

DES PLAINES COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Existing Conditions Report | Issues & Opportunities

February 8, 2018



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Unless otherwise specified, all photos are by CMAP staff.

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A. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Des Plaines is home to a diverse blend of people; strong transportation network of train lines, major arterials, and access to interstate highways; commercial districts and vibrant downtown center; quality housing stock composed of mostly single-family homes; local community-based institutions and neighborhood schools; an array of open space amenities and recreation centers; and located in close proximity to key regional amenities and major employment centers such as the O’Hare International Airport; but there is room for further growth and improvement.

The Comprehensive Planning process conducted a range of outreach strategies to engage different sectors of the population, including stakeholder interviews, focus groups, steering committee meetings, a plan survey, and participation in local community events. The result of all these outreach efforts culminated in a list of issues and opportunities used to identify the most prominent topics facing the City of Des Plaines. Major topic areas identified as crucial for the future of Des Plaines are detailed below.

Chapter 1. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (Page 13)

Located in one of the strongest industrial markets in the country, Des Plaines stands to benefit from strengthening connections to industry while integrating best practices for sustainable development. While the City has undertaken several initiatives to expand economic development, opportunities still exist to expand retail, entertainment, and dining options in the Downtown and fill key vacancies in major corridors, such as Oakton Street and Elmhurst Road. Moreover, while opportunities for large-scale development in Des Plaines are limited, unincorporated areas to the south and west of the City may hold significant potential for annexation and redevelopment.

Chapter 2. TRANSPORTATION (Page 24)

Des Plaines benefits from a robust transportation network that provides easy access to the City of Chicago, O’Hare International Airport, and public transit. Opportunities exist to expand and complete regional bikeways and improve pedestrian safety to make active transit safer and more accessible, particularly along regional truck routes. Outreach revealed senior mobility to be a major theme, as residents consistently expressed concern over limited transportation options available to an aging population. Des Plaines stands to benefit from several major capital projects including the Pulse Dempster Line, Elgin O’Hare Western Access Project, and O’Hare 2025.

Chapter 3. HOUSING (Page 37)

The Des Plaines housing market is stable as the community enjoys low vacancy rates and foreclosure, as well as a rebounding housing sales market. However, the community faces challenges to affordability as nearly 35 percent of homeowners and 50 percent of renters are considered cost-burdened. Opportunities to diversify the housing stock to enhance livability for older persons and provide options to attract younger families to the downtown has risen through several outreach activities.

Chapter 4. DIVERSITY AND IMMIGRATION (Page 48)

Des Plaines is a diverse community which has continually attracted immigrant and foreign-born residents since the early 1970's. The immigrant population is a valuable component of the Des Plaines population as it contributes to local workforce needs, local economic growth, and to the social and cultural fabric of the community. Opportunities exist to create and provide a community integration plan for new and existing immigrant residents. The immigrant population has also contributed to the local economy through the establishment of thriving small businesses. By better integrating immigrant families and celebrating cultural diversity, Des Plaines will be primed for future growth and further development as a vibrant and diverse community.

Chapter 5. STORMWATER MANAGEMENT (Page 52)

The City of Des Plaines is susceptible to multiple types of flooding. Parts of Des Plaines experience flooding when waters overflow the banks of the Des Plaines River and other streams within the area. This type of flooding is commonly referred to as riverine flooding. In addition, parts of the community experience urban flooding, which occurs when rainfall overwhelms the capacity of the drainage systems. While Des Plaines continues to encounter flooding and its adverse effects, the community has taken proactive action to reduce flooding damages and prepare for future events. The City has either developed, conducted, or engaged with a number of plans and studies to address flooding concerns. Capital projects identified in numerous plans and studies have been completed and several more have been identified for future work. Furthermore, Des Plaines works to control flooding by regulating construction and development in flood-prone areas through municipal codes and ordinances. This experience and commitment sets the stage for further improvements and ultimately a reduction in flooding damages in the near future.

Chapter 6. OTHER OPPORTUNITIES AND ISSUES (Page 62)

While five broad topic areas have been identified as key concerns in research and public engagement, several other issues and opportunities arose as well. The following topics did not fit neatly into the five major categories, but will be addressed in the forthcoming plan. Additional topics include the preservation and restoration of the Historic United Methodist Campground, and supporting the Des Plaines Park District's Strategic Plan and Capital Improvement Projects.

B. SUMMARY OF OUTREACH

The City of Des Plaines is one of the most racially, ethnically, and income-diverse communities in the northwest suburbs of Chicago. In order to provide mechanisms for meaningful outreach that reach different segments of the community, several approaches were implemented for the existing conditions phase of the plan. Strategies have thus far included interviews, steering committee meetings, focus groups, surveys, an interactive website, public meetings, and seeking feedback at community events. Various materials and online tools were provided in English, Spanish, and Polish to attempt to reach and engage as many residents as possible.

Steering Committee

The Steering Committee, comprised of residents, elected officials, City staff, businesses, and representatives from local community organizations, has met twice since the beginning of the planning process. The first meeting, held November 30, 2016, consisted of reviewing the project scope and timeline, laying-out the Steering Committee's role, and identifying the City's most prominent issues and opportunities. The second meeting, held June 6, 2017, consisted of reviewing the Community Profile and participating in a visioning exercise where members described what an ideal Des Plaines would look like in 10 years. The list of membership and affiliations of the project Steering Committee are listed below.

Members

Steven Andrews, Community Relations Representative, Pace

Andrea Biwer, Executive Director, Des Plaines Chamber of Commerce

Johanna Bye, Senior Planner, City of Des Plaines

Alderman Mike Charewicz, 8th Ward, Des Plaines City Council

Richard Fisher, Civil Engineer, Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Colette Hands, VP Continuing Education, Training and Workforce Development, Oakton Community College

Audrey Haugan, Principal, Maine West High School

Ray Imig, Board Member, District 62

Michael McMahon, Director of Community and Economic Development, City of Des Plaines

Don Miletic, Executive Director, Des Plaines Park District

Lauren Pruss, Economic Development Coordinator (*former*), City of Des Plaines

Wharton Sinkler, Resident and Bike Activist

Holly Sorensen, Director, Des Plaines Public Library

Jim Szabo, Chairman, Des Plaines Planning and Zoning Board

Cynthia Veremis, Vice President, LSG Sky Chefs

Heather Wahl, Owner, Wahl Jewelers



Caption: Steering Committee members participated in a mapping activity where they identified assets and challenges in the City of Des Plaines.

Stakeholder Interviews

Stakeholder interviews have included meeting with local residents, business owners, elected officials, municipal staff, and local community organizations such as the Frisbie Senior Center, Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Maryville Academy, the Northwest Municipal Conference, and the Des Plaines Chamber of Commerce. Each of the interviews tackled different topics based on the stakeholder’s primary area of interest, expertise, or jurisdiction. However, common themes still emerged from the conversations: addressing transportation challenges, improving the downtown, strengthening commercial areas (including the Oakton Street Corridor, Elmhurst Road, and 5 Corners), stormwater management, and access to the Des Plaines River and Trail. CMAP will continue to interview additional pertinent stakeholders as interest emerges and as plan recommendations are explored.

Focus Groups

Downtown Business Focus Group

The Downtown Business focus group was attended by business owners primarily located in Metropolitan Square and along Miner Street. The meeting consisted of reviewing the Urban Land Institute (ULI) Developer Panel recommendations and addressing key topics that were missing on that list. Participants identified the top 3 issues facing downtown businesses as the business mix (too many of the same), the need for a retail plan to address competition in the surrounding suburbs, and customer attraction (particularly from commuters). Additional challenges raised included addressing homelessness, the lack of a nightlife, bad landscaping, beautification and littering, parking, signage and wayfinding, the need for tax incentives, and pedestrian safety.

Oakton Street Business Focus Group

The Oakton Street Business focus group was attended by business owners primarily located on the eastern end of the Oakton Street Corridor. The meeting consisted of reviewing the 2009 Oakton Street/Elmhurst Road Corridor Study and revising key recommendations. Participants felt the 2009 plan did not adequately address the challenges faced by business owners along Oakton Street. Key challenges raised included: insufficient parking, the flow of traffic, signage restrictions, and customer attraction.

Elmhurst Road Business Focus Group

Elmhurst Road business owners, primarily located between Oakton Street and Dempster Street, discussed the unique situation they face along the Elmhurst Corridor. Between Mount Prospect's Downtown to the north and the Elgin O'Hare Western Access to the south, participants raised opportunities to connect to the growing amenities and strengthen their position with the addition of signage, façade improvements, landscaping improvements, redevelopment, and a strong anchor tenant. Additional challenges raised included vacancies, barriers to store access, lighting, flooding, high tax rates, and customer attraction.

Industrial Area Business Focus Group

Industrial Area business owners gathered at the LSG Sky Chefs office to share their thoughts involving business growth, transportation, freight movement, and employment. Participants shared a positive working relationship with the City of Des Plaines, describing them as easy to work with and responsive to permitting issues and capital needs. Challenges included the arrangement and negative impacts of incompatible land uses, traffic congestion on Oakton Street and Touhy Avenue, striking a balance between pedestrian safety and busy truck routes on Touhy Avenue, and the desire to employ more residents in close proximity.

Maine West High School Student Focus Group

The Maine West High School (MWHS) Student focus group took place in a Civil Engineering and Architecture class of twenty-five. Students participated by taking a general plan survey to provide feedback on transportation, economic development, and open space challenges in Des Plaines. Key comments provided by students included the desire to see more fast food options, sporting goods stores, and safer crosswalks. Students also engaged in a mapping activity where they identified key transportation challenges around MWHS, and shared recommendations to improve pedestrian safety.



Caption: Students at Maine West High School identifying transportation and pedestrian challenges along Oakton Street and Wolf Road.

Source: Journal & Topics, 2017

Public Events

Taste of Des Plaines

The Taste of Des Plaines is a community-wide festival located in Downtown Des Plaines. The festival is a weekend-long family-friendly event that features local cuisine, live entertainment, and family activities. CMAP staff attended the event to distribute surveys and discuss topics of importance to the residents and visitors in attendance. Suggestions to improve Des Plaines included: additional retail and restaurants downtown; recreational opportunities for both, youth and older adults; increased civic programming; enhanced bike routes; and pedestrian safety.



Caption: Local youth participating at the Comprehensive Plan's booth at the Taste of Des Plaines, "What would you like to see in your community?"

Public Open House

A public open house was held in the beginning of the summer to vet ideas and better understand community interests. Several residents and stakeholders identified problem and opportunity areas, and shared ideas for future improvements and development. Activities included a visual preference survey for downtown improvements, reviewing the past Comprehensive Plan's goals, and identifying transportation and natural resources challenges. The Open House also featured a "Kids Corner" in which youth shared their desire to see more amenities in the city, including: more businesses (i.e. bike shops), additional street lighting in residential areas, recreational amenities (laser tag, arcades, paintball, and movie theaters), food trucks, more community festivals (i.e. carnivals), more restaurants, and a revamped Metropolitan Square.



Caption: Des Plaines residents revisiting and revising recommendations of the 2007 Comprehensive plan at the first Public Meeting at the Des Plaines Public Library.

Online Engagement

CMAP Project Webpage

A project page for the plan is located on CMAP’s Local Technical Assistance program (LTA) webpage. The project page introduces the plan, explains the need for a new comprehensive plan, and details the planning process, public engagement, and project partners.

MetroQuest

An interactive website was created in English and Spanish to encourage residents and other community stakeholders to provide their feedback on topics such as housing, commercial areas, transportation, stormwater management, parks and open space, and community character. Paper surveys were also provided and distributed through local organizations. In total, over 686 surveys were completed.

Respondents identified and rated the following as the most important topics in the community: economic development, stormwater management, and the downtown. The most needed improvements included maintenance of neighborhood properties, repaved roads, safe pedestrian crossings at major intersections, alleviated traffic, safe places for youth/teens to gather, a need for continuous sidewalks, and improving public safety.



Caption: The most popular words used to describe what residents would like to see in Downtown Des Plaines via the MetroQuest survey.

C. ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES



Caption: Apache Park in Des Plaines, IL.

1. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Opportunity: Business Attraction

Community outreach has underscored a desire for expanded retail and dining options in Downtown Des Plaines. Similarly, stakeholders have highlighted vacancies along the Oakton Street corridor and competition along Elmhurst Road as significant economic development issues to address. A retail gap analysis was used to estimate support for new retail development in Des Plaines with particular focus on these three areas.

Retail supply and demand data were analyzed for the following three market areas:

- **Downtown Des Plaines:** The area within a 10-minute drive of the intersection of Miner Street and Lee Street.
- **Oakton Street Corridor:** The area within a 10-minute drive of the intersection of Oakton Street and Mannheim Road.
- **Elmhurst Road Corridor:** The area within a 10-minute drive of the intersection of Elmhurst Road and Millers Road (the center location between two retail areas on Elmhurst Road).

For the three areas, the retail gap analysis compares the sales of businesses (“supply”) with what consumers spend (“demand”) to determine the amount of retail leakage or surplus occurring across various retail categories.

- **Retail Leakage.** When consumers spend more in a given retail category than what businesses earn (demand > supply) in the market area, it means that consumers are spending dollars outside of the area. This is referred to as “leakage,” and is displayed in green on the accompanying table. Retail categories experiencing leakage represent potential opportunities for growth, as local demand for these goods and services already exists, but is unmet by existing retail supply.
- **Surplus.** Conversely, when businesses earn more than consumers spend (supply > demand) in a market area, the market is saturated with customers from both within and outside the area. This is referred to as a “surplus,” and is depicted in red on the accompanying table. It can be challenging for new retail development to succeed in a retail category experiencing a surplus.
- **Potential.** Potential for retail development is calculated by dividing unmet retail demand by sales-per-square-foot. This yields an estimate of additional retail square feet that could potentially be supported within the market area. For the purposes of this analysis, it is assumed that retailers average \$400 per-square-foot in sales annually. Retail potential within a given retail category is significant if it is larger than the typical store size in that category.

It should be noted that these three market areas overlap, so any retail development within one area would likely impact the ability to attract new retail to another area.

Table 1.1 Retail Gap Analysis Summary, 10-minute Drive Time Market Areas, 2017

Summary Demographics

	Downtown 10-minute Drive	Oakton & Mannheim 10-minute Drive	Elmhurst & Millers 10-minute Drive
Population	188,058	140,352	136,337
Households	71,760	53,624	53,278
Median Disposable Income	\$52,485	\$52,026	\$52,103
Per Capita Income	\$35,973	\$35,643	\$35,816

Retail Gap by Market Area

	Downtown 10-minute Drive	Oakton & Mannheim 10-minute Drive	Elmhurst & Millers 10-minute Drive
Total Retail Trade and Food & Drink	(\$152.8)	(\$331.0)	(\$583.9)
Total Retail Trade	(\$114.1)	(\$158.7)	(\$520.6)
Total Food & Drink	(\$38.7)	(\$172.3)	(\$63.4)

Retail Gap by Industry Group

	Downtown 10-minute Drive		Oakton & Mannheim 10-minute Drive		Elmhurst & Millers 10-minute Drive	
	Retail Gap (\$M)	Potential * (sf)	Retail Gap (\$M)	Potential * (sf)	Retail Gap (\$M)	Potential * (sf)
Retail Gap by Industry Group						
Motor Vehicle & Parts Dealers	\$79.6	N/A	\$49.9	N/A	\$171.9	N/A
Furniture & Home Furnishings Stores	\$1.3	3,355	(\$3.3)	(8,327)	(\$28.9)	(72,253)
Electronics & Appliance Stores	(\$185.1)	(462,862)	(\$55.1)	(137,698)	(\$140.6)	(351,513)
Bldg Materials, Garden Equip. & Supply Stores	\$41.9	104,684	\$11.4	28,390	(\$48.2)	(120,376)
Food & Beverage Stores	\$23.1	57,760	(\$71.3)	(178,358)	(\$139.7)	(349,182)
Health & Personal Care Stores	(\$36.2)	(90,399)	(\$62.0)	(155,077)	(\$38.6)	(96,598)
Gasoline Stations	\$98.4	N/A	\$48.1	N/A	\$18.3	N/A
Clothing & Clothing Accessories Stores	\$30.8	76,956	(\$48.0)	(120,079)	\$10.4	26,014
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book, & Music Stores	\$26.3	65,823	\$17.7	44,141	(\$3.4)	(8,420)
General Merchandise Stores	(\$10.12)	(252,977)	\$140.5	351,155	(\$143.9)	(359,647)
Miscellaneous Store Retailers	(\$57.6)	(143,886)	(\$87.7)	(219,358)	(\$75.7)	(189,147)
Nonstore Retailers	(\$35.5)	N/A	(\$98.6)	N/A	(\$102.3)	N/A
Food Services & Drinking Places	(\$38.7)	(96,668)	(\$172.3)	(430,787)	(\$63.4)	(158,408)

*Potential based on an average annual sales per-square-foot of \$400.

Source: ESRI Business Analyst; CMAP20 17

*Potential based on an average annual sales per-square-foot of \$400. Not applicable (N/A) to nonstore retailers that utilize outdoor space for sales.

Retail Leakage. GREEN values represent retail categories where current consumer demand exceeds existing retail supply. This is referred to as "leakage," and may represent potential growth opportunities for goods and services in that retail category.

Surplus. RED values represent retail categories where businesses supply more good and services than consumers spend in that category. This is referred to as a "surplus," and may represent a challenge to new retailers seeking to expand in the given market area.

Oakton Street Corridor Market Area

The Oakton Street corridor faces competition from shopping districts in all directions, including The Fashion Outlets of Chicago in Rosemont, Randhurst Village in Mount Prospect, Woodfield Mall in Schaumburg, and Westfield Old Orchard in Skokie. Within a 10-minute drive of the corridor, retail sales exceed local demand by more than \$331 million. The 10-minute drive time contains approximately 140,000 people in 54,000 households with a median disposable income of \$53,600. Retail potential (where household demand exceeds retail supply) is limited to a few categories with only **General Merchandise** providing significant unmet demand to potentially support a traditional retail storefront along Oakton Street. Countering this opportunity is a surplus of retail sales in other categories that may offset the ability of the corridor to attract larger format general merchandise retailers.

Downtown Des Plaines Market Area

While Downtown Des Plaines also faces competition from surrounding areas, the downtown is farther removed from the impacts of retailers in Rosemont and Schaumburg. Furthermore, the downtown shopping environment is unique from that of nearby more auto-oriented retail areas along Rand Road, Golf Road, and Dempster Street. While overall retail supply within a 10-minute drive of the downtown exceeds demand by approximately \$153 million (compared to Oakton Street market area's \$331 million), the downtown context fosters potential for smaller boutique retailers. Several retail categories, including **Food and Beverage, Clothing & Clothing Accessories Stores, and Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book, & Music Stores**, demonstrate unmet demand potentially capable of supporting new retail locations (where retail potential is at least as large as a typical retail store in that category).

Elmhurst Road Corridor Market Area

Retail development within Des Plaines along the Elmhurst Road corridor faces competition from shopping centers located in nearby municipalities. The 10-minute drive time contains approximately 136,000 people in 53,000 households with a median disposable income of \$53,300. There is only demonstrable retail potential in the **Clothing & Clothing Accessories Stores** category. The overall retail supply exceeds market area demand by \$584 million indicating strong competition within and outside of Des Plaines, the most notable of which being the Randhurst Village (formerly known as Randhurst Mall) area, which is at the edge of the 10-minute drive. Repositioning existing retail space to attract higher quality tenants, and minimizing the addition of new development that adds to competition, may be the best strategy within this environment.

Issue: Downtown Des Plaines

ULI Development Panel

To solicit guidance on improving their downtown, the City applied for and was selected to receive assistance from the Regional Transportation Authority's (RTA) Community Planning Program to conduct a Developer Discussion Panel on December 6, 2016. The panelists were led on a tour of various sites in the downtown area. From their observations, panelists devised a prioritized list of recommendations that they believed would improve the overall vitality of the city's downtown. Key takeaways and recommendations from the panel included:

- assessing current parking usage and reevaluating parking regulations;
- reconfiguring Metropolitan Square roadways to clearly direct traffic to businesses and provide more flexible civic space;
- continuing to support façade improvements throughout the downtown;
- renovating the Des Plaines Theater to serve as an activity generator;
- attracting more restaurants to the Downtown, and;
- improving connectivity, including
 - intersection enhancements for pedestrians,
 - a stronger Des Plaines River Trail connection, and
 - installation of wayfinding/gateway signage.

Many of the observations made by the Developer Panel were also noted by the Comprehensive Plan project team prior to gaining access to the panel's report. As such, several overlapping areas of discussion are highlighted in this Existing Conditions Report. Additionally, a Downtown Business Owner Focus Group was conducted to gather feedback on the ULI Development Panel's recommendations and to solicit additional ideas. Concerns around business mix, business incentives, customer attraction, safety, design, and beautification were incorporated.

Downtown Parking & Circulation

As in many communities, parking was often mentioned as a primary transportation concern for Des Plaines, especially in its downtown area. Parking influences the character, form, function and flow of our communities. It is necessary to support a community's local businesses, but it can make walking and bicycling unpleasant and unsafe, add to stormwater and pollution problems, and make housing more expensive. Circulation within the downtown was identified as a potential issue by the Developer Panel. The extensive use of one-way couplets was indicated to be intimidating to drivers and typically viewed negatively by retailers.

Stakeholders interviewed as part of this plan's study of existing conditions revealed disagreement on the availability of parking in the downtown area. Some believe that the area does not offer enough parking spaces needed by residents and workers conducting everyday business, and especially for potential customers, whom the City wants to attract to patronize local restaurants and stores. Some are concerned about the construction of new, higher-density condominium and apartment housing—the main building blocks of successful transit-oriented development—without the construction of new structured parking. Others believe that enough parking exists in the downtown area and contend that Des Plaines needs to better understand and manage its existing parking spaces, frequently pointing to often-vacant lots operating under long-standing leases.

While a parking study for the downtown was completed in 2007, stakeholders view it as a dated report that can't be used to reliably plan for current parking needs. The 2016 Developer Panel echoed this sentiment and recommended an updated study be performed in conjunction with an assessment of existing parking lot leases and usage of parking spaces in nearby multi-family complexes. Such a study could be used to identify areas in need of additional parking as well as areas where wayfinding and other strategies can be used to make better use of existing spaces. Some stakeholders have also stated that the evaluation of multi-family parking usage could be used to support changes in the parking ratios required in the City's zoning ordinance and make the downtown more attractive for multi-family and mixed-use development.

Metropolitan Square

Opened in 2006, Metropolitan Square is the most significant new development in Downtown Des Plaines with over 121,000 square feet of commercial space and 135 condominiums. The project struggled in its early years and was sold through foreclosure in 2012. In an effort to ensure the development's success, the City commissioned a study to identify strategies for enhancing the city-owned streets and plaza at the center of the development as well as strategies for improving visibility and access from Miner Street. The study resulted in two proposed concepts: one in which the current street/plaza configuration is maintained and improved with amenities such as decorative lighting and water features and another in which a traditional four-way intersection replaces the circular drive and the plaza is expanded. Since the completion of the study in the spring of 2016, there does not appear to be an agreement on how, or if, to proceed with recommended improvements. Moving forward, the Comprehensive Plan process can be used to further discussion of repositioning public areas within the Metropolitan Square to foster continued success of the development.



Caption: Metropolitan Square entrance on Miner Street in Downtown Des Plaines.

Des Plaines Theatre

As noted in the 2016 Developer Discussion Panel Summary, the Des Plaines Theatre has the potential to be a significant activity generator for the downtown area. While some community stakeholders have indicated redevelopment of the site may have a bigger impact than renovation of the existing structure, the outreach process highlighted agreement that the large and centrally located Des Plaines Theatre site has the potential to serve as a catalyst for other reinvestment in the downtown. The City recently approved a nonbinding memorandum of understanding to partner with Rivers Casino in the purchase and renovation of the building. Under the agreement, Rivers Casino would donate up to \$2 million in matching funds and the City would then own the property and be responsible for funding remaining project costs.

Additional outreach as part of the planning process can be used to further assess the community's vision for the Theatre and surrounding areas and ensure that plan recommendations for elsewhere in the Downtown complement the potential future Des Plaines Theatre project.

Issue: Oakton Street Corridor

Oakton Street carries more than 20,000 vehicles per day and is an important east-west corridor in Des Plaines along with Dempster Street/U.S. Highway 14 and Touhy Avenue. Oakton Street functions as a commercial and industrial corridor as it passes through Des Plaines, providing access to Interstates 90 and 294, as well as job centers in Des Plaines, Elk Grove, and Nilens. Vacancies, an unattractive appearance, and limited redevelopment potential have been cited as significant issues during the outreach process.

Oakton Street/Elmhurst Road Corridor Study (2009)

A previous study, the Oakton Street/Elmhurst Road Corridor Study (2009), divided the corridor into three separate activity areas including the:

- Oakton Industrial District: Elmhurst Road to Wolf Road;
- Oakton Retail District: Wolf Road to the Canadian National Railroad; and
- Oakton Mixed-Use District: CN Railroad to River Road.

The goal of the study was to enhance the public realm, character and overall appearance of the corridor, as well as entry points into the City and redevelopment strategies of obsolete properties. Many of the issues sought to be addressed by the study persist today and the study will be thoroughly reviewed to identify strategies that should be carried forward into the new Comprehensive Plan. Given that the previous Oakton Street corridor planning process began at the beginning of the recession of the late 2000's, it will be necessary to reconsider recommendations in light of current market influences and changes in the retail environment.

East Oakton Street Corridor

Redevelopment Potential

The small size of commercial parcels (as small as 3,000 sq. ft.) along east Oakton Street, and the related issue of shallow lot depth (125 to 200 ft.), limits the potential for large-scale redevelopment. The proximity to residential parcels to the north and south of the corridor also limit redevelopment potential. While incremental changes can be made to shift the character of the corridor over time, more intense public improvements or parcel acquisition and consolidation could have more of an impact. Additional outreach during the planning process is needed to identify what level of intervention the community desires to encourage redevelopment along east Oakton Street.

Business Mix

The eastern portion of the Oakton Street corridor is home to a wide variety of businesses as well as a mix of single-family and multi-family homes. Oakton Street has numerous restaurants, convenience stores, and neighborhood-serving businesses, such as salons, daycares and drycleaners. In addition, several of the retail properties consist of storefronts attached to heavy commercial businesses such as contractors, auto repair shops, and service related business. These properties also have loading docks and drive-in doors that provide for larger commercial vehicles.

Input received to date indicates that the Comprehensive Plan will ultimately need to identify strategies that accommodate a variety of business needs while addressing traffic flow and circulation, parking needs, customer attraction, and promoting a more pedestrian-friendly environment for the patrons of the neighborhood serving retail and services.

Office and Retail Vacancy

Despite community input to the contrary, retail inventory data indicates that the eastern portion of the Oakton Street has a healthy proportion of vacant space. According to CoStar, a leading commercial real estate data provider, there are 349,000 square feet of retail and office space along the eastern portion of Oakton Street. Outreach comments highlighted a perception that the east Oakton Street area suffers from high vacancy, however the vacant 25,000 square foot American Society of Safety Engineers (ASSE) building is likely a large contributor to that perception. Excluding the ASSE building, total retail and office vacancy is at approximately 22,000 square feet (or 6.8 percent) and is similar to vacancy experienced in the O'Hare Retail/Office Submarket (6 percent). While strategies may be needed to enhance the quality of businesses and tenants over time, eastern Oakton Street functions as an active commercial corridor.



Caption: The Oakton Street Corridor is home to a mix of small local businesses and scattered single-family housing.

Central Oakton Street Retail Area

Business Mix

The intersection of Oakton Street and Lee Street has combined traffic counts of over 42,000 vehicles (Figure 2.1) on an average day making it an attractive retail area in Des Plaines. While the area lacks any large regional retail tenants, the recent opening of a Sam's Farmers Market and the pending opening of a Butera Market in the former Dominick's location speaks to the central Oakton Street Corridor's strength as a local retail destination. As a community serving retail area, central Oakton Street is likely to be most attractive to "mid-box" retailers under 50,000 square feet.

Redevelopment Potential

According to CoStar, there are 705,984 square feet of space in the central Oakton Street retail area. Following the anticipated opening of the Butera Market in the winter of 2018, there will be 76,665 square feet of available space representing a vacancy rate of 10.9 percent. While filling existing retail space should be encouraged, repositioning aging retail properties should also be considered. Furthermore, over the long term, there are several underutilized parking lots and vacant sites that could accommodate commercial redevelopment.

West Oakton Industrial Corridor

Many of the City's largest industrial businesses are located along the western portion of the Oakton Street Corridor and north along the Mt. Prospect Road Corridor, such as Motor Coach Industries, UOP Honeywell, and International Paper. Opportunities for expansion of this area are limited with existing residential development and regional stormwater infrastructure present on all sides. Future investment in the area will likely be focused on redeveloping and maximizing the value of underutilized sites within the area. For example, a pharmaceutical company, Vetter Pharma, recently closed on the purchase of a 17-acre property in the area with the intent to redevelop the site into a 1.2-million square-foot complex. Moving forward, the Comprehensive Plan can be used to identify opportunity sites for industrial expansion in and around western Oakton Street. In addition to attracting new businesses, the planning process can also be used to evaluate what public improvements can be made to enhance the district and services provided to existing industrial users.

Issue: Elmhurst Road Corridor

In addition to three planning districts along Oakton Street, the 2009 Oakton Street/Elmhurst Road Corridor Study included an Elmhurst Road District. As noted in the study, much of the development along the commercial portion of Elmhurst Road was built in the 1970s and 1980s. Retail centers are auto-oriented, catering to the needs of the 22,000 to 30,000 motorists that travel the corridor on an average day. While it is understandable that businesses would predominantly rely on vehicular traffic, the deep setbacks of structures along the roadways also provide opportunities to enhance the corridor for pedestrian and bicycle circulation.

Input from local business owners along Elmhurst Road underscored a need for a long term vision for the corridor including coordination with Mount Prospect and the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) regarding infrastructure improvements and economic development efforts. Business owners also

identified a general need to attract development that will increase activity along the corridor, citing examples such as regional-scale recreation facilities, hotels, restaurants, and entertainment such as a movie theater. Mixed-use development was seen as a positive contribution to the corridor if development regulations could be modified to allow for more intense development by right. The Comprehensive Plan process could be used to reevaluate the 2009 study recommendations regarding site development standards (i.e. parking and landscaping) and public right-of-way improvements to better reflect on the image of the Des Plaines community. The Plan will also identify opportunities for the City of Des Plaines to partner with Mount Prospect in facilitating mutually beneficial economic development along the corridor.

Issue: Five Corners

With a mix of salvage yards, light industrial, auto repair shops, and mobile home parks, the area surrounding the intersection of Rand Road and River Road (known as “Five Corners”) has been identified as an area in need of economic development assistance.

Previous efforts to enhance the Five Corners area included the adoption of a TIF District and a master plan for the area. In 2014, after eight years and a decrease in property values, the City dissolved the 70-acre Five Corners TIF District. Challenges affecting the area include environmental contamination, zoning classification and restrictions, and problematic traffic circulation. The ability to redevelop the area is also hampered by the number of small parcels and diverse ownership that make lot consolidation and larger scale improvements difficult. The master plan undertaken as part of establishing the Five Corners TIF should be reevaluated as part of the planning process. In addition, while some in the community have expressed a desire to see the area redeveloped, strategies to assist existing businesses and property owners to enhance the district should also be encouraged.

Opportunity: Industrial Development

Input from industrial business owners and representatives gave high regard to the City in its efforts to help facilitate development and expansion of industrial businesses. Working with the City was described as “a breath of fresh air” compared to some nearby municipalities with the biggest drawbacks being higher taxes associated with its location within Cook County and modest challenges coordinating with other jurisdictions such as IDOT. Regarding workforce development, some businesses indicated that it was difficult to tap into the local workforce when filling open positions and that many employees come from elsewhere in the region. Moving forward, industrial users highlighted a need to maintain boundaries between industrial areas and residential development to minimize conflicts with residents and ensure long term viability of businesses.

Industrial Job Base

The City of Des Plaines has several important industrial areas that are part of the larger O’Hare Industrial Subregion. According to the Local Employment Household Dynamics (LEHD), more than 30 percent (33.4) of Des Plaines’s private sector jobs are in industrial sectors, transportation and warehousing, manufacturing, and wholesale trade. Since 2002, manufacturing and wholesale trade jobs declined by 43.4 percent and 19.3 percent respectively. Simultaneously, the transportation and warehousing sector increased by 78.1 percent.

These trends in industrial sectors are not unique to Des Plaines. Many areas of the Chicago region and the nation have seen similar decreases in manufacturing and increases in transportation and warehousing employment. Manufacturing efficiencies and the outsourcing of logistics functions has led to a significant real estate and workforce shift. As discussed in many of CMAP’s policy updates, such as the [O’Hare Subregional Freight-Manufacturing Drill-Down Report](#) and the [Chicago Region Supply Chain Trends and Trading Partners Report](#), trends in industrial real estate have shifted toward large distribution facilities in logistics parks.

Industrial Real Estate

Despite employment declines among some industrial uses, Des Plaines is located in one of the strongest industrial real estate markets in the Midwest. In the second quarter of 2017 the O’Hare Industrial Submarket maintained close to a record vacancy rate of only 3.8 percent while offering the largest inventory (139.4 million square feet) and fourth highest average asking rent (\$5.59 per square foot) in the region. According to CoStar, at the end of the second quarter 2017 there were 16,995,615 square feet of industrial space in the City of Des Plaines with a vacancy rate of 4.0 percent. This rate is down from a recession peak of 10.8 percent in the fourth quarter of 2011 and on par with the O’Hare Industrial Submarket. This strong demand may lead to increased pressure to redevelop underutilized industrial properties which may provide the opportunity to integrate best practices such as stormwater management and other right-of-way improvements alongside future industrial businesses.

O’Hare International Airport Plans and Expansion

Improvements proposed and underway at O’Hare International Airport should be taken into consideration including the [O’Hare Modernization Program](#) and added terminal capacity proposed in the [O’Hare 21 Terminal Area Plan](#).

Impacts to Infrastructure

Severe weather events and the associated climate-related impacts pose significant risk to the infrastructure of the Greater O’Hare freight/manufacturing cluster that makes the Des Plaines an attractive place to locate. Extreme heat and drought can lead to the buckling of rail and pavement. Heavier precipitation can increase ruts, scouring and deterioration of pavement (including runways). Transportation networks can experience power outages from severe storms, which can cause major delays to land and air freight routes as well as employee commutes. Air freight, in particular, may also face cargo restrictions and flight cancellations during periods of extreme heat.

O’Hare International Airport, directly southwest of Des Plaines, has two cargo facilities that process approximately 1.6 million tons of freight worth over \$170 billion each year.^{1,2} In addition to access to the largest cargo airport in the Midwest, the Greater O’Hare freight/manufacturing cluster has a notably high density of truck routes, many of which travel through the City of Des Plaines. Similarly, the most heavily used rail in the cluster—the Canadian National (CN)—runs through the City as well. Infrastructure supporting the cluster is already experiencing these impacts. As transportation improvements are made within the city and O’Hare, the city should consider supporting the updating of transportation infrastructure design standards that use recalibrated thresholds of heat, freeze-thaw cycles, and buckling from changing temperature and precipitation patterns. At the municipal level, there are also opportunities to budget accordingly for greater infrastructure expenses in support of the major transportation networks upon which the City of Des Plaines depends.

Opportunity: Annexation

Stakeholder input has identified annexations as a potential mechanism for economic development. Adjacent unincorporated areas that could potentially be annexed by the City are largely built-out. This typically means that such areas would require taxes on existing uses to offset the cost of providing adequate services and infrastructure, or redevelopment to increase property values.

Given existing conditions and market context, the unincorporated areas to the south and west of the City may hold the most significant potential for redevelopment. These areas are home to a mix of light industrial uses, single-family homes, and mobile home communities. The Comprehensive Plan process could be used to weigh the costs and benefits of annexation and opportunities for employment-focused development as appropriate.

CMAP is also currently engaged in a project to assist Cook County in evaluating the costs and benefits of annexation of unincorporated within Maine and Northfield Townships and strategies for improving infrastructure and services. The study area includes the large unincorporated area located on the northeastern edge of Des Plaines where large multi-family complexes are the predominant land use. Where possible, the preliminary results of that study can also be used to inform discussion of annexation within the Des Plaines Comprehensive Plan.

¹ O’Hare Drill Down <http://www.cmap.illinois.gov/documents/10180/27283/2014-5-12-O-Hare-Subregional-Freight-Manufacturin+Drill-Down-report.pdf/231356b3-2edc-40ac-b1bb-7ee9cab04c0d>

² Federal Aviation Administration, “Preliminary CY 2016 All-Cargo Airports,” 2015, https://www.faa.gov/airports/planning_capacity/passenger_allcargo_stats/passenger/media/preliminary-cy16-cargo-airports.pdf

2. TRANSPORTATION

The City of Des Plaines has a strong transportation network and is located 20 miles northwest from the Chicago Loop, via Interstate 90 (and connecting Interstate 294). The City also borders O'Hare International Airport, with the added benefit of having its industrial area adjacent to the airport, facilitating easy transport between the two. Several transit routes intersect the City, with two Metra stations located in Downtown Des Plaines and at Northwest Highway and Wolf Road. While the CTA Rail "L" System does not stop in Des Plaines, the nearby Rosemont Blue Line Station is accessible via Pace bus routes 230 and 606. The City of Des Plaines is also supportive of bike accessibility, with examples such as the Des Plaines River Trail which passes through the downtown next to the Des Plaines Metra Station- the site of convergence for several Pace bus routes offering access to nearby communities such as Niles, Park Ridge, and Skokie.

Most of the transportation challenges in Des Plaines are site specific, occurring at locations often along IDOT-controlled arterials. The City is already busy addressing many of these, through engineering studies or infrastructure improvements. Some examples include pedestrian access along the Northwest Highway "S-curve," the traffic circle at Golf Road/ Wolf Road, full pedestrianizing of Rand Road and River Road, a needed traffic signal at the increasingly busy Lee Street and Mannheim Road intersection, and stormwater-related issues on River Road.

Beyond site specific concerns, an overarching theme from outreach efforts has been senior mobility. Residents have raised concerns that Des Plaines does not offer adequate transit options for an aging population. These and other important challenges will be included in the plan.

Issue: Touhy Avenue

Pedestrian safety along Touhy Avenue was identified as one of the most significant transportation challenges within Des Plaines, particularly west of Mannheim Road. It is an exceptionally busy street with high average daily traffic counts: 28,300 – 47,700 automobiles per day, and 4,950 – 6,100 heavy commercial vehicles (i.e. trucks) per day (see Figure 2.1).

City staff and other stakeholders highlighted two locations along Touhy Avenue where pedestrians often cross the street despite the lack of a safe crossing. The first, located at Mannheim Road, is where employees of businesses located in the northeast quadrant of the intersection often cross many lanes of traffic to the southwest quadrant, which is adjacent to several restaurants and a Target. The other is located just west of Interstate 90, where many LSG Sky Chefs employees regularly cross the six lanes of fast-moving traffic without a pedestrian crossing. Sky Chefs employs a large number of workers who depend on public transit for their commute, and often hastily cross the dangerous intersection at night to catch the Pace bus. Figure 2.2, which indicates pedestrian crashes between 2010 and 2014, provides some illustration of the dangers along Touhy Avenue, particularly at the Mannheim Road intersection.

Figure 2.1. Average Daily Traffic Count, Automobiles and Trucks, 2016

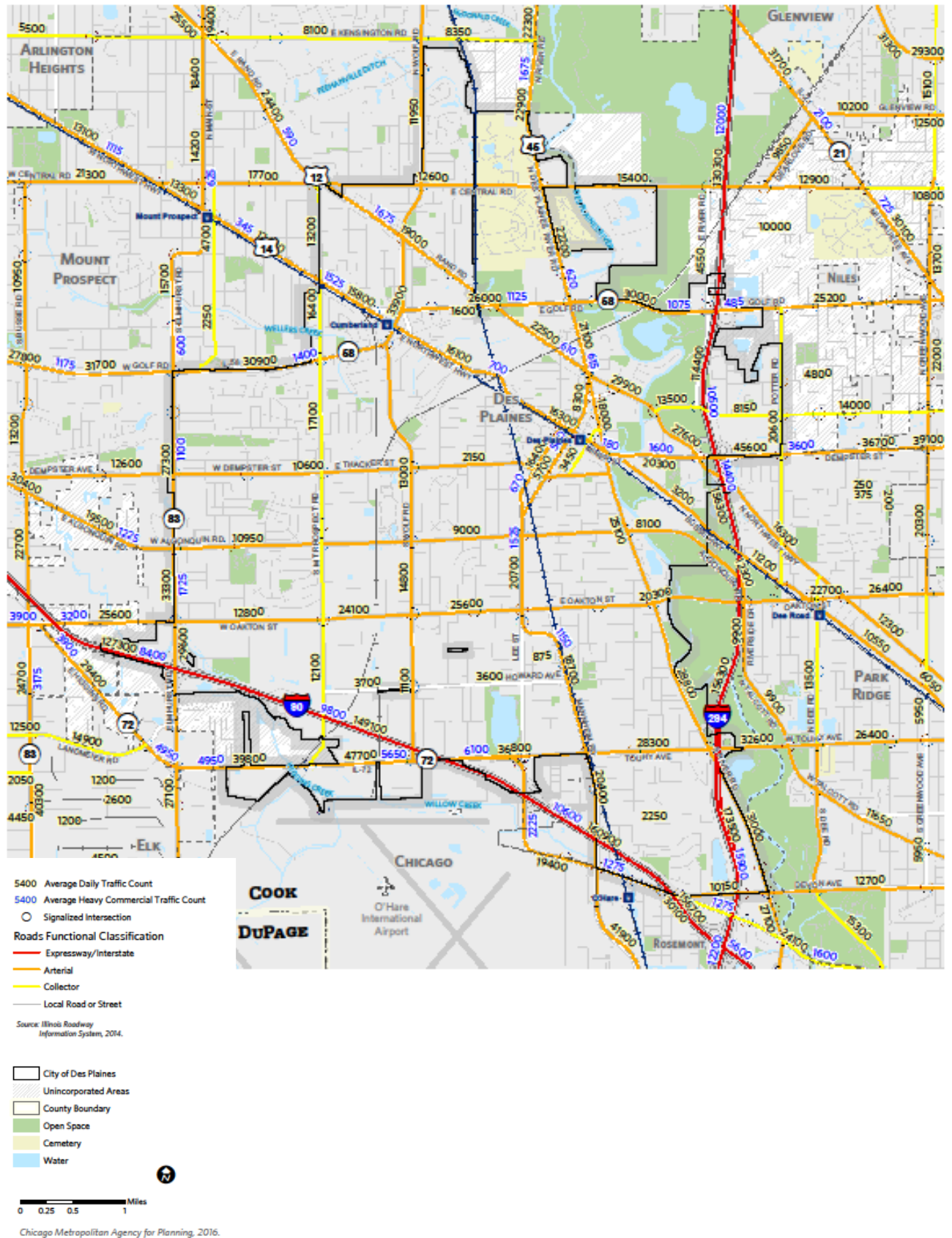
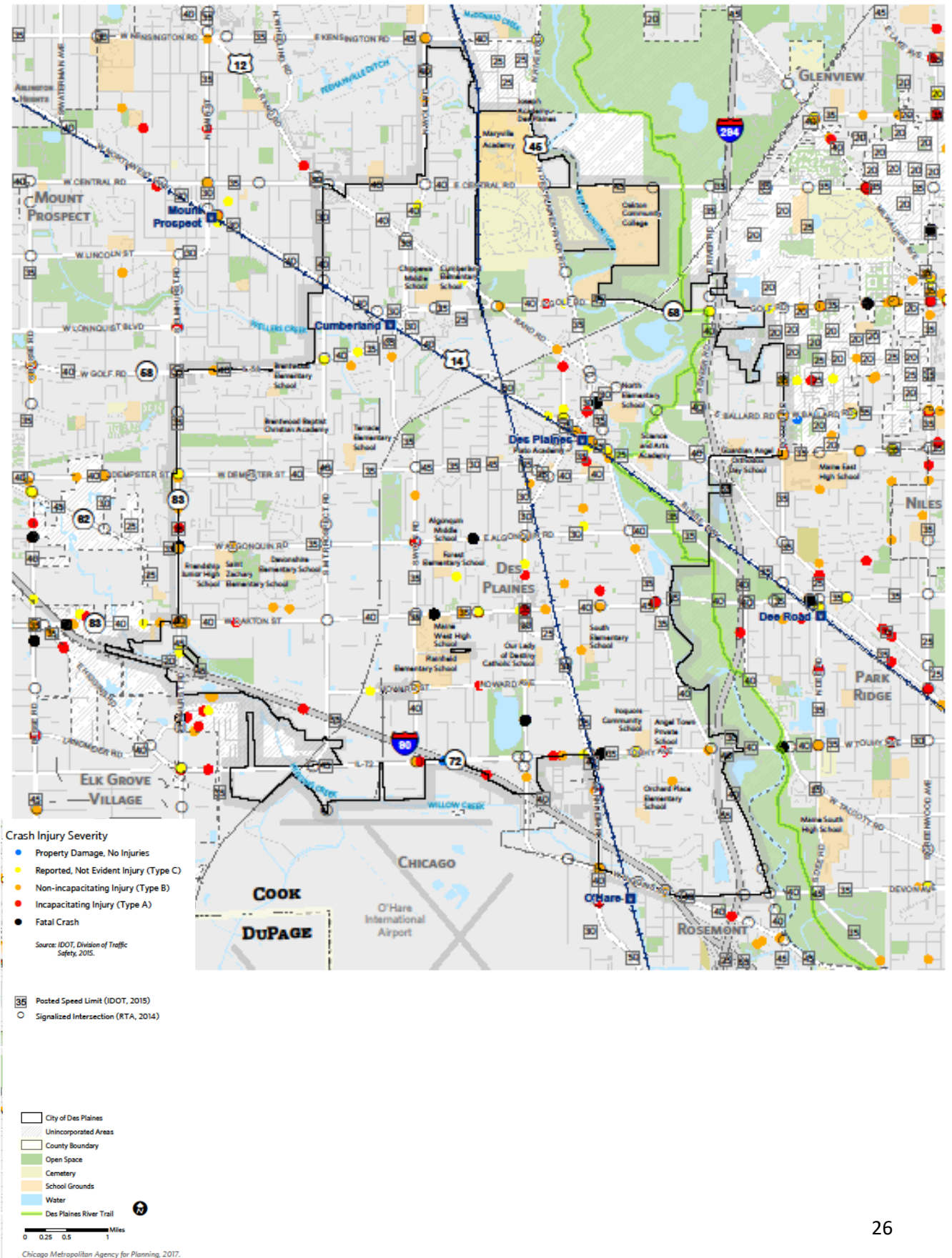


Figure 2.2. Pedestrian Crashes, 2010-2014



Opportunity: Bike and Pedestrian Network

As indicated earlier, the active transportation network (i.e. bicycles and pedestrians) in Des Plaines possesses many strengths, but like most communities in our region, it is incomplete. In addition to the City's extensive sidewalk network that covers most roads, Des Plaines features on- and off-street bikeways, with on-street facilities that serve predominately-residential neighborhoods south of the downtown. In addition, marked on-street bike routes link residential areas to the Des Plaines Metra Station, with some wayfinding signage (guiding bikers to the Downtown, Des Plaines Public Library, and City Hall) along a couple of north-south routes. By contrast, the Cumberland Metra Station is not served by bicycle facilities, which limits access.

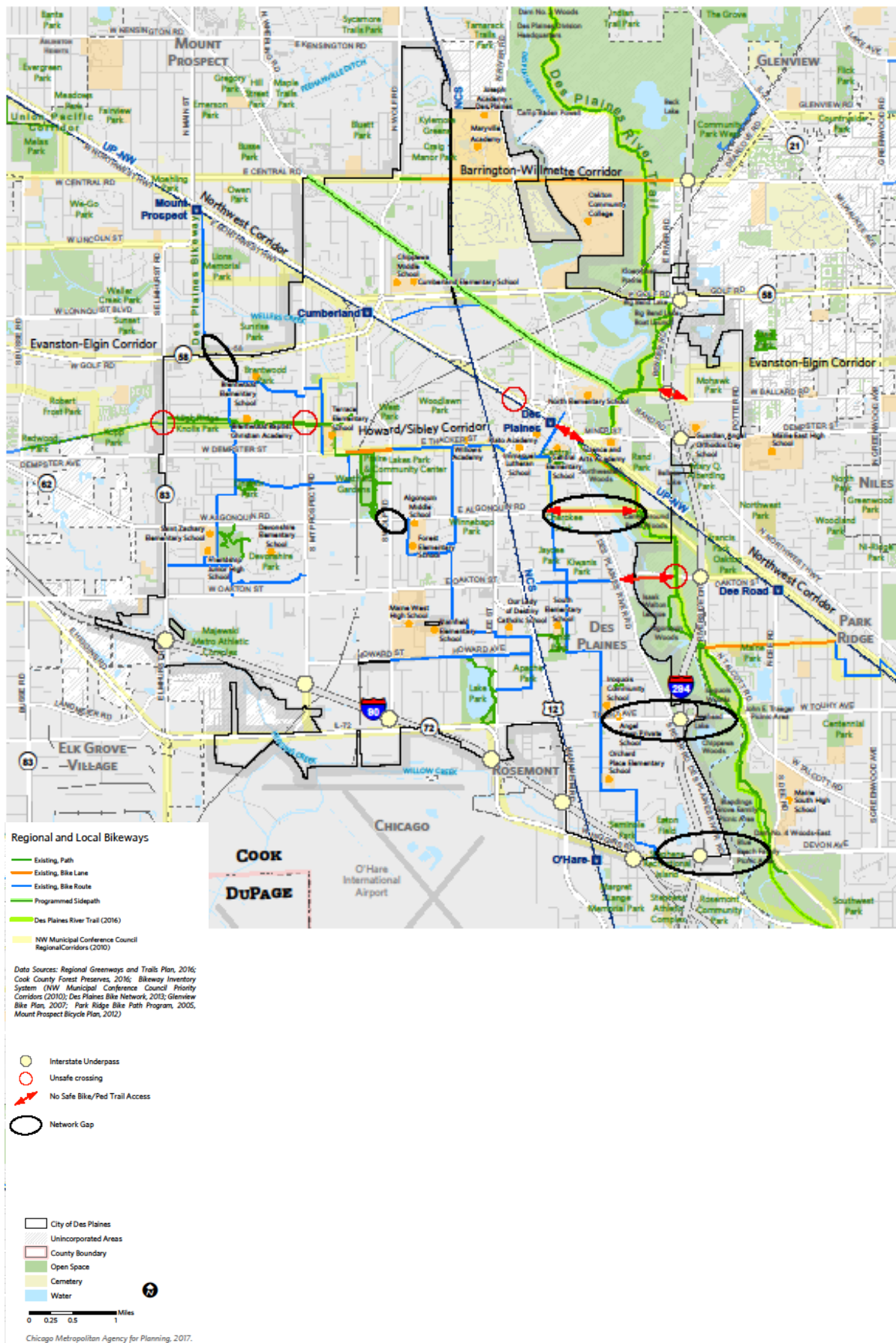
Connections to Parks, Open Space, and Schools

On-street bike routes connect many local parks and some schools. Larger parks, including Lake Park, Friendship Park and Prairie Lakes Recreational Center, have multi-use, off-street paths, which are popular for various recreational activities like biking, roller-blading, running and strolling. The High Ridge Knolls Trail is a popular off-street walking and biking trail that stretches east-west through the western section of the City, but the condition of trail surface is poor in some locations, and crossing at both Elmhurst Road and Mount Prospect Road can be difficult. The High Ridge Knolls Trail is part of the larger Howard/Sibley Regional Corridor (identified in the 2010 Northwest Municipal Conference Bicycle Plan), which could potentially connect the City of Evanston with the Ned Brown Preserve (also known as Busse Woods), located between Elk Grove Village and the Village of Schaumburg. Additionally, stakeholders shared that they need to drive to enjoy Big Bend Lake, the various picnic spots along the Forest Preserve, and trailheads.

With the assistance of the Active Transportation Alliance, the City of Des Plaines prepared an [Active Transportation Plan](#) in 2011. The plan recommended the City partner with School Districts 59 and 26 to begin developing school travels plans, and as a result, Central Elementary School was selected for a "Safe Routes to School" pilot project.

Currently there is a planned side path along Ballard Road, which would allow safe trail access to residents living east of I-294. In addition, a side path along Rand Road has been programmed, which will improve bicycle and pedestrian circulation around Cumberland Park and Community Pool, Chippewa Middle School, Cumberland Elementary School, and North Elementary School.

Figure 2.3. Existing Bicycle Network, 2017



Downtown Des Plaines and the Des Plaines River Trail

During a visual preference exercise at the Public Meeting conducted on June 28, 2017, residents voted for various active transportation improvements in the City, specifically downtown including protected bikeways, safer crosswalks, and access to the Des Plaines River Trail.

There are various opportunities to help Downtown Des Plaines become an easy destination for bicyclists and potentially attracting new customers. A safe on-street bike route along Busse Highway would improve access to the downtown for bicyclists traveling from surrounding suburbs and nearby Chicago neighborhoods. Other means of facilitating bicycle access to the downtown include the Rand Road Sidepath Project, planned for completion in 2018, which will run along the south side of Rand Road between Central Road and Elk Boulevard. The sidepath is similar to a traditional sidewalk, but will be built wider to accommodate bicycle travel.

One of the City's most unique assets is the downtown's proximity to the Des Plaines River Trail. The Des Plaines River Trail is a 55-mile recreational multi-use trail that follows the course of the Des Plaines River through part of Cook County and most of Lake County, weaving through several forest preserves. A short segment of the trail is an on-street bike lane that runs along Camp Ground Road, while the rest of the trail's surface type is composed of crushed stone, which facilitates walking, mountain biking, horseback riding, and cross country skiing. Access to the trail between the Des Plaines River and I-294 is limited, but recently a segment of the partially completed Barrington-Wilmette Harbor Bikeway was completed to include accessibility via bike lanes on both sides of Central Road.

A stretch of the trail runs through the eastern section of the city and connects with the Downtown at the intersection of Miner Street and South River Road. However, there are notable challenges to connecting with the trail, including lack of signage, flooding during and after intense rainfalls, and access from the Miner Street Bridge. Access from the north side of the Miner Street Bridge is only possible by stairs, which is problematic for seniors, people in wheelchairs, or those traveling with strollers. Access from the south side of the Miner Street Bridge requires turning onto Camp Ground Road, with no sidewalk, and either hopping over a road barrier or traveling a significant distance (see Figure 2.4).

Figure 2.4, Access to Des Plaines River Trail from Miner Street, 2017



Maine West High School

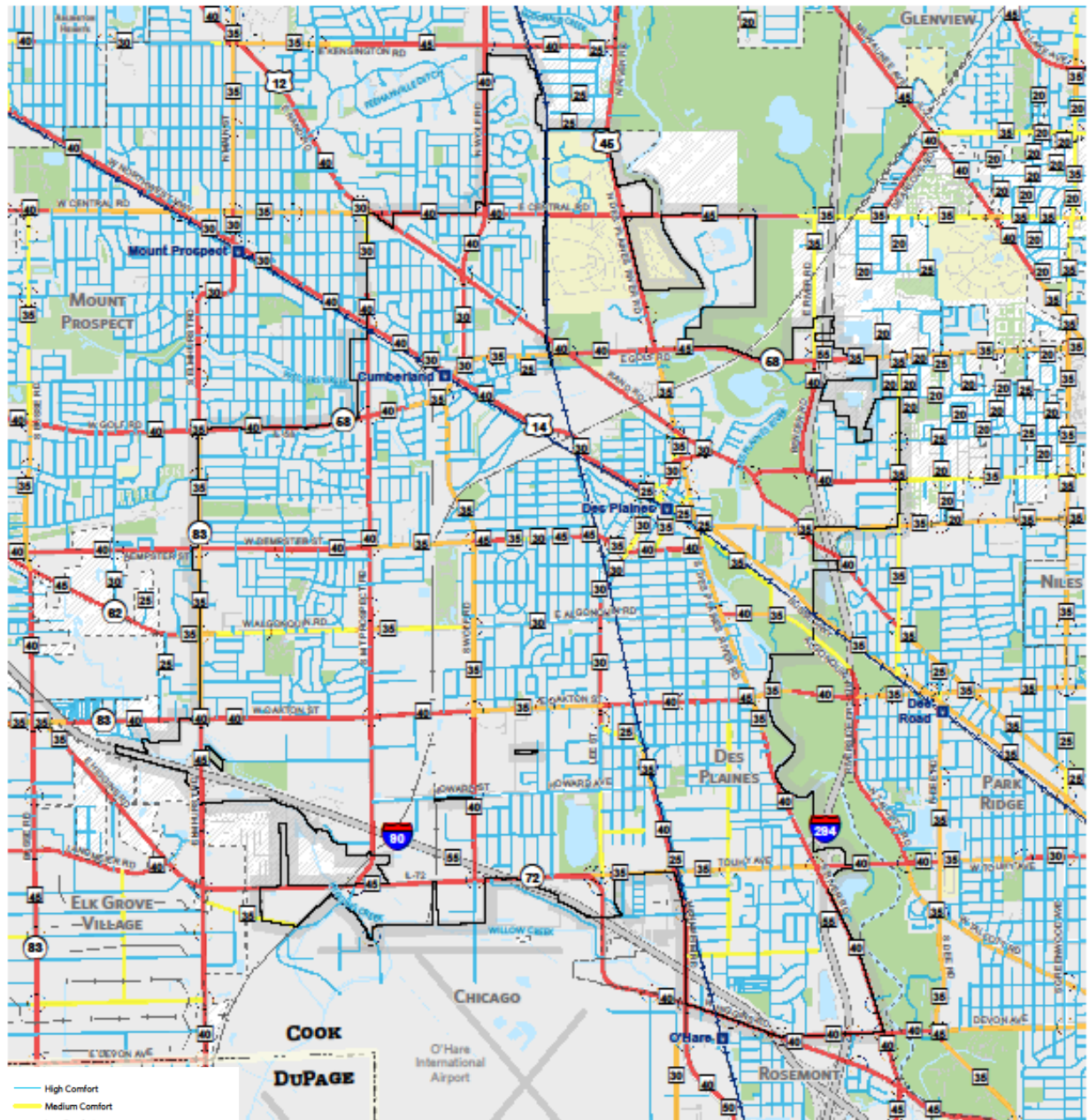
Planning is needed to improve bicycle and pedestrian safety around Maine West High School (MWHS), located on the 1700 block of Wolf Road. The majority of Des Plaines is located within the Maine Township High School District 207, with Maine West being the only high school campus within its municipal limits. The attendance area for MWHS determines the direction and routes of travel for students attending the school. Since the school is located in southwest corner of the attendance area, most of the students travel from the north, northeast, east, and southeast areas of the City.

Maine West High School does not provide bus service, so students living further than walking distance rely on public transit, driving, or biking. Four Pace bus routes—221 (Wolf Road), 226 (Oakton Street), 250 (Dempster Street), and 230 (South Des Plaines)—provide service to the high school. While Routes 230 and 250 stop directly by the school's entrance on the east side of the building, Routes 221 and 226 stop at the intersection of Wolf Road and Oakton Street without shelters or well-marked pedestrian crosswalks. Some parents drop students off at a designated drop-off zone on Wolf Road, which causes a bottleneck during school rush hours. Oakton Street, the most popular way to access the high school, is used by cars, buses, and students walking or biking. Since the intersection of Oakton Street and Fairmont Court does not have a traffic signal installed, Des Plaines police officers direct traffic every school day. This is necessary given that Oakton Street is a busy arterial and designated as a Class II truck route with high volumes of automobile and commercial vehicle traffic. An additional factor challenging pedestrian safety around MWHS is the number of students with limited driving experience circulating the area. Figures 2.5 and 2.6, show the locations of pedestrian and bicycle crashes, several occurred around MWHS, specifically along Oakton Street— including a fatal pedestrian crash in front of the high school.



Caption: MWHS, located at the intersection of Oakton Street and Wolf Road faces various pedestrian challenges including lack of a traffic signal for students crossing Oakton Street.

Figure 2.5. Level of Traffic Stress for Bicyclists in Shared Traffic, 2016



- High Comfort
- Medium Comfort
- Low Comfort
- Extremely Low Comfort

- Posted Speed Limit
- Signalized Intersection

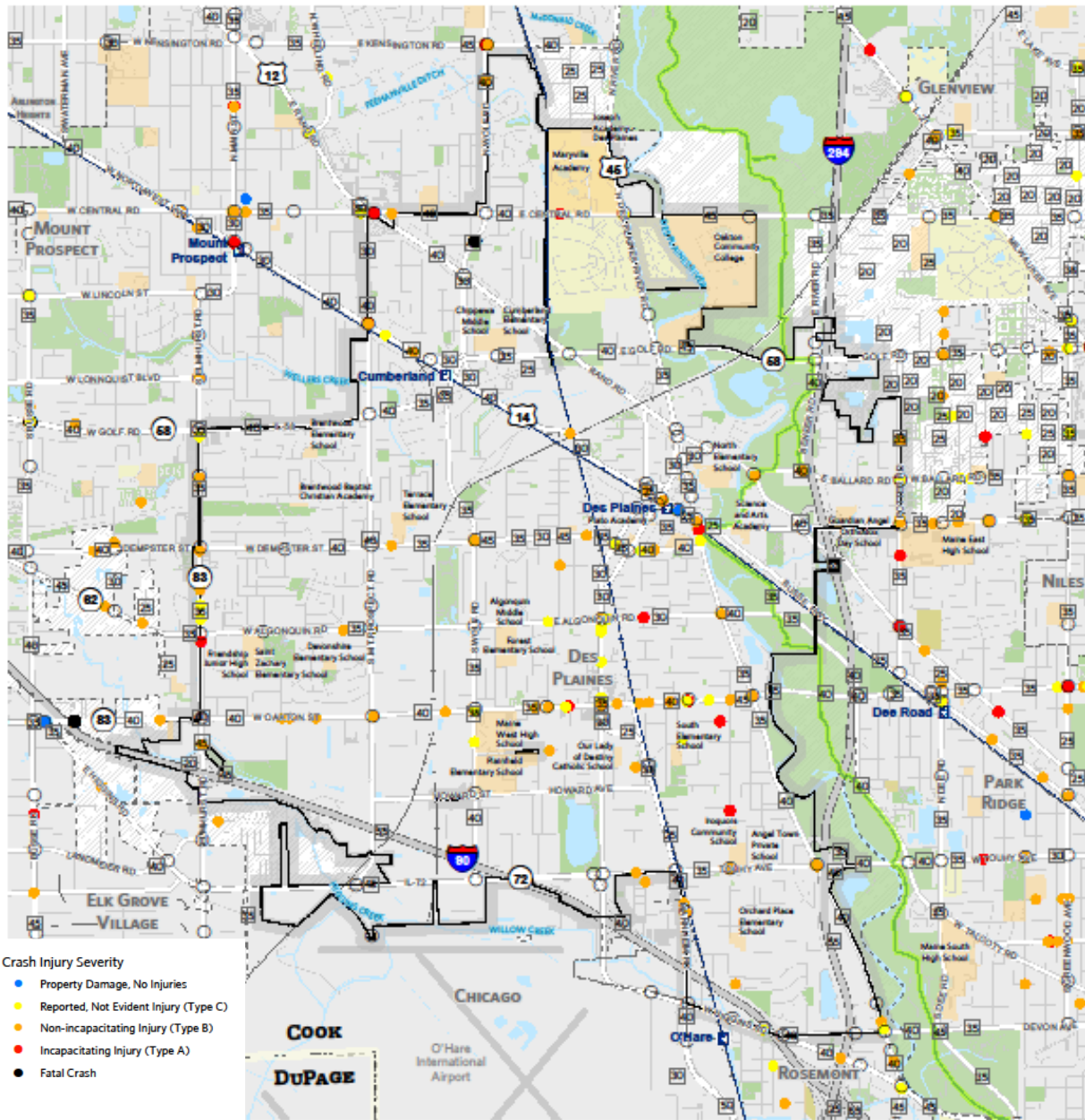
Source: Illinois Roadway Information System, 2013; Navteq, 2015.

- City of Des Plaines
- Unincorporated Areas
- County Boundary
- Open Space
- Cemetery
- Water

0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles

Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2016.

Figure 2.6. Bike Crashes, 2010-2014



- Crash Injury Severity**
- Property Damage, No Injuries
 - Reported, Not Evident Injury (Type C)
 - Non-incapacitating Injury (Type B)
 - Incapacitating Injury (Type A)
 - Fatal Crash

Source: IDOT, Division of Traffic Safety, 2015.

- Signalized Intersection (RTA, 2014)
- 35 Posted Speed Limit (IDOT, 2015)

- ▭ City of Des Plaines
- ▭ Unincorporated Areas
- ▭ County Boundary
- ▭ Open Space
- ▭ Cemetery
- ▭ School Grounds
- ▭ Water
- ▭ Des Plaines River Trail

0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles

Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2017.

Opportunity: Pulse Dempster Line

Pace is currently developing a rapid transit network, named Pulse, designed to provide enhanced bus service along heavily traveled corridors of suburban Chicagoland. One route, the Dempster Line, will operate through Des Plaines, with service running from the Davis CTA/Metra stop in Evanston and west along Dempster before pivoting south to O’Hare International Airport.

The Pulse Dempster Line is projected to open in 2020. Currently, the project is undergoing environmental review through stakeholder outreach and environmental and engineering analysis. In Des Plaines, specific locations for stations are being reviewed at the following intersections: Mannheim Road and Higgins Road, Lee Street and Touhy Avenue, Mannheim Road and Oakton Street, and the Des Plaines Metra Station. The Pulse Dempster Line will provide improved mobility through the City of Des Plaines to regional transit hubs. The Comprehensive Plan will work closely with Pace to determine optimal locations for stations that are easily accessible, environmentally responsible, and do not decrease visibility of local businesses.

Issue: Truck Routes

An additional challenge to improving bicycle and pedestrian safety and access to the downtown is the presence of several truck routes that run through the area. The primary streets that intersect Downtown Des Plaines—Miner Street, Lee Street, and Graceland Street—are designated truck routes carrying significant volumes of heavy commercial vehicles right through the heart of Des Plaines, where the City wants to create an attractive, thriving, walkable, and bike-friendly destination for residents and visitors. The Comprehensive Plan process will investigate strategies that strike a balance between pedestrian safety and truck driver safety along busy and congested roadways.



Caption: Trucks and passenger vehicles approaching the Touhy Avenue and Lee Street intersection.

Issue: Transportation and Older Adults

The Des Plaines population consists of a sizeable number of residents over the age of 65, with projections pointing to a community that will continue to get older. Various outreach efforts have identified traveling to and from home for daily needs and recreation as the primary transportation challenge faced by older adults. This should be of concern as the region is also experiencing an increase in temperatures and severe storms, including winter storms. Elderly populations, in particular, are more susceptible to the impacts of extreme heat as well as extreme cold.³ In Illinois, extreme heat has led to the most deaths from a natural disaster, followed by winter storms.⁴ Provision of emergency services (including evacuation assistance) and adequate access to hospitals, heating/cooling facilities, and nursing homes in the event of severe storms is also critical for older adults. The Comprehensive Plan will identify possible recommendations to improve transit and circulation strategies that will better support aging in place in light of a changing climate.

Issue: Future Travel Delays and Safety Concerns

Travel delays caused by severe weather are an ongoing challenge for the City of Des Plaines. Increased precipitation and winter storms, as a result of a changing climate, pose the greatest threats to the safety and welfare of the community. Severe flooding and winter storms can create unsafe driving conditions as well as bridge and road closures. With approximately 60 percent of Des Plaines' employed residents⁵ commuting to work, these disruptions can become an economic burden on the City and individuals. According to the City's Hazard Mitigation Plan, the Corps of Engineers studied the cost of lost travel time due to the closing of the bridges over the Des Plaines River in northern Lake County (based on driving distance) equated to \$383,000 per day. This figure is likely to be higher for Des Plaines commuters, particularly at today's prices.

Opportunity: Major Transportation Projects

Elgin O'Hare Western Access Project (EOWA)

Construction for the EOWA began in 2013 and is slated for completion by 2020. Aimed at improving travel efficiency, providing western access to O'Hare Internal Airport, enhancing multi-modal connections, and reducing congestion, the \$3.4 billion project includes 17 miles of new roads with 15 new or improved interchanges. The project will also seek to rehabilitate and widen Illinois Route 390, formerly known as the Elgin O'Hare Expressway, extend it east along Thorndale Avenue to O'Hare, and build a new roadway around the western border of O'Hare linking I-90 and I-294. The project will provide significant enhancements to the transportation network of Des Plaines, including the new diverging diamond interchange at Elmhurst Road.

³ City of Des Plaines. 2013. Hazard Mitigation Plan. See www.desplaines.org/civicax/filebank/blobdload.aspx?blobid=24234

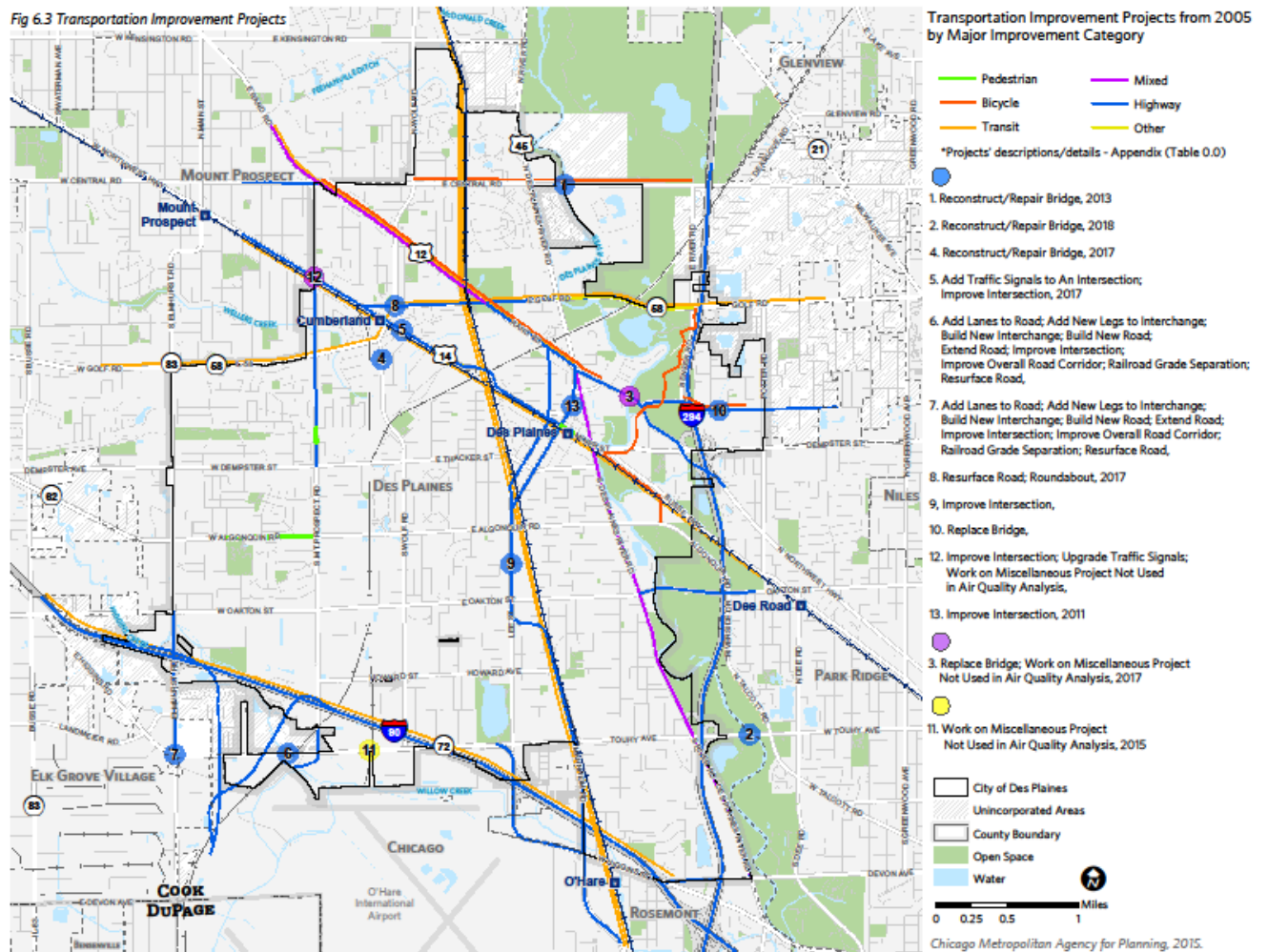
⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Among the City's employed residents, 23 percent commute to the City of Chicago, 22 percent commute to nearby commutes, and 10 percent commute to jobs within the City.

O'Hare 2025

Along with significant capital improvement programs designed to add more departure gates and increased nearby hotel capacity, the Chicago Department of Aviation is working on a multimodal facility and airport transit system expansion. The facility would serve Metra, Pulse, and CTA bus and light rail service. Included in the development are improvements to key road and intersections serving the airport, such as the intersection of [Mannheim Road and Higgins Road](#).

Figure 2.7. Transportation Improvement Projects, 2005-2018



3. HOUSING

Housing plays an integral role for a community and in the lives of its residents. A balanced housing supply helps to ensure that each household has access to assets in Des Plaines and the larger Chicago region. A mix of housing types are needed to allow residents to age in place and provide homes for teachers, nurses, and other members of the community. Understanding the current supply as well as potential future demand will help the City of Des Plaines develop a balanced mix of housing that serves current and future populations and enhances quality of life. As the population continues to become more diverse and older, the Comprehensive Plan process will review housing options that best reflect the different household needs in Des Plaines.

Opportunity: Stable Housing Market

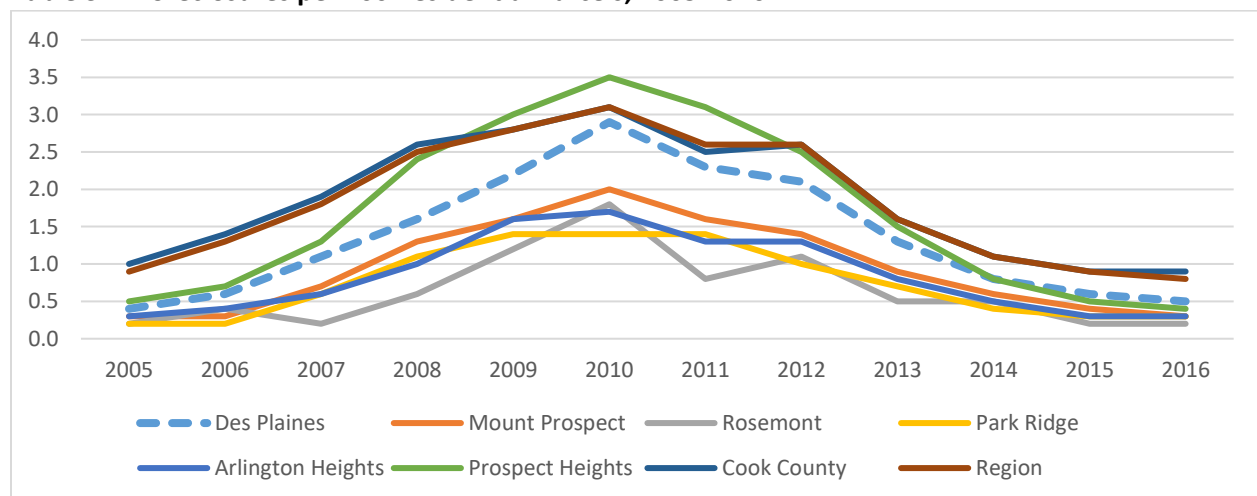
Des Plaines has a strong tradition of home ownership. Nearly 80 percent of all occupied units are owner-occupied, more than 20 percent higher than the figure for Cook County. Additionally, Des Plaines enjoys a low vacancy rate. At just 4.6 percent, Des Plaines vacancy rate is less than half that of both Cook County and the region.

A strong majority of homeowners in Des Plaines are aged 45 or older. Of the 17,905 owner-occupied units in the community, 43.3 percent belong to homeowners between ages 45 and 64, with another 29.9% units owned by residents aged 65 and older. Home ownership is strong among residents aged between 25 and 44 as well, as 4,747 members of this age cohort own homes, compared to 1,925 who rent. The only age group that prefers to rent are those younger than 25. 205 residents under the age of 25 choose to live in rental units, compared to just 56 who own their homes.

Current Market

With 0.5 foreclosure filings per 100 residential parcels in 2016, Des Plaines’ housing market is stable, and comparable to surrounding markets. These figures for Des Plaines and its surrounding suburbs are some of the lowest foreclosure rates in the last 10 years.

Table 3.1. Foreclosures per 100 Residential Parcels, 2005-2016

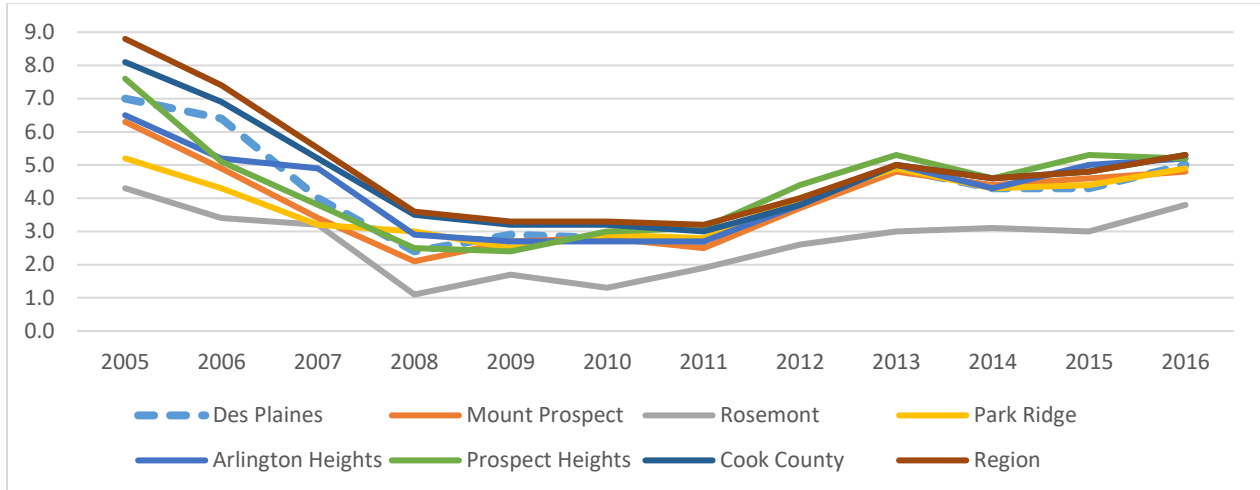


Source: Institute for Housing Studies at DePaul University, 2005-2016

*Region includes Illinois counties of Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will.

Similar to trends in foreclosures, sales activity in Des Plaines tends to be slightly better than the Cook County average and comparable to nearby markets. As of 2016, Des Plaines averaged 4.8 sales per 100 residential parcels compared to 4.3 sales per 100 residential parcels in Cook County.

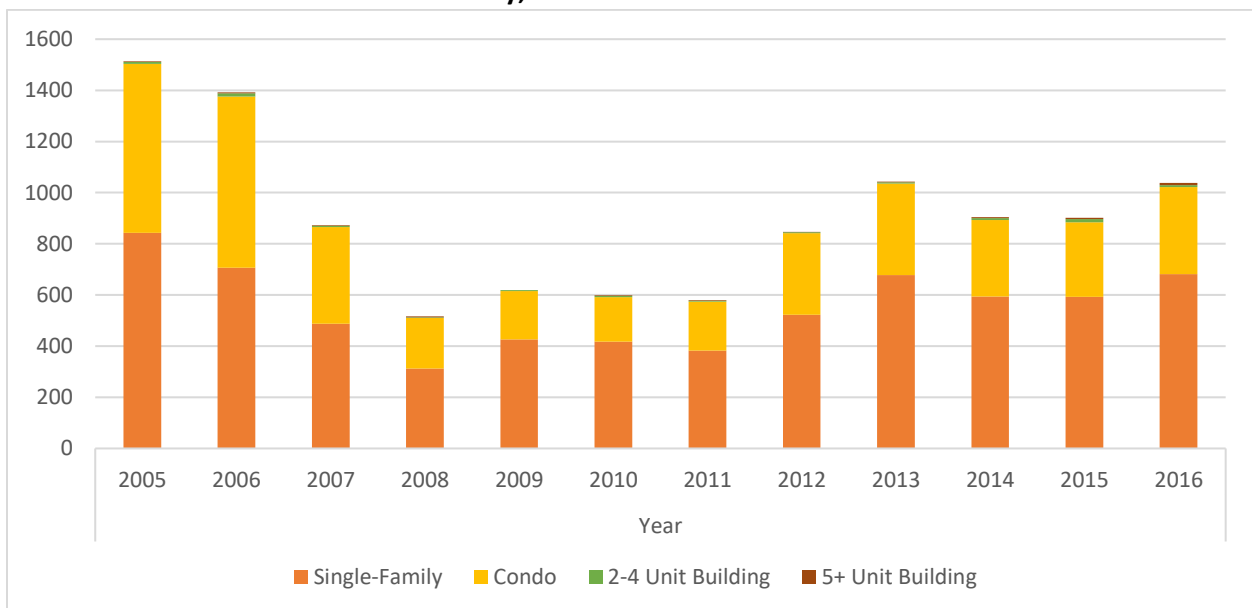
Table 3.2. Sales per 100 Residential Parcels, 2005-2016



Source: Institute for Housing Studies at DePaul University, 2005-2016
**Region includes Illinois counties of Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will.*

The majority of residential sales in Des Plaines are single-family homes as roughly 700 units were sold in 2016. Condominiums account for the second-largest portion of sales, with over 300 units sold in 2016. Total sales topped 800 units each year between 2012 and 2016, consistently higher than the 600 or fewer units sold between 2008 and 2011.

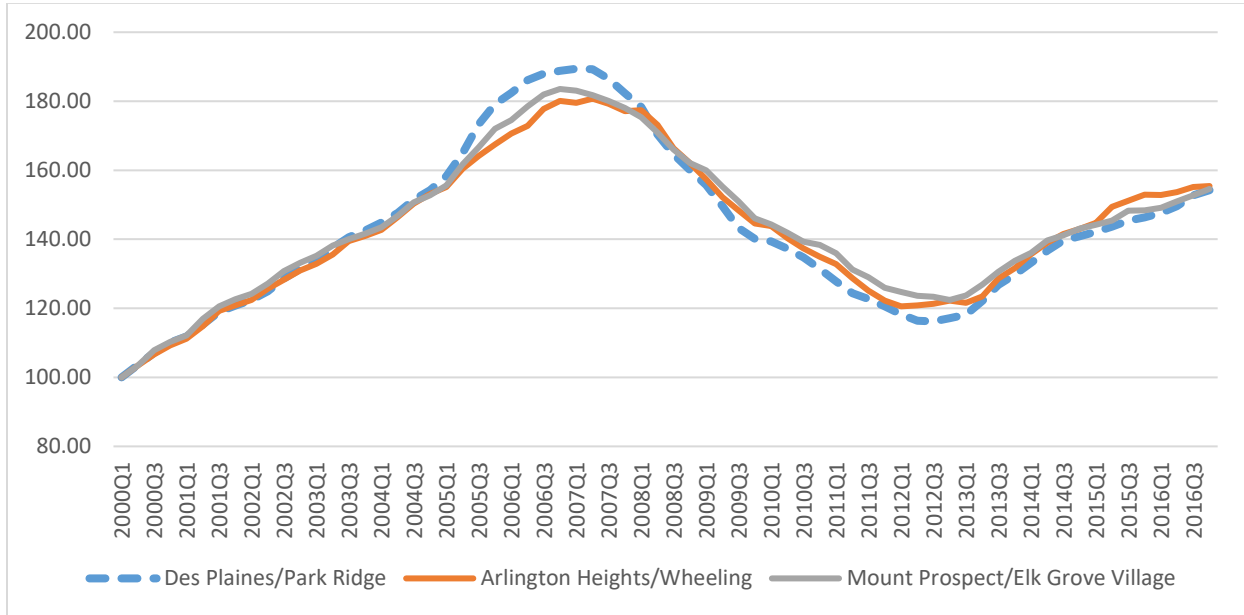
Table 3.3. Des Plaines Home Sales Activity, 2005-2016



Source: Institute for Housing Studies at DePaul University, 2005-2016

Single-Family home prices are trending upward in the Des Plaines/Park Ridge submarket*, mirroring patterns in neighboring municipalities. Des Plaines home values in 2016 Q3 sold for over 150 percent of their 2000 Q1 value, showing a continued recovery from the housing market crash of 2008.

Table 3.4. Single-Family Home Sales Price Index, 2000-2016



Source: Institute for Housing Studies at DePaul University, 2000-2016

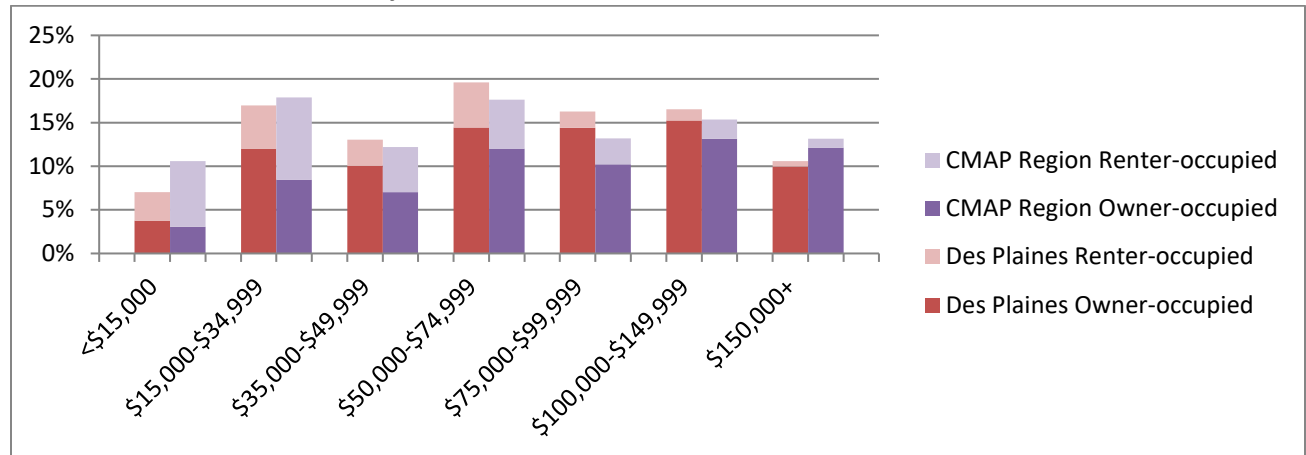
**Statistical geographies are public use microdata areas from the US Census Bureau*

Issue: Housing Affordability

Household Income

Household income figures show a strong middle class in the city as Des Plaines has more households in the middle income brackets than the rest of the region, many of which are owner-occupied. More than 20 percent of Des Plaines households earn less than \$35,000 annually. While this figure is slightly less than the regional average, it still represents a significant number of low-income households.

Table 3.5. Household Income by Tenure, 2010-2014

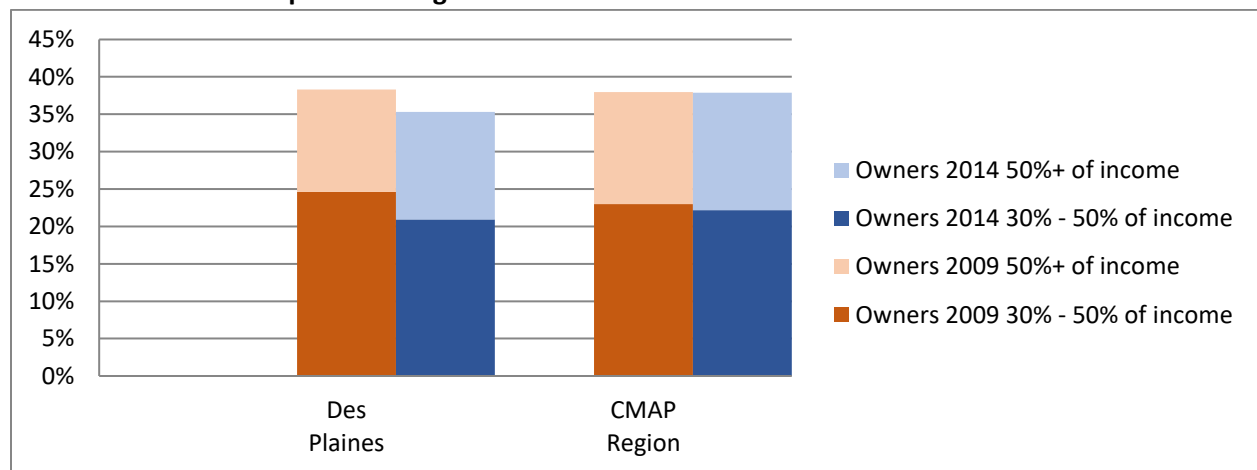


Source: American Community Survey, 2010-2014

Affordability

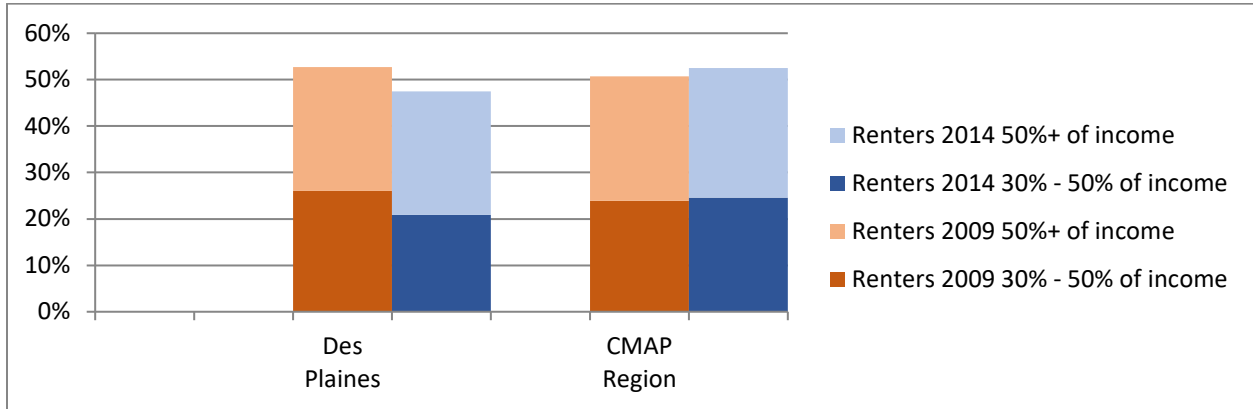
Cost-burdened households are defined as those spending more than 30 percent of their monthly income on housing costs, whereas severely burdened households are defined as those spending more than 50 percent of their monthly income on housing costs. As of 2014, an estimated 35 percent of homeowners were cost-burdened. 15 percent of those are considered to be severely burdened. Figures for Des Plaines are slightly less than figures for the overall region, though regional cost burden figures remained stagnant between 2009 and 2014, while figures for Des Plaines have decreased.

Table 3.6. Owner-Occupied Housing Cost Burden



Source: American Community Survey 2005-09 and 2010-14.

Table 3.7. Renter-Occupied Housing Cost Burden

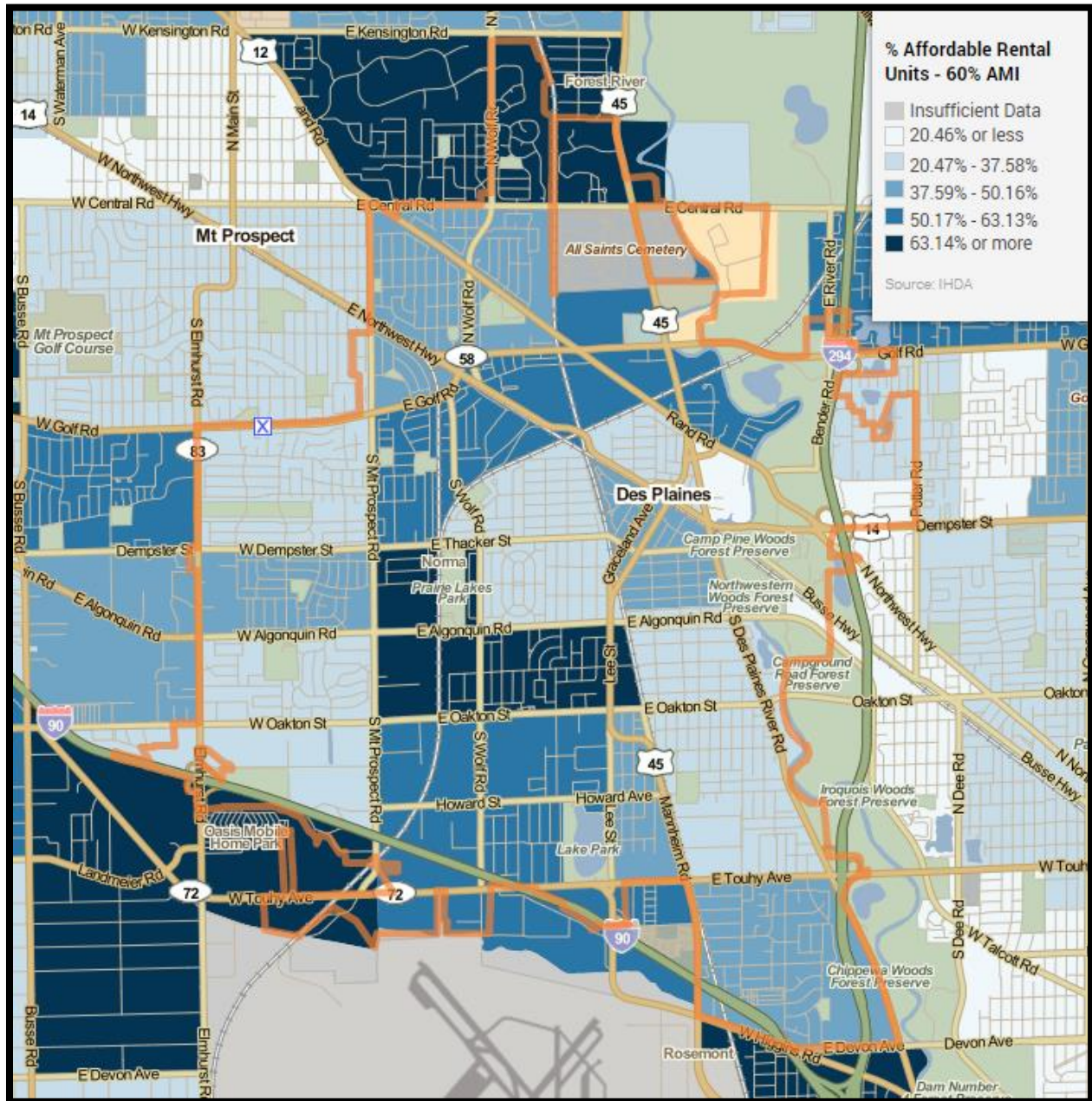


Source: American Community Survey 2005-09 and 2010-14.

Renter-occupied households in Des Plaines are more likely to be cost burdened than owner-occupied units, nearly 50 percent of renters were cost burdened in 2014, and more than half severely burdened. Similar to owner-occupied units, these figures are lower than a regional average that has surpassed 50 percent. Moreover, renter cost burden dropped between 2009 and 2014 while regional figures rose slightly during that time frame.

Rental housing affordability varies greatly between census tracts in Des Plaines. The Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA) provides a data mapping tool to highlight the percent of housing units in Illinois census tracts that are considered affordable. This tool defines affordable rental units as those that require 30 percent of monthly income or less for a household earning 60 percent of the area median income for a family of four. While many tracts in Des Plaines have more than 50 percent affordable rental units, there are a number of tracts containing 20 percent affordable units or less, these tracts are located south of Rand Road and mostly along the Des Plaines River.

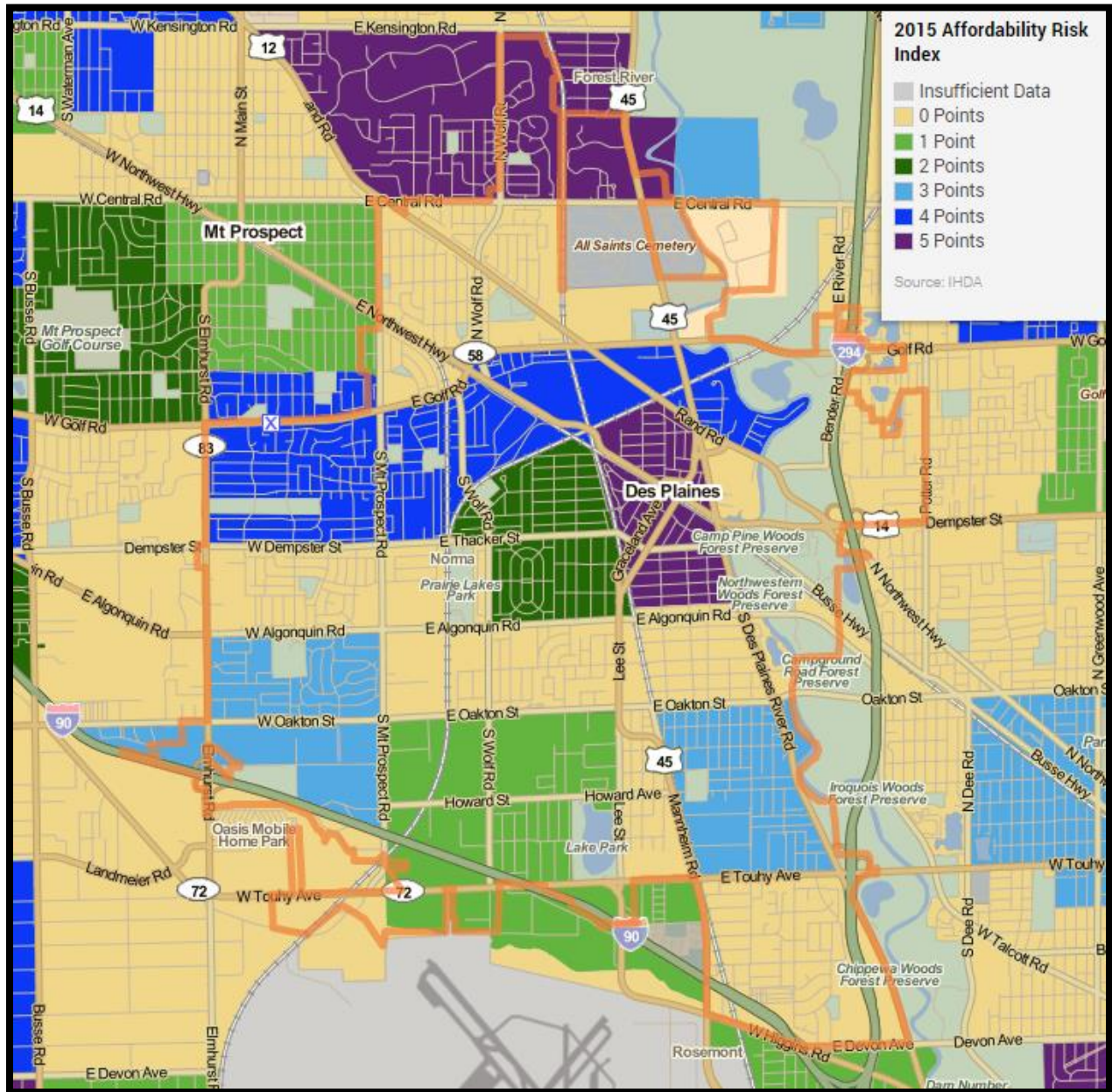
Map 3.1. Affordable Rental Units by Census Tract, 2015



Source: Illinois Housing Development Authority, 2015

IHDA also provides an Affordability Risk Index, designed to highlight tracts that are in danger of becoming unaffordable by analyzing change over time of median household income, median home value, poverty level, housing vacancy, renter tenancy, and individuals with a 4-year degree or higher. Using this scoring criteria from 2015, a number of tracts in Des Plaines show levels of affordability risk. These higher-risk tracts are concentrated toward the city center along Des Plaines River Road and Golf Road, as well as a couple of tracts in the northernmost point of the city along Central Road.

Map 3.2. Affordability Risk Areas by Census Tract, 2015



Source: Illinois Housing Development Authority, 2015

Additional Challenges to Affordability

A unique housing challenge Des Plaines faces is the cost associated with storm-related events. Certain homes in Des Plaines are susceptible to these events and require purchasing flood insurance. In certain areas, home owners can consider FEMA buyouts. It is estimated that the average cost of damages associated with a single flood event⁶ is equivalent to 6.5 percent of the value of the building.⁷ Based on the city's housing stock located in the floodplain, the total estimated property damage within Des Plaines is \$57,468,450.⁸ Areas that repeatedly experience these events are also impacted by the social costs associated with structural degradation and depreciating property values.

Since 1978, the number of NFIP claims and repetitive loss⁹ properties has been on the rise. There were 46 repetitive loss properties identified in 2002, which increased to 268 properties in 2013. The City has identified 16 repetitive loss property areas that have been used to prioritize stormwater management and mitigation projects, such as participating in Illinois Emergency Management Agency's (IEMA) property acquisition program. More details are provided later, in the stormwater management section of this report. While this program is meant to provide long-term affordability, it relies on homeowners and families to voluntarily leave their homes. The market-value compensation provided for the buyout of the home may not add up to or account for the inherent social value that a family may associate with a home.

Similarly, FEMA paid 971 NFIP insurance claims (\$17,750,604 in total) between 1978 and 2008, nearly all of which were associated with single family homes. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), which administers the NFIP, currently owes the U.S. Treasury \$23 billion in back payments for funds spent on disaster recovery, including NFIP payouts.¹⁰ In the past, the NFIP has been an effective tool for financial assistance and storm-related recovery, but as flooding becomes more frequent, especially in coastal regions, the program may become a less reliable source of relief within northeastern Illinois, forcing local governments to take a more active role on stormwater mitigation and recovery.

⁶ Cost estimates are based on a flood event that has a 2-10% chance of occurring within a year, i.e. a 10- to 50-year flood event.

⁷ City of Des Plaines. 2013. Hazard Mitigation Plan. See www.desplaines.org/civicax/filebank/blobdload.aspx?blobid=24234

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Repetitive loss properties are those that have received at least two flood insurance claim payments for at least \$1,000 each since 1978.

¹⁰ U.S. Government Accountability Office, "National Flood Insurance Program," <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/homesec/R44593.pdf>.

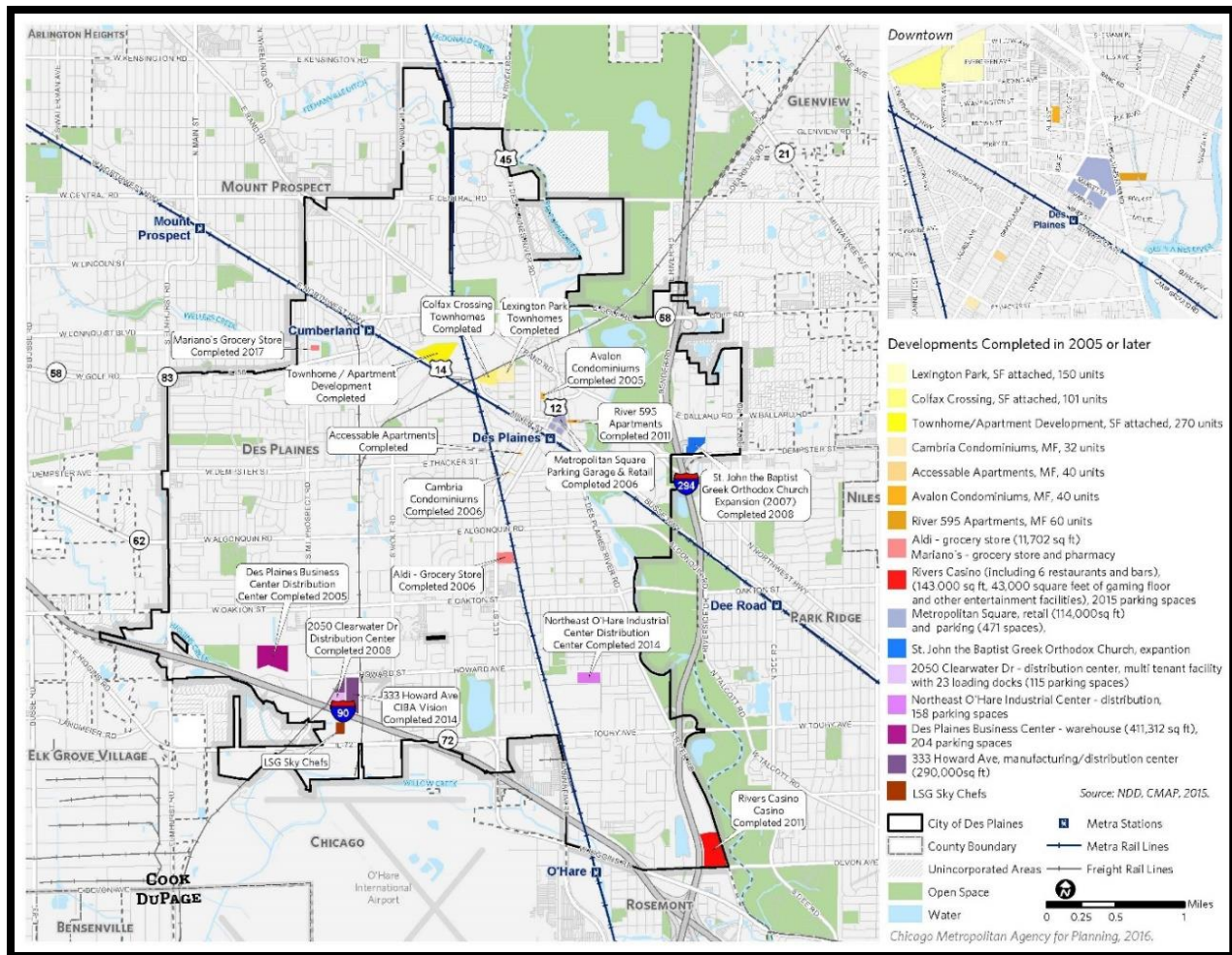
Opportunity: Diversifying Housing Stock

Approximately 60 percent of housing units in Des Plaines are single-family homes, which is slightly high compared to the region as a whole. The vast majority of single-family homes, in both Des Plaines and the region, are owner-occupied. However, Des Plaines does have a sizeable amount of multi-family housing in which more than half are owner-occupied, a contrast from the broader region where most are occupied by renters. Moreover, Des Plaines tends to have a smaller percentage of townhomes than the CMAP region, though townhomes account for less than 10 percent of occupied units in both geographies.

Recent Developments

Since 2005 there have been a number developments built in Des Plaines, including seven significant housing developments. Of those developments, the majority of units added to the Des Plaines market have been attached single-family units, though a number of multi-family units have been concentrated downtown.

Map 3.3. Recent Developments in Des Plaines



Maintaining Affordable Housing Stock

A number of resources are available to assist efforts that maintain housing affordability in the midst of Des Plaines' recovering housing market. As an entitlement community, Des Plaines Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds annually. In 2017, Des Plaines received roughly \$277,000.00 in CDBG funding to be put towards community priorities established by City officials. These priorities, listed below, provide Des Plaines with both resources and flexibility in providing and maintaining affordable housing units.

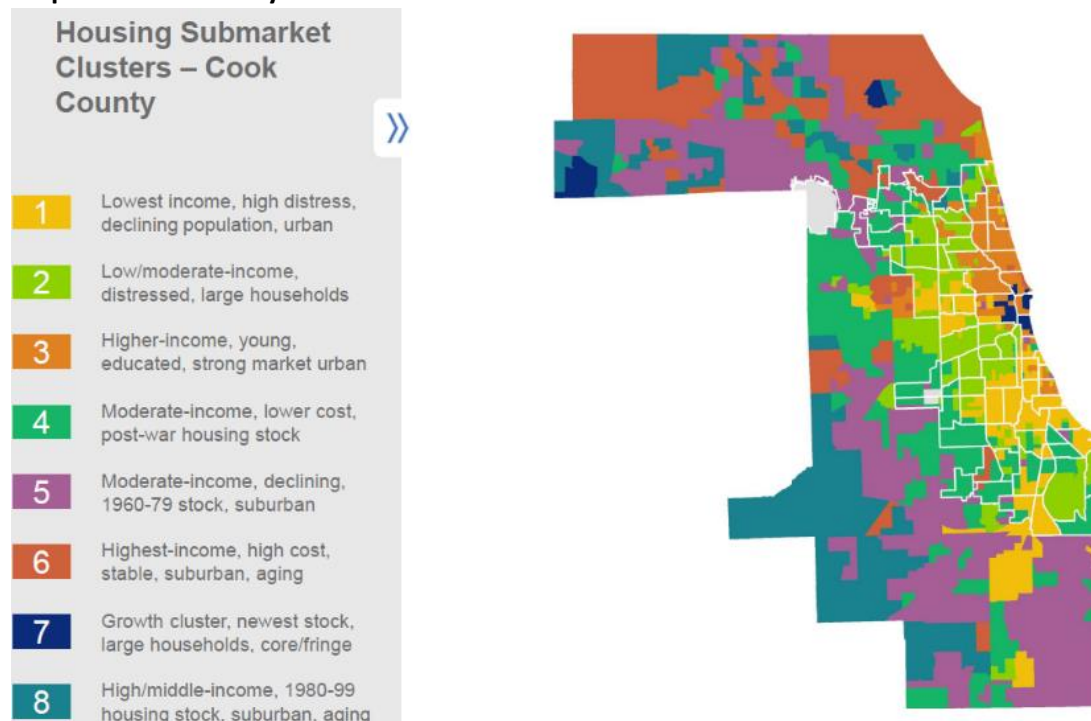
Priorities for Community Development Block Grant Funding

- 1) Make Housing affordable, accessible, & sustainable
- 2) Assistance to limited clientele
- 3) Assistance to homeless and those at risk of homelessness
- 4) Improve public facilities
- 5) Improve public infrastructure
- 6) Planning and administration

Regional Housing Solutions Submarket Clusters

Developed from a partnership including CMAP, the Metropolitan Mayors Caucus, Metropolitan Planning Council and the Institute for Housing Studies at DePaul University, the Regional Housing Solutions study is designed to identify the geography and characteristics of eight distinct subregional housing markets across northeastern Illinois. Strategies for submarket classification were developed from the results of outreach and discussion with housing developers, nonprofit partners, realtors, financial institutions, and municipal staff. Each submarket is determined by analyzing housing stock and affordability, housing market activity, resident demographics, and socioeconomic indicators.

Map 3.4. Cook County Submarket Clusters

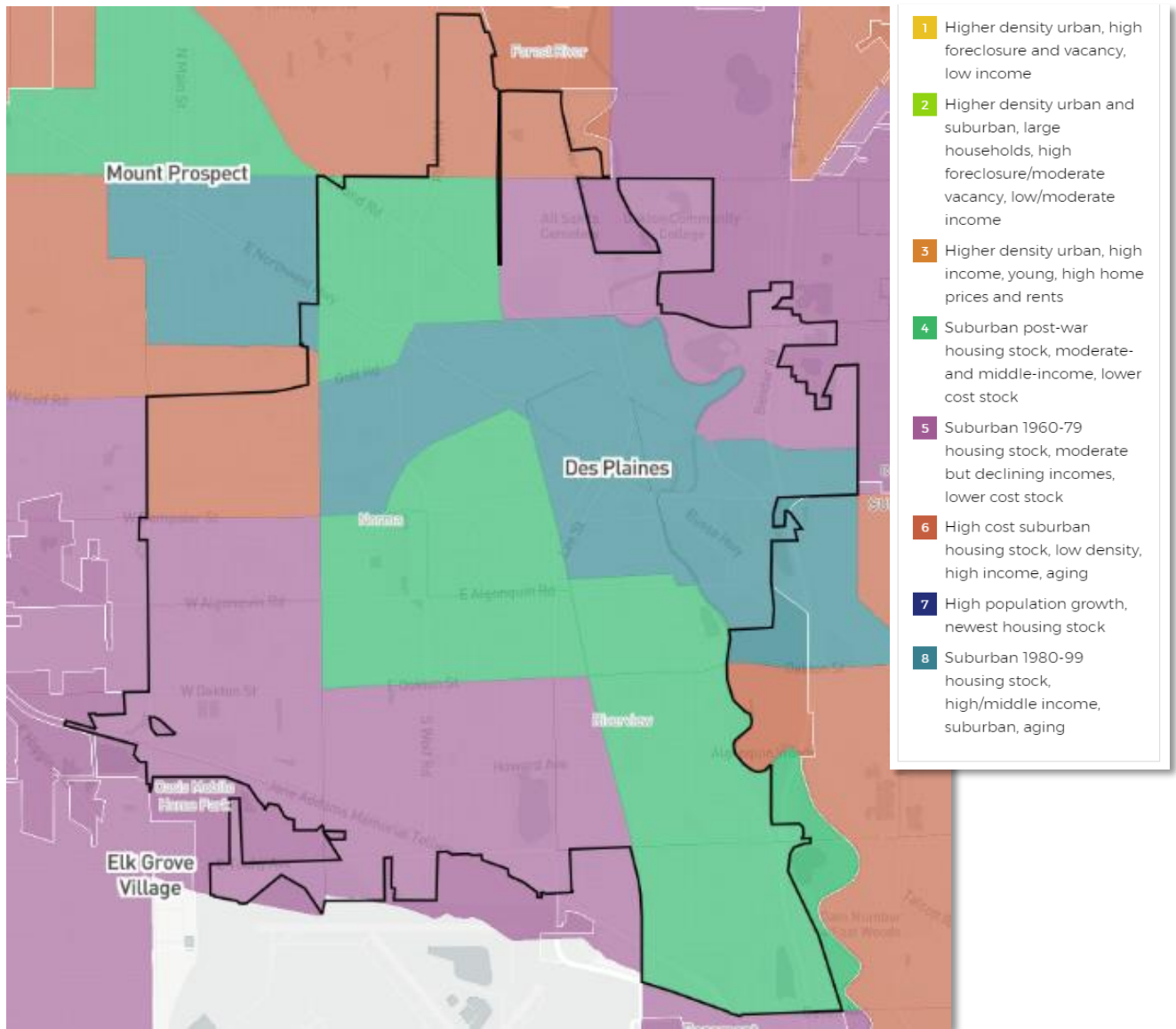


Using the Regional Housing Solutions analysis, Des Plaines includes submarkets 3, 4, 5, and 8. The vast majority of the downtown area is in submarket 8. Key statistics of submarket 8 include:

- Lower density housing largely built after 1980
- Mostly owner-occupied
- Population growing, most notably among seniors
- Middle to upper income families
- High transportation costs

Additionally, the study identifies three issues associated with submarket 8, including accessibility and visibility, attracting younger families, and the need for more diverse housing options.

Map 3.5. Des Plaines Submarket Clusters



DIVERSITY & IMMIGRATION

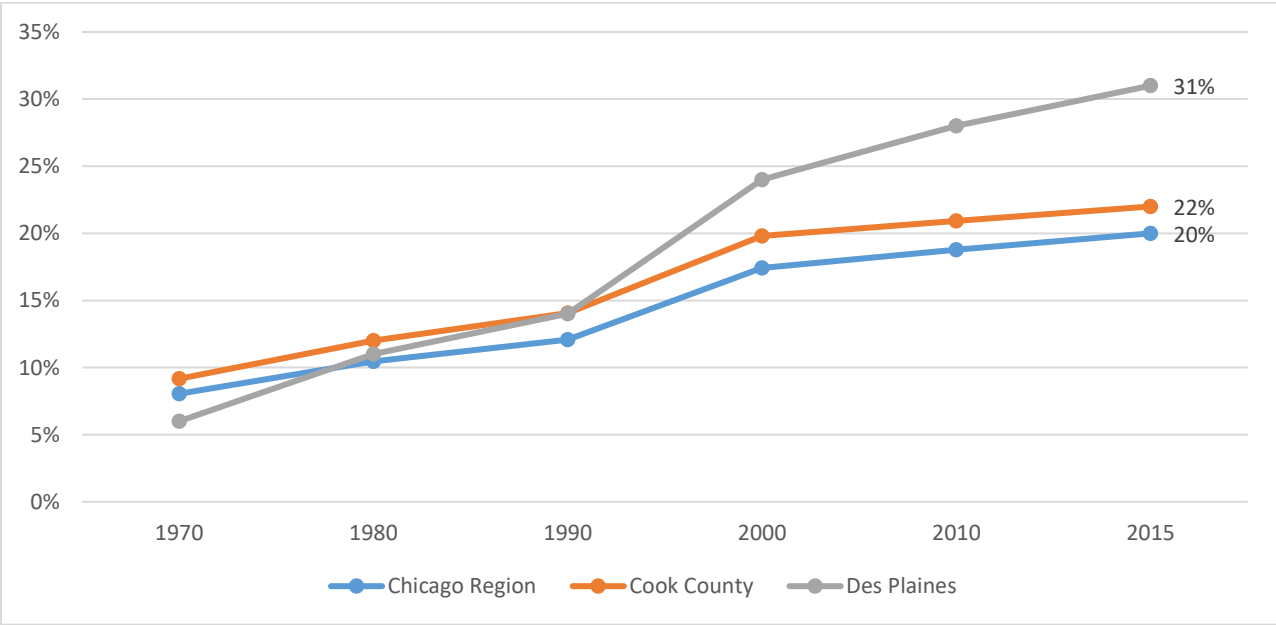
Through various outreach efforts, Des Plaines residents have shared their pride in the city’s diversity. The City is home to various ethnic businesses, local religious establishments, and regionally-significant institutions such as the revered Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe. As the City becomes more diverse with a growing Asian, Latino, and Eastern European population, the Comprehensive Plan process will be used to further discuss the opportunity to better support, integrate, and celebrate the diverse populations that make up the City’s social fabric.

Opportunity: Integrate Immigrant Families

Immigration drives population growth

Immigration from foreign countries has historically have been pivotal for the City’s population growth. Originally the Des Plaines River Valley was occupied by the Potawatomi, Ottawa, and Chippewa Indians, until the arrival of the first settlers during the second quarter of the 19th century. As an early railroad town outside the City of Chicago, the suburb attracted German immigrants seeking economic and political freedom between the 1840s and 1850s, thereby doubling the population to 8,798 by 1930.¹¹ By 1990, the number of foreign-born residents in Des Plaines outpaced both Cook County and the Chicago region, and now composes over 31 percent of the total population (figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1. Percentage of Foreign-Born Residents, 1970-2015



Source: U.S. Census 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010, and 2011-2015 American Community Survey

¹¹ Perry, M. E. (2017, August 15). *Des Plaines, IL*. Retrieved from Encyclopedia of Chicago: <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/376.html>

Tracing the influx of immigrants by country of origin reveals that immigration from European countries dominated between the 1960s and 1980s. Immigration from Mexico gained momentum in the late 1970s and continued to rise rapidly, ultimately occupying the top country of origin for foreign-born individuals in Des Plaines since 1990 (figure 4.2).

Additionally, there was a significant rise in immigration from the Philippines since the 1990s, which along with India and Korea, now compose the majority of the Asian population that has immigrated to Des Plaines in the most recent decade. Notable numbers of immigrants have also hailed from the eastern European countries of Romania and Bulgaria since 2000.

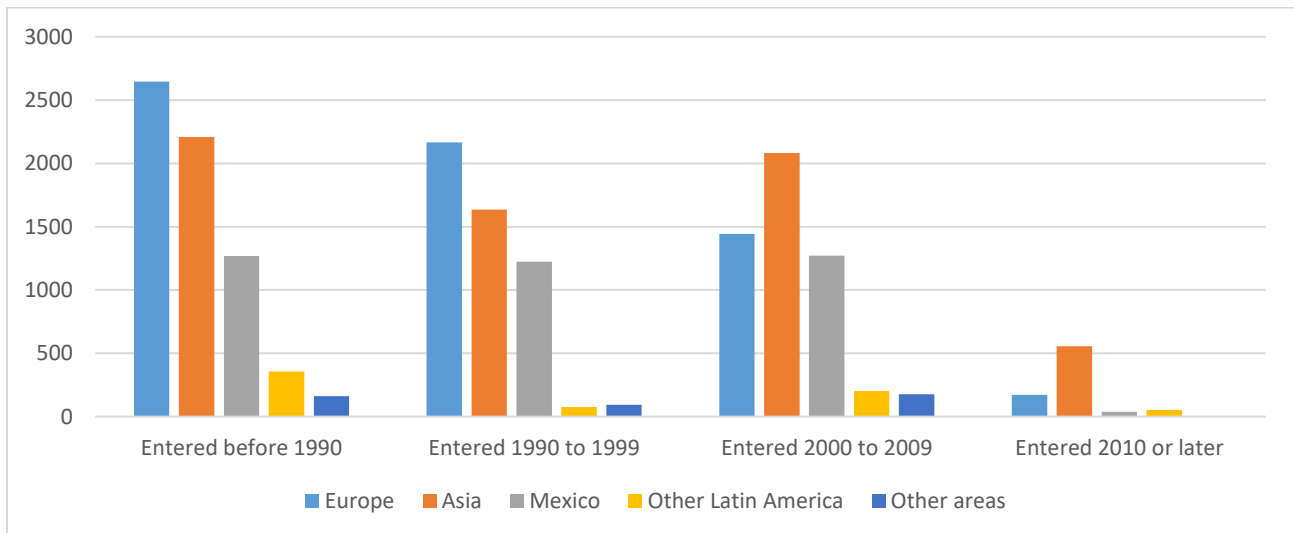
Figure 4.2. Top 5 Countries of Origin for Foreign-Born Residents of Des Plaines, 197-2015

Rank	1970	Rank	1980	Rank	1990
1	Germany (17%)	1	Germany (11%)	1	Mexico (17%)
2	United Kingdom (10%)	2	Mexico (8%)	2	Poland (11%)
3	Italy (10%)	3	Italy (8%)	3	India (9%)
4	Poland (9%)	4	Greece (8%)	4	Italy (9%)
5	Canada (7%)	5	Poland (7%)	5	Greece (8%)

Rank	2000	Rank	2010	Rank	2015
1	Mexico (29%)	1	Mexico (22%)	1	Mexico (21%)
2	Poland (19%)	2	Poland (18%)	2	Poland (17%)
3	India (11%)	3	India (13%)	3	India (16%)
4	Philippines (5%)	4	Philippines (7%)	4	Philippines (9%)
5	Italy (4%)	5	Romania (4%)	5	Bulgaria (3%)

Source: U.S. Census 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010, and 2011-2015 American Community Survey

Figure 4.3. Time of Entry and Birthplace of Foreign-Born Population



Source: U.S. Census 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010, and 2011-2015 American Community Survey

The number of foreign-born residents in the City of Des Plaines is not uncommon for the region. Suburbs and unincorporated areas surrounding Des Plaines have high concentrations of foreign-born residents, including the suburbs of Mount Prospect, Rosemont, Prospect Heights, and the unincorporated areas located to the east of Des Plaines.

Table 4.1. Foreign-Born Population in Des Plaines and Surrounding Communities

Municipality	Population	Foreign Born Population	Percent Foreign Born
Park Ridge	37,608	5,556	15%
Arlington Heights	75,802	13,618	18%
Elk Grove Village	33,333	6,467	19%
Glenview	45,969	10,157	22%
Des Plaines	58,930	17,833	30%
Mount Prospect	54,710	17,211	31%
Rosemont	4,305	1,412	33%
Prospect Heights	16,370	6,564	40%
Wheeling	37,982	15,669	41%
Unincorporated area east of Des Plaines	36,419	18,901	52%

Source: 2011-2015 American Community Survey

Existing Immigrant Services

The vast cultural and ethnic diversity of Des Plaines presents an opportunity to be tapped for increased economic growth and social prosperity. This involves providing added opportunities to adequately integrate immigrants into the City and support local immigrant-owned businesses.

There are a couple of organizations in and around the City of Des Plaines that provide services to immigrant families. Maryville Academy, a local nonprofit located along Central Road, provides shelter and other supportive services to children who immigrated to the United States without their parents. Oakton Community College (OCC) is dedicated to supporting the undocumented community through various efforts within and outside the college campus. Oakton works with DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) students through a program called Educational Access Creates Hope (EACH). Both institutions, OCC and Maryville, also provide ESL (English as Second Language) classes to Hispanic/Latino immigrants in the City and region.

The Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe, also located on Central Road, provides a networking area for newly-arrived immigrants and connects them to needed services. Religious institutions such as St. Zachary's and St. Paul ChongHasang are often at the forefront of serving immigrants in the community. With the presence of numerous cultural and religious institutions and local non-profits in Des Plaines, there is an opportunity to produce a stronger partnership with the City to effectively deliver resources, provide services, support, and celebrate the diverse immigrant community.

While the listed facilities are of great value, it has proven difficult to make recent immigrants aware of available services and their location. A survey of 200 participants conducted by Maryville Academy concluded that few respondents participated in human services programs, however, the interest in

participation was high. The most requested services included ESL classes, access to healthcare, parenting classes, technology classes, and immigrant rights presentations.¹²

A couple of neighboring communities offer resources on their municipal websites for new arrivals with directories listing key services or relevant events. For example, the Village of Skokie developed an Immigrant Services Directory in 2008 that provides information for immigrant residents,¹³ while the Village of Niles hosts events such as, “Know Your Rights” and “Refugee Presentation”. The Des Plaines Comprehensive Plan process will work to further discussions regarding the creation, dissemination, and collaboration needed to provide supportive services to immigrant residents and families.

Opportunity: Support Immigrant-Owned Businesses

The City of Des Plaines is rich in diversity not only in its population but in its local economy. Many immigrant-owned establishments (businesses and institutions) are primarily concentrated along Oakton Street, Lee Street and Mannheim Street. The assortment of establishments include restaurants and catering services, grocery stores, auto sales and repairs, beauty salons, and local pharmacies. The ethnic make-up of the establishments vary, including Bulgarian, Balkan, Indian, Polish, Thai, Vietnamese, Chinese, Greek, Mexican, Puerto Rican and Salvadorian businesses. The Comprehensive Plan process will explore manners in which the City can collaborate with local entities, such as the Chamber of Commerce, to identify the unique needs of immigrant-owned businesses and better support its owners.

Additionally, the availability of educational materials on stormwater mitigation and prevention measures as well as disaster relief should be provided in multiple languages to ensure that these businesses can continue to thrive in the face of extreme flooding. While Des Plaines continues to experience the effects of a changing climate, it will be important that business owners of all backgrounds are aware of the threats and potential impacts of increasing trends in precipitation and heavy storm events. FEMA statistics show that 40-60 percent of small businesses never reopen after being impacted by a natural disaster¹⁴, such as a major flood or damages caused by severe summer or winter storms. Similar to the City’s housing stock, it is estimated that the average cost of damages caused by a single flood event¹⁵ is equivalent to 6.5 percent of the value of the building.¹⁶ Based on the City’s commercial properties located in the floodplain, the total estimated property damage of such an event would be \$12,759,500.¹⁷

¹² Maryville. (September 2015). *Serving the Needs of the Latino Population in the Northwest Suburbs: Challenges and Opportunities. Survey Results*. Des Plaines.

¹³ Village of Skokie. (2017, August 15). *Human Services - Immigrant Services*. Retrieved from <http://www.skokie.org/ImmigrantServices.cfm>

¹⁴ FEMA, Make Your Business Resilient,” <https://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/images/116921>.

¹⁵ Cost estimates are based on a flood event that has a 2-10% chance of occurring with within a year, i.e. a 10- to 50-year flood event.

¹⁶ City of Des Plaines, “Hazard Mitigation Plan” 2016, <http://www.desplaines.org/civicax/filebank/blobdload.aspx?blobid=24234>

¹⁷ Ibid.

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

Issue: Des Plaines is susceptible to multiple types of flooding

While flooding is a natural process, development and changing precipitation patterns have altered the way water flows through the landscape. The reasons behind flooding can be quite complex and are the result of a combination of factors, including flat topography and saturated soils, stronger, more frequent storms, habitat loss and development in flood-prone areas. Parts of Des Plaines experience flooding when waters overflow the banks of the Des Plaines River and other streams within the area. This is commonly referred to as riverine flooding. In addition, parts of the community also experience urban flooding, which occurs when rainfall overwhelms the capacity of the drainage systems, such as storm sewers or drainage ditches. Urban flooding can result in water pooling in streets and yards, basement flooding, and basement back-ups. Unique strategies are necessary to reduce damages from both types of flooding.

Riverine Flooding

In the City of Des Plaines, portions of the community were established in low-lying areas adjacent to the Des Plaines River, Farmers Creek, Feehanville Ditch, Higgins Creek, Weller Creek, and Willow Creek. Floodplains are areas adjacent to bodies of water that are intermittently saturated with floodwater. The regulatory floodplain, commonly known as the 1 percent annual chance floodplain or 100-year floodplain, originates from federal regulation of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) (figure 5.1). Within Des Plaines, the FIRM depicts the area anticipated to flood when approximately 7.5 inches of rain falls within a 24-hour period. Flooding within Des Plaines' 1 percent annual chance floodplain may occur more frequently than it has in the past.¹⁸ The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD) has also studied Des Plaines' regulatory floodplain area and has delineated inundation areas that are anticipated to flood for different sized storm events. The inundation boundaries are roughly the same as the regulatory floodplain boundaries, with some slight differences along Willow Creek near O'Hare International Airport and some additional areas within the Des Plaines River floodplain.

Development has occurred in the floodway, which is a portion of the floodplain where water flows during a flooding event and, therefore, is considered most vulnerable to damages. For this reason, new development is generally not allowed in the floodway in northeastern Illinois due to safety concerns as well as hydrological impacts on other properties.¹⁹ While much of the Des Plaines River floodplain is composed of Cook County Forest Preserve District lands, portions of the Des Plaines River floodplain along River Road and Rand Road have been developed. The floodplains of Willow Creek and Wellers

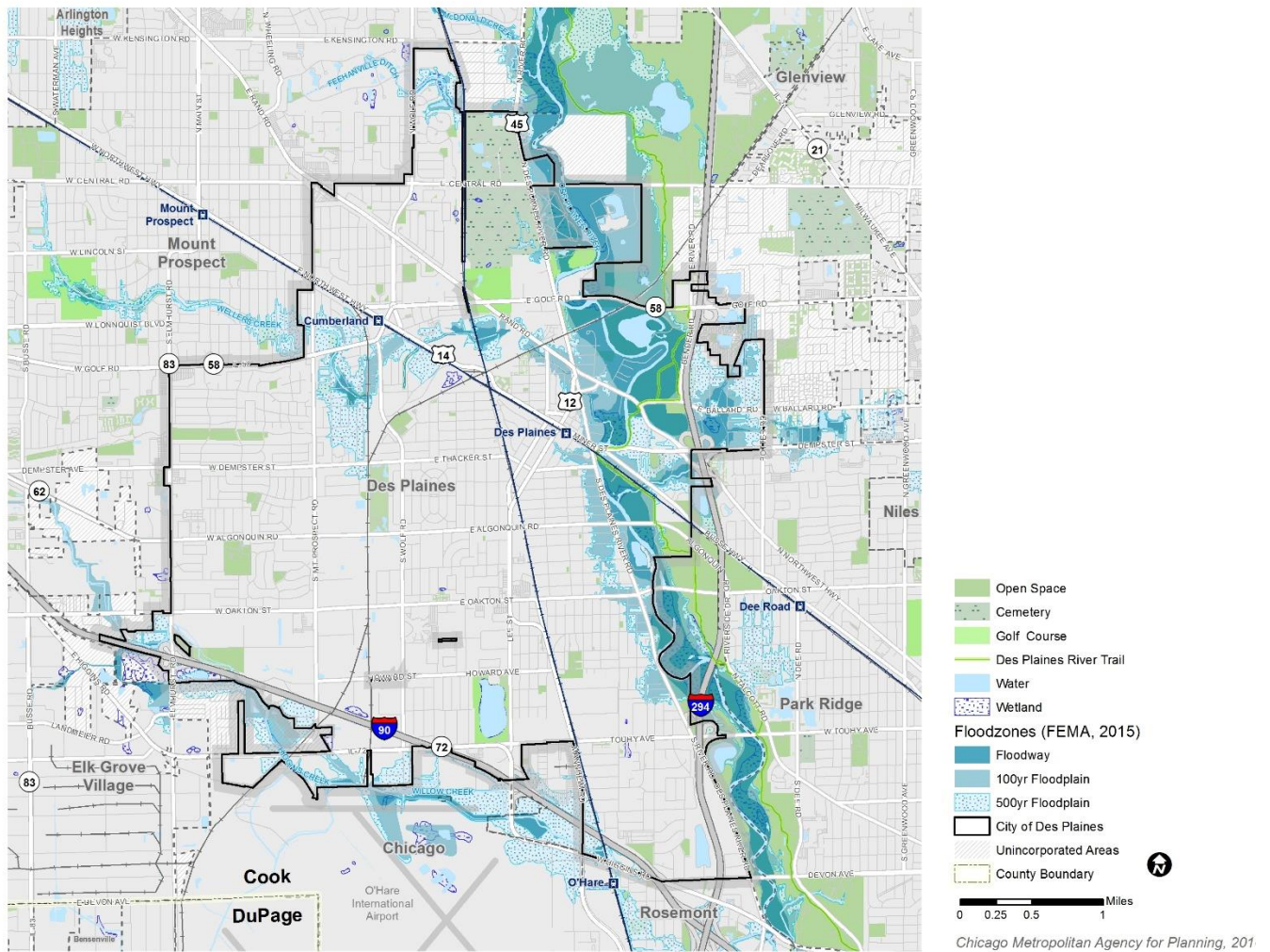
¹⁸ Illinois State Water Survey. State Climatologist Office for Illinois. Rainfall Trends in Northeast Illinois. See <http://www.isws.illinois.edu/atmos/statecli/climate-change/NE-IL-trends/rainfall.htm>

¹⁹ Illinois Administrative Code. Section 3708 Floodway Construction in Northeastern Illinois. See <ftp://www.ilga.gov/JCAR/AdminCode/017/01703708sections.html>

Creek also contain homes and businesses. The City’s 2013 Hazard Mitigation Plan identified over 2,600 structures in the floodplain and 16 repetitively flooded areas within the city.²⁰

Figure 5.1 also displays the 500-year floodplain, which has a 0.2 percent chance of occurring in any given year. While the odds are more remote, it is the national standard used for protecting critical facilities, such as hospitals. The City also identified critical facilities, which are facilities that are vital to public safety and disaster response or could create secondary problems if damaged from flooding, in the City’s Threat Assessment Plan. While not published for security reasons, these could include fire and police stations, nursing homes, and other similar structures.

Figure 5.1. Des Plaines Floodplain Map, 2015



²⁰ City of Des Plaines. 2013. Hazard Mitigation Plan. See www.desplaines.org/civicax/filebank/blobload.aspx?blobid=24234

Urban Flooding

Unlike riverine flooding, urban flooding is more directly related to specific site conditions, such as topography, impervious cover, drainage capacity, hydric soils, as well as building and foundation condition. Urban flooding happens for multiple reasons, but one of them is stormwater and sewer systems becoming overwhelmed by runoff generated from nearby properties. Much of Des Plaines was built and designed before the adoption of modern stormwater management standards. Therefore, many residential properties were developed within depressions in the landscape or on hydric soils that may result in the pooling of rainwater in backyards and basements. If built today, modern development standards would have required development to retain the initial stormwater runoff produced by a storm event on site (also known as the first flush), as well as installation of infrastructure that hold backs and conveys stormwater at slower rates.

The City of Des Plaines maintains three types of local sewers – sanitary, storm, and combined sewers. Combined sewers collect both sanitary and stormwater in the same pipe. There are four combined sewer area clusters²¹ throughout the city that are more susceptible to basement flooding from backups: the northernmost area is approximately one square mile bound by S. Mt. Prospect Road, Rand Road, and Wellers Creek; the western most area is approximately one half square mile that is bound by W. Dempster Street, W. Algonquin Road, and S. Mount Prospect Road; the southernmost area is approximately 1.5 square miles bound by E. Oakton Street, S Des Plaines River Road, and Howard Street; the largest area is approximately 6.6 square miles located between Rand Road, S. Des Plaines River Road, E Algonquin Road, and S. Mt. Prospect Road. These combined sewer areas, along with the City's local sanitary sewers, then feed into the sub-regional combined sewer system maintained by MWRD, where wastewater is eventually treated at their Kirie or Stickney Water Reclamation Plants.

Unlike riverine flooding, where problem areas are identified through FEMA floodplain mapping efforts, urban flooding locations are less widely known. CMAP has developed an approach to identify which areas of a community could be more susceptible to flooding, to then inform land use and transportation decision-making. CMAP will use this approach, combined with additional information from the City's Hazard Mitigation Plan and most recent Stormwater Master Plan, to identify areas of the community in need of further mitigation activities.

Increasing trends in precipitation

The Chicagoland region has been experiencing an increase in precipitation and heavy storm events as regional temperatures rise from climate change. Air within the atmosphere can hold 4 percent more water vapor with each degree Fahrenheit of temperature increase.²² The Midwest has warmed by two degrees since 2000, and the amount of precipitation falling in very heavy storm events²³ has increased by 37 percent between 1958 and 2012. At a more local level, precipitation around the City of Des Plaines has increased by approximately five inches since the last late 1950s.²⁴

²¹ Clusters are approximate areas with a high concentration of combined sewers.

²² Illinois Department of Natural Resources, 2015, "Urban Flooding Awareness Act," https://www.dnr.illinois.gov/waterresources/documents/final_ufaa_report.pdf

²³ 'Very heavy storm events' is defined as the heaviest 1% of all daily events.

²⁴ Illinois State Water Survey. State Climatologist Office for Illinois. Rainfall Trends in Northeast Illinois. See <http://www.isws.illinois.edu/atmos/statecli/climate-change/NE-IL-trends/rainfall.htm>

Des Plaines receives approximately 37 inches of rain on average, on an annual basis. The months of May through August typically receive the greatest amount of precipitation, with August receiving the most at an average of 4.9 inches.²⁵ Between 1961 and 2000, a 10-year storm produced an average of 4.29 inches of precipitation over 24-hours, and a 100-year storm produced 6.80 inches of precipitation over 24-hours. By mid-century, Des Plaines is projected to experience 5.26 inches from a 10-year, 24-hour storm and 8.06 inches from a 100-year, 24-hour storm.^{26,27} Another way to look at this is the number of days in which the amount of precipitation is one inch or greater; this is a commonly used indicator to measure a community's flood risk. Today, Des Plaines experiences approximately eight days in which precipitation is at or above one inch. By the mid-century, Des Plaines is projected to experience between nine and eleven days.^{28,29}

Recent flooding events

Des Plaines recently recovered from the storm-related events that occurred in July 2017, when the Des Plaines River reached its fourth highest crest on record at 19.88 feet.³⁰ Major flood stage at this location is reached when waters rise to 19 feet. In May 2013, President Obama declared that a major disaster (DR-4116) occurred from the severe storms, straight-line winds, and flooding experienced from April 16 to May 5, 2013 in Illinois, including Cook County. Heavy rainfall fell on April 17 and 18, resulting in urban and riverine flooding. The weather gauge at the Des Plaines station recorded a total of 9.08 inches over a 17-day period (5 days preceding and 11 days following the April 17-18 event),³¹ which is a level of rainfall that is anticipated to fall only once every 40 years.³² Intense storms like this can result in more flooding as the soils become completely saturated and sewers quickly reach capacity. In addition, this storm hit the region after a wet April, which meant the region was at a higher risk of flooding due to already saturated soils, full detention ponds, and higher water levels of rivers and streams. The Des Plaines River U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) stream gaging station near Des Plaines recorded its highest

²⁵ NOAA National Climatic Data Center, Official 1981-2010 Climate Normals for Chicago O'Hare Airport. See <http://www.isws.illinois.edu/atmos/statecli/newnormals/normals.USW00094846.txt>

²⁶ Momcilo Markus, James R. Angel, Gregory J. Byard, Chen Zhang, Zoe Zaloudek, and Sally McConkey. *Communicating the Impacts of Potential Future Climate Change on the Expected Frequency of Extreme Rainfall Events in Cook County, Illinois*. Illinois State Water Survey, 2016.

²⁷ Based on the A1B IPCC climate scenarios. See <https://ipcc.ch/pdf/special-reports/spm/sres-en.pdf>.

²⁸ U.S. Climate Resilience Toolkit: Climate Explorer. See <https://toolkit.climate.gov/climate-explorer2/location.php?county=Cook+County&city=Des%20Plaines,%20IL&fips=17031&lat=42.03336229999999&lon=-87.88339910000002>

²⁹ Based on lower and higher emission scenarios used by NOAA US Climate Resilience Toolkit: Climate Explorer. See definitions and FAQ for more information, <https://toolkit.climate.gov/climate-explorer2/definitions.php>.

³⁰ National Weather Service, "Advanced Hydrologic Prediction Service for USGS Des Plaines River Gauge near Des Plaines," <http://water.weather.gov/ahps2/hydrograph.php?wfo=lot&gage=DSPI2>

³¹ U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, "Post Flood Survey Report: April 2013 Chicago Area Riverine and Basement Flooding," April 2017,

http://www.lrc.usace.army.mil/Portals/36/docs/projects/April%202013%20Flood%20Report/April%202013%20Post%20Flood%20Survey%20Report_FINAL_APRIL2017.pdf

³² Masters, Jeff. Extreme Drought to Extreme Flood: Weather Whiplash Hits the Midwest. April 19, 2013. See www.wunderground.com/blog/JeffMasters/comment.html?entrynum=2389

level event on record with 20.92 feet.³³ This height was reached approximately 40 hours after the middle of the storm event (April 17 at 10 pm).³⁴

After the storm, FEMA, Cook County, and the City of Des Plaines conducted a needs assessment to understand the damages by the storm. FEMA recovery teams visited 1,566 homes and businesses in Des Plaines that were affected by the flooding.³⁵ Table 5.1 summarizes the payments made to residents in the city as a result of the April 2013 storm from three federal programs – National Flood Insurance Program, Individual Assistance grants, and Small Business Administration disaster loans.³⁶ In 2015, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) conducted a study of the cost and prevalence of urban flooding in the state and found that 90 percent of damage claims from 2007 to 2014 were for locations outside of the mapped 100-year floodplain, highlighting the prevalence of urban flooding that occurs.³⁷ Given that private insurance claims are not accounted for, and some residents and businesses may not have filed a claim or been aware of assistance programs, Des Plaines residents likely experienced additional damages beyond the \$13.5 million documented in payments for the April 2013 event.

Table 5.1: Documented damages in Des Plaines from NFIP, Individual Assistance, and SBA Disaster Loans for the April 2013 floods (DR-4116).

	Number of Paid Claims	Payments
NFIP	325	\$11,278,041
Individual Assistance Grants	444	\$1,424,246
SBA Disaster Loans	n/a	\$841,400

Source: FEMA, 2016

Opportunity: Existing Capital Improvement Programs

While the City of Des Plaines continues to encounter flooding and associated damages, the community has taken action to reduce flooding damages and prepare for future events. This experience and

³³ National Weather Service, “Advanced Hydrologic Prediction Service for USGS Des Plaines River Gauge near Des Plaines,” <http://water.weather.gov/ahps2/hydrograph.php?wfo=lot&gage=DSPI2>

³⁴ U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, “Post Flood Survey Report: April 2013 Chicago Area Riverine and Basement Flooding,” April 2017, http://www.lrc.usace.army.mil/Portals/36/docs/projects/April%202013%20Flood%20Report/April%202013%20Post%20Flood%20Survey%20Report_FINAL_APRIL2017.pdf

³⁵ City of Des Plaines. 2013. Hazard Mitigation Plan. See www.desplaines.org/civicax/filebank/blobdload.aspx?blobid=24234

³⁶ Individual Assistance and SBA Disaster Loan totals are given for all zip codes that partially intersect the study area and represent an overestimate of damages experience directly within the unincorporated areas of Maine and Northfield Townships.

³⁷ State of Illinois Department of Natural Resources. 2015. Report for the Urban Flooding Awareness Act. Prevalence and Cost, p.8. See www.dnr.illinois.gov/WaterResources/Documents/Final_UFAA_Report.pdf

commitment sets the stage for further improvements and ultimately a reduction in flooding damages. As a result of plans and studies conducted by the City as well as MWRD and the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), a number of capital projects have been or are being completed to address flooding issues. In addition, the City and partners have launched educational and cost-share programs to help residents and businesses reduce their risk of flooding damages. The City also participates in FEMA's National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) and the Community Rating System (CRS), which provides insurance premium discounts for residents in communities that go beyond the minimum floodplain management requirements. The following summary identifies the main capital and programmatic projects underway in Des Plaines.

Recent plans

Planning to address stormwater management and flooding is an essential step in understanding the issues and identifying potential solutions. The City has either conducted or been engaged with a number of studies in recent years to address flooding concerns, including the 2003 Des Plaines Comprehensive Stormwater Management Master Plan; 2011 MWRD Detailed Watershed Plan for the Lower Des Plaines River; 2013 Des Plaines Hazard Mitigation Plan; 2015 USACE Upper Des Plaines River and Tributaries; 2016 Des Plaines River Communities Green Infrastructure Mapping Project; and the Illinois and Wisconsin Integrated Feasibility Report and Environmental Assessment, 2015. All of these planning efforts identified key capital improvement projects that could address stormwater and flooding issues in the city. The scope and extent of the planning efforts are described in Appendix D.1.

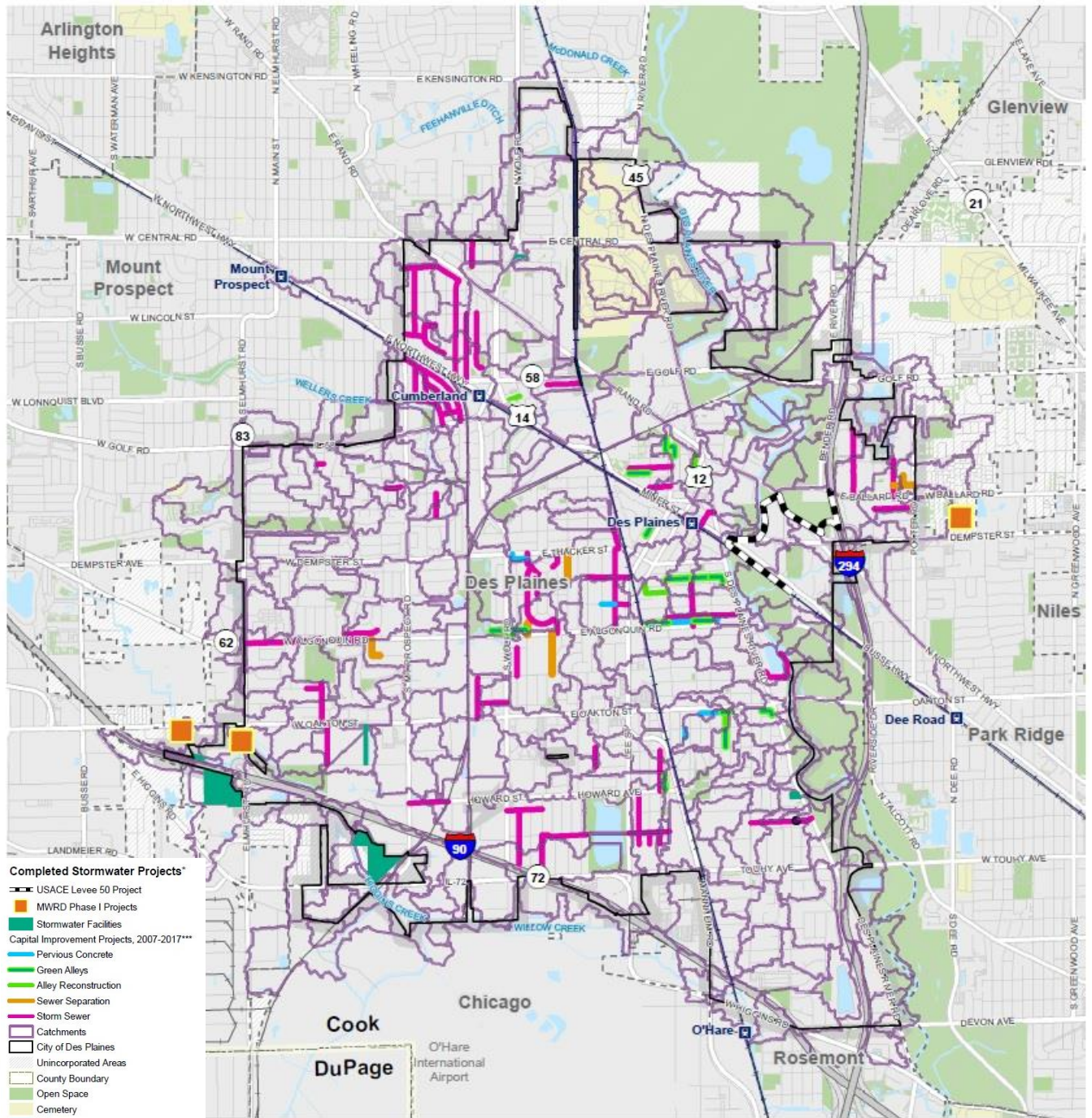
Capital Projects

From the plans and studies developed over the years, several capital projects have been completed and several more have been identified for future work. Figures 5.2 and 5.3 highlight both, recently completed and proposed projects. The City of Des Plaines now requires all alley reconstruction to be done with permeable pavement. When a combined sewer street undergoes construction, the City would like to add separate storm sewers to combined sewers streets.³⁸

IEMA administers an acquisition and buyout program through FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) that has been reviewing applications from Des Plaines, Glenview, Glenwood, and River Forest. FEMA began acquiring (buying out) homes in 2016, but the City has found it to be a difficult sell. The program requires voluntary applications, and homeowners often refuse to leave despite being offered market value for their homes. The City should continue to apply for mitigation grant funding through available IEMA and FEMA for floodplain mitigation and other types of hazards (e.g., severe storms and tornadoes) where projects are cost beneficial and help homeowners understand the economic and social advantages of participation.

³⁸ City of Des Plaines, 2007. CSO Operations & Maintenance Plan, <http://www.desplaines.org/civicax/filebank/blobdload.aspx?BlobID=24211>

Figure 5.2: Recently Completed Capital Projects Designed to Reduce Flood Damage



* Includes projects completed prior to or within 2017.
 ** Assumes capital improvement projects are completed in the year within which it is scheduled.

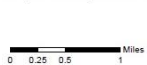
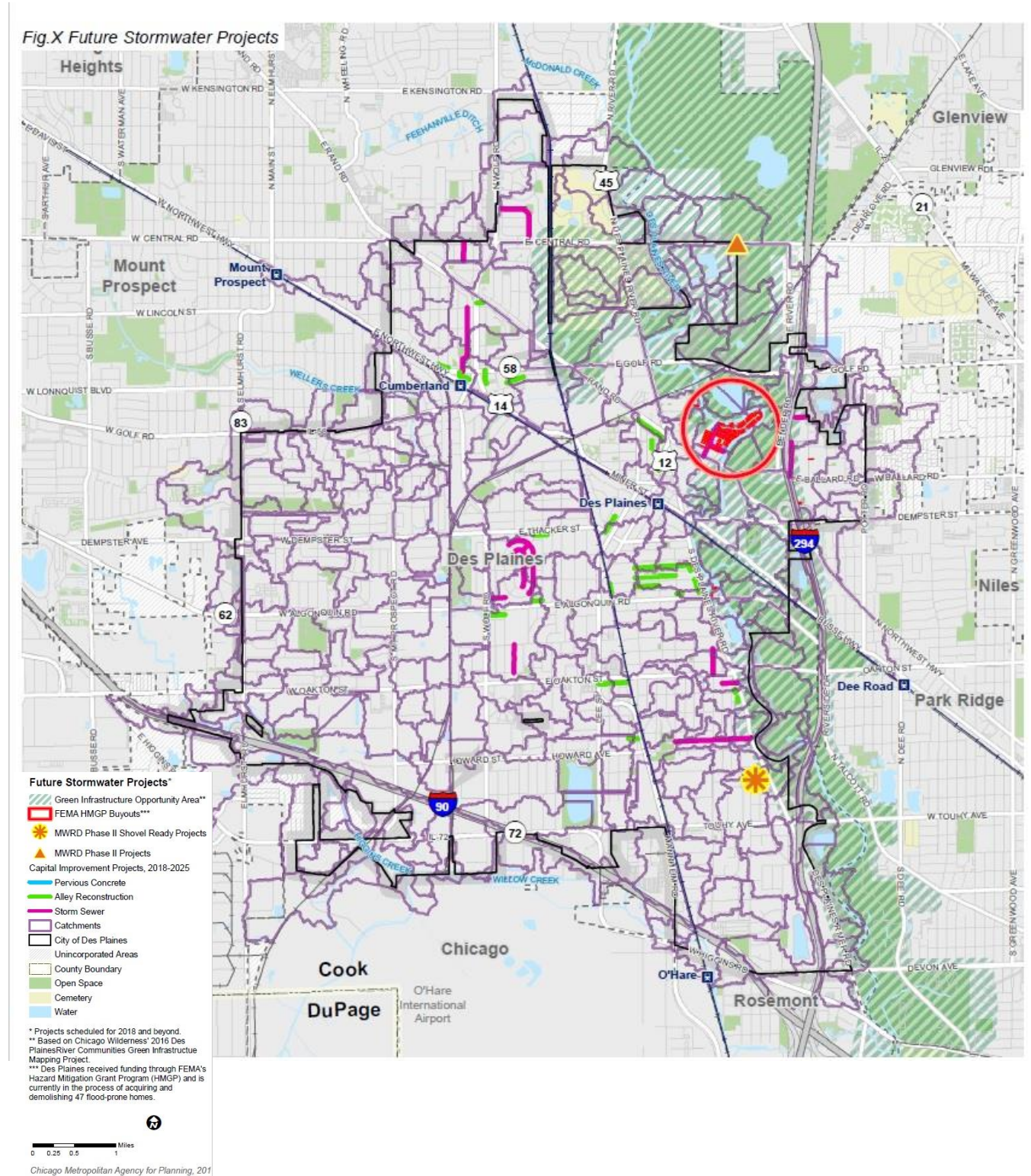


Figure 5.3: Future Capital Projects Designed to Reduce Flood Damage



Community Programs

Residents of Des Plaines can also have an active role in managing stormwater on their property. In addition to municipal planning efforts and capital improvement projects, the city participates in and administers programs that help residents reduce their risk of flood damages. The National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) and the Community Rating System (CRS) provide insurance premium discounts for residents that go beyond the minimum floodplain management requirements. The city also has a rebate program to help finance stormwater management projects that take place on private property. Active participation in these programs can help improve local and city-wide stormwater management. Both programs are further detailed in Appendix D2.

Development Ordinances

The City of Des Plaines also works to control flooding by regulating construction³⁹ and development⁴⁰ in the floodway, floodplain (i.e. Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA)), and flood fringe areas. The municipal code outlines procedures to determine if proposed development is within one of the three flood-prone areas, and special building requirements if the development is located in one of the flood-prone areas. For instance, the code strives to prevent increased damages by requiring development in the floodplain to set the lowest finished floor two feet above the base flood elevation (BFE). Development in the flood fringe is required to set the elevation of the lowest opening in the basement wall (i.e., window wells, access ways) at two feet above the BFE.⁴¹ The code also outlines the necessary procedures that need to be taken to obtain a permit, which enables development in the flood-prone areas to move forward.

Properties within the floodplain in Cook County are subject to special development requirements⁴² and require flood insurance to receive financial assistance, such as a mortgage. The Cook County Watershed Management Ordinance (WMO) applies to all development above a specific area threshold and regulates sewer construction, drainage and detention, volume control, floodplain management, isolated wetland protection, riparian environmental protection, and soil erosion and sediment control. Table 5.2 provides a summary of the WMO. Most of the residential lots within Des Plaines are less than one acre in size and therefore are not required to include stormwater retention and detention practices as required by the WMO if they are redeveloped.

³⁹ Construction includes, but is not limited to, homes, building additions, garages, and fences.

⁴⁰ Development includes redevelopment, site modification, and building modification.

⁴¹ City of Des Plaines, Municipal Code: 14 Flood Control Regulations, Ch.1, http://www.sterlingcodifiers.com/codebook/index.php?book_id=561&chapter_id=34788

⁴² Cook County Code of Ordinances, Part II Land Development Ordinance, Chapter 106 Floodplains and Chapter 118 Stormwater. https://www.municode.com/library/il/cook_county/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=PTIILADEOR_CH118ST_A_RTIIFLDAPR

Table 5.2: Cook County Watershed Management Ordinance Summary

Design storm for stormwater systems	Retention / Detention Requirements	Area of Development Thresholds			
		Residential	Multi-family	Non-Residential	Open Space
100 year	First inch of runoff from an impervious area = volume control storage	1 acre	0.5 acre	0.5 acre	0.5 acre

Source: State of Illinois Department of Natural Resources. 2015. Report for the Urban Flooding Awareness Act. www.dnr.illinois.gov/WaterResources/Documents/Final_UFAA_Report.pdf.

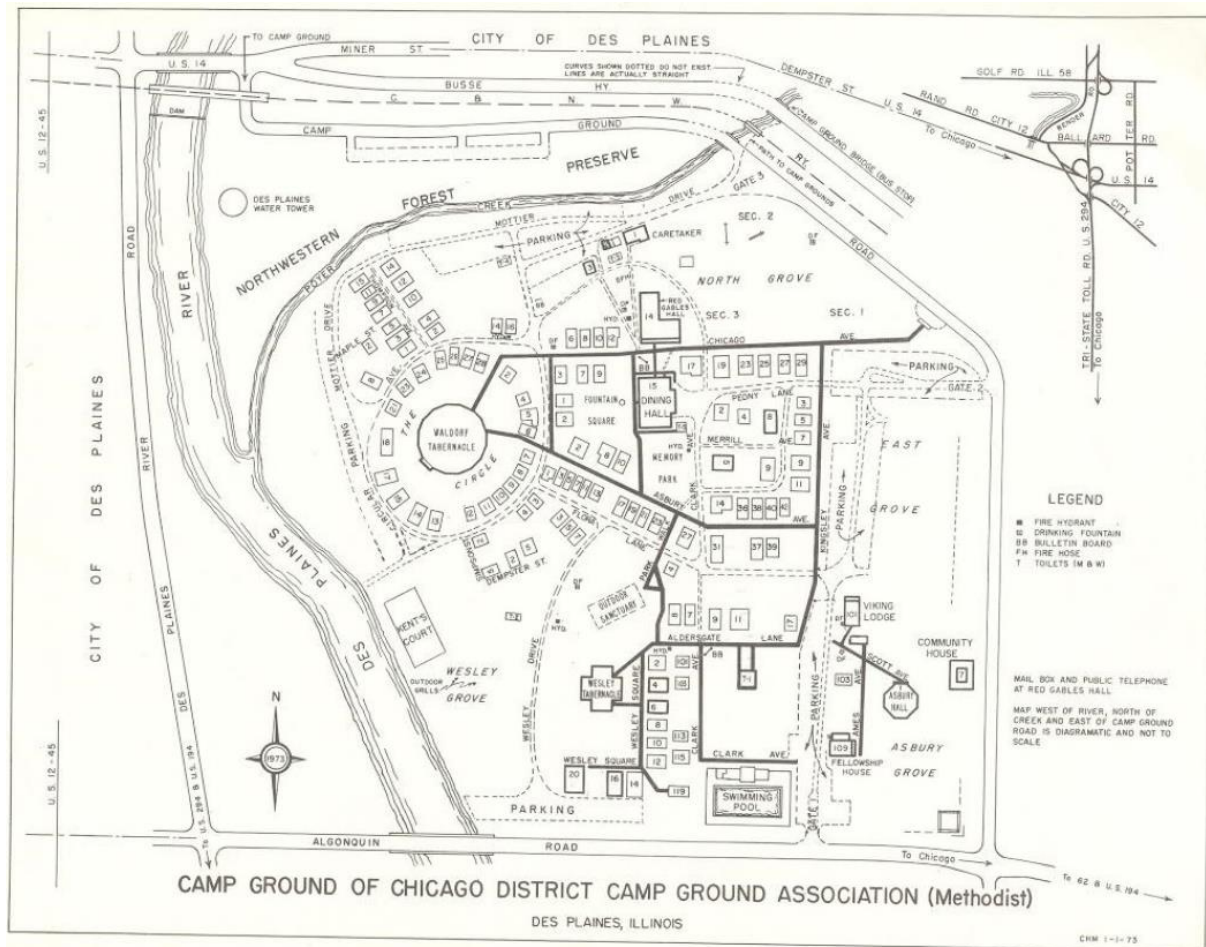
6. OTHER OPPORTUNITIES & ISSUES

Opportunity: Methodist Camp Ground

The Des Plaines Methodist Camp Ground, a 36-acre campground and National Historic Landmark established in 1860, has been described as a hidden gem by various stakeholders. This unique regional amenity is located one mile south of the Des Plaines Metra Station, minutes away from O'Hare International Airport, and is bordered by the Des Plaines River to the west and Trail to the east. The Campground's leaders have undertaken a significant restoration and preservation plan to revitalize the site as an eco-lab for businesses and higher-educational institutions that will also serve as an exhibit space for green manufacturers, and run as a co-operative community.

Moving forward, the Comprehensive Plan process can be used to increase collaboration efforts between the Campground and the City, and further redevelopment strategies that focus on: historic preservation along with visitor awareness of the Chautauqua heritage, improving infrastructure including elevating all the buildings due to increased flooding, exploring opportunities to produce clean energy, and maintaining resiliency in the face of climate change.

Figure 6.1: Historic Methodist Camp Ground Site Map



Opportunity: Des Plaines Park District Strategic Plan

The Des Plaines Park District currently encompasses 59 parks, facilities, and recreational areas, while hosting popular community-wide events such as the annual Fall Fest. Residents and visitors alike have described the Park District and its facilities as “a strong presence, well-run, and first-rate”, with a desire for more. To better understand residents’ desires, the Park District completed a Community Needs Assessment in 2016 and identified more open space and walking paths as the community’s top requests.

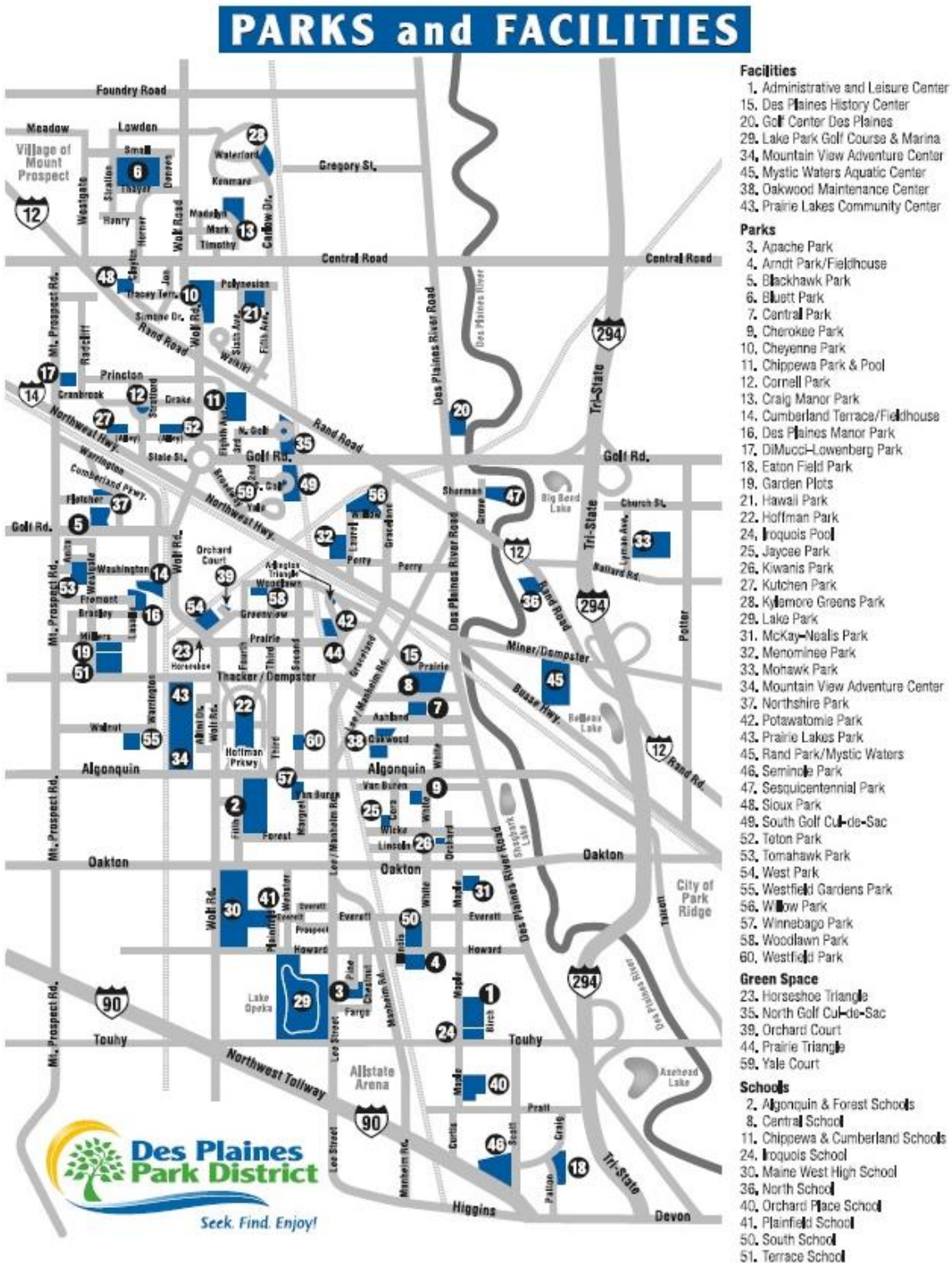
Top challenges associated with the Park District includes limited funds and a lack of collaboration from key institutions where open space expansion is being considered. The Comprehensive Plan will explore manners in which the Park District’s Strategic Plan and Capital Projects can be supported and implemented through diverse funding sources and stronger local and regional partnerships.

The 2015-2020 Des Plaines Park District Strategic Plan lists strategies that include expanding recreational resources, increasing visibility and outreach to the community, developing a finance plan that minimizes reliance on taxes, and promoting sustainable practices throughout the park system. The Park District’s Master Plan Capital Items lists projects that include the construction of the indoor pool at Prairie Lakes, improving Lake Park (and increasing storm water storage), seeking a grant to fund a bridge over Weller Creek, and creating new parks; Oakwood Park in downtown Des Plaines, and River Park near Golf Road and East River Road.

Figure 6.2: Mountain View Adventure Center, a Des Plaines Park District facility



Figure 6.3: Des Plaines Park District Parks and Facilities Map, 2017



D. APPENDIX

D1: List of Recent Plans for Stormwater Management and Flooding

*2003 Des Plaines Comprehensive Stormwater Management Master Plan*⁴³

In 2003, the City completed a Comprehensive Stormwater Management Master Plan after flooding in 2001 inspired city action. The plan identified 12 areas with flooding and sewer capacity issues and recommended projects to address the issues. As of 2010, projects have been completed for four of the problem areas. It is anticipated that the remaining projects will be completed by 2014.

2011 MWRD Detailed Watershed Plan for the Lower Des Plaines River

In 2011, the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) completed a detailed watershed plan for the Lower Des Plaines River, which makes several recommendations to address regional stormwater problems.⁴⁴ MWRD identified flooding issues along Weller Creek as regional in nature, citing overbank flooding into residential neighborhoods and closure of primary transportation routes. The plan recommended a series of storage and channel improvements, and divided them into two phases. Phase 1 projects tackle larger, regional scale flooding issues, while Phase 2 projects address flooding problems at the local level.

In addition, MWRD continues to implement the Tunnel and Reservoir Plan (TARP), which is the long-term control plan for reducing and eliminating combined sewer overflows in the Chicago region. The project consists of a series of deep tunnel systems and reservoirs to channel and store combined sewer discharges during heavy rain events. Construction on the project began in 1975, and the tunnel system was largely completed by 2006. The reservoir system is scheduled to be completed by 2024.

2013 Des Plaines Hazard Mitigation Plan

In 2013, the City completed a Hazard Mitigation Plan, which outlines the goals, preventative measures, and actions that can help reduce the potential impacts of the natural hazards on the city.⁴⁵ The City of Des Plaines is the only municipality in the Chicago region that has its own, community-specific hazard mitigation plan. Having their own hazard mitigation plan also allows the City of Des Plaines to apply directly to the federal government for Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) funds, rather than applying through Cook County.

2015 USACE Upper Des Plaines River and Tributaries, Illinois and Wisconsin Integrated Feasibility Report and Environmental Assessment

In 2015, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) produced the Upper Des Plaines River and Tributaries, Illinois and Wisconsin Integrated Feasibility Report and Environmental Assessment.⁴⁶ The plans propose the construction of levees, reservoirs, and other features to reduce flood damages in the

⁴³ City of Des Plaines, July 2003. Stormwater Master Plan, <http://www.desplaines.org/civicax/filebank/blobdload.aspx?blobid=24274>

⁴⁴ MWRD, 2011. Lower Des Plaines River Detailed Watershed Plan. See <https://www.mwrdd.org/irj/portal/anonymous/stormwateroverview>

⁴⁵ City of Des Plaines, November 2013. Hazard Mitigation Plan, <http://www.desplaines.org/civicax/filebank/blobdload.aspx?blobid=24234>

⁴⁶ U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Chicago District. 2013. Upper Des Plaines River and Tributaries, Illinois and Wisconsin Integrated Feasibility Report and Environmental Assessment. <http://www.lrc.usace.army.mil/Missions/Civil-Works-Projects/Des-Plaines-River-Phase-II/>

Upper Des Plaines River Watershed, including several structural and ecosystem restoration projects in, or immediately adjacent to, Des Plaines. In addition, the USACE made a number of non-structural recommendations, such as relocation, acquisition, flood proofing, flood insurance, flood preparedness, warning, response, and public education. There were 243 structures identified in Des Plaines as ripe for undergoing one of more of these non-structural improvements.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers completed the Des Plaines River Phase 1 study which identified 6 structural elements to reduce flood damage, these include the Big Bend Lake expansion and the Rand Park Levee, or Levee 50, within the City of Des Plaines. The project is designed to provide flood protection to 181 properties east of the Des Plaines River.

2014-2018 Capital Improvement Program

Every five years, the Engineering Division prepares a capital improvement program (CIP) that outlines priority projects to address the City's infrastructure needs. Projects are selected and scheduled with the guidance of a biannual assessment of pavement conditions, field inspections, and recommendations proposed in completed plans, such as the City's 2003 Stormwater Management Master Plan. The most recent CIP outlines an \$87 million investment in street, utility, and drainage infrastructure improvements for the years 2014 through 2018.⁴⁷

Des Plaines Park District Strategic Plan 2015-2020

In 2003, the Des Plaines Park District prepared its first five-year strategic plan, which is intended to guide and improve the District's operations, programs, financial stability, and standards.⁴⁸ The most recent update of this plan is the *Des Plaines Park District Strategic Plan 2015-2020*. Over the course of these five years, the Park District intends to monitor and maintain the urban forest through a proper forestry plan; continue to work on restoration of retention ponds; as well as identify natural resource management opportunities in the City's Comprehensive Plan.

2016 Des Plaines River Communities Green Infrastructure Mapping Project

Chicago Wilderness, in partnership with CMAP, worked with the City of Des Plaines and other Des Plaines River communities to develop a multijurisdictional green infrastructure map and accompanying recommendations for two sub-regions of the Des Plaines River basin.⁴⁹ Through this process, Des Plaines expressed interest in restoring the floodplains on the west side of the Des Plaines River once they have acquired and demolished the flood-prone homes (using Hazard Mitigation Grant Program funds from FEMA) that are currently within the floodplain.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ City of Des Plaines <http://desplaines.org/civicax/filebank/blobdload.aspx?BlobID=24205>

⁴⁸ Des Plaines Park District, "Strategic Plan 2015 – 2020," January 2010, https://www.dpparks.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/DPParks_Strategic_Plan_2015-2020_v01.pdf

⁴⁹ Chicago Wilderness, 2016. Des Plaines River GI Mapping Project, http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.chicagowilderness.org/resource/collection/26E68198-A56F-4805-99CF-0037455FC939/Des_Plaines_Communities_GI_Project_Report_Updated_8-19-16_Compressed.pdf

⁵⁰ Floodplains west of the Des Plaines River generally bound by Bender Rd., S Des Plaines River Rd., and South of Gold Rd.

D2: List of Community Programs for Stormwater Management and Flooding

National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) and Community Rating System (CRS)

The National Flood Insurance Program was established to help provide affordable flood insurance, help communities repair damaged homes and businesses, and promote floodplain management. In order for residents to gain access to flood insurance, communities, including Des Plaines, have agreed to meet floodplain management standards. These include having regulatory floodplains mapped; obtaining a permit if a development is located within the regulatory floodplain; allowing only “appropriate uses”⁵¹ in the floodway; new residential structures must be elevated above the base flood elevation (BFE), and nonresidential structures must be at the elevation of the BFE or flood proofed; and treating substantial redevelopment as new development for permit review.⁵² In 2017, Des Plaines was recognized as having the most active flood insurance policies of any community in Illinois with 2,268 policies. Yet, “less than 50% of the privately owned buildings in the City’s floodplains and 1% of the buildings in the rest of the City are covered by flood insurance”⁵³ which illustrates a need for greater coverage.

Through the Community Rating System (CRS)⁵⁴, the City of Des Plaines has been recognized for floodplain management practices that exceed NFIP minimum standards. CRS is a voluntary program that incentivizes community efforts beyond those minimum standards by reducing flood insurance premiums for property owners. Currently, Des Plaines has obtained a CRS Class 7 rating, which results in a 15% premium reduction for property owners. V3 Companies recently completed a review of the Des Plaines CRS program and identified areas where further municipal activities could result in an improved CRS rating and premium reduction.⁵⁵ Similarly, the city’s floodplain and stormwater management programs exceed national and regional standards, but some training is needed and some procedures should be revised to ensure continued compliance with State and Federal rules.⁵⁶

Des Plaines Flood Rebate Program

The City of Des Plaines has established a residential flood rebate program for flood mitigation and prevention projects, such as sump pump improvements, backwater valves or overhead sewers, and basement waterproofing or other flood control systems.⁵⁷ The City will pay for up to \$2,000 based on 30 percent of the actual costs of the project conducted on single-family homes or townhomes regardless of whether they are owner-occupied or not. As documented in the 2013 Hazard Mitigation Plan, residents have utilized the program throughout the community.

⁵¹ Appropriate uses include flood control structures, recreational facilities, detached garages or accessory structures, flood proofing activities, and other minor alternations. See pg. 5-11 of Des Plaines’ Hazard Mitigation Plan, <http://www.desplaines.org/civicax/filebank/blobdload.aspx?blobid=24234>

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ City of Des Plaines. November 2013. Hazard Mitigation Plan, www.desplaines.org/civicax/filebank/blobdload.aspx?blobid=24234

⁵⁴ The CRS is a part of FEMA’s NFIP program.

⁵⁵ Shuana Urlacher, “V3 Companies City of Des Plaines CRS Program”, March 9, 2017, http://www.illinoisfloods.org/documents/2017_IAFSM_Conference/Conference_Presentations/5A-City_of_Des_Plaines_CRS_Program_Evaluations.pdf

⁵⁶ City of Des Plaines. 2013. Hazard Mitigation Plan. See www.desplaines.org/civicax/filebank/blobdload.aspx?blobid=24234

⁵⁷ City of Des Plaines, Flood Rebate Program, http://www.desplaines.org/government/citydept/pw/flood_rebate_program.htm