

3 Community Setting

Introduction

Glen Ellyn is an attractive community with a small town atmosphere. The Village of approximately 27,000 people is located roughly 20 miles west of Downtown Chicago. It is known for its historic Downtown, residential neighborhoods, and a variety of public amenities. The narrow valley through the Downtown is the inspiration for its name, *Glen Ellyn*.

Almost 60% of the Village's housing stock was built prior to 1970. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, there are 6,742 single family owner-occupied detached homes Village-wide. The median household income is \$74,800, and the median value of an owner-occupied single family home is \$274,800.

Seventy-two percent (72%) of the working population drives alone to work, while 12% takes public transportation. Fifty percent (50%) of the households have two vehicles, 33% have one vehicle, 13% have three or more vehicles, and 5% have no vehicle.

The Village of Glen Ellyn is a desirable community in which to live. High-quality housing stock and school districts are key features that families look for in a community, and Glen Ellyn provides these amenities. For example, in 2001, Glenbard West High School ranked 27th of Illinois' 644 high schools in academic testing. Also in 2001, Duchon Field – the school's football stadium – was ranked as one of the "10 Great Places to Watch a High School Football Game" by USA Today. In 2009, Glenbard South High School earned a silver medal in *U.S. News and World Report's* listing of "America's Best High Schools". In addition, the Village provides excellent police and fire protection, and the Downtown is a major selling-point for those who choose to buy a home nearby.

The Downtown is located along the Union Pacific Railway, and approximately one mile north of Roosevelt Road (a regional commercial corridor) and one mile south of Geneva/St. Charles Roads (otherwise known as Stacy's Corners, the area's original "downtown" before the construction of the present-day rail line). In addition, Glen Ellyn has convenient access to Interstate 355 ("I-355") to the east.

* Information contained within this chapter is a general overview of what is contained in Appendix C: Data Collection and Analysis Report. Please reference the appendix for additional information.

Neighboring Communities

Glen Ellyn's immediate neighbors along the Metra/Union Pacific Line are Wheaton to the west and Lombard to the east. Other neighboring communities include Carol Stream and Glendale Heights to the north, and Lisle and Downers Grove to the south.

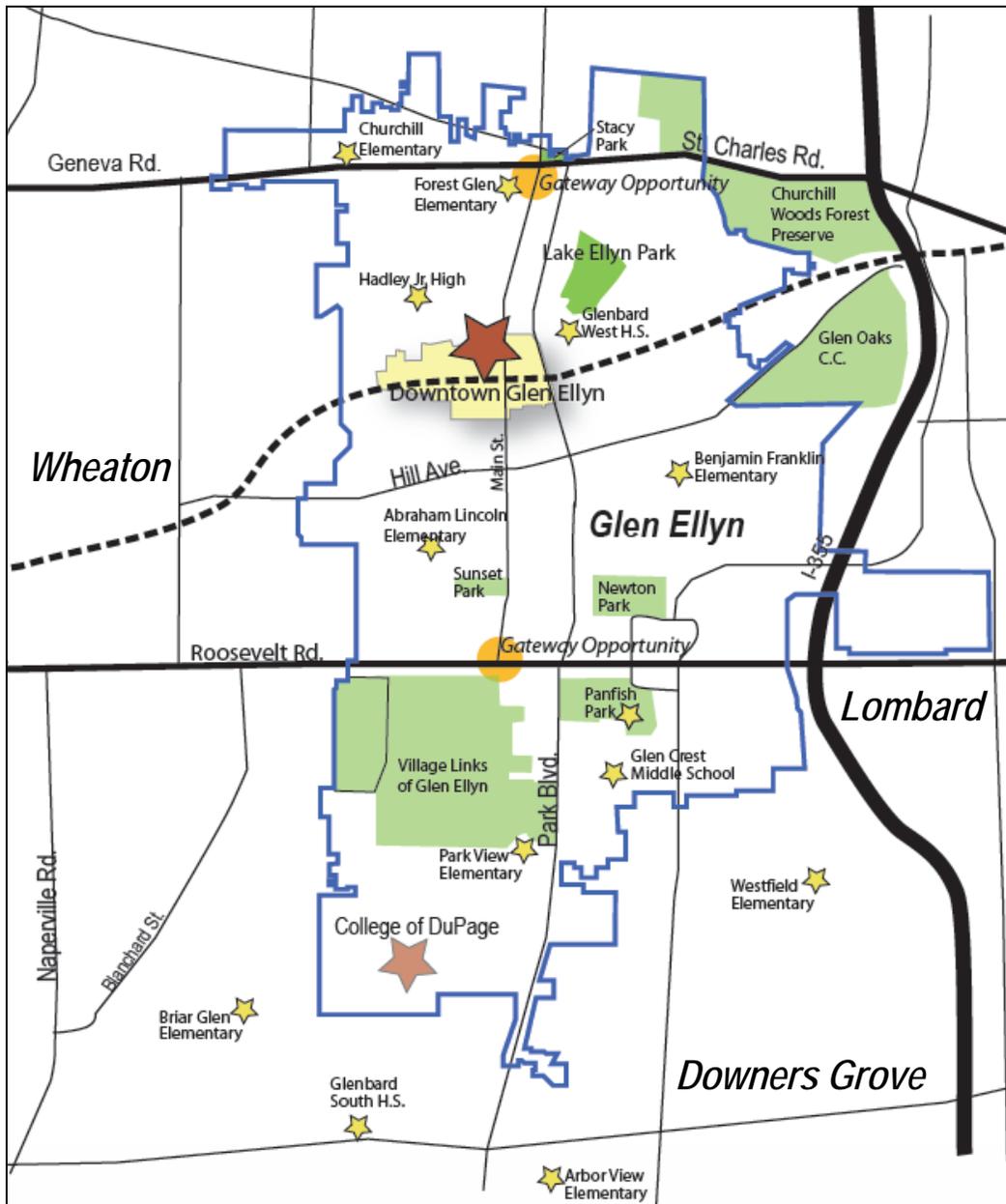


Figure 4: Glen Ellyn and the Surrounding Area
Source: Town Builder Studios.

The Village-Wide Comprehensive Plan

The vision for the Downtown in the 2001 Comprehensive Plan includes an “active, pedestrian-oriented area containing an exciting mix of shopping, entertainment, public, and residential uses”. In addition, a new commuter rail station, protection from through traffic, and safety and convenience for pedestrians and bicyclists are envisioned. The Comprehensive Plan envisions significant citizen participation, excellent Village leadership, and strong public/private partnerships, to improve and further develop the Village of Glen Ellyn.

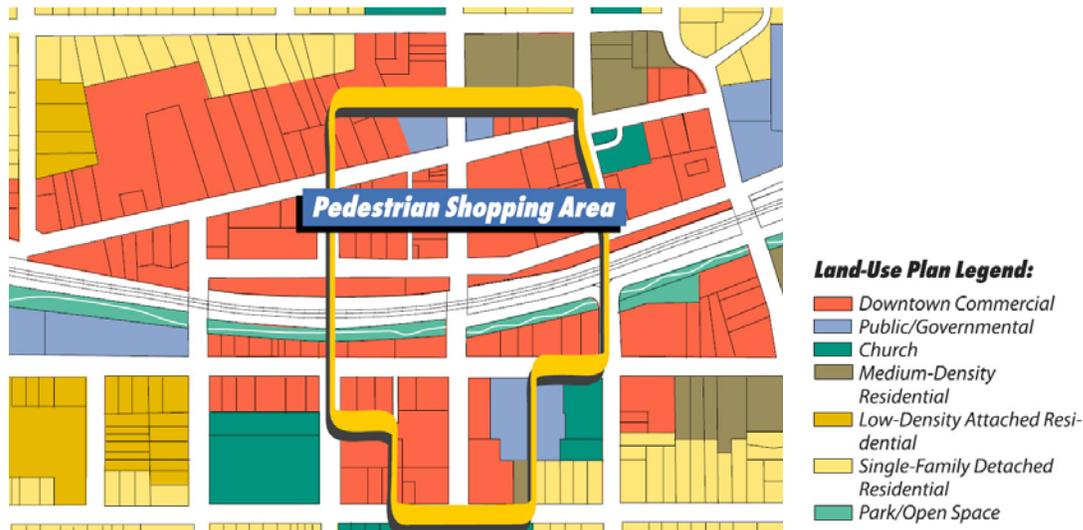


Figure 5: Comprehensive Land Use Plan for the Downtown Area
Source: Comprehensive Plan, Glen Ellyn, Illinois (April 2001). Prepared by: Trkla, Pettigrew, Allen and Payne, Inc., with Parsons Transportation Group

Downtown Strategic Planning Process

An eight-step planning process, including an extensive public participation component, was utilized in preparing the *Village of Glen Ellyn Downtown Strategic Plan*.

1. **Data Collection and Analysis.** Data from field surveys and photographs, previous reports and studies, internet resources, and professional resources, were collected and analyzed, and recommendations were made for potential next steps.
2. **Market Analysis and Recommendations.** The TBS Team developed a profile of the Downtown, determined the boundaries of the primary market area for the Downtown, and made recommendations regarding retail, office, residential, recreational, and organizational elements to be incorporated into the *Downtown Strategic Plan*.
3. **Development of a Vision and Two Downtown Concept Plans.** The TBS Team developed “The Glen” concept that took advantage of the narrow valley that traverses the Downtown, and the “Main Street” concept that built upon the primary corridor that passes through the heart of the Downtown. These plans were shared with the public.
4. **Development of a Preferred Downtown Plan.** The TBS Team developed the “Downtown Vision” that incorporated elements from both of the two concept plans based on input received from citizens, property owners, business owners, and community leaders.

5. Parking, Circulation, and Access Analysis of the Preferred Downtown Plan. The TBS Team developed a refined “Downtown Vision” that incorporated details from conceptual site and streetscape redevelopment plans related to parking and traffic.
6. Implementation Strategies. Short-, mid-, and long-term Downtown projects and initiatives were identified, and the level of private and/or public involvement for each project and initiative was determined.
7. Draft Report. A final “Downtown Vision” and draft report was prepared for review and recommendation by the Downtown Advisory Committee.
8. Final Report. A final report was prepared for review and approval by the Village Board.

Purpose

The purpose of the *Downtown Strategic Plan* process is to identify strategies to slow down and reverse the trend of increasing Downtown business vacancies, making it economically-viable once again.

Study Area

Historically, the Downtown has been an anchor for shopping, and has evolved from stores that met the daily needs of the community (department- and daily necessity-types of retail) to services and specialty stores (restaurants, boutiques, etc.) The Downtown is supported by a passionate citizenry and has a loyal group of shoppers. In addition, the Downtown has felt the impact of a loss of customers to enclosed malls such as Yorktown Mall in Lombard, regional shopping centers such as Danada Square East Shopping Center in Wheaton, local shopping corridors such as Roosevelt Road, and other community-based centers such as Downtown Wheaton.

Downtown Glen Ellyn is traversed by a rail corridor, and has all the elements of a Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) district – a train station; retail, service, office, and residential land uses within close proximity of the train station; pedestrian-friendly features such as sidewalks, street trees, street lighting, and storefronts facing the street. There is an opportunity to build upon these TOD-friendly features in the Downtown, focusing new transit-supporting development within the existing Downtown footprint and protecting the surrounding single family neighborhoods from commercial expansion.

The *Downtown Strategic Plan* study area is generally bound by Anthony Street to the north, Hillside Avenue to the south, Western Avenue to the west, and Park Boulevard to the east, and is approximately 72 acres in size.

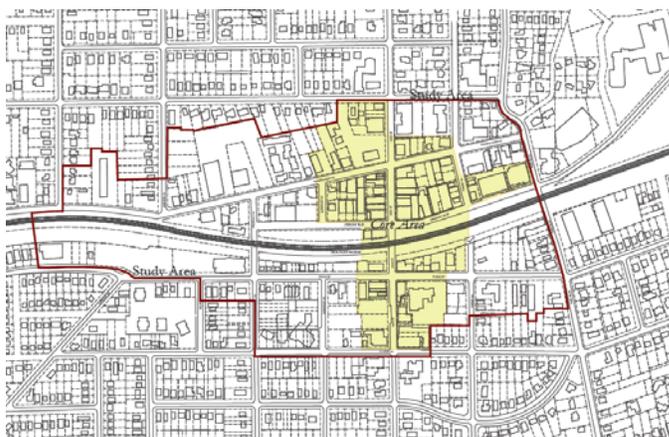


Figure 6: Downtown Study Area
Source: Town Builder Studios

Goal and Scope of Work

The goal of the *Downtown Strategic Plan* process is to create an economically-viable Downtown that is attractive for citizens and businesses. The following elements were analyzed to identify objectives, strategies and measures to make the goal a reality:

- Community Context
- Land Use
- Public Policy
- Physical Conditions
- Circulation and Transportation
- Civic Spaces
- Market Analysis
- Downtown Community Organizational Structure

The Downtown Vision resulting from the planning process also builds upon and refines some of the conclusions of the 2001 *Comprehensive Plan* prepared by Trkla, Pettigrew, Allen, and Payne, Inc., with Parsons Transportation Group.

Timeline

The *Downtown Strategic Plan* process was approximately 12 months in duration. A typical planning process timeline is amended as the plan moves forward, and this plan was no different. The interviews during the first phase of the process revealed the need for an expanded open forum for residents and business owners to discuss their vision for the Downtown; therefore, a two-day "Main Street Design Studio" was added to the schedule. Also, additional Downtown Advisory Committee meetings were held to ensure the existing conditions, concept plan development, and plan recommendations were fully discussed, reviewed, and understood by the 15 DAC members who have a passion for the success of Downtown Glen Ellyn.

Project Team

The Project Team included Village Staff, a Downtown Advisory Committee (DAC), and the consulting team. Other key project participants included citizens, business owners, and the Village Board.

Downtown Advisory Committee

The Downtown Advisory Committee (DAC) was a 15-member group comprised of citizens, representatives from various organizations, business owners, and property owners. This group was assembled to represent the community at large, to review draft portions of the plan and make strategic plan recommendations to the rest of the project team and community leaders. Over the course of the *Downtown Strategic Plan* process, these members met as a group seven times. Many members also chose to attend public open houses, public presentations, and Village Board meetings to represent the plan, and visit other communities to improve upon the draft plan prior to adoption. In addition, these members were "on call" if members of the community had a question about the status of – or the concepts contained within – the *Downtown Strategic Plan* over the course of the planning process.

The following topics were discussed at the seven DAC meetings:

- DAC Meeting #1: Kick-Off and Orientation
- DAC Meeting #2: Part 1: Data Collection and Analysis Review
- DAC Meeting #3: Part 2: Data Collection and Analysis Review
- DAC Meeting #4: Concept Plan Review – "The Glen" and "Main Street"
- DAC Meeting #5: Preferred Plan Review – "The Downtown Glen"
- DAC Meeting #6: Implementation Review
- DAC Meeting #7: Downtown Strategic Plan Report Review and Village Board Recommendation

Downtown Glen Ellyn and the *Downtown Strategic Plan* report greatly benefitted from the involvement of the DAC. The list of the DAC members is included in Chapter 1: Acknowledgements.

General Public Involvement

The extensive public participation process involved many citizens, business owners, and elected and appointed officials. Highlights of the planning process included individual and small group interviews, a "charette" (a design-based brainstorming session), a two-day Main Street Design Studio, a Downtown business parking survey, a handwritten/online preliminary concept plan community feedback survey, and a handwritten/online preferred plan community feedback survey.

Town Hall Meeting and Charette

(June 2, 2008). This first "town hall" meeting was held to kick-off the planning process with the general public. A presentation by the full consulting team included an overview of existing Downtown land uses, market forces, the historic building inventory, and circulation and parking issues. After a brief question and answer session, the audience of 80 people divided into small groups to discuss the future of the Downtown by taking notes and drawing ideas on maps. The larger group reconvened, and a spokesperson for each small group presented his/her group's ideas to the rest of the participants.



A Charette Group Discussing the Future of Downtown Glen Ellyn
Source: Town Builder Studios

Main Street Design Studio (June 2-3, 2008). Thanks to the generosity of Costello Jewelers, a temporary studio was set up in an empty storefront on Main Street, and the public was invited to drop by at any time to share their thoughts with the consulting team. Approximately 60 participants dropped by to share their ideas and concerns by completing a survey, drawing their own map, and/or having an “annotated conversation” with a member of the consulting team.

Town Hall Presentation (June 3, 2008). The second “town hall” meeting was held in the Main Street Design Studio to conclude the three-day public participation event. A minimum of 50 participants attended to view 40 maps of ideas and “annotated conversations” shared by members of the community, and to witness a summary presentation by the consulting team.

Public Open House and Presentation (November 3, 2008). A presentation of “The Glen” and “Main Street” concept plans was presented to a crowd of 150 people, followed by a question and answer session. Participants were asked to complete a paper survey or submit their responses online through an internet-based survey. A video recording of the presentation was broadcast on the local cable channel GETV three times during the online survey period.

Online Survey (November 4-12, 2008). One hundred forty (140) people completed a survey that asked multiple choice questions to determine which concept plan elements the community preferred. Overall, the “The Glen” concept was preferred to the “Main Street” concept.

Public Open House and Presentation (January 15, 2009). A presentation of the “Downtown Vision” was presented to a crowd of 120 people on a frigid evening. The presentation was followed by a question and answer session. Participants were asked to complete a paper survey or submit their responses online through an internet-based survey. Once again, a video recording of the presentation was broadcast on the local cable channel GETV twice during the online survey period.

Online Survey (January 16-23, 2009). One hundred forty-six (146) people completed a survey that asked multiple-choice questions to determine which elements of the “Downtown Vision” the community preferred. Overall, 94% of the participants agreed with the goal, 36 participants would consider opening/relocating a business in the Downtown now or in the future, and an overwhelming majority of participants were interested in dining, shopping, recreating, or socializing in the Downtown to help implement the *Downtown Strategic Plan*.



The screenshot shows a survey interface with a dark header bar containing the text "Downtown Vision for the Downtown Strategic Plan" and a link "Exit this survey". Below the header, the section is titled "1. Downtown Vision - Goal". The goal text reads: "The goal of the Downtown Vision is: 'To create an economically-viable Downtown that is attractive to citizens and businesses.'" The question is "Do you agree with this goal?". There are two radio button options: "Yes" (which is selected) and "No".

*The goal to which 94% of the Downtown Strategic Plan survey participants agreed.
Source: Town Builder Studios and www.surveymonkey.com.*