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Existing Conditions of Downtown Glen Ellyn

Introduction

This section simply describes the existing conditions of Downtown Glen Ellyn. Topics include land use, zoning, physical conditions, transportation, parking, and Downtown organizations. The analysis of these – and potential future – conditions is discussed in the next chapter.

Land Use and Zoning

Nationwide, downtowns have experienced decline over the years as the use of the automobile has increased and as auto-oriented retail centers are being developed along nearby commercial corridors. Downtowns that are not located along major arterial streets generally do not have the traffic volumes to attract national retailers, resulting in a struggle to keep retail vacancies to a minimum. Downtown Glen Ellyn is no exception.

The Downtown has a mix of land uses – from mixed-use to retail to office to residential to civic – that is a great start to creating a complete TOD district. There is commuter rail service to connect commuters to Downtown Chicago and shoppers to Downtown Glen Ellyn; mixed-use buildings with first floor retail, restaurant, or office, with residential or office uses on the floors above that provides the Downtown with daytime and nighttime activity; and civic buildings such as the Glen Ellyn Train Station, Civic Center, Public Library, Post Office, and Fire Station, that service the community. Elements such as surface parking lots and one-story buildings don't provide the intensity that is needed to create a successful Downtown and TOD district.

* *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.*



Figure 8: Existing Land Use
 Source: Town Builder Studios with Walker Parking Consultants.

Recreational amenities include the Illinois Prairie Path passing through Downtown south of the railroad tracks, a small gazebo and park adjacent to the Illinois Prairie Path, and Lake Ellyn located approximately one quarter-mile from the Glen Ellyn Train Station; however, there is little community gathering and socializing space.

The 1989 Zoning Code was last updated in 2007. Overall, the code is sufficient to meet the basic needs of the Downtown business and development community. Adjustments to the code could be made that would benefit the Downtown. Changes such as permitting residential uses by right on floors above first floor retail, discouraging first floor service uses in the Downtown core, and allowing administrative approval for select events and activities, should be considered.



Images around Downtown
 Source: Town Builder Studios

Physical Conditions

The rolling terrain in the Downtown is traversed by the Union Pacific Railway and the Illinois Prairie Path. The Downtown street rights-of-way are 66 feet wide, and they accommodate two-lane roads, parking on both sides of the street, sidewalks, and street trees.

Transportation

Downtown Glen Ellyn is accessible by train, bicycle, and foot, via Metra Rail service, the Illinois Prairie Path, and an interconnected network of sidewalks, respectively. It is also accessible by car. The nearest regional arterial streets are Roosevelt Road to the south and Geneva/St. Charles Roads to the north.



*Accessing Downtown by via Roosevelt Road, Main Street, the Illinois Prairie Path, and Rail
Source: Town Builder Studios*

Pedestrians

The Downtown has an interconnected sidewalk system, including at-grade pedestrian railroad crossings.

Bicycles

The Downtown can be accessed by bicycle via an off-street pathway and neighborhood streets.

Illinois Prairie Path

The Illinois Prairie Path is a 61-mile trail that connects Forest Park to Elgin. The main stem of the Illinois Prairie Path passes through Downtown Glen Ellyn. To the west, the Elgin Branch (with a Geneva Spur) and the Aurora Branch (with a Batavia Spur) split off from the main stem just west of Main Street in Wheaton. To the east, the main stem of the path connects to the Great Western Trail (between Villa Park and Elmhurst), and continues to Forest Park.

On-Street Bicycle Routes

The DuPage County Bikeways and Trails Map, indicates a "Proposed Local Bikeway" along Lorraine Road from Duane Street, south to Roosevelt Road (via Greenfield Avenue and Lambert Avenue), past the Glen Ellyn Village Links, east on Fawell Boulevard, to points east of I-355.

Bike Racks

Bike racks are provided at the Glen Ellyn Train Station, in Volunteer Park, and in several locations along Main Street.

Transit

An estimated 180 commuter and freight trains pass through the Downtown each day.

Train Station

The Glen Ellyn Train Station is in "Zone E" of Metra's Union Pacific – West line. Depending on the time of day, the commute between Glen Ellyn and Downtown Chicago is approximately 40-55 minutes one-way. The original train station was built in 1852 and was known as Danby Station. The current station is located on the north (inbound) side of the tracks. Improvements to the station area in 2008 included the replacement of the retaining wall between the station and the sidewalk along Crescent.



The Glen Ellyn Train Station and the Union Pacific – West Route Map

Source: Town Builder Studios and www.metra.com

Metra Ridership

Ridership for weekday boardings¹ at the Glen Ellyn Train Station has averaged 1,987 passengers per day, with an all-time high of 2,506 boardings in 1979 (the first year data was available), and an all-time low of 1,537 boardings in 2006 (the last year data was available). Similarly, Downers Grove's ridership peaked in 1979 with nearly the same number of passengers as Glen Ellyn. Wheaton reached its maximum ridership in 1993, while Naperville reached its peak in 2006.



A Metra Train in Downtown Glen Ellyn

Source: Town Builder Studios

¹ Source: Metra Biennial Boarding and Alighting Counts.

Commuter Parking

Metra has prepared a Draft Environmental Assessment for a project known as the Union Pacific West Line Core Capacity Upgrade, which is a part of the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA's) New Starts program. This study is considering the impacts of increased capacity of the line, including adding a third track between Elmhurst and River Forest to allow for more express service. Metra is planning a future 74-train weekday schedule, which is a 15-train increase from the existing weekday schedule, to accommodate an increase in ridership.²

The draft Metra report recommends adding new commuter parking spaces and potential locations in Downtown Glen Ellyn, with the majority of these potential spaces anticipated to be located in one or more parking structures west of the Glen Ellyn Public Library. New locations near the Glen Ellyn Train Station are also under consideration, due to the preparation of the *Downtown Strategic Plan*. A preferred minimum of 300 to 500 spaces by 2011 in Downtown Glen Ellyn, and a preferred minimum of 1,600 spaces between Glen Ellyn and West Chicago, have been identified by Metra staff.

Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR)

An "average freight trains per day" was not shared by the UPRR citing safety reasons; however, in 2004, it was estimated that 39% of Metra's commuter service delays³ were from freight traffic, compared to 13% for Metra's Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Railway – Chicago to Aurora line.



*A Union Pacific Train in Downtown Glen Ellyn
Source: Town Builder Studios*

Pace Bus

Glen Ellyn is served by three (3) rush hour feeder bus routes and one (1) full-service bus route.

Automobiles

The number of vehicles that pass through Downtown Glen Ellyn along Main Street on an average day is at or below 9,200 AADT (average annual daily traffic)⁴. The one-way traffic pattern on portions of Main Street, Crescent Boulevard, Forest Avenue, Pennsylvania Avenue, and Hillside Avenue has been in existence since 1955.

² Source: *Metra Union Pacific – West Line, Draft Environmental Assessment*. November 2008. Page 1-13.

³ Source: *Metra Union Pacific – West Line, Draft Environmental Assessment*. November 2008. Page 1-5.

⁴ Source: www.gettingaroundillinois.com.

Infrastructure and Parking

National retailers generally look for a minimum AADT of 20,000 vehicles in order to maximize the number of potential customers passing by their stores each day. Main Street has an AADT of 9,200 vehicles north of the tracks and 7,200 vehicles south of the tracks – less than half of most national retailers’ minimum standards. On the other hand, Roosevelt Road is the primary commercial corridor in Glen Ellyn, with an AADT of 43,700 vehicles. Stacy’s Corners was the first commercial center in Glen Ellyn, and the St. Charles/Geneva Road corridor has an AADT of 18,500-19,200 vehicles.

Parking

There is a perception of a parking shortage – and the reality of a less-than-convenient public parking supply in the Downtown. The Glen Ellyn Train Station produces a demand for commuter parking spaces, and Downtown stores and restaurants produce a demand for shopper and diner parking spaces.

Parking Demand

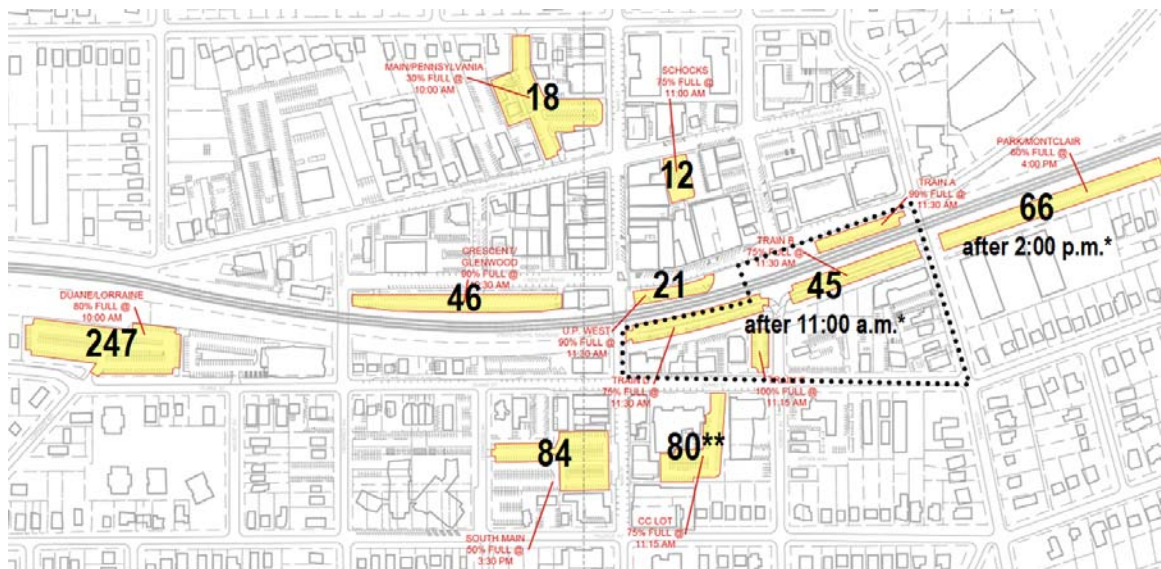
The Downtown “parking demand” is the number of parking stalls needed within the Downtown, based on the amount of parking generated by retail, office, residential, commuters, and other Downtown land and building uses.

Parking Supply

The Downtown “parking supply” is the number of parking stalls available for use within the Downtown. The supply includes both public and private parking areas.

Figure 9: Off-Street Public Parking – Shoppers and Merchants Only

The “Shopper and Merchant Off-Street Parking” map below represents the parking supply available to shoppers and merchants on a typical weekday (Monday-Friday). Commuter parking is not included. When the commuter parking is removed from the off-street public parking inventory, the number of available stalls drops. There are 100 stalls north of the tracks and 519 stalls south of the tracks available for shopper and merchant off-street public parking. Source: Town Builder Studios, Walker Parking Consultants, and the Glen Ellyn Police Department.



* Average number of stalls available Monday-Friday.

** Includes parking for Civic Center employees and the Police Department.

Figure 10: Off-Street Public Parking – Shoppers, Merchants, and Commuters

The “Off-Street Public Parking” map below represents all the publicly-owned parking lots in the Downtown that can be used by shoppers, merchants, commuters, and other permit-holders. The majority of the public parking supply is located along the railroad tracks, with a few surface lots tucked behind civic buildings and between commercial buildings. There are 339 stalls north of the tracks and 813 stalls south of the tracks available for off-street public parking. Source: Town Builder Studios Walker Parking Consultants, and the Glen Ellyn Police Department.

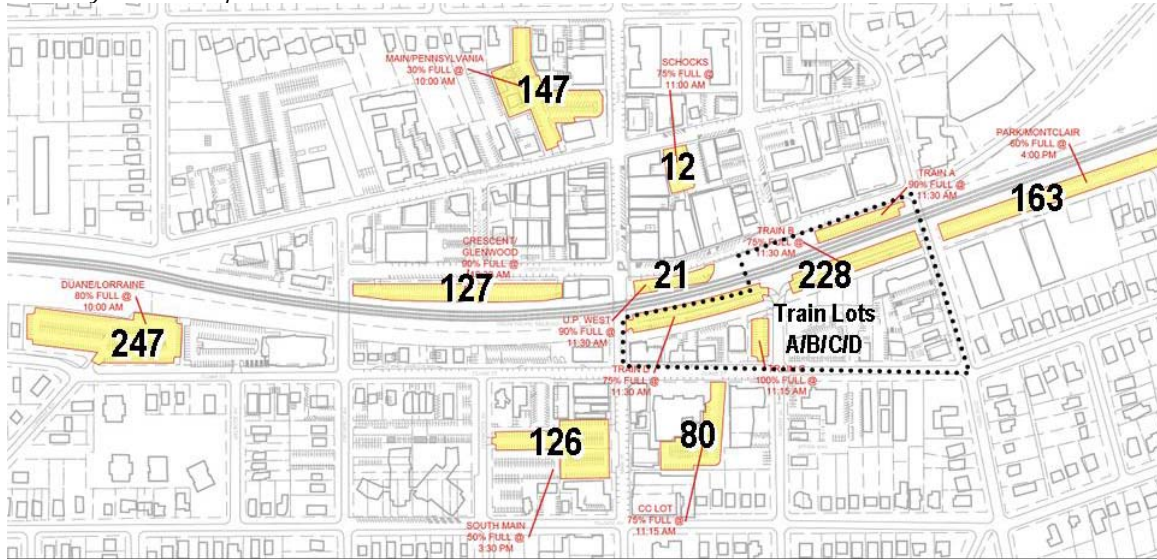
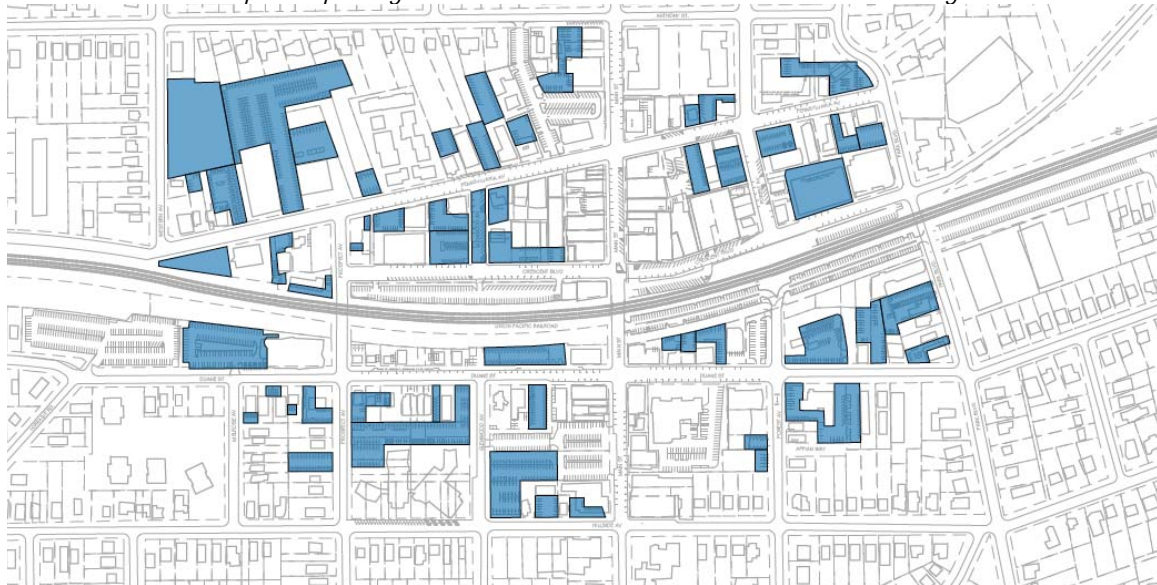


Figure 11: Private Parking

The private parking supply is more evenly distributed throughout the Downtown than the public parking. The largest concentration of private parking is located in the northwestern corner of the Downtown, servicing the DuPage Medical Clinic. There are 802 stalls north of the tracks and 663 stalls south of the tracks available for off-street private parking. Source: Town Builder Studios with Walker Parking Consultants.



Downtown Organizations

Current community-based organizations in the Village include the Glen Ellyn Chamber of Commerce, the Economic Development Corporation, the Downtown Glen Ellyn Alliance, and Go Downtown!

Glen Ellyn Chamber of Commerce

"The purpose of the Glen Ellyn Chamber of Commerce is to foster and promote the business and professional interests of Glen Ellyn and adjoining areas, and to promote the welfare of the Glen Ellyn Community." (Source: www.glenellynchamber.com)

Economic Development Corporation

"The mission of the Glen Ellyn Economic Development Corporation (EDC) is to provide an environment that is conducive for attracting and keeping business in Glen Ellyn." (Source: www.glenellynedc.com)

Downtown Glen Ellyn Alliance

The goal of the Downtown Glen Ellyn Alliance is "to increase foot traffic and sales in the central business district by planning events and heightening awareness and visibility of downtown Glen Ellyn as a destination for shoppers and diners." (Source: Downtown Glen Ellyn Alliance.)

The Downtown Glen Ellyn Alliance is funded by the Village of Glen Ellyn, Economic Development Corporation, central business district merchants, and the Chamber of Commerce. A commitment to fund the Downtown Glen Ellyn Alliance was made for a temporary period of 2006 through 2009, with an option to extend its funding and responsibilities thereafter.

Go Downtown!

"A resident-based organization dedicated to celebrating and supporting Glen Ellyn's historic downtown commercial district." (Source: www.downtownglenellyn.com)

The passion for the Downtown is evidenced by the number of Downtown organizations and volunteers. Consideration should be given to merging organizations and focusing communication, event programming, and marketing efforts for the betterment of Downtown Glen Ellyn. Cheerleading for the future of the Downtown is a must.