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Civic Spaces and Events

Overview

According to the “Market Analysis and Strategic Action Plan for Downtown Glen Ellyn”, until more people are brought into the Downtown more often, the business growth needed to motivate private investments to property and business expansion is expected to be challenging. A stronger emphasis should be placed on bringing more frequent and more exciting events and programs into the Downtown, and that all activities be well-coordinated and the Downtown business community.

Public uses (along with retail and residential uses) are a minimum requirement of a Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)¹. The general distribution of the three basic uses in an employment-based TOD such as Downtown Glen Ellyn is 30-70% core/employment, 20-60% housing, and 5-15% public.²

Public uses include parks, plazas, greens, public buildings, and public services. In addition to a larger community space at the heart of the core area, smaller parks and plazas must be provided in the surrounding residential neighborhoods to meet the local population’s needs.³

Prairie Path Park

Prairie Path Park is located along the south side of the Illinois Prairie Path, between Forest Avenue and Park Boulevard. It is slightly less than a ½-acre in area, with a gazebo, park benches, a small pathway of its own, and landscaping.

Volunteer Park

Volunteer Park is located at the southwest corner of Pennsylvania Avenue and Prospect Avenue. It is slightly less than a ¼-acre in area, with hardscaping, plantings, a bicycle sculpture, a drinking fountain, park benches, etc.

¹ A Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) is a mixed-use neighborhood focused around a transit station. Downtown Glen Ellyn is an example of a TOD.

² Calthorpe, Peter. The Next American Metropolis: Ecology, Community, and the American Dream. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1993, pg 63.

³ Calthorpe, Peter. The Next American Metropolis: Ecology, Community, and the American Dream. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1993, pg 59.

Nearby Amenities

Although the following amenities are not included within this plan's study area, they do have an impact on the events and activities within the Downtown area.

Lake Ellyn Park

This 25-acre recreational amenity is tucked behind Glenbard West High School, and is host to events and activities such as the Fourth of July Fireworks, and the Cardboard Boat Regatta and ice skating on its 10-acre lake. The Boathouse on the shore of Lake Ellyn can be rented by individuals or groups. Its hall is 1,840 square feet in area and can accommodate seating for up to 120 people.

Memorial Park

This park is located south of Crescent Boulevard, north of the tracks, and east of Park Boulevard. In 2000, the Glen Ellyn Park District sold the park to the Village of Glen Ellyn, and in turn, sold it to the Glenbard Township High School District #87, where it now contains athletic facilities (soccer field, ball diamond, and tennis courts) for Glenbard West High School.

Civic Spaces in Other Communities

Other communities along the Metra rail lines have public parks and greenspaces near their depots. Sample communities include: Wheaton, Lombard, Hinsdale, Western Springs, Riverside, and La Grange – Stone Avenue.



Wheaton



Hinsdale



LaGrange – Stone Avenue



Riverside



Western Springs



Lombard

Source: maps.live.com

Events

The Downtown is the heart of the community, where gatherings and celebrations routinely occur, with food, beverages and fun activities for people of all ages. A few of the more popular events that were routinely mentioned during the early public participation process include:

Taste of Glen Ellyn. A popular event to attend by the community; however, most if not all restaurants and food vendors originate from outside of Glen Ellyn. Recommendation: Consider changing the format to include all Glen Ellyn restaurants, allow the Downtown restaurateurs to set up a vendor booth outside of their locations (to

allow the food to be prepared in the kitchen of the respective establishment, ensuring quality control; and to allow the patrons to stroll through the Downtown and remember the location of the restaurant so that he/she can come back and visit during the rest of the year). In addition, involve the culinary arts and hospitality students from the College of DuPage in this event. The students can serve as interns at the various restaurants, set up booths to sell their own culinary creations, and/or help organize the event itself.

Fourth of July. An event so big it has its own committee. Events include a parade, a picnic, and fireworks. Recommendation: Continue this annual celebration, and consider how the local businesses and restaurants can be more involved.

Jazz Fest. A very popular event in the Downtown, where Main Street is closed off between Pennsylvania Avenue and Crescent Boulevard and temporarily landscaped to add to the ambiance of the event, and four different jazz groups play. Recommendation: Continue to hold this festival, potentially expand it in the future to a multi-day event, and encourage 100% Downtown merchant participation by keeping their stores open during festival hours.



Jazz Garden (top left), "lounge" detail (top middle), standing room only crowd (top right), and the 2008 Jazz Garden landscape plan for Main Street (above). Source: www.jazzfestglenellyn.org.

Halloween Trick-or-Treating. A popular event for the children, and the parents who accompany their children to the stores return to the stores at a later date to shop for merchandise because they liked what they saw when they came into the store while trick-or-treating. Recommendation: Continue the tradition and consider handing out tricks-or-treats to the parents, including coupons to be used within seven days of the event, flyers with November and holiday specials, and/or bite-sized samples of the cuisine of the establishment.

Holiday Walk. The 2007 event included carolers, Santa, a Christmas Tree, and holiday lights. Stores and restaurants held later hours, exclusive Holiday Walk services, and specials through the end of the year. In addition, the Glen Ellyn Chamber of Commerce encouraged the community to shop and dine in the Downtown.

Event Listing. Village events are a big part of the community and many different organizations coordinate them, as evidenced by the following list:

Organization	Event	When Held
Chamber of Commerce	Taste of Glen Ellyn	May 16-18, 2008
	Halloween Trick or Treating	Saturday, October 25, 2008
	Holiday Walk	Friday after Thanksgiving
	Farmers' Market	May to October
	Jazz Festival	Fridays – 8:00 a.m. to noon
	Sidewalk Sale	Saturday, July 12, 2008 July 24-26, 2008
Downtown Glen Ellyn Alliance	Holiday Weekends (Santa, Carriage Rides, Gift Wrap)	After Holiday Walk until Christmas
	Ladies Night Out	Not Planned for 2008
	Music on Main	Not Planned for 2008
	Fire Muster	Not Planned for 2008
	Cicada Mania	Not Planned for 2008
Jaycees	Carnival	During the Taste of Glen Ellyn
The Glen Ellyn Lions Club	Glen Ellyn Festival of the Arts	August 23-24, 2008 (Lake Ellyn)
AAUW	AAUW Book Sale	May 1-3, 2008
Reid's Lemon-Aid	Reid's Lemon-Aid Ride for Research	April 19, 2008
	Reid's Lemon-Aid Stand	Not Planned for 2008
Coldwell Banker	Pet Parade	Fall
Library	Book Sale	March 14-15, 2008
	Harry Potter Book Release	Not Planned for 2008
Fourth of July Committee	Fourth of July Parade	July 4, 2008
	Fourth of July Picnic	July 4, 2008 (Lake Ellyn)
	Fireworks	July 4, 2008 (Lake Ellyn)
Park District	Cardboard Boat Regatta	June 28, 2008 (Lake Ellyn)
	Flea Market at Recreation Center	May 31, 2008
	Freedom Four Run	July 4, 2008
YMCA	Chase to the Taste 5K	May 17, 2008
Glen Ellyn Baseball	Baseball/Softball Parade	April 26, 2008
Glen Ellyn Bible Church	Student Ministries 5K Run	May 24, 2008

Summary of Key Recommendations

Below is a summary of the key recommendations of this chapter.

A stronger emphasis should be placed on bringing more frequent and more exciting events and programs into the Downtown, that all activities be well-coordinated with the Downtown business community – including ensuring the Downtown business community stays open during and after such events. More live music and a better farmers market were identified by shoppers who completed a “Short Merchant Survey” in April 2008. Other ideas include:

- Weekly Music Concerts
- Annual Summer Art Displays Painted by Members of the Community
Examples from other communities include painted turtles in Elmhurst (2007), decorated benches in Tinley Park (2007-08), and painted garden party sidewalk statues in Naperville (2008).
- Stand-Up Comedy, Comedy Sportz™, and/or Second City© touring troupes
- Downtown Juried Art Fair
- Musical Entertainment at Local Restaurants and Bars

Interviews suggest that consolidating the responsibility for event programming with resulting increased funding and accountability would be more effective than the current diffusion of responsibility among various entities. The Glen Ellyn Alliance was formed several years ago. Although the Alliance has accomplished several positive and highly-attended events, funding has been and continues to be a major concern that will limit the progress of this organization. Individuals operating their businesses have limited time to volunteer. Additional funding will allow for more events, and the potential for paid event planners to oversee the events. Merchants have the ideas, but have limited time to help those ideas become a reality.

The Downtown currently lacks an iconic gathering space for events and activities in the Downtown. At a minimum, investigate how to transform the Metra corridor into a greenway with appropriate lighting, landscaped walkways, safety elements, noise abatement measures, and public areas that improve the physical environment of the Downtown, and augments linkages within the Downtown and the Illinois Prairie Path. In addition, it is recommended that a central gathering place with a signature sculpture for the Downtown be identified and programmed, and incorporate it into the aforementioned greenway.

General Civic Space and Event Ideas

Whenever possible, a fountain, waterfall, or other running water display should be installed to add to the ambiance of the Downtown. Include seating nearby so passersby can sit down and enjoy the sights and sounds of moving water.

The College of DuPage represents a major source of programming and support for the Downtown. The College's Culinary Market should participate in future Taste of Glen Ellyn events. In addition a band shell/performance venue and local eating/drinking establishments are other potential outlets for the College.