

Appendix D:

Key Person Interviews

This Appendix section documents the results of the Key Person Interviews conducted by the Consultant Team as a part of Phase 1 of the Glen Ellyn Comprehensive Planning Program.

Confidential interviews were conducted with 21 individuals to discuss conditions and potentials within the Glen Ellyn community. Persons interviewed included residents, merchants, public officials, builders and developers, and representatives of local institutions. A list of interviewees can be found at the end of this Appendix section.

Interviews were conducted during the period March 9 through March 17, 2000. Each interview lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes. Each interviewee was asked a series of questions regarding the community.

Overall responses to key questions are summarized below.

It is important to emphasize that the interviews represent the personal opinions of a limited number of people within the community. They should not be interpreted as findings of fact or as conclusions and recommendations by the Consultant. However, the interviews do highlight: a) several locally perceived issues and concerns which should be addressed in the new *Comprehensive Plan*; and b) a number of assets and advantages which should be built upon and preserved in the future.

The interviews also helped guide and direct many of the background studies and analyses undertaken by the Consultant Team in Phase 2 of the planning program.

1. What kind of community is Glen Ellyn?

According to the interviewees, Glen Ellyn is a friendly, family-oriented community with a pleasant “small town” character and charm. It is stable, “livable,” and a good place to raise children. It is an attractive community, with tree-lined streets, well-maintained homes, distinctive neighborhood areas, and a historic Downtown area. It is neat and clean and has an abundance of park land and open space.

2. What do you believe are the primary assets and advantages of Glen Ellyn?

In addition to the assets and advantages mentioned above, interviewees cited Glen Ellyn’s excellent schools; high-quality public services; good parks and recreational facilities; the quality of the housing stock; a wide range of housing types and housing choices; a relatively low crime rate; warm and friendly residents; the presence of DuPage College and a number of churches; convenient regional location and commuter rail service; a responsive local government; and a spirit of cooperation and “volunteerism” among the local population.

3. What do you believe are the primary weaknesses or disadvantages of Glen Ellyn?

Most interviewees stressed that Glen Ellyn’s advantages far outweigh its disadvantages, and that its “weaknesses” only suggest the need for improvement and enhancement, *not* the need for major change within the community.

The most frequently mentioned “weakness” related to Glen Ellyn’s lack of a strong commercial tax base. Because of the continuing need to provide quality public facilities and services, a heavy tax “burden” must be placed on local residents.

A number of interviewees were also concerned about the potential impact of residential “tear-downs” on neighborhood character and housing diversity. Several individuals also mentioned the noise and traffic congestion caused by the large number of freight trains along the Union Pacific rail line as being a growing concern.

Other “weaknesses” included the viability and appearance of the Roosevelt Road commercial corridor; the proliferation of signs, including construction signs and political campaign signs; the condition of streets; the unattractive appearance of over-head utility lines; the perceived division between the north and south sides of the community; a sometimes difficult public approval process for new development projects; the divisive effect of multiple school dis-

tricts; and the lack of much “demographic diversity.”

4. Please share with us your ideas, comments and concerns about the following aspects of Glen Ellyn:

Residential Neighborhoods.

Most interviewees believed that Glen Ellyn’s neighborhoods are important community assets. The number and character of “tear downs” was the most frequently mentioned neighborhood concern. Many interviewees were concerned about the undesirable impacts of tear-downs, including the loss of affordable housing; the loss of homes with historic interest; the change in neighborhood character that sometimes occurs; and the fact that new homes are often too large and/or out-of-scale with nearby homes.

Other interviewees noted the positive aspects of residential redevelopment, including the overall upgrading of the Village’s housing stock, the removal of homes that have become too small or functionally obsolete, and the fact that new homes can enhance the value of surrounding properties. Several interviewees also noted the inherent right of each property owner to improve or upgrade their own property, and that these rights must be protected. Virtually all of the interviewees agreed that height, bulk and setback controls are required to control the character of “tear downs.”

Some concern was also expressed about the condition of housing in the area east of

355, and the fact that this residential area is so isolated from the remainder of the community. The condition of small homes along Duane Street just west of Downtown was also mentioned.

Multi-Family Residential Development. Most interviewees believed that a “range” of housing types is desirable and that compatible and attractive multi-family development is an important part of the Village. Several noted the need for additional senior housing and multi-family developments that would be attractive to “empty-nesters” desiring to remain within the Village. However, a few felt that Glen Ellyn now “had enough” multi-family housing and that additional developments were not desirable.

There were differences in opinion regarding multi-family development within and around Downtown. Many felt that Downtown was an ideal location for multi-family housing because of its proximity to shopping, services and public transportation, and the fact that this housing creates additional customer support for Downtown commercial uses. Others believed that recent multi-family developments have been too large, tend to create a “wall” between the commercial area and the adjacent neighborhoods, and add to the overall level of congestion within the Downtown.

Commercial Areas. All interviewees indicated that Glen Ellyn’s historic Downtown is an

attractive and vital community asset that should be maintained and enhanced in the future. Several felt that the overall store-mix should be upgraded and that additional new national retailers should be recruited to complement the large number of local merchants within the area. Some were concerned about the number of vacancies. Other suggestions included additional community events and activities to “showcase” the Downtown, and improvement of the “back sides” of commercial buildings.

Most interviewees felt that the Village is continuing to make progress in the Roosevelt Road commercial area. Several cited Baker Hill as a major new addition, and several also noted the Village’s on-going sidewalk, lighting and “street-scape” improvement program. However, several interviewees were concerned about the mix of businesses along the street, the number of vacancies and “turn-overs,” and the appearance of some commercial properties. Several also believed that Roosevelt Road creates a “split” between the north and south portions of the community.

Several interviewees suggested that the “five-corners” commercial area could be improved and expanded as a neighborhood service area in the future.

Traffic Circulation. While most interviewees believed that traffic was quite heavy during certain times of the day, most felt

that conditions in Glen Ellyn were “no worse” than other communities and that traffic does not represent a major community-wide concern. Specific locations where concerns were cited include Roosevelt Road, the “five-corners” intersection, and the Downtown area, particularly near the Main Street railroad crossing. Several individuals also highlighted the need for safer and more clearly marked pedestrian crossings, particularly within the Downtown. A few interviewees suggested improved walkways and bike-ways to reduce the number of auto trips within the Village. One individual expressed concern regarding the possible widening of Route 53 and whether it is needed now that I-355 is in place.

Parking. There were differences in opinion regarding Downtown parking. Several interviewees noted a shortage of parking spaces. However, others believed that there is an adequate overall supply, but that parking spaces may not be conveniently located to serve some of the stores and shops. While some interviewees were not in favor of a new parking deck within the Downtown, others believed that an attractively designed parking structure as part of a new “mixed-use” development project might be appropriate.

Several interviewees also cited parking around Glenbard West High School as a concern, where students park on residential streets in the

neighborhoods adjacent to the school.

Public Transportation. Most interviewees noted commuter rail service as a major community asset, although a few expressed the desire for a more attractive commuter station. Several felt that bus service should be improved, and were concerned that Pace may have plans to eliminate some of the existing routes. A few interviewees also noted the increasing need for special transit services to serve senior citizens and others with special transportation needs.

Parks and Recreation. Most interviewees noted parks, recreation and open space as a major community asset. Village Links and the Prairie Path were cited as important attractions. Recent acquisition of the Maryknoll property was commended. Park and open space suggestions included a new park south of Roosevelt Road, new walkways and pathways along the river, and the need to improve or enlarge the Links clubhouse for year-round use. Several of the interviewees expressed concern that there is “overlap” between the Village and the Park District, and suggested that all local parks should perhaps be under the jurisdiction of the Park District. One individual noted that since open space is limited, the community must continue to improve and enhance existing parks and recreation areas.

Schools. Most interviewees noted schools as an important community asset. Several cited

the importance of continued cooperation between the park, school and Village administrative bodies. A few cited the multiple school districts as a concern and expressed the desire for a single, consolidated school district serving the entire Glen Ellyn community.

Fire and Police Protection. Most interviewees considered fire and police protection to be very good. The volunteer Fire Department was cited as a special source of community pride. A few individuals suspected that the Police Department might be understaffed, and that additional personnel might be needed. It was also suggested that on-the-street police personnel be stationed in the Downtown to assist with traffic and directions, and to ensure a safe and comfortable environment. One interviewee also suggested that emergency calls be answered locally rather than be routed through the county.

Library. While all interviewees felt that the construction of the new Library was an important addition to the community, several expressed the feeling that the size, scale and/or architectural design of the new facility were not in character with the surrounding community.

Public Utilities and Infrastructure. Most interviewees cited aging public infrastructure as an ongoing concern within Glen Ellyn, but most felt infrastructure needs are being adequately addressed by the Village. The condition of streets

was a frequently mentioned concern, and snow removal was also cited as a concern by a few individuals.

Community Appearance. Most interviewees indicated that Glen Ellyn's attractive appearance is one of the community's most important distinguishing characteristics. The historic Downtown, tree-lined streets, topography, attractive neighborhoods, and the large amount of park land and open space were all cited as special assets. A few persons noted the appearance of Roosevelt Road as a continuing concern, although a number of improvements have been made. Several expressed a concern that new development, particularly "tear downs" and new multi-family housing, may have a detrimental affect on community appearance if it is not carefully monitored and controlled.

5. Are there any specific geographic areas or "hot spots" that you believe require special attention as a part of the new Comprehensive Plan?

The most frequently mentioned "hot spots" were Downtown and Roosevelt Road. A few interviewees also mentioned "five-corners," the area east of I-355, and the adjoining unincorporated areas. One individual mentioned "anywhere" that new open space could be obtained.

6. What do you consider the single most important issue confronting Glen Ellyn today?

The most frequently mentioned responses related to: a) the need to resolve the "tear down" issue in a manner that will maintain neighborhood character; b) the need to ensure the continued health and viability of Downtown; c) the need to upgrade aging infrastructure; and d) the need to promote new commercial development.

Other responses included the condition and appearance of Roosevelt Road; the need to improve parking in the Downtown and around Glenbard West High School; the need to unite the north and south sides of the community; the need to work with the railroad to reduce noise and congestion; and the need to acquire new open space.

7. If you had the power to undertake one project or improvement, what would it be?

While a wide range of projects and improvements were mentioned, the most frequently noted were: a) construction of a new "mixed-use" project within the Downtown which includes retail space, housing and parking; b) community-wide upgrading of streets, sewers and other infrastructure; and c) redevelopment of marginal properties along Roosevelt Road.

Other projects included preservation of existing open spaces; development of a new youth center; construction of a new commuter station; construction of an overpass or underpass at the UP rail tracks; improved linkages between Downtown and Lake Ellyn; the "re-freezing" of Lake Ellyn; new commercial development at the I-355/Roosevelt Road interchange; the upgrading of "five-corners;" and the clean-up of older, declining apartment developments.

Other suggestions included joining the National Trust's Main Street Program; a study of the feasibility of "no-fee" parking throughout Downtown; and "do something" with the vacant property at Western and Pennsylvania.

Other Issues and Concerns:

Other issues, concerns and suggestions mentioned during the key person interviews included the increased level of noise from air traffic; noise from I-355 and the possible need for noise buffers; support for the flower clock; opposition to the flower clock; the need for more emphasis on historic preservation; the need for cooperation with and support of local churches; regret that residents can no longer ice skate on Lake Ellyn; and the need for a more comprehensive and long-range policy for annexation.

List of Persons Interviewed:

Arthur W. Angrist, Village President,
1989-93; long-time resident

Marc Cella, Developer/Property
Owner

Donald H. Fischer, President,
Community Bank of Wheaton/Glen
Ellyn

Mike Formento, Village President,
1981-88; County Board member

Stephen Garwood, Chairman,
Capital Improvements Commission

Peter Lee, Youth recreation,
resident

Leland Marks, Chairman, Historical
Sites Commission

Patrick Melady, Trustee;
businessman; property owner

Matt Pekarek, Director of Links CC

Janice and Jerry Perkins, long-time
residents

Phyllis and Lloyd Renfro, Trustee,
long-time residents

Michael Stahelin, Developer;
property owner

Stuart Stone, Glen Ellyn Volunteer
Fire Company Chief

Darrell Stremmer, Chief Executive
Officer, DuPage Medical Group,
Ltd.

Howard Thiele, Police Chief
(retired)

Robert E. Wahlgren, President,
Bridge Communities

Joe E. Wark, Village President

Brad Webb, Roosevelt Road
businessperson, EDC

Raymond J. Walen, Building Board
of Appeals; builder; long-time
resident

