



## **Village of Morton Grove Economic Development Strategic Plan**

*The mission of the Morton Grove Economic Development Commission is to advise the Village Board regarding matters related to the Village's economic environment and its quality of life. This proposed Strategic Plan has been prepared by this Commission in order to establish goals and strategies to improve our local economic climate. The Plan has been written recognizing that local economic development requires ongoing efforts and flexibility to adapt and respond to regional, national, and global changes.*

*This Plan includes a time-frame for the reasonable implementation of these goals and strategies. The anticipated time periods include:*

- *Short-Term (less than 2 years)*
- *Mid-Term (2 to 8 years)*
- *Long-Term (more than 8 years)*
- *Ongoing (present to future)*

*This Plan is intended to be a living document that is reviewed and updated from time-to-time.*

### **Vision Statement**

Morton Grove is a vibrant community that has a balanced mix of residential neighborhoods, open space for public recreation and enjoyment, stable industrial districts that provide employment opportunities and attractive commercial corridors that provide a robust blend of consumer goods and services to residents and others from the trade area. This mixture of land uses results in an outstanding quality of life for residents and creates an environment where businesses can prosper.

### **Overview of Economic Goals**

1. retain, expand and attract commercial and industrial businesses
2. promote general economic development and business growth
3. expand municipal revenue sources
4. redevelop commercial corridors to restore viability as shopping districts

# **Economic Goals and Strategic Objectives**

## **Goal 1 – Retain, expand and attract commercial & industrial businesses**

**Strategy 1.1** – promote awareness of existing businesses to residents and other customers in the trade area

- a. hold an annual business-to-consumer expo (Ongoing)
- b. conduct business visits on a regular basis to promote good relations (Short-Term)
- c. distribute annual listing of business license holders to residents and businesses via internet and/or print (Short-Term)
- d. seek business involvement at New Resident Receptions and other community events (Short-Term)
- e. provide new residents with small gift basket with coupons & promotions from local businesses (Short-Term)
- f. encourage residents and school children to “shop locally” (Mid-Term)

**Strategy 1.2** – encourage the retention and creation of permanent jobs paying a living wage

- a. encourage businesses to remain in Village by helping to meet their needs (Ongoing)
- b. be responsive to concerns of large employers (Short-Term and Ongoing)
- c. promote the educated and skilled workforce in and around Morton Grove (Ongoing)

**Strategy 1.3** – welcome business owners and managers as part of the community

- a. send “welcome” letter to new businesses (Short-Term)
- b. recognize significant awards and events of local businesses (Mid-Term)
- c. host annual roundtable meeting with business owners to discuss the local economy and related concerns (Short-Term)

**Strategy 1.4** – attract anchor businesses to each commercial corridor and redevelop large shopping centers to attract a synergistic blend of anchors, junior anchors, and small shops that create a shopping destination for consumers from the northern suburbs and beyond

- a. Maintain open communication with business and property owners (Ongoing)
- b. research companies that are looking for sites (Short-Term)
- c. identify preferred types of anchors that could fit on the available land including mid-sized grocery stores, home good stores, and professional tenants (Short-Term)
- d. advise expanding companies of the advantages of Morton Grove (Short-Term)
- e. create community vision for each major shopping center and each commercial corridor (Mid-Term)

*Goal 1 continued on next page.*

## **Goal 1 – Retain, expand and attract commercial & industrial businesses**

**Strategy 1.5** – consider revenue-sharing agreements for large commercial businesses that have the potential to attract consumers from within and beyond the Village.

- a. incentives only to highly desirable and highly beneficial businesses (Ongoing)
- b. incentives to be based on a win-win outcome (Ongoing)
- c. incentives considered on a case-by-case basis (Ongoing)

**Strategy 1.6** – consider incentives and parking variations to attract new restaurants

- a. consider changes to zoning code to allow flexibility in parking requirements for small businesses and small restaurants (Short-Term)
- b. encourage restaurant owners to participate in local restaurant shows (Short-Term)

**Strategy 1.7** – attract new industrial companies

- a. conduct study to evaluate the competitive strengths of existing industrial businesses (Mid-Term)
- b. seek out businesses that operate in the same competitive sectors (Mid-Term)
- a. seek out businesses that operate in growing industrial sectors such as technology and bio-technology (Mid-Term)
- b. work cooperatively with state and regional industrial groups (Ongoing)

**Strategy 1.8** – consider future redevelopment preferences for industrial sites vulnerable to change

- a. update Village Comprehensive Plan every 10 to 15 years to reflect these preferences (Mid-Term)

## **Goal 2 - Promote general economic development and business growth**

**Strategy 2.1** – increase communication and cooperation between governmental units and Morton Grove Chamber of Commerce

- a. increased communication between Village, school districts, library, park district, and MGCCI (Short-Term)
- b. improved relationship with Forest Preserve District, Metra, and Pace (Short-Term)
- c. notify MGCCI of new businesses (Short-Term)
- d. attend and participate in MGCCI and multi-chamber events for northern suburbs (Short-Term)

**Strategy 2.2** – improve the image of Morton Grove as being supportive of businesses

- a. provide consistency in rules, regulations and fees (Mid-term)
- b. create a “user-friendly” summary of rules, regulations, and fees (Mid-term)

*Strategy 2.2 continued on next page.*

## **Goal 2 - Promote general economic development and business growth**

### **Strategy 2.2 – continued**

- c. allow license renewal electronically (Mid-Term)
- d. allow fees and fines to be paid electronically (Mid-Term)
- e. simplify business license process (Short-Term)
- f. coordinate dates for liquor, business, contractor, and alarm license renewals (Short-Term)
- g. expedite commission review process (Mid-Term)
- h. provide annual awards to outstanding businesses that have recently remodeled, expanded or otherwise made a notable contribution to the local economy and quality of life (Mid-Term)
- i. conduct survey of local businesses to collect their viewpoint (Mid-Term)
- j. provide quarterly newsletter and other “friendly” community information to business owners and managers (Short-Term)
- k. provide simplified handouts to answer common business-related questions (Mid-Term)
- l. customer service to be “friendlier” and responsive (Short-Term)

### **Strategy 2.3 – update ordinances to provide clear and unobstructive regulations for businesses**

- a. review commercial regulations (Short-Term)
- b. review industrial regulations (Short-Term)
- c. review size limits and other aspects of the Sign Code that hinder businesses (Short-Term)
- d. review business licensing requirements & fees (Short-Term)
- e. reduce processing time for business tenants, especially “special uses” (Short-Term)

### **Strategy 2.4 – consider all available tools to promote local economic development**

- a. identify areas where Tax Increment Financing (TIF) might be considered (Mid-Term)
  - a. possibly commercial corridors and aged shopping centers in need of revitalization
- b. identify areas where Special Service Areas (SSA) might be considered (Mid-Term)
  - a. possibly commercial corridors in need of annual maintenance
- c. identify areas where Business Improvement Districts (BID) might be considered (Long-Term)
- d. identify areas where revenue-sharing agreements might be considered (Ongoing)
  - a. possibly for large retailers in commercial zoning districts
- e. Identify areas where façade improvement programs could be implemented (Short-Term)
- f. identify areas where property-tax incentives might be considered (Ongoing)
  - a. possibly industrial districts and historic structures in need of restoration to offset rising real estate taxes on properties that have been recently improved

### **Strategy 2.5 –provide goods and services to Forest Preserve users**

- a. seek a bike rental facility or bicycle shop near the forest preserve. (Mid-Term)
- b. Seek a small restaurant/café for a location convenient to the forest preserve trails (Mid-Term)
- c. Seek input from Chicagoland Bicycle Federation & similar user groups (Mid-Term)

*Strategy 2.5 continued on next page.*

## **Goal 2 - Promote general economic development and business growth**

### **Strategy 2.5 – continued**

- d. Promote the mega-picnic site to outside groups (Mid-Term)
- e. Investigate gaining preferred status for local caterers for events in the forest preserve (Mid-Term)
- f. Investigate mobile food vendors (trucks and carts) to serve forest preserve users (Mid-Term)

### **Strategy 2.6 – promote environmental sustainability and commercial recycling**

- a. encourage businesses to recycle and to share disposal services (Mid-Term)
- b. encourage recycling on construction sites (Mid-Term)
- c. allow scrap dealers to pick up re-usable trash prior to collection (Short-Term)
- d. provide zoning incentives for “environmentally-friendly” site improvements (Short-Term)

### **Strategy 2.7 – craft an updated “image” of Morton Grove as a destination for new businesses and new families**

- a. Select marketing slogan; examples include “we’ll take you everywhere”, “in the middle of everywhere”, “your destination to everywhere”, or “positioned for progress” (Mid-Term)
- b. Market Morton Grove to new residents & businesses (Short-Term)
- c. Install unique identity markers at Village entrances (Mid-Term)
- d. Prepare brief video to promote Morton Grove (Mid-Term)
- e. Establish internet presence to promote Morton Grove (Short-Term)
- f. Promote Morton Grove to realtors (Short-Term)
- g. Create a unique social event (arts, music, etc.) that establishes a creative and family-oriented impression of Morton Grove throughout the region (Mid-Term)

### **Strategy 2.8 – distribute up-to-date information to prospective businesses via the internet and in print**

- a. Keep website up-to-date with economic development information (Ongoing)
- b. Distribute brief questionnaire to solicit business input, suggestions, concerns (Short-Term)
- c. Maintain database of real estate contacts mailing information & email addresses (Short-Term)
- d. Distribute marketing information to prospective businesses and investors (Short-Term)

## **Goal 3 - Expand municipal revenue sources**

### **Strategy 3.1 – increase the property tax base by encouraging reinvestment in appropriate locations in the commercial, industrial, and mixed-use districts**

- a. establish and maintain relationships with commercial and industrial realtors and brokers (Ongoing)
- b. Consider multi-story buildings on commercial and industrial parcels to maximize tax base (Ongoing)

*Goal 3 continued on next page.*

## **Goal 3 - Expand municipal revenue sources**

### **Strategy 3.2 – increase sales tax generated by businesses**

- a. implement “shop local” program to residents to increase awareness of local businesses (Mid-Term)
- b. allow businesses to advertise and promote more effectively (Short-Term)

### **Strategy 3.3 – increase revenue generated from business and industrial fees**

- a. monitor all businesses, including home-businesses to ensure they are properly licensed (Short-Term)
- b. Consider raising license fees, as necessary to offset staff costs (Mid-Term)
- c. establish fines and late penalty for failing to secure required licenses (short-term)
- d. consider licensing large-events in the Forest Preserve (Mid-Term)

### **Strategy 3.4 - seek outside funding for community projects from federal, state, county, township, and private sources**

- a. maintain consistent communications with legislators who have potential access to funding (Ongoing)
- b. annual updates to legislators to raise awareness of local goals and projects, and accomplishments (Mid-Term)
- c. seek out private and public grants (Ongoing)
- d. pursue grants in cooperation with local school and park districts (Ongoing)

### **Strategy 3.5 - promote businesses that attract customers from outside the Village**

- a. provide space on Village website to promote local businesses that demonstrate extraordinary marketing efforts (Short-Term)
- b. include “business brief” on website and newsletter (Short-Term)
- c. display “business brief” on Village cable television channel; to raise awareness of unique businesses, not merely advertisement (Mid-Term)
- d. issue press release to local and regional media outlets (Mid-Term)
- e. give annual award to recognize outstanding businesses (Short-Term)

### **Strategy 3.6 – create a recognizable theme to our shopping districts and commercial corridors**

- a. identify retail theme or niche; examples include: recreation, medical equipment or professionals, ethnic foods and goods (Mid-Term)
- b. install planters, banners, signage or similar features to establish a “unified” appearance to commercial districts (Mid-Term)

## **Goal 4 - Redevelop commercial corridors to restore viability as shopping districts**

**Strategy 4.1** – promote property assembly along Dempster Street and Waukegan Road in order to attract larger businesses

- a. provide grants or low-interest loan to encourage property assembly in commercial corridors (Mid-Term)
- b. provide zoning or signage incentives to larger parcels (Mid-Term)
- c. restrict re-use of small outdated parcels (Mid-Term)
- d. consider re-zoning residential parcels adjacent to commercial parcels with owner consent (Long-Term)

**Strategy 4.2** – acquire strategic parcels for future land assembly

- a. acquire small strategically-located parcels when available (Ongoing)
- b. maintain strong financial position so that loans or bonds can be easily issued (Ongoing)

**Strategy 4.3** – improve parking along Dempster Street corridor

- a. provide public parking lots that are conveniently located, easily accessed, and prominently identified (Ongoing)
- b. provide zoning incentive for shared parking among neighboring properties (Short-Term)
- c. provide alley improvements or use-agreement for shared parking purposes (Short-Term)
- d. install coordinated signage to identify public parking lots (Short-Term)
- e. notify businesses about the public parking lots (Short-Term)
- f. notify residents of the new parking lots (Short-Term)
- g. provide coordinated signage that directs shoppers to available parking (Mid-Term)

**Strategy 4.4** – establish a rotating, seasonal banner program along commercial corridors to promote local events and local businesses

**Strategy 4.5** – promote façade improvements of outdated buildings

- a. provide grants that encourage business owners to remodel the exterior of the building; consider up to 50% of exterior improvements not to exceed \$50,000 per building per year (Short-Term)
- b. establish no-interest improvement loan that is repayable when building is sold; consider maximum amount to be \$100,000 per building per year (Mid-Term)
- c. advise businesses of the façade improvement program (Short-Term)

**Strategy 4.6** – improve or vacate public alleys that serve commercial corridors

- a. include alley improvements in near-term capital improvement program (Mid-Term)
- b. vacate commercial alleys that are not used by the general public (Short-Term)

*Goal 4 continued on next page.*

## **Goal 4 - Redevelop commercial corridors to restore viability as shopping districts**

**Strategy 4.7** – consider establishing a special service area (SSA) and all alternative means to improve streetscape along commercial corridors

- a. establish dialogue with affected business owners (Short-Term)
- b. prepare preliminary budget acceptable to business owners (Mid-Term)
- c. research other SSA's and determine what makes them successful (Mid-Term)
- d. define scope of work; possibly limited to maintenance and beautification (Mid-Term)
- e. seek agency and contractors to administer and provide services (Mid-Term)
- f. consider partial tax abatement to limit rising taxes on commercial owners (Mid-Term)

**Strategy 4.8** – vigorously enforce property maintenance requirements to prevent obsolete properties from becoming eyesores

- a. remind business and property owners about property maintenance requirements (Ongoing)
- b. establish clear regulations of minimum appearance standards to compliment property maintenance requirements (Short-Term)
- c. authorize Village to conduct necessary repairs and place lien on property (Short-Term)
- d. require owner to post name and contact number on all vacant buildings (Short-Term)
- e. require all vacant buildings to be registered as “vacant” with penalty for failure to comply, pending legal review (Short-Term)

**Strategy 4.9** – vigorously oppose property tax appeals on properties that are both vacant and obsolete.

- a. monitor tax appeals and seek legal council to register opposition to tax appeal (Ongoing)
- b. restrict businesses in receipt of local incentive from seeking appeal without express written approval from Village (Ongoing)
- c. create legislation to prohibit restrictive covenants that prevent or hinder the re-use of commercial property (Short-Term)

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