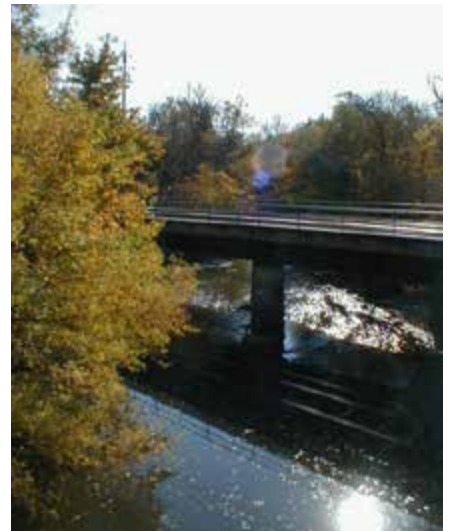


Village of Morton Grove

Strategic Plan

January 2015



Adopted by Resolution 15-08 on January 26, 2015

Executive Summary

The Morton Grove Strategic Plan serves as a framework for decision-making over a five year period, examining the current state of the Village while seeking to leverage the unique qualities and assets of the community.

The Strategic Plan is the product of extensive community outreach conducted through workshops, focus groups, meetings, interviews, and online interactive tools. These outreach efforts helped in preparing a responsive plan in tune with the distinct needs and aspirations of the Morton Grove community.

The Plan is organized into four Strategic Categories: Character, Community, Governance, and Economy. These categories represent the most vital areas of the Village's vision and organize the steps necessary to accomplish positive change and community improvement.

Each Strategic Category is further expanded into significant Strategic Goals which represent high level objectives for the Village as directed by the stakeholders themselves. The goals of the Plan demonstrate the check marks by which future Village actions can be measured.



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Special Thanks to the following for providing your ideas, suggestions, and concerns throughout this process:

Morton Grove Residents
Commercial Property and Business Owners
Village Employees
Village Board and Commission Members
Representative from Park District, School, and Library
Morton Grove Chamber of Commerce



Background

The Village is a diversified and balanced community of residential, commercial, and light to medium manufacturing and warehouse districts.

The Village of Morton Grove is comprised of 5.2 square miles in Cook County, Illinois. It is located approximately 13 miles north/northwest of Chicago's loop, and eight miles northeast of O'Hare Airport. The Village borders Glenview on the north, Skokie on the east, and Niles on the south and west. Interstate 94 is located in the eastern part of the Village and Interstate 294 is located three miles west of the Village. The Metra's Milwaukee District/North Line provides service from Morton Grove to Chicago and the Regional Transportation Authority's PACE buses connect the Village to surrounding suburbs, the City of Chicago, and O'Hare Airport.

English and German families first settled in Morton Grove in the 1830s and 1840s. Several decades later in 1872, the Milwaukee Railroad constructed rail tracks and a train stop in the area, which was soon named Morton Grove in honor of the railroad financier, and U.S. Vice President Levi Parsons Morton. Morton Grove was incorporated in 1895.

Between 1900 and 1930, the local economy depended on wholesale florist business. In the 1940s, Baxter Laboratories moved its headquarters to Morton Grove, which paved the way for other light industrial plants and research companies. Morton Grove experienced an increase in growth in the 1950s. Commercial, industrial, and residential development continued during the 1960s and 1970s.

The Village of Morton Grove is a home rule unit of government governed by a President and Board of Trustees that are elected at large for staggered four-year terms. Independently-elected boards govern the Park District and Public Library. The Park District operates and maintains over 73 acres of parks at 13 park sites offering varied facilities, ball fields and courts, outdoor swimming pools, field houses, and an historical museum. The Cook County Forest Preserve offers residents 400 acres of forest preserve, open space, a golf course, horseback riding, and cycling and walking trails within Village boundaries. Four elementary school districts and three public high schools serve the Village.



Brian Kabat

Introduction



A Strategic Plan is a high-level planning document aimed at providing guidance and operational direction for an organization.

The Strategic Plan (Plan) serves as a framework for decision-making over a five year period, examining the current state and resources of the Village, but more importantly, seeking to leverage the unique qualities and assets of the community. By understanding the issues, opportunities, and influences in the community, the Strategic Plan can effectively prioritize and address the challenges currently facing the Village in order to strengthen and grow Morton Grove.

Input gathered from community stakeholders helped to shape the Plan's vision of positive growth for the future of Morton Grove. The Plan examines this vision in relation to the mission of the Village and provides strategic goals and specific activities in order to make the vision a reality.

The Village of Morton Grove is charting a vision for its future. The Strategic Plan is designed to plot that course, providing direction and focus, aligning resources, and measuring the Village's progress in addressing its strategic issues. The Strategic Plan does not exist as a static document. As Morton Grove moves forward, the Plan will be continually assessed and adjusted to reflect the changing environment and evolving needs of the Morton Grove community.



Toward the end of 2013, the Village Board of Trustees established a Strategic Planning Steering Committee and organized executive staff and Department heads to provide input in the process. The Village retained the services of Houseal Lavigne Associates to bring their experience, expertise, and guidance into the endeavor. The highly-participatory process engaged all of Morton Grove, including residents, business owners, elected and appointed officials, students, and other internal and external stakeholders.

Strategic Plan Development Process

The Morton Grove Strategic Plan process provided an ideal opportunity to include residents and members of the business community in an important community dialogue. It was important that all residents had the opportunity to be heard and to know that someone was listening. It was this community dialogue that served as the foundation for the community vision and strategic plan.

Community involvement and feedback was essential throughout the entire planning process. Engagement became increasingly important in serving as a means of building community consensus, and helping to foster a sense of stewardship for the Village of Morton Grove.

The results of outreach and citizen participation activities have been incorporated into the Village's strategic planning process in an effort to maximize the ability and opportunity for residents to participate and provide the Village with their thoughts and insights.

Community Outreach & Engagement

The outreach and engagement activities identified below were conducted from November 2013 to March 2014.

Interviews

As part of the public outreach, several one-on-one confidential interviews were conducted with individuals to discuss their views regarding existing conditions and potentials within the Morton Grove Community. A diverse range of interviewees was selected to effectively represent the full spectrum of Morton Grove stakeholders. Interviewees included local businesses owners, non-profit representatives, elected and appointed officials, community leaders, and citizens who provided unique insights and understanding into the Morton Grove community. The interviews were conducted on November 29th and 30th, 2013.





Workshops

Workshops all followed a similar format, utilizing a four-part worksheet that focused on issues and concerns facing the Village of Morton Grove, along with the Village's key assets and positive attributes. Participants were asked to identify the most important issues facing the community and the actions they would like to see undertaken within the community. Finally, all workshop participants were asked to list the primary strengths and assets of the Village. Workshop responses were then categorized and synthesized into major categories. The following is a list of workshops conducted throughout the outreach process.

- Strategic Planning Committee Workshop
- Community Workshop
- Business Workshop
- Boards & Commissions Workshop
- Morton Grove Religious Leaders Workshop
- Student Workshops (3 workshops - elementary, middle, and high school)

Focus Group Workshops

Three Focus Group Workshops were held which provided a forum for targeted discussions on community issues and goals that were identified as among the most important based on the prior workshops and interviews. Focus Group Workshops were centered on the following topics: 1) Governmental Excellence and Innovation; 2) Community Life and Engagement; and 3) Economic Development. Although several issues and concerns facing the community are important, these three represented categories of concern that captured many of the issues identified throughout previous community outreach activities.

Questionnaires

Three questionnaires were posted on the project website, in order to obtain further insight regarding various aspects of the community. One questionnaire was intended for Village residents, another for Village business owners and/or operators, and a third for students. A total of 52 questionnaires were completed throughout the outreach process.

sMap

sMap, an interactive online mapping tool that allowed participants to highlight key issues and opportunities within the Village of Morton Grove. These ranged from key development sites and problematic intersections to the identification of community assets and needs for aesthetic improvements. The user-created maps were reviewed by the planning team and incorporated into the feedback gathered from other outreach activities. 85 points of interest and concern were identified throughout the community.

Demographics & Market Analysis

As part of the Strategic Planning process, a demographic and market analysis was conducted to define existing conditions, trends, and projections related to socioeconomics as well as Morton Grove's position within the context of the competitive market area. The demographic analysis examined all population and household information, including age, income, race, household size, and more. The market analysis examined development potential and market conditions related to residential uses, employment, retail, industrial, and office uses. This analysis resulted in the identification of influences, trends and opportunities within Morton Grove's market position in order to better align plan goals and recommendations.

Coordination with Concurrent Planning & Branding Initiative

In order to ensure consistency in Village goals and priorities, work on the draft Strategic Plan was extended to better coordinate the draft Plan with the recently completed Industrial Areas Plan and the data collection, research and analysis phase of the Branding Initiative. Recognizing significant overlap in many of the goals and implementation strategies, coordination between these projects is important to ensure that the documents did not result in conflicting or competing priorities.

Analysis & Interpolation of Data

Following the completion of the outreach efforts and coordination work with the concurrent planning and branding initiatives, the planning team comprehensively reviewed the research, the data collected from the community outreach efforts, and the information and recommendations generated from the Industrial Areas Plan and Branding Initiatives. The analysis

included tracking trends in the identified opportunities and challenges. These were then reviewed in the context of the frequency of the comments, the ability and/or appropriateness of such comments to be addressed by the Village government, and by natural groupings of commonly themed comments and data. This analysis process was critical to ensure that the goals and strategies developed are not only ones that target key community issues and opportunities, but also can be achievable within a five-year time frame and within the limits of the Village's resources.

While the planning team was careful to concentrate on goals and strategies that are within the purview of the Village government, there are some goals and recommendations that encourage, and may depend on, inter-governmental cooperation. These goals and strategies, deemed as priorities by the community, focused on community events and engagement as well as improvements to intergovernmental coordination.

An Appendix containing the full results from the Community Outreach and Engagement Process and detailed data and analysis is on file at Village Hall.



Mission Statement and Core Values



Mission Statement

The mission of the Village of Morton Grove is to provide high quality municipal services and public improvements in a fiscally responsible manner, while developing and supporting economic activities in order to preserve and enhance an excellent quality of life for the community.

Vision

Morton Grove is a diverse, family-friendly community known for its spirit, pride, aesthetics, and civic engagement. An outstanding quality of life for living, working, and playing is enhanced by excellent public services and is supported by an economic platform of attracting and retaining a diverse business community.

Core Values

Respect & Equity

We are proud of our diversity and recognize it as a community strength. We embrace and celebrate the contributions from all members of our multi-faceted community. We will treat all stakeholders with respect and equal opportunity.

Communication & Collaboration

We will listen to and be responsive to the concerns of all stakeholders. We will promote a culture of collaboration with residents, businesses, and other government agencies to achieve Village goals.

Innovation & Excellence

We will foster innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurship within our Village and will maintain the highest standards of quality, efficiency, and effectiveness in all respects.

Transparency & Fiscal Responsibility

We will ethically conduct Village affairs in a transparent environment and will hold ourselves accountable to the public for our actions and decisions. We will practice responsible financial management to ensure economic stability and growth.

Strategic Categories & Goals

Strategic Categories

The vision of the Village comes from the Village community itself. The various studies, workshops, interviews, focus groups, the market analysis, and research all coalesce into an understanding of what the Village currently represents and the Village's desire for the future.

Through thorough and detailed analysis of the research, community outreach data and information gathered through the complementary planning and branding initiatives, trends emerged in key issues and opportunities. These key issues and opportunities fell into four discernible strategic categories, which represent the most vital areas of the Village's vision and mission and include the steps necessary to accomplish desired growth and improvements to the community. These categories specifically demonstrate the most important components and tools to guide the future of Morton Grove, emphasizing areas of focus which the Village can maintain and improve to best serve and advance the community.

The identified Strategic Categories are:

- Character
- Community
- Governance
- Economy

Strategic Goals

The Strategic Goals are derived from the intersection of the Village's strategic opportunities and its *Core Values*. These Goals represent high level objectives for the Village aimed at achieving positive direction for the future as directed by the stakeholders themselves.

Given the unique composition of stakeholders and current challenges and opportunities the Village faces, *Strategic Goals* intentionally focus on what priorities need emphasis and which issues may be resolved in the future. The Goals of this plan are specific to the current conditions of the Village and projected changes in the years to come.

The Strategic Goals were crafted from a collaborative effort from a comprehensive group of stakeholders including residents, business and property owners, civic and religious leaders, elected officials, students, and other community members. This diversity of perspectives bridges cultural, economic, and social viewpoints. The ultimate goal is unified in the desire to bring positive growth to the Village of Morton Grove.



Strategic Categories Character



The Character of the Village is represented by the appearance and function of its infrastructure, including the aesthetic appeal of its residential neighborhoods, corridors, open space, and streetscapes. The Village is privileged with outstanding natural resources and the form and functionality of its infrastructure should complement that environment.

The Character Strategic Category is broken into the following Strategic Goals:

- **Maintain and enhance the appearance and aesthetics of the Village.**
- **Provide and maintain infrastructure appropriate to support expected service levels.**
- **Have municipal facilities that maintain high quality Village services.**



Strategic Goals - 1.1: Maintain and enhance the appearance and aesthetics of the Village.

An attractive community yields great rewards. A well-kept neighborhood enjoys a sense of community pride. Exteriors and signage can project the right personality for a business, whether it's quaint and warm, or modern and efficient. The Village can create conditions to establish a positive aesthetic appeal to its residential areas, commercial buildings, streetscapes, and corridors.

Managing the appearance of residential areas balances the sense of an attractive and maintained appearance with the individual sense of expression. Basic design guidelines and code enforcement policies are important components to maintaining a positive appearance. Also, establishing understandable and enforceable guidelines, codes, and standards – as well as communicating the underlying values of appearance to the residents - bridges the internal motivation of residential maintenance and the ability of code enforcement personnel to perform their duties.



Like residential areas, design and development guidelines for commercial areas contribute to an orderly appearance for businesses, streetscapes, and corridors as well. These guidelines should be developed to respect Morton Grove's various commercial corridors, and be differentiated for different commercial areas such as pedestrian-friendly developments near the train, concentrated office/manufacturing centers, and along the Dempster and Waukegan corridors. Sign codes will also be updated to align with an overall design strategy. The Village may also consider engaging in incentive programs to aid businesses with quickly incorporating the Village's overall design strategy. Similarly, communicating clear guidelines to the businesses, as well as rationale, is an important component for this strategy.

Strategic Goals - 1.2: Provide and maintain infrastructure appropriate to support expected service levels.

A core responsibility of municipal government is infrastructure. Streets, sidewalks, lighting, water mains, sewer lines, and other infrastructure components tend not to be a focus until a failure or outage occurs.

In order to provide needed government services, regular inventory, assessment, and maintenance is required. Identifying infrastructure assets reaching or exceeding their usable life-span allows the Village to proactively plan for the financial and resource impact of infrastructure maintenance, the anticipated service disruptions, and to find opportunities for maintenance confluence.

Infrastructure improvements should evaluate external drivers such as accessibility, safety, and regulatory compliance. Area flooding should also be a consideration when evaluating the impact of Village infrastructure improvements.

Although the majority of infrastructure items are core to basic functionality, the Village should align their supplementary infrastructure components to its strategic goals for service, aesthetics, and utility. Business and commuter parking, streetscaping, pedestrian and bike paths, community space, and other ancillary infrastructure items are valuable community assets and also require the necessary planning and maintenance in order to best complement the Village.

Strategic Goals - 1.3: Have municipal facilities that maintain high quality Village services.

Municipal facilities run the gamut from purely utilitarian establishments to community anchor sites that provide common public spaces for all citizens. A building's form, design, layout, and location can enable functional efficiency for the Village government. Therefore, it is valuable to critically consider how the physical municipal facilities interact with not only the government staff, but also to the citizens and community stakeholders.

A recent feasibility analysis has identified numerous issues with Morton Grove's Police Department facility. Outdated mechanical systems result in costly and unplanned system failures. Physical space deficiencies impact safe and effective police operations including prisoner holding and evidence storage. The Village Hall administrative services building, which share common physical and mechanical components with the police facilities, face similar operational deficiencies. Planned facility replacement will provide the Police Department and Village administrative services efficient operational capabilities as well as comply with modern regulatory requirements.

Ancillary items and facilities also need attention. Maintaining outdated mechanicals affect the facility quality and the energy efficiency of all municipal buildings. The upkeep of storage and transfer facilities, such as garages, the salt dome, or water towers, impact critical areas of constituency service and should be recognized as such.

Strategic Categories Community



The people, businesses, events, and amenities of Morton Grove establish the personality of the Village. This personality represents everything that is uniquely Morton Grove. The Village's identity distinguishes itself from other communities and creates a destination for families and businesses to establish themselves. The Village recognizes its own diversity that spans generations socially, ethnically, culturally, and economically. This diversity does not divide us – but strengthens our sense of community and transform mere events to celebrations and neighbors into friends.

The Community Strategic Category is broken into the following Strategic Goals:

- **Embrace diversity to promote a unified community.**
- **Foster meaningful constituent communications.**
- **Recognize and support community-based events.**
- **Promote community pride and identity.**



Flickr - Morton Grove Farmers' Market

Strategic Goals - 2.1: Embrace diversity to promote a unified community.

The Village of Morton Grove is strengthened by its diverse population. Ethnic, social, economic, cultural, generational, and ideological diversity create the fabric of the community. Rather than see these as dividing elements, the desire to promote and recognize this multi-faceted Village becomes a unifying strength.

Although the recent 2010 Census provided the Village with a demographic snapshot of its community, the Village can conduct a mid-cycle update to refresh its demographic statistics and analyze population trends. Statistics help the Village understand the constituency which they are serving as well as provide information to emerging businesses about the Morton Grove target market.

Cultural and ethnic diversity represent a special opportunity. The Village can consider engaging local cultural groups and organizations to identify ways to showcase their contributions in the context of the Village as a whole. The Village can also examine its existing schedule of community events and seek areas for showcasing the Village's diverse population and cultural offerings.

Staff training, official documents, outreach mediums, and language resources should reflect the Village's demographics. This recognition embraces the ideals of a representative government, and the Village should seek to engage all stakeholders across its demographic spectrum.



Strategic Goals - 2.2: Foster meaningful constituent communications.

Communication is a refining process. The work of government begins with listening to its constituents, and the feedback loop continuously improves the quality of service. Recognizing the needs and desires of the community directs the Village as it allocates resources, establishes initiatives, sets goals, and improves services. Engaging in regular communications is a normal component of Village operations.

The Village has many forums for soliciting constituent input and has utilized outreach surveys and town hall meetings for special projects. The Village can expand on this input effort by establishing formalized and regular community input meetings, feedback surveys, and customer service surveys. By defining regular opportunities for input across multiple mediums, Village constituents increase their engagement to the government and their community.

The balance of the feedback cycle requires the Village to not only establish informational resources, but also to disseminate information to the community. Regular forums can be held to educate constituents about Village operations or community affairs. The Village should continue to leverage and develop existing mediums such as paper and electronic newsletters, website, and video to ensure a well-informed community.

Strategic Goals - 2.3: Recognize and support community-based events.

The community events and attractions of Morton Grove are simultaneously its best-kept and least-kept secret. A community event, small or large, draws participation from within Morton Grove as well as visitors from outside the Village. Some events reach a broad audience, whereas other events appeal to a more niche target. Nevertheless, there is always something happening in Morton Grove.

It is recognized that the Village government has a limited part in the actual implementation of community events, as constrained by its role and purview. That role is fulfilled by the Village's municipal agencies, such as the Park District, Public Library, School Districts, social and civic organizations, business districts, and the local Chamber of Commerce. Establishing liaison relationships to these agencies and organizations creates a collaborative environment for creating and supporting events.

Within the scope of its abilities, the Village still has great power to support existing and emerging community events. The Village provides a degree of centralization for event organization and publicity. Use of space, public safety and Public Works resources, where appropriate, are unique Village assets which can be deployed to support community events. Also, the ability to leverage community demographic information places the Village in a special position to help develop or influence events to best serve the needs and interests of Morton Grove.

Strategic Goals - 2.4: Promote community pride and identity.

Morton Grove deserves to be proud of itself. It has been nationally recognized as a community for families and homeowner value. The Forest Preserve that bisects the Village complements the community's existing natural aesthetics. The education and Park programs consistently appeal to families looking for a community to call home. Morton Grove's business community recognizes the value of its location and loyalty of its residents.

The Village should continue to intentionally identify positive areas of uniqueness and strength, with particular attention to its commercial aspects. Marketing the positive qualities of the Village not only promotes a sense of community pride internally, but also generates an external appeal to prospective residents and businesses seeking to align themselves with the positive attributes of Morton Grove.

A community branding and identity initiative helps focus the positive Village assets and creates a rallying point for community pride. Minimizing the visual disparity of municipal assets and adhering to a consistent brand and design guideline further reinforces the sense of a deliberate and unified endeavor to promote Morton Grove.

Strategic Categories Governance



The citizens and stakeholders of Morton Grove expect their government to conduct business in an operationally-efficient, financially-responsible, and honest manner. Village governance addresses the desire and ability for the elected officials and Village staff to meet those ideals – and to surpass those expectations.

The Governance Strategic Category is broken into the following Strategic Goals:

- **Manage fiscal matters with a multi-year perspective.**
- **Support efficient legislative input.**
- **Collaborate with other government agencies.**
- **Improve operations for effective service.**



Strategic Goals - 3.1: Manage fiscal matters with a multi-year perspective.

The management of finite resources enables the Village to perform its work and serve its constituents. Resources devoted to one initiative constrain the resources to other, similarly worthwhile projects or initiatives. The leadership of the Village is expected to establish priorities and effectively manage the distribution of resources in order to best serve the community. Leadership focuses on strategic work and balances the need for near-term fixes and long-term solutions.

Incorporating a formal multi-year capital improvement plan (CIP) properly allocates resources for capital assets and infrastructure on a regular and predictable schedule. The CIP links the inventory, assessment, and usable life of capital assets to both financial and operational resources, such as staff alignment and simultaneous project management. The intent of the CIP is to proactively allocate resources to maintain capital assets and infrastructure at a quality level and minimize the emergency reaction of neglecting such assets past the point of its usable life.

Multi-year budgeting is the operational equivalent of a capital improvement plan. By assigning resource allotments to near- and medium-term initiatives, the Village can proactively manage its work and prepare for planned expenditures. This process also exposes to the Morton Grove constituents a near-term roadmap for planned projects, initiatives, and service improvements.



Strategic Goals - 3.2: Support efficient legislative input.

Village Boards and Commissions represent municipal work at its most basic - a devoted and voluntary service to better the Village. In addition to statutorily-required Boards, the Village also maintains several common-interest Boards and Commissions that focus on a variety of subject matters.

Both statutorily-required and common-interest Boards and Commissions serve a dedicated function and typically provide reports to the elected Board of Trustees regarding their activities. As the Village goals and priorities evolve, the missions of the Boards and Commissions may need to be redefined. As the Village periodically realigns itself strategically to the needs of its constituents, each Board and Commission shall be examined for organizational alignment in terms of its own mission and scope of responsibilities within the context of this plan.

Strategic Goals - 3.3: Collaborate with other government agencies.

Local governments do not stand alone - the Village of Morton Grove exist alongside the library, schools, and Park District, regional and county organizations, state agencies, and beyond. Although each organization or government unit has a defined mission, all share the concept of high-quality, cost-effective municipal service. Collaborative efforts and strategic partnerships amongst agencies represent opportunities to fulfill that shared concept.

Other agencies within Morton Grove such as the School, Library, and Park District share a common constituency with the Village government. Establishing regular information sharing sessions among local agencies provides an opportunity to share insights, express concerns, and identify solutions which will ultimately benefit the community.

The Village already participates in multi-jurisdiction collaborations, including consortium services, specialty task forces, and centralized dispatching. These joint efforts provide the Village with specialized services while responsibly managing costs. The Village should continue to identify and engage in multi-jurisdiction services where there is operational and strategic alignment. Maintaining positions of leadership or influence in these collaborations ensure Morton Grove and the Morton Grove community is properly represented and served.

The Village should continue to represent itself within the surrounding region. As noted, establishing a leadership position and regularly interfacing with adjacent communities proactively manages collaboration. The actions, initiatives, and policies of municipal neighbors may have an impact on Morton Grove or present opportunities for strategic partnerships to serve the public.

Strategic Goals - 3.4: Improve operations for effective service.

The clichéd notion of an overly-bureaucratic and inefficient government is rejected by Morton Grove. The management of organizational resources enables the Village to operate effectively in its service delivery to all members of the constituency. Adopting a practice of continual operation improvement internally will translate into excellence in service externally.

Morton Grove's reputation for lean staffing levels has not diminished its ability to serve the public. Nevertheless, an organization with limited personnel presents additional considerations. Responsibilities need to be appropriately distributed for managing risk and business continuity. Department cross-training maximizes the utility of available staff and reduces the risk of operation disruptions. Staff development, particularly in the areas of management and command, customer service, and operations ensures the organization is able to maintain pace with modern practices.

Organizational process audits should be conducted for identified elements of the Village Government. An organizational process audit is the analysis of a process or processes within the Village government to ensure the process is optimized with respect to the organization's structure and mission. Operational inefficiencies and redundancies need to be identified and minimized. The process audit also formalizes operation documentation for business continuity.

Strategic Categories Economy



The Village is inseparable from its local economy. A successful and thriving economy enables opportunities across the Village, provides a destination for residents and visitors, and synchronizes the energies of commercial and industrial businesses that call Morton Grove home. The Village recognizes untapped opportunities that still exists within its boundaries and is excited to engage those opportunities.

The Economy Strategic Category is broken into the following Strategic Goals:

- **Engage businesses with an emphasis on recruitment and retention.**
- **Leverage Village codes, policies, and programs to support business development.**
- **Focus redevelopment efforts on key commercial areas and sites.**
- **Establish a framework for a pedestrian-friendly commercial district.**



Strategic Goals - 4.1: Engage businesses with an emphasis on recruitment and retention.

The Village views its commercial and business entities as partners. In a narrow sense, businesses provide the community with services, goods, and sales tax revenue. However, in the broader perspective, businesses contribute to the Village's character; provide a destination for residents and visitors to enjoy the commercial aspect of Morton Grove; create employment opportunities; and deliver services that promote the opportunities of their customers. The Village desires to provide the best environment to enable the success of these valuable partners.

The Village maintains basic resources that are useful to potential businesses, such as available properties information, zoning classifications, or other municipal regulations. However, the Village also understands the culture and needs of its community and its ability to embrace certain businesses and business types. Marketing and communicating this message allows strategically-aligned businesses to recognize Morton Grove as the proper environment for their success. The proactive development of mutually-beneficial incentive programs can also provide additional opportunities for business recruitment.

Establishing an open and regular dialogue with existing businesses also promotes their commercial well-being. The Village can communicate specific legislative updates, upcoming programs, and initiatives that may impact businesses. In turn, the business community can communicate events, opportunities, and successes, as well as highlight needs and challenges the Village, in its authority, can address.



Strategic Goals - 4.2:
Leverage Village codes, policies, and programs to support business development.

The rules, regulations, and policies of the Village establish conditions for business development. These conditions can be designed to support growth and business initiative, or they can be designed restrictively, and inhibit development. Morton Grove must ensure its policies and codes align with these initiatives.

The Village Code guides business development processes and regulations for Morton Grove. The Village Code should be reviewed and updated to ensure desired levels and types of developments within various commercial districts are allowed, accommodated, and encouraged. The review would seek to minimize or eliminate process inefficiencies, outdated regulations or practices, and impractical requirements. Village operating policies existing outside the Village Code shall also be examined and updated to support business development.



Strategic Goals - 4.3:
Focus efforts for redevelopment on key commercial areas and sites.

Opportunities exist to improve key commercial areas or sites. Timing, financial considerations, or strategic value to community needs, provide impetus to the Village to align its resources for redevelopment efforts.

The distinct redevelopment needs of the community will compete for local focus. It is important for the Village to regularly identify and prioritize commercial areas and sites to prevent overextending resources. Independent market analysis, feasibility studies, and community input are tools to assist in shaping these priorities.

Commercial areas and sites present unique constraints and opportunities. Recruitment or financing programs can be targeted to the specific characteristics and desired outcomes for each redevelopment effort. Similarly, Village guidelines can be adjusted to suit the uniqueness of each area or site. Marketing campaigns should focus on promoting desired commercial alignment to the redevelopment efforts.

The East Dempster commercial area has been recognized as one such opportunity for redevelopment. An independent market analysis will provide the Village with an understanding regarding the site's potential. The characteristic of the area, including existing businesses, lot depths, speed of travel, parking considerations, and other traits, can direct the Village to tailor specific programs, guidelines, and marketing to support redevelopment efforts.

Strategic Goals - 4.4:
Establish a framework for a pedestrian-friendly commercial district.

The viability of a Village downtown area is an important element to the strategic character and community of Morton Grove. A downtown area can reflect economic interests, community lifestyles, local "culture", and creating a sense of place. Establishing a framework for a downtown area includes considerations for traffic, transportation and parking, visual appeal, pedestrian improvements, bicycle access, residential uses, safety, business locations and desired use, and marketing. The Morton Grove community has a desire for a downtown district. The Village's role is to understand these desires and to link them to reasonable and feasible market opportunities.

As with many economic development strategies, establishing a downtown framework begins with community vision and is executed through the cooperation and partnership between the local government and business community. The Village maintains a special task in bridging the community vision with market analysis and feasibility studies. Code, policy, and program updates targeted to a downtown concept, guide the attraction of the desired levels and types of development within this area. The Village can also structure financing programs to spur and encourage development investment.

Next Steps

Strategic Plan Process



The formation of this Strategic Plan is a significant milestone for the Village. The process continues with the all-important implementation stage.

The adoption of the Strategic Plan is not the end of the process, but rather, just the beginning. The Strategic Plan document establishes the Village's collective vision and strategic goals. The next steps are the on-going implementation process where Village leaders, stakeholders and staff work together to achieve the vision and goals. The implementation process includes the development and prioritization of action items and the allocation of resources necessary to achieve these goals.

Ongoing Monitoring & Evaluation

The Strategic Planning and Implementation process is dynamic and will continue to evolve with the community needs and desires. The Village leadership must regularly evaluate emerging opportunities and their impact on resources already devoted to defined Action Items. New opportunities, especially those in alignment with the Strategic Goals, may need to be engaged and re-prioritized. Village staff should report on the progress of the plan to the Strategic Plan Steering committee on a periodic basis. The Actions Items and associated work programs should be updated annually, ideally in conjunction with the annual budgeting process to ensure that the Village is making the best use of its limited resources in order to achieve the Strategic Goals.

Developing Action Items

Action items will be grouped and assessed in relation to the goal the tasks seeks to support. Each task will identify a projected timeframe, expected costs, responsible persons and performance measures. The implementation of the plan should be integrated in the work plans of the Village Administrator and key staff members.

Many of the Plan's Strategic Goals represent complex community priorities that will likely require the undertaking of multiple Action Items. Some of the Action Items will require sequential and incremental implementation, such as the need to undertake additional analysis or plan-making to further develop specific recommendations.



Conclusion



Measuring Success

Actions Items should be achievable, measurable, and specific. It is important to know if Morton Grove is having success with implementation, and whether or not the actions being undertaken are having the desired effect. For each Action Item, a metric, benchmark, and progress indicator should be developed. A metric is the thing being measured, a benchmark is the level that determines a goal has been reached, and a progress indicator determines if the Village is “moving the needle” in the right direction.

For example, for an effort to increase Metra ridership, the metric could be the number of Metra commuters boarding at Morton Grove; the benchmark might be a Morton Grove daily boarding number of 1,500 commuters; and the progress indicator could be that the number of commuters is increasing from year to year. Again, what are we measuring, what are we trying to achieve, and are we improving?

Regular progress reports should be prepared (annual reports at a minimum) to help monitor implementation success and provide on-going information to allow for the recalibration of resource allocation is necessary.

Moving Forward

The Strategic Plan is a snapshot of the current priorities of the Village. As goals are addressed and new opportunities arise, the Plan should be regularly evaluated. The Plan is a reflection of the community and shall evolve as the community moves forward.

