



# LYONS COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

March 2015



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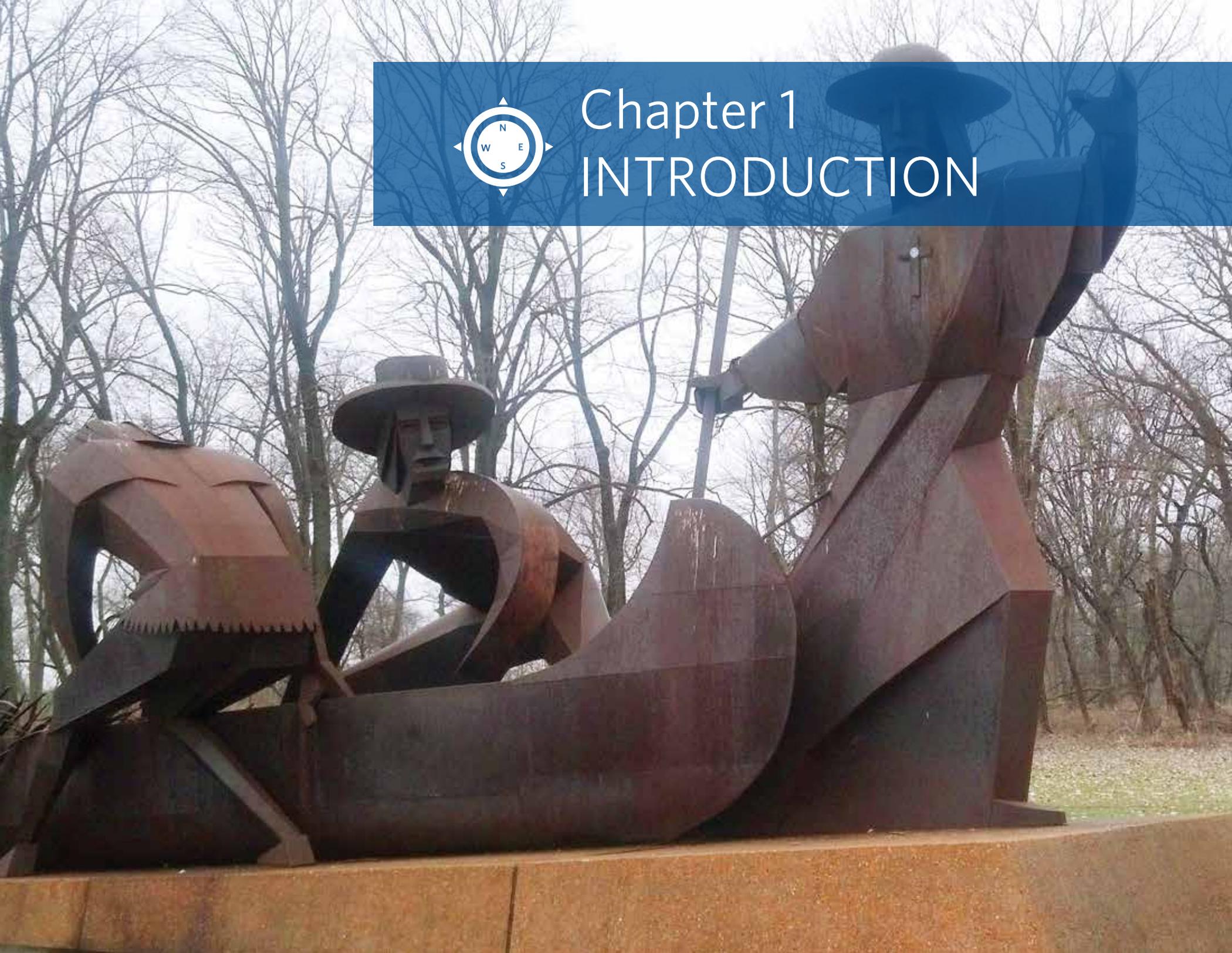


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# Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION





The Lyons Comprehensive Plan outlines the community's vision for its future and provides a roadmap to realizing that vision. The plan serves as a guide for elected officials, municipal staff, community residents, business owners, and potential investors, providing them with a framework for making informed decisions about development and future growth. The decisions made today and in the future will determine the physical appearance, economic well-being, and character of the village. This plan helps shape a cohesive, community-wide vision that builds on Lyons' recent planning initiatives, which primarily have focused on economic development and strategic planning. It integrates the recommendations of the previous and current planning initiatives and addresses issues that previous planning initiatives have not covered in detail, such as creating a pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly environment.

The Comprehensive Plan supports the Village's long-term goals of revitalizing commercial and industrial areas and creating a town center at the intersection of Ogden Avenue and Joliet Avenue. It recommends creating safe, vibrant, and pedestrian-oriented retail nodes along the Ogden Avenue commercial corridor, and suggests using strategies such as shared parking to allow for greater density of development and enhanced pedestrian circulation. For the implementation of its recommendations, the plan identifies specific action items and next steps, including prioritizing sites for redevelopment, effectively marketing sites to the development community, incentivizing redevelopment, and encouraging interagency collaborations in undertaking capital improvements. The implementation strategies the plan identifies are not meant to be a comprehensive list of actions by the Village and its partners, but provide suggested next steps that will help to bring the plan to reality.

# Background

The Village of Lyons, which was incorporated in 1888, is located in central Cook County, approximately 10 miles southwest of downtown Chicago. The strategic advantage of Lyons' location became evident during early European exploration of America. When French explorers Louis Joliet and Pierre Marquette were searching for a passage from the Great Lakes to the Pacific Ocean in 1673, the local Pottawatomie tribe advised them to cross a marshy, half-mile-wide strip of land that led them to the Des Plaines River near present-day Lyons. The crossing became known as the Chicago Portage, the first connection between shipping routes in the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River. The connection provided a western shipping route between the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of Mexico that was used by thousands of early settlers and traders traveling east and west.

A series of canals constructed across the portage beginning in the 1800s allowed direct navigation between the watersheds and helped drive the growth and industrialization of the Chicago region. The Illinois and Michigan Canal opened in 1848; the larger Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal replaced it in 1900 and remains a major shipping route.<sup>1</sup> The first stagecoach route from Chicago to St. Louis, Missouri, ran through Lyons as well, driving the establishment of taverns and trading posts as the Village's first businesses.<sup>2</sup> The railroad arrived in Lyons in 1864 as part of a line extending from Chicago to Aurora.<sup>3</sup> In 1908, prominent local brewer George Hofmann, Jr., constructed a dam on the Des Plaines River along with the adjoining tower, both of which bear his name. The Hofmann Tower was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1978. In more recent years, the Village's proximity to Chicago and location near major roadways has driven its evolution into a primarily residential community.

<sup>1</sup> Chicago History Museum. 2005. "Lyons, IL." In The Electronic Encyclopedia of Chicago. <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/770.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Kenneth Getty. 2011. "History of Lyons, Illinois." In Lyons. Presented at United Citizens Party Breakfast, October 15.

<sup>3</sup> Chicago History Museum. 2005.



## What is a Comprehensive Plan?

A comprehensive plan is an advisory document that is intended to guide the development of a community. It articulates the community's vision for future growth and provides a roadmap to achieving that vision. While a comprehensive plan is not a regulatory document, it is an extremely important tool for shaping the character of a community because it guides policy on a broad range of issues including transportation, land use, housing, economic development, and open space. It is the comprehensive plan that sets key land use policies and guides the preparation of land use regulations.

According to the Illinois Local Planning Assistance Act (Public Act 92-0768), a comprehensive plan should be composed of a series of distinct yet interrelated elements. Under the Illinois Municipal Code (65 ILCS 5/11-12-5(1)), a municipal plan commission is responsible for preparing and recommending a “comprehensive plan for the present and future development or redevelopment of the municipality.”

The Lyons Comprehensive Plan provides the Village with a general, flexible, and realistic guide for future improvements over the next 15 to 20 years. It offers a framework for preserving and enhancing community assets in the best interest of Village residents. Although it is a long-term document, it should be viewed as a flexible tool that can be adapted to changing conditions and updated at any time to match local needs, interests, or opportunities. It is recommended that the Village update its comprehensive plan whenever a change in conditions occurs, but not less than every five years.

## Why Does Lyons Need a Comprehensive Plan?

The purpose of the Lyons Comprehensive Plan is to help define—by establishing goals, objectives, and recommendations—how the Village should best manage land use, transportation, economic development, the natural environment, and vital services while accommodating future population and job growth. Lyons adopted a Comprehensive Plan in 1992, but the Village does not refer to it in making planning and development decisions. Rather, the Village relies on its ordinances, particularly the zoning ordinance and zoning map, to guide development. While Lyons' municipal codes have been effective in guiding development, the current zoning ordinance and zoning map have been amended several times. The result has been a set of documents that are now difficult to administer and insufficient for contemporary development needs. A plan that is more than twenty years old cannot reliably provide adequate guidance for land use and development decisions.

Over the last 30 years, Lyons has experienced several challenges that have affected its development character, economy, and social fabric. To respond to these challenges, the Village has undertaken a number of initiatives, including the development of new housing, revitalization of the commercial areas, and the improvement of aging infrastructure. While these initiatives are invaluable, they have mostly been targeted at specific issues rather than a broader strategy as outlined in a comprehensive plan. A new plan will provide a comprehensive framework for making strategic decisions about development and policy that advance a current vision for Lyons.

# Planning Process

Creating the Lyons Comprehensive Plan consisted of multiple steps over the course of approximately one year. The process was crafted with the assistance of Village officials and staff and was designed to include the input of Village residents, business owners, and other stakeholders. Figure 1.1 shows the key stages of the planning process and the project timeline.

# Core Elements of a Comprehensive Plan

- Land Use
- Transportation
- Housing
- Economic Development
- Natural Environment
- Implementation Strategies

**Figure 1.1 Planning Process**



Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning.



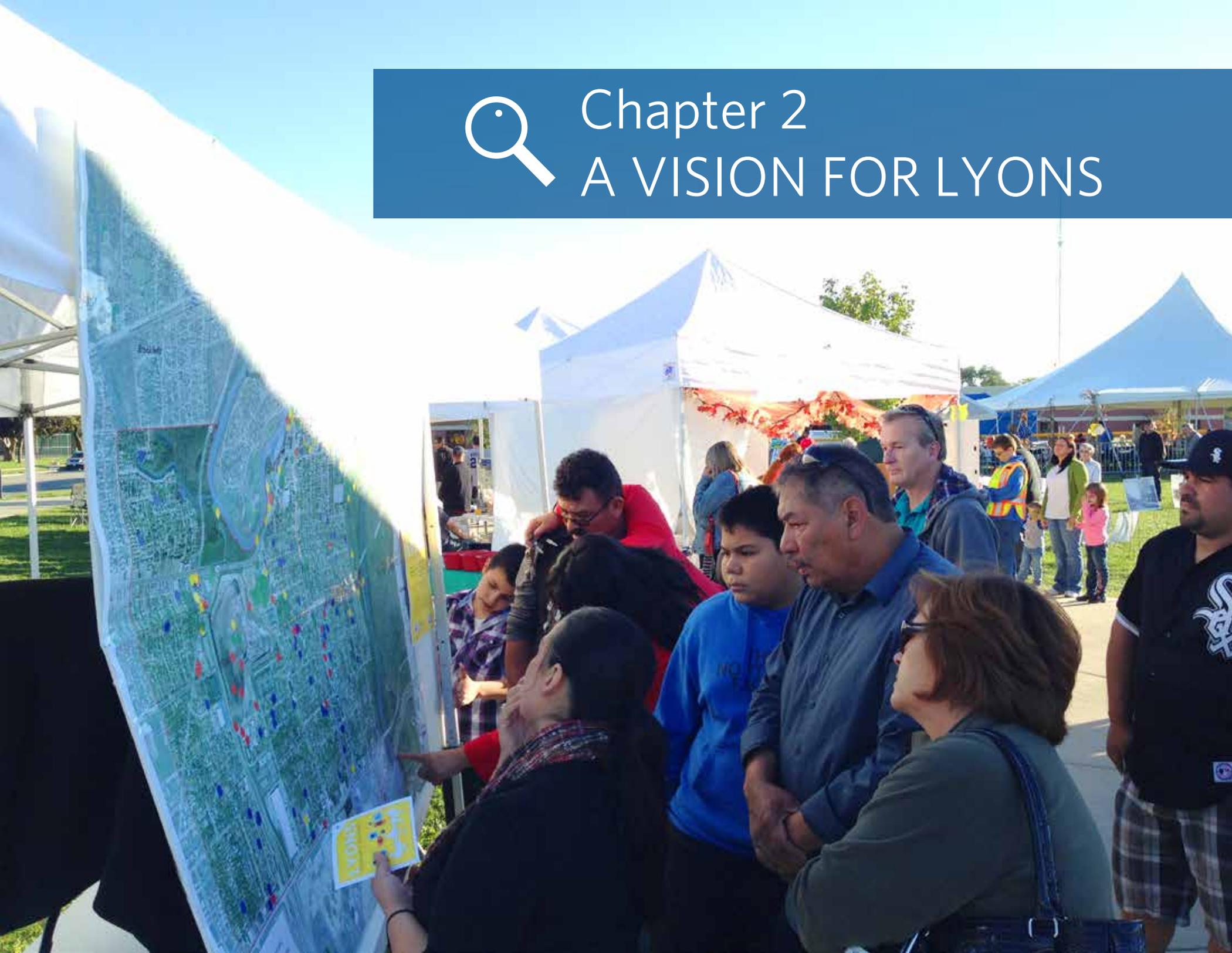
Joliet Av





# Chapter 2

## A VISION FOR LYONS





This chapter of the Comprehensive Plan presents the vision, goals, and objectives that provide the foundation for the plan's recommendations. The vision, goals, and objectives are based on feedback obtained from residents, Village staff, and other stakeholders through community outreach, key stakeholder interviews, and assessment of existing conditions and potential opportunities.

## Community Vision

A “community vision” is a guiding component of a plan, normally expressed in the form of a vision statement, which communicates the community’s values and aspirations for the future. It answers the question, “What will success look like in the effective implementation of a plan?” The following statements outline the community vision for Lyons’ future:

- A vibrant, balanced community with jobs, housing, and recreational opportunities that serve residents of the Village and the region as a whole
- A growing community with a resilient economic base that generates a variety of job opportunities, supports local businesses, and secures fiscal resources for the Village
- A community that embraces and promotes public transportation, reduces dependence on automobiles, and is easily accessible, with inviting urban streetscapes that are safe for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders
- A Village that fosters the unique character and spirit of the community, as seen in its history, culture, and neighborhoods and in its residents’ deep sense of civic engagement
- A community that promotes a sustainable future through effective stewardship of open space and the natural environment, balanced transportation modes, and engaging recreational and community spaces

## Planning Goals and Objectives

To help Lyons develop implementable policies, the Comprehensive Plan translates Lyons’ overall vision statement into long-range planning goals and objectives that provide more specific policy direction. Future actions by the Village, from land use regulation to capital improvements, should be evaluated in the context of the planning goals and objectives this plan outlines to determine whether the proposed action will serve the community’s needs.



## Land Use and Development

**Goal:** Provide for a cohesive balance of compatible land uses in an environment that supports a diversity of uses, fosters new development, and maintains the Village as an attractive, family-oriented community that provides high quality of life and opportunities to its residents.

### Objectives

- Provide a desirable and balanced land use pattern that does not overburden existing and future utilities, infrastructure, roadways, and government services
- Plan sufficient land for residential, industrial, and commercial development in locations best suited to those uses based on traffic access, physical features, availability of utilities, and relations to existing uses
- Encourage development at strategically located nodes where a mix of residential, retail, and service uses can complement one another and provide mutual economic benefits
- Establish and enforce development standards to ensure that future development is compatible with existing and proposed neighboring land uses
- Pursue the development of a new pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use commercial town center area at the intersection of Ogden Avenue and Joliet Avenue
- Consider annexing the unincorporated area north of the Village to ensure that the future of that area is consistent with environmental constraints and land uses in the surrounding neighborhoods

## Housing

**Goal:** Provide housing and living environments that serve local residents, accommodate anticipated future growth, and enhance the overall quality and character of the community.

### Objectives

- Preserve and protect existing housing stock by enforcing acceptable standards of maintenance and repair
- Provide suitable sites, focusing on infill locations, for housing development that can accommodate a range of housing by type, size, location, price, and tenure, and monitor development of designated residential and mixed-use properties to ensure a mix of housing for all economic segments across the Village
- Facilitate development of affordable housing by providing density and regulatory incentives and assisting housing developers in accessing financing
- Encourage the location of higher density residential development in areas of higher accessibility and concentrated activities, such as the proposed town center

## Transportation and Circulation

**Goal:** Provide a roadway network and transportation system that serves community needs and provides a safe balance between vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian modes.

### Objectives

- Establish a Village-wide road maintenance program to help improve and maintain all streets to high standards
- Direct automobile and truck traffic to designated routes and appropriate classes of road to promote safety and minimize inconvenience to residents
- Develop a non-motorized transportation network within the Village and install pedestrian and bike infrastructure
- Continue to work with Cook County and the state of Illinois to improve roadway intersections and install traffic signals where hazardous conditions exist
- Increase public transit ridership by Village residents by improving the accessibility and scope of transit options
- Explore strategies to better manage parking, especially along major commercial corridors

## Economic Development

**Goal:** Provide a sustainable business environment that supports the attraction and retention of businesses that provide necessary services and generate employment opportunities for residents.

### Objectives

- Identify high-accessibility and high-visibility locations for new infill commercial development and encourage the development of a town center for Lyons
- Aggressively seek commercial development at strategic locations and encourage the clustering of businesses to promote complementary benefits, generating significant sales taxes for the Village while preserving the character of existing neighborhoods
- Establish standards for maintenance and rehabilitation of commercial buildings and create design and redevelopment standards for the principal business districts
- Create an economic development program that actively seeks to recruit new businesses and identifies a strategy to retain and support important local business and industry



## Natural Environment

**Goal:** Maintain and preserve parks, open spaces, and natural resources to provide Village residents with recreational and health amenities while incorporating best practices in flood and stormwater management.

### Objectives

- Provide appropriate amounts of active and passive open space for the enjoyment of all Village residents
- Encourage planned/programmed use of existing public and private open spaces in order to maximize their benefits to Village residents
- Link local parks and other open spaces to the forest preserve system by extending existing trails in ways that are least disruptive to existing residential neighborhoods
- Work with property owners in flood-prone areas and upgrade stormwater infrastructure to mitigate flooding

## Community Facilities and Services

**Goal:** Provide excellent community facilities and efficient and effective services that meet the needs of current and future Village residents and businesses.

### Objectives

- Explore opportunities for improving the physical condition of public facilities
- Seek new sources of revenue to support provision of public facilities and services
- Provide special facilities and programs focused on the needs of senior citizens, youth, and other special needs groups
- Improve water distribution, metering, and sewer systems to mitigate water loss, meet state and federal requirements, and capture lost revenue for the Village

# Chapter 3

## LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT





The land use and development chapter provides a framework for guiding growth and development in Lyons over the next 15 to 20 years. It describes the existing land use pattern in the Village and proposes an allocation of land for future use.



## Goal Statement

Provide for a cohesive balance of compatible land uses in an environment that supports a diversity of uses, fosters new development, and maintains the Village as an attractive, family-oriented community that provides high quality of life and opportunities to all its residents.



# Summary of Existing Conditions

Like many communities, Lyons contains a mix of land uses, but the majority of its developed land is residential. Aside from preserved open space, the Village is largely developed and 32 percent of land is devoted to residential uses. The existing neighborhoods in Lyons are generally attractive and well maintained; their quality and character have set high expectations for future development. The Village's current residential mix includes both single-family and multi-family buildings, though multi-family residences (condominiums, apartments, and senior housing) occupy only about six percent of the Village's total land area.

Commercial, mixed-use, and industrial uses in the Village are generally located along major arterials, including Harlem Avenue, Ogden Avenue, 1st Avenue, and 47th Street. Some commercial uses are scattered along portions of Joliet Road, Joliet Avenue, and Lawndale Avenue. Ogden Avenue is the primary retail corridor in the community, boasting the greatest percentage of retail businesses and mixed-use developments, including office and institutional uses. The commercial uses along Joliet Road and Joliet Avenue consist of a mix of retail and office uses that serve local neighborhoods while 1st Avenue and 47th Street feature a greater percentage of service businesses.

The primary industrial uses in the Village include freight and logistics, with limited warehousing and distribution. Industrial uses occur in concentrations along 47th Street and 1st Avenue, with a few scattered along Joliet Road and Joliet Avenue. Industrial land uses along the northern side of 47th Street are mixed with commercial and residential uses.

Institutional use is well represented in Lyons with several educational and religious institutions dispersed throughout the community.

## Key Findings

- **Lyons is largely built out, with almost all land either developed or preserved as open space.** The Village has very little vacant land (0.5 percent), and residential uses and open space occupy almost three-quarters of the Village's land. Developed land features areas of medium-density residential and commercial development. Future opportunities for growth will depend on infill development that increases density and diversifies uses along commercial corridors.
- **Lyons contains considerable industrial land that could drive economic development.** The presence of industrial land and associated infrastructure offers Lyons an advantage in attracting manufacturing and warehousing businesses, which are critical to the local and regional economy. Recent high vacancy rates in the industrial districts call for a long-term strategy to revitalize these areas.
- **The community boasts considerable open space, which constitutes the largest land use (33 percent) in the Village.** Most open spaces are public land owned by the Forest Preserves of Cook County (FPCC) and by the Village. They provide residents with many outdoor recreation options and passive open space. Most of the open spaces are concentrated in the eastern and northern parts of the Village, creating a need for additional open spaces, especially community parks, in the western and southern parts of the Village.
- **The former National Service Quarry site along 1st Avenue offers a rare opportunity for development or creation of open space.** Although Lyons is built out and contains very little vacant land to develop, within the next decade the Village will acquire the former National Service Quarry site near the intersection of 1st Avenue and 43rd Street, a site of more than forty acres. While the site will require investment to prepare it for reuse, Lyons may adapt it to a combination of limited new development and recreational open space to serve the western part of the Village.

# Future Land Use

The future land use plan builds on existing land use patterns and prioritizes new development in targeted locations. It reinforces the current residential character of Lyons and capitalizes on the development potential of nodes where key roadways intersect. A future land use map is provided that identifies lands that should be devoted to residential, commercial, industrial, institutional, and other uses. The map depicts how different land use areas are interconnected.

## Single-Family Residential

These parcels accommodate detached and attached single-family homes. Some parcels in this category may accommodate a combination of attached single-family homes, including townhomes, and lower density multi-family buildings containing up to four units per building. Single-family residential will continue to be the predominant land use in the Village, though the style, form, and lot sizes will vary within residential areas. Additional information on residential uses can be found in Section 3.4.1: Residential Areas.

## Multi-Family Residential

These parcels accommodate primarily multi-family housing types, including condominiums and apartments. Areas designated for multi-family residential land uses include existing multi-family developments and strategically located sites with potential for new multi-family developments. New multi-family housing is recommended near the proposed commercial nodes where they would generate a higher population within walking distance of the nodes to support businesses within the nodes. In addition, such multi-family residential developments would provide a transition between commercial uses and single-family residential uses. The density and overall design of multi-family residential developments will vary between developments.

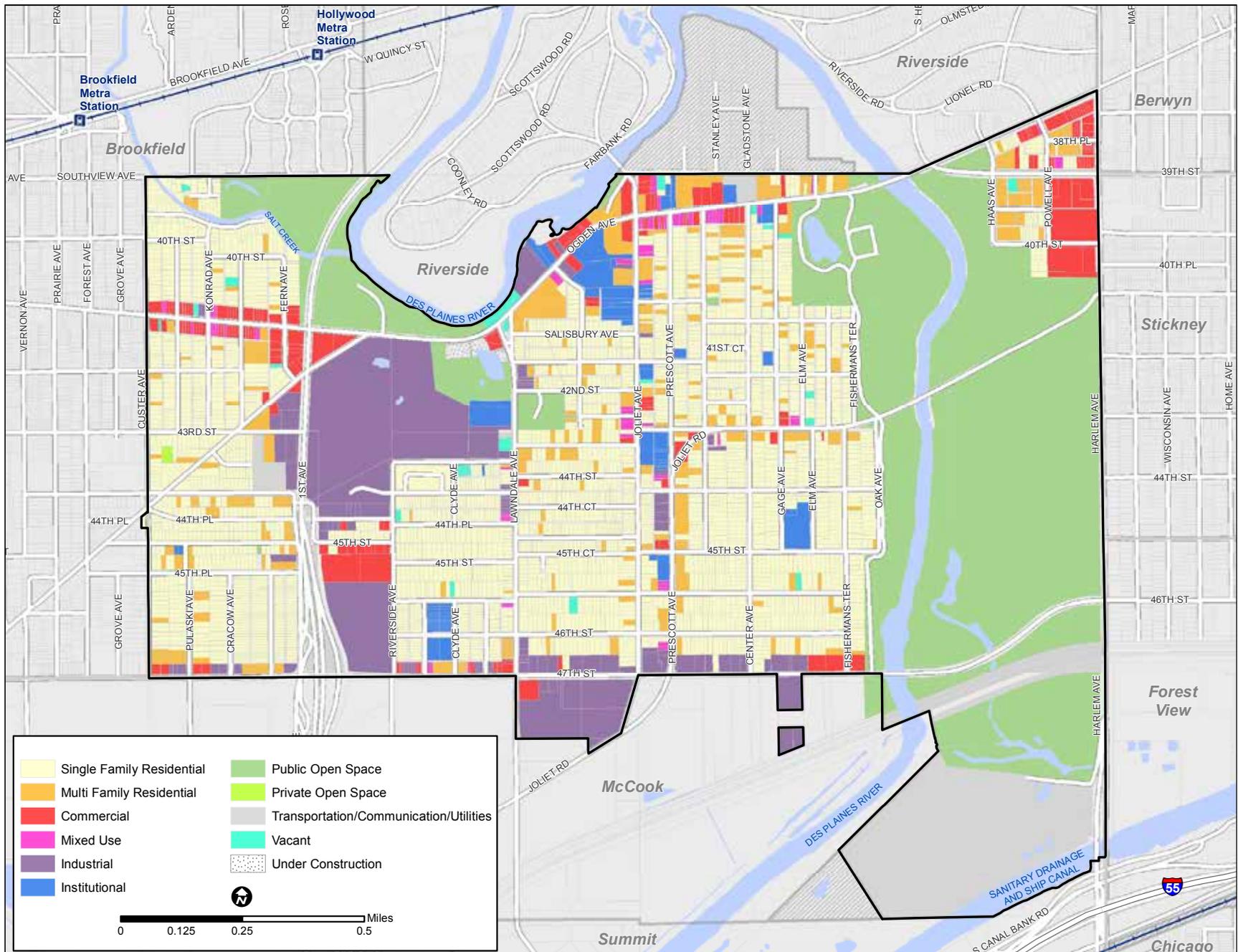
## Mixed-Use

These parcels contain a mix of residential, retail, office, and institutional uses arranged in a compact and pedestrian-friendly development pattern. Buildings in this district should be configured as mixed-use with residential units or offices above ground-floor retail spaces or as single-use buildings interconnected in a pedestrian-friendly manner. These parcels should mostly be located within or near key commercial nodes. Although mixed-use development is currently scattered along several major streets including Ogden Avenue, Joliet Road, Joliet Avenue, 39th Street, and 47th Street, this plan recommends that in the future, mixed-use development should be focused on three key commercial nodes: the intersections of Ogden Avenue with Harlem Avenue, Joliet Avenue, and 1st Avenue. The intersection of Ogden Avenue and Joliet Avenue has been identified as the future location of Lyons' town center, which is planned as a compact mixed-use district.

## Commercial

These parcels contain retail, office, and service-oriented commercial uses that serve the day-to-day needs of households within a walking or short-driving distance. This category of land use includes parcels that contain retail, entertainment, and employment services supporting not only the Village of Lyons, but also the surrounding communities and the greater region. Areas planned for commercial use are concentrated along major traffic corridors and key intersections to benefit from higher traffic volumes, visibility, and activity generators. They may involve expanding or reorienting the Village's existing commercial areas or planning for future developments. Commercial developments will take different forms depending on their location in the Village. An appropriate mix of commercial development will help sustain and be supported by nearby residential neighborhoods. Additional information on commercial uses can be found in Section 3.4.2: Commercial Areas.

Figure 3.1. Current land use



Source: Land Use Inventory 2010, Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2013.

## Industrial

These parcels contain industrial uses, which in Lyons are mostly light industrial activities including small-scale production, warehousing, assembly, and distribution. Light industrial parcels typically have smaller footprints than do heavy industrial parcels. The industrial land use category may include industrial flex uses, which are parcels that contain a combination of commercial, office, and low-intensity industrial uses. Light industrial and industrial flex uses generally have lower environmental impacts than those associated with heavy industry. This Plan envisions existing industrial uses remaining in their current locations and new industrial uses located in areas where they can capitalize on close proximity to freight lines, particularly along 47th Street. The plan proposes additional industrial uses on 47th Street to help maintain a diverse tax base in the Village and provide employment opportunities. Due both to the surrounding residential and commercial land uses and the competitive advantages that Lyons' location offers, the plan recommends that light industrial uses remain the main type of industry in these areas. The parcel at Prescott Avenue and 44th Street may remain industrial if a low-intensity use that is compatible with the surrounding land uses can be found, but may eventually be appropriate for conversion to commercial use. More information on industrial uses can be found in Section 3.4.3: Industrial Areas.

## Institutional

This land use category describes parcels where the primary use is public and semi-public in nature, including the village hall, schools, libraries, and recreational facilities. Institutional uses also include facilities that promote a sense of community and provide important services and functions, such as religious institutions and fraternal organizations. Community institutions can help attract private investment. Overall, no significant change is envisioned for institutional use in the future. However, the plan recommends repurposing the former school property owned by Zion Lutheran Church on Ogden Avenue, across from Prescott Avenue. The property should transition from institutional use to commercial use. In addition, the plan recommends that the Village rezone the former village hall, located at the southwest corner of Cage Avenue and Ogden Avenue, from institutional use to commercial use.

The designation of parcels for institutional use does not preclude the Village or other governmental agencies from planning and constructing additional facilities when needed to continue providing adequate services. Because contemporary institutional uses can attract users from outside their immediate area, adequate buffers should be maintained or installed between the institutional use and abutting residential properties. Additional information on local institutions can be found in Chapter 8: Community Facilities and Services.



## Open Space

These parcels contain all the recreational areas under the ownership of the Village of Lyons and the FPCC. They include land areas designated for active and passive recreation. Detention areas, mosquito abatement areas, and private open areas are also included in this category. The plan recommends that the Village preserve existing open spaces and develop park sites whenever possible to make recreational opportunities widely available throughout the community. The Village should coordinate its efforts to preserve open space with those of the FPCC and other agencies that have plans to improve recreational areas and the natural environment. More information on open space can be found in Chapter 7: Natural Environment.

## Transportation, Communications, and Utilities

These parcels are restricted to areas that are directly in the right-of-way of transportation routes or power lines, accommodate communication facilities, surface-parking facilities, and electrical substations. The parcels are critical in ensuring that neighborhoods are accessible and are connected to infrastructure and basic services. The plan does not propose major changes to this land use category because, typically, the Village has limited control of these parcels.

## Special District

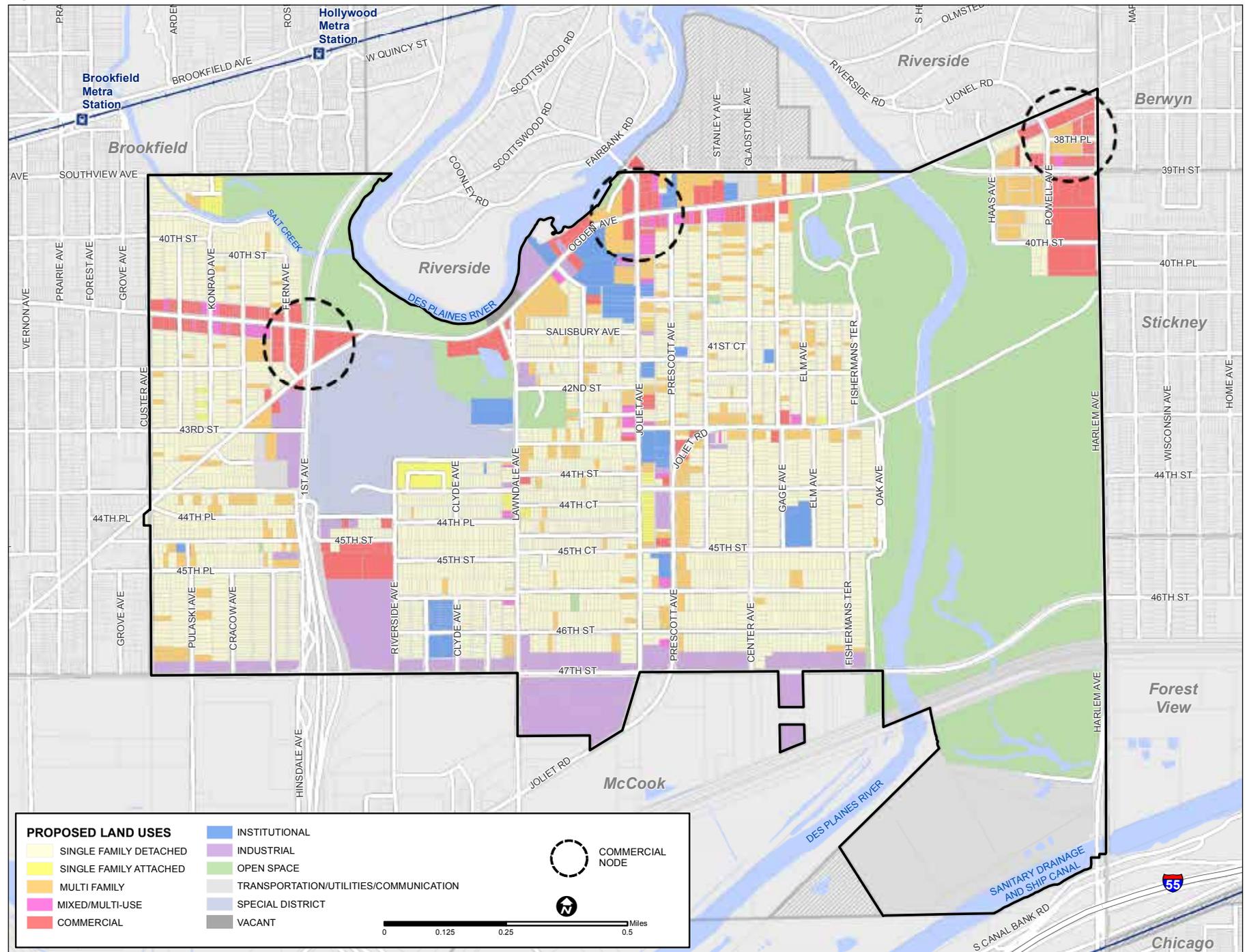
This land use category designates parcels that make up the former National Service Quarry site that sits along 1st Avenue, south of Ogden Avenue. Since an appropriate use for the site has not been determined, a special designation has been assigned to parcels in the district until its best use is identified. The quarry site presents both a challenge and an opportunity to the Village in terms of its development potential. The Village is considering adaptive reuse of the site and is exploring low-density, single-family senior housing development for approximately 15 acres on the eastern and southeastern edges of the quarry site, where the available land is not new fill. The central part of the quarry site, where soft fill may be unable to support large structures, presents the opportunity for new neighborhood open space. Careful consideration is needed to determine the best use of the site.

**Figure 3.2. Institutional properties recommended for rezoning**



Source: DigitalGlobe.

Figure 3.3. Future land use



Source: Land Use Inventory 2010, Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2013.



# Plan Recommendations for Land Use and Development

The following recommendations address overarching land use and development policies for the Village. More detailed recommendations addressing the specific needs of residential, commercial, and industrial areas in the Village are provided in Chapter 4: Housing and Chapter 6: Economic Development, which are closely related to land use. The emphasis in the plan's goals and objectives on directing commercial development to key nodes, providing walkable connections to residential neighborhoods, and the complementary nature of mixed uses all relate the needs of specific sectors to overall land use planning.

**1. Implement the proposed town center concept.** The town center, proposed for the intersection of Ogden Avenue and Joliet Avenue, has the potential to become a new pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use commercial destination in Lyons. The Village has explored the town center concept for many years and the idea has great appeal among residents. A mix of retail and service uses that meet the needs of Lyons residents, combined with investments in pedestrian infrastructure and streetscaping, would take advantage of the area's convenient location near existing civic and retail destinations to stimulate a vibrant commercial district. Given the current market demand and development realities, realizing such a development vision will take some time, but the Village can take several steps to begin advancing the proposal. The Village should begin by establishing a vision for the area followed by adoption of development guidelines specific to the town center concept. Regulations that clearly set out the Village's vision for the area, including the mix of uses, walkability, circulation, parking, and design standards, will offer clarity to property owners and developers. As the Village implements this plan, it should pay specific attention to zoning and other code changes that will advance the proposed town center and encourage private investment.

Important steps to facilitate private investment in the town center include conducting a market study to gauge what types of development are most likely to succeed and working with property owners to consolidate parcels at the site. The Village could also approach potential developers, initially focusing on attracting redevelopment to properties near the intersection to demonstrate the viability of the town center concept.

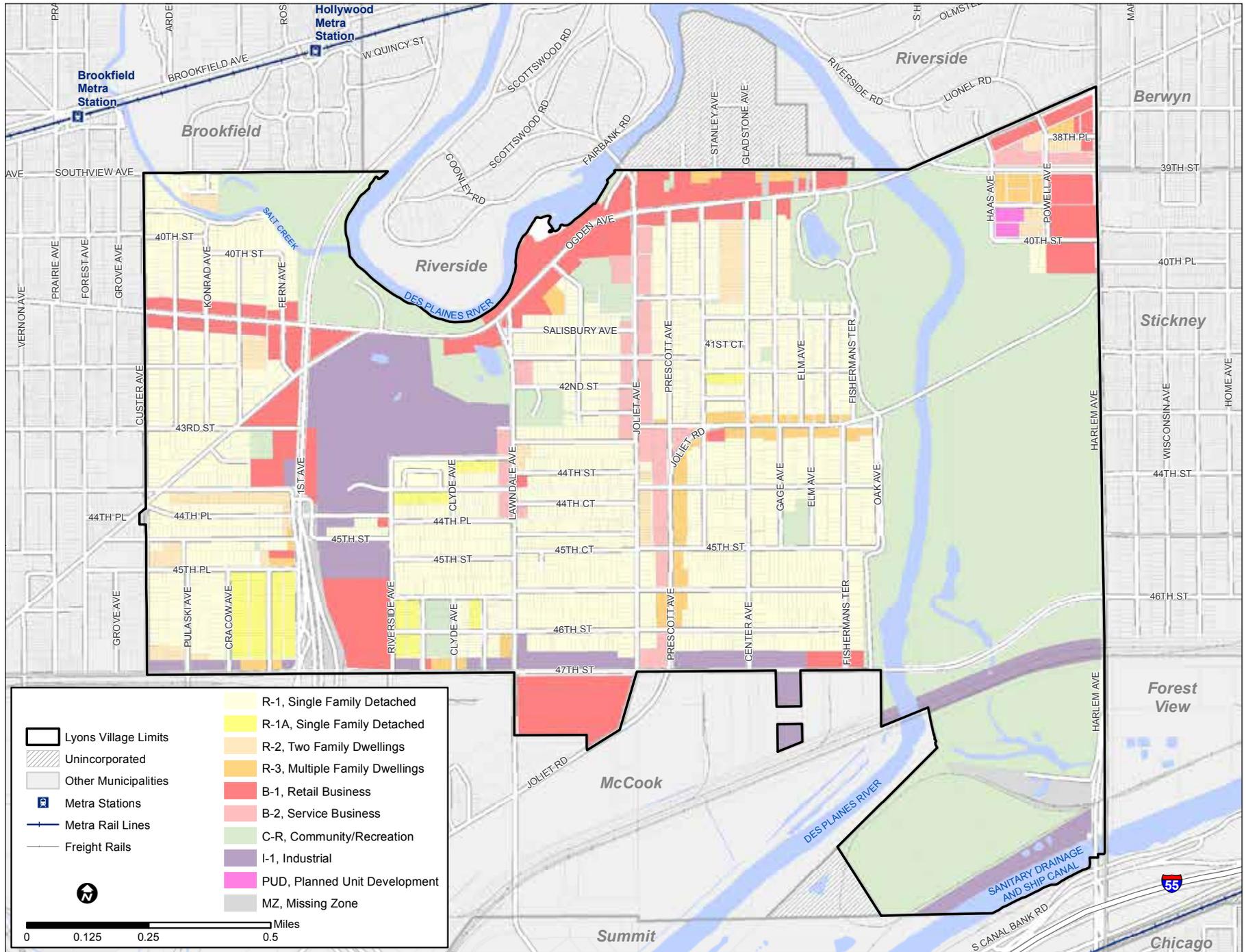
The creation of a town center at what is currently a busy, auto-oriented intersection will impact transportation and circulation in the area due to the potential for a greater amount of turning, parking, and navigating. In addition to anticipating a change in automobile circulation, the Village should plan to improve pedestrian infrastructure. The form of current commercial business along Ogden Avenue reflects an auto-oriented pattern, with large signage designed to attract passing drivers, unprotected sidewalks that are sometimes obstructed by parked cars, and little or no bike infrastructure. A successful downtown-style development thrives on pedestrian traffic, as people linger in the area and shop in multiple complementary businesses on a single trip. Creating that atmosphere requires an environment where patrons feel safe and comfortable walking. In addition to improved pedestrian infrastructure, additional efforts to calm traffic, reduce curb cuts, and prioritize transit users, cyclists, and pedestrians will be beneficial. The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) has already begun the process of acquiring the rights-of-ways for roadway expansion near this intersection.

**2. *Revise the zoning ordinance.*** The Village regulates development through its zoning ordinance, making zoning a key mechanism for implementing the vision embodied in this plan. Overall, Lyons' municipal codes have been effective in guiding development, but the current zoning ordinance and zoning map have been amended several times, and the code is now difficult to administer and insufficient for contemporary development needs. Additionally, some properties in the Village predate the current zoning regulations and do not conform to the Village's development standards in terms of building densities, setbacks, and landscaping

The Village should amend its zoning ordinance to encourage a rational land use pattern, update building standards, eliminate redundant zoning classifications such as R-1A, and translate this plan's vision into the built environment. For commercial areas, the revised zoning ordinance should include new parking standards that balance on-site parking requirements based on lot size and configuration and the relationship between neighboring uses. To reduce the numerous disconnected parking lots that are currently common in the Village's commercial areas, the new zoning regulations should encourage centralized shared parking and utilization of existing alleys to provide access to parking lots in the commercial district. Additionally, the ordinance should contain design standards to help the Village maintain a consistent, attractive physical appearance in residential, commercial, and industrial areas. The new zoning ordinance should promote the types and densities of development envisioned in this plan and include new signage and landscape ordinances that will promote quality development. Creating additional classes of industrial uses, instead of the current code's single industrial use, would allow the village to guide industrial facilities of different intensities to the appropriate context, limiting potential nuisances, such as truck traffic and noise, near neighborhoods.

**3. *Increase building code and zoning ordinance enforcement.*** This plan recommends promoting strong and consistent quality and character in the built environment throughout the Village. The majority of the homes in Lyons are older, and their condition varies. Ongoing improvement and enforcement efforts are needed throughout the community to ensure that property owners properly maintain their homes. The Village should conduct regular property inspections to enforce the building code and zoning ordinance. The Village should identify homes that are in need of external or internal maintenance, and work with their owners or managers to ensure that they comply with the building code and zoning regulations. Vacant lots should be properly maintained so as not to become a nuisance to the occupied homes and businesses around them. Owners of vacant properties should be required to mow grass regularly and maintain parcels that are free of debris and undesirable materials. The Village should also enforce codes that promote compatibility between industrial uses and other uses in the community, such as buffering requirements. In addition, the Village should encourage voluntary relocation of non-conforming uses in residential areas, including commercial or industrial uses near residences, if buffers do not suffice to insulate surrounding residents from negative impacts.

Figure 3.4. Current zoning



Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2013.



#### *4. Develop a plan for redeveloping the National Service Quarry site.*

The future acquisition of the 40-acre quarry site gives the Village an opportunity to plan for new development, but the land's current use as a quarry presents complex challenges. The site's size offers the possibility of multiple new uses including housing (on unexcavated portions) and open space that would be accessible to underserved neighborhoods. But before any redevelopment can take place, the quarry will require extensive fill, site preparation, and investment. The Village should take advantage of the long lead time before acquiring the land to solicit input from engineering and real estate experts who can advise Lyons on realistic, feasible redevelopment options. This plan recommends that the Village consider working with the Urban Land Institute (ULI) to convene a Technical Assistance Panel to explore the site and offer the best advice and recommendations for redeveloping the site. The Technical Assistance Panel program uses short, intensive work sessions to develop strategic, comprehensive, locally focused recommendations for complex development challenges.

| National Service Quarry Site

**5. *Explore annexation of the unincorporated area north of the Village.***

While many communities in central Cook County cannot expand their boundaries, Lyons has the potential to grow slightly through annexation. Currently, the Village is in the process of acquiring approximately 24 acres of unincorporated land along its southern municipal border, next to the Des Plaines River. This plan recommends that the Village also consider annexation of the unincorporated area bounded by 39th Street, the White Eagle Woods Forest Preserve, the Riverside Public Works Department, and the Des Plaines River. The area's close proximity to Ogden Avenue and its direct access to the river make it a potential asset for the community, though flooding might be an issue. The Village is already providing services to the residential properties located in this area; annexation would make economic sense for the Village by more closely matching property tax revenue with the fire and police services the Village already provides. While the annexation might offer the Village an opportunity to incorporate the existing properties, which would immediately contribute taxes to offset the cost of providing services in the area, it must make sense for the affected residents as well. The Village should explore coordinating this effort with Cook County, which encourages the annexation of unincorporated areas to improve the efficiency of service delivery.

**6. *Preserve and promote community character and identity.*** Many

residents and other stakeholders want to see a positive community image and identity for Lyons. They desire the community to have a high-quality environment with an attractive physical setting for living and working. It is important for the Village to continue supporting events that foster community spirit, such as the annual Village picnic. To protect the history and identity of Lyons, historical structures and sites such as the Hofmann Tower and the Chicago Portage National Historic Site that promote the historical significance of the community should be preserved. The Village should also protect and promote open spaces and environmentally significant features like the Salt Creek Greenway Trail and the forest preserves, because they play a significant role in defining the character and image of the community.

The plan recommends visual improvements on major commercial corridors including the improvement of building façades, landscaping, and signage. For example, Ogden Avenue will most likely grow in visibility and significance to the Village in the coming years, making investment in its image and identity critical. The Village should also work with the local business community and IDOT to improve the image of this commercial corridor. In addition, the Village should work with surrounding communities to improve entry points into Lyons through distinctive signage and landscaping of gateways and entry routes.



## Implementation Strategies

This plan outlines a number of strategies to promote desired patterns of land use and development in Lyons, including revision and increased enforcement of the zoning ordinance and building code and steps to implement the town center concept. Implementing the land use vision established in the plan can be accomplished through a range of actions by the Village, the business community, and residents, ranging from administrative actions to capital spending to marketing efforts. Due to limited funding and administrative resources, the Village should prioritize redevelopment efforts in key locations. The Village can help to redevelop specific areas by ensuring that the zoning ordinance allows the desired form of development, investing in capital improvements at those areas, and focusing business attraction and retention efforts on parcels and buildings in those locations. Dedicated efforts in the priority locations will promote success in the near term while setting the stage for longer-term redevelopment initiatives in other parts of the Village. One important step the Village should take involves creating a Capital Improvement Program (CIP), a schedule and accounting of planned capital projects and their funding sources for a span of about five years. Aligning the CIP with this plan will establish investment priorities that reflect the community vision for the future. A CIP will help the Village to determine the most effective targets for investment of the additional local tax revenue for infrastructure that Lyons voters approved in the November 2014 referendum.



**Table 3.1. Implementation strategies for land use and development**

ACTION	IMPLEMENTERS	DESCRIPTION
Work with property owners to increase building code compliance <i>Timeline: 0-2 years</i>	Village, property owners	The Village should regularly inspect buildings throughout Lyons to identify buildings that are in need of external or internal maintenance to comply with zoning regulations and the building code. The Village should create an inventory of properties that require additional maintenance and investment and work with property owners to provide technical assistance on understanding code requirements and working toward compliance.
Revise building code <i>Timeline: 0-2 years</i>	Village	Based on the results of inspections, the Village should assess whether the current building code is consistent with the goals of the plan. If increased enforcement of the existing code does not achieve the vision spelled out in the plan, the Village may need to update the building code.
Revise zoning ordinance <i>Timeline: 0-2 years</i>	Village	The Village should undertake a comprehensive review of its zoning ordinance and any other development controls to ensure they are consistent with the recommendations of this plan. If they are not consistent, then the Village should revise the zoning ordinance.
Develop a Capital Improvement Program (CIP) that is aligned with comprehensive plan <i>Timeline: 0-2 years</i>	Village	The Village should develop a CIP. Aligning the CIP with the plan’s recommendations will ensure that Village spending promotes the desired form of development. For example, the Village could prioritize investments in sidewalks in the area of the proposed town center, where a pedestrian-friendly environment will support the envisioned commercial area.
Convene ULI Technical Assistance Panel to plan for National Service Quarry site <i>Timeline: 0-2 years</i>	Village, ULI, CMAP	ULI sponsors one- to two-day panels in which local real estate and development experts help address complex land use challenges. CMAP can help the Village approach ULI about convening a Technical Assistance Panel to consider possible future scenarios for the quarry site. A Technical Assistance Panel typically costs approximately \$15,000.
Conduct market study for town center <i>Timeline: 0-2 years</i>	Village, consultant	Planning, developing, and marketing a complex, multi-use area such as the proposed town center requires a thorough understanding of what types of businesses are market-feasible. A market study would help the Village identify the appropriate mix of retail and services the area can attract and support. This knowledge can inform land use planning for the area and equip the Village to approach developers with a well-conceived, realistic proposal that satisfies the residents’ vision and market realities.
Develop town center subarea plan <i>Timeline: 3-5 years</i>	Village, consultant	Based on the plan and the results of the market study, Lyons should complete a subarea plan for the town center. The plan should include consideration for multimodal circulation, with an emphasis on meeting the needs of pedestrians walking to and within the town center. The subarea plan should also address the mix of uses, parking needs, and design and streetscaping, such as signing, façades, and landscaping, that are specific to the needs of the town center development. The plan can also inform parcel consolidation priorities.
Facilitate parcel consolidation <i>Timeline: 3-5 years</i>	Village	Assembling adjacent parcels into larger properties will allow Lyons to attract development within the town center that smaller single parcels cannot accommodate. The Village can either work to control adjacent properties, or work with property owners on plans for consolidation and redevelopment. The Village does not need to formally consolidate parcels prior to working with potential developers. In addition to enabling the town center development, this approach will be particularly important in industrial areas, where small parcels may currently limit potential new businesses.
Evaluate the costs and benefits of annexing area north of 39th Street <i>Timeline: 3-5 years</i>	Village, Cook County	Before approaching voters or residents about annexation, the Village should assess the relative fiscal impacts of new revenue and new costs it will incur by serving the area. Considering the costs of service provision, potential flooding, and tax revenues will help the Village determine whether annexation is a prudent step.
Survey residents’ views on community image and identity <i>Timeline: 3-5 years</i>	Village, Parks and Recreation Department	This planning process has shown that Lyons residents cherish the unique historical features of Lyons and see promoting the Village’s image as an ongoing priority. Acting to do so will require a firmer definition of what residents see as unique and desirable about Lyons’ past and present; this plan provides some input to this effort. To inform Village efforts to market the community, hold cultural events, and invest in historic preservation, it would be helpful to learn more specifically about residents’ concerns about image, identity, and character. Conducting a survey of residents and community groups would help the Village identify themes and attractions that it can use as the basis for future community events and branding efforts.



## Chapter 4

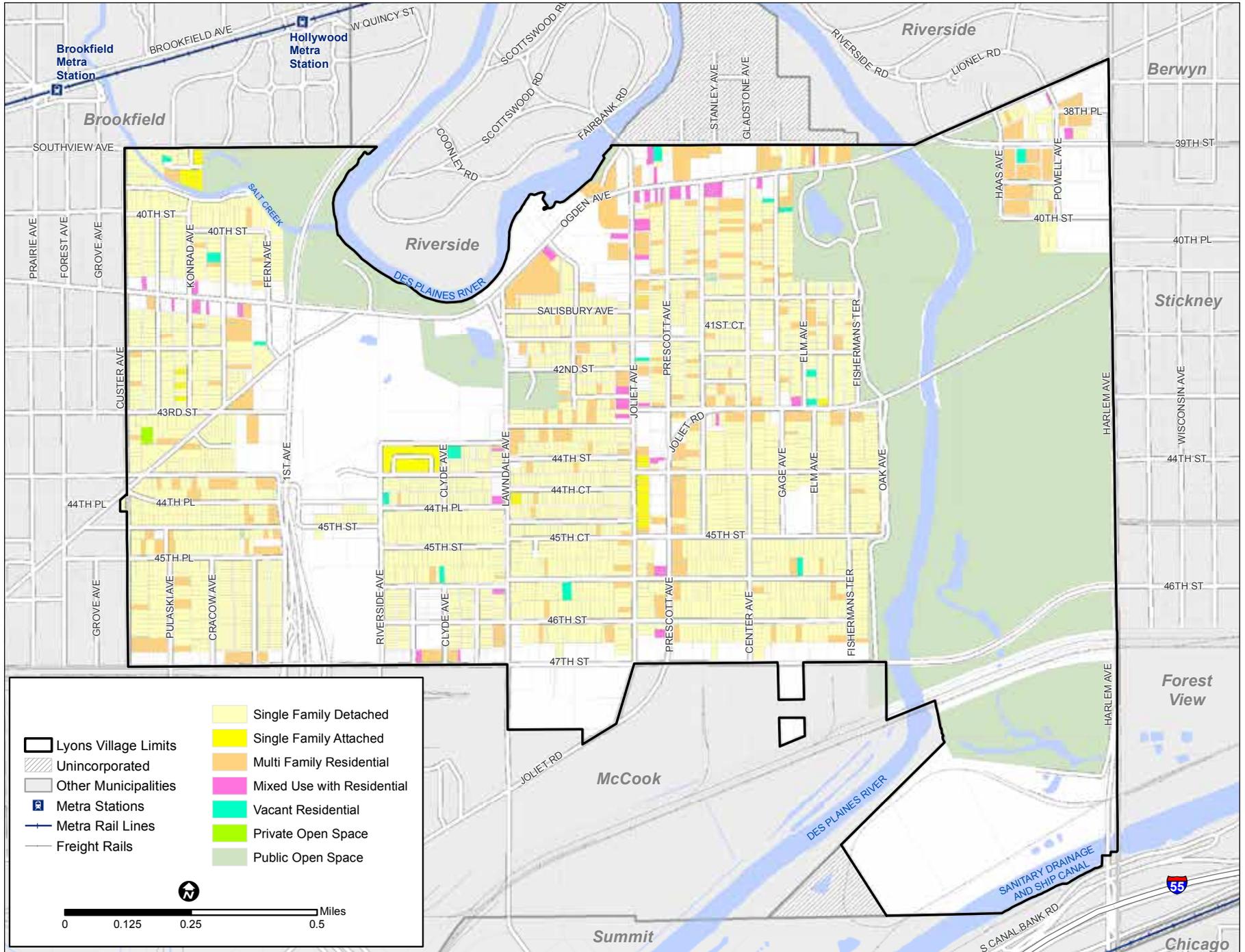
# HOUSING AND RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS





Lyons is predominantly residential in character and is anticipated to remain so. Its residential neighborhoods contribute to the Village's cherished small town feel. This chapter outlines housing policies to guide residential areas in the Village through the next 15 to 20 years. A primary goal of this plan is to support a range of residential dwelling types that are consistent with the desired character of the Village. It provides recommendations to preserve existing housing stock, address vacant or foreclosed properties, improve neighborhood infrastructure, and meet the housing needs of a changing and aging population.

Figure 4.1. Existing residential areas



Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2013.



## Goal Statement

Provide housing and living environments that serve local residents, accommodate anticipated growth, and enhance the overall quality and character of the community.

## Summary of Existing Conditions

Housing in Lyons generally consists of post-World War II construction, although approximately one quarter of housing units were built before 1940. A few residential developments have been completed in recent years, including the Riverwalk Condos and Senior Apartments near the intersection of Ogden Avenue and Joliet Avenue and the Condos on the Forest near the intersection of Hass Avenue and 40th Street. Overall, Lyons features residential development of consistent quality and style throughout the Village, with the majority of the housing being in good condition. Single-family homes, consisting mainly of detached dwellings, dominate the residential neighborhoods. Residential lot sizes are generally modest, ranging in size from 4,500 square feet to one-quarter of an acre, but Village zoning permits lots of smaller or larger size depending on the desired characteristics of the area. Multi-family housing is interspersed throughout the Village, though it occurs in concentrations along a few roadways such as Joliet Road and 1st Avenue, where it provides a transition between single-family homes and non-residential uses. There are also a number of areas where multi-family housing is intermixed with single-family uses.

## Key Findings

- **Lyons is characterized by predominantly single-family, low-to-medium-density residential development with a large number of renters.** A large proportion of Lyons' housing stock is occupied by renters, with the percentage of households in Lyons that rent their home (39 percent) being slightly greater than that in the region (35 percent). A number of single-family, detached homes and most multi-family housing (58 percent) are occupied by renters. The large number of renters in the Village may indicate a need to diversify the housing stock. In recent years, renters have helped to keep the community stable by occupying houses that might otherwise be vacant.
- **An aging population and limited room for new housing development require special strategies for Lyons.** Lyons has a high proportion of seniors (65 years and older) and must be prepared to meet the housing needs of an aging population. While the Village has already instituted a number of programs to serve seniors, more strategies are needed to prepare the community to accommodate its aging population in the future. The majority of the existing housing stock is older, having been built before the Village instituted zoning, which may pose special challenges for older residents. A housing strategy that focuses on densifying and diversifying housing options through infill development could help serve the needs of seniors.

# Plan Recommendations for Housing and Residential Neighborhoods

Because of the strength of its current housing stock and the lack of large parcels of developable land within Lyons, maintaining and preserving existing structures is a major component of its housing strategy.

Opportunities also exist to meet residential needs and diversify the Village's housing supply through context-sensitive infill development and redevelopment of underutilized properties. These strategies may need to be preceded by policy and zoning changes that promote housing of a diversity of types, tenures, and densities.

## **1. *Maintain and enhance the existing housing stock and neighborhoods.***

The majority of Lyons' housing stock is relatively old, with most units requiring some rehabilitation. As housing units age, they can become unsafe or unhealthy for occupancy. Preventing and addressing those problems will protect residents and help the Village meet its housing needs. The Village should inventory substandard properties in the community and work with their owners to bring them up to code. It could create a housing rehabilitation program and provide rehabilitation loans and grants for lower-income property owners. A rehabilitation program can also help maintain neighborhood stability, which could become a more prominent issue as the current population ages and moves out of neighborhood homes. It is also very important that the Village maintain the infrastructure in all neighborhoods. Pavement, curbs, sidewalks, storm drainage facilities, streetlights, and parks should be kept in good repair and refurbished and/or replaced as necessary to make neighborhoods safe and attractive. The Village should establish and fund an infrastructure replacement program through its CIP, paying special attention to older neighborhoods. These public investments in existing housing stock can help attract and promote private investment in neighborhoods, as homeowners act to upgrade properties to match the quality of the surrounding area.



**2. Plan for and provide sufficient land suitable for new housing, prioritizing infill development and redevelopment.** To adequately provide for the housing needs of all economic segments of the community, housing opportunities should accommodate a range of housing by type, location, size, price, and tenure. The Village should prioritize new residential construction within existing residential neighborhoods, where adding additional units is an efficient and fiscally responsible approach to strengthening the residential character of these areas. A number of infill development opportunities exist on a lot-by-lot basis; new housing at these locations can fill vacant parcels, creating a more consistent residential fabric without changing the overall character of these neighborhoods. The Village should target such properties as priority growth areas to capitalize on existing infrastructure and utility systems, and to reinvigorate older neighborhoods.

**3. Establish and implement new development standards for residential areas.** To enhance residential neighborhoods, new development standards and guidelines are needed to shape housing development and general improvements of the built environment, ensuring that new development adds value to the community. Rather than creating a separate regulatory document, the Village should incorporate design standards as an element of its new zoning code. The new standards should address density, site design, architecture, parking management, and landscaping to ensure that investment in residential areas sustains the character and vitality of neighborhoods. The new standards could promote green building techniques and universal design principles to accommodate older and less mobile residents and to reduce housing costs in the long run. As Lyons pursues infill development and expands housing opportunities to new areas, it should require appropriate buffers, screening, fencing, setbacks, and property maintenance, to help insulate residential neighborhoods from the effects of non-residential activities such as those in the industrial areas. The Village should make sure new housing is integrated into existing neighborhoods with respect to pedestrian connections, architecture, green space, and urban design. Once the standards are established, they should be consistently enforced along with the Village's maintenance and safety codes.

**4. Increase the diversity of housing options.** People of different ages, incomes, and lifestyles have varying housing needs that evolve with time and changing life circumstances. The Village should strive to ensure provision of a diverse supply of owner- and renter-occupied housing options to accommodate the changing housing needs of all residents, regardless of age or income. While Lyons can remain a community of predominantly detached single-family homes, market forces and development opportunities suggest there will be continued demand for a mix of residential housing types, including attached residential units such as townhomes, apartments, and condominiums. The Village could take advantage of the recommended zoning update to designate areas for high quality multi-family housing and ensure adequate and diverse supply of senior housing, similar to what is available on Ogden Avenue between Leland Avenue and Lawndale Avenue. As it revises its ordinances, the Village should review its policies and regulations to determine whether any of them might constrain housing production, affordability, or maintenance. Overall, multi-family and senior housing should be located near local amenities, such as commercial nodes, public facilities, and parks and open spaces. The Village should monitor construction of housing over time in areas zoned for residential and mixed-use development to ensure a mix of housing is developed.

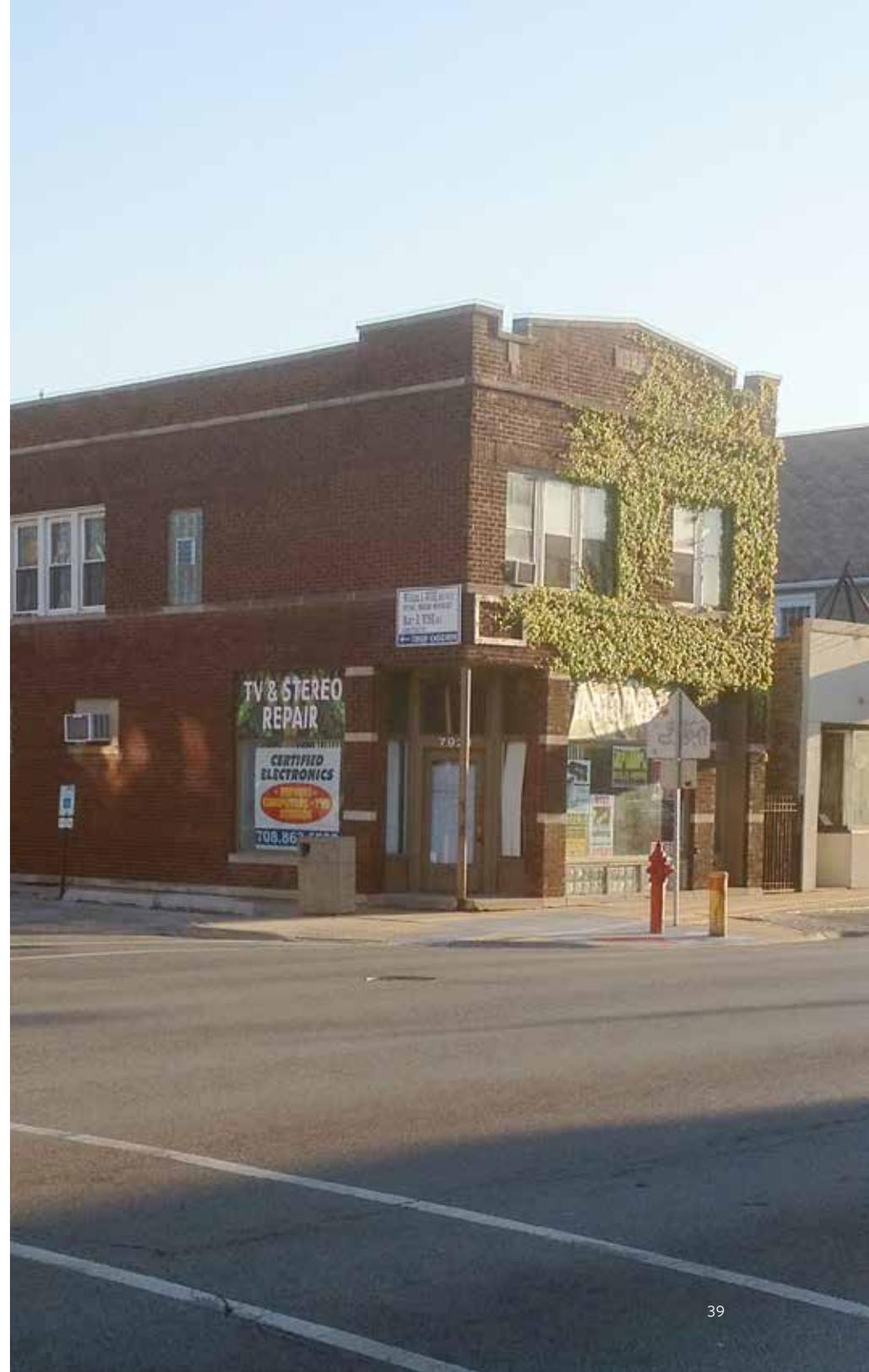
Housing options for a variety of income levels is essential for a healthy community, helping to establish strong residential neighborhoods and instilling a sense of community pride. Increasing the diversity of housing types is one way a Village can help meet the needs of residents with different housing needs. Additionally, the Village should promote opportunities for a range of housing options as the need becomes more apparent. The Village should work with nonprofit and private developers to increase the supply of rental units with supportive services that target seniors, persons with disabilities, and low-income families.

The Village can offer land for developing permanent housing options or provide density and regulatory incentives to facilitate housing development appropriate for a range of income levels. More importantly, the Village could assist developers in accessing public and private financing sources for affordable housing. To preserve existing housing options, the Village should identify all affordable housing units in the community and, if feasible, explore possible incentives to maintain affordability for lower income property owners and owners of affordable units that are at risk of converting to market-rate. To ensure that future provision of new housing promotes housing choice, the Village should provide adequate sites for development of affordable housing and use land donation to promote the development of permanent affordable housing.

**5. Address housing foreclosures and vacancies.** Residential neighborhoods in Lyons are generally stable, but there are a few areas where vacancies compromise the character of neighborhoods and the value of surrounding properties. Like many communities, Lyons has a number of residential units in foreclosure, including some recently constructed units. To address this issue, the Village should proactively implement strategies to help stabilize residential neighborhoods. The Village should work with the county and state housing agencies, non-profit organizations, and other community service providers to offer foreclosure avoidance and refinancing counseling. The Village could work with local housing agencies to connect renters in the community to home-buying support services so that they can be encouraged and supported to purchase some of the foreclosed and vacant houses in the community.

# Implementation Strategies

Many of the same implementation steps identified in the Land Use and Development chapter will help to advance the plan’s objectives for housing and residential neighborhoods. Revising the zoning ordinance will allow a greater diversity of housing types, including senior and multifamily housing, and allow the density and housing typology that the plan envisions as supporting overall land use and economic development goals. The Village should renew its commitment to enforce the building code in residential areas as well as commercial areas; Village action to keep housing and landscaping up to code will ensure attractive, high quality residential and commercial areas across the Village. In addition to the strategies described below, Lyons should make sure to incorporate its housing goals of maintaining the existing housing stock and diversifying the overall housing supply as it revises and enforces these important Village regulations.



Ogden Avenue.

Photo credit: flickr user davidwilson1949.

**Table 4.1. Implementation strategies for housing and residential neighborhoods**

ACTION	IMPLEMENTERS	DESCRIPTION
<p>Work with property owners to increase building code compliance <i>Timeline: 0-2 years</i></p>	<p>Village, property owners</p>	<p>The Village should identify housing that fails to comply with building codes and development standards. For properties that require upgrades and maintenance, the Village should work with property owners to bring properties up to code. If the Village identifies patterns, such as common code violations or geographic areas with low compliance, it should seek to develop programs to address these trends.</p>
<p>Incorporate housing principles into revised zoning and codes <i>Timeline: 0-2 years</i></p>	<p>Village</p>	<p>As zoning ordinance and building codes are updated and enforced, the Village should ensure that this Plan's housing principles are addressed. New zoning should reflect planned future residential land use.</p>
<p>Provide incentives and assistance for development of a range of housing options. <i>Timeline: 0-2 years</i></p>	<p>Village</p>	<p>The Village can offer land for developing mixed-income housing options or provide density and regulatory incentives to facilitate a range of housing development. The Village could assist developers in accessing public and private financing sources for affordable housing.</p>
<p>Provide housing counseling and address foreclosures <i>Timeline: 0-2 years</i></p>	<p>Village, Cook County, State of Illinois, Non-profit organizations</p>	<p>Working with housing agencies, non-profits, the county and the state, the Village should connect residents with foreclosure avoidance and refinancing counseling. To address the number of homes already in foreclosure, the Village could work to connect renters in the community to home-buying support services to encourage purchase of some of the foreclosed and vacant houses in the community when financially feasible.</p>
<p>Assess capacity of sites planned for housing, particularly around commercial nodes <i>Timeline: 3-5 years</i></p>	<p>Village</p>	<p>To ensure provision of sufficient new housing, this plan identifies several areas where additional housing development fits overall Village goals. The Village should examine how much housing these parcels can accommodate while considering that increasing residential density near commercial nodes provides customers for businesses.</p>
<p>Conduct assessment of community housing stock <i>Timeline: 3-5 years</i></p>	<p>Village</p>	<p>Recent trends such as foreclosures and an increase in rental units have rapidly changed the state of housing in Lyons. A community-wide assessment of housing stock, including age, condition, sales price, rents, and vacancy, will help the Village understand current conditions and plan accordingly. As part of the assessment, the Village should make sure to identify all affordable housing units so it can track the need to provide additional units or act to preserve existing units.</p>
<p>Provide financial assistance for homeowners improving or rehabilitating housing <i>Timeline: 3-5 years</i></p>	<p>Village</p>	<p>To improve code compliance, the Village could establish a program providing low-interest loans to residents improving the visual appearance or architecture of their homes. For senior citizens or low income residents, the Village could establish a home maintenance grant/low-interest loan program.</p>
<p>Provide technical assistance for mixed-use development <i>Timeline: 3-5 years</i></p>	<p>Village, CMAP, ULI</p>	<p>To deal with the complexity of mixed-use development, the Village could work with willing business owners in the target areas to create residences on upper levels of commercial buildings. The Plan Commission and Building Department can help property owners navigate any zoning or code issues, such as parking requirements, that may deter mixed-use development. If the Village pursues a Technical Assistance Panel for the National Service Quarry site, ULI can help address the challenges of mixed-use development at that location.</p>



# Chapter 5



# TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION





Transportation infrastructure, transit service, and circulation patterns affect the function and efficiency of a community and its relationship to its surrounding area. This chapter describes Lyons' transportation infrastructure, which includes roadways, transit, sidewalks, and off-street bicycle trails, and outlines the transportation plan for Lyons. It includes specific recommendations for the improvement of transportation, circulation, and transit service within the community.



## Goal Statement

Provide a roadway network and transportation system that serves community needs and provides a safe balance between vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian modes.

## Summary of Existing Conditions

Lyons features a diversity of transportation infrastructure typical of villages in Cook County, with a grid street network crossed by a few major thoroughfares, extensive sidewalks in residential areas, and a few off-street bicycle trails. Lyons is in close proximity to commuter and freight railways and interstate highways, but none pass through the Village itself.



## Roadway Network

Lyons’ roadways serve a range of functions and traffic intensities, and the layout and connectivity of the street network varies by land use. Within most residential areas, the streets follow a regular grid street pattern. The neighborhoods are well connected, although the forest preserves and the Des Plaines River limit connectivity in the northern and eastern areas of the Village. On the west side of town, the quarry and other industrial sites break up the street grid. Overall, the streets are in fairly good condition. Commercial development in Lyons has occurred with multiple and uncoordinated access points along major arterials like Ogden Avenue, which reduces roadway efficiency, limits pedestrian accessibility, and creates greater potential for accidents. It is important to consolidate access points and limit the number of access points along major and minor arterials to improve safety and circulation in the Village for both drivers and pedestrians.

Planning for the street network should reflect the unique functions of different types of roads. Streets are classified based on a number of factors including the length of a roadway, adjacent land uses, number of traffic lanes, relationship to the street network in surrounding areas, and the types of control devices at major intersections. These factors influence the degree to which roadways accommodate pedestrian movement, maximize traffic flow, or find balance between many types of users. Lyons has three principal arterials: Ogden Avenue (U. S. Route 34), 1st Avenue (Illinois Route 171), and Harlem Avenue (Illinois Route 43). The minor arterials in the Village include Joliet Road, 47th Street, and Pershing Road. The characteristics of roadway classification in Lyons are summarized in Appendix C.

**Table 5.1. Jurisdiction of non-local roads**

ROAD NAME	JURISDICTION	RIGHT-OF-WAY	TRAFFIC COUNT (AVERAGE DAILY TRAFFIC)	TRUCK VOLUME (AVERAGE DAILY TRAFFIC)
Ogden Avenue	IDOT	66 ft.	22,800	825
Harlem Avenue	IDOT	66 ft.	37,300	1,800
47th Street	IDOT	100 ft.	9,100	1,475
1st Avenue	IDOT	80 ft.	31,800	2,800
Plainfield Road	Cook County	66 ft.	6,300	Not a truck route

Source: Illinois Department of Transportation.

The roadways serving Lyons fall under the jurisdiction of IDOT, the Cook County Department of Transportation and Highways (CCDOTH), and the Village of Lyons. IDOT has jurisdiction over Interstate 55, Ogden Avenue, Harlem Avenue, 47th Street, and 1st Avenue. CCDOTH has jurisdiction over Plainfield Road. The rest of the streets in the community fall under the Village’s jurisdiction. With a number of major roadways under IDOT or County jurisdiction, the Village’s ability to make improvements, control access, or unify roadway character is a challenge that requires cooperation and coordination with external entities. Even the installation of traffic control devices, which are an important component of public safety and efficient traffic movement, may require the Village to coordinate with IDOT and CCDOTH.





## Transit

Many transit services pass through or near the Village, providing connections to nearby communities and major destinations. For some residents, these services may be difficult to access due to the majority of the bus routes' location along roads at the edge of town and the Metra stops' location outside the Village. Three Pace bus routes serve Lyons: 302 Ogden/Stanley, 307 Harlem, and 311 Oak Park Avenue. Of these three routes, only one passes inside Lyons, while the other two run along the edges of the Village. Metra does not directly serve Lyons, but the BNSF Metra line that runs from downtown Chicago to Aurora travels through neighboring communities, with stops at Brookfield, Hollywood, Riverside, Harlem, and Berwyn. The Metra Heritage Line to Joliet has a station in Summit that is less than one mile from the Village boundary. Pace Route 302 connects the Village to stations to several stations to the east on the BNSF line, including Harlem and Berwyn, although no service connects to the stops closest to the Village (Hollywood and Riverside). The Pace routes that pass through Lyons also connect to Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) stations, providing access to another important transit mode. While residents and workers have access to Pace bus and Metra stations, transit ridership in the community is relatively low, as many Lyons residents opt to drive to their destinations.

## Bicycling and Walking

Lyons has an extensive network of sidewalks, although a number of them are in fair to poor condition and need improvements. Some streets in residential neighborhoods have sidewalk gaps that potentially inhibit residents, particularly those with disabilities or mobility limitations, from choosing to walk. The commercial corridors have sidewalk gaps that make them unsafe for pedestrians, especially in sections with fast vehicular traffic or narrow rights-of-way. Some areas of open space also lack safe walking routes despite being popular with pedestrians. The section of Joliet Road that passes through the Ottawa Trail Woods, a minor arterial that carries high-speed traffic, lacks a sidewalk on either side of the road, forcing pedestrians to walk in the street. Despite its lack of pedestrian infrastructure, the road is heavily used by pedestrians traveling to the Pace bus routes on the Stickney side of Harlem Avenue.

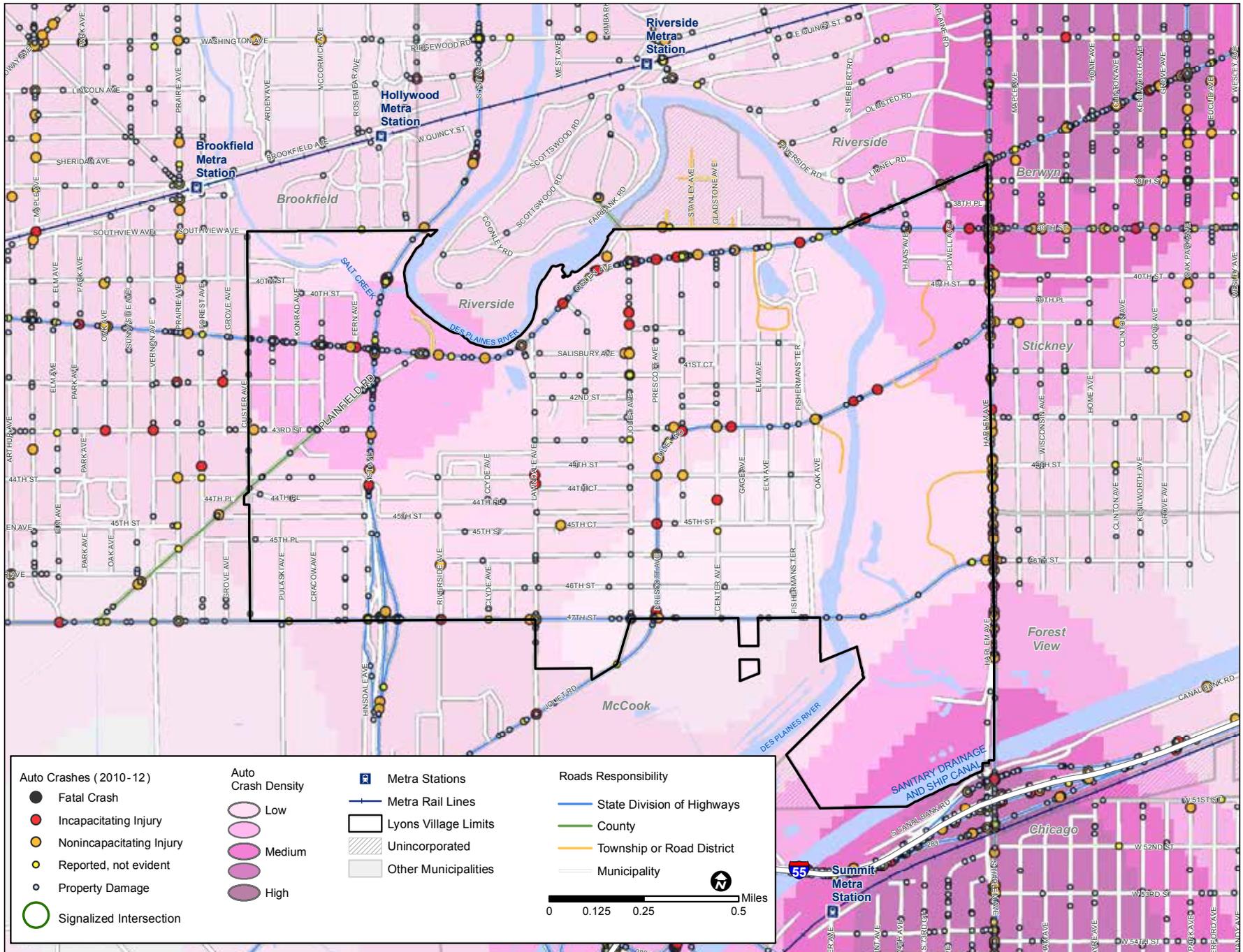
Lyons has three existing bikeways, with several more routes planned within the Village and in the surrounding area. In 2012, the West Central Municipal Conference (WCWC) developed a bicycle plan to promote and facilitate safe bicycling within the 40 municipalities of the Council of Governments, which includes Lyons. WCWC developed the plan with the assistance of the Active Transportation Alliance (ATA), a non-profit organization that works with communities in the Chicago area to create safer and more convenient bicycling and pedestrian options. The Plan designated Joliet Avenue, Salisbury Avenue, and sections of Ogden Avenue and 39th Street (Pershing Road) as bikeways. Most of these bikeways are currently not marked and lack posted signs. The lack of markings and clear identification as bikeways, combined with the high volume of fast-moving traffic on some of these roads, makes them unsafe for cyclists.

The Salt Creek Greenway Trail, which runs through the forest preserves, is the only existing off-street bike trail in the community. It starts at the Portage site and runs north to Cermak Aquatic Center, covering almost the entire north-south distance of Lyons. The path is continuous within Lyons, but is not connected to other nearby trails. The trail presents great opportunities for connections not only to destinations within Lyons, but also to other trails in the region. Village officials have discussed the need to establish linkages to nearby trails and destinations with the FPCC, especially to the trails in Riverside and the Brookfield Zoo. According to the 2009 Regional Greenways and Trails Plan, a number of trails are planned in the area that will provide connections to surrounding communities and destinations. Figure 5.5 shows the alignment of existing and planned trails in Lyons and the surrounding communities.

## Key Findings

- **Limited public transportation options in Lyons contribute to high transportation costs for residents and may make it more difficult to access employment.** It lacks a Metra station as well as bus service connecting the community to the closest stations, such as Riverside and Hollywood. In the heart of the Village, only Ogden Avenue is served by Pace bus (two more Pace routes skirt the edge of the Village), leaving a significant gap in service to residential neighborhoods. Despite the Village's proximity to Chicago and major job centers, the average Lyons resident can access fewer jobs by public transit than can the average resident of Cook County. Expanding the availability of and access to a variety of transportation options in the Village can help reduce household expenditures and traffic congestion.
- **Lyons lacks sufficient bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.** Many residential neighborhoods lack safe and convenient pedestrian and bicycling connections to public facilities, transit stops, parks, and recreation areas. A number of sidewalks in the Village are in poor condition and some have gaps, which present a safety hazard. The Village is traversed by major arterials such as Ogden Avenue, 1st Avenue, and Harlem Avenue that carry high volumes of traffic at relatively high speeds, creating an unsafe environment for pedestrians and cyclists throughout the community. Patrons of businesses along Ogden Avenue also frequently park with their vehicles in a way that partially blocks sidewalks. Intervention strategies are needed to improve bicycle and pedestrian safety in the village through such measures as providing safe places to walk and ride bicycles, safe roadway crossings, well-lighted crosswalks, and signal timings that allow pedestrians to cross streets.

Figure 5.2. Automobile Crashes



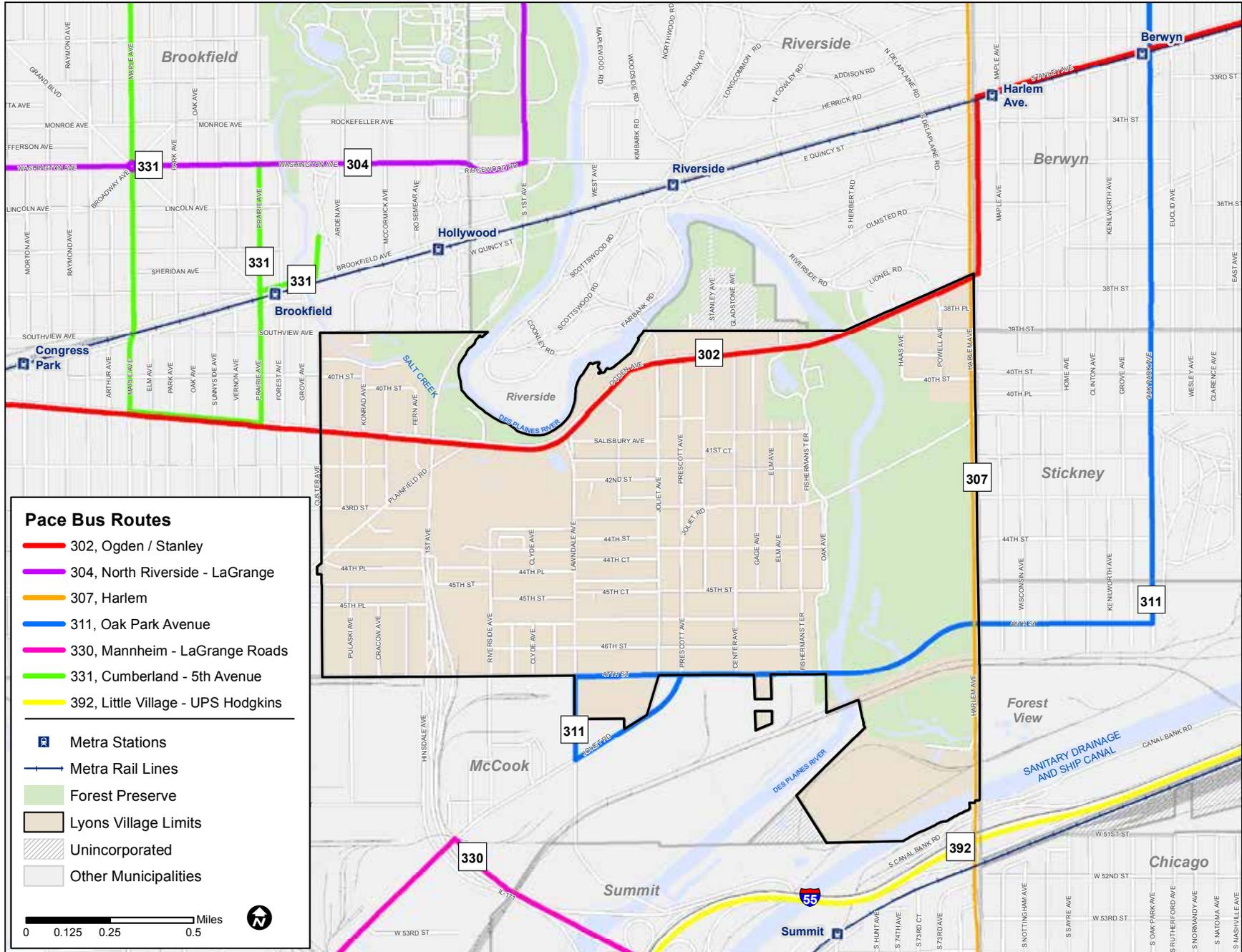
Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2013.



- **Major arterials in Lyons experience traffic congestion during peak periods.** Per capita, Lyons residents drive more miles than do average Cook County residents. Residents of nearby towns also often use Lyons roads such as Ogden Avenue, which experiences the most severe congestion, as commuting routes to Chicago. IDOT is currently in the process of increasing the road's capacity and modernizing traffic signals near the intersection of Ogden Avenue and Joliet Avenue to relieve congestion at the intersection, and this project presents a few challenges to the Village, including its impact on curbside parking for businesses along Ogden Avenue.
- **The Village's major streets lack well-designed aesthetic enhancements.** The major roadways leading into the Village have either limited or no streetscaping and design enhancements, which limits their aesthetic appeal. The most significant gateways into the community include the intersection of 1st Avenue and 47th Street, Ogden Avenue and Harlem Avenue, and the Sanitary Drainage and Ship Canal and Harlem Avenue, none of which contain design elements that highlight their significance as gateways to the community.
- **The 1st Avenue overpass may be confusing to navigate and unsafe.** As 1st Avenue crosses into Lyons from the south, it becomes a divided, elevated road that crosses over 47th Street via an overpass. It also features several access roads in each direction on both sides of 47th Street. The roadway's design suggests to drivers that it is suitable for higher-speed traffic, despite its return to ground level and the presence of traffic signals at 44th Place, where trucks enter the roadway from the National Service Quarry. Because of its location near the quarry and the industrial businesses along 47th Street, this stretch of 1st Avenue is also heavily used by trucks. Stakeholders cite the combination of unintuitive layout, fast-moving traffic, and heavy usage by trucks as contributing to unsafe conditions.

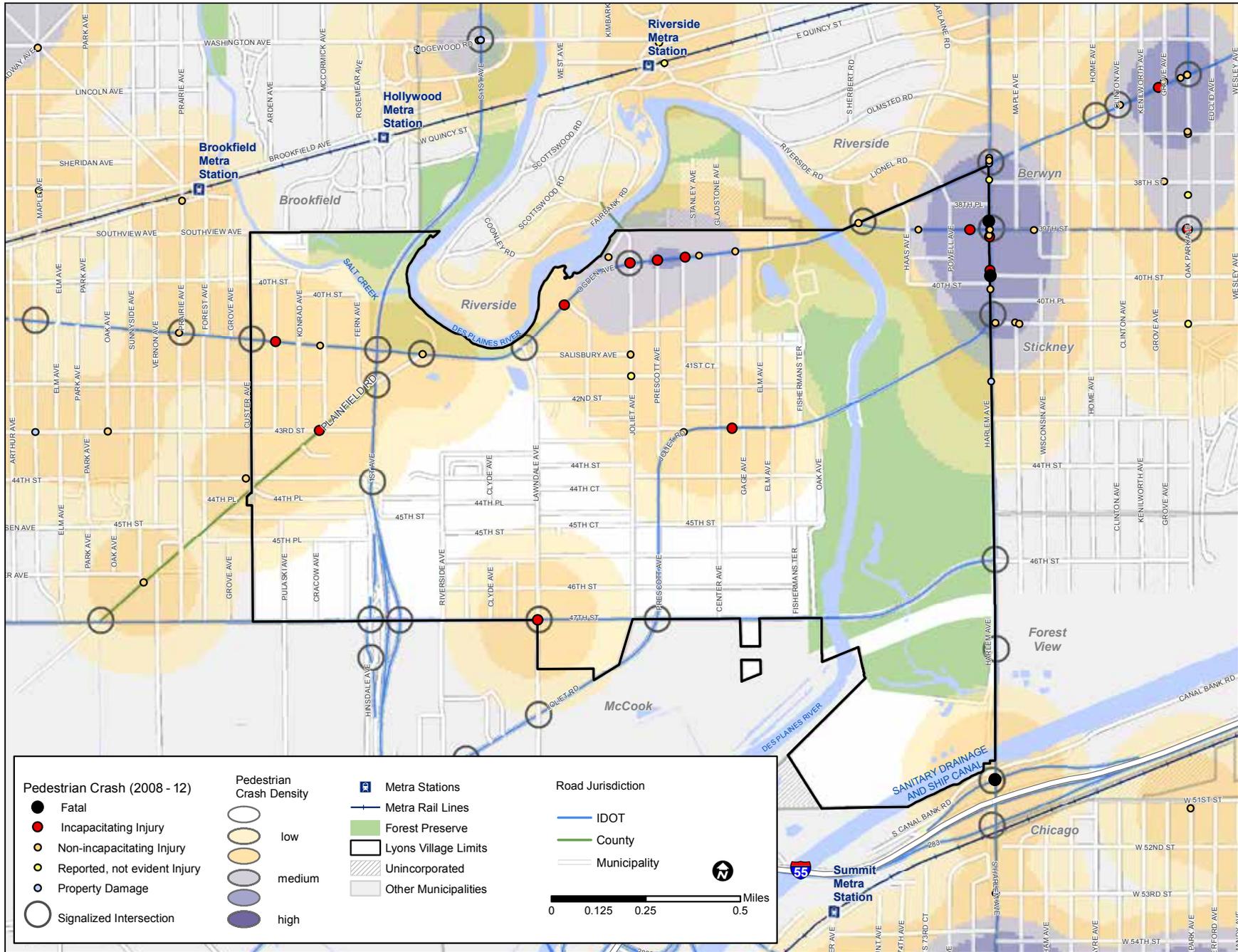
| Photo credit: Bing Maps.

Figure 5.3. Transit services



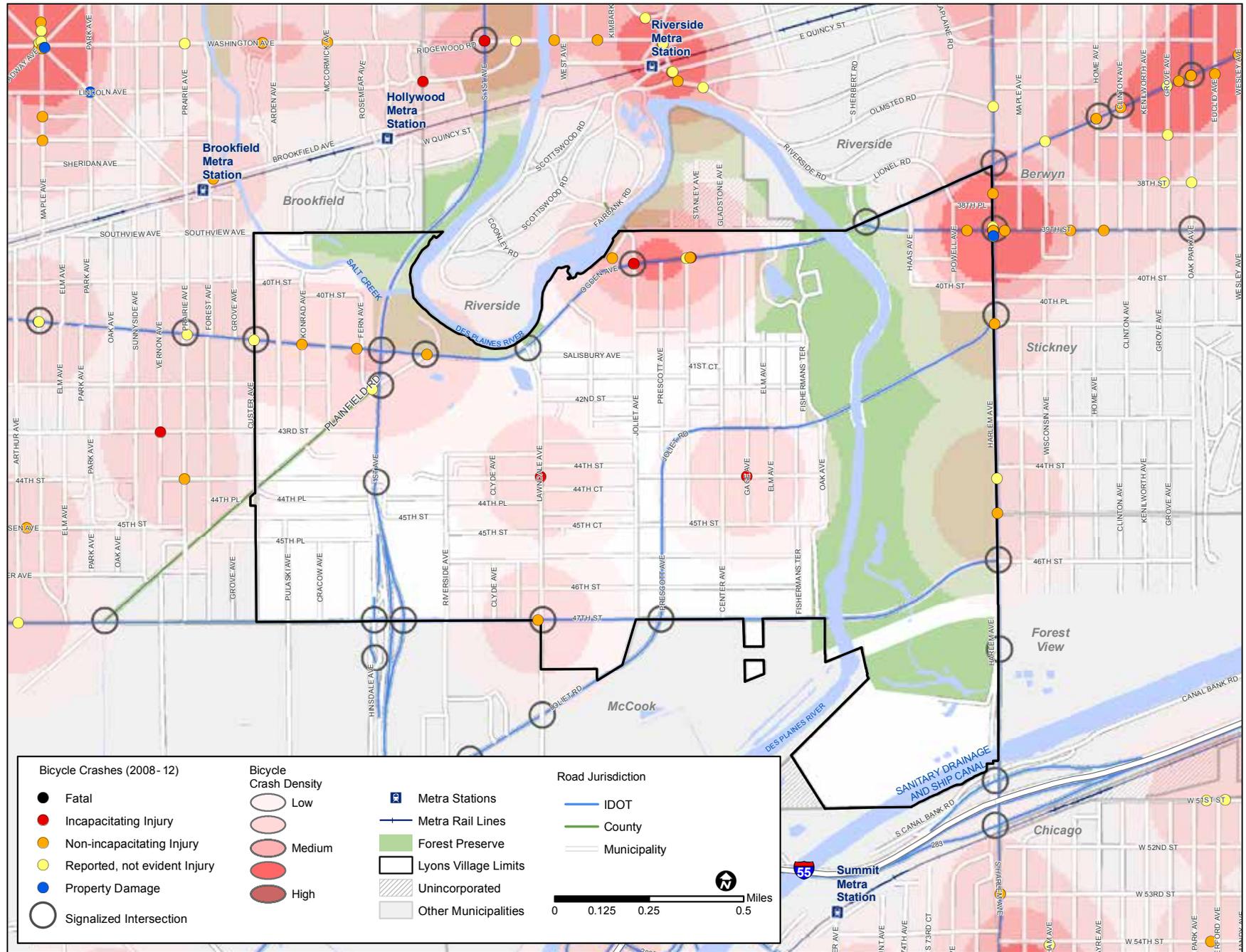
Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2013.

Figure 5.4. Pedestrian crashes



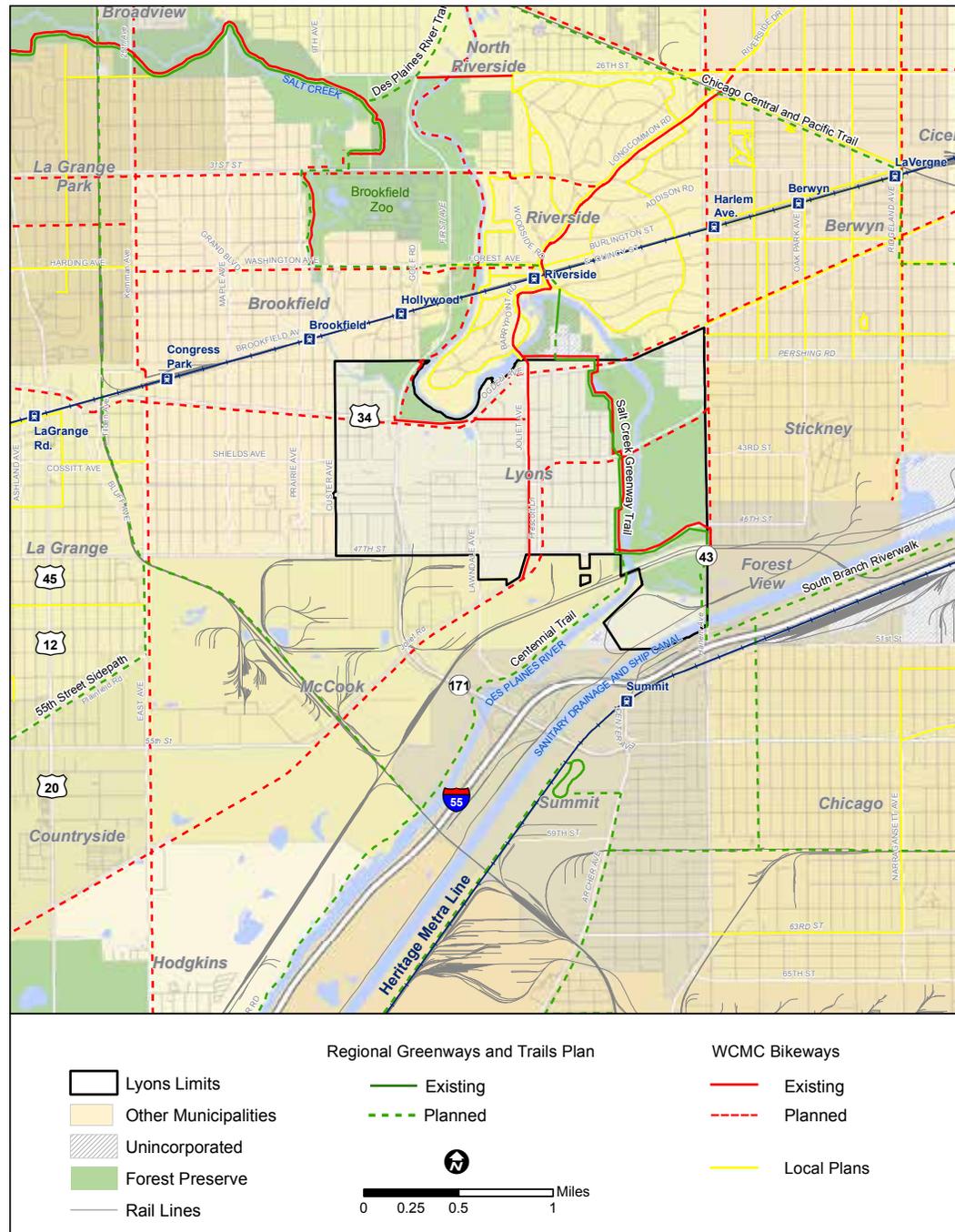
Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2013.

Figure 5.5. Bicycle crashes



Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2013.

Figure 5.6. Bikeways and trails



Source: Bicycle Inventory System, Regional Greenways and Trails Plan 2011, Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2013



# Plan Recommendations for Transportation and Circulation

Lyons needs a transportation system that supports all modes of travel, promotes safe passage of vehicular traffic through the community at minimum inconvenience to residents, and encourages a desired development pattern. It is important for the Village to work with transit and transportation agencies and to provide convenient transportation for all residents, including those who are not able to or choose not to use private cars. Pedestrian and bike infrastructure are needed throughout the community to encourage residents to consider walking and biking as alternative modes of transportation.

**1. Update and maintain the roadway system to reflect current and anticipated needs and traffic volume.** To optimize traffic and pedestrian flow in the Village, a number of roadway improvements should be implemented to address existing and future system deficiencies. Potential improvements include street resurfacing and extension or expansion of existing roads. Overall, most streets in the Lyons are in relatively good condition. A few streets, such as north Riverside Avenue and some sections of 1st Avenue and Harlem Avenue are in need of patching and resurfacing. The Village should establish a regular program of roadway condition inventory and maintenance and work with the county and state to maintain all roads at acceptable level of service.

As the Village implements this plan, it may affect future traffic volumes on some Village roadways. Going forward, the Village should consider the impact that land use changes will have on the transportation system, proactively planning for expansions, resurfacing, or other modifications to keep pace with changes. While roadway expansion is not necessary for all changes to traffic flow, the Village should analyze roadway cross sections as part of the planning process to determine whether they are sufficient to carry current and projected traffic.

Major roadways in Lyons like Ogden Avenue, Harlem Avenue, and Plainfield Road have narrow rights-of-way (See Table 5.1). The Village should work with CCDOTH and IDOT to ensure that adequate rights-of-way are established for major streets, and that the streets are improved to meet these agencies' standards. When roadway expansion is necessary, the Village should seek to use the project to also address the problems faced by pedestrians and bicycle users, as well as to consider impacts to businesses near the intersection. The spacing of curb-cuts should be better controlled along these streets in the future to reduce conflict with pedestrians.

Activity created by planned development may prompt further changes to existing streets. In a few instances, existing local streets may need to be extended and bikeways constructed to complete the roadway and pedestrian network. As opportunity sites, like the quarry site, are planned and redeveloped in the future, logical street extensions should be provided to maximize local mobility and reflect the character of established neighborhoods. In some areas, increased traffic may warrant an examination of whether additional road cross-section is needed, for example, along 47th Street and Ogden Avenue. Increased use of the industrial area along 47th Street may necessitate widening portions of the street to five lanes, from Custer Avenue to Fishermans Terrace, to accommodate a center left-turn lane for trucks accessing the industrial districts. Ogden Avenue should be considered for expansion to a five-lane cross section within the proposed commercial nodes and commercial center, with a turning lane where traffic makes it necessary and medians planted in locations with no turning access. In both of these cases, additional study is needed to determine whether expansion is necessary or not. If the town center is developed as recommended in this plan, the Village should consider expanding Joliet Avenue from 47th Street to Ogden Avenue to prepare the street to handle additional traffic volumes.

**2. *Install and upgrade traffic control devices at intersections to improve their efficiency.*** Roadway capacity—the ability of a street system to efficiently move traffic—is influenced in part by traffic control devices. Congestion in Lyons, particularly on Ogden Avenue, is primarily caused by the lack of adequate road capacity, uncoordinated access points, and inadequately designed intersections. Control modification could make a number of intersections in the Village more efficient, which will likely reduce the number of accidents. IDOT has identified a number of intersections in the Village where signal improvements are needed, including the intersections of Ogden Avenue with Joliet Avenue, Lawndale Avenue, 1st Avenue, and Plainfield Road. IDOT is currently working on traffic signal modernization and channelization at these intersections. The remaining intersections in the Village should be analyzed for operational efficiency and a signal timing sequencing study conducted to determine traffic flow interruption, particularly during peak traffic periods. The Village should then work with entities that have jurisdiction over the roadways to ensure that traffic signals and all-way stop sign controls are installed where warranted, based on the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) standards.

Based on stakeholder input and crash data, intersections where further study may be required to determine the proper future traffic control include 47th Street and 1st Avenue, 47th Street and Custer Avenue, 43th Street and Joliet Avenue, and Harlem Avenue and 43th Street. These locations were either identified by stakeholders as problematic, exhibit a pattern of crashes, or may see future development that alters traffic. If future industrial development occurs along 47th Street, turning lanes may be necessary. Modification options should also be considered at high accident locations like Harlem Avenue and 39th Street, Ogden Avenue and Amelia Avenue, Lawndale Avenue and 47th Street, and Joliet Avenue and Ogden Avenue. All traffic signals should be integrated into the roadways system to coordinate their signaling so that they can maximize vehicle progression and efficiency.

The Village should work with IDOT and CCDOTH to ensure that existing and proposed traffic signals, especially along major streets, are upgraded to include emergency vehicle “pre-emption” equipment to allow traffic signals to adjust based on the presence of an emergency vehicle.

**3. *Study potential safety and design improvements to 1st Avenue.*** The Village should advocate for a study of the stretch of 1st Avenue between the interchange with I-55 in Summit and 44th Place in Lyons. The repeated transition from elevated highway to ground-level roadway, heavy truck traffic, and large number of access roads and turning lanes has created potentially unsafe traffic conditions. Especially given the eventual redevelopment of the quarry site, the Village should work with IDOT to evaluate potential changes to the road’s design that could be safer and better compatible with the land use in the area. Specific elements that may call for detailed study include the traffic signal at 44th Place, where a large volume of trucks servicing the quarry merge with residential traffic before entering 1st Avenue, and the overpass over 47th Street. The Village should partner with IDOT to develop a plan for future improvements to the area’s traffic flow and design.



**4. Adopt and implement a complete streets policy.** An important part of transportation planning is establishing and implementing a complete streets policy, which creates streets that are useable by all transportation modes, including pedestrian, bicycle, transit, and automobile. The Village of Lyons should consider developing a complete streets policy to guide future roadway projects and repairs. The policy will formalize the Village's intent to operate and maintain streets so they are safe for users of all ages and abilities. The complete streets approach to local roadway system will supplement off-street trails and help create a bicycle network throughout the community. Complete streets elements vary based on the surrounding context but often include sidewalks, bike facilities, accessibility improvements, pedestrian refuge islands, high visibility crosswalks, curb extensions, and transit enhancements.

**5. Develop bicycle facilities and expand the trail network.** Lyons boasts large areas of open space and numerous park facilities, which offer a great opportunity for a bicycle network. A continuous bike network throughout the Village would be beneficial to residents, as it will provide another transportation option, helping to reduce the number of cars on the road and promoting a healthy lifestyle. In the future, when streets are constructed or reconstructed, appropriate provisions should be considered for bicycles based on roadway function, traffic volume, roadway characteristics, surrounding land uses and budget constraints. The bikeway system should be connected to the forest preserves, parks, schools, library, and other civic uses. The bikeway system should also provide connections to the proposed Lyons town center.

One bikeway that currently passes through Lyons is the Route 66 Trail. The trail consists of a series of off-road paths and on-road routes that follow the path of the historic highway across Illinois. The West Cook Municipal Conference's 2012 Bicycle Plan routes this trail through Lyons along Joliet Avenue. While Joliet Avenue features relatively low daily traffic, it lacks bicycle infrastructure. The Village could help make this route more inviting and safe by exploring the use of bike lanes or sharrows.

Trails are also important elements of a community's transportation system. The Salt Creek Greenway is an important multi-purpose corridor providing access to the forest preserves and the neighboring communities. This trail should be more prominently identified, through proper signage, to enhance crossing safety, and to advertise the trail for people going through the community. Currently the Salt Creek bike trail runs along the western side of the Cermak Woods, White Eagle Woods, Stony Ford Woods, and Ottawa Trail Woods forest preserves. The Village should work with FPCC to continue the path south along the Des Plaines River to connect to the planned Centennial Trail, which will follow the river south to the Illinois and Michigan Canal Trail in DuPage County. Another extension should be made along Harlem Avenue to connect to the South Branch Riverwalk Trail that runs along the Sanitary and Ship Canal, as proposed in the Chicago Wilderness Green Infrastructure Vision 2.0. The Salt Creek Greenway Trail should also be extended further north through the unincorporated area to connect to the proposed trail in the Village of Riverside. Figure 5.5 shows these potential trail connections, which are planned as part of the Regional Greenways and Trails Plan.

**6. Create safe pedestrian facilities and sidewalks.** Providing a safe, pedestrian-friendly environment is vital in maintaining a healthy, desirable community. Major streets that lack pedestrian right-of-way, particularly at signalized intersections, present the most common impediments to pedestrian movement in Lyons. The Village can address this gap by updating existing traffic signal equipment to include proper pedestrian signal heads. A countdown timer that shows pedestrians the number of seconds they have to cross the street would improve safety at busy intersections, especially near key pedestrian locations and bike route crossings. Pedestrian crossing locations along primarily auto-oriented commercial corridors such as Ogden Avenue and Harlem Avenue should include clearly marked crosswalks and pedestrian countdown signals. A busy section of Ogden Avenue, between Joliet Avenue and Amelia Avenue, has a narrow right-of-way with insufficient space for on-street parking, forcing vehicles that are parked on the street to partially block the sidewalk (**Figure 5.7**). The Village should work with IDOT to increase maintenance of the public right-of-way between the curb and property line and ensure that sidewalks are accessible and connected.

Lyons needs a comprehensive sidewalk network that includes accessible sidewalks in the public realm, as well as on-site connections to local businesses. The Village should assess sidewalk connectivity to determine where connections and improvements are needed. As roadways are improved, sidewalks or multi-use paths should be incorporated, especially near schools, churches, parks, and commercial nodes. These improvements will more clearly delineate the sidewalk environment and improve the aesthetics of the commercial corridors. Adequate spaces should be provided in the public right-of-way for bus stops that can accommodate bus shelters, concrete bus pads, and pedestrian connections to the public sidewalk.



7. *Enhance access to public transit.* Many transit services pass through or near the Village of Lyons, providing connections to nearby communities and major destinations, but Lyons residents infrequently use them. The most recent (2006) rider origin-destination survey conducted by Metra revealed that relatively few Lyons residents use Metra. The study found that about 100 riders from Lyons boarded BNSF trains on a typical weekday, with the greatest number using the Riverside station, and no Lyons residents recorded at the Hollywood or Summit Metra stations.<sup>4</sup> The low usage of Metra could be due to a number of factors, including the infrequency of bus connections to the nearest stations. Riverside Metra Station, despite recording the highest usage by Lyons' residents, does not have a connecting bus service to Lyons. In addition to Metra stations, Village residents cited nearby schools and facilities serving the needs of seniors as destinations they would like to be reachable by transit. The Village should work with Pace to improve bus service connections to destinations potential riders identify as important. Some residents seek increased access to Metra stations, but residents have also expressed a desire for better transit access to businesses and amenities popular with youth and seniors, groups less likely to drive to their destinations.

As the main employment centers in the Village, commercial and industrial districts are the key destinations for many residents and potential transit riders. Increasing transit access in those areas could potentially increase ridership. The Village should analyze key destinations in the community, especially those with multiple, complementary uses, including the municipal center, community parks, key commercial nodes including the proposed town center, and the industrial areas, to identify service gaps and then work with Pace to determine the best way to expand transit access to those destinations. Extension of existing bus routes is one way to improve transit access. Currently, the 311 Oak Park Avenue bus only serves the eastern portion of 47th Street. Since the entire corridor is designated for industrial use in the future, the bus service could be extended through the entire corridor. Moreover, since every transit rider is a pedestrian at some point along his or her trip, the Village can also encourage transit ridership through improvements to the pedestrian network. In the absence of extended bus routes, the Village can pursue sidewalk and wayfinding improvements that help pedestrians locate and reach nearby transit service.

<sup>4</sup> Metra. 2006.

**8. Promote shared parking and implement parking management strategies.**The placement and design of off-street parking can present a challenge in commercial areas if facilities are not properly integrated into the built environment. Currently, circulation of traffic entering, exiting, or crossing between parking areas along Ogden Avenue and Harlem Avenue is unclear or awkward. The Village should require in its zoning regulations that parking in the commercial districts be positioned behind, below, or beside buildings, rather than in front, and that buildings be oriented to the sidewalk. A number of businesses along Ogden Avenue and 47th Street feature front parking areas, which are directly accessible from the street. This layout sometimes forces motorists to back up into traffic to exit the spaces. These spaces should be reconfigured and buffered from traffic on the streets or should be relocated to the rear of businesses.

The current parking arrangement in Lyons' commercial areas mainly consists of individual parking lots in the front of each business, which can be accessed only from the street via driveways that cross the sidewalk. Each of these curb cuts creates a potential point where pedestrians and drivers must dangerously cross one another's path. Furthermore, to move from one parking area to another, drivers must reenter the roadway, sometimes to travel only a few hundred feet. Several parking strategies can help reduce these conflict points. Cross-access between adjacent parking areas can allow drivers to move through the business district without crossing the sidewalk and reentering a busy road. More importantly, cross-access can reduce the number of curb cuts, creating longer stretches of safe, uninterrupted sidewalk.

Shared parking is another important strategy to reduce curb cuts, control excess parking supply, and free additional land for commercial development and pedestrian facilities. When each business has its own parking area, lots often sit empty next to lots that are overcrowded due to different business schedules. For example, a medical office requires parking during daytime hours, while a restaurant next door has its greatest parking need in the evening. Instead of each business providing enough parking to meet their maximum demand individually, the medical office could allow restaurant patrons to park at night, while the restaurant could allow patients to park during the day. Shared parking arrangements reduce the perception of an overall parking shortage and can open land currently reserved for parking to a higher and better use. Cross-access and shared parking require businesses to cooperate and agree to clear definitions of responsibility; the Village should take the lead in facilitating these agreements. The management of alley access is also critical to improving circulation. The Village should encourage use of alleys to access parking or service areas. However, alleys should include designated curb cuts to ensure safe access.



**9. *Make streetscape improvements and install gateway markers.***

The Village can enhance the image and character of a number of major streets in Lyons through streetscape improvements. Aesthetic improvements along 1st Avenue, Ogden Avenue, Harlem Avenue, Plainfield Road, and 47th Street can be made through attractive landscaping, more uniform signage, and sidewalk and curb improvements. The Village should work with IDOT and CCDOH to implement streetscape improvements that enhance the aesthetic appeal of major arterials in Lyons. Improvements could include decorative lighting, banners, burying overhead utilities, and additional landscaping.

Key gateway locations need features that signify arrival in the community. Installation of attractive and distinctive gateways at key entry points into the Village would help to create an identity for Lyons. Although gateway signs currently exist on Ogden Avenue and Harlem Avenue, there are no gateway treatments marking entry into Lyons from Riverside or Stickney. The Village needs visible and attractive signage at all major entry points to Lyons. Locations that are appropriate for gateway treatment at the borders of the community include 1st Avenue, Ogden Avenue, Harlem Avenue, Custer Avenue, Joliet Avenue, 47th Street, and Plainfield Road. Gateway treatments could include formal structures such as signage and monuments that reflect a local identity, and landscaped improvements.

**10. *Invest in infrastructure and facilitate truck traffic on appropriate routes.*** Many of the industrial businesses in Lyons rely on truck traffic coming from elsewhere in the I-55 corridor. The ability to reach businesses in nearby towns by truck is a key reason why firms seek to locate in Lyons, but truck traffic can also present safety and noise issues. The Village can play a role in planning and investing in infrastructure to help ensure truck traffic will be compatible with the diversity of land uses within Lyons. The Village should work with business owners to identify infrastructure investments that would strategically improve freight access and truck routes and incorporate them into the CIP. While most businesses in Lyons are located along major routes that allow truck traffic, access to some businesses requires vehicles to travel through residential neighborhoods. For example, Riverside Drive borders a residential neighborhood and is used as a direct truck access route. The Village should discourage through traffic on residential streets and minimize truck traffic in residential neighborhoods. The Village should partner with neighboring communities to develop and coordinate a comprehensive truck route system that minimizes truck traffic penetration in residential areas, while reasonably serving the commercial and industrial districts.

# Implementation Strategies

The transportation vision of this plan will require a combination of Village action and collaboration with partners, including IDOT, CCDOTH, FPCC, and ATA. Working with a diversity of partners will allow the Village to address the many facets of its transportation system, from bike paths to bus access to pedestrian safety. Parking was identified by many stakeholders as a key issue in the Village’s commercial areas. Enforcing existing parking regulations can help alleviate the safety hazards posed by cars parking on the Ogden Avenue sidewalk, while conducting a parking management study will help find alternative spaces for vehicles to park. Some of the implementation steps discussed in previous chapters will affect transportation, such as aligning the CIP, which will help set an agenda for upgrading sidewalks and streets.

The CIP should also plan for improvements to alleyways, particularly in commercial areas. Paving, repairing, and maintaining alleys will provide access to off-street parking in the rear of businesses, allowing the areas in front of commercial centers to safely cater to pedestrians.

**Table 5.2. Implementation strategies for transportation and circulation**

ACTION	IMPLEMENTERS	DESCRIPTION
Establish a roadway condition inventory <i>Timeline: 0-2 years</i>	Village, CCDOTH, IDOT	To strategically plan roadway resurfacing, maintenance, and improvements, the Village should assess the condition of roads throughout Lyons. The inventory will help the Village to establish priorities for roadwork and coordinate with the county and state on how to efficiently work together to maintain acceptable service on all roads. The Village should incorporate these roadway priorities into the CIP it develops.
Install pedestrian amenities <i>Timeline: 0-2 years</i>	Village, CCDOTH, IDOT	Improvements such as visible crosswalks and attractive landscaping at major roadway intersections can enhance pedestrian safety. The Village should develop a streetscape plan based on the recommendations of this plan, identifying key pedestrian areas that require safer crossings. Design features such as landscaped buffers along sidewalks, bulb-outs, and raised pedestrian paths will be appropriate for areas such as the town center. The Village should incorporate these improvements into the CIP. Funding for pedestrian facilities may be available through federal and state funding sources; CMAP can help the Village identify appropriate funding programs for specific projects.
Conduct a parking management study <i>Timeline: 0-2 years</i>	Village, consultant	A parking management study would help diagnose the needs of areas such as the Ogden Avenue commercial district. It would determine available spaces, parking utilization, and turnover rates, helping to find alternatives to the current practice of parking on sidewalks. The study could also explore the use of shared parking near downtown locations.



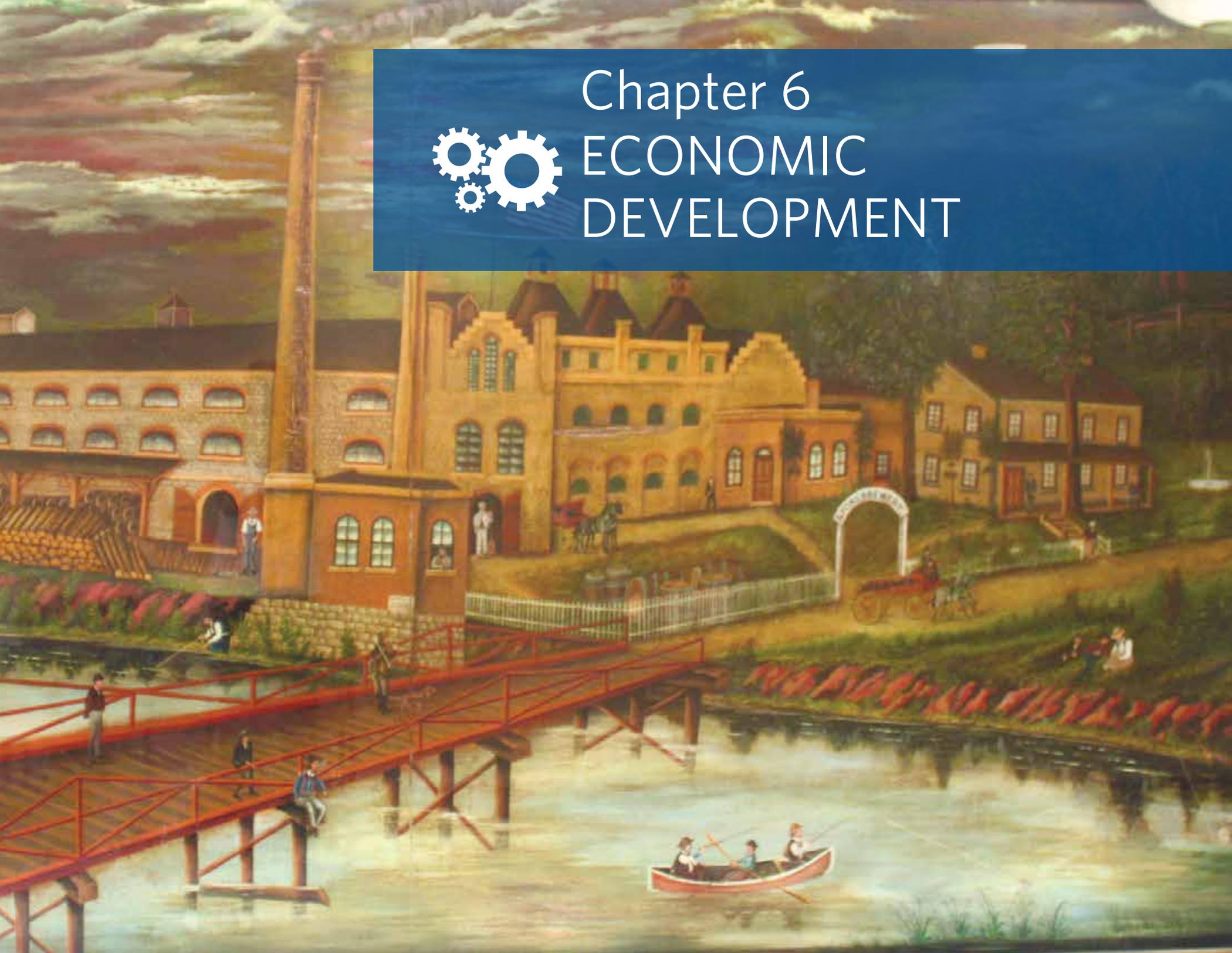
**Table 5.2. Implementation strategies for transportation and circulation (continued)**

ACTION	IMPLEMENTERS	DESCRIPTION
Increase parking enforcement <i>Timeline: 0-2 years</i>	Village	The Village should enforce parking regulations, especially in areas such as Ogden Avenue, where stakeholders have identified safety hazards. The Village should increase enforcement of parking regulations in a friendly and fair manner to end the practice of cars parking partially on sidewalks. Conducting a full parking study before increasing enforcement will allow the Village to first establish alternatives to accommodate cars that will no longer be allowed to obstruct sidewalks.
Survey business owners about truck route needs <i>Timeline: 0-2 years</i>	Village, Lyons-McCook Business Association	To develop an effective, comprehensive system of truck routes, the Village must understand the needs of businesses that use trucks within Lyons. The Village should meet with business owners who receive truck traffic or have trucks of their own to determine how they can meet businesses' needs while keeping truck traffic out of residential areas. The LMBA can help reach out to business owners, especially for industrial businesses.
Survey residents about desired transit destinations <i>Timeline: 0-2 years</i>	Village, Lyons Retirees, local school districts	A survey can help the Village determine which currently underserved destinations residents would like to reach by transit. Senior citizens and youths are the most likely groups of residents to choose transit over driving, and would be important demographics to survey about transit service needs. The Lyons Retirees and local school districts could help publicize a survey that can inform the Village's efforts to work with Pace to meet residents' needs.
Continue to work with Pace to assess feasibility of increased bus service and connections to popular destinations <i>Timeline: 0-2 years</i>	Village, Pace, Metra, RTA, CCDOTH, IDOT, LMBA	The Village should work with Pace to conduct a feasibility study on improved and bus service that extends into Lyons or connects to nearby destinations favored by residents. These destinations could include Metra stations or other locations identified by seniors as important but hard to reach by current transit service. Continue to explore conversion of the large parking lot at the intersection of Riverwalk Drive and Joliet Avenue to park-and-ride facility, with pedestrian or bus connection to Riverside Metra.
Adopt a complete streets policy <i>Timeline: 3-5 years</i>	Village, CMAP, ATA	A complete streets policy can help the Village accommodate non-motorized transportation in its future roadway projects. CMAP can provide examples of policies that have been adopted in other communities throughout the region and provide guidance to the Village on what might be most appropriate for its needs. ATA can also provide information and assistance on complete streets planning.
Study 1st Avenue overpass design <i>Timeline: 3-5 years</i>	Village, IDOT	Work with IDOT to determine whether improvements to 1st Avenue are needed to improve safety. While current conditions may merit alterations to the design of the roadway or traffic signals, the study should take into account the most likely future land use at the quarry site.
Interconnect traffic signals <i>Timeline: 3-5 years</i>	Village, CMAP, consultants	Because interconnected signals can make traffic movement more efficient and alleviate congestion, projects to coordinate traffic signals are eligible for federal Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funding. The Village should conduct a study to see assess the need for interconnected signals on Ogden Avenue. If a project is justified, it should apply for CMAQ funding, which is programmed by CMAP.
Create Village-wide bike plan with designated off-street paths and on-street bike lanes <i>Timeline: 3-5 years</i>	Village, FPCC, ATA, CCDOTH, IDOT, CMAP, consultants	Engage residents in a Village-wide bike route planning exercise, including the alignment of potential routes, prioritization of pathways and bikeways and location of bike facilities. Design on-street bike routes, connecting the bikeways to the nearby trail system including the South Branch Riverwalk Trail, Centennial Trail, Des Plaines River Trail and the Chicago Central and Pacific Trail. Install signage, bicycle parking, and safety features. For off-street bike paths, federal funds are available through the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP), which is programmed by CMAP. A consulting firm or ATA can provide assistance for the planning exercise.
Install streetscaping along major corridors <i>Timeline: 3-5 years</i>	Village, property owners, developers, CCDOTH, IDOT	As part of the revision of zoning and development ordinances, review for signage and landscape regulations. Create a unified design character for these elements and incorporate into new ordinances. Attractive signage, parkway landscaping, and parking lot landscaping can be paid by developers, property owners, or through the Village CIP, as appropriate to each property.

# Chapter 6



# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT





Lyons faces multiple economic development challenges, including a need to retain and support existing businesses. The Village has a goal of encouraging commercial and industrial development to provide employment opportunities, support the needs of the residents and businesses, and enhance the local tax base. The key strategies for economic development described below can help revitalize existing areas of commercial activity while also promoting the development of a new commercial town center.

Artist's depiction of Mueller's Brewery,  
a prominent early business in Lyons  
(Joseph Antos, 1898).

## Goal Statement

Provide a sustainable business environment that supports the attraction and retention of businesses that provide necessary services and generate employment opportunities for residents.

## Summary of Existing Conditions

Economic activity within the Village of Lyons mostly consists of light industrial businesses and commercial businesses that serve local residents. As Lyons is primarily a bedroom community, with more than 95 percent of working residents employed outside the Village, most developed land is dedicated to residential housing rather than commercial activity. Most business activity in the Village, including restaurants and small-scale retail, is located along Ogden Avenue. While some commercial businesses are located elsewhere in the Village, such as along Joliet Avenue and 47th Street, the highly visible and heavily trafficked corridor of Ogden Avenue is Lyons' "main street." The Village's stable, middle-class population, as well as its location along a busy commuting route to Chicago and other locations, presents an attractive customer base for businesses.

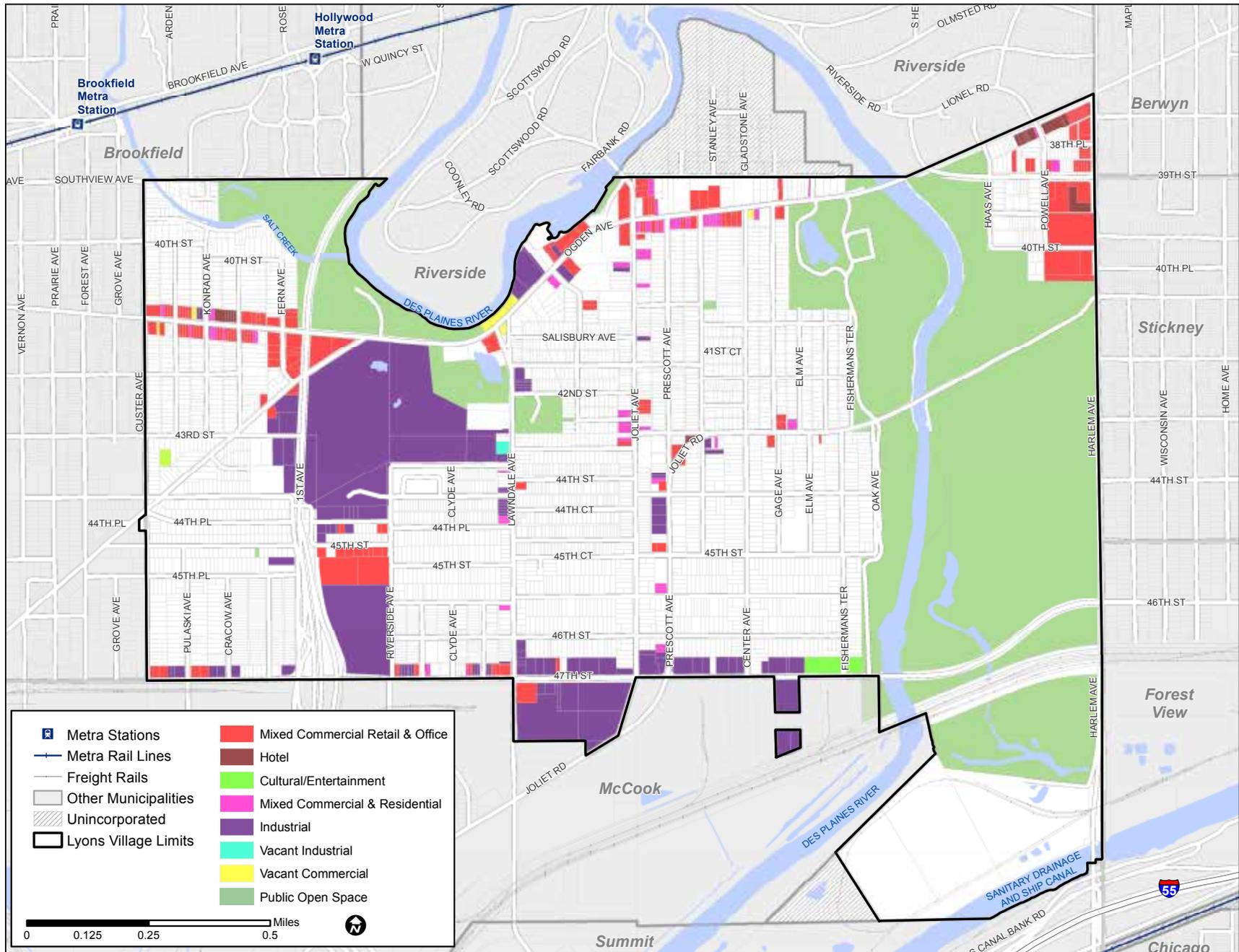
The Village contains numerous industrial buildings, primarily along 47th Street and 1st Avenue, most of which are warehousing and distribution facilities. Seven of the 10 largest employers in the Village are industrial or freight-related firms. Lyons' ease of access to I-55 and its location in the key industrial submarket along the I-55 corridor offer the possibility of growth in those sectors. Most of Lyons' industrial facilities are older, relatively small, and located close to residential areas, limiting the intensity and scale of industrial development. Light industrial uses could be a strong area of specialization for Lyons, taking advantage of the Village's location and the small footprint of its industrial parcels to support heavier manufacturing elsewhere in the corridor.



## Key Findings

- **The dominant employment industry sectors within Lyons are retail trade and accommodation and food services.** While many Lyons residents work in manufacturing, the service and retail sectors employ a growing share of workers employed within the Village. These sectors account for nearly 30 percent of total employees within the Village. The majority of jobs in these sectors are associated with national and international business chains such as Dunkin' Donuts, Starbucks, and McDonalds.
- **Recent trends in commercial vacancy rates indicate the relative strength of Lyons' retail sector.** In the past decade, the square footage of retail space in Lyons increased by 3.3 percent while rentable building areas for industrial and office space remained constant. The community generates more retail sales per capita than does the county overall, presenting Lyons with an economic development advantage.
- **While Lyons contains a large amount of industrial land, the Village suffers from moderately high industrial vacancy rates.** The Village contains considerably more industrial land on a percentage basis than does Cook County and the region overall, with industrial properties making up 17.4 percent of the assessed land value. Lyons' 11 percent industrial vacancy rate is slightly high compared to 9 percent for Cook County and 8.8 percent for the Chicago metropolitan region. Even with these vacancy rates, the presence of established industrial areas and infrastructure in Lyons offers the Village a strong opportunity to attract industrial businesses.
- **Industrial facilities in Lyons are smaller and older than those in nearby communities.** The median date of construction for industrial facilities in Lyons is 1961 and the median size is 7,405 square feet. In the North I-55 industrial corridor, which includes communities near the Stevenson Expressway stretching from Cicero to Willow Springs, the median date of construction for an industrial facility is 1981 and the median size is 19,000 square feet. The size, age, and depth of Lyons' industrial properties as well as their proximity to residential neighborhoods limit the types of industrial businesses that can locate in the community. Supportive industries, such as trucking and truck support, are common in Lyons and should continue to provide a niche for Lyons that takes advantage of its location.

Figure 6.1. Commercial and industrial uses



Source: Land Use Inventory 2010, Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2013



# Plan Recommendations for Economic Development

## Commercial Sectors

Commercial areas represent a vital component of a community's economy because they meet the retail and service needs of residents and visitors, enhance the livability and image of a community, and provide revenue to the Village. Lyons' commercial uses are spread along major arterials in the Village with no single area having established itself as the main commercial anchor of the community.

The future holds potential for new commercial development in the Village, including the realization of a town center at the intersection of Ogden Avenue and Joliet Avenue (see Chapter 3: Land Use and Development). The following strategies are recommended to promote and enhance the overall commercial sector in the Village.

**1. *Attract retail uses to key commercial nodes in the village.*** Currently, retail and service businesses are scattered along Lyons' commercial corridors, especially Ogden Avenue. In order to create safe, thriving, and pedestrian-oriented retail environments, Lyons should continue to support commercial development along major corridors like Ogden Avenue and Harlem Avenue, but focus on consolidating retail uses around key nodes. Clustering of retail and service businesses at key nodes reduces the dilution of limited market demand for commercial space and can improve accessibility and visibility of existing businesses. Focusing public attention and infrastructure investment at key nodes can help draw and direct private investment to those locations, creating thriving concentrations of commercial activity. The Village could use business incentives to increase occupancy and facilitate potential catalytic projects at strategic nodes. Clustering development around nodes makes it easier to connect complementary land uses, such as residential neighborhoods, through improved pedestrian and transit connections to ensure a stable customer base is maintained.

Nearby residential development or employment centers like the MacNeal Professional Center located at the intersection of Harlem Avenue and Ogden Avenue are viable uses that will support commercial developments and ensure their sustainability.

Three prominent opportunities currently exist along Ogden Avenue for clustering of commercial development: the intersections of Ogden Avenue with Harlem Avenue, 1st Avenue, and Joliet Avenue. Although dependent on a strengthening economy and real estate market, each of these locations exhibits potential to become a commercial node, given their strategic location and excellent access and visibility.

**2. *Enhance and diversify existing commercial districts.*** Stakeholders expressed a desire for retail tenants and services that better match the needs of Lyons residents. Currently, residents feel there are too few restaurants, grocery stores, and other local-serving retail businesses. Stakeholders also reported dissatisfaction with the look and feel of Ogden Avenue, which is the main commercial corridor in the community. The corridor lacks consistent and aesthetically pleasing facades and signs, as well as safe on-street parking. In addition to pursuing streetscape and parking improvements through new and revised ordinances, the Village should evaluate alternatives to the current business mix in key locations. It may wish to propose voluntary relocation of businesses over time. For example, auto-related businesses may relocate from the envisioned town center at Ogden Avenue and Joliet Avenue to more appropriate auto-oriented areas. The Village can use zoning revisions and provide assistance to encourage businesses to relocate and thereby help advance the larger vision for Lyons.



**3. *Move forward with revitalization efforts.*** In the past several decades, Lyons has seen significant reinvestment in strategic locations throughout the community. The Village has constructed a new municipal complex and two community parks near the intersection of Ogden Avenue and Lawndale Avenue. IDOT is also investing more than two million dollars to improve roadway intersections and modernize traffic signals near the intersection of Ogden Avenue and Joliet Avenue. These projects can attract future private investment at these locations. While the market itself will ultimately drive the types of businesses locating in Lyons, the Village can work to attract private investment in the community. Coordinating revitalization efforts with the desired location of key commercial nodes will be a key to the strategy's effectiveness.



## Industrial Sectors

A goal of this plan is to support a diverse mix of industries that provide local employment and advance Lyons' role in the regional economy. Improvement of the Village's industrial areas offers Lyons an opportunity to strengthen and expand local job opportunities and the municipal tax base. Lyons' existing industrial infrastructure and proximity to the City of Chicago, O'Hare Airport, and Midway Airport presents a great opportunity for industrial development. Existing industrial uses in the Village vary in size, intensity, and context, but generally their small footprints and proximity to residential neighborhoods favor supportive and light industrial uses over heavier industry. The following strategies are recommended to enhance the Village's industrial areas.

**1. *Develop an economic development program to recruit and retain industrial businesses.*** Given Lyons' easy access to major railways and roadways and its close proximity to a large industrial park in McCook, the Village is well positioned to maximize its industrial development potential. Experts anticipate that the Chicago metropolitan region will continue to experience growing demand for freight, logistics, storage and distribution, and other industrial uses given expanding global trade, regional initiatives to increase exports, and Chicago's position as the hub of much of the nation's transportation infrastructure. Recent and proposed transportation infrastructure investments including the expansion of O'Hare Airport, the Chicago Region Environmental and Transportation Efficiency (CREATE) Program, and several highway projects, are likely to further drive increased demand for freight and logistics facilities and firms in the Chicago region.

Specifically, the Village should promote light industrial uses on 47th Street and along 1st Avenue between 44th Street and Plainfield Road. The Village should focus on promoting the types of supportive industrial uses that currently thrive in Lyons, such as trucking and truck support. The Village is already working with the Lyons-McCook Business Association (LMBA) on some strategies, including building the administrative and marketing capacity of small businesses to serve local customers and expand the customer base beyond Lyons. The Village should rezone non-industrial properties along the 47th Street corridor to industrial and allow them to transition to light industrial uses, warehouses and distribution, and other supportive industrial uses over time, though commercial uses should continue to be supported in the short term. Over the longer term, the Village should prioritize sites for industrial redevelopment, effectively marketing sites to potential investors and encouraging parcel consolidation to support some mid-size industries and diversify industrial businesses in the Village. The Village can further support industrial redevelopment at these sites by making appropriate infrastructure investments through its CIP.

**2. *Coordinate industrial development with other entities.*** To promote successful, sustainable industrial areas, the Village should continue working with other entities including LMBA and the Village of McCook, which borders Lyons' industrial corridor. The Village should work with the LMBA to establish a local "Industrial Council," made up of industrial tenants from both Lyons and McCook, to assist in identifying and addressing shared issues and concerns in the industrial districts, including image and branding, site and building maintenance, and access and circulation. This body can help to guide infrastructure improvement and delivery of government services in the industrial areas.



## Implementation Strategies

The Village can spur economic development through land use planning, assisting in business development and attraction, and connecting residents and employers with workforce development resources. Steps identified in earlier chapters, such as cataloging and marketing vacant parcels and focusing commercial development at key nodes, will help to implement economic development plans as well. External support from municipalities and business associations can be especially beneficial to the small, locally owned businesses that are well suited for the small lots and lower rents of Lyons' commercial districts. Therefore, assisting existing businesses and helping new enterprises get off the ground should be integral to the Village's economic development agenda. The Village should work with the LMBA on a number of strategies to support small businesses, including connecting business owners with business training resources, identifying spaces for new entrepreneurs, and providing loans for upgrading facades and signage.

Ogden Avenue.  
Photo credit: Flickr user seanbirm.



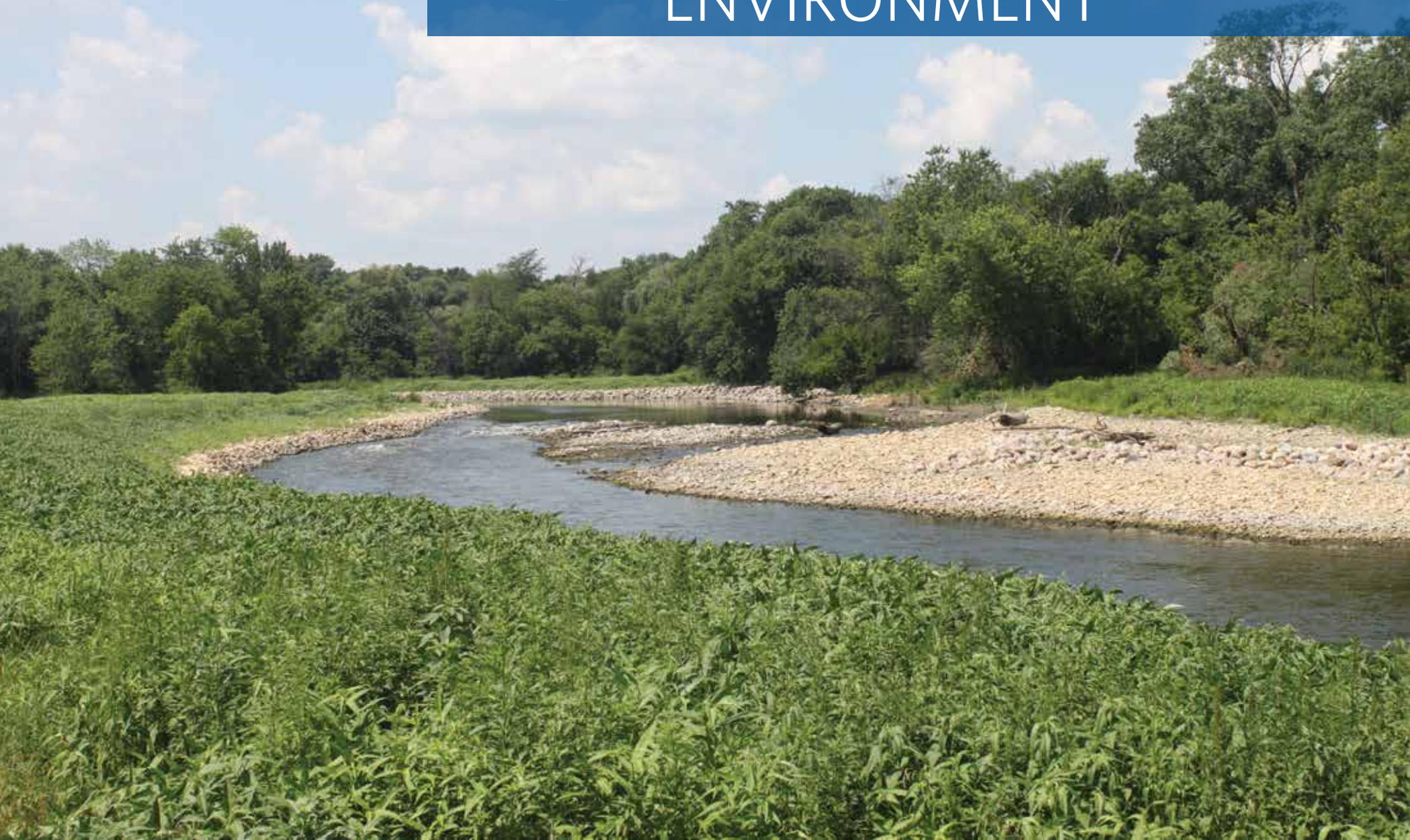
**Table 6.1. Implementation strategies for economic development**

ACTION	IMPLEMENTERS	DESCRIPTION
Conduct a retail market study <i>Timeline: 0-2 years</i>	Village, consultants	Many of this Plan's recommendations call for the Village to actively recruit and retain businesses while steering them to key locations. A market study will help the Village to understand exactly which types of businesses will be most successful in meeting local consumer demand and driving overall economic development. Residents expressed a desire to shop more within Lyons, which suggests that demand may be present to support certain types of businesses that currently "leak" out of Lyons and are located in neighboring villages. The study will help the Village identify opportunities to capture business leakage, attract businesses with high potential for success to key nodes, and diversify Lyons' commercial districts.
Offer economic development incentives <i>Timeline: 0-2 years</i>	Village, Illinois Dept. of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO)	To help with the rehabilitation of older industrial properties, the Village should establish and support programs that offer financial incentives to businesses in Lyons to invest in their own properties. Village officials should explore existing incentive programs, such as Illinois Enterprise Zones, and identify new programs to spur additional investment and rehabilitation of existing facilities. Currently, the McCook/Hodgkin Enterprise Zone covers the industrial park in McCook but does not extend to Lyons' industrial district. Village officials should work with the county and the state to extend this program to Lyons' side of the industrial corridor.
Promote local shopping <i>Timeline: 3-5 years</i>	Village, LMBA	From stakeholder interviews, comments at public meetings, and basic market assessment, it is clear that Lyons residents spend most of their dining, grocery, and entertainment dollars outside of the community. Shifting a portion of this money back into the community will be critical to creating vibrant commercial districts, especially for the proposed town center. The retail market study will help the Village to identify opportunities for business types that could thrive within the Village. As such businesses locate in Lyons, the Village should work with the LMBA to develop programs that promote local shopping, from institutional purchasing practices to shopping campaigns targeted at residents.
Create an industrial council <i>Timeline: 3-5 years</i>	Village, LMBA, industrial businesses	Village officials should work with the LMBA to establish an "Industrial Council" to proactively market industrial investment opportunities. The industrial council should create marketing materials and work to access different media outlets to promote development and investment opportunities in the Village's industrial districts. The council should work with Village officials to identify regional partners that they should reach out to and collaborate with in marketing industrial opportunities, such as the Cook County Bureau of Economic Development, the Cook County Land Bank Authority, and DCEO.
Inventory and market vacant properties <i>Timeline: 3-5 years</i>	Village, LMBA, CMAP	To continue revitalization efforts and advance infill development, the Village should maintain an inventory of vacant and underutilized properties. The Village can obtain parcel records through the Cook County Tax Assessor's Office, which should be field verified and mapped, and work with LMBA to create a database of parcels to market to developers. One common method for determining whether a parcel is underutilized is the Improvement/Land (I/L) Ratio. The I/L Ratio compares the value of buildings and improvements on a parcel to the value of the land itself; a value of less than one means the land has more value than the buildings on it. CMAP can work with the Village to determine I/L values that suggest redevelopment potential specifically for Lyons.
Create an industrial market analysis and plan <i>Timeline: 5+ years</i>	Village, LMBA, consultants	To build on the creation of the industrial council and vacant property inventory, the Village should complete a market analysis for industrial businesses. The analysis should consider trends in industrial development within the North I-55 industrial corridor and recommend ways that Lyons can attract, retain, and support businesses that can thrive. The analysis should help Lyons meet the needs of local industrial businesses in terms of providing accessibility for both the workforce and freight vehicles. The analysis should incorporate input from stakeholders in the supportive industries that currently prosper in Lyons.



# Chapter 7

## NATURAL ENVIRONMENT





With the prominence of the Des Plaines River and the many acres of preserved land that surround it, parks and open spaces have played a significant role in shaping the image and character of the Village of Lyons. This chapter presents the plan for preserving and protecting parks, open space, historic sites, and environmental features in the Village while providing recommendations to improve open space and trail connections throughout the community.

# Goal Statement

Maintain and preserve parks, open spaces, and natural resources to provide Village residents with recreational and health amenities while incorporating best practices in flood and stormwater management.

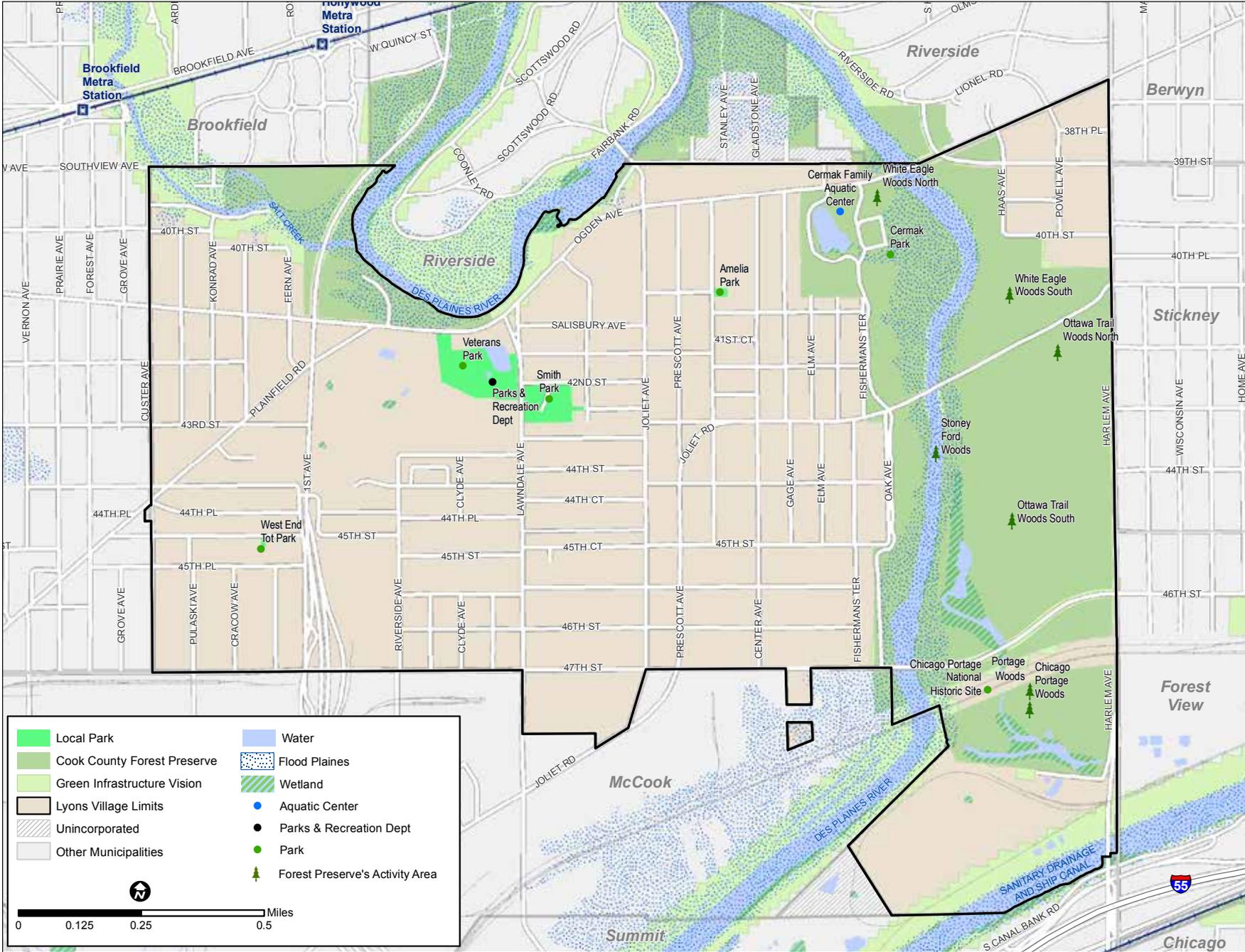
## Summary of Existing Conditions

Lyons enjoys significant and diverse open space and natural resource assets, including the Des Plaines River, Village parks, and several Cook County forest preserves. In total, more than one-third of all land in Lyons is public open space, highlighted by more than 370 acres of forest preserves along the river. While the Village derives major benefits from its natural environment, it also faces multiple challenges. Open space, while extensive, is concentrated in the eastern part of the Village. Improved bicycle and pedestrian connections would spread the benefits to a greater number of Lyons residents. The Village has also suffered from episodes of flooding and experiences severe water loss from its water supply system.

### Key Findings

- **The Village boasts significant open space assets with the potential for improved connections between them.** The presence of the Des Plaines River, Village parks, and forest preserves provides residents with access to recreational opportunities, natural areas, historic sites, and ecological benefits. Properties along the river present great opportunity to allow better integration of the various parcels of open space with one another and the Village as a whole. Residents would benefit from improved bicycle and pedestrian connections to the open spaces.
- **The Village suffers from severe water loss in its water supply system.** From 2007 to 2011, nearly one-quarter of the water that entered Lyons' supply went unaccounted for, possibly due to leaks in the system, metering inaccuracies, or theft. By percentage, the loss ranks second among all Lake Michigan permittees in Illinois and exceeds the 8 percent unaccounted for loss allowed by law. Water that does not reach a metered user also represents significant lost revenue for the Village.
- **Flooding poses a concern for the Village.** Flooding was mentioned by a number of stakeholders as a concern. The Village's open space resources offer some security from flooding, as most of the floodplain lies within the forest preserves that surround the river, but some neighborhoods near the river, such as Czech Terrace, are at risk, and isolated flooding remains a concern among Village residents and officials. Due to expected increases in precipitation, flooding is likely to become more frequent and severe in the future.
- **Energy usage and greenhouse gas emissions per household are lower in Lyons than in Cook County overall, but vehicle miles traveled are higher.** With modestly sized, post-WWII building stock, Lyons boasts relatively energy efficient homes. Its greatest potential gains for emissions reductions lie in boosting public transportation, walkability, and bicycle connections to reduce automobile dependency.
- **Lyons features many natural and historic assets that indicate its ecological and historic significance to the Chicago region.** The Des Plaines River runs along the northern edge of the village before turning through the forest preserves along the village's eastern boundary. Near the Sanitary and Ship Canal, the Chicago Portage National Historic Site celebrates the discovery of an inland shipping route between the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River.

Figure 7.1. Parks and open space



Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2013.

# Plan Recommendations for the Natural Environment

The Village has goals of preserving and expanding parks and open space for its residents and increasing recreational opportunities, while also improving resilience to flooding. Enhanced parks and recreation offerings can improve public health, beautify the Village, and capitalize on the Village's excellent access to natural resource areas. The Village, through the Parks and Recreation Department and other departments, has successfully applied for state grant programs to address water issues and improve local parks and should continue to actively pursue these goals.

***1. Activate existing open spaces and expand open space and recreational opportunities in residential areas that are underserved by parks.***

Residential areas benefit from the provision of open spaces because they provide spaces for social interaction, safe play areas for children, and reduce the perceived density of development. A large amount of land in Lyons is dedicated to parks and open spaces, but many residents want the Village to enhance their use, including by increasing and building awareness of activities and park amenities. A recent \$400,000 Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) grant to the Village will help the Parks and Recreation Department provide a new multi-purpose walking track, picnic shelter, playground, tennis courts, and community garden at Smith Park. Other strategies include improving the condition, activity, and lighting of public open spaces, installing additional landscaping, conducting regular maintenance, and improving signage to direct visitors to public parks.

While improved wayfinding and safe connections to existing parks will improve park access throughout Lyons, a key strategy to help the community realize its natural environment goals is the provision of additional open spaces in currently underserved neighborhoods, such as the southwest corner of the Village. Generally, it is desirable to provide a neighborhood park within one-quarter mile or one-half mile of any dwelling, without requiring residents to cross major roads. While Lyons has extensive open space along the Des Plaines River, neighborhoods in the southwestern corner of the Village are separated from this open space by 1st Avenue and more than one-half mile of distance. Since this section of the Village is already built out, conversion of underutilized properties into small parks or shared use agreements for playgrounds in large institutions presents the best opportunity to provide additional open space in the area. The Village could inventory and acquire vacant or underutilized residential properties along Pulaski Avenue or Cracow Avenue and convert them into tot lots similar to the West End Tot Park. Additionally, the Village could enter into a partnership with the School District to allow the public to use the playgrounds at Costello School during non-school hours.



**2. *Preserve natural resource amenities and open spaces that are important to the community.*** During the public outreach component of the planning process, many stakeholders discussed the importance of developing and preserving a positive community image and identity for Lyons, with particular emphasis on having a high-quality environment with an attractive physical setting for living and working. Many residents expressed pride in their parks, trails, and forest preserves, as well as in the unique and historically significant sites of Hofmann Tower and the Chicago Portage National Historic Site. The Village has demonstrated its commitment to parks and open space in Lyons; in addition to successfully seeking the IDNR grant to renovate Smith Park, the Village has announced plans to renovate and upgrade Lyons' small lot lots. The Village should continue to emphasize the role of well-maintained park space in the community. Lyons should also continue to develop strong partnerships with entities such as the FPCC that can help preserve and enhance regional open space in the community. The FPCC has expressed interest in improving connections to facilities at the Chicago Portage National Historic Site. Enhancing this site of regional significance would benefit Lyons residents as well as the broader public.

**3. *Enhance existing recreational amenities by connecting bike trails and sidewalks throughout the community.*** The Village and the FPCC provide many recreational and open space amenities, which should be accessible by foot or by bicycle, but the community has very limited bike infrastructure. The Village should consider connections to parks and open space in its planning for non-motorized transportation, described in Chapter 5. Improved bicycle connections would not only connect open spaces within the Village, but also establish off-street access to Brookfield Zoo, regional trails, and forest preserves.

**4. *Mitigate flooding by continuing to work with property owners in flood-prone areas and upgrading stormwater infrastructure.*** While most of the residential neighborhoods in Lyons are outside the 100-year floodplain, some of the residential areas in the northwestern corner of the Village (the Czech Terrace subdivision) are partially within the floodplain. The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD) has reported flooding in several places in Lyons, including the Czech Terrace subdivision, 45th Street, 47th Street, Ogden Avenue, and 1st Avenue. The Village should continue to develop its ongoing initiative to work with property owners in flood-prone areas to upgrade stormwater infrastructure or to consider buyouts for the affected residents and properties. The Village should also work with surrounding communities, IDNR, the forest preserves, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to alleviate flooding along the Des Plaines River.

**5. *Encourage and promote water-based recreational activities.*** Lyons' location on the banks of the Des Plaines River and the recent removal of the Hoffman Dam have primed the Village to take advantage of its extensive open space for recreational activities. While residents will benefit from the increased opportunities for fishing, paddling, and walking and biking paths along the river, the outdoor amenities also offer potential economic benefits. Boat launches and businesses that offer canoe rentals and fishing equipment rentals can create jobs and revenue for the Village, driven by its natural assets. The Village should explore marketing and economic development strategies that have been successful in similarly situated communities.



## Implementation Strategies

Many of the natural resources objectives in the plan call for preservation and enhancement of the Village's considerable open space assets. Enhancing the existing forest preserves along the Des Plaines River will preserve a system of open space that offers both recreational assets and flood prevention. The recent Open Space Lands Acquisition and Development (OSLAD) grant to add amenities to Smith Park offers a helpful example of how existing open spaces can be improved through partnerships and external funding opportunities. In the longer term, the Village should seek to expand open space in areas of the Village further from the river, incorporating the principle into zoning and future land use plans. As described in Chapter 6, developing clearer, safer bicycle connections to regional trails and open space will also help improve access to natural and recreational areas for a larger population within the Village.



**Table 7.1. Implementation strategies for natural environment**

ACTION	IMPLEMENTERS	DESCRIPTION
Install green stormwater infrastructure in parks and open space <i>Timeline: 0-2 years</i>	Village, FPCC, local school districts	The Village should install innovative design elements such as native plantings, community gardening beds, and drainage swales in parks and open spaces to assist with stormwater management. Lyons can incorporate these designs into future applications for OSLAD funding. The Lyons Public Works department should preserve the stormwater management benefits of parks by ensuring that any construction of facilities or amenities in public parks or open spaces does not cause an increase in the amount of run-off by creating more impervious surfaces. The Village should also work with FPCC and local school districts to install stormwater management features on school grounds and forest preserves.
Promote participation in rain barrel program <i>Timeline: 0-2 years</i>	Village, MWRD	Rain barrels are repurposed plastic barrels designed to collect rainwater from rooftops for reuse. The MWRD is currently encouraging residents living in its service area to participate in the rain barrel program. The program is a part of the MWRD's green infrastructure initiative to help municipalities with managing stormwater and reducing water pollution. Under the program, homeowners can purchase a rain barrel that they can use to collect and reuse stormwater. The rain barrels are made available by MWRD to property owners year-round for a nominal price. The price includes an installation kit and home delivery for all residents living in the MWRD's service area. The Village should encourage Lyons residents to participate in this program. The Village could promote the rain barrel program using a variety of techniques such as announcements on the Village's and School Districts' websites, Village newsletter, local newspapers, water bills, and bulletin board displays.
Partner with FPCC to promote water-based recreation <i>Timeline: 0-2 years</i>	Village, LMBA, FPCC	To realize the Village's full potential as a destination for fishing, canoeing, and kayaking, the Village should partner with FPCC to plan and promote these activities within the forest preserves. Marketing materials can emphasize the new opportunity created by the removal of Hofmann Dam. As the area gains in reputation and attracts paddlers and anglers, the Village should partner with LMBA to attract complementary businesses such as outdoor outfitters and boating instruction.
Enhance Village parks system with programming <i>Timeline: 0-2 years</i>	Village, IDNR	As improvements such as the Smith Park project come online, the Village should survey residents to determine what types of programming would attract them to visit. Targeted events and activities can help the Village to capitalize on its investment in new facilities. Continue to seek funding through OSLAD to develop improvements to new and existing parks.
Inventory potential park sites and pursue acquisition of at least one new park site in southwestern part of Village <i>Timeline: 0-2 years</i>	Village, IDNR	To expand open space in the southwestern part of Lyons, the Village should assess the potential for small parks on vacant or underutilized residential parcels. The Village should explore the possibility of developing pocket parks west of Lawndale Avenue to expand park access. Creating an inventory of parcels along Pulaski Avenue, Cracow Avenue, or other nearby streets would help the Village identify potential sites for acquisition. IDNR's OSLAD program is a potential source of funds for acquiring parcels the analysis identifies.
Encourage continued maintenance and improvement of Forest Preserve facilities <i>Timeline: 3-5 years</i>	Village, FPCC	Work with the FPCC to maintain, improve, and promote existing Forest Preserve facilities, such as the Cermak Family Aquatic Center. While forest preserves are regional in nature, Lyons residents are major users of the extensive network of open space within the Village. The Village should represent the needs of its residents and attract visitors to the community by continuing to partner with FPCC.
Incorporate open space connections into bicycle and pedestrian planning <i>Timeline: 3-5 years</i>	Village, FPCC, ATA, CCDOTH, IDOT, CMAP	As the Village works with residents and partners to plan bike routes within the Village, it should emphasize the importance of connections to forest preserves, the Chicago Portage National Historic Site, and Village parks. To promote regional connections, collaborate on extension of Salt Creek Greenway Trail through the Village, including continuing to work with the FPCC on access along the Des Plaines River.



# Chapter 8 COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES





Community facilities and services contribute to residents' quality of life, health, and safety. While most of the public facilities and services are necessary safeguards for the public welfare, others are desirable because they reflect the preferences of residents. Among the key community services the Village provides is the water and sewer system, a main focus of this chapter. This chapter outlines the future needs of Lyons' public facilities, services, and water infrastructure and makes recommendations to improve them.

# Goal Statement

Provide excellent community facilities and efficient and effective services that meet the needs of current and future Village residents and businesses.

## Summary of Existing Conditions

Lyons features a significant number of recreational facilities, community institutions, and services. In addition to the parks discussed in Chapter 7, the Village boasts a state-of-the-art Village Hall, a public library, and several schools among others. The existing municipal buildings and structures, which include the municipal complex built in 2009, are generally well maintained and meet current needs of the Village. The physical conditions and size of all schools serving the community are adequate. The Village's water supply and distribution system and the combined storm and sanitary sewer system are in need of improvement and will likely need to be replaced in the near future.

During the public engagement process for this plan, residents expressed a desire for greater opportunity to use the Village's high-quality public facilities. Noting that schools, the municipal complex, and other public buildings offer excellent spaces for meetings, recreation, and civic functions, residents cited their interest in pursuing partnerships that allow greater access for community members and groups.

## Educational Institutions

The school districts serving Lyons do not anticipate major changes or capital projects in the near future. Lyons School District 103 serves the Village and neighboring communities and operates five elementary schools and a middle school; the middle school and two of the elementary schools are located within Lyons. The elementary schools and the middle school are currently operating at almost full capacity and there are no planned capital improvements within the school facilities. For high school, most Lyons students attend J. Sterling Morton West High School in Berwyn, which is operated by the Morton High School District 201. The school is in good physical condition and has adequate capacity for foreseeable future enrollments.

## Public Utilities

### Water Distribution

Lyons receives its drinking water from Lake Michigan via the Brookfield-North Riverside Water Commission (BNRWC). The Lyons Public Works Department maintains water and sewer infrastructure in the community. Water infrastructure in the Village includes a pump house, the water tower, and approximately 30 miles of water mains that carry fresh water to households and businesses. The Public Works Department is responsible for regular maintenance of the system, leak repair, and monitoring usage for billing operations. Due to the generally poor condition of the water distribution system, the Village has been experiencing significant water loss for many years. The most severe problem with the system is the lack of fire flow pressure. Much of the system requires replacement, at significant public expense.



# Plan Recommendations for Community Facilities and Services

The Village is currently pursuing a number of strategies to mitigate water loss and improve its water system. According to data from IDNR, from 2007-2011 an average of 23.6 percent of Lake Michigan water allocated to the Village was unaccounted for, which ranks Lyons second among all IDNR permittees in water loss by percentage. Whether due to leaks in the system, metering inaccuracies, billing errors, or theft, the high percentage of unaccounted for water causes lost revenue for the Village. The Village has launched a two-year, in-house effort to account for and prevent water loss, focusing on improvements to water mains and replacement of meters and hydrants throughout Lyons. The Village is taking advantage of a \$6.4 million loan from the Clean Water Initiative, a federally funded revolving loan fund managed by the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA), for a project to install new meters and water mains. Improvements will include installing a sleeve on the Ogden Avenue water main, installing new sewer and water mains on Custer Avenue, Anna Avenue, 1st Avenue, and Plainfield Road, and updating the water meter reading system throughout the Village.

## Storm Sewers and Sanitary Sewers

Lyons maintains a combined sewer system where stormwater and waste water are collected within the same pipe system. A combined system presents a problematic health and safety issue in the community because the system's low capacity to accommodate storm water run-off can cause it to flood, back up, or trigger combined sewer overflows of untreated wastewater. Previous engineering studies indicate that most of the system will require replacement in the future, and like the water system, represents a significant future public investment.

1. *Develop solutions to improve the infrastructure and operations of the Village's water and sewer systems.* Reducing the amount of unaccounted for loss from the Village water system would capture additional revenue while bringing Lyons into compliance with IDNR water regulations. The Village's current IEPA-funded projects are a good step toward reducing water loss, but given the magnitude of the Village's water problems, further action will likely be necessary. The Village should continue to explore ways to identify the causes of the water loss and develop solutions to improve infrastructure and metering practices. It should pursue partnerships and assistance from programs offered by IDNR, IEPA, the Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT), and the Lower Des Plaines Ecosystem Partnership. Solutions to some causes of apparent water loss, such as inaccurate metering, can result in major reductions in water loss at a much lower cost than water mains upgrades.

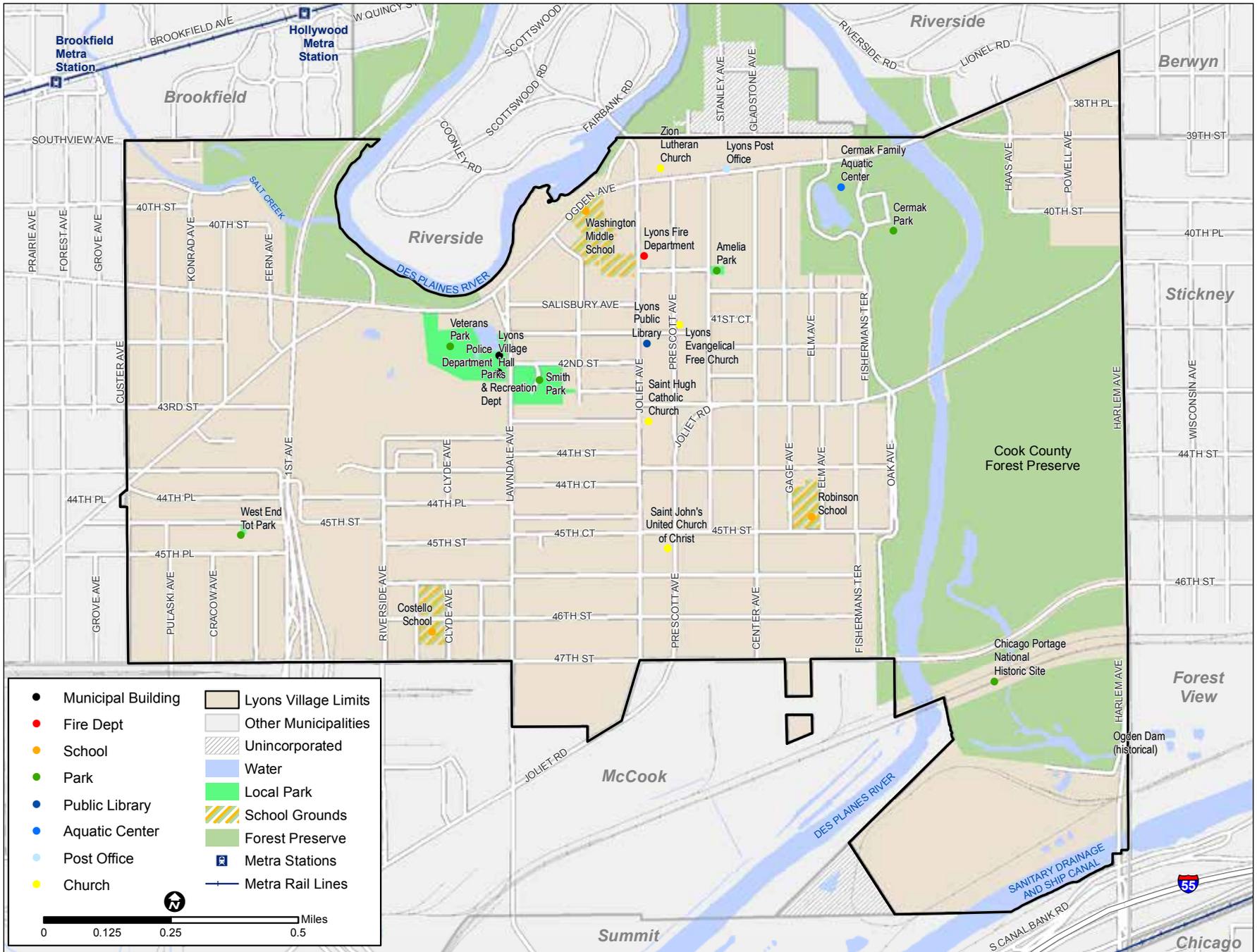
Currently, the Village's public water supply and distribution system and its combined storm and sanitary sewer system are in need of significant improvement. The water and the sewer systems will eventually need replacement in order to meet federal guidelines. The Village should take steps to determine the deficiencies and replacement costs for both the water system and the combined sewer system. Separation of the system from combined sewer to separate sewer for storm water and sanitary sewer is preferred, although this is a long-term goal since it requires significant financial resources from the Village.

**2. Provide and support facilities and programs focused on the needs of senior citizens, youth, and special needs groups.** The Village provides facilities and services for all local residents and businesses; it should pay particular attention to populations with unique needs, such as seniors, youth, and the physically handicapped. As demographics change, community facilities and service needs may change as well. For instance, the increasing number of senior residents in the community may require new facilities and services.

**3. Support cooperative programs involving the schools and the Village.** Schools are among the most important community facilities, especially in a predominantly residential community like Lyons. The Village has a reputation of excellence in education. While the physical conditions and size of all school facilities serving the community are currently adequate, the community should always strive to maintain its reputation as a community of excellence in education. The Village should explore opportunities to work cooperatively with the school districts to maintain this highly coveted reputation of excellence in education and also develop a partnership on shared use of school's playgrounds and recreation facilities in neighborhoods that lack access to parks and open space.

**4. Improve the condition of existing facilities and strive to maintain quality services.** Although major growth is not expected in the near term for Lyons, existing facilities will continue serving residents and businesses in the future. It is important for the Village to maintain high standards for existing facilities and sustain quality services. The Village should ensure that all public sites and buildings are attractive and well maintained and that preventive and corrective maintenance are undertaken in a timely manner. The Village should always be attuned to the changing needs of residents and local businesses to ensure adequate provision of public facilities and services to all areas in Lyons. When public facilities become inadequate or obsolete, the Village should replace them with new facilities that offer services of the highest quality. In the long-term, construction of new public facilities may be necessary, which will require significant public investment. New sources of revenue should be sought, where necessary, to finance construction of new facilities, replacement of existing facilities, and provision of improved services. Continued provision of high quality public facilities and services will allow the Village to continue building its reputation as a desirable community.

Figure 8.1. Community facilities



Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2013.

# Implementation Strategies

Addressing the amount of non-revenue water in the Village water system is the most pressing community facilities and services issue facing Lyons. The Village’s ongoing projects funded by the Clean Water Initiative are a helpful step toward addressing the environmental and fiscal costs created by water loss from the system, but there are additional steps the Village can take to further alleviate the problem and achieve compliance with IDNR regulations. The Illinois Section of the American Water Works Association (AWWA) offers free training and software for industry-standard water audits, which would equip the Village to diagnose the needs of its water systems.

Taking the immediate step of training village staff on industry-standard methods will help the Village develop internal capacity and make it easier to meet state reporting requirements on the water system. In the longer term, commissioning a cost of service study to determine appropriate, sustainable rates for water users will help the Village create a plan for upgrades, repairs, and maintenance of the system.

**Table 8.1. Implementation strategies for community facilities and services**

ACTION	IMPLEMENTERS	DESCRIPTION
Adopt industry-standard water loss audit software <i>Timeline: 0-2 years</i>	Village, AWWA, CMAP	The AWWA provides free water loss audit software, training, and technical assistance to water system operators. Adopting this industry-standard procedure will help Lyons refine the operations of its water system, provide necessary information to comply with state reporting requirements, and build Village staff’s capacity. CMAP can connect the village to the AWWA if necessary.
Conduct a cost of service study on the Village water system <i>Timeline: 0-2 years</i>	Village, consultants	An engineering firm or other qualified consultant can conduct a cost of service study for the Village water system. The study can assess the status of the system’s infrastructure, set goals for system efficiency, and recommend actions to meet these goals. The study will recommend rates for users that will sustainably fund projected operations, maintenance, and upgrade costs.
Survey residents to determine service and facility needs <i>Timeline: 0-2 years</i>	Village, Lyons Retirees, local school districts	Where interest groups exist to represent groups of residents who have specific needs, the Village should work with them to identify gaps in current services. The Lyons Retirees and the local school districts offer the chance for the Village to survey senior citizens and youth in the community to determine how the Village can adapt current offerings to the evolving needs of residents.
Partner with schools to provide community facilities <i>Timeline: 0-2 years</i>	Village, local school districts	During this planning process, Lyons residents expressed interest in creating more opportunities for residents and community groups to take advantage of school facilities that offer large meeting and event spaces. The Village and the Lyons School District 103 should partner to provide shared access to schools, grounds, and recreational facilities.
Develop an asset management plan for the water system <i>Timeline: 3-5 years</i>	Village, consultants	An asset management plan sets out a long range plan for the renewal and replacement of the physical infrastructure of the water system. Through comprehensive, long-term planning, an asset management plan will help the Village maintain a desired level of service at the lowest overall cost of operating and maintaining the system.
Create inventory condition of public facilities <i>Timeline: 3-5 years</i>	Village	The Village should inspect all public facilities in the Village and inventory their age, condition, and maintenance needs. This inventory will help the Village to prioritize repairs and upgrades going forward.





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