

Community Local News Sports



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**Feedback sought for Comprehensive Plan ‘Eye to the Future’**

by Lynn Meredith

ELBURN—In the first phase of a year-long project to update Elburn’s Comprehensive Plan, Elburn business owners, Kaneland high school students, Elburn service providers and key people in the community all participated in workshops designed to elicit feedback on how they envision Elburn’s future. For such diverse groups, their views are surprisingly consistent.

The sessions are conducted by Images, Inc., a consultation firm whose services are paid for by a \$100,000 grant from the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning to update Elburn’s Comprehensive Plan.

At Monday’s Elburn Village Board meeting, these same themes emerged. Everyone present, including, the police chief, several observers, the village clerk, board members, the press and public in attendance were made participants in a workshop designed to identify issues and concerns about Elburn. These issues were then turned into goals and objectives that will go in the eventual wording of the Comprehensive Plan.

“Growth has moderated quite a bit in Elburn as it has for many communities. It’s an opportunity to catch our breath and re-evaluate, to get a blue-print to move forward with,” said Carrie Hansen, president of Images, Inc. “This plan is a collective, long-term vision for Elburn, a blueprint or guide for what your community will be for the next 20 years.”

As everyone present wrote down their issues and concerns about Elburn in the areas of transportation, economic development, land use, parks, environment, safety and quality of life, Hansen explained her experience with Kaneland students in a similar workshop with 10 freshman, sophomores and juniors. They were asked what they liked about living here.

“It was such a pleasant experience. They all like Elburn the way it is. They don’t want Elburn to become a Randall Road. They don’t want big box stores. They don’t want an I-Max Theatre. They want to drive to Randall Road for that. They want the sense of a small town,” Hansen said.

Village President Dave Anderson added that what came out in the workshop with the students was that 20 years from now, they are the Village.

“They picked up on that immediately. They showed such wisdom,” Anderson said.

As issues were read aloud and posted according to theme, Hansen noted that regardless of the stakeholder group – students, board members, business owners, the press, the police – that themes were consistent.

“We’re starting to get a picture of what Elburn wants to be: a reduction of congestion, attracting business to downtown,” she said. “Next we need to see what the Village and the community can do to make these things happen.”

As the workshop progressed, these issues —many similar, some divergent—were discussed and a goal statement crafted.

**Transportation and Access**

Access and connectivity was a common theme when it comes to transportation. Workshop participants saw the need for bike paths to connect, pedestrians to be able to walk to the train station, drivers to have access to the train station from multiple roads and section roads to remain open. Other ideas were left-turn lanes where possible and access from the industrial park to Pouley Road.

## **Economic Development**

Attracting business, both commercial and residential, to strengthen the local economy was hands-down a common issue. Many expressed that Elburn should promote itself as a destination and play upon its assets of being on the train line and having the pull of Ream's Meat Market. Also it should keep its small town flavor and identity.

"We need to define what our true character is. When I moved here, we were a booming farm town. Everything we needed was here. You could buy a tractor and a car here. That kind of faded as Randall Road developed and people came in from the east," Bill Grabarek said. "What do we really want to do? There are a lot of bikers, which is fine, but that's a certain kind of character (to the town)."

## **Parks and Environmental Features**

The consensus of the workshop was that Elburn needs to develop a partnership with agencies like the Forest Preserve to promote and enhance the existing parks and natural features of the area. It also needs to foster within the community a sense of ownership of the land and parks.

"There's nothing for us to do' comes up a lot, not just among teens, but all age groups," Jeff Walter said. "But we have things that people don't know about."

"We need to take advantage of what we have – neighborhood parks, two Forest Preserves, one to the east and one to the west. We need to focus on promoting and finishing the existing parks," Anderson said.

Other themes included Growth Issues and Strategies, where the goal expressed was to encourage development that strengthens the community and is sustainable into the future; Village Codes and Policies, which would support the existing plan; and Quality of Life, which would enable Elburn to be an ideal place to live, work, worship and play.

For more information as the Comprehensive Plan project continues, visit the Village of Elburn and Town and Country Library websites

To express your views on the future of Elburn, attend the Public Open House at [John Stewart Elementary School](#) on Wednesday, June 20. Community members can drop in between 5 and 8 p.m. to contribute to the plan.

## **A Public Open House**

*Wednesday, June 20*

*5 to 8 p.m.*

*[John Stewart Elementary](#)*

*This will allow the community to provide ideas and feedback on the update*

*of the Comprehensive Plan.*

*This plan will chart the course for Elburn in*

*areas of land use, economic growth,*

*transportation, the environment,*

*parks and any other issues*

*and concerns that the*

*public may have.*

*Previous feedback sessions have been conducted with seniors, key people in the community, business owners and high school students.*