

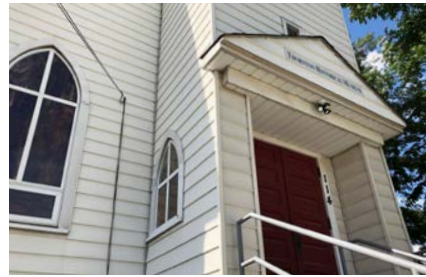


# Thornton Planning Priorities Report

April 2019







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# Section 1 INTRODUCTION

THORNTON  
COMMUNITY  
GARDEN



The Village of Thornton sought technical assistance from the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) for the creation of a comprehensive plan that would speak to a number of local issues, including the need for downtown revitalization, economic development opportunities, expanding housing options, freight traffic and non-motorized transportation, and access to nearby forest preserves. Given the wide variety of different topics of importance in Thornton, CMAP determined that it would need to work with the Village to decide what type of planning project would be most appropriate given local priorities. CMAP staff and the Village concluded that a Planning Priorities Report would help assess the opportunities, assets, and needs in Thornton and determine what type of planning is most important for the Village to undertake next.

## Planning Process

CMAP began working with the Village in 2018 to develop this Planning Priorities Report. To better understand the community's key planning issues, CMAP staff used a combination of approaches, beginning with analysis of existing conditions using multiple data sources and review of past local plans, surveys, maps, and other planning documents. CMAP staff also conducted nearly 20 in-person and phone interviews with Thornton's elected officials, staff, residents, business owners, and other key community stakeholders, which provided additional insight into Thornton's current conditions, needs, and local priorities for the future.

- Project initiation (May - June 2018)
- Existing conditions (July - September 2018)
- Preparation and review of draft report (October 2018 - March 2019)
- Final report approval (April 2019)

## Report Structure

This report is a distillation of CMAP's research, findings, and recommendations for Thornton. The report includes four sections:

- Planning Context, including data and maps
- Previous Plans, including summaries of existing plans and studies
- Stakeholder Interviews, including main themes from the interviews
- Recommendations for Future Planning Projects

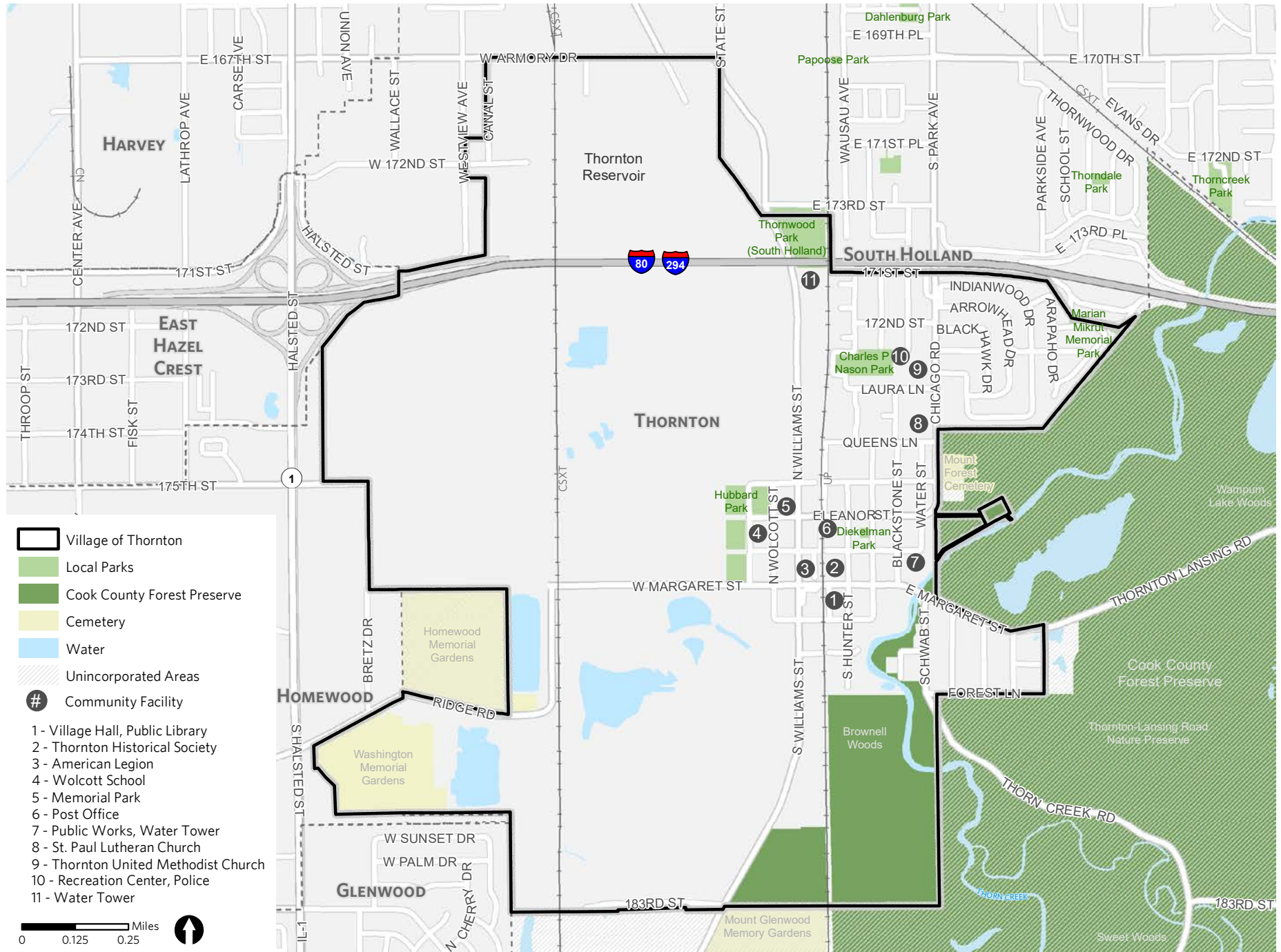
## Thornton and the ON TO 2050 Comprehensive Regional Plan

Thornton influences and is influenced by the Chicago region. Local autonomy over land use decisions requires communities to take responsibility for how those decisions shape a community's livability, as well as impacts on neighboring communities and the region as a whole. The cumulative choices of 284 municipalities and seven counties determine quality of life and economic prosperity across our region.

Adopted in October 2018, the ON TO 2050 comprehensive regional plan presents a collective vision for the future of the Chicago region and identifies steps for stakeholders across the region to take in order to achieve that vision. ON TO 2050 focuses on the need to grow our economy through opportunity for all (Inclusive Growth), prepare for rapid changes (Resilience), and carefully target resources to maximize benefit (Prioritized Investment). The plan guides transportation investments and frames regional priorities on development, the environment, the economy, and other issues affecting quality of life.

In particular, ON TO 2050 acknowledges the need to build local capacity by pooling resources, deploying new technologies, and training staff to provide essential services even as federal and state support continues to diminish.

Figure 1. Village of Thornton



Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2019.

# Section 2 PLANNING CONTEXT





To assess Thornton’s planning needs, it is important to consider its local planning context within Cook County and the larger Chicago region. Having a broader perspective of how Thornton is situated in the County and region can assist in both the understanding of existing conditions and in identifying broader issues or opportunities that may be impacting the Village.

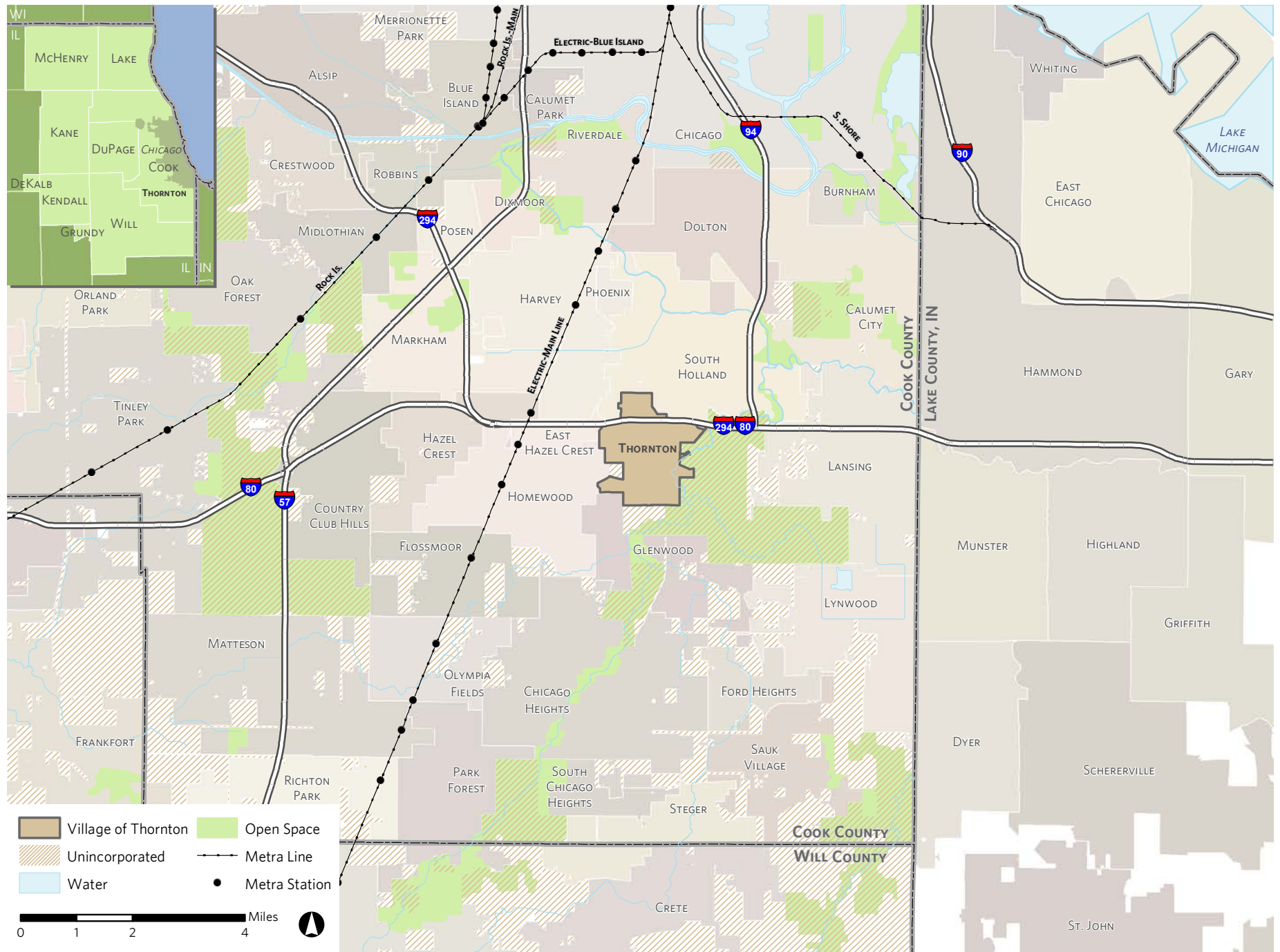
A summary of key data points that describe the current conditions in Thornton follows, drawn from CMAP’s MetroPulse Community Data Snapshots,<sup>1</sup> which contain regularly updated data provided by various regional, state, and federal organizations. This information is supplemented with additional data sources.

# Location

The Village of Thornton is located in south Cook County, approximately 25 miles from downtown Chicago. The Village has excellent access to Interstate 80, Interstate 294, and the Bishop Ford Freeway (I-94) via interchanges at Halsted Road and IL Route 394. The Metra Electric (ME) line provides service just to the west of the community, which is roughly a ten minute drive from Thornton Village Hall.

Part of the south suburbs, Thornton is a member of the South Suburban Mayors and Managers Association (SSMMA) and maintains good relationships with its neighboring communities of East Hazel Crest, Homewood, Glenwood, and South Holland. Wampum Lake Woods borders the Village to the east and comprises a large portion of Cook County Forest Preserve holdings in southeastern Cook County.

Figure 2. Regional context



Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2019.

# Governance

Thornton has a president-board form of government and is a home rule community (which gives Thornton more control over how to finance and run the community). The President and six Trustees are elected to serve four-year terms. The President, with advice and consent from the Village Board, appoints the Village Administrator, Treasurer, Deputy Clerk, and Attorney. To address the community’s needs, the Village of Thornton has established six standing Village Committees and three Commissions. Thornton also has six Village Departments: Administration, Police, Fire, Public Works, Parks and Recreation, and Building and Zoning. Staffing for these departments is provided in Table 1.

Comprehensive plans and capital improvement plans are important tools for prioritizing resources to achieve long-term goals. To guide the future update of the 2003 Comprehensive Plan, the Village established a sub-committee comprised of elected officials, representatives from the Plan Commission, Village staff, and community members. In 2017, the sub-committee conducted a community survey to learn more about the wants and needs of the community (see Section 3 for a summary of survey results). However, at present, Thornton is faced with limited resources to pursue the update of the Comprehensive Plan. Meanwhile, the Village maintains a five year capital improvement plan (CIP), which outlines improvements in six areas: Police, Public Works, Fire, Parks & Recreation, Downtown, and Administration.

**Table 1. Village staff by department**

	Full Time	Part-Time or Seasonal
Administration	3	
Police	10	8
Fire		37
Public Works	4	
Parks and Recreation	1	13
Building and Zoning	1	
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>58</b>

# Land Use and Ownership

Livable communities depend on a mix of land uses that provide the homes, businesses, civic institutions, and open space that are essential for daily living and quality of life. Assessment of existing land use patterns in Thornton can help the Village better understand its current use of land in the community, as well as provide insight into how those land uses could change in the future.

More than half of Thornton (54.8 percent) is devoted to industrial use. Much of this industrial land is occupied by the Thornton Quarry, which is owned and operated by Hanson Material Service Corporation. The quarry is situated on the west side of the Village and spans both sides of Interstate 80 and Interstate 294 to the southern edge of the Village at 183rd Street. Transportation and utilities account for over 20 percent of Thornton’s land use; in addition to interstates, streets, and railroads, this category includes the Thornton Reservoir, which is a decommissioned segment of the Thornton Quarry operated by the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD) that is designed to collect floodwaters as part of the District’s Tunnel and Reservoir Plan (TARP).

Single-family residential is the third largest occupied use of land in Thornton (11.5 percent), primarily situated between the CSX railroad and Cook County Forest Preserves. Detached single-family homes, which make up 96 percent of the Village’s dwelling units, occupy 92 percent of the residential land in terms of acreage. Multi-family homes make up less than one percent (0.3) of the Village’s land area and are primarily located in the center of the Village, between Eleanor Street and Margaret Street, and on Chicago Road.

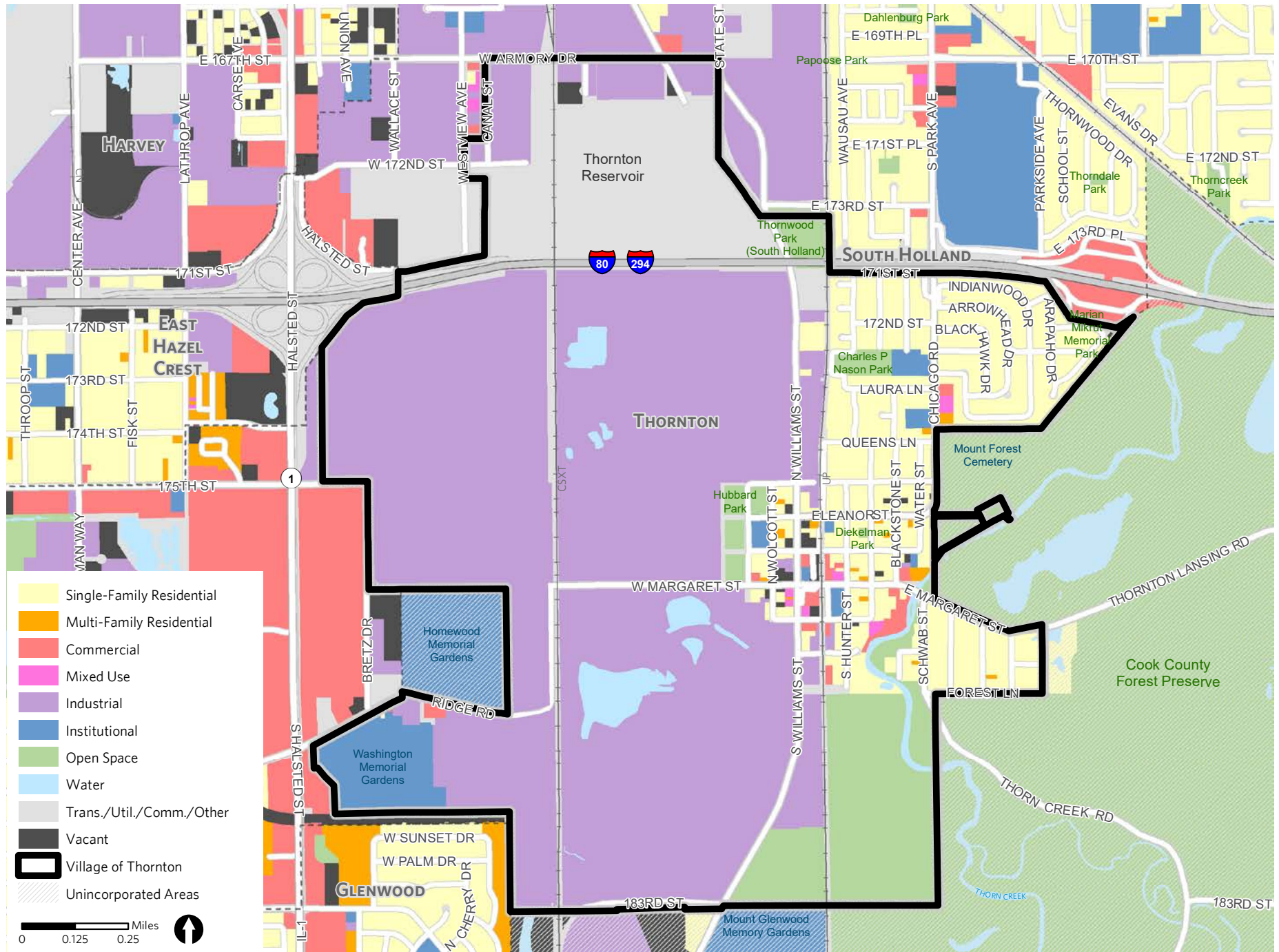
**Table 2. General land use, 2013**

	Acres	Percent
Single-Family Residential	175.8	11.5%
Multi-Family Residential	4.4	0.3%
Commercial	10.7	0.7%
Industrial	837.4	54.8%
Institutional	51.8	3.4%
Mixed Use	2.8	0.2%
Transportation and Other	307.8	20.1%
Open Space	126.5	8.3%
Vacant	8.3	0.5%
Water*	2.8	0.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,528.4</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

\*This category only comprises slivers of land along Thorn Creek and does not reflect the total acres of land covered by water. Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning’s 2013 Land Use Inventory.

Commercial development makes up over 10 percent of Thornton’s land area and is primarily situated along Margaret and Williams Streets as well as Chicago Road and Thorn Creek. The Village also has some mixed use development in these areas, which refers to buildings with commercial uses on the bottom floor and residential units above. Open space accounts for about eight percent of the Village’s land use. This includes a portion of the Cook County Forest Preserves, making up 111.7 acres or 88 percent of Thornton’s open space. The remaining 12 percent of open space comprises five parks that are owned and maintained by the Village of Thornton and one park, Thornwood Park, which is owned by the Village of South Holland. Institutional uses (3.4 percent) include Village Hall, Washington Memorial Gardens cemetery, churches, and Wolcott School (a highly valued K-8 school in the Village). Vacant commercial, industrial, or residential lots make up 0.5 percent of the Village’s land area and are primarily clustered along Margaret Street, Williams Street, and the Union Pacific railroad.

Figure 3. Land use, 2013



Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2019.

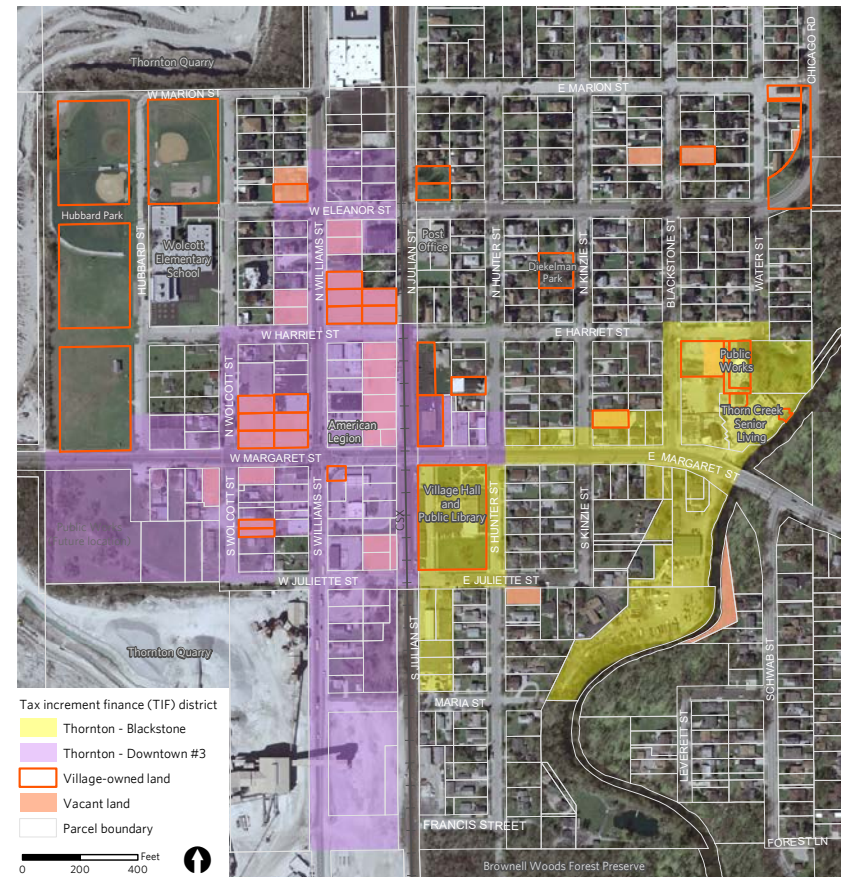
## Downtown Land Use and Ownership

Thornton's downtown area is centered on the intersection of Margaret Street and Williams Street. The area comprises different land uses, including commercial, residential, and mixed use. Industrial uses are primarily concentrated south of Juliette Street and north of Eleanor Street. In 2017, the Village created the Thornton Downtown #3 TIF district to facilitate the redevelopment of the downtown area. The Thornton Downtown #3 TIF extends from approximately Eleanor Street to Francis Street and comprises approximately 4.5 acres of vacant land. These vacant properties account for more than half of all vacant land in Thornton and a good portion of them are owned by the Village. More information on TIF districts is provided in the Economic Development section.



Northwest corner of Margaret Street and Williams Street.

Figure 4. Land use and ownership in the downtown area



# Demographics

Assessment of demographics helps identify the unique characteristics of a community's population and explain significant shifts that have occurred over time. Understanding these shifts can help Thornton respond to the needs of its existing residents as well as prepare for potential change in the future.

**Table 3. General population characteristics, 2016**

	Thornton	Cook County	Region
Total population	2,614	5,227,575	8,501,507
Total households	1,048	1,951,606	3,081,930
Average household size	2.5	2.6	2.7
Population change, 2000-10	-9.5%	-3.4%	3.5%
Population change, 2010-16	11.8	0.6	0.8
Population change, 2000-16	1.2	-2.8	4.4

Source: 2000 and 2010 Census, 2016 American Community Survey five-year estimates.

**Table 4. Age cohorts, 2016**

	Thornton		Cook County		Region	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
19 and under	574	22.0%	1,316,810	25.2%	2,243,626	26.4%
20 to 34	588	22.5%	1,214,796	23.2%	1,812,767	21.3%
35 to 49	438	16.8%	1,046,126	20.0%	1,738,296	20.4%
50 to 64	589	22.5%	972,184	18.6%	1,632,283	19.2%
65 to 74	204	7.8%	377,451	7.2%	613,214	7.2%
75 and older	221	8.5%	300,208	5.7%	461,321	5.4%
Median age	41.0		36.1		36.7	

Source: 2016 American Community Survey five-year estimates.

Thornton is a community of about 2,600 people. It lost 9.5 percent of its population between 2000 and 2010, at a much greater rate than Cook County (-3.4 percent), but then experienced an increase of 11.8 percent between 2010 and 2016, which was much greater than the County (0.6 percent). The average household size in Thornton is similar to the household sizes of the County and region. Thornton has an older population than the County with a median age of 41 compared to the county at 36. Residents between the ages of 20-34 and 50-64 make up large portions of Thornton's population, both at 22.5 percent, followed closely by residents that are 19 and under at nearly 22.0 percent. Residents 75 and older make up a larger percent of Thornton's population when compared with the County and the region. Thornton is 72.2 percent white, 13.2 percent Hispanic/Latino, 12.6 percent Black, and 1.5 percent Asian.

**Table 5. Race and ethnicity, 2016**

	Thornton		Cook County		Region	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
White	1,887	72.2%	2,241,001	42.9%	4,414,726	51.9%
Hispanic or Latino*	344	13.2%	1,300,843	24.9%	1,914,044	22.5%
Black	329	12.6%	1,232,816	23.6%	1,436,860	16.9%
Asian	39	1.5%	355,071	6.8%	572,098	6.7%
Other	15	0.6%	97,844	1.9%	163,779	1.9%

Source: 2016 American Community Survey five-year estimates.

\*Includes Hispanic or Latino residents of any race.



# Employment, Income, and Education of Residents

Approximately 85 percent of Thornton residents are employed, among residents 16 years and older who participate in the labor force (which does not include retirees, full-time students, and spouses or others who choose not to work). This is a lower rate than in Cook County and the region. The median household income in Thornton is less than in the County and the region, with 48 percent of households in the Village earning less than \$50,000 per year, which may have some relation to local educational attainment, as only 10.1 percent of residents 25 and older have at least a bachelor's degree, a rate significantly lower than that of the County and the region.

**Table 6. Employment status of residents, 2016**

	Thornton		Cook County		Region	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
In labor force	1,374	63.5%	2,759,566	66.1%	4,530,920	67.5%
Employed*	1,167	84.9%	2,492,088	90.3%	4,137,033	91.3%
Unemployed	207	15.1%	266,397	9.7%	381,643	8.4%
Not in labor force	789	36.5%	1,413,506	33.9%	2,181,954	32.5%

Source: 2016 American Community Survey five-year estimates.

\*Does not include employed population in Armed Forces.

**Table 7. Median household income, 2016**

	Income
Thornton	\$52,944
Cook County	\$56,902
Region	\$65,174

Source: 2016 American Community Survey five-year estimates.

**Table 8. Educational attainment, 2016**

	Thornton	Cook County	Region
Percent high school diploma or higher*	89.2%	85.9%	87.5%
Percent bachelor's degree or higher*	10.1%	36.5%	37.6%

Source: 2000 and 2010 Census, 2016 American Community Survey five-year estimates.

# Housing

Housing plays an integral role in the lives of residents, and a balanced housing supply helps to ensure that a diversity of household types have access to the assets in Thornton and the Chicago region. A mix of housing types is needed to allow residents to age in the community, provide homes for teachers, nurses, and other members of the community, and also attract young professionals and families. Understanding the current supply as well as potential future demand can help Thornton develop a balanced mix of housing that serves current and future populations and enhances livability.

Single-family homes make up the vast majority of Thornton’s housing stock at 80 percent. Thornton also has a strong tradition of home ownership, as nearly 73 percent of all occupied units are owner-occupied as compared to Cook County (56.6 percent) and the Chicago region (63.6 percent). However, the number of renter-occupied units increased by 135 percent from 2010 to 2016. Thornton’s housing stock has less diversity in size than Cook County and the region with 53 percent of homes with three bedrooms. Most homes in Thornton were built between 1940 and 1970 and no new homes were constructed after year 2000. Thornton’s housing vacancy rate of 7.5 percent is lower than Cook County (10.4 percent) and the region (8.8 percent).

**Table 9. Housing type, 2016**

	Thornton		Cook County		Region	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Single Family, Detached	910	80.3%	874,907	40.2%	1,692,480	50.1%
Single Family, Attached	21	1.9%	114,564	5.3%	253,342	7.5%
2 Units	64	5.6%	211,843	9.7%	236,321	7.0%
3 or 4 Units	5	0.4%	241,638	11.1%	277,204	8.4%
5 or more Units	120	10.6%	718,925	33.0%	893,514	26.4%

Source: 2012-16 American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau.

**Table 10. Housing tenure, 2016**

	Share owner	Share renter
Thornton	72.9%	27.1%
Cook County	56.6%	43.4%
Region	63.6%	36.4%

Source: 2012-16 American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau.

**Table 11. Household size, 2016**

	Thornton		Cook County		Region	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
0-1 Bedrooms	152	13.4%	439,547	20.2%	545,572	16.1%
2 Bedrooms	223	19.7%	694,276	31.9%	970,924	28.7%
3 Bedrooms	600	53.0%	693,551	31.9%	1,126,456	33.3%
4 Bedrooms	134	11.8%	264,646	12.2%	580,797	17.2%
5+ Bedrooms	24	2.1%	85,322	3.9%	155,215	4.6%
Median No. of Rooms	5.6		5.1		6.0	

Source: 2012-16 American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau.

**Table 12. Housing age, 2016**

	Thornton		Cook County		Region	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Built 2000 or later	0	0.0%	186,929	8.6%	422,506	12.5%
Built 1970 to 1999	184	16.2%	549,047	25.2%	1,142,676	33.8%
Built 1940 to 1969	736	65.0%	780,125	35.8%	1,049,835	31.1%
Built before 1940	213	18.8%	661,241	30.4%	763,947	22.6%
Median year built	1957		1958		1967	

Source: 2012-16 American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau.

**Table 13. Housing vacancy, 2016**

	Thornton	Cook County
Total units	1,133	2,177,342
Vacant units	85	225,736
Vacancy rate	7.5%	10.4%

Source: 2012-16 American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau.

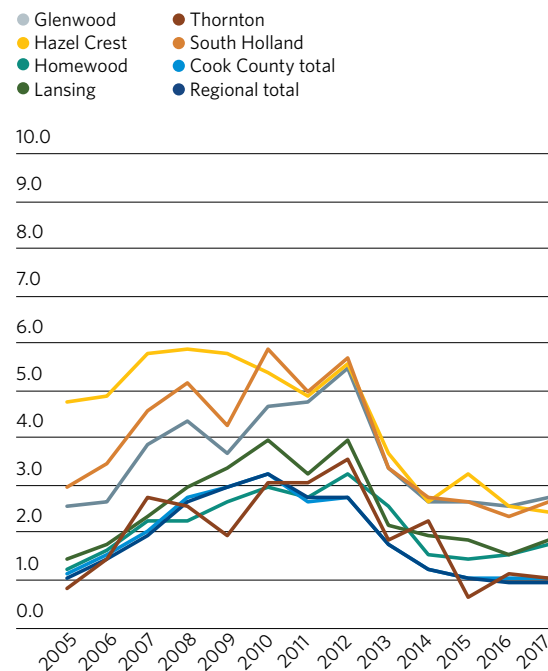
## Current Market and Household Income

Thornton's housing market is relatively stable based on foreclosure and sales data. With 0.9 foreclosures per 100 residential parcels in 2017, Thornton's housing market experiences fewer foreclosures than markets in nearby communities and is comparable to the County and the region. Sales activity in Thornton is trending upward, and is slightly lower than the average for Cook County and nearby markets. As of 2017, Thornton averaged 5.0 sales per 100 residential parcels, compared to 5.5 in Cook County. What appears to be a dramatic drop in home sales (to 1.5 in 2012, followed by a sharp rise to 4.6 in 2013) could be due to Thornton's relatively small housing market.

Thornton has experienced an increase in sales to buyers looking to rent the property (known as business buyers), which may indicate a need for more oversight of single-family rental homes.

Household income figures show a strong middle class in the community, as Thornton has more households in the middle income brackets (\$50,000 to \$100,000) than the rest of the region, many of whom are homeowners. Thornton also has a significant number of low-income households with nearly 40 percent of households earning less than \$35,000 annually as compared to 28 percent for the region. At the same time, more of Thornton's low-income households own their homes than in the region as a whole.

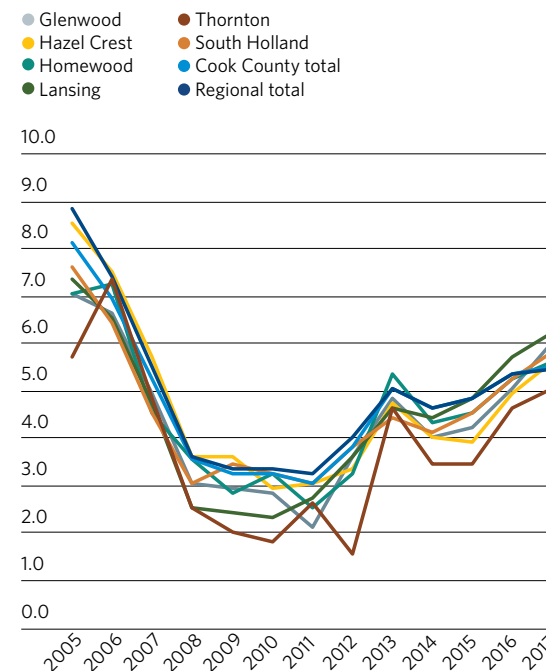
**Figure 5. Foreclosures per 100 residential parcels, 2005-2017**



Source: Institute for Housing Studies at DePaul University, 2005-2017

\*Region includes Illinois counties of Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will.

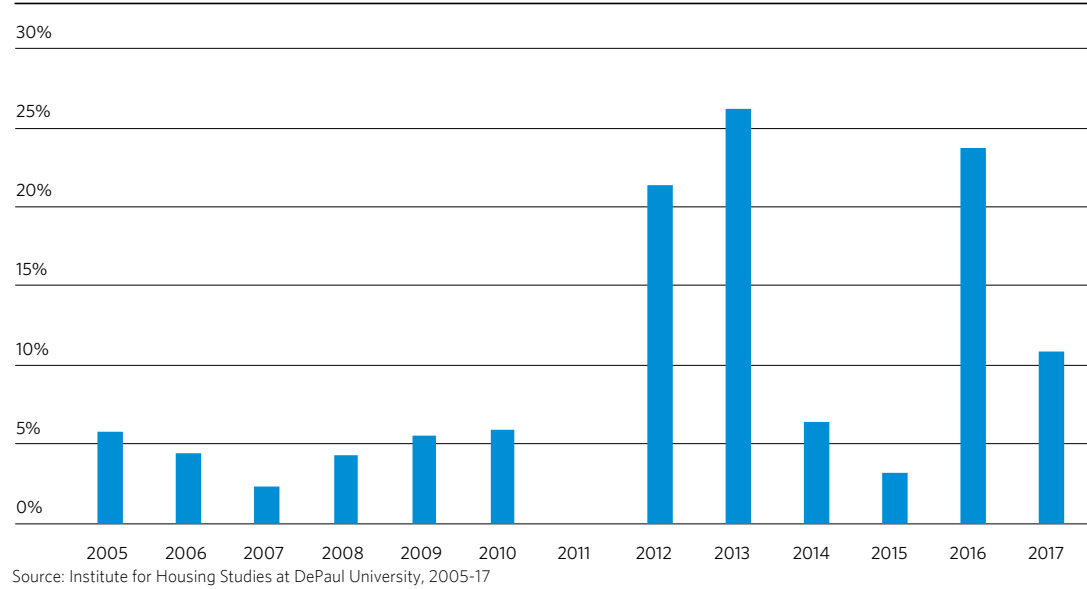
**Figure 6. Sales per 100 residential parcels, 2005-2017**



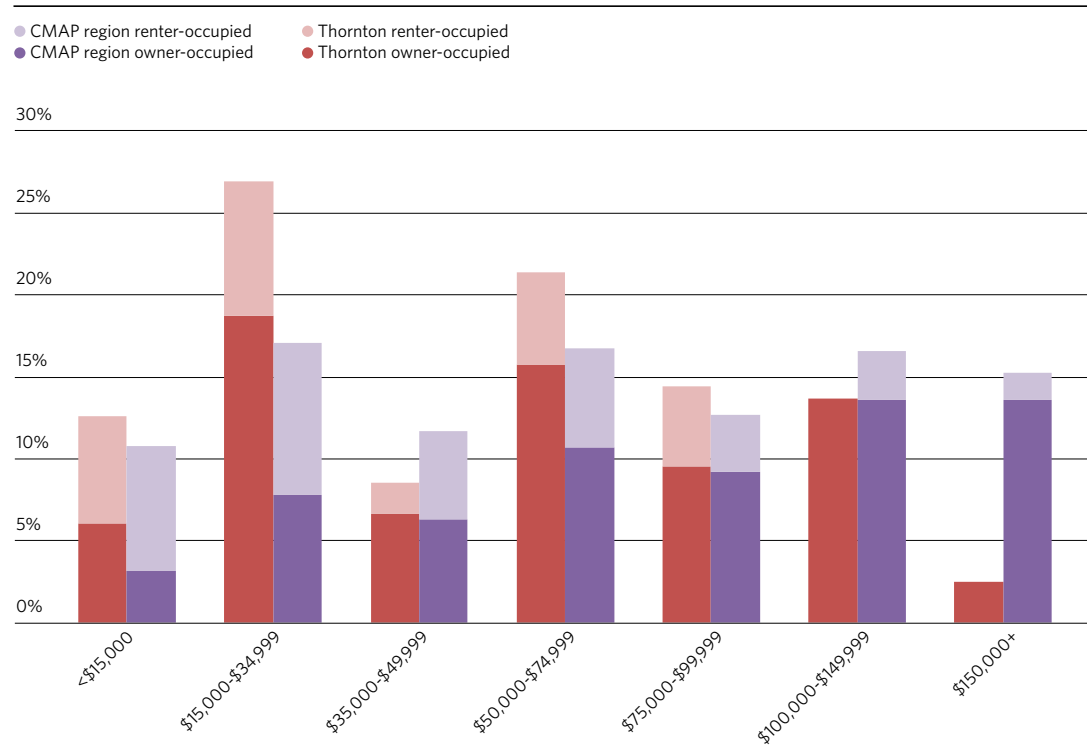
Source: Institute for Housing Studies at DePaul University, 2005-2017

\*Region includes Illinois counties of Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will.

**Figure 7. Share of business buyer sales in Thornton, 2005-17**



**Figure 8. Household income by tenure, 2012-16**

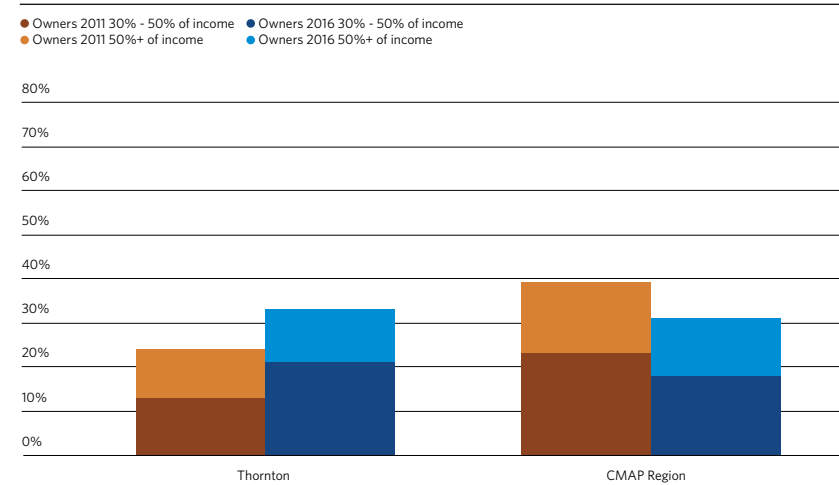


## Affordability

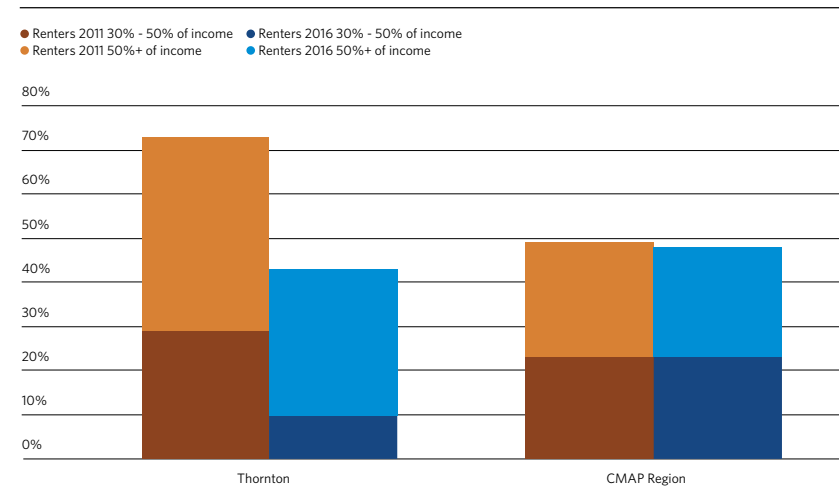
Cost-burdened households are defined as those spending more than 30 percent of their monthly income on housing costs, whereas severely burdened households are defined as those spending more than 50 percent of their monthly income on housing costs. As of 2016, an estimated 33 percent of homeowners were cost-burdened, which is a significant increase from 2011 figures, with 24 percent. Figures for Thornton are significantly less than the region for 2011, but slightly more for 2016. This increase in cost burden for owner-occupied homes is likely related to the high unemployment rate in the community.

Renter-occupied households in Thornton are more likely to be cost burdened than owner-occupied units, and a much greater share of these households experience a severe burden. In 2016, nearly 73 percent of renters were cost burdened and 44 percent of all households were severely burdened. Following a different trend than owner-occupied units, these figures for Thornton renters decreased dramatically from 2011 to 2016 as compared to a slight decrease for the region. This dramatic decrease could be the result from the small sample size in Thornton, as only 27 percent of the population rents.

**Figure 9. Owner-occupied housing cost burden, 2011-2016**



**Figure 10. Renter-occupied housing cost burden, 2011 and 2016**



# Economic Development

In order to prosper economically and sustain a high quality of life, Thornton and the Chicago region need to maintain a diversity of business types, a skilled workforce, and modern infrastructure. Jobs that provide pathways to economic opportunity for residents, especially those with lower educational attainment, are an important asset in light of national trends toward increasing economic inequality. Industrial, retail, and office development in Thornton are influenced by trends within the community, but also by the larger sub-regional and regional markets for each sector. Understanding this larger context can help Thornton move forward with a plan that reflects market realities.

## Jobs

Thornton's 1,631 jobs are scattered throughout the Village, with most falling into the following categories: accommodation and food, manufacturing, and construction. Between 2005 and 2015, the overall number of jobs in the Village increased by 52 percent, primarily due to 625 new jobs in accommodation and food. Jobs earning \$1,250 per month or less decreased by 44 percent, while jobs earning between \$1,250 and \$3,333 increased by 48 percent, and jobs earning more than \$3,333 per month increased by 88 percent.

The 944 jobs held by Thornton's residents (914 of which are located outside the Village) are distributed across a wider variety of industries, with larger proportions found in retail trade, health care, and education. Compared to 2005, in 2015 fewer residents held jobs earning \$1,250 per month or less (a decrease of 34 percent), while those earning between \$1,250 and \$3,333 decreased by 26 percent, and residents earning more than \$3,333 per month remained the same. During the same time period, the proportion of Thornton residents under the age of 55 that were working decreased from 80 percent to 71 percent, while Village residents 55 or older who were working increased from 20 percent to 29 percent.



Businesses on Williams Street.

**Table 14. Comparison of jobs in Thornton, 2015 and 2005**

	2015		2005	
	Count	Share	Count	Share
<b>Total Primary Jobs</b>				
Total Primary Jobs	1,631	100.0%	1,074	100.0%
<b>Jobs by Worker Age</b>				
Age 29 or younger	249	15.3%	175	16.3%
Age 30 to 54	919	56.3%	681	63.4%
Age 55 or older	463	28.4%	218	20.3%
<b>Jobs by Earnings</b>				
\$1,250 per month or less	99	6.1%	176	16.4%
\$1,251 to \$3,333 per month	570	34.9%	385	35.8%
More than \$3,333 per month	962	59.0%	513	47.8%
<b>Jobs by NAICS Industry Sector</b>				
Accommodation and Food Services	629	38.6%	4	0.4%
Manufacturing	388	23.8%	274	25.5%
Construction	241	14.8%	231	21.5%
Wholesale Trade	73	4.5%	41	3.8%
Transportation and Warehousing	63	3.9%	170	15.8%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	58	3.6%	119	11.1%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	49	3.0%	36	3.4%
Public Administration	49	3.0%	53	4.9%
Other Services (excluding Public Administration)	35	2.1%	27	2.5%
Educational Services	30	1.8%	36	3.4%
Retail Trade	12	0.7%	48	4.5%
Health Care and Social Assistance	3	0.2%	7	0.7%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	1	0.1%	2	0.2%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Utilities	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Information	0	0.0%	5	0.5%
Finance and Insurance	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Administration & Support, Waste Management and Remediation	0	0.0%	20	1.9%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	0	0.0%	1	0.1%

Source: Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics, U.S. Census Bureau.



**Table 15. Comparison of jobs of Thornton's residents, 2015 and 2005**

	2015		2005	
	Count	Share	Count	Share
<b>Total Primary Jobs</b>				
Total Primary Jobs	944	100.0%	1,187	100.0%
<b>Jobs by Worker Age</b>				
Age 29 or younger	201	21.3%	297	25.0%
Age 30 to 54	468	49.6%	657	55.3%
Age 55 or older	275	29.1%	233	19.6%
<b>Jobs by Earnings</b>				
\$1,250 per month or less	230	24.4%	349	29.4%
\$1,251 to \$3,333 per month	350	37.1%	475	40.0%
More than \$3,333 per month	364	38.6%	363	30.6%
<b>Jobs by NAICS Industry Sector</b>				
Retail Trade	121	12.8%	132	11.1%
Health Care and Social Assistance	119	12.6%	156	13.1%
Manufacturing	101	10.7%	113	9.5%
Educational Services	87	9.2%	109	9.2%
Accommodation and Food Services	78	8.3%	99	8.3%
Construction	60	6.4%	73	6.1%
Administration & Support, Waste Management and Remediation	59	6.3%	55	4.6%
Wholesale Trade	58	6.1%	48	4.0%
Transportation and Warehousing	46	4.9%	76	6.4%
Public Administration	44	4.7%	47	4.0%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	43	4.6%	62	5.2%
Finance and Insurance	33	3.5%	60	5.1%
Other Services (excluding Public Administration)	28	3.0%	90	7.6%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	19	2.0%	7	0.6%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	18	1.9%	17	1.4%
Information	13	1.4%	21	1.8%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	13	1.4%	11	0.9%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	3	0.3%	1	0.1%
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction	1	0.1%	3	0.3%
Utilities	0	0.0%	7	0.6%

Source: Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics, U.S. Census Bureau.

## Industry in the South Suburbs and Thornton

Thornton sits within the broader economic context of the south suburbs of Cook County. CMAP is working with the South Suburban Economic Growth Initiative (SSEGI), which aims to drive strategic, large scale, comprehensive economic growth in the south suburbs. In 2017, the SSEGI released a report<sup>2</sup> that analyzed industry in the south suburbs and identified best-fit industry clusters, several of which could pertain to Thornton, including Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics (TD&L); Metals, Machinery, and Equipment (MME); Food and Beverage Manufacturing and Packing; Blue-Collar B2B On-Site (wholesaling businesses); and Blue-Collar B2B Off-Site (facilities management). SSEGI is also working on initiatives in the workforce and housing spaces, as well as pursuing new capacity in the south suburbs to pursue new development in the key industry clusters identified above.

## Incentive Programs

Incentive programs available at the local, county, state, and national level could support future economic development in Thornton. Qualifying for these various programs will depend on what type of development is proposed to be built, where it will be built, and when. Moreover, it is important to establish and follow criteria to ensure that incentives are used in a manner that fit with local and regional economic goals, maximizing broad—rather than narrow—benefits.

Three incentive programs are relevant to Thornton. The first, Tax Increment financing (TIF), is a redevelopment tool to spur revitalization of certain areas determined to be in a “blighted” condition. Property owners within a TIF district can receive subsidies for redevelopment and benefit directly from infrastructure investments. Examples include redevelopment of vacant buildings, financing public infrastructure improvements, and cleaning up polluted sites. Thornton currently has two TIF districts: Blackstone and Downtown #3 (see Figure 4 on page 15).

**Table 16. Tax increment finance (TIF) districts in Thornton**

TIF Name	First Tax Year	Total Revenue
Thornton - Blackstone	2016	\$781,554
Thornton - Downtown #3	2017	\$60,477

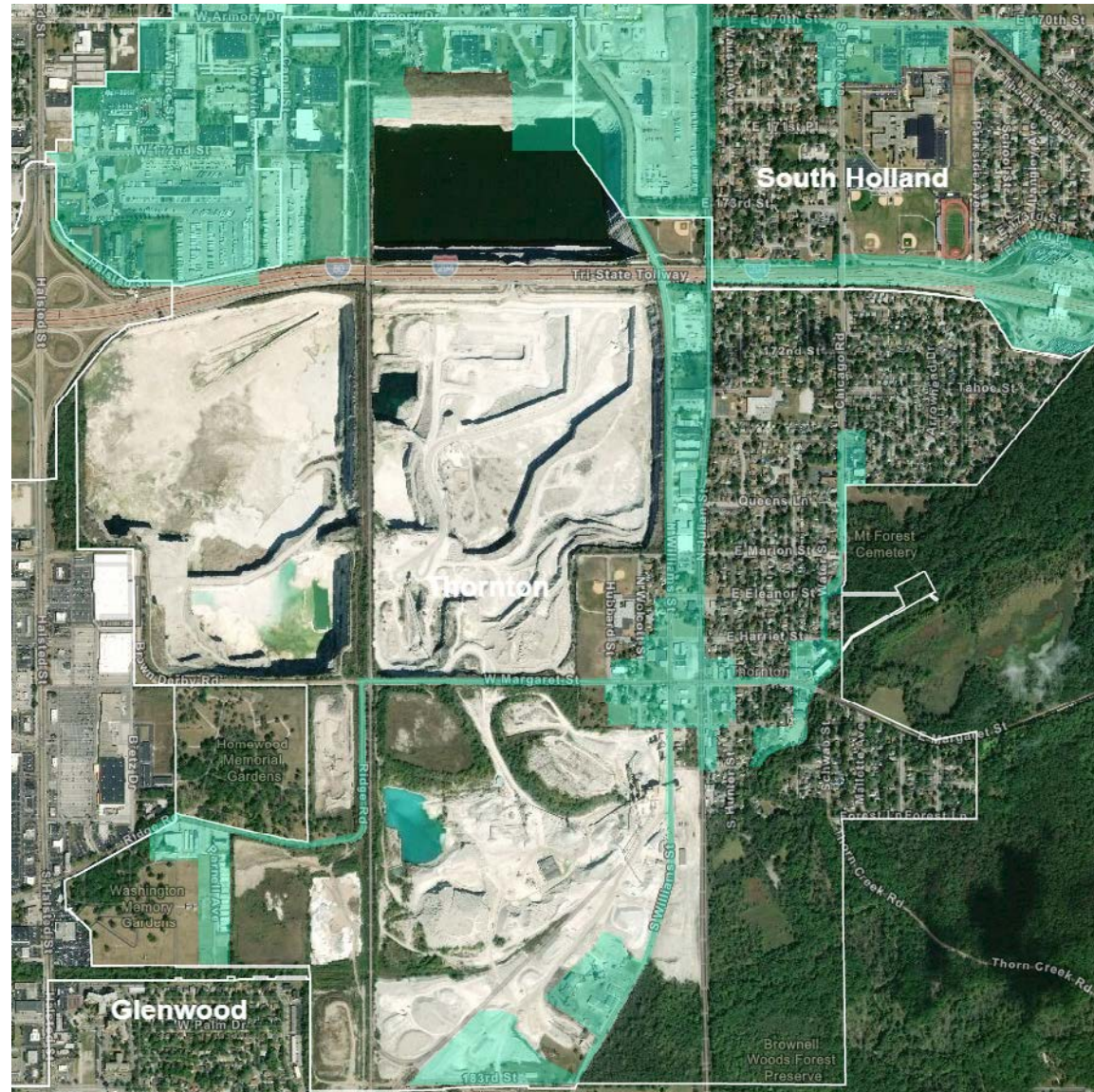
Source: 2012-16 Cook County TIF Viewer, <https://maps.cookcountyil.gov/tifviewer/>.

The second type of incentives are Industrial Growth Zones and Enterprise Zones. Cook County and the City of Chicago created Industrial Growth Zones<sup>3</sup> to facilitate industrial development in a defined area. A number of benefits are available for property owners, developers, and industrial businesses located within the zone. For businesses and developers, the Industrial Growth Zone program helps identify the best suited sites for development, provides an expedited permitting process, and access to potential financial assistance, including up to \$130,000 in grants for environmental assessments and remediation. Sites enrolled in the program have access to marketing through a web mapping tool, as well as workforce assistance, including applicant recruitment, screening, and training. Property owners within the eligible area must apply and receive approval to receive the benefits that come from the designation. In Thornton, there are no properties enrolled in the program.

The Calumet Region Enterprise Zone was established in 2017 to stimulate economic growth and neighborhood revitalization through business attraction and expansion in key opportunity areas in Thornton as well as Calumet City, Dolton, Lansing, Riverdale, South Holland, and unincorporated Cook County. Commercial, industrial, and multifamily residential developments can qualify for enterprise zone incentives. Incentives include a sales tax exemption on construction materials, in addition to other tax incentives depending on use and number of jobs created such as municipal real estate tax abatement and a discount on local building permit fees.

The Industrial Growth Zone and Enterprise Zone share the same boundary (see Figure 11). In Thornton, the zones cover land in both TIF districts, industrial properties off Williams Street and Ridge Road, and select properties along Chicago Road and Thorn Creek.

**Figure 11. Thornton properties in the Industrial Growth Zone and Enterprise Zone (in teal)**



## Vacancy and Land Value

Recent data shows that retail vacancy in the Village is relatively high, with 9.8 percent vacant as compared to 5.4 percent in 2008. Thornton's vacancy rate is slightly lower than Lansing (14.8 percent), but higher than South Holland (5.1 percent) and Cook County as a whole (5.6 percent). In contrast, Thornton has no industrial vacancy, which is lower than both South Holland (3.8 percent) and Lansing (6.5 percent).

**Table 17. Retail vacancy, 2nd Quarter 2018**

	Number of buildings	Total square footage	Vacant square footage	Percent vacant
Thornton	8	66,147	6,506	9.8%
South Holland	121	649,306	32,889	5.1%
Lansing	203	2,575,608	287,391	11.2%

Source: 2012-16 Cook County TIF Viewer, <https://maps.cookcountyil.gov/tifviewer/>.

**Table 18. Industrial\* vacancy, 2nd Quarter 2018**

	Number of buildings	Total square footage	Vacant square footage	Percent vacant
Thornton	20	845,877	0	0.0%
South Holland	160	4,976,796	188,080	3.8%
Lansing	66	2,163,474	141,217	6.5%

\*Includes flex properties.

Source: 2012-16 Cook County TIF Viewer, <https://maps.cookcountyil.gov/tifviewer/>.

The higher retail vacancy might be due to the small number of buildings dedicated to retail. With only eight buildings documented by CoStar, each of those buildings has a greater contribution to the vacancy rate. At the same time, Thornton is a small community with relatively low traffic that is just within a few minute drive of large retail centers in Homewood and Calumet City, factors which can make it difficult to attract certain retailers.

**Table 19. Average size of retail and office spaces, 2nd Quarter 2018**

	Number of buildings	Total square footage	Average square footage
Thornton	8	71,485	8,936
South Holland	121	1,049,344	8,672
Lansing	203	3,077,117	15,158

Source: CMAP analysis of CoStar data.

**Table 20. Retail square footage and vacancy, 2008-2018**

	2008	2018	Percent change
Total square footage	66,147	66,147	0.0%
Vacancy rate	5.4	9.8	+81.5%

Source: CMAP analysis of CoStar data.

Municipal revenue indicates the ability of communities to provide services and keep infrastructure in a state of good repair. The Village of Thornton relies on a diverse revenue stream, primarily consisting of local property and utility tax revenue, and state disbursements of sales and income tax revenue.

Equalized assessed value (EAV) refers to the value of an assessed property in a taxing district. Thornton’s overall EAV was approximately \$44 million in 2016. The primary sources of taxable value come from industrial and residential uses, which make up over 91 percent of the EAV. Commercial and railroad uses make up the remaining 9 percent.

Market value, or the fair cash value for a property, can help describe the amount of assets in a community. In 2016, the total market value of Thornton’s land was \$135,338,194, up slightly from 2015. Residential land makes up nearly 64 percent of Thornton’s total market value, followed by industrial (16.8 percent), commercial (16.5 percent), and vacant (3.0 percent). The quarry is a significant asset in Thornton, comprising over \$16.2 million in industrial market value, as well as a portion of market value classified as commercial (\$4.1 million) and vacant (\$2.6 million).

Most of the remainder of Thornton’s industrial market value, which is unrelated to the quarry, has received an incentive classification. Between 2015 and 2016, class 8 real estate tax incentives increased from \$997,080 to over \$2.8 million. It is important to note that while providing property tax incentives can help mitigate the effects of high property tax rates on development opportunities, it also shifts that portion of the tax burden to other properties in the area.

**Table 21. Equalized assessed value (EAV), 2016**

TIF Name	First Tax Year
Residential	\$18,154,215
Commercial	\$3,014,980
Industrial	\$21,825,805
Railroad	\$790,989
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$43,785,989</b>

Source: Illinois Department of Revenue

**Table 22. Market value by major class, 2015-2016**

Major Class	2015	2016	Percent change
Residential	\$86,907,870	\$86,232,500	-0.8%
Commercial	\$19,279,088	\$22,306,428	+15.7%
Industrial	\$18,746,044	\$17,307,836	-7.7%
Industrial Incentive (Class 8)	\$997,080	\$2,825,010	+183.3%
Industrial Incentive (Class 6b)	\$2,576,200	\$2,576,200	0.0%
Vacant	\$6,340,790	\$4,051,920	-36.1%
Not for Profit	\$38,300	\$38,300	0.0%
Exempt & Railroad	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$134,885,372</b>	<b>\$135,338,194</b>	<b>+0.3%</b>

Source: CMAP analysis Cook County Assessor data.

# Transportation

A modern transportation system is indispensable; residents must be able to travel quickly and easily around Thornton as well as the larger Chicago region to sustain our economy and quality of life. Businesses must be able to count on the timely delivery of their goods. With an aging and congested transportation system, maintenance and modernization are necessary to respond to mobility needs and trends.

Thornton is conveniently located off of Interstate 80, Interstate 294, and Bishop Ford (I-94) expressways, which are accessible via Halsted Road. Within Thornton, Margaret Street and Williams Street are the most heavily trafficked roads with between 5,000 and 10,000 vehicles per day. Thornton’s quarry industry results in significant truck traffic on Margaret Street and Williams Street. When paired with freight trains and people driving in and out of town, the downtown area can experience backups and congestion.

Pace Route 353 (River Oaks/Homewood) serves Thornton and connects residents and workers to the River Oaks Shopping Center and the City of Chicago (95th/Dan Ryan Station). It runs through Thornton via Margaret Street, Williams Street, Eleanor Street, and Chicago Road. The Metra Electric District (ME) line runs to the west of Thornton, with Homewood Station a ten-minute drive from Village Hall.

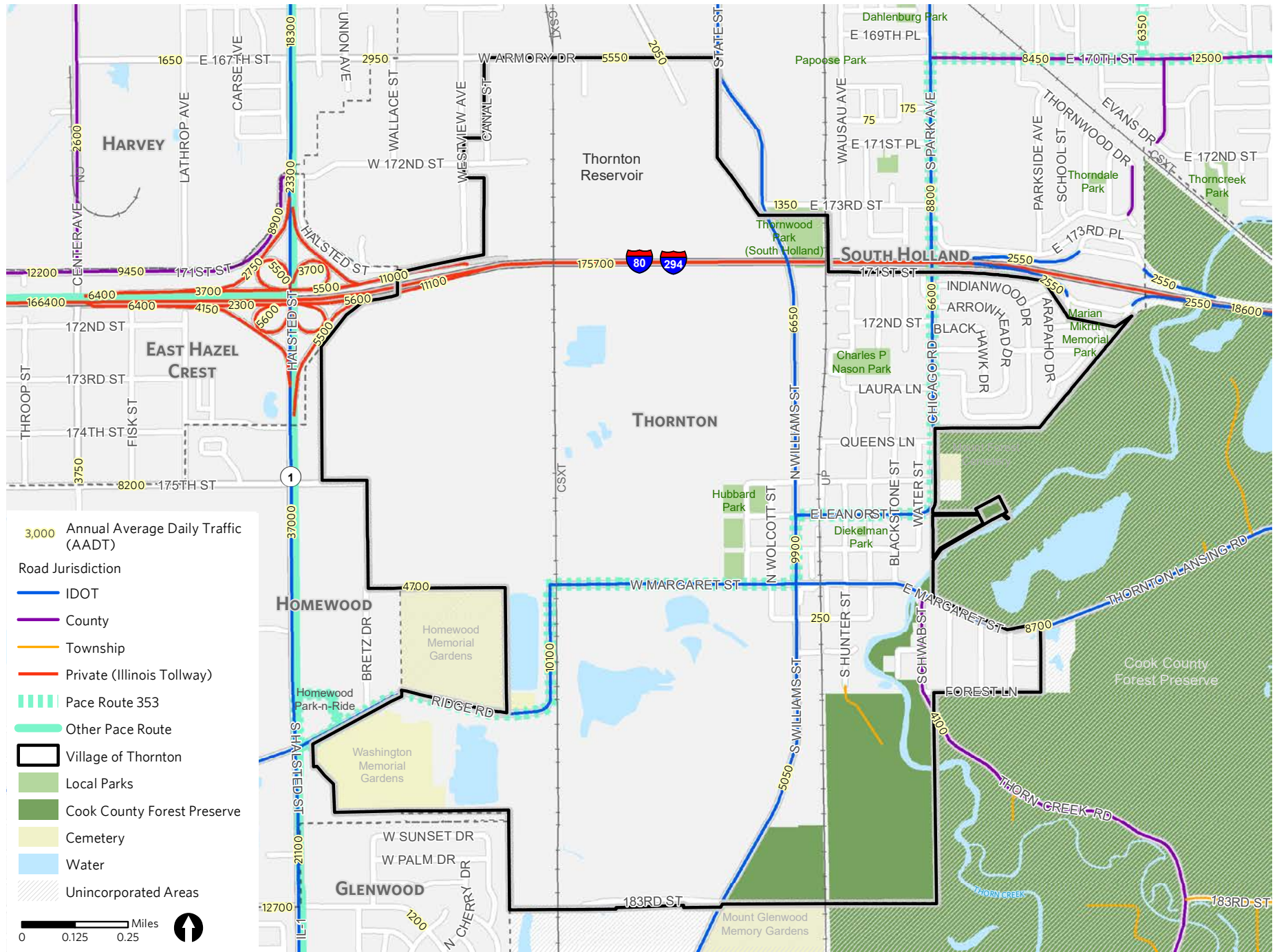
The majority of Thornton’s residents drive to work, with 87 percent driving alone to work and nine percent carpooling, while three percent walk or bike. With one Pace route and no Metra station, only one percent of residents takes transit to work.

**Table 23. Mode of travel to work, 2016**

	Thornton		Cook County		Region	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Work at home*	36	N/A	107,374	N/A	194,259	N/A
Drive alone	985	87.1%	1,513,861	64.8%	2,813,343	72.6%
Carpool	98	8.7%	203,847	8.7%	327,567	8.5%
Transit	13	1.1%	453,217	19.4%	524,527	13.5%
Walk or bike	35	3.1%	133,146	5.7%	163,011	4.2%
Other	0	0%	30,811	1.3%	45,348	1.2%
Total commuters	1,131	100.0%	2,334,882	100.0%	3,873,796	100.0%

\*Not included in "Total commuters"  
Source: 2012-16 American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau.

Figure 12. Traffic counts and road jurisdiction



Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2019.

## Mobility

As of 2015, only 30 people both lived and worked in the Village. Most residents of Thornton commute elsewhere, and most people who work in Thornton reside in another town. This is typical for municipalities in the region. In total, about 1,601 workers commute to Thornton every day, while about 914 commute out of Thornton to places like Chicago, South Holland and other south suburbs, and Indiana. Given the high percentage of residents commuting by driving, the daily flow of commuters into and out of Thornton can result in traffic congestion, wear and tear on roads and lengthy commute times. The 1,601 workers commuting to Thornton also come from places like Chicago, the south suburbs, and Indiana.

Figure 14 shows that many Thornton residents work in Chicago (22 percent), followed by South Holland (6.5 percent), and Lansing (3.2 percent). A small percentage of residents commute to jobs in Indiana. The greatest concentrations of jobs for Thornton residents are to the north and northwest, with approximately 45 percent of jobs located within 10 miles of the Village and another 32 percent of jobs between 10 and 25 miles, which includes Chicago's Loop.

Similarly, the majority of people who work in Thornton are traveling from the north and northwest, with approximately 31 percent living within 10 miles of their job in the Village. Figure 15 shows that many workers commute from Chicago (25 percent), followed by Lansing (2.3 percent), and Hammond, Indiana (2.0 percent).

**Figure 13. Work inflow/outflow analysis, 2015**

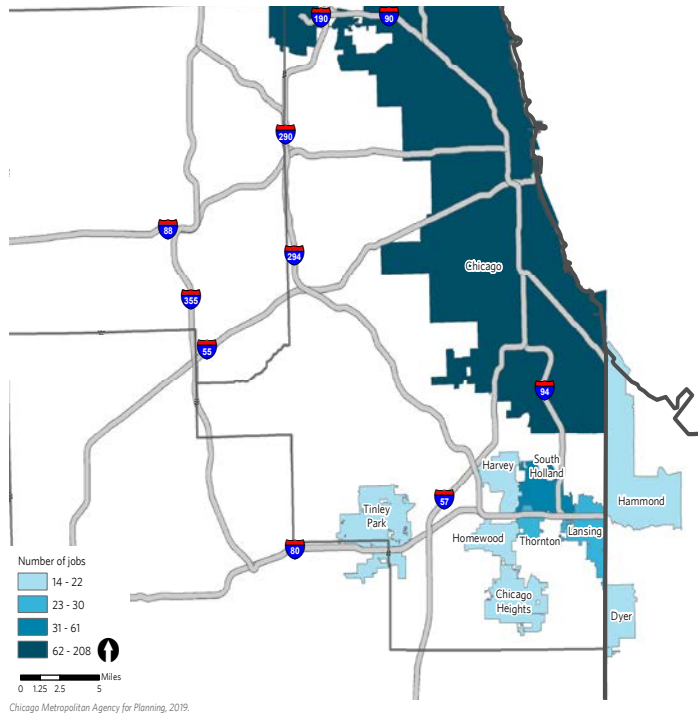


Source: Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics, U.S. Census Bureau.

Note: Arrows do not correspond to direction of travel.



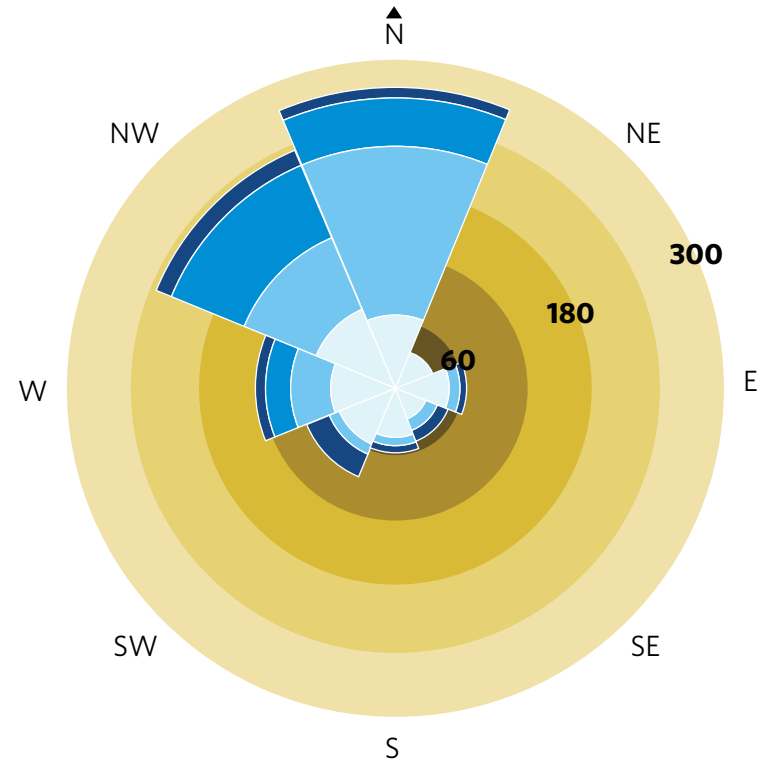
Figure 14. Where Thornton residents work, 2015



	Count	Share
All Places	944	100.0%
Chicago	208	22.0%
South Holland	61	6.5%
Lansing	30	3.2%
Thornton	30	3.2%
Tinley Park	22	2.3%
Chicago Heights	21	2.2%
Homewood	21	2.2%
Harvey	19	2.0%
Dyer	17	1.8%
Hammond	14	1.5%
All Other Locations	501	53.1%

Source: 2012-16 American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau.

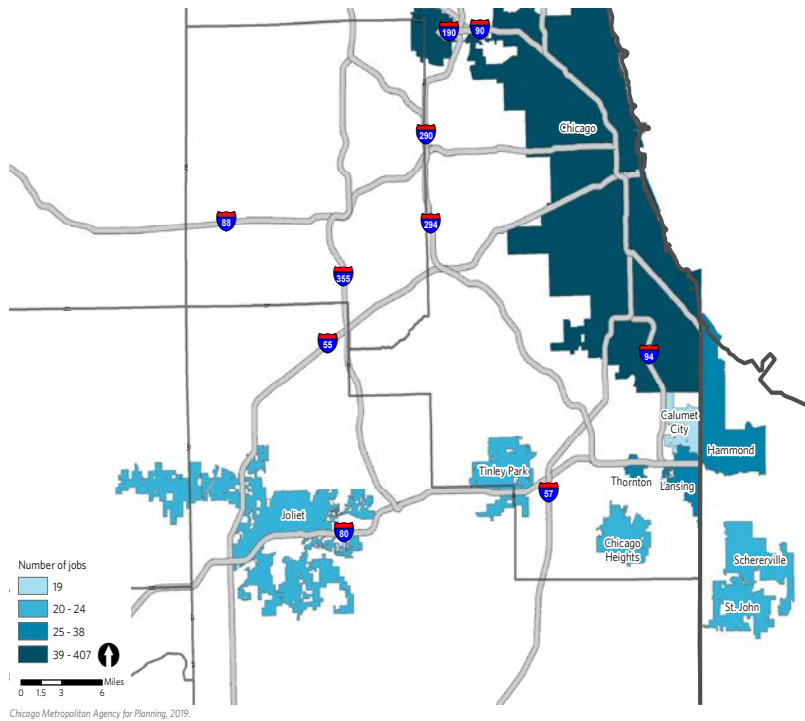
- Less than 10 miles
- 10 to 24 miles
- 25 to 50 miles
- Greater than 50 miles



	Count	Share
Total Primary Jobs	944	100.0%
Less than 10 miles (dark green)	420	44.5%
10 to 24 miles (green)	301	31.9%
25 to 50 miles (light green)	149	15.8%
Greater than 50 miles (yellow)	74	7.8%

Source: 2012-16 American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau.

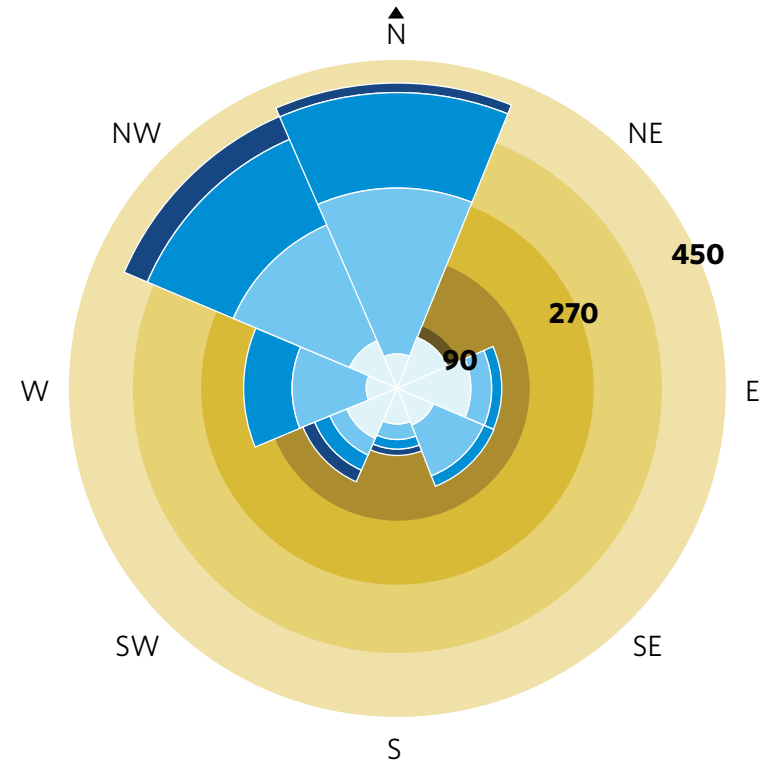
Figure 15. Where Thornton workers live, 2015



	Count	Share
All Places	1,631	100.0%
Chicago	407	25.0%
Lansing	38	2.3%
Hammond	33	2.0%
Thornton	30	1.8%
Joliet	24	1.5%
Chicago Heights	23	1.4%
St. John	23	1.4%
Tinley Park	22	1.3%
Schererville	22	1.3%
Calumet City	19	1.2%
All Other Locations	990	60.7%

Source: 2012-16 American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau.

- Less than 10 miles
- 10 to 24 miles
- 25 to 50 miles
- Greater than 50 miles



	Count	Share
Total Primary Jobs	1,631	100.0%
Less than 10 miles (dark green)	512	31.4%
10 to 24 miles (green)	657	40.3%
25 to 50 miles (light green)	374	22.9%
Greater than 50 miles (yellow)	88	5.4%

Source: 2012-16 American Community Survey, U.S. Census Bureau.

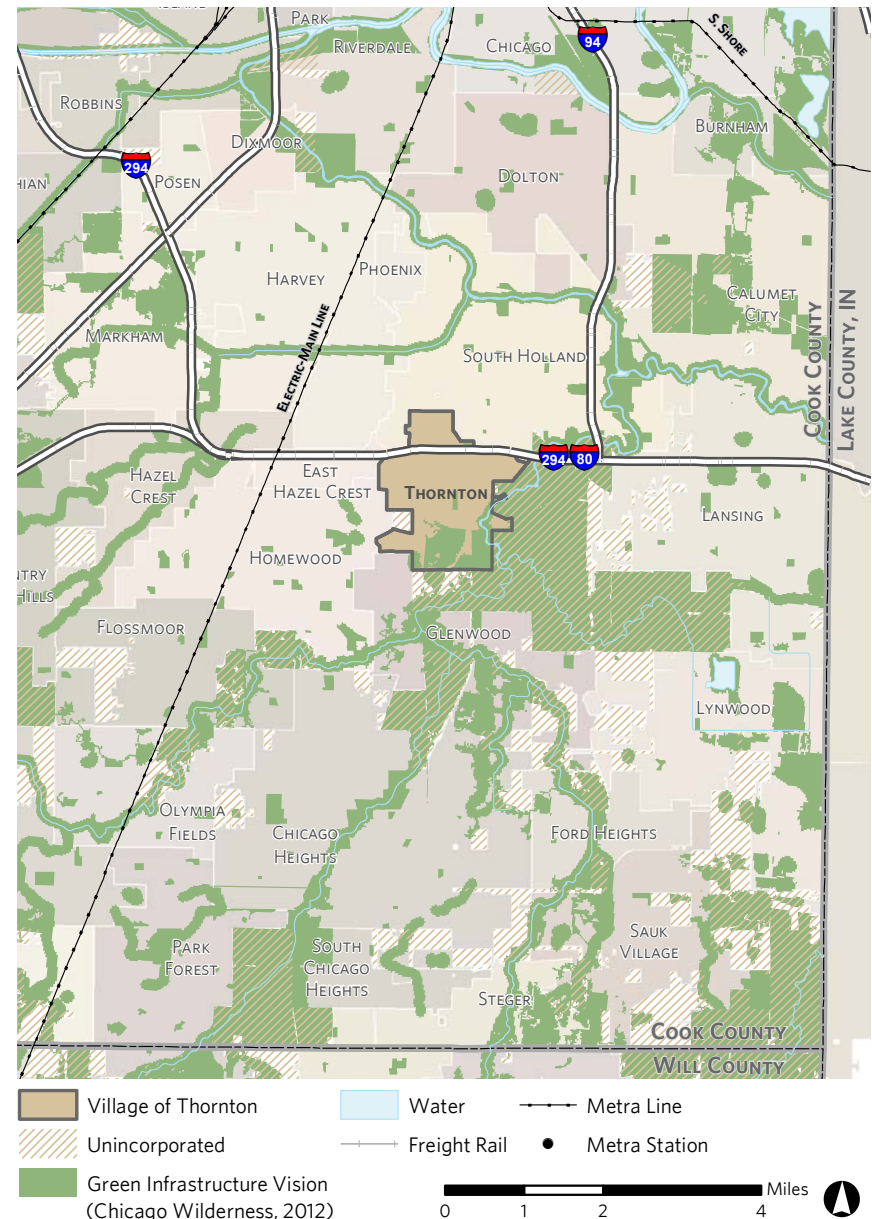
# Natural Environment

Natural resources are some of the greatest assets in Thornton as well as the Chicago region. These resources provide a number of ecosystem services, such as clean air and water, flood control, and climate regulation, among others. In addition, the natural environment contributes to community character and enhances quality of life. Thornton's natural resources exist within a larger network of water and land resources and the community's plans, policies, and development decisions should work in concert with these assets to achieve a sustainable and livable future.

## Green Infrastructure

Green infrastructure is comprised of a network of land and water resources that perform natural ecosystem functions and provide a variety of services and benefits to people and wildlife. These resources are commonly referred to as "green infrastructure" to highlight the importance of these natural resources to society. The regional Green Infrastructure Vision (GIV) is a large-scale, multistate vision of interconnected land and water resources. Figure 16 illustrates green infrastructure that has been identified at the regional scale for the Village of Thornton and surrounding area. GIV areas within Thornton include Cook County Forest Preserves along Thorn Creek and the southern portion of Thornton Quarry, which features wetlands and historically flowed to Thorn Creek.

**Figure 16. Green infrastructure**



Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2019.

## Local Open Space

According to population and land use data from 2013, Thornton has 6.9 acres of accessible public open space per 1,000 people. This ratio exceeds the ON TO 2050 recommendation of 4 acres per 1,000 people for dense areas. It is important to note that this calculation does not include Thornwood Park, which is owned by the Village of South Holland, and the Cook County Forest Preserves, since the vast majority of Forest Preserve land is not accessible from the Village.

The Village of Thornton owns and maintains five parks in the Village: Charles P Nason Park, Diekelman Park, Hubbard Park/Thornton Ball Fields, Marian Mikrut Memorial Park, Memorial Park, and Skate Park. Together these parks offer a variety of recreational activities featuring four playgrounds, two ball fields, tennis and sand volleyball courts, a skate park, pavilions, and picnic areas. The Parks and Recreation Department also runs the community center at Charles P Nason Park, which includes a fitness center and provides a variety of programming for children, teens, and adults throughout the year.



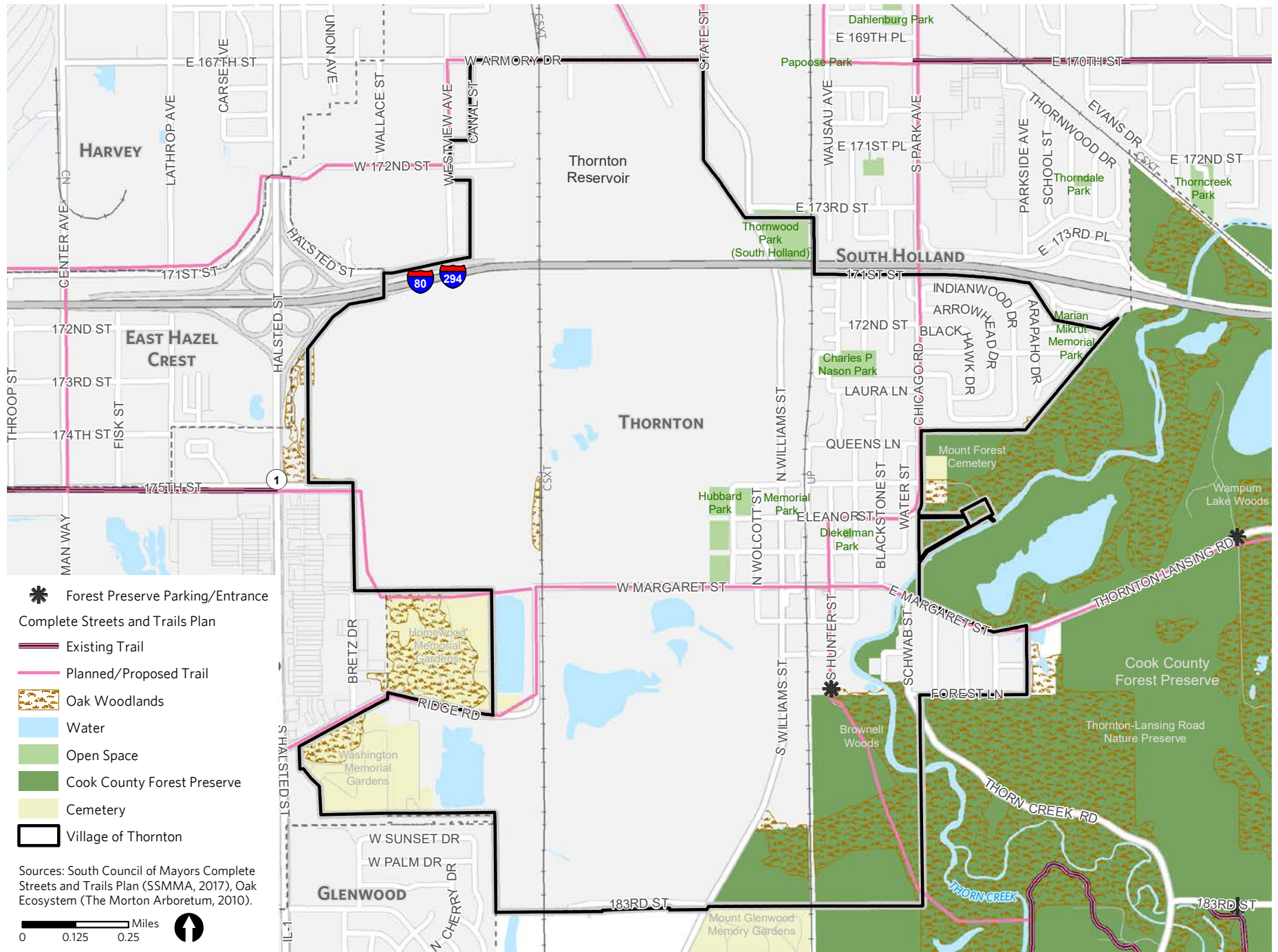
Skate park.

South and east of Thornton is a vast expanse of land managed by the Forest Preserve District of Cook County (FPDCC), consisting of Brownell Woods, Wampum Lake, and Thornton-Lansing Road Nature Preserve. The Forest Preserve comprises biologically rich ecosystems, including remnant oak woodlands, and provide recreational activities such as fishing, ice fishing, and picnicking. Brownell Woods offers a picnic grove that is accessible from the Village via Hunter Street. Wampum Lake Woods is 0.5 miles from the Village limits via Thornton Lansing Road, which is a two-lane IDOT road with a combination of paved, gravel, and no shoulders, making it difficult for people to access on bike or foot. A trail has been proposed that would connect Brownell Woods with Sweet Woods Forest Preserve further south, which would require crossing Thorn Creek and associated wetlands. If constructed, this trail would provide a great benefit to Thornton residents by connecting them to the Thorn Creek Trail System, which extends over 15 miles from Lansing Woods Forest Preserve all the way to Park Forest and Steger.



Diekelman Park.

Figure 17. Open space



Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2019.

Planning context

## Watersheds

Watersheds are areas of land that drain surface water to a specific point in the landscape, such as a stream or a lake. Thornton is located primarily within the Thorn Creek watershed, with the exception of the Thornton Reservoir and Thornton Transitional Reservoir that both drain to the Little Calumet River. Both watersheds are part of the Chicago basin, which is a developed watershed that extends from North Chicago to the north, Crete to the south, and Gary, Indiana to the east. Thorn Creek is the most prominent water resource in Thornton, which flows through the east side of the community.

Updated in 2014, the Thorn Creek Watershed Base Plan<sup>4</sup> recommends actions to improve the water quality of the creek such as the installation stormwater best management practices (BMPs), stream restoration, and street sweeping, among other activities. Wetlands are also found in the Village, predominately along Thorn Creek and ponds in Thornton Quarry, which provide habitat for a variety of wildlife.

## Floodplains

Floodplains are areas adjacent to waterways that are susceptible to flooding during different rainfall events. The one percent annual chance floodplain, commonly known as the 100-year floodplain, is an area where there is a one percent chance of flooding each year. In northeastern Illinois, flooding in the floodplain is expected when approximately 7.5 inches of rain falls within a 24-hour period. Because of the greater frequency and intensity of rainstorms due to climate change, flooding within floodplains is occurring more frequently. A small portion of Thornton's land (27.7 acres or 1.8 percent) is located within the one percent annual chance floodplain, the majority of which is along Thorn Creek. These areas include sites that are susceptible to inundation during the one percent annual chance flood. Most of the land is protected Forest Preserve, although some areas west of the creek and south of Margaret Street are developed and could be impacted.

Thornton has benefited from MWRD's Tunnel and Reservoir Plan (TARP) to reduce pollution into Chicagoland's rivers and streams and mitigate flooding. The Thornton Transitional Reservoir, located in the western lobe of Thornton Quarry, receives high flows from Thorn Creek that would have otherwise flooded land in the floodplain before it is slowly released back into the creek.

## Climate resilience

Climate change has already begun to affect the Chicago region, and will continue to bring more frequent and intense storms, increased periods of extreme heat and cold, and longer droughts. Local impacts may include decreased livability, increased costs to the public sector and private citizens as a result of damage to infrastructure and property, and even loss of life. Thornton's vulnerable populations, such as low-income households or the elderly, may be disproportionately burdened by future climate impacts if they do not have access to safe and comfortable living conditions during periods of extreme heat or cold, or do not have the financial resources required to rebound from flooding or other storm-related property damage.



# Section 3 PREVIOUS PLANS





This section of the report provides a summary of the existing Village plans and other relevant plans, projects, and studies that inform and influence the recommendations of this Planning Priorities Report.

LEFT: Native landscaping at the Thornton Public Library.

## Village of Thornton Community Survey (2017)

In 2017, the Village of Thornton conducted a community wide online survey to gather information about the attitudes and opinions of residents and business owners, find out how people ranked various issues and improvements, and give participants a voice in determining goals and priorities. Nearly 120 people responded to the survey, providing feedback on topic areas such as parks and programming, housing, and economic development.

Survey respondents ranged from lifelong residents to those who have lived in Thornton for less than a few years. Respondents listed several aspects that attracted them to Thornton such as being an affordable, quiet, and safe small town that is in close proximity to family, schools, work, and the Forest Preserve. Several others were raised in Thornton and decided to either stay or move back to raise their children. Unsurprisingly, when asked about future change in Thornton, most respondents cited a desire for the Village to keep its “small town” feel and remain peaceful and safe.

### Parks and Recreation

Most respondents (55 percent) supported the existing amount of park space. Over 20 percent of respondents believe there is not enough park space, while 23 percent had no opinion. When asked about opportunities for expanded recreation, walking/jogging paths were ranked the highest, followed by festivals, a dog park, and bike lanes.

### Housing

Nearly 90 percent of survey participants own their home, while 10 percent rent or live with family. When asked if Thornton should offer additional types of housing (beyond single-family homes), the majority of survey participants (60 percent) responded that there should be no change, followed by 36 percent in support of condos or townhomes, 17 percent for senior housing, 16 percent for mixed use, and eight percent in support of apartments.

### Economic Development

Most respondents patronize at least the 7-Eleven in Thornton, with several also supporting businesses like Jimbooo’s Italian Beef, Koch’s Plaza, Mobil Gas Station, Krunch Time Auto, Blades & Fades, Boz Hot Dogs, and the American Legion, among others. Overall, respondents would like to see a variety of small businesses such as specialty shops, bakeries and cafes, fast food chains, restaurants, a grocery store, pharmacy, spa/nail salon/ barber shops, and ice cream shops.

### Priority Issues and Improvements

When asked to prioritize issues that the Village will confront in the future, high taxes, Thornwood High School, crime and safety, and aging infrastructure rose to the top. Other priority issues include vacant property, odor from the Thornton Reservoir, and poor street lighting. When asked about improvements, several respondents wanted to see the Village improve town upkeep, create an attractive downtown area, attract more businesses, fix streets and sidewalks, install more lighting, and involve residents in the planning process. Specifically, 72 percent of respondents thought that the Village should develop a downtown area. When asked to list one thing to change, with other popular answers including improved appearance (including streetscaping and lighting), stores/shops, odor/dust/traffic, Metra stop, lower taxes, and community events.

## SSMMA South Council of Mayors Complete Streets and Trails Plan (2017)

The Complete Streets and Trails Plan<sup>5</sup> includes an update to SSMMA's 2008 Bicycle Plan and provides recommendations and best practices related to bicycling, walking, and accessing transit. The plan includes a Council-wide network of potential bikeway corridors, which highlights major trail connections. Two of these, the Ridge Street/Margaret Street/Thornton Lansing Road corridor and the Chicago Road/Eleanor Street/Hunter Street corridor through Thornton, are identified as major trail connections to the Forest Preserves. The plan promotes the Surface Transportation Program<sup>6</sup> as a vital funding source to help achieve these connections.

## Thorn Creek Watershed Based Plan (Addendum 2014)

The Thorn Creek Watershed Based Plan<sup>7</sup> was initiated, in 2003, by CMAP with funding from the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA). The watershed spans 107 square miles across Illinois and a portion of Indiana, from University Park in the south to South Holland in the north. Updated in 2014, the plan recommends best management practices (BMPs) throughout the watershed to improve the health and water quality of Thorn Creek. Recommended BMPs include green stormwater infrastructure like permeable pavement, bioretention or rain gardens, wetland restoration, and green roofs, as well as street sweeping and education activities. This plan meets requirements as defined by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) and, thus, projects and programs in much of Thornton that would help implement the plan are eligible to receive funding through Section 319 of the Clean Water Act.<sup>8</sup>

A photograph of a residential street scene. In the foreground, a large, leafy tree stands on the left side of the frame. Behind it is a single-story house with a white porch and a dark-colored main body. The house number '210' is visible on the porch. To the right of the house is a utility pole. In the background, there are other houses, including one with a white lattice fence and a ladder leaning against it. The sky is blue with some clouds. A green semi-transparent box is overlaid on the top right of the image, containing the text 'Section 4 STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS' in white.

# Section 4 STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

As part of the research conducted for this report, CMAP staff held a series of confidential interviews with 20 key stakeholders in the Village of Thornton, including residents, business owners, property owners, Village staff, and elected officials. Nearly all were individual interviews (one was a pair of stakeholders), lasting between 30 and 45 minutes. One kickoff meeting was held with three elected/appointed officials and one Village staff. Stakeholders shared diverse and candid perspectives on Thornton's current conditions and needs, as well as visions for its future. These interviews were highly influential in the development of the planning priorities report.

LEFT: Residential neighborhood.

# Key Themes

The main themes that emerged out of the entirety of the interviews are summarized below.

## Thornton's Identity

When asked to describe Thornton, community members overwhelmingly agreed that it is the “small town” feel that sets it apart from other communities in the area. A sense of safety, peace and quiet, and no crime - likening the town to the fictional town of Mayberry - were common descriptions. Old and new residents alike think that it is a great place to raise kids. Thornton is considered by many residents to be a tight knit community with committed residents and neighbors who look after one another. At the same time, several community members lamented the lack of involvement from residents, often using the slightly weary phrase “It’s Thornton” to describe the belief that everyone wants something, but few are willing to get involved.

## On change and the future

Opinions on how Thornton has changed varied among community members. Some longer-term residents suggested that today there seem to be fewer businesses and more vacant storefronts, empty lots, and foreclosed homes than in the past. Others noted a change in demographics, specifically that older residents have moved out of their homes to downsize; this may contribute to beliefs held by some residents that the community is not as close-knit as it once was and is perceived to be less safe.

When asked for their vision for the future of Thornton, several community members expressed a desire for more businesses and development, particularly concentrated in a small, downtown area. Some want the development of a downtown area to reflect a sense of place and identity that tells everyone This is Thornton. Others want to see a community where multiple generations can thrive, with a variety of housing options and quality public schools.



Residential neighborhood.



Mixed use building on Margaret Street.

## Economic Development

Commercial development was the most commonly cited priority to provide options for residents, generate revenue, and increase the vibrancy of the community. Community members voiced a desire to continue to support existing businesses, while identifying strategies to draw new businesses into a revitalized downtown area and other vacant commercial properties.



The Well at the Distillery on Margaret Street.

## Existing businesses

Existing businesses are seen as a strength of the community and, overall, business owners feel well supported by the Village. Many stated that high Cook County property taxes makes it challenging for Thornton to attract and retain businesses. Meanwhile, some current business owners claim that, in addition to high taxes, MWRD's stormwater management requirements can limit expansion of existing businesses or redevelopment of property, especially in some areas of Thornton that sit atop shallow bedrock, which can make it difficult or costly to meet MWRD's requirements. High business turnover was noted as a challenge, particularly in the Koch's strip mall and commercial suites on Williams Street. Inconsistent and inconvenient hours were also cited as an issue for small businesses to thrive. One stakeholder expressed a desire for a marketing campaign to support locally owned businesses.

## New businesses

Stakeholders cited the new Thorn Creek Senior Living complex and The Well at the Distillery as successful projects that could be leveraged to spur development in Thornton. A family restaurant, grocery store, or coffee shop were just a few ideas offered by community members. At the same time, many stakeholders believe that it takes more than Thorntonites to keep a business alive. Several saw customer potential from quarry employees, as well as people driving through town to avoid backups on the tollway. However, they see challenges for the Village to attract retail businesses, given Thornton's proximity to the Halsted commercial corridor in Homewood, the small size of the community, and the comparatively low traffic counts.

## Downtown area

Nearly everyone pointed to the intersection of Margaret and Williams as an opportunity for future growth. Several community members expressed the desire to create a “downtown feel” that is unique to Thornton, enlivens the community, and creates a reason for people to stop instead of just passing through. The availability of Village-owned property, historic mixed-use buildings, and traffic were seen as assets for economic development. However, some community members thought truck and freight train traffic could pose a challenge to making the area a walkable, downtown area, proposing the idea to reorient development around the new distillery and senior housing complex.

Community members have differing opinions on historic preservation in Thornton. Some cited poor building conditions as an impediment to purchase or restoration, while others expressed an aesthetic preference for new development. One stakeholder brought up the use of design guidelines at the South Holland Walgreens as a way to influence the look and feel of new development. On the other hand, several noted that the volunteer-run Thornton Historical Society is a valuable community asset and believe that Village should protect the few historic buildings remain in the Thornton.

Several stakeholders thought that beautification was an important ingredient to create an attractive downtown area. Ideas include establishing an Adopt-A-Corner program and pursuing local sponsors for streetscape, landscaping, and gateway projects. One stakeholder suggested the idea of installing a decorative barrier along Margaret Street and the southern end of Hubbard Park that could separate recreational uses from the street while doubling as gateway signage or a Village-themed decorative element.



Northeast corner of Margaret Street and Williams Street.



Local businesses on southwest corner of Margaret Street and Williams Street.



## Schools

Residents enjoy living in Thornton, but have mixed feelings about its public schools.

Wolcott Elementary, Thornton's only public primary school, is a source of great pride for residents. The school's attendance is around 254 students, predominately from Thornton with a few students from nearby Lansing. Parents like that Wolcott offers small class sizes, which provide extra attention to students and create a strong sense of family in this already close community. Parent engagement seems to be relatively high and the school has made improvements to the drop-off area and general beautification in recent years. The school also actively pursues partnerships with Hanson Material Services, the owners of Thornton Quarry, and other organizations like the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (through its green infrastructure grant program) to enhance the school property and provide outdoor learning and recreation opportunities for students.

Some believe that Thornwood High School has been improving and attracting more Thornton students in recent years. One stakeholder noted that Thornwood has a good honors program and that Thornton students in that program have excelled. Despite these views, the actual or perceived state of the school continues to be a key concern for residents. Several stakeholders described the decision that many residents are confronted with—to either move or pay to send their children to private school instead of sending them to Thornwood—which often results in Thornton losing families with older children. Many residents wish that Thornton could be incorporated into the Homewood/Flossmoor district; however, past attempts of doing so have been unsuccessful, making it an unlikely option in the future.

Stakeholders voiced some interest in improving the high school, but are discouraged given the small influence Thornton has on the School Board. A parent advisory committee exists for Thornwood, but it seemed to community members that few parents from Thornton are involved. Ideas for improvement included encouraging involvement in the parent advisory committee, establishing a peer mentoring program between Wolcott and Thornwood students to strengthen ties between the schools, and creating partnerships between the high school and businesses to provide job training for students.



Wolcott Elementary drop-off area.

## Parks and Recreation

Residents are pleased with the Village's parks and recreation offerings, including programs offered for kids and seniors. Several stakeholders cited the community center as an asset and suggested that the Village promote these assets to residents.

The Village's Parks and Recreation Department handles programming, while the Public Works Department is in charge of park maintenance and improvements. Public Works has made improvements in recent years, including a softball field in Hubbard Park, and is constructing a walking track at Nason Park. Community members would like to see improvements in existing parks, especially at Hubbard Park given that it is the largest and improvements would mutually benefit Wolcott Elementary students. There is also a desire to renovate and reopen the Hanson observatory overlooking the Thornton Quarry, to the public. However, it was noted that if it is reopened, the Village may need to provide security and establish limited hours. Other improvements noted by community members include upgrading playground equipment and surfacing, installing lighting, and creating a dog park. (The Village staff noted that they previously evaluated public opinion on the creation of a dog park, but found that it was not well supported, possibly due to the dog license requirement.)

A few residents voiced support for the farmers market that is run by Parks and Recreation and would like to see it expanded to include more vendors with extended hours to accommodate people who work during the day. One stakeholder suggested relocating it to a more central location, such as the lawn outside of the Village Hall. A suggestion to provide more programming for teenagers was also suggested.

Several stakeholders see the Forest Preserve as one of Thornton's greatest assets. They would like to see the creation of well-designed trails that would better connect the Village to the Forest Preserves, possibly via Mount Forest Cemetery and Hunter Street/Brownell Woods. On a related note, one stakeholder suggested that the Village find ways to provide good access to Thorn Creek for fishing and other recreation.



Edge of Forest Preserves on Chicago Road.

## Home Vacancies and Upkeep

Several community members expressed concern over the number of vacant houses and poor property maintenance at vacant or rental properties. Thornton's low home prices, signaling a slow recovery from the recession, was noted as a reason for increased foreclosures. Several residents expressed concern about boarded up vacant properties in their neighborhood and, in some instances, squatters. The Village has been proactive by tracking and managing vacant properties, including the demolition of houses that pose a public safety hazard and lawn maintenance. The Village has also placed liens on vacant properties; however, these properties have been difficult to sell. Some suggested that the Village is asking too much for the properties, although this difficulty could also be due to a weak housing market in the south suburbs. One stakeholder proposed a vacant lot program that would allow adjacent property owners to purchase vacant properties at a low price, which is similar to a program that has been implemented in certain neighborhoods on the south and west sides of Chicago. Another community member expressed a desire to see fewer teardowns and instead find ways to rehab/rebuild them. Beyond vacant properties, some community members are concerned with the ability of older residents to maintain their property, citing a need for Thornton to maintain and expand housing options that are attractive and affordable to seniors who want to stay in the community.

Concerns over a perceived increase in rental properties were raised by several community members, particularly poor yard upkeep. At the same time, it was noted that the Village does not experience problems with apartment buildings in Thornton.

## Village Capacity and Operations

Nearly everyone had a positive attitude toward management and services provided by the Village, and offered a few areas for improvement. Overall, community members agree that the Village government is well administered, citing receiving a "quick response time" for requests, and being trustworthy and easy to work with. At the same time, some would like the Village to be more transparent with residents.

### Revenue / Financial Stability

Almost everyone expressed the need for the Village to generate more revenue to help reduce the tax burden on property owners. The Village is already working with the Chicago Southland Economic Development Corporation (CSEDC) and Calumet Region Enterprise Zone to attract new development to the community, but Village staff and leadership hope to receive additional guidance regarding which businesses types and sectors they should seek to attract, based on market feasibility. While the Village has successfully obtained grants in the past (including the CMAP assistance through which this report was developed), staff and community members would like to increase Thornton's capacity to apply for and manage grants to support future improvements in Thornton. Similarly, stakeholders would like to see the Village continue to strengthen relationships with organizations such as SSMMA and CMAP.

## Communication and Transparency

Community members appreciate the Village newsletter and website, and they do an effective jobs at keeping residents up to speed on what is happening in Thornton. The Village also holds a quarterly “meet and greet” to hear from residents and discuss current Village issues and priorities. However, a few stakeholders thought that the Village could make better use of Facebook to inform the public. One suggestion was to live stream Board meetings for those residents, particularly young families, who cannot attend in person but would still like to be involved. Some community members did express a desire for more transparency from the Village, citing the closure of Brown Derby Road as a decision that was only communicated to residents when it came up for vote by the Village Board.

## Planning, Building, and Zoning

Some community members suggested that Thornton needs to update its zoning code to refine land uses in the downtown area, provide a mix of housing options, buffer residences from industrial uses, and smooth out inconsistencies. One stakeholder noted a need to clarify the inspection process and develop consistent building and development standards. Another stakeholder expressed a desire to require businesses to be in good standing with their commercial rent in order to renew a business license.

## Village Departments

The following are priorities noted by Village Departments:

Department	Priorities
Building and Zoning	Administrative support and software integration.
Fire Department	New equipment, including a fire engine.
Parks and Recreation	Grant assistance, upgrad playground equipment and surfacing, and amenities for preschool age students.
Police Department	Stay up to date with technology. One resident interviewed commented that the new system has resulted in slower police response times.
Public Works	Maintain good potable water quality, mowing, a new public works building, geographic information systems (GIS) data entry and management. Also noted was a localized flooding problem between the CSX railroad and Hunter Street, requiring coordination with IDOT.

## Other Topics Frequently Mentioned

Living near the quarry was a common point of discussion by community members. Unsurprisingly, the Thornton Quarry was described as both a huge asset and a nuisance to residents. Externalities associated with the quarry include dust, noise and rumbling from blasts, cracks in structures, and significant truck traffic. At the same time, several people welcomed the revenue generated by the quarry and some see it as a significant, geological feature that draws people into Thornton. The tours held by the Thornton Historical Society are extremely popular, and one community member noted that reopening the Hanson observatory to the public could be a point of interest for residents and visitors.

Thornton is fortunate to not experience significant damages from flooding. However, since the Thornton Reservoir has begun to collect combined sewer overflows, many community members are disgusted by the smell, although they note that it is not as big of an issue as it is in neighboring South Holland.

Transportation concerns varied, including heavy truck traffic, speeding on Margaret Street, accidents at the Margaret and Williams Street intersection, and stop sign violations on Chicago Road. Most community members find it comfortable to walk in Thornton; however, stakeholders noted a need for more police surveillance to ensure safety for children and sidewalk snow removal near Wolcott Elementary. Additional parking at the school to assist with drop-offs was also desired.



Williams Street looking south at Hanson aggregate facility.



Margaret Street at railroad crossing.



# Section 5 RECOMMENDATIONS

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Thornton would benefit from a variety of planning projects that could address its future needs and investment priorities for commercial development, residential areas, infrastructure, transportation system, and parks and open space. A comprehensive plan is one way to address these needs, but may not be the highest priority for Thornton. While the 2003 Comprehensive Plan is out of date and does not address current issues and opportunities in Thornton, to target specific actions for the Village to implement for short-term results.

LEFT: Thorn Creek Senior Living.

# Primary Recommendation

The Village of Thornton should partner with CMAP to complete a market analysis to better understand the potential for economic development in the community. A high-level market analysis that focuses on Thornton's assets would help the Village play to its strengths to achieve long-term economic prosperity and a high quality of life for residents.

## Challenges and opportunities

While Thornton has a thriving industrial sector, it has struggled to attract and retain commercial businesses. The community is unique in that it is situated in the center of the south suburbs, yet is isolated from surrounding villages by the Thornton Quarry, Illinois Tollway, and Cook County Forest Preserves. Combined with its small population, relatively low traffic counts, and competing retail in neighboring communities, Thornton faces challenges to attract certain retailers. At the same time, recent developments like Thorn Creek Senior Living complex and The Well at the Distillery could help stimulate future economic growth in Thornton. While the Cook County Forest Preserves can be perceived as a barrier between Thornton and communities to the east, they are also a significant asset that the Village should leverage.

Thornton's relatively high retail vacancy (9.8 percent) and vacant land indicates a need for the Village to define an economic development strategy. This is particularly evident in the Downtown TIF district, which currently includes 4.5 acres of vacant land or more than half of all vacant land in Thornton. A good portion of vacant land in the downtown area is also owned by the Village, which creates an opportunity to implement a long-term redevelopment strategy.

During this planning process, Village staff and leadership expressed a need for a strategy to return vacant land back to productive use. Input from these and other stakeholders (during this planning process and in the 2017 Community Survey) confirmed a desire for more businesses and development in order to expand the Village's tax base, and many voiced support for new development that would revitalize Thornton's small, downtown area. However, questions remain concerning the viability of creating a "downtown feel" at Margaret and Williams Streets, due to heavy truck traffic and dust from the quarry. Some wondered if the Village should reorient its downtown development further east at Margaret and Blackstone Streets. There is a need to assess what options are viable and most likely to succeed.

## What should the market analysis include?

A market analysis is typically conducted at the scale of a community or subarea to analyze conditions and trends related to local employment and demographics, as well as residential, retail, industrial, office, medical/educational, and other types of development. Assessing supply, demand, and special conditions can help a community or group of communities define target markets, types of development, and the level of unmet demand in the study area.

Given Thornton's small size, isolated location, and local competition with strong commercial markets, the potential for commercial development would need to meet the characteristics of the local community instead of attracting customers from a larger area, such as small-scale convenience retail that serves the everyday needs of residents and people traveling through Thornton during their commute. But in light of the expected limitations of the local market, the market analysis should also look beyond Thornton to explore what broader benefits could be attained through partnership opportunities with nearby communities, whether through industry clusters identified through the South Suburban Economic Growth Initiative (SSEGI) or other economic development opportunities.



Specifically, the market analysis should answer the following questions:

- What are Thornton’s assets from a market perspective? How can the Village leverage the Thornton Quarry, which makes up considerable market value (\$22.9 million) and is a significant employer in the community, and the Cook County Forest Preserves and Thorn Creek Trail System to the east?
- What is the potential for retail, industrial, or residential development? Based on Thornton’s assets and challenges, what key sectors should the Village pursue? How much development could be supported and how does this compare to the amount of vacant and Village-owned land in the Downtown TIF district?
- How should the market potential inform Thornton’s housing strategy? Should the Village focus on employer-assisted housing based on regional submarkets? Or is there a need to increase the number of housing units (“rooftops”) to support localized retail opportunities?
- Do opportunities exist for Thornton to partner with nearby communities in order to meet economic development goals?
- What actions can the Village take regarding land use, reinvestment, and development? What partner organizations should Thornton work with? What are the potential funding and financing opportunities? What could be a realistic timeline for revitalization activities?

## Discuss opportunities with developers

Based on the results of the market analysis, the Village should seek guidance from developers on how to attract development that is in line with market realities as well as the goals of the community. Speaking with unbiased development experts can provide Thornton with a fresh perspective on how to market existing assets and candid advice on what is feasible from a development perspective. These conversations can also help the Village identify which sites should be marketed first and, in conjunction with the market analysis results, pinpoint the target market and potential financing and funding opportunities.

Through previous LTA projects, CMAP has worked in partnership with the Urban Land Institute (ULI) to convene Developer Discussion Panels to do just that. The panels consist of three to five development experts, who meet with Village staff and elected officials for a half day discussion to focus on what the community can do to attract future investment.

Panelists consist of ULI members from the development community. ULI is a membership-based, non-profit global research and education organization focusing on providing leadership for “the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide.” Their membership base allows ULI to have access to the widest range of development expertise in the region and to customize each discussion to the needs and goals of a specific community or study area. As unbiased experts, panelists are able to use their industry knowledge and experience to offer honest feedback that typically provides new perspectives and ideas for communities.

Currently, CMAP does not have the capacity to take on new Developer Discussion Panels. However, the Village should monitor future opportunities via the CMAP webpage and weekly newsletter and apply to be considered for a Developer Discussion Panel as opportunities arise.

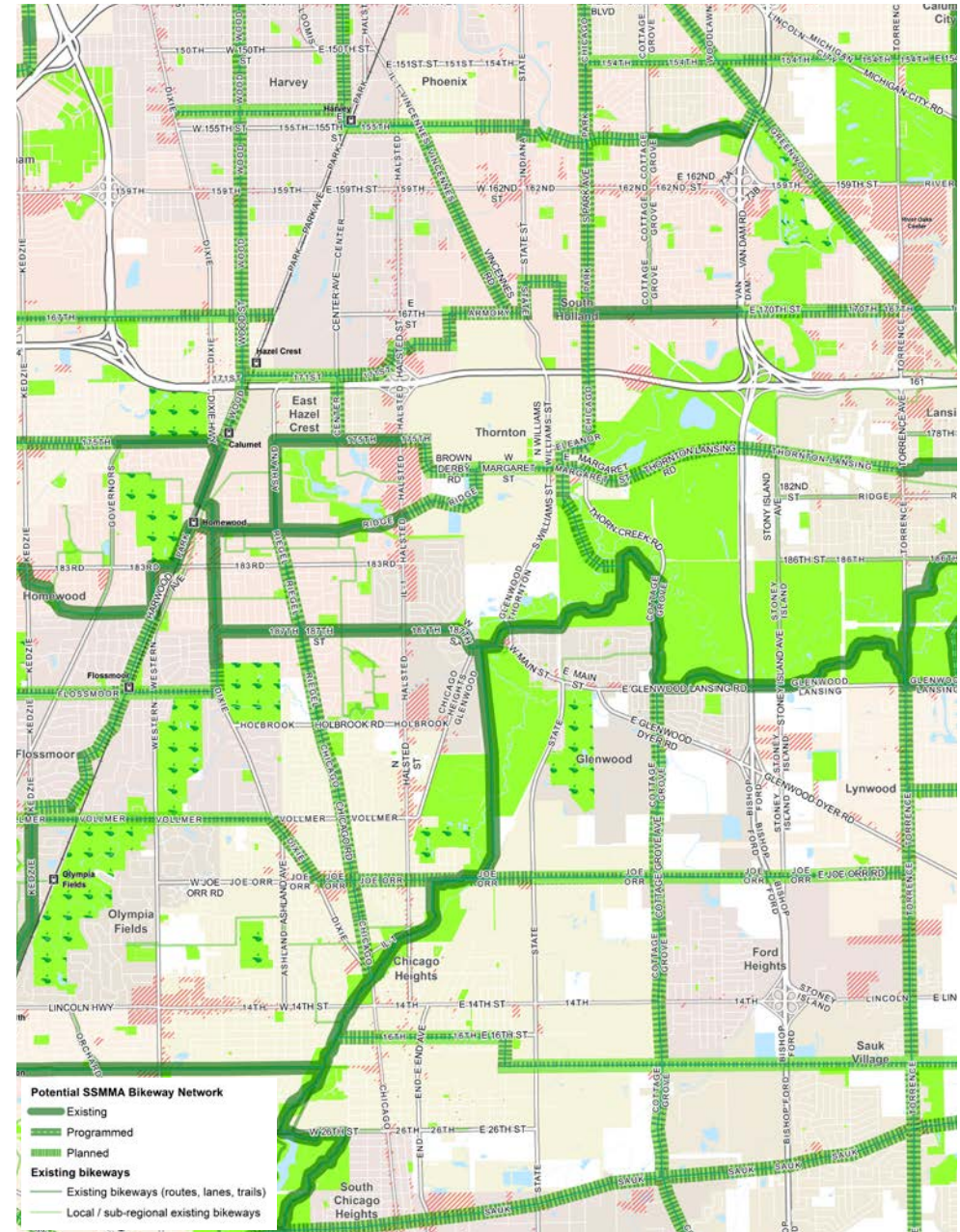
# Other Recommendations

## Improve access to Forest Preserves

The Forest Preserves located in and around Thornton are a tremendous asset to the Village, but better access is needed. Wampum Lake Woods—one of the most popular sites in the Cook County Forest Preserves—is located just one mile to the east of Village Hall. It is situated off of Thornton Lansing Road, a two-lane road under IDOT jurisdiction with shoulders that alternate between paved, gravel, and nonexistent, making it difficult and unsafe for people to reach Wampum Lake Woods by walking or biking. While IDOT recently resurfaced the road and upgraded pedestrian ramps, it has not been assessed for bikeway feasibility. Meanwhile, Thornton already has access to Brownell Woods, located to the southeast of the Village, via Hunter Street where there is a small parking lot and picnic grove. However, there is no trail system to enjoy the woods or access the Thorn Creek Trail from the Village.

The 2017 SSMMA Complete Streets and Trails Plan<sup>9</sup> identifies priority regional corridors for bicycle and pedestrian improvements in the south suburbs. Connections between Thornton and Wampum Lake Woods as well as between the Village and Sweet Woods/Thorn Creek Trail are noted in the plan's proposed bikeway network. As shown in Figure 19, the planned bikeway network utilizes Thornton Lansing Road to provide access to Wampum Lake Woods, and proposes an off-street trail through Brownell Woods that would connect to the Thorn Creek Trail System further south. These planned bikeways are also identified in the Northeastern Illinois Regional Greenways and Trails plan.

Figure 19. Proposed bikeway network (SSMMA Complete Streets and Trails Plan)



While these bikeways have been proposed in SSMMA’s plan, implementation would require coordination and funding—to determine feasibility and alignment, and then to design and construct. The end product could differ vastly from what is shown in the plan. For example, extending a trail through Brownell Woods to Sweet Woods would require crossing over Thorn Creek, not to mention wetlands and other sensitive habitats which require protection or mitigation. Assessing trail alignment alternatives may prove Thorn Creek Road to be the optimal route.

There are a variety of potential sources to fund on- or off-street bikeways and trails, including the Surface Transportation Program - Local (STP-L), Transportation Alternatives Program - Local (TAP-L), Motor Fuel Tax (MFT), Invest in Cook, and the Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program (ITEP). For both of these connections, the Village should work with SSMMA, FPDCC, and the relevant transportation agencies—Cook County Department of Transportation and Highways (DOTH) for Thorn Creek Road and IDOT for Thornton Lansing Road—to identify opportunities for cost-sharing and combining multiple funding sources.

**Table 24. Transportation fund sources for bicycle and pedestrian improvement relevant to Thornton**

Program	Purpose	Administrator	Local Match	Important Details
Invest in Cook	To fund improvements consistent with the five priorities of Connecting Cook County <sup>10</sup>	Cook County	Sliding scale based on need	Can be used as local match; preference given to multi-jurisdictional projects.
ITEP	To foster cultural, historic, aesthetic and environmental aspects of transportation infrastructure	IDOT	Minimum 20%, 50% for right-of-way	Phase I engineering is not funded.
MFT	To improve, maintain, repair or construct local roads and highways	IDOT	None	Can be used as local match.
STP-L	To fund transportation projects prioritized by subregional councils	South Council of Mayors	Minimum 20%	Project must be on a route classified as a collector or higher. Certain off-road facilities, such as regional trails, are also eligible.
TAP-L	To support non-motorized modes of transportation	CMAP	Minimum 20%	Phase I engineering is not funded, but a high need community may request phase I engineering funds. Priority goes to projects that implement the Regional Greenways and Trails Plan.

## Participate in housing initiatives in the south suburbs

Home vacancies and rental property upkeep were two issues frequently raised by community members. While the number of vacant residential properties is relatively low compared to surrounding communities, an increasing share of the occupants in Thornton's predominately single-family housing stock are renters, and the market has seen a rise in the number of buyers looking to turn homes into income properties—all of which may indicate a need for more oversight of single-family rental homes. At the same time, Thornton residents are more frequently struggling with housing costs, likely due to declines in income.

Thornton is not experiencing these issues in isolation. Many other south suburban communities are grappling with weak housing markets, vacancies, and rental property maintenance. By participating in local initiatives such as the Chicago Southland Housing and Community Development Collaborative (CSHCDC),<sup>11</sup> Cook County Land Bank Authority, and the South Suburban Land Development and Bank Authority, Thornton can join its neighbors to better understand broader trends and learn about the latest best practices in housing. Other south suburban communities have joined CSHCDC and used it to guide new local housing regulations or programs.

The CSHCDC, formed by SSMMA in 2009, seeks to address local and regional housing issues through cross-border collaboration. The Collaborative meets at 9:00 a.m. on the second Thursday of each month at SSMMA and is open to all communities served by the Association.

Thornton is able to participate with two land banks—the Cook County Land Bank Authority (CCLBA) and the South Suburban Land Bank and Development Authority (SSLBDA). Both land banks help build strategic partnerships with developers, community organizations, lenders, and local governments to bring tax- or bank-foreclosed properties back into productive use.

Land banks can help communities expand their capacity because of their ability. Thornton already has one residential property listed on CCLBA's Interactive Property Viewer website through the Homebuyer Program.<sup>12</sup> The Village should continue to leverage services offered by CCLBA and enter into an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) to join SSLBDA. The Village should reconvene a meeting with SSLBDA to clarify the process to join and answer any questions.

The following three sub-regional initiatives can also help Thornton address issues related to vacancy, rentals, and rehabilitation:

- The Metropolitan Mayors Caucus (MMC), a member of the CSHCDC, has developed two resources to help communities address vacant property challenges: Vacant Building Ordinances and the Vacant Property Toolkit.<sup>13</sup> With the help of these resources, the Village of South Chicago Heights developed its Vacant Property Ordinance to track and address vacant properties and foreclosures.<sup>14</sup>
- CMAP, MMC, and the Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC) developed 74 case studies on housing policy, development, program, or financing strategies. One case study from Mount Prospect outlines how the Village developed and administered an inspection program for rental properties.<sup>15</sup>
- Rehabilitation assistance programs could help preserve and improve Thornton's housing stock, addressing current neighborhood eyesores, getting properties ready for sale, and increasing community pride, all of which could make the Village's housing market more competitive. The Reverse Mortgage Assistance Program, provided through the Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA), is available to senior homeowners who are struggling to pay real estate taxes and facing foreclosure.<sup>16</sup> Organizations like the SSLBDA can help Thornton figure out how to access rehabilitation funds in coordination with other south suburban communities.

# Endnotes

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The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) is our region's comprehensive planning organization. The agency and its partners developed and are now implementing ON TO 2050, a new long-range plan to help the seven counties and 284 communities of northeastern Illinois implement strategies that address transportation, housing, economic development, open space, the environment, and other quality-of-life issues. See [www.cmap.illinois.gov](http://www.cmap.illinois.gov) for more information.