2019/2020 Local Technical Assistance and Community Planning Programs

Application Number: 54

Project Title: La Grange GIS/Data Assistance for Comprehensive Planning

Applicant: Village of La Grange

Project Description:

In 2005, the Village of La Grange adopted a Comprehensive Plan (https://www.villageoflagrange.com/DocumentCenter/Home/View/91) at a critical point in its evolution as a relatively built-out, mature suburb facing significant market pressures for new development. Now, 15 years later, the Village seeks to build on the momentum generated by the 2005 plan and create a new comprehensive plan that addresses new market realities impacting the Village’s transit-oriented development (TOD) areas, traditional retail districts, and residential neighborhoods, among other topics.

TOD: Approximately 10% of the Village’s total land area and 78% of the Village’s commercially zoned property is located within the transit-oriented BNSF Railroad Corridor Subarea, as identified in the 2005 Comprehensive Plan. Since 2005, approximately 170,500 square feet of new construction and 423 dwelling units have been created in the BNSF Subarea. By updating the plan, the Village seeks to evaluate the current subarea boundaries, address current market dynamics, and poised to take advantage of future redevelopment opportunities on the West End, which has seen no new development since 2005.

More than 30% of the Village is located within walking distance of existing Pace routes 302, 330, and a future Pace Pulse service. These potential TOD areas were not specifically addressed by the 2005 plan, but the Village seeks to address them in a new plan.

Changing Retail Trends: In 2017 the Village commissioned a retail market assessment to evaluate the performance of La Grange’s downtown (https://www.villageoflagrange.com/DocumentCenter/View/1930). Although La Grange currently fares well, the assessment noted changing trends in the retail industry that will affect all suburban communities with traditional downtowns. As part of the new comprehensive plan, La Grange seeks to develop a model for how downtowns can best plan for these trends, including the impacts of online retail sales, greater growth of food service in retail districts, and an increasing need for retailers to offer experiences that may not be aligned with traditional retail zoning requirements.

Residential Infill Development: Village has seen a 20% increase in infill residential development in the last five years. These reinvestments in residential neighborhoods have amplified community conversations related to bulk standards, local flooding issues, how to meet market demands while preserving older housing stock, how to accommodate more diverse housing types, and how to prepare for the conversion of institutional lands to residential use. To facilitate this conversation, the Village wishes to employ planimetric data built on LiDAR data recently collected by Cook County and partners. This data will allow the Village to evaluate various development scenarios’ impacts on community aesthetics, diversity of housing types, and resilient stormwater planning.

A new comprehensive plan will provide an opportunity for all stakeholders to engage in discussions about current conditions and reevaluate goals for the future, and to prepare a plan that aligns with the ON TO 2050 principles and the goals of RTA’s Invest in Transit strategic plan. The Village is seeking assistance with all aspects of plan development, including public outreach and data collection and has budgeted to provide the necessary local match.

A vibrant village with a warm, inviting ambiance, La Grange feels unexpected. Just 13 miles west of Chicago, La Grange appeals to those seeking a village with a distinct character, yet close to the city.

The Village is a walkable community that occupies a land area of approximately two and a half square miles and has a population density of 24.51 persons per acre. Although relatively small (the 2016 American Community Survey estimated population is 15,688), La Grange’s businesses serve many nearby communities that lack a traditional retail district, making downtown La Grange a destination in the western suburbs. This economic activity is vital to the Village’s tax base, since La Grange does not have significant areas of industrial or office properties, or large suburban style shopping centers.

The Village benefits from excellent transportation options, with La Grange Road (US Hwy 45) and Ogden Avenue (US Hwy 34) intersecting at the northern edge of downtown La Grange. The Village is served by two Metra commuter stations and two Pace Routes within its boundaries. The La Grange Road Metra station, located in the heart of downtown, is among the top 10% most heavily utilized suburban Metra stations (ranked 23rd of 233 by Metra in 2018). La Grange’s charming West End (a second commercial area a half mile west of La Grange Rd.) is located adjacent to the Stone Avenue Metra station, which also ranks above average for passenger activity.

La Grange is also known for its historic residential neighborhoods and is home to a national register historic district. However, La Grange features a variety of architectural styles and housing types and continues to see new development in all neighborhoods. A map of the Village of La Grange is located on the village website (http://www.villageoflagrange.com/DocumentCenter/View/1628).

As a mature community, La Grange was largely developed before modern stormwater management best practices and is served by a combined sewer system. The Village has taken steps to improve stormwater management through local regulations and storm sewer construction but surface ponding, basement flooding, and sewer backups on residential properties remain a persistent issue. CMAP ranks La Grange’s Urban Flood Susceptibility Index as a nine.

Project Location: Village of La Grange