

Morton Grove eyes new industrial development

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In the past decade Morton Grove has lost 3,555 jobs, with well over half of those in manufacturing and wholesale industries.

Despite that, the village has potential for additional industrial development, particularly in a large area in the southern part of the village.

Those are among the findings in a draft existing conditions report, the first section of an industrial areas plan being developed for the village. The plan is aimed at guiding the village in coming years in its efforts to attract and keep

industries and the jobs that come with them.

The work is being done through a grant awarded to the village by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP). CMAP held a series of meetings with area officials and business people last year and recently presented the draft existing conditions report to the Morton Grove Plan Commission, which is overseeing the project for the village.

The final plan is expected to provide an overall vision for the two main industrial areas of the village, provide recommendations for use of the land and offer ideas for creating partnerships between the village and local industries.

In addition, it will look at ways for Morton Grove to compete with other towns in the area, financial incentives to attract industry and other factors such as training for workers and transportation services.

The plan is expected to take about a year to complete.

Village Administrator Ryan Horne said the study of industry will serve as a "sub-area plan" to be incorporated into an upcoming update of the village's overall comprehensive plan. The village is in the very early stages of the comprehensive plan update.

The previous update, adopted in 1999, took almost two years to complete.

Nancy Radzevich, the village's community and economic development director, said that while the comprehensive plan provides an overall, general look at development in the village, the industrial study will offer more specific ideas and recommendations.

"A comprehensive plan is not a be all, end all," she said. "It's a guiding document. It's a large-scale plan."

Radzevich this is a good time for the village to update the comprehensive plan and perform the industrial study.

"The economy has changed a lot," she said.

The plan will look at the two main industrial areas in Morton Grove. The 19-acre northern industrial area consists of three parcels south and east of Waukegan Road that are owned and occupied by Avon Products, Inc.

The 204-acre southern industrial area is generally bounded by Main Street to the north, the southern

The 231-acre southern industrial area is generally bounded by Ivaan Street to the north, the southern municipal boundary and Oakton Street to the south, the Cook County Forest Preserve to the west and Austin Avenue to the east.

Several companies are located within Morton Grove's industrial areas, including manufacturers such as John Crane, Xylem, Morton Grove Pharmaceuticals and TSI Accessory Group, as well as the corporate office of the Land of Nod and the big-box retailer Menard's.

The existing conditions report cites a loss of jobs in the village over the past decade, something that reflects the overall problems in the economy.

The draft report says that the village's net loss of 3,555 jobs can be attributed to job losses in almost every field other than health care, including real estate and rental leasing and retail trade.

One of the greatest employment losses in Morton Grove has been in manufacturing and wholesale industries, which lost 2,741 or 44 percent of their workers in the past decade.

But Morton Grove is not alone in this, according to the draft report.

"The overall decline of businesses and employment in manufacturing is not too surprising, given regional and national trends in the manufacturing industry," the report said.

Between 2000 and 2010, Illinois lost about 20 percent of its manufacturing jobs and Cook County lost more than a 25 percent of its manufacturing jobs, according to the draft report.

But the report cites attributes that could make Morton Grove attractive to industry.

Oakton Community College provides training in manufacturing jobs that are in Morton Grove.

According to the report, the village also offers a good image, "responsive" village officials and good access to highways and other transportation services such as the Metra station.

Also, rents and leases are affordable and the report notes that industrial uses are contained and do not infringe on other areas such as residential property.

The 1999 Comprehensive Plan led to similar sub-area plans such as studies of the Lehigh/Ferris area and Dempster Street commercial corridor.

Those resulted in creation of a tax increment financing district, new developments and improvements to Dempster.