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Traffic planning takes center stage in Plainfield

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As Plainfield officials continue to weigh the options on Route 59, a grant has been secured to update the village's comprehensive transportation plan.

The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning has given the village \$120,000 to fund updates in the plan, blending new data with the existing transportation proposal.



The work will be handled by the engineering firm of Baxter & Woodman of Crystal Lake, as well as Teska Associates of Evanston. Village trustees this week awarded a \$120,000 contract to the companies to complete the updates. The plan is to merge several previous studies and the village's comprehensive plan into a single document, village officials said.

Village officials said one focus of the work will be land use in the community and consultants will be taking a closer look at the downtown sector, the development of which has been up for recent discussion.

Village trustees, preservationists and planners all have voiced opinions on the future of the downtown Route 59 corridor in particular, debating what kinds of business should be allowed there and the process for their approval. Traffic issues have been the primary area of concern in those discussions.

A series of public meetings will allow residents to share feedback and concerns, and an interactive project website is in the works, according to the engineers.

The first public meeting is scheduled to take place Aug. 21. Additional public meetings are scheduled for Nov. 14 and March 20, 2013. The entire project must be completed by June 2013, as stipulated in the grant allocation.

Residents also will have an opportunity to voice their opinions about the Route 59 corridor online, as the village begins seeking input through both public meetings and social media

Chicago-based Civic Artworks will take the lead on the social media side. Residents will be able to post suggestions for the area, and other residents can offer their support. Once an idea garners enough support from other community members, it becomes part of a drafted plan based on community feedback.

The process will most likely begin in Early September, and is not expected to exceed \$5,000.

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Tobacco licensing

In other Village news, officials this week approved an ordinance that will require a more extensive registration process for retailers who wish to sell tobacco products in town.

Licensing fees to sell the products have been increased from \$100 to \$250, and only U.S. citizens without federal or state convictions may apply. The ordinance applies to the sale of all tobacco-related products, including cigarette papers, pipes and rolling machines.

Playa Vista

Playa Vista, a planned unit subdivision on the village's west end, has received approval to change its home offerings to better compete in the current market.

The community, designed for older adults, broke ground on its project in 2007 and struggled almost immediately when the housing market collapsed. To date, Playa Vista has sold just one home. The developer, Hartz Homes, sought revisions to its plans that would reduce the cost of each home, placing them in a more affordable and marketable price range for the consumer.

Village planner Michael Garrigan has said the changes to such things as roof pitch and building materials will allow Hartz to cut down on costs while keeping the previously approved design consistent.