

Village of Elburn

Strategic Plan and Goal Development 2021-22

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NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

Center for
Governmental Studies

Outreach, Engagement and Regional Development



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Executive Summary

Strategic planning helps to guide an organization’s future more effectively than making decisions issue by issue. The Village of Elburn (“the Village”) engaged the Northern Illinois University Center for Governmental Studies (NIU-CGS) to facilitate a strategic planning workshop with Board and senior staff members in December of 2021 to update the Village’s strategic plan. Prior to the workshop, five focus groups were conducted using a mix of in-person and virtual sessions in November 2021 with front-line staff (conducted in-person), residents, intergovernmental/civic organizations, and the Village’s appointed Boards and Commissions to gather input on the Village’s future vision and goals.

With the focus groups as a starting point for discussions, the 2021 strategic planning workshop provided a positive atmosphere for the Board and senior staff members to re-visit the accomplishments and priorities from the previous plan. It also allowed time to collaboratively review and update the Board’s visions for the future, develop new and/or revised strategic goals, and explore where the Village wants to go as an organization in the next few years.

Strategic Goals

After a series of environmental scanning discussions regarding the Village’s visions for the future, as well as current strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges, participants were asked to identify short-and long-term goals. Upon completion of an updated list of goals, participants were then asked to classify each goal according to a matrix model of time and complexity. Agreed upon criteria were used to classify a goal as short- or long-term and as complex or routine (please see full report for defined criteria).

After the strategic planning workshop, the Village Board was asked to delineate, via an online ranking exercise, which goals should be given the highest priority. In total, the group developed six short-term routine goals, eight short-term complex goals, three long-term routine goals, and eight long-term complex goals. The *top three goals* from each category are offered as a process “snapshot” representing the most important strategic goals or priority areas for the Board and staff to address in the months and years ahead (see below). For a full description of all the strategic goals developed, discussed, and ranked, please refer to the full report.

Short-term Routine

- Implement the results of the Village-wide staffing plan ensuring adequate staffing levels to meet future demands with funding sources identified.
- Identify strategies for wastewater conveyance from the north side to enhance capacity allowing for development of the north side of the Village.
- Establish a staff position dedicated to promoting and managing the Village’s economic development strategies and activities.

Short-term Complex

- Develop an infrastructure plan that identifies strategies to improve the safety of Rt. 47, enhances collaboration with the state, and aligns with the Elburn Connects study.
- Identify funding sources to implement the results of the completed inflow and infiltration (I&I) analysis.
- Identify strategies to enhance community connectivity that align with the results from the Elburn Connects study (e.g., Metra to downtown, bike paths, sidewalks, etc.).

Long-term Routine

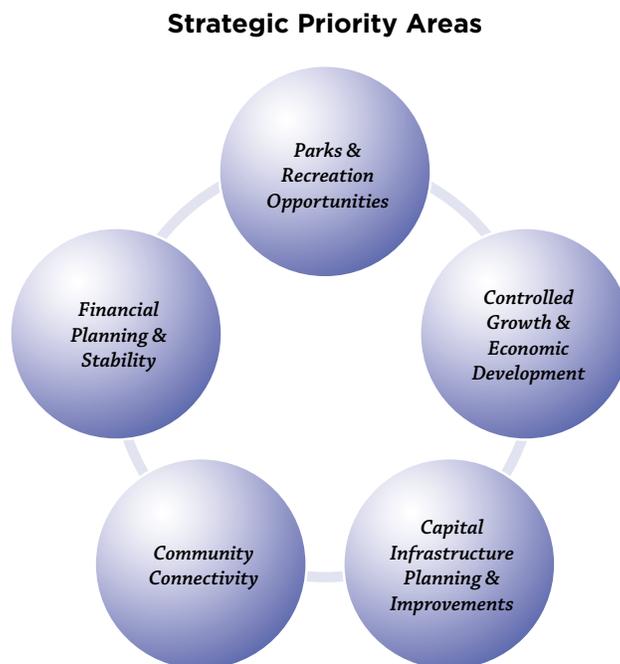
- Continue to implement the Village’s Capital Improvement Plan to have quality and consistent infrastructure across the community (e.g., consistent streetscaping, street lighting, etc.) and to improve the overall beautification of the community.
- Improve the Village’s economic position and attract developers/businesses by having an accurately and regularly updated inventory of the Village’s vacancies, land parcels, zoning regulations, etc.
- Explore establishing police department programs, such as a cadet program, to help with staff recruitment/retention, and a K-9 program.

Long-term Complex

- Implement the results from the I&I analysis.
- Implement the Water System Master Plan.
- Prepare for the wastewater treatment expansion, including determining the type of treatment systems to be used and funding sources.

Strategic Priorities

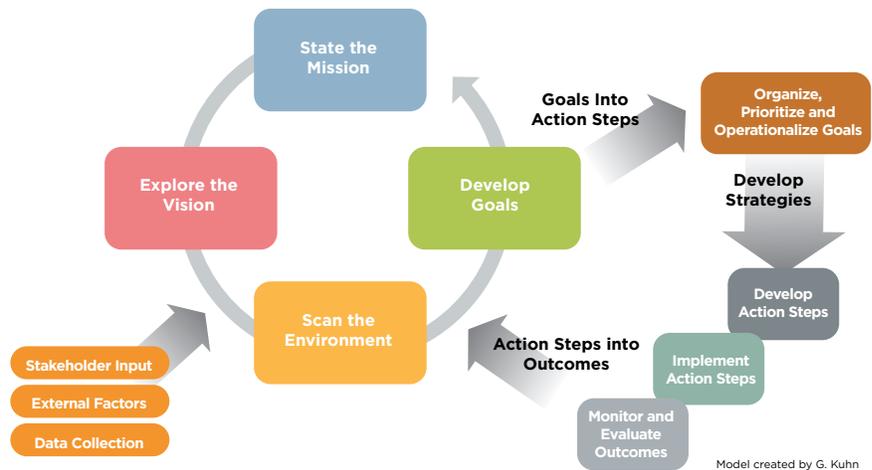
Several priority areas were identified as an outcome of the strategic planning process, and they highlight activities and initiatives that the Village should focus on in both the short- and long-term. The key strategic priority areas were similar from the 2017 to the 2021 Strategic Plan with slight modifications. The strategic priority areas identified during the process (in no particular order) are illustrated below.



Introduction

As an organization, the Village has followed a regular process of establishing goals for the Village government and the community it serves. The Board and senior staff gathered again in 2021 to review the progress made and continue to move forward towards the future vision expressed for the Village of Elburn. As part of the 2021 process, the Board and senior staff worked collaboratively to review the previous Strategic Plan’s outcomes and results and evaluate the current operating environment to establish strategic goals to guide the Village over the next 3-5 years. As was discussed during the workshop, executive-level retreats and strategic planning sessions are a staple of good governance and leadership for progressive organizations. The value of such processes continues to be recognized by policymaking boards and executive staff in both private and public organizations. As an organization, the Village of Elburn has now placed itself among the special class of organizations that engage in formalized strategic planning and goal setting (Figure 1). Due to its prior experience with strategic planning, the Village has seen the benefits of this strategic approach to guiding the Village’s future. The 2021 workshop provided another positive environment to set aside time to methodically, *strategically*, determine where the Village wants to go as an organization, a community, and a government. This important undertaking will work again to serve the Village’s residents, partners, and stakeholders well into the coming years.

Figure 1. Strategic Planning Model*



*Model generally represents the steps that are taken for this type of initiative.

As was shared with the Board and senior staff members at the conclusion of the workshop session, the Village should resist the temptation to rearrange priorities as the fiscal year moves along. It is important to adhere to the results of the Board’s and senior staff members’ efforts throughout this process and the Village’s budgeting process.

Keep in mind that the judicious use of the Village’s limited resources (including financial resources and professional staff time) will be the key to good results. These high standards can place a strain on the organization, as excellence requires adequate staff time, expertise, and resources. In the end, quality policies and quality implementation equate to tough choices in setting priorities and in allocating resources. Only a limited number of goals and objectives can be effectively managed and implemented at any given time. In a very realistic sense, clear and stable priorities must be maintained if the Village desires to stretch its resources as far as they can go.

Pre-Workshop:

Taking Stock, Stakeholder Engagement Process

Stakeholder engagement is an important pre-workshop component designed to help ground the environmental scanning portion of the process. Listening is vital to planning and these steps help the organization “take stock” and understand current Village policies and operational perspectives, perceptions, and preferences. In November 2021, four focus groups were conducted virtually with the Village’s residents, intergovernmental/civic organizations, business community, and appointed Boards and Commissions, along with one in-person focus group conducted with the Village’s front-line staff.

The focus group sessions were designed to serve as a primer for the strategic planning process. The information presented next in summation was shared at the workshops and added *exploratory* and *thematic information* for the Board and Senior Leadership Team to consider. As a result of the focus group sessions’ responses and feedback, the facilitators identified four overarching themes presented (in no particular order) in Figure 2. The themes represent important topic areas that the Village leadership and Board were asked to consider as they went through the workshop exercises and developed short- and long-term goals. Therefore, it is not unusual to see alignment between the focus group themes and the priority areas identified as part of the entirety of the process. Please see the [Appendix](#) for a full summary of all focus group questions and aggregated responses for each theme.

Figure 2. Aggregated Focus Group Identified Themes



Outline Of Workshop :

Leadership Exercises and Discussion Sessions

All the discussion sessions used in the planning effort employed formats that were highly participative and interactive. The process was informed by the environmental scanning components and the identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges for the Village. The workshop facilitators utilized a group discussion approach called ‘Nominal Group Technique’ where the facilitator assured participants had equal opportunities to speak and share opinions. During the workshop sessions, individuals had the opportunity to generate and share their ideas, as well as participate in group activities allowing them to weigh alternatives and refine their thinking through dialogue. As ideas were shared and debated, the group worked steadily toward a consensus regarding organizational values, purpose, future directions, and priorities.

Introduction/Icebreaker Exercise

Describing The Village and Future Visioning

Participants engaged in introductory/ice breaker exercises designed to stimulate conversation by describing the Village in 10 words or less. The Board and senior staff also participated in a visioning exercise to describe the desired future direction of the Village by answering the following question: “In 10-15 years when I return to the Village of Elburn, what do I hope to see, or think I will see with regard to the Village and its activities?” Participants were asked to think about their ideas ahead of time and then be ready to share them with the group during the first session of the workshop. This was a brainstorming exercise—all ideas about the Village’s future were encouraged and shared. No evaluative or judgmental debate was permitted during this session. Below is a summary of those answers.

Words used to describe the Village of Elburn



- Up and coming, growing town with a small-town feel.
- Growing, farming community at the end of the Metra West line and 15 miles east of DeKalb.
- Beautiful small town filled with awesome volunteers.
- Small but growing, quiet, far west Chicago community.
- New gateway to the west – a lot of great things coming.
- Truly one of a kind.
- Amazing small town with an amazing opportunity to grow because it’s going to grow.
- Sense of a small town – want to maintain by having strategic/balanced growth and development – retain sense of community.
- Small, community-based, surrounded by cornfields, a lot of growth potential (e.g., St. Charles 30 years ago).
- Small town surrounded by cornfields, open space, and forest preserves, calming environment.
- Small, managed growth, active community involvement, good sense of community.
- Quaint small town and it’s much more than Reams.
- Small, rural town, positive growth, growing village with a rural background with a bright future.
- Rural happening town, Chicago suburb going through cultural change.
- Growing village with the goal of maintaining a small-town charm.

Visions of the Future

Visions of the Future

Maintain rustic downtown feel, trains still going, storefronts, housing.

Progressive, small, walkable town maintaining small town charm with opportunities to work, live, and play. Have more destination attractions.

Be on the other side of being described as a small town – still charming but have the tax base to offer work/life balance – be the place people want to live.

Elburn Station built out. Connectivity between the Metra and downtown.

Infrastructure and roads are top notch, consistent street lighting, streetscape, etc., and have the funding to do so. Improved community beautification.

Downtown reach its full potential, vibrant/mixed-use along Route 38 without hurting the downtown – help make Elburn a destination.

Don't want to see franchises across the community – more local/ Mom & Pop shops, pedestrian-friendly downtown, consistent downtown storefronts, cobblestone streets, safe.

Still recognize it as Elburn, sense of community, more mass downtown but not lose the charm, cohesive growth, more diversified tax base between residential, commercial, and industrial.

Balanced long-term growth and planning – commercial development and maintaining the uniqueness of Elburn. Have places to gather – build/keep sense of community. Keep infrastructure up-to-date, maintain history.

Impact of four lane expansion of Route 47 on the community – what will this look like? Can the Village capitalize on the increase in traffic through the Village?

Stays fiscally responsible to continue to meet infrastructure needs, maintain community pride.

Environmental Scanning Part I

Surrender or Lead

Participants were introduced to a leadership exercise entitled “Surrender or Lead.” Participants were asked, in small groups, to respond to a series of structured questions designed to initiate discussion and reveal hopes, perspectives, challenges, opportunities and possible barriers based on the collective view of each participant’s group. The group’s responses were recorded and are reported below. The **bolded** and underlined sections are key phrases that the group provided in response to the exercise’s open-ended questions and prompts.

Group #1

1. We want a **vibrant downtown**, but **need to manage pedestrian and vehicular conflicts**.
2. The two most important things to focus on are **infrastructure** and **economic growth** because **they are the background of diverse and successful community**.
3. If it weren't for a **supportive community**, **Elburn would not be the Village we are today**.
4. We need to finally **plan and have financial resources to complete connectivity (walkable, bikeable)**.
5. **Appropriate staffing and retention of personnel** will have the biggest impact on the Village in the coming 2-3 years.

Group #2

1. We want to **grow**, but **with good planning**.
2. The two most important things to focus on are **infrastructure** and **revenue** because **it all costs money and we can't do it all!**
3. If it weren't for **money**, we would **have it all done already**.
4. We need to finally **commit to a plan and continue to update as needed**.
5. **The economy** will have the biggest impact on the Village in the coming 2-3 years.

Group #3

1. We want to **grow**, but **smartly**.
2. The two most important things to focus on are **infrastructure** and **growth** because **they help generate revenue**.
3. If it weren't for **lack of diversified revenue sources**, we would **offer more services**.
4. We need to finally **build a plan/strategy to address Route 47**.
5. **Residential growth** will have the biggest impact on the Village in the coming 2-3 years.

Environmental Scanning Part II

Large Group S.W.O.C. Analysis

The next step of the strategic planning workshop involved reviewing and accounting for the internal and external factors present in the environment that can potentially influence the success of the Village, both negatively and positively. Given the exploratory statements and challenges raised in the Surrender or Lead exercise, participants were then asked to identify what constraints and practical difficulties are likely to be encountered that will make it challenging to achieve the desired future state. These elements included both internal and external factors, conditions, trends, regulations, agencies, resources, etc. Furthermore, participants were asked to identify the organization's **strengths (S)** and **weaknesses (W)**. In what areas does the Village regularly excel, and in what areas are there difficulties or shortcomings in terms of expertise, resources, training, etc.? What **opportunities (O)** are on the horizon that can be used to the Village's advantage? Conversely, what trends or **challenges (C)** lie ahead that would be obstacles or hindrances? Those answers are captured next.

S.W.O.C. EXERCISE (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Challenges)

Internal

| STRENGTHS | WEAKNESSES |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involved residents - volunteers, Board members • Department heads and elected officials work well together • Location — transportation hub — Rt. 47, I-88, Metra • Fiber available in Elburn - Improved Internet speeds, attractive to residents/businesses • Lion’s Park • Forest preserve proximity/green space • Schools • Fiscally responsible • Great staff • Downtown — strong businesses | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate need for more staff (e.g., communications manager) • Aging infrastructure — roads, sewer, etc. • Police facilities • Economic competitiveness — attracting developers • Current population not large enough for all developments • Diverse, complementary businesses that benefit others (e.g., medical) • Lack of hotels, Airbnb, etc., in immediate area • Availability of senior level housing (55+) • Limited recreation availability for all ages/ interests • Physical connectivity of all of Elburn • Large school district — long bus routes, early busing • Overall communications plan not yet implemented — social media, other forms of communication |

External

| OPPORTUNITIES | CHALLENGES |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Police facility • Location of Elburn • Working with IDOT — interchange options • Impact of pandemic — more people work from home • Recruit high quality employment (e.g., doctor’s office, medical campus) to support the community • A conference/convention center to draw people in • Planned senior housing (e.g., Step program, friendly villages) • More recreation opportunities for all ages and interests • Potential park district or group • Community connectivity and walkability • Continue to update Village’s website to stay engaged and inform residents • Develop a communications plan • Community Center • Downtown development • Regional collaboration • Light industrial development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding/new revenue sources • Location of Elburn • State of Illinois — unfunded/unknown mandates • Preparing for upcoming growth (e.g., staffing) • Development and usage of the Metra lot • Community Center — privately held • Staff retention/turnover due to compensation and upward mobility — competitive compensation/surrounding communities • Downtown development |

Nominal Group Goal Identification

With the preceding workshop sessions as a sound foundation for goal setting, the final workshop session was a healthy group discussion of goals and/or action items needed to achieve the future visions as expressed by the group. Agreed upon criteria were used to classify a goal as short- or long-term. The purpose of the exercise is to group goals of roughly the same type together so when prioritization occurs, the participants can avoid the problem of comparing “apples to oranges.”

The agreed upon criteria used for classifying goals as either short- or long-term involved the following: **Short-term goals** were those goals that could or should be completed or substantially underway in the next one to three years. **Long-term goals** were those goals that could or should be completed or substantially underway within a three- to eight-year timeframe. **Complex goals** were goals that required extraordinary resources, specialists, funding, or the agreement of outside organizations or agencies. **Routine goals**, although not necessarily simple, were goals that could be accomplished upon unilateral decision of the Board and within present budget streams or with minor revenue enhancements or reallocations.

To begin the process, participants returned to their Surrender or Lead groups. Each member was allotted time to highlight the three or four most important policy and program goals they thought the Village should accomplish in the next one to three years as well as establish long-term goals focused on a three to eight-year time frame. The groups then shared their short- and long-term goals with the larger group for feedback and discussion. Goals that participants developed could be highly specific or general.

Open Group Discussion and Consolidation of Goals

This final phase of the discussion served as the forum for Board and staff members to discuss, evaluate and debate the ideas and goals offered by each participant in the previous sessions. Participants were asked to give their opinions, evaluations, and judgments of the worthiness and value of different policy objectives. Participants were also asked to confirm each goal as short- or long-term, especially where similar goals were developed.

Post-Workshop:

Goal Prioritization and Board Ranking Exercise

After the workshop, each Board member was asked to delineate, via an online ranking exercise, which goals should be given the highest priority. The Board was provided an online ranking tool where point values were assigned to each goal in each quadrant of the time and complexity matrix by individuals. The calculation of goal prioritization consisted of “forced ranking” where the ranking of each identified goal is calculated as the average of the rankings given by all participants. For example, if a goal was given the scores of 2, 5, 6, 6, 1, 2 and 3, the average total would be 3.57. **The lower the score, the higher the priority.** Figure 3 presents the order of priority by the average score. Again, the average totals were based on the individual ratings provided by the Board.

Figure 3. Strategic Goals - Group Average

| Short-term Routine Goals | Group Average |
|---|---------------|
| Implement the results of the Village-wide staffing plan ensuring adequate staffing levels to meet future demands with funding sources identified. | 2.3 |
| Identify strategies for wastewater conveyance from the north side to enhance capacity allowing for development of the north side of the Village. | 2.4 |
| Establish a staff position dedicated to promoting and managing the Village’s economic development strategies and activities. | 3.3 |
| Explore the parks and recreation needs of the community including the role of the Village. | 4.0 |
| Develop and implement a Village-wide communication plan with established policies and responsibilities. | 4.4 |
| Develop and implement a Village-wide succession plan. | 4.6 |
| Short-Term Complex Goals | Group Average |
| Develop an infrastructure plan that identifies strategies to improve the safety of Rt. 47, enhances collaboration with the state, and aligns with the Elburn Connects study. | 2.3 |
| -Consider the implication of Rt. 47, Anderson Road, and Rt. 38 being truck routes. | 2.9 |
| Identify funding sources to implement the results of the completed inflow and infiltration (I&I) analysis. | 3.1 |
| Identify strategies to enhance community connectivity that align with the results from the Elburn Connects study (e.g., Metra to downtown, bike paths, sidewalks, etc.). | 3.3 |
| Identify funding sources and strategies for a standalone police facility to meet the growing needs of the community and staff. | 3.7 |
| Develop a plan to meet the lead service line unfunded state mandate. | 3.9 |
| Undertake a comprehensive review of the Village’s current technology infrastructure and identify areas of improvement, needs, gaps, and possible efficiencies that can be gained. | 5.0 |
| Encourage the attainment of individual certifications within the police department to help with cost savings, traffic control, special events, etc. | 7.0 |
| Establish an overall Village-wide employee wellness program with a focus on mental health services (e.g., reinforce the health benefits of the EAP programs). | 7.1 |

| Long-term Routine Goals | Group Average |
|---|---------------|
| Continue to implement the Village’s Capital Improvement Plan to have quality and consistent infrastructure across the community (e.g., consistent streetscaping, street lighting, etc.) and to improve the overall beautification of the community. | 1.6 |
| Improve the Village’s economic position and attract developers/businesses by having an accurately and regularly updated inventory of the Village’s vacancies, land parcels, zoning regulations, etc. | 1.9 |
| Explore establishing police department programs, such as a cadet program, to help with staff recruitment/retention, and a K-9 program | 2.6 |
| Long-term Complex Goals | Group Average |
| Implement the results from the I&I analysis. | 2.4 |
| Implement the Water System Master Plan. | 2.9 |
| Prepare for the wastewater treatment expansion, including identifying the type of treatment systems to be used and funding sources. | 4.3 |
| Implement the recommendations of the completed space needs analyses for the Police and Public Works departments. | 4.4 |
| Develop and implement a marketing plan that leverages residential growth to promote and attract commercial and industrial development. | 5.0 |
| Implement the Elburn Connects transit-oriented development (TOD) study results. | 5.7 |
| Explore establishing a regional park district to leverage resources and enhance service options for all ages and interests. | 6.3 |
| Undertake a facility/space needs assessment/evaluation for Village Hall specifically Admin/Finance/Building & Zoning. | 6.6 |
| Continue to improve the role and expectations of the Village’s ad hoc historical committee. | 7.4 |

The following illustration presents the dashboard of *high, medium, and low* priority levels for the short- and long-term strategic goals based on the consensus ranking exercise conducted by the Board (Figure 4). The goal priority dashboard demonstrates the most important strategic goals, tasks, and objectives for the Board and staff to address in the months and years ahead.

Figure 4. Strategic Goals - Priority Dashboard

| Short-term Routine Goals | Priority Level |
|---|----------------|
| Implement the results of the Village-wide staffing plan ensuring adequate staffing levels to meet future demands with funding sources identified. | High |
| Identify strategies for wastewater conveyance from the north side to enhance capacity allowing for development of the north side of the Village. | High |
| Establish a position staff dedicated to promoting and managing the Village’s economic development strategies and activities. | Medium |
| Explore the parks and recreation needs of the community including the role of the Village. | Medium |
| Develop and implement a Village-wide communication plan with established policies and responsibilities. | Low |
| Develop and implement a Village-wide succession plan. | Low |

| Short-term Complex Goals | Priority Level |
|--|----------------|
| Develop an infrastructure plan that identifies strategies to improve the safety of Rt. 47, enhances collaboration with the state, and aligns with the Elburn Connects study. - Consider the implication of Rt. 47, Anderson Road, and Rt. 38 being truck routes. | High |
| Identify funding sources to implement the results of the completed inflow and infiltration (I&I) analysis. | High |
| Identify strategies to enhance community connectivity that align with the results from the Elburn Connects study (e.g., Metra to downtown, bike paths, sidewalks, etc.). | High |
| Identify funding sources and strategies for a standalone police facility to meet the growing needs of the community and staff. | Medium |
| Develop a plan to meet the lead service line unfunded state mandate. | Medium |
| Undertake a comprehensive review of the Village’s current technology infrastructure and identify areas of improvement, needs, gaps, and possible efficiencies that can be gained. | Low |
| Encourage the attainment of individual certifications within the police department to help with cost savings, traffic control, special events, etc. | Low |
| Establish an overall Village-wide employee wellness program with a focus on mental health services (e.g., reinforce the health benefits of the EAP programs). | Low |

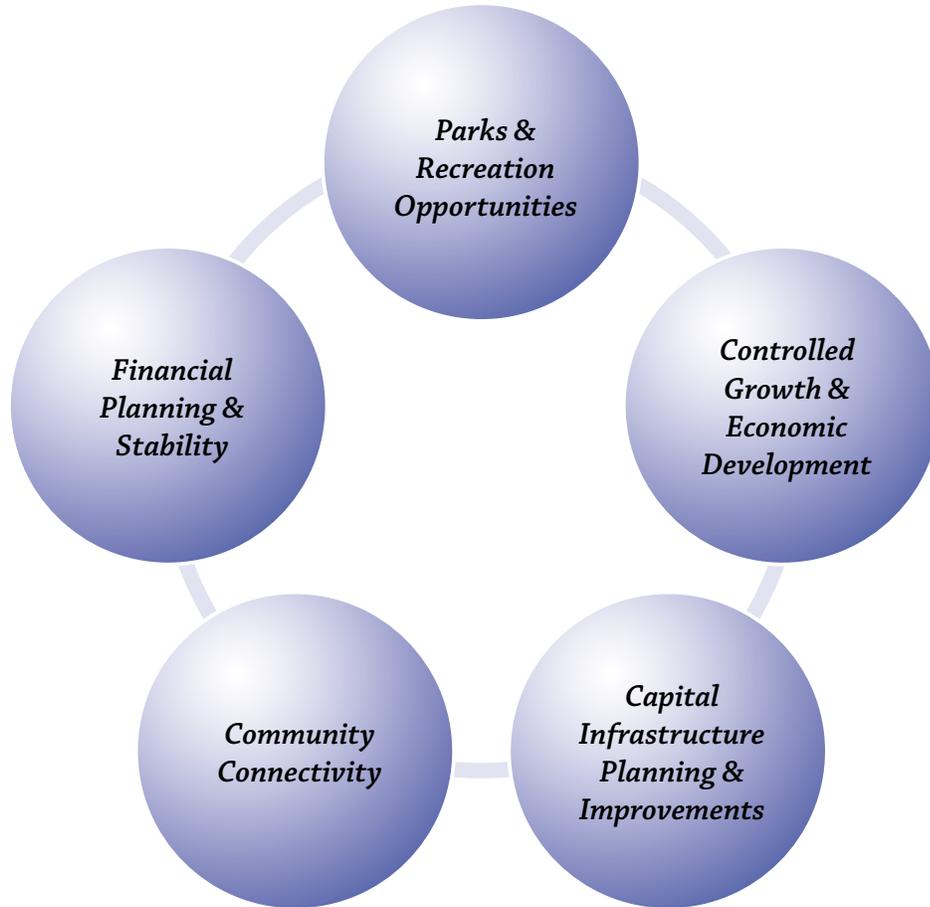
| Long-term Routine Goals | Priority Level |
|---|----------------|
| Continue to implement the Village’s Capital Improvement Plan to have quality and consistent infrastructure across the community (e.g., consistent streetscaping, street lighting, etc.) and to improve the overall beautification of the community. | High |
| Improve the Village’s economic position and attract developers/businesses by having an accurately and regularly updated inventory of the Village’s vacancies, land parcels, zoning regulations, etc. | High |
| Explore establishing police department programs, such as a cadet program, to help with staff recruitment/retention, and a K-9 program | Medium |

| Long-term Complex Goals | Priority Level |
|--|----------------|
| Implement the results from the I&I analysis. | High |
| Implement the Water System Master Plan. | High |
| Prepare for the wastewater treatment expansion, including identifying the type of treatment systems to be used and funding sources. | Medium |
| Implement the recommendations of the completed space needs analyses for the Police and Public Works departments. | Medium |
| Develop and implement a marketing plan that leverages residential growth to promote and attract commercial and industrial development. | Medium |
| Implement the Elburn Connects transit-oriented development (TOD) study results. | Low |
| Explore establishing a regional park district to leverage resources and enhance service options for all ages and interests. | Low |
| Undertake a facility/space needs assessment/evaluation for Village Hall specifically Admin/Finance/Building & Zoning. | Low |
| Continue to improve the role and expectations of the Village’s ad hoc historical committee. | Low |

Strategic Priorities

Several priority areas were identified as an outcome of the strategic planning process, and they highlight activities and initiatives that the Village should focus on in both the short- and long-term. The key strategic priority areas were similar from the 2017 to the 2021 Strategic Plan with slight modifications. The strategic priority areas identified during the process (in no particular order) are illustrated below.

Strategic Priority Areas



Conclusion

The value of the strategic planning process will only be realized if it is used as an active working guide for both the Village Board of Trustees and staff leadership as the issues explored during the strategic planning process are pursued. It is designed to capture the content of the discussions and to assist the Village in developing implementation plans for their high priority goals.

In the Village's ever evolving operating environment, adapting to changes in demographics, community trends, technology advancements, best practices, and development opportunities (among others) will be paramount. The strategic plan is meant to be a road map for the Village with the flexibility to adapt to those changes. Therefore, it is recommended that the Village undertake a regular review (monthly, quarterly, or semi-annually) of the strategic plan, its goals, and implementation schedule to identify needed updates or modifications to ensure the Village consistently recognizes and meets changes in community needs and expectations. Like Elburn, many communities engage in regular strategic planning process updates/renewals annually or every 2-3 years.

What is apparent from the exchange of ideas and dialogue during the environmental scanning and strategic planning workshop is that the Village is fortunate to have progressive leadership and a management team that is looking ahead and committed to strategic thinking and planning. One noted observer summarized the challenges of organizational progress this way:

*“The art of progress is to preserve order amid change,
and change amid order...”*

— A.N. Whitehead

We wish you well with the ambitious years that lie ahead.


 Two handwritten signatures in black ink. The first signature is 'Melissa' followed by a stylized flourish. The second signature is 'Jeanna Ballard' in a cursive script.

Mel Henriksen and Jeanna Ballard, Project Coordinators and Session Facilitators

Appendix:

Focus Group Feedback Summary

One of the key analytical techniques used for focus group notes is an analyst's search for key phrases, words, or terms that emerged during the focus group sessions. Coding is done by analysts' individual readings of the data, followed by key term searches with the aid of document software. The words and phrases listed below are the results of the study team's analysis of the collected focus group notes. At a glance, the reader can discover what terms were used or referred to most frequently in the feedback notes. Using individual analysts' coding, the researcher identifies terms that recur across groups and across questions. The results are revealing in that they highlight key topics or issues that should be weighed and considered when proceeding with strategic planning discussions.

The information that follows is a summary of key themes and topics that emerged during the exploratory focus group/outreach sessions. The focus group sessions served as a primer for the strategic planning process. The information that is presented in this summation was designed to add *exploratory and thematic information* for the Board and Senior Leadership Teams to consider during the strategic planning workshop sessions.

The same exploratory discussion questions were asked to each focus group and are listed below:

1. How would you describe the Village of Elburn to a stranger or someone who doesn't live or work here?
2. If you left Elburn tomorrow, and didn't return for 10-15 years, what do you think you'd see, or what do you hope you'd see, when you return?
3. What do you like best about Elburn? Related to that, what are the strengths/greatest assets of the Village? Opportunities?
4. Can you identify areas or topics in need of attention or improvement? Related to that, what are the weaknesses/greatest needs in Elburn? Threats?
5. What are/should be the top priorities for the Village over the next 3-5 years?
6. If you could change or initiate one key item or thing about the Village, what would it be?

Overall Themes Based on All Focus Group Feedback



Strategic Growth & Connectivity

- Controlled growth that aligns with the Village’s standards and vision.
- Preparedness for growth — adequate infrastructure, staffing levels, etc.
- Community connectivity — sidewalk, bike paths, downtown and Metra station.
- Housing developments — diversified options to meet the different stages of life (e.g., rentals, apartments, townhomes, single-family, retire in place, etc.).
- Increased industrial and business growth to broaden the tax base.

Recreation & Gathering Spaces

- More recreation opportunities/amenities available (e.g., community pool, park district, community center).
- Explore establishing a Park District or Parks and Recreation Department.
- Community Center improved or repurposed:
 - Bring the building up to code.
 - Explore a new site for a community center.
- Establish a community gathering area.
- More youth options — sports, arts, etc.

Downtown Development

- Maintain small town feel but with some added improvements.
- More family dining options — more accessible for small children, strollers, etc.
- Main street thriving, walkable with small businesses still supported.
- Continued strength and success of the downtown business district.
- Elburn becomes a destination.
- Improved connectivity between the train station and downtown.
- Parking options and pedestrian safety improvements.

Organizational Advancement

- Evaluate staffing needs (especially public works).
- Use of more technology.
- Employee recruitment and retention — competitive compensation and benefits.
- Bigger/more modern police facility.
- Improve communication between departments.
- Offer more cross-training opportunities.

Top Priorities for the Village

- Connect the Metra and downtown.
- Improve code enforcement, making community more appealing.
- Infrastructure replacements/updates on NE and NW side of town.
- Create a plan and act upon it in a prioritized fashion.
- Adequately staff City Departments as the town grows.
- Create solid job descriptions for positions — Everyone should know their responsibilities and be held accountable to those.
- Recruitment and retention of employees, especially in high turnover positions.
- Evaluate the establishment of a Park District.
- Continue to find effective ways to communicate with residents.
- Have a community hub/gathering space developed, and run, by the Village.
- Develop a family-friendly environment — more family-friendly activities.
- Increase industrial and business growth, broaden the tax base — might help lower property taxes.
- Establish an economic development/business development mentor program to help businesses/ entrepreneurs.
- New businesses in town that people want to see/can use (i.e., hardware store, day-to-day necessities).
- Undertake a detailed Environmental Impact Study of what the growth could look like in Elburn.