



**CITY OF SYCAMORE**  
**2021 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE**

*"Preserving the past, enhancing today, and preparing for our future."*

# **City of Sycamore 2021 Comprehensive Plan Update**

## **Acknowledgements**

The City of Sycamore would like to thank the City staff, Mayor, Council, Planning & Zoning Commission, and Economic Development Commission for their tireless efforts, input, and support throughout this process.

The City of Sycamore further extends its gratitude to the many residents, business owners, property owners, and local taxing bodies for their commitment to the future of our community through participation in the comprehensive planning process. The insights and contributions of all those involved have been incorporated into the Plan's recommendations and will serve as a valuable guide for the future development of the City of Sycamore.

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# 1

## CHAPTER ONE

# INTRODUCTION

**The City of Sycamore** is the county seat of DeKalb County in north central Illinois, approximately 58 miles west of the City of Chicago and 30 miles southeast of the City of Rockford. The City encompasses an area of 9.74 square miles and is served by Illinois Routes 23 and 64 which provide easy access to Interstates 88, 39, and 90. Other state highways in proximity include Illinois Routes 38 and 72.

Sycamore has its origins in a claim established on the north bank of the East Branch of the Kishwaukee River, then called the Sycamore River, in 1835.

The present location was surveyed as a village plat in 1836 and a county seat controversy was settled in

Sycamore's favor in 1839. That same year, Sycamore's broad streets were laid out by Eli Barnes and James Waterman.

In 1852, community leaders attempted to raise local subscriptions to build a rail line connecting Sycamore with the growing east-west rail traffic. This attempt failed and it was not until 1859 that Sycamore was linked with the prominent Galena and Chicago Railroad at Cortland for a cost of about \$75,000.

The Civil War that divided and ultimately transformed the country in the 1860's had a salutary effect on the town's growth. By the early 1880's Sycamore had developed a substantial industrial base including



The image of Sycamore in 2020 remains the courthouse, central business district, and nearby historic homes. In no small way, the historic architecture and walkable business district conveyed a gracious charm that fit the popular image of the ideal small town.





## HISTORICAL TIMELINE

The following timeline summarizes the historical events that have shaped the identity and development of Sycamore. It provides a historical lens to inform the future.



**1835 | First settlers arrive and claim land along the north bank of the East Branch of the Kishwaukee River**



**1836 | Village platted and Comb's Mill built**  
**1839 | County Seat established. Street grid and public schools created**



**1859 | Link with Galena & Chicago Railroad and early industries established**

By the early 1880's Sycamore had developed a substantial industrial base including the Marsh Harvester Manufacturing Company, the Reuben Ellwood Manufacturing Company, and the Sycamore Preserve Works. Though not extensive, this manufacturing presence helped push the City's population to 3,300 in 1900.

**1800s - 1900s | Downtown Sycamore as the commercial center**

Through the nineteenth century and much of the twentieth century, the downtown business district accounted for most of the city's commercial activity.



**1920s - 1930s | Infrastructure improvements**

Sycamore's city council approved many roadway and utility improvements, installed new infrastructure such as "electric stop and go lights", and routine infrastructure maintenance.

**1929 Building Code Drafted**

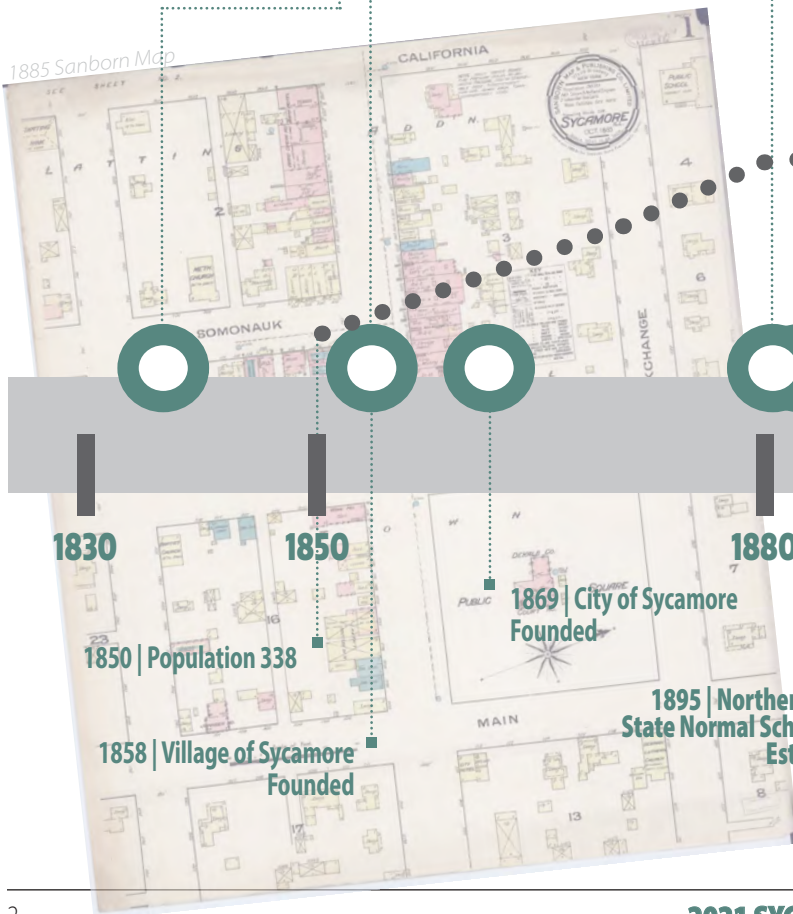


**1911-1918 | Woodstock & Sycamore Traction Co.**

26.5 mi. intraurban railroad operating between Sycamore & Marengo, IL

**1881-1885 | Utilities Installed**

Gas and electrification (1881)  
Telephone & water tower (1883)  
Addresses, Street Signs, Jail, Sewers (1895)



**1830**

**1850 | Population 338**

**1858 | Village of Sycamore Founded**

**1850**

**1869 | City of Sycamore Founded**

**1895 | Northern Illinois State Normal School (NIU) Established**

**1880**

**1890**

**1900**

**1900 | Population 3,300**

Though not extensive, the manufacturing presence helped push the City's population upwards.

**1910**

**1905 | Sycamore Public Library Established**

**1920**



## 2003-2008 | Intense interest in private development

## 2003 | Sycamore considers growth management

City Council approves restrictions and Zoning Code is revised to pace annual residential permitting. Ordinance limits growth to 250 homes/year. Mechanisms such as impact fees and transfer taxes studied.



## 1998 | Peace Road I-88 Interchange

"The completion of Peace Road spawned a number of business park developments, including the Sycamore Prairie Business Park, the Airport North Industrial Park, the redevelopment of the former Barber-Greene property, and several other buildings and facilities."\*

## 1934 | Recreational Board Established

## 1962 | Sycamore &amp; DeKalb plan land use between cities

## mid-1990s | Commercial activity moves to commercial corridors

An increasing share of the city's sales generated in outlying commercial corridors, particularly Illinois Route 23 and Peace Road.



## 1990s | Residential Boom

Residential growth started in earnest after a period of economic recession.

## 2019 | Population 18,322

## 2015 | Permit valuations at all-time high

Industrial \$18M  
Residential \$14M  
Building pace remains steady for all land uses

*Fowler Farm Estates*

## 2008 | The Great Recession

Private development was very strong until the start of the 2008-2009 recession and housing collapse.

## 1944 | Bus Service

Rockford Bus Co. begins with service from Sycamore to Milwaukee and DeKalb.

## 1944 | Sycamore Housing Authority Board Established

## 1950 | Sycamore Planning Commission Established

## 1957 | Sycamore Forestry Board Established

## 1962 | Sycamore Pumpkin Festival Established



## 1978 | Sycamore Historic District Established



## 2005 | Unified Development Ordinance Adopted

the Marsh Harvester Manufacturing Company, the Reuben Ellwood Manufacturing Company, and the Sycamore Preserve Works. In the 1980s and 1990s Sycamore saw another surge in its industrial base thanks to I-39 opening and the extension of Peace Road.

The community has become considerably more diverse in its economic profile in recent decades, owing in no small part to the influence of Northern Illinois University. The University's perpetual creation of tech centers, commitment to advancing business degrees, and manufacturing centers in the community has led to improvements in local industries and in the community's education base.

Sycamore's growth has not been limited to industrial. Residential growth started in earnest in the 1990s after a period of economic recession. Private development interest, especially in the residential sector, was very strong from 2003 through the start of the 2008-2009 recession. The great recession and housing bubble minimized development in Sycamore through 2012.

In 2013 signs of the economic and development recovery started to appear with an increase in housing starts, new commercial buildings and industrial expansions which has since stabilized in the latter half of the 2010s. Median age in Sycamore continues to trend upwards, which follows persistent growth in the senior population at the local, regional, and national levels. In addition, industrial EAV in Sycamore has steadily increased, while the commercial EAV has stabilized.

These trends will have significant impacts on the City's housing stock and economic development efforts leading into the 2020s and beyond.

## WHERE DO WE STAND NOW?

Chapter 2 of this plan summarizes demographic and economic trends to create a blueprint that will guide growth and development in Sycamore over the next five years. This blueprint is comprised of the Goals and Objectives and Land Use Plan, as described below:

**[1] Community Inventory & Analysis:** The inventory and analysis establishes the community's needs, constraints, and opportunities.

**[2] Goals & Objectives:** The goals and objectives represent the community's vision in general value statements and provide tangible steps to realize that vision.

**[3] Land Use Plan:** The land use plan defines the desired character of land uses with reference to these goals and objectives.

### PLANNING AREA

The geographic area addressed by this comprehensive plan includes all of the Sycamore corporate limits plus the land within a mile and a half radius around the corporate limits. This combined area is herein known as the Sycamore planning area.

### PLANNING ISSUES

Many planning issues are addressed in this plan; however, the essential concerns are listed below. Chapters 2, 3, 4, and 5 of this Plan will address these planning issues.

- What land uses should develop within the mile-and-a-half perimeters of the City?
- What public policies should shape the development of these uses?
- How should the City preserve and enhance the quality of life within its corporate boundaries? Should the City's subdivision, planned development, and zoning regulations be amended to more effectively implement the plan?
- How can the City enhance its identity? What are the areas where a uniform branding would promote Sycamore to residents, businesses and visitors (i.e. gateways, downtown, etc.)?





## CHAPTER TWO

# INVENTORY & ANALYSIS

***This analysis provides a community profile and identifies trends that directly affect land use, local utilities and transportation, municipal and other governmental services, and future development opportunities.***

### POPULATION TRENDS

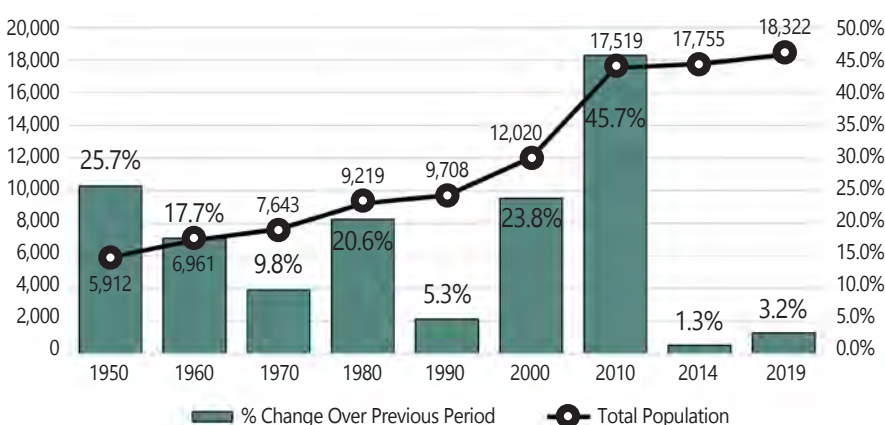
Between 2000 and 2010, Sycamore's population grew approximately 4 percent per year to 17,519. Population growth in DeKalb County between 2000 and 2010 was about 1.8 percent per year, on average. A spike in population growth occurred between the third quarter of 2002 and the second quarter of 2006, when the pace of new housing starts slackened. Figures 1 through 3, based on U.S. Census data, depict these recent population trends.

Since 2010, the population has increased slowly, growing 1.3% from 2010-2014 during the recovery period from the Great Recession, and increasing 3.4% from 2014-2019.

Raw census data is useful but does not always provide sufficiently detailed information by housing type for local taxing bodies to assess demands for service. Additional demographic information has been culled from the following local sources:

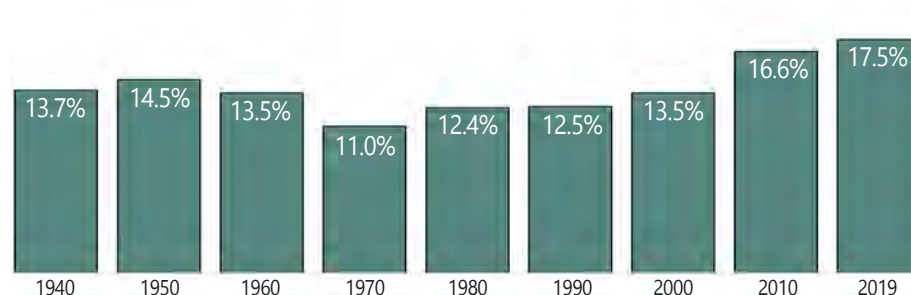
- **City Surveys of New Occupancies:** Since June 2004, the City of Sycamore's Community

Figure 1: Sycamore's Population Growth



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program

Figure 2: Sycamore's Share of the County Population



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Estimates Program



Development Department has been surveying the demographics of families as occupancy permits are issued in order to discern the number of school-aged children in new housing units. Since December 2005 the City's occupancy permit survey has been tracking the number of adults moving into new housing units.

- **Transfer Tax Data:** On June 1, 2006 the City started collecting a transfer tax of \$5 per \$1,000 of valuation on the transfer of title to real property located within the City limits. As stamps are purchased by the buyer of real property, the tax form requires additional information about household size, the number of adults, and the number of school-aged children.

Continuing to review and analyze demographic data will be valuable to discern any changes in these recent trends. Coupled with the socioeconomic data illustrated on the following pages, the household data beg some policy questions:

## POLICY QUESTIONS

The Sycamore population will age significantly in coming years. How can the City plan to make the community age-friendly?

Most Sycamore residents work outside of the community while local employers hire workers who commute from other communities to jobs in Sycamore. What policies might encourage more people to both live and work in Sycamore?

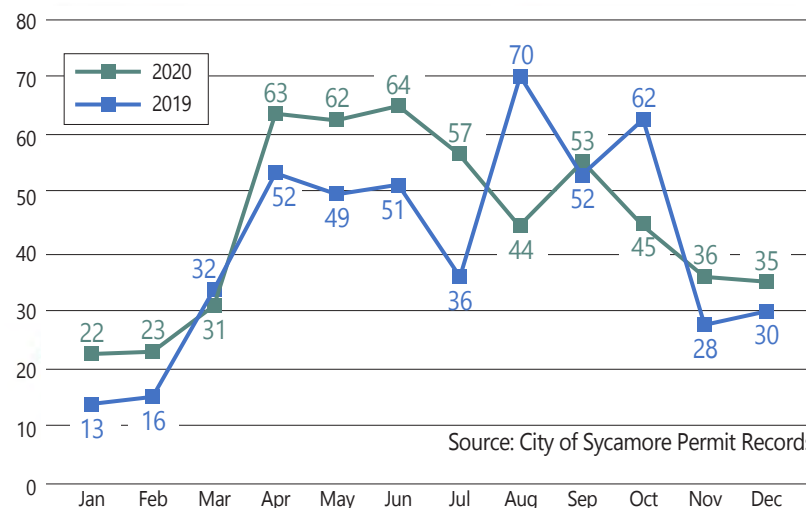
Figure 3: Population Relating to Households

Factor	2000	2005	2010	*2018
Population	12,020	14,866	17,519	17,725
Females	6,141	7,582	8,976	9,187
Males	5,879	7,284	8,543	8,538
Households	4,692	5,890	6,993	6,752
Family Households	3,147	3,930	4,574	4,494
%	67.1%	66.7%	65.4%	66.5%
Average Household Size	2.54	2.50	2.48	2.60
Owner-Occupied	3,230	4,340	4,836	4,748
Average Household Size	2.72	2.68	2.64	2.67
Renter-Occupied	1,462	1,550	2,157	2,022
Average Household Size	2.15	2.00	2.13	2.48
Per Capita Income	23,112	n/a	31,582	33,537
Median Age	34.7	35.0	34.8	36.8

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 5-Year Estimates

\*Population totals from the ACS should not be compared directly to totals from the Census' Population Estimates Program used in Figures 1 and 2. The ACS is used for population profiles by detailed characteristics, while the estimates program gives the most recent and reliable count of total population.

Figure 4: Total Building Permits Issued by Month, 2019 vs 2020



Source: City of Sycamore Permit Records

Figure 5: Demographic Trends

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates

Year	Median Age	% Age 18+	% Families w/ Children	Avg Household Size
1990	33.7	-	-	2.56
1996	34.0	71.9%	37.1%	2.53
2000	34.7	72.0%	36.5%	2.54
2005	35.0	73.5%	33.9%	2.50
2010	34.8	74.5%	32.1%	2.48
2014	35.4	77.7%	28.3%	2.55
2018	36.8	75.4%	30.1%	2.60





What will be the absorption rate of new buildable lots in future years and the resulting population? Notwithstanding the large inventory of platted but unbuilt lots in Sycamore (486 detached units and 284 attached units), the housing slowdown in Sycamore since the 2008-2009 recession and housing bubble has been abrupt and severe (see the Socioeconomic Trends on the next page).

The pace of residential building permits was at its lowest in 2010 and 2011 in wake of the 2008-2009 housing bubble. Permitting activity improved through 2013 and has remained largely stable since then, although there have been significantly fewer building permits than those issued in the 2000's.

Nationally, housing starts declined during the onset of the pandemic,

but began to rebound in April. Building permits, an indicator of future housing starts, followed a similar trend. U.S. building permits reached record lows in March, and returned to near-record highs in July. Information on housing starts specific to Sycamore is unavailable, but building permits in Sycamore followed a different trend.

From January through June of 2020, the number of building permits increased or remained stable from month to month. In fact, the total number of permits issued in most months was higher than in 2019. For example, there were 70 building permits issued in June 2020, compared to 48 in June 2019.

The number of building permits issued in August 2020 were considerably lower than those issued in 2019, and remained slightly lower

in September. In the first 9 months of 2020, there were 412 building permits, which was 7.9% higher than the 382 permits issued over the first 9 months of 2019.





## SOCIOECONOMIC TRENDS

### INDUSTRY

In terms of assessed valuation, the proportional size of the industrial sector declined from 1997 through 2009, but it recovered between 2012 and 2018. Industrial building activity varied widely from year to year, but 2015 and 2019 were exceptionally strong years in terms of permit values. Building permit records tend to understate the value of industrial building improvements, since smaller projects are typically completed by in-house workers. Figure 6 records the known data.

Figure 6: Industrial Permits & Valuation

Year	Permits	Valuation
1995	7	\$1,808,000
1996	1	\$97,000
1997	9	\$2,100,000
1998	2	\$194,000
1999	3	\$1,237,000
2000	3	\$196,000
2001	4	\$3,993,000
2002	2	\$3,905,000
2003	3	\$1,437,000
2004	5	\$6,805,000
2005	6	\$1,719,000
2006	6	\$2,651,800
2007	9	\$3,860,393
2008	11	\$4,980,000
2009	2	\$451,000
2010	13	\$8,803,100
2011	15	\$369,620
2012	16	\$1,280,100
2013	11	\$1,523,275
2014	7	\$48,000
2015	12	\$18,200,919
2016	15	\$3,791,145
2017	25	\$3,106,409
2018	21	\$6,397,250
2019	19	\$5,388,391
2020	19	\$14,345,850

Source: City of Sycamore Permit Records



Figure 7: Industrial Valuation

Year	1997	2002	2007	2009	2012	2018
Industrial EAV	\$9,099,118	\$11,092,209	\$16,462,567	\$17,517,636	\$14,204,393	\$22,370,358
% of Total EAV	5.8%	5.1%	4.0%	3.8%	3.8%	5.0%

Source: Illinois Department of Revenue, Property Tax Statistics, Table 28; 2020 data unavailable





## COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY

Sycamore's commercial history began with a mill built on the north side of the Kishwaukee River by Sharer & Company in 1836. Through the nineteenth century and much of the twentieth century, the downtown business district accounted for most of the city's commercial activity. During the past twenty-five years, an increasing share of the city's sales has been generated in outlying commercial corridors, particularly Illinois Route 23 (DeKalb Avenue) and, more recently, Peace Road. Figure 8 tracks the number and valuation of new commercial additions and commercial buildings since 1996.

Commercial properties have represented 20% or more of the property tax base in Sycamore since 1997, except for 2007 which was slightly less at 19%. Commercial property values declined during the Great Recession, but in 2018, they

have recovered and exceeded their 2009 levels. Commercial permitting activity has remained strong, with more than 100 permits issued each year since 2015, although the value of those permits varies widely from year to year.

The distribution of Sycamore's retail sales taxes has been generally stable with the exception of the significant economic downturn that plagued the county from late 2008 through 2010. Automobile dealerships remain the largest generators of retail sales. In terms of assessed valuation, the proportional size of Sycamore's commercial sector has remained relatively stable since 1997. The residential EAV in 1997 was 72.9% of the total EAV; this proportion increased to 75.7% (\$234,122,073) in 2005; 76.8% (\$315,766,851) in 2007 and stood at 73.5% (\$272,830,641) in 2012.

Figure 8: Commercial Permits & Valuation

Year	Permits	Valuation
1995	11	\$11,693,000
1996	8	\$2,266,500
1997	5	\$5,550,000
1998	23	10,829,250
1999	33	\$11,584,000
2000	22	\$5,324,066
2001	22	\$9,341,867
2002	33	\$7,582,420
2003	24	\$3,881,300
2004	20	\$8,817,012
2005	50	\$14,472,556
2006	54	\$9,779,554
2007	66	\$19,801,296
2008	43	\$15,398,500
2009	46	\$4,713,724
2010	69	\$8,717,432
2011	91	\$17,235,645
2012	112	\$11,779,011
2013	91	\$7,974,570
2014	86	\$9,335,675
2015	101	\$6,052,688
2016	123	\$34,882,295
2017	107	\$50,879,621
2018	103	\$5,404,187
2019	120	\$43,255,267
2020	94	\$13,327,933

Source: City of Sycamore Permit Records



Figure 9: Commercial Valuation

Year	1997	2002	2007	2009	2012	2018
Commercial EAV	\$32,539,839	\$46,370,926	\$77,950,756	\$96,344,271	\$83,210,491	\$98,760,630
% of Total EAV	20.9%	21.4%	19.0%	21.0%	22.4%	22.2%

Source: Illinois Department of Revenue, Property Tax Statistics, Table 28; 2020 data unavailable



The distribution of retail sales tax revenue in Sycamore shifted considerably between 2014 and 2019, before the pandemic. Total sales tax revenue declined 29.3%. Sales tax revenue from manufacturers more than doubled, although it represents a relatively minor share of total sales. Sales from discretionary items like apparel and drinking and eating places increased.

Figure 10: Sycamore Sales Tax Revenue by Type of Retailer\*

Retail Type	2014	2019	% Change 2014-2019	% of Total, 2014	% of Total, 2019
General Merchandise	\$31,686	\$31,635	-0.2%	0.1%	0.2%
Food	\$1,129,862	\$1,263,731	11.8%	3.9%	6.2%
Drinking & Eating Places	\$968,229	\$1,228,137	26.8%	3.4%	6.0%
Apparel	\$10,152	\$35,005	244.8%	0.0%	0.2%
Furniture, HH & Radio	\$84,590	\$95,431	12.8%	0.3%	0.5%
Lumber, Bldg, Hardware	\$936,140	\$1,078,135	15.2%	3.2%	5.3%
Gas Stations, Convenience Stores, Drug Stores & Misc	\$16,417,359	\$14,785,659	-9.9%	56.9%	72.6%
Agriculture, Others	\$9,110,437	\$1,560,486	-82.9%	31.6%	7.7%
Manufacturing	\$143,656	\$294,922	105.3%	0.5%	1.4%
Total	\$28,832,111	\$20,373,142	-29.3%		

Source: Illinois Department of Revenue, Sales Tax Statistics

\*Municipal share of statewide sales tax plus Home Rule sales tax.

\*\*The original Department of Revenue Data included two separate categories: Automotive & Filling Stations, and Drugs & Miscellaneous Retail. However, gas station revenue was inconsistently classified in this data for 2014 and 2019. These categories were combined to circumvent classification errors.

## LABOR FORCE

Sycamore's labor force totaled 5,036 in 1960, or 72 percent of the total population 16 years of age or older. In that year, the proportion of the total population in the labor force across the State of Illinois was 60 percent. In 1990, Sycamore's labor force had fallen to 4,939 or 51% of the total population of 9,708. In 2000, residents who were 16 years or older in the workforce totaled 6,566 or 55% of a population of 12,020. The US Census Bureau American Community Survey estimated that 73.7% of residents over 16 years of age were in workforce from 2008-2012, but the participation rate decreased to 70.5% in the 2014-2018 period. Statewide, the 2014-2018 labor force participation rate was 65.3%.

The labor force excludes retirees, full-time students who are not seeking employment, and those who are unemployed but have abandoned their job searches.

The distribution of employment changed dramatically in the period from 1960 to 2010. Figure 11 depicts these changes.

Figure 11: Employment of Residents by Major Industry (Employed Persons 16 Years and Over)\*

Category	1960	1980	1990	2000	2010	2018
Agriculture	53	97	138	163	82	143
Construction	144	213	354	426	740	515
Wholesale & Retail Trade	489	1,024	875	861	1,214	1,446
Professional (Health, Education, Public Admin)	457	1,164	1,597	2,275	3,364	3,030
Service (Finance, Insurance, Real Estate, Business, Information, Personal, Entertainment)	352	393	485	772	1,771	2,153
Other (Manufacturing, Transportation, Utilities)	1,663	1,721	1,606	1,886	2,127	2,072
Total	3,158	4,612	5,055	6,383	9,298	9,359

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

\*Data reflects jobs held by Sycamore residents, not necessarily the jobs physically located in Sycamore.



## HOUSEHOLD INCOME

The median household income in Sycamore has increased about 3.6 percent per year since 1990. Figure 12 depicts recent income trends in the City of Sycamore. Figure 13 presents the distribution of household incomes from 1990-2018. From 2010 to 2018, there was a decrease in the number of households with incomes of \$25,000-49,999 and an increase in the number of households with \$100,000 in income or higher.

Figure 12: Recent Income Trends

Income Type	1990	2000	2007	2010	2012	2018
Median Family Income	\$41,342	\$62,083	\$76,602	\$79,274	\$80,385	\$83,750
Median Household Income	\$34,058	\$51,921	\$64,425	\$66,359	\$61,320	\$69,500
Per Capita Income	\$14,704	\$23,112	\$29,179	\$31,582	\$29,821	\$33,537

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Figure 13: Household Incomes

Income Level	1990	2000	2010	2018
Less than \$15,000	700	357	421	479
\$15,000 to \$24,999	592	467	547	536
\$25,000 to \$49,999	1,486	1,440	1,386	1,090
\$50,000 to \$74,999	727	1,962	1,470	1,323
\$75,000 to \$99,999	169	655	1,192	1,098
\$100,000 to \$149,999	52	343	1,175	1,232
\$150,000+	44	148	579	818

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

## HOUSING

As the population has increased in Sycamore, so has the number of housing units. Figure 14 and 15, based on City permit records, illustrate recent housing trends. After 2007, there was a significant decrease in permitting for multi-family units before it picked back up in 2013. Permitting for single-family detached dwellings has fluctuated since 2010-2011, when there were only 4 total permits issued in those two years.



Figure 14: Residential Permits by Type

Year	MF	SF	R4	DU
1995	22	32	-	70
1996	42	38	-	112
1997	26	45	-	88
1998	40	65	-	140
1999	30	64	-	143
2000	20	88	-	128
2001	31	78	-	144
2002	14	114	-	197
2003	43	139	-	258
2004	90	197	-	331
2005	292	248	-	705
2006	127	159	-	365
2007	95	75	-	227
2008	44	14	-	108
2009	44	10	-	76
2010	4	19	-	23
2011	0	16	-	27
2012	17	13	-	30
2013	39	30	-	69
2014	33	39	-	72
2015	26	48	-	79
2016	16	50	-	66
2017	12	46	-	58
2018	11	53	-	64
2019	12	38	0	52
2020	12	41	1	54

Figure 15: Residential Permit Valuation

Year	SF	MF	Total
1995	\$5,288,045	\$890,000	\$6,178,045
1996	\$6,055,650	\$1,656,304	\$7,711,954
1997	\$7,009,300	\$1,290,000	\$8,299,300
1998	\$11,198,867	\$2,354,304	\$13,553,171
1999	\$11,669,000	\$2,316,000	\$13,985,000
2000	\$15,034,400	\$1,818,000	\$16,852,400
2001	\$15,408,600	\$2,416,000	\$17,824,600
2002	\$26,878,600	\$732,000	\$27,610,600
2003	\$34,654,170	\$2,575,000	\$37,229,170
2004	\$40,185,212	\$5,791,650	\$45,976,862
2005	\$78,030,224	\$15,440,625	\$93,470,849
2006	\$48,414,432	\$6,424,250	\$54,838,682
2007	\$20,840,398	\$4,870,000	\$25,710,398
2008	\$7,743,220	\$2,362,000	\$10,105,220
2009	\$4,454,000	\$3,618,390	\$8,072,390
2010	\$4,261,000	\$240,000	\$4,501,000
2011	\$3,228,700	\$0	\$3,228,700
2012	\$2,589,000	\$1,388,000	\$3,977,000
2013	\$6,109,500	\$3,469,000	\$9,578,500
2014	\$6,998,965	\$3,627,000	\$10,625,965
2015	\$10,451,000	\$3,504,000	\$13,955,000
2016	\$9,564,500	\$2,731,000	\$12,295,500
2017	\$10,061,300	\$1,966,000	\$12,027,300
2018	\$11,971,164	\$1,116,000	\$13,087,164
2019	\$8,935,500	\$1,606,327	\$10,541,827
2020	\$12,226,630	\$2,300,000	\$14,526,630

Source: Zillow.com Abbreviations: SF (Single-Family); MF (Multi-Family); DU (Dwelling Units)

Based on home sales listed on Zillow, home prices have fluctuated the past few years; declining as a result of the recession then stabilizing and now starting to bounce back. A home sold for nearly \$1.5 million in 2018, which is not typical for the area. Regardless, the median home sale price increased between 2017 and 2020.

Since 2004, the City of Sycamore has surveyed new residents to monitor housing conditions. Most years, the majority of new households included in this survey were in detached single family homes, with relatively fewer residents in attached single family units or condominiums. Between 2015 and 2018, there were more than 30 new households in the survey each year. In 2019, the number of new households in the survey decreased to 24. Additional insights about new residents can be gained from city transfer tax records.

In 2020 through November 6th, there were 452 transfer tax stamps issued for real estate purchases. About 166 of those stamps were from Sycamore residents (e.g., moving within Sycamore), while the remaining 286 were new residents who moved from elsewhere. New residents were divided across a range of communities, with DeKalb representing 43 and other locations representing 10 stamps or less.

Figure 16: Data on All Homes Sold in Sycamore

Year	*Highest Price	% Change Over Previous Year	*Average Price (Median 2017-20)	% Change
2003	\$440,750	1%	\$189,775	4%
2004	\$535,000	21%	\$226,009	19%
2005	\$486,470	-9%	\$235,260	4%
2006	\$674,650	39%	\$244,500	4%
2007	\$620,000	-8%	\$223,397	-9%
2008	\$770,000	24%	\$218,306	-2%
2009	\$441,385	-43%	\$216,170	-1%
2010	\$782,000	77%	\$167,205	-23%
2011	\$390,000	-50%	\$156,777	-6%
2012	\$750,000	92%	\$141,828	-10%
2013	\$660,000	-12%	\$157,011	11%
2014	\$660,000	-2%	\$173,659	11%
2017	\$453,000	-31.4%	\$257,500	48.3%
2018	\$1,480,000	226.7%	\$747,500	190.3%
2019	\$530,000	-64.2%	\$272,500	-63.5%
2020	\$861,000	62.5%	\$438,000	60.7%

\*2017-2020 prices are medians based on data from Zillow.com; unavailable data for 2015-2016

Figure 17: Pricing of Three- & Four-Bedroom Detached Houses

Year	*Average Price: Three-Bdrm Detached	% Change Over Previous Year	*Average Price: Four Bdrm	% Change
2003	\$172,105	14%	\$230,358	3%
2004	\$187,100	9%	\$258,137	12%
2005	\$199,167	6%	\$291,402	13%
2006	\$212,911	7%	\$305,449	5%
2007	\$217,337	2%	\$312,260	2%
2008	\$202,059	-7%	\$289,583	-7%
2009	\$184,736	-9%	\$229,777	-21%
2010	\$172,223	-7%	\$246,978	7%
2011	\$155,152	-10%	\$200,991	-19%
2012	\$135,668	-13%	\$213,620	6%
2013	\$154,557	21%	\$213,081	0%
2014	\$150,058	-9%	\$232,376	9%
2017	\$285,875	90.5%	\$238,288	2.5%
2018	\$247,500	-13.4%	\$259,000	8.7%
2019	\$204,500	-17.4%	\$286,500	10.6%
2020	\$287,500	40.6%	\$485,500	69.5%

\*2017-2020 prices are medians based on data from Zillow.com; unavailable data for 2015-2016



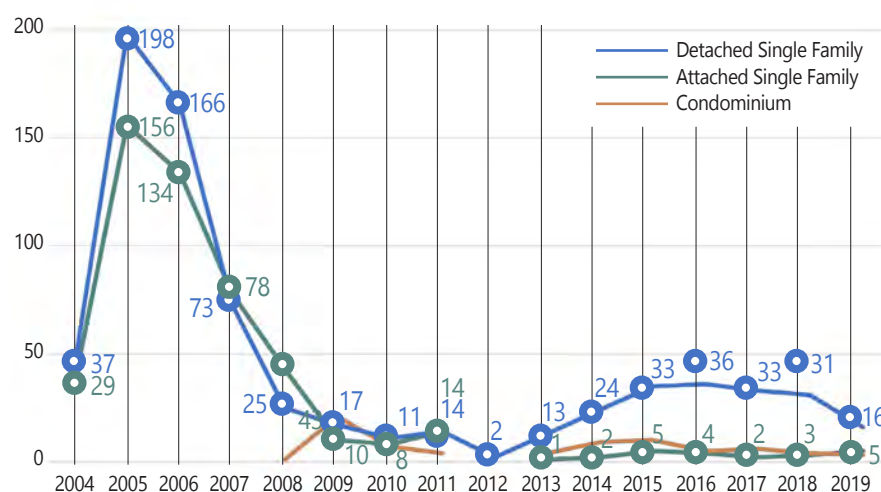


The pace of residents moving to Sycamore as indicated by transfer tax stamps has remained relatively stable since 2013. As noted in Figure 19, there were 562 transfer tax stamps in 2007, at the peak of expansion before the 2008-2009 recession. Transfers reached their lowest amount in 2011 at 245, and returned to near-pre-recession levels in 2013. The number of real estate transfers surpassed 500 in 2016 and 2017. Data for 2018 and 2019 was incomplete, but the amount of transfers in January through October of 2020 does not seem to have been adversely affected by the pandemic.

According to data from Zillow.com for the Sycamore city limits, the pace of home sales has declined somewhat over the past three years. About 30.7% of all home sales in the past 36 months (oldest available) were made in the past 12 months, compared to 33.7% made between September 2018 and September 2019, and 35.6% of sales made before August 2018. The number of homes sold each year has declined slightly since 2018, but the impact of the pandemic has been minor. There were 336 homes sold in the past 12 months, compared to 369 sales from 2018 to 2019, and 390 home sales made from 2017 through 2018, representing a 9.8% decrease year-over-year.

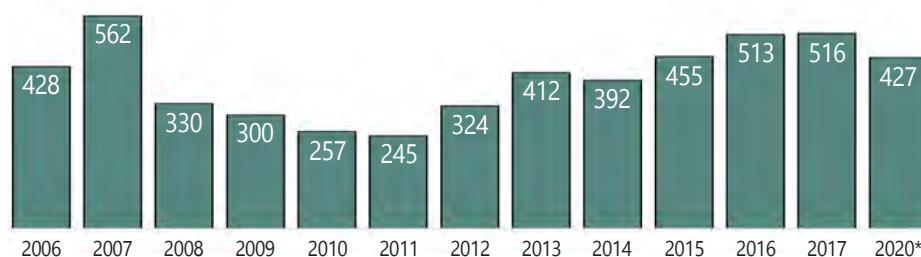


Figure 18: New Households in Survey



Source: City of Sycamore Occupancy Survey

Figure 19: Sycamore Transfer Tax Stamps by Year



Source: City of Sycamore Occupancy Survey

\*2020 is year to date as of November 1, 2020. 2018 and 2019 data omitted for missing entries.



## INVENTORY

As of March 1, 2014, the City's inventory of platted but unbuilt lots by subdivision is illustrated in Figure 20. It is difficult to project the pace of future housing starts. Given slowdown in residential starts since the 2008-2009 recession the City's regulations constraining the pace of permitting will not likely come into play over the next few years. However, if residential development achieves a pace consistent with that of the mid-2000's at some point in the future the City's pacing mechanisms would take effect.

Within this regulatory context, it is possible to arrive at a fairly reliable estimate of the maximum number of permits that may be issued in any given year. The actual number will of course be much affected by market demand, pricing, etc. The following table illustrates the annual permit pace for single-family detached units and multiple family attached units.

Figure 20: Sycamore's Housing Inventory by Type

Subdivision Name	Single Family Detached (R1, R4 Zones)	Attached Housing (R2, R3 Zones)	Total
Bowen Apts (Sacramento)	0	10	10
Camden Crossing (Single Family)	25	0	25
Camden Crossing (Duplex)	0	30	30
Fowler Farms Estates (Part of NW Subarea)	8	0	8
Foxpointe	2	0	2
Grandview III Townhomes	0	51	51
Heron Creek, Phase 3	1	0	1
Heron Creek, Phase 6	6	0	6
Heron Creek, Phase 6A	0	0	0
Heron Creek Country Estates	25	0	25
Heron Creek Estates	4	0	4
Heron Creek Stonegate Townhomes	0	28	28
Hickory Terrace	16	0	16
Krpan's Parkside Estates, Phase 1	2	0	2
Krpan's Parkside Estates, Phase 2	12	0	12
Krpan's Parkside Estates, Phase 3	14	0	14
Krpan's Parkside Estates, Phase 4	118	0	118
Maple Terrace, Phase 1, 2, 3	1	0	1
Meadowcreek	1	0	1
North Grove Crossing	12	0	12
North Grove Crossing, MF Phase 2	0	33	33
Old Mill Park 12-4 units	0	36	36
Prairie Ridge Townhomes (Coltonville)	0	12	12
Reston Ponds, Phase 1	4	0	4
Reston Ponds, Phase 3	96	0	96
Sycamore Creek I, Unit 1	48	0	48
Sycamore Creek I, Unit 2	20	0	20
Sycamore Crossing (Anjali), 2 units	0	76	76
Townsend Woods, Phase 4	1	0	1
Townsend Woods, Phase 5	3	0	3
Windfield Meadows	1	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>420</b>	<b>276</b>	<b>696</b>

Source: City of Sycamore, July 20, 2021



## AFFORDABILITY

Affordability can be an emotionally-charged term in today's political discourse. For many persons, the term "affordable" conjures an image of tracts of stylized, monotonous housing sold below average market prices. More accurately, affordability is a financial notion rather than a physical appearance.

Affordability is encountered in different ways by the low-income renter, renters who are prospective first-time home buyers, and owners who are shopping for a new home. In this context, it is defined in terms of financial thresholds -- namely 28% of gross income -- that lenders apply when qualifying applicants for mortgage loans.

These front and back ratios are not absolute; ratios may differ from lender to lender depending on the loan product, the size of a down payment, the net worth of the applicant, and other factors. In general, to qualify for a loan under the most conservative lender guidelines, no more than 28 percent of the applicant's income can be devoted to mortgage principal, mortgage interest, property taxes, and insurance (PITI).

Figure 21: Income/Home Cost Comparisons

Year	Median Household Income	Affordable Home Price (2.5x Income)	Actual Average Price of Home Sold
1990	\$34,057	\$85,143	\$91,118
1995	\$39,596	\$98,990	\$125,671
2000	\$51,921	\$129,803	\$148,791
2007	\$64,425	\$161,063	\$223,397
2008-2012	\$61,320	\$153,300	\$179,945
2014-2018	\$69,500	\$173,750	*\$250,000

\*Median home price listed on Zillow.com as of November 4, 2020, excluding outliers above \$500,000

In addition, no more than 36 percent of the applicant's monthly income can be devoted to PITI plus other monthly debt payments such as credit card bills, auto loans, student loans, and other ongoing expenses. The 28/36 (front/back) ratios provide a conservative estimate of buying power and might not apply in the case of government-guaranteed loans.

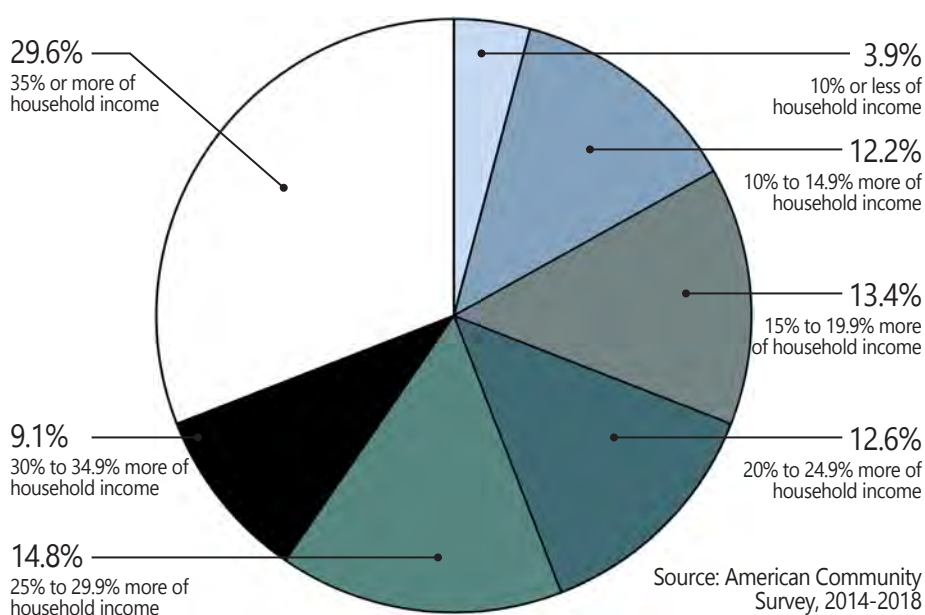
A further indicator is the affordability index. If the purchase price of a home exceeds 2.5 times the buyer's annual income, the purchaser risks their ability to meet their mortgage obligations and other routine monthly expenses. According to the 2010 census, 66.7% of all Sycamore

households lived in owner-occupied units, compared with 73.7% in 2005.

The percentage of residents whose incomes are sufficient to afford local housing is biased by the fact that people who are already residents can afford to live there. In looking at housing affordability, the percentage of nonresidents in target markets or demographics who would be able to afford housing in Sycamore should be examined.

How affordable are Sycamore's single family home costs compared with single family homes sold in nearby communities? The 2010 census did not detail household incomes; however, the US Census provides an estimate via the American Community Survey. The table in Figure 21 is suggestive.

Figure 22: Share of Rented Dwellings by Percentage of Household Income Spent on Rent



Another element of housing affordability is rent burden, or the share of household income spent on rented dwellings. Figure 22 shows the proportion of occupied, rented dwellings by the share of household income spent on rent. About 29.6% of rented dwellings in Sycamore were occupied by those who paid rent equal to 35.0% of household income or more. For reference, statewide, about 37.2% of renters are rent-burdened by this measure. In DeKalb County, about 39.0% of renters were rent-burdened. The ACS data on rent burden do not show the extent to which potential residents choose to locate elsewhere in pursuit of lower housing costs.





## EXISTING LAND USE

As of March 1, 2020 the area within the existing corporate limits was approximately 6,242 acres, or 9.75 square miles. Of this total incorporated area, 6,063 acres are developed and 179 acres are used for agriculture. In terms of the existing zoning designations, the predominant land use is One Family Residential, which accounts for 2,505 acres or 40.1% of the total incorporated area. Compared to 2014, some land use categories that had the most growth were residential, highway businesses, and schools/institutional. The table Existing Land Use by Zoning Designation displays the breakdown of existing land uses.

Illinois Route 64 is the predominant commercial spine running east and west through the downtown business district. Illinois Route 23 has likewise served as a major commercial roadway for many years, linking Sycamore with the expanding DeKalb

community to the south. Since Peace Road's extension northward to Illinois Route 23 at Plank Road, the Peace Road corridor has increasingly served as a major commercial roadway as well. The intersection of Peace Road and DeKalb Avenue (Illinois Route 23) has become one of the busiest in the county.

2018 Annual Average Daily Traffic Counts from the Illinois Department of Transportation show this intersection having an average daily traffic volume (ADT) of 18,500 from the west and 13,400 from the east; 12,400 ADT from the south (toward Illinois Route 64); and 16,500 from the north (toward Bethany Road). These traffic counts have improved since 2014.

Care must be taken in viewing these traffic counts because they do not show direction headed, only the number of vehicles that pass

road sensors in either direction. For example, 18,500 vehicles passing Peace Road on the west includes a mix of inbound and outbound traffic. Also, these traffic counts do not show the number of unique visits per day, and same-day, in-town traffic is likely double-counted. Regardless, vehicle activity in Sycamore has increased since 2014.

While commercial activity is largely located along Sycamore's major roadways, pockets of light and heavy manufacturing are scattered within the corporate limits, mainly along the paths of former railroad rights-of-way. The largest recent industrial developments include the Sycamore Prairie Business Park and the Thanks America Subdivision at the intersection of Bethany and Peace Roads.

Figure 23: Existing Land Use By Zoning Designation

Land Use	2014 Acres	2014 %	2020 Acres	2020 %
R-1, One Family Residential	2,408.92	45.00	2,504.68	40.13
R-2, Two Family Residential	309.03	5.77	308.06	4.94
R-3, Multiple Family Residential	412.07	7.70	460.00	7.37
R-4, Rural Residential	0.00	0.00	179.10	2.87
<b>Total Residential</b>	<b>3,130.02</b>	<b>58.47</b>	<b>3,451.84</b>	<b>55.30</b>
C-1, Neighborhood Business	21.32	0.40	16.56	0.27
C-2, Central Business	110.35	2.06	114.28	1.83
C-3, Highway Business	661.72	12.36	935.87	14.99
C-4, Mixed Use	99.99	1.87	206.11	3.30
<b>Total Commercial</b>	<b>893.38</b>	<b>16.69</b>	<b>1,272.82</b>	<b>20.39</b>
M-1, Light Manufacturing	199.26	3.72	284.04	4.55
M-2, Heavy Manufacturing	312.96	5.85	288.49	4.62
ORI, Office, Research, and Light Manufacturing	27.26	0.51	27.26	0.44
<b>Total Industrial</b>	<b>539.48</b>	<b>10.08</b>	<b>599.79</b>	<b>9.61</b>
Schools/Institutional	168.06	3.14	299.86	4.80
Parks & Open Space	596.85	11.15	592.63	9.49
ROW	25.06	0.47	25.06	0.40
<b>Total Other</b>	<b>789.97</b>	<b>14.76</b>	<b>917.55</b>	<b>14.70</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5,352.85</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>6,242.00</b>	<b>100.00</b>





## NATURAL FEATURES

An understanding of the natural features in the Sycamore planning area is critical to effective long range planning. This brief section provides an overview of the principal natural features which generally affect land development and the distribution of existing and future open space.

### DRAINAGE

All of the Sycamore planning area gently slopes toward either the south or the east branch of the Kishwaukee River which, along with its tributaries, drains the area in a northwesterly direction toward the Rock River system. The area topography varies from flat to gently rolling. These surface features are the product of pre-historic moraines or accumulations of earth and stones deposited by glacial action.

The planning area ranges in elevation from 820 to 935 feet above sea level. The highest elevation is on Whipple Road approximately 1,500 feet west of Moose Range Road. The lowest elevation is located along the East Branch of the Kishwaukee River.



### WETLANDS

Wetlands provide natural flood control, stormwater purification, and support diverse flora and fauna. Less than 1 percent of DeKalb County's area contains wetlands, and the Sycamore area has only pockets scattered near the Kishwaukee River branches. Most of the wetlands can be described as marsh land where water is at or near the surface with a dominance of herbaceous vegetation.

### FLOODPLAIN

To provide a national standard without regional differentiation, the Federal Emergency Management Agency has adopted the 100-year flood as the base flood for floodplain management purposes. Within the floodplain there is a 1 percent chance that the 100-year flood will be equaled or exceeded each year. Floodplains within the planning area are associated with the Kishwaukee River branches and associated creek corridors. Heron Creek, one of the largest tributaries, runs in an east to west direction crossing Illinois Route 23 north of Swanson Road and converges with the Kishwaukee River near where the east and south branches meet west of Motel Road. On the Flood Insurance Rate Maps, the 100-year floodplains are designated A Zones.

The floodway is that portion of the special flood hazard area that conveys the base flood and includes the actual channel and certain adjoining floodplain. The area outside the floodway but inside the base floodplain is known as the floodway fringe.

A 1998 assessment of the Kishwaukee River basin prepared by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources revealed that since 1970 there has been a significant increase in the average annual flow through the Kishwaukee River floodplain. Contributing to this increase, which is estimated to be as high as 50 percent over pre-1970 average flows, is an increase in the average annual precipitation, expanding development and related storm water systems that carry more runoff directly to the river basin, and an increased volume and rate of runoff from cultivated fields.

Soil erosion has led to channel widening and bank failure, increasing the possibility of flooding along stream valleys during heavy rain events.



**MAP 1:**  
**Environmental Features**

**ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES**

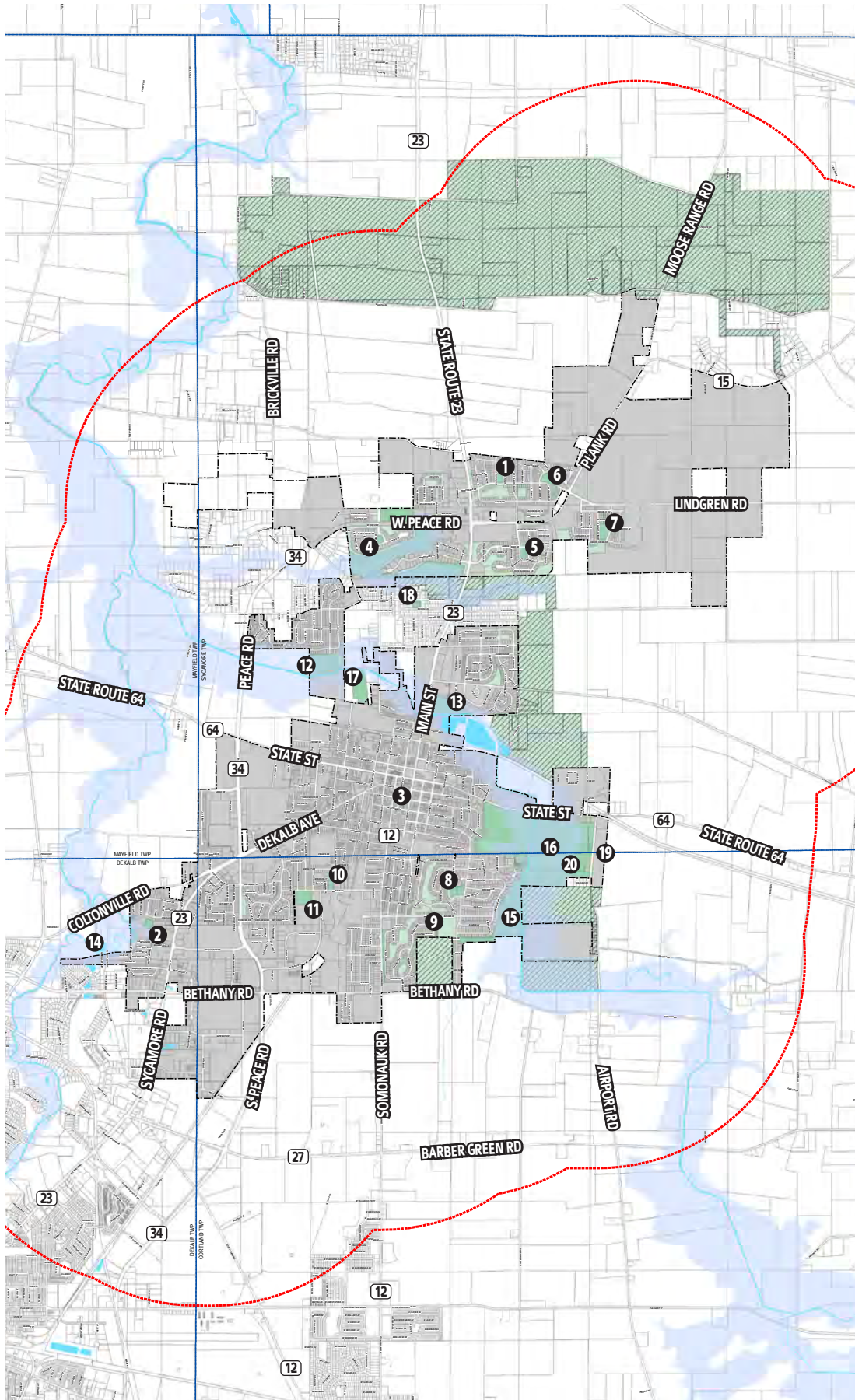
- Parks | CITY OF SYCAMORE
- Open Space | CITY OF SYCAMORE
- Future Green Buffer
- Floodplain

**BOUNDARIES**

- Municipal Boundary
- Planning Boundary

**SYCAMORE PARK DISTRICT PARKS**

- 1 Boynton Park
- 2 Brothers Park
- 3 Charley Laing Memorial Park
- 4 Emil Cassier Park
- 5 Founders Park
- 6 Future Park
- 7 Future Park
- 8 Future Park
- 9 Future Park
- 10 Kiwanis East Park
- 11 Kiwanis Prairie Park
- 12 Leon D. Larson Memorial Park
- 13 Old Mill Park
- 14 P.A. Nehring Preserve
- 15 Parkside Preserve
- 16 Sycamore Community Park
- 17 Sycamore Lake Rotary Park
- 18 Wetzell Park
- 19 Legacy Campus
- 20 Sycamore Soccer Fields





## SCHOOLS

The Sycamore Community Unit School District No. 427 covers approximately 82 square miles primarily in DeKalb County and serves the majority of the Sycamore planning area. District 427 operates five elementary schools, a middle school (grades 6-8), and a high school. District 427 schools include:

- North Grove Elementary School (Republic Avenue)
- North Elementary School (Brickville Road)
- Southeast Elementary School (South Locust Street)
- West Elementary School (Fair Street)
- South Prairie Elementary School (Borden Avenue)
- Sycamore Middle School (Maplewood Drive)
- Sycamore High School (Spartan Trail)

The Fall 2020 enrollment included 3,713 students at all school levels. In September 2020 there were 1,649 in the K-5 grades, 850 in grades 6-8, and 1,214 enrolled in the high school. The maximum capacity of each school

is based on Board- set maximum enrollments for current classroom use.

For facility planning purposes, operational capacity is based on 80% of maximum capacity. The maximum capacity of the elementary schools ranges from 367 (West School) to 658 (North Grove); the maximum capacity of the middle school is 1,200 students; and the maximum capacity of the high school campus is 1,800 students.

The table in Figure 24 illustrates the recent overall student enrollment trend in Sycamore C.U.S.D. #427. Total district enrollment peaked in 2016 and has declined slightly from 2017 through 2020, with most of the declines in middle school enrollment.

Additional insights on public school enrollment can be gained from the City of Sycamore's occupancy survey, which tracks new children

by grade level. In this survey, there were fewer than 10 new 6th-8th-grade level children each year since 2010. There were also relatively few new high-school-age children. Most children counted in the survey were of K-5 grade level. The majority of new households had no school-age children; however, some of these households may have younger children or no children at all.

Through a successful referendum in April 2007, Sycamore voters committed \$30 million for the construction of the new elementary school (\$15,000,000) along with substantial improvements to existing school facilities (\$15,000,000). Improvements to the existing elementary schools in 2007-2008 added 40,255 square feet in multi-purpose space but only measurably increased classroom capacity at the Southeast Elementary School.

Figure 24: Sycamore CUSD Enrollments, 1996-2020

Year	K-5	6-8	9-12	Total
1996	1,227	754	1,004	2,985
1997	1,292	696	940	2,928
1998	1,151	712	973	2,836
1999	1,245	738	941	2,924
2000	1,231	741	959	2,931
2001	1,204	745	1,000	2,949
2002	1,210	754	1,004	2,968
2003	1,236	762	1,052	3,050
2004	1,291	771	1,076	3,138
2005	1,391	780	1,088	3,259
2006	1,531	794	1,129	3,454
2007	1,622	782	1,153	3,557
2008	1,674	846	1,160	3,680
2009	1,713	855	1,177	3,745
2010	1,768	854	1,167	3,789
2011	1,733	859	1,161	3,753
2012	1,720	845	1,214	3,779
2013	1,676	871	1,174	3,721
2014	1,626	913	1,195	3,734
2015	1,643	930	1,203	3,776
2016	1,610	913	1,208	3,795
2017	1,636	871	1,255	3,763
2018	1,642	857	1,233	3,732
2019	1,674	845	1,242	3,761
2020	1,649	850	1,214	3,713



Per the School District's Five Year Forecast for Fiscal Years 2019-2023, total expenditures (plus other financing uses) in 2018 were \$79.4 million, compared to \$55 million for 2013-2014. The 2018 expenditures were positively offset by total revenues (plus other financing sources) of \$88.6 million. The Five Year Forecast summarized that revenues averaged an 8.4% increase from 2016-2018, with expenditures increasing by only 2.5% in the same timeframe.

In addition, this Five Year Forecast indicates that revenues should continue to surpass expenditures through 2020, with shortfalls starting in 2021 through 2023. However, these forecasts were made in May 2019, so it is uncertain as to how the pandemic will impact both revenues and expenditures. Presumably, updated forecasts will need to be conducted to more accurately reflect current and anticipated conditions.

Sycamore is also home to two private schools serving students in pre-kindergarten through eighth grade. St. Mary's Catholic School is located on Waterman Street and Cornerstone Christian Academy, affiliated with Aurora Christian Schools, is located on N. Cross Street.



Figure 25: Sycamore Public Schools by Capacity

School	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
<b>Sycamore High School</b>					
- Square Feet	329,481	329,481	329,481	329,481	329,481
- Occupational Capacity (students)	1,800	1,800	1,800	1,800	1,800
- Enrollment	1,175	1,175	1,195	1,247	1215
<b>Sycamore Middle School</b>					
- Square Feet	114,851	114,851	114,851	114,851	114,851
- Occupational Capacity (students)	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200
- Enrollment	913	913	910	858	856
<b>West Elementary School</b>					
- Square Feet	55,100	55,100	55,100	55,100	55,100
- Occupational Capacity (students)	367	367	367	367	367
- Enrollment	291	291	274	272	285
<b>Southeast Elementary School</b>					
- Square Feet	65,520	65,520	65,520	65,520	65,520
- Occupational Capacity (students)	475	475	475	475	475
- Enrollment	323	323	333	330	349
<b>North Elementary School</b>					
- Square Feet	53,400	53,400	53,400	53,400	53,400
- Occupational Capacity (students)	389	389	389	389	389
- Enrollment	281	281	286	276	283
<b>North Grove Elementary</b>					
- Square Feet	91,666	91,666	91,666	91,666	91,666
- Occupational Capacity (students)	658	658	658	658	658
- Enrollment	452	452	453	457	465
<b>South Prairie Elementary School</b>					
- Square Feet	68,175	68,175	68,175	68,175	68,175
- Occupational Capacity (students)	621	497	497	497	497
- Enrollment	301	297	284	297	301

Figure 26: Counts of Children in New Households by Grade Level

Year	Households w/ No School Age Children	Preschool	Kindergarten - 5th Grade	6th - 8th Grade	9th - 12th Grade
2004	57	16	14	9	7
2005	250	54	82	35	21
2006	205	50	72	38	21
2007	130	18	24	17	16
2008	54	5	20	8	7
2009	30	8	12	10	5
2010	19	4	6	9	4
2011	12	8		1	3
2012	1	1	1		
2013	12	5	2	2	1
2014	24	1	13	2	2
2015	43	5	8	1	
2016	22	5	10	1	4
2017	21	3	8		3
2018	23	2	12	4	8
2019	15	2	8	6	1

Source: City of Sycamore, Occupancy Survey





## PARKS & OPEN SPACE

The Sycamore Park District has made extensive strides in realizing the long-range strategic plan outlined in its Vision 20/20 Plan, particularly through its ACTION 2020 initiative to implement this vision plan. This included the Park District's Leaf a Legacy fundraising campaign, which came to a close at the end of 2017 with multiple grants, gifts, and donations secured to help fund the various projects that have propelled ACTION 2020.

In particular, the Park District has established a new Recreation Campus near the northern end of Airport Road across from the Sycamore Community Park, Golf Course, and Sports Complex. New features include a Community Center (completed Spring 2018), splash fountain (Summer 2018), and Brian Bemis Family Dog Park (Spring 2019).

Northwestern Medicine Sled Hill was added to the campus in 2019. The adjacent Sports Complex is also planned for renovation (completion date TBD), including Phase I (development of new soccer complex) and Phase II (conversion of existing soccer complex to baseball/softball fields and expanded parking).

Figure 27: Developed Park Facilities

Year	Park Acreage	Classification
Sycamore Community Golf Course (includes Sycamore Park Sports Complex)	220.0	Regional
Wetzel Park	2.0	Neighborhood
Kiwanis West Park	7.5	Neighborhood
Elmer & Stanley Larson Park	0.2	Neighborhood
Brothers Park	2.5	Neighborhood
Kiwanis East Park	5.0	Neighborhood
Boynton Park	2.4	Neighborhood
Chief Black Partridge Nature Preserve	11.8	Neighborhood
Emil Cassier	64.0	Neighborhood
Founders Park	2.8	Neighborhood
Leon D. Larson Memorial Park	24.8	Neighborhood
Sycamore Lake Rotary Park	12.7	Neighborhood
Charlie Laing Memorial Park	0.6	Neighborhood
Parkside Preserve	45.0	Neighborhood
Old Mill Park	27.8	Neighborhood
Reston Ponds	3.2	Neighborhood
Dr. John Ovitz Park	5.4	Neighborhood
Legacy Campus	21.9	Regional
Soccer Fields	27.0	Regional
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>486.6</b>	

Source: Sycamore Park District



## SYCAMORE LIBRARY

The Sycamore Library opened in 1892 at the corner of Maple and State Streets. In 1902, Andrew Carnegie contributed \$12,000 toward a new library and on May 24, 1905 the cornerstone was laid for a 7,000 square foot facility at the present location at the corner of State and Main Streets. A 21,000 square foot addition was dedicated on July 27, 1997.

In anticipation of a possible facility expansion in another generation, the Library Board purchased the adjacent 4,000 square foot site at 104 N. Main Street in 2002. The cost of this acquisition was funded by a new developmental impact fee that multiplies the number of persons per new household against the per capita spending of the Library.

The facility houses 77,206 total items consisting of books, DVD's, CD's and audio books. In addition, the Library's association with other regional libraries makes over 4 million items available on loan and on line to users. While adapting continually to the changing preferences of its readers, the Library continues to see strong interest in more conventional books in print.

In 2012, the Library underwent renovations to improve the effectiveness of its operational space. In particular, the children's department was expanded with age-appropriate spaces and collections. New seating and reorganized work and study spaces were also provided in the Adult Services Department. The Library added a new roof in 2015

and celebrated its 125th anniversary in 2017. Completed building projects in 2018 included repaving of the parking lot, tuck pointing, gutter and roof repairs, air conditioning replacement, and interior alterations.

The 2019-2024 Sycamore Public Library Strategic Plan identifies general capital improvement plans, such as identifying necessary building improvements and maintenance, but doesn't provide specific projects, funding, or timelines. Other strategic priorities focus on community partnerships, expanded programs and services, modernization, finances, branding, user experience, and responsiveness to community needs.





## UTILITIES

### WATER DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM

The City of Sycamore established a public water authority in 1888. The City pumps its water from five deep wells drawing water from deep sandstone aquifers. These wells have an average depth of 1,200 feet and can produce a combined total of over 6.8 million gallons per day. The average daily demand is about 1.8 million gallons. This level of demand has remained relatively constant in recent years.



With respect to anticipated growth, at an average demand of 114 gallons per person per day, the present well system could accommodate another 15,000 residents, assuming (a) future industrial use does not substantially exceed the present proportional share of overall demand and (b) the system's pumping capacity is protected with back up generating power and an adequate inventory of replacement motors and parts.

All five of the City wells are equipped with back-up power for emergency pumping and all have variable frequency drives. The City has two elevated water storage tanks with a total capacity of 2.25 million gallons. Four of the five wells are equipped with radium treatment facilities.

The City's 2019 Water Master Plan indicates that the water system has generally been able to handle relatively consistent demand over the past decade. Based on modeling of population growth based on the 2014 Future Land Use Plan, the Master Plan also suggests that the City's current water system has the capacity to provide average daily demand for all population projections in the four modeled planning horizons for 2020, 2025, 2030, and 2040. The City will also need to conduct updated modeling based on the 2020 Future Land Use Plan to ensure the water system maintains adequate capacity.

### SANITARY SEWER SYSTEM

Sycamore originally constructed a plant for the treatment of sanitary sewage on North Cross Street in 1936. A smaller plant with a capacity of about 50,000 gallons was opened in Electric Park in the 1960's and later expanded to a capacity of 400,000 gallons per day in 1972. In 1961, the North Cross or north treatment plant was expanded to a capacity of 1,800,000 gallons per day.

In 1979, the north treatment plant was again expanded and an excess flow facility was completed in 1995, at which time the Electric Park plant was closed. The daily designed flow of the existing plant is 2,970,000 gallons per day.

The City's current sanitary sewer system operates solely on gravity, with zero use of any pumping stations. A majority of the sewer collection system was installed prior to 1999, including certain sections built in the early 1900's. The system has been modernized over time, including the use of GIS to track the 2,352 manholes and 104 miles of sewer collection lines. Approximately every 90 days, the City also updates a list of sewers that require cleaning to ensure proper system maintenance and prevention of sewer backups and other issues.



Upgrades to the plant are complete. Improvements increased the daily designed flow to 4.95 mgd and replaced equipment as old as 35 years. It should also be noted that phosphorus removal, which is not currently achieved with the current facility, has been mandated by the IEPA and will be addressed in the upgrades. The estimated cost of the improvements is about \$20 million. About 30% of the cost will be borne by local funds (e.g. impact fees, reserve funds) and the balance will be found in borrowed funds (e.g. low-interest IEPA loan monies).

The City also modified user rates in 2015 to help fund system improvements by apportioning part of the rate increase towards sanitary sewer rehabilitation, which costs about \$250,000 each year. Part of these funds also go towards the purchase of collection system maintenance equipment.

The City's 2018 Sewer Evaluation Plan recommends implementation of a flow monitoring program to regularly assess dry and wet weather flows that have an effect on bottlenecks in the sanitary sewer system. Budgeting for

FY 2019, 2020, and 2021 generally focus on providing new flow meters, inflow testing, monitoring equipment, manhole replacements, sewer rehab, and cleaning/maintenance processes. Beyond FY 2021, it is recommended that the City alternate between manhole and sewer rehabilitation as funding is available each fiscal year.

## REFUSE REMOVAL

Household wastes in the City are collected by a private waste management company under a multi-year contract with the City and removed to a privately-owned landfill. In its refuse contract, the City has also arranged for the regular weekly collection of a wide variety of recyclables including various types of mixed paper, newspaper, and many commingled varieties of plastic, glass, and metal containers. Landscape wastes are collected between April 1 and November 30 and organic Christmas trees are collected during the last week of December and the month of January. The waste management company offers "At-Your-Door" service for the safe disposal of electronic goods and other household items, such as paint, automotive products, batteries, light bulbs, etc..





## TRANSPORTATION

Sycamore's existing road network is mainly characterized by a grid of primary, secondary, collector and minor streets. This grid is bisected by Illinois Route 23 and Illinois Route 64 that provide important links to a broader, developing region. The five existing roadway classifications are described below.

### PRIMARY ARTERIALS

Such roadways may have from two to six lanes and typically provide regional access with posted speed limits between 25 and 55 mph, depending upon the nature of adjacent land uses. Primary arterials provide local access to the regional road system for all types of vehicles including large trucks.

They typically have signalized intersections with commercial and industrial driveways at permitted locations. Average daily traffic (ADT) volumes typically range from 10,000 to 25,000. Illinois Route 23 and Illinois Route 64 are the two primary arterials serving Sycamore. Route 64 is a primary arterial only in the downtown area.

### MINOR OR SECONDARY ARTERIALS

Such roadways provide access and circulation for all land uses within a community and often connect adjacent communities, serving limited regional or county-wide travel. Speed limits vary from 25 to 55 mph, depending on the nature of adjacent land uses.

Driveway and intersection spacing are restricted by local policy and, ideally, residential driveways are not located on such roadways. Average daily traffic (ADT) volumes typically range from 7,000 to 18,000. Secondary arterials serving Sycamore include Peace Road, Somonauk Road, Bethany Road, Coltonville Road, Route 64 beyond the downtown area, and parts of Elm Street, DeKalb Avenue, and Main Street.

### COLLECTORS

Collector streets are usually built using a grid system that penetrates neighborhoods with all types of land uses and collects local street traffic for direction to the arterial system. There are residential, commercial and

industrial collector streets. Speed limits are usually posted in the 25 to 45 mph range, depending on surrounding land uses. Average daily traffic (ADT) volumes typically range from 1,000 to 5,000.

### MINOR STREETS

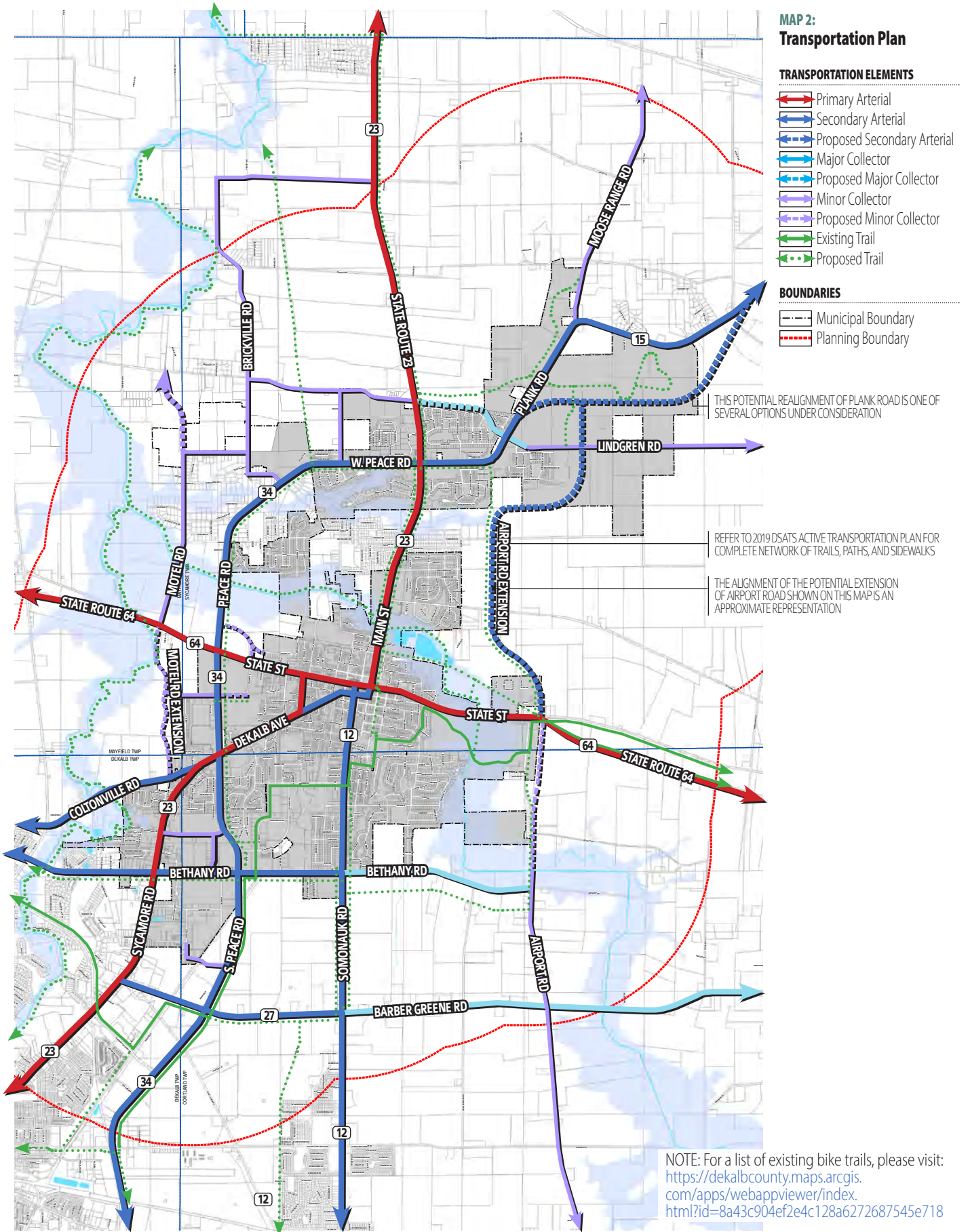
Minor or local streets provide access to abutting properties and typically connect to the collector system rather than arterial streets. Speed limits are usually not posted but are enforced at 25 mph in most areas. Minor streets typically serve daily traffic volumes of less than 1,000 ADT.

### CUL-DE-SACS

The purpose of cul-de-sacs is similar to that of minor streets. Traffic volumes on cul-de-sac streets are typically less than 400 ADT.

NOTE: For a map of roads, please visit:  
[https://idot.illinois.gov/Assets/uploads/files/Transportation-System/Maps-&-Charts/Five-Year/FCUrban/FC%20Urban%20AreaCity\\_De%20kalb.pdf](https://idot.illinois.gov/Assets/uploads/files/Transportation-System/Maps-&-Charts/Five-Year/FCUrban/FC%20Urban%20AreaCity_De%20kalb.pdf)







# 3

## CHAPTER THREE

# GOALS & OBJECTIVES

***Planning goals and objectives represent the community's vision for Sycamore. Goals are generally broad value statements that represent the end desires of the community. Objectives are the means by which such goals can be achieved and are preferably tangible or measurable.***

Goals and objectives have been formulated for the following elements of community development:

- Community Appearance
- Residential Development
- Commercial Development
- Industrial Development
- Downtown Enhancement
- Community Facilities
- Natural Features
- Transportation





## COMMUNITY APPEARANCE



Visitors regard Sycamore as a quaint community with a hometown charm. Sycamore residents embrace this image and desire to sustain it. The City's core is its downtown with a walkable central business district marked by historic facades, surrounded by neighborhoods consisting primarily of single family detached dwellings. It is expected that, as in earlier generations, growth will extend from the center of the community outward in a balanced pattern of compatible land uses. The logical limits to such outward growth have been established as part of past comprehensive planning efforts.

The scope of the City's future land use was defined in the 2003, 2008 and 2014 Comprehensive Planning processes outlining the geographic limits that would be consistent with the feel of a small city. With development slowed due to the Great Recession in the late 2000s and subsequent recovery in the early 2010s, the 2014 plan update offered an opportunity to focus in on areas such as community appearance and identity, gateways, redevelopment and the downtown area. This 2020 update builds upon the goals and objectives outlined in the 2014 Comprehensive Plan.

### GOAL:

**Preserve a small town identity while promoting expansion of the tax base and community-oriented services and jobs.**

### OBJECTIVES:

**1:** Refine the desired uses at the community's edges and create buffer zones, signage, landscaping and gateway features to establish an identity.

**2:** Use the City's urban design guidelines to promote an attractive presentation for new development.

**3:** Creatively regulate the appearance of accessory uses.

**4:** Enhance the appearance of larger dry-bottom or wet-bottom retention systems.

**5:** Promote attractive landscaping in parking lots and other open spaces in commercial and industrial developments, especially on properties along major gateways into the community, including Route 23, Route 64 and Peace Road.

**6:** Protect residential areas from dissimilar land uses with landscaped transitional buffers.

**7:** Encourage attractive entryways to new residential, commercial and industrial subdivisions.

**8:** Continue to direct residential development incrementally from the core outward, conserving land and infrastructure costs and reinforcing the sense of entering a community with a central place.

**9:** Investigate distinctive gateway designs and signage for the intersections at North Grove Road and Illinois Route 23, Plank Road east of Lindgren Road, W. State Street (Illinois Route 64) and Peace Road, and Peace Road near Bethany Road.

**10:** Continue to work with the Sycamore Park District to create small neighborhood parks on scattered unbuilt or infill lots in older residential neighborhoods.

**11:** Incorporate parks and recreational space within easy walking distance of dwelling units in new planned developments.

**12:** Continue to encourage developers to minimize the physical impact of utilities during the preliminary plat review process.

**13:** Continue the city-wide way-finding and gateway signage program.



## RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT



Sycamore should provide housing for all stages of life so young adults can become residents and established residents do not have to leave the community as their needs change. A diversified, quality housing stock encourages sound economic growth. Yet, the scale of multifamily housing types should be kept small and the design similar to single-family homes.

### GOAL:

**Maintain the primarily single family character of the community's housing stock, but evaluate the potential to introduce more diversity in housing options in order to attract a variety of residents with varying budgets, family structures, and housing needs at different life stages.**

### OBJECTIVES:

**1:** Preserve existing neighborhoods.

**2:** Support residents in attaining homeownership by providing a diverse housing stock, while providing limited opportunities for quality rental housing.

**3:** Ensure housing stock appeals to multiple segments, regardless of income, family structure, or life stage.

**4:** Pursue the development of senior living neighborhoods or senior housing options near walkable centers, such as the downtown.

**5:** Consider allowing the modification of single family zones to allow accessory dwelling units on single family lots and mother-in-law suites attached to or within single family homes.

**6:** Retain a permitted density in multifamily or high density zoning districts of nine (9) units per gross acre with 30 percent of the development dedicated to open space. Open space in this context would not include rights-of-way or parking lots but would include lawns, decorative planting areas, bike paths, active or passive recreational areas, fountains, swimming pools, wooded areas, water courses, and retention areas.

**7:** Retain a permitted density in medium density or two family residence districts of 3 to 6 units per gross acre with 20 percent of the development dedicated to open space.

**8:** Retain a permitted density in low density or one family zoning districts of 0 to 3 units per acre, with yard zoning requirements and national park standards guiding the provision of green spaces in single family neighborhoods.

**9:** Discourage the routing of traffic to and from multifamily developments through lower density neighborhoods.

**10:** Link residential areas with a pedestrian/ bicycle pathway system as new development occurs. Provide sidewalks along through-streets in developed areas where they may not already exist and as space in the public right-of-way allows.

**11:** In the planning process, reduce the perceived bulk and density of larger-scale multiple family buildings through a variety of roof lines, diversity in finish materials, façade articulation, and the spacing of buildings on site. If constructed next to detached or attached single family residences, make the design of multifamily buildings compatible with the bulk and scale of surrounding structures.

**12:** Integrate amenities and natural areas into the site plans of multifamily developments. Provide sidewalk links to parking areas and building entries; where possible provide bike paths to link areas with neighborhood shopping areas or parks; situate open space and play areas at convenient distances from residences.

**13:** In the case of attached residences and multifamily structures, assure that garages do not dominate the street side of the building, including the encouragement of side- and rear-loaded garages.

**14:** In multifamily and townhouse developments, consider privacy in building arrangements particularly with respect to the arrangement of bedroom windows on adjacent buildings and the relationship of ground-level windows to parking areas.

**15:** Review all residential developments with appreciation for the requirements of public safety agencies (e.g. police, fire, and public works).

**16:** Retain the regulatory framework in Ordinance 2005.60 to moderate the pace of new housing starts in any given year.

**17:** Promote affordability in new subdivisions by encouraging the quality construction of smaller detached single family houses on lots nearer the regulatory minimum of 9,000 square feet.

**18:** Promote affordability in existing neighborhoods through consistent code enforcement. Preservation and good repair are essential to sustaining affordable house values and encouraging new investment in older residential neighborhoods.



## COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT



Sycamore's residents demand diversity in commercial services and products and used to travel out of town to satisfy some of their needs. Commercial development has improved in recent years. However, more diverse and easily accessible commercial development will continue to satisfy consumer needs and generate needed revenues for governmental services.

### GOAL:

**Focus primarily on community-oriented commercial retail and service outlets, while also encouraging development that will attract spending from outside of the community.**

### OBJECTIVES:

**1:** Cluster new commercial development at strategic arterial and collector crossroads.

**2:** Continue to support the revitalization of the downtown commercial district which is vital to the community's image, identity, and economic base.

**3:** Continue to promote more intense retail development in three key areas: (1) The First Rockford Development (land on the west side of Peace Road between DeKalb Avenue and Illinois Route 64); (2) the Menard Subdivision; and (3) the corner of Peace/Plank and Route 23.

**4:** Identify redevelopment areas and utilize economic development tools to ensure the properties are repurposed to fill retail needs and offer an appearance consistent with community expectations.

**5:** Support a business retention program to preserve the existing retail and commercial base of the community.

**6:** Encourage commercial building on a more human scale with residential-style roof planes, creative fenestration, better entry definition, and wall articulation. Discourage blank windowless walls. Encourage architectural finishes on highly visible building sides. Blend accessory structures with the materials and colors of the principal buildings.

**7:** Minimize the visual impact of parking areas from adjacent streets and commercial buildings.

**8:** Work with the Sycamore Chamber of Commerce, the DeKalb County Economic Development Corporation, the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, and other agencies as needed to market Sycamore's retail development sites for large-scale national retailers. Encourage strategic location of retailers likely to attract spending from outside of Sycamore.

**9:** Retain landscaping requirements within commercial developments to soften the look within parking lots and to promote greener storm water management practices. Encourage landscaped corridors within parking rows rather than just landscaped pods at the ends of rows.

**10:** Encourage clearly defined entry points to new commercial developments.

**11:** Encourage shared driveways or frontage roads for access points from public streets to diminish curb cuts. Encourage off-street access between commercial properties through the use of cross-access easements.

**12:** Consider permanent adjustments to local codes that allowed additional outdoor dining, easier access for curbside pickup, signage informing the public of options for interacting with the business, and other changes beneficial to businesses and the community on a long term basis.

**13:** Periodically evaluate the list of commercial uses that are subject to special use permits in the Unified Development Ordinance.

**14:** Encourage the clustering of complementary businesses in commercial areas and downtown.





## INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

Sycamore residents have expressed their strong desire to retain and attract a diverse mix of quality industrial enterprises in order to strengthen Sycamore's economic, employment, and tax base.



### GOAL:

**Retain Sycamore's quality industrial firms and diversify the community's industrial base by attracting new industry to Sycamore.**

### OBJECTIVES:

**1:** Plan for and facilitate the development of new industrial sites for future industrial expansion. The extension of Crosby Avenue to Peace Road through the Peterson Farm would open additional industrially-zoned sites.

**2:** Maintain a current inventory of industrial sites and buildings.

**3:** Cooperate with the DeKalb County Economic Development Corporation, the Sycamore school system, Kishwaukee College, and the Kishwaukee Education Consortium to enhance the availability of skilled labor through the Workforce Development Program.

**4:** Periodically visit existing industrial firms to learn more about their history, processes, needs and future plans.

**5:** Provide ongoing recognition for all new or expanding industrial businesses.

**6:** Provide buffers between industrial and commercial uses, not just industrial and residential uses, to assure compatibility.

**7:** Encourage planned unit developments along principal corridors involving site plan review by the Plan Commission.

**8:** Promote industrial building design and open space standards that enhance the appearance of industrial areas without diminishing the competitive pricing of Sycamore's sites. In this regard, durable exterior finishes of natural materials such as masonry, brick, and wood should be encouraged. Steel-sided buildings may be preferable where building scale is large, but landscaping and screening should soften such facades.

**9:** Encourage research facilities and other light industrial uses.

**10:** Ensure roadways and utilities are adequate to support desired industrial uses.

**11:** Consider new industrial uses in former industrial buildings located near downtown.



## DOWNTOWN ENHANCEMENT



Sycamore's central business district has unique features and a historical relevance that give the community its identity. The appearance of new development or redevelopment should be compatible with this existing pattern of structures and spaces. Behind the facades, a mix of uses is desirable to keep the downtown the vital core of the community.

### GOAL:

**Enhance the vitality and sustainability of the downtown in terms of aesthetics and commercial activity.**

### OBJECTIVES:

**1:** Focus downtown development efforts on infill and other enhancements before considering expansion of the downtown boundaries.

**2:** Encourage planned unit developments along principal corridors involving site plan review by the Plan Commission. Locate and design gateway features that signalize entry into the downtown.

**3:** Continue to work towards a true downtown brand providing a cohesive and modern aesthetic to downtown signage and way-finding and apply that brand identity to help market downtown as a unique experience within the City.

**4:** Explore the creation of downtown business attraction programs that provide incentives for desirable businesses to locate in the downtown.

**5:** Continue downtown façade improvement programs, expanding eligible projects and the number of awards as funds allow.

**6:** Coordinate with DeKalb County Convention and Visitors Bureau and the Sycamore Chamber of Commerce to explore the possibility of a Welcome Center for visitors to Downtown Sycamore.

**7:** Encourage upper floor apartment or condo development. Retail uses are more successful when there is regular foot traffic. A greater mass of residential and professional uses within easy walking distance would contribute to such pedestrian traffic.

**8:** Maintain the downtown streetscape, introduce and replace shade trees as needed, and generally make the downtown more appealing to consumers. Consider additional street furniture and public art.

**9:** Identify ways to make downtown more bicycle and pedestrian friendly.

**10:** Work closely with DeKalb County to ensure active communication of future plans that may impact the downtown.

**11:** Sustain the City's façade grant program to promote downtown façade improvements.

**12:** Consider additional outdoor gathering spaces that are flexible in use and accommodate varying group sizes.

**13:** Investigate the costs and benefits of restricting first floor spaces along State Street to retail/restaurant use.

**14:** Use parking efficiently before adding additional spaces, encouraging the shared use of spaces by businesses with differing hours of operation and levels of demand.

**15:** Retain changes made to accommodate outdoor dining and curbside pickup that have been popular with customers and businesses.



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



Local government can substantially influence the nature and impact of economic development by virtue of its expenditures in the local marketplace, its land use policies, and the business climate it promotes. The community's objectives for economic development will accordingly highlight government action but will also attempt to influence the varied and disconnected economic decisions of individual businesses that define the community's quality of life.

### GOAL:

**Enhance the local economic climate to ensure that Sycamore is a desirable community in which to live, work, and conduct business.**

### OBJECTIVES:

- 1:** Maintain and actively support a positive image and identity for the community.
- 2:** Maintain accessible and responsive municipal services.
- 3:** Develop and sustain a multi-year plan for infrastructure repairs to better serve existing businesses and residents.
- 4:** Actively promote business retention.
- 5:** Actively market available commercial and industrial sites to expand and diversify the community's tax base.
- 6:** Work cooperatively with the Sycamore School District, Park District and Library to promote diverse and high quality educational, recreational, cultural, and social services.
- 7:** Continue to work with local partners to expand community programming for all residents.
- 8:** Work cooperatively with neighboring municipalities and the County of DeKalb to promote regional planning initiatives and joint planning agreements that reduce adverse competition for new business.
- 9:** Promote a mix of quality housing for households of all sizes and incomes.
- 10:** Work cooperatively with the County of DeKalb and the DeKalb County Regional Planning Commission to promote compatible development within the City's mile-and-a-half primary development area.
- 11:** Encourage locally employed nonresidents to relocate to Sycamore by promoting workforce housing and other development attractive to this group.





## COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Managed growth requires routine and effective coordination of all public agencies and jurisdictions. Well-defined objectives for municipal, school, and park services are critical in establishing a compatible framework for future development.



### GOAL:

**Provide exemplary, efficient, and cost effective public services and facilities to maintain and enhance the health, safety, and welfare of Sycamore residents.**

### OBJECTIVES:

**1:** Review all development proposals with attention to the long-range plans of the School District, the Park District, and the Sycamore Library.

**2:** Periodically review the method for determining the fair-share of land or cash contributions that developers ought to contribute in support of future school and park facilities.

**3:** Explore whether a developmental exaction should be imposed to support future municipal street improvements.

**4:** Plan and direct utility extensions that facilitate orderly, incremental growth.

**5:** Encourage creative design in new developments so as minimize costly public infrastructure improvements over the long term.

**6:** Encourage the routine sharing of data between the City, School District, Park District, and Sycamore Library to assist each body in long range capital planning. Among other things, such regular cooperation may reveal ways to share resources, and will also keep policymakers aware of overlapping debt levels.

**7:** Negotiate with developers to establish land for open natural areas or greenways in addition to recreational neighborhood parks. Such amenities have recreational functions (e.g. allowing users to hike, jog, or bike); they protect and buffer streams and wetlands; and they can potentially link existing trails to community facilities.

**8:** Upgrade and expand the City's waste water treatment plant.

**9:** Involve all City departments in the review of annexation proposals so that all potential costs of municipal services in geographically expanding areas can be assessed.

**10:** Upgrade the municipal water system to ensure safe and quality water for the community.

**11:** Periodically evaluate the potential to put the Village's deactivated well back in operation to accommodate future population growth.

**12:** Coordinate with the Fire Department to plan for a future fire station in the area of Bethany Road, Mercantile Drive, and Peace Road, per the department's 2015 Strategic Plan.

**13:** Collaborate with Park District and community organizations to evaluate the reuse of the former Midwest Museum of Natural History.



## NATURAL FEATURES



Agriculture is the predominant use on the periphery of the Sycamore corporate limits and throughout the primary development area. If open space is to continue to be a prominent feature of the Sycamore planning area, the City of Sycamore should carefully plan for the preservation and integration of open space in new developments, and the preservation of a greenbelt at the community's edge. In addition, significant drainage swales and the very limited number of major tree stands within the primary development area should be carefully integrated with development plans.

### GOAL:

**Preserve the natural environment as much as reasonably possible during the planning and development of urban land uses and infrastructure.**

### OBJECTIVES:

**1:** Provide contiguous open space where feasible, rather than small fragments of open space. Establish greenway or linear space corridors along streams, major swales, and floodplain areas to provide environmental protection and linkages among significant open space areas. Provide for public access through such corridors by the use of easements and other means.

**2:** Utilize corridors offered by abandoned railroad rights-of-way, utilities, or natural features to provide a comprehensive system of bicycle and pedestrian trails.

**3:** Prohibit building in undeveloped floodplain areas except for park and recreational facilities.

**4:** Establish an interconnected network of green space throughout Sycamore that links major natural features, such as the Kishwaukee River, Memorial Park, Sycamore Lake, Old Mill Park, Sycamore Community Park, and other green spaces throughout the community.

**5:** Review future development with reference to the plans and policies of the Sycamore Park District and the DeKalb County Forest Preserve District.

**6:** Integrate setbacks and buffer areas along Peace Road and collector streets with the open space system.

**7:** Enforce the landscaping provisions of the Unified Development Ordinance particularly with respect to buffering requirements between different land uses and parking lot design.

**8:** Establish a program to incorporate Sycamore trees into landscaping, especially near gateways.

**9:** Continue to participate in the DeKalb Watershed Steering Committee and implement the recommendation provided within watershed master plans.



## TRANSPORTATION



Conventional municipal transportation plans are almost exclusively focused on moving local and regional traffic quickly from point to point. While the efficient movement of vehicular traffic remains an abiding interest among the City's residents, it is not the only issue. Aesthetic concerns, pedestrian safety and comfort, and mass transit needs are factored into this plan.

### GOAL:

**Reinvigorate the transportation system through a capital program that measures success in terms of traditional transportation objectives such as uncongested traffic flow as well as contemporary aspirations for aesthetically pleasing and pedestrian-friendly right-of-ways.**

### OBJECTIVES:

**1:** Through the subdivision review and approval process, provide for the extension of existing collector streets. Avoid subdivision designs that inhibit future adjacent developments.

**2:** Explore ways to ensure that a portion of the cost of the primary development area's future street network will be borne by new development.

**3:** Work cooperatively with DeKalb County to maintain limited and responsible access to Peace Road and promote the public dedication of land for the extension of Airport Road.

**4:** Explore the viability of roundabouts in new residential development to increase the safety and efficiency of residential traffic circulation.

**5:** Continue to support mass transit service to and from Sycamore's commercial centers.

**6:** Work cooperatively with DeKalb County, DeKalb County Forest Preserve, and the Sycamore Park District to connect existing sidewalks and trails.

**7:** Assure efficient east-west traffic movement in the primary development area by working with developers to extend Motel Road from Route 64 to Coltonville Road, to extend North Grove Road to Plank Road, to extend Sarah Drive to the future Motel Road extension and to extend Crosby Avenue to Peace Road.

**8:** Work cooperatively with DeKalb County to extend the Peace Road bike trail north to Illinois Route 23.

**9:** Provide bicycle paths along major and minor arterials where adequate rights-of-way already exist and where appropriate safety measures can be incorporated at intersecting streets and driveways.

**11:** Minimize the impact of commercial truck traffic on residential neighborhoods.

**12:** Minimize the impact of through traffic on neighborhoods. Continue to require traffic impact studies as a condition of the development approval process if a concept plan may generate significant hazards or congestion.

**13:** Evaluate measures to reduce crash incidences and create safe transportation environments at targeted intersections, including: DeKalb Avenue/Peace Road; DeKalb Avenue/Mercantile Drive; Peace Road/Plank Road/N Main Street; and DeKalb Avenue/Spartan Trail.

**14:** Conduct a downtown parking study to assess parking behavior, utilization of existing parking spaces, effectiveness of parking policies, and potential needs to expand parking opportunities.

**15:** Assess the potential to provide a north-south connector road on the east side of Sycamore, with proper coordination with the future realignment of Plank Road.

**16:** Continue to participate in the DSATS Active Transportation Committee and promote the construction and connection of pathways.





# 4

## CHAPTER FOUR

# LAND USE PLAN

***The Land Use Plan synthesizes the key development trends, constraints, and opportunities outlined in Chapter Three. The Plan defines areas for the future development of residential, commercial, and industrial uses, as well as mixed uses and office/research uses in planned unit developments.***

The majority of future land uses were identified in the 2003 and 2008 plans. With the housing bubble and resulting Great Recession in the late 2000s, development was constrained for several years. As a result, the land use map in the 2014 update of the Comprehensive Plan remained relatively unchanged.

Residential development started to rebound by the mid 2010s, with a 4.1% increase in total housing units from 2014 to 2019. This increase was partly driven by significant growth

in multi-family and attached single-family residential homes, including 11 to 16 permits per year for these uses from 2015 to 2018.

While this level of development is considerable relative to the post-recession trends, the 2020 update of the Land Use Plan is still primarily the same as previous iterations of the Comprehensive Plan, mostly due to the fact that development over the past five years has generally occurred where it was anticipated in the 2014 update.



The primary features of the Land Use Plan include:

**1:** A range of density and open space requirements for residential development.

**2:** A rural residential classification to highlight existing rural residential uses within the planning area that may be annexed with a lower gross density than neighborhood residential areas.

**3:** A distribution of future commercial activity at the intersection of arterial roadways and at neighborhood intersections to conveniently serve present and future residents. This includes large nodes of commercial zoning along the frontage at the northeast corner of Illinois Route 64 and Peace Road, and at the east gate of Sycamore at the intersection of Illinois Route 64 and Airport Road.

**4:** A designation of industrial sites to sustain a diversified tax and employment base. The Thanks America and Sycamore Prairie Business Park have been well received and are largely filled or specific users reserve remaining space. Additional sites for industrial use should be pursued. The 2014 Plan Update prioritizes investment in Sycamore's existing industrial sites -- which could include site improvements, modernized zoning standards, or adaptive re-use -- before expanding or pursuing additional industrial development.

**5:** Mixed use designations to provide flexibility in planning mixed residential and commercial developments with an emphasis on one or the other type of land use. The principal mixed use-commercial areas are north of the intersection of Old State Road and the Airport Road extension, and in the vicinity of the intersection of Motel Road and Illinois Route 64.

**6:** An Office/Research/Light Industrial designation to guide the development of office and research facilities and encourage higher levels of design, extensive site amenities, and open space for such uses, particularly along the Bethany Road corridor.

**7:** New bicycle and pedestrian trails to link existing and future development to recreational areas and open space.

**8:** Proposed corridors for the extension of Airport Road, Motel Road, North Grove Road, and Crosby Avenue.

**9:** Targeted sites for future school and park facilities.

**10:** Gateway corridors generally conforming to the City's main entrances to highlight rights-of-way meriting special protection and beautification as adjacent land is developed.

**11:** Large areas of agriculturally-zoned land on the edge of the City's primary development area to underscore the importance of farmland preservation in DeKalb County's land use plan, and the preference for growth extending outward from the City's core rather than leapfrogging to remote sites.



## RESIDENTIAL

All new residential developments shall be reviewed according to the planned development guidelines within the Unified Development Ordinance, Articles 4.4 and 4.5.

### RURAL RESIDENTIAL

Within the City's planning area, along the Brickville Road corridor and extending westward to the South Branch of the Kishwaukee River, single family housing has been established with a rural character within the DeKalb County political jurisdiction. In this unincorporated area, the low density single family housing has been developed with individual wells and septic tank absorption fields, utilizing township road designs that feature ditches to carry storm water runoff.

Within the City's mile-and-a-half planning jurisdiction, 377 acres have been included within the rural residential land use category. The acres within this designation that become contiguous with the corporate limits may be annexed incrementally for low-density, estate-sized single family detached homes, with the expectation that such homes will typically be served by municipal water and sewer systems.

Any new development should demonstrate compatibility with existing development. Larger lot sizes or nestled home designs with a gross density of 1 unit per acre or less shall be considered.

### NEIGHBORHOOD RESIDENTIAL

The Plan directs most new urban residential development to the north-central and northeast portions of the planning area. Many of the areas identified have been annexed but remain undeveloped. Additional infill opportunities for residential development are also designated. A total of about 690 acres is set aside for neighborhood residential development in the Land Use Plan, based on sewer line capacity and the ability to loop City water mains for the delivery of good quality drinking water. All neighborhood residential areas shall have municipal sewer and water service.

### RESIDENTIAL DENSITIES

The Neighborhood Residential designation in the 2020 Land Use Plan Update does not distinguish between low density, medium density, or high density designations. Within the unincorporated planning area at the community's edges, a diverse range of housing alternatives including detached single family housing on smaller lots; attached townhouses or condominiums; duplexes; bed and breakfast guest homes; and congregate senior housing could occur. Such uses should be integrated with, rather than isolated from, housing in existing neighborhoods.

As concept plans are submitted for Plan Commission consideration, greater densities may be considered and will be weighed in terms of their compatibility with contiguous neighborhoods and uses, affordability, and the extent to which they conform with sub-regional plans and urban design guidelines.

Figure 28 summarizes residential gross densities and open space guidelines.

**Figure 28:**  
Residential Gross Densities  
& Open Space Guidelines

Density	Guidelines
Low Density	0 to 3 units per acre; 10% dedicated open space in PUD
Medium Density	3 to 6 units per acre; 20% dedicated open space in PUD
High Density	6 to 9 units per acre; 30% dedicated open space in PUD





The Land Use Plan welcomes a variety of gross density ranges and open space percentages. Among other features, developers will be expected to identify the gross density they are planning to introduce. Gross density is defined as the total number of housing units divided by the gross area of a residential development site. Gross area includes all proposed rights-of-way, floodplain, storm water management areas, wetlands, and arterial buffer areas.

Open space, as a requirement within residential developments, can include:

- Park or open space dedicated to the Sycamore Park District
- Common areas maintained by homeowners associations; except driveways and parking areas
- Storm water management areas such as detention ponds
- Wetlands
- Floodplain areas as defined by the latest edition of FEMA's flood insurance rate map
- Buffer yards along arterial highways or collectors in excess of the minimum front side or rear yard setbacks
- Pedestrian easement areas
- Publicly accessible areas on private lots in excess of minimum lot size requirements

Open space requirements are minimum percentages. In a creatively planned development, larger open space dedications may entitle the developer to increase height or density allowances in designated clusters of buildings so long as the overall density does not exceed the allowance for the particular residential zoning district. As the Plan Commission and Council evaluate proposed developments, the residential gross densities and open space guidelines in Figure 28 will be useful in defining the population density.

To soften the physical scale of housing in residential developments with higher densities, regional storm water detention rather than parcel-by-parcel detention should be considered. In addition, pedestrian pathways should link such developments with existing neighborhoods.

Within the planned unit development or PUD process, townhouses or zero lot line homes may be established so

long as the total number of dwelling units does not exceed and acceptable density.

Residential land uses should be buffered from more intense land uses, as much as practicable, by natural corridors of open space such as floodplains, swales, and the limited over-story tree stands in the planning area. These areas should blend urban design with the essentially rural character of the County-zoned agricultural land at the north edge of the City's planning area. In this regard, lots should be grouped to maximize the contiguous open space.

In addition, deeper minimum building setbacks along the rights-of-way of collector roads (100 feet) are recommended. Curb cuts should be discouraged along internal collector roads and attractive entranceways should be encouraged. Curvilinear streets that blend into the topography and which minimize the distortion of appealing natural features should be encouraged.



## COMMERCIAL

Commercial designations in the primary development area will accommodate retail, service, and office uses that serve the Sycamore planning area and beyond. They are generally intended to provide for highway business uses as opposed to neighborhood business uses.

Neighborhood commercial uses may be integrated with Mixed Use-Residential developments (see next page). The proposed commercial uses are automobile-oriented and are located to provide direct access to and from arterial and collector streets.

Two large and un-annexed areas remain open to annexation for highway business purposes: (1) the northeast corner of Illinois Route 64 and Peace Road and the northeast and southeast corners of Airport Road and Illinois Route 64. These areas should be developed in a unified fashion rather than in parcel-by-parcel strip developments.

In addition to the general objectives outlined for commercial uses in Chapter Three, some guidelines for the new commercial areas are:

- Regional storm water detention designed as an amenity
- Landscaped setbacks along peripheral roads and internal roadways
- Landscaped internal parkways and boulevards
- Compatible ground-mounted signage in monument style
- Compatible façade signage

## INDUSTRIAL

Two prime areas for industrial development were annexed: roughly sixty (60) acres within the Thanks America subdivision that lies west of Peace Road and north of Wirsing Parkway, and a sixty-four acre parcel within the Sycamore Prairie Business Park.

While heavier industrial uses may be introduced in the Crosby Avenue area and Thanks America subdivision, light manufacturing, warehouse and distribution uses will be encouraged in the areas abutting Bethany Road. Office/research uses can be a component within designated industrial areas but would be subordinate to the principal industrial uses within the context of a creatively planned development.

Light industrial development may also be a minor component of a mixed use land designation. However, the more extensive and costly infrastructure requirements for industrial uses would typically make the siting of other uses financially unfeasible.

## OFFICE, RESEARCH & LIGHT INDUSTRIAL

In keeping with regional planning trends and local aspirations for low impact high tech businesses to diversify the City's employment and tax base, the Plan depicts several Office/Research/Light Industrial (ORI) areas. Such developments invite such uses as:

- Laboratories
- Low-impact manufacturing of electronic and scientific instruments
- Experimental product development
- Printing and publishing
- Training and educational facilities
- Other businesses that are not offensive in terms of emissions, noise, dust, or frequent and repetitive truck movements
- Flex spaces
- Coworking spaces
- Business incubators
- Tech startups
- Breweries/microbreweries
- Makerspaces

Three prime areas for ORI development are at the northwest corner of Illinois Route 64 and



Peace Road; the southwest corner of Bethany and Somonauk Roads; and along the south side of Bethany Road between Sycamore Road and Peace Road (adjoining the present Monsanto campus). The land area south of the regional detention pond at the southwest corner of Bethany and Somonauk Roads is on the periphery of the path for the DeKalb Taylor Airport's northeast runway and would not be suitable for residential uses.

## MIXED USE

The Plan also includes a Mixed Use category of land use to accommodate compatible residential and commercial uses and to maximize opportunities for orderly economic development. For instance, a strategic approach to the development of larger tracts of land for residential purposes might contemplate the incorporation of neighborhood businesses at the intersection of collector and arterial roadways.

Conversely, long-range planning for commercial uses might anticipate the integrated development of medium density housing buffered with landscaped amenities. To facilitate the incorporation of such mixed developments in the Plan, the City's Unified Development Ordinance includes Mixed Use-Commercial districts.

Guidelines for such areas might include the following:

- Combined storm water detention
- Internal roadways for access to individual parcels rather than multiple curb cuts on collector streets
- Compatible architecture in terms of bulk, building materials, height, etc.
- Compatible ground-mounted monument-style signage
- Extensive landscaped or open space buffers between uses

- Extensive parking lot screening especially along peripheral roadways
- Restricting small neighborhood commercial uses to those that do not operate late into the evening
- Promoting an interdependency of uses; for example, in Mixed Use-Residential districts, ancillary non-residential uses that primarily serve the neighborhood and nearby subdivisions such as day care centers, schools, corner markets, and dry cleaners would be encouraged
- Encouraging sidewalks and bike paths that directly connect the mix of uses

## FLOODPLAIN

The Plan depicts the flood hazard areas of the City as an overlay district. It is the purpose of the overlay district to discourage uses other than public recreational uses in order to control filling, grading, dredging, and other development that may increase erosion or flood damage. The floodplain is shown on the Environmental Features exhibit in Chapter 2 of this Plan.

The Plan shows large park acreage within the floodplain on the west side of Airport Road. Most of this land should be retained as natural open space. The Park District Master Plan and the Airport Road Sub Area Plan identify this area as ideal for the development of a passive recreational green belt conducive to walking and bike paths.



Figure 29: Proposed Land Uses

Land Use	Area (Acres)	% of Total
<b>Existing Land Use</b>		
Single Family Residential	2,213.69	36.5%
Two Family Residential	308.39	5.1%
Multi-Family Residential	413.80	6.8%
Rural Residential	173.49	2.9%
Public/Semi-Public	128.30	2.1%
Schools/Institutional	171.56	2.8%
Neighborhood Business	16.91	0.3%
Central Business District	114.33	1.9%
Highway Business	935.26	15.4%
Mixed Use	369.72	6.1%
Parks	451.29	7.4%
Open Space	141.35	2.3%
Light Manufacturing	284.04	4.7%
Heavy Manufacturing	288.49	4.8%
Office/Research/Light Ind	27.26	0.4%
ROW	25.06	0.4%
Subtotal: Existing LU	6,062.84	100.0%
<b>Future Land Use</b>		
Single Family Residential	158.85	2.7%
Two Family Residential	247.64	4.2%
Multi-Family Residential	229.62	3.9%
Neighborhood Residential	604.17	10.3%
Rural Residential	348.75	5.9%
Park	50.59	0.9%
Green Buffer	2,952.53	50.3%
Commercial	121.32	2.1%
Highway Business	152.50	2.6%
Mixed Use	385.93	6.6%
Industrial	38.54	0.7%
Office/Research/Light Ind	582.13	9.9%
Subtotal: Future LU	5,872.58	100.0%
Total: All Land Use	11,935.52	





MAP 3:  
Future Land Use Plan

**EXISTING LAND USE**

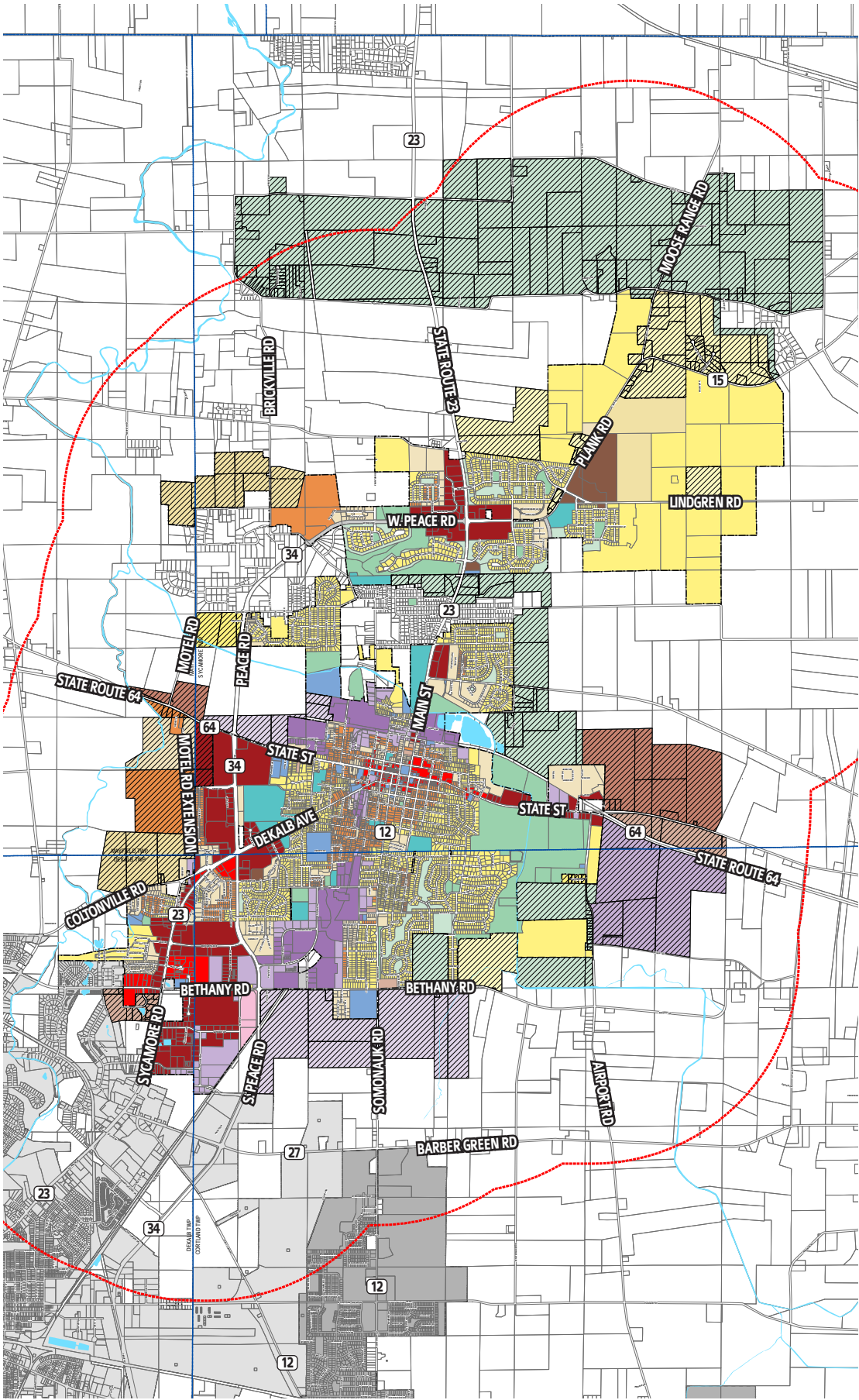
- R-1 Single Family Residential
- R-2 Two Family Residential
- R-3 Multi-Family Residential
- Public/Semi-Public
- Schools/Institutional
- C-1 Neighborhood Business
- C-2 Central Business
- C-3 Highway Business
- C-4 Mixed Use
- Parks
- Open Space
- M-1 Light Manufacturing
- M-2 Heavy Manufacturing
- ORI Office, Research & Light Industrial

**FUTURE LAND USE**

- Rural Residential
- Neighborhood Residential
- Multi-Family Residential
- Parks
- Open Space
- Green Buffer
- Commercial
- Mixed Use
- Industrial
- Office, Research & Light Industrial

**BOUNDARIES**

- Municipal Boundary
- Planning Boundary

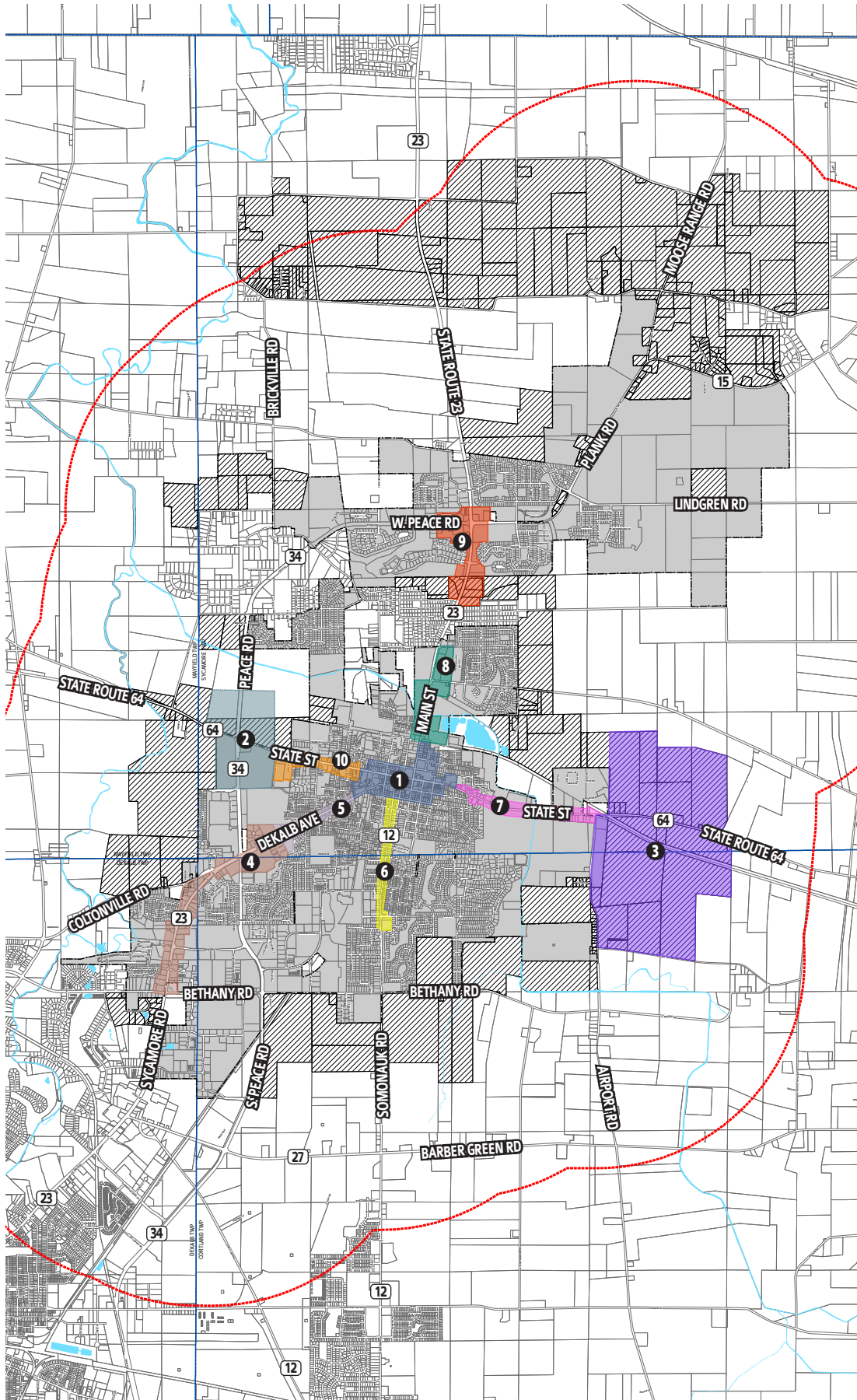


#### MAP 4: Future Subarea & Corridor Planning Studies

The City of Sycamore should prioritize and explore the future planning initiatives identified. This exhibit locates and lists a series of subarea plans, corridor studies, and gateway locations that may result in not only aesthetic enhancements to the city but other improvements beneficial to local development and economic interests.

##### SUBAREAS & CORRIDORS

- 1 Downtown Sycamore
- 2 Western Sycamore Subarea
- 3 Airport Road Subarea
- 4 South DeKalb Avenue Corridor
- 5 North DeKalb Avenue Corridor
- 6 Somonauk Street Corridor
- 7 East State Street Corridor
- 8 South IL Route 23 Corridor
- 9 North IL Route 23 Corridor
- 10 West State Street Corridor
- Municipal Boundary
- Planning Boundary



# 5

## CHAPTER FIVE

# DOWNTOWN SYCAMORE

***Downtown Sycamore embodies the Sycamore community and its identity. As the heart of the City, the historic center serves as home to the DeKalb County seat offering a collection of locally-owned shops and restaurants woven into a network of intimate tree-lined streets.***

High quality streetscapes enhance the traditional street grid in Downtown Sycamore by introducing on-street parking and wide, commercially-oriented sidewalks with a variety of traditional street features. These elements combine to establish an active pedestrian environment possessing the quaint nature of a traditional small town and reinforcing the identity and charm of the community.

This chapter identifies opportunities to further enhance the downtown area. These recommendations are based on outreach efforts conducted as part of the 2020 update and include resident and business owner surveys and interviews. Commonalities are broken down into five key areas; Marketing, Real Estate Market and Economic Development, Land Use and Zoning, Access and Circulation, and Signage and Wayfinding.

### MARKETING

One of the core discussion areas centered on “What is the draw to bring people to downtown Sycamore?” There is a general interest in determining how Sycamore can

promote the downtown area to people outside of the City who may not be aware of the types of shops, services, and the unique environment offered.

In addition to traditional print and online marketing, the use of information centers in the downtown area would provide opportunities to highlight businesses, history, unique architecture and significant natural features such as mature trees, all of which contribute to the unique atmosphere of the downtown. This can be accomplished through

informational kiosks in public parking areas or through a formal welcome center.

The City will continue to work closely with DeKalb County, the Sycamore Chamber of Commerce, the Sycamore Library and downtown businesses to ensure active communication as programs, events and initiatives help bring visitors to the downtown area. A welcome center or additional informational kiosks can be utilized to promote both programs and initiatives that are mutually beneficial to all parties.





Events and promotions are successful revenue generators for downtown businesses and participation by businesses is high. Creating new spaces and preserving existing ones so the size and number of events can grow should be a priority. Signage, curbside pickup modifications and other changes that have proved beneficial to businesses and shoppers should be retained.

## REAL ESTATE MARKET & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Residents, business owners and visitors all value downtown's mix of locally owned businesses, small town ambience and historic character. The City has invested in downtown and there is support for continuing that investment in the form of continued streetscape improvements, façade grants and financial incentives to small businesses. Residents and business owners benefit from a mix of businesses. New kinds of businesses should be encouraged. There is also a desire for more entertainment venues.

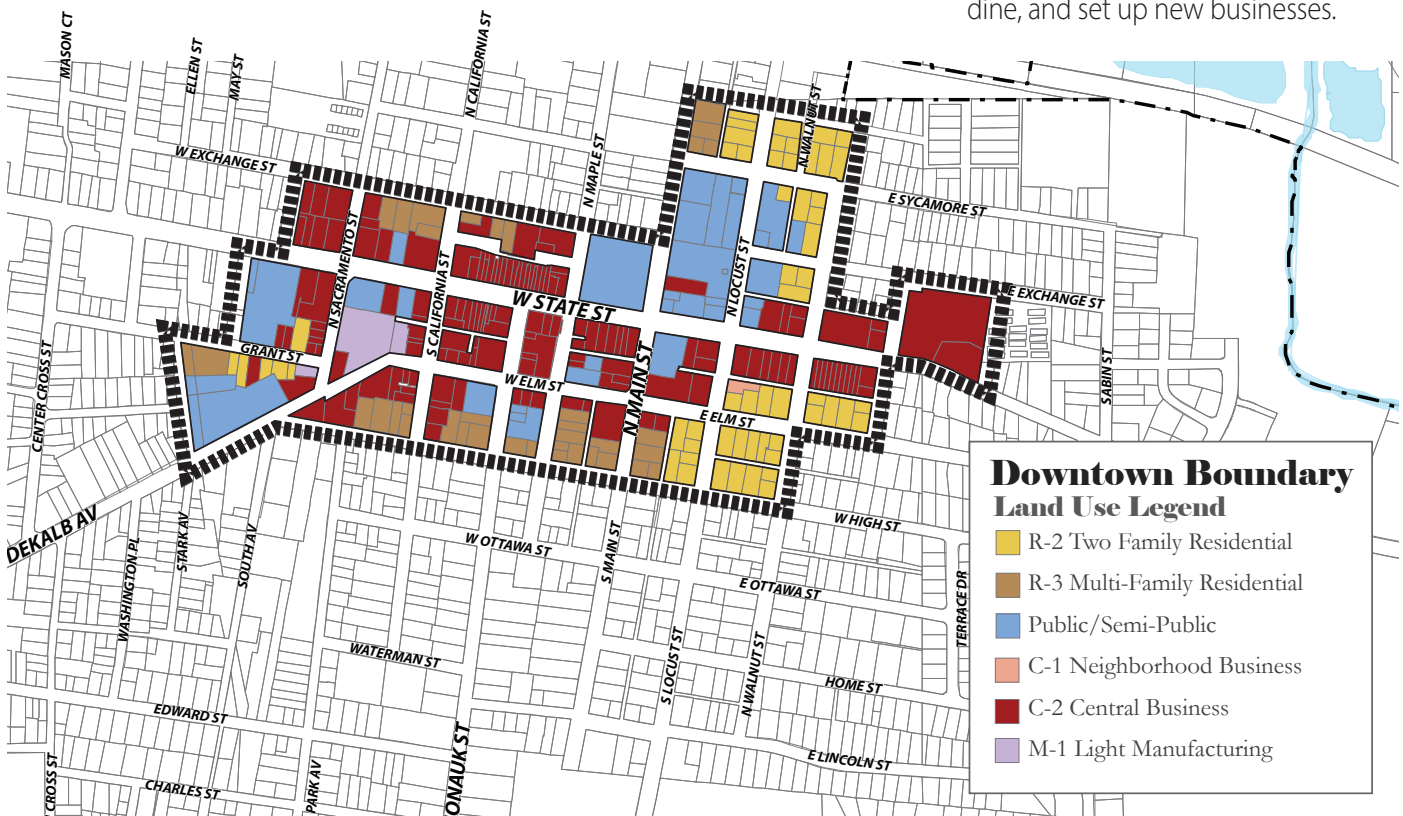
Filling storefronts is key to business success. A critical mass of retailers is necessary to continue to attract enough shoppers. Presently the storefronts are occupied by a mix of retail, restaurant, office, and service uses. Some traditional downtowns similar to Sycamore limit non retail or restaurant businesses in first floor street facing spaces. Sycamore might consider what a desirable balance is and consider policies to encourage that balance. Successful downtown businesses generate demand for more business space.

The City should pursue policies that encourage existing downtown businesses to expand into downtown space rather than relocating. Such policies benefit the businesses, downtown in general, and demand for downtown space. Population growth creates additional demand for the goods and services offered by downtown businesses. Therefore, business owners support residential growth. In particular, there is support for new residential development targeted to young adults.

## LAND USE & ZONING

"Should the footprint of the downtown be expanded, and if so in what direction?" Interest in the downtown area increased as the economy rebounded from the lows of the Great Recession. While several potential businesses approached the City looking to turn adjacent residential uses into commercial offices and/or storefronts, the emphasis has generally been to fill out the existing downtown district before considering expanding the footprint. The value of retaining residential areas adjacent to downtown in order to provide a strong base of customer support should be considered.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought instability to downtown, but also innovative ways to do business. However, City officials and local partners can work together to help stabilize the local economy, support local business owners, and take appropriate steps to continue making Sycamore a desirable place to shop, dine, and set up new businesses.



## ACTIVE DOWNTOWN

Implementation of programs to attract and retain unique businesses will help sustain an active downtown and fill vacant storefronts to draw shoppers, diners, and visitors to the downtown area. Encouraging the use of upper floor spaces for residential purposes provides a local base of residents who can visit downtown shops, services, and restaurants. A policy limiting the amount of first floor, street-facing space along State Street occupied by non retail/restaurant uses should be considered. Downtown should also provide spaces that appeal to employment-generating uses, such as professional offices, coworking spaces, business incubators, and flexible spaces for emerging entrepreneurs.

Downtown Sycamore would benefit from continued steps that enable it to evolve into a place where people live and work rather than just a place to visit for a short time and then leave. This would create a more active downtown that has an around-the-clock population of residents and workers who can support downtown businesses throughout the day. As vacancies begin to fill with new business and possible residential uses, the City will need to identify opportunities to expand parking.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic and the potential for sustained economic instability hampers the City's ability to adequately fill out downtown vacant spaces, particularly as various businesses and institutions struggle to keep their doors open. Once economic conditions improve to provide a stable marketplace for commerce and fill existing downtown spaces, expanding downtown can be revisited.

## DOWNTOWN BOUNDARIES & STREETSCAPING

While the boundaries of the downtown will remain largely unchanged, continued streetscaping efforts and signage will be utilized to create an attractive appearance as well as a cohesive identity for downtown Sycamore. The downtown streetscape can be extended to the west along Sacramento Street to remove unsightly overhead wires, reconstruct failing sidewalks, introduce more shade trees and greenery, and generally make the downtown more appealing to visitors. Other improvements will be incorporated to promote overall pedestrian safety and convenience such as flaring sidewalk corners at intersections to form safer crossings while discouraging rapid turns and rolling stops by motorists.



## COMMUNITY SPACES

Where possible, park and open green spaces should be incorporated throughout the downtown. Neighborhood parks such as the Charley Laing Memorial Park may be developed in order to introduce a natural element into downtown while promoting space for recreation and performing arts. Other features such as additional landscaping, planting or water features can be utilized to make community spaces more visually attractive. COVID-19 limitations on indoor business activities generated interest in additional outdoor spaces. Community spaces varying in size to accommodate small and larger gatherings should be considered. Adjustments to the uses allowed in existing community spaces, such as streets, sidewalks and parking lots, should be considered for retention where desired by the public and businesses.





## PARKING

Downtown Sycamore possesses a unique element that nearly no other downtown may offer, penny parking meters. Even as parking meter technology evolves, downtown Sycamore will preserve the tradition of penny meters as it helps shape the identity of the downtown. While the penny parking meters add to the quaint nature of the downtown, the meters also encourage traffic turnover which is important for the viability of downtown businesses. Diagonal, on-street parking along with public lots in the center and west end of the downtown generally meet existing parking needs. However, additional parking will be necessary as vacant spaces are occupied. Options for additional parking will be explored as opportunity arises. The location of additional spaces will seek to preserve Sycamore's traditional downtown streetscape. On-street parking will be prioritized before creating additional lots.

If additional public lots are needed, an effort will be made not to place new parking areas in prominent location along major roadways. The relocation or demolition of buildings to accommodate parking areas will also be avoided to preserve the downtown's traditional street wall. In situations where parking areas must be placed along the street



frontage, the installation of low and articulated screening walls or fencing will be used around public parking lots to form a pleasing street edge without creating security problems or diminishing visibility from the street.

## ACCESS & CIRCULATION

Vehicular access and circulation improvements focus primarily on improving visibility for downtown Sycamore and creating a healthy balance of various forms of transportation.

### PEDESTRIAN MOBILITY

Improving pedestrian access and circulation improvements will be factored into downtown Sycamore improvements. Making downtown Sycamore a safe and walkable area for pedestrians and bicyclists encourages more visitors to frequent the area.

The streetscapes within the downtown area create a warm and inviting environment but there is a need to connect the downtown with other areas of Sycamore through multiuse trails and paths. This can be accomplished utilizing current walks and making the connections with signage (i.e. directional paths tying the Great Western Trail to the downtown area). This increased connectivity would allow residents and visitors the opportunity to travel

into downtown without relying on automobiles. Incorporating more bicycle parking areas would promote a more bicycle friendly environment.

### TRUCK TRAFFIC

Reducing truck traffic in the downtown area would create a more pleasant pedestrian environment. However, given that State Street (Route 64) is controlled by the State of Illinois, reducing such traffic is unlikely. A focused truck traffic study and collaboration with IDOT may help identify potential methods to address truck traffic, even if such solutions may require rerouting to other roadways (existing or new) and be a long-term undertaking. For example, cities with similar issues have proposed the diversion of truck traffic away from downtown onto proposed bypass roadways, which have the foresight to be designed and built specifically to withstand expected truck traffic loads in less pedestrian-oriented areas.

A shorter-term solution may be to explore the potential to establish truck delivery times during non-peak business hours, such as the early morning or late at night. While this won't eliminate truck traffic in the downtown, it would help reduce conflicts between trucks, pedestrians, bicyclists, and other motorists.





## WAYFINDING & SIGNAGE

The Sycamore downtown area is a source of great pride and helps shape the local identity. With a clearly established system of streetscaping in place, minor additions are needed to improve an already effective strategy in downtown Sycamore.

Gateway features announce entrance into the downtown area. These features should be designed and implemented in order to signal arrival into a special and unique environment and would be used to promote downtown Sycamore to visitors. The use of trees, landscaping or even a water feature could be features incorporated in these gateways.

In addition to gateway signage, wayfinding signage throughout the downtown guides visitors to parking areas and other points of interest while creating a brand unique to the downtown. This branding would help visitors understand the downtown boundaries, more easily identify parking areas and reinforce the image of the area.



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# CHAPTER SIX

## URBAN DESIGN GUIDELINES

***Urban design refers to the appearance of a community as well as the layouts and functional relationships of our streets, neighborhoods, private and public buildings, common areas and open spaces.***

Either by design or by a coincidence of unrelated private choices, our community will leave an impression. It will be based, of course, on how people are treated when they visit our town. The impression we leave will also be based on physical images such as the perceived bulk and height of structures, the relationship between buildings and open spaces, the facilities for getting around the community whether on foot or by bicycle or by motor vehicle, the locations and layouts of shopping areas and business centers, and the appearance of our public facilities.

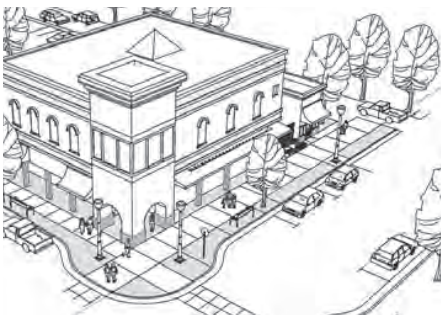
Feedback from City officials and community members during the 2014 and 2020 updates of the comprehensive plan indicated a consistent concern for the look of the Sycamore community, including quality of design of developments and maintenance of existing properties.

Generally speaking, most residents want to retain a small town feel while accommodating managed growth.

How can this be accomplished?



Source: Urban design graphics prepared by WBK Engineering as part of the Sycamore 2014 Comprehensive Plan





The Comprehensive Plan Update proposes the following general objectives:

- A careful definition of the desired uses at the community's edges, physical connections between old and new parts of town in the form of sidewalks and bike paths and open space development.
- More subtle connections in the form of compatible architectural designs encouraged during the PUD approval process.
- The clustering of new commercial development at strategic arterial and collector crossroads rather than at many remote locations.
- Extending the downtown streetscape to downtown side streets and preserving our historic neighborhoods to strengthen the community's core.
- Encouraging shared driveways rather than multiple access points to commercial and industrial subdivisions.
- Minimizing the visual impact of larger commercial and industrial buildings with residential-style roof planes, wall articulation, better entry definition, and landscaping.
- Promoting durable exterior finishes of natural materials such as masonry or wood on larger buildings.
- Maintaining a multi-year plan for infrastructure repairs to enhance the community's appearance and better serve existing businesses and residences.

The Comprehensive Plan (Chapter Three) provides a series of planning goals and objectives to achieve these ends. The Plan also anticipates a continuing commitment to community planning that includes the development of sub-area plans and very general design guidelines that promote an attractive urban community.

This document supports urban design guidelines that are intended to encourage more attention to appealing existing designs and a more creative integration of building layouts and natural features in new developments. They are also intended to promote:

- A sharper focus on the human scale, or how favorably people confront the local built environment;
- A higher concern for the potential conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles;
- More attention to the scale and arrangement of new buildings and their relationship to existing buildings; and
- More interest in how natural features might present opportunities rather than development constraints.

Urban design elements include roadways, signage, parking lots, utilities, plantings, and open spaces. A creative arrangement of such elements can lead to results that reflect the pride of the property owners and developer as well as the community at large.

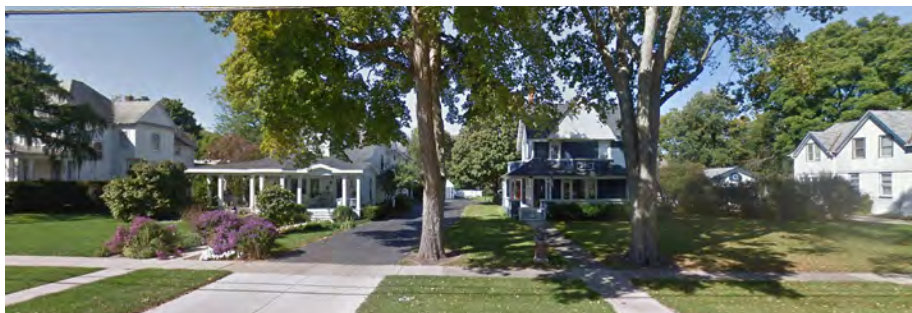
## ARTICLE ONE PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT & SUBDIVISION DESIGN

**Guideline:** Provide parks and open space featuring bikepaths and pedestrian paths connecting with neighborhoods and green spaces as well as neighborhood services (e.g., schools, neighborhood commercial districts).

**Action:** Implement through the subdivision review process using the City's Greenway Plan as a guide. Collaborate with the Sycamore Park District and developers to identify major bikeway links with public easements before logical pathways are compromised by subdivided lot lines.

**Guideline:** Strive for diversity in building design. In past decades, the slower evolution of small subdivisions led to a mix of building scale, building heights, and parcel sizes. Today, as large farm tracts are purchased for development, upfront development costs are enormous and there is a stronger economic incentive to build out a property as quickly as possible. As a result, subdivisions tend to replicate the look of developments in most metropolitan suburbs, and the unique feel of a community is diminished.

**Action:** In addition to unique entrance features, attractive landscape buffers along arterials, and connecting links of attractive bike paths and pedestrian walkways, more attention should be given to land use at the community's edges to promote a distinct image consistent with the character of the City's core. Some communities encourage estate belts that invite the feeling that one is traveling toward a central core. Others are becoming more prescriptive in terms of residential design along such corridors. The diverse "Sycamore look," below, suggests a design preference for the community's edges.



**Guideline:** Provide attractive entry features such as masonry walls with integrated signage and ornamental foliage, using building materials and landscaping that will be commonly seen in the new development.

**Action:** Require elevation and plan views of entry features as part of subdivision or PUD approval process.

---

**Guideline:** Along new collector streets and minor arterials, require deeper setbacks with the provision of a wider parkway on at least one side for a paved bikepath accented with trees.

**Action:** Follow the general design criteria in Article 6.6, Landscaping and Tree Preservation, of the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO).

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**Guideline:** Minimize the visual impact of utilities such as overhead wires and poles. This will reduce visual clutter and make homes and businesses more visible.

**Action:** With the participation of local utilities, decisions can be made as the preliminary plan and plat are being prepared for final review.

---

**Guideline:** In the design of new subdivisions and planned developments, draw attention to natural features through view sheds or visual corridors.

**Action:** Implement through the annexation and subdivision process.

---

**Guideline:** Provide for substantial landscape buffers between various types of uses. This would include transitions between commercial and industrial uses, commercial or industrial and residential uses, and between different types of residential uses. Areas featuring single-family detached homes should be buffered from townhouse developments. A combination of berms, walls, landscaping, and yard depths can be used to establish a compatible fit between new and adjacent uses.

**Action:** Follow the general design criteria in Article 6.6, Landscaping and Tree Preservation, of the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO).

## ARTICLE TWO SINGLE-FAMILY & TWO-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL USES

**Guideline:** New developments and subdivisions should feature lot areas, lot dimensions, and housing types that are compatible with surrounding neighborhoods.

**Action:** Implement through the review of subdivisions and planned developments at the staff, Plan Commission, and Council levels. Follow Articles 4.4 and 4.5 of the UDO to assure that preliminary plans and plats depict the sizes and dimensions of all adjacent lots around the periphery of the proposed development for reference.

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**Guideline:** Developments should be designed with a variety of façade and elevation views to avoid the dominance of garages on the street side of buildings.

**Action:** Work with developers to offer a variety of visual elements. Varied garage arrangements are more achievable on wider lots or corner lots, but some variety can be achieved on smaller lots by thrusting the living space forward from straight-in garages or encouraging side- and rear-loaded garages.

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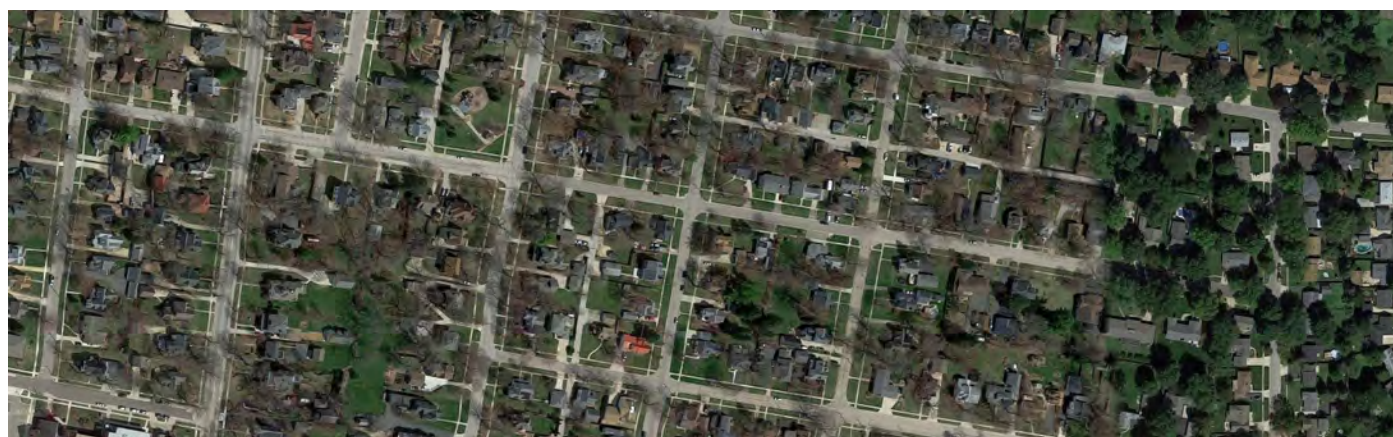
**Guideline:** Developments should feature variety in architectural details to distinguish individual homes. Such variety should extend to side and rear elevations, as well as front or street elevations.

**Action:** Some developers feature a variety of front facades but repetitive rear views in their subdivisions. A review of representative building elevations could be a part of the staff report to the Plan Commission during the public hearing process.

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**Guideline:** Two-Family and Single-Family developments should be buffered through such features as increased setbacks at common lot lines and landscaping.

**Action:** Follow Articles 6.5 and 6.6 of the UDO.





## ARTICLE THREE MULTIPLE FAMILY USES

**Guideline:** If multiple family buildings are constructed adjacent to existing developments, their architectural designs should be generally compatible with the scale and bulk of structures in the adjacent neighborhood(s).

**Action:** Vary roof lines and use door and window shapes and sizes that replicate the more architecturally significant features of adjacent buildings.

**Guideline:** Provide “density with dignity.” Reduce the perceived density of attached townhouses, condominiums, or apartment buildings.

**Action:** Provide a variety of roof and building lines, a variety of exterior building finishes and materials, varied garage arrangements, and maximal landscaping opportunities to soften building sizes. Consider the need for privacy in the alignment of bedroom windows in opposing buildings, and as they may relate to parking areas.

**Guideline:** Integrate green or open areas with building layouts to provide for the convenience and recreation of residents.

**Action:** Encourage pedestrian and bike paths throughout the development to link buildings with other buildings; buildings with parking areas; and buildings with neighborhood parks, shopping areas, or common areas. Assure that open spaces are located in safe, convenient, and observable locations.

**Guideline:** Minimize the visual impact of common off-street parking areas.

**Action:** Require additional guest parking to be provided in rear yards in higher density developments, or on wider streets. Follow Article 6.6 of the UDO which increases the aggregate interior landscaping for additional parking in multiple family developments when minimum parking requirements are met.



Source: Urban design graphics prepared by WBK Engineering as part of the Sycamore 2014 Comprehensive Plan





## ARTICLE FOUR COMMERCIAL USES

**Guideline:** For large-scale commercial buildings, the architectural design shall maintain a human scale through variations in wall planes, a variety of building materials, sharpened entry definition, varying roof planes, and the creative layout of windows and other wall openings. Windowless walls should be avoided on front facades or sides facing public ways. Where large blank walls are unavoidable, changes in colors and building materials or additional landscaping should be provided to soften the visual effect. Dominant building colors and materials should be applied to all sides of the building.

**Action:** Encourage voluntary compliance through the site plan and building review process. Consider turning some or all of the guidelines listed above into requirements rather than voluntary, particularly by codifying the guidelines in the UDO.

**Guideline:** Minimize parking areas in front yards or corner side yards.

**Action:** Refer to Article Eight of these guidelines for more detail.

**Guideline:** Increase landscaping within commercial developments to soften the visual impact of larger buildings, longer driveways, and large parking areas. For example, landscape buffers can be established along street frontages regardless of the size of adjacent parking areas or other buffering requirements. In addition, landscaped corridors can be established along entry drives and within parking rows, rather than simply at the end of parking rows. Such additional landscaping can be established without hindering sight lines between streets and buildings or streets and principal signage. Landscaping also helps to reduce the amount of impervious surfaces on a site, which allows for improved storm water management.

**Action:** Follow Article 6.6 of the UDO.

**Guideline:** Ensure that building improvements in the Central Business District are compatible with the existing pattern of historic structures and open spaces.

**Action:** Enforce the Conservation District for the State Street corridor from Main Street to Sacramento Street, established in November, 2006.

## ARTICLE FIVE INDUSTRIAL USES

**Guideline:** Provide landscaped buffer areas between different types of industrial uses, as well as between industrial and commercial uses, or between industrial and residential uses. For example, in light manufacturing zoning districts a variety of retail uses can be established along with more traditional manufacturing uses. Such uses may not be compatible from a design standpoint, although they may be identified as allowable uses in the Zoning Code.

**Action:** Follow Article 6.6 of the UDO which brings landscaping requirements for Light and Heavy manufacturing districts into line with the landscaping requirements for ORI Office, Research, and Light Industrial zoning districts.

**Guideline:** Consider the adoption of design criteria for industrial buildings in specific corridors with high public visibility, including the Bethany Road corridor and the future extension of Oakland Drive.

**Action:** A developer's voluntary submittal of conceptual site and architectural plans for buildings in such highly-traveled areas for Plan Commission review will invite detailed suggestions.

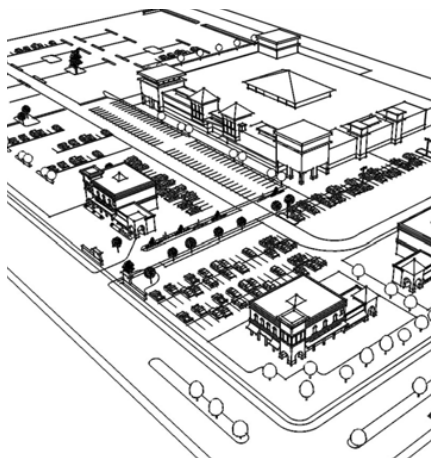
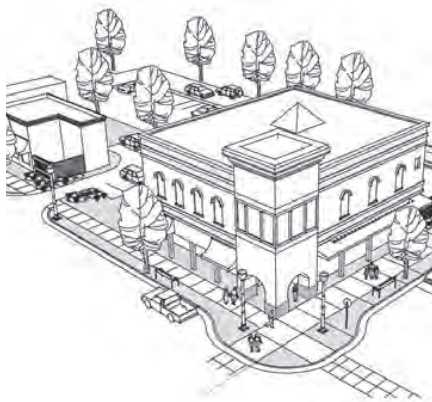
**Guideline:** Perimeter landscaping should be provided for all parking lots regardless of size.

**Action:** Follow Article 6.6 of the UDO.

**Guideline:** Provide bike path links and pedestrian sidewalks to and from industrial lots so nearby commercial and residential neighborhoods can be more connected.

**Action:** Address as part of any subdivision, re-subdivision, or planned unit development review.

Source: Urban design graphics prepared by WBK Engineering as part of the Sycamore 2014 Comprehensive Plan



## ARTICLE SIX PUBLIC & INSTITUTIONAL USES

**Guideline:** Public, civic, and institutional buildings should provide green space and landscaping in excess of conventional commercial developments.

**Action:** Since capital allocations for public improvements typically go through a public vetting process, site plans for development or redevelopment of public and civic spaces should undergo rigorous scrutiny.

**Guideline:** New public structures should be architecturally bold and serve as community landmarks.

**Action:** Fiscal constraints will typically restrain innovation in design and construction. However, some economies can be found in non-institutional exterior features such as pitched roofs, residential-style fixed or operable windows, and natural, long-lasting materials such as wood, masonry, or brick.

**Guideline:** Parking areas should be more visible through attractive directional and lot signs. Low and articulated screening walls or landscape fencing around public parking lots will offer a more pleasing street edge without creating security problems.

**Action:** Continue phasing lot improvements as part of the multi-year City capital plan.

**Guideline:** Encourage more attractive City entryways.

**Action:** Upgrade the existing lighted and landscaped entrance signs on West and East State Street leading into the City. Add additional signage that clearly distinguished entry into Sycamore along Peace/Plank Road and Route 23. Investigate more detailed zoning restrictions for properties along well-defined

corridors, in order to moderate conflicting uses and promote more compatible uses over time.

**Guideline:** Create a uniform identity through the use of signs, landscaping and streetscapes in specific sub-areas.

**Action:** Install consistent gateway, way-finding and downtown signage to clearly enhance the City's identity and promote tourism and commerce. Article Seven Storm Water Detention Systems Guideline: Wet and dry detention ponds should be landscaped features, with minimal rip-rap on side slopes and a natural shape rather than a standard geometric shape. Action: During the site review process prior to Plan Commission consideration, the developer should consider such a project amenity.

**Guideline:** Avoid development impacts in floodplain or flood-prone areas.

**Action:** Prohibit building in undeveloped floodplain areas except for park and recreational facilities, or where one hundred fifty percent (150%) of the displaced flood storage is provided in an adjoining floodplain or floodway area as approved by FEMA.

## ARTICLE SEVEN STORM WATER DETENTION SYSTEMS

Wet and dry detention ponds should be landscaped features, with minimal rip-rap on side slopes and a natural shape rather than a standard geometric shape. Native plantings are also encouraged to provide for more natural maintenance and filtration, as well as provide for natural habitats for wildlife that sustain local ecosystems. Where appropriate, allow permeable surfaces for parking and driveways.

## ARTICLE EIGHT SIGNAGE

**Guideline:** In planned commercial developments and integrated strip centers with more than one lot, encourage monument-style signs where ground signs are permitted. Limit pylon or pole signs to the C-3 Highway Business Districts and allow only one per planned development, advertising only the name and location of the commercial center and the names of the tenants. On one-lot subdivisions with a single tenant or owner in the C-3 Highway Business District, pylon signs may be permitted.

**Action:** Follow Article 6.8.8 of the UDO for clarity on this point.

**Guideline:** For signs over eight feet in height, establish a stronger relationship between the sign and the ground with landscaping or a more solid base of materials that match the principal buildings in the development. This will soften the visual transition between vertical and horizontal planes.

**Action:** Follow Article 6.8.8.C of the UDO.

**Guideline:** In the C-2 Central Business District, the design of wall signs shall bear some relation to the historical architectural features of the district.

**Action:** The City's Architectural Review Committee will review downtown sign permit applications per the Downtown Conservation District guidelines adopted on November 20, 2006.



## ARTICLE NINE PARKING LOTS

**Guideline:** As indicated in Articles Three, Four, Five and Six, above, and as noted at various points in the Comprehensive Plan, parking areas significantly affect the look of a parcel or a neighborhood. Perimeter screening or landscaping is desirable in all zoning districts. In addition, landscaped islands at intermediate points in long parking rows are recommended in larger parking lots.

**Action:** Follow Article 6.6 of the UDO.

**Guideline:** Wherever possible, minimize parking spaces in front yards or corner side yards in multiple family residence districts, commercial districts, and industrial zoning districts.

**Action:** Seek cooperation during the Plan Commission review of individual site plans.

**Guideline:** Take into account all four seasons when planning parking lots to account for snow storage, heavy rains, and autumn leaves.

**Action:** Developers should be encouraged to provide landscaping

that is tolerant of salt and snow; to provide green space for snow storage; to select tree varieties that shed minimal foliage; and to minimize storm water ponding in driving aisles after hard rains that will inconvenience motorists and pedestrians. Permeable surfaces should also be encouraged to assist with storm water management and reduce impervious surfaces.

**Guideline:** In larger lots, pedestrian safety is an issue. Provide marked crossings to warn drivers of pedestrians.

**Action:** Address during plan review process.

**Guideline:** In larger, planned commercial developments, encourage shared lots with internal cross-easements to provide legal access between adjacent parcels.

**Action:** Implement on a case-by-case basis during the review of subdivision plats.

## ARTICLE TEN ACCESSORY STRUCTURES

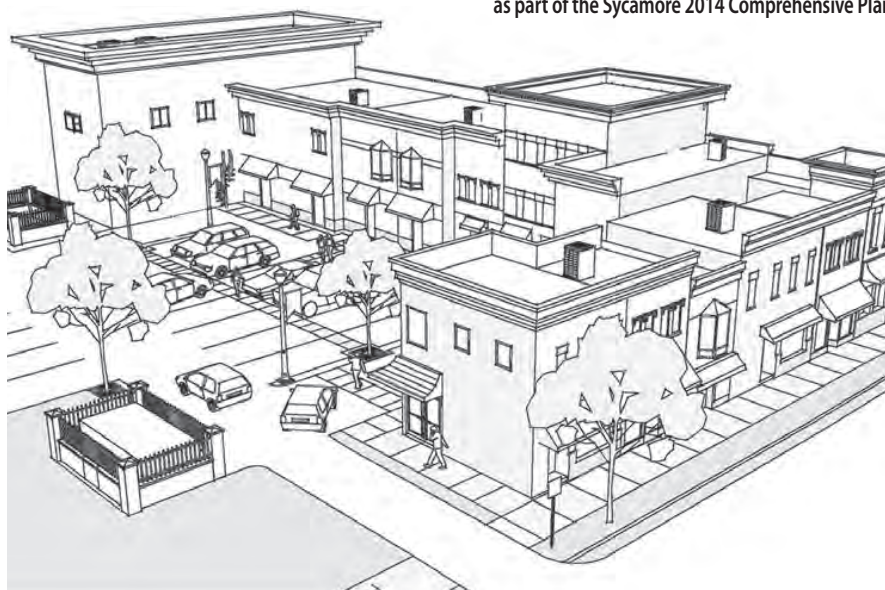
**Guideline:** Dumpster enclosures, utility sheds and other accessory structures should be landscaped and designed to match the architecture, finish, durability, and color of the building(s) they serve.

**Action:** Give more attention to the design of such structures during the subdivision review process. Follow the provisions of Article 6.2 of the UDO.

**Guideline:** Loading areas, outdoor storage, refuse enclosures, HVAC equipment, drive-through queues, and other accessory uses should be located in the side or rear yards whenever possible.

**Action:** Promote attention to such details during the site plan review process. If voluntary compliance is not routinely achieved, some revisions to the UDO may be necessary.

Source: Urban design graphics prepared by WBK Engineering as part of the Sycamore 2014 Comprehensive Plan





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