

**City of Highland Park**

**WESTSIDE DISTRICT**

**Neighborhood  
Strategic  
Plan**

**Approved  
May 1999**

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## INTRODUCTION

### **Relationship to Master Plan**

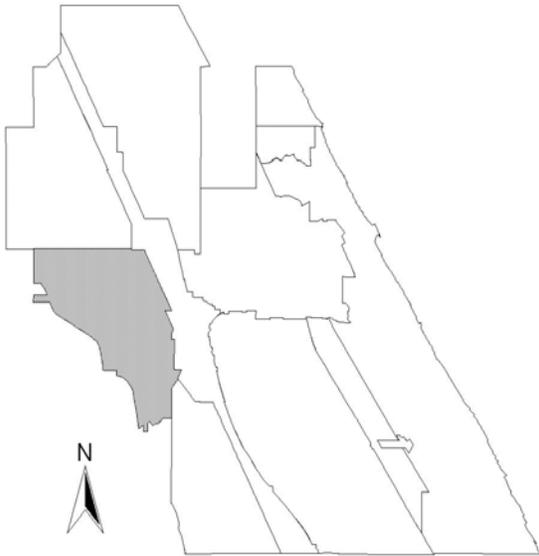
In 1997, the City's 1976 Comprehensive Master Plan was updated to reflect the changing needs of the community. The second phase of that process was the division of the City into neighborhood districts that would allow residents the opportunity to be a part of the planning process. The Westside District is one of eleven planning districts created for that purpose.

### **Neighborhood Planning Process**

In July of 1997, every resident in the Westside district was invited to a neighborhood kick-off meeting to discuss the planning process. They were asked to write down what they felt should be the important issues addressed in a neighborhood plan for the Westside neighborhood. Residents were then encouraged to become a part of the neighborhood planning committee that would meet to create the neighborhood plan. Over the last year and a half, neighbors from the Westside district have come together to address those issues that have an impact on their neighborhood, the good and the bad. Each meeting focused on a particular subject, (zoning, infrastructure, public safety traffic, etc.). At the conclusion of each meeting, the planning committee identified important issues within each topic, then prioritized these issues with neighborhood objectives.

Community Development staff drafted the neighborhood plan based on the meeting discussions and written comments from residents. Areas where neighborhood residents feel future city and community efforts should be focused were identified. From the list of objectives, an action plan was developed that specially identified key agencies responsible for each issue and set a reasonable timeframe to meet the objectives.

The Neighborhood Planning Committee reviewed this draft and made changes prior to a second neighborhood wide public meeting. This meeting gave the neighborhood an opportunity to comment on the draft plan before it was sent to the Plan Commission for consideration.



The Westside Neighborhood Strategic Plan is the result of citizen participation in the master planning process. The objectives and recommendations are by no means the views of everyone who lives in Westside district. It is however, a representation of the general views, goals and desires of a neighborhood community for the purpose of providing direction to present and future city leaders on matters such as zoning, infrastructure and planning.



*“ 1923- Opening day for the newly paved Deerfield Road. City fathers boast that it is the finest “hard” road in the state as it is 24 feet across, rather than the standard 18 feet.”*

- “West Side Story” A Time Line, October 1996

## NEIGHBORHOOD PROFILE

### History

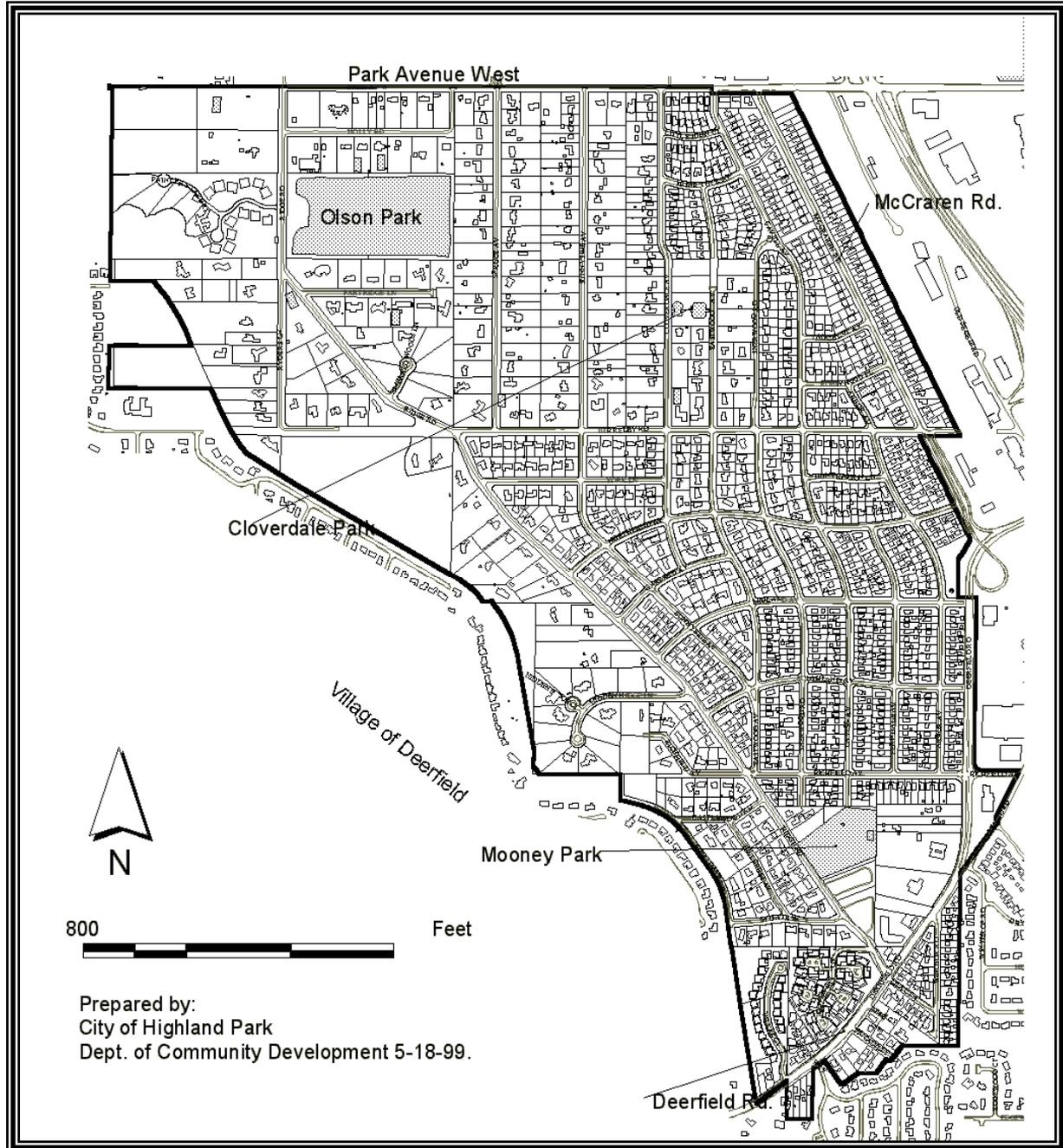
First settled in the 1840’s, this area would see dramatic changes over the next 150 years. Settlers sought land in this area to grow crops that would be close to city markets in Chicago. It was a wooded and marshy area, drained poorly by the North Branch of the Chicago River to the west and the Skokie River to the east. As Port Clinton, (Highland Park) developed to the east, this area quietly attracted settlers looking for opportunity and a new way of life.

By 1861, only 12 families lived in what is now the Sherwood Forest area, but things were changing. Highland Park was incorporated in 1869, spurred by the opening of railroad service between Waukegan and Chicago in 1854. And at the turn of the century, as Highland Park grew in population and wealth, its boundaries grew westward. The pressure was on the Westside area as farmland was converted to subdivisions such as Jacob Hovland’s Highland Park Acres and George Nixon’s Highland Park Gardens.

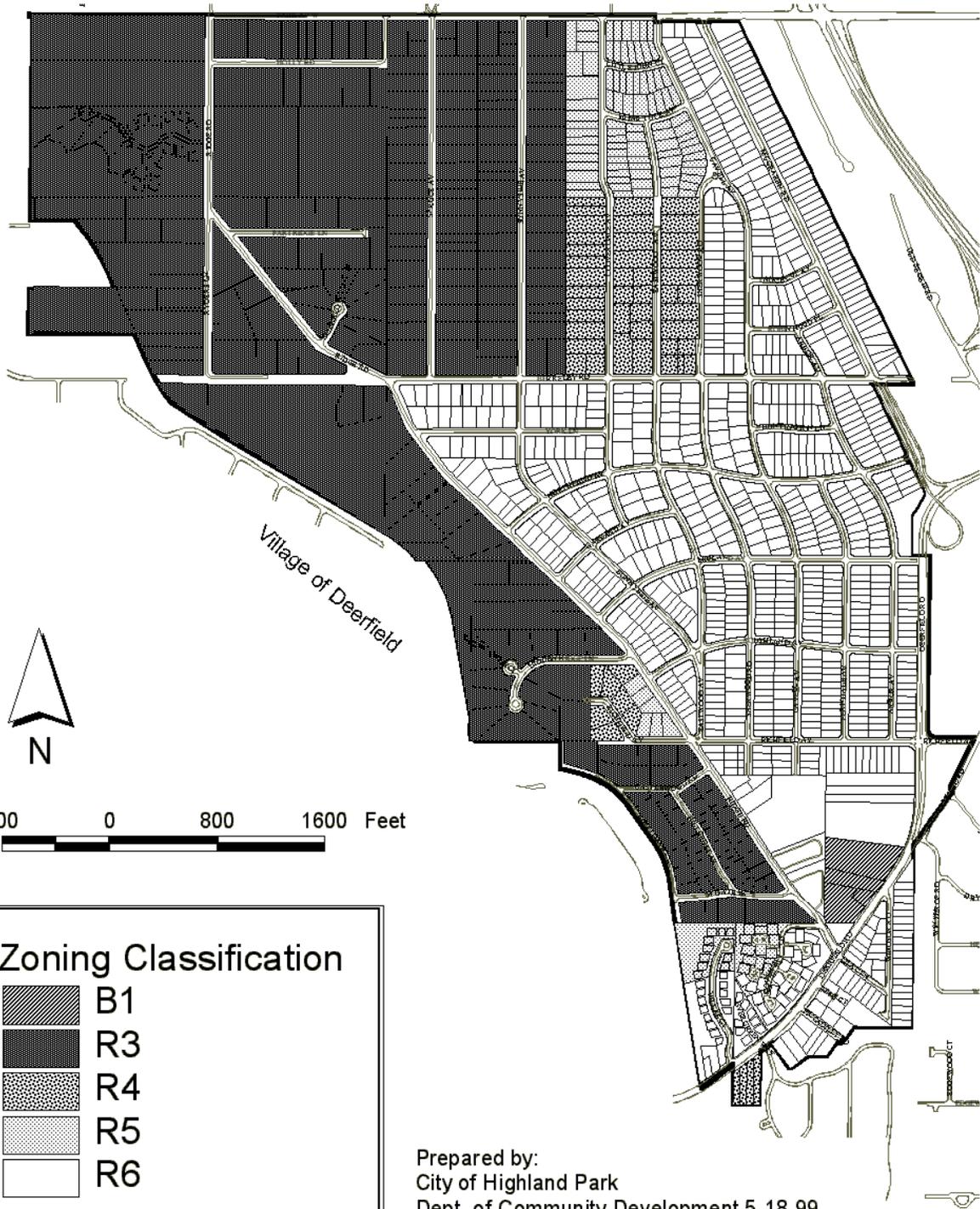
Residential growth during the 1920’s and 1930’s saw Highland Park’s municipal boundaries expand westward as the subdivisions desired city services, turning a mostly rural area into a suburban one. Neighborhood character, accessibility to shopping and train service to Chicago has made the Westside area a popular Highland Park neighborhood to live in.

## District Boundaries

Generally, the Westside District comprises the west central portion of the city. Its boundaries begin at Park Avenue West in the Northeast corner and follow the Chicago & Northwestern Railroad Southeast. With the exception of the commercial properties on the East Side of Mc Craren Road., it continues South to Deerfield Road. From Deerfield Road Southwest it reaches the North Branch of the Chicago River including the Ridge View and Oak Meadow subdivisions. The Neighborhood boundary is completed as it follows the North Branch of the Chicago River North back to Park Avenue West.



# Westside Neighborhood District



## VISION STATEMENT

This vision statement was created from the collective goals and objectives of the community brought out during the neighborhood planning process. For the casual reader this statement highlights what future planning efforts in the Westside Neighborhood should address.

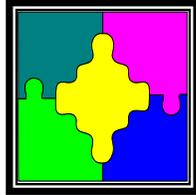
*To sustain a safe, involved and inclusive residential community, which pro-actively balances the city's Master Plan with the needs and goals of the Westside neighborhood. To provide guidance to city leaders through the following neighborhood objectives:*

- *Maintain the existing neighborhood character, for it is essential to preserving the quality of life that Westside residents enjoy.*
- *Preserve and maintain existing neighborhood parks and open space.*
- *Promote housing diversity, both economically and architecturally.*
- *Control density through zoning.*
- *Encourage neighborhood integration by strengthening physical linkages to other neighborhoods.*



## ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Major issues identified by Westside neighborhood residents were divided into four categories; Zoning, Neighborhood Character and Urban Design, Infrastructure and Public and Traffic Safety.



### ZONING



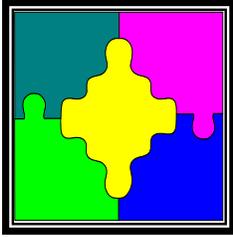
### NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER AND URBAN DESIGN



### INFRASTRUCTURE



### PUBLIC AND TRAFFIC SAFETY



*“It is, perhaps, in its official designation as “neighborhood park” that Olson plays its most important, though most unassuming role. It is the site of neighborhood events as large as block parties and gatherings as small as a man and his son walking their dog.”*

–Highland Park  
Conservation Society  
Newsletter, spring 1997

## ZONING

### **Objective: Preserve, maintain and foster parks in the Westside District.**

Westside is home to five parks. Each provides space for active children and serenity from busy city streets. It is a priority to neighborhood residents to insure that these parks are maintained for them and future neighborhood use. Westside residents are concerned that without the creation of a special zoning district for open space, existing parks, particularly ones not owned or maintained by the Park District could be threatened by development in the future.

#### Recommended Action Steps:

- Encourage School District #112 to give the park district right of first refusal on its half of Olson Park.
- Promote the preservation of small “pocket parks” like Buckthorn and future development of similar parks.
- Vacate the west half of Eastwood Avenue along Cloverdale Park and give to the park district to prevent the street’s extension.
- Ensure continued enjoyment of current “open space” uses such as parks, schools and golf courses by rezoning these areas to R1 or by the creation of a new “open space” zoning district.

### **Objective: Rezone the western part of the existing R-6 zoning district to a modified R-5**

Over time, as a neighborhood changes, the zoning restrictions implemented years ago may no longer be the most appropriate regulatory guide, particularly if neighborhood character has been altered.

The western section of the current R-6 single-family zoning district typifies such a change. Many of the homes in that area sit on lots twice the size required, (7,260 sq. ft.) for the zoning district. Under the present zoning requirements, many of these properties could be subdivided, changing the character and density of the neighborhood.

Recommended Action Step:

- Create a separate R-5A zoning district out of the western portion of the current R-6 zoning district that would have a minimum lot size of 10,000 square feet and special side yard setbacks of 8 feet. (See Appendix A)



*“Recent teardowns and infill projects are changing the character of our neighborhood.”*

-Local Resident

*NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER AND URBAN DESIGN*

**Objective: Preserve the Character of Residential Neighborhoods.**

Largely a residential neighborhood, Westside residents would like to keep it that way. Their streets are heavily lined with large shade trees that are uniquely characteristic of older suburban neighborhoods. Walking through the neighborhood one would notice that no two homes are exactly alike, but at the same time are in harmony with one another.

However, neighborhood residents are concerned that this is changing. While they realize that time will inevitably alter a neighborhood in some way, (family additions, new homes replacing old, etc.) the residents of Westside want to maintain the existing character of the neighborhoods that they live in. They want to see new development fit the size and character of existing neighborhood homes.

Neighborhood character also includes streetscape considerations. Placement of sidewalks too close to the street and pavement that removes existing vegetation may provide the access residents need, but significantly alter neighborhood environment.

Recommended Action Steps:

- Discourage teardowns at the Historic Preservation Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals and City Council level.
- Require construction of new sidewalks to conform to existing natural conditions, preserving vegetation and promoting landscape buffers.
- Reaffirm the City's policy of protecting mature trees.
- Encourage the development of a program that would provide incentives, (property tax relief, building permit fee waivers) to homeowners to keep and remodel their existing home and not demolish it.



*INFRASTRUCTURE*

**Objective: Improve Deerfield Road.**

As an entrance to the city and a major thoroughfare that provides access to retail, schools, public highways and homes, the importance of Deerfield Road to Highland Park residents goes beyond the residents of the Westside neighborhood. Because Westside neighbors are so dependent on its ability to transport them to other areas, its maintenance and continued improvement is vital to the success of the neighborhood.

Recommended Action Steps:

- Encourage the City to accelerate the transfer of Deerfield Road from the Illinois Department of Transportation by making the improvements necessary for that transfer a priority.
- Redo the intersection at Deerfield Road and Richfield Avenue by improving drainage, surfacing and intersection layout.

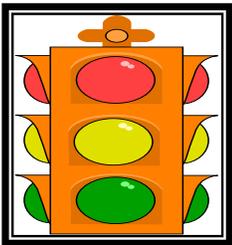
**Objective: Infrastructure issues and their impact on future development**

Whether it is the construction of a new home or a new shopping center, knowing the capacity of existing infrastructure and needs for future development is a part of every city's development review. Westside neighborhood residents are concerned that because of their existing

mature sewer and water systems, new projects will cause a greater strain on the services that they rely on.

**Recommended Action Steps:**

- Stop illegal hook-ups to the sanitary sewer system.
- Solve storm water issues, (i.e. basement flooding) in Westside neighborhoods, particularly the Sherwood area.
- Have the Public Works Department work with residents to identify existing sewer and water trouble spots.



***PUBLIC AND TRAFFIC SAFETY***

**Objective: Improving vehicular safety and efficiency through signage and light controls**

In conjunction with speed limit regulation, placement of traffic signs at strategic points helps to control the flow of traffic.

**Recommended Action Steps:**

- For better traffic flow and to discourage speeding, link traffic signals along Deerfield Road. from Highway 41 to Ridge Road.
- Make the stop signs at Berkeley and Ridge Road more visible.
- Make the intersection at Cavell Avenue and Sherwood Road a 3-way stop.
- Make the intersection at Ridge Road and Richfield Avenue a 5-way stop.

**Objective: Adjust neighborhood speed limits to make streets safer.**

Speed limits not only provide a safety measure to protect pedestrians and vehicular riders alike; they also regulate the flow of traffic through a community in the most efficient manner. With the exception of Deerfield Road, most of the Westside District is residential, requiring lower speeds for residential safety.

*“Travel along Ridge Road for cars and pedestrians is dangerous.”*

-Comments from Westside residents

Recommended Action Steps:

- Encourage continued police enforcement of speeding along Ridge Road south of Park Avenue West.
- Decrease the speed limit on Berkeley Road from 30 to 25 mph.
- Recommend to the Northwest Neighborhood District to increase the speed limit on Ridge Road to 30 mph between Park Avenue West and Half-Day Road.

**Objective: Encourage further development of safe and efficient pedestrian and bicycle transportation systems.**

Because of its proximity to major traffic areas, the Westside neighborhood presents many challenges to the pedestrian and the bicyclist. Heavy vehicular traffic and little or no supporting infrastructure in the form of sidewalks, bike paths and trails can create barriers to non-automotive transportation. Throughout the neighborhood there are destination points that are desirable to adults and children alike. Some examples of where people want and need to go include parks, schools, municipal buildings and services, commercial shopping districts and community events. Residents and their destination points need to be linked safely for pedestrian and bicycle use so those alternative modes of transportation are encouraged.

Recommended Action Steps:

- Support the construction of a pedestrian bridge at Park Avenue as proposed in the 1997 Greenways Plan to provide a safe way for people to get over Highway 41.
- Add sidewalks on the north side of Deerfield from Richfield to Ridge.
- Provide sidewalks continuously along Ridge Road from Deerfield Road to Berkeley Road.
- Add a sidewalk along the North side of Berkeley Road between Sherwood and Ridge Road.
- Set back sidewalks from road as far as possible to protect pedestrians from vehicular traffic.
- Install a crosswalk across Deerfield Road between Richfield and U.S. Route 41.
- Support efforts by the Police Department to educate residents on the rules of the road. This pertains to vehicular, bicyclists, rollerbladers and pedestrians alike

## WESTSIDE ACTION STEPS

OBJECTIVES AND ACTION STEPS	RESPONSIBLE AGENCY	TIME TABLE
Encourage School District #112 to give the Park District right of first refusal on its half of Olson Park.	Community Development Department	1 year
Promote the preservation of small “pocket parks” like Buckthorn and future development of similar parks.	Community Development Department	On going
Vacate the west half of Eastwood Avenue along Cloverdale Park and give to the Park district to prevent the street’s extension.	Community Development Department	6 months-1 year
Ensure continued enjoyment of current “open space” uses such as parks, schools and golf courses by rezoning these areas to R1 or by the creation of a new “open space” zoning district.	Community Development Department	1 year – 2 years
Create a separate R-5A zoning district out of the west side of the current R-6 zoning district that would have a minimum lot size of 10,000 square feet and special side yard setbacks of 8 feet.	Community Development Department	3 months
Discourage teardowns at the Historic Preservation Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals and City Council level.	Westside Neighborhood Residents	On going
Require construction of new sidewalks to conform to existing natural conditions, preserving vegetation and promoting landscape buffers.	Public Works Department	On going
Encourage the development of a program that would provide incentives, (property tax relief, building permit fee waivers) to homeowners to keep and remodel their existing home and not demolish it.	Community Development Department/ Historic Preservation Commission	1 – 2 years
Encourage the City to accelerate the transfer of Deerfield Road from the Illinois Department of Transportation by making the improvements necessary for that transfer a priority.	City Council/ Public Works Department	1 – 2 years
Redo the intersection at Deerfield Road and Richfield Avenue by improving drainage, surfacing and intersection layout.	Public Works Department	2 – 5 years

Stop illegal hook-ups to the sanitary sewer system.	Public Works Department	On Going
Solve storm water issues, (i.e. basement flooding) in Westside neighborhoods, particularly the Sherwood area.	Public Works Department and Area Residents	1 – 3 years
Have the Public Works department work with residents to identify existing sewer and water trouble spots.	Public Works Department and Area Residents	On Going
Link traffic signals along Deerfield Road from Highway 41 to Ridge Road.	Public Works Department	1 – 2 years
Make the stop signs at Berkeley and Ridge Road more visible.	Public Works Department	6 months –1 year
Make the intersection at Cavell Avenue and Sherwood Road a 3-way stop.	Traffic Commission /Public Works Department	6 months
Make the intersection at Ridge Road and Richfield Avenue a 5-way stop.	Traffic Commission /Public Works Department	6 months
Encourage continued police enforcement of speeding along Ridge Road south of Park Avenue West.	Police Department	On going
Decrease the speed limit on Berkeley Road from 30 to 25 mphs.	Traffic Commission /Public Works Department	6 months
Recommend to the Northwest Neighborhood District to increase the speed limit on Ridge Road to 30 mph between Park Avenue West and Half-Day Road.	Community Development Department	2 months
Support the construction of a pedestrian bridge at Park Avenue as proposed in the 1997 Greenways Plan to provide a safe way for people to get over Highway 41.	Public Works Department	On Going
Add sidewalks on the north side of Deerfield from Richfield to Ridge.	Public Works Department	1-5 years
Provide sidewalks continuously along Ridge Road from Deerfield Road to Berkeley Road.	Public Works Department	6 months – 5 years
Add a sidewalk along the North side of Berkeley Road between Sherwood and Ridge Road.	Public Works Department	5 years
Set back sidewalks from road as far as possible to protect pedestrians from vehicular traffic.	Public Works Department	On Going
Install a crosswalk across Deerfield Road between Richfield and U. S. Route 41.	Public Works Department	1 year
Support efforts by the Police Department to educate residents on the rules of the road.	Police Department	On Going

# APPENDIX A: PROPOSED R-5A MODERATE DENSITY RESIDENTIAL ZONING DISTRICT

The proposed district would have the boundaries shown below:



	<b>CURRENT R-6 ZONING</b>	<b>PROPOSED R-5A ZONING</b>
<b>MINIMUM LOT SIZE:</b>	7,260 SQUARE FEET	10,000 SQUARE FEET
<b>MINIMUM LOT WIDTH:</b>	50 FEET	75 or 70 FEET
<b>MINIMUM FRONT YARD:</b>	25 FEET	40 FEET
<b>MINIMUM SIDE YARD:</b>	25% OF TOTAL – NO YARD LESS THAN 6 FT.	25% OF TOTAL NO YARD LESS THAN 8 FT.
<b>MINIMUM REAR YARD:</b>	25 FEET OR 20%	30 FEET OR 20%
<b>MAXIMUM HEIGHT OF PRINCIPAL STRUCTURE:</b>	30 FEET	32 or 30 FEET
<b>FLOOR AREA RATIO:</b>	40 %	35 %