

Section 2:

Community Outreach

Three separate Community Outreach efforts were undertaken to involve property owners, business persons and residents in the planning program. These outreach efforts provide important insight on local issues, concerns and opinions from residents, community leaders, the business community, and other participants. This section of the *Comprehensive Plan* report summarizes each of the following outreach efforts:

- a) A ***Project Initiation Meeting*** was conducted with the Steering Committee on December 12, 2002 at the Municipal Center.
- b) A ***Community Workshop*** was conducted with the residents of Sugar Grove on February 26, 2003 at the Municipal Center.
- c) ***Key Person Interviews*** were conducted with a select number of people identified by the Steering Committee. The interview process consisted of question and response dialogue.

Project Initiation Workshop

A Project Initiation Workshop was conducted with the *Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee* on December 12, 2002. In addition to the Steering Committee, approximately 16 people attended and participated in the workshop. The workshop was designed to encourage Steering Committee members and other participants to communicate their concerns and feelings about their community as we begin the comprehensive planning process.

The workshop consisted of a series of four questions regarding the Village of Sugar Grove. Steering Committee members were asked to answer each question independently, using the questionnaires provided. Several of the questions were

then discussed with the group. Committee members were asked to return their completed questionnaires at the conclusion of the meeting. A total of twenty-one questionnaires were received.

This section summarizes the results of the Project Initiation Workshop. The summary reflects the opinions and comments stated during workshop dialogue and includes a summary of participants' responses to the workshop questionnaire.

1) Identify five (5) issues or concerns confronting the Village of Sugar Grove.

The most common concern was related to the Aurora Airport and the impact of its growth (8 responses). The creation of a downtown area, the need to create a Park District, and protection of green space/land preservation/loss of farmland were next, with 7 responses each. Other frequently mentioned concerns were traffic (6 responses); rapid, impending growth and pressure on community services (5 responses); preservation of historic character/feel of community (4 responses); concern for development of quality housing, including that for all incomes and ages (three responses); the need to build more parks (3 responses). The following issues were mentioned by 2 participants: rising residential taxes; need for infrastructure; economic development; want to see smart controlled growth; and transportation related concerns—specifically, one respondent said “not another Randall Road”.

Issues mentioned once included: redevelopment of Route 47 Corridor; concern over the source of funds to satisfy the needs & desires of the community; lack of community development; school impact/education needs; develop a community spirit; create a shopping center; develop a light industrial area; low community participation in the development process; Metra; and create a

“watershed vision” (related to rivers and creeks).

2) List, in order of importance, the three (3) most important issues discussed thus far.

The most important issues are:

1. Rapid residential growth (incorporate into community without impacts (14 responses);
2. Bringing in business (11 responses); and
3. Need to develop infrastructure (11 responses)

Other frequently mentioned issues were: lack of commercial and retail facilities (10); identify major transportation and rail corridors (8); Village growth and size issues (8); growing traffic on IL 47 (5); concern for development of agricultural land and loss of green space (5); and preserve small-town character (5). Issues with three responses include: airport-expansion/authority; vision for regional watershed. Affordable/attainable housing, the need to expand the tax base and community services; lack of revenue/Village budget; and keeping a centralized community each had 2 responses.

Issues mentioned once included identification of a downtown central business district; pressure on the schools/education; and community spirit.

3) Identify three (3) specific projects or actions that you would like to see undertaken within the Village of Sugar Grove.

The most frequent responses were: the desire for creation of a park district (6 responses) and the redesign of the I-47 Corridor to reduce traffic congestion (6 responses); revitalize the downtown area, and improve the infrastructure (roads, water, sewer) (3 responses); and, with 2

responses each: increase commercial development along I-47 and 56, such as a grocery store and retail establishments; establish an economic development corporation; and locate a cultural or civic center,

Other responses mentioned by a single participant included: creation of bike and walking trails; build a Metra station in town; further the community character/spirit; develop a commercial downtown center; inventory and identify important and sensitive natural resources in the area; create boundary agreements; improve local feeder roads; extend Municipal Drive and Galena Boulevard; development of access roads, better access on Route 30; and approve and develop residential communities.

4) What are the primary strengths and assets of the Village of Sugar Grove?

The most common responses were the access to transportation, including the airport and road and highway corridors (5 responses), small town character (5 responses), and the “clean slate”/opportunity for good comprehensive planning (5 responses); the amount of open/green space (4 responses); the community’s location (3 responses), the nearby Aurora Airport (3 responses), residents who care about their community and get involved (3 responses) and the Wabaunsee Community College (3 responses).

Other common responses included the young people in the community and young age of new residents (2); local schools (2); sense of community (2); and the historic Main Street/architecturally significant historic structures (2).

Responses cited by a single participant included: green space/rural feeling; employee base for business; large enough parcels to affect a master planned community; police department; fire department, quality residential

development; land for development; water supply and the amount of publicly-owned space and privately-owned natural features.

Community Workshop

A Community Workshop with the residents of Sugar Grove was conducted on February 26, 2003. Approximately 25 people attended and participated in the workshop. The workshop was designed to encourage residents to communicate their concerns and feelings about their community during the early stages of the comprehensive planning process.

The workshop consisted of a series of four questions regarding the Village of Sugar Grove. Participants were asked to answer each question independently, using the questionnaires provided. Several of the questions were then discussed with the group. Those participating were asked to return their completed questionnaires at the conclusion of the meeting. Of the 25 questionnaires distributed, a total of twenty-one questionnaires were received.

This section summarizes the results of the Community Workshop. The summary reflects the opinions and comments stated during workshop dialogue and includes a summary of participants' responses to the workshop questionnaire.

1) Identify five (5) issues or concerns confronting the Village of Sugar Grove.

The most common concern was maintaining the rural (small town) feel (resisting rapid growth and sprawl) (17 responses). The need for planned, and historically sensitive commercial development was next (14 responses). Followed by creating a park district or developing park and recreational facilities (13 responses); traffic congestion and transportation infrastructure (12 responses); and maintaining the high quality of the schools as the community

grows (11 responses). Other frequently mentioned concerns included: lack of industrial and commercial land to create tax revenue (8 responses); the need for a greater variety of housing options (7 responses); preservation of historic character (5 responses); the ability of public services to meet growing demand (5 responses); and the responsiveness of Village leadership and staff (5 responses).

Issues mentioned by four or fewer respondents included: water quality (4 responses); growth of the airport (4 responses); need for a community vision (3 responses); need for a grocery store (2 responses); need for quality entertainment uses (2 responses); bike/hike trails (2 responses); annexation of land (2 responses); and the need for a Metra station (1 response).

2) List, in order of importance, the three (3) most important issues discussed thus far.

The most important issues are:

- ≠ The need to grow the commercial and industrial tax base;
- ≠ Preserve rural character; and,
- ≠ Increasing retail development.

Other frequently mentioned issues (in order of importance) were: maintaining quality schools; need for infrastructure improvements; potential airport expansion; need for diversity in housing; and funding to maintain Village services.

Issues mentioned less frequently included: historic districts; larger lots for future homes; too many track home developers; impact fees to cover new growth; limited area of industrial zoning; development of the town center; balancing new and existing developments; and implementing and following the plan.

3) Identify three (3) specific projects or actions that you would like to see undertaken within the Village of Sugar Grove.

The most frequent responses were: the creation of a park district and recreational facilities (13 responses); encourage commercial development (11 responses); historic preservation and historically sensitive development in the Village center (8 responses); the redesign of the IL-47 Corridor to reduce traffic congestion and increase visual appeal (6 responses); and maintain and expand schools (6 responses). Less frequently mentioned responses include: design hike/bike paths (5 responses); zone some land for industrial (4 responses); and build a grocery store (3 responses).

Other responses mentioned once or twice included: build a Metra station in town; expand community services, technological improvements; expand and solidify boundary; general roadway improvements; creation of a community news letter; extend Gordon Lane south; add traffic signals along Prairie; and improve water quality.

4) What are the primary strengths and assets of the Village of Sugar Grove?

The most common responses were: excellent access to transportation, including the airport and road and highway corridors (16 responses); small town character (11 responses); resident's commitment to the community (7 responses); and the good reputation of the school district (7 responses). Other responses that were noted five times include: land available for development and growth; high quality homes and good property values; and beautiful open/green spaces.

Responses cited two or fewer times include: Wabauunsee Community College; community commitment to plan for the future; few traffic problems; low

crime/safety; Village leadership; and no strip malls.

Key Person Interview Summary

Interviews were conducted with people consisting of residents, business owners, county and municipal staff, consultants, and other individuals representing a local issue or cause. The interview process consisted of question and response dialogue. The questions were designed to solicit the opinions, concerns and issues regarding the Sugar Grove Comprehensive Plan and the planning process. Interviews were conducted at the Sugar Grove Municipal Center on February 19, 2003 and February 20, 2003. In total, 13 people participated in the interview process.

Below is a summary of the results of the Key Person Interview Process. The summary reflects the opinions and comments stated during the interview dialogue and includes a summary of participants' responses to questions asked during the interview process.

1) How would you define/describe the character of Sugar Grove?

The interviewees describe the character of Sugar Grove as a community that is currently rural, but is about to experience urbanization. Some interviewees are frightened about the future growth, but more believe that the Village has a great deal of potential to plan and prepare for growth, and to develop a community in which all can be proud of. Interviewees describe Sugar Grove, as a quiet, low-crime, family friendly, bedroom community. There is no downtown, and the small industrial core that does exist has been neglected. Descriptions heard only once throughout the interviews are listed on the following page.

Descriptions heard only once throughout the interviews:

- # Large lots
- # No character
- # Geographically separated
- # Outlying suburb

2) What do you believe are the primary assets and advantages of Sugar Grove?

Sugar Grove's location and proximity to Interstate 88 was the overwhelming response by interviewees. Most people interviewed see great potential and locational benefits from Illinois 56, Illinois 47, U.S. Route 30 and Interstate 88. Another asset commonly cited by interviewees was Sugar Grove's natural resources. The parks, bike trails, and large forest preserves provide relief from urbanization, and add greatly to the quality of life in the community. Interviewees also believe that the schools, and existing infrastructure (Aurora Airport, Burlington Northern-Santa Fe Railway, community leaders, and utilities) were an asset to Sugar Grove. Advantages and assets cited by only one interviewee are listed below.

- # Sense of community
- # Waubensee College
- # Good relationship with developers
- # Boundary agreements
- # Pass through traffic
- # Quiet
- # In a position to learn from other communities
- # Quality of Life
- # Low crime
- # Large lots

3) What do you believe are the primary weaknesses and disadvantages of Sugar Grove?

Interviewees were quick to cite the lack of a downtown and small commercial and industrial tax base as Sugar Grove's primary weakness. They believe that the Village must identify a central business district to capture retail sales tax and to expand the non-residential property tax base. Identification and promotion of industrial sites would also help the Village diversify its tax base. Some respondents believe the Village is too poor and that infrastructure is too expensive, and this will be to the Village's disadvantage as growth occurs in the future. Geographic separation by major roadways is also a disadvantage according to interviewees. A few people interviewed believe that the Village's water quality, the lack of housing diversity/options, and appearance and monotony of new construction were disadvantages to Sugar Grove. Weaknesses and disadvantages cited by only one interviewee are listed below.

- # No park district
- # No shopping
- # Sprawl
- # Nothing unifies the village
- # High speed Internet
- # Traffic
- # Not pedestrian friendly
- # Lack of Village staff
- # No natural boundaries
- # Perception of encroaching development

4) What do you consider to be the single most important issue confronting Sugar Grove today?

Controlling growth and having a plan for growth were the most commonly heard responses from interviewees throughout the interview process. While some interviewees believe that there is tremendous potential, new growth must be controlled and directed to ensure the Village maximizes benefits associated with

growth, and minimizes any negative impacts. Concerns about traffic, the economy, lack of industrial land, and establishing a vision for Sugar Grove were mentioned by a small number of interviewees. Issues cited by only one interviewee are listed below.

- # Quality of life
- # Natural resources
- # Recreation and open space
- # Natural boundaries
- # Leadership
- # A proactive approach to growth
- # Water quality
- # Relationship with developers
- # Geographic separation
- # Illinois Route 47
- # Schools
- # Utilities
- # Balance
- # Need for a downtown

5) *If you had the power to undertake one project or improvement within Sugar Grove, what would it be?*

Construction of a town center, improving the Village's water quality, and identification and acquisition of open space and environmentally sensitive areas received the most responses from people interviewed. Projects or improvements mentioned by only one interviewee are listed below.

- # Widen U.S. Route 30
- # Widen Illinois Route 47
- # Preserve historic downtown
- # Comprehensive plan
- # Streetscape improvements
- # Construction of an interchange at IL 47 and I-88.

6) *What are your primary concerns regarding growth and development of the Sugar Grove area?*

When asked what the primary concerns regarding growth and development of the Sugar Grove area were, there was very little consensus among interviewees.

Concerns heard from more than one interviewee are: is the Village prepared for growth; is there adequate infrastructure in place; what will happen to stormwater; loss of character/appeal; and increased traffic and impacts on transportation. Concerns cited by only one interviewee are listed below.

- # Lot sizes
- # Impact fees
- # Blackberry Creek
- # Big Rock Creek
- # Loss of identity
- # Monotonous housing
- # Lack of a defined core
- # A mix of land uses
- # Lack of housing diversity
- # More industrial land
- # Lack of a Metra station
- # Impact of proposed Prairie Parkway
- # No shopping/town center