

# COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



*Sammamish  
2003*



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## Village of Somonauk **Comprehensive Plan**

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This Comprehensive Plan is limited in its scope, but provides the framework for the Village of Somonauk to build upon and to address all aspects of community development that may arise in the future. It is not the purpose of the Comprehensive Plan to predict the future; rather it is to provide a vision, or direction, for the community to move toward. For this reason, this document is intended to be dynamic and respond to changes that will occur in the community over time. In the process the Village has the ability to allocate resources and to determine priorities, usually in advance of need as opposed to reacting to unanticipated problems.

***It is not the purpose of the Comprehensive Plan to predict the future; rather it is to provide a vision, or direction, for the community to move toward.***

The adoption of the Somonauk Comprehensive Plan does not complete the process. In many respects, the process only begins with the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan. The plan identifies many tasks the Village will need to undertake in the future to achieve the collective vision. In fact, there is much work ahead for the Village. But the Somonauk Comprehensive Plan can help provide the direction and focus necessary to keep the Village moving toward its vision.

The intention of the community is not to limit or prohibit growth and new development, but to encourage it and allow it to flourish only if growth and development provides positive contributions to the quality of life in Somonauk and the quality of municipal services provided by the Village.

It is 2003 and DeKalb County is experiencing a rush of new development and speculation by developers and investors in its constituent communities, particularly in Somonauk. The interest in DeKalb County is welcome but the scope, magnitude and pace of the development being proposed in just about every community in the County caused the County Board to undertake a most unique approach to comprehensive planning. The County Board recognized that many communities in the County, such as Somonauk, have no professional staff; if they have a Comprehensive Plan it is outdated; and, they are generally unprepared for the wave of growth, development and change that is about to beset their communities.

The DeKalb County Board initiated a Unified Comprehensive Planning process to bring the comprehensive planning process to each of the communities and to reinforce the County's zeal to protect farmland as an economic asset. The resulting land use plans will be compiled in to the County's land use plan, a Unified Comprehensive Plan.



While the Village of Somonauk is not yet experiencing the kinds of development pressure as are many of its counterparts in DeKalb County, the Village, nevertheless, chose to join the DeKalb County Regional Planning Commission and participate in preparation of the Unified Comprehensive Plan.

The Somonauk Comprehensive Plan is unique in many respects, but none more so than its relationship with the DeKalb County Unified Comprehensive Plan. The Somonauk Comprehensive Plan is a stand-alone policy document adopted by the corporate authorities. But it is also an integral part of the DeKalb County Unified Comprehensive Plan for it, in effect, establishes the land uses the County will encourage, recommend, and enforce.



While the County had no involvement in the preparation of the Somonauk Comprehensive Plan, aside from funding the process, the County accepts and supports the community's vision. In return, the County expects the Village to make land use and community development decisions consistent with the Somonauk Comprehensive Plan and to support the County's agriculture preservation goals. To this end, the Village and DeKalb County will enter into an intergovernmental agreement acknowledging each other's Comprehensive Plan and pledging mutual support.





community

# vision

culture

growth  
quality

## THE SOMONAUK VISION

### What will Somonauk be like or become in the future?

Residents want Somonauk to accommodate growth and development in order to make Somonauk a vibrant, thriving community bound together by close neighborhood relationships among its people, and to provide an array of services and amenities for residents and visitors. Additionally, residents desire to maintain a community wherein individuals and families can be provided a safe and secure neighborhood; where there is diversity and respect; where children are provided opportunities for growth and development; and, where residents can be assured that the value of their property will be maintained.

The vision for Somonauk includes providing all people with choices and options for housing, travel, recreation, cultural activities, and employment opportunities; and providing for their basic personal needs. Essential to this vision is a community that is visually attractive and appealing, and where interaction among residents is encouraged and is a daily routine.

Residents want Somonauk to be a place where there is an open exchange of information among its residents, business owners and government; where the local government is fiscally responsible, yet attends to the community's needs for expanding services and amenities; and, where they can be filled with pride about calling Somonauk home.



## ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

**The purpose of this element is to state the shared vision of the community, identify major forces affecting the local government and its citizens, set goals and standards, and serve as a series of guiding principles and priorities to implement the vision.**

### Location

Somonauk is located approximately twenty-two miles south of DeKalb (city) on the far south side of DeKalb County and straddles the LaSalle-DeKalb County line. The community is not conveniently located near any Interstate highway, but US 34 provides access to Interstate 39, approximately twenty mile west, and to the Interstate highway network in the Chicago suburbs to the east. Nearby IL 23 provides direct access to Interstate 80 in Ottawa, approximately twenty miles south, and to Interstate 88 in DeKalb (city), approximately twenty miles to the north.

The Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad (BNSF), formerly the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad, cuts diagonally across the community. Grain elevators near the railroad are the last remnants of Somonauk's roots as an agricultural market. The BNSF is a high speed mainline track from Chicago and Aurora to points west and across the Mississippi River. The line is used by Amtrack for much of its west and southwest destinations. Amtrack does not stop in Somonauk. The nearest station is in nearby Plano.

Somonauk sits atop a flat plain overlooking Somonauk Creek. The topography is generally flat with gently rolling terrain in the proximity of the named and unnamed drainage ways in the landscape. The topography and soil characteristics make it suitable and productive for crop farming. Woodlands are found only along Somonauk Creek.

The Village sits at the west end of a growth corridor extending from Aurora-Naperville along US 34. Once considered remote, Somonauk is increasingly being pulled into the expanding exurban area of the Chicago metropolitan area.

## Location Map





## Existing Land Use

Despite all outward appearances, agriculture, technically, is the predominant land use in Somonauk. This statistical anomaly is due to the large undeveloped land areas in the corporate limits that remain in agricultural production until the use of the property changes. In reality, the primary land use in the Village is single-family residential (*Table 1*). Residential land uses account for 66% of the land area in the Village, if agriculture is excluded.

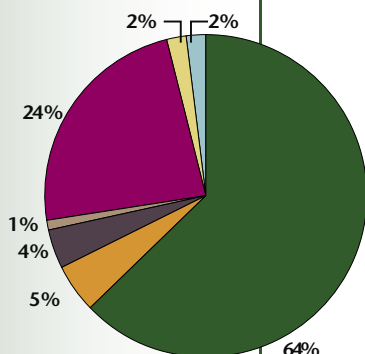
Multiple-family residential (including all non-single-family residential building typologies) represents 2% of the Village's land area and ten-percent of the residential land area. Apartment and condominium buildings represent only 1% of the residential land area. Two-family, duplex, and townhouse building typologies represent 9% of the residential land area in Somonauk.

Civic and Institutional land uses, such churches, the Village Hall, Library, fire station, and schools account for 5% of the total land area. The ratio for this land use category is made larger by the large land areas occupied by the schools in Somonauk.

Commercial land uses represent 4% of the community's land area. The majority of the commercial land uses are concentrated in the central business district and elsewhere along US 34.

Industry represents less than 1% of the land area. No identifiable industrial "district" has been established in Somonauk. Industrial uses are scattered across the community with uses located in the central business district, along South County Line Road, and along Somonauk Road at the railroad crossing.

Parks and open space represent 1% of the land area. At 6.63 acres, the amount of park land per capita (0.005 acres) is about half that of the national average of 10 acres per thousand persons (0.01 acres per capita). Some recreation space needs are satisfied by the Somonauk Forest Preserve, as well as the playfields provided on the school sites in the Village.



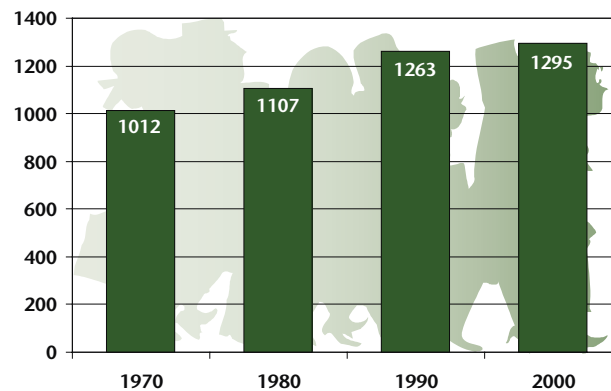
**Table 1. Existing Land Use Distribution, Village of Somonauk**

	<i>Acres</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Agriculture	388.1	64%
Civic/Institutional	28.61	5%
Commercial	22.13	4%
Industrial	1.80	<1%
Parks & Open Space	6.63	1%
Single-Family Residential	130.95	24%
Multiple-Family Residential	14.31	2%
Utility	0.33	<1%
Vacant	13.77	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>606.74</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Demographics

During the last decade Somonauk's population grew by 2.5%, a markedly lower rate than the previous two decades (14% from 1980 to 1990, 9% from 1970 to 1980). These growth rates are similar to those of DeKalb County during the same periods. The small average annual rate of growth has provided Somonauk with a sense of stability. This is stark contrast to the rate of growth being experienced in communities farther east in the US 34 corridor where annual rates of growth are eight to ten times greater than Somonauk.

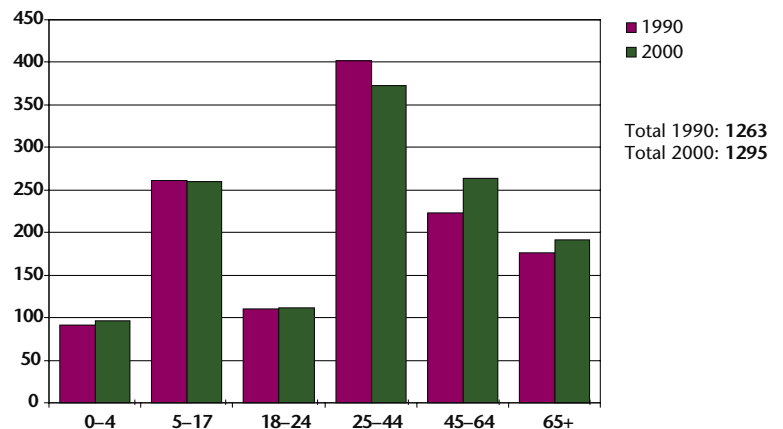
**Table 2. Population (1970–2000)**



Source: US Census

The distribution of the population by age group (*Table 3*) indicates no significant change in the age distribution of the population below 24 years of age. However, large changes occurred in the 25-44 year old age group (-7%), the 45-64 year old age group (+18%), and the 65+ age group (+8.5%) in the past decade. The result is the median age in Somonauk is now 36.0 years of age. These changes are not unique to Somonauk and are, in fact, similar to experiences by most small rural communities.

**Table 3. Population Distribution by Age Group (1990–2000)**



Source: US Census



These subtle changes in the population have implications on the growth and development of the community in the future. An older population, generally, tends to have much different expectations and needs than a younger population. This will be exhibited in the housing choices the population makes in the future. For example, as physical mobility among the population diminishes single-story homes will become more popular, and alternative living environments for older populations will become more commonplace.

The average median household income for 1990 was \$32,308. The average median income for 2000 was \$45,370.

In 1990 there were a total of 497 housing units in Somonauk, of which 25 units were vacant. Of the 472 occupied housing units available, 318 units were owner-occupied and 154 units were renter-occupied. In 2000 there were a total of 515 housing units, of which 11 units were vacant. Of the 504 occupied housing units available, 350 units were owner-occupied and 154 units were renter-occupied.

**Table 4. Housing Unit Distribution (1990 – 2000)**

	1990	2000
1, Detached	369	380
1, Attached	3	30
2	53	37
3 or 4	27	36
5 to 9	0	7
10 to 19	10	2
20 to 49	24	21
50 or more	0	0
Mobile Home or Trailer	1	2
Other	10	0
<b>Total Housing Units</b>	<b>497</b>	<b>515</b>

*Source US Census*



The number of people 16 years of age and over are employed in the following industrial categories (Table 5). While the number of persons employed increased by 1% between 1990 and 2000, there were large shifts in the distribution of employed persons in certain industries such as construction (+42%), manufacturing (-42%), service (+507%), and entertainment and recreation services (-48%). Some of these shifts can be attributed to the wave of business mergers and acquisitions, as well as business closures and relocations that occurred during the 1990's. The shifts in employment by industry illustrate the adaptability of the labor force in Somonauk to transition from one industry to another.

**Table 5. Population Employment by Industry (1990 – 2000)**

<i>Industry</i>	<i>1990</i>	<i>2000</i>
Agriculture, Forestry & Fisheries	9	0
Mining	0	3
Construction	47	67
Manufacturing	198	114
Transportation, Communication & Other Public Utilities	44	57
Wholesale Trade	19	10
Retail Trade	88	83
Finance, Insurance & Real Estate	46	47
Service	26	158
Entertainment & Recreation Services	136	70
Public Administration	5	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>618</b>	<b>625</b>

*Source US Census*

The distribution by occupation for employed persons 16 years of age and over changed dramatically between 1990 and 2000 (Table 6). The occupation of employed persons in Somonauk shifted dramatically from blue collar-type occupations to white collar and professional occupations. This dramatic shift demonstrates how far Somonauk has moved from not only an agricultural economy, but, recently, from blue collar occupations to professional occupations. This shift is consistent with state and national trends and generally reflects the changes that have occurred in business and industry in the nation over the past decade.

**Table 6. Population Employment by Occupation (1990 – 2000)**

<i>Occupation</i>	<i>1990</i>	<i>2000</i>
Managerial Occupation	51	169
Professional Specialty & Technical Occupations	197	104
Sales Occupations	66	188
Service Occupations	62	84
Farming, Forestry & Fishing Occupations	3	2
Precision Production, Craft & Repair Occupations	102	93
Operators, Fabricators & Laborers	133	121
<b>Total</b>	<b>614</b>	<b>761</b>

*Source US Census*

## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

**The purpose of this element of the Comprehensive Plan is to document the process for engaging the community in the development and preparation of the Comprehensive Plan.**

Various tools and techniques were applied in Somonauk to generate interest in the process, educate the community about alternatives, and to develop a consensus for the vision for Somonauk in the future. In addition to a special comprehensive plan newsletter and messages on the community message board, the chief tools used were the Image Preference Survey and the community planning charrette. The process and the findings are described on the following pages and a detailed description of the findings from the Community Attitude & Preference Survey and the Image Preference Survey is provided in a separate report.

### Community Attitude & Preference Survey

The Attitude and Preference Questionnaire was administered concurrently with Image Preference Survey to forty-three participants on March 19, 2003. Participants were asked to answer questions intended to gauge community attitudes and preferences for quality of life considerations, items that enhanced or detracted from positive images within Somonauk, and future priorities for development in Somonauk. The average age of the group was 50 years of age and their average length of residency in Somonauk was 26 years.

#### The key findings from the Attitude and Preference Survey include:

- Ninety-eight percent of the respondents believe that community opinion is important for determining the future visual appearance and character of Somonauk.
- According to survey respondents the priorities for new land use or development within Somonauk included single-family homes (26%), more stores and services (17%), more industry (15%), and bike paths and trails (14%).
- When asked to identify what characteristics or qualities set Somonauk apart from other communities in the county, residents responded that rural setting (24%), sense of community (24%), quality of life (20%), and neighborliness (14%) were the key attributes.
- Seventy-two percent of the respondents agreed that downtown Somonauk should be an area where people can walk along streets lined with shop windows, trees and outdoor seating areas.
- Eighty-eight percent of the participants agreed that Somonauk should control the location and design character of all new and rehabilitated buildings in the Village.



- Ninety-five percent agreed that landscaping and street trees are essential to the desirability of a neighborhood.
- Seventy percent of the respondents agreed that a good neighborhood includes a mixture of housing types, shops, open space, churches, civic institutions, and places to work, transit stops and public gathering places within a short walking or biking distance from home.
- Ninety-eight percent of survey respondents agreed that sidewalks are necessary improvement and should always provide a safe and pleasant walking experience.
- Survey participants were asked if Somonauk has changed in the past few years. Over half of the respondents (67%) answered that Somonauk has continued to be the type of community in which they wanted to live. Twenty-one percent (21%) said that the community hasn't changed much. Twelve percent (12%) said that the community has changed and is less of the community, in which they wanted to live.
- Given the increasing population and the need to provide for economic development, survey participants were asked where the development should occur. The four most popular answers were: distribute new commercial and industrial land uses along US 34 and the railroad (21%); keep development away from natural areas, concentrating development in appropriate locations (21%); develop single use neighborhoods, keeping similar uses together and separating different residential types from one another and other land uses from one another (14%); and, distribute development evenly across the Village (12%).
- Survey participants were asked what they wanted to see occur in Somonauk in ten, twenty or thirty years hence. Twenty-one traits or characteristics were provided and respondents were asked to rate each trait with respect to its level of importance to the respondent. Among all respondents, the ten most important traits or characteristics desired in Somonauk in the future include:

1	Neighborhood schools and the entire public school system as a key community asset
2	A small town atmosphere
3	Citizen participation in all levels of community decision-making
4	Well-maintained homes and yards
5	Well-designed public buildings and projects
6	Well-designed and landscaped development
7	he design of housing, commercial an industrial development is in keeping with the character of the Village
8	A viable downtown with pedestrian friendly streets, storefronts along the sidewalk
9	ree-lined streets
10	Residents have the ability to walk, or have easy access from their homes, to shops, work, schools, parks and community buildings

## Image Preference Survey

An Image Preference Survey was conducted as one of the opportunities for public involvement in the process for preparing the Somonauk Comprehensive Plan. This consensus building technique was used to draw out community values on various community development and growth issues, and to identify community preferences for design, appearance and relationships of various types of land development which may not exist in Somonauk, today.

The purpose of the Image Preference Survey is to use images to establish a common terminology, an understanding about critical design issues, and to forge a consensus about choices affecting the future. The numerical scores assigned to the images are indications of core community values and are used to help focus the vision citizens have for the future of Somonauk. From this vision are derived the principles, strategies and decisions to guide future growth and (re)development in Somonauk. The most positive images, in effect, influence the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan.

The Image Preference Survey was administered in March, 2003. The survey attracted a diverse audience: the youngest was 31 years of age and the oldest was a 81 years of age (the median age: 50). The length of residency of survey participants ranged from one year to 67 years (the median length of residency: 26 years).

Survey participants were shown 300 images representing all types of land development found in Somonauk and elsewhere in the region. These images were supplemented with images from other regions of the country to provide a greater breadth of choices to show a variety of alternatives and solutions used elsewhere for similar development types. The “appropriateness” of an image for Somonauk was not a consideration in the selection of the images. The images were intended to cover the entire range of development applications and represented good and bad examples. Images in each category were shown in random order. The images were grouped into the following categories:

	<b>Commercial and Office</b>	<b>Accessory Apartment</b>	<b>Street and Alley</b>
	<b>Landscape</b>	<b>Civic</b>	<b>Mixed Use</b>
	<b>Parking</b>	<b>Industrial</b>	<b>Single-Family</b>
	<b>Multiple-Family</b>	<b>Park</b>	<b>Signs</b>

Participants were instructed to assign a numerical value to each image on a scale reflecting their level of approval or satisfaction of the image with -5 representing complete disapproval and +5 representing complete approval. Zero indicated a neutral response. In this Survey all positive scores are considered positive or desirable; all negative scores are considered negative or undesirable.

The range of values for similar or like images represents varying degrees of approval or disapproval of the various elements or features in the images. The differences in numerical values are relative and do not represent orders of magnitude. A +2.00 is three points from complete approval or acceptance, but is two points better than no opinion. The difference between a score of +2.58 and a score of +2.69 or +2.12 among similar images is small enough to be negligible, but the comments and explanations provided by participants for the images is insightful and exposes community values. Survey participants who attended the charrette provided clarification or the reasons why an image was given a positive or negative score or why similar images received disparate scores.



Image No. 13



Image No. 75



Image No. 78



Image No. 140



Image No. 192

After the scores were tabulated, the average scores were reviewed with Survey participants to determine why certain images received the scores they did, and to identify the specific features in the images that contributed or detracted from the score they were given. In this manner, Somonauk residents could express their particular likes and dislikes about particular images and filter out images that may have inadvertently prejudiced the scores. For example, if an image was too dark and prevented viewers from understanding what was in the image or from forming an opinion or reaction, or the image contained some particularly attractive or beautiful floral display or architectural element that was an obvious prejudicial element, the group determined whether the image and score were valid and should be used in the findings.

Somonauk residents are loyal to the community; however, this loyalty did not restrain participants from constructively criticizing certain images of development in Somonauk. The highest scores in the Image Preference Survey were given to open space (Image No. 75) and well-landscaped images (Image No. 140), pedestrian-scaled shopping areas (Image No. 13) and images of tree-lined streets in mature neighborhoods (Image No. 192). Even images that included no pedestrians but showed an otherwise inviting and pedestrian-friendly environment scored high.

Images of paved areas, unscreened service alleys and outdoor storage areas, and underlandscaped parking lots (Image No. 78) scored very low. Survey participants generally viewed unscreened service yards negatively. Lack of landscaping or other screening measures, along with general lack of maintenance or visual interest, contributed to the low scores of these images.

Participants overwhelmingly favored landscaping across all of the categories. Also, images of development incorporating pedestrian friendly design, proportions, and amenities scored higher than those that did not. Favorable images were not limited to old or “historic” scenes. The use of land or buildings did not influence scores as much as the appearance of the pedestrian and/or public realm.

Generally, the Image Preference Survey found that Somonauk residents prefer development that incorporates the following characteristics and attributes:

- Well-designed buildings, recognizable front doors or main entrances, and appropriate use of architectural detail and material color, and being able to recognize the use and purpose of the buildings
- Organization and order
- Pedestrian access, friendly environments
- Meaningful landscaping and well maintained and manicured landscaping
- Visual interest
- Screening cars from view or hiding parking lots altogether
- Designated pedestrian access across parking lots
- Buildings oriented toward the street, not to parking lots
- Site amenities using water
- Safety
- Proximity of houses to one another is important; don't like houses too close together
- Avoid garagescapes, garages need to be recessed or removed front of houses
- Front porches are highly desirable





## Community Planning Charrette

Key to the public input and community involvement process was the Somonauk Community Planning Charrette. The charrette was a highly focused, hands-on, collaborative, inclusive daylong event that transformed residents into planners and visionaries for Somonauk. Twenty-seven residents participated in the charrette, all but two having previous involvement with the local government. Prior to beginning their work in drafting their plans for Somonauk participants reviewed selected images from the Image Preference Survey and were provided a primer on town planning principles and techniques. Each of the charrette teams presented their plans and recommendations to the group. The consultant took all of the charrette plans and prepared a “consensus plan” incorporating the common ideas and recommendations, as well as recommendations that provided interesting potential. The Consensus Plan was presented and reviewed by charrette participants and the Somonauk Plan Commission at which point additional changes were recommended.

## Citizen’s Visions

Three groups or teams were created. Each group worked independently of the others. The consultant functioned as the facilitator and provided only clarification or answers to questions by participants at each table. The charrette groups produced three distinct, yet similar, plans. Generally, the charrette plans reflected the primary concerns and expectations of Somonauk residents:

- Extend Somonauk Road to County Line Road
- Make and keep the pedestrian crossings across the railroad line safe
- Preserve farmland
- Provide open space along Somonauk Creek and other drainage ways in planning area
- Establish locations for industrial development
- Exploit US 34 and Lake Holiday for commercial purposes
- Maintain existing character of Village
- Encourage mixed-use neighborhoods
- Extend the existing thoroughfare network into new neighborhoods, preferably with no cul-de-sacs
- Revitalize the existing downtown

## Consensus Plan

Following the presentation of the charrette plans at the end of the charrette, a Consensus Plan was prepared and reviewed by charrette participants and members of the Somonauk Plan Commission and Village Board. The Consensus Plan incorporated the common elements or themes among the various charrette plans and sought to exploit certain ideas or recommendations that could benefit the community in the long run. The minor changes and modifications identified by residents were incorporated into the Consensus Plan which became the basis the Future Land Use Plan and the recommendations in the Comprehensive Plan.

**TABLE 1**



**TABLE 4**



**TABLE 2**



**TABLE 3**



**TABLE 5**





## Goals and Policies

The intention of the community is not to limit or prohibit growth and new development, but to encourage it and allow it to flourish only if growth and development provides positive contributions to the quality of life in the community and the quality of municipal services provided by the Village.

Change will be accepted in Somonauk only if it contributes to these community goals:

- Physical expansion of Somonauk is consistent with the village's compact form;
- Growth and development cannot exceed the availability or capacity of municipal utilities and services,
- New neighborhood development reflects the current building relationships, scale, and uses;
- New development respects adjacent and surrounding agricultural operations and needs.
- Provides a positive contribution to the maintenance of Somonauk's small town character, qualities and appearance;
- Growth and development creates opportunities for new employment, shopping, recreation and community interaction in Somonauk;
- New development allows Village government to efficiently and effectively provide basic infrastructure and services for the optimum level of public services for the health, safety and general welfare of all residents and does not harm or undermine the Village's financial health or creditworthiness; and,
- Growth and development contributes to the improvement of the quality of life in Somonauk.



To achieve these goals, the following policies shall govern the physical change, development, and improvement of the Village and its neighborhoods.

1. Future neighborhoods shall be designed and developed with the pedestrian as the principal design determinant. Sidewalks shall be provided along all streets, tree banks separating sidewalks from streets shall be provided, and buildings shall be oriented toward the street and have pedestrian proportions and details, e.g. porches within conversation distance of the sidewalk, storefront windows adjacent the sidewalk.
2. A diversity of uses, building types and street types shall be provided on each block, in each neighborhood.
3. The influence of the motor vehicle shall be diminished by placing garages off alleys or setting garages back from the front building line of the house, placing parking lots behind commercial buildings, and designing streets to calm traffic.
4. An interconnected network of streets shall be established. Streets shall connect from neighborhood to neighborhood. Cul de sac and permanent dead-end streets shall be avoided. Block lengths shall be kept to a reasonable distance to facilitate pedestrian circulation.
5. A park shall be provided within a five-minute walk of every residence in Somonauk.
6. Mixed-use buildings shall be concentrated in the Downtown and in neighborhood commercial areas.
7. Storm water management shall be provided in all new neighborhoods. Overland drainage ways shall remain in or near their natural state and alignment. Storm water management facilities shall be introduced in existing neighborhoods expeditiously and economically.
8. Native landscaping material shall be used wherever possible to reduce irrigation and maintenance costs, to add beauty to the landscape, contribute to storm water management, and reinforce the Village's rural character.
9. Attempt to reduce or deflect development pressure on adjoining farmland by encouraging development of the Village in a compact, dense form, and allow for careful, purposeful expansion of the Village's boundaries, neighborhoods and municipal services. Leapfrog or strip forms of development shall be avoided.
10. Developers shall be required to contribute to park, school and municipal infrastructure improvement costs.
11. Development along Somonauk Road and US 34 should contribute to the appearance of the community. Development along these highways shall establish and maintain a gateway character helping to distinguish Somonauk from various other communities along either highway.
12. Alleys should be encouraged in order to improve the appearance of the streetscape, especially along high-density residential and commercial streets and to provide access to parking.
13. An inventory of parcels at key locations for industrial development shall be set aside to provide the Village with local employment opportunities and diversification of the Village's tax base for the near-term and the long-term.
14. Adequate municipal utility capacity shall be maintained to accommodate non-residential users.
15. The Village considers the relationship between the Somonauk Comprehensive Plan and the DeKalb County Unified Comprehensive Plan as integral to the achievement of the community vision and will support the DeKalb County Unified Comprehensive Plan and DeKalb County's efforts to implement its plan.
16. Development of property along County highways in the Somonauk planning area shall maintain the limited access policies adopted by the County in order to maintain the efficiency of the countywide thoroughfare network.



## LAND USE & NATURAL RESOURCES

**The purpose of this element is to translate the community vision into physical terms; providing a general pattern for the location, distribution, and characteristics of future land uses over the next generation; and serve as the element of the Comprehensive Plan upon which all other elements are based.**

### Somonauk Future Land Use Map

The Somonauk Future Land Use Map is derived from the charrette plans prepared by residents during the preparation of the Comprehensive Plan. Generally, the charrette plans recommended a predominantly residential land use in Somonauk in the future with two industrial “districts” established to provide local employment opportunities and to diversify the tax base. Commercial “districts” were identified in critical locations in the community. Somonauk Creek and Buck Creek, and the various tributary drainage ways leading to it, were identified as desirable open space corridors, and residents identified future park sites. Rehabilitation and redevelopment of the downtown area along Market Street was identified as key to future of the community.

Lake Holiday was identified by many as an economic development resource to mine and exploit. There is no commercial development in the Lake Holiday development, leaving some 6,000 people yearning for nearby shopping and service conveniences.

Transportation and circulation considerations in the various charrette plans influenced land use recommendations. Extending Somonauk Road south from its present terminus at US 34 to County Line Road and to Hoxie Road was universally identified as an opportunity to create some dynamics at the US 34 intersection for commercial development. The railroad was recognized as a divisive element in each of the plans and some provided recommendations for additional railroad crossings to better unite the two halves of the community.

The Somonauk Creek corridor was universally treated as an open space corridor for preservation and maintenance of hydrological functions, e.g. floodplain, and habitat for flora and fauna. The creation of new public parks throughout the community was identified by all of the teams in the charrette.

In many charrette plans agriculture was the land use of choice for providing an open space edge around the community. Residents recognized agriculture as a viable, if not sentimental, endeavor around the community and a key component of the community’s character and appeal.

Perhaps, the most significant recommendation to come out of the Somonauk charrette was the community’s preference for mixed-use residential



neighborhoods. While residents were not opposed to non-single-family building typologies in Somonauk, they expressed a general disdain for large concentrations of any particular non-single-family building typology, e.g. two-family, multiple-family, apartment buildings. This preference mirrors the socially and civically acceptable practice of scattering isolated or small groups of non-single-family building typologies throughout Somonauk neighborhoods. This, in part, explains the absence of “multiple-family” or “medium-” or “high-density residential” land use classifications on the Somonauk Future Land Use Map.

The Somonauk Future Land Use Map identifies eight basic land use categories: mixed residential, central business district, commercial, industrial, parks and open space, storm water management, civic, and agriculture.

**AGRICULTURE.** Despite the amount of territory designated for future neighborhood development, agriculture is the preferred use of land in much of the planning area. Somonauk respects agribusiness and the livelihoods represented by the fertile farmland surrounding the community. To this end, Somonauk will encourage the development of markets for agricultural products to expand opportunities for farming operations around the Village.

**FLOOD PLAIN.** This land use classification includes the floodplain along Somonauk Creek and Buck Creek and the natural areas along both water courses.

**MIXED RESIDENTIAL.** This land use classification designates the areas suitable for residential development in a manner that emulates the established neighborhoods of Somonauk. In this land use all residential building typologies are permitted. In this land use all residential building typologies are permitted but may not exceed the following maximum ratios: single-family: 100%; two-family: 12%; other attached single-family: 10%; multiple-family: 8%; and, senior housing: 8%. The location, scale and design of non-single-family building typologies will be determined by the detailed land development standards to be adopted by the community in its land development regulations.

**COMMERCIAL.** This land use designates the preferred locations for retail, food service, personal and business services, offices, and automotive related uses. Mixed-use buildings, i.e. buildings having retail or food services or offices on the ground floor and offices or residential on upper floors, are encouraged in these designated areas.

**INDUSTRIAL.** This land use classification designates the areas suitable for industrial uses, including manufacturing, assembly, warehousing and logistics operations.

**PARKS AND OPEN SPACE.** This land use designates the preferred locations for public parks and private open spaces for active and passive recreation. This land use applies to formal public squares, facilities for programmed recreational activities, and linear trails along major thoroughfares and drainage ways.

**DOWNTOWN RETAIL.** This land use designation applies to the existing downtown or “Main Street” commercial area on Market Street. The distinction between this land use and the commercial land use is the central business district also provides a central location for most civic functions (Village Hall, post office, library) and is the traditional core area of Somonauk.

**CIVIC.** This land use classification designated locations for existing and future civic uses, including government facilities, churches, schools, libraries, day care, post offices, police and fire stations and sub-stations, and community buildings.

## CIRCULATION & TRANSPORTATION

**The purpose of this element is to consider all relevant modes of transportation and to establish the framework for the acquisition, protection, and preservation of existing and future rights-of-way.**

The road network in the Village is the original layout from the railroad, along with a few minor additions to the established network. The road network around Somonauk is primarily the rural section road system and circulation in and around Somonauk is predicated on the automobile. The section road grid is disrupted at the DeKalb-LaSalle County line making for discontinuous thoroughfares. Lake Holiday, Somonauk Creek and the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad also disrupt the continuity of the thoroughfare network.

Since Lake Holiday has limited access, a significant amount of traffic must travel through Somonauk to arrive at the north and west entrances to the private community, placing a strain on the Village's old streets and neighborhoods.

At one time Somonauk was served with regular commuter rail service that allowed residents to travel all the way to Chicago. The service ended in the early 1960's. Today, only transcontinental Amtrak Railroad passenger service is provided with a scheduled stop in nearby Plano. The growing emphasis on rail transportation in the Chicago metropolitan area and certain rail transportation initiatives by the Regional Transportation Authority's (RTA) commuter rail division, Metra, such as the STAR project which will provide a circumferential commuter rail route around the Chicago suburbs, will offer new commuter rail opportunities and options for Somonauk (and Lake Holiday) residents in the future.

In the meantime, the Village should use its position and authority to determine where future roads are located so that future additions to the community can be seamlessly woven together and reduce the overall impact on the road network.

US 34 runs parallel to the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad in the planning area and is the primary east-west arterial thoroughfare. It connects the Village with Naperville, Aurora, and Chicago to the east and to I-39 and beyond to the west. The railroad is a divisive element in the Village's thoroughfare network. Over the years several grade crossings have been closed, disrupting the continuity of the thoroughfare network and concentrating traffic to the remaining grade crossings. The Village should protect the remaining railroad crossings from closure because additional closures will alter traffic and land use patterns in the community.

The proximity of the railroad to US 34 presents geometric and other design problems at intersections, as well as complicated interconnected traffic signal-railroad signal operations and the Railroad's high-speed operations all conspire to preclude the creation of new grade crossings in the Somonauk planning area. One possible location for a new grade crossing is relocating the existing South County Line Road crossing east to the section line to permit Council Road to be extended south into LaSalle County and to become an arterial thoroughfare for Somonauk in the future. Overpasses remain an available option to grade crossings but these, too, influence traffic and land use patterns.



South County Line Road, another east-west thoroughfare, provides an alternative route for US 34. Unfortunately, County Line Road does not travel far enough to the east to function as another arterial thoroughfare. If South County Line Road is extended farther east to Sandy Bluff Road, or beyond, by the City of Sandwich this thoroughfare's function could change.

Somonauk Road, a DeKalb County highway, was re-aligned to cross the BNSF Railroad and intersect with US 34. This improvement, while welcome, only diverted traffic from the north and had little impact on traffic generated by Lake Holiday. Extension of Somonauk Road to South County Line Road and to Hoxie Road and to could relieve the established portions of Somonauk from the brunt of the Lake Holiday traffic. If this alignment was extended west to US 34 the Village would have an effective by-pass route for US 34 traffic and Lake Holiday traffic.

The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) is reviewing environmental and engineering information pertaining to the preparation of a feasibility report for the Prairie Parkway, a limited access highway connecting I-88 with I-80. A link between I-88 and I-90, and beyond, also is contemplated, but is not included in the current study. A centerline was recently recorded for the highway between I-88 and I-80 but could be moved westward into DeKalb County as a result of engineering, environmental or political considerations before the highway is designed and constructed.

At present, the corridor is situated between Plano and Yorkville. Whether Somonauk will experience any direct benefit or adverse impact from the new highway is difficult to predict. What is certain is the highway would improve Somonauk's accessibility in the region, thereby improving economic development prospects in the future.

No public transportation exists in Somonauk, today.



## COMMUNITY FACILITIES



**The purpose of this element is to provide an inventory of community facilities and to ensure that public facilities are provided as needed.**

At present, the following public facilities or uses are located in Somonauk:

**Village Hall • Fire Station • Police Station • Public Works Building  
Somonauk Community Park • Post Office • Library • Olmstead Museum  
James R. Wood Elementary School • Somonauk Middle School  
Somonauk High School • Sewage Treatment Plant • Water Tower**



The Village has a public water and sanitary sewage treatment system. Public storm water management system and facilities are present in the community.

At some point in the future the population of Somonauk will grow sufficiently to warrant construction of new elementary schools, parks and other municipal facilities. The Village should begin preparing for this eventuality by developing a capital improvement program to itemize the park and other municipal improvements the community is likely to need, along with budget estimates and dates the facilities may be provided. The Village should adopt school and park land contribution requirements to facilitate this eventuality and use the annexation agreement as a tool to obtain necessary school and park improvements.



The Village should work with the United States Postal Service to retain the post office operations and functions in the downtown. The Post Office is the community “front porch” and this use should remain in the historical core or heart of the community and continue its social meeting place function in the center of the community. The Post Office, along with the Village Hall and Library, is one of downtown Somonauk’s “anchor tenants” and relocating it to an outlying location will be detrimental to the inherent functions of the downtown.

At present, the Village’s water and wastewater systems have adequate capacity. But growth will require expansion of these facilities and the Village will need to monitor the available capacity in each system in order to begin expansion of the facilities in advance of need.



Lake Holiday, a private community in LaSalle County, is adjacent the Village and is served by numerous private wells and septic systems. This arrangement has worked satisfactorily for the Lake Holiday community but the density and intensity of recent development that has occurred in the community could present environmental problems in the future. Somonauk residents are not likely to be directly affected by any individual failure of the private water or sanitary disposal systems in Lake Holiday. But if septic and well failures become epidemic the Village could be approached by Lake Holiday and/or the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency for help in the form of treating sanitary waste and/or providing a source of potable water to the private community. If this



situation were to materialize the addition of Lake Holiday to the Village's water and sanitary sewer systems would be a dramatic undertaking given the size of the private community. The creation of a regional sanitary waste treatment facility serving Somonauk, Lake Holiday and Sandwich is an option that has been discussed among the communities and may provide more economical and long-term benefit for each community.

Growth of the community will also place demands on the space needs for Village government, the library, and police and fire facilities. The present facilities are adequate for the present size of the community and for the near-term but will become inadequate as the community grows and expands. Growth will eventually require the addition of one or more new fire stations, and the Comprehensive Plan identifies several locations to reserve or set aside for future facilities.

## TELECOMMUNICATIONS INFRASTRUCTURE



**The purpose of this element is to coordinate telecommunications initiatives in the region and encourage investment in the most advanced technologies.**

Telephone, personal wireless communication devices, and the Internet are a few of the types of communication being revolutionized, today. The tools and technologies being developed and implemented today will have repercussions in the future and could materially affect quality of life and economic development in Somonauk in the future.

The deregulation of the telecommunications industry and the providers of telecommunications services has shifted the burden of providing the latest in telecommunication technology and service on local governments.

Citizens are no longer guaranteed the latest advances in telecommunications service or facilities. Local governments will need to be vigilant about the services being provided in the community to be certain businesses and residents are being provided the very latest telecommunications technologies and to remain competitive in the economic development sphere. At present, high-speed internet and wireless web service exist and are available in the community.

Because Somonauk, alone, does not possess the resources necessary to develop, attract, or retain the telecommunications infrastructure necessary to keep it competitive for economic development purposes, it should seek to partner with other communities in LaSalle and DeKalb County, or the US 34 corridor, to ensure that the latest advances in telecommunications are provided in the Village and in LaSalle and DeKalb County.

# HOUSING



**The purpose of this element of the Somonauk Comprehensive Plan is to document present and future needs for housing in Somonauk, including, affordability, visitability, and other special housing needs; identify the barriers to housing in Somonauk; assess the condition of the local housing stock; and, develop strategies, programs and other actions to address the needs for a range of housing options in Somonauk.**

Somonauk's housing stock is primarily single-family in character. There are a few buildings designed or used for more than one family, but these are the exception in the Village. The housing inventory is generally in good condition. Ongoing building and property maintenance code enforcement will be needed in the Village to prevent the condition of the housing stock from deteriorating and materially affecting the appearance and value of all property in the Village.

The housing stock is varied: large and small, old and new, modest to opulent. In addition to single-family homes, two-family, attached single-family, senior housing, apartments, and other multiple-family building typologies are present in Somonauk. Maintaining a diverse mix of housing, such as size, value, type (single-family, multiple-family, rental) as the community grows and develops will be one of the Village's biggest challenges in the future.

Owning a house remains the American dream. Whether it remains a dream or is attainable for many people depends upon local government practices, as much as job security and mortgage interest rates. Small decisions, such as the minimum lot size or whether or not to permit multiple-family or apartment development in a community, materially affect whether a community and its housing practices are exclusionary or not.

The demand for housing in the future is likely to be much different than the past fifty years. Today, the majority (76%) of homebuyers are non-traditional families, including single persons, single parents, empty-nesters, same-sex households, married couples with no children, and others, with single women representing the largest segment (23%) of the non-traditional house buyer. The type of house a single women wants (size, amenities, yard, garage, neighborhood environment) is undeniably different than the traditional nuclear family or the empty-nester wants. The increasing differentiation among the buyers in the market will place demands for new and different housing choices in the future.

The Somonauk Comprehensive Plan emphasizes development of mixed residential neighborhoods that provide a wide range of housing types in close proximity to each other to provide neighborhood stability and offer choices and options within the neighborhood. Mixed residential neighborhoods a key to Somonauk's character and the quality of life in the community and replicating this neighborhood planning concept in new neighborhood development in Somonauk is the focus of the Comprehensive Plan.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



**The purpose of this element is to coordinate local economic development initiatives with those of the State of Illinois. An assessment of the community's strengths and weaknesses with respect to attracting and retaining business and industry is a focus of this element.**

In its heyday, Somonauk provided a vibrant market for residents in the Village and in the outlying farm country. It enjoyed commuter rail service to Aurora and Chicago and points westward. But changes in business, technology and other social factors saw a long period of decline for the Village. Today, business, technology, and social factors continue to change and offer some economic hope for Somonauk in the future.

In order for any new retail business development growth in Somonauk, the population will need to grow in order to support new businesses. To put this challenge in perspective, a rule of thumb in the commercial development profession is a community needs approximately six hundred homes to support a mini-mart or convenience store, and six thousand homes to support a small grocery store.

As it sits, today, Somonauk does not have sufficiently large population to support a wide range of basic commercial enterprises. Because Somonauk sits at the end of the growth corridor along US 34 extending from Aurora-Naperville, the Village will need to exercise some patience with its economic development expectations.

In the meantime, the current businesses and services in Somonauk will remain only as long as they are economically viable. Until Somonauk accumulates a critical mass of population to support new business growth and development, it is unlikely there will be significant new business development in Somonauk in the near term.

One key to Somonauk's economic development strategy should be to exploit Lake Holiday for commercial development purposes. This private community represents a significant market base for Somonauk and it is not necessary to annex the community to receive some benefit from it. One way is to capture the discretionary income available in this community by encouraging strategic annexation and commercial development of parcels at the gateways to Lake Holiday.

Another key to Somonauk's economic development strategy is its quality of life. Many of the characteristics about Somonauk that attracted current residents still exist and remain highly sought after by the public. Small-town environments are highly desirable and to the extent that they attract an educated and skilled labor pool small towns like Somonauk will be attractive to most businesses and employers.



Key to any economic development initiative in Somonauk will be establishing maintaining sufficient capacity in the municipal sewer collection system and sanitary waste treatment operation and water distribution system, and a cooperative, "can-do" business environment. Without this infrastructure, Somonauk's economic development prospects will be exceedingly small and limited. The nature of the environment the Village government cultivates for business growth and development will bear directly on the success of economic development initiatives in the Village.



## NATURAL RESOURCES

**The purpose of this element is to identify and define the natural resources in the community with respect to water, flora and fauna and to assess the relative importance of these resources to the community.**

Given that Somonauk is situated in the midst of an active farming landscape, the land is the natural resource in the community. The landscape in the planning area is flat to gently rolling and is well-drained, contributing to its suitability for farming activities.

Lake Holiday, Somonauk Creek and Buck Creek are the most notable water features in the landscape in the planning area. Lake Holiday is an artificial lake and was formed by damming Somonauk Creek. Somonauk Creek drains a large watershed and continues past the Village to the Fox River in La Salle County. A number of overland drainage ways lace the landscape conveying surface waters to Somonauk Creek.

Regulated floodplains are found along Somonauk Creek.

Woodlands are present along Somonauk Creek and, with the exception of the DeKalb County Forest Preserve District's Somonauk Forest Preserve, are in private ownership.

Located where US 34 crosses Somonauk Creek, the Somonauk Forest Preserve is a popular location for fishing and winter activities and has become a community amenity.

There are no known endangered species of flora or fauna or endangered habitat in the planning area.

## AGRICULTURE PRESERVATION



**The purpose of this element is to identify the means and methods for protecting farmland.**

Given the role of agriculture in DeKalb and LaSalle Counties—as well as Somonauk’s heritage—agriculture protection is an underlying component of the Somonauk Comprehensive Plan. While agriculture is the dominant industry in both Counties, technology and economics have reduced the direct ties to agricultural production that once existed in Somonauk. Nonetheless, agriculture remains a key force in each County’s economy, a dominant feature on the landscape, and a defining feature of the communities in each County, including Somonauk.

To this end, the Somonauk Comprehensive Plan attempts to provide a framework with which the Village can aid or assist in the protection of farmland from premature development and the nuisances caused by development in Somonauk. The areas of the Future Land Use Plan that identify agriculture land uses provide reasonable assurance that farming activities will remain there during the life of this Plan, at least for the next generation or so.

A key agriculture preservation strategy is to make farming economically viable in the face of development pressures. The way to keep farming viable is to develop markets for agricultural products. The Village supports research and technology used to develop new uses for agricultural products.



# COMMUNITY DESIGN

**The purpose of this element is to identify the key community design principles and strategies for achieving the community vision with respect to its physical form and appearance.**

In many respects, the design principles that follow are a record of the physical form of Somonauk and its neighborhoods, today. This is not a yearning for nostalgia, or an exclusionary strategy. Instead, the design principles grew out of the Image Preference Survey and community planning charrette and reflect what citizens in Somonauk accept and desire.



## Principle One

*Pedestrian scale shall be the common denominator in neighborhood development in Somonauk in order to create a positive comfortable public realm and facilitate interaction among neighborhood residents.*

### **Walking Scale Shall Define the Size and Function of a Neighborhood**

Residents of Somonauk's neighborhoods should be able to walk to the center of the community or to the center of their neighborhood. Neighborhood residents should not be dependent upon their automobiles for most of their daily trips. They should be able to walk from home to school, recreation, shopping, places of employment, civic facilities, and transit opportunities that may exist in Somonauk in the future. A pedestrian neighborhood is defined by walking distances that are comfortable to the average person. For an adult, a five-minute walk (1/4 mile) is deemed to be the optimum walking distance between home and the core of the neighborhood, such as a park, square, civic building, or commercial area, and shall be the determining dimension for neighborhood size.

### **Locating Intensity of Uses**

Community size is influenced by walking distances, but it need not be limited by them. The highest intensity of use (scale, floor area, density) must occur in the core of the Village or its neighborhoods. The highest densities should be found mixed into the core areas and immediately adjacent them. Density and intensity of use should decrease as one reaches the edges of individual neighborhoods and the primary development area of the Village. Open spaces, parks, very low density uses, large boulevards, or natural features should be used to separate neighborhoods.

### **Transit Linkages to Expand Pedestrianism**

The provision of transit alternatives can significantly expand the pedestrian domain. Transit stops are important design elements of the core and can be very important places in the community and individual neighborhoods. Somonauk neighborhoods and core areas shall be located and designed to accommodate transit services in the future.

### **Walking and the Pedestrian**

The walking distance between home and various neighborhood facilities must be a fundamental factor in design and layout. A movement network which supports and encourages pedestrian movement is a design element which creates a sense of place. The movement network must be designed to be attractive, safe and comfortable for pedestrians of all ages and levels of mobility.

### **A Network of Walkways**

A network of interconnected pedestrian walkways is an essential basic design feature in a neighborhood. The pedestrian network must link and connect home with shopping, school, transit, recreation, and employment opportunities in the neighborhood and beyond. Sidewalks and off-street paths must be continuous, safe, and they must be clearly delineated and understandable.

### **Continuity**

People are generally willing to walk greater distances if they are provided with a continuous and pleasurable experience. The placement of trees, the treatment of building facades and parking, the use of interesting pavement, fences, hedges and architectural details all contribute to the pleasurable experience of walking through the neighborhood and shall be employed in all types of development in Somonauk.

### **Sidewalk Width**

The width of a sidewalk should be in direct proportion to the projected volume of users.

### **Security in the Pedestrian Realm**

Sidewalks should be separated from traffic on the adjoining street. A parkway, or tree bank, between the street and sidewalk, with trees planted at regular intervals to increase the sense of security for the pedestrian, shall be provided in all neighborhoods regardless of the uses or street characteristics. On-street parking should be encouraged to calm traffic and significantly contribute to the security of the pedestrian.

### **Edges**

The sidewalk edge away from the street should be treated as a boundary and help to define the pedestrian realm. In residential neighborhoods a low fence, wall or hedge can be used to define edges. In residential areas where building setbacks are shallow, the first floor of residences shall be elevated two to four feet above the sidewalk grade for the privacy of the inhabitants of the dwellings. In commercial areas, buildings should be brought up to the sidewalk with the first floor no more than six inches above the grade of the sidewalk.

### **Street Lighting and Street Furniture**

Street lighting and other street furniture, such as benches, planters, trash receptacles, etc., can increase the positive experience of walking in Somonauk neighborhoods. Street lighting and street furniture should complement the pedestrian realm. The use of lighting should vary with the land uses on property adjoining the sidewalk and the amount of pedestrian traffic. Benches should be provided throughout the Village, even in residential neighborhoods, to provide places to rest.



### Signs

The pedestrian experience and visual appearance of Somonauk can be enhanced by the quality of signs. Signs designed for the pedestrian can be smaller but still provide essential information.

### Bicycle Paths

Bicycle paths, although not strictly pedestrian, have a critical role in complementing the pedestrian network. Most streets in Somonauk can accommodate bicycle traffic. However, paths along major highways or the railroad connecting Somonauk to more distant places such as Hinckley, Plano or Yorkville, or Sheridan may be considered in the future.



## Principle Two

*Neighborhood development in Somonauk must complement the natural features of the landscape and respect the natural and man-made environment.*

### Indigenous Vegetation

Indigenous (native) vegetation should be used to the fullest extent in the landscaping of development in Somonauk and the restoration of the landscape in and around the Village.



### Manage Storm Water Responsibly

Storm water collection and management should rely less upon pipes and constructed basins and more upon overland drainage and natural landscape features, with plants intended to convey, store and release storm water flows. The emphasis on infiltration rather than collection of storm water demands a conscientious effort from design to construction to reduce impervious surface and disturbances to soil structure, and preservation of natural hydrology and hydrologic conditions. The use of certain plants and restoration of landscape features, e.g. wetlands, contributes to more environmentally friendly storm water management systems and reduces the impact on adjoining farmland and Somonauk Creek and Buck Creek and their tributaries, and ultimately lower operating costs to the Village.



### Reduce the Conflict Between Agriculture and Neighborhood Development

Agricultural activity around Somonauk is a significant element of the landscape and the local economy. It is also one of the defining features of Somonauk. Agriculture represents livelihoods for many people in Somonauk and the conflicts between agriculture and neighborhood development need attention.

### Develop Land According to its Suitability

Development should occur only on land most suitable for growth and only to the degree that will cause the minimum negative environmental impact.

### Walking and Bicycling

The ability to walk and bicycle to reach recreation, shopping, and job destinations in Somonauk can significantly reduce the consumption of energy and pollution emissions. Walking and bicycling also allow for greater interaction with nature and neighbors, the observation of seasonal and daily changes, and

an appreciation of such features as clean air and streets. Facilities and conditions to enable and enrich walking and bicycling opportunities in Somonauk must be incorporated into neighborhood development plans.

### Principle Three

*Create a sense of community.*



#### Semi-Public and Private Spaces

“Good fences make good neighbors.” While public life is essential to a community, a sense of privacy is also important. Semi-private areas, such front yards are used to create a transition zone between the public domain of the street and the private domain of the house or shop. These areas can be defined by porches, short fences or shrubs.



#### Community Spaces

Every neighborhood needs places where people can meet. The sense of community is enhanced by the physical characteristics of common spaces. Community centers, cafes, plazas, and even kiosks are places where people can meet in formal or informal situations.



#### A Mix of Houses and People

A mix of housing types and housing types shall be distributed throughout Somonauk neighborhoods. The sense of a safe, socially healthy, and visually interesting place is enhanced by the provision of a range of housing types and sizes to accommodate households of all ages and sizes. The location of various housing types within a neighborhood creates physical variation and contributes to the diversity of the population.

#### Facilitate Person-to-Person Interaction

Face-to-face interaction is a fundamental human need. Neighborhoods in Somonauk must be designed with this need in mind. To reinforce the human scale, the design of a place should facilitate the creation of neighborhood bonds, and a sense of community while insuring individual privacy.



### Principle Four

*Open spaces of all types and sizes for visual and aesthetic qualities, recreational, ecological, agricultural and economic functions shall be provided within, as well as on the periphery of, neighborhoods and the Village.*

#### Rear Yards

Private open spaces are essential to the basic function of any household. A modest, yet private, landscaped rear yard is a necessary requirement for most housing types in Somonauk. Yard sizes and layout will vary with housing types. Lots with small yards should be compensated by being located in close proximity to parks.



### Front Yards

The space between the public sidewalk and the front of the dwelling is a transition area. Even the smallest front yard acts as a transition between the public street and the private dwelling. The front yard is a semi-public space and a contributing element to the neighborhood's open space network.



### Public Spaces

Public open space within Somonauk neighborhoods provides locations for formal and informal gatherings and passive recreation, and is an essential element of the neighborhood and feature of the community. In Somonauk, public open spaces should take on many forms and functions. Public open spaces must serve all age groups in Somonauk and be integrated with the pedestrian network in the Village. Public open spaces must be physically accessible and visible to the public.



### Active and Passive Recreation

Public open spaces in Somonauk must include opportunities for passive and active recreation. Active recreation facilities should be sized commensurate with the expected population within the service area of the public open space.



### Peripheral Spaces

Peripheral open spaces should define the edge of Somonauk and individual neighborhoods. Peripheral open spaces enhance the sense of place by making Somonauk identifiable in the landscape: they create a sense of exit and entry. Open spaces on the periphery of Somonauk can preserve environmentally sensitive lands or land used for agriculture.



### The Parkway (Tree Bank)

Parkways are the open space that lies between the sidewalk and the street. When thought of as part of the Village's open space system, parkways extend internal and peripheral open spaces into the network of streets. Parkway serve to separate and define roadways and sidewalks and will vary in width depending upon the street type and the intensity of adjacent uses.

## Principle Five

*Somonauk must have a central core or focus. Every neighborhood in Somonauk must also have a core or community focus.*

### The core

The core is the focal point for Somonauk and each neighborhood. Its size will vary with the number of dwellings in the neighborhood but it provides a potential place for employment, shopping, social activities, and for people in the neighborhood or community to interact or congregate. Pedestrian presence is critical; it signals the vitality of the community or neighborhood. The elements found in the core of one neighborhood may vary from those found in another neighborhood but it should be the activity center which unifies the neighborhood and its character often reflects the image of the neighborhood as a whole. The core should incorporate these elements:



- A central and integrated location for equal access by foot, car, or transit
- A balance of residential and non-residential uses
- Retail uses in proportion and scale to housing
- Employment space in proportion and scale to housing
- Civic and social facilities
- Specific design standards for streetscapes and facades
- Vertical elements, such as a bell tower, that render it immediately identifiable in the landscape



### Location

The core symbolizes the center of the community or neighborhood and, to the extent possible, is surrounded by the community or neighborhood. It must front onto a street or streets within the primary movement network in the community or neighborhood and be designed around a central place such as a square, green, plaza, or a crossroad. Where possible, buildings in the core should define the space(s). The size of the core should be in direct proportion to the number of dwellings in the community or neighborhood. A neighborhood will have a smaller core than the Village.



### Balance

The core must have an appropriate balance of housing to other uses such as retail and services, civic and social, offices and open space. The amount of retail and office space should be compatible with the number of housing units and potential users within the primary walking area. Civic and social spaces such as churches, libraries, post offices, community buildings, and schools are appropriate uses in the core since these uses tend to be major focal points for community and neighborhood activity.



### Design

In order to foster and enhance the purpose and function of the core, essential design elements need to be included in the design and location of the core. Buildings in the core should have a greater scale and a higher density than the remainder of the neighborhood and should range from two- to three-stories in height. Generally, one-story buildings should be avoided. Buildings in the core must be closely spaced and the street level reserved for food services, personal services and retail businesses. Mixed-use buildings with retail on the ground floor and offices or dwelling units on the upper floors are the preferred building typology in the core.



Parking must not be permitted in the front of buildings unless it is located on the street. Landscaped parking lots shall be placed behind buildings in the core.

When retail uses are located in the core, retail must front onto a street providing pedestrian and vehicular access. Retail requires a seamless or continuous frontage of shop windows and entrances to maintain pedestrian interest. People must not be forced to pass in front of blank walls or parking lots as they walk between stores.

The core should have a traditional Main Street appearance with architectural details such as large display windows, awnings, decorative street furniture, small projecting signs, transoms, and cornices. The core should have a high point which should be visible from a distance. This vertical landmark, such as a steeple, cupola, or bell tower, will serve as that focal point and should also form the visual termination of a street or the square at which the core is located.

## Principle Six

*Streets create the form and scale of the community and must accommodate the pedestrian and the motor vehicle.*



### Streets Shall Create a Positive Community Image

The first impression of a community or a neighborhood is influenced greatly by the street. Streets are the foundation of the settlement pattern in Somonauk and are the most important public spaces in Somonauk neighborhoods. Their thoughtful design is crucial to the creation of a positive community image.



### Streets Shall Form a Network

A dense network of interconnecting streets will influence pedestrian and vehicular circulation, provide a sense of place, and more evenly distribute traffic. A network of streets provides order and legibility to the neighborhood. Every street shall be connected to at least two other streets. A dense network of interconnecting streets provides multiple alternative routes, eliminating congested arterial streets.

### A Hierarchy of Streets Shall be Established

The street network relies upon a hierarchy of streets. A variety of street widths shall be provided to accommodate various levels of traffic.



### Alleys

The use of alleys in Somonauk is encouraged to improve the visual appearance of the streetscape and to provide access to off-street parking. The use of alleys is strongly encouraged along streets having multiple-family residential and/or mixed-use buildings along their frontages.



### Design Features

In order to provide a positive experience, streets in Somonauk shall incorporate the following:

- Except for high volume roadways, the width of roadways shall be typically narrow to discourage high travel speed.
- Buildings shall front directly onto streets
- On-street parking is encouraged to increase safety for pedestrians and to calm traffic.
- Street trees must be planted in the parkways (tree banks).
- Small curb radius shall be used at intersections to slow traffic and reduce width of roadway at crosswalks.

## Principle Seven

*Variation within the design conformity creates the most visually positive communities.*

### Variety shall be used in Neighborhoods

Variations on basic patterns are necessary to discourage sameness and dullness. Differences in building form, mass, façade treatment, and other architectural details contribute to the individuality of each building, even within a common design in the neighborhood.

Variation and variety can be achieved by applying any and all of these techniques:

- **LOT WIDTH.** Lot widths of different size encourage variation among building masses. Lots of different widths should be dispersed, but lot sizes generally increase from the center of the community to the edge.
- **LOT DEPTH.** Varying lot depth will affect the configuration of the block and the street network.
- **BLOCKS.** A variety of block lengths and configurations is recommended in Somonauk neighborhoods.
- **ALLEYS.** Alleys are recommended, but particularly for lots and blocks containing narrow lot single-family, attached single-family, multiple-family, mixed-use, and retail uses.
- **BUILD-TO LINES.** A build-to line defines the proportions of the street by prescribing where the mass of a building must be located. Unlike a setback line which establishes the distance from which a structure must be located, the build-to line established a mandatory location for a structure relative to the street. Porches, balconies, bay windows, and other building projections would be permitted to encroach upon the build-to line to provide dimension and rhythm to the streetscape.
- **BUILD-UP LINES.** Variety can be accomplished with building height, with taller buildings placed at points of interest and at corners. Roof lines and ridges can also vary with some ridges being perpendicular to the street and others parallel. The addition of porches, roof projections, chimneys, and garage placement also contribute to variety. A build-up line specifies a cornice height that defines the street proportion. Build-up lines should vary.
- **NON-RESIDENTIAL USES.** Variety and variation can be accomplished by the introduction of non-residential uses in the neighborhood. Civic and social uses can be located in the neighborhood in functional and serviceable locations and yet, provide visual variation. The development of the core also adds to the variety and variation of a neighborhood or community.
- **HOUSING TYPES.** A variety of housing types within a neighborhood, a block, or along a street frontage contributes to variety and variation. Non-single-family structures should be dispersed throughout the neighborhood, not concentrated in one location or large development.





## Principle Eight

*A mix of land uses, housing, jobs, and incomes creates a more balanced community, reduces traffic, maintenance costs, and creates better fiscal balance for Somonauk.*



### Mixed- and Multiple-Uses

Mixed-use refers to different uses located in the same building. Multiple-use refers to different uses located adjacent each other, typically in separate buildings. Mixed- and multiple-uses are encouraged in Somonauk neighborhoods. A mixture of compatible uses provides greater proximity for residents and creates opportunities for shopping, employment and interaction among neighborhood residents. Mixed- and multiple uses should be located in or very near the neighborhood core.

### Housing Above Retail

Housing above ground level retail uses is strongly encouraged in core areas.



### Housing Mix

Homogenous neighborhoods must be avoided. A mix of housing types and price ranges should be provided throughout the neighborhood to help achieve the desired visual quality and market, economic and social mix necessary to create the most desirable neighborhoods. Housing is not static. Small houses can grow in to larger ones; garages can be added to or expanded. Add-on opportunities in residential neighborhoods contribute to the variety, diversity and resilience of neighborhoods.

### Attainable Housing

Neighborhoods must accommodate attainable housing for families of low and moderate incomes. Attainable housing must not be concentrated in one project, one area, or one neighborhood.

### Land Use Boundaries

Land use boundaries should run at the rear of parcels rather than down the middle of the street. Both sides of a street should have matching land uses in order to create more harmonious streetscapes. Schools, parks and other civic buildings and public uses would be exceptions to this rule.

### Large Floor Area Uses

Large, single purpose uses such as warehouse supermarkets, home improvement centers and discount department stores, should be located on the edges of neighborhoods along arterial highways, or in industrial areas.



## **Principle Nine**

*Somonauk is committed to maintaining its character and quality of place and the character and quality of place within its individual neighborhoods.*

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### **Property Maintenance Codes**

The level of property maintenance on a given parcel will influence property values throughout the neighborhood. Consequently, prevention of visible deterioration of property in Somonauk neighborhoods is imperative. Enforcement programs should be constant, consistent and equitable.

### **Preservation of Somonauk's Heritage**

Historic structures, neighborhoods and landscapes should be preserved and enhanced. Historic preservation contributes to the richness, diversity and visual interest of Somonauk's neighborhoods and helps to differentiate neighborhoods from one another. Historic preservation efforts are compatible with neighborhood development and should be encouraged.

### **Maintaining a Sense of Security**

A fundamental human need is security. People must feel secure in their community. The greatest security is in knowing the people who live and work in the community. Neighborhood design and layout must promote personal interaction and neighborliness while assuring privacy.



## PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

**The purpose of this element is to identify specific actions the Village will need to accomplish in order to achieve the goals of the Somonauk Comprehensive Plan.**

Adoption of the Comprehensive Plan is not the end of the planning process. Rather it is the beginning of a long continuous process of responding to the recommendations in the Plan as well as changing community needs and opportunities presented to the community.

The strategies for implementing the recommendations of the Somonauk Comprehensive Plan can, at best, only be viewed as a set of directions or tasks. Additional study, analysis and community input will be required in order to implement recommendations related to many elements of the Comprehensive Plan, such as housing, economic development, and telecommunications infrastructure.

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### **Establish a boundary agreement with the City of Sandwich.**

The Future Land Use Plan recognizes Somonauk Creek as a physical limitation to expansion of Somonauk north of the county line. Since it is the purpose of the Future Land Use Plan and the Comprehensive Plan to identify those areas the Village expects to provide services and to control development and to provide a vision for the logical, economical and orderly development of the community, establishing a boundary agreement would permit Somonauk to plan for improvements and extension of public services in a logical orderly manner without fear of losing control over certain territory to another community. A boundary agreement also gives the Village the added benefit of a better negotiating position by not being in competition with another community for the same developer or development of the same land.

**Adopt the Model Unified Development Ordinance (UDO), or amend the Village Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Ordinance to match the community design principles in the Comprehensive Plan.**

The present ordinances are no longer adequate to deal with the types of land uses and development practices that exist today. The subdivision and zoning requirements are somewhat antiquated and in need of modernization. Adoption of the Model UDO would provide the fastest means of modernizing the codes and, yet, permit the Village to personalize the regulations for Somonauk's specific conditions and expectations.

- Key to any code amendment is providing the appropriate mechanisms to achieve the desired mixed residential neighborhood ideal. One option is to treat all non-single-family construction as a Special Use in the residential district and provide specific criteria for each building type as it relates to building location, the number of buildings or dwelling units, the appearance of buildings, and so on. This strategy provides the Village with the control it desires over the placement of multiple-family uses without appearing exclusionary.
- Also key to any code amendment, is to evaluate the present lot development standards with what presently exists in Somonauk. Too often district regulations are amended over time in response to isolated circumstances and, unwittingly, existing uses and structures are made non-conforming by changes that seem appropriate for the matter at hand at the time. A simple test is: Can what exists today in Somonauk be reconstructed under the present regulations? If not, evaluation of the standards is warranted, if for no other reason to remove the unnecessary non-conforming status on parcels and structures. This is an issue for two reasons. First, non-conforming structures and uses of land or structures cannot be re-established if they are destroyed. Second, banks and other financial institutions are more careful in their due diligence investigations prior to issuing loans and financing and non-conforming status on a parcel or structure can result in a financing rate at a higher rate or rejection of the application.
- The Subdivision Ordinance should be amended to include the very latest population and fair market value data for school and parks contribution requirements. In addition, the park and open space principles in the Community Design element of the Comprehensive Plan should be incorporated in the subdivision regulations.
- The Subdivision Ordinance should be amended to include the latest in subdivision preparation and review requirements and to reflect current development practices, including requiring subdividers to construct and/or improve road frontages on their property.
- Amend the Zoning Ordinance to permit mixed-use buildings. The Image Preference Survey and charrette demonstrated that this building typology is acceptable and desirable in Somonauk, yet the Zoning Ordinance prohibits it.
- Amend the lot development standards for each zoning district to be more explicit with respect to the desired end result. As written, the lot development standards permit the very types of buildings and lot development Image Preference Survey and charrette participants indicated they did not like or want to see in Somonauk.



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### **Adopt and enforce property maintenance standards.**

The desirability of a community is often a function of its appearance. Lack of regular property maintenance or deferred maintenance on residential and commercial properties alike has a creeping effect on a community, which is when it becomes noticeable it has likely gotten out of hand. Thus, abating minor issues before they become major neighborhood problems is an important function of the local government.

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### **Exhaust all means to remove the salvage yard uses in the Village.**

If the image of a community is formed by what one can see from the road, several entry points to Somonauk do not project a positive image of the community. The community has undertaken a number of attempts to fix the situation over the years and is encouraged to continue these efforts and to consider out-of-box and even drastic measures to remove—or mitigate—these unsightly and incompatible uses.

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### **Participate in regional economic development initiatives.**

Given the Village's scant resources, it is recommended that Village participate on a regular basis with groups, such as the DeKalb County Economic Development Corporation, as a means of keeping involved in economic development activities and to increase the familiarity of the community among economic development professionals.

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### **Continue to monitor capacity of the Village water and wastewater systems.**

If the new development illustrated on the Future Land Use Plan is to be achieved, the Village will need to provide expansion and upgrades to its water and wastewater systems. The present systems are not capable of serving the development illustrated on the Future Land Use Plan and the Village will need to be prepared to set in motion the expansion of these facilities in advance of need. In addition, since such expansions generally have a long design and construction period, the Village will need to maintain a reserve capacity at any given time in order to accommodate new industrial or commercial uses which cannot wait for expansion to be completed.

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### **Prepare a Downtown revitalization plan.**

The community has identified the central business district, the "Downtown," as a vital community asset and the Future Land Use Plan gives the central business district special recognition. A Downtown revitalization plan is important in order to realize the hidden potential in this neighborhood, but such an effort is beyond the scope of the Comprehensive Plan. In the meantime, the Village can make amendments to the Zoning Ordinance to facilitate many of the Community Design principles that are applicable to the central business district. Capital improvement decisions can also aid the downtown in the meantime. For example, sidewalk and road maintenance decisions need not be delayed until a revitalization plan is adopted, and decisions related to expansion of the Village Hall or a new library or post office can greatly influence the future viability of the central business district.



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### **Rezone strategic parcels of property.**

At the present time there are a number of parcels in the Village that have a zoning classification that permits a different use or more intense use of the property than what currently exists. For example, much of the property north of Market Street and east of the central business district is zoned for commercial uses, but very few of the parcels have a commercial use established upon them. Thus, appearances betray reality and the community could find itself one day with a checkerboard of residential and commercial uses along this stretch of Market Street.

With or without any Zoning Ordinance amendments, the Village should pursue this strategy as a way to ensure stability of property values in the immediate neighborhood and the community in general. Execution of this strategy will require careful analysis and full disclosure with the affected property owners in order to achieve a unified and coordinated change in the underlying zoning.

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### **Establish appearance criteria for the established neighborhoods of Somonauk.**

In the charrette a number of participants noted how the old neighborhoods in Somonauk had “so much more character” than the newer neighborhoods being built today. Given that Somonauk’s old neighborhoods contain some of the community’s oldest and most architecturally significant structures the Village could establish appearance criteria to maintain the neighborhood character and property values, as well as retain one of the physical attributes of the community that help define it and establish its character.

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### **Work with IDO to establish a by-pass around Somonauk.**

During the charrette and throughout the process of developing the Comprehensive Plan, concerns were expressed about increasing traffic through downtown and surrounding older neighborhoods. Residents advocated development of a by-pass around the Village and the Future land Use Plan incorporates this recommendation. The Village should begin to work with IDOT officials to identify the corridor and allocate funds for its eventual construction.

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### **Explore formation of a park district.**

At the present time, recreation needs are provided by the Village. The current situation may not be tenable in the future as the community grows. Thus, the Village should begin exploring the requirements, logistics and financial implications of forming a park district to assume responsibility for park and recreation needs of the community.

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### **Work with local and state transportation officials to construct a railroad overpass on the west side of Somonauk.**

The community recognizes that as the Village grows to the north and west there are few opportunities to cross the railroad and that future crossings west of the Village’s current limits will be critical to the development of the planning area and the circulation network. The Village should work with County and State and Railroad officials to identify the optimum location for an overpass and secure funding for the improvement.