Planning
Recovery
In
Downtown
Elmwood



ELMWOOD DISASTER RECOVERY PLAN 2010

This recovery plan was written by the Peoria County Planning & Zoning Department in cooperation with the City of Elmwood and the Elmwood Disaster Recovery Committee.

Elmwood Disaster Recovery Committee

Harry McFall
Tom Meyers
Terry Schulz
Kathy Shoop

Peoria County Planning & Zoning Department

Julie Young, Planner III
Andrew Braun, Planner II
Kristen Penniston, Planner I


Fuego!


06/06/2010


06/06/2010


McGUIRE'S
06/06/2010


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COMMUNITY VISION

As our forefathers "who bridged the streams, subdued the soil, and founded a state," we will together forge ahead turning adversity into opportunity creating a stronger more vibrant community with a continuing focus on family values as we grow into the future.



The above statement is the vision for rebuilding in the aftermath of the June 5, 2010 tornado. The vision statement is the overall perspective of the Community, as developed by the Elmwood Disaster Recovery Committee.

LETTERS OF SUPPORT

The following pages contain letters of support from Federal, State, and Local officials. These letters recognize continued support and encouragement from various elected officials.

INTRODUCTION



On Saturday, June 5, 2010, an EF-2 tornado struck the City of Elmwood, located in Peoria County, Illinois. According to the National Weather Service, the tornado was approximately 50 yards wide with winds up to 130 mph. The damage to Elmwood's Central Business District was extensive. A total of 41 buildings sustained damage, whereas 33 were originally deemed structurally unsafe for occupancy. Trees were uprooted, power lines toppled, and vehicles in the path incurred extensive damage. Fortunately, no lives were lost and no injuries were reported as a result of this disaster.

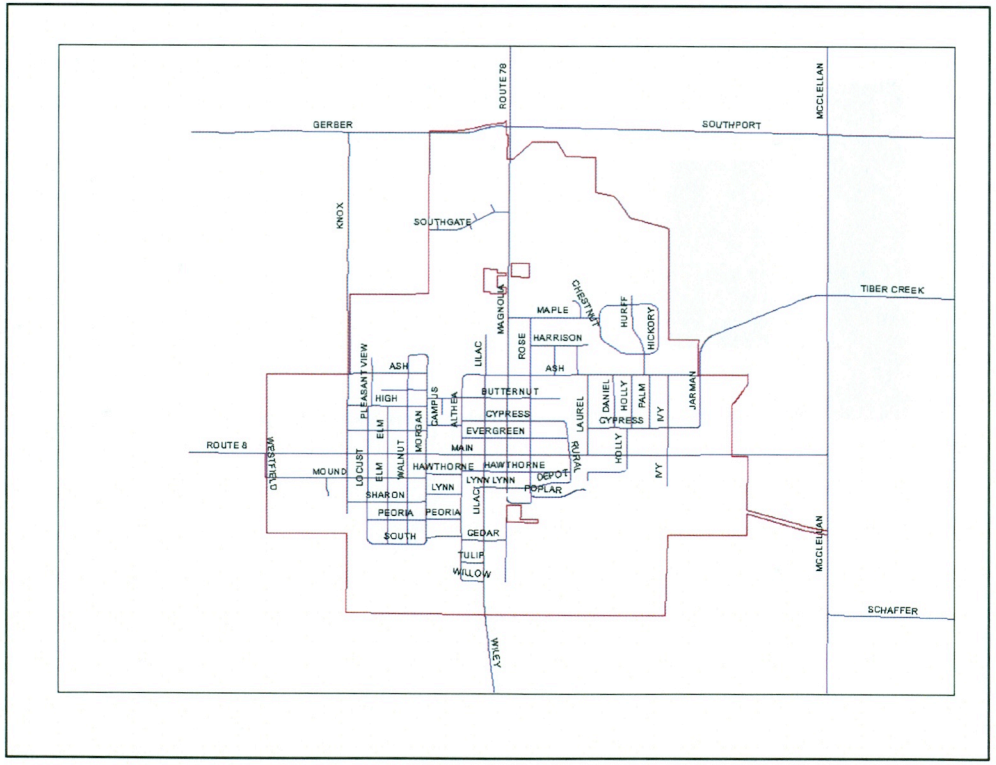
This Community Recovery Plan outlines the projects and processes identified by the community for rebuilding. This plan is the result of an intense 2 week planning process. A Disaster Recovery Plan Committee was established by the City of Elmwood and met with Peoria County Planning and Zoning staff. This committee consisted of representatives from local township government, business leaders, and community activists.

COMMUNITY PROFILE

In 1854, W.J. Phelps laid out what was originally known as the Town of Elmwood, located near the western border of Peoria County, Illinois. The Phelps Barn, built in 1840, is believed to have been a part of the Underground Railroad's "Liberty Line". In 1860 the Silver Cornet band was formed, laying the foundation for what is now known as the Elmwood Municipal Band. In 1867, Elmwood was officially incorporated as a Village. In 1892, Elmwood was officially incorporated as a City.

Some of the structures that have been impacted by the tornado are of historical value, including Hometown Hardware, which was constructed in 1885. Soon thereafter the City Building was erected in 1889. Another building of historical significance, The Palace Theatre, opened in 1913. *The Pioneers*, a statue sculpted by Lorado Taft and dedicated in 1928, serves as a symbol of the community spirit and heritage of Elmwood.

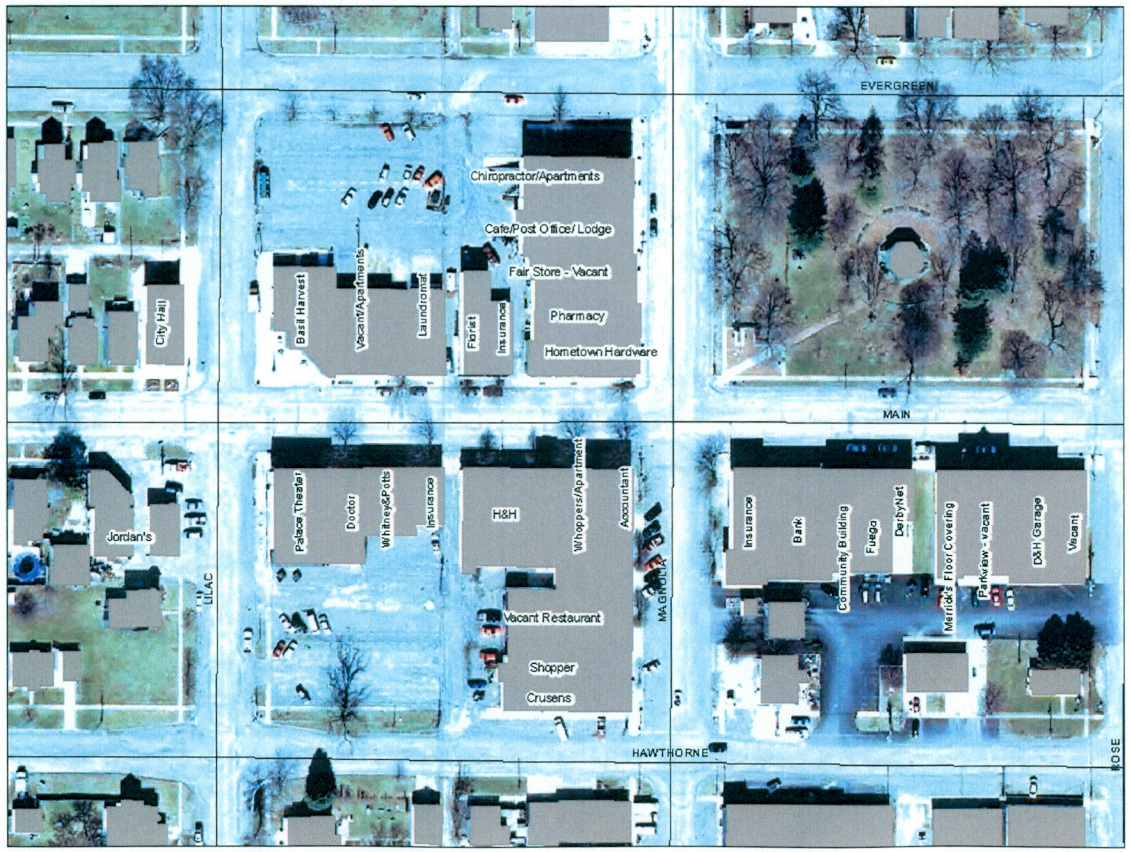
The City of Elmwood has a population of 1,945 according to the 2000 U.S. Census. The median household income was $44,500 at that time, which is slightly higher than the Peoria County median of $39,978. The City of Elmwood has 772 total households and 808 total housing units. Of the total housing units, 82% are owner-occupied, which is significantly higher than the 68% figure reported within Peoria County as a whole. The City of Elmwood's largest employer is Elmwood Community Unit School District #322



Map 1. Elmwood City Limits

ECONOMY & BUSINESS

The primary area impacted by the tornado of June 5, 2010 was the Central Business District for the City of Elmwood. Initial damage estimates indicated 80% of the downtown commercial district was deemed structurally unsafe. Re-establishing and rebuilding this area is crucial to the City. This area represents many facets important to the community - employment, services, tax base, and historical significance.



Map 2. City of Elmwood Business District

PROCESS

Immediate action was taken the morning following the tornado event and involved damage assessments conducted by professional inspections staff and local emergency service providers. Volunteers responded quickly by donating equipment and manpower for street clean-up efforts. Soon thereafter, community meetings were held in an effort to relay progress and processes to residents and business owners. City of Elmwood officials appointed the aforementioned Disaster Recovery Plan Committee to meet with Peoria County.

The plan development process began with an initial informational meeting to determine the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats within Elmwood as a result of the tornado. Elmwood identified several strengths on which the community prides itself. One of which, the Central Park, has been the setting for many community celebrations. The iconic park is the home of *The Pioneers* statue and the Gazebo, which is a symbol of the perseverance of the Elmwood Community, as it has continued to stand tall after disasters in 2009 and 2010. Other strengths identified include the municipal band, the Community Center gymnasium, Palace Theatre, and an award winning school district.

While it is important to focus on the positive aspects of a community after such a significant event, it also speaks volumes of the character and community to acknowledge the weaknesses that do exist. During the analysis phase, a lack of food establishments was identified as the largest deficiency within Elmwood. Several restaurants have explored the option of relocating within the City of Elmwood; however, the buildings which have housed restaurants over the years currently sit vacant. With weakness comes the chance to focus on a solution, and restaurant opportunities have been identified as a high priority by the residents during the recovery phase.

The residents recognize the tornado of June 2010 could be an opportunity to rebuild historic Elmwood. An overwhelming response was heard during public meetings: "Elmwood is not about the buildings; Elmwood is about the people". The potential to develop a downtown Tax Increment Finance District and/ or Enterprise Zone could generate funding for both public and private development in the near future and for years to come. Damage to several township and city buildings allows for the exploration of a combined municipal complex. Additionally, the opportunity to upgrade infrastructure, utilities, and city parking lots presents itself due to the damage incurred by surrounding structures.

Unfortunately, with the opportunity to rebuild is the threat that many of the historic buildings will be lost. Due to the fact that much of the City was constructed during the late 1800's and early 1900's, many buildings have limited structural information available and concerns surrounding reconstruction efforts exist. Another threat which is apparently nationwide, but is certainly evident within Elmwood is the concern that the Elmwood Post Office may not be considered a priority by the United States Postal Service and may be lost. The opportunity to create a new downtown Tax Increment Financing District creates the concern that the Elmwood Community Unit School District may be affected. However, the school board has expressed their support for a new TIF District. While all of these threats pose valid concern, it is important to conduct thorough analysis of each project or suggestion to ensure these questions can be answered.

After an analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats was completed, local community leaders looked for direction as to what the next step should be in moving forward. The consensus decision was that the community should be involved in the rebuilding process, so a survey was generated to identify the needs and wants of the residents who will play such a crucial role in rebuilding the City of Elmwood and its future. The intent of the survey was to assess the following four questions:

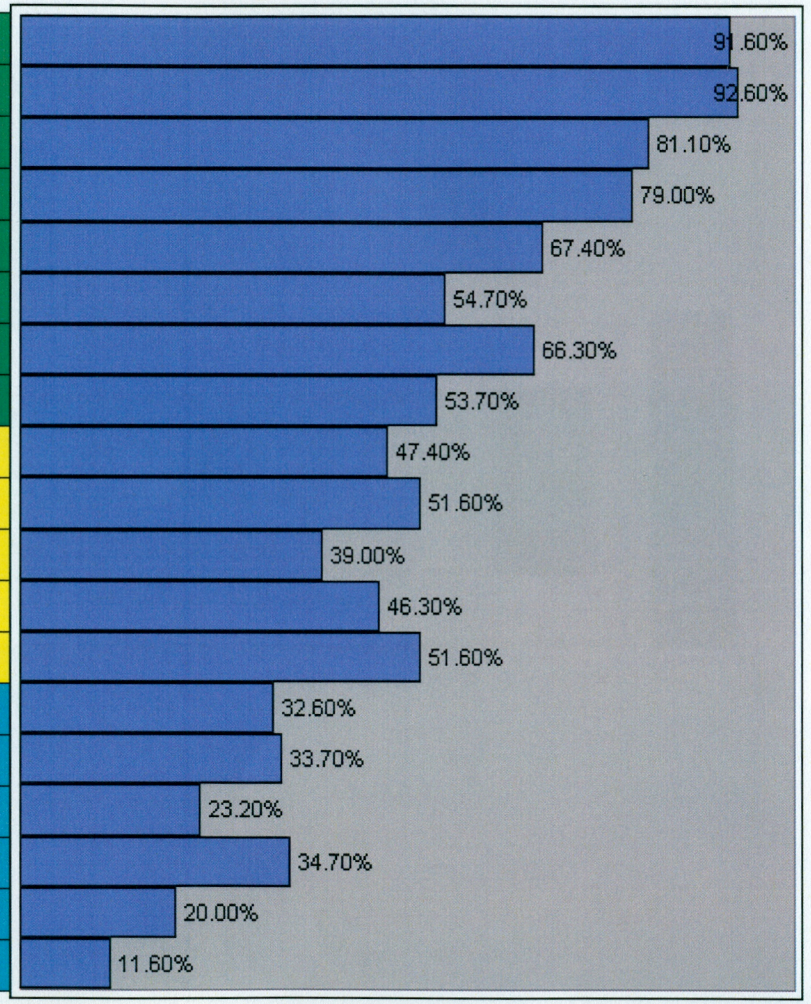
1. What services do you think are essential to Elmwood?
2. What new businesses would you like to see in Elmwood?
3. What recreational opportunities would you like to see in Elmwood?
4. What do you think could attract people to Elmwood?

Local Elmwood residents distributed the survey throughout the City limits. Citizen response can be considered above average with 323 surveys received in a matter of 2 days. This response emphasizes the community character and participation, which provided an invaluable source of input and feedback. For a copy of the Community Assessment Survey and results, please refer to Appendix A.

Based upon the survey results, as previously indicated, the committee met to determine potential projects. A list of 19 projects was identified, triggering a second survey. A project priority survey was distributed to gauge the community interest. The response was once again higher than expected, with 95 surveys returned over a 3 day period. Citizens ranked their top 10 priorities on a scale of 1-10. A project which received a priority of number 1 would then receive 10 points. This system continued until all projects receiving votes were assigned a point value. Thus, a project may have appeared on a higher number of surveys, yet received a lower priority ranking. Projects were assigned their final recovery value based upon the point value system. The results were analyzed and a priority value was assigned to each project, with rankings consisting of high, moderate, and community interest. The high value recovery projects are the most urgently needed and all available resources should be focused on immediate implementation. The moderate value projects, although not essential to recovery, are likely to produce substantial benefits for the community, and should be pursued as time and funding permit in the near future. Community interest projects are those that are of relative less significance, but are still probably worthy of more discussion and thoughtful consideration as recovery proceeds. For a copy of the Project Priority Survey, please refer to Appendix B. The results for the Project Priority Survey are illustrated as follows.

Project Priority Survey- Review of Community Response

Projects	Community Response (Total responses = 95)
Revitalize Downtown Business District	91.60%
Palace Movie Theatre	92.60%
Restaurant Opportunities	81.10%
Save the Historical Landmarks	79.00%
Medical Complex	67.40%
Establish Downtown TIF District	54.70%
Municipal Building/Complex	66.30%
Formation of Downtown Elmwood Development Review Board	53.70%
Pursue Formation of Elmwood Park District	47.40%
Explore Senior/Assisted Living	51.60%
Develop Business Incubator	39.00%
Evaluate/Upgrade Utility Systems	46.30%
Streetscaping	51.60%
Build & Repair Housing for Renters	32.60%
Explore Community Activities	33.70%
Explore Brick Repurposing Opportunities	23.20%
Improve City Parking Lots	34.70%
Explore Transportation Improvements	20.00%
Community Safe Room(s)	11.60%



HIGH RECOVERY VALUE
Projects are the most urgently needed and all available resources should be focused on immediate implementation.

MODERATE RECOVERY VALUE
Projects, although not essential to recovery, are likely to produce substantial benefits for the community and should be pursued as time and funding permit over the next few years.

COMMUNITY INTEREST
Projects are those that are of relatively less significance, but are still probably worthy of more discussion and thoughtful consideration as recovery proceeds.

Once projects had been identified, the committee met to discuss development of action items. With every project, a detailed process needed to be developed in order to make the goal obtainable. The committee generated a list of step-by-step actions and later a narrative was created to elaborate on the key points. Steps ranged from conducting damage assessments to exploring potential avenues for funding. The committee was careful not to single out any one individual or business during this phase, as responsibilities should not be dictated by a group lacking financial interest. Action steps should be treated as suggestions, and no single action is considered set in stone. Others actions require further exploration and development. These actions and subsequent steps served as the final building block for a draft plan to be created.

The group convened one final time to review a draft of the plan prior to final publication. Ideas surrounding the formatting of the document were considered, and a final product was agreed upon. The committee made the unanimous decision that before any document could be considered final, local community leaders should have the opportunity to review and comment. Several copies of the plan were distributed to solicit comment. The overall response was satisfaction with the Elmwood Recovery Plan and the process for adoption and implementation could now begin.

Process for Adoption

While the short-term and long-term goals of the City of Elmwood identified the steps which must be taken in order to rebuild the properties adversely affected as a result of the tornado, it is crucial to understand that the reconstruction of Elmwood may be based on 3 key criteria. Consideration of these requests must be made by the City of Elmwood and the Peoria County Board to assist property owners and developers with rebuilding efforts. Due to the historic nature of the community, unique characteristics exist which pose a hardship in returning Elmwood to its pre-disaster condition. Property owners, business managers, local officials and Peoria County must work together to achieve these goals, but this hard work alone will not be enough to restore the economic vitality of Elmwood. The City of Elmwood has identified the following conditions to be requested of the Peoria County Board:

1. Waiver of building code requirements
   The City of Elmwood is requesting that buildings be renovated without strict compliance with the County's adopted building codes. Due to the fact that many of these structures were constructed in the late 1800's and early 1900's, it is unrealistic to believe any of the existing buildings would meet the current codes implemented in the 2000's. While the buildings certainly may have been structurally sound and safe at the time they were constructed, new codes were drafted and adopted to ensure structural integrity and reduce the risk of hazards. As building codes progressed over time, existing structures were considered non-conforming to these standards and thus code compliance was not required unless improvements to the buildings were made. Components such as electrical, plumbing, mechanicals, as well as fire safety, energy conservation, and structural design all are addressed by current Peoria County building codes. To comply with current building codes would be extremely costly and may be a deterrent to reconstruction efforts.

2. Increased substantial damage indicator
   The City of Elmwood is proposing a significant increase (i.e. 95%) to the substantial damage determination. Existing local ordinances and adopted building codes require a structure to come into compliance with any and all applicable codes in two specific events. The key component is the fair market value, a number determined by the local assessments office. If the building is damaged beyond 50% of fair market value, or the cost of construction exceeds a value of 50%, a building must be brought into compliance and treated as new construction. Due to the fact that the tornado caused catastrophic damage to the downtown Elmwood area, 33 of 41 buildings were deemed structurally unsafe. While the term structurally unsafe does not indicate whether or not a structure is substantially damaged, the cost of reconstruction to bring the damaged portions of the buildings up to code could trigger a substantial damage determination. Insurance payments and building professionals' estimates may determine these structures as salvageable; however, if strict compliance of the 50% damage rule is adhered to, it may not be economically feasible to reconstruct many of the structures.

3. Waiver of building permits fees
   The City of Elmwood has requested that no permitting fees be charged for projects associated with the tornado disaster. Many of the buildings appear to have been underinsured. As a result, insurance claims may not reflect the building replacement value and insurance payments would be less than the cost of reconstruction. This problem is compounded further by the additional costs of building permits, which are not covered by insurance. This financial constraint would be detrimental to retention of

existing business and may impair future development. In the event that the Peoria County Board could waive the fees associated with the building permits for reconstruction, it may allow some of the buildings to be rebuilt and reoccupied.

In order to fully understand the requests made by the City of Elmwood, it is important to be aware of the processes as identified by the Peoria County Code and subsequent International Code Council building code adopted by Peoria County in April of 2006. The current substantial damage determination policy is one that has been established by the Federal Emergency Management Agency and has been implemented for all types of disasters, including past flooding within Peoria County. This formula is derived from taking the amount of damage, generally in the form of a professional construction estimate or insurance claim, and comparing it to the fair market value of the structure. A professional construction estimate will offer the most accurate data, due to the fact that the amount of an insurance policy can be undervalued, thus not reflecting the total amount of damage. The option presents itself to the individual property owner to enlist in the services of a State licensed appraiser, as it can be acknowledged the assessed value is not always an accurate representation of the value of the structure. This policy should not be taken lightly, as the theories behind such policy are established by staff appointed by the President of the United States himself. The engineer's reports generated for structures in Elmwood indicate some of the structural materials for many of these buildings are at, or near, the end of their lifecycle.

While the components of reconstruction which must comply with Peoria County possess a formidable challenge for Elmwood and may be negotiable, it is important to understand that the challenges from the State of Illinois may be even greater. Another consideration regarding strict compliance of this substantial damage policy must be the requirements as set forth by the Illinois Accessibility Code. Governed by the State of Illinois' Capital Development Board, the Illinois Accessibility Code requires structures must come into compliance with any and all laws once a specific reinvestment has been made. Peoria County does not have the authority to waiver from these requirements. Any ruling on the Accessibility Code must come from the Capital Development Board itself and should be explored prior to any rebuilding efforts within Elmwood. Regardless of this requirement, considerations from the Peoria County Board must be analyzed and approved prior to reconstruction efforts.

Revitalize Downtown Business District

Recovery Value

High

Goal

Rebuild damaged structures and reopen local businesses to support the sustainability of Elmwood for generations to come.

Project Description

Downtown Elmwood has always been identified as a historical center and source of community pride. 41 businesses located within the downtown area were adversely impacted as a result of the tornado, 33 of which were originally deemed structurally unsafe for occupancy. These businesses play an integral role in support of the local economy as well as providing jobs to residents.

Actions

- Assess condition of damaged structures
- Determine owner interest for return
- Determine best use for structures
- Explore funding opportunities
- Explore permitting requirements
- Identify marketing strategies
- Educate residents on benefits of local spending

In order to meet the project goal of revitalizing the downtown business district, the condition of existing structures must first be assessed. Industry professionals must be consulted to determine estimates of expenses for renovation and reconstruction. The City should evaluate which owners will be returning and which storefronts may be filled. In determining potential new businesses, the citizen survey should be utilized to assess demand for the service. Many funding opportunities should be explored for these projects. Resources available from the Economic Development Council and Peoria County are outlined in Appendices C and D. Business owners may be eligible for grants to restore their structures. Insurance coverage and private investment must be utilized. TIF proceeds may be available if the district is formed. The City of Elmwood could issue bonds for infrastructure improvements. Another scenario could include the extension of the existing of the Peoria County Enterprise Zone. Once building owners have made the decision to rebuild or repair, permitting requirements should be explored. These include building code and zoning ordinance requirements. A building permit must be obtained and will be based upon the scope of work. Market strategies should be identified to retain existing businesses and attract new businesses. One possible resource for this marketing effort is the Peoria County Market Study, which examined demand for a variety of retail establishments within the Elmwood area. The revitalized downtown business district is dependant upon local resident support. The community needs to be educated on the benefits of shopping in Elmwood. Property tax revenues are increased by these businesses occupying downtown buildings. Local tax revenues are generated and are utilized by the

City of Elmwood. Strategies for educating residents include a buy local program, marketing in *The Shopper,* or distributing information on the local community website.

Palace Movie Theatre

Recovery Value

High

Goal

Restore the local landmark which has been identified as one of the most recognizable structures within Elmwood.

Project Description

The Palace Theatre has been a local landmark regarded for its importance as a community gathering place and entertainment venue. Reopening the theatre will be instrumental in bringing vitality to downtown, drawing residents on nights and weekends and attracting people to Elmwood. In doing so, it will aid in bolstering the local economy.

Actions

- Assess condition of damaged structure
- Coordinate committee for community involvement
- Explore funding options
- Consult/Select design professionals
- Rebuild/Reopen facility
- Determine growth potential (size and services)
- Determine interest in additional events

In order to meet the project goal of reopening the Palace Theatre, an assessment must be made on the current condition of the structure. Once the determination has been made that the Theatre can be restored, the Elmwood Community should then identify strategies for raising awareness and securing funds to aid the restoration project. Advertisements for coordination activities could be made through *The Shopper* and the local website www.elmwoodil.org. Funding options must be explored, as the cost of the reconstruction may be substantial. By soliciting donations, utilizing potential TIF District proceeds, and exploring grant opportunities such as National Endowment for the Arts funding, the burden on private investments may be decreased. Expansion of theatre services may also be explored at this time, including but not limited to; theatrical performances, musical performances, and expanded movie offerings. Furthermore, an addition to the Palace Theatre could be considered for concessions, handicapped restrooms, and services such as dinner and movie offerings.

Restaurant Opportunities

Recovery Value

High

Goal

Explore the expansion of eateries located within Elmwood to meet the unmet demand as indicated by local residents.

Project Description

Resident survey response called for extended hours of operation and a wider variety of service levels and food options. More local establishments will lead to decreased travel time for evening and weekend dining, thus resulting in additional money being spent within Elmwood.

Actions

- Determine if existing restaurants will remain in Elmwood
- Evaluate community interest
- Explore growth potential at multi-use facilities
- Assess market study for current demand
- Market with City of Elmwood for new opportunities
- Explore grant opportunities

In order to meet the project goal of increasing restaurant opportunities, an assessment of the condition of existing local eateries must be made. Several establishments were damaged during the tornado event, while others were previously vacant. Resident survey response indicated a strong demand for increased food service, menu options, and hours of operation. It is unlikely that the downtown business district boundaries will be expanded, therefore, reuse of, or additions to, existing buildings should be considered. There is great potential to locate food establishments within existing buildings as a secondary use. An example of such combination services could be a bakery which also offers coffee and tea. Interest for food service establishments could come from entrepreneurs, but should be solicited by the City of Elmwood to increase marketability.

Save the Historical Landmarks

Recovery Value

High

Goal

Identify and restore buildings of significant historical value to preserve the character of downtown Elmwood.

Project Description

Many existing commercial buildings were built in the late 1800s and carry memories passed down from generation to generation. Damage as a result of the tornado has jeopardized the survival of several of these iconic structures. A list of targeted buildings should be created and prioritized to ensure strong community support continues for maintenance and rebuilding of the historic downtown.

Actions

- Identify Historical Landmarks
- Determine if structures can be designated on historical registry
- Assess condition of damaged structures
- Explore funding opportunities
- Consideration of consolidated services/lots
- Consult/select design professionals

In order to meet the project goal of saving the historical landmarks of Elmwood, it is first necessary to identify the structures of historical significance. These may include the Neptune Fire House building (existing City Hall), the old school house gym, the Opera House Block (100 N. Magnolia), the 100 Block of S. Magnolia, the 100 Block of E. Main, and the 100 Block of W. Main. Local property owners should explore guidelines that could qualify their building for listing on a local, State, or Federal Historical Registry. Designation on a historical registry may provide benefits, but also may impose limitations on rebuilding and renovations. Once this analysis has been completed, damages should be assessed to determine repair and reconstruction costs. Funding opportunities to consider include private investments, fundraising efforts, potential TIF District proceeds, and various grant applications. Senate Bill 2534 has recently granted funding to the City of Peoria, therefore the exploration of State historic preservation tax credits should be completed for possible expansion to Elmwood.

Medical Complex

Recovery Value

High

Goal

Construct or locate a building to house essential medical services.

Project Description

As the population ages, demand for health care increases and response time becomes critical. A new medical complex could provide offices for a local doctor and dentist, as well as rehabilitation programs or prompt care services.

Actions

- Determine owner interest for return
- Determine feasibility of shared medical complex
- Determine interest from medical service providers
- Explore satellite offices
- Explore funding opportunities
- Locate facility to house services
- Consult design professionals

In order to meet the project goal of constructing or locating a facility for essential medical services, the interest in returning of existing medical providers must be determined. The condition of the damaged structures should be evaluated to verify the need for a shared complex. Once this assessment has occurred, contact can be made with additional medical service providers to gauge their interest in locating offices or facilities in Elmwood. The potential exists for a satellite office branch of one of the local hospitals: Methodist, OSF or Proctor. Funding opportunities may be available if the community is found to be underserved by medical providers. A facility to house medical services can be identified, either via acquisition of an existing building or construction of a new complex. The facility will be required to have adequate parking and accommodate handicapped individuals. Design professionals, including architects and engineers, should be consulted. The State of Illinois has guidelines for medical facilities and must be advised of plans to ensure compliance.

Establish Downtown TIF District

Recovery Value

High

Goal

Establish a TIF District centered upon the intersection of Main and Magnolia to generate funding for downtown revitalization.

Project Description

Tax Increment Financing (TIF) helps local governments attract private development and new businesses. This revenue base allows the opportunity to make improvements and provide incentives within the district without tapping into general municipal funds or raising taxes.

Actions

- Hold series of informational meetings
- Assess financial impact on various taxing districts
- Explore expansion of existing TIF vs. formation of additional TIF
- Determine TIF boundaries
- Explore process for formation
- Determine funding eligibility requirements

In order to meet the project goal of establishing a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district in downtown Elmwood, the City must determine the level of community support. The City, Township, County, and Elmwood Community Unit School District are among the various taxing jurisdictions which must be assessed for financial impacts. The City should determine if expanding the current TIF district or formation of a new TIF district would best meet the needs of the community. The City TIF attorney will be crucial in providing information necessary for this decision-making process. The life of the TIF district will be substantially different for expansion as opposed to the creation of a new district. A boundary for the TIF district would be established and consideration must be made of which properties would generate revenue for the district. After soliciting comment at public hearings, a final decision rests with the City Council. Once the district has been formed, eligibility requirements will be established for the dispersal of funding and any match requirements. Agreements between the City and property owners must be created with each party agreeing to improvements.

Municipal Building/Complex

Recovery Value
High

Goal
Construct a new municipal building or complex to meet the needs of the community by providing operational space for a variety of city and township services.

Project Description
The new municipal complex could house services for the City of Elmwood including but not limited to police, fire, township office, other city staff and officials. Relocating governmental services into one location would minimize annual operation and maintenance costs. The combination of services will significantly increase chances for construction grant opportunities. The Neptune Fire House building will be restored regardless of the outcome of the complex.

Actions

- Restore Neptune Fire House building for alternative uses
- Evaluate feasibility of combining city/township fire services into one building
- Evaluate affordability of new construction vs. acquisition of alternative building site
- Determine location, size, and specifications
- Identify funding opportunities
- Consult/select design professionals

In order to meet the project goal of establishing a municipal complex, the feasibility of combining the city and township services into one building must be explored. This would include an investigation into which public services to consider, ownership of the structure, as well as cost share and tax savings to citizens. Due to the fact that the potential services which would be combined are currently operating in multiple locations, an assessment for rebuilding those structures would need to be compared against the cost of new construction or renovating an existing building to house a municipal complex. Funding options may include the generation of revenues through the sale of publicly owned properties which would no longer be utilized. Additional financial considerations may come from potential TIF District proceeds, public donations, and grant opportunities such as the United States Department of Agriculture Community Facilities Program. Consideration for a municipal complex may increase the opportunity for construction grant funding when multiple taxing bodies combine efforts. The formation of this building should not have any adverse impact on the existing Neptune Fire House building, as it should be restored regardless due to its historical significance.

Formation of Downtown Elmwood Development Review Board
Recovery Value
High

Goal
Preserve the historic and aesthetic appearance by regulating design and materials used in development of downtown district.

Project Description
The tornado destroyed much of the original facades within downtown Elmwood. As redevelopment occurs, the formation of a Downtown Elmwood Development Review Board allows the local community the opportunity to determine consistent design criteria. New structures should be designed to be compatible with existing historic appeal.

Actions

- Determine Community Interest for local design regulation
- Explore the establishment of Downtown Elmwood Development Review Board by Mayor/City Council
- Determine development criteria
- Determine implementation applicability

In order to meet the project goal of forming a Downtown Elmwood Development Review Board, local leaders must first gauge the community support for adopting and enforcing local design regulations. This is not the creation of an Elmwood zoning office, but may serve as an initial step. The mayor, along with the City Council, would be responsible for establishing the board. Specific duties would include passing an ordinance to create the board, creating a search committee to identify potential candidates, and appointing board members. Design criteria enforced by the board should include building materials, size, height, door/window openings, and awnings. Guidelines for implementation must be adopted and should include a specific date after which rules will be enforced, an amount which can be spent on renovations before these rules would be enforced, and criteria to ensure new construction blends with existing development.

Pursue Formation of Elmwood Park District

Recovery Value
Moderate

Goal
Create a local park district to manage and maintain community recreational opportunities.

Project Description
A local park district could oversee operation of the existing township community center and city parks. This new entity would be funded by a property tax levy. The park district would employ an individual who could focus their attention on the expansion of community facilities, programs, and sports leagues.

Actions

- Hold series of informational meetings to determine community interest
- Determine process for implementation
- Assess feasibility of combination of existing services and facilities
- Determine need for tax levy
- Determine operation structure
- Explore potential park district activities
- Explore potential park district facilities
- Explore grant opportunities

In order to meet the project goal of forming an Elmwood Park District, community support must be gauged. The new Park District would be responsible for the existing Township Community Center and the City parks. Both the City of Elmwood and Elmwood Township currently utilize property tax revenues to maintain their recreational facilities. The new entity would combine those tax revenues and may require an additional levy. The procedures for forming the district must be established and outlined to the community. A determination must be made regarding who will be responsible for managing the district. A board of trustees or directors must be appointed to carry out start-up and administrative decisions. The Park District would need to hire employees to maintain its facilities. Additional activities and programs could be operated including adult or youth sports leagues. New facilities may be considered as interest is indicated by the community. Grant opportunities may exist for these projects and may be more successful in the event the Park District forms its own taxing body.

Explore Senior/Assisted Living

Recovery Value
Moderate

Goal
Determine feasibility for creation of senior/assisted living facility.

Project Description
Aging citizens require additional care and accessible living arrangements. Demographics indicate the need for this type of housing and existing demand exceeds current conditions. This facility would create additional job opportunities for local residents, while retaining population.

Actions

- Conduct housing study to determine community need
- Evaluate design criteria for potential senior or assisted living facility
- Explore potential sites for redevelopment/acquisition
- Explore funding opportunities
- Partner with private sector for development
- Consult design professions

In order to meet the project goal of meeting the demands for senior and assisted living, a study should be conducted to determine the need. Prospective residents may have been displaced due to the tornado or may have no choice but to migrate out of Elmwood due to the limited availability and options currently offered. It is important to note that the average age of residents within the City of Elmwood is 38 years old and population projections indicate Elmwood to be aging. Design criteria should consider the size of the facility desired and the scope of services available at this location. Once established, the results may identify an existing building which could be renovated or may also warrant the construction of a new facility. Funding opportunities could dictate the project construction and grant funding should be explored in combination with private investment and donations. Partnership with the private sector would be essential; therefore, a developer should be solicited. Due to the nature of this industry, State healthcare regulators must be consulted to ensure any applicable codes can be met and followed.

Develop Business Incubator

Recovery Value

Moderate

Goal

Create a business incubator that would allow start-up or displaced businesses an opportunity to operate while they recover from the disaster. This is essential to bring new businesses to Elmwood, and to ensure existing businesses will continue to thrive.

Project Description

A business incubator provides support for small, start-up or displaced businesses, including management guidance and technical assistance. Businesses typically stay in an incubator until they are stable enough to move into their own space and could generate long-term economic renewal for the City.

Actions

- Identify interest from community
- Develop marketing strategies
- Determine who will operate/own/maintain
- Explore potential sites for incubator
- Explore funding opportunities
- Determine management services offered
- Establish growth criteria

In order to meet the project goal of creating a incubator to assist businesses, there must be demand from the local business owners. In addition to local business owners, the City of Elmwood should consider the volume of interest for the existing commercial space and local residents who could utilize such services. Marketing strategies should be developed through partnerships with the City of Elmwood, Economic Development Council, and local universities and colleges. The biggest component to this project would be a location for the business incubator to operate. Several existing vacant buildings may be opportune at this time; however, ownership of the proposed incubator building plays a critical role in the feasibility of the project. Several funding options exist, including the most likely scenario of private ownership. Grant opportunities may present themselves for start-up or displaced business, and the Economic Development Council has a number of programs currently in place. Additional information regarding the services offered by the EDC can be found in Appendix C. Management services including shared resources such as staff, equipment, and office space can reduce operation costs. Management guidance would be crucial to help steer a business towards long-term viability. A rent increase timeline should be considered so that any one business does not gain a competitive advantage over start-up businesses.

Evaluate/Upgrade Utility Systems

Recovery Value

Moderate

Goal

Assess the need for utility system improvements or expansions.

Project Description

Elmwood's utility system is currently functional; however the rebuilding process should include an assessment of utility infrastructure condition, capacity and reliability to meet the expectations of current residents as well as future demands. Improvements to telecommunication services, availability of high speed internet, and underground rerouting of electrical wiring may be considered at this time to take advantage of rebuilding efforts.

Actions

- Evaluate public support for existing systems
- Encourage utility companies to consider upgrades
- Explore improvements to City parking lots for underground electric
- Coordinate project implementation with redesign of city parking lots
- Explore funding opportunities

In order to meet the project goal of evaluating and upgrading utility systems, the community first needs to assess the existing utility systems. Public utility companies, such as AmerenCilco, Verizon Telecommunications, and local internet providers, must be contacted to evaluate the feasibility of improvements. The expansion of services including high-speed internet should be considered and discussed to meet the growing technological demands of the community. These projects should be done in conjunction with an evaluation of the condition of City parking lots, with potential improvements including the burying of electrical wires and the addition of landscaping. The City of Elmwood may be eligible for grant funding from Ameren.

Streetscaping

Recovery Value

Moderate

Goal

Beautify downtown Elmwood by adding streetscape and landscape elements to create an appealing and convenient destination for residents and visitors. Design a pedestrian-friendly, attractive downtown setting for comfortable shopping, walking, and enjoyment of historic and other attractions.

Project Description

Establish a uniform streetscape to encourage pedestrians to spend more time downtown and enhance the quality of their experience. Potential streetscape elements may include historic streetlights, trees, planters, public art, benches, sidewalk improvements, and signage.

Actions

- Determine streetscaping design criteria
- Explore funding source, if applicable
- Consult design professionals
- Formulate schedule of improvements
- Determine entity responsible for implementation

In order to meet the project goal of improving streetscaping in downtown Elmwood, community input can be gathered to explore design criteria. Project aspects could include historic streetlights, landscaping, public art, benches, and sidewalk improvements. Prospective funding sources for these improvements could be potential TIF district proceeds, private investment or grant opportunities. Architects, engineers, or landscape architects may provide assistance in generating ideas for design. The expectations of property owners for streetscaping elements and an implementation timeframe must be determined.

Build & Repair Housing for Renters

Recovery Value
Community Interest

Goal
Encourage rebuilding of rental units, including second story downtown units.

Project Description
Prior to the tornado, as many as 100 rental units were available within Elmwood including 16 affordable housing units. A variety of housing options is essential to inspire local youth to remain, to recruit new individuals and families to relocate, and meet the needs of seniors and families who may be downsizing.

Actions

- Encourage businesses to incorporate apartment units into downtown redevelopment
- Assess damaged units for reconstruction potential
- Attract and retain developers
- Conduct housing study to determine community need
- Explore funding opportunities

In order to meet the project goal of satisfying the need for rental housing, current business owners should be encouraged to incorporate units into downtown redevelopment. This ensures the community would be consistent with the character of the downtown prior to the tornado. Existing landlords have indicated demand exceeds the supply and the rebuilding efforts should be used as an opportunity to reverse this trend. The reconstruction potential of several downtown units is contingent upon the handicap accessibility requirements, as determined by the State of Illinois' Capital Development Board. The main component to successful apartment implementation into the downtown redevelopment plan is to attract and retain developers. Funding opportunities appear to exist with the exploration of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) money and through the continued support of private developers. Due to the fact that apartments tend not to be owner-occupied, grant funding is limited but should be considered.

Explore Community Activities

Recovery Value

Community Interest

Goal

Provide increased opportunities for community participation.

Project Description

Community activities provide recreation and gathering places which enhance the quality of life. Existing activities such as band concerts and local festivals have been successful and serve as a source of tourism. The creation of additional activities would promote citizen involvement and stimulate the local economy.

Actions

- Coordinate community activity leaders
- Explore potential activities
- Implement ideas

In order to meet the project goal of exploring community activities, a forum for community activity leaders to collaborate should be established. Representation from community leader organizations may include, but are not limited to; the Elmwood Community Foundation, Elmwood Community Unit School District, Kiwanis Club, the City of Elmwood, and the future Park District. Together, community leaders should introduce new activities to Elmwood residents. Resident surveys suggested possible activities which may include bingo, a Farmers Market, Arts & Crafts show, and Ice Cream Social.

Explore Brick Repurposing Opportunities

Recovery Value

Community Interest

Goal

Identify options to reuse historical bricks from damaged structures.

Project Description

Many of the original commercial buildings were constructed with brick and have been damaged as a result of the tornado. These bricks have become a symbol of the community's past and present. Now the community should determine potential projects or programs that will ensure these bricks are retained for the future of Elmwood.

Actions

- Determine amount of bricks
- Assess condition of bricks
- Identify storage location
- Identify project coordinators
- Identify potential reuse projects

In order to meet the project goal of finding alternative uses for the historic Elmwood bricks, a determination as to the amount and condition of available bricks should occur. Once this assessment has been completed, ideas for reuse should be explored and a location for storage can be identified. A project coordinator can then be appointed and potential reuse projects may be explored. Examples may include redevelopment projects such as pavers on downtown streets, inclusion on business facades, or streetscaping planters. The community may consider a fundraiser so that bricks can be dispersed within the community for those who consider them to be of sentimental value.

Improve City Parking Lots

Recovery Value

Community Interest

Goal

Provide a sufficient supply of accessible parking to support downtown businesses and nearby destinations.

Project Description

Create a mix of new parking options by redeveloping existing off-street parking lots. Expanded parking is needed to accommodate the revitalization of the downtown business district, to respond to growing traffic volumes, and to meet the needs for overflow parking during community special events.

Actions

- Assess current conditions of City Parking Lots
- Determine feasibility for utility improvements
- Explore alternative materials
- Promote parking lot landscaping
- Explore funding options

In order to meet the project goal of improving City parking lots, the current conditions of existing lots must be evaluated. This may include the assessment of current parking lot layouts, condition of subsurface and surface materials, handicapped accessibility, and lighting. While pursuing improvements to City parking lots, other opportunities exist to take full advantage for utility improvements. The City should coordinate with Ameren Cilco and Verizon for underground wire placements. Alternative materials that decrease runoff should be considered; further research of pervious surface materials and retention basket inlets may be necessary. Parking lot landscaping should be encouraged and must conform to any applicable ordinances. Potential grant funding may be available from the CDAP State Flex Program.

Explore Transportation Improvements

Recovery Value

Community Interest

Goal

Enhance vehicular mobility and improve downtown connectivity.

Project Description

The intersection of Magnolia and Main presents difficulty in maneuvering for semi-trailer traffic. As the need for reconstruction at this intersection is evident, design should be considered to improve the safety and visibility for all traffic. By enhancing pedestrian crosswalks, the potential exists for increased accessibility to downtown.

Actions

- Determine feasibility for intersection improvement
- Evaluate redesign criteria
- Consult Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) for Route 78/Route 8 intersection study
- Explore funding opportunities for road infrastructure improvements
- Evaluate community demand for walkways

In order to meet the project of goal of improving local transportation corridors, the City of Elmwood and the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) should assess the feasibility of enhancements to the intersection of Main and Magnolia. This will begin with an assessment of the damaged structures at this intersection. Design criteria must be established; reconfiguration of building footprints may allow for the redesign of the intersection, including a wider turn radius. According to the 2009 IDOT traffic map there are approximately 4150 vehicle trips in a 24 hour period along this portion of W. Main. Of these vehicle trips, approximately 180 trips are generated by truck traffic. There are approximately 3150 vehicle trips in a 24 hour period along this portion of N. Magnolia. Of these vehicle trips, approximately 225 trips are generated by truck traffic. The City of Elmwood would need to coordinate with IDOT to conduct a more thorough traffic study and explore the availability of State and Federal funding. As part of intersection improvements, enhanced pedestrian connections to downtown may be considered.

Community Safe Room(s)
Recovery Value
Community Interest

Goal
Incorporate safe rooms into the construction of designated community locations to provide emergency shelter during severe weather events.

Project Description
Safe rooms are fully engineered structures designed to withstand the forces of high winds and debris impacts associated with severe weather events. The construction of a community safe room is dependent upon financial considerations.

Actions

- Determine ideal location for placement/operation
- Determine size of community safe room
- Determine potential for multiple safe rooms
- Explore grant opportunities
- Formulate emergency action guidelines
- Educate residents on procedures of safe rooms

In order to meet the project goal of constructing a community safe room in Elmwood, a central location must be first determined which could maximize its potential and purpose. While a safe room cannot be constructed to shelter the entire community, an appropriate size should be considered. For this reason, it is possible that multiple safe rooms may be constructed; however, the project goal may not be a realization unless funding can be secured. The Federal Emergency Management Agency offers grant funding for safe rooms, provided a community has a FEMA approved Hazard Mitigation Plan. The City of Elmwood has been included in a Tri-County plan adopted in 2004. In the event that a safe room is constructed, specific emergency guidelines must be established as to when to open operations as well as who will assume this responsibility. Residents must be educated on the benefits and procedures of utilizing a community safe room.

APPENDIX

Survey 1
Survey 2
EDC
Peoria County GAP