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MEMORANDUM

VIA EMAIL

Date: Thursday, March 9, 2023

To: City of Countryside
Richard Trent, Planning Manager

From: Houseal Lavigne
Josh Koonce, AICP, Project Manager

Re: Draft for Review: Vision, Goals, and Preliminary Land Use Framework
City of Countryside Comprehensive Plan

A Comprehensive Plan is an expression of what a community wants to become in the future. The Plan should be a dependable policy guide for decision-making and City action. This memorandum presents three cornerstones of the Countryside Comprehensive Plan, the **Community Vision Statement, Goals, and Preliminary Land Use Framework**. These provide the blueprint for the future of Countryside – a place that is vibrant, livable, and prepared for the coming decades. These components of the plan support places throughout Countryside for the people who live, work, and visit, including pleasant neighborhoods, accessible open spaces, and high quality areas to attract employment, improve commerce, and encourage civic activity.

The Community Vision Statement encapsulates the collective desires and aspirations of the community, public officials, and stakeholders. The Vision and the supporting Goals are the foundation for policies and recommendations in the subsequent chapters of the Comprehensive Plan.

The Preliminary Land Use Framework identifies the desired future land use for all areas within the Countryside municipal boundary, based on field reconnaissance and the City's existing development pattern. It sets the stage for investment that supports strong and stable neighborhoods and continues to build the City's lively commercial areas.

Next steps: *Based on feedback from staff and the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee, and as we work through the planning process in the coming months, the Vision Statement, Goals, and Preliminary Land Use Framework will be adjusted and refined for incorporation into the draft plan document.*

PLANNING

DESIGN

DEVELOPMENT

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Community Vision Statement

*The **Community Vision Statement** is an aspirational narrative that paints a picture of what the City can achieve following the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan. The Vision Statement is the foundation for the Plan's goals, policies, recommendations, and actions.*

Countryside will be known as a welcoming, prosperous, sustainable, and well-connected community, home to people of all ages and backgrounds, from young professionals and growing families to life-long residents and retirees. Countryside's reputation and services will appeal to its residents, continue to attract visitors, and create new opportunities to enjoy the community. Meanwhile, the City will stay true to its heritage – a charming place with a lot to offer.

Countryside will stand out as a great place to live within the Chicago region thanks to its attainable and attractive homes in desirable neighborhoods. People will continue to choose to live in Countryside based on its accessibility and connectivity within the region, and the City's reputation will grow over the coming decades as a strong residential community that attracts people at all stages of life.

The City will be defined by its bustling commercial corridors and centers. Key employment areas will thrive, supporting new creative businesses from co-working spaces to microbreweries, alongside established industrial and manufacturing areas. Increasingly, locally-owned establishments will call the City's commercial spaces home, drawn to the areas' unique character and vibrancy. Attractive shops and restaurants will take root along the corridors and provide a place for residents and visitors to enjoy shopping, dining, and entertainment.

The City will build on its transportation assets and advantageous location within the Chicago region, maintaining its reputation as "Chicago's western gateway." The City will be known as a connected community where residents can easily access anything they need. As projects are planned, the City will ensure roads and intersections are designed efficiently to relieve congestion and promote safety. The City will support sustainable transportation with expanded bicycle facilities, sidewalks, and EV infrastructure, offering residents healthy and active options for getting around.

The City will become even more active, healthy, and sustainable by reinvesting in its existing green spaces and creatively identifying new parks and recreational areas for all to enjoy. The City will work with the Forest Preserve District to ensure that its most significant open space, the Arie Crown Forest, remains a vital asset that serves the community. Similarly, the City will continue to work with local and regional partners to offer a variety of services, support great schools, and ensure its community facilities meet the needs of its residents and businesses.

Goals and Policies

Goals are broad and long-range desired outcomes. They are ambitious and will require the culmination of many incremental actions to be fully achieved. The City's planning efforts should work to support these goals.

Goals and policies for each section of the plan will be expanded with recommendations and actions, ensuring the City can take meaningful and implementable steps toward realizing these broader goals over the next few decades.

Housing and Neighborhoods

Goal 1. Provide high quality housing and neighborhoods for residents in all stages of life and socioeconomic status, maintaining and expanding the City's reputation as a great place to live.

Key Policies and Recommendations for Housing and Neighborhoods

- Improve home design and landscape standards to make the community more attractive for current and future residents.
- Support the provision of a variety of different residential types, tenures, lot sizes, and unit sizes at a diversity of price points to meet the needs of the City's residents.
- Improve, maintain, and enhance the aesthetic of homes in the City's neighborhoods through regular code enforcement and preventative maintenance programs to strengthen existing neighborhoods.
- Ensure that the City's residential areas are high quality, with curb, gutter, streetlights, sidewalks, and street trees contributing to the character where appropriate.
- Ensure that the City's neighborhoods have accessible pedestrian and bicycle connections.
- Promote the development of expanded senior housing options attractive to support residents who want to age in place.

Commercial and Industrial Areas

Goal 1. Continue to enhance the economic viability, productivity, and uniqueness of the City's primary commercial corridors.

Goal 2. Attract, retain, and expand businesses in the City's key industrial and employment areas.

Key Policies and Recommendations for Commercial and Industrial Areas

- Explore design guidelines to ensure future commercial buildings are aesthetically pleasing, functionally well-designed, and complementary to the community's existing context.
- Provide clear regulatory and permitting processes, giving business owners and entrepreneurs fair certainty for new ventures in the City.
- Where appropriate, use economic development tools such as tax increment financing, special service areas, and business development districts to facilitate desired commercial developments.
- Position key employment areas such as Dansher Business Park for long-term success by encouraging a greater diversity of users.
- Ensure that higher-intensity commercial and industrial areas are effectively screened and buffered where they are adjacent to residential neighborhoods.

Transportation and Mobility

Goal 1. Provide a seamless, efficient transportation system that offers good connectivity, supports mobility for people using all modes (walking, biking, transit, and driving), and enhances the character of the City.

Key Policies and Recommendations for Transportation and Mobility

- Redesign critical intersections in partnership with IDOT to reduce congestion and improve safety.
- Improve streetscape design standards to beautify the public realm along the City's highly visible corridors.
- Work with Pace to improve transit service, routes, and bus infrastructure such as bus stops within the City.
- Use traffic calming best practices to promote safe and efficient streets City-wide.
- Ensure that sidewalks provide good access and mobility for all residents by closing gaps, providing adequate width, and adhering to ADA standards City-wide.
- Continue to develop an active transportation system that incorporates interconnected paths, sidewalks, and on-street bikeways.
- Consider adopting a complete streets policy to benefit all road users, including pedestrians and bicyclists.

Community Facilities, Infrastructure, and Environment

Goal 1. Support the delivery of high-quality community facilities and availability of quality public places, ensuring a high quality of life, and maintaining the City's overall desirability.

Goal 2. Offer a park and open space system that meets the recreational and environmental needs of Countryside residents and visitors

Key Policies and Recommendations for Community Facilities, Infrastructure, and Environment

- Maintain and strengthen relationships with community service providers by supporting their operations and partnering to provide services or acquire resources.
- Ensure that Countryside continues to benefit from an adequate level of fire protection through the Pleasantview Fire Protection District.
- Ensure that Countryside continues to benefit from a high level of public safety and police protection throughout the City.
- Strategically acquire land to develop pocket parks and tot lots in neighborhoods where community parks are not within walking distance.
- Connect parks and recreation areas with trails on existing right-of-ways and through neighborhoods where possible to create a more connected park system.
- Work with the Forest Preserve of Cook County to better activate Arie Crown Forest and their underutilized land in the Southern Tier with new trails, pavilions, and other recreational infrastructure.
- Invest in existing green spaces by modernizing aging facilities and building new recreational options such as new athletic facilities and dog parks.
- Ensure that the City's infrastructure meets the needs of current and future residents and businesses, including telecommunications, water, wastewater, and energy.

Preliminary Land Use Framework

The City of Countryside is defined by its attractive neighborhoods, prosperous commercial corridors, good location, and access to natural areas. The City is a desirable place to live, with accessible but regionally competitive housing prices supporting a slightly increasing senior population, and a consistent population of middle to upper-middle income residents. Similarly, the reliable commercial areas make it a great place to maintain a business. The Land Use Plan is intended to emphasize the City's assets, build on existing land use patterns, and guide development and redevelopment in a way that leverages limited available opportunity sites within the City's built-out area. This section presents long-range policies and recommendations for high quality and compatible new residential, commercial, and industrial development, as well as the protection and enhancement of open spaces and environmental resources within the community.

General Land Use Policies

Develop and redevelop strategically. With limited area available due to its landlocked municipal boundary, the City should maintain a balanced pattern of development and redevelopment that provides for well-designed, compatible, and economically sustainable neighborhoods, businesses, and employment areas. When developable sites are available, the City should work with property owners and developers to ensure they contribute to local economic stability and meet the needs of residents. Community feedback has indicated a desire for unique, local commercial development, and for residential development that meets high-quality standards.

Collaborate regionally. Countryside should continue the strong partnerships that help it capitalize upon local and regional resources and assets for residents, such as library services, transit, recreational programming, and regional open space access. Regional collaboration includes maintaining relationships with the organizations, civic groups, institutions, and neighboring municipalities that positively influence the community.

Maintain the high-quality Countryside image and identity. The City should continue to provide a physically distinctive and high-quality environment that contributes to its quality of life and character. To enhance a sense of community and pride, the City should ensure that private investment and new development is context sensitive, and that the public realm is well-cared for. Similarly, the City should maintain its community facilities and ensure its services continue to meet the high expectations of Countryside's residents. The City's tools to implement a high-quality image and identity, such as the City Center Design Standards and the zoning code, should be regularly reviewed and revised as needed.

Set the standard for sustainability. With the opening of its state-of-the-art municipal complex, the City of Countryside has established a public commitment to sustainability, social equity, and environmentalism. Through its recent Sustainability Plan, the City has articulated its support of the Metropolitan Mayor's Caucus Greenest Region Compact (GRC) which offers consensus-based goals for communities. The City should continue to make land use decisions through the lens of its broad sustainable land use goals, which include:

- Conserve, restore and enhance natural features and ecosystems
- Support networks of accessible well-used and enjoyable parks
- Sustain a robust urban forest canopy
- Sustain beautiful landscapes that provide ecosystem services
- Achieve greater livability through sustainable land use and housing policies

- Cultivate a conservation ethic in the community

Land Use Category Descriptions

The categories listed below should be used to formulate general policy and desired land uses within Countryside. More detailed recommendations to support the City's high-quality residential, commercial, industrial, and open space areas will be contained within the subsequent plan chapters. Parcels within the City have been assigned nine (9) general land use categories to serve as the basis for development review and approval, and for future zoning amendments.

Note: *The land use categories correspond to the Future Land Use Map on page 10.*

Single-Family Detached

The Single-Family Detached category consists of single-family homes occupying individual lots. Single-family detached homes are the most predominant existing residential type in the City. The single-family detached land use includes the older, established neighborhoods of Countryside, such as the ones along Plainfield Road, and newer planned subdivisions, such as Woodland Ridge. Countryside's existing housing stock generally exhibits a high quality in terms of image, character, and stability.

Single-family detached development will align with the patterns of existing neighborhoods. New single-family homes will be built through infill and redevelopment. The City should continue to monitor infill and residential redevelopment to ensure that changes are sensitive to and reflective of the existing neighborhood character.

Single-Family Attached

The Single-Family Attached category includes structures where dwelling units share an exterior wall with at least one adjacent unit. Each dwelling unit has a dedicated entrance, such as townhomes, duplexes, and triplexes. Countryside's existing attached homes are in multiple subdivisions, including Clocktower Pointe, Country Estate, and Countryside Meadows.

Single-family attached residential development should be encouraged in areas where a single-family character is desired, infrastructure and services can accommodate additional density, and there is increased demand for attainable homes in proximity to amenities. Single-family attached homes are an opportunity for first-time homeownership and for residents looking to downsize or age in place.

Multifamily

The Multifamily category includes structures with multiple dwelling units stacked vertically with shared entrances, stairways, hallways, and amenities. This land use includes apartments, condominiums, and assisted living facilities. Multifamily buildings are interspersed throughout the residential areas of Countryside. Some are located along the City's major thoroughfares, such as Joliet Road. Country Club Condominiums and Forest Villa Condominiums constitute a larger-sized multifamily complex and are located on Brainard Avenue south of Joliet Road.

New multifamily residential developments should reflect the overall character of the community, offering high-quality living environments, amenities, and sufficient parking. A variety of price points in rental and condominium configurations should be incorporated to serve young professionals, senior residents, and workforce residents.

Mobile Home

The Mobile Home category includes manufactured, detached single-family homes constructed on a permanent chassis, allowing for transportability, as well as low-density single-family detached homes. The City has one mobile home park within municipal limits at Joliet Road and Main Drive, offering an attainable homeownership option to residents. No areas are designated for new mobile home park uses and the land use plan does not accommodate expansion of the existing mobile home park.

Community/Corridor Commercial

The Community/Corridor Commercial category includes commercial establishments that sell a product or service, such as grocery stores, gas stations, restaurants, salons, clothing stores, pharmacies, or home goods stores. Existing commercial uses are primarily concentrated along corridors like La Grange Road, Joliet Road, 55th Street, and Plainfield Road, taking advantage of their visibility and easy access. Office uses, such as medical buildings, real estate offices, legal firms, tax offices, and other professional services are a subset of commercial uses within this category. Additionally, mixed-use developments – characterized by land uses that coexist in the same multi-storied building or mixed horizontally in a unified complex – are included.

The City should ensure community and corridor commercial areas continue to accommodate a blend of local business, regional chains, and national retailers, positioned on individual lots or in configurations of multiple stores within a commercial development linked by shared parking lot areas.

Regional Commercial

The Regional Commercial category includes large-scale retail and service establishments with a regional customer draw. Two regional commercial centers exist in the City – Salem Square Shopping Center and Countryside Plaza. Along La Grange Road, there is a concentration of auto dealerships, which have been one of the City's biggest sources of tax revenues and draw car buyers from the surrounding region. These areas appeal to residents while drawing on a customer base that extends beyond Countryside limits.

The City should continue to recognize the importance of its regional commercial centers, working with national retailers to ensure that these major centers remain viable for the long term. Similarly, as car buying moves toward online and direct-to consumer sales, the City should acknowledge the importance of its automobile sales tax base and work with dealers to ensure they can continue to operate successfully.

Industrial

The Industrial category includes areas and facilities used for low intensity manufacturing, processing, storage, commercial service, and distribution of goods and materials. Most of the City's industrial uses are along East Avenue in the Dansher Industrial Park. The Park consists of many smaller-sized and older light industrial buildings. It is becoming harder for these buildings to support contemporary industrial operations, which often require greater space and building height.

New industrial areas are not identified within the land use plan. The City should prioritize retaining and improving existing light industrial uses, and ensure they offer flexibility to attract non-traditional uses to these important areas. Permitting non-traditional commercial and industrial tenants, such as fitness centers, indoor recreation center, medical offices, co-working spaces, dance studios, and microbreweries, will expand the pool of potential uses within these areas and keep them activated.

Public/Semi-Public

The Public/Semi-Public category includes existing local government uses (such as the City Municipal Complex), community service providers, schools, nonprofit organizations, and religious institutions. The category also includes land dedicated to utility infrastructure, such as electrical substations, power lines, rights-of-way, and water treatment facilities. These uses are anticipated to remain over the 20-year planning horizon.

Parks/Open Space

The Parks/Open Space category includes public parks managed by the City, and privately-owned recreational facilities and other open spaces. This includes Ideal Elementary School's playgrounds and soccer fields, community greenways, and detention and retention ponds, Flagg Creek Golf Course, and forest preserve land. The City of Countryside maintains and oversees six (6) neighborhood parks, a Little League/Soccer park, the City's Carl W. LeGant Memorial Park, and the flagship Countryside Park. The City partners with the Park District of LaGrange for classes and programs. Largest preserved open space within City limits is Arie Crown Forest, owned and operated by the Forest Preserve District of Cook County (FPDCC). The City should continue to work with the Park District of LaGrange for programming and FPDCC for the upkeep and access to the preserve.

FUTURE LAND USE

Legend

Countryside Municipal Boundary

Future Land Use

- Single-Family Detached
- Single-Family Attached
- Multifamily
- Mobile Home
- Community/Corridor Commercial
- Regional Commercial
- Industrial
- Public/Semi-Public
- Parks/Open Space

