



# DEER PARK 2030

STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE





## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We extend our thanks to the Village leaders, staff, and residents who came together to share stories of what makes life in Deer Park special — their vision, ideas, concerns and priorities for the future — for rolling up their sleeves, asking tough questions, and imagining possibilities together. The planning process was rooted in care, strengthened by dialogue, and inspired by shared purpose.

*With gratitude to all who participated!*

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Paul Kreatsoulas, Village Trustee

David Lemme, Village Trustee

Michael Mann, Village Trustee

James Oakley, Village Trustee

Jimi Psarakis, Village Trustee

Michael Reiser, Village Trustee

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**UNANIMOUSLY ADOPTED OCTOBER 16, 2025**

*Plan prepared by Teska Associates, Inc.*

**teska**

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## PREFACE

This plan is not about transforming Deer Park. It's about strengthening what makes us special while investing thoughtfully in our future. It is about honoring our community's promise through careful stewardship; nurturing what blooms naturally while planting wisely for seasons to come. Our vision is clear, to be a place where families choose to put down roots, build their stories, and stay... where business partners see not just customers but community, connection, and enduring opportunity... and where visitors recognize something increasingly precious, a place that has mastered the art of being both welcoming and exceptional; that rare combination of rustic charm, bustling vitality, abundant greenspace, and shared experiences. This is who we are and who we are becoming.



# DEER PARK 2030 *Strategic Plan*

## INTRODUCTION

The Village of Deer Park stands at a remarkable inflection point. Over the past five years, our community has achieved what many small municipalities only aspire to. Through smart fiscal stewardship and strategic planning, we've completed 30 stormwater projects, supported in part by a \$270K DCEO Stream Stabilization Grant, resurfaced Village roadways, championed significant park investments - including a \$600K OSLAD grant secured for Town Center Park - earned multiple sustainability certifications, and adopted a new Village brand and logo - all while maintaining zero municipal property tax.

Through ongoing partnerships with our residents, businesses, stakeholders, and service providers, including a multi-year agreement with the Lake County Sheriff, we continue to elevate quality of life across every dimension. Together, these milestones (and many more) showcase a community that honors its natural beauty and character while strengthening its connections and planning thoughtfully for a vibrant, resilient future.

*As Deer Park looks toward 2030, the challenge is not to transform the Village but to strengthen what makes it special and invest thoughtfully in the future. Recent achievements lay the groundwork for purposeful economic development and strategic partnerships that will sustain the fiscal base and preserve community character for years to come.*

Located 35 miles northwest of downtown Chicago, the Village of Deer Park, population 3,681, offers residents “the best of both worlds” — living amidst ample green space nestled in nature with quick access to a variety of high-end and convenience shopping options only minutes away. This unique positioning as a suburban Chicago community that maintains its semi-rural character is both the Village's greatest asset and its most important responsibility to preserve.

The Village's fiscal foundation is equally distinctive. As one of the few municipalities in Illinois that does not impose a property tax, Deer Park relies on sales tax revenue and strategic economic development tools like the Rand Road TIF District. This structure has enabled the Village to maintain excellent services while keeping the tax burden low for residents, but it also underscores the critical importance of sales tax, revenue-generating uses, and making strategic investments in economic development. Recent achievements — including a successful sales tax referendum, the welcoming of anchor businesses, and new development underway within the Rand Road TIF District — demonstrate the Village's capacity for smart growth that supports long-term fiscal health.

## PLANNING PROCESS

*The 2030 Strategic Plan emerges from considerable engagement, with each layer of feedback informing the next.*

The planning process began with research and a SWOT Analysis to assess community strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats. Next came a 3-hour visioning retreat at Vehe Barn with staff and Village leaders. As part of this session key themes and focus areas began to emerge. Building on these insights, a poll was distributed to key stakeholders, staff and trustees, which revealed strong consensus around more detailed priorities. The planning team then drafted a set of goals and strategies, shaped by the collective input. A Trustee Workshop (photo below) was held to present engagement findings and draft planning pillars. Leaders engaged in a 3-hour interactive open-house to review and discuss feedback, and identify top priorities going forward as part of this strategic plan.

*The collaborative planning process revealed key insights that shaped this plan's direction, goals and strategies.*



1

RESEARCH, ANALYSIS &  
VILLAGE ASSESSMENT  
MAY 2025

2

STAFF VISIONING  
SESSION  
JUNE 2025

3

STAKEHOLDER  
VISIONING POLL  
JULY 2025

4

BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
WORKSHOP  
JULY 2025

5

PLAN DRAFT  
REVIEW & ADOPTION  
AUG-OCT 2025



## OUTREACH THEMES

*The following themes reflect takeaways from Deer Park’s strategic engagement process. For each theme, a brief “Next Steps” summary highlights how this strategic input translates into action items that are elaborated on in the sections that follow. Please reference the Appendix for detailed summaries of the engagement events, SWOT Analysis, and poll.*

1. Enhance Strategic Economic Development
2. Establish Rand Road Framework Plan
3. Communicate Vision & Need
4. Strengthen Community Partnerships & Collaboration Across Shared Goals
5. Prioritize Family-Centered Programming & Community Identity Building

### 1. ENHANCE STRATEGIC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Residents and leaders strongly agree: Economic development is Deer Park’s top priority. As part of the Strategic Visioning Poll, 86% identified it as the top focus for the next five years. The most desired uses included family-oriented entertainment (86%), grocery or fresh food markets (60%), family-friendly restaurants (53%), and breweries or taprooms (40%). One respondent summed it up: “Family-friendly restaurants and entertainment that caters to all ages, like Top Golf or Pinstripes, would really enhance our Village.” Workshop participants also stressed the importance of specialized economic development expertise and new staffing or consulting support to sustain momentum.

**Next Steps** • Engage specialized economic development expert to guide revenue diversification strategies, comprehensive fiscal modeling, and competitive TIF incentive packages. Pursue an immediate economic strategy followed by exploration of flexible support or staffing solutions, including part-time or consulting arrangements, to strengthen the Village’s ongoing development capabilities. Prioritize attracting specific business types and mixed-use niches that align with market and demographics.



*Explore business and developer interest in family-oriented entertainment as part of economic strategy next steps*



*“Family-friendly restaurants and entertainment like Top Golf would really enhance our Village.”*

*– Visioning Poll Respondent*

*“We need to bolster internal and external capacity... particularly in economic development.”*

*- Staff Visioning Session*

## 2. ESTABLISH RAND ROAD FRAMEWORK PLAN

Rand Road is the Village’s central redevelopment opportunity. Residents called for safer crossings and better walkability, while trustees and staff emphasized the need for a clear framework to guide TIF resources and land use decisions. The 2023 Comprehensive Plan frames Rand Road as Deer Park’s “gateway corridor” with TIF incentives (Re:NewRand) in place to attract high-quality mixed-use development. Staff and trustees agreed that the next step is a clear, actionable framework plan to guide land use, TIF investments, and infrastructure priorities. Safety and connectivity also rose to the forefront.

**“Clear vision needed for Rand Road redevelopment with predictable guidance for TIF resources.”**

- Feedback Shared Across All Groups

**“A safe pedestrian way between Deer Park Town Center and the Shops at Kildeer — it’s very dangerous today.”**

- Resident Survey

**“Strong consensus around mixed-use development strategy and the need for ongoing, transparent communication.”**

- Trustee Workshop Finding

**Next Steps** • Create a unified framework plan for Rand Road that establishes predictable guidance for development and TIF investment. Priorities include commercial-focused mixed-use, outdoor dining, and gathering spaces, supported by infrastructure such as frontage roads, bike lanes, sidewalk connections, safe crossings and exploration of additional access points.

*Advance planned frontage road through the Framework Plan via an approved palette of streetscape furnishings, landscape materials, naming, and ownership to guide cohesive character and predictable development.*

*Build from the conceptual framework plan in the comprehensive plan to incorporate updates, frontage road and refine recommended land uses and amenities.*

### 3. COMMUNICATE VISION & NEED

Fiscal tools like TIF are new to many — Village leaders, staff, and residents alike want to understand how they can advance Deer Park’s long-term goals. As Finance Director Megan Roscoe put it: “The TIF increment is just starting to take shape. We need to look ahead, plan intentionally and project wisely.” Trustees identified public communication and business outreach as the strategies in need of community engagement and buy-in. Residents consistently value safety, dining, access to parks, and walkability - touchpoints the Village can emphasize to show how economic development investments improve daily life.

**Next Steps** • Build broader understanding of the long-term vision and TIF benefits through targeted outreach to local partners, school districts, and residents. Clearly articulate how proposed investments align with Deer Park’s strategic goals and address the critical need for mixed-use development to generate viable tax increment given current property tax limitations.

### 4. STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS & COLLABORATION ACROSS SHARED GOALS

Stakeholders agree that Deer Park’s success is dependent on partnerships, namely with Town Center, as well as neighboring communities and regional agencies. Priorities shared at the Staff Workshop flagged the importance of the Town Center relationship and seeking ways to build a collaborative partnership around shared objectives, not just a landlord-tenant dynamic. The Visioning Poll echoed this, with 73% supporting cross-promotion of events. Trustees likewise ranked regional and local partnerships as one of the most impactful strategies to pursue.

**Next Steps** • Reframe relationship with Town Center as a long-term partnership built on shared goals: boosting activation, foot traffic, and community identity. Establish regular check-ins, formalize shared priorities, and pilot small joint activations to build momentum. Collaborate on co-branded events, marketing, and amenities, while aligning programming with community feedback. Share data and survey insights they can use to attract prospective tenants.

***“Elevate communication and outreach to ensure shared understanding of Village goals and tools.”***

*– Trustee Workshop Finding*

***“Strengthen partnership with Town Center Mall, cross-promote events at the newly renovated park.”***

*– Poll Findings*

***“Regional and local partnerships are among the most impactful strategies for Deer Park’s future.”***

*– Trustee Workshop*



***Explore opportunities to integrate public art and greenspace within the Village’s existing built environment to enhance social and economic vitality alongside events, comfort, access and local identity.***

## 5. PRIORITIZE FAMILY-CENTERED PROGRAMMING & COMMUNITY IDENTITY BUILDING

Family-focused events and identity matter deeply to Deer Park. Family entertainment topped the poll at 86%, while residents in the survey called for “better playgrounds, safe paths to shopping, and community events.” Respondents ranked a Food & Drink Festival as the top event concept, followed by concerts and seasonal celebrations. Placemaking ideas - from nature-inspired art (73%) to seasonal activations (53%) and branded signage (53%) - highlight the appetite for visible identity-building. Mascot suggestions ranged from ‘Dash’ to ‘Dart’ a disco-loving deer, showing both humor and pride in local character.

*Visioning participants expressed strong interest in a community mascot, suggesting names and the desire to have the mascot appear at community events like Fall Fest to Santa Bingo, as well as in digital communications and interactive activities.*

– Visioning Poll



**Next Steps** • Scale programming to focus on family experiences that enhance quality of life and economic vitality within budget realities. Establish a signature annual event at Town Center Park; engage event planning consultants for quotes and scope to leverage expertise/capacity, relieve staff workload, and develop sustainable funding models through sponsorship cultivation and partnerships. Advance identity-building initiatives from developing a Village mascot to exploring Town Center Park renaming -that celebrate Deer Park’s character cost-effectively. Ensure new development integrates quality outdoor furnishings, walkable design, and gathering spaces while exploring signature design and gateway treatments to create lasting impact through smart design over time.

**“ Dart the Deer.**  
Dart loves donuts and disco dancing in his platform hooves. Dart is known for dilly dallying at DPTC (loves a good deal), playing pickleball (no opposable thumbs? no problem!), and attending Fallfest at Town Center Park and Ela Marsh.

**“ Leaflet with a personality that is into nature and conservation and attends community events and teaches children about the environment**

*Top Voted Placemaking Elements from Poll:*  
**Nature Inspired Art (73%)**  
**Seasonal Activations & Events, Food & Drink Fest (53%)**  
**Branded Signage & Infrastructure (53%)**



**<< SIGNATURE EVENT & SPONSORSHIPS**  
Work jointly with community partners on marketing, outdoor amenities, and seasonal activations that extend dwell time and elevate customer and community experience. Review event calendar to identify opportunities to evolve programming in line with community demographics and feedback — for example, pairing a traditional 5K with a family-friendly “Dino Dash” or pop-up experience.

# VISION, MISSION, VALUES & GOALS

## *Vision*

**WHAT WE'RE  
BUILDING  
TOWARD**

“Deer Park is a resident-focused, business-friendly, forward-looking community that provides a high quality of life based upon sustainable growth, preservation of neighborhood open space, and strong partnerships. We blend small-town charm with smart growth, creating a community where connection and tranquility flourish together. Through ongoing planning, partnerships, fiscal stewardship, and environmental care, we’re building a place where our residents enjoy vibrant local businesses, beautiful parks, connectivity, and community events.”

## *Mission*

**WHAT WE DO  
EVERY DAY**

“The Mission of the Village of Deer Park is to continually improve the quality of life for our residents and business community. We achieve this through strategic planning, adherence to the Village Comprehensive Plan, community engagement, and operating in a fiscally responsible manner with responsive municipal leadership and staff. Our focus is on sustainable, conscientious development, public safety, preservation of our natural amenities, and fostering our small-town character while being a vibrant, connected, and desirable destination.

## *Values*

**WHAT GUIDES  
OUR DECISIONS**

### **EXCELLENCE IN SERVICE**

Deliver safe, well-kept neighborhoods, efficient operations, and responsive, respectful service.

### **COMMUNITY & CONNECTION**

Foster quality of life through events, parks, and experiences that bring residents, businesses and community partners together.

### **SMART GROWTH & FISCAL STEWARDSHIP**

Plan for a vibrant and resilient economy, using the right tools and partnerships to keep Deer Park financially strong.

### **SUSTAINABILITY & CARE**

Protect and enhance our neighborhoods, green spaces, infrastructure, and character through thoughtful, well-managed investments.

## *Goals*

**HOW WE'LL  
GET THERE**

### **GOAL 1: OUTSTANDING VILLAGE SERVICES & STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS**

Keep delivering outstanding services, strengthening relationships, collaborating, learning, and improving.

### **GOAL 2: FINANCIAL RESILIENCE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Maintain conservative spending ethos while fostering quality development, sales tax base, and diverse revenue streams.

### **GOAL 3: DISTINCT EXPERIENCES & COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT**

Create more reasons to love living here and visiting through events, parks, thoughtful development, and local identity.

### **GOAL 4: RESILIENT INFRASTRUCTURE & ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP**

Build and maintain systems that support both today’s needs and tomorrow’s opportunities.



# GOAL 1

## Outstanding Village Services & Strategic Partnerships

Outstanding Village services and strategic partnerships have been central to Deer Park’s success — and will continue to anchor its next chapter. Since the last Strategic Plan, the Village has renewed its three-year agreement with the Lake County Sheriff, expanded communications and social media outreach, modernized the municipal code and Comprehensive Plan, and advanced infrastructure projects that improve daily life. Together, these achievements underscore Deer Park’s commitment to excellence in service delivery, community safety, and responsive governance. Looking ahead, the Village will build on this foundation by investing in staff / leadership development, streamlining operations, updating regulatory frameworks, and strengthening partnerships that expand capacity, enhance safety, and support long-term community well-being.

### ACHIEVEMENTS INCLUDE (BUT NOT LIMITED TO):

- Village roads resurfacing (ongoing program)
- Fifth three-year agreement with Lake County Sheriff
- \$600K OSLAD grant awarded to transform Town Center Park into destination for all ages
- Multiple sustainability awards: SolSmart Silver, EV Ready Bronze, \$15K Morton Arboretum grant
- Code modernization across 10+ municipal code chapters
- Emergency Operations Plan updated

### GOAL 1 STRATEGIES AT A GLANCE

#### 1.1 Invest in Staff, Leadership & Service Providers

- Continued excellence in public safety, security, services
- Prioritize professional development of staff and conduct Plan Commissioner training
- Continue cybersecurity and emergency protocols
- Establish/continue annual performance review cycle
- Review and amend Emergency Operations Plan
- Expand strategic relationships with brokers, recruiters
- Conduct employee compensation study

#### 1.2 Strengthen Communications & Planning

- Continue to evaluate Village systems, online platforms
- Plan and host annual State of the Village meeting
- Coordinate with neighboring communities
- Prepare Deer Park Business & Partner Survey
- Review and update core Village Plans

**“We need to bolster internal and external development capacity... particularly in economic development.”**

- Staff Visioning





## GOAL 2

# Financial Resilience & Economic Development

Deer Park’s strong financial position is no accident — it’s the result of intentional, forward-thinking leadership and a conservative spending ethos. Since 2020, the Village has secured and leveraged transformative funding tools including a successful sales tax referendum and the creation of a TIF district, while welcoming new anchor businesses. With no property tax and a reliance on retail sales, economic resilience is essential. This goal builds on that momentum - emphasizing conservative spending, disciplined budgeting, smart land use and site planning, and strategic business recruitment. Together, these efforts will safeguard long-term fiscal health, grow and diversify revenue, catalyze reinvestment along Rand Road, and foster a thriving local economy rooted in partnership and place.

### ACHIEVEMENTS INCLUDE (BUT NOT LIMITED TO):

- TIF District established with increment beginning to take shape for strategic reinvestment
- Temporary 0.5% sales tax increase implemented, successfully strengthening fund balance
- No municipal debt maintained while increasing reserves
- New anchor businesses welcomed including Persin & Robins (Flagship Rolex Jeweler) and Ancho & Agave
- Comprehensive Plan updated with refined economic development focus and design guidelines

### GOAL 2 STRATEGIES AT A GLANCE

#### 2.1 Revenue Diversification & Financial Tools

- Maintain sufficient reserves/conservative spending
- Evaluate economic development support/expertise
- Develop TIF strategy/revenue optimization
- Update online fiscal dashboard
- Consider recruitment process for desired business types (family entertainment, restaurants, hospitality)

#### 2.2 Land Use Planning & Development Framework

- Prioritize Framework Plans for Rand Road, key sites
- Prepare pre-approved streetscape furnishings menu
- Conduct development process and permit audit
- Create user-friendly development / permit guide

*“The TIF increment is just starting to take shape. We need to look ahead - plan intentionally and project wisely.” - Finance Director*

*“Advance Major Site Planning & Revenue Strategy” - exploring funding tools, TIF incentives, and unified Rand Road vision*

*- Second-Highest Trustee Priority*





## GOAL 3

### Distinct Experiences & Community Enhancement

Deer Park’s charm lies in its ability to feel both connected and tranquil. Since the last Strategic Plan, the Village has enhanced parks and public spaces, launched new branding and signage, and supported well-loved events that bring residents together. This goal celebrates those efforts while charting a path forward — one that deepens civic pride, tells Deer Park’s unique story, and invites participation from all ages. Through strategic programming, creative placemaking, and engaging communications, the Village will cultivate a vibrant community identity, activate gathering spaces like Town Center Park, and foster stronger connections between neighbors, visitors, and the natural environment.

#### ACHIEVEMENTS INCLUDE (BUT NOT LIMITED TO):

- *New branding and signage launched to strengthen village identity*
- *Town Center Park improvements with \$600K OSRAD grant for destination transformation*
- *Enhanced social media presence with growing engagement across platforms*
- *Village newsletter and e-blasts to expand community communication and transparency*
- *Brand Identity Package developed including marketing materials and website updates*
- *Well-loved community events continued with strong resident participation*
- *Successful National Night Out (NNO) at Vehe Farm welcomed 210 attendees*

#### GOAL 3 STRATEGIES AT A GLANCE

##### 3.1 Activate Assets & Cultivate Experiences

- Commission annual photography sessions*
- Continue to strengthen community partnerships*
- Rename Town Center Park (resident engagement)*
- Evaluate event planning / sponsorship framework*
- Develop signature family-friendly event(s)*

##### 3.2 Enhance Village Identity & Public Art

- Continue refining and improving social media*
- Integrate sustainability into programming/events*
- Name Deer Park mascot (resident contest)*
- Identify priority locations and concepts for public art installations and updated Village signage (as part of Park Master Plan Update)*

*“Interest in expanding family-focused events, particularly through activation and renaming of the new Town Center Park.” - Staff Visioning*

*“Communication, Connection, & Community Engagement” identified as top priority requiring community buy-in*

*- Top Trustee Priority*





# GOAL 4

## Resilient Infrastructure & Environmental Stewardship

Deer Park’s investment in infrastructure has delivered visible results — from over two dozen completed stormwater projects and resurfacing of Village roads to award-winning sustainability initiatives like EV readiness and native habitat restoration. These projects have improved daily life while setting a standard for environmental responsibility. Looking ahead, the Village will continue to lead with intention — ensuring long-term infrastructure performance, advancing connectivity, and protecting its cherished green spaces.

This goal focuses on proactive planning, regional collaboration, and grant-seeking to maintain resilience, reduce risk, and support high-quality, low-impact growth — ensuring Deer Park remains a safe, beautiful, and future-ready place for generations to come.

### ACHIEVEMENTS INCLUDE (BUT NOT LIMITED TO):

- Nearly 30 stormwater projects completed village-wide
- Chapel Hill Pond Restoration launched with \$5K ComEd Green Regions Grant, 1K native plants installed
- SolSmart Silver & EV Ready Bronze certifications achieved
- \$15K Morton Arboretum matching grant secured for urban forestry
- New playground equipment installed at Deerpath Park with accessible, inclusive design
- Tree canopy enhancement across multiple parks with native species
- Charles E. Brown Park reconstruction, including three new pickleball courts and sports court resurfacing
- Deerpath Pond Dredging Project and installation of aerator system to promote overall health of ecosystem

### GOAL 4 STRATEGIES AT A GLANCE

#### 4.1 Maintain, Enhance & Future-Proof Core Systems

- Continue annual road program
- Advance Stormwater Master Plan
- Update Parks Master Plan
- Continue restoration of habitats and watersheds
- Foster sustainability as part of ongoing planning

#### 4.2 Develop Strategic Infrastructure

- Evaluate access alternatives for key development sites
- Identify priority bike/ped enhancement locations
- Determine legal processes for public-private infrastructure
- Integrate infrastructure in development / TIF marketing
- Consider long-range Lake Michigan water allocation

**“Preserving Deer Park’s natural areas, community character, and connected infrastructure remain ongoing priorities.”**

**“Enhance walkability, bikeability, and supportive infrastructure while exploring partnerships for event logistics. Integrate sustainability messaging into parks and programming”**

- Staff & Trustee Visioning Sessions



## INSPIRATION SPOTLIGHT

### POWER OF NATURE-BASED PLAY >>

Nature-based play areas invite kids to climb, dig, splash, and explore in ways that spark curiosity and build confidence. Research shows these experiences enhance cognitive development, problem-solving, and creativity, while also encouraging physical activity and social interaction. Incorporating natural play elements into parks and green spaces would strengthen Deer Park's identity as a place where families thrive close to nature.

### LEARNING RESOURCE:

Grant opportunities exist through IDNR OSRAD, Illinois Children's Health & Wellness, and corporate foundations focused on outdoor education. Kompan is a reputable company that can design playgrounds made of 95% recycled materials. They also provide guidance on planning and grant applications.

>> <https://www.kompan.com/>



*“Nature Play” embodies Deer Park’s values of stewardship and sustainability and celebrates the Village’s family-oriented spirit, shared by 72% of households.*



*Decorative crosswalks are enhanced pedestrian crossings that use patterns, colors, or materials (like pavers or stamped concrete) to improve visibility, calm traffic, and carry Deer Park's identity into the public realm—much like the Village's branded signage does at gateways and parks.*



### << TROT THIS WAY · FUNCTIONAL IDENTITY BOOSTERS

Branded wayfinding signage and decorative crosswalks (like the concept shown left) are functional ways to celebrate Deer Park's identity. While state and county agencies restrict treatments on Rand, Lake Cook, and Quentin, options exist on Village-controlled roads like Deer Park Blvd. or Field Parkway. A pilot brick paver crosswalk (80' x 10') is estimated between ~\$50-80K, with costs reduced if multiple are built together. Long-term maintenance would need to be explored alongside costs. Given strong community support for walkability and placemaking, decorative crosswalks could be pursued near Town Center as a visible pilot.

### LEARNING RESOURCE:

Grant opportunities (CMAP, IDOT pedestrian safety, or Safe Routes to School) may help offset design and installation costs. Explore costs associated with specialty crosswalks, inlay concepts and ongoing maintenance.

>> [www.wgpaver.com](http://www.wgpaver.com)

## INSPIRATION SPOTLIGHT

### << EXPLORING SIGNATURE ELEMENTS

Deer Park's Town Center and existing Comprehensive Plan Design Guidelines provide a solid foundation for future expansion. As new development occurs within the TIF District, setting clear design expectations upfront creates a developer-friendly process while ensuring high-quality outcomes.

**TIF Investment Strategy:** As part of Deer Park's economic development strategy, explore the use of TIF funds to co-invest in signature gateways and furnishings that elevate property values and district identity—creating a multiplier effect where public investment sparks private reinvestment.

#### Implementation Approach

- Develop a furnishings and materials menu to operationalize existing guidelines.
- Pilot a TIF-funded gateway at a key entry. Replicate through PUD negotiations and incremental development to build a cohesive gateway system over time.



#### *Brand Amplification, Design Consistency & Scalable Applications:*

*The Town Center archway is a signature design element that reinforces Deer Park's visual brand while guiding visitors to the district. Arches act as visual markers while coordinated site furnishings (like light fixtures, seating, and outdoor furnishings) reinforce identity. From grand gateways (e.g., West Des Moines, IA) to smaller thresholds and pedestrian walkways (e.g., Ouilmette Way in Wilmette, IL), arches and furnishings can be applied at multiple scales and budgets.*



# DEER PARK 2030

## *Strategic Plan*

### **ACTION PLAN**

The following Action Plan translates Deer Park's vision, values, and strategic priorities into a clear roadmap for the next five years. It bridges community input with achievable next steps, ensuring that goals are supported by concrete strategies, measurable actions, and accountable leadership.

Each action item reflects themes voiced throughout this process — fiscal responsibility, community experience, development strategy, and capacity building — and has been refined through staff workshops, trustee discussions, and poll/survey feedback. The matrix is designed to be both practical and flexible: a tool that guides day-to-day decision-making while keeping sight of long-range aspirations.

Actions are categorized to show near-term priorities, long-term initiatives, and ongoing commitments. Together, they form a living framework that will help Deer Park maintain its strengths, adapt to change, and advance the collective vision for a connected, resilient, and thriving community.

# VISUAL SNAPSHOT OF PLAN DRIVERS

The Deer Park 2030 Strategic Plan reflects months of collaboration, community input, and careful evaluation of the Village's opportunities and challenges. This graphic offers a high-level view of the plan's four goals and key strategies — each shaped by the priorities shared by residents, staff, and elected officials.

Together, these goals chart a path to strengthen fiscal resilience, enhance community life, guide thoughtful development, and steward the Village's natural and built assets. The pages that follow dive deeper into each goal area, outlining the specific strategies, actions, and measures that will guide Deer Park's growth and investment over the next five years.





## GOAL 1 · OUTSTANDING VILLAGE SERVICES & PARTNERSHIPS

### Strategy 1.1 Invest in Staff, Leadership & Service Providers

ACTION ITEM	LEAD (PARTNERS)	COST	TIMELINE					SUCCESS METRICS
			2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	
<b>A</b> Ensure continued excellence in public safety, security and community services	Staff (LZ Fire, Lake County Sheriff)	\$\$\$	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Resident safety survey satisfaction, technology upgrades (cameras, lighting, communications); coordination with neighboring communities; safety messaging/improvements
<b>B</b> Prioritize ongoing professional development for staff, board and commission; conduct Plan Commissioner Training	Staff (Finance, APA-IL)	\$	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Annual PD budget established, events attended, ongoing education and skill development, commissioner trainings completed every 5 years
<b>C</b> Continue cybersecurity protocols, train staff annually	IT, Staff (Consultant)	\$	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Security protocols adopted, annual training completed, incident response plan tested
<b>D</b> Establish / continue annual performance review cycle	Staff (HR Consultant)	Staff Time	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Performance reviews completed annually, goal-setting integrated, career development plans
<b>E</b> Review and amend Emergency Operations Plan	Staff	\$\$	✓		✓		✓	Current plan updated, staff trained annually, include response plan for service prioritization and emergency budget scenarios (COVID-style planning)
<b>F</b> Expand strategic relationships with brokers, retail recruiters, ICSC, and chambers to grow the Village's prospect pipeline	Staff (ED Consultant)	\$\$			✓	✓	✓	Event attendance, participation, explore resources available via the International Council of Shopping Centers ( <a href="https://www.icsc.com/">https://www.icsc.com/</a> )
<b>G</b> Conduct employee compensation study	Staff (Consultant)	\$\$			✓		✓	Study completed, salary bands established, classification updates adopted, new compensation plan

**Lead Departments:** Admin, Finance, HR

**5 Year Outcome Goal:** Ensure excellence in safety, security and community services; foster staff capacity and abilities through professional development, training, emergency protocols, and enhanced cybersecurity to support operations.

**Cost Tiers**

- \$ Operational expenses, minor improvements, typically routine/in-house
- \$\$ Departmental initiatives, moderate capital investments
- \$\$\$ Major, transformational investments, multi-phase, partner / consultant

## GOAL 1 · OUTSTANDING VILLAGE SERVICES & PARTNERSHIPS

### Strategy 1.2

### Strengthen Communications & Planning

ACTION ITEM	LEAD (PARTNERS)	COST	TIMELINE					SUCCESS METRICS	
			2026	2027	2028	2029	2030		
A	Continue to evaluate online platforms, e-pay solutions, and equipment in conjunction with current system(s) to strengthen communications, service, safety, efficiency, and user experience	Staff (IT/Service Provider)	\$\$	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Resident satisfaction scores for service delivery and experience working with Village; increased engagement via digital platforms; platform recommendation to Board if warranted; user testing; final adjustments
B	Plan and host annual State of the Village meeting	Staff (Communications)	\$	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Resident attendance, participation year over year, digital presentation posted to website and social media
C	Coordinate with neighboring communities (ongoing)	Staff (Consultants)	Staff Time	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Coordination meetings held annually with BACOG; community-specific meetings held annually pending planning pursuits / coordination
D	Prepare 'Deer Park Business & Community Partner' survey	Consultant (Staff)	\$\$		✓		✓		Prepare and distribute biannual survey to commercial property owners, management/leasing, and independent businesses; response tracking; summary of findings reported out; implementation of feedback
E	Review and update core Village Plans as needed to ensure alignment between goals, code and policies	Staff (Consultants)	\$		✓		✓		Plans reviewed, amendments identified, present to Board for consideration and next steps

**Lead Departments:** Admin, Communications, Planning  
**5 Year Outcome Goal:** Strengthen external partnerships and internal communications to support strategic initiatives while maintaining transparency, ongoing plan updates, and regional collaboration.

**Cost Tiers**  
**\$** Operational expenses, minor improvements, typically routine/in-house  
**\$\$** Departmental initiatives, moderate capital investments  
**\$\$\$** Major, transformational investments, multi-phase, partner / consultant

## GOAL 2 · FINANCIAL RESILIENCE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### Strategy 2.1

### Revenue Diversification & Financial Tools

ACTION ITEM	LEAD (PARTNERS)	COST	TIMELINE					SUCCESS METRICS
			2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	
A Continue to budget conservatively and maintain prudent spending ethos	Finance (ED Consultant)	Policy Change	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Reserves maintained, monthly monitoring
B Evaluate Economic Development consultants with TIF expertise; compare experience, costs, and fit for Deer Park	Staff (Planning, Board, Finance)	\$\$\$	✓	✓				Explore cost-benefits of capacity-building focused on consultant with TIF experience, mixed-use development expertise, small village specialization, revenue strategy development
C Develop comprehensive TIF strategy, incentives, and revenue optimization framework	ED Consultant (Finance, Legal)	\$\$\$	✓	✓	✓			TIF incentives and revenue strategy aligned with Framework Plans (2.2a); legal steps pursued as relevant to make operational (re: policies and regulatory frameworks updated/adopted; revenue sources active)
D Update online fiscal dashboard to include added transparency of new tools and tracking	ED Consultant, Finance (Staff/ IT)	\$\$			✓	✓		Dashboard complete; year-over-year revenue growth and diversification score stable or improving; Board updates
E Consider recruitment process to stimulate desired development and business types (family entertainment, restaurants, hospitality) that align with Framework Plans (2.2a)	ED Consultant (BACOG, Brokers)	Staff Time			✓	✓	✓	Explore cost-benefit of RFQ / RFP process; major development agreement signed, construction timeline confirmed; dashboard reporting;

**Lead Departments:** ED Consultant, Admin, Finance, Board

**5 Year Outcome Goal:** Achieve sales tax growth and revenue diversification through strategic deployment of TIF, incentives, and new revenue tools, while maintaining 25%+ fund balance and building organizational capacity for sustained economic development.

#### Cost Tiers

- \$ Operational expenses, minor improvements, typically routine/in-house
- \$\$ Departmental initiatives, moderate capital investments
- \$\$\$ Major, transformational investments, multi-phase, partner / consultant



## GOAL 2 · FINANCIAL RESILIENCE & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### Strategy 2.2

### Land Use Planning & Development Framework

ACTION ITEM	LEAD (PARTNERS)	COST	TIMELINE					SUCCESS METRICS
			2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	
<b>A</b> Prioritize Framework Plans for Rand Road and key sites; conduct in parallel with Economic Development Strategy (2.1c)	Planning (Staff, ED Consultant, Engineering)	\$\$	✓	✓				Identify desired development forms, land use mix and density; Framework Plans and financial models complete; Board review; engage community and partners
<b>B</b> Prepare pre-approved “menu” of commercial / mixed-use streetscape furnishings to ensure consistent look across development and redevelopment	Planning (Staff, Engineering)	\$	✓					Pre-approved menu completed with 5-7 furnishing categories (lighting, seating, planters, signage, etc.); menu reviewed by Plan Commission, adopted by Village Board and integrated into PUD review process; design guidelines / code updated to reference approved menu.
<b>C</b> Conduct development process audit to reinforce Village’s commitment to quality planning while strengthening partnerships 2-way communication, listening and collaboration	Planning (Staff, Consultant)	\$	✓	✓				Conduct interviews with developers/local partners, identify ways to enhance experience, materials and process; audit complete, new protocols adopted and implemented, user feedback positive
<b>D</b> Develop user-friendly development and permitting guide for residents and developers, update as needed based on prior actions	Planning (ED Consultant)	\$			✓	✓		Comprehensive guide published addressing both simple permits and complex development processes/ TIF incentives, user feedback positive

**Lead Departments:** Planning, ED Consultant, Finance  
**5 Year Outcome Goal:** Establish predictable, efficient development processes supported by clear framework plans and comprehensive guidance that enable quality development projects to move from concept to construction with greater speed, certainty, and community alignment.

**Cost Tiers**  
**\$** Operational expenses, minor improvements, typically routine/in-house  
**\$\$** Departmental initiatives, moderate capital investments  
**\$\$\$** Major, transformational investments, multi-phase, partner / consultant



## GOAL 3 · DISTINCT EXPERIENCES & COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT

### Strategy 3.1

### Activate Existing Assets & Cultivate Experiences

ACTION ITEM	LEAD (PARTNERS)	COST	TIMELINE					SUCCESS METRICS
			2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	
<b>A</b> Commission annual photography session, prepare list of key sites, align with Village event / ppl pics	Staff (Professional Photographer)	\$	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Professional photo library created, seasonal coverage, event documentation, social media interactions
<b>B</b> Continue to partner with Town Center Mall for joint events, seasonal activations, marketing, and data-sharing	Staff (Town Center)	\$	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Number of annual events, marketing and sponsorship, coordinated seasonal promotions, attendance, annual data sharing summary
<b>C</b> Explore renaming Town Center Park	Staff (Community)	\$\$	✓	✓				Community naming contest launched, Board adoption, unveiling event, number of attendees
<b>D</b> Evaluate event planning teams to determine feasibility of sponsorship framework or funding mechanism for community events; determine cost-benefit of on-call support with event planning, coordination and capacity for signature event(s)	Staff (Consultant)	\$\$	✓	✓				Scope of service/needs outlined, leads and referrals contacted, quotes secured, board review, contract awarded if warranted, sponsorship framework established, amount of sponsorships / dollars raised; staff feedback on working relationship and effectiveness
<b>E</b> Develop and launch signature family-friendly event(s)	Staff (Event Planners, Town Center, Volunteers)	\$\$		✓	✓	✓	✓	Annual event established, sponsorship secured, number of attendees, community survey satisfaction,

**Lead Departments:** Staff, Consultants

**5 Year Outcome Goal:** Create memorable community experiences and strengthen village identity through strategic partnerships, seasonal programming, and enhanced communications while maintaining lean operations. Expand sponsorship, funding capacity, and sustainable event model.

**Cost Tiers**

- \$ Operational expenses, minor improvements, typically routine/in-house
- \$\$\$ Departmental initiatives, moderate capital investments
- \$\$\$\$ Major, transformational investments, multi-phase, partner / consultant



## GOAL 3 · DISTINCT EXPERIENCES & COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT

### Strategy 3.2

### Enhance Village Identity, Branding & Public Art

ACTION ITEM	LEAD (PARTNERS)	COST	TIMELINE					SUCCESS METRICS
			2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	
<b>A</b> Continue to refine and improve social media strategy	Staff (Consultant)	\$\$	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Engagement metrics and follower growth annually; integrate professional photography
<b>B</b> Integrate sustainability into Village programming and events (incorporate as part of signature event 3.1e and Parks Master Plan 4.1b)	Staff, Planning (Consultant)	\$\$		✓	✓	✓	✓	Sustainability education integrated into parks and programming
<b>C</b> Name Deer Park mascot through community contest	Staff (Planning)	\$	✓	✓				Community naming contest launched, number of submissions, mascot celebrated as part of events and marketing
<b>D</b> Identify priority locations and preferred concepts, public art, outline list of potential artists and partners (incorporate as part of Parks Master Plan - 4.1b)	Staff, Planning (Consultant, Artists)	\$\$			✓	✓	✓	Priority public art locations and preferred concepts identified, funding secured, Call for Artists issued, installation and community dedication events
<b>E</b> Identify priority locations and property readiness for updated Village signs with new logo/brand (incorporate as part of Parks Master Plan - 4.1b)	Planning (Design Consultant)	\$\$			✓	✓	✓	Priority locations identified, cost estimates secured, cohesive signage installed, village identity reinforced, directional clarity improved

**Lead Departments:** Admin, Staff, Consultants

**5 Year Outcome Goal:** Strengthen Deer Park’s “upscale small-town” brand through cohesive visual identity, strategic public art, and authentic marketing that promotes business partners, enhances resident pride, strengthens visitor attraction and helps attract quality investment.

#### Cost Tiers

- \$ Operational expenses, minor improvements, typically routine/in-house
- \$\$ Departmental initiatives, moderate capital investments
- \$\$\$ Major, transformational investments, multi-phase, partner / consultant



## GOAL 4 · SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE & ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

### Strategy 4.1 Maintain, Enhance & Future-Proof Core Systems

ACTION ITEM	LEAD (PARTNERS)	COST	TIMELINE					SUCCESS METRICS
			2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	
<b>A</b> Continue annual road program, maintenance and resurfacing	Staff (Engineering)	\$\$\$	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	<i>Ongoing implementation of 5 Year Road Plan and resurfacing of Village roads;</i>
<b>B</b> Advance Stormwater Master Plan	Engineering (Environmental Consultants)	\$\$	✓	✓				<i>Complete evaluation of flood-prone areas and address resilience through green infrastructure; problems resolved, no flooding</i>
<b>C</b> Update Parks Master Plan to improve and expand access /and amenities; address complementary factors, locations and concepts pertaining to public art, signage, programming, and sustainability	Park Consultant (Staff, Planning, Engineering)	\$\$\$		✓	✓			<i>Plan adopted, number of renovated parks/ features (e.g., nature-based play equipment, trails, seating, lighting) as documented in capital improvement logs; number of companion art and signage installations; events hosted, usage documentation / tracking; resident survey satisfaction scores</i>
<b>D</b> Continue to support ecological restoration of key habitat areas and strengthen watershed-based partnerships to improve shoreline health;	Staff (Engineering, Consultants)	\$\$		✓	✓	✓	✓	<i>Restoration projects completed / being monitored, habitat quality metrics, testing results, partnership agreements established</i>
<b>E</b> Make sustainability a core part of planning and community life; foster public education and awareness of municipal, HOA and individual efforts	Planning (Engineering)	\$ Staff Time		✓		✓		<i>Sustainability programs, green infrastructure projects, plan updates, integration as part of development review, code updates, social media / newsletter spotlights, and marketing materials</i>

**Lead Departments:** Public Works, Engineering

**5 Year Outcome Goal:** Maintain high-quality roads, drainage, parks and amenities while integrating sustainability and advancing sustainability. The success of initiatives will depend heavily on collaboration and partnerships.

**Cost Tiers**

\$ Operational expenses, minor improvements, typically routine/in-house

\$\$ Departmental initiatives, moderate capital investments

\$\$\$ Major, transformational investments, multi-phase, partner / consultant



## GOAL 4 · SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE & ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

### Strategy 4.2

### Develop Strategic Access Infrastructure

ACTION ITEM	LEAD (PARTNERS)	COST	TIMELINE					SUCCESS METRICS
			2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	
<b>A</b> Evaluate access alternatives and legal processes / timing to advance desired development of key sites; consider roadway construction, conversion, costs, funding, and phasing; integrate as part of Economic Development Strategy (2.1c) and Framework Planning (2.2a)	Engineering, ED Consultant, Planning (Staff, Legal)	\$\$	✓	✓				Engineering studies complete; design, cost, phasing and funding strategies identified, TIF coordination and incentives outlined and incorporated; development readiness improved
<b>B</b> Identify priority locations for bikeway and pedestrian connectivity enhancements	Engineering (Planning, Staff)	\$\$	✓	✓				# miles of mobility infrastructure, # of pedestrian improvements completed (decorative/regular crosswalks, refuge islands, lighting, wayfinding signs), safety enhanced, meetings/coordination
<b>C</b> Determine legal process and public-private ownership considerations and naming	Legal (Staff, Engineering, Planning)	\$\$\$	✓	✓				Ordinance language and legalities outlined / confirmed; meetings with staff, commission, board, and partners; approvals
<b>D</b> Integrate infrastructure related details within development marketing	ED Consultant (Planning)	Staff Time		✓	✓	✓	✓	Infrastructure readiness / water access featured in developer materials, site planning coordination improved; competitive advantage messaging deployed
<b>E</b> Consider long-range needs to evaluate Lake Michigan water allocation	Staff (Engineering, JAWA, Legal)	\$\$					✓	Consider long-range steps towards Lake Michigan water capacity allocation, feasibility, public information campaign on cost-benefit-investment requirements

**Lead Departments:** Engineering, Planning, ED Consultant  
**5 Year Outcome Goal:** Create infrastructure that unlocks development potential while maintaining and enhancing community character. Continue to create safe, connected walkable routes between neighborhoods, schools, parks, and development.

**Cost Tiers**  
**\$** Operational expenses, minor improvements, typically routine/in-house  
**\$\$** Departmental initiatives, moderate capital investments  
**\$\$\$** Major, transformational investments, multi-phase, partner / consultant

# IMPLEMENTATION ROADMAP & PHASED TIMELINE

This roadmap translates the four strategic goals into a sequence of simplified action statements organized by workflow dependencies rather than goal categories. The three phases prioritize foundational work that enables subsequent initiatives. Each phase includes clear checkpoints to track progress and maintain momentum toward the Village’s 2030 vision. As with all planning efforts, not every step will be fully within the Village’s control; flexibility and adaptability are essential as conditions evolve.

## PHASE 1 ANALYSIS & FOUNDATION BUILDING (2026)

### Economic Development Strategy

- Engage TIF economic development expertise
- Develop comprehensive TIF and revenue strategy
- Expand broker/recruiter relationships (ICSC, etc.)

### Site Planning & Analysis

- Create Rand Road and key site framework plans
- Evaluate strategic access infrastructure alternatives
- Explore public-private costs and legal framework
- Advance Stormwater Master Plan
- Prepare pre-approved streetscape furnishings
- Update Parks Master Plan (+ public art/sign strategy)

### Engagement & Communications

- Plan Annual State of Village address
- Hold signature family-friendly event
- Introduce renaming of Town Center Park
- Commission seasonal photography sessions
- Conduct Business & Partner Survey

## PHASE 2 DEPLOYMENT & IMPLEMENTATION (2027)

### Revenue Generation

- Launch TIF incentive programs
- Complete development process audit
- Create user-friendly development guide
- Update online fiscal dashboard with
- Explore business / developer recruitment marketing

### Infrastructure & Connectivity

- Confirm legal framework for access infrastructure
- Advance priority ped-bike enhancements
- Continue annual road program and improvements

### Programming, Planning & Identity

- Evaluate event planning teams (cost, expertise)
- Establish event sponsorship model, secure funding
- Complete community mascot naming contest
- Enhance social media with professional photos
- Review and update core Village Plans for alignment
- Continue cybersecurity and emergency protocols

## PHASE 3 SCALING & COMPLETION (2028-2030)

### Outcomes & Fiscal Results

- Assess development agreements and TIF performance
- Monitor revenue diversification and sales tax growth
- Evaluate recruitment success and adjust strategies

### Infrastructure & Community Assets

- Complete Parks Master Plan Update
- Advance strategic connectivity/safety enhancements
- Continue habitat restoration with educational elements
- Complete priority improvements to parks, signs, art

### Program Optimization & Sustainability

- Integrate sustainability messaging in programming
- Establish sustainable event sponsorship framework
- Assess and refine community partnerships
- Maintain excellence in coordination, safety
- Assess long-range Lake Michigan water allocation



# DEER PARK 2030 *Strategic Plan*

## APPENDIX

- SWOT ANALYSIS..... P27
- STAFF VISIONING SUMMARY..... P29
- VISIONING POLL SUMMARY ..... P33
- TRUSTEE WORKSHOP SUMMARY ..... P37

# DEER PARK 2030 SWOT ANALYSIS • APRIL 2025

## STRENGTHS

### Vibrant, Walkable Town Center

- Deer Park Town Center and nearby shops/dining provide robust sales tax revenue.
- Year-round events and regional draw strengthen local economy and brand identity.

### Fiscal Stability

- Historically strong financial management, including a balanced budget and reserve funds.
- No municipal property tax, which is attractive to residents and businesses.

### Safe, Serene Neighborhoods

- High-quality housing, well-maintained infrastructure, and low crime rate.
- Outstanding local schools and convenient access to parks, forest preserves, and abundant green space.

### Accessible Location

- Proximity to major transportation corridors.
- Access to Barrington & Palatine Metra stations for regional connectivity.

### Natural & Recreational Assets

- Multiuse trails, open space, and forest preserves—key components of community identity.
- Continuous improvement program for infrastructure supports healthy, scenic environments.

## WEAKNESSES

### Stalled Appearance of South Rand Rd

- Market factors and stalled development.
- Segments need aesthetic and functional upgrades. Gaps in tenant mix and occupancy hinder commercial corridor vibrancy.

### Reliance on Sales Tax

- Heavy reliance on retail sales tax.
- Economic fluctuations or retail shifts can significantly impact municipal finances.

### Limited Mid-Range Housing

- Housing stock is predominantly large-lot single-family or higher-end rental. Fewer mid-priced or starter-home options.
- Lack of housing diversity to accommodate downsizing seniors and younger households.

### Car-Centric Development

- Limited public transportation, with much of the Village designed for auto travel.
- Pedestrian and bike connectivity improving but remains incomplete between subdivisions and commercial areas.

### Higher Infrastructure Costs

- Provision of Lake Michigan water and sewer services requires coordination with multiple agencies.
- Reliance on private wells in older areas and patchwork of unincorporated enclaves can complicate infrastructure planning and service delivery.

### Civic Engagement

- Limited involvement by younger generations in government boards/commissions.
- Potential knowledge loss if transitions are not proactively planned.

## OPPORTUNITIES

### Rand Road / Redevelopment

- Rand Road TIF offers potential to redevelop underutilized commercial sites, diversify retail/restaurant mix, and improve streetscapes.
- Opportunity to encourage mixed-use, entertainment, and commercial investment.
- Revitalized façade and streetscape improvements can re-energize South Rand corridor.

### Branding & Placemaking

- Leverage Deer Park's existing identity ("small-town feel + upscale amenities"). Explore strategies to unite events, development, and marketing.
- Expand public art, cultural events, and wayfinding to strengthen sense of place.

### Expanded Housing Options

- Mixed-use developments bring more foot traffic to commercial corridors.
- Additional mid-range and senior-friendly housing could attract new residents and support existing households. Encourage scaled housing options for multi-generational households (empty nesters, young families).
- Attract younger residents to diversify economic base and sustain community.

### Sustainability & Environmental Initiatives

- Implementing green infrastructure, EV-readiness, and trails can attract eco-conscious businesses & residents.

### Regional Collaboration

- Partnership with adjacent municipalities and BACOG to align on infrastructure, watershed management, and economic initiatives.

## THREATS

### Retail & Tech Disruption

- Shifting consumer habits and e-commerce competition could reduce brick-and-mortar sales impacting the Town Center and local sales tax base.
- Office market changes (remote work) may lessen demand for corporate expansions.

### Neighboring Competition

- Nearby retail hubs (Kildeer, Lake Zurich, Hawthorn Woods) vying for similar businesses and market share.

### Illinois Population & Fiscal Challenges

- Illinois' slow/negative population growth affects housing and job markets; can dampen develop interest.
- Older populations may downsize sooner if mid-range housing isn't provided locally.

### Costs & Intergovernmental Factors

- Ongoing state fiscal challenges or potential municipal/township consolidations may limit local control.
- Infrastructure and utility expenses (Lake Michigan water, sewer) can escalate project costs.

### Environmental & Climatic Changes

- Flooding or severe weather events require robust mitigation plans.
- Increased frequency of storms may strain older stormwater systems and natural habitats.
- Balancing new development on Rand Road with open space preservation and green infrastructure.

# DEER PARK 2030 SWOT ANALYSIS

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Leverage the Rand Road TIF** as a proactive economic development tool to reinvent and diversify the corridor while upholding Deer Park’s established design standards.
- **Strengthen Placemaking & Branding** to create memorable community events, unique public art, and marketing strategies that highlight Deer Park’s upscale yet “small-town” appeal.
- **Enhance Connectivity & Housing Diversity** by investing in walkable and bike-friendly infrastructure, as well as encouraging mid-range housing options and continued high-quality development.
- **Focus on Sustainability** in all municipal and development practices, from green stormwater solutions to EV charging stations, aligning with the Village’s commitment to environmental stewardship.
- **Monitor Shifting Retail & Economic Conditions** by maintaining robust financial reserves, planning for e-commerce impacts, and exploring ways to attract entertainment, hospitality, and mixed-use development.



*Photo of Daucus carota, Queen Anne's Lace, taken at Cuba Marsh*



**To:** Beth McAndrews, Village Administrator, Village of Deer Park  
**From:** Erin Cigliano, AICP · Michael Blue, FAICP · Maggie Eickhoff · Teska Associates, Inc.  
**Date:** June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2025  
**RE:** **Summary Memo – June 3rd Strategic Visioning Workshop**

## **Deer Park 2030 Strategic Plan Update · Visioning Workshop Summary**

As Deer Park charts its next chapter of strategic planning, investment, and community building, an internal visioning workshop marked a pivotal first step. Held on June 3, 2025, at Vehe Barn, the session brought together key staff and leaders to reflect on progress since the 2020 Strategic Plan, assess current challenges, and align on emerging priorities that will guide the 2025–2030 strategic plan update.

### **The following individuals participated, with Teska consultants facilitating the session:**

- Greg Rusteberg, Village President
- Beth McAndrews, Village Administrator
- Josie Doniec, Director of Building & Zoning
- Kimberly Kelly, Village Clerk
- Megan Roscoe, Director of Finance
- Dave Heidtke, Plan Commission Chair
- Cheryl Martire, Administrative Assistant
- Ken Garrett, Building and Zoning Official (B&F)
- Michael Burke, Village Engineer (CBBEL)
- Kelly Cahill, Village Attorney

Designed to foster candid dialogue and critical thinking, the workshop surfaced foundational insights on shared values, community strengths, uncertainties, and the need for long-term fiscal sustainability. With strategic tools like TIF now in place alongside evolving market shifts, developer interest, and a robust family demographic (representing 72% of households) -- Deer Park stands at a moment of opportunity and responsibility.

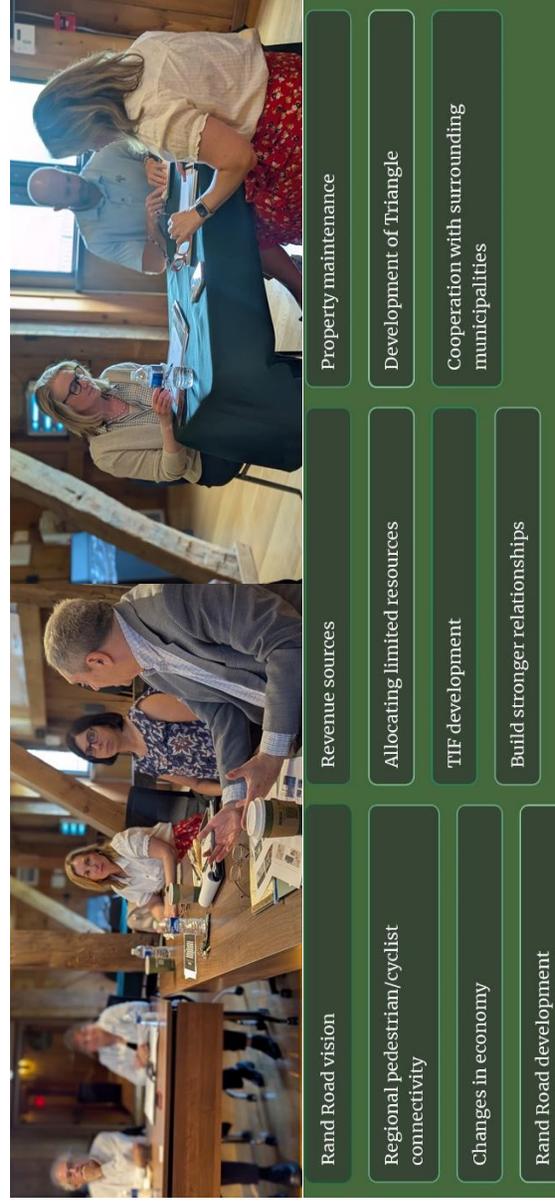
The Village enters this process with strong community assets, renewed investment in parks, a refreshed brand, and a shared understanding that a proactive economic development strategy is more critical than ever, particularly given Deer Park's fiscal structure, which relies on sales tax revenue and does not levy property tax.

***The visioning session overview and findings that follow establish a foundation for focused strategy development as part of Deer Park's Strategic Plan Update; a document the Village will seek to implement in coming years. Insights noted herein will be combined with additional engagement and analysis to shape actionable recommendations, plan-development, and support meaningful dialogue and decision-making with the Village Board.***

## Workshop Structure • Building the Foundation for What’s Next

The 3-hour session followed a structured agenda combining group discussion, interactive facilitation, and vision-setting exercises to set context and identify priorities.

- 1. Welcome + Framing the Future:** The session began with a review of Deer Park’s vision, mission, and values, and the importance of aligning priorities with near-term decisions and long-range planning objectives.
- 2. Looking Back + Leaping Forward:** A facilitated discussion on past accomplishments helped surface strengths and outside forces shaping the future. Noted strengths included Deer Park’s friendly sense of community, open space, and commitment / following-through on planning endeavors. Challenges centered on limited revenue sources, future development ideals for Rand Road, predictability with TIF investment, and partnerships.
- 3. Toolkit Building:** This segment highlighted planning tools and case studies across key topics including land use, economic development, TIF, placemaking, events and sustainable mobility. The examples sparked discussion on strategies Deer Park could adapt and areas where further learning and investment may be needed.
- 4. Action Lab:** Working in small groups, participants prioritized what to advance, protect, or reimagine; and tools, partners and resources that may be needed to accomplish such.



Above: Interactive polling and facilitated discussion invited participants to share top-of-mind priorities and challenges.

## Key Themes & Takeaways • Emerging Priorities and Future Aspirations

### 1. Fiscal Positioning

Deer Park's stable fiscal foundation, built on a strong sales tax base and absence of property tax, is a strength. However, long-term resilience may require diversification of revenue sources, additional fiscal tools, and proactive public education to build shared understanding and support.

### 2. Community Experience

Preserving Deer Park's natural assets, safety, connected infrastructure, mobility and community character remain top priorities. Staff expressed interest in enhancing walkability, bikeability, and supportive infrastructure, expanding family-focused events, particularly through activation of the new Town Center Park. Exploring partnerships, sponsorships, and selective outsourcing of event logistics could support fundraising and improve delivery, while keeping fiscal constraints in mind. Strengthening coordination and branding with Deer Park Town Center partners was also seen as important.

### 3. Development Strategy

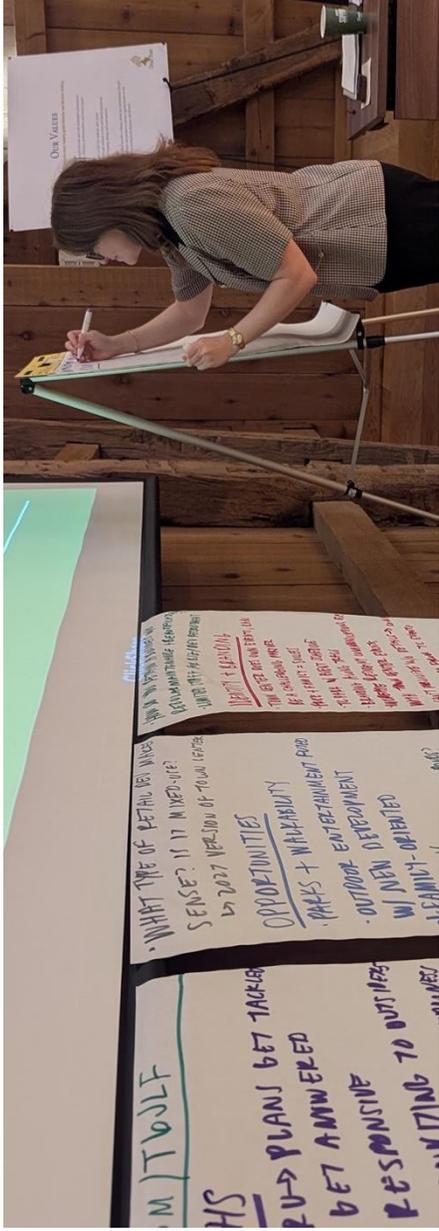
There is strong consensus around the need for a clear and actionable vision for Rand Road redevelopment. Priorities include refining land use expectations, evaluating context-sensitive residential typologies, and establishing transparent guidance for the use of public funds and TIF resources. Strengthening partnerships with adjacent communities and Town Center stakeholders, along with identifying alternative funding mechanisms, will be important next steps.

### 4. Capacity Building

Participants recognized the need to bolster internal and external development capacity. Opportunities include preparing developer-facing tools such as a TIF reference guide, expanding educational outreach on Village processes and incentives, and considering additional staffing support, particularly in economic development. Key challenges such as limited tax levers, perceptions around residential development, and coordination across entities underscore the need for strategic investment in capacity.

***"The TIF increment is just starting to take shape. We need to look ahead - plan intentionally and project wisely."***

- Megan Roscoe, Director of Finance & Human Resources



**Strategic Planning Implications • Outlining Future Needs & Action Items**

As a result of the visioning session, several key directives emerged to guide the development of Deer Park’s updated Strategic Plan. These considerations include:

- Present a unified vision and land use strategy for Rand Road that guides both vertical and horizontal mixed-use opportunities.
- Build community understanding of TIF and development trade-offs through outreach and storytelling.
- Explore a phased economic development staffing model, including part-time or consulting resources.
- Address the Town Center relationship as a strategic partnership, not just a commercial operator.
- Position family-friendly entertainment and greenspace programming as key to quality of life and economic resilience.

**Next Steps • Visioning Poll, Plan Drafting & Village Board Meeting**

Following the workshop, a poll was shared with key staff, session participants, and Village Trustees to gather additional quantitative and qualitative feedback on the topics discussed. These responses will build on the workshop insights and help shape the draft 2030 Strategic Plan Update. Poll findings and draft plan themes will be presented to the Village Board in July to support informed discussion and alignment around Deer Park’s goals and priorities. Teska will then collaborate with staff refine a final draft and build out actionable metrics for presentation and adoption by the board in Fall 2025.



# POLL RESULTS

June 9 - 19, 2025  
15 responders

## 2 A particular project or effort that stood out:

“Committing to having a TIF and all the work that went into setting that up was a very forward thinking move by the Village.”

“Committing to a campaign to increase the NHR sales tax has been transformative for the Village financial stability and has allowed the Village to take on more capital projects.”

“New developments like Ancho & Agave and Rolex are great additions to the Village and help spur other developments.”



## 4 Deer Park’s biggest challenges:



## 1 Most impact on Deer Park in the past 5 years:

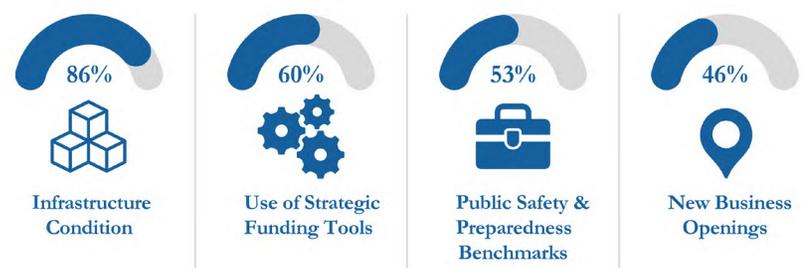


“The roads, drainage, and park improvements provide a direct benefit to Village residents.”

## 3 Top Priorities for the next 5 years:



## 5 Potential success measures:



## 6 Most important TIF-approved investment categories:

Business Recruitment Incentives

86%

Pedestrian/Bike Enhancements

86%

Infrastructure Improvements

73%

## 8 Desired establishments:



Family-Oriented Entertainment



Grocery Store or Fresh Food Market



Family-Friendly Restaurants



Breweries, Wineries, or Taprooms



## 7 Best development approach:

Commercial-Focused Mixed-Use

40%

Mixed-Use Residential

33%

## 9 Business types and activities to bring to Deer Park:

- Family friendly restaurants and entertainment
  - Top Golf
  - Main Event Hoffman Estates
  - Pinstripes
  - 4 Hands Brewing Co.
  - Smash Park
  - Ascend
  - ClimbZone
- Breweries that act as third spaces/entertainment
- Coffee shops
- Grocery stores

Pinstripes (Oak Brook, IL)



Smash Park (St.Louis, MO)

## 10 How important is it to have new development include public amenities like outdoor seating, walkability, and gathering spaces?



Very Important  
73%



Important  
13%



Neutral  
13%

# 11 Placemaking elements with the most potential:

Nature-Inspired Art



Seasonal Activations & Events



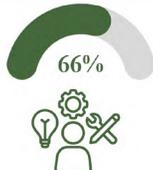
Branded Signage & Infrastructure



# 13 Ways to approach community programming:



Strengthen partnership with Deer Park Town Center to promote events



Explore ways to boost funding, planning, and capacity



Engage external consultants to plan 1-2 annual events

# 15 Thoughts and ideas about placemaking and events:

Music in the parks (revive the Jazz and Wine event by the Town Center)

Concerns about limited staff to attend the events and no place for the community to gather

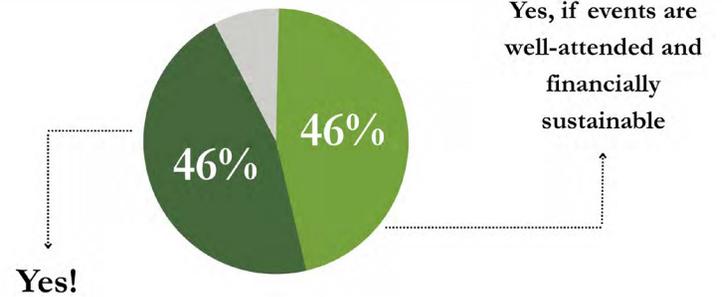
Build on brand identity and take advantage of the fall season to gather more people, families, and a seasonal vibe

Live music at Town Center Park than Vehe

Most popular events that exist are National Night Out and Santa Bingo

“Differentiate from other communities and surrounding events.”

# 12 Should the Village have more regular, seasonal events?



# 14 Community events ranked:

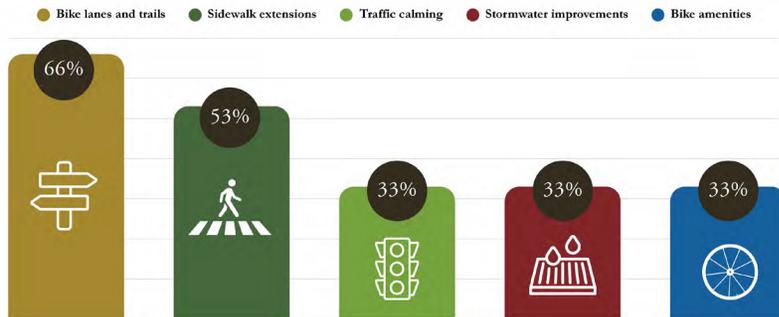
1. Food & Drink Festival
2. Summer Concert Series
3. Seasonal Celebrations
4. Movies in the Park
5. Youth Focused
6. Dog-Friendly Happenings
7. Lawn Game Tournaments



# 16 Strategies to improve access for pedestrians and cyclists:



## 17 Most needed mobility and infrastructure improvements:



## 19 Open space initiatives:



## 21 Examples of events in other communities:

- Community wide events that bring people together, often through music and food, or holidays
- Lake Zurich events like Rock the Block, Phase3 Fest, Pumpkin Walk, farmers market
- Deer Park could create a more realistic and smaller signature event
- Oak Brook Mall is truly an experience with its dining options and landscape and outdoor space features. All other communities we like to visit have downtowns.
- Wheaton has an array of family friendly events year round and an SSA helps support such.



## 18 Locations or intersections that need improvement:

- Long Grove and Quentin
- Long Grove and Laurel
- Increase traffic and pedestrian safety near parks
  - lower speed limits / enforce
  - flashing beacons

(all county roads, LCDOT; Visionary Partner Projects)



## 20 Other important things for the Strategic Plan:

- “Investing in an economic development consultant with a specific goal in mind to enhance business opportunities to the Village.”
- Park Plan tied into the Strategic Plan
- Utilize the Cuba Road pedestrian cycling path to connect the northern portion of the Village
- Inclusive advertisement on social media and branding for businesses not in Town Center

“This is about near and long range planning—the big picture should inform next steps.”

“Hoping our next plan can guide as well as our last recognizing our challenges are greater and goals will be harder to achieve”

## 22 Deer Mascot Ideas:

- Many suggested names and personas (Dart, Dash, Leafler, Yardley, Sylvester, Chuck, Parker, Daphne, Dylan), and a desire to see a mascot active at community events, from Fall Fest to Santa Bingo.

**Dart the Deer.**  
Dart loves donuts and disco dancing in his platform hooves. Dart is known for dilly dallying at DPTC (loves a good deal), playing pickleball (no opposable thumbs? no problem!), and attending Fallfest at Town Center Park and Ela Marsh.

**Leafler with a personality that is into nature and conservation and attends community events and teaches children about the environment**

- Dash the Deer (attends events)
- Chuck (Charlie Brown Park)
- Parker the Deer bikes around and shops around the village just like any resident!
- Sylvester (means forest)
- Yardley (means branch)
- Keep it kid-friendly
- Whitetail deer over an elk



**To:** Beth McAndrews, Village Administrator, Village of Deer Park  
**From:** Erin Cigliano, AICP · Maggie Eickhoff · Teska Associates, Inc.  
**Date:** July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2025  
**RE:** **Summary Memo – July 15<sup>th</sup> Board of Trustees Strategic Workshop**

**Deer Park 2030 Strategic Plan Update · Board of Trustees Workshop Summary**

As the next step in refining Deer Park 2030, a strategic plan update to carry the Village through the next five years, the Village Board of Trustees and Village President gathered to solidify the top priorities for action. Held on July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2025, in the Village Hall, Trustees reflected on the previous strategic plan’s successes, reviewed insights from the staff Visioning Workshop, assessed findings from the staff and board poll, and looked to the future to evaluate strategic actions that will have the largest impacts on the Village.

**The following individuals participated, with Teska consultants facilitating the session:**

- Greg Rusteberg, Village President
- Beth McAndrews, Village Administrator
- Michael Mann, Trustee
- David Lemme, Trustee
- Michael Reiser, Trustee
- Paul Kreatsoulas, Trustee
- Jimi Psarakis, Trustee

***The workshop session overview and findings that follow will inform further refinement of strategies, actions, and tools being developed as part of Deer Park’s Strategic Plan Update; a document the Village will seek to implement in coming years.***



## Workshop Structure • Reviewing Findings; Prioritizing Priorities

The 3-hour session agenda was designed to allow time for Trustees to reflect on previous engagement findings, reaffirm vision and values, ask valuable questions, and consider impactful priorities and starter actions.

- 1. Introductions + Reflecting on Village Strengths and Opportunities:** The session opened with introductions and a reflective exercise inviting participants to share what they love most about Deer Park, current challenges they observe, and what excites them about the Village’s future. This set a thoughtful tone and grounded the group in shared values. A brief overview of the strategic planning process helped align everyone on the purpose of the workshop and the importance of forward-thinking dialogue.
- 2. Celebrating Accomplishments + Looking Ahead:** The workshop acknowledged the many accomplishments made since Deer Park’s last Strategic Plan, which have helped position the Village in the region. Participants celebrated these efforts—spanning infrastructure upgrades, parks, branding, economic development tools like TIF, and more—while also recognizing complex decisions that lie ahead. Chief among these is shaping a clear, compelling vision for Rand Road and the TIF district, which presents both an opportunity and a challenge for future development.
- 3. What We’ve Heard:** This segment summarized key takeaways from the staff visioning workshop and the Strategic Plan poll completed by staff and Trustees. The findings reaffirmed core themes: maintaining fiscal responsibility while exploring new revenue sources, expanding governance capacity to support economic development, and enhancing community experience to both attract visitors and enrich daily life for residents. Notably, there was growing alignment around a mixed-use development strategy—particularly within the TIF district—as a critical path forward.
- 4. Prioritizing Priorities:** In the final portion of the session, boards displaying draft strategic goals and actions were set up in the foyer of Village Hall, inviting Trustees to engage in an open house-style exercise. With melodic jazz playing in the background, participants moved freely between stations, reviewing the content and placing priority dots to indicate which actions they felt (1) should be addressed in the next year, (2) would have the greatest impact, and (3) would require or benefit from community input. The interactive format sparked valuable conversations and surfaced clear takeaways to help shape the next phase of the Strategic Plan.

***"This is about near- and long-range planning—the big picture should inform next steps."***

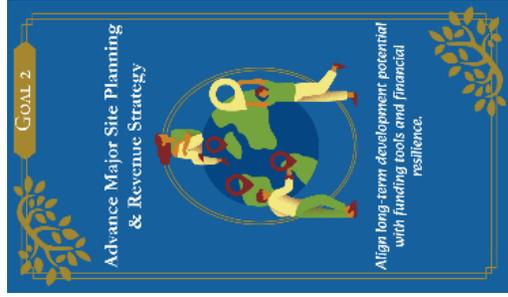
- Poll Responder

**Key Takeaways** · Near Term Priorities, Most Impactful + Community Buy-In

**1. Draft Actions which should be Prioritized in the Next Year**

While all the draft actions are priorities for the Village, some strategies were identified as top priorities for Deer Park's next year:

- The highest-voted was "Foster Fiscal Responsibility & Planning Foundations," aiming to maintain high service levels. This is a foundational action, which should be a high priority for the Village in any year.
- Receiving the second-most votes was "Advance Major Site Planning & Revenue Strategy," which calls for a unified vision for Rand Road and exploring funding tools like Special Service Areas and Business Districts. In contrast to the top vote-getter, this is a visionary strategy, which may require additional tools, time, and capacity to achieve.
- This was followed by "Communication, Connection, & Community Engagement," focusing on transparent communication with residents, businesses, and partners.



**2. Draft Strategies with the Most Impact on Deer Park**

Trustees identified several key action areas with the greatest potential impact:

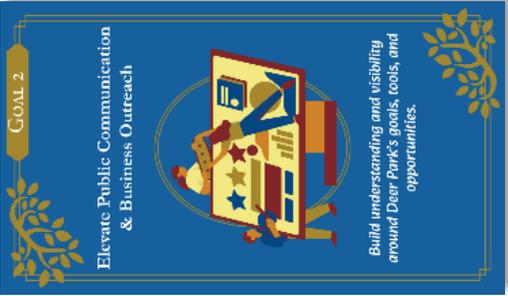
- The top-voted was "Streamline Development & Policy Guidance," focused on improving the predictability of doing business in Deer Park.
- Second-most votes went to "Strengthen Regional & Local Partnerships," aiming for coordinated efforts with nearby communities and the Town Center.
- Also highly favored was "Advance Infrastructure Investment & Sustainability Integration," prioritizing maintaining and future-proofing Village infrastructure with sustainable options.



**3. Draft Actions Requiring Community Buy-in**

In alignment with Village values of excellence and transparency in communications with residents, some draft actions were identified as needing more community buy-in than others.

- Trustees voted "Elevate Public Communication & Business Outreach" as the strategy needing the most community engagement, as this goal aims to build collective understanding of Village goals, tools, and opportunities (e.g., incentive and TIF programs).
- Next highest were "Communication, Connection, & Community Engagement" (defined above in item 1), and "Launch Seasonal, Community-Oriented Activations," focusing on habitat restoration, seasonal outdoor dining, and temporary parklets.



**Strategic Planning Implications • Action Items + Future Directions to Explore**

Through discussion, several considerations emerged for future refinement and research before eventual inclusion in the strategic plan. These considerations include:

- A shifting consensus towards more mixed-use commercial development along the Rand Road redevelopment area as opposed to strictly commercial development
- Continued importance and focus on the diversification of Village revenue sources to ensure financial stability and sustainability and to stay competitive in the region
- Acknowledging that future development along Rand will be heavily impacted and influenced by future infrastructure projects, access considerations, and public-private right-of-way coordination
- Renaming Town Center Park to avoid confusion with Town Center mall
- Addressing the capacity building and expertise needed to achieve economic development goals and engage in TIF-related next steps
- Creating consistent and cohesive streetscape design guidelines for all future development and redevelopment based on an approved menu of street furniture, lighting, signage, and other streetscape elements
- Encouraging existing, organic neighborhood events

**Next Steps • Plan Draft + Presentation**

Strategies and actions will be refined as a result of the prioritization exercise and engagement with the Trustees. The strategy matrix and Strategic Plan will be drafted and presented to the Village Board in August.

**END**