

December 2024

Braidwood

Comprehensive plan



Chicago Metropolitan
Agency for Planning



Acknowledgments

This project's success is due to the residents, business owners, city employees, and elected officials who helped create this plan.

Steering committee

Karen Hart - Mayor

Tony Altiery - City Administrator

Josh Bolatto - Braidwood Police Department, Braidwood Emergency Service Disaster Agency, Braidwood Park District

Gregory Cholek - Braidwood resident

Pamela Dell'Aquila - Braidwood Area Healthy Community Coalition

Kimberly Earling - Commissioner of Accounts and Finance

Melissa Micklos - Braidwood Fire Protection District, Board of Education, Reed-Custer Community Unit School District 255U

Dale Walsh - Commissioner of Streets and Public Improvements

Ron Wilczak Sr. - Commissioner of Public Health and Safety

CMAP staff

Brett Brown - Planner

Maddy Clowse - Planner

Tony Manno - Program Manager

Stephen Ostrander - Project Manager

Todd Vanadilok - Senior Advisor

Beatrix Yan - Planner (former)

Funding acknowledgement

This project was in part funded through the support of the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning's (CMAP) Technical Assistance program, which is funded by the Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration, and Illinois Department of Transportation. The City of Braidwood and CMAP thank these funders for supporting this project.





Table of contents

Introduction	1
Community engagement	3
A top priority	5
Expected future land use in Braidwood	7
Economic development	9
Transportation and accessibility	18
Parks, activities, and natural resources	32
Housing	38
Implementation matrix	46
Key deliverables from the planning process	58

Introduction

This is Braidwood's first comprehensive plan in two decades, developed through a collaborative effort that brought together residents, city staff, elected officials, and other community members. Grounded in thorough research, data analysis, and extensive community engagement, this plan outlines a vision for Braidwood's future. It addresses Braidwood's challenges *and* opportunities, focusing on preserving and enhancing what makes the community special while ensuring that maintaining a high quality of life remains Braidwood's top priority.

The comprehensive plan is a policy document and is not legally-binding. The plan can serve as a framework over the next ten to twenty years for elected officials, city staff, and community members to make informed decisions regarding land use, community development, transportation, economic development, and parks and recreation improvements throughout Braidwood.

This plan is designed to be adaptable, allowing for modifications as changes arise in the community. To remain relevant and aligned with Braidwood's growth trajectory, it should be reviewed and updated every five years, if necessary.

Implementation

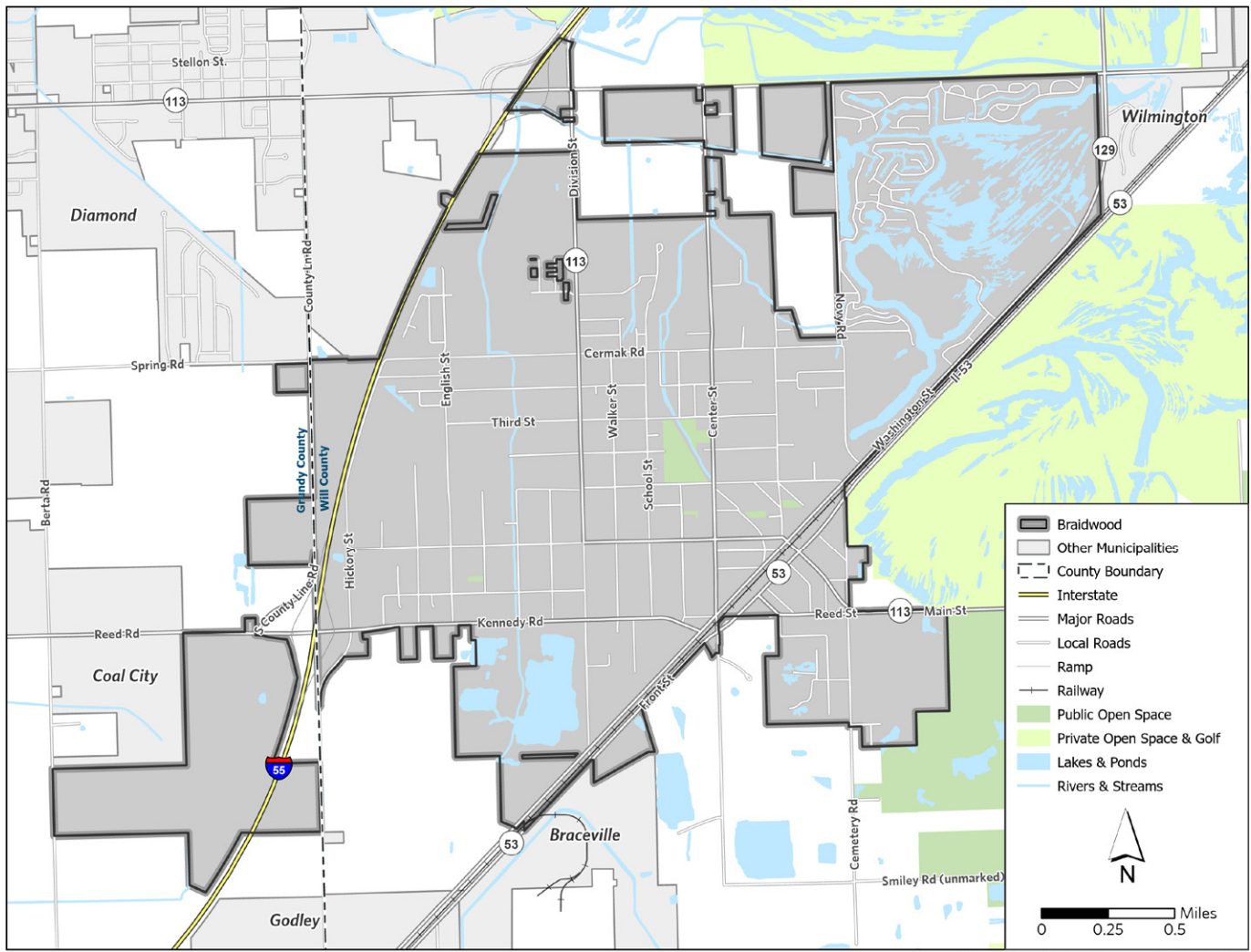
To effectively implement the plan, the city should prioritize which recommendations and strategies to pursue first. The steering committee will be essential in establishing working groups tasked with initiating and leading these efforts. The following steps are recommended:

- The steering committee forms a working group of 3-5 members for each of the plan's four main sections, including community volunteers and one city council member.



- Using the [implementation matrix](#), working groups evaluate "short" to "medium" timeline strategies, prioritizing those marked as higher priority. After an initial ranking, they meet with the city administrator to discuss potential benefits, drawbacks, and actionable steps for key strategies.
- Each working group submits a concise report, following a template created by the steering committee. The reports outline priority strategies, potential impacts, practical first steps (including who is responsible for each), and estimated costs.
- Each report is reviewed by the mayor, city administrator, and city council for feedback.
- Following any revisions, the reports are compiled into a single document, which becomes an action plan for the community, with most actions handled by the City of Braidwood, and others led by residents, community groups, and other local partners.

Braidwood study area.



Source: Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2023

Community engagement

This comprehensive plan was guided by the input of Braidwood residents, city staff and elected officials, business owners, and others who call Braidwood home.

Community engagement included:

- the project's steering committee (composed of nine residents)
- question and answer sessions during presentations to the Braidwood City Council
- a community engagement survey on the city's Facebook page
- an in-person and livestreamed "Community Conversation" with residents on February 16, 2023
- the project's community engagement website

The highlight of the project's community engagement was the over 100 Braidwood community members who attended the Braidwood Comprehensive Plan Open House on the evening of November 30, 2023, at the Fossil Ridge Library.

As can be seen in the photos on the following page, the meeting room was packed with residents engaging in lively conversation, debate, and questioning – providing their opinions and insights in response to a series of activities placed at stations around the room (similar to the setup at a school science fair).

The large turnout and spirited participation of community members was unique and especially impressive given that Braidwood is a small town of a little over 6,000 people. It was a clear demonstration that Braidwood's residents care deeply about the future of their community. It was also noteworthy that the volunteer members of the project's steering committee led the open house, engaging their neighbors in active conversation about Braidwood's challenges and opportunities over two lively hours.

[A report](#) was prepared to document the extremely valuable community input that was received at the Comprehensive Plan Open House. Transparency was the goal.

The report includes photographs of each poster at the event, which asked participants for their opinions and input. These photographs of each poster were taken with a professional camera, with the goal of giving anyone the opportunity to zoom in and examine all of the input that was received. Following the photograph of each poster, the CMAP project team tried to faithfully transcribe every Post-it note comment and to document the total counts of dot sticker votes received in response to various questions on many of the posters. The report was shared with all residents by posting it on the project's community engagement website, as well as on the city's website (under Public Notices).

The [key deliverables from the planning process](#) section at the end of this plan includes a link to the [Comprehensive Plan Open House Report](#)—along with links to the plan's [Existing Conditions Report](#), [Market Analysis Report prepared by Kretchmer Associates, Inc.](#), and the [Hotel Market Feasibility Study prepared by TR Mandigo and Company, Inc.](#)



Braidwood Comprehensive Plan Open House.

A top priority: Preserve and build upon Braidwood's character and identity, and ensure a high quality of life for its residents.

Braidwood is known for its friendly residents, safety, and close-knit feel—a place people are genuinely proud to call home. For most residents who participated in the planning process, preserving this community character was a top priority. However, it is important to acknowledge that many residents did not engage in the planning process.

Among those who did participate, views varied widely. Some expressed a desire to keep Braidwood unchanged, valuing its small-town appeal. Others were open to substantial changes, including significant growth in the population, often motivated by a desire for the types of stores and restaurants more common in larger communities, as well as community amenities that generally require a larger tax base. Most residents seemed to want something in the middle.

In the coming years, the community will need to explore and reach a consensus on what it wants to be. This effort should thoughtfully weigh the trade-offs among various goals and potential paths. While that effort is beyond the scope of this plan, the community input gathered during the planning process can be used as a starting point.

The plan's recommendations and strategies are designed to provide a balanced approach that preserves and builds upon Braidwood's unique character and identity. Guided by a commitment to a high quality of life for residents, this vision aims to ensure that Braidwood thrives for generations to come.



Expected future land use in Braidwood

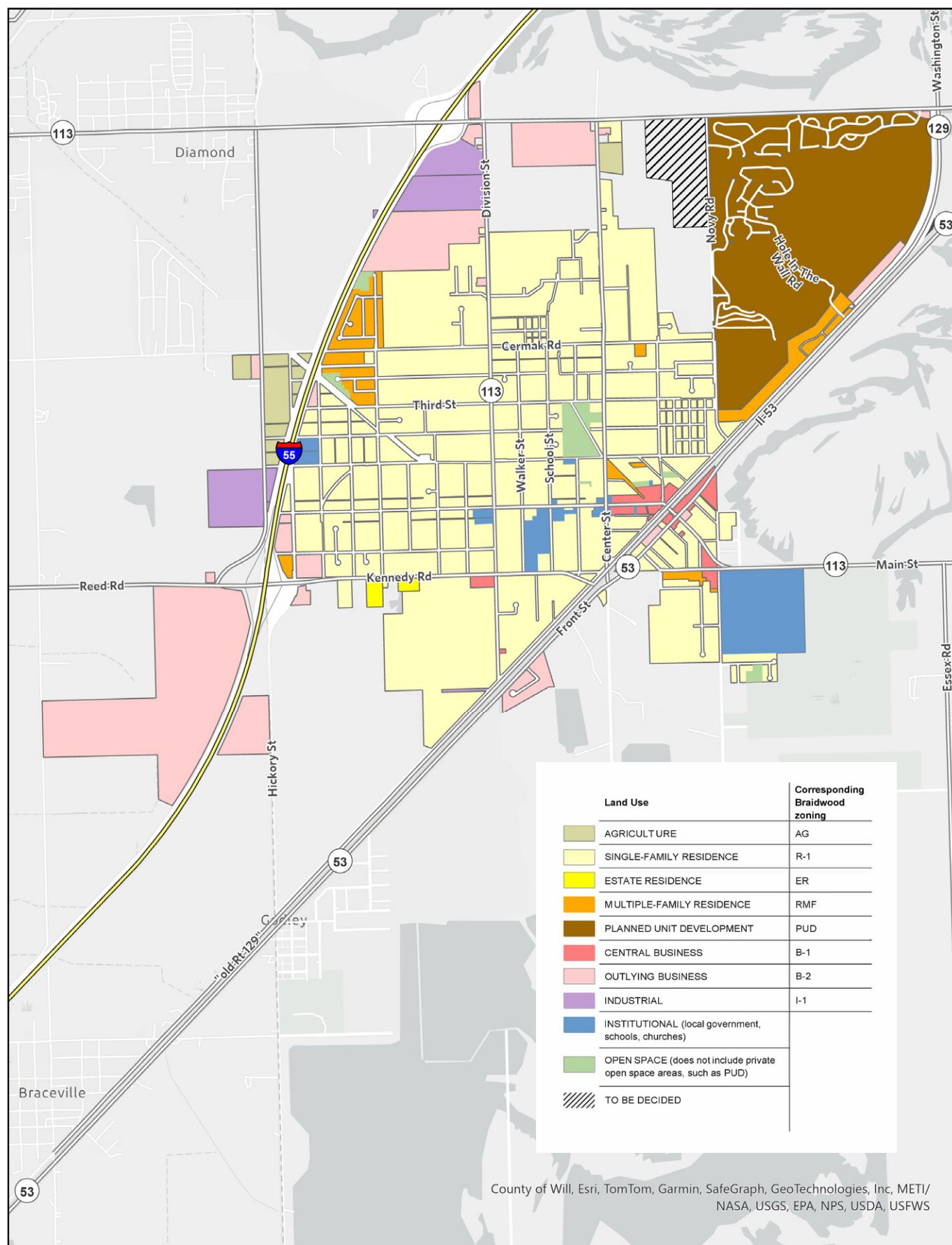
Braidwood features a diverse mix of land uses, including residential, commercial (such as shops and restaurants), institutional (including local government buildings, schools, and churches), agricultural, limited industrial, and open space.

The map on the following page illustrates the projected distribution of land uses within Braidwood's current municipal boundaries, as anticipated by city staff in October 2024.

Although Braidwood is largely built out, there remains a limited amount of land available for new development, along with opportunities for future "infill" projects, particularly in the downtown area along Main Street. Additionally, some adjacent areas outside the city limits could be annexed for new development. It is crucial to guide any future growth in a fiscally responsible manner that enhances Braidwood's economic vitality while preserving and enriching its unique character.



Expected future land use.



Economic development

In the future Braidwood is home to a vibrant small business scene with a diverse selection of restaurants, services, and retail businesses serving residents and regional visitors.

Braidwood residents appreciate the town's shops and restaurants, but many would like to focus on growing and diversifying Braidwood's local economy. The market analysis completed as part of the development of this plan indicates that this is possible.



Goal: Increase economic activity in Braidwood.

Recommendation 1: Attract new commercial activity.

Braidwood residents and city officials are passionate about strengthening the community's brand for residents and visitors alike. A key piece of this is attracting new shops and restaurants to the area. A robust commercial sector will be central to strengthening Braidwood's sense of community and longevity as a thriving town.

Through the [market analysis completed by Kretchmer Associates](#), it is clear Braidwood has opportunities to attract more stores and restaurants, but it will take a concerted effort to determine what types of businesses residents want and then market the community to regional brokers and specific types of commercial businesses Braidwood seeks to attract.

It is important to underscore that while Braidwood can pursue economic development strategies to try to attract the types of businesses desired by residents, **the city does not open businesses, nor does it have control over the realities of the market.** Also, it is important to recognize that the city has already been working behind the scenes over the past few years to try to attract businesses desired by residents.

By following the recommendations in this plan and, especially, those detailed in the market analysis completed by Kretchmer Associates, Braidwood can further strengthen its economic development efforts.

Braidwood Market Analysis Report

Kretchmer Associates, Inc.

To assist in the development of the Comprehensive Plan, CMAP hired Kretchmer Associates, Inc. to conduct an independent, expert market analysis in four key areas: commercial, residential, industrial, and hotel. Kretchmer Associates presented their findings to the city council at its meeting on December 12. The presentation, along with the full market analysis report are available on the project website or at the direct links below:

[Braidwood Market Analysis Report](#)

[Market analysis presentation - City Council, December 12, 2023](#)

Strategies

1.1 Identify what types of new businesses are most wanted by the community.

Through public input, it is clear residents were interested in attracting new types of businesses to Braidwood, and the market analysis indicates that they have the spending power to support them. Braidwood officials and residents should create a list of the types of businesses they would like to attract to the area. This will allow city officials to target their marketing to specific commercial opportunities that residents would like to see.

Resources:

- [Braidwood Comprehensive Plan Open House Report](#) (see pages 23-26 for community input on stores and restaurants)

1.2 Identify what types of new businesses are less wanted by the community.

When targeting commercial marketing opportunities, Braidwood should develop an understanding of which new businesses are less wanted by community members. Through public engagement, many residents highlighted that they felt there were already too many liquor stores and bars. Several residents spoke out against building new truck stops or new gambling facilities in the area. A clear list of less desired businesses would help city officials refine their marketing strategy.

However, it is important for residents to realize that some businesses that they may not value actually play an important role in generating revenue for the community. For example, the city estimates that Braidwood's existing gaming businesses will pay for approximately 60% of road resurfacing in Braidwood.

1.3 Identify and market available properties and sites in town.

To attract commercial opportunities, the city should develop and maintain a complete, up-to-date inventory of properties available for commercial development. This tool can then be used for marketing opportunities when developers or retail operators express interest in entering the Braidwood market.

The Main Street Approach

Founded in 1980 by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Main Street America revitalizes historic downtowns and neighborhoods through its practical, adaptable [Main Street Approach](#), focused on community-driven economic development.

The organization offers valuable resources, including a [handbook](#) for implementing the approach and a [knowledge hub](#) covering topics such as real estate, small business, entrepreneurship, and marketing.



Case study

Galena Comprehensive Plan Galena, IL

Through its 2003 Comprehensive Plan, Galena, Illinois transformed itself into a destination for residents and visitors throughout northwestern Illinois. Until the late 1980s, Galena was a small rural farming community. To bolster the area's economy, Mayor Frank Einsweiler started a tourist campaign changing Galena into a top economic force in northwestern Illinois.

In their 2003 Comprehensive Plan, the City of Galena laid out specific economic development and transportation strategies that focus on strengthening their vision for their local economy.

Main strategies from this plan include:

1. Developing a package of design controls and incentives to help preserve the natural landscape of Galena.
2. Developing a business visitation program to help Galena continue to develop a diverse economy, as well as retain and expand businesses. Also, developing a list of business types that the city would like to attract and targeting them with specific marketing efforts.
3. To attract new investment and expand current businesses, providing further innovative programs, such as the Galena Vision Fund.
4. Providing new businesses with current, accurate information regarding business trends, economic facts, and conditions in the area.

These strategies, paired with other transportation, sustainability, marketing, and other policy shifts, have transformed Galena's economy by bringing in new businesses and supporting existing businesses in the area.



Source: [2003 Galena Comprehensive Plan](#)

1.4 Develop an image or brand for Braidwood.

To attract new businesses, Braidwood must develop a strong town brand. Its appeal includes affordable homes, direct I-55 access, good schools, low taxes, and a safe, small-town feel. The city's location along Historic Route 66, highlighted by the popular Polk-a-Dot Drive-In, offers branding opportunities, especially with Route 66's centennial coming up in 2026. Braidwood also boasts parks and recreation facilities, including golf, camping, and nature preserves, which are key assets to promote for drawing retailers, residents, and visitors.

1.5 Increase retail and restaurant awareness of Braidwood.

City officials should focus on increasing retail and restaurant awareness of Braidwood in the broader region. Officials should update Braidwood's website to advertise Braidwood's convenient location along I-55 and Historic Route 66 on a map, as well as provide a comprehensive profile of the town, including community demographics, existing businesses, and economic development opportunities. To attract businesses from around the region, city officials should make an effort to connect with regional brokers that are active in the retail and industrial sectors and promote the community and potential sites for development.

Resources:

- [Braidwood Market Analysis Report](#) (see page 26 for discussion of marketing the town to regional brokers)

1.6 Notify I-55 drivers of Braidwood and its local businesses and attractions.

Braidwood should collaborate with the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) to enhance awareness of the city and its local businesses through signage along I-55. Priority should be given to adding Braidwood to exit signs for Coal City Road along I-55. Additionally, the city should explore opportunities to promote local businesses and attractions through IDOT's Business Logo Signing Program and its Tourist Oriented Directional Signing Program.

Resources:

- [IDOT: Special Sign Programs](#)

Case study

Lemont Downtown Branding
Lemont, IL

The Village of Lemont engaged All Together Studio in March 2021 to work with staff and stakeholders to develop a new brand to market their downtown. The design team spoke to village staff and elected officials, local residents, and visitors to identify what makes Lemont unique. Main elements were outdoor recreation areas, family-friendly environment, and unique businesses. They created a logo and other design elements, which could then be used for a website redesign, new signage, and other marketing efforts for the village. The effort saw a 44 percent increase in total website users since brand launch, a 55 percent increase in Facebook followers, and +270 percent subscriber growth for the community's e-newsletter.



Source: [All Together Studio](#)

Recommendation 2: Improve the appearance and strengthen the commercial identity of the central downtown area.

There is widespread community interest in the potential of Braidwood's downtown area, which is primarily located along Main Street between Center Street and Washington Street. Many residents want to improve the appearance of this area, with several expressing their hope that it becomes a center of commercial and community activity, as well as a source of pride for Braidwood residents and a means of attracting visitors to the city.

Studies have shown that taking a [Complete Streets approach](#) can help increase business activity because visitors on foot are more likely to stop at multiple locations than drivers. In combination with pursuing new commercial development, these strategies can help to transform Main Street into a more vibrant area.

Strategies

2.1 Improve the appearance of local businesses.

To support Braidwood's businesses, the city should implement a rebate program for aesthetic upgrades like façades, windows, and signs. Additionally, businesses should be informed about county and state resources for these improvements. Establishing an ordinance for signage and decorations, along with strategies such as creation of attractive public art in the downtown area can enhance Main Street's streetscape.

Resources:

- [City of Woodstock: Facade Improvement Program](#)

2.2 Preserve and reuse older buildings in central downtown area.

Though few historic buildings remain in Braidwood's downtown, the community should preserve and redevelop them to maintain the town's character and create new business spaces. The city could partner with the Braidwood Area Historical Society to create a database of restoration candidates, which could be shared on the city's website as a resource for developers.

Funding sources:

- [Landmarks Illinois](#)
- [National Trust for Historic Preservation](#)



Depot at Braidwood, 1904. Source: [Library of Congress](#)

2.3 Explore potential improvements for parking in central business areas.

In addition to parallel parking, parking lots should be shared between businesses, with a single driveway to minimize curb cuts, which can help to reduce crashes involving vehicles and pedestrians. Ideally, any parking lots should be placed at the side or rear of buildings in the central business district to maintain vehicle access while also improving the streetscape by minimizing driveways crossing sidewalks.

Resources:

- [How to implement shared parking facilities](#)

2.4 Improve the streetscape of Main Street.

Main Street could be a candidate for some [Complete Streets strategies](#), which is a design approach that ensures streets are planned, designed, and maintained to enable safe and comfortable travel for users of all ages, ability, and transportation mode. The most relevant Complete Streets strategies for Main Street are probably those that help with [traffic calming and improving the safety of pedestrian crossings](#).

However, some accessibility improvements may be challenging, if not impossible, to achieve. For example, on the southern side of Main Street, light posts are located within the narrow sidewalk, making it difficult for wheelchair

users to navigate. But expanding the sidewalk for better accessibility would likely require removing parallel parking on that side, a change that would be very controversial given the dependence of local businesses on this parking for customer access.

Similarly, while high-quality bike lanes are often ideal for town centers, Main Street in Braidwood may only accommodate [Shared Lane Markings](#) (SLMs), or “sharrows,” which are road markings used to indicate a shared lane environment for bicycles and automobiles.

Braidwood will need to keep in mind that Main Street is a state road, and any improvements would require collaboration with IDOT.

There are other ways to enhance the streetscape of Main Street. Attractive signs can guide visitors to key destinations around Braidwood, and banners along the street featuring the Braidwood logo, seasonal themes, or event promotions could add visual appeal. The city’s collaboration with local businesses to install flower pots is a good example of beautification, and the community should continue exploring similar enhancements.

Funding sources:

- [Rebuild Downtown and Main Streets Capital Grant](#)



Recommendation 3: Create a comprehensive and effective approach to attract prospective businesses and developers to Braidwood.

Residents have emphasized the desire for more commercial and residential development. In order to attract this, more can be done to communicate the community's assets, including locations, demographics, available properties, and any available economic development incentives.

Additionally, Kretchmer Associates' market analysis details opportunities for the city to work with regional retail brokers to better attract desired development by enhancing Braidwood's visibility in the larger market area.

Strategies

3.1 Create marketing materials that communicate advantages of locating in Braidwood.

City officials should focus on creating materials that clearly list the benefits of locating in Braidwood, including that it has a tight-knit community, a family-friendly atmosphere, a prime location along I-55 and Historic Route 66, abundant natural areas, and a very strong school system. These benefits could be included in a web page, one-pagers, and/or brochures.

3.2 Evaluate the potential to establish economic development incentives and promote them on the city's website.

If Braidwood establishes any economic incentives for developers in the future, these should be advertised on the city's website. There should also be a Braidwood point of contact for developers and realtors to access more information if needed.

3.3 Develop an easy-to-follow checklist for prospective developers to help navigate the development process.

To streamline the development process, there should be a clear checklist posted on Braidwood's website for developers to navigate the process of developing new commercial or residential properties in the city.

Municipal business and economic development webpages

Towns often create webpages that market their communities to potential businesses and developers. Some examples from Illinois include:

- [Village of Homewood](#)
- [Village of Lake Zurich](#)
- [Village of Minooka](#)
- [City of Rochelle](#)
- [City of Woodstock](#)

Recommendation 4: Build on recent hotel market feasibility study and take the next steps to explore development of a new hotel.

In addition to providing new revenue for the city of Braidwood, a new hotel could help local businesses and spur new commercial development desired by residents. While a new hotel may not be a high priority for many residents, these potential benefits make development of a new quality hotel an idea worthy of consideration. As a result, [a hotel market feasibility study was completed by TR Mandigo and Company](#), as part of the overall market analysis completed by Kretchmer Associates.

The analysis found sufficient support for development of a 45-room, limited-service hotel to be located in Braidwood near either of its interchanges along I-55. In addition to this positive assessment, TR Mandigo's very comprehensive document provides the city with the information it needs to take the next steps with relative ease.

Strategies

4.1 Identify potential sites near Braidwood's two I-55 interchanges.

The hotel market feasibility analysis examined both of Braidwood's interchanges along I-55. Each site offers excellent visibility and accessibility within a half-mile of the exits, with minimal construction disruption expected. The southern site near Kennedy Road, close to residential areas and a potential truck stop, could impact hotel demand. Meanwhile, the northern site by Coal City Road, with more traffic and ongoing development, appears more favorable. City officials are in discussions with a developer for this site.

Evaluate community opinion on development of a new hotel at potential site(s).

The hotel market feasibility analysis provides a clear assessment of what type of hotel Braidwood could support, as well as two proposed locations. To move

forward with this project, city officials should take these findings to the public and gauge support for either or neither of these proposed sites. Community opinion on hotel development in general and on potential locations is vital in ensuring the success of the development.

4.3 Consider hiring a hotel advisory consultant to facilitate next steps and reach out to potential developers.

Because Braidwood does not currently have a chain hotel in the city, hiring a hotel advisory consultant could be helpful in understanding how to best market the city and choose a potential hotel developer. If the community is open to a hotel, the consultant could help with more detailed site selection, as well as facilitate next steps.

Resources:

- [Hotel Market Feasibility Study](#)

Transportation and accessibility

In the future Braidwood provides safer and more efficient ways to reach destinations throughout the community, whether driving, biking, or walking.

Braidwood is a key transportation hub. Interstate 55 runs along its west side, while Illinois Routes 53 and 129 run along its east side. Freight and Amtrak trains cut through its downtown area. As the town's population and commercial activity grow, impacts on the transportation network and pedestrian circulation will continue. Addressing residents' concerns, this framework emphasizes multimodal and active transportation (walking, biking, rolling) to improve circulation and safety for everyone. (Note: "Pedestrian" here includes anyone traveling on foot, in a wheelchair, using a mobility device, or via scooter, but excludes bicyclists.)



Goal: Improve roadway safety for all users.

Recommendation 5: Improve safety and comfort for all road users, whether they drive, walk, or bike.

During the public engagement process, residents raised various concerns about Braidwood's roads and transportation experience, including safety and delays at railroad crossings, poor road conditions, inadequate lighting, and the presence of freight trucks. Many saw potential to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety, citing missing bike lanes and incomplete sidewalks. While residents expressed a desire to walk or bike, the current infrastructure limits mobility and lacks safety for all users.

It's important to note that several key roads in Braidwood, including Coal City Road and Illinois Routes 113, 129, and 53 fall under state jurisdiction. To help address challenges on these state roads, the city should collaborate with neighboring communities where relevant, as well as the Will County Division of Transportation, and elected officials at the county and state levels.

Strategies

5.1 Prioritize locations with safety problems.

Some locations identified by residents include:

Intersection of Coal City Road and Division Street (Illinois Route 113)

- Unsignalized
- Accidents due to offset four-way design.

Coal City Road

- Poor condition due to use as truck route between I-55 and Illinois Route 53.

Division Street from Coal City Road to Main Street (Illinois Route 113)

- Division Street contains a sidewalk on the northbound side, although it terminates at Cermak Road.

Division Street (Illinois Route 113) and Cermak Road

- Intersection identified as unfavorable to pedestrian and bicyclists due to the lack of sidewalks as well as excessive speeds.
- High number of vehicular accidents; no stop sign, unsignalized.

Intersection and railroad crossing at Main Street (Illinois Route 113) and Washington Street (Illinois Route 129)

- Poor signal timing/cause congestion and delays
- Traffic delays caused by train

Intersection of Center and Elm Streets

- Unfavorable for bicyclists. Poor site distance from Elm Street and lack of sidewalks on both Elm and the eastern side (northbound lanes) of Center Street.

Route 53 near intersection with Ridge Street

Rush hour traffic

Intersection of Center Street and railroad tracks

English Street (North of 3rd Street)

- No sidewalk

Novy Road

- Dangerous intersection with Coal City Road (State road).
- Residents observed that Novy Road is unsuitable for pedestrians and cyclists due to the lack of sidewalks and minimal street lighting. Currently, the only destination along the road is the Shadow Lakes community. (Note: The city plans road improvements, including lighting, pending future development in the area.)

Ingress/Egress points near Shadow Lakes along Coal City Road (State road)

Intersection of Reed Street and Comet Drive with Main Street (Illinois Route 113)

Washington Street (Illinois Route 129) to Coal City Road (State road)

- No lighting

Resources:

- [Braidwood Comprehensive Plan Open House Report](#) (see pages 11-12 for community input on dangerous locations)

5.2

Adopt a Complete Streets policy that commits to designing streets that are safe and accessible for all modes of transportation.

Complete Streets policies take a comprehensive approach to roadway design, prioritizing accessibility and safety for all modes of transportation, utilizing the [Safe System Approach](#). This includes careful consideration for pedestrians and bicyclists, promoting roadway designs that enhance safety and mitigate potential risks.

Examples of Complete Streets strategies include **wider sidewalks** to accommodate pedestrian traffic, **dedicated (and protected) bike lanes** to ensure the safety of bicyclists, and **traffic calming measures** such as curb extensions, raised crosswalks, and even chicanes to reduce vehicle speeds and improve safety. (See the explanations of traffic calming measures on the following page.)

Funding sources:

- [U.S. Department of Transportation: Active Transportation](#)
- [Safe Streets and Roads for All \(SS4A\)](#)
- [CMAP Transportation Improvement Program \(TIP\)](#)
- [National Safety Council: Road to Zero Community Traffic Safety Grants](#)
- [Safe Routes to School \(IDOT\)](#)

Resources:

- [Safe Routes to School Grant and Program Resources](#) (guide to grant program from the Active Transportation Alliance)
- [Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program \(ITEP\) Grant Resources](#) (guide to grant program from the Active Transportation Alliance)

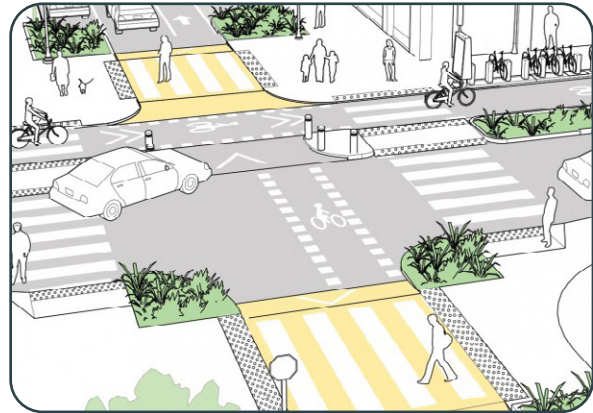
Traffic calming measures

Explanations from the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO)

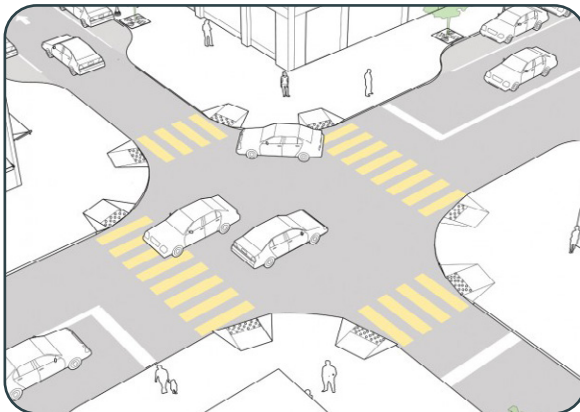
Curb extensions



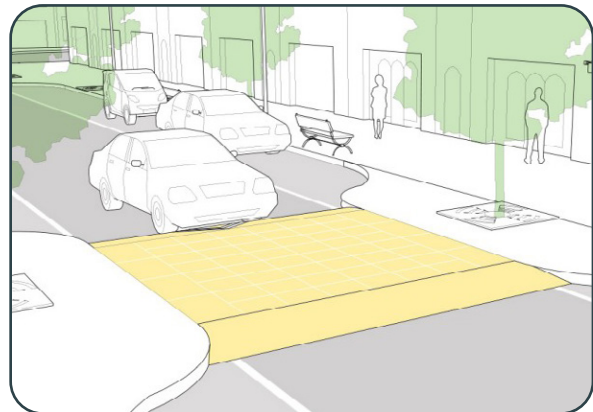
Vertical speed control elements



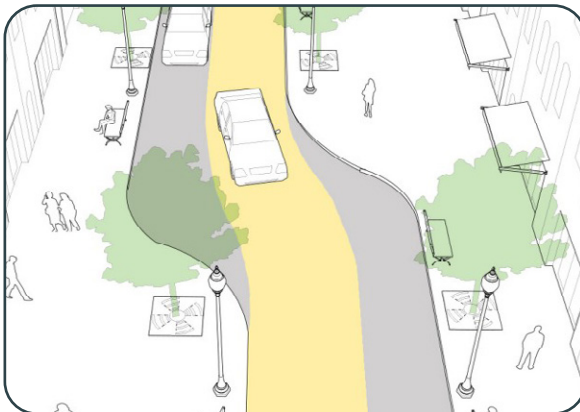
Conventional crosswalks



Speed table



Chicane



Midblock crosswalk

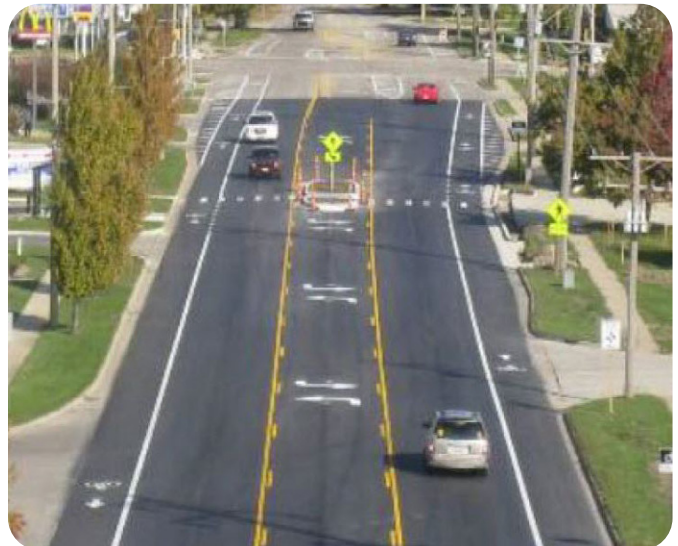
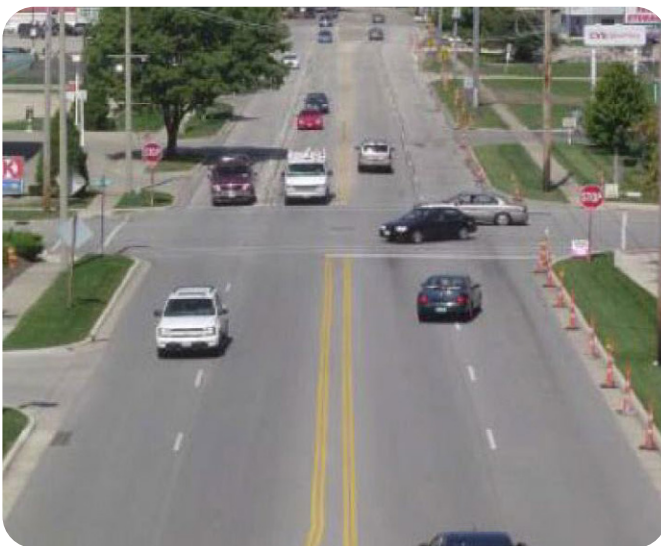


Case Studies

Complete Streets in Our Communities: Findings and Recommendations for Implementing Streets for All Modes

Active Transportation Alliance

Municipalities implementing Complete Streets policies often struggle with where to start, as they are faced with reforming their planning, funding, design, construction, and maintenance practices. [This report](#) examines the processes and outcomes in six northeastern Illinois communities, DuPage County, and Champaign, offering practical advice for local governments.



Another key Complete Streets strategy is the implementation of **roadway rightsizing** or **road diets** (see example above) which involve reconfiguring wide roads to make them safer for pedestrians and bicyclists by:

- Reducing travel lane widths and/or the number of travel lanes.
- Creating shorter crossing distances for pedestrians.
- Reallocating road space to pedestrian and bicyclists.

Road diet - Urbana, Illinois. Credit: Mark Fenton. Source: [Congress for New Urbanism](#)

Case Studies

Trunk Highway 112 Conversion La Sueur, MN

La Sueur collaborated with the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) to revamp Trunk Highway 112. Ownership of the highway was transferred from the state to the county, and the city successfully advocated for the inclusion of a multi-use path on one side and a sidewalk on the other to enhance pedestrian and bicycle mobility and safety. The redesign involved implementing new striping and adding a bikeable shoulder, thus reducing the road width and providing sufficient buffer space from traffic for bicyclists.



Before and after redesign of Elmwood Avenue. The road was previously unstriped and contained no pedestrian and bicycle facilities.

Tactical Urbanism is a community-led approach for testing temporary traffic calming measures before making permanent changes to infrastructure. Some examples include:

- Temporary bike lanes
- Makeshift roundabouts
- Street art crosswalk designs
- Temporary striping for curb extensions

Funding sources:

- [America Walks: Community Change Grants](#)
- [Bloomberg Philanthropies: Asphalt Art Initiative](#)

Resources:

- [Tactical Urbanist's Guide](#)

5.3 Make it easy for residents to identify local transportation problems.

The city should create a centralized 311 hub to make it easier for residents to report public transportation and infrastructure issues. These could include potholes, sidewalk repairs, missing curb ramps, crosswalk needs, damaged street signs, and more. By simplifying how residents report these concerns, the city can address safety and infrastructure problems more efficiently, benefiting the entire community.

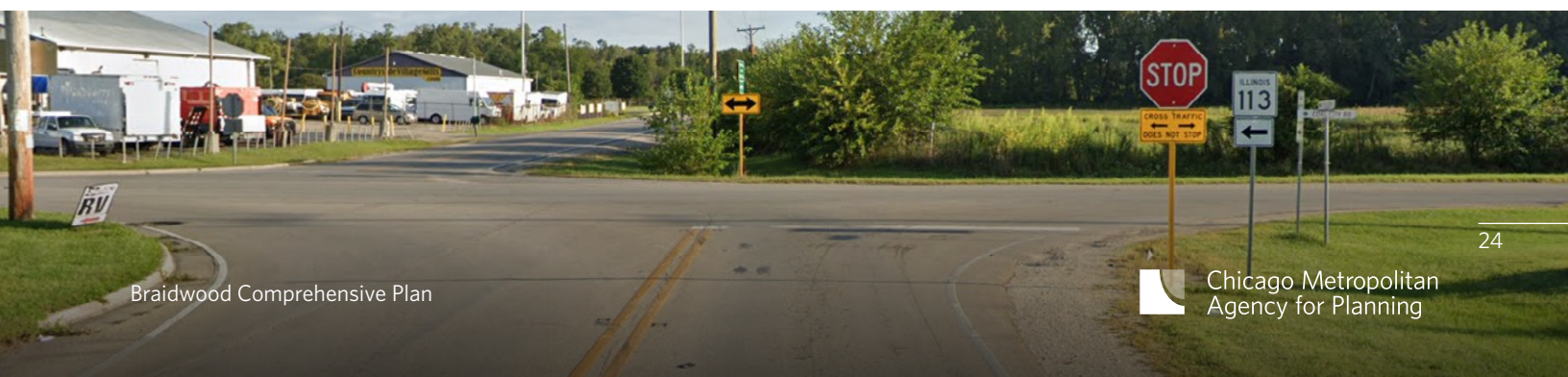
There are off-the-shelf CRM (Customer/Citizen Relationship Management) platforms available to help towns successfully manage 311 non-emergency issues reported by residents. Examples of these services include [GOGov](#) and [SeeClickFix 311 CRM by CivicPlus](#), which typically cost between \$3,000-\$10,000 annually for a basic platform suitable for a small town.

Whether developed internally or through an off-the-shelf option, this new system could feature the following:

- **User-friendly interface:** The platform or mobile app should prioritize simplicity, ensuring all residents—regardless of technical skills—can easily navigate and use its features. An intuitive design with clear instructions and easy-to-use functions is essential to promote inclusivity and accessibility. Reducing the number of steps and clicks

required to complete tasks will provide quick access to information and improve the overall user experience.

- **Geolocation feature:** The system should incorporate geolocation capabilities, allowing users to accurately mark the exact location of reported issues on an interactive map. This feature will enable city officials to quickly identify and address problems. After submitting a report, residents should be able to pinpoint the issue's location, ensuring faster and more precise resolutions.
- **Photo and video upload:** To enhance the quality of reports, the system should allow users to upload photos or videos of the issue. This visual documentation will provide city officials with clear and detailed evidence, making it easier to assess the problem and respond more efficiently.
- **Real-time notifications and status updates:** Residents should have the ability to track the progress of their reports, such as for potholes or broken streetlights. The system should provide regular updates to keep users informed of the steps being taken to address the issue. Additionally, residents should have the option to receive real-time notifications when the problem is resolved, through their preferred method of communication (e.g., text, email).



Recommendation 6: Develop a pedestrian and bicycle network that promotes walking and bicycling.

Braidwood's small, compact size presents a great opportunity to develop a well-connected pedestrian and bicycle network. The map on the following page shows the current sidewalk infrastructure. Many residential streets outside the downtown area either have sidewalks on only one side or none at all, highlighting areas for improvement. Expanding and upgrading these sidewalks would create a more inclusive and accessible network for pedestrians (including people with limited mobility and wheelchairs) as well as children on bicycles. In some cases, existing sidewalks may also need repairs to better accommodate foot and children on bicycles.

Strategies

6.1 Prioritize pedestrian and bicycle improvements on high-traffic streets.

The city should review Braidwood's pedestrian and bike infrastructure, focusing on sidewalks, crosswalks, and trails. Priority should be given to high-traffic areas like schools, parks, and commercial zones to ensure safety and convenience. Intersections in these areas should be assessed for redesigns that improve safety and accessibility for non-motorized users.

Potential modifications could include:

- **Restriping** major and secondary thoroughfares with faded markings to improve their visibility and clarity.
- Implementing **traffic calming strategies**, such as raised crosswalks, narrower lanes, speed humps, and curb extensions, on high-volume roads.
- Constructing **pedestrian refuge islands** at wide intersections or streets.
- Conducting a comprehensive assessment to **identify optimal locations for new protected walking and biking lanes**.

- Ensuring that sidewalks, crosswalks, and existing or planned bike paths and multi-use trails are equipped with **adequate lighting** during nighttime hours.

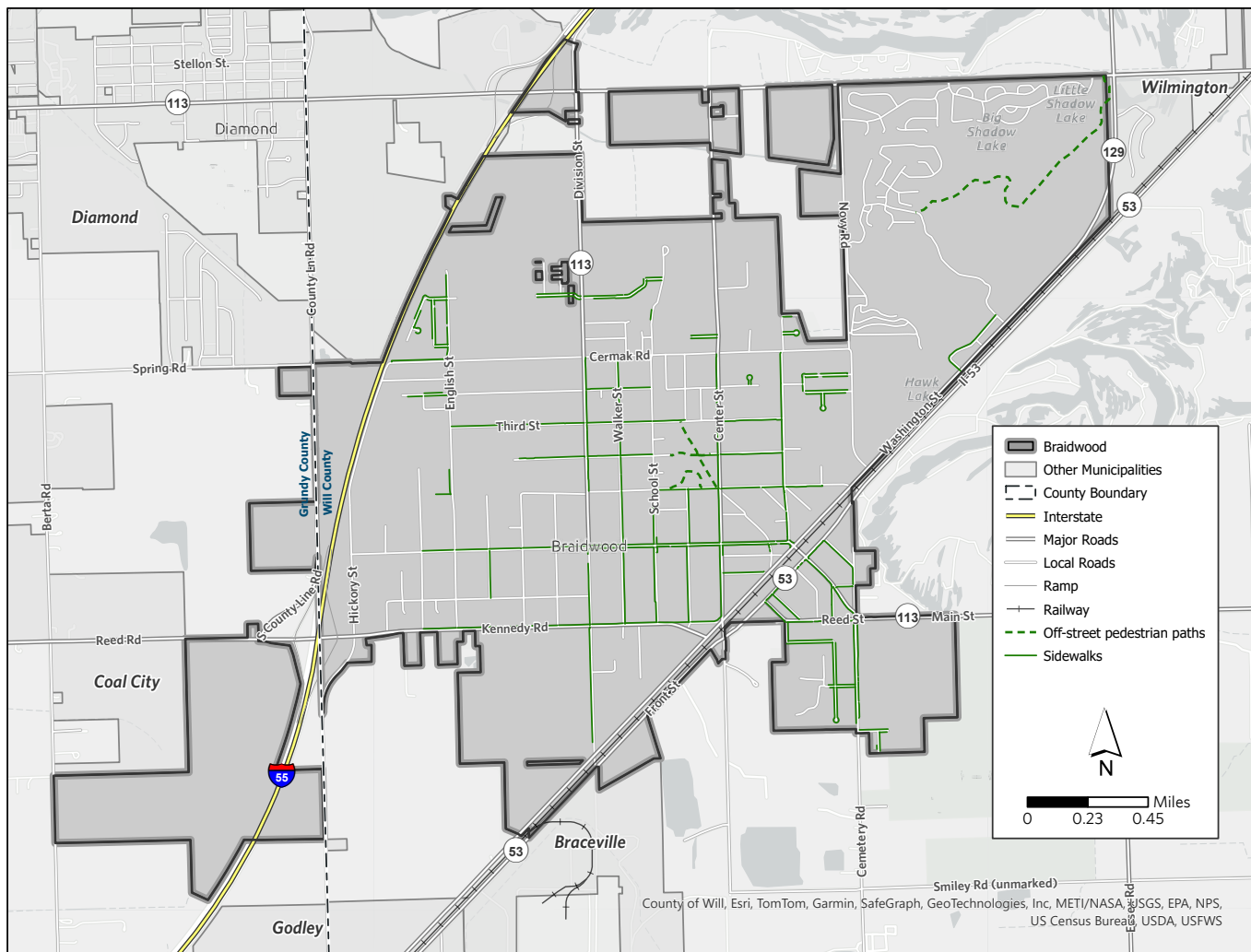
Funding sources:

- [Bicycle and Pedestrian Program \(FHWA\)](#)
- [Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program \(CMAQ\)](#)
- [Carbon Reduction Program \(CRP\)](#)
- [Transportation Alternatives Program \(TAP\)](#)
- [Surface Transportation Program \(STP\)](#)
- [Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program \(ITEP\)](#)

Resources:

- [Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program \(ITEP\) Grant Resources](#) (guide to grant program from the Active Transportation Alliance)
- [Braidwood Comprehensive Plan Open House Report](#) (see pages 15-16 for community input on walking and biking routes)

Existing sidewalks in Braidwood.



Case Study

Highway 299 road diet and bike lanes

There is no minimum or maximum population requirement to install bicycle infrastructure. For example, Willow Creek, with a population of 1,710, situated in the Six Rivers National Forest in California, has implemented left-and-right side separated bike lanes through its downtown area. Willow Creek also offers a multitude of mountain biking trails.



6.2 Expand Braidwood's trail and greenway network.

Braidwood is situated adjacent to the expansive 300-acre Braidwood Dunes and Savanna Nature Preserve on its eastern edge, a vital component of the Kankakee Sands preservation system. This nature preserve boasts a rich ecosystem with diverse plant and animal species, complemented by a well-maintained half-mile network of natural-surface trails for hikers and runners. Despite being less than a mile from central Braidwood, the preserve remains challenging to access on foot or by bike due to a lack of sidewalks and connecting trails within Braidwood's pedestrian network. Similarly, the Kankakee Sands Preserve, accessible from Illinois Route 113, poses comparable accessibility challenges for residents without private transportation.

To improve community connectivity, Braidwood should capitalize on its existing natural and hard-surface trail systems. By prioritizing the extension of these trails and developing new pathways, the city can expand recreational opportunities and enhance access to its green spaces, fostering greater community engagement.

- **Improve and expand existing trails:**
The city should focus on maintaining and enhancing its current trail systems in parks and nature reserves. Ensuring that trails are safe and accessible year-round should be a priority. Expanding these trails where feasible will create more opportunities for outdoor recreation and strengthen connections between the community and nature.



Braidwood Dunes and Savanna Nature Preserve. Credit: Anthony Schalk.

Source: [Forest Preserve District of Will County](#)

- **Explore expansion opportunities:** City leaders should collaborate with property owners, developers, and key stakeholders to establish internal trail and pathway systems. This can be accomplished through public access agreements, trail easements, and public-way use and maintenance agreements. Such partnerships will foster accessible, well-maintained pathways throughout Braidwood, enhancing connectivity for both residents and visitors.
- **Encourage trail systems in new developments:** The city should incentivize new developments to include additional trails that enhance pedestrian and cyclist access. This approach will create safer, more convenient multimodal connections to Braidwood's existing street grid, promoting active transportation and a more connected community.
- **Provide tax incentives:** The city could offer tax breaks or financial incentives to developers who incorporate public pedestrian and bike-friendly paths into their projects. These incentives would help offset construction costs, encouraging developers to prioritize trail systems and enhancing overall community connectivity and walkability.
- **Consider mandating trail systems in zoning regulations:** The city might consider revising its zoning regulations to require new developments to allocate a specific percentage of their project area to public pedestrian and bike-friendly paths. This mandate would ensure that every new development contributes to Braidwood's trail network, with the required percentage

determined by factors such as size, location, type, and impact on existing infrastructure.

- **Coordinate with neighboring jurisdictions:** Braidwood should collaborate with neighboring jurisdictions to create a seamless, interconnected trail network across the region. This could involve joint projects or shared-use agreements for trails that extend beyond city boundaries, ensuring continuous access and connectivity for all users.

By implementing these strategies, Braidwood can significantly enhance its trail network, improve access to its natural areas, and foster a more active, engaged community.

Funding sources:

- [Recreational Trails Program \(RTP\)](#)
- [Illinois Bicycle Path Grant program](#)
- [Trails Capacity Program](#)
- [Park and Recreational Facilities Construction Program \(PARC\)](#)
- [Transportation Alternatives Program \(TAP\)](#)
- [Surface Transportation Program \(STP\)](#)
- [Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program \(ITEP\)](#)

Resources:

- [Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program \(ITEP\) Grant Resources](#) (guide to grant program from the Active Transportation Alliance)
- [Braidwood Comprehensive Plan Open House Report](#) (see pages 15-16 for community input on walking and biking routes)

Recommendation 7: Address resident quality of life concerns related to Braidwood's role as a transportation hub.

Braidwood is traversed by several major transportation routes, including Interstate 55, Illinois Route 53/Front Street, Illinois Route 129/Washington Street, and the Union Pacific railroad tracks. Within Braidwood city limits, the designated truck routes currently include:

- Interstate 55 (northbound/southbound)
- Coal City Road (eastbound/westbound)
- Illinois Route 53/Front Street and Illinois Route 129/Washington Street (parallel routes, northbound/southbound)
- Illinois Route 113/Front Street (eastbound)

Although small, Braidwood plays a vital role as a key transportation hub. However, the constant flow of trucks and trains has significantly affected the town's quality of life. Residents frequently voice concerns about freight trucks diverting onto local streets, resulting in increased noise, dust, and disruptions. Additionally, trains passing through at-grade crossings have caused regular traffic delays, further exacerbating frustrations.

Strategies

7.1 Analyze existing truck traffic patterns.

Braidwood should conduct an analysis of the city's current truck traffic patterns by examining data from traffic counts, GPS tracking systems, and feedback from local businesses and trucking companies. The analysis should highlight areas where large trucks often deviate from designated routes or pass through residential neighborhoods. This data will help pinpoint key hotspots where targeted interventions may be required.

Resources:

- IDOT: [Getting Around Illinois](#): online map showing [Truck Average Daily Traffic](#) and [Designated Truck Routes](#)
- [Braidwood Comprehensive Plan Open House Report](#) (see pages 13-14 for community input on freight truck traffic in Braidwood)

Geographic Information Systems

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) technology can effectively map existing truck routes, warehouse locations, distribution centers, and other freight destinations within and outside city limits. This allows for the identification of common truck routes and potential alternatives to reduce congestion in critical areas. Additionally, GIS can visualize traffic study data, uncovering trends and patterns that might otherwise go unnoticed.

By closely analyzing the mapped data, specific locations where trucks frequently deviate from designated routes or exceed weight limits can be pinpointed.

Braidwood's city engineer should request this GIS data and assistance from Will County DOT.

7.2 Address at-grade railroad crossing delays.

Residents frequently cited long blockages at Braidwood's at-grade railroad crossings as one of their biggest frustrations during the planning process. At-grade crossings within Braidwood city limits include:

- Division Street between Washington Street and Illinois Route 53
- Center Street between Washington Street and Front Street (53)
- Main Street between Washington Street (129) and Front Street (53)

Grade separation involves constructing overpasses or underpasses to enable local traffic to safely cross railroad tracks without interfering with trains. But IDOT and the Union Pacific railroad evaluated options for grade separation in Braidwood in 2009 and found that there were several major obstacles. These included limited land available on both sides of the tracks to create necessary approaches for an overpass and a multitude of underground utilities (including a major gas line) running underneath, making an underpass extremely unlikely if not impossible.

Lengthy blockages by stalled trains have persisted in the 15 years since that study, especially in the heart of Braidwood's downtown. Some blockages have lasted for hours, raising serious public safety concerns. The frustration among residents is significant, heightened for many by the absence of a train station in Braidwood.

City staff and community leaders have appealed to Braidwood's state and federal elected officials to help address the problem. Since trains are regulated by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), Braidwood should continue to seek the assistance of its elected representatives to work with the FRA to persuade Union Pacific to stop their trains at a location further south. This effort could be aided by partnering with Will County DOT, IDOT, and possibly even neighboring communities along the rail line experiencing similar challenges.

Even when trains are not present, extended waits for drivers can occur where Main Street intersects with Washington Street (Illinois Route 129) and with Front Street (Illinois Route 53). Waiting for the traffic signals to change can be very frustrating for residents, and feel pointless when there are no cars on the cross street. Drivers may not know that sensors underneath the road at these intersections help to regulate traffic signal timing and maintain safety at these multiple, interdependent signals. Still, it may be worthwhile for city staff to confer with IDOT to see whether the vendor that maintains these traffic signals could lessen unnecessary wait times without compromising safety.

Case study

State Route 25 Railway-Highway Grade Separation Project Calera, AL

In June 2023, the City of Calera received \$11,742,184 for a grade separation project to realign State Route 25 into an overpass over the CSX railway. The funds cover right-of-way acquisition, construction, and final design. The overpass, located near Calera's historic downtown, addresses a major mobility barrier caused by the current railroad alignment. Planning began in 2024.



7.3 Explore options for reducing noise from freight trucks and trains.

The city should collaborate with IDOT, Will County DOT, and representatives from the freight industry, to develop strategies for reducing noise from freight trucks. To address the issue, the city should first identify intersections or corridors where truck traffic affects residential areas. It may be possible to designate quiet zones to reduce the noise impact on resident quality of life. Additionally, the city should consider implementing a noise ordinance, setting decibel limits for truck noise during sensitive times, such as nighttime, with clear penalties for violations to ensure enforcement.

The city should also explore any opportunities to reduce noise from the many trains passing through Braidwood. During the planning process, many residents complained of train noise,

including train horns sounding at night. While some communities in Illinois have established train quiet zones, train horn requirements set by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) are generally quite strict due to safety concerns. The city should evaluate FRA guidance on train quiet zones (linked below) to determine whether this is a possibility for Braidwood. In any case, the city should explore options to implement noise abatement walls or other strategies to reduce noise from trains, especially in areas adjacent to rail, such as at Illinois Route 129 (North Washington Street).

Resources:

- [Federal Railroad Administration: Train Horn Rule and Quiet Zones](#)

Parks, activities, and natural resources

In the future Braidwood is known for its parks, access to natural amenities, recreational and family-oriented activities, and wise management of natural resources.

Braidwood's green spaces—parks, nature preserves, and private recreation areas—promote healthy lifestyles and provide a welcome escape from urban life. Towns that invest in fun events, local recreational activities, and their natural spaces strengthen community bonds, enhance quality of life, foster social interaction, and attract visitors, boosting the local economy.

Water is another essential resource. Braidwood is evaluating its current water supply and future needs. By developing a comprehensive long-term plan and exploring partnerships with neighboring communities, Braidwood can ensure a sustainable water supply to support its future prosperity.



Goal: Invest in fun events, recreational activities, and natural amenities.

Recommendation 8: Invest in amenities that help bring residents together and enhance their quality of life.

This recommendation focuses on physical investments that the city and the Braidwood Park District should consider to help bring residents together and enhance their quality of life.

But improvements entail significant costs, such as purchase of equipment, related infrastructure enhancements, maintenance, and liability insurance. **The Braidwood Park District is a separate taxing body from the City of Braidwood, with a very limited budget that does not have the capacity for additional amenities or programming. The following strategies, which are offered in response to resident input, will need to be considered—and may be impossible to implement—within that very challenging context.**

Strategies

8.1 Explore options for creating a permanent or semi-permanent seasonal splashpad for schools and families.

Because Braidwood is home to many families with children, many residents expressed a desire for more child-oriented recreation areas, such as a splashpad. The Park District does not have the funding or other resources to create such an amenity on its own. It would need to be a collaborative effort, involving the city, resident volunteers, and civic-minded businesses. The city should work with the Park District to identify potential locations that would provide adequate space and ample parking. One potential option is the north end of the Old Smokey Park near the intersection of 3rd and Center Streets.

8.2 Promote connectivity between Braidwood's urban areas and its natural areas through the creation of walking and biking trails.

The area boasts numerous public and private natural spaces, such as Braidwood Dunes, Savanna Nature Preserve, and the Braidwood Recreation Club. While these locations are primarily accessible by car, it's important to enhance access for pedestrians and cyclists. Braidwood could develop a network of sidewalks, bike lanes, and multi-use trails to better connect these natural resources. (Note: This initiative is considered in greater detail in the transportation section of this report.)

8.3 Explore options for creating a dog park accessible to the most walkable areas of Braidwood.

To further promote gatherings in Braidwood's natural areas, one potential project is the creation of a dog park near the downtown area. During a recent open house, residents expressed interest in establishing a dog park, either on a vacant lot or within an existing park. Given the limited number of public dog parks in nearby towns, this addition could attract both locals and visitors. Fortunately, the Braidwood Park District is currently moving forward with discussions to install a dog park at Old Smokey Park.

Funding sources:

- [PetSafe® Bark for Your Park Grant Contest](#)



Nearby Tag-A-Long Dog Park in Morris, IL
Source: [Morris, Illinois](#)

8.4 Improve current playgrounds.

Braidwood is home to several playgrounds, including those at Lion's Kiddie Park and Luke H. Goodrich Park, both of which are popular with local families. However, these playgrounds are becoming outdated. Goodrich Park received updates after the Park District identified significant damage to its equipment in 2021, with replacements installed in 2022. Lion's Kiddie Park, in particular, is in need of similar upgrades. This presents an excellent opportunity for the city to install an ADA-accessible playground, ensuring all children can enjoy the space.

Funding sources:

- [Playworld®](#)
- [Landscape Structures®](#)

8.5 Preserve and enhance current recreational activities in a sustainable fashion.

Because Braidwood has such valuable natural resources, recreational activities like hunting and fishing are extremely popular in the area. In order to ensure natural resources can be maintained for the future, city officials should ensure that all local fishing and hunting laws are followed.



Example of an ADA-accessible playground in Aurora, IL
Source: [Hope D. Wall Inclusive Playground, Kidlist](#)

Recommendation 9: Create and promote family-friendly programming throughout the year.

Although Braidwood hosts annual events that foster community spirit, it could strengthen this sense of togetherness by organizing more interactive, all-ages events. Special focus could be placed on creating activities that engage children, teenagers, and seniors, ensuring that everyone in the community has opportunities to participate and connect. However, Braidwood's first step should be to identify and effectively promote the wide variety of activities and events already available through the Fossil Ridge Library, Reed-Custer School District, and other community institutions. Once that is done, Braidwood will be in a better position to fill any gaps.

Strategies

9.1 Determine what resources are available to create and promote family-friendly programming in every season.

A key takeaway from the public open house was the community's strong desire for more family-oriented activities for children, such as outdoor movie nights, field days, and after-school homework help. However, the Braidwood Park District, operating on a limited budget, currently employs only three part-time maintenance staff and lacks personnel to support the development of new programs.

To address this, the city and resident volunteers should explore partnerships with organizations like the Library District, which offers programs for all ages. Securing sponsorships from local businesses and applying for national grants could also provide additional funding, despite potential local match challenges. With creative collaboration and sufficient resources, these initiatives could enhance community engagement and offer children valuable opportunities outside of school hours.

Funding sources:

- [MLB/Boys and Girls Clubs of America: Youth Development Foundation](#)

9.2 Create community programming to bring community members together.

The Braidwood Park District and city officials could collaborate to organize inclusive events for all Braidwood residents. Given the town's close-knit nature, there's great potential for festivals, seasonal celebrations, and fitness activities. Additionally, organizing community service opportunities, like park clean-up days or food drives, would further foster connection and engagement.

Case study

Power Play! Before and After School Program, Alsip, IL

The Alsip Park District's Before and After School Program is tailored for children in Kindergarten through Sixth grade. It offers a structured, nurturing environment with a variety of indoor and outdoor activities, games, homework assistance, arts and crafts, as well as light breakfast, lunch, and snacks.

Goal: Beautify Braidwood.

Recommendation 10: Promote beautification efforts throughout Braidwood.

Beautification involves using flowers, planters, banners, and other visual enhancements to create a more inviting environment for walking, biking, or driving. These touches add color and charm, making the area feel more cohesive, themed, and welcoming.

City officials have observed that beautification efforts have been tried in the past but have generally been short-lived. These efforts do require a commitment of resources, including funding for maintenance, and are not a solution on their own. However, it is no coincidence that other towns that have successfully improved their image have incorporated various beautification initiatives as part of their overall approach.

Strategies

10.1 Use planters and flowers to create a pleasant walking and biking environment.

In downtown Braidwood, beautification efforts will enhance Main Street's appeal and attract more visitors. These efforts are already underway, with the city placing planter boxes at the entrances of most businesses. Strategically placed planter boxes on sidewalks can serve as both a visual barrier and a protective shield, creating a welcoming environment while keeping pedestrians and cyclists safe from traffic.

Funding sources:

- [Rebuild Downtowns and Main Streets \(RDMS\) Capital Grant](#)

10.2 Beautify any welcome signs in the community to create a welcoming image, especially along interstate corridors.

Braidwood's location along I-55, Coal City Road, and Historic Route 66 offers an excellent opportunity for gateway signage. Installing signs with the city's branding at key entry points will highlight entrances and guide visitors to attractions like the Polk-a-Dot Drive-In and Braidwood Zoo. Using materials like stone or brick, along with landscaping, will enhance appeal. Strategically placing these signs in high-traffic areas will strengthen Braidwood's branding and attract more travelers.



Goal: Ensure future water supply.

Recommendation 11: Determine future water needs and partner with neighboring communities.

While this plan seeks to preserve Braidwood's small-town character, economic development and gradual population growth will be essential for the town's future prosperity. However, the current water supply may not be sufficient to support this growth. Braidwood uses about six million gallons of water monthly, averaging 200,000 gallons per day. Its main source is sandstone groundwater, stored in towers with a combined capacity of 400,000 to 450,000 gallons; a new tower is planned to increase this capacity to 1.1 million gallons.

Robinson Engineering, authorized by the city council, is conducting a water system evaluation and project plan. They anticipate that additional supply will be necessary, potentially from new wells, connections with neighboring communities, or a new source like the Kankakee River.

Strategies

11.1 Pursue a comprehensive water system evaluation and project plan.

Braidwood is already pursuing a water system evaluation and project plan, led by Robinson Engineering, which will begin with an evaluation of the existing conditions and capacity of the city's water supply to meet current and future demands based on Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) guidelines.

As Robinson has suggested, it is vital that this effort is comprehensive and frank about anticipated costs, so that the city can make fiscally sound, long-term investments to foster prosperity in the future.

Funding sources:

- [IEPA: Wastewater/Stormwater and Drinking Water Loans](#)
- [USDA: Water and Waste Disposal Loan and Grant Program in Illinois](#)
- [USEPA: Drinking Water Grants](#)
- [USEPA: Funding Sources for Small and Rural Wastewater Systems](#)

11.2 Seek partnerships with neighboring communities.

In 2017, Braidwood partnered with Diamond, Coal City, and the Godley Public Water District to form the Kankakee River Valley Water Planning Alliance aimed at developing a regional water plan. However, this initiative has since stalled.

Recently, neighboring communities have begun exploring potential collaborations to tackle common water supply challenges. As Braidwood evaluates its own water system, it is essential for the city to collaborate with Robinson Engineering to either engage in these multijurisdictional discussions or initiate new efforts, ensuring continued progress in addressing water supply issues.

Housing

In the future Braidwood is able to thrive by accommodating growth and future housing demand while preserving the town's small-town feel and high-quality housing stock.

The development of new housing in Braidwood presents both opportunities and challenges. It could increase property tax revenue, attract new residents, and stimulate the growth of businesses like stores and restaurants, thereby enhancing local amenities. Meanwhile, the housing market is changing, with increasing demand for a variety of housing options. This includes longtime senior residents looking to downsize and young people looking for something they can afford in the town they grew up in.

However, many residents worry that residential growth and new housing other than detached single-family homes could compromise the town's small, close-knit character. In particular, residents are concerned about the introduction of new housing that is low quality, which could bring down the value of their community and their homes. To address these concerns, Braidwood must develop a shared vision for residential growth that balances high-quality new development with the preservation and enhancement of its existing housing stock.



Goal: Preserve Braidwood's existing housing and plan for future housing demand.

Recommendation 12: Strengthen housing code enforcement while also connecting homeowners with helpful assistance.

Residents have emphasized the importance of maintaining acceptable standards for existing residential properties in Braidwood. The city should re-evaluate its code enforcement procedures and identify resources to assist homeowners with home upkeep.

Additionally, while flooding has not been a major problem in Braidwood, the frequency and severity of storm events in northeastern Illinois have escalated, and the city can connect homeowners with free guidance on how they can protect their homes from future events.

Strategies

12.1 Re-evaluate Braidwood's housing code and code enforcement procedures.

To address residents' concerns about property standards, Braidwood should re-evaluate and enhance its housing code enforcement measures. This involves a comprehensive reassessment of existing protocols to ensure their effectiveness.

At the same time, the city should create initiatives to assist homeowners in accessing resources and financial aid for essential repairs and upgrades, including local, state, and federal programs. This review will help identify gaps and inefficiencies in the current system, allowing the city to implement targeted actions that maintain property standards and improve the overall quality of the residential environment.

Resources:

- [Center for Community Progress: Equitable, Efficient, and Effective Code Enforcement](#)

- [Metropolitan Planning Council: Up to Code](#)
- [OpenGov: Code Enforcement 101: How to be the Hero Behind a Thriving Community](#)

12.2 Connect homeowners with repair and revitalization resources to assist with bringing their properties up-to-code and other necessary home improvements.

Braidwood should implement initiatives to connect homeowners with valuable resources for home repairs and revitalization. This could involve sharing information about available grants, low-interest loans, and collaborations with local organizations. By providing this support, Braidwood can empower residents to meet regulatory standards and make necessary improvements, helping to ensure that the community's housing remains secure and well-maintained.

Funding sources (for home repair and community revitalization):

State:

- [Illinois Housing Development Authority: Home Repair and Community Revitalization Programs](#)

Federal:

- [Community Development Block Grants \(CDBG\)](#)
- [HUD Title 1 Property Improvement Loan Program](#)
- [203\(k\) Rehabilitation Mortgage Insurance Program](#)

Resources:

- [Establishing and running a local home repair program](#)

Case study

Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity

.....

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity [awarded \\$8.9 million to rural communities throughout the state](#) for housing rehabilitation for low-to-moderate income homeowners. Funds were used for structural work, plumbing, electrical, and ADA accessibility. Awards for local governments range from \$539,000 to \$650,000, with up to \$60,000 available for each home.

12.3 Identify resources for homeowners to mitigate the impacts of flooding and other extreme weather events.

Funding sources:

- [The Federal Emergency Management Agency's Individuals and Households Program](#)

Resources:

- [Protect your home from flooding](#)

Case study

Home Repair and Accessibility Program
Park Forest, IL

.....

The Village of Park Forest partnered with the Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA) to provide loans up to \$21,500 to eligible homeowners for roof repairs. By leveraging funding through IHDA's Home Repair and Accessibility Program, the village was able to assist homeowners with limited income make home repairs and essential improvements, which helped to preserve affordable housing stock, invest in disadvantaged communities, improve health of homeowners, and help limited income and disabled residents remain in their homes. To be eligible for the loan, program applicants could not exceed 80% of the area median income, and preference was given to households below 50% AMI.

Source: [Village of Park Forest](#)

Recommendation 13: Determine Braidwood's vision for new housing and develop a marketing strategy to achieve that vision.

Like its approach to economic development, the city should actively engage the community before introducing new housing proposals to shape Braidwood's vision for residential development. This engagement should build on the input collected during the planning process and the insights from the housing market analysis conducted by Kretchmer Associates. Furthermore, the city should identify suitable sites for residential development and ensure that appropriate zoning regulations are established to support this vision. Finally, an effective marketing strategy should be developed to promote Braidwood in alignment with community goals.

Strategies

13.1 Engage the community — ahead of development proposals — to determine Braidwood's vision for new housing.

To align with Braidwood's housing vision, the city must proactively engage with the community before development proposals are introduced. This engagement will help identify residents' preferences, which appears to include support for additional senior and 55+ living options, with a strong emphasis on high-quality housing that reflects and preserves Braidwood's unique character. By integrating both community input and expert analysis, the city can create a strong foundation for a strategic marketing plan aimed at attracting suitable developments to Braidwood. Incorporating ongoing feedback will ensure that new housing proposals align with community expectations. Early and continuous engagement will help ensure that future developments reflect the preferences of Braidwood residents.

Resources:

- [Braidwood Comprehensive Plan Open House Report](#) (see pages 17-22 for community input on housing issues)

13.2 Identify sites available for residential development, and make sure zoning is in place (for acceptable forms of residential development).

Braidwood should prioritize identifying and mapping areas suitable for residential development while simultaneously establishing zoning regulations that reflect community preferences for housing types. This dual approach will lay the groundwork for successful future developments.

Resources:

- [Braidwood Market Analysis Report](#) (see pages 11-21 for discussion of housing)

13.3 Reach out to residential developers active in Will County with information on potential development sites.

To attract developers of high-quality housing in Will County, Braidwood should create and regularly update a dedicated webpage featuring comprehensive information about potential development sites. This webpage should include key details such as site specifications, zoning regulations, and available infrastructure, along with maps and photographs to give developers a clear understanding of each opportunity. Additionally, the city could include testimonials from local residents and stakeholders, highlighting the benefits of developing in Braidwood and the community's commitment to quality housing.

Case study

Sandy Spring Missing Middle Pilot Project
Sandy Spring, MD

Located in the rural-but-growing town of Sandy Spring, MD, the Missing Middle Pilot aims to introduce diverse housing options within existing neighborhoods by developing 19 residential lots. This initiative focuses on "missing middle" housing, such as duplexes and triplexes, to increase affordability and density while maintaining the community's character. The properties are designed to appear as single-family homes and appear in harmony with existing neighborhood housing stock.



13.4 Ensure that new housing preserves and enhances Braidwood's small-town character.

To preserve and enhance Braidwood's small-town charm, any new multifamily housing follows architectural designs that seamlessly integrate with the existing neighborhood aesthetic. These designs should reflect the scale, style, and materials of the surrounding single-family homes, ensuring that new developments blend naturally into the established residential fabric. By adopting this approach, Braidwood can maintain its unique character while accommodating growth and expanding housing options.

Funding sources:

- [Illinois Housing Development Authority: Resources for Developers](#)

Resources:

- [AARP: Making Room - Housing for a Changing America](#)
- [Metropolitan Mayors Caucus: Homes for a Changing Region](#)
- [Missing Middle Housing](#)
- [Video: What is Missing Middle Housing?](#)

Case study

Broadview Senior Apartments
Broadview, IL

Recognizing the critical need for affordable senior housing, Broadview donated village-owned land to the Housing Opportunity Development Corporation, a nonprofit that collaborated with Ross Financial, a development firm, to create the Broadview Senior Apartments. Through a lease agreement, the village established terms that ensured the developer maintained high operational standards and exclusively dedicated the property to senior housing.

Opened in 2021, this three-story building offers 70 dwelling units specifically for senior citizens and veterans. To qualify, tenants must be at least 55 years old and have an income at or below 30% of the area median income. The building is certified by the National Green Building Standard and features energy-efficient design elements.

This innovative development not only allows seniors and veterans to remain in their community but also frees up additional housing for families and first-time homebuyers.



Sources: [Village Free Press](#), [Housing Opportunity Development Corporation](#)

Case study

Pine View Apartments
Carmi, IL

In 2006, the rural community of Carmi issued an invitation to developers to address the shortage of workforce housing within the area. This initiative led to the establishment of Pine View Woods, a housing complex consisting of affordable duplex units. Other similar projects exist in a variety of small towns across the state, including in Olney and Paris.



Source: [Laborers' Home Development Corporation](#)

Recommendation 14: Encourage strategies to help seniors live safely and independently as they grow older.

Braidwood is poised to support an increasing number of senior residents in the coming years as baby boomers continue to age and the overall population matures. Many long-term residents are eager to remain in Braidwood, while the town also attracts older individuals from urban areas who are drawn to its small-town charm, slower pace of life, and strong sense of community. While some seniors seek assisted living options, many prefer to age in place in their own homes. To meet this demand, Braidwood should implement aging-in-place strategies that ensure its buildings and neighborhoods remain comfortable and safe for residents throughout their lives.

Strategies

14.1 Identify zoning and regulatory barriers to accessibility improvements to ensure safety and promote aging in place.

Funding sources:

- [Metropolitan Mayors Caucus Age-Friendly Communities Collaborative](#)
- [Illinois Housing Development Authority: Home Repair and Community Revitalization Programs](#)

Resources:

- [Metropolitan Mayors Caucus: Aging in a Changing Region](#)
- [Partners for Livable Communities A Blueprint for Action](#)
- [CMAP: How communities are helping residents age in place](#)

Case study

Updated building code to improve accessibility, Bolingbrook, IL

In 2003, the Village of Bolingbrook created a visitability code that requires all new homes to include design principles that allow access for all people, regardless of age or physical ability. While a perception of higher construction costs caused some initial hesitation, the village found that costs are minimal and homes incorporating visitability features are more marketable. There are now over 1,700 homes with full compliance. The ordinance includes the following criteria:

- Entrance: all homes must have at least one step-free entrance.
- Doors and hallways: all exterior and interior doors must be at least three feet wide.
- Bathroom: there must be at least one bathroom on the floor closest to grade level. Bathroom walls must be provided with wall framing to support grab bars.
- Electrical wall switches: all wall switches that control light fixtures and fans must be located no higher than four feet above the floor.

Source: [Village of Bolingbrook municipal code](#)

14.2 Communicate housing options and promote housing resources to seniors.

This includes various resources to help educate seniors about resources to help them age in place, including programs such as Illinois' [Senior Citizens Homestead Exemption](#).

Programs that benefit seniors must be marketed to seniors. In addition to the city's website and Facebook page, Braidwood could promote these services through flyers at city hall or on the back of water bills.

Funding sources:

- [Senior Citizens Homestead Exemption](#)

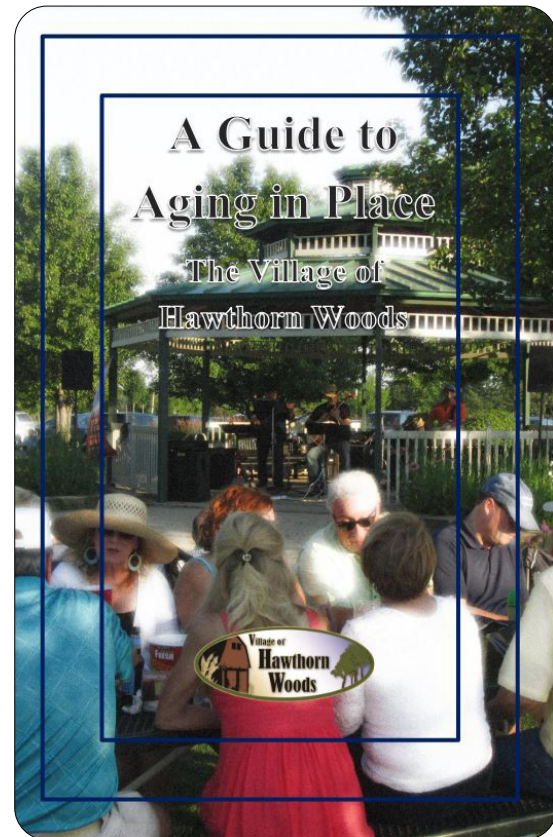
Resources:

- [National Institute on Aging: Aging in Place](#)
- [Safe Home. Happy Home. Tips for keeping it that way](#)

Case study

A Guide to Aging in Place
Hawthorn Woods, IL

The median age in Hawthorn Woods (44.5 years) is significantly older than Lake County overall (37.5 years). To embrace their growing senior population, the Village of Hawthorn Woods created A Guide to Aging in Place in 2019. [The guide](#) provides tools and resources to help residents remain healthy and happy in their community, including information on transportation, community services, socialization, and more.



Source: [Village of Hawthorn Woods](#)

Implementation matrix

The following pages present the **goals, recommendations, and strategies** of the Braidwood Comprehensive Plan in a user-friendly matrix format. This matrix includes priority levels for each recommendation, a **timeline** for implementing each strategy, and available **funding opportunities** and **resources**, providing a structured approach to implementation.

Priority levels

Each recommendation is categorized on a scale from one to three based on its importance and urgency. Level one indicates high priority, level two represents medium priority, and level three signifies low priority. While all recommendations are essential, this prioritization will help the city allocate limited resources effectively.

Timeline

The timeline column outlines the schedule for implementing each strategy, detailing the estimated duration for completion. This chronological framework facilitates progress tracking and helps ensure that implementation stays on track. Strategies are categorized as short-term (five years or less), medium-term (five to ten years), and long-term (ten years or more).



Braidwood's downtown area along Main Street.

Economic development

Goal: Increase economic activity in Braidwood.

Recommendation 1: Attract new commercial activity.

Priority level - 1

Strategy	Timeline	Funding sources	Resources
1.1 Identify what types of new businesses are most wanted by the community.	Short		Braidwood Comprehensive Plan Open House Report (see pages 23-26 for community input on stores and restaurants)
1.2 Identify what types of new businesses are less wanted by the community.	Short		Braidwood Comprehensive Plan Open House Report (see pages 23-26 for community input on stores and restaurants)
1.3 Identify and market available properties and sites in town.	Medium		Braidwood Market Analysis Report Hotel Market Feasibility Study
1.4 Develop an image or brand for Braidwood.	Medium		
1.5 Increase retail and restaurant awareness of Braidwood.	Medium		Braidwood Market Analysis Report (see page 26 for discussion of marketing the town to regional brokers)
1.6 Notify I-55 drivers of Braidwood and its local businesses and attractions.	Medium		IDOT: Special Sign Programs

Recommendation 2: Improve the appearance and strengthen the commercial identity of the central downtown area.

Priority level - 2

Strategy	Timeline	Funding sources	Resources
2.1 Improve the appearance of local businesses.	Long		City of Woodstock: Facade Improvement Program
2.2 Preserve and reuse older buildings in central downtown area.	Long	Landmarks Illinois National Trust for Historic Preservation	
2.3 Evaluate the potential improvements for parking in central business areas.	Medium		How to implement shared parking facilities
2.4 Improve the streetscape of Main Street.	Long		Rebuild Downtown and Main Streets Capital Grant

Recommendation 3: Create a comprehensive and effective approach to attract prospective businesses and developers to Braidwood.

Priority level - 1

Strategy	Timeline	Funding sources	Resources
3.1 Create marketing materials that communicate advantages of locating in Braidwood.	Medium		Braidwood Market Analysis Report Hotel Market Feasibility Study
3.2 Evaluate potential to establish economic development incentives and promote them on the city's website.	Medium		Braidwood Market Analysis Report
3.3 Develop checklist for prospective developers to help navigate the development process.	Medium		

Recommendation 4: Build on recent hotel market feasibility study and take the next steps to explore development of a new hotel.

Priority level - 2

Strategy	Timeline	Funding sources	Resources
4.1 Identify potential sites near Braidwood's two I-55 interchanges.	Short		Hotel Market Feasibility Study
4.2 Evaluate community opinion on development of a new hotel at potential site(s).	Short		
4.3 Consider hiring hotel advisory consultant to facilitate next steps and reach out to potential developers.	Short		Hotel Market Feasibility Study

Transportation and accessibility

Goal: Improve roadway safety for all users

Recommendation 5: Improve safety and comfort for all road users, whether they drive, walk, or bike.

Priority level - 2

Strategy	Timeline	Funding sources	Resources
5.1 Prioritize locations with safety problems.	Short		Braidwood Comprehensive Plan Open House Report (see pages 11-12 for community input on dangerous locations)
5.2 Adopt a Complete Streets policy that outlines its commitment to designing streets that are safe and accessible for all modes of transportation.	Long	U.S. Department of Transportation: Active Transportation Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) CMAP Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) National Safety Council: Road to Zero Community Traffic Safety Grants Safe Routes to School Program (IDOT)	Safe Routes to School Grant and Program Resources (guide to program from the Active Transportation Alliance) Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program (ITEP) Grant Resources (guide to program from the Active Transportation Alliance) Tactical Urbanist's Guide
5.3 Make it easy for residents to identify local transportation problems.	Short-medium		GOGov SeeClickFix 311 CRM by CivicPlus

Recommendation 6: Develop a pedestrian and bicycle network that promotes walking and bicycling.

Priority level - 3

Strategy	Timeline	Funding sources	Resources
6.1 Prioritize pedestrian and bicycle improvements on high-traffic streets.	Medium	Bicycle and Pedestrian Program (FHWA) Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) Carbon Reduction Program (CRP) Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) Surface Transportation Program (STP) Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program (ITEP)	Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program (ITEP) Grant Resources (guide to grant program from the Active Transportation Alliance) Braidwood Comprehensive Plan Open House Report (see pages 15-16 for community input on walking and biking routes)
6.2 Expand Braidwood's trail and greenway network.	Medium-long	Recreational Trails Program (RTP) Illinois Bicycle Path Grant program Trails Capacity Program Park and Recreational Facilities Construction Program (PARC) Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) Surface Transportation Program (STP) Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program (ITEP)	Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program (ITEP) Grant Resources (guide to grant program from the Active Transportation Alliance) Braidwood Comprehensive Plan Open House Report (see pages 15-16 for community input on walking and biking routes)

Recommendation 7: Address resident quality of life concerns related to Braidwood's role as a transportation hub.

Priority level - 2

Strategy	Timeline	Funding sources	Resources
7.1 Analyze existing truck traffic patterns.	Medium		IDOT: Getting Around Illinois : online map showing Truck Average Daily Traffic and Designated Truck Routes
7.2 Address at-grade railroad crossing delays.	Medium-long		
7.3 Explore options for reducing noise from freight trucks and trains.	Medium		Federal Railroad Administration: Train Horn Rule and Quiet Zones

Parks, activities, and natural resources

Goal: Invest in fun events, recreational activities, and natural amenities.

Recommendation 8: Invest in amenities that help bring residents together and enhance their quality of life.

Priority level - 3

Strategy	Timeline	Funding sources	Resources
8.1 Explore options for creating a permanent or semi-permanent seasonal splashpad for schools and families.	Short		
8.2 Promote connectivity between Braidwood's urban areas and its natural areas through the creation of walking and biking trails.	Medium-long		
8.3 Explore options for creating a dog park accessible to the most walkable areas of Braidwood.	Medium	PetSafe® Bark for Your Park Grant Contest	
8.4 Improve current playgrounds.	Medium	Playworld® Landscape Structures®	
8.5 Preserve and enhance current recreational activities in a sustainable fashion.	Long		

Recommendation 9: Create and promote family-friendly programming throughout the year.

Priority level - 2

Strategy	Timeline	Funding sources	Resources
9.1 Determine what resources are available to create and promote family-friendly programming in every season.	Medium	MLB/Boys and Girls Clubs of America: Youth Development Foundation	
9.2 Create community programming to bring community members together.	Short-medium		

Goal: Beautify Braidwood.

Recommendation 10: Promote beautification efforts throughout Braidwood.

Priority level - 2

Strategy	Timeline	Funding sources	Resources
10.1 Use planters and flowers to create a pleasant walking and biking environment.	Short	Rebuild Downtowns and Main Streets (RDMS) Capital Grant	
10.2 Beautify any welcome signs in the community to create a welcoming image, especially along interstate corridors.	Medium		

Goal: Ensure future water supply.

Recommendation 11: Determine future water needs and partner with neighboring communities.

Priority level - 1

Strategy	Timeline	Funding sources	Resources
11.1 Pursue a comprehensive water system evaluation and project plan.	Short-medium	IEPA: Wastewater/Stormwater and Drinking Water Loans USDA: Water and Waste Disposal Loan and Grant Program in Illinois USEPA: Drinking Water Grants USEPA: Funding Sources for Small and Rural Wastewater Systems	
11.2 Seek partnerships with neighboring communities.	Short		

Housing

Goal: Preserve Braidwood's existing housing and plan for future housing demand.

Recommendation 12: Strengthen housing code enforcement while also connecting homeowners with helpful assistance.

Priority level - 2

Strategy	Timeline	Funding sources	Resources
12.1 Re-evaluate Braidwood's housing code and code enforcement procedures.	Short		Center for Community Progress: Equitable, Efficient, and Effective Code Enforcement Metropolitan Planning Council: Up to Code OpenGov: Code Enforcement 101: How to be the Hero Behind a Thriving Community
12.2 Connect homeowners with repair and revitalization resources to assist with bringing their properties up-to-code and other necessary home improvements.	Short-medium	Illinois Housing Development Authority: Home Repair and Community Revitalization Programs Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) HUD Title 1 Property Improvement Loan Program 203(k) Rehabilitation Mortgage Insurance Program Home Equity Conversion Mortgages for Seniors	Establishing and running a local home repair program

12.3 Identify resources for homeowners to mitigate the impacts of flooding and other extreme weather events.	Medium	Federal Emergency Management Agency's Individuals and Households Program	Protect your home from flooding
---	--------	--	---

Recommendation 13: Determine Braidwood's vision for new housing and develop a marketing strategy to achieve that vision.

Priority level - 2

Strategy	Timeline	Funding sources	Resources
13.1 Engage the community— ahead of development proposals—to determine Braidwood's vision for new housing.	Short-medium		Braidwood Comprehensive Plan Open House Report (see pages 17-22 for community input on housing issues)
13.2 Identify sites available for residential development, and make sure zoning is in place (for acceptable forms of residential development).	Short-medium		Braidwood Market Analysis Report (see pages 11-21 for discussion of housing)
13.3 Reach out to residential developers active in Will County with information on potential development sites.	Short-medium		Braidwood Market Analysis Report (see pages 11-21 for discussion of housing)

13.4 Ensure that new housing preserves and enhances Braidwood's small-town character.	Long	Illinois Housing Development Authority: Resources for Developers	AARP: Making Room - Housing for a Changing America Metropolitan Mayors Caucus: Homes for a Changing Region Missing Middle Housing Video: What is Missing Middle Housing?
---	-------------	---	--

Recommendation 14: Encourage strategies to help seniors live safely and independently as they grow older. Priority level - 3			
Strategy	Timeline	Funding sources	Resources
14.1 Identify zoning and regulatory barriers to accessibility improvements to ensure safety and promote aging in place.	Short-medium	Metropolitan Mayors Caucus Age-Friendly Communities Collaborative Illinois Housing Development Authority: Home Repair and Community Revitalization Programs	Metropolitan Mayors Caucus: Aging in a Changing Region Partners for Livable Communities A Blueprint for Action CMAP: How communities are helping residents age in place
14.2 Communicate housing options and promote housing resources to seniors.	Short	Senior Citizens Homestead Exemption	National Institute on Aging: Aging in Place Safe Home. Happy Home. Tips for keeping it that way

Key deliverables from the planning process

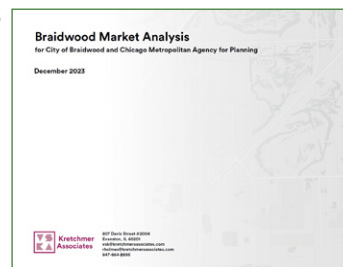
Appendix A: Existing Conditions Report



Appendix B: Braidwood Comprehensive Plan Open House Report



Appendix C: Braidwood Market Analysis Report (Prepared by Kretchmer Associates, Inc.)



Appendix D: Braidwood Hotel Market Feasibility Study (Prepared by TR Mandigo and Company)



The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) is the region's comprehensive planning organization. The agency and its partners developed and are now implementing ON TO 2050, a long-range plan to help the seven counties and 284 communities of northeastern Illinois implement strategies that address transportation, housing, economic development, open space, the environment, and other quality-of-life issues.

See cmap.illinois.gov for more information.

433 West Van Buren Street
Suite 450
Chicago, IL 60607

cmap.illinois.gov
312-454-0400



Chicago Metropolitan
Agency for Planning