

Wheeling **2000** *and beyond*

THE FINAL REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

NOVEMBER 16, 1996

WHEELING 2000 AND BEYOND

Executive Summary

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Wheeling 2000 and Beyond

This executive summary is designed to provide an overview of the process used to complete the Wheeling 2000 and Beyond process as well as summarized visions and recommendations made in the eight areas studied by the committee

WHAT IS WHEELING 2000 AND BEYOND?

Wheeling 2000 and beyond is a community-based project implemented to engage Wheeling's residents and business community in planning for the village's future. Initiated by the Village President and Board of Trustees, Wheeling 2000 was guided by those with the greatest possible investment in the community's future - the citizens themselves. These citizens have provided important direction, planning and recommendations for the future of the community into the next century.

In the fall of 1995, the Village retained the services of Denniston Consulting Group to facilitate this strategic planning process. Two community wide meetings were held in October and December, 1995 to ensure that all citizens and the business community were given the opportunity to participate as well as ensure that the process was a community based effort. Following the first meeting, an Executive Committee consisting of representatives of all the village's governmental units, churches and business community was selected. The Executive Committee then elected eight committee chairs - image, education, infrastructure, government, community diversity, community services, economic development large corporations and economic development commercial/retail. Residents and members of the business community were placed into committees based on their interest preference. The Executive Committee and the chairs of each of the eight committees were combined to form an overall Steering Committee which met several times throughout the entire 12 month process.

Each of the eight committees adopted its own vision statement and during the ensuing months held meetings, conducted research, met with village officials and interviewed government and business leaders from other communities. Each committee completed a series of reports which included an assessment of the current situation, identification of future trends, creating a future vision, and finally making recommendations.

Written reports prepared by each of the committees were shared and presented at several Steering Committee meetings which were open to all interested participants. Feedback from the Steering Committee was used in the development of the final reports and recommendations.

The Wheeling 2000 and Beyond Report is the product of its community members. The document is testimony to the caring and concern Wheeling citizens and members of its business community have for the village as well as their personal belief that the future of Wheeling is worthy of their best efforts. From the individual vision statements developed by the eight committees, a **Wheeling 2000 and Beyond** overall Vision Statement has been created which captures the future of Wheeling.

WHEELING 2000 AND BEYOND

VISION STATEMENT

Wheeling Is:

- A network of partnerships between governments and businesses, and among those entities responsible for providing educational, recreational and human care services.
- A community with governments which are forward thinking, assertive and cohesive in response to issues affecting their residents and businesses.
- A pro-business community of economic opportunity and growth with a vibrant and strong economy.
- A community with a safe and healthy environment with its appearance reflecting the pride of its residents and businesses.
- A diverse and inclusive community where all of its residents live in a state of harmony.

These partnerships share resources, promote awareness, communication and understanding among the partners and work together to provide goods, services and employment opportunities, promote assimilation into the community and establish a mutual support system. These partnerships also extend into the broader community with whom they interact and reap the benefits of cooperation with the region, the state and the nation. As partners:

- The governments are responsive and develop and implement coordinated comprehensive plans which meet the needs and expectations of the people, invite participation, improve access to social and human services for all its citizens and meet future challenges to develop and maintain a sound infrastructure, transportation and communication.
- The residential and business community embraces the opportunity to provide, encourage and expect participation in lifelong learning by residents and employees of all ages.
- The families, neighbors, friends and visitors gather to attend a variety of social, recreational and cultural celebrations.
- The people with a strong sense of community, work together voluntarily

at all levels resulting in a collective sense of investment, further enhancing the quality of life.

- The community celebrates its diversity, respecting our varied cultural heritage and religious beliefs and modeling this for our children in our homes, businesses, region, and our nation.

INDIVIDUAL COMMITTEE'S VISION SUMMARY

The Village of Wheeling will be a community recognized and studied by other communities throughout the country as a model because:

COMMUNITY SERVICES: The Village government will continue to coordinate and improve access to social and human services for all its' citizens.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT--COMMERCIAL/RETAIL: Existing business will take pride in ownership and in being an integral part of the community. Prospective businesses will view Wheeling as a place of economic opportunity and growth. The commercial portion of the tax base will augment needed funding for the village government, school districts, and park and library districts.

GOVERNMENT: The government has a specific plan to keep the feeling of the community while being aggressive enough to give all the advantages within reach. All governmental units will be communicating and cooperating, fostering greater participation among the people and businesses in Wheeling, thus enabling them to meet the needs and expectations of the people.

EDUCATION: Partnerships between both the public and private sector which promote and support the life long learning opportunities in Wheeling necessary to meet the challenges of the future.

COMMUNITY DIVERSITY/CULTURAL INTEGRATION: All residents of Wheeling will feel welcome and comfortable as members of the community regardless of their status.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT--LARGE CORPORATIONS: The Village of Wheeling understands and promotes the corporate environment. The Village together with business partners work towards improving the community and the economy. The public economic forum allows for the exchange of ideas, contributions and recognition within the Village. Corporations play an active role in the community by adhering to regulations while providing jobs, resources, expertise, training, materials, and financial contributions.

IMAGE AND PUBLIC RELATIONS: People who live inside and outside of Wheeling recognize our Village as being a first-class community; appreciate the outstanding reputation of our public services and institutions (schools, park district, governmental and social agencies); are stirred by our beautiful physical appearance; value and are envious of our warm, spirited, and culturally diverse populace; and are impressed with the strength and depth of our industrial and commercial sectors.

INFRASTRUCTURE: Wheeling's infrastructure are those physical assets that facilitate services being provided. Those assets are an essential base upon which services are built. Infrastructure requires coordination and cooperation both within the community among governments and with neighboring communities in regional infrastructure ranging from roads and airports to bike paths, water, wastewater, stormwater, and solid waste. We place a high regard on quality and a beautiful environment, realizing that infrastructure is the foundation upon which a community is built.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following is a summary of recommendations made by committees to enable the citizens of Wheeling and their government officials to realize this future state.

Infrastructure

This Committee focused on existing and future infrastructure needs of the community, including transportation, public properties and facilities, water, solid waste, housing and undeveloped properties, and communications.

Below is a summary of the issues that were discussed and the recommendations that followed. Please see the full report for a listing of all the recommendations in detail.

Transportation:

The Committee examined roadways, the North Central Metra Commuter Line, Palwaukee Airport, and bicycle/pedestrian facilities, with the understanding that transportation is a significant factor to a community, its residents, businesses, employees, and visitors. The recommendations focus on enhancing Wheeling's transportation system by State, County, and/or Village improvements to roads, encouraging bicycle and pedestrian trail development and travel within the village, and providing information about the village at the new train station. Further, the recommendations highlight the need to coordinate the timing of improvement projects by various governmental agencies so as to minimize the travel impacts and delays.

Public Properties and Facilities:

Public properties and facilities in the village include not only those of the Village, but also the Wheeling Park District, School Districts 21 and 214, and the Indian Trails Public Library District. The Committee focused on potential areas of future cooperation between these units of government and forecasting future infrastructure needs in a comprehensive manner. Wheeling voters have supported many major public infrastructure projects in recent years. The recommendations discuss ways in which Wheeling can enhance its properties both economically and aesthetically, making them more attractive to developers and residents. They also discuss ways in which the individual units of government can coordinate their efforts and share information on properties they manage.

Water:

We, as citizens, expect to have a sufficient quantity of good quality water to drink, adequate stormwater facilities, and sufficient wastewater transmission and treatment facilities. Recommendations highlight the need to improve water

transmission lines between the Northwest Water Commission and the Village. Floodwater management needs to be implemented through development of areawide improvements to the Des Plaines River to enable it to accept, contain and discharge floodwater received both from upstream communities as well as Wheeling.

Solid Waste:

Wheeling has participated in the regional effort to design a system to provide efficient and environmentally sound collection and re-use of solid waste. The recommendations suggest that household hazardous waste removal should become a higher priority and made more frequently available.

Housing and Undeveloped Properties:

Wheeling is home to a variety of single family and multi-family residential units. Most residential development prior to the 1970's was relatively basic single family, while most development since then has been multi-family. As the Village contains sufficient multi-family residential properties, the Committee has recommended that future residential development be primarily higher end single family, to provide balance to the older and more modest homes that presently exist.

While Wheeling's borders are generally defined, some opportunities for annexation exist. There remain some larger undeveloped parcels of land or parcels that are available for redevelopment. The recommendations focus on coordination with neighboring jurisdictions to ensure land use compatibility, and various ways to improve the economic viability of such parcels. Also, it is suggested that beautification efforts be enhanced.

Communications:

Advances in technology have made communications an issue that is key to any long-range planning process. Recommendations focus on ways to improve the delivery of services, as well as ways to enhance information sharing via printed mediums, cable television, and the internet.

Community Service

1. Increased services for children, youth and seniors.
2. Increased corporate and business involvement in existing and future services.
3. Establishment of a village health and human services department.
4. Improvement of affordable public transportation.
5. Expansion of the Pavilion Senior Center.
6. The increase of available space in Village Hall and the Police Department to meet the needs of growing social services.

7. Establishment of adult day care and respite care for seniors.
8. The opening of a teen recreation center.
9. Increase affordable child care services for residents.
10. Establishment of an ombudsmen of government information.

Economic Development--Retail/Commercial

The establishment of an Economic Development Corporation. This independent economic development entity will serve as a partnership between government and business, and will promote a pro-business environment in Wheeling resulting in a vibrant economy. It is recommended that the corporation include members of government, business and the community. It is further recommended that the village and the business community provide financial support to ensure its success.

The Economic Development Corporation should include the following key responsibilities:

- The creation of a well-defined attraction and retention strategy.
- The development of a database on all existing, departed and prospective businesses.
- An in depth review of the requirements for new business approvals and business improvements including fee structure, for the purpose of improving the process by which desirable business can locate and successfully operate in Wheeling.

The Retail/Commercial team further recommends the construction of a hotel/convention center near Palwaukee Airport, and the construction of a hotel/banquet facility on Lake Cook north of Wal-Mart.

Government

1. Exploration of alternative sources of tax revenue that do not put the burden on fixed incomes.
2. Clean-up and refinement of existing zoning codes.
3. Redefinition of qualifications for zoning board members that will eliminate or decrease the political nature of the board.
4. The coordination of a land use plan.
5. Increase of crime prevention education.
6. Expansion of problem oriented policing.
7. Balancing of responsibilities and rights.
8. Adoption of a zero tolerance policy pertaining to guns, gangs, and graffiti.
9. System for the simplification and classification of ordinances.
10. Emphasis on the prudent coordination of and communication between government agencies within and outside of the Village.

11. The communication of the Village Strategy with neighboring communities.
12. Improve the accessibility and dissemination of information to the citizens.
13. Change the format of broadcast Board and Commission meetings to maximize interest.
14. Use of cable TV as the primary means of communicating to the residents.
15. Promotion of communications within the Village through questionnaires and surveys.
16. Construction of a building housing the historical information and current events of Wheeling.
17. Creation of a strong open space ordinance to accommodate recreation, improve all means of transportation and generate revenue.

Education

1. The development and implementation of public and private sector Community-Business-Education partnerships that promote lifelong learning.
2. The dedication of formal learning to the preparation and training of individuals for the transition from school to work.
3. Increased responsiveness of the public and private learning centers.
4. The promotion of knowledge, learning, and skill as the new raw materials.
5. Schools should become one stop shopping centers for community service.
6. Education as a tool for the teaching of conflict management and problem solving.
7. Availability of education for all people at any stage in the life cycle.
8. The concentration of learning on the human condition.
9. Educational opportunities shall reflect the communities' wants and needs.
10. Maximization of resources through collectivization.
11. Services shall be delivered in proximity to where people live.
12. Education as the most important means for meeting individual and community needs.
13. The collaboration of parents and community agencies in schools.
14. Problem solving, decision making and group process training of local leaders.
15. The encouragement of lifelong learning, community involvement, and efficient use of resources made possible by electronic access to all members of the community.
16. The creation of a Community Education Commission to focus on life long learning, community involvement, and the efficient use of resources.

Community Diversity/Cultural Integration

1. A program or campaign be adopted by all government agencies operating in the Village, the schools, all religious and civic organization to discourage bigoted remarks. The program could be titled something like "I'm sorry, but that's not right". This phrase could be used in a conversation after someone makes a derogatory statement about a person or a group of people.
2. The Village or a private organization, with the Village backing, sponsor an annual one or two day Community Folk Festival where diversity is celebrated.

3. Committee forums on diversity could be held to keep residents understand and appreciate each other.
4. A program called "meet your neighbors" that creates opportunities for people to meet each other in a social setting.

Economic Development--Large Corporations

1. The establishment of an independent economic development entity that serves as a partnership between government and business that promotes the well being of the community.
2. Involvement of the representatives of the economic development entity in business, government and the community alike.

Image and Public Relations

The Image and Public Relations Committee strongly recommends that two important plans need to be developed, shared, and implemented.

1. A comprehensive, well defined, aggressive, professionally designed public relations and communications plan that all agencies in our village will be committed to implementing; a plan that celebrates our strengths and extols the benefits in a rich, diverse community such as is ours.
- The image of Wheeling needs to be focused on our strengths and character as well as help celebrate who we are. As does communities like Oak Park, we need to acknowledge who we are and what we have to offer, while at the same time let others know that we want people to move to Wheeling who recognize and value our diversity and character.
 - A well defined public relations effort would capture the essence of what we are all about and what it is we want to achieve. Slogans could be adopted that clearly communicate our beliefs, e.g. "a slice of the city in a suburban setting" or "an urban experience with suburban amenities."
 - All village personnel must be encouraged, expected, and trained to deliver a positive approach to communicating with the public as well as to help create a community spirit second to none. Aggressive advertising and promotional campaigns should be developed that promote our village, e.g. a "Living in Wheeling" campaign.
 - Wheeling 2000 should sponsor an open forum for all community residents to participate in and hear reports from the various 2000 committees. This form could be organized in the form of a Design and Report Charette (round-robin format). Potential developers and members of the business community would be invited to attend along with the public. The Image and Public Relations Committee would be willing to help organize this event.

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- Biannual Town Meetings should be organized to provide constituents with updates on the progress being made towards meeting both of our identified plans, as well as to solicit opinion and recruit assistance from residents.
- Production and more frequent distribution of professionally developed newsletters, cable television shows, video tape, targeted brochures, and other communication vehicles will enhance communication and increase community pride.
- A band shell should be erected on the lawn adjacent to Village Hall for the purpose of hosting summer events, concerts, and local performances.
- Given their first-class computer and gym facilities, schools should be kept open for residents to use at night, on weekends, on national holidays, as well as during the summer.
- Commercials and/or infomercials about Wheeling could be aired on cable and/or commercial TV. The precedent for doing this was established recently by other suburbs interested in recruiting new business and attracting new residents.
- Weekend Learning Academies could be organized at one of our schools during which information and instruction could be shared. Residents could pick from a variety of offerings such as seminars on retirement or income tax, classes on current events or history; business-related lectures, leisure time and hobby training, etc.
- We believe strongly that Wheeling should be host to major celebrations and events, the purpose being to bring members of our own community together, to promote civic pride, and bring positive attention to our community. A well organized and promoted Children's Festival or Cultural Festival would be of interest and benefit to both residents in and around Wheeling and would help to change how Wheeling is viewed by some.
- Hire a Public Information Officer and/or a Special Events Coordinator to accomplish the above. These could either be full-time positions, or shared positions with other governmental agencies.
- The history of Wheeling should be taught in our schools as part of our Social Studies curricula.
- A Professional Directory should be published identifying the occupations of Wheeling residents. Residents could be encouraged to patronize businesses owned by neighbors.

A Professional Directory would help communicate that our community has its share of professionals residing in it.

2. A well defined, detailed plan that clearly depicts the Wheeling of the future must be developed. All village agencies, as well as our business community, must be committed to its implementation. This plan should be shared with the public and with developers interested in investing in our community.
- The creation of a modern town center adjacent to the new train station should be adopted. Given the open space on both sides of Dundee and the proximity of Village Hall and the Community Recreation Center, this is the ideal location for establishing our town center. A plan for the development of this area should include the property and strip malls along Dundee Road both east and west of the station, as well as take into consideration maintaining of the land along the drainage canal north of Dundee as open, recreational space.
 - A more cooperative relationship between the village and our business community must be developed. The Village needs to take a more aggressive position relative to recruiting and supporting retail business. The development of a business alliance committed to Wheeling is a necessity. A dynamic, charismatic professional should be appointed as liaison to our business community and charged with recruiting new business to our town and helping existing business to flourish.
 - Stronger appearance standards must be developed and enforced if we are to turn Wheeling into a first-class looking community. Local businesses should be helped to meet these standards, financially if necessary, rather than made to feel impeded by them.
 - A dramatic improvement of the appearance and function of the Milwaukee Road corridor is a necessity. Our suggestion is that Milwaukee Avenue be given an "Old English" motif, that we develop a River Walk behind the Restaurant Row area, and that an effort be made to attract new retail and entertainment establishments. The development of the northwest corner of Milwaukee and Dundee provides us with an outstanding opportunity to begin this effort. An entertainment venue or cultural center should be considered, along with other viable uses of this corner.
 - Extensive aesthetic improvements along Dundee Road and other major thoroughfares in the village should be a priority, including, but not limited to, improved lighting, remodeled frontages, and extensive landscaping.
 - We recommend the installation of a modern signage system along Dundee Road and other thoroughfares celebrating the highlights of our community and including a dramatic, arched gateway at the corner of Milwaukee and Dundee, and a similar gateway at the west end of the village. In addition, the pedestrian bridge over Dundee Road by London Middle School is in need of painting and remodeling, especially given that it is in view of all who travel through our village.

- Improvement of the appearance of shopping centers in the village, particularly Dunhurst and others along main thoroughfares, is an absolute necessity.
- A directory of businesses and retail outlets in Wheeling should be published and shared with all Wheeling residents as part of a "buy and eat in Wheeling" campaign.
- Social issues must be aggressively addressed in a positive, proactive, preventative manner if indeed we hope to develop a sense of community. A Human Relations Officer could be appointed to do this as well as to help residents solve problems and disputes.
- Our committee recognizes the important role Chevy Chase has played in our community and supports efforts to remodel and maintain it as a community landmark and meeting place.

The recommendations listed above were designed to help drive and implement two identified plans. Successful implementation will require expanded and improved cooperative efforts between all community governmental agencies, as well as an increased amount of volunteerism from the community. While these recommendations have been condensed for this Executive Summary, they are delineated in more depth in our Summative Report.

COMMITTEE ROSTERS

A special thanks goes out to all the committee members listed. Collectively, they devoted over 4,000 hours to researching materials, attending presentations, interviewing local and regional experts, and participating in numerous committee meetings.

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Wheeling 2000 and Beyond

The Process

