

**BOARD OF TRUSTEES WORK SESSION**  
**11004 Carpenter Street, Mokena, Illinois 60448**  
**Monday, February 24, 2025**

**CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Fleischer called the Board of Trustees work session to order at 7:39 p.m.

**ROLL CALL**

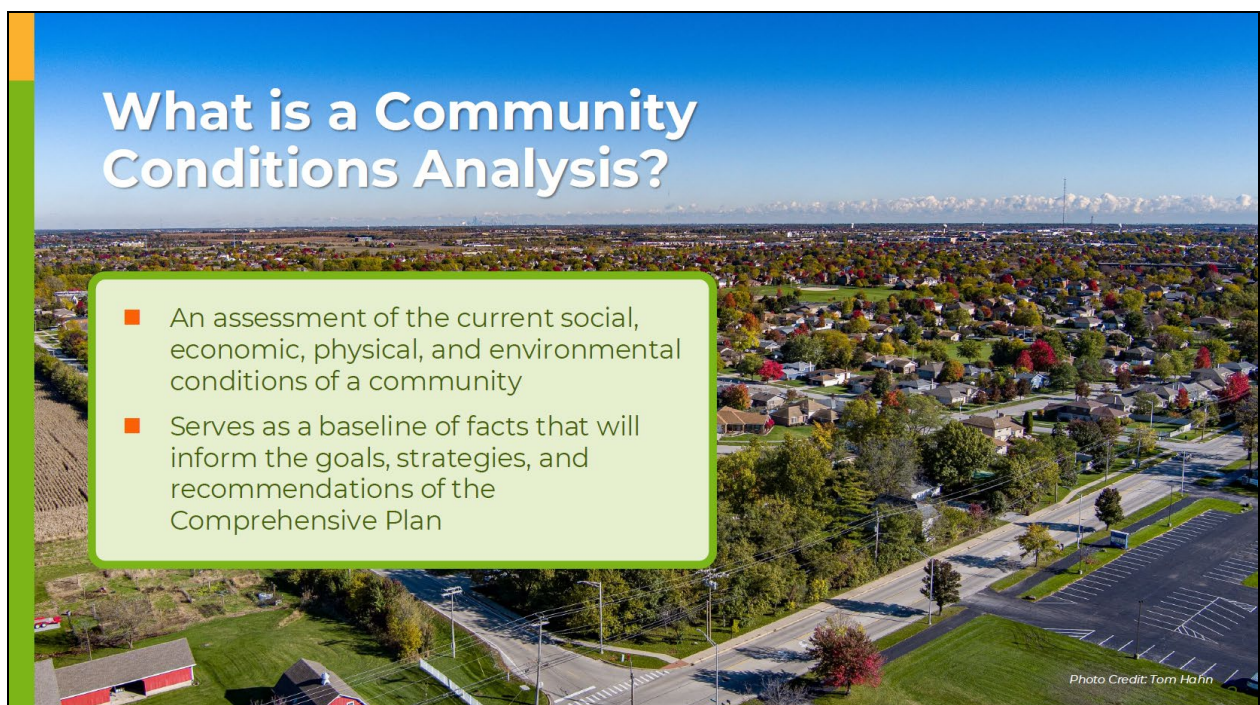
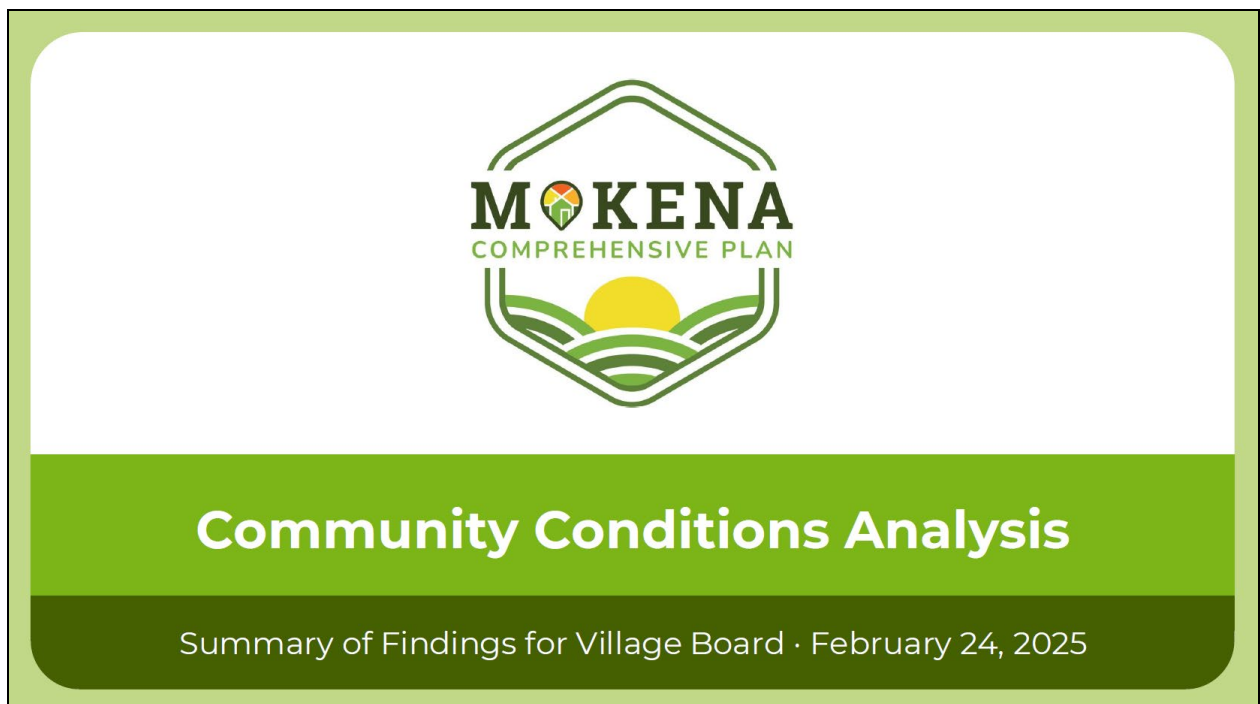
The following Trustees were present:

Rob Dauphinais  
Debbie Engler  
Melissa Fedora  
Terry G. Germany  
George J. Metanias  
James D. Roberts

Also present were the following: Village Clerk Melissa Martini; Village Administrator John Tomaskoski; Village Attorney/Human Resources Director Carl Buck; Chief of Police Brian Benton; Public Works Director Dan Peloquin; and Community Development Director Brent Cann

**Comprehensive Plan Update: Current Conditions Report**

Brent Cann and Teska Associates presented this item.



# Contents

- Section 1: Introduction
- Section 2: Land Use & Zoning
- Section 3: Demographics & Market Overview
- Section 4: Transportation
- Section 5: Utilities & Infrastructure
- Section 6: Environment
- Section 7: Community Facilities, Programs, & Services
- Section 8: Community Character & Identity
- Section 9: Community Engagement

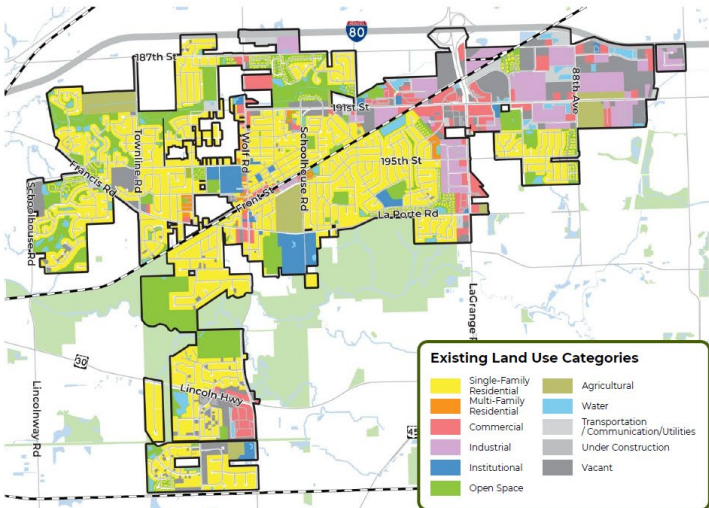
## 1. Introduction

- The Comprehensive Plan will **update and build upon the Village's existing plans**: 2002 Comprehensive Plan and 2008 Downtown Station Area Plan



## 2. Land Use & Zoning

- Mokena is primarily a **residential community** with mostly single-family homes
- Commercial nodes** are along Wolf Road, 191st Street, La Grange Road, and Route 30
- Industrial uses** are concentrated in the east section of Mokena
- Open spaces**, including forest preserves and parks, are distributed across the Village
- Zoning** generally matches existing land uses



Source: CMAP, 2020



### 3. Demographics & Market Overview

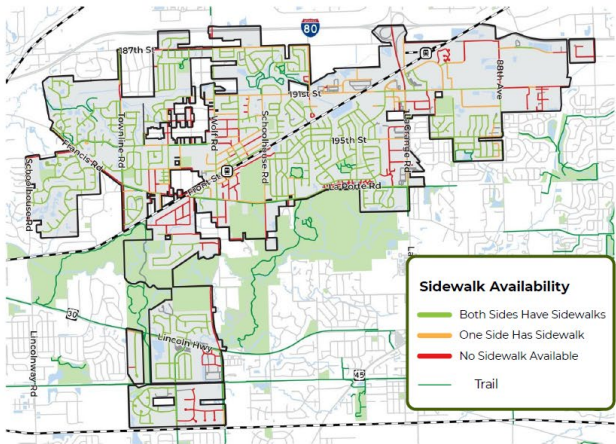
- **Wide range of retail**, including restaurants, home improvement stores, and grocery stores, serving locals and surrounding communities
- **Front Street has seen limited activity in recent years**, influenced by factors such as the railroad tracks bisecting the area, as well as challenges related to visibility, access, older properties, and multiple property owners
- **Industrial vacancies have steadily decreased** over the past five years
- Office market continues to improve gradually, with vacancies slowly declining, though **demand for office has decreased post-pandemic**
- **Mokena's housing market is strong**, with a decent mix of housing types, low vacancy rates, and high property values. Most homes in the Village were built after 1990
- **Single-family homes dominate Mokena**, though new townhome developments have increased in recent years that provide a greater variety of housing types to accommodate residents at different life stages and evolving preferences



6

### 4. Transportation

- Many roadways in the Village are owned by **IDOT or Will County**
- **Metra parking lot usage** is estimated to be lower than pre-pandemic (last data from 2019: 63% Front Street, 67% Hickory Creek)
- **Gaps in the sidewalk network** impact connectivity and accessibility for pedestrians
- Number of vehicle **crashes increased by 32% over the past five years**, with 455 total crashes in Mokena in 2023. Crashes causing personal injury happen more frequently on local streets and in subdivisions



7

### 5. Utilities & Infrastructure

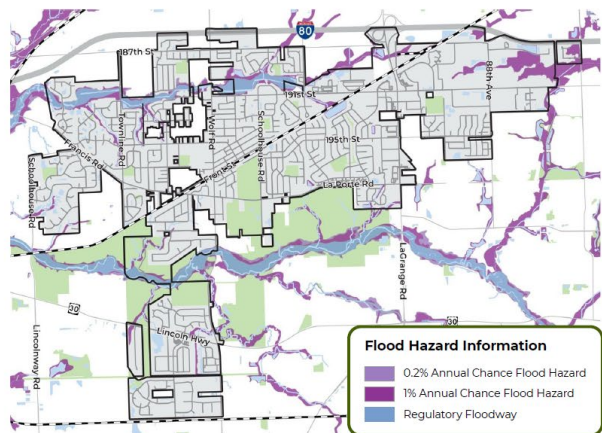
- **Lake Michigan Water** is available across Mokena, purchased from the Chicago Water Department
- Village **Capital Improvement Plan** for FY2025 includes:
  - Concrete curb/sidewalk replacements, milling, underdrains, patching, longitudinal joint sealing, resurfacing, and ancillary repairs
  - Street improvements for: Willow Avenue/195th Street (Schoolhouse Road to Lagrange Road), Midland Avenue (191st Street to Third Street), Parker Street (Wolf Road to Midland Avenue), and many streets within the Crystal Creek Subdivision (South of 187th, beginning a couple blocks east of Wolf Road)





## 6. Environment

- Wetlands in Mokena are concentrated in the Hickory Creek Forest Preserve
- Mokena's **tree canopy** (19%) is higher share than Will County (16%), indicating healthy tree coverage and benefits for air quality, stormwater management, and shade
- There are two regulatory **floodways** formed by natural streams, in northwest Mokena (covering some residential, commercial, and industrial areas) and south (along Hickory Creek)



*This map is provided for informational and illustrative purposes only. It should not be used for legal purposes. For precise and legally reliable information, please consult FEMA. Source: FEMA*

9

## 7. Community Facilities & Programs

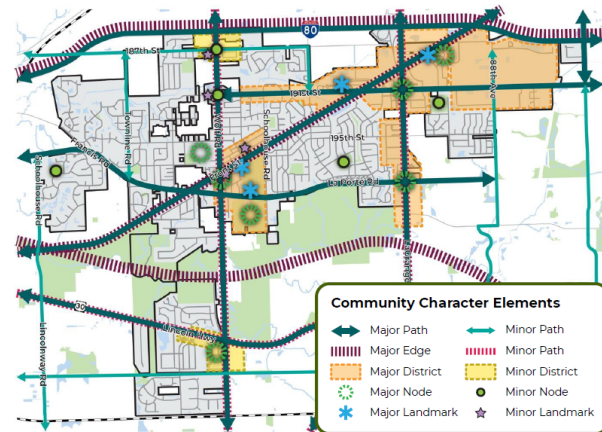
- Mokena's acres of **parkland per 1,000 residents** (13.1) is higher than the national average (10.6).
- Four elementary **school districts** and one high school district
- Three public **library** districts
- Village **Police Department** recently relocated from Front Street to a new state-of-the-art building on 191<sup>st</sup> Street
- Three **Fire Protection** districts
- Wide variety of **Mokena events** are cherished by residents
- Downtown Property Enhancement Assistance Program** for non-residential buildings in the Downtown



10

## 8. Community Character & Identity

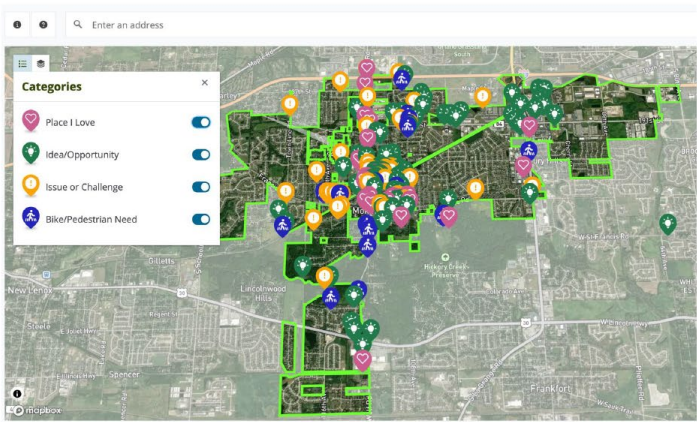
- Paths:** roads, sidewalks, trails
- Edges:** railroads, forest preserves, rivers, streams
- Districts:** clusters of buildings with similar uses, bulk, and aesthetics (downtown, corridors, near Metra stations)
- Nodes:** where people gather (shopping centers, recreational spaces, and community facilities)
- Landmarks:** major and known buildings such as the recreation center, library, Village Hall, churches, and historic buildings



11

## 9. Community Engagement

- Project **Website**: PlanMokena.org
- Online **Comment Map**
- Printed **project cards**
- **Pop-up #1**: Food Trucks on Front Street
- **Pop-up #2**: Halloween Hallow
- **Village Board** Interviews
- **Stakeholder** Interviews & Focus Groups



As of 2/20/25: **185 ideas** shared, **1,300 website visitors**, **3,300+ website views**

## 9. Community Engagement: Key Themes

- **Activate Front Street**
- **Increase walkability/bikeability**
- Create a **community destination/gathering** space
- Pursue **proactive economic development** in line with a vision
- **Balanced growth**, including a variety of **housing** options
- Attract **new businesses** and **recreation/entertainment**
- Define a cohesive **identity** for Mokena
- **Preserve** and **build upon** what we already have



## Next Steps

- Community Workshop: April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 5:30-7:30pm at the Police Station
- Develop Vision, Goals, and Objectives





Community Development Director Brent D. Cann presented an update on the Comprehensive Plan, specifically the findings of the Current Conditions Report. This report, prepared in collaboration with Teska Associates, Inc., serves as a foundational analysis of the Village's existing assets, infrastructure, and community characteristics.

Community Development Director Cann began by providing background on the Comprehensive Plan, noting that the Village engaged Teska Associates in early 2024 to lead the process. Since then, Michael Blue, FAICP, Vice President, and Francie Lawrence, AICP, Associate Principal, have worked closely with Village staff to gather data, engage the public, and assess existing conditions. Their efforts have culminated in the Current Conditions Report, which offers a snapshot of Mokena's land use, demographics, transportation systems, utilities, environment, and overall community identity.

Following this introduction, Mr. Blue and Ms. Lawrence addressed the Board, outlining key aspects of the report. They highlighted Mokena's predominantly residential nature, with commercial activity concentrated along major corridors such as Wolf Road, 191st Street, La Grange Road, and Route 30. Industrial development remains largely in the eastern section of the Village, while open spaces and forest preserves contribute to the community's environmental landscape. The Village's zoning regulations were found to be largely consistent with existing land use patterns.

The report's demographic and market overview pointed to a stable housing market with increasing diversity in housing options, particularly in new townhome developments. Retail activity, while strong in many areas, has seen challenges along Front Street due to access and visibility issues. Industrial vacancies have steadily decreased, and while the office market remains sluggish post-pandemic, it is showing gradual improvement.

Transportation findings indicated that many major roadways fall under state or county jurisdiction, and while Metra usage remains lower than pre-pandemic levels, it continues to be an important transit option. Gaps in the sidewalk network were identified as a concern for pedestrian accessibility, and the report noted an increase in vehicle crashes over the past five years.

The discussion of utilities and infrastructure emphasized that the Village continues to be well-served by Lake Michigan water, purchased from the Chicago Water Department. Planned capital improvements for 2025 include street and sidewalk repairs in key areas, aimed at maintaining Mokena's infrastructure.

Environmental considerations included Mokena's strong tree canopy coverage, which surpasses the county average and provides significant benefits for air quality and stormwater management. The Board was also informed of floodplain areas in the northwest and along Hickory Creek that require ongoing monitoring.

The report further detailed the Village's community facilities and programs, including its parks, schools, library districts, and emergency services. Notably, the Mokena Police Department's recent relocation to a modern facility on 191st Street was highlighted as a key infrastructure improvement.

The presentation concluded with an overview of community engagement efforts, which have involved public pop-up events, online feedback mechanisms, and stakeholder interviews. A total of 185 ideas have been submitted by residents, with strong interest in activating Front Street, enhancing walkability, attracting new businesses, and defining a cohesive identity for the Village. The next step in the planning process is a community workshop scheduled for April 22, 2025, at the Police Station. This event will provide residents with an opportunity to share their perspectives and help shape the vision, goals, and objectives for the Comprehensive Plan.

#### Discussion:

Board members expressed appreciation for the thoroughness of the report and the engagement process, noting that the data-driven approach would be instrumental in guiding Mokena's future development. Trustees also inquired about strategies to address identified challenges, such as pedestrian connectivity and economic revitalization in certain areas. In response, Mr. Blue and Ms. Lawrence reiterated that upcoming public input sessions would play a critical role in forming actionable recommendations.

With no further discussion, the Board acknowledged the report's significance in informing future policy decisions and reaffirmed their commitment to an inclusive planning process. The meeting concluded with encouragement for residents to participate in the upcoming workshop and other engagement opportunities to help shape Mokena's long-term growth.

#### **Geothermal Investment Tax Credit**

Chief of Police Brian Benton presented this item.

Chief Benton advised the Board that in October of 2024, Studio GC requested the Chief's assistance in completing an application for a tax benefit through a federal program created under the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). The benefit sought by Studio GC is called the Energy-Efficient Commercial Building Deduction (179D).

Chief Benton advised that in order to process the application for the tax benefit under this act, Studio GC retained a company called Alliant Group. Alliant Group reportedly works with them on several of their construction projects which use renewable energy technologies such as our geothermal heating and cooling system.

While working with staff from Alliant Group to accommodate the application process for Studio GC, Chief Benton advised that he was notified that the Village may also qualify for a tax incentive known as the Advanced Energy Project Investment Tax Credit (IRC Section 48) because of the Village's investment in the geothermal system. Alliant Group staff advised that tax-exempt organizations, such as the Village, are eligible for rewards for investing in renewable energy technologies. They advised that the investment tax credit (ITC), is a percentage ranging from 6%-50% of the total investment made in the eligible energy property. Chief Benton noted that for the new Police Station, this would include the ground source heat pumps and geothermal wells that were installed which could equate to approximately 30%-40% of the qualified energy property cost. According to the Alliant Group representative, this is estimated to be approximately \$100,000 to \$125,000.

Chief Benton shared that the Alliant Group representative advised that tax-exempt entities register for "Elective Pay" by filing a 990T with the Internal Revenue Service and that Alliant Group has offered to assist the Village with planning and submissions related to the Energy Tax Credit in return for a fixed fee of \$15,000.00. Their proposal identifies three phases that they will assist in. These phases include the initial project assessment where the determination would be made whether we qualify or not, the energy project analysis and application and then the reporting and compliance phase.

February 24, 2025

Work Session

Page 8 of 8

Under phase three, Alliant Group advised that they would prepare the final report and will also include compliance services for a period of five years after the credits are received to ensure the energy credits are maintained.

Chief Benton then inquired of the Board as to whether they would like to pursue this tax incentive option and enter into a contract with Alliant Group.

Discussion:

Mayor Fleischer thanked Chief Benton for presenting this opportunity to seek a return on the Village's investment. The Mayor and Board collectively agreed that the Chief should present this matter to the Board for a formal vote at a future meeting.

There being no further business to bring before the Mayor and Board of Trustees, Mayor Fleischer adjourned the work session at 8:03 p.m.