

# Chapter 1: Introduction

The Village of South Elgin is a community that has gone through significant changes in the past twenty years. In 1991, when the last Comprehensive Plan was adopted in South Elgin, the Village was a quiet, blue collar town of about 7,500 people living along the Fox River that had not changed significantly in decades. Since 1990, South Elgin has nearly tripled in population, added more than 1,000,000 square feet of commercial space along Randall Road and welcomed hundreds of new businesses. Put simply, South Elgin is not slightly different from what it was in 1990, it is almost completely different. South Elgin now offers a variety of quality neighborhoods to live in, great schools to attend, beautiful parks to play in, a variety of careers to pursue, and dozens of restaurants to eat at. It is a growing suburb in the Fox Valley with all of the opportunities and challenges that entails.

With all this said, South Elgin is not done growing or changing. An analysis of the land within or immediately adjacent to the Village shows that up to 29% additional land mass could be added, bringing many thousands of more people and dozens of new businesses in the coming decades. Exactly how many people, or what kinds of businesses, is not yet determined. South Elgin today is like a mostly finished puzzle, a puzzle that shows generally what kind of town it has become, but not a complete picture of what it will be. It is these details that can determine what kind of place South Elgin will be in 2030.

## A. Community Background

South Elgin is located within the Fox River Valley in Kane County, Illinois. The Village is approximately 40 miles west of the City of Chicago. Its neighbors include the City of Elgin, City of St. Charles, Village of Bartlett and unincorporated Kane County. Initial permanent settlement of South Elgin began in 1834 and it is now considered part of the Chicago suburbs. The Village has seen significant commercial, industrial, and residential growth over the past several years. The Village is now 7.13 square miles. Approximately 12% on the Village's land mass is industrial, 12% commercial and 48% residential.

South Elgin's municipal government was incorporated on April 20, 1897 for the purpose of administering the public affairs of its inhabitants for the common good. The Village is directed and managed by a Village President and the Board of Trustees. The Village works to promote a high quality of life for all residents; to maintain a prosperous financial base; to preserve South Elgin's unique heritage; and to conserve its distinct natural and historical character. The Village fulfills this mission with work completed under the following departments: Administration, Finance, Police, Public Works, Community Development, and Parks and Recreation. Fire protection services are provided by the South Elgin & Countryside Fire Protection District and the Fox River & Countryside Fire Protection District.

A major natural asset for the Village is the Fox River, which runs through the heart of the community and serves as a

significant recreational resource for the community. Many regional bike paths travel through and around South Elgin. Residents enjoy 163 acres of active and passive parks located throughout the Village. South Elgin is also home to the Fox River Trolley Museum which is the longest continuous service electric train in the United States. The Trolley Museum offers visitors an antique trolley ride over tracks that once connected South Elgin to Carpentersville, Elgin, Aurora, and Yorkville, dating back to 1896. Village residents attend public school at either St. Charles Community School District 303 or School District U-46. The Village is home to four elementary schools, one middle school, one high school and one kindergarten through eighth grade private school. Elgin Community College lies just outside the Village's boundaries. Residents are also served by the Gail Borden and St. Charles Library Districts with branch locations in nearby Elgin and St. Charles respectively.

## B. A Fast Growing Community

As highlighted in *South Elgin, 150 Years of Heritage, 1835 – 1985* by Ralph Tredup, the Fox River brought the initial settlement in South Elgin, with the first permanent settlers in 1834. In the 1800's South Elgin was known as Clintonville and by 1876 had a population of 450 people.

Growth continued slowly into the early 1900's as South Elgin grew to a population of 580 people in 1910. With South Elgin's proximity to the Fox River and to the neighboring cities of Elgin and St. Charles continued growth occurred from 1940 to today,

as Table 1.1 summarizes. South Elgin has grown by at least 25% in each decade of the last seventy years.

To date, South Elgin has had three main phases of growth. The first growth trend occurred pre-1970 where growth was limited to the core area. The type of growth during this time included small scale housing development and industrial and commercial development centered around the Fox River and north towards the City of Elgin along Route 31.

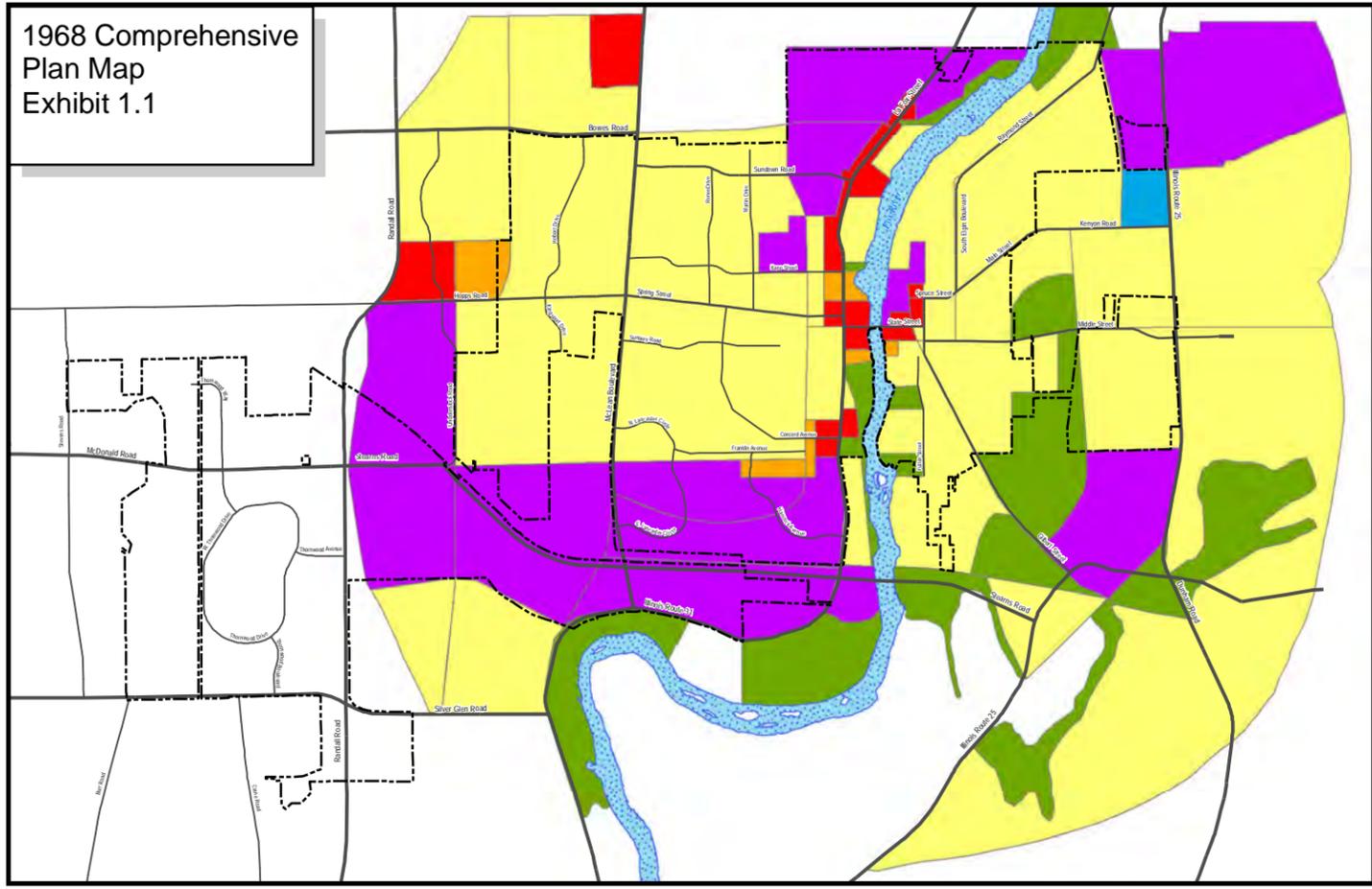
The second phase of growth was from 1970 to 1990. During this period, the Village continued to grow west from the Fox River towards McLean Boulevard. This new growth was substantially different than previous growth in that it included tract housing, parks, sidewalks, stormwater management systems and subdivision names. This growth occurred west of, but adjacent to, the existing core of South Elgin.

The final stage of growth from 1990 to present day occurred on a much larger scale and much more quickly than previous

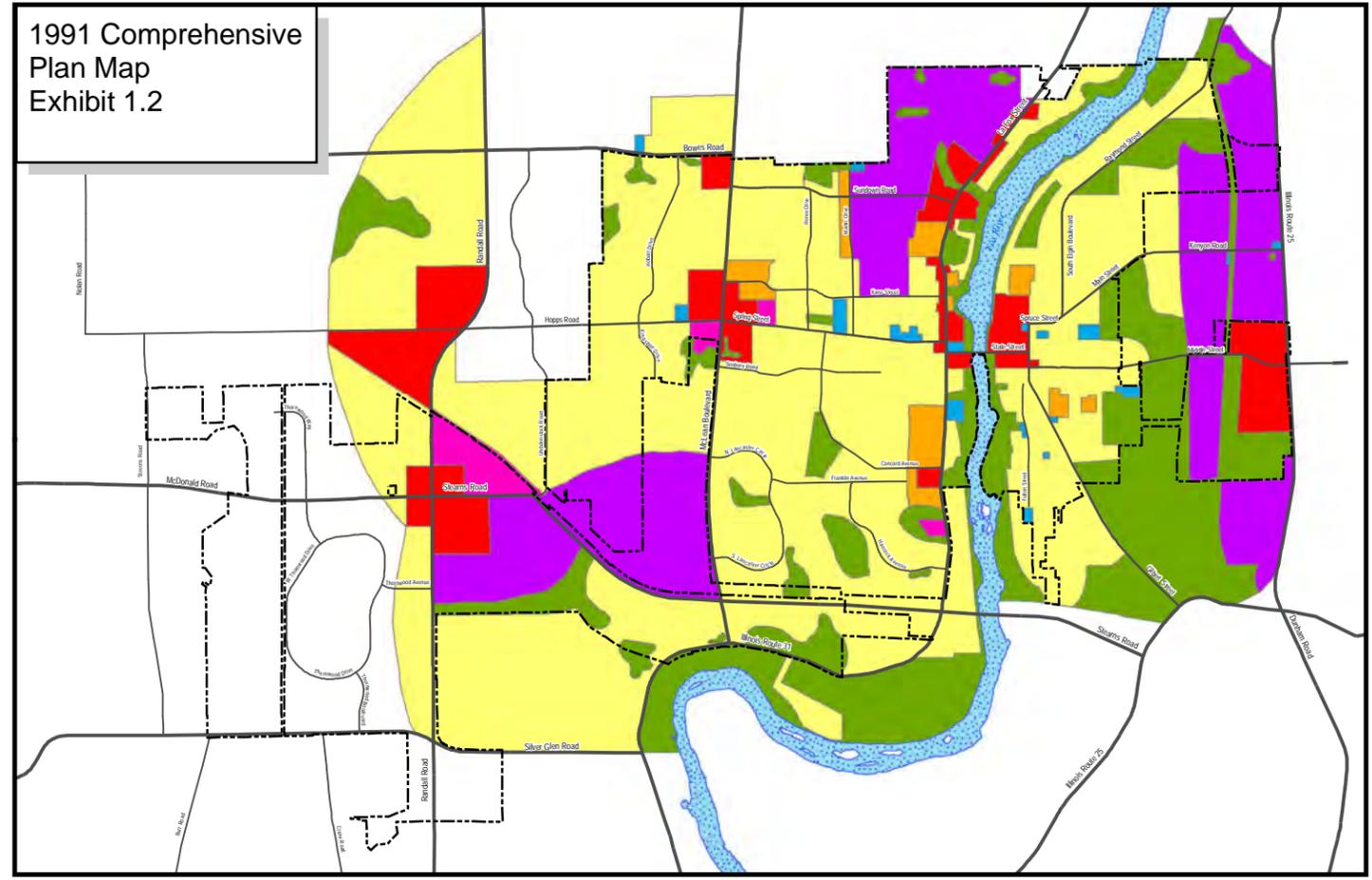
Population Trends		
Year	Population	% Change from Previous
1940	961	
1950	1,220	27%
1960	2,624	115%
1970	4,289	63%
1980	5,970	39%
1990	7,474	25%
2000	16,941	127%
2010	21,985	30%

Table 1.1

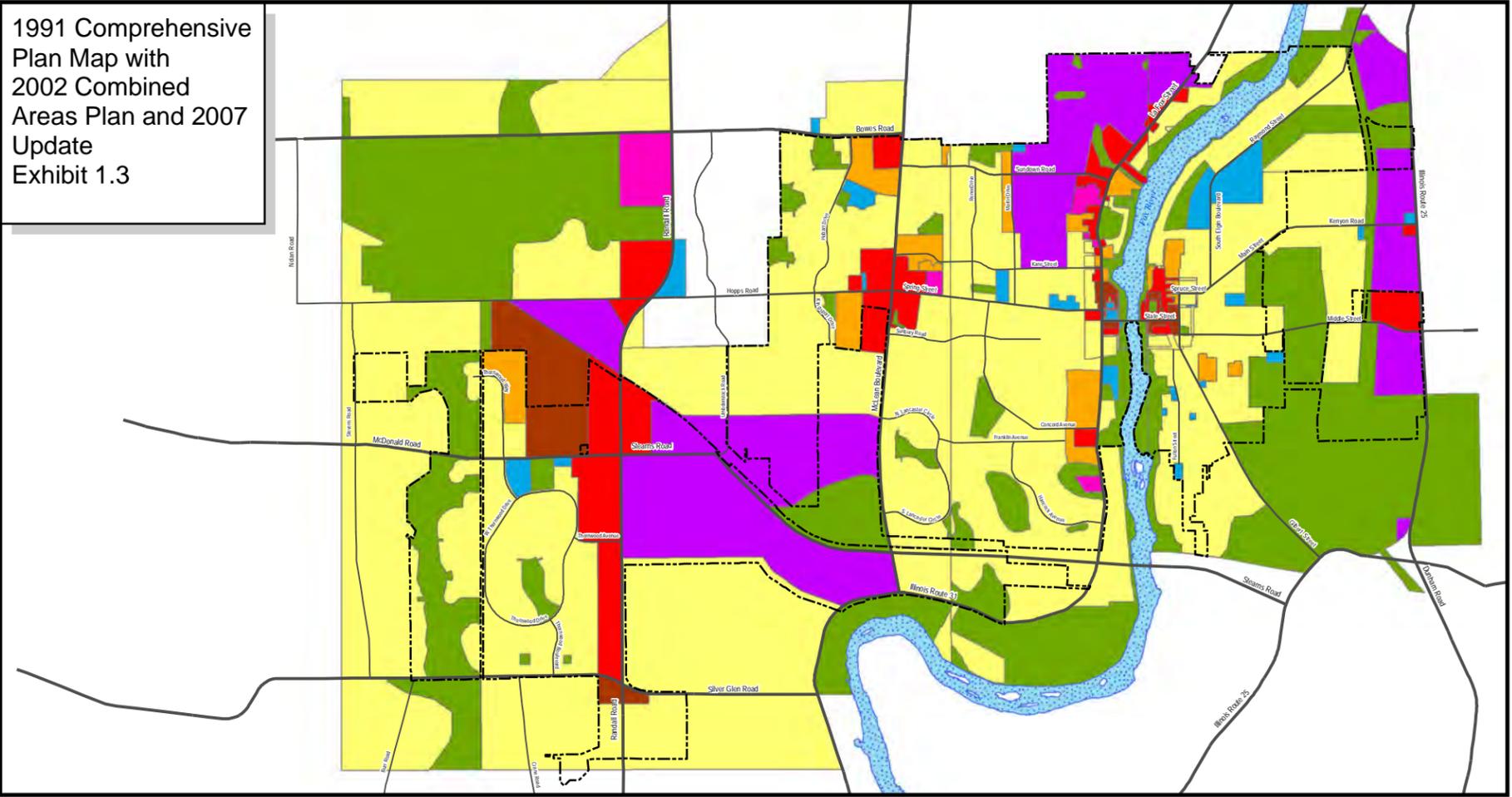
1968 Comprehensive Plan Map Exhibit 1.1



1991 Comprehensive Plan Map Exhibit 1.2



1991 Comprehensive Plan Map with 2002 Combined Areas Plan and 2007 Update Exhibit 1.3

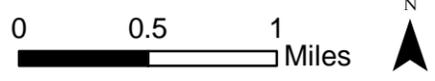


**Legend**

- Village Limits - 2010
- Arterials and Collectors - 2010
- Fox River

**Historic Plans Future Land Use**

- Single Family Residential/Low Density
- Mult-Family Residential/Medium Density
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Office
- Mixed Use
- Parks and Open Space
- Institutional



growth cycles. This new growth occurred mostly west of McLean Boulevard and south of Spring Street, although some new growth also occurred on the east side of the Village. This latest growth spurt brought large scale planned subdivisions like Sugar Ridge, Wildmeadow, River Ridge, Heartland Meadows and Thornwood. The new growth included a more diverse housing stock from small single family detached and duplexes to large single family and townhouse developments. The new growth also included a new industrial park along Umbdenstock Road and a major commercial corridor along Randall Road. During this time, developers changed from local to regional and national developers. Multiple national retailers appeared along the Randall Road corridor with shopping opportunities previously unheard of in the Village. This time frame also saw the Village stretch its boundaries much farther south and west than ever before. This rapid growth period was the catalyst for a new identity for South Elgin from that of a small relatively unknown Village along the Fox River to a thriving suburb in Chicagoland recognized in national magazines as “a great place to live.”

### C. A History of Planning

The first comprehensive plan was created in 1968 and showed the results of initial growth and guided the beginning of the second phase of growth. The plan addressed the arrangement of “homes, business, industry and recreation” and was intended to serve as a “guide to maintain the good community life in South Elgin.” This plan included four planning areas; the center area, the area within the present village limits, the fringe area and the area which falls within the one and one-half mile jurisdictional limit. This plan is summarized by Exhibit 1.1. The plan focused on developing a central area along the Fox River, locating the appropriate facilities for residential development, expanding the industrial base, improving the road networks, developing quality schools and parks, and creating a land use plan for future growth over the next 20 years.

The second comprehensive plan was completed in 1991 and continued to guide growth. During the development of the 1991 plan, it was seen as “the last opportunity for the Village to have a significant influence” on development. The goals of the plan were to create:

1. A well planned village that maintains its small town character within the context of the Fox River Valley.
2. A balanced relationship between man and the environment that minimizes the adverse impacts of development on natural resources.
3. The effective provision of essential services and facilities for the health, safety and welfare of South Elgin residents.
4. An adequate supply of housing opportunities within attractive neighborhoods to accommodate all residents of South Elgin.
5. Provide for an adequate and attractive commercial, office and industrial base to serve the needs of Village residents.
6. Safe, convenient and pleasant access throughout South Elgin.
7. Maintain sound and equitable Village finances.

Exhibit 1.2 shows the areas that were included in the 1991 Comprehensive Plan.

As growth occurred faster than any imagined, several updates to the 1991 plan were completed in 2002. Updates included plans for the Western Growth Area, Eastern Growth Area, La Fox Street Corridor, and Village Center. These updates focused on the third phase of growth. This plan discussed the transportation network, including pedestrian access, bicycle access and public transit, detailed land use policies, and defined design and development guidelines, including signage, architecture and lighting. A more detailed plan for the Village Center was adopted in 2007 that looked at transportation, infrastructure, parking and environmental needs on a block by block basis. The 2002 and 2007 updates to the 1991 Comprehensive Plan are included in Exhibit 1.3. This map shows the compilation of previous comprehensive planning efforts.

Each of the comprehensive plans and long range plans completed by Kane County and the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) were referenced as part of the planning process for the 2030 Comprehensive Plan.

### D. Plan Organization

The purpose of this 2030 Comprehensive Plan is to put the remaining puzzle pieces together to ensure that South Elgin is an even better place to live, play and work in 20 years than it is today. To accomplish this goal, the 2030 Comprehensive Plan establishes a vision for the future with clear and achievable goals based on input from community leaders and the citizens of South Elgin. The Plan looks at areas within the current Village boundaries and areas within the Village’s Planning Area. The Village’s Planning Area is defined by boundary agreements with Bartlett, Elgin and St. Charles, as well as, areas within 1.5 miles of the Village boundary that are not included within any boundary agreement. The Plan is organized as follows:

- Chapter 1: Introduction.
- Chapter 2: Context – describes South Elgin as it is in 2010.
- Chapter 3: Capacity Analysis – conducts a review of key Village systems to determine their strengths and weaknesses and establishes the capacity the Village has for growth.
- Chapter 4: Public Participation – describes the myriad of ways community leaders and the public at large have participated in the creation of this Plan.
- Chapter 5: Goals and Objectives – identifies the goals and objectives the community has set for itself to achieve its long term vision.
- Chapter 6: 2030 Vision – displays the vision for South Elgin in the year 2030. This chapter includes the Framework and Land Use Plans.

In addition to the main body of the report, the 2030 Comprehensive Plan will include appendices for additional plans as they are completed and remain relevant. See the table of contents for a listing of plans included in the appendices of the 2030 Comprehensive Plan.