

Village of Kaneville  
**COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**



*October 15, 2009*





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# Kaneville Comprehensive Plan

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## Landowner Interviews

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# Table of Contents

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## INTRODUCTION

<i>WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?</i>	<b>i</b>
<i>A VISION OF KANEVILLE</i>	<b>vi</b>
<i>PUBLIC PARTICIPATION</i>	<b>x</b>

CHAPTER 1: ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES	<b>1-1</b>
-----------------------------------	------------

CHAPTER 2: NATURAL RESOURCES	<b>2-1</b>
------------------------------	------------

CHAPTER 3: AGRICULTURAL	<b>3-1</b>
-------------------------	------------

CHAPTER 4: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT	<b>4-1</b>
---------------------------------	------------

CHAPTER 5: HOUSING	<b>5-1</b>
--------------------	------------

CHAPTER 6: VILLAGE CHARACTER & IDENTITY	<b>6-1</b>
-----------------------------------------	------------

CHAPTER 7: COMMUNITY FACILITIES	<b>7-1</b>
---------------------------------	------------

CHAPTER 8: CIRCULATION & TRANSPORTATION	<b>8-1</b>
-----------------------------------------	------------

CHAPTER 9: LAND USE	<b>9-1</b>
---------------------	------------

CHAPTER 10: PLAN IMPLEMENTATION	<b>10-1</b>
---------------------------------	-------------

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## List of Figures

Figure 1. Location Map	1-5
Figure 2. Existing Land Use Distribution in Kaneville	1-6
Figure 3. Existing Land Use Map	1-7
Figure 4. Kaneville Township Population Compared (1960-2000)	1-8
Figure 5. Kaneville Township Population Distribution by Age Group (1990-2000)	1-9
Figure 6. Kaneville Township Population Distribution by Age Group Compared (2000)	1-10
Figure 7. Kaneville Township Population Distribution by Age Group Compared (1990)	1-11
Figure 8. Kaneville Township Employment by Occupation (1990-2000)	1-14
Figure 9. Kaneville Township Employment by Industry (1990-2000)	1-15
Figure 10. Existing Community Facilities	7-4
Figure 11. Mobility vs. Access in the Thoroughfare Network	8-3
Figure 12. Thoroughfare Functional Classification Map	8-4
Figure 13. Highway and Thoroughfare Jurisdiction	8-6
Figure 14. Thoroughfare Network Plan	8-8
Figure 15. Regional and Local Bikeways	8-12
Figure 16. Existing Sidewalk Inventory and Evaluation	8-18
Figure 17. Pedestrian Circulation Plan	8-19
Figure 18. Existing Conditions Map	9-10
Figure 19. Planning Framework	9-11
Figure 20. 2040 Future Land Use Plan	9-12
Figure 21. 2040 Future Land Use Plan (Context Map)	9-13

## List of Tables

Table 1. Existing Land Use Distribution, Village of Kaneville	1-6
Table 2. Kaneville Township Population Compared (1960-2000)	1-8
Table 3. Kaneville Township Population Distribution by Age Group (1990-2000)	1-9
Table 4. Population Distribution by Age Groups Between Kaneville Township and Kane County	1-10
Table 5. Kaneville Township Population In-Migration (1990-2000)	1-11
Table 6. Education Attainment in Kaneville Township Population (1990-2000)	1-12
Table 7. Occupied Housing Characteristics for Kaneville Township (1990-2000)	1-12
Table 8. Kaneville Township Population Employment by Occupation (1990-2000)	1-13
Table 9. Kaneville Township Population Employment by Industry (1990-2000)	1-14

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## What is a Comprehensive Plan?

A Comprehensive Plan is the vision of what the community wants to become and the steps needed to meet that goal. They often have been described as a blueprint or road map to be used by a community for creating or arriving at some prescribed end state. Like a blueprint or road map, Comprehensive Plans are dynamic meaning they need to be able to adjust to changing circumstances, new technology, new opportunities, or changing community preferences and attitudes. Comprehensive plans may be developed for specific geographical areas of the community, and are referred to as sub-area plans, e.g. central business districts, transportation corridors, or a neighborhood.

Comprehensive Plans are composed of a series of separate, but interrelated, core elements that address specific topics defined in the Illinois Local Planning Assistance Act (Public Act 92-0768). The elements addressed in the Kaneville Comprehensive Plan include Natural Resources, Agriculture, Housing, Economic Development, Transportation and Circulation (Walkability Plan), Village Character, and Land Use. A community may wish to add additional elements, such as historic preservation, community facilities, technology and urban design as needed.

The elements of a Comprehensive Plan are interrelated in that they share common assumptions about population and economic growth, the geographic area to which the plan applies, and the time frame, typically from ten to twenty years or more. The elements must reinforce and not conflict with one another.

## Why is Kaneville Preparing a Comprehensive Plan?

The expansion of the sand and gravel mines adjacent to the community over the years; the adoption of the centerline for the proposed Prairie Parkway and its imminent construction; the growth of adjacent municipalities; and, the desire to maintain community character all conspired to influence the incorporation of Kaneville. Preparing and adopting a Comprehensive Plan would arm the community in its challenges to these and other threats yet to come. Residents recognize that Kaneville has special qualities that attract and keep them here and they wish to maintain these attributes as the community grows. Kaneville will be faced with numerous decisions in the near and distant future. Having a plan provides a context in which decisions affecting the future of Kaneville can be made today with some certainty that today's decisions contribute to achieving the larger goals or objectives.

A Comprehensive Plan also provides a larger context in which smaller decisions can be evaluated. Growth and change in Kaneville will occur incrementally over a long period of time. Having a plan that identifies the destination and achievements to be made only helps the decision-making process for all of the decisions—large and small—that will come. The Comprehensive Plan should be used in all community development decisions affecting land use, transportation and infrastructure, and capital improvements.

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## Does Kaneville Need to Grow?

Growth is part of the natural order of things. Plants and animals grow. People grow. Communities grow. But growth for a community, like living things in the natural world, occurs only when the conditions are right and the essential components of community development—cultural, economic, ecological—are satisfied and in balance. But achieving balance is further complicated by the interrelationships and conflicts between each component.

Cities and villages form in response to human needs for civic or cultural, social and economic interaction. Cities form and grow in response to trade and transport: harbors, river crossings, where main roads intersect, and where roads meet trains. Kaneville began as a crossroads market place for the agricultural activities that were occurring in close proximity to the crossroads. Some people chose to reside in town rather than in the farm landscape. And the community grew. Churches and schools were added. More businesses appeared. When the railroads came to Kaneville and expanded markets, the community grew a little bit more. After the railroads left Kaneville the community stopped growing. Access to markets and services is key to economic development and economic development or opportunity is key to growth for a community. If there are no jobs in the community or within close proximity, few will settle in the community. But the proximity of Interstate 88 has had a negligible influence on growth in Kaneville. This is due in large measure to the partial interchange at Route 47 and the comparative inaccessibility of the Village.

The short answer is, yes, Kaneville will grow. Cities and villages are not unlike developing the human body. We can make many choices and decisions that affect the physical appearance of our bodies, how well our bodies function, and ultimately, how long our bodies will work. Over emphasizing one land use at the expense of others does not lead to a well-rounded resilient, complete community. The three pillars of community development—culture, economy and ecology—must be in balance in order for a community to achieve its potential. Concentrating on the protection of natural landscape and farms at the expense of the man-built environment eventually will degrade the protected landscapes. Focusing only on the costs of development or improvements will turn a blind eye towards environmental protection and other opportunities and benefits for the community that can accrue through development. If the man-built environment and the natural environment are not in sync and compatible, civic and cultural institutions in the community may not function.

Treating communities or neighborhoods like museum pieces or placing them in amber works only for the few exceptional places, such as Colonial Williamsburg, Woodstock, Vermont, or Cooperstown, New York, and is usually the work of one or more wealthy benefactors, or where religious custom is entrenched such as the Quaker settlements in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania or the Mennonite settlements in Iowa. Cities and villages are a living, dynamic species that owe their vitality to the individuals that live and conduct business in them.



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Change is inevitable. Every community undergoes change and experiences stages of growth and redevelopment. There is not one community in the Fox Valley that remains the same as it was like one hundred or even forty years ago. Yet, many of these communities remain endearing and much beloved places (and highly desirable places to live). Geneva and Batavia were settled about the same time as Kaneville and likely resembled Kaneville in many respects early in their existence. But as they attracted more people to earn a livelihood they grew and evolved. Neither community looks exactly as it did when it was founded but there are enough clues and remnants to establish a look and feel to their community character.

The “keep-it-as-it-is” approach to community development ignores the fact that much of the change that occurs in a community is brought about by forces that do not respect municipal boundaries and over which local decision-makers have no control. Flooding will continue and may worsen over time, even if Kaneville does not grow. Traffic will increase and the country highways that give character to Kaneville will be transformed into wider faster highways, even if no new house or business is constructed in Kaneville. Some public facilities, such as schools and the post office, could be (re)located closer to where the demand for services is present in nearby communities, even if there is no change in Kaneville in the future. Because retail and service businesses and employers tend to locate where the market exists, Kaneville could see a slow decline in the number of businesses from the community, even if there is no decline in population in Kaneville. And taxes in Kaneville will rise, even if there is never another house or business constructed in the community. Sticking one’s head in the sand and pretending growth will not occur is no answer either. Ignoring change does not make it go away.

In nature, the species that adapt live on; those that cannot or refuse to do so become extinct. Cities are no different. If a community cannot or refuses to adapt to the changes and challenges or seize the opportunities presented to it, the community is likely to decline and may cease to exist. At first, the decline will be slow and imperceptible but over time the decline will become painfully apparent and, all too often, irreversible.

It is understandable why residents of Kaneville want to protect that which they have because Kaneville is a unique place. But growth need not mean Kaneville’s qualities and characteristics have to be destroyed. It is true the metropolitan region has plenty of examples of communities which have started off on that journey only to lose the things that defined them and quickly become disappointing characterless places. But Kaneville need not replicate those mistakes and should learn from them.

Due to its location, Kaneville has been able to remain largely unchanged for nearly eighty years. It was abandoned by the railroads in the 1920’s (they even took the railroad tracks with them). It’s not situated on a major highway. There is no unique landscape feature. But these circumstances also permitted the community to exist without the kinds of development pressures that many communities in the region have experienced for the past fifty years.

Adapting to change does not mean nor imply that the community must forfeit the qualities and characteristics that define it.

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The question at the beginning of this section is incorrect. **The question should be “How shall Kaneville grow?”** For, it is the manner in which a community grows and responds to change, challenges and opportunities that defines it. The benchmarks are not quantitative, such as acres or population. Rather, decision-makers and residents should be asking qualitative questions: Is the growth compact and orderly? Does it reflect Kaneville, or is it transplanted from another place? Is the growth and change fiscally sound? Is the growth and change consistent with the principles and recommendations in the Comprehensive Plan? Will there be measurable community benefits if the development or program is approved? What harm is caused to the natural environment if the growth or change occurs? Does the growth or change improve the quality of life in Kaneville for all residents and visitors? How does the growth or change contribute towards making Kaneville a sustainable community?

Elsewhere in this document the pace of achieving this plan is addressed. **The Comprehensive Plan is not a race to finish.** Rather it is a journey to experience. None of us possess a crystal ball or have the ability to forecast with any degree of certainty what the future will be. The Comprehensive Plan relies upon history, trends and expectations to formulate a recommended path to follow. It is broad and general in scope. It attempts to force people to dream. **The Plan has a very long time horizon.** Many of the recommendations in the Plan will be realized by persons who have not moved to Kaneville or have yet to be born. There are numerous details that have yet to be examined and studied and for this reason the Comprehensive Plan—and the Future Land Use Plan—should be considered as framework plans upon which additional layers will be added in the future.

## What is a Small Rural Town?

Kaneville residents indicated over and over the desire to maintain Kaneville as a small rural town. But what is a small town? What is a rural town? Is a small town defined by its physical size? The number of inhabitants? The number of schools? If so, what are the standards?

Or is a small town the connections one can make with others in the neighborhood and where you can recognize by face, if not by name, most of the people you encounter walking along the street or at the General Store or at the Village Board meeting? Or is it a place where neighbors look out for one another and have genuine concern about the well being of their neighbors? Or is it the kind of place where the shopkeepers greet you by name when you enter their store, and where everybody’s business is everybody’s business? If it is these types of qualities, can they not exist within the neighborhoods of larger communities?

Is a rural town any kind of development in the countryside? Which is a more appropriate example of a rural town, Image A or Image B? Both are surrounded by farmland. But in which example would you expect the social interaction along the street to occur? And in which image can you envision the pillars of community development—culture, economy and ecology—at work and readily available?

### RURAL CHARACTER:



(A)



(B)

### COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT RULES-OF-THUMB:

- » 600 households are needed to support a mini-mart
- » 800 households are needed to support an elementary school
- » 6,000 households are needed to support a small grocery store

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## A Vision of Kaneville

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It is now 2059. Since Kaneville's first Comprehensive Plan was completed 50 years ago, the community has grown but still remains very much a small town. When the Comprehensive Plan was adopted, Illinois and the nation were mired in what has been labeled the Great Recession and the prospects for growth seemed dim at the time. But the refocus on energy independence and integrating energy policy with security and environmental protection spawned entire new industries, some of which have taken root in Kaneville. Renewable energy installations and water collection systems in Kaneville are as commonplace, today, as shade trees.

Agriculture remains the dominant landscape feature in the community and plays a significant role in the socio-economic development of Kaneville. Farming remains a viable occupation and vocation in the area due in large measure to the Village's approach to development prescribed in the Comprehensive Plan: compact form of development, no leapfrog development, and developing only those properties identified for development in the Plan. The County's agriculture protection program that began around the turn of the 21st century also is a contributing factor to the agricultural landscape.

Specialty farms abound and a number of specialty agricultural products have spread the Kaneville "brand" across the country. A thriving artisan culture calls Kaneville home, attracting hundreds of visitors and shoppers each week and making Kaneville the epicenter of the artisan movement that has swept the country. The village center is part shopping district and part workshop as many artisans produce their wares right in the shop fronts. On any given day a visitor can see jewelry, musical instruments, glass, art work, handicrafts, and even some food products being produced right before their eyes. The robotics and other technology studios are particularly popular among locals and visitors, alike. A sophisticated network of bed-and-breakfasts in Kaneville further contributes to the visitors' thirst to experience small town life with the "farm-and-breakfasts" increasing in popularity. The internet economy is key to Kaneville's economic development as numerous successful enterprises flourish in the community.

Kaneville has been successful in accommodating growth and maintaining the small town character that endeared it to earlier residents and visitors. While the community is bigger in area and population, the neighborhoods are distinctly pedestrian-scale and immensely pedestrian-friendly. The supply and location of parks in the Village place a park less than a five-minute walk from nearly every resident. Many visitors remark about the pleasure of being able to walk about safely and being able to negotiate the neighborhoods and community without being intimately familiar with the Village, as well as the friendliness of Kaneville's residents. The circulator bus also contributes to the ease with which one can traverse the community, and provides scheduled service to the commuter rail stations in Elburn, Big Rock, and north of Kaneville at Meredith Road.

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The emphasis on compact development and designing new neighborhoods with the pedestrian in mind has reduced automobile trips dramatically. The interconnected thoroughfare system has enabled Kaneville to avoid the expensive retrofitting of neighborhood street networks that is occurring in many communities in the area. Kaneville's approach to neighborhood design allowed the Village to construct smaller, safer streets. Making neighborhoods pedestrian-friendly discourages use of the auto in Kaneville and permits people to meet and talk with their neighbors. The value of such impromptu social-civic interaction is immeasurable and is one of the quality of life considerations in Kaneville today.

Social and community organizations play a significant role in the community by organizing community events, which seem endless, and are popular among non-residents, as well. The major seasonal events help to remind us all of the agricultural cycle as well as the natural cycle of the seasons, all of which instills a greater respect for nature and greater reverence for husbanding the land and natural resources in the community. The land ethic in Kaneville remains as strong as ever. Water conservation efforts have helped the Village avoid many of the water shortage problems that plague the region, particularly those areas beyond the service area of Lake Michigan water providers.

The long anticipated Prairie Parkway has been constructed and the Village prevailed in putting the "park" in the Parkway and the corridor is the recreational and transportation corridor envisioned by the first Comprehensive Plan. The bridges and viaducts in the Prairie Parkway corridor differentiate Kaneville from all other communities in the corridor and the Village is the envy of northern Illinois communities with respect to the design of the Prairie Parkway. The bikeway along the Prairie Parkway is more popular than anyone could have imagined. In fact, the number of regional bikeways that converge on Kaneville have made the Village a gathering spot for scores of bicyclists every weekend.

Welch Creek has been transformed from a channelized ditch back into a magnificent natural stream. The meander was put back in the creek channel several decades ago and a vegetation buffer was extended farther out from the creek for water quality and habitat purposes. The wildlife returned and the floods which still occur are far less damaging and disruptive. A visit to the creek on most any day will find people of all ages fishing and children searching for mussels and turtles and frogs.

One of the characteristics of the community that endears it to residents is the wide range of ages that call Kaneville home. The Village has been very successful in making Kaneville a place where people of all ages are comfortable and welcome, and where an individual can find housing choices and options throughout their entire life span in Kaneville. Kaneville has become a true life span community which likely has had a direct positive impact on the social and civic engagement of residents in the community. Residents and visitors remark about the mix of housing and people in all

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of Kaneville’s neighborhoods and how different the community is from the segregated enclaves that characterize many other communities in the region. There are some who argue that Kaneville had no choice but to adopt housing policies that encourage choices and options for people at all stages of life because few people want to leave Kaneville once they visit it.

The Village has done a remarkable job of reducing its carbon footprint. With the implementation of energy and water conservation measures, rural nighttime illumination standards, renewable energy production, and community design which reduces the need for automobile trips. New neighborhood development has had a lower impact on natural resources than in the past. Combined with some of the landscape restoration efforts in the planning area such as the wetlands restorations and the naturalization of Welch Creek, Kaneville is a very sustainable community.

Following one of the recommendations of the original Comprehensive Plan, the community made a significant investment in a public water supply and distribution system and a sanitary wastewater collection and treatment system. This investment was fortuitous since it allowed Kaneville to construct a state-of-the-art system that was more environmental, and the Village is not faced with the tremendous cost of retrofitting an existing system like many communities have been forced to do. Kaneville has a secure supply of potable water which, unfortunately, cannot be said of many private wells in the region. And because the vast majority of buildings constructed in the Village occurred after 2009 there is an inventory of buildings that optimize water and energy conservation and waste reduction and the expensive household conversions occurring in many communities is not needed in Kaneville.

When the Comprehensive Plan was prepared the community desired a return of its own elementary school. Today, Kaneville has a number of elementary schools, reflecting the changes occurring in education and the size of education facilities.. The schools are smaller, multi-purpose facilities and provide a meeting place for neighborhood activities and events throughout the year and they also reflect the new approach to school design and incorporate the latest technologies to keep school children competitive with their counterparts around the globe.

The original crossroad area remains much as it was like fifty years ago with many buildings having been rehabilitated and updated with renewable energy technology. The new Town Center along Welch Creek is dynamic and a popular place for locals and visitors. The “Main Street”-like environment suits Kaneville and the spa has become synonymous with Kaneville. Many of the storefronts are artisan workshops and shoppers and passersby are treated to the pleasure of seeing wares created before their eyes and makes the Town Center a shopping and entertainment district of a different sort. The robotics studios and their scheduled (and unscheduled demonstrations) are particularly popular among visitors. Many community events are staged on the Village green along Welch Creek and the summer concerts are extremely popular and well attended.

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The sand and gravel mines have been transformed into a business park and a number of enterprises call it home. And many Kaneville residents are employed in these businesses, foregoing the long commutes many in the region continue to make twice each workday. The industrial district was the result of farsighted leadership in the community and a political partnership among the leaders of Kaneville, Elburn and Sugar Grove. The cooperative effort to complete the full interchange at Interstate 88 and State Route 47 obviously was an important achievement. But the Seavey Road overpass at Interstate 88 enabled Kaneville to truly exploit the access advantages the Interstate provides and allowed the other communities to achieve a number of their goals as well.

In some ways, the industrial district does not resemble what was contemplated when the Comprehensive Plan was adopted. Today, while there are businesses involved in the production of goods and materials, such as the nanotechnology businesses and the wind energy businesses, the district has become a multi-purpose zone where the green roofs of the buildings double as specialty farms and photovoltaic surfaces which enables the district to be a net producer of electricity for Kaneville. Aquaculture and fisheries occupy some of the buildings in the district with one Kaneville fishery being the leading US exporter of certain specialty fishes.

Since the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan, Kaneville has become not only a place on the map, but a lifestyle, to its residents. Many residents could have chosen another community but as their lifestyles change they would not have the variety of housing choices or options available to them like they do in Kaneville. Decisions made fifty years ago to make Kaneville neighborhoods compact, people friendly, and to maintain the land as a resource to be conserved which contributes to the Kaneville lifestyle that continues to endear people half a century later.

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## Public Participation

The purpose of this element of the Comprehensive Plan is to document and summarize the process for engaging the community in the development and preparation of the Comprehensive Plan.

### **Community Survey**

The Kaneville Plan Commission conducted a survey of Kaneville residents to obtain information about the matters that were of most interest to them, including community development issues. The survey was mailed to every household in the Village in 2008. Results of the community survey can be found at the Village's website, [www.villageofkaneville.com](http://www.villageofkaneville.com).

### **Comprehensive Plan Open House**

An Open House was conducted in August 2009 at which residents could review the Comprehensive Plan and its recommendations. Over forty persons attended and represented about ten-percent of the population. Key elements of the Comprehensive Plan were on display for public review, including recommendations, implementation strategies, inventory information, and the Future Land Use Plan. Planning Commissioners and the consultant were present to answer questions. Participants also were given opportunities to rank the importance of the Plan's implementation recommendations and to identify images of various building typologies that they found attractive and pleasing and suitable for Kaneville. The implementation recommendations in this report are presented in the order of preference indicated by residents who attended the Open House.

The Image Preference Survey allowed residents to view a number of like building typologies and to select the image(s) that they found most favorable or agreeable with their vision of Kaneville. There was a total of 71 images representing detached single-family, attached single-family, multiple-family, accessory apartments, commercial, mixed-use buildings, industrial, streets and alleys, and environmental images or features. Residents were given 32 dots and they could place as many dots on an image and on any number of images. Planning Commissioners often asked participants to explain why they selected or did not select certain images. The responses form the basis form the conclusions described below.

Generally, residential images, regardless which building typology was in the image, received votes if the architectural style evoked the rural Midwestern vernacular (e.g., Victorian, four-square, Gothic, Craftsman, Colonial). Bizarre (Image 17) or uninspiring (Image 13) architecture did not score high with residents. But front yards, front porches and generous amounts of windows on the street façade of buildings, as well as well-maintained landscaping, were positive features that influenced votes.





Image 17



Image 13

Residential images that included an attached garage that protruded from the façade of the home or otherwise dominated the façade of the home were not well received. Preferences were greatly influenced by the angle from which the image was taken. Buildings that were captured in a portrait format (e.g., Image 19) generally received more votes than similar buildings or architectural styles that were captured in a perspective format (e.g., Image 20). Participants explained that the perspective views made the buildings appear too close together which was considered an undesirable feature for most persons.



Image 19



Image 20

The images of two-family buildings, also known as duplexes, which showed two-family buildings that resembled a large single-family house (Image 25, & 28), were very favorably received. The conventional duplex (Image 26) received no support.



Image 25



Image 28



Image 26

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There was similar reaction to images of attached single-family homes. The conventional townhouse (Image 36) received no support. Images that showed traditional architecture (Image 35 & 37) were preferred more than those that did not.



Image 36



Image 37



Image 35

The preference for multiple-family building images followed the same track. What is notable about the preferences for multiple-family buildings is that building mass and scale are factors that can be mitigated by good architectural design, landscaping and pedestrianism. Image 39 uses a recess line on the fourth floor to step-back portions of the fourth floor, material and color changes and a courtyard that is designed for the pedestrian. Image 38 employs a pitched roof to accentuate the building's height and the courtyard is reserved for automobile use. Image 38 did not receive any votes from participants.



Image 39



Image 38

Mixed-use building images (buildings that have different uses vertically in the building) received favorable responses. However, size and scale of the building and the presence of pedestrian amenities such as awnings and outdoor seating, materially affected resident's acceptance of the image. Generally, residents accepted the mixed-use building typology and their preferences gravitated towards images that included or

evoked rural Midwestern “Main Street” character, such as Images 49, 53 and 52. Image 45 received the most votes owing to its small scale and rural character. Image 51 received no votes because the building is out-of-scale for Kaneville.



Image 49



Image 52



Image 53



Image 45



Image 51

The live-work building typology is a new concept for Kaneville and the region and an image was provided to spark thought and discussion. The sole live-work image (Image 56) received few votes but many participants expressed their opinion that the live-work unit is a good idea.



Image 56

The accessory apartment building typology (Image 59) also is a new housing concept for Kaneville, but a number of participants were familiar with the concept. This typology, too, received few votes but many positive comments.



Image 59

The industrial building typology was represented with one image of a large logistics building (Image 57) but no loading docks or trucks were visible in the image. This image received a number of votes with the landscaping and absence of trucks in the image influencing participants' preferences.



Image 57

A small number of images showing green development practices were included in the survey. Residents enthusiastically supported the renewal energy and water conservation practices depicted in the images (Images 62, 63, and 65). Many residents noted that they were voting for Image 66 in support of the wind turbine, not the retailer's building included in the image.



Image 62



Image 63



Image 65



Image 66

The preference among streets and alleys images was toward those images that showed rural or small town environments (Image 68 & 71). Wide suburban streets with curb and gutter did not appeal to residents or reflect their vision of the community. However, images in the green development practices section of the survey showing (narrow) streets with bio-swales received many positive votes and comments. The conclusion that can be drawn is curbs and gutters are not the primary issue with the street; it is the width of the street that influenced residents' preferences.



Image 68



Image 71

Participants overwhelmingly favored landscaping across all of the categories. Also, images of development incorporating pedestrian friendly design, proportions, and amenities scored higher than those that did not. Favorable images were not limited to old or “historic” scenes. The use of land or buildings did not influence scores as much as the appearance of the pedestrian and/or public realm.

Generally, the Image Preference Survey found that Kaneville residents prefer development that incorporates the following characteristics and attributes:

- » Well-designed buildings, recognizable front doors or main entrances, and appropriate use of architectural detail and materials, color, and being able to recognize the use and purpose of the buildings
- » Organization and order
- » Pedestrian access, friendly environments
- » Meaningful landscaping and well maintained landscaping
- » Buildings oriented toward the street, not to parking lots
- » Proximity of houses to one another is important; don’t like houses too close together
- » Avoid garagescapes; garages need to be recessed or removed from the front of houses
- » Front porches are highly desirable
- » The use of renewable energy devices and sustainable development practices are widely supported