

**City of Highland Park**

**MORAINÉ NORTH  
DISTRICT**

**Neighborhood  
Strategic  
Plan**

**Approved  
May 1998**

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## **MORaine NORTH NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN**

### **Introduction to the Moraine North Neighborhood**

The Moraine North neighborhood is located along Lake Michigan in the northeast portion of Highland Park. Moraine North is generally bounded by Walker Avenue on the north, Lake Michigan on the east, Moraine Road on the south and the City Corporate Limits (Waukegan Avenue) on the west. The western portion of the Moraine North Neighborhood includes the Moraine North business district, which is adjacent to the City of Highwood Central Business District. Surrounding the Moraine North business district is multiple-family residential land uses zoned RM1 (medium to high density) and RM2 (high density). The rest of Moraine North is zoned for single-family uses, with the majority being zoned as R6 (medium density). The eastern edges of the neighborhood are zoned R5 (moderate density) and R4 (low to moderate density). The former Fort Sheridan military base is situated immediately to the north of the neighborhood. The southeastern portion of the Fort functions as housing for the Navy, and the southwestern portion of the Fort serves the Army Reserve. Open space and recreational areas in the neighborhood include Port Clinton Park, Moraine Park and the Green Bay Trail.

### **Moraine North Neighborhood Planning Process**

In 1996, the City of Highland Park began the process of updating its Official Master Plan, which is being completed on a neighborhood-by-neighborhood basis. The Moraine North neighborhood is one of eleven districts into which the City has been divided for Master Plan update. The boundaries of the Moraine North neighborhood are defined as Walker Avenue on the north, Lake Michigan on the east, Moraine Road on the south and Waukegan Avenue on the west.

The planning process for the Moraine North neighborhood began in March 1997. At the first Moraine North Neighborhood meeting on March 20, 1997, residents discussed opportunities and challenges of the neighborhood, and enumerated several neighborhood strengths. Such positive attributes include the natural environment created by the ravines and lakefront, as well as the active recreational areas of Port Clinton Park, Moraine Park and Green Bay Trail. The residents also agreed that the City of Highwood's downtown provides the neighborhood with convenient services including a post office, commuter train station, library and drug store.

Another important ingredient in the existing neighborhood quality is the sense of community among the neighbors that is expressed by longevity in home ownership, well-maintained properties and participation in community programming such as parent-teacher organizations. The diversity of age and ethnicity within the neighborhood is also considered appealing.

Over the course of a year, specific recommendations were drafted by the Moraine North neighborhood planning committee (a group of property owners and residents), addressing topics such as zoning, density, traffic safety, public safety, building code compliance, infrastructure, capital projects, business district matters and urban design. The neighborhood plan also includes an "action plan" to establish the responsibility for the implementation of each element of the plan.

## NEIGHBORHOOD ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Zoning and Density

The Moraine North Neighborhood is comprised of a range of residential zoning districts and one commercial zoning district. The B1A commercial zoning district is located at the western edge of the neighborhood along Waukegan Avenue, adjacent to the City of Highwood Central Business District. Moving eastward from Waukegan Avenue are two multiple-family zoning districts, RM1 Medium to High Density Residential and RM2 High Density Residential. The rest of Moraine North is zoned for single-family uses, with the majority being zoned as R6 Medium Density Residential. The eastern edges of the neighborhood are zoned R5 Moderate Density and R4 Low to Moderate Density.

The neighborhood planning committee found that the predominant built character of the neighborhood was that of consistently sized single- and two-family structures. The larger buildings designed for multiple-family use of three or more units reflect a scale consistent with the smaller buildings by falling under the maximum height limitations and exceeding the front yard and side yard setback requirements.

During the neighborhood planning process, several meetings focused on the issue of residential density and zoning. The neighborhood planning committee studied whether the existing zoning designations were appropriate for the area, given neighborhood character and infrastructure considerations. The highest level of multiple-family residential density is allowed in the RM2 zoning district. This district allows 30 units per acre on a minimum of 21,780 sq. ft. of land, with a maximum building height of 40 ft. The RM1 zoning district allows the next highest level of multiple-family density. This district allows 15 units per acre on a minimum of 10,000 sq. ft. of land, with a maximum building height of 35 ft.

The neighborhood planning committee performed a build-out analysis, which indicates that currently, the RM1 and RM2 zoning districts were built out to significantly less than one-half of the allowable densities. The RM2 zoning district currently contains approximately 39 dwelling units. The maximum build-out of this district would yield approximately 188 dwelling units. The RM1 zoning district currently contains approximately 65 dwelling units. The maximum build-out of this district would yield approximately 143 dwelling units.

The neighborhood planning committee found that such a potential increase in multiple-family units would negatively impact the existing infrastructure and traffic patterns, as well as alter the established physical character of the neighborhood. The committee found that the existing development patterns of the areas currently zoned RM2 would be better maintained by rezoning the block to RM1. If rezoned to RM1, the potential build-out for this area would be 96 units rather than 188 under the existing RM2 zoning.

Likewise, the areas currently zoned RM1 are developed more consistently with the standard of the R7 Single- and Two-Family zoning district. Under R7 zoning, the actual maximum build-out would be 61 units, rather than 143 under RM1 zoning.

The neighborhood planning committee also studied the B1A commercial zoning, a zoning classification that had been created in 1995 specifically for the Moraine North neighborhood business district. The committee found that the existing zoning regulations (15 units per acre, maximum height of 35 ft., general mix of commercial uses) should be maintained. The committee also found that the district would function more efficiently if new development was constructed at or near the front property line, with off-street parking located to the rear of buildings, accessed from Waukegan Avenue by shared driveways. This would eliminate the number of curb cuts and private parking lots that currently exist along Waukegan Avenue.

#### Recommendations

- o Rezone the RM2 High Density Residential zoning district to RM1 Medium to High Density Residential zoning.
- o Rezone the RM1 Medium to High Density Residential zoning district to R7 Single- and Two-Family zoning.
- o Maintain existing B1A zoning designation and encourage redevelopment within existing use, height, bulk and density regulations.
- o Amend the Zoning Ordinance to establish a maximum front yard setback on Waukegan Avenue in the B1A district so that buildings are brought up to the street front.

#### Code Conformance

The neighborhood planning committee found that the predominant neighborhood character includes well-maintained properties and homes. The committee studied methods to ensure that single-family structures be used for single-family purposes only and to eliminate non-compliant sites.

#### Recommendations

- o Encourage active neighborhood involvement in reporting non-conforming single-family homes.
- o Develop a proactive City strategy for identifying non-compliant sites.

#### Traffic Safety

The neighborhood planning committee identified certain traffic challenges throughout the neighborhood. These issues include speeding vehicles, cut-through traffic in neighborhood alleys, commercial-vehicle parking on neighborhood streets, illegally parked cars on neighborhood streets, and a perceived lack of traffic control signage.

Additionally, the committee found that a relocation of the Bloom Street underpass to align Prairie Avenue with Bloom Street, as suggested in the City of Highwood Master Plan, would add to the potential for speeding vehicles and commercial cut-through traffic in the neighborhood.

### Recommendations

- o Install four-way stop sign at Walker Avenue/Fort Sheridan Avenue/Patten Road intersection (south entrance to Fort Sheridan).
- o Implement traffic calming methods along Walker Avenue and Bloom Street to reduce speeds.
- o Paint crosswalks/stop lines and trim foliage at intersections.
- o Install "children at play" and "school zone" signs at appropriate locations.
- o Improve traffic control at the intersection of Bloom Street and Green Bay Road, and the intersection of Bloom Street and Waukegan Avenue.
- o Issue parking violations to illegally parked cars on St. Johns Avenue right-of-way near Port Clinton Park.
- o Maintain the existing location of the Bloom Street underpass.
- o Install curbs and post parking time limits during business hours along residential streets.
- o Prohibit semi-trailers trucks and through-traffic from using the alley between Temple Avenue and Bloom Street, and post appropriate signage.
- o Discuss with the City of Highwood traffic issues concerning Highwood intersections and traffic patterns that may impact the neighborhood.

### Public Safety

Public safety is an important issue to the neighborhood. In order to continue the success of providing a safe, residential neighborhood, members of the neighborhood are encouraged to report any concerns to the City's Police Department immediately.

### Recommendations

- o Implement a Neighborhood Watch Program.
- o Utilize Police Officers on bicycles at night and install additional lighting within the parks and bike trails.
- o Remove non-native vegetation only from under the trees that surround the Green Bay Trail to improve the visibility of the pedestrians on the trail.

### Infrastructure and Public Improvements

The infrastructure of the Moraine North Neighborhood is a mature system. The Five Year Capital Improvement Plan includes the street resurfacing of Roslyn Lane and the street resurfacing and water system improvements of Bloom Street.

## Recommendations

- o Conduct an infrastructure analysis to determine the exact condition and capacity of the existing system (sewer and water) and identify necessary improvements to accommodate existing use, as well as the potential for increased density.
- o Identify drainage problem at the intersection of Bloom Street and the alley located west of Waukegan Avenue.
- o Install curbs and gutters on streets where needed.
- o Extend a sidewalk along the north side of Walker Avenue and the east side of Oak Street, and complete sidewalk connections where needed.
- o Encourage ComEd to install utility lines underground along the railroad right-of-way when practical.
- o Study the possibility of creating a designated pathway in the right-of-way extension of Edgecliff Drive for lakefront access.

## **Fort Sheridan Redevelopment**

The Fort Sheridan Military Base is located immediately north of the Moraine North Neighborhood. The Base closed in 1993, and after extensive negotiations, the Cities of Highland Park and Highwood purchased the Fort Sheridan Historic District (the central part of the Fort) from the United States Army in 1998. The Cities entered into an Annexation Agreement allowing for the residential redevelopment of the Historic District.

The portions of the Fort which are immediately adjacent to the Moraine North Neighborhood are considered to be "non-surplus" property. This property is still owned and controlled by the Federal Government, with the southeastern portion of the Fort containing multiple-family housing for the Great Lakes Naval Base, and the southwestern portion of the Fort serving the Army Reserve. Although the southern portion of the Fort still serves a military purpose, the neighborhood planning committee found that any potential redevelopment of this area should be managed in a way that is sensitive to the existing residential densities and traffic patterns of the Moraine North Neighborhood.

## Recommendations

- o Maintain a zoning density for any future land to be annexed into Highland Park consistent with the existing zoning in the east side of the City along the lakefront.
- o Maintain residential bulk and setback requirements consistent with the existing development pattern within the Moraine North Neighborhood.
- o Allow for redevelopment of the "non-surplus" property in a manner which maintains view corridors from the Moraine North Neighborhood toward Lake Michigan.
- o Conduct an independent traffic analysis of any future redevelopment plans for the "non-surplus" property that would identify potential impacts on the Moraine North Neighborhood.
- o Restrict "non-surplus" construction traffic from residential streets within the Moraine North Neighborhood.

- o Encourage any redevelopment of the southern portion of the Fort to have a street system that compliments the existing grid of the Moraine North neighborhood.
- o Encourage any redevelopment of the southern portion of the Fort to have its "front" to the Moraine North neighborhood.

## **Urban Design**

Urban Design contributes to the neighborhood's identity. A top priority of the Moraine North Neighborhood is to maintain and enhance the identity of a friendly and close neighborhood in which children are safe to play and future generations would be proud to live with their own families.

### **Recommendations**

- o Install City Entry Signs at appropriate locations along Waukegan Avenue and other gateways to the City within the neighborhood, to include a welcome message to the Moraine North business district/neighborhood.
- o Develop and implement a streetscape and landscape program along Waukegan Avenue.
- o As the property along the east side of Waukegan Avenue north of Bloom Street redevelops, preserve a portion of the northeast corner of Waukegan Avenue and Bloom Street as a park or plaza, to provide space for installing landscaping and/or public art.
- o Create a permanent area for the installation of public art along the Green Bay Trail at the southwest corner of Bloom Street and Waukegan Avenue.
- o Implement a lighting plan throughout the public spaces of the neighborhood to compliment the streetscape and landscape program, with particular emphasis on the neighborhood business district and parks.
- o Work with the railroad to improve the appearance of the Bloom Street viaduct, including the use of murals.

## **Business District Redevelopment**

The Moraine North Business District, extends mainly along Waukegan Avenue for approximately two blocks, from Bloom Street on the south to Temple Avenue on the north. The Business District contains the neighborhood's primary redevelopment opportunities and challenges. The existing commercial uses range from retail to personal service to medical and business offices. A number of non-conforming automotive and free-standing residential uses also exist in the Business District.

The Business District is zoned B1A, a zoning classification which was created in 1995 specifically for the Moraine North neighborhood business district. The neighborhood planning committee recommends that the existing zoning regulations concerning uses, bulk and density be maintained. The B1A district allows for permitted commercial uses on the first floor and commercial or residential uses on upper levels. The maximum allowable height in the B1A district is 35 ft.

The most significant redevelopment opportunities in the neighborhood exist on the southeastern most block of Waukegan Avenue near Bloom Street. In this area there exists vacant land, non-conforming residential structures, vacant commercial buildings and open parking areas. As

suggested above, the neighborhood planning committee believes that any future development to occur should be consistent with the existing B1A zoning. The committee recommends that new development include first floor retail or office uses with upper level rental apartment units affordable to the area's senior population.

Should properties be consolidated for redevelopment purposes, existing permitted uses should be incorporated into the site. As the vacant land at the northeast corner of Waukegan Avenue and Bloom Street redevelops, the committee recommends that a portion of the property at the corner be preserved as open space, with landscaping, a plaza or public art features to serve as a gateway to the Moraine North Neighborhood and Business district.

The committee also recommends that, for a more walkable district with safer circulation patterns, new development should be constructed at the front property line, with off-street parking located to the rear of buildings, accessed from Waukegan Avenue by shared driveways. This would eliminate the number of curb cuts and private parking lots that currently exist along Waukegan Avenue.

#### Recommendations

- o Maintain existing B1A zoning designation and encourage redevelopment within existing use, height, bulk and density regulations.
- o Amend the Zoning Ordinance to establish a maximum front yard setback on Waukegan Avenue in the B1A district so that buildings are brought up to the street front.
- o Encourage property owners to replace non-conforming land uses in the business district with permitted uses as soon as possible, without causing hardship to property owners.
- o Encourage property and business owner participation in Chamber of Commerce business attraction and marketing programs.
- o Encourage property owners to provide the Chamber of Commerce with a list of desired business-types so that the Chamber may refer potential tenants to the Moraine North business district property owners.
- o Develop a plan to reorganize parking accommodations in the neighborhood business district, including the possibility of a municipal parking lot.
- o Encourage redevelopment of the southeast end of Waukegan Avenue near Bloom Street as first floor retail or office uses with upper level rental apartment units affordable to the area's senior population.

## MORaine NORTH DISTRICT ACTION PLAN STEPS

ACTION ELEMENTS	RESPONSIBILITY	SHORT-TERM (yr. 1-2)	MID-TERM (yr.3-5)	LONG-TERM (yr. 6+)
<b>ZONING AND DENSITY</b>				
Rezone the RM2 High Density Residential zoning district to RM1 Medium to High Density Residential zoning	Community Development-Planning	Plan Commission Public Hearing and City Council Action		
Rezone the RM1 High Density Residential zoning district to R7 Single- and Two-Family Residential zoning	Community Development-Planning	Plan Commission Public Hearing and City Council Action		
Amend the Zoning Ordinance to establish a maximum front yard setback on Waukegan Avenue in the B1A district	Community Development-Planning	Plan Commission Public Hearing and City Council Action		
<b>CODE COMPLIANCE</b>				
Active neighborhood involvement in reporting non-conforming single-family homes	Neighborhood	Ongoing		
Develop a proactive strategy for identifying non-con-compliant sites	Community Development-Building	City Council Consideration		
<b>TRAFFIC SAFETY</b>				
Install four-way stop sign at Walker Av./Fort Sheridan Av./Patten Rd. intersection	Public Works Dept.	Traffic Commission hearing and City Council Consideration		
Implement traffic calming methods along Walker Avenue and Bloom Street to reduce speeds	Public Works and Public Safety Departments	Traffic Commission hearing and City Council Consideration	City Council Consideration re: capital improvements plan	
Paint crosswalks and stop lines at intersections	Public Works Dept.	Traffic Commission hearing and City Council Consideration		
Install "Children at Play" and "School Zone" signs at appropriate locations	Public Works Dept.	Traffic Commission hearing and City Council Consideration		

ACTION ELEMENTS	RESPONSIBILITY	SHORT-TERM (yr. 1-2)	MID-TERM (yr.3-5)	LONG-TERM (yr. 6+)
Improve traffic control at the intersection of Bloom Street and Green Bay Road, and the intersection of Bloom Street and Waukegan Avenue	Public Works Dept.	Traffic Commission hearing and City Council Consideration		
Issue parking violations to illegally parked cars on St. Johns Avenue right-of-way near Port Clinton Park	Public Safety Dept.	Ongoing		
Maintain the existing location of the Bloom Street underpass		City Council Consideration		
Install curbs and post parking time limits during business hours along residential streets.	Public Works Dept.		City Council Consideration re: capital improvements plan	
Prohibit semi-trailer truck traffic and through traffic from using the alley between Temple Avenue and Bloom Street, and post appropriate signage	Public Works Dept.	Traffic Commission hearing and City Council Consideration		
Discuss with the City of Highwood traffic issues concerning Highwood intersections and traffic patterns that may impact the neighborhood	Neighborhood	Discussion with City of Highwood		
<b>PUBLIC SAFETY</b>				
Implement a Neighborhood Watch Program	Neighborhood Public Safety Dept.	Ongoing		
Increase police officer bicycle patrols	Public Safety Dept.	City Council Consideration		
Install additional lighting on bike trails	Public Works Dept.	City Council Consideration		
Install additional lighting within parks	Community Development - Planning Park Board	Park District Board Consideration		
Remove non-native understory vegetation from Green Bay Trail	Public Works Dept. - Forestry	City Council Consideration		

ACTION ELEMENTS	RESPONSIBILITY	SHORT-TERM (yr. 1-2)	MID-TERM (yr.3-5)	LONG-TERM (yr. 6+)
<b>INFRASTRUCTURE/PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS</b>				
Conduct an infrastructure analysis to determine the condition and capacity of existing system and identify necessary improvements to accommodate existing use, as well as the potential for increased density	Public Works Dept./Consultant	City Council Consideration		
Identify drainage problem at the Bloom Street/alley intersection	Public Works Dept.		City Council Consideration re: capital improvements plan	
Install curbs and gutters on streets where needed	Public Works Dept.		City Council Consideration re: capital improvements plan	
Extend a sidewalk along the north side of Walker Av. and the east side of Oak St.	Public Works Dept.		City Council Consideration re: capital improvements plan	
Encourage ComEd to underground utility lines along the railroad right-of-way when practical		Ongoing		
Study the possibility of creating a designated pathway in the right-of-way extension of Edgecliff Drive for lake front access	Community Development Dept. Public Works Dept.		City Council Consideration re: capital improvements plan	
<b>FORT SHERIDAN REDEVELOPMENT</b>				
Maintain a zoning density for any future land to be annexed into Highland Park consistent with the existing zoning in the east side of the City along the lakefront.				Fort Sheridan Joint Plan Commission public hearings and City Council consideration

ACTION ELEMENTS	RESPONSIBILITY	SHORT-TERM (yr. 1-2)	MID-TERM (yr.3-5)	LONG-TERM (yr. 6+)
Maintain residential bulk and setback requirements consistent with the existing development patterns in the adjacent Moraine North neighborhood				Fort Sheridan Joint Plan Commission public hearings and City Council consideration
Allow for redevelopment in a manner which maintains view corridors from the Moraine North Neighborhood toward Lake Michigan				Fort Sheridan Joint Plan Commission public hearings and City Council consideration
Conduct a traffic study to identify potential impacts to neighborhood				Fort Sheridan Joint Plan Commission public hearings and City Council consideration
Restrict construction traffic from utilizing streets within neighborhood				Fort Sheridan Joint Plan Commission public hearings and City Council consideration
Encourage redevelopment to have a street system that compliments the Moraine North neighborhood				Fort Sheridan Joint Plan Commission public hearings and City Council consideration
Encourage redevelopment to have its front to the Moraine North neighborhood				Fort Sheridan Joint Plan Commission public hearings and City Council consideration
<b>URBAN DESIGN</b>				
Install City Entry Signs at appropriate locations along Waukegan Avenue and other gateways to the City within the neighborhood, to include a welcome message to the Moraine North Business District and Neighborhood	Community Development - Planning Public Works Dept.	City Council Consideration		
Develop and implement streetscape and landscape programs for Waukegan Avenue	Community Development - Planning Public Works Dept.		City Council Consideration re: capital improvements plan	

ACTION ELEMENTS	RESPONSIBILITY	SHORT-TERM (yr. 1-2)	MID-TERM (yr.3-5)	LONG-TERM (yr. 6+)
Develop a portion of the northeast corner of Waukegan Avenue and Bloom Street as a park or plaza, to include landscaping and/or public art	Community Development - Planning			
Create a permanent area for the installation of public art along the Green Bay Trail at the southwest corner of Bloom Street and Waukegan Avenue	Community Development - Planning Public Art Committee	City Council Consideration		
Create and implement a lighting plan for the public areas of the neighborhood with emphasis on business district and parks (to complement streetscape plan)	Community Development - Planning Park District	City Council Consideration Park Board Consideration		
Work with railroad to improve the Bloom Street viaduct, including the use of murals	Community Development Dept. Public Works Dept.	City Council Consideration		
<b>Business District Redevelopment</b>				
Maintain existing B1A zoning designation (use, bulk, density)	City Council			
Amend the Zoning Ordinance to establish a maximum front yard setback on Waukegan Avenue in the B1A district	Community Development - Planning	Plan Commission Public Hearing and City Council Action		
Encourage property owners to replace non-conforming land uses in the business district with permitted uses	Property Owners			
Encourage property and business owner participation with City and Chamber of Commerce business attraction and marketing programs	Property Owners Community Development - Planning	Discussion with Chamber of Commerce		
Encourage property owners to provide the Chamber of Commerce with a list of desired business-types	Property Owners Community Development - Planning	Discussion with Chamber of Commerce		

ACTION ELEMENTS	RESPONSIBILITY	SHORT-TERM (yr. 1-2)	MID-TERM (yr.3-5)	LONG-TERM (yr. 6+)
Develop a plan to reorganize parking accommodations in the neighborhood business district, including the possibility of a municipal parking lot	Community Development - Planning Public Works Dept. - Engineering		City Council Consideration re: capital improvements plan	