Lake Bluff Description

Lake Bluff, one of Chicago’s best suburbs, overlooks Lake Michigan as the northern-most point of the North Shore. Weaving together small-town charm with easy access to Sunrise Beach, parks, recreation trails, and a host of family-centered experiences, village life has a distinct culture all its own – one that is buoyed by lively, forward-thinking residents, a sensible and broad-minded government, a thriving commercial historic district (ca. 1895) with a burgeoning commercial corridor, and great schools. The friendly and easy-going atmosphere of the village shapes a strong sense of belonging where business owners know their customers and Bluffers connect with and know their neighbors – new and old. Lake Bluff’s unique character, Americana charm, amenities, and lakeside location have been recognized and lauded nationally by Coastal Living and locally by Chicago Magazine.

Mission Statement

The expression of mission, or purpose, is the Village’s fundamental reason for being, and that for which all commitments and resources are in service.

The Village of Lake Bluff provides vision, stewardship and valued services, and fosters a vibrant community culture to enhance our quality of life.

Guiding Principles

The Village and its stakeholders embrace these shared values which serve as guideposts describing our conduct and behavior in all circumstances. They apply to everyone without exception.

• Take personal responsibility for the quality of our community
• Act with integrity, accountability and in the best interest of all
• Demonstrate kindness, neighborliness and concern for others
• Be inclusive, welcoming, and open minded
• Interact with respect and civility in all circumstances
• Embrace a positive, forward-looking orientation
• Cherish our history, culture and legacy of excellence
Vision for 2023

Our Vision for 2023 inspires us, and sets the trajectory for a bold, clear and compelling future for our community.

The Village of Lake Bluff is welcoming, attractive and flourishing – an authentic atmosphere of neighbors, traditions, safety and invigorating community life.

High-Level Goals

These five Goals establish the Strategic Plan framework. Each one pertains to a distinct component of Village health and viability. Achievement of these Goals facilitates attainment of our Vision for 2023. No prioritization is implied by the order in which they are listed.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Sense of Community</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Economic Development</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Environmental Sensibility</td>
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<tr>
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Strategic Action Plan

The Action Plan describes proposed strategies and actions to achieve each of the five High-Level Goals.

Goal 1: Sense of Community: Cultivate connection, stewardship and informed optimism across interests, generations, neighborhoods and borders.

Strategy 1 – Placemaking: Maintain and build upon Lake Bluff’s charm and intrinsic character.

Action 1. Feature and prioritize the Village’s natural beauty, setting, culture and connectivity.

Action 2. Preserve quality public space for community gathering and support community-wide events.

Action 3. Foster Village unity and connectivity.


Action 5. Consider transit-oriented development design principles.

Strategy 2 – Housing: Diversify housing to ensure choice and facilitate the balance of supply and demand.

Action 1. Encourage diverse housing implementation for residents in all stages of life.

Action 2. Engage the entire community in Village leadership’s examination of what it takes to enjoy a variety of quality housing options, including condominiums and townhomes, in the context of Lake Bluff’s historic housing legacy and the marketplace.

Strategy 3 – Engagement and Communication: Reach out to Village stakeholders on community matters.

Action 1. Create opportunities and means to engage new residents, youth, veterans and others to enrich the quality and culture of the community.

Action 2. Convene a diverse team to guide, evaluate, select and design effective forms, composition and frequency of multi-directional communications and social media.

Action 3. Audit current communications practices and perform periodic assessments.

Action 4. Make it easy for people to participate and to be informed.

Strategy 4 – Volunteerism: Build civic capacity to understand, participate and lead the array of institutions, initiatives and traditions that make Lake Bluff great.

Action 1. Host timely mini-workshops to educate stakeholders on policies, rights, responsibilities and processes.

Action 2. Encourage brainstorming sessions and constructive dialogue on community events, traditions and challenges.
Action 3. Popularize volunteerism across all generations – redefine it, recast it as a privilege and honor to serve.

Action 4. Find ways to engage and leverage talent without overtaxing new volunteers.

Strategy 5 – Inclusion: Recognize and signal support for the increasing diversity of the greater Lake Bluff community.

Action 1. Honor the community we have created and welcome new potential that accompanies change.

Action 2. Practice open-mindedness and demonstrate confidence that diversity and change are assets to our community.

Goal 2: Economic Development: Bolster economic vitality.

Strategy 1 – Central Business District: Create a planned vision for the growth and sustainability of our downtown.

Action 1. Identify and attract ideal profile businesses to heighten and amplify vibrancy downtown.

Action 2. Increase foot traffic by instituting an intelligent mix of business and residential uses.

Action 3. Ignite interest in the Central Business District as a destination location by target marketing to such groups as bicycle organizations and families of Military Base graduates.

Strategy 2 – Waukegan Road Corridor: Retain existing businesses and identify and pursue ideal sales tax-generating businesses.

Action 1. Maximize the potential and revenue generation of the Business Parks.

Action 2. Explore strategies to economically and aesthetically integrate the north side of Route 176, and the intersection of State Routes 176 and 41.

Action 3. Manage impacts of the new Lake Forest Hospital and modified campus, and maximize potential benefits.

Strategy 3 – Marketing: Extend our branding and marketing reach to tout Village assets and desirability.

Action 1. Market to surrounding businesses and relocation companies.

Action 2. Target market to potential new businesses.

Action 3. Encourage residents to create demand by acting as community ambassadors.

Action 4. Develop marketing materials to equip Bluffers as brand ambassadors.
Goal 3: Stability: Ensure insightful governance, financial viability, safety and quality municipal services.

Strategy 1 – Governance and Leadership: Be true to the Village’s shared vision, bring the community together, and act in the best interest of all.

  Action 1. Maintain momentum toward Vision achievement, report on Strategic Plan performance and schedule timely Plan updates.

  Action 2. Utilize clear, fair decision making processes and anticipate dissent as a natural function of diverse perspective.

  Action 3. Convene partners and peers to re-imagine partnerships, champion innovation and create leading-edge practices.

  Action 4. Ensure transparency in governance and municipal functions.


  Action 1. Build resilience by diversifying the Village’s revenue base.

  Action 2. Identify and pursue non-property tax revenue sources to finance programs, services and infrastructure at every opportunity.

Strategy 3 – Public Safety: Ensure community commitment to public safety.

  Action 1. Foster a culture of safety throughout the Village through individual awareness, education and safe practices.

  Action 2. Be diligent about emergency preparedness.

  Action 3. Explore innovations in safety and law enforcement.

Strategy 4 – Municipal Services: Deliver high-quality, cost-effective municipal services that meet community needs.

  Action 1. Evaluate current structures and systems to ensure resources can fulfill the direction of the strategic plan.

  Action 2. Continue to identify and implement reductions in operating expenses.

  Action 3. Continue to advance shared services and purchasing opportunities.

  Action 4. Continue to support volunteer EMS and fire service provision.

Goal 4: Environmental Sensibility: Celebrate, preserve and enhance our natural heritage.

Strategy 1 – Preservation: Practice and cultivate environmental stewardship.
Action 1. Apply best practices to manage the impacts of commercial and residential development.

Action 2. Leverage existing committees to facilitate and support interagency environmental initiatives.


Action 4. Emphasize and celebrate our successful approach to handling household waste.

Strategy 2 – Enhancement: Identify and implement measures to enhance our natural environment.

Action 1. Set the standard for public ravine maintenance.

Action 2. Provide education on maintenance of privately owned ravines and the benefits of conservation areas.

Action 3. Make forestry management resources more available to the community.

Action 4. Continue a leadership stance on stormwater management.

Goal 5: Public Assets: Fortify our public assets and systems.


Action 1. Annually review and prioritize the 10-Year Capital Improvement Plan.

Action 2. Continue to strategically invest in Village-owned assets.

Action 3. Advance stormwater mitigation for the viaduct.

Strategy 2 – Aesthetics: Accentuate the Village’s aesthetic environment.

Action 1. Resource the Sustainability and Enhancement Committee for development of a Beautification and Enhancement Program for all transportation corridors.

Action 2. Continue to support local volunteer efforts to beautify the Village.

Strategy 3 – Transportation: Facilitate ease of movement and improved connectivity.

Action 1. Integrate bike and pedestrian trails.

Action 2. Advocate for more Lake Bluff express commuter trains.

Action 3. Explore public transportation opportunities.

Action 4. Create awareness about existing senior-focused transportation programs.

Action 5. Embrace innovations in alternative and non-traditional transportation modes.

Action 6. Seek solutions for local, state and regional arterial congestion.