



# Village of Winnetka

## Residential Design Handbook

### Community Workshop #1: Summary

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#### Project Background

The Village of Winnetka is beginning a Voluntary Residential Design Handbook project for the established neighborhoods within the Village. The Villages' goal is to maintain the design character and quality of these neighborhoods. The design handbook will be for voluntary use and will address appropriate building design practices within the Village. The handbook will also establish a consistent approach for new construction while providing custom-tailored guidance for specific neighborhood contexts.

The process for creating this handbook will invite active participation of a Design Advisory Panel, a Project Steering Committee, community residents, property owners, and city staff. Community residents will be asked to participate in a series of workshops designed to inform them of the project and its progress as well as to obtain their opinions and feedback about the handbook. The following is a summary of the first community workshop.

#### Community Workshop #1

In the first of the community workshops, residents were asked to participate in two activities to help identify both existing assets of, and threats to, community character and architectural design. Workshop participants were also asked to fill out an individual response sheet with any additional comments and concerns related to the design handbook or housing in the Village as a whole. In order to maximize community involvement, two separate sessions of this workshop were held, one on April 3rd and one on April 5th. The following is a summary of the community feedback from both sessions.

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*Feedback collected during the first community workshop will help shape the strategy for promoting compatible design through the Residential Design Handbook.*



*This house was categorized as 'Appropriate New Construction' by a majority of workshop participants, with one group categorizing it as 'Traditional Winnetka'.*

*These two houses were unanimously categorized as 'Traditional Winnetka' by workshop participants due to their consistency of style and use of materials and architectural features.*



*The first activity asked each group to place a random sampling of images of Winnetka homes into categories based on their character's appropriateness within the Village.*

## Activity #1: Defining Appropriate Styles

The first activity asked groups to place a random sampling of images of Winnetka homes into categories based on their character's appropriateness within the Village. These categories included Traditional Winnetka, Appropriate New Construction and Out of Character. While opinions differed about individual houses, the buildings placed in each of the three categories were considered to have many of the same characteristics. These are summarized as follows:

### Traditional Winnetka

- Integrity and consistency of design
- Refined or restrained in character
- Consistency and quality of materials and their use
- Mass and scale consistent and in proportion to lot size and neighborhood context
- Porches and other design elements "interact" with the neighborhood

### Appropriate New Construction

- Consistency of design
- Consistency and quality of materials and their use
- Mass and scale of house in proportion to lot size
- Style and scale compatible with neighborhood context

### Out of Character

- "Pretentious" or "over-the-top" character
- Inconsistency of style, or mix of styles
- Massing proportions not balanced or "over-built"
- Inconsistent or incompatible use of materials and architectural elements
- Inconsistent, incompatible or out of scale roof forms
- Prominent garages oriented to the street-front
- Incompatible with neighborhood context

## Activity #2: Defining Character Areas

The second activity asked participants to identify on an aerial map areas within the Village which have a distinctive character. Most residential areas of town were called out at least once as being part of a specific neighborhood context. However, only a few of these areas were identified with a high level of consistency across multiple groups. The boundaries of these areas often coincided with the zoning boundaries (participants were not shown a zoning map). This may be due to the effect of the lot size on character, but this is not necessarily the case.

The five areas identified with the most consistency are described as follows:

1. The area most consistently identified was the 'Tree Streets' neighborhood, bounded by Hibbard Road, Pine Street, Birch Street and Willow Road. A few sub-areas within these boundaries were also identified. The first included the blocks between Glendale Avenue and Locust Street, where the street grid includes alleys. The second sub-area includes the properties along Provident Avenue, where the street grid is broken up by the curvilinear street, creating varied lot shapes. Overall this area was considered to be fairly consistent in character with many older homes.

2. The second area consistently identified by participants is located east of the tracks and west of Sheridan Road between Pine Street and Willow Road. This area was called out by most workshop participants as being part of "early Winnetka." Many groups said that the historic character of this area is important, as it is one of the most "intact" neighborhoods in the village. This area also includes the "Village green" which was noted to be the "community connecting spot."

3. The third area consistently identified is located along the east edge of Sheridan Road along the lake-front. This area was called out frequently as having many large lots and "mansions."

4. The area in the northwest portion of town and back to the open space along the west edge of town was also identified by many groups. This area was described as historically having many 1940s and 50s ranch homes, which are now being (or have

already been) torn down by speculative builders. One group identified this areas as having a "potential estate character."

5. The final area frequently identified is located south of Willow Road. This area had less consistent boundaries, and included everything from between Hibbard Road to as far east as the tracks and as far south as the town limits. While the boundaries were imprecise, the qualities of this area identified by multiple groups were fairly consistent. This area was noted to have large lots with a variety of shapes, curvilinear streets with no sidewalks, large homes, and less density.



The second activity asked participants to identify areas within the Village which have a distinctive character.



Aerial maps showing distinctive neighborhoods in Winnetka as identified by community workshop participants.

## Individual Response Sheets

Workshop participants were given a short questionnaire to gather individual responses related to the design handbook. The following is a selection of the variety of responses given for each of the questions posed to participants.

### 1. What issues should be considered in this process?

- *“CONTEXT—We are a village not a city or a glitzy new planned community. ‘Village’ implies a certain amount of greenery and space and a moderation of scale. ‘Community’ implies consideration for neighbors.”*
- *“...we do need some design review—so much of what we now have built is so ugly, not at all traditional Winnetka. Way too many things going on on the facades, also many overbuilt.”*
- *“Role of speculative builders—degree to which they are determining housing direction.”*
- *“...break down the massing in front so that it isn’t a monolithic massive house next to a bungalow, keep mass away from street front.”*
- *“Overbuilding has been, and continues to be a problem... Overbuilding threatens the character of the Village in many ways:
 
  1. *It blocks the light and air of neighboring properties;*
  2. *It destroys grand trees and covers green space;*
  3. *It can vastly increase the ‘carbon footprint’ of a house.”**
- *“How can we regulate design without limiting designers creativity?”*
- *“Modern homes should not be prohibited. Current designs were once ‘modern’. No reason why Winnetka cannot be architectural leaders.”*
- *“Not the architectural style but please consider the integrity of the style.”*

### 2. What Regulatory actions should be considered?

- *“Nothing regarding design.”*
- *“Strong actions with expensive consequences”*
- *“Taste is difficult to legislate but a Handbook is a good place to encourage proper context and character.”*
- *“It should not be assumed that most village residents oppose stringent ordinances for both design and zoning. Well-structured restrictions would be supported by a majority of residents.”*
- *“Size and bulk of home (footprint) relative to lot size.”*
- *“...overbuilding, as opposed to design, can and should be addressed through zoning. And our zoning ordinance should be changed to reduce mass and discourage tear-downs.”*

### 3. Who else should be involved?

- *“Historical Society”*
- *“Preservation Groups”*
- *“Realtors”*
- *“Developers/Builders”*
- *“Zoning [officials]”*

### 4. Please take a moment to discuss any additional comments you may have.

- *“It is important to differentiate between zoning and design. The Village government should be very careful not to dictate property owners’ rights to make design decisions about their properties. The only way the Village should be able to determine design is to own it themselves.”*
- *“Need to maintain focus on ‘Village’—how can design guides promote a village persona and the positive interactions that emanates from the concept of a Village rather than a city.”*
- *“Please consider cement—driveways, patios and all other as a part of the design qualifications. Birds, small natural wildlife and water run off are all affected by volumes of cement that is added to Winnetka.”*
- *“Scale, proportion and compatibility of materials, shapes etc. is more important than style.”*
- *“A well proportioned home of a new and different style should be okay.”*
- *“Mixtures of materials should be discouraged!”*
- *“Issue should not be ‘what is traditional?’ but rather ‘what is appropriate and why?’.”*
- *“Whatever the overall principle style you choose isn’t important as long as you’re faithful to that style.”*

