

# Element Five: Community Character, Culture & Design

Northbrook has maintained its distinctive character over the years. Its identity makes it different from the surrounding suburban Chicago communities. The quality design of new development is a reflection of the value Northbrook citizens place on the community's appearance. Care has also been taken to employ special treatments on identified streets and pathways, and to enhance the comfort, safety, and usability of public places. Entryways and major street corridors have been identified, preserved, and enhanced. The Village's historic roots are still apparent through preservation of special sites, structures, and buildings.

One of the most appealing features of the Village is the appearance of its residential neighborhoods. Many older neighborhoods contain large shade trees that provide a natural canopy. Houses in the Village are typically well maintained. In addition, the Village emphasizes the maintenance of neighborhood streets and sidewalks in its Capital Improvement Program and Budget process. These factors combine to enhance the desirability of the Village's neighborhoods.

This Element is complimentary to other elements of the Comprehensive Plan. Community character is addressed broadly in the Overall Goals Element. Specific aspects of community character are addressed in the appropriate Elements. For instance, Northbrook's economic character is addressed in the Economic Vitality Element and locations for various uses under the Land Use Element. This Element focuses more closely on design goals and the cultural enrichment of the Village.

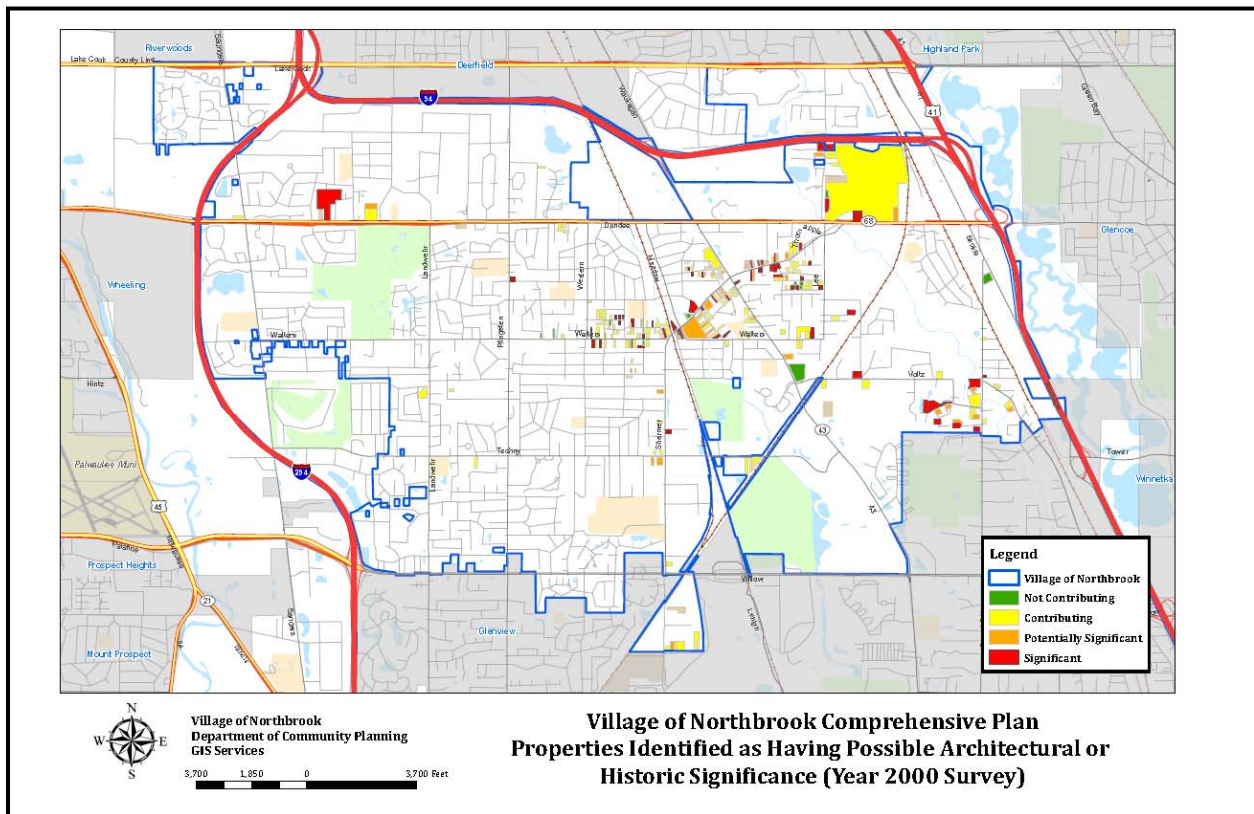


Figure 5-A: Results of Survey -- Architectural & Historically Significant Buildings

### Inventory of Architectural & Historic Resources

Historic resources connect the community with the Village's past providing a sense of continuity and permanence to an increasingly mobile society. Recognition and preservation of historic resources are essential to the long-term maintenance of the Village's character.

In 2000, the Village Board of Trustees recognized that a number of the older homes in the Village were being demolished and replaced with new larger homes. The Board commissioned a study by an architectural historian to determine whether or not any of the existing structures or neighborhoods in the community warranted special classification or protection.

The consultants viewed 652 structures, including homes and businesses throughout the Village and found that 74 structures might be considered "locally significant", although none were found to merit listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The structures were not concentrated in any one neighborhood. As such, the Board of Trustees agreed with the consultant's finding that no neighborhood warranted the creation of a special local historic district designation. The map on the preceding page depict the location of properties that were surveyed by the architectural historian and the rankings of each property.

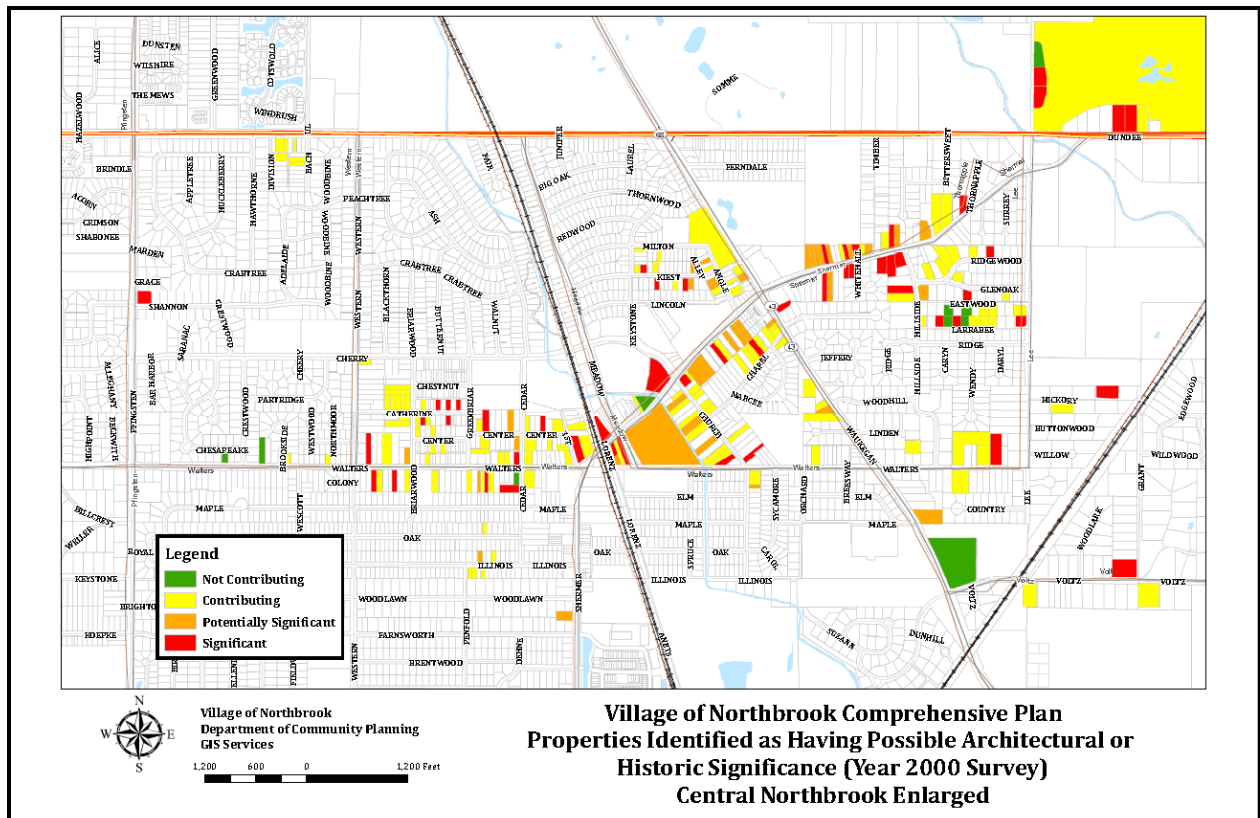


Figure 5-B: Results of Survey -- Architectural & Historically Significant Buildings (Central Northbrook)

Northbrook has established itself as a leader in fostering good architectural and landscape design in new developments. The community embraces both traditional and modern architecture. The result is a community that has a design palette as diverse as its citizenry.

**Community Character, Culture & Design Goals & Strategies**

**CC 1. *Maintain the high quality and appearance of the Village's commercial areas and mixed use areas.***

- a. Promote the transformation of the downtown into an attractive, pedestrian-oriented environment.
- b. Reexamine the Village's current architectural and design control standards, ensuring that they provide clear direction to developers and enhance the visual quality and livability of the Village.
- c. Consider the merits of expanding the current design review process to include all new and remodeled commercial, institutional and multi-family projects, including changes to parking lots.
- d. Consider establishing specific plans and development guidelines for key redevelopment areas (including, but not limited to the Downtown, the Skokie Boulevard Corridor and the South Shermer Road Corridor) that involve the public while recognizing economic and market conditions and the rights of property owners.

**CC 2. *Maintain and enhance the attractiveness and livability of the Village's residential neighborhoods.***

- a. Evaluate the establishment of new "neighborhood edge" zoning districts (as described in the Land Use Element) in order to blend residential and non-residential uses in a manner that creates smooth, natural transitions between commercial and residential districts. The regulations should include necessary landscape, height, setback, building design and land use controls that recognize the need to protect the quality of nearby residential neighborhoods.
- b. Continue to review the effectiveness of Village zoning and design regulations concerning the size and appearance of remodeled, replacement and new single family homes in the community.
- c. Balance traffic circulation objectives with the goal of creating walk able neighborhoods that are designed and oriented towards pedestrians.

**CC 3. *Improve and maintain the appearance of the Village's high profile commercial corridors and areas.***

- a. Establish regulations, guidelines and procedures for public and private signage.
- b. Bring nonconforming signs into compliance with current regulations.
- c. Continue efforts to place utility poles and overhead wires underground in high profile areas of the community.
- d. Consider the creation of distinctive and memorable gateway features at major points of entry to the Village. Gateways should be designed to make a strong and positive visual impact.

*Northbrook Comprehensive Plan*

**CC 4. *Make design an integral part of the planning process for Village facilities and roadways.***

- a. Maintain the attractive landscaping and signage at major entrances to the Village to help reinforce the positive image of the community.
- b. Evaluate the use of Context Sensitive Design (CSD) techniques when planning major road improvements, particularly in the vicinity of established residential areas.
- c. Continue the Village's practice of incorporating high quality architecture, landscape and site design into major public improvement projects as evidence of the community's commitment to design.

**CC 5. *Encourage the visual and performing arts in the Village as a means of promoting civic involvement pride and stature.***

- a. Consider the placement of works of art, sculpture, or fountains at prominent public spaces in the Village to help increase civic prominence and a sense of place.
- b. Review opportunities for musicians and artists to perform and display their talents in appropriate locations in the community.