



President's Corner
November 2018

Whether you call the central business district 'uptown' or 'downtown', we can all agree that it represents the heart of our community, in terms of its vitality and commerce. The Village of Western Springs recognizes that improvements to this corridor elevate the shopping and dining experience for visitors and residents alike, and makes our community more appealing to new businesses, restaurants, and shops.

The Village is implementing a structured plan of improvements to the downtown area using the [2016 Downtown Revitalization Refinement Project](#) as its guide. The 2016 plan refines the objectives identified in the initial [2011 Downtown Redevelopment Plan](#). Together, these plans provide an aesthetic guide and vision with multiple objectives, which include promoting economic revitalization, improving pedestrian safety and connectivity between Hillgrove and Burlington Avenues, and updating the overall look of the area to equal the quality of the residential neighborhoods in the Village.

The recently completed East Train Platform renovation represents one of the first of several planned upgrades. This project was substantially funded by a federal grant, and enhances the commuter experience through improvements in both safety and aesthetics. The lower-level platforms adjacent to the BNSF tracks on both sides were upgraded with paver bricks and new concrete. At street level, you will find new and improved lighting, plantings, and seating. A new, enlarged bike rack with a repair stand encourages commuters to bike to the station, while a meandering path encourages shoppers to leave their cars behind and stroll through town. At the corners of Wolf Road on both sides of the tracks, new signs with water features and lighting welcome visitors to Western Springs. In a continued effort to encourage environmentally responsible modes of transportation to public transit and the central business district, the next phase of improvements includes proposed bike shelters and electric vehicle charging stations on the west side of the station platform.

Foxford Station is taking shape on the southeast corner of Wolf Road and Burlington Avenue. The building is four stories with the fourth story set back from the street. It will house approximately 3,600 square feet of commercial space and indoor parking on the first floor, and 28 condos on the three floors above. Construction is estimated for completion early next year, with occupancy anticipated in April of 2019.

This has been an ambitious year for the roadway program in Western Springs. The concrete reconstruction of Lawn Avenue (from Elm to Burlington) allows the Village to undertake pedestrian streetscape improvements in the central business district. The Lawn Avenue project is a maintenance-driven project, however, new parking structures, pedestrian walkways, and landscaping elements are included. New curb lines will bump out the sidewalks at Burlington and maintain one lane on Lawn in each direction at the intersection. This change will improve pedestrian safety, establish safer driving conditions, and create space to add streetscape elements, as funds permit.

Like Lawn Avenue, Johnson Avenue (from 47th to Burlington) is currently being reconstructed in concrete. This project also includes the complete removal of the existing roadway, installation of new concrete roadway pavement, curbs and gutters, repairs to the existing sewer main, removal and replacement of private walkways, driveway aprons, and crosswalks, with those that are ADA compliant.

Looking ahead, the Village plans to continue streetscape improvements in the downtown area as outlined in the Revitalization Plan, with the eventual addition of wayfinding signs and street signs, bench seating, raised planters, and an information kiosk. While I hope you are enjoying the streetscape improvements, large-scale construction projects like these are necessarily disruptive to the community. We appreciate our businesses, residents, and commuters for your patience and understanding while streets are blocked off, parking spaces lost, and sidewalks closed. As the holidays approach, make sure to check out the new features in the central business district and support the local businesses that support our Village: shop local, eat local, spend local, enjoy local.

Wishing you and yours a very Happy Thanksgiving!