

Executive Summary: Brown Deer Vision Project

Beginning in November 2001, the Village Board initiated an organizational assessment process designed to define the Village's mission, to identify Village customers and their values, to focus on achieving results, and to develop primary goals. They determined that the mission of the Brown Deer Village Board is "to understand and responsibly fulfill the community vision." In order to more fully understand the community's image of itself now and its vision of the future, the Village Board initiated the Brown Deer Vision Project.

"Visioning" is a term used to describe a strategic planning process that develops an image of what a community would like to be in the future and an implementation plan to get there. It seeks to bring together diverse interests to reach agreement on the answer to four important questions:

- **Where are we now?**
- **Where are we going?**
- **Where do we want to be?**
- **How do we get there?**

The Village Board established a Visioning Committee consisting of citizen volunteers representing a range of ages, race, and interests. The Visioning Committee was fully empowered to reach out into the community and gather information through a community workshop, a series of customer focus groups, and a village-wide survey. The information gathered was used to create this report's Vision Statement and Visioning Plan. In summary, the Committee found the following:

- **Where are we now?** Brown Deer is a fully developed, aging, first-ring suburb of Milwaukee. Our population is shrinking slightly, becoming more diverse, and growing older. Our school population is declining as is the number of families with children. A number of commercial properties on reduced traffic corridors are empty or underutilized. We value our diversity, our middle-class values, our homes and neighborhoods, our schools, our businesses, access to jobs in Milwaukee and the metro area, and the beautiful, green suburban atmosphere of our Village.
- **Where are we going?** We are convinced that without vision, planning and intervention, Brown Deer will not age gracefully. "Curb appeal" will decline, quality of life and service ratings will become average, and property values will flatten. Fewer residents will move in with the same high expectations we brought with us when we moved here. Brown Deer will lose some ability to set itself apart from its neighbors. Property values and quality of life ratings may fall to unacceptable levels.
- **Where do we want to be?** We want to be a beautiful suburban village that provides a high quality of life including a thriving school system that attracts middle class families who believe in the value of a quality education. We want to be a diverse community bound together by our shared values and welcoming to all who want to share in our community life. We want our Village to provide a

full range of quality services in a professional and cost-effective manner. We want to provide an atmosphere that is conducive to successful collaborations and creative partnerships, in both public and private sector, that continually refresh our community and our property.

- **How do we get there?** We believe that we must keep the Vision Statement fresh in our minds to continually find ways to move toward fulfilling that vision. We hope that the Village Board will evaluate decisions in the future in light of their potential impact on the Vision Statement, and we have outlined specific action steps for consideration. We also believe that individual property owners as well as the community as a whole need to share our understanding and our vision of the future. We must share the responsibility and the work required to successfully shape that future.

The Visioning Committee hopes that community leaders, businesses, residents, and property owners will use this report to actively create a better future together.