



HISTORIC CONTEXT

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DOWNERS GROVE FROM 1832 THROUGH THE 1880S

Downers Grove is named for Pierce Downer (1782-1863), who arrived in the area from Jefferson County New York in 1832, staking his claim to a 160-acre tract of timberland and prairie for which he paid the government \$1.25 an acre. Downer settled in the present-day northwest corner of Downers Grove near Ogden Avenue, which was then an Indian trail, in the midst of the friendly Pottawatomie country. Downer built a log cabin with the assistance of his son Stephen, and by 1834, he was joined by his 22-year old daughter Adeline. She kept house for her father until 1836, when they were joined by Downer's wife Lucy (1784-1863) and son Elon.⁴ By the mid-1840s, Downer had replaced his log cabin with a gable-roof frame house that still stands at 4437 Seeley Avenue.⁵

Over the years, Downer transformed his property into a successful dairy farm, which encompassed much of the later E.H. Prince Subdivision in central Downers Grove. Other pioneers were attracted to the high, well-drained grove as its timber provided wood for fuel and building materials, while the surrounding prairie was suitable for cultivation. Downer was the acknowledged leader of the first settlers in the grove. Due to his reputation for honesty and fairness, he was often made the arbiter of disputes arising between settlers when courts of law were not accessible. Downer was well-educated by the standards of the time and his home featured a large library. He also possessed the

⁴ Pierce and Lucy Downer had six children, all of whom were born in Rutland, Jefferson County, New York: George D. and Stephen E., both born in 1812; Adeline (1812-80); James (1818-19); Maria (1820-21); and Elon, born 1827.

⁵ This home was owned by members of the Downer family until 1924. After Pierce Downer's death in 1863, ownership passed to his son Elon, who died in about 1906, and then to Elon's son James. James sold the family's remaining 83-acre tract to a developer in 1924. The Downer home, which remains a privately owned residence, originally faced south but was turned to face west onto Seeley Avenue in 1927

attributes of a hardy pioneer, being described by Walter Blanchard in 1857 as "a man of unusual physical powers, energetic, and capable of great endurance."⁶

Downer's son Stephen, a stone mason who helped to build Chicago's first light house, staked a claim to the east of his father's tract in 1833. However, there is no record that he ever lived on his land. In the same year, Joel Wells and a Mr. Cooley staked claims to the southeast of the grove. Within the next couple of years, these individuals had sold their property to other pioneers. Gary Smith settled in the grove in 1834 and married Adeline Downer. The couple built the community's first frame house which stood on the northeast corner of Maple Avenue and Carpenter Street.

One of Downers Grove's most prominent early settlers was Israel Blodgett (1797-1861), who arrived with his family in 1835 following his purchase of Joel Wells' land, which included much of the present-day central business district. Blodgett, a native of Amherst, Massachusetts, had originally settled in the Naperville area in 1831. After his move to Downers Grove, he built a log cabin and blacksmith shop at present-day 831 Maple Avenue, the current site of the Downers Grove Museum. In his blacksmith shop he made self-cleaning plows that were sold to local farmers and proved highly beneficial in cutting the heavy prairie sod. Blodgett also established a farm on his land south of Maple Avenue, which was devoted mainly to cattle-raising rather than grain growing. He later replaced his log cabin with a gable-front-and-wing frame house.

⁶ C.W. Richmond and H.F. Vallette. *A History of the County of DuPage, Illinois*. (Chicago: Steam Presses of Scripps, Bross and Spears, 1857), p 175.

Within a year of his initial purchase, Blodgett sold part of his claim in the center of the grove to Samuel Curtiss (1789-1867), a farmer who was born in Connecticut and raised in Vermont. Curtiss and his wife Mary (married 1813) settled in Downers Grove with their grown sons Henry, Charles and Roswell, and by 1839 they were joined by their son Eli. Curtiss's land included the business section of today's downtown district south of the train tracks. He built a cabin on the north side of present-day Maple Avenue and a nearby tavern and stables for the accommodation of farmers taking their produce to and from Chicago. In around 1840, Samuel Curtiss established a post office in the hamlet and Eli Curtiss served as the first postmaster. By 1853, Curtiss had replaced his cabin with a frame house.

In 1838, Israel Blodgett and Samuel Curtiss established what was to become Maple Avenue as a roadway between their two properties. They hitched six yoke of oxen to a massive log, dragging it back and forth for at least two miles, leveling what was then prairie turf into a well-beaten path. Soon after, Blodgett and Curtiss planted sugar maple trees on each side of the new road, which became the center of the settlement. Many of the town's earliest homes and businesses clustered near Maple Avenue as for many years it was the only street.

DuPage County was organized in 1839 and the county seat was located in Naperville. In the same year, Reverend Orange Lyman built a Greek Revival-styled frame house at present-day 806 Maple Avenue. An iron fence surrounded the property, which extended east to Mackie Place and north to Curtiss Street. Lyman's house remains, although altered, and is thought to be the oldest home in Downers Grove.

Walter Blanchard and Henry Carpenter arrived in the late 1830s from New York, purchasing land to the southwest and northwest of the present intersection of Main Street and Maple Avenue, respectively. Carpenter was unsuccessful at farming and in 1845 he opened the town's first store in his gable-front-and-wing house, which still stands at 1047 Maple Avenue. Henry Carpenter was the first man to sell off small parcels of his property for residential or commercial use, resulting in early settlement on his land in the vicinity of Maple Avenue and Carpenter Street. Blanchard's property along what was to become the west side Main Street south of Maple Avenue was also subdivided prior to the Civil War.

In 1846, a small, frame one-room school house was erected on Maple Avenue, near present-day Dunham Road. Settlement of the Downers Grove area was facilitated by the planking of the old Indian trail and a later stagecoach route from Chicago in 1851. The newly created Southwestern Plank Road — now Ogden Avenue — featured a frame tollhouse at the 1940 Ogden Avenue (the current site of Wannemaker's Nursery, 1940 Ogden Avenue) as well as Horace Aldrich's tavern.

During the 1850s, log cabins were being replaced with more comfortable clapboard houses and two churches were built in the center of settlement along Maple Avenue. In 1852, Henry Carpenter donated land to the Methodists for the construction of a church at 1032 Maple Avenue, which was replaced by a larger frame church with steeple in 1880. The Baptist Church erected their first edifice in 1853 at 929 Maple Avenue on land donated by Samuel Curtiss. After this building was destroyed by fire in 1871, the congregation built a gable-roofed frame meeting house on the

same location, which is extant. In 1874, the First Congregational Church built a frame church with steeple at 1047 Curtiss Street.

The Main Street Cemetery was established in 1856 on land donated by Samuel Curtiss. A burial association was formed roughly a decade later and the cemetery became the resting place of many of Downers Grove's most prominent early settlers, including the Blodgett, Curtiss, Carpenter, and Blanchard families. However, the graves of community founder Pierce Downer and his wife Lucy are notably absent. When the couple died within a day of each other in March 1863, they were unable to be buried in the cemetery as spring rains had caused the St. Joseph Creek to flood, making the downtown inaccessible from the north. Instead they were buried on a portion of their land on the north side of Downers Grove near the northwest corner of Linscott Avenue and Lincoln Street.⁷

Many of the early residents buried in the Main Street Cemetery were ardent abolitionists as anti-slavery sentiment ran high in DuPage County. Israel and Avis Blodgett were active in the Underground Railroad and hid slaves either in their home or Israel's blacksmith shop (historical sources vary on this), which was located near the southwest corner of the present Main Street and Maple Avenue, on their journey to Chicago and then onto a steamer to Canada. Other Downers Grove abolitionists included Samuel Curtiss and Henry Carpenter. Pierce Downer is also believed to have aided fugitives in their quest for freedom. His home at what is now 4437 Seeley Avenue would have been ideally situated for aiding persons traveling the Plank Road toward Chicago.

In 1863, Samuel Curtiss established an early subdivision in what would become the southeastern side of the business district. Until that time, Downers Grove remained a sleepy

⁷ The small Downer family cemetery also contains the graves of the couple's son Elon Downer, Elon's wife, their four children, and one granddaughter. The site was maintained by the Village of Downers Grove until it was purchased by the Downers Grove Park District in 1974.

farming hamlet with just a handful of commercial establishments and two blacksmith shops in the vicinity of Maple Avenue. By 1867, the one-room school house at Maple Avenue near Dunham Road had become inadequate and a two-room brick school house was built at 935 Maple Avenue, the present site of the Lincoln Community Center. This school received a two-room addition in 1877 when a ten-year course of instruction was adopted, including two years of high school work.

The first plat of the village of Downers Grove was made on September 26, 1864 in anticipation of the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad (now the Burlington Northern) from Chicago to Aurora, which was completed that year. Arrival of the railroad sparked the creation of Main Street (formerly Union Street) from Maple Avenue to the train tracks in 1865. This began the gradual shift of commercial establishments from Maple Avenue to Main Street. The railroad did not have an immediate impact on residential growth, however, as only one train a day traveled in each direction, with passengers often having to ride in freight cars. The first commuter trains did not begin operating until 1869. The 1877 History of DuPage County noted:

"Downer's Grove was the most quiet of country places until thirteen years ago, when the railroad was completed from Chicago to Aurora. Since that time, it has grown more rapidly in population and business.... Since the completion of the railroad, it has gradually become more and more a suburb of Chicago, having now quite a large number of men residing here who are doing business in that city. This in many ways helps forward its refinement, and stimulates our citizens to an ambition to keep pace with the times."⁸

In 1873, Downers Grove was officially incorporated as a Village with about 350 residents and the first Village Hall was built four years later. Residents were mainly natives of New

⁸ *History of DuPage County*. (Aurora, Illinois: Knickerbocker, 1877), p. 159.

England and New York as well as immigrants from England, Ireland, and Germany. During the 1870s, Main Street was extended south of Maple Avenue, Grove Street was ordered cut through to Carpenter, and the first sidewalk of two-inch planks was built along Maple Avenue. The 1874 Atlas of DuPage County illustrated a number of gable-fronted frame farm houses in Downers Grove that were owned by prominent early residents and situated on landscaped grounds.

In about 1872, a group of Chicago businessmen headed by General Arthur C. Ducat formed the Linden Heights Association, which purchased 800 acres of land within the heavily wooded grove west of Main Street. By the early 1880s the property was “being laid off in streets with artistic curves, rustic parks and lawns, for elegant residences.”⁹ However, the property — which encompassed the present-day Maple Grove Forest Preserve, Avery Coonley School campus, Gilbert Park, and the Denburn Woods subdivision — was never developed during the nineteenth-century. Instead, Ducat retained the immense tract as a sprawling estate and built a large home called Lindenwald on the north side of Maple Avenue where he lived as “a country gentleman” in his later years.

In 1892, Arthur Ducat sold most of his sprawling estate to his friend Marshall Field at a cost of a little over \$300 per acre “as an investment,” although he retained the acreage surrounding his home. The property sold to Field contained over 700 acres of land that extended almost a mile west of the Main Street station along both sides of the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad. A notice of the sale described the land as “high, rolling, and well-wooded.”¹⁰

Ducat’s Linden Heights Association also purchased land south of 55th Street, as indicated in the 1874 DuPage County Atlas. A circa 1900 map of Downers Grove shows the Linden Heights Association subdivision as bounded by

⁹ Rufus Blanchard. *History of DuPage County, Illinois*. (Chicago: O.L. Baskin & Co., Historical Publishers, 1882), p. 204.

¹⁰ “To Promote An Industrial Town,” *Chicago Tribune*, April 21, 1892.

Main, Lyman, 55th, and 59th streets. However, it appears that only three homes were erected on this tract in the Nineteenth-century, including two gable-front-and-wing homes at 5312 and 5539 Main Street and the Italianate style home at 5529, which appear to date to the 1860s or 1870s. The remainder of this tract was developed in the post World War II era with Ranch and Split-Level homes.

Arthur Ducat (1830-1896), a native of Glengarry, County Dublin in Ireland, was educated as a civil engineer and came to Chicago in 1856 where he secured a position with the Board of Insurance Underwriters of the City of Chicago, eventually becoming Chief Surveyor. After serving as a Captain in the Civil War, he became the head of the Home Insurance Company of New York’s Western Department.¹¹ In this position, he was responsible for commissioning architect William Le Baron Jenney, whom he met during the Civil War, to design the noted Home Insurance Building in 1883 in downtown Chicago, which is most famously known today as one the first skyscraper to be erected with a metal skeleton frame.¹² Ducat also headed other insurance agencies and established “an immense business.”¹³ In addition to his own estate in Downers Grove, Ducat’s extensive real estate holdings included a large tract of land in Evanston, where he lived in the 1870s. He also purchased property in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, where he organized a yachting club.

¹¹ “General A.C. Ducat is Dead,” *Chicago Tribune*, Jan. 30, 1896.

¹² Upon Ducat’s death in 1896, William Le Baron Jenney wrote a letter for inclusion in a memorial booklet that described his initial acquaintance with Ducat during the Civil War, Ducat’s role in recommending him as the architect for Chicago’s Home Insurance Building, and his involvement in the construction progress. According to Jenney: “During the entire construction of the (Home Insurance) building he was the representative of the building committee in Chicago, and as the company’s architect I reported directly to him. He took a most active interest in every minutia of the details, and often made valuable suggestions.” Quote contained in: Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States. In Memoriam: Lt. Col. And Brig. General Arthur Charles Ducat. 1896.

¹³ Newton Bateman and Paul Selby. *Historical Encyclopedia of Illinois*. (Chicago: Munsell Publishing Co., 1914), p. 845.

By 1885, the population had grown to 500 and more homes were added to the settled area between the train tracks, Maple Avenue, and Washington and Carpenter Streets. During this decade, the principal streets of Downers Grove received gravel paving and the first sewers were built. One- to two-story frame and brick Italianate style commercial buildings were built along Main Street to house businesses that included general merchandise stores, a drugstore, bakery, florist, butcher, and the Mertz and Mochel hardware store. The Sucher blacksmith shop at the southwest corner of Main Street and Maple Avenue was built in 1875 and survives as the oldest brick building in the village. A carriage and wagon maker shop was also located at this intersection. The Downers Grover Reporter was established as the first village newspaper in 1883. The town's gable-roofed brick train station was situated on Burlington (then Railroad) Street, along the south side of the tracks, west of Main Street.

NORTHWARD EXPANSION IN THE 1890S

Downers Grove prospered during the 1890s, a decade of increased subdivision activity and residential growth that saw the community's population double from 960 to 2,102. By 1895, 25 trains ran daily between Chicago and Downers Grove and additional stations were built at Belmont and East Grove (later Fairview). South of the tracks, the settled area expanded outside its previous boundaries defined by Maple Avenue to the south and Washington and Carpenter Streets to the east and west. A new subdivision on the southeast side was laid out by the Chicago development firm of Heckman and Straube where lots could be purchased for \$75.00 with \$10.00 down and payments of \$5.00 per month.¹⁴ The Queen Anne style homes at 5216, 5228, and 5256 Fairmount Avenue were built by the developer during this decade.

¹⁴ Display advertisement for Straube Subdivision in Downers Grove, *Chicago Tribune*, May 10, 1891.

Maple Avenue remained a favored location for the homes of some of the community's most prominent residents, including Charles Blodgett, the son of pioneer Israel Blodgett. In 1892, he built a Folk Victorian-styled house, the construction of which entailed moving the family's modest 1849 frame house to the rear of the property near present-day Randall Street. Folk Victorian homes were smaller, plainer versions of the more Picturesque Queen Anne, the more predominant architectural style employed in new home construction along Maple Avenue during the 1890s. Additional homes built during this time period include the homes at 843, 904 and 909 Maple Avenue. In 1894, First United Methodist Church at 1032 Maple Avenue replaced its 1880 building with a larger frame church to accommodate its growing congregation.

However, the most significant development to occur during the 1890s was the expansion of the village north of the tracks. This was due in large part to the establishment of the 225-acre E.H. Prince and Company subdivision, which was bounded by Ogden Avenue to the north, Warren Avenue to the south, Highland Avenue to the east, and Montgomery and Linscott Avenues to the west. The company subdivided the land, graded the streets, built sidewalks, planted trees, and installed a picturesque pond, originally called Grove Lake, to attract settlement. During the 1890s, a season ticket for ice skating at the Grove Lake Skating Pond could be had for \$1 for children 10 years and younger.

The E.H. Prince and Company's broadside advertising described the subdivision as featuring "high, rolling ground," with "magnificent trees, beautiful lake, pure water, and pure air." Lot prices started at \$4 per front foot and the company offered a payment plan of 10 percent down, with the balance due in 30 equal monthly payments, without interest. During the 1890s, home construction in the Prince subdivision was confined to its southeast corner, the area bounded by Franklin Street and Highland, Saratoga and Warren Avenues. The 1898 Sanborn Fire

Insurance Company map shows that about 25 homes were erected within this area at that time. These included gable-roofed Folk Victorian-styled homes and some more elaborate Queen Anne residences. The largest concentration of homes was located around the block bounded by Franklin Street and Warren, Forest (then Foote), and Saratoga Avenues, which featured a large green house in the center.

An 1895 article in the Downers Grove Reporter on E.H. Prince & Co. praised the firm's role in developing and improving the north side of the village:

"They have expended large sums of money in excavating and fixing up the lake on their subdivision and which has materially added to its value and beauty... Fine houses and cottages, miles of sidewalks and water mains, hundreds of beautiful shade trees, good broad streets and avenues, plenty of pure fresh air makes Prince's Addition a much sought place to live."¹⁵

E.H. Prince and Company was comprised of Earl H. Prince, Emerson Foote, and Fannie T. Linscott. Earl Prince (1861-1940), a native of Vermont, moved to Chicago with his wife Minnie in 1890 after receiving a law degree from the University of Michigan the previous year. In 1893, Earl and Minnie Prince moved with their young daughter Harriet into a large Queen Anne home situated on an oversized parcel at 4714 Oakwood Avenue, which stretched westward to Montgomery. Their son Earl was born shortly thereafter. Prince's brother A.G. Prince lived on the 5100 block of Saratoga Avenue, across the street from the subdivision's large greenhouse.

In 1893, Prince abandoned his family to join the gold rush in Alaska, after which he spent several years in mining operations in Cobalt, Ontario. Earl and Minnie Prince divorced in 1901. Prince later experienced financial difficulties while working as a member of the Chicago Board of

¹⁵ "E.H. Prince & Co.," *Downers Grove Reporter*, November 28, 1895.



Example Queen Anne residences in the E.H. Prince's Subdivision, 4736 (above) and 4934 Saratoga Avenue (below), 1890s

Trade in the early 1900s and declared bankruptcy in 1905. By 1920, Prince had established himself in Dixon, Illinois, and was associated with the ice industry until his death in 1940. Minnie Prince was very active in the Downers Grove community and remained in the family home at 4714 Oakwood Avenue until her death in 1946.¹⁶

Emerson Foote (1857-1892) was a native of New Haven, Connecticut and graduated from Yale University with a law degree in 1879. He married Corrine (Oldmixon) Foote (b. 1870), who was raised in Philadelphia, in 1887, after which the couple moved to Chicago where Foote was a founder of Somerset Coal and Coke Company. They lived at 2965 Groveland Avenue in the western suburb of North Riverside with

¹⁶ "Realtor who Opened D.G. Subdivision Passes Away," *Downers Grove Reporter*, April 15, 1940. "Minnie H. Prince Dies," *Downers Grove Reporter*, Oct. 10, 1946.

their daughter Marguerite (b. 1890). Foote died suddenly of apoplexy in June 1892, ten days after his son Edward Mason was born. In August 1892, Corrine Foote moved to a house at 1130 West Franklin (formerly 62 West Franklin) in Downers Grove, where she lived with her children until leaving Downers Grove in 1905.¹⁷

Upon establishing his subdivision, Earl Prince advocated for the northward extension of Main Street (originally called Rogers Street) from the railroad tracks to present-day Ogden Avenue. Prior to 1890, pedestrians and drivers traveling northward were forced to jog one block east upon reaching the railroad tracks and continue north on Highland Avenue (formerly called North Main Street). The obstacle to the Main Street right-of-way was the farm of Captain T.S. Rogers, the home of his mother, which stood directly in the path of the proposed roadway. Prince made what he considered a fair offer to Rogers for the right-of-way, which was rejected. The home was subsequently condemned and moved to 4942 Saratoga Avenue (demolished). During the 1890s, a landscaped park with fountain called Railroad Park was located within the Prince subdivision, just west of Main Street between Warren Avenue and the tracks. In 1890, the two-room Washington Elementary School opened at the northeast corner of Washington and Prairie Streets. A two-room addition was built the following year to accommodate the growing population on the north side of the village.

Toward the end of the nineteenth-century, Downers Grove saw its ethnic mix change with the arrival of Eastern European immigrants. A Polish community called Gostyn developed in the area bounded by Chicago, Stanley, Fairview Avenues and the railroad tracks near the East Grove train station (later called Fairview). A Polish real estate developer with the last name of Kostrzeski purchased and subdivided this area, which was named after the town in Poland from which many of the immigrants originated.

¹⁷ “Corinne S. Foote House,” undated essay contained in the files of the Downers Grove History Museum.

In 1891, the community founded St. Mary of Gostyn Parish and built a frame church on Wilson (formerly Kostrzeski) Street, where the congregation’s present rectory is located. A one-room schoolhouse was built in 1897 at the southeast corner of Prairie Avenue and Douglas Street. Modest frame homes were built in the vicinity of the church, although the area remained sparsely settled through the end of the nineteenth-century.

In 1892, the first nine-hole golf course in the Midwest was established just outside the western boundary of Downers Grove by a group of Chicago businessmen led by Charles Blair Macdonald, who formed the Chicago Golf Club on the former stock farm of A. Haddow Smith. An additional nine holes were added the following year, making it the nation’s first 18-hole golf course. A Burlington Northern official named Mr. Puffer owned a farm just east of the new Club and used his influence to get the Belmont station built near the course in the 1890s which stimulated development in this area, which was later annexed to Downers Grove.

In 1894, the Chicago Golf Club relocated their club to Wheaton, Illinois and shortly thereafter, this site reverted back to nine holes. By 1900, the course had a club house and was described as “occupying about 47 acres of rolling country well studded with natural and artificial hazards.”¹⁸ Many changes to this course have occurred through the last 110 years, although much of the original course remains, including holes 2, 4, 7, 8 and 9. From 1895 to 1968, the course was owned by several different individuals and was operated under the names of the Illinois Golf Club and later the Belmont Golf Club. In 1968, the course was purchased by the Downers Grove Park District and was renamed the Downers Grove Golf Club.

Residential growth in Downers Grove was accompanied by a variety of new municipal services and utility improvements during the

¹⁸ “Belmont Golf Club,” In: *Golfers Green Book*, 1901.

1890s, including a water works and electric plant, a volunteer fire department, and the introduction of telephone communications. The community's first bank was established in 1892 when the Farmer's and Merchant's Bank opened a facility in a Queen Anne-style commercial building with a distinguishable corner turret at the northeast corner of Main and Curtiss Streets (extant but significantly altered). In 1897, John Oldfield built a three-story brick commercial building at the southeast corner of this intersection, which featured pressed metal window bays and decorative cornice (demolished). Main Street continued to develop as the town's primary commercial spine with one- to two-story wood frame commercial buildings, including the Miller Hotel at the southwest corner of Main and Burlington (then Railroad) Streets. The Crescy Auditorium Building was built in 1890 at the corner of Main and Grove Streets as the town's first community center.

In 1890, Casper Dicke moved his machine shop from Chicago to Downers Grove to become the first industry in the village. Dicke, born in Cologne, Germany, was a skilled machinist who had arrived in the United States in 1881. His Downers Grove factory manufactured electrical lineman tools and was incorporated in 1897 as the Dicke Tool Company. The Company's products were shipped throughout the world and were of such high quality that they won the grand prize at World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago (1893), and the World Fairs in Buffalo (1901), and St. Louis (1904). The company's current brick factory at Warren and Saratoga Avenues replaced an earlier frame factory that was destroyed by fire in 1905. The nearby Van Matre and Straube's Piano Factory was located at the present intersection of Warren and Forest Avenues. Downers Grove even had its own stockyard, located on the south side of the tracks and east of Main Street, which served as a holding area for livestock being shipped to Chicago. It was flanked on both sides by a lumber and coal yards.

EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY DEVELOPMENT

The population of Downers Grove grew from 2,103 to 3,543 between 1900 and 1920 as new housing slowly began to spread outside previously settled areas.¹⁹ During this time period, the Village was bounded by Chicago Avenue to the north, 55th Street to the south, Fairview Avenue to the east, and Oakwood Avenue to the west. Most of this area was subdivided, except for the southeast and southwest corners, which remained farmland. In the early twentieth-century, residential development south of the tracks remained clustered on either side of Main Street and extended eastward to Washington Street, westward to Forest and Lane Streets, and southward to Randall Street. Between 1909 and 1921, this area expanded eastward to Park Avenue and southward to Summit Street. New homes were also constructed west from Main to Carpenter Streets, between the Burlington Northern railroad tracks and Grove Avenue.

In 1900, the two-story Lincoln Elementary School (originally called South Side Public School) was built at 935 Maple Avenue in front of the four-room school house that dated from the 1860s and 70s. This older rear building was replaced in 1913 by a large, two-story addition that was used to house the community's high school, which included a gymnasium and assembly hall. In 1912, the Kindergarten Extension Association opened its new school on Grove Street, just west of Main (the present site of Fishel Park). The school, later renamed Avery Coonley School, originally featured a kindergarten-only curriculum that was later expanded to include classes for primary grades.

During the early twentieth century, several new brick commercial buildings were erected in the downtown business district along Main Street, which continued to feature a mix of one- to two-part gable-roofed wood-frame buildings, Italianate

¹⁹ Census figures obtained from: Chicago Fact Book Consortium. *Local Community Fact Book, Chicago Metropolitan Area, 1990*. (Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers, 1995), p. 245.

and Queen Anne-styled brick buildings, as well as some homes and vacant parcels. These buildings housed a range of businesses, including general stores, bakeries, a hardware store, laundries, a bank, offices, plumbing shop, funeral parlor, meat market, drug store, shoe repair shop, confectionary, barber, milk depot, and shops for plumbing, cigars, and furniture.

The Bonnell House Hotel was at the southwest corner of Main Street and Burlington (then Railroad) Avenue. The Cresny Auditorium Building at the northwest corner of Main and Grove Streets remained a premier recreational amenity, as was the new movie house that opened in 1915 on the south side of Curtiss Street, east of Main. Named originally as the Paragon Theater, it had a seating capacity of 484 and soon became known as the Curtis Theater.

Two churches were added to the business district during this period: St. Paul's Church on Grove Street near Main Street, a frame building with corner steeple (1908; demolished), and Faith Evangelical United Brethren Church at the northeast corner of Main Street and Maple Avenue, a stone-clad Gothic Revival style edifice (1909; demolished). A one-story library building was built in 1915 at the corner of Curtiss Street and Forest Avenue, made possible through a gift from Andrew Carnegie fund and a donation by the late John Oldfield. The handsome brick building with Neoclassical detailing was designed by architect Frederick Lundquist of Chicago. In 1915 residents voted to change its form of government from a mayor and board of commissioners to a commission, which went into effect in 1917. The Village Hall was located on the west side of Main Street near Curtiss, adjacent to a parcel containing the police station and fire department, all three of which were one-story wood-frame buildings.

A new brick passenger railroad station was built in 1912 on the site of the current station, although many light industrial concerns continued to be clustered near the railroad tracks. Two different

lumber yards were located along the south side of the tracks near Belden and Forest Avenues to the east and west. On the north side of the tracks, the Kelmscott Press Printing Company Building (later M.W. Mills Printing Company), Dicke Tool Company Building, and the Downers Grove Electric Light and Water Works Building, were located on Warren Avenue, between Forest and Middaugh Avenues.

During the early Twentieth-century, Main Street was paved with brick from Maple to Franklin Avenues, beyond which was all farmland northward. Highland Avenue was the main road in 1910 leading north from the town and it was graded all the way to 12th Street (Roosevelt Road). One resident described the northwest side of Downers Grove at this time:

"In 1910 Chicago Avenue was not paved and from Chicago on Prince there were only six houses, the first one of which was directly across the street where north high school is now. From the north, two houses were on the east side of prince (sic) just south of the "plank road (sic).

...Getting back to Prince Avenue, it was just a plain one-track dirt road from two blocks north of Chicago Avenue. There was nothing from Highland Avenue west all the way to the old Downer farm (at Grant and Seeley). More than once with a big wet spring or fall the whole area from about Grant Street where North High is now, was one big lake from highland avenue (sic) all the way to Linscott. Highland Avenue was the only street you could drive to the Plank Road."²⁰

Early twentieth century residential development north of the railroad tracks extended to Franklin Street, between Highland and Saratoga Avenue, within the south end of the E.H. Prince & Company subdivision. An additional small cluster of homes was situated just north of Franklin Street, between Prince Street and Forest Avenue, and also around St. Mary of Gostyn Church near the then-northeast area of the Village. Between

²⁰ Quote contained in: Dunham and Wandschneider p, 100.

1909 and 1920, this settled area expanded northward to Chicago Avenue, between Highland and Oakwood Avenues. However, even within these more densely populated residential areas to the north and south, vacant lots remained. The remaining subdivided areas outside of those already described remained sparsely settled through 1920.

St. Joseph's Catholic Church was built in 1908 at the northeast corner of Main and Franklin Streets. The congregation was formed in 1906 by English speaking members of St. Mary's of Gostyn. Northsiders even had their own recreational venue — the Dicke Building — located at the northwest corner of Warren Avenue and Forest Street (demolished). This two-story Queen Anne style building with corner turret featured a pool room and a one-story rear wing with bowling alley. By 1921, the pool room had been subdivided into an American Legion meeting room and dance hall, and a movie theater was added to the rear of the building, next to the bowling alley. A small number of commercial establishments were situated on Forest Avenue, just north of the Dicke Building, including a restaurant, bakery, tailor and shoe repair shop, and a grocer.

DOWNERS GROVE DEVELOPMENT: 1920S TO 1950

The population of Downers Grove more than doubled during the 1920s, as 5,000 new residents increased the population to nearly 9,000 by the end of the decade. The real estate market was booming as new subdivisions were created and vacant parcels throughout previously settled areas were increasingly infilled with new housing. The Village boundaries expanded northward to Ogden Avenue and 39th Street, eastward to Cumnor and Williams Avenues, westward to Belmont Road; and southward to 63rd Street. These boundaries were to remain in place until their further expansion post-World War II.

Most of the new residential construction during the 1920s took place north of the Burlington Northern railroad tracks, where settlement of the E.H. Prince & Company subdivision continued its steady march northward to Grant Street and expanded westward to Oakwood Avenue. Northwest of the Prince Subdivision, James Downer, grandson of Pierce Downer, sold the family's remaining 83 acres of land to Arthur T. McIntosh and Company in 1924. The firm subdivided the farm into its present day street network and the area was annexed to Downers Grove. Settlement between the tracks and Chicago Avenue also moved eastward to Cumnor Road. Between Chicago Avenue and Ogden, eastward settlement extended to Sterling Road.

South of the railroad tracks, settlement during the 1920s development boom extended eastward to Benton Avenue. Residential construction also began in the Fredenhagen subdivision, situated in the southeastern corner of the community near the Fairview train station, with at least thirty bungalows designed by Haase and McMartin Construction Company of Chicago. This area was subdivided by Victor Fredenhagen (1857-1929) in the 1890s but remained largely undeveloped until the 1920s. Fredenhagen was one of the oldest and most experienced real estate men in DuPage County at that time, and lived for many years at 5121 Fairview Avenue.²¹

Homes built in Downers Grove from the early twentieth-century through the 1920s were commonly one- to two-stories in height and featured vernacular gabled cottages, bungalows designed in the popular Craftsman style, American Foursquare homes, and those featuring historical revival styles, such as the Colonial and Dutch Colonial. Many homes during this period were built from kits ordered from Sears, Roebuck and Company, until the company closed its Modern Homes Division in 1940. With over 200 Sears houses inventoried in the

²¹ V. Fredenhagen County Pioneer Dies on Monday," *Downers Grove Reporter*, May 24, 1929. "Downers Grove Model Bungalow Open to July 16," *Chicago Tribune*, July 10, 1927.

community featuring at least 22 different Sears mail-order home models, Downers Grove has one of the largest concentrations of existing Sears houses in the United States. The 30,000-piece kits were shipped from the Sears factory site in Cairo, Illinois by railcar. The unusually large concentration of Sears homes in Downers Grove was likely due to the long rail sidings situated between the Burlington Northern tracks and Warren Avenue, which provided ample space to store Sears box cars waiting to unload kit home materials to be constructed off-site.

The remaining subdivided areas outside of central Downers Grove remained sparsely settled until the next boom that began after 1950. However, one area that experienced some new residential construction during the Depression years of the 1930s and into the 1940s was the portion of Arthur Ducat's former estate west of Main Street that had been renamed Denburn Woods. The 1933 Sanborn Map shows that the northwest corner of Maple Avenue and Brookbank Road had been subdivided into nine parcels featuring one home at the corner. The remaining area of present-day Denburn Woods had not yet been subdivided and featured only three homes in 1933, one of which was Ducat's original residence. However, the 1947 Sanborn shows that by that time, Denburn Woods featured approximately 30 homes situated on oversized lots facing the winding roads that meandered throughout the heavily wooded neighborhood.

Three of the homes on west Maple Avenue in Denburn Woods — including those at 1300 and 1304 — were built in 1937 by the Home Builders Company of Chicago. The house at 1336 Turvey Road was designed by noted architect Jerome Cerny and erected in the same year. A group of homes in the new Denburn development erected in 1939 were designed by the firm Norling and Alstrom.²²

²² "Draw Plans for Homes in West Suburb," *Chicago Tribune*, Oct. 17, 1937. "Home Building Announced for Downers Grove," *Chicago Tribune*, July 9, 1939.

Just west of the future Denburn Woods residential development, in 1928, the Avery Coonley School purchased an approximately ten-acre parcel that was formerly part of the Ducat Estate for the construction of a larger school on spacious grounds. The two-story Prairie-styled school was clad in brick and stucco, had a U-shaped plan, and was built around a central courtyard. It was completed in 1929 and designed by architect Waldron Faulkner of Washington, D.C. with the assistance by the Chicago firm of Hamilton, Fellows and Nedved. The school grounds were laid out and landscaped by nationally prominent designer Jens Jensen and included formal elements, several different pools, a working garden for children and native plantings surrounding two large lawn areas on the south slope of the main building. Today, the Avery Coonley School is listed in the National Register of Historic Places due to the national significance of its historic educational program and the design features of its buildings and grounds.²³

The growing population of Downers Grove necessitated the need for schools and additions to existing ones during the 1920s and 1930s. Two new elementary schools were erected in 1928: Whittier School at 536 Hill Street on the southeast side and Longfellow School at 1435 Prairie Avenue in the E.H. Prince subdivision. The existing Washington School at the intersection of Washington Street and Prairie Avenue north of the tracks received a 12-room addition in 1929. The Downers Grove Community High School was built in 1927 at the northern terminus of Forest Avenue, and new wings were constructed in 1935 and 1939. This handsome two-story brick school featured Gothic Revival style detailing and was intended to serve the larger area surrounding Downers Grove, rather than just the village itself. St. Mary of Gostyn replaced its 1897 frame school with a two-story brick building in 1920, which also featured a convent and social hall. St. Joseph's Church built an eight-room school in 1926.

²³ Jean A. Follett. National Register of Historic Places Nomination for the Avery Coonley School in Downers Grove, dated November 13, 2006.

Several new churches were also erected to accommodate growing congregations during the 1920s. These included the current First United Methodist Church at 1032 Maple Avenue (1928), which replaced the congregation's frame 1894 church building. Tallmadge and Watson designed this edifice, which was clad in buff brick and featured a stone bell tower.²⁴ Other new ecclesiastical buildings included First Congregational Church at 1047 Curtiss Street (1925), which replaced its 1874 frame church; First Church of Christ Scientist on Curtiss Street at Forest Avenue (1924); and Immanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church at 5211 Carpenter Street (1924).

The construction boom of the 1920s led the Downers Grove Village Council to adopt its first zoning ordinance on April 16, 1923 as a means to guide future growth. It was "...designed to protect the residence districts of the community from the encroachments of business and manufacturing establishments and thus keep up their value as residence property."²⁵ The ordinance was developed by the zoning commission under supervision of nationally prominent city planning consultant Jacob L. Crane Jr. and divided the Village into various land-use districts.

In his report, Crane was critical of the Village's dead-end streets and recommended that they be extended for the "safety, convenience and beauty of the village."²⁶ Crane's report also included a list of list of recommendations for the Village, including the need for small parks and playgrounds as well as a new Village Hall building, which was erected in 1925. The three-story brick Village Hall, named Memorial Hall in honor of World War I servicemen, was built in 1925 and replaced its one-story frame predecessor on the west side of Main Street.

²⁴ "New Church Planned for West Suburb," *Chicago Tribune*, Dec. 5, 1926.

²⁵ "Zoning Ordinance Passed by Council," *Downers Grove Reporter*, April 27, 1923. "Glen Ellyn and Downers Grove Adopt Zoning," *Chicago Tribune*, April 22, 1923.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

During the 1920s and 1930s, the downtown business district expanded to Curtiss Street between Main and Washington, which featured additional shops on the ground floor of a large courtyard apartment building, a new Post Office with WPA murals, a funeral home, and a picturesque three-story brick Masonic Temple, built in 1925 at the southwest corner of Curtiss and Washington Streets. This stretch of Curtiss Street also featured the 1,400-seat Alamo Theater Building, which was built in 1926 as the first of two large-scale movie theaters in the Village. The theater commissioned James J. Dvorak and Vincent T. Lynch, President of Lynch Theaters of Chicago, and designed by Elmer F. Behrns, the architect of the York Theater in Elmhurst.²⁷ The building was designed in the Spanish Renaissance style with two storefronts on either side of the Theater's centrally-located lobby.

The new Spanish Renaissance-styled Tivoli Theater and Hotel Building at the northeast corner of Highland and Warren avenues attracted an estimated 4,000 people when it opened on Christmas Day, 1928. The multi-use building featured a 1,400-seat movie theater, a 39-room hotel, seven stores, and a twelve-lane bowling alley in the basement. It was designed by the Chicago architecture firm Van Gunten and Van Gunten for Gustav H. Bunge (1865-1941), a long-time attorney for the Village and founder of the Downers Grove Sanitary District.²⁸ The Tivoli was built on the site of Bunge's Queen Anne style house, which was subsequently moved to 4943 Highland Avenue, which was designated a Village landmark in 2009. The slightly earlier Alamo Theater on Curtiss Street, which was labeled the "DuPage Theater and Commercial Building" on the 1927 Sanborn Map, evidently couldn't compete with the Tivoli and fell victim to the

²⁷ "Downers Grove to Have 1,200 Seat Cinema," *Chicago Tribune*, January 17, 1926.

²⁸ "New Picture House for Downers Grove," *Chicago Tribune*, Nov. 27, 1927. "Crowds Attend Tivoli Theater Here Christmas," *Downers Grove Reporter*, Dec. 28, 1928. "Schless-Bunge Banquet Opens Tivoli Theater," *Downers Grove Reporter*, Dec. 28, 1928. "Gustav H. Bunge, Attorney, Dies of Auto Injuries," *Chicago Tribune*, Oct. 26, 1941.

ensuing Depression. By 1933, the Theater was replaced by a large garage, although its storefronts remained on Curtiss Street.

During the early years of the Depression, the community's three banks — First National, Security National, and Downers Grove State Bank — were all closed. Downers Grove was without a single banking institution between 1931 and 1940, when the Citizens National Bank opened in the former First National Bank Building on Main Street.²⁹

The downtown business district featured a continuous streetwall of commercial buildings along Main Street, between Curtiss and Burlington. A range of automotive-related structures—including garages, filling stations, sales buildings, and repair shops — were increasingly built nearby during this period, especially along Main Street, south of Grove Street and north of the railroad tracks, and along Burlington Avenue, which also featured a large dance hall just east of Main Street.

New industrial development included the Rite-Rite Manufacturing Company, maker of mechanical pencils, which built a \$100,000 plant at 641 Rogers Street in 1941 that employed 150 people and was designed by architect George Buckley.³⁰ The adjacent parcel to the east housed the Boddy and McKnight Concrete Products Plant. The Pyramid Company, which manufactured stucco and plaster, and an adjacent machine shop, were located along the south side of Maple Avenue, just east of Douglas Road (all demolished).

In 1920, the fledgling Forest Preserve District of DuPage County purchased 80 acres of the former Arthur Ducat Estate in order to preserve a large remaining parcel of the community's original grove. An additional three acres were added in 1923, creating the 83-acre Maple Grove Forest

²⁹ "Downers Grove Has Bank Again After Lapse of Nine Years," *Chicago Tribune*, Sept. 22, 1940.

³⁰ "Pencil Company Building Factory in Downers Grove," *Chicago Tribune*, August 31, 1941.

Preserve. Today, Maple Grove is the largest remaining remnant of the vast maple forest that became Downers Grove and also exists as a valuable natural area. The preserve is categorized as a "globally endangered ecosystem" by ecologists. The preserve's remnant black maple savanna and upland maple forest communities host hundreds of plant species, some of which are threatened or endangered.³¹

A DuPage County Guide developed during the Depression by the Federal Writers Project noted that in 1939 Downers Grove officials were taking steps to create a park system since, "Strangely enough, Downers Grove has less park area than any other town its size in the county."³² Only a few small parks were owned by the Village prior to World War II, including the three-acre Prince Pond, which Earl Prince donated to the Village in 1936. The original two-acre site of the Avery Coonley School on Grove Street Park purchased by residents in 1944 and donated to the Village for public recreational use. Randall Park was opened in the heart of the southeast residential district 1942 and featured a wading pool, swings, sandboxes and a baseball diamond. Gilbert Park bordering the Maple Grove Forest Preserve and Littleford Park were also maintained by the Village prior the World War II. These original Village parks were deeded to the Downers Grove Park District in varying years after its establishment in 1946.³³

During the decade of the 1930s, the population of Downers Grove grew by only about 500 additional residents, rising to 9,500 by 1940. The population began to rebound in the post-World War II era of the 1940s reaching 12,000

³¹ Forest Preserve District of DuPage County website: www.dupageforest.com.

³² Marion Knoblauch, ed. *DuPage County: A Descriptive and Historical Guide, 1831-1939*. (Elmhurst: Irvin A. Ruby, 1948), p. 32.

³³ "Band Concert Opens New Park in Downers Grove," *Chicago Tribune*, August 23, 1942. Downers Grove Park District website: www.dgparks.org.

by 1950.³⁴ New homes were modest in size and many were built in previously subdivided, yet sparsely settled, areas.

DOWNERS GROVE DEVELOPMENT: 1950 TO THE PRESENT

Downers Grove experienced its greatest period of growth after World War II due to its strategic location near the intersection of the East-West (Interstate 88) and North-South Tollways (Interstate 355), as well as its close proximity to Interstate 55 to the south and the Tri-State Tollway (Interstate 294) to the east. The nearby expressway system also provided easy access to O'Hare and Midway International Airports, and Chicago's Loop. Together, these factors attracted residents, new shopping centers, and a range of business and industry to the Village's previously undeveloped periphery.

The population of Downers Grove nearly doubled from 11,865 to 21,154 between 1950 and 1960 and then doubled again over the next 20 years, rising to 42,560 by 1980. Annexations of unincorporated areas for the creation of subdivisions — particularly north of Ogden Avenue and south of 63rd Street — consumed the productive farms that still surrounded much of the Village as late as the 1940s and involved the installation of streets, water mains, and sewers. In the process, the Village boundaries were expanded to eventually encompass 13 square miles. By 2000, the population reached a high of slightly over 48,000 residents. In recent years, diversity has been increased with African American residents and newcomers of East Indian, Southeast Asian, and Philippine descent.

New residential construction impacted the already settled sections of the Village, as vacant parcels were rapidly developed with new housing. In contrast to the older areas, post World War II

subdivisions were often laid out in cul-de-sacs rather than in a gridded street system. Residential construction from the 1950s included brick and frame cottages, many of which featured the "Cape Cod" or Minimal Traditional style, while homes built during the 1960s through the 1970s overwhelmingly featured Ranch and Split-Level types clad in face brick, aluminum, hardwood, or some combination of these materials. One particularly noteworthy cul-de-sac subdivision from the 1950s is Shady Lanes Estates off Fairview Avenue near Ogden Avenue, which is set within a heavily wooded tract and features a range of distinctive, custom-made "California" Ranch homes.

Although residential construction mainly consisted of single family homes during this period, some townhomes and apartment buildings were also constructed. The Oak Tree Towers at



Example homes in the Shady Lane Estates Subdivision, 300 (above) and 232 Shady Lane (below), 1950s

³⁴ Census figures obtained from: Chicago Fact Book Consortium. *Local Community Fact Book, Chicago Metropolitan Area, 1990*. (Chicago: Academy Chicago Publishers, 1995), p. 245.

the corner of Forest and Warren Avenues opened in 1977 as the first senior citizen housing in the Village. Additional apartment buildings for seniors were opened at 1122 Gilbert Street and at 3737 Highland Avenue in 1981.

The population explosion in the immediate post-World War II era overtaxed the local school system and created a crisis that was alleviated by a multi-million dollar school expansion plan that began in the 1950s. Between 1950 and 1970, Downers Grove built nine elementary schools, two junior high schools (now middle schools), a new high school, and created additions to those buildings and to the older existing schools. Lincoln Elementary School on Main Street was closed in 1974 and subsequently purchased by the park district, which converted it to a community center. Two other historic elementary schools — Washington and Longfellow — were both closed in the late 1970s. Washington School was later demolished and Longfellow was repurposed by the local school district as a technology center.

New Elementary schools built during the 1950s included Highland, Hillcrest, Pierce Downer, Lester, and Fairmount. During the 1960s, Kingsley, Indian Hill, Belle Aire and El Sierra elementary schools were built. Herrick Junior High School was built in 1953 at 4435 Middaugh Avenue and housed all of Downers Grove's seventh and eighth graders until O'Neill Junior High School was built in 1962 at 59th Street and Fairmount Avenue. The original 1928 Community High School on North Main Street was renamed North High School after the new South High School was built in 1964 at 1436 Norfolk Street.

The growing population of Downers Grove spurred many churches and religious institutions to build new additions or construct larger buildings, while many new congregations were also organized. Today, the Village has approximately 47 religious institutions. Some institutions feature traditional designs, such as the Colonial Revival-styled addition built

onto First Baptist Church's 1871 edifice at 929 Maple Avenue. Other buildings feature more Modernist and Modern Eclectic designs such as St. Paul's United Church of Christ at 5739 Dunham Road (1957); Gloria Dei Lutheran Church at 4501 Main Street (c. 1960); St. Mary of Gostyn at Prairie Avenue and Douglas Street (1965; altered); and Immanuel Lutheran Church at 5211 Carpenter Street. St. Joseph Church at the northwest corner of Main Street and Prairie Avenue, built in 1992, is a more recent late Modern Eclectic design.

The creation of new residential districts since 1950 was accompanied by the steady expansion of the park system which currently consists of 45 park sites. Neighborhood parks range in size from small play areas at 62nd and Carpenter Streets to the 27-acre Patriots Park at 55th Street and Grand Avenue. Downers Grove parks are quite diverse in terms of their appearance and function. Many feature active recreational uses, such as the 13-acre Doerhoefer Park at 41st Street and Saratoga Avenue, which has tennis and basketball courts, baseball fields, and a synthetic turf field for football or soccer. Others include natural areas intended for more passive recreation. The ten-acre Hoopers Hollow Park at Chicago and Cornell Avenues features a rustic appearance with a meandering creek.

Particularly noteworthy are two natural areas of statewide significance: Belmont Prairie and Lyman Woods. The 10-acre Belmont Prairie, located west of the Downers Grove Golf Course at Hadow Avenue and Cross Street, is one of the last original prairies in Illinois. The area was protected from development during the 1970s by cooperative efforts of The Nature Conservancy and the Belmont Prairie Preservation Association. One-third of the area was preserved through a gift by Alfred and Margo Dupree of Downers Grove. The site was purchased by the Downers Grove Park District in 1979 and a year later was designated by the State as an Illinois Nature Preserve, supporting more than 300 species of plant and animal wildlife.

Lyman Woods is located east of Highland Avenue, between Good Samaritan Hospital on the south and 31st Street on the north. The sprawling 150-acre site features oak woods, prairie, and marsh habitats that support over 300 species of native plants. The most notable feature is a nineteen-acre oak woods that has remained undisturbed since it was purchased by the Lyman family in 1839. Today it serves as a rare example of the pre-settlement landscape that dominated the Downers Grove area. The preservation of its initial ninety acres in 1987 represented the cooperative effort of the Village of Downers Grove, the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County, the Downers Grove Park District and a number of dedicated individuals. Additional acreage was purchased in the 1990s, expanding the site to its current size.

The first ninety-acre parcel acquired to create Lyman Woods was purchased from George Williams College after its closure in 1985. The remaining 104 acres of the College's original 194-acre campus — which was established in 1964 and featured fourteen Modernist buildings — was sold at that time to the Chicago College of Osteopathic Medicine (now Midwestern University), which later expanded with additional buildings. Directly to the south, the five-story Good Samaritan Hospital opened in 1976 on a 63-acre tract fronting Highland Avenue to handle post-war population growth in DuPage County. Owned and operated by the Evangelical Hospital Association, it added a cardiac surgery center in the mid-1980s which spurred further growth, as did the hospital's designation as a Level I trauma center.

Downers Grove changed to the Village Manager form of government in 1962. Its new Zoning Commission prepared a comprehensive zoning ordinance that was adopted in 1965 and included provisions for apartment buildings and shopping centers. Over the ensuing decades, the community's major commercial thoroughfares developed as linear shopping strips that included stand-alone retail stores, restaurants, and strip malls. Larger retail developments featuring big

box stores are located in the Butterfield/Finley district, which is adjacent to Interstates 88 and 355, and includes five shopping centers. An extensive retail district is also spread out along 75th Street, with a concentration near its Lemont Road intersection.

The historic Main Street commercial corridor between Maple and Burlington Avenues has also evolved over the years. Many of its surviving one- to two-story brick-clad commercial buildings from the late-nineteenth and early twentieth-centuries have experienced façade alterations while others have been demolished and replaced since the 1970s. For example, the intersection of Main and Curtiss Streets features new one-story commercial buildings on three of its corners. In 1979, the Citizens National Bank built a three-story brick headquarters building at the southwest corner of Main Street and Burlington Avenue. However, new buildings exhibit the same scale, massing, and setbacks as their older counterparts and a continuous streetwall has been retained along this stretch of Main Street with no vacant parcels.

In 1956, the Village's 1915 Carnegie library received a one-story addition that was commonly referred to as the "wraparound" as it surrounded the historic building. This library complex was in turn replaced by a new and larger library in 1977, which was designed by John Wilson of Loeb, Schlossman Dart and Hackl. A large new addition to the library was built in 1999. In 1969, the Village purchased the Shafer Bearing Company Building at 801 Burlington Avenue as its new Village Hall. The Main Street Station was rehabilitated in the 1970s and a new Belmont station was erected in 1981.

By the 1990s, the downtown business district was suffering by a lack of investment and retail competition from both outlying local shopping districts and regional malls. In order to attract new business and residents to the downtown, the Village launched a downtown redevelopment project in 1997 that was funded by a newly developed tax increment financing (TIF) district.

The plan focused on infrastructure and aesthetic improvements as well as the construction of multi-family housing aimed at young professionals and empty nesters. Over the next four years, century-old infrastructure was replaced with sanitary sewers, water mains and underground utilities. Other improvements included the rebuilding of downtown sidewalks and streets and the installation of new signage, trees, and ornamental streetlights. The train station was overhauled and its plaza received a new fountain, park benches, landscaping and historic clock. In 2004, a new 800-car parking garage was constructed just east of Main Street.

In 2000, the Morningside Square Condominiums opened on Main Street, just south of Maple Avenue. The five-story building with forty units was first major construction project in the downtown area in twenty years. Residential development near the business district since that time has included the Georgian Courts town home development between Curtiss and Gilbert Streets, west of Forest Avenue, and Station Crossing, a mixed-use development of condominiums and ground-level retail businesses, bounded by Main, Rogers, Highland, and Warren Streets, just north of Metra Train Station. The Acadia on the Green mixed-use development at Burlington Avenue and Mochel Drive was also constructed in 2008.

As part of the downtown's revitalization, the Downers Grove Historical Society spearheaded the preservation of the 1856 Main Street Cemetery between Curtiss and Grove Streets, which included the repair of headstones and the installation of new stone walls, fencing, and landscaping.

Among the most notable changes to the urban landscape of Downers Grove since 1950 has been the significant growth of business and light industrial parks in newly annexed areas along the periphery. Pepperidge Farm bakeries moved to the eastern edge of the Village near the Fairview Avenue station in the late 1950s. By the mid-

1960s, Ellsworth Industrial Park was developed to the west near the Belmont train station. Today, this 300-acre site is also adjacent to Interstate 355 and home to more than 135 businesses. Since the 1980s, extensive office development has occurred in the north and northwest sections of Downers Grove. The Butterfield/Finley district includes two office complexes that are home to many large corporations, one industrial park, and several hotels.

Continued residential construction has kept pace with retail and business developments since the 1980s, with new cul-de-sac subdivisions of increasingly larger homes erected in the outlying areas. Starting in the late 1990s, rapidly increasing property values prompted teardowns of more modest homes, typically those situated on oversized lots, in order to build larger residences. Many of the new homes are located on the Village's northwest side, including the 4400 through the 4600 blocks of Seeley and Downers Drive. The area surrounding Chicago Avenue west of Downers Drive features a significant number of post-1990 homes, such as the 4700-4900 blocks of Stonewell, where many are designed in the Neo-Craftsman style. Other homes erected in recent decades also feature revivals of historic styles, such as Neo-Colonial and Tudor designs.