

## ONLINE SURVEY RESPONSES

### **When you think about our community, what are your most positive and powerful impressions?**

Downers Grove is a friendly, family-oriented, safe town with good schools. Residents like the downtown and transportation options provided by its location and rail access. It maintains its historic character, provides good services and offers events/entertainment.

- I love our community in Downers Grove. I especially love the quaint downtown area and having 3 train stations is a plus.
- Family oriented town completely walkable.
- Good shopping choices, good schools, clean streets, low crime rate, close to expressways, good public transportation. Plus the library provides reading for pleasure and excellent research resources.
- The vibrant downtown with the summer car shows, live entertainment and crowds of happy visitors and residents. The access to the train and the effort of the city to create a place where people want to live. I love the Starbucks and the Movie theatre and the trains.
- I think we need to focus on the youth and parenting groups of this community. DG is a town for families and has an excellent school system
- Proactive management driven by residents' commitment to. Balancing the maintenance in the clear presence of its history with the investment its future. That takes people capable of making difficult decisions and then following through on over long periods of time.
- Parks, schools, downtown and library.
- My positive experience always includes the library (except when someone is trying to petition me outside its doors for something partisan). The librarians know our family well and my kids know to ask what they need when maybe they can't ask us, their parents. I've even sent my mother-in-law, from Burr Ridge, to our library for technology help when she needed to print important documents. She returned overjoyed, remarking how patient and savvy The Technology Woman was, someone her own age. Our library is inclusive, and not once have I felt judged being there for whatever I needed. Negatively, about judgement and partisan positions, I seek our library as a sanctuary from it. I feel sometimes our community is far too divided, by design, into Us. v. Them. At the library, I don't feel that way at all. And I greatly appreciate it's the last stronghold of what community is and should be, in my opinion.
- Educated, friendly, welcoming, homey, somewhat walkable
- The reason we wanted to live in Downers Grove when we moved here back in the 90's was because of the neighborhood feel of the community. We wanted a mature community with full grown trees and a town with a main street (versus a Woodridge for example which has no downtown). The charm of walking to town and parks was important to us. Of course great schools was a requirement.

- Well-planned, low apparent crime, sense of history. Most conveniences are available. There's a wide selection of restaurants and stores. Its Library is quite good.
- I just moved here and people are extremely warm and welcoming, whether they are people I have met on my street, at the park, or at local businesses.
- Family, historic, inviting and vibrant community.
- That it is a safe and fun place to raise our family. There are always low or no cost activities we can participate in and that is great since we have young kids. I love that we have an active downtown area and many family friendly events.
- DG is a very child friendly community with great services. The library is the center of it all.
- Historic homes and train station, good schools, dog-friendly, the Tivoli.

### **What are the most important issues in our community today?**

Infrastructure needs include public parking in downtown, stormwater, sewers, and sidewalks. It is important to keep the town clean and safe while maintaining its historic character. Homelessness and lack of affordable housing are ongoing concerns. Taxes are viewed as both an investment and concern. Supporting and welcoming diverse populations (racial, economic, cultural, etc.) is necessary.

- Keep the village clean. More and more I see trash on the easements, parking lots, parks, streets & sidewalks. Maybe we can get community service from convicted people to pick up the trash? Adding signs for people to pick up after their dog's mess in the parks and forest preserves would also be nice. This is such a beautiful town and the garbage is detracting from its beauty.
- All kids need an affordable place to go after school
- There are not any problems that keep me up at night. However, attention needs to be given to providing more public parking on both the north and south side of the RR tracks. The funds available for replacement of streets, water mains, sewers, and sidewalks should be checked to insure that they are adequate for the long term (25-50 yrs.)
- Homelessness. Rising costs of housing for families.
- Besides the drain water issue? I think income tax and property taxes going up and how that is going to effect families.
- Respecting our history while investing in its future. No matter the topic. This balancing act is a fundamental theme across them all.
- We are getting more culturally diverse community I see that as a plus, but there may be things to address along the way.
- Diversity, access to resources, and kindness. There are some who might say lower taxes, but those who are first to say it are usually those who don't know or use the library as much as our family. And if they did, they might realize just how much our taxes greatly contribute to the kind of community they would seek if they didn't already take this one for granted ... friends who live in communities hyper focused on taxes don't have a library and now gladly pay membership fees because short-sided decisions then continually return a negative impact now, especially when new families equate the strength of a library with the strength of a community, and its schools.

- Herion addiction, computer/screen addiction, flooding/stormwater, walkability/need more sidewalks everywhere.
- Explosion of massive homes being built, continued destruction of absorbable land/trees that pull water from the ground, flooding creating chaos/upset/cost to residents, mature trees being felled due to the large homes, the charm of our town being impacted. A simple example; one of the delights of our neighborhood was the ice pond at Hummer. Our son played hockey and one of his winter joys was to skate there. That has been ruined due to massive home builds and the change in water routes. Additionally too many condo buildings, with more coming, that alter everything about our downtown. Historic buildings being pulled down and replaced with a massive condo building. Retailers being pushed out to fell buildings that will turn into more condos. Unfavorable tax issues locally and by the state that push retail out of our downtown.
- Destruction of older, historically significant houses and other buildings. Deteriorating streets and lack of sidewalks. Flooding issues, compounded by inadequate storm sewerage. Noise problems from trucks and autos without mufflers, causing sleep disturbances and stress. Increased population density and resultant stress and crime. Although the situation is better now than 10 years ago, homelessness is still a problem.
- Since I'm still learning about the major issues in our local community, I'm not entirely sure, but I do know DuPage and Will counties relatively well. Generally, as parts of the community seem to be growing more affluent, I think we need to remember that there are still significant populations that need our attention, whether they are more middle class or even homeless. Remember that there is a surprising number of homeless families in our community.
- Making sure EVERYONE feels welcome and included. Not alienating groups of individuals. Removing/replacing the blight on Ogden Avenue, and bringing more business back to fill vacancies in the downtown area.
- access & acceptance for all. regardless of ability, age, income or other typically thought of category. I also think that it is so important to support the local organizations like the library and local non-profits that are the back bone of help our community. I do worry about the new and drugs in the community. i have young kids and i don't want them to be effected by that as they get older i want them to have positive influences that help keep them away from the bad stuff.
- Lack of diversity, Car dependency, Housing becoming unaffordable to middle class, leading to even less diversity, Not very progressive in terms of sustainability
- Need for historic preservation. I'd like to see the library take a strong position in support of preserving the history of the town. Also, we need more low-income housing options and support for the homeless and those living in poverty in DG.

### **What is your vision for Downers Grove?**

Downers Grove would ideally be a diverse, safe, and inclusive community where all are welcomed and help one another. Its neighborly feel makes it “the town” in which people want to live and raise families. Our diverse residents enjoy a variety of educational and recreational opportunities. The thriving local business community attracts both

businesses and residents to the community for its walkable downtown, historic charm, and vibrant retail areas.

- Free wireless for all residents, like the larger cities in the Western US.
- Safe neighborhoods drug free old school values be able to lend a helping hand to your neighbors
- the goal should be to maintain the village as a good place to live that is affordable for middle income families. The management of commercial streets like Ogden, 63rd, 75th, and similar streets need to be continually monitored to maintain a modern, clean image. Efforts to attract business enterprises should be given proper funding and employ pros that have a proven track record.
- A culturally diverse and supportive city.
- More community events, more work with the schools, more outreach
- More than an investment. An extension of ourselves. A place where families grow and call home for a lifetime.
- We are already pretty great. We come through for neighbors in crisis, I just question whether we will continue that with neighbors who are not white, non-christian. We should aspire to embracing the diversity.
- I'd love less if people noted I live in 630 because of its money and partisan position, and more if people noted 630 for its welcome and long reach into neighborhoods, schools, and working with each other to network and educate better things. I'd like to think of Downers Grove as a place where people want to move because it supports access to education and resource.
- A walkable friendly community where drugs are less available. Where the library and elementary schools encourage reading instead of iPad/computer/video games. The library should be a place where those who enjoy reading are welcomed and encouraged. It's hard to raise a family of readers when people are always sticking electronics in your kids faces. It would be wonderful if the library ditched the video game systems, iPads where kids can make a silly beard and computer games. I've stopped bringing my kids in even though they love to read because they are always tempted by the array of electronic diversions front and center in the children's department. It would be wonderful to have a library that focuses on reading and research and doesn't feel the need to push electronics for fun. The kids need a safe zones like libraries and schools that encourage thinking. Put sidewalks on every side of every street in Downers Grove to make it fully walkable. Heavily fund stormwater improvements and change regs for new construction so they stop negatively affecting stormwater. They aren't strong enough.
- Enhanced management and consideration of future builds. Is it really necessary to add yet another condo building on Maple? Are 100% of the condos already downtown (with the addition of yet another building in the former bank building lot) at full occupancy? The increase in traffic from the condo at the tracks is already concerning as I am a frequent visitor to the library. When I have retailers tell me that they type of crowd they see during vintage car night is so very different than when they first opened their store and that it causes them to not want to be open on those nights that doesn't sound like a Village headed in the

right direction. We already lack diversity here - continuing to behave like we're a budding Hinsdale is not helpful.

- I'd like to see more money thrown into the school system, stressing STEM and foreign languages. Increased train traffic is causing pollution, traffic and noise problems on the east side, and thought needs to be given to grade separation on Fairview and on Maple. We need more sidewalks, bike trails off arterial streets, and a public swimming pool. Aging shopping centers need to be either restored (although this has failed in Westmont) or demolished. Any tax breaks for businesses should be more carefully considered: many have failed in the last 3 years despite a robust economy.
- I hope that in 20 years, Downers Grove will be more diverse than it is today with residents from a broad spectrum of racial, religious, socio-economic and even national backgrounds. I hope that Downers Grove will have places for all of these people to live, shop, socialize and generally thrive.
- Continue to be a family centered, vibrant community with a thriving downtown area, and blight-free Ogden Avenue corridor.
- the baby/infant library programs are well know in my mommy circles as the BEST and most developmentally appropriate in the area for non-walkers. I want Downers grove to be the place that surrounds our kids with fun, affordable positive activities, and influences to help them play and grow and help our kids be they best they can be. I want DG to be "the town" to raise kids and the place to visit. I grew up in darien and went to dgs and i love Downers grove i hope my kids will do the same. I'd love to see growth in the park district programs for little ones and more a splash pad but we do visit near by lisle & bolingbrook for that.
- I envision a DG that is more inclusive and more sustainable. DG has a lot of green space that is under-utilized and could be transformed to grow food for the vulnerable or create habitat for pollinators. The wonderful parks we have with playgrounds could become the center of different community programs such as community gardens, coops, gathering place for neighbors to share resources. Public buildings would be powered with renewable energy.
- In 20 years, I'd like to be able to still see the historic qualities of the village. I'd like to see a more diverse community.

### **What services are most needed in the community? Who needs them most?**

Supportive services for seniors, day services for homeless, and public transportation options are needed. People need help identifying and connecting to the services they need, as well as for volunteering with those organizations. Cultural and educational programs, specifically for seniors and teens, offer opportunities to bring people together.

- Services like meals-on-wheels. Also, I love innovative programs where college students mentor teens, teens help kids with homework, seniors help homeless people, etc. And anything that brings people together to volunteer in a meaningful way. And please make it accessible, make it inclusive in everything you do. Ableism is everywhere I look these days.
- Non-faith based programs that support idea exchange or services exchange. For example, there are many non-profit groups in DG. We need some place to promote them, help them grow. Services that promote diversity (cultural and

generational) and cultural exposure. Also, alternative transportation options are needed. Needed for everyone, to foster acceptance.

- I'm most shocked to learn about those transitioning from homeless or domestic violence and having to sleep on floors but i'm also VERY VERY concerned due to the new administration/government views that those with disabilities are at a very real risk of losing support in the community and in schools. We also need to consider our environment impact with recycling, water use, and composting!
- Public education and support for children and families in the community. Creating a safer community, helping many of the homeless in the town.
- I think that more temporary shelter as well as transitional housing for at-risk populations, battered women or homeless for example, would be useful.
- The Library could use more money for materials, and some sort of social network for day shelter for the homeless needs to be devised. The Library should not have to serve this purpose. Funding could come from a small liquor and tobacco tax. Similarly, although DG is better than many suburbs, there need to be places for teens to congregate and have fun together. As people age, more public transit is needed. This would decrease the need for parking downtown. There also need to be more services such as arranging home health care and co-housing. With the uncertainty of healthcare and insurance, perhaps a low-cost clinic will be needed to help provide immunizations, well-baby checkups, and basic health services.
- The library is a wonderful resource and community center. Capitalizing on the space, wonderful staff, and resources is paramount. What about a remedial reading program that is offered through the library? We know that reading is an indicator of future success - are we addressing this problem through community outreach - if not we should be. What about a program to teach reading to the refugee or minority community? How about the ability for people to register for needs programs through library outreach - our neighbors that are experiencing hunger etc.? How about a focus on volunteerism built through the library? There are so many in our community with so much to give and finding a way to connect with one another creates bridges - time, money, resources - the library can be a conduit for much in our community. The library can be a builder of relationships in our community.
- Readers need a safe place to be readers not to be tempted by yet another person putting electronics in their face. Kids need a space to be creative and thoughtful. You are the logical place for readers to turn, but you are so focused on electronics that you are hurting your primary market.
- That's a good question. My first inclination is to say seniors need resources most—access to technology know-how, resource, and getting to know community beyond just family. Both my parents use the library; other than church, it's their community too. Also, in my community there are homeless and low-income families. If you ask around, in schools, it's more prevalent than I think most want to believe. The library is one of the only places, really, where there's equal footing for resource and access to education beyond just the classroom. I grew up with parents who worked two jobs. We never took vacation. The library

gave me a place to be and learn without feeling less of a person because I don't have money to afford those things outside of school.

- Kids/families and the elderly.
- Events and venues that appeal across the age, ethnic and lifestyle spectrum and bring these demographics together. People not only celebrate but solve problems when you offer them opportunities to engage each other face to face.
- I think having programs on the weekends help the working. I don't want to go out after a hard days work. Also, the giving back to the community through service is needed.
- Support services for the underpaid and underprivileged.
- Senior citizens living in town should continue to get reduced cab fares to help with shopping and medical trips. The town should develop a directory of firms from gutter cleaners, and runner/drivers, to home repair pros that have passed a criminal background check, charge fair rates for services, and start and complete work on a timely basis.
- Transparent political actions
- I can't think of any

### **What do you think is keeping Downers Grove from making progress as a community?**

Us vs. them mentality is a challenge – from partisan politics to embracing diversity. Balancing community needs like addressing blighted commercial areas, providing affordable housing and supporting services for homeless and struggling families while stretching tax dollars and not raising taxes makes the balance.

- I'm not sure
- DG is a wonderful town that needs to go with in it's leaders to find a solution to be on the same page to advance us into the future. Kids always have been and will be the future more needs to be done to support and advance them.
- My opinion is the village is making acceptable progress. Inflation is an ongoing problem that needs constant attention to stretching tax dollars as far as possible.
- Lack of empathy and social responsibility in society for the less fortunate.
- Individual people that are loud and abrasive.
- Isolation. The Us versus Them tact. There are groups and forums that celebrate their membership as a badge of achievement in and of itself. They often respond to external influence, differences or even cooperation with "others" as a threat.
- I think we aren't challenged with the perspectives of people who haven't traditionally been part of the community.
- Partisan positions rooted in partisan ideas ... without context or understanding of what happens in the community outside tight circles that often echo national sentiments and attempt to apply those notions, locally. How people in my community are appointed by the Mayor for their partisan loyalty—not always with regard to experience and reach into the community—is a disconcerting example. And it doesn't matter from which party.
- Face facts - we are not Naperville. We have only a couple of streets for restaurants and retail. Community strategists are trying to force a personality and structure on DG that we simply don't have physical space to handle - nor the

parking to accommodate. As a resident I find it inconvenient to go downtown and support the businesses that are there because parking and traffic is a mess. People that work in the service and retail industry downtown have no where to park or have to move their cars frequently. What a gross oversight in planning by the Village. A select few (either on the council or influencers) making decisions about downtown development that benefit construction companies not the esthetic of the village overall.

- Population density is a huge issue. High rise housing is not helping, because the population increases faster than property tax revenue. Something needs to be done about traffic on Ogden Avenue. It's nearly gridlock from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.: Maple Ave. is nearly as bad. It affects deliveries along with commutes. A quality bus system is also needed. Deteriorating shopping centers are an issue, especially the aging one on 63rd near Belmont. The center NW of Main and 75th St. is also on the cusp of becoming a blight. Commercial rents are too high. Small business is driven away by the poor value of neglected properties. Too much emphasis is given to cosmetics, such as business signage ordinances and the superfluous lit street signage, rather than environmental issues.
- An unwillingness to pass tax levies. I went to the February 14, 2017 village council meeting, and they mentioned the fact that taxes have been flat for the past six years (I think that is what they said). This is not comforting to me. I value services such as those provided by the public library and good public schools. I want elected officials and appointed trustees to be brave enough to push citizens to fulfill their responsibility to make sure Downers Grove continues to be a place people want to live and raise their children. One of the reasons we left Indiana is that frankly, the public schools stunk. I'm quite certain that was in part a result of our taxes being so low.
- Blight and vacant buildings, homeless population, making sure struggling families have services they need.
- I think it's the normal things: money and politics and ourselves
- Lack of affordable housing resulting in even less diversity, Lack of community engagement (although this is changing)  
It seems like the village keeps building more and more condos for a community that can't afford to buy them. Also, budget problems have led to fewer events in the town over the years. In general, there's not much to do in DG for a 20-something like myself who isn't at all interested in hanging out at Another Round.

**When you think about what we've talked about, what are the kinds of things that could be done that might make a difference?**

Support of diversity and inclusion through library services and programs would make a difference. Green/sustainability, civic engagement opportunities, arts and cultural programming were suggested, as well as improved marketing of programming. Partnerships among governments and non-profits already making a difference in Downers Grove could extend their reach. Parking is again mentioned.

- First, STEM is great, but please don't forget importance of the humanities and liberal arts. Also, there are a lot of library programs for kids to learn to code, but

few for adults. I personally would be interested in a novice coders group. Second, more parking. Third, archival preservation projects, like collecting oral histories, advocating for town signage in front of historic places around town, highlighting local history collections, etc. Fourth, keep your focus on helping the marginalized. Design for all users instead of the average user. Illinois is cutting important social services. The library is so important. Thank you for all you do!

- I would love to see a lecture series offered at the DG library to promote sustainability in our Village. We are part of a group "Go Green DG" that is trying to develop different ideas geared towards making DG more sustainable. One of the ideas we came up with is promoting education on topics such as community gardening, global warming, how to grow habitat for pollinators in your backyard, how to grow food in your backyard, etc. DG library could plan a lecture series and we could help fill the slots with topics related to sustainability. Please feel free to email me if that's something you would like to pursue [julie.rimbault@gmail.com](mailto:julie.rimbault@gmail.com)
- I think we need to find a way to work together and help those that are making a difference. we also need to help bring people together in positive ways like the concerts in the parks and programs that are offered. as individuals we need to motivate our selves to volunteer or help others as much as we can.
- Offer more community supports, focus on education, keep the diverse families in mind, remove blighted/vacant buildings on Ogden, lower rent downtown to allow for more small business.
- Spend money appropriately, and don't misuse funds meant for other purposes. Increase programming to reach a more diverse audience. I love the Spanish and French story times at the Westmont Library. I have a 17-month-old, and I have found the programming for toddlers at the Downers Grove Library difficult to navigate and not worth the trouble. That's why we pretty much only go to the Westmont Library these days. Parking is also a real pain at the library. Are people parking there to go shopping or take the train?
- 1) Newcomers, especially minorities, need to be welcomed in and encouraged to contribute their skills. A central community center would be quite helpful.  
2) Especially in older, historic neighborhoods, teardowns, McMansions, and high density housing construction needs to be stopped. Downers is lovable because it's not dense. There are generous lawns.  
3) Long empty buildings and land on Ogden Avenue needs to be utilized. Some type of business, besides automotive, needs encouragement.  
4) Green space to help mitigate climate change should be provided. For example, the parking lots of the aforementioned shopping centers could be halved, and the rest planted in native landscaping. Hiring the underemployed to improve the environment, clean stream beds, plant diverse native trees, and keep up with litter and trash would make a pretty village beautiful.
- I decided to read 100 books last year. I hit 96 and all but a handful of those books came from our library. I am in and out of the library parking lot at least a couple times a week. Parking is a joke. If I could park for a longer period of time I would linger at the library, or pop into the shops on Main Street. Now there is additional construction for another condo building that isn't needed and it is

difficult to maneuver around the construction site. Capitalize on what our downtown can offer with the current town layout as the consideration. Keep in mind that as a resident if I can't easily park and get to retailers I will not be able to support the important retail structure. I can't waste time or deal with unnecessary stress because I'm crossing the tracks, and stuck in traffic, and not find anywhere to park because of poor planning and vision and frankly - greed to build more/bigger. It might sound like a small thing but if you think it's not impacting growth you are wrong. This is not a time when our library should be looking to do less. We have no state budget, people are stressed about property taxes. Consider a fund raiser, or planned outreach to corporations that could make bequests, with specifics around where the money would go - the types of programs that would be built with money received. If the library needs a new roof stop thinking you can misappropriate funds from the Foundation to fund that. Know that there is a groundswell effort to be more watchful of our local resources and government. We will be watching what takes place from now on.

- Ditch the video game systems in the children and teen sections. Drop the iPads and computers with preloaded games even the "educational ones". Read the research they are bad in the longterm for children's brains. Stick to electronics for research and give the kids chance to grow their minds instead of dumbing it down like everyone else.
- Sending messages, with programming and maybe even physical reminders in the library, that the library is an open and inclusive environment that provides resources (and education) to all people, not just some. Quality programming—and an intense effort to community programming, otherwise it doesn't matter—is something I'd appreciate. And I've seen a trend in that direction; it's noted.
- Cultural diversity programs library and museum. Maybe even hiring a few people of color as librarians. That daily interaction can be very helpful.
- Continue to recognize our differences and that their labels don't define us. Overcoming them consistently produces positive results for everyone.
- I think that you addressed a lot of issues in the community. I would have liked questions about what the library is or is not doing as well. This community is great and is far from needing a change so small changes and being kind to one another are always the first step. I think more community partnerships and working together would help both the library and the community.
- I have no idea.
- Children of Downers Grove residents should be encouraged to buy homes in the village when they grow up. Thought should be given to how they can be helped to stay here. Could low cost loans be arranged through local banks, a civic group ? What are other villages around the country doing>
- Education for all