

STRATEGIC VISION & GOALS

2024-2026



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next level
PARTNERS FOR BIG IDEAS

STRATEGIC VISION

Harvard's Strategic Vision is the City's guide to help shape the work of the City government and inform the work of partner organizations. The vision is a framework that guides all plans being created within city departments, setting direction for addressing the community's needs.

It provides direction to city staff, consultants, and contractors working on projects and developing policies. It helps build alignment and strengthens partnership opportunities.

Harvard's Strategic Vision builds upon its rich history and works with the diverse community in Harvard while identifying new opportunities to ensure the community thrives. The framework helps us tackle key issues that need our attention and resources in the near term while holding up a vision for growth and prosperity over the next 20 years.

2040 VISION STATEMENT

Harvard is a community steeped in rich history and tradition, anchored by a safe small-town atmosphere, and known for its rich diversity. Harvard's vibrant economy ensures a strong infrastructure and education system that supports a well-educated workforce and robust commercial sector. Our City government is efficient, innovative, and an engaged partner in the community. A variety of cultural, and recreational experiences are enjoyed by residents and have made Harvard a destination for visitors.

MISSION STATEMENT

The City of Harvard is an efficient, innovative, and inclusive organization that engages fully in partnerships and embraces equity, to create opportunities and improve the quality of life, for families and businesses in our community.

INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY STATEMENT

Harvard committed to being an inclusive, diverse, and growing community. We define diversity broadly, including but not limited to all races, ages, sexual orientations, gender identification, socio-economic backgrounds, physical or mental abilities, and cultural beliefs. We prioritize the engagement of more community members to ensure we have representative and engaged boards, commissions, and Council members to lead our community.

CITY OF HARVARD PRIORITY AREAS



**STRONG, RELIABLE
INFRASTRUCTURE**



**SAFE
COMMUNITY**



**EFFICIENT,
EFFECTIVE
GOVERNMENT**



**VIBRANT
DOWNTOWN**



**THRIVING
ECONOMY
(ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT)**



**HOUSING &
NEIGHBORHOODS**



**ARTS &
CULTURE**



**PARKS &
RECREATION**



STRONG, RELIABLE INFRASTRUCTURE

Harvard invests in its infrastructure and facilities. Our trees, landscaping, and gardens add beauty and enjoyment. State-of-the-art water treatment facilities ensure residents have clean water and a sustainable environment. Roads, sidewalks, water, & sewer systems are well maintained using data and planning systems to prioritize replacements. Fiber optics connect every part of our community to every part of the world.

KEY STRATEGIES

- Complete a City-wide infrastructure study to establish a replacement plan for streets, sidewalks, water, sewer systems, and trees.
- Launch a communication plan to share the street improvement plan with residents.
- Seek new funding sources, e.g., grants, so that the PAVER pavement Management System goals can be met.
- Begin street improvements with new funding supported by taxpayers
- Engage with Metra, RTA, and PACE to explore ancillary transportation opportunities like pedestrian access, bus access, and vehicle parking access.
- Establish downtown wireless access.

PROGRESS MILESTONES

- Infrastructure plan in place by 2025 and shared with the community
- Street improvements increase by 3x beginning in 2025
- Road maintenance plan is in place to achieve a PCI (pavement condition index) of 52.
- Initial work on Regional Transportation Authority Grant complete to provide better access to transit
- Wireless access available downtown



SAFE COMMUNITY

Our community is safe, and our residents enjoy a small-town feel. An updated facility for the police department ensures our first responders can provide better service to residents. Staff develop a culture of emergency preparedness to enhance community service. An accessible emergency alert system ensures residents are well informed of and prepared for emergency situations.

KEY STRATEGIES

- Complete emergency management certifications (staff)
- Continue to build a diverse police force that represents the community
- Enhance partnerships & coordination with the Fire District and School District
- Hold regular & planned coordinated emergency scenario response training
- Identify improvements to the emergency alert system

PROGRESS MILESTONES

- Staff members are fully certified in emergency management practices
- Police department members are representative of the community
- Coordinated emergency response training scenarios happen 2-4 times/year
- Emergency alert system is active and accessible to all residents



EFFICIENT, EFFECTIVE GOVERNMENT

Our City government responds quickly to community needs and has open channels of communication. We use long-range planning and manage debt to use our revenue wisely. We strive to control costs while providing the highest possible level of services. City government is trusted and transparent, and we use technology effectively to communicate with, engage and empower the community.

We have strong public-private partnerships that support investment and growth as well as confidence and pride in our community. Our relationships with regional partners and state/national legislators are demonstrated by their support for and investment in Harvard.

KEY STRATEGIES

- Increase information available in Spanish along with translation supports
- Invest in technology & website to improve data and access to online services
- Review staffing matrix by department & succession planning model
- Increase engagement with McHenry County Council of Government
- Explore partnerships with neighboring communities to share resources
- Improve communication with residents – explore PT communication person
- Track progress milestones & share in communications to residents
- Launch a resident survey to inform the City's work & decision making.

PROGRESS MILESTONES

- Spanish translation supports in place, increase in engagement of residents with Hispanic heritage
- Website & technology improvements launched
- Regular participation in COG, new opportunities emerge for Harvard residents
- Resident satisfaction with City communication/information increases



THRIVING ECONOMY

Our city has a strong local economy. Our local businesses are vibrant and diverse, while new businesses are emerging. Our history, cultural scene and access to the train continue to support a growing visitor-based economy. Meanwhile, our residents can find a wide range of career opportunities.

Plentiful educational options, workforce development programs, access to capital, economic incentives, and a culture that values homegrown businesses attract residents and employers who share these values.

KEY STRATEGIES

- Review, revise, and adopt economic development plan
- Establish a best-practice business retention & development program
- Partner to build a business incubation program/space
- Explore targeted business development (e.g., aviation, industrial park projects)
- Establish a business & economic development advisory board to inform decisions and engage partners
- Engage in County and regional planning and partnerships

PROGRESS MILESTONES

- Economic development plan is adopted and driving our efforts
- Advisory Board is engaged, informed, and supporting the plan
- Partnerships and supports for businesses increase
- Business occupancy (downtown) increases
- Business starts increasing
- Business investment increasing
- Jobs increasing



HOUSING & NEIGHBORHOODS

Harvard's charming neighborhoods and affordable housing make up a small-town feel that attracts families and a growing workforce. Connections to Chicago by train or car make Harvard an easy commute for workers and a convenient trip to our community for visitors.

KEY STRATEGIES

- Improve policy to encourage development of existing subdivisions for workforce housing
- Explore incentives to encourage improvements to historical homes & neighborhoods
- Improve code enforcement to address properties in poor condition and abandoned properties
- Complete a housing stock and residential land inventory to inform a residential development & housing plan

PROGRESS MILESTONES

- Residential land inventory & development plan complete
- Property improvements due to increased code enforcement
- Increase in workforce housing availability
- Reduction in number of homes in poor condition or abandoned



VIBRANT DOWNTOWN

Our downtown is a gathering place for residents and visitors. A revitalized streetscape supports a wide variety of shops and businesses. The upper stories of buildings are desirable residential spaces just steps from a variety of restaurants, shops, arts/culture, and entertainment.

KEY STRATEGIES

- Develop a Downtown Master Plan
- Improve incentives for downtown building improvements to encourage development of quality upper-story apartments, e.g., micro-TIF
- Use data to inform small business recruitment/retention to downtown spaces

PROGRESS MILESTONES

- Downtown Master Plan complete
- Wi-Fi access available downtown
- Increase quality of upper-story residential units
- Increase in number & variety of downtown businesses



ARTS & CULTURE

Harvard's arts & culture scene offers opportunities for residents to enjoy cultural events and community art spaces enhance our downtown. Open spaces, bike paths, parks, greenways, and community gardens are abundant throughout the community.

Harvard is a destination for everything from weddings to weekend getaways. Visitors are attracted to Harvard, taking part in events that highlight the community's heritage, Hispanic culture, and emerging arts community.

KEY STRATEGIES

- Develop clear policies & practices for supporting cultural events
- Establish an Arts & Culture commission or board to develop a plan
- Create spaces for performance art or art displays, murals, sculptures

PROGRESS MILESTONES

- Increase in events & clear role established for City support
- Arts & Culture Commission in place
- Increased arts/cultural options, projects, and funding (from external sources)



PARKS & RECREATION

Our parks and recreation opportunities provide spaces, playgrounds, and programs that residents enjoy. The City is committed to exploring ways to expand recreation opportunities.

KEY STRATEGIES

- Complete existing park improvements with recently redirected funding support from taxpayers
- Review parks master plan and revise, replace as necessary
- Create regular programming & communication to support awareness and registration
- Build partnerships with the library, schools, and other program providers to coordinate programming and space use
- Explore development of indoor space for recreation activities
- Explore development of self-sustaining facilities e.g., soccer field/facility

PROGRESS MILESTONES

- Park improvements are planned and being implemented with available funding according to the plan
- Parks Master Plan is complete and driving park programming and facilities work
- Additional Parks programs are available, partners are engaged, and residents can easily learn about recreation opportunities and register for them
- A plan is in place to make indoor space available for our park/recreation programming needs

HARVARD MAYOR & CITY COUNCIL

Michael P. Kelly, Mayor
Daniel Carncross
Charles Gorman
Lisa Haderlein
Lorena Lancaster
John Lavalley
Rosa Luna
Matthew Perkins
Jay Schulz

