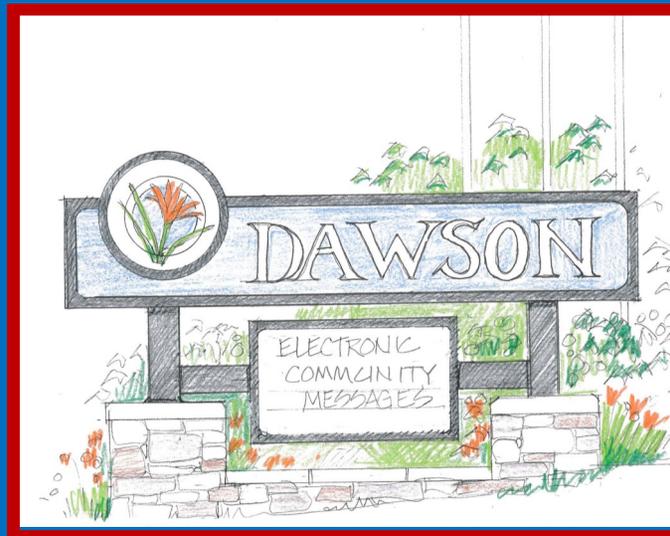


Dawson, Illinois



**Concept Plans for Village Entrances
and other Community Enhancements**

Small Town Roadway Character Pilot Project

November 2017

This report is the result of the *Small Town Roadway Character Pilot Project*, an initiative of the Springfield-Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission (SSCRPC) to assist small towns in Sangamon County in formulating ways to enhance their image and community recognition.

The preparation of this report was financed in part through an Illinois Department of Transportation Rural Transportation Project Grant. The contents of this report reflects the work of the project consultant as accepted by the Springfield-Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission (SSCRPC). The contents do not necessarily reflect the official views or policies of the agencies listed above. This report does not constitute a standard, specification, or regulation.

Unless otherwise noted, the material, figures, charts and other renderings contained in this report are the property of the Illinois Department of Transportation and the SSCRPC, and may only be used with permission. Contact should be made through the Springfield-Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission. The SSCRPC may be reached by post at 200 South 9th Street, Springfield, IL 62701.

sponsored and funded by

**Springfield and Sangamon County
Regional Planning Commission**

200 South 9th St., Room #212, Springfield, IL 62701

prepared by

MassieMassie+Associates

Landscape Architecture and Land Planning
1210 South 5th St. Springfield, Illinois 62703
217-544-3210 Massie-Massie-Associates.com

Small Town Roadway Character Pilot Project

Introduction to the Project

This report is the result of the *Small Town Roadway Character Pilot Project*, an initiative of the Springfield and Sangamon County Regional Planning Commission (SSCRPC) to assist small towns in Sangamon County in formulating ways to enhance their image and community recognition. Because of size, small towns often have difficulty in establishing identities and attractive characteristics that can promote community pride and encourage visitors to tour local points of interest, attend community events and patronize businesses. Visitors' involvement with communities can potentially lead to interest in making small towns their homes and places of employment as well.

Small Towns in Sangamon County

Scattered throughout Sangamon County are some two dozen towns with populations of 5,000 or fewer, most with origins in the early to mid-1800s. Settlers of the Sangamo Country, as it was known, found home sites near waterways where woodlands met open prairies. Rivers provided water and a means of transportation and the forest trees were used for building, cooking and heating in the winter. Some early homesteads attracted others and grew into towns as a result of favorable natural conditions or successful commercial ventures.

Beginning in the 1860s, railroad development greatly benefitted the towns that were fortunate to be located along the lines. Railroads provided convenient shipping of local products to outside markets and imported goods for townspeople to purchase. As time went by, additional towns were established along rail lines, however, communities that had been bypassed tended to decline or disappear.

The twentieth century development of high-speed highways and the interstate system took a toll on small towns. Highways bypassed communities leaving them without through-traffic and seemingly with little to attract motorists to exit the highways and explore their communities. Today, many small communities struggle to maintain their viability and prospects for the future.

This project is an effort to assist small towns in Sangamon County to overcome difficulties faced by contemporary conditions and to promote pride and optimism for their future.

Four Pilot Study Towns

Four Sangamon County small towns are involved in the study. Three towns - Auburn, Riverton and Dawson – are interested in improving their community entrances to entice visitors to explore their communities. The fourth town, Illiopolis, wants to improve their downtown area to create a more attractive environment for current and new businesses.

The study involves developing improvement plans to address the needs that each town identified. In addition, the plans are meant to be models, or templates, that can be adapted for other towns in Sangamon County.

A further objective of this study was to develop enhancement plans that could visually unify towns to create a recognizable image of "A Sangamon County Small Town." To accomplish this goal, several types of community improvements were devised: Downtown Improvements, Entrance "Community Pride" Signs, Highway and Street Sign Enhancements, Wayfinding Signs, Community Welcome Stations, Tree and Flower Planting Programs and Silo Embellishments. Towns may adopt one or more of these enhancement concepts and phasing in the improvements over a period of time that suits each community.

Village of Dawson, IL

An initial meeting was held in Springfield at the SSCRPC office on July 19, 2017, with representatives of three of the pilot towns to kick-off the project. Village President Paul Smith represented the Village of Dawson at the meeting.

The overall parameters of the study, its purpose and anticipated results were reviewed as described in the introduction to this report. Discussion then turned to the village's objectives and what they envision as possible community improvements.

Dawson selected the category of *Arrival Character Areas* as their particular need and interest. The community's goal is to create a more attractive and welcoming entrance to town, encouraging visi-

tors to enjoy the atmosphere and patronize businesses in town.

Dawson is the smallest of the four pilot towns with a population of 466 but has eateries and other businesses, and a park on the northeast side of town. Interesting from a historical perspective, the town was incorporated in 1883, its name bestowed by John Dawson, one of the Lincoln-led Long Nine who managed to move Illinois's capitol from Vandalia to Springfield in 1839.

At a Village Board meeting on September 11, preliminary ideas were presented and discussed. Comments were noted and the following recommendations were developed.



Village of Dawson, IL

Map of Community Features



 North Not to Scale



Village Hall and Memorial, Lewis Street



Main Street looking west in Dawson



Dawson Park



Memorial to Dawson Grade School



Old Route 36 looking east toward Dawson

ENTRANCE “COMMUNITY PRIDE” SIGN

Distinctive signs at community entrances identify a town and also make a strong visual statement about the character of the community. Other signs within the community, can reinforce the identity and character and provide information useful to both village residents and the public.

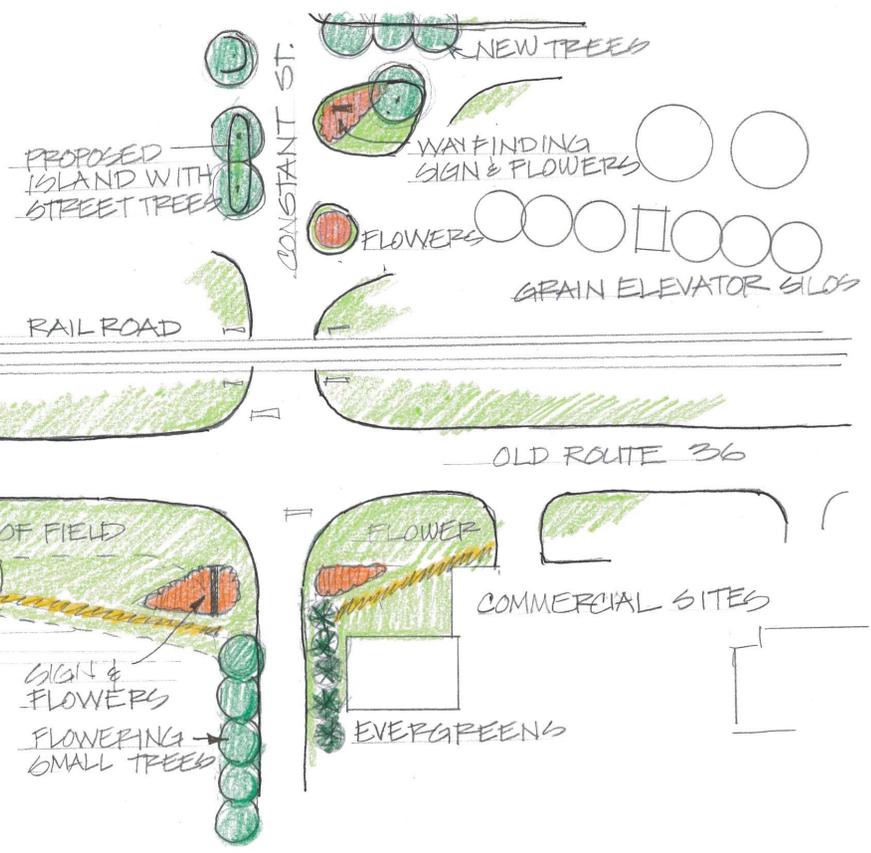
The newly installed electronic sign, south of the Route 36 near Constant Street, will do much to keep residents abreast of news and motorists informed of upcoming events. This sign might be better located, however, at the southwest corner Old Route 36 and Constant Street where there is better visibility. The electronic sign could be moved and enveloped as shown here. The village name Dawson would

be in bold and distinctive lettering along with the community-selected symbol and the town’s web site.

As an alternate, a Community Pride sign could be constructed without the electronic board. The space under the sign board would accommodate a banner to promote community features or upcoming events. Banners can be readily removed or replaced as desired.

During evening hours, the sign would be lighted with power provided from electrical service or solar panels. The grounds around the signs would be improved with turf, flowers, trees and perhaps flags or other elements suited to the particular locations.





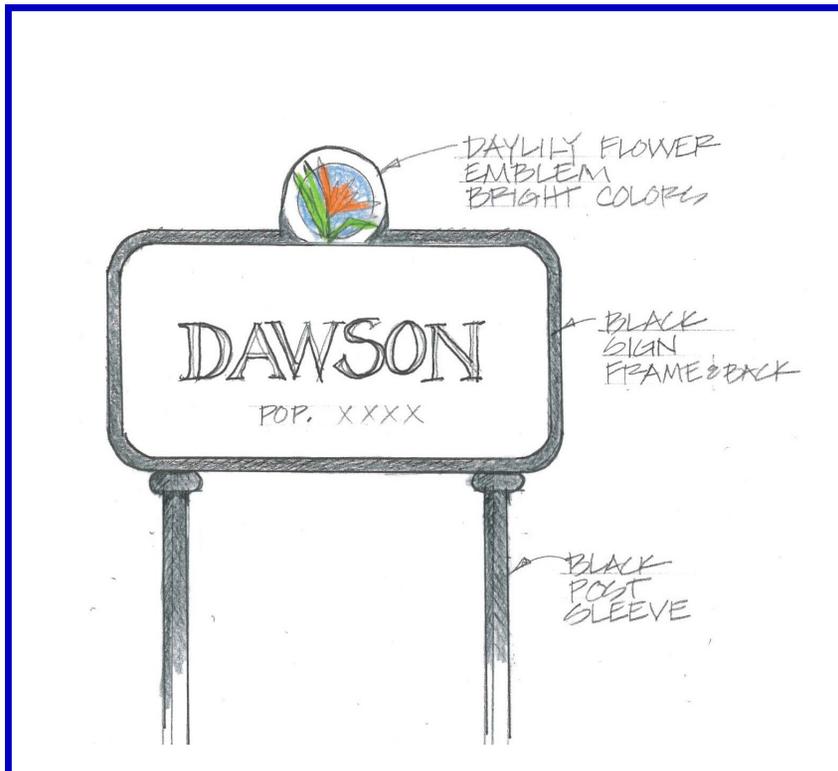
**Site Plan:
Dawson South Entrance**

HIGHWAY CITY SIGNS and STREET NAME SIGNS

HIGHWAY CITY SIGNS

Enhancing the city signs along the highways can contribute to the image of Dawson and help to unify towns in Sangamon County. Standard highway name signs are now located along Route 36 on the west and east sides of Constant Street and on Route 16 on the north side of town.

Although highway signs must comply with regulations of the IL Department of Transportation, they can be embellished to become part of an overall community recognition program. The sign panels can be backed and attractively framed to improve their visibility and appearance. To further identify the community, an emblem of Dawson such as daylilies can be applied to the sign.



STREET NAME SIGNS

Street name signs can be enhanced in much the same way as the highway name signs. Frames can be installed around sign panels, posts can be painted, sleeved or replaced with decorative posts and community emblems can be added. Enhancements could begin with the signs along the most-traveled streets, Constant and Walnut streets. Street signs within the village could be addressed in the future, perhaps as a phased improvement program.



DIRECTIONAL WAYFINDING SIGNS

To aid residents and visitors in navigating around town and finding points of interest, easy to spot and read directional street signs are effective. Signs should visually stand-out from traffic and commercial signs typically found in communities. Signs should direct motorists along reasonably direct routes while taking advantage of scenic streets or landmark locations where feasible. Destinations should be

“ganged” on sign panels where possible to minimize the number of signs required.

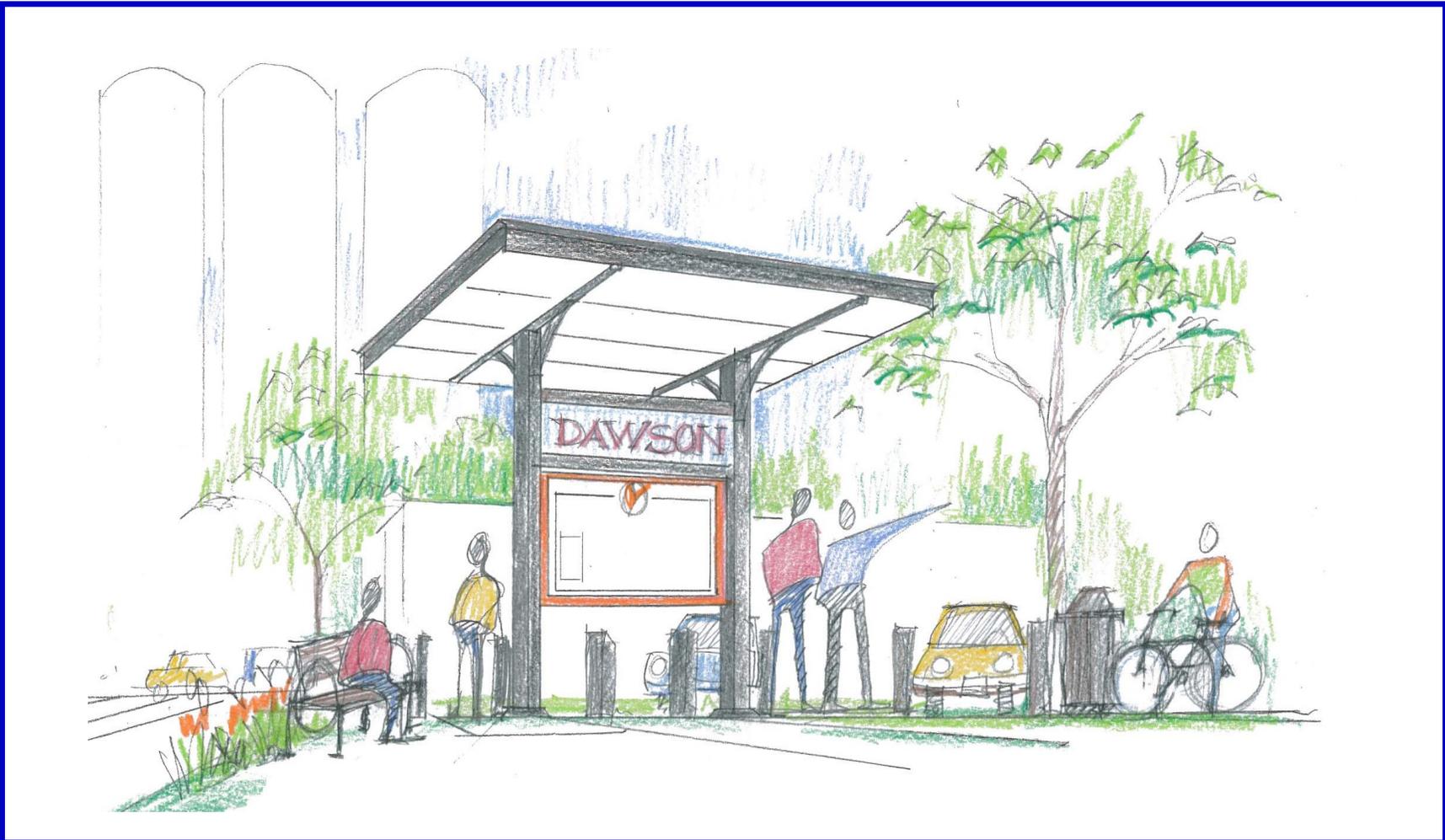
An optimum location for a ganged directional sign is at the intersection of Constant and Walnut streets. Here, the sign plaques could include School, Downtown, The Silos and perhaps other points of interest. As routes diverge, single-destination signs would be provided to point the way.



COMMUNITY WELCOME STATION

Dawson could designate a location where residents and visitors can obtain information about the community and have access to public facilities. City maps or brochures might be available or QR codes or other technology provided to access information through mobile devices. Routes for driving, bicycling or walking could be offered.

A good location for the Community Welcome Station is in the memorial area south of the Dawson Village Hall. Parking space is already available and the grounds can be improved with a new display sign and perhaps more benches, a picnic table and additional landscape improvements. When the village building is open, visitors could have access to water and restrooms. The area should be kept clean and maintained to best represent the character of the community.



TREE AND FLOWER PLANTING PROGRAM

A tree and flower planting program could be initiated in Dawson. A community-designated tree or flower could be used as an identifying symbol on signs throughout town. Tree planting could be contracted out or managed within the community. Trees and pots of flowers might be purchased in quantity and sold or given to city residents and businesses. Assistance with properly locating and planting the trees would be beneficial. Civic organizations, scout troops or other volunteers might be tapped for service.

Tree species listed below are generally suited to the central Illinois environment. In selecting a tree for an exact location, site conditions should be considered including soils, moisture, sun and shade and exposure to salt spray or chemical use. The visual qualities of each species including size, texture, flowering, etc. are equally as important in making plant selections.

Shade Trees for Streets and Parking Lots

Acer miyabie—Miyabe Maple
Acer saccharum - Sugar Maple
Acer rubrum – Red Maple
Acer fremanii – Freeman Maple
Taxodium distichum - Bald Cypress
Carpinus betulus – European Hornbeam
Celtis occidentalis – American Hackberry
Ginko biloba – Ginko
Gleditsia triacanthos inermis – Thornless Honeylocust
Nyssa sylvatica - Black Tupelo
Tilia Americana—American Linden
(Redmond or Sentry)
Tilia tomentosa - Silver Linden
Ulmus prospector – Prospector Elm

Ornamental Trees for Parks and Boulevards

Deciduous

Amelanchier species – Serviceberry
Cercis canadensis – Eastern Redbud
Cornus florida - Flowering Dogwood
Crabapple cultivars
Cornus kousa – Kousa Dogwood
Magnolia species
Ostrya virginiana – Ironwood
Syringa reticulata subsp. reticulata – Japanese Tree Lilac

Evergreen

Juniperous Virginia—Eastern Red Cedar
Picea abies - Norway Spruce
Pinus strobus - Eastern White Pine
Pinus thunbergii – Japanese Black Pine

SILO EMBELLISHMENTS

Distinctive structures in the community could be highlighted. Night lighting of downtown buildings, churches and other interesting features would add ambiance during evening hours.

The grain silos in downtown Illiopolis offer a unique opportunity. These classic mid-west structures are conspicuous features in many small towns in Sangamon County. The silos' massive cylindrical forms could be highlighted by night lighting and painting with artistry of any imagined subject or style.

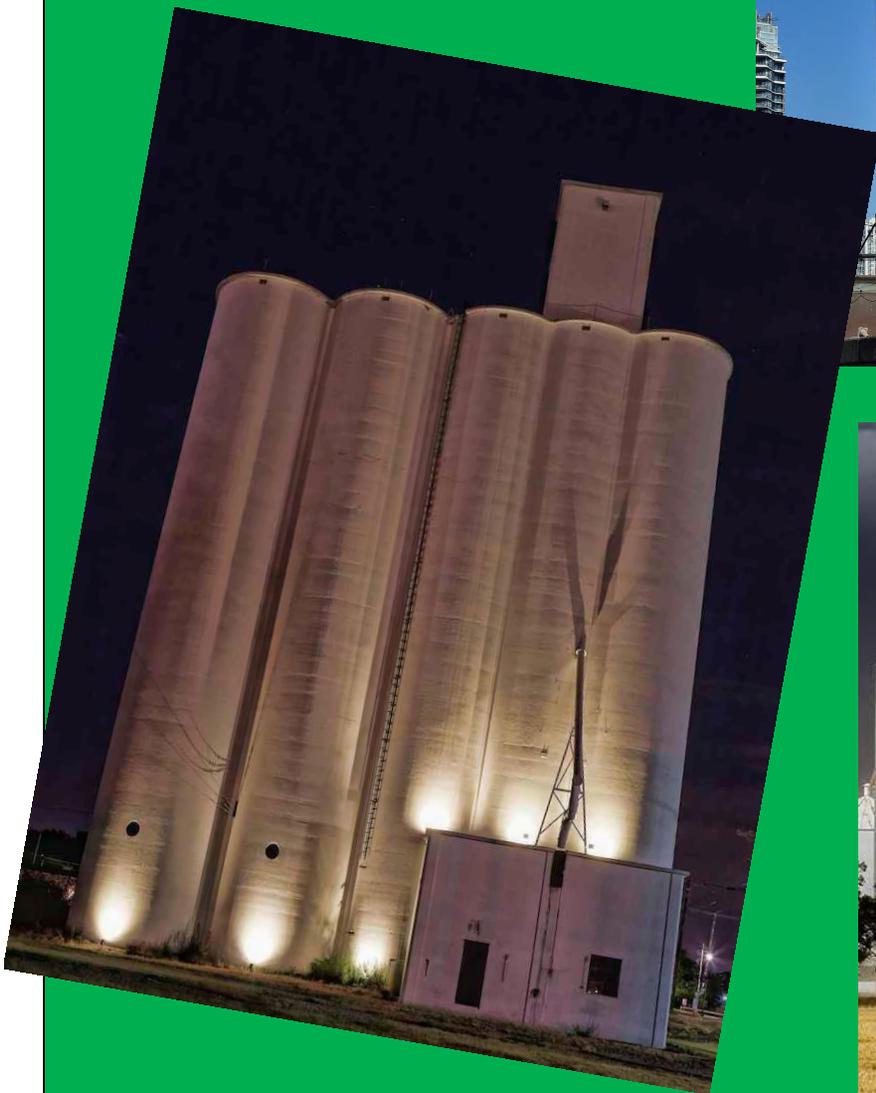


If towns embellish their silos, each in their own way, a cohesion among communities would be created that could attract visitors for the specific purpose of viewing the unique “Sangamon Silos.” A Silo Tour route could be developed or an inter-community Silo Festival established.

Each town could also improve the grounds surrounding their silos, perhaps creating small parks or attractive landscapes. Silos might also be adapted for other uses, either permanent or temporary.



Silo Painting Art



Village of Dawson, IL

BUDGET ESTIMATES FOR ENHANCEMENT PROJECTS

The following information is provided to aid in budgeting for future projects, although many factors will affect the actual cost of the work.

First, the improvements outlined in this report are broad-brush, Concept Plans. This study did not include investigation of critical aspects such as: determining location and condition of underground utilities, surveying for topography and drainage, research of property ownership, assessing the integrity of structures and other matters that could substantially affect the construction work and cost.

The scope of a construction project will greatly affect costs as well, as there is economy in greater quantities. The following information therefor is provided as a range of unit costs.

Some of the items that may affect cost, but require more investigation are also listed.

<u>Entrance “Community Pride” Signs</u>	
Community Pride Sign with relocated electronic panel	\$50,000-\$60,000
Community Pride Sign	\$30,000-\$50,000
<u>Highway City Signs and Street Name Signs</u>	
Embellishment with backing, frame	\$4750/ea.
<u>Directional Wayfinding Signs</u>	
Large custom frame with sign panels	\$1,500—\$2,500
<u>Community Welcome Station</u>	
Expand Village Hall Plaza	\$ 5,000—\$8,000
Benches, Picnic table	\$1,000-\$2,500/ea.
Improve grounds	\$500-\$1500
<u>Tree and Flower Planting Program</u>	
Large Shade trees, installed	\$600/ea.
Medium-size ornamental, installed	\$400/ea.
<u>Silo Embellishments</u>	
Lighting	
Painting	
Artist’s fees	