Major road improvements along 143rd Street and 159th Street provide transportation benefits like more efficient mobility and greater access for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit. In turn, economic development prospects in Homer Glen are enhanced with a more multimodal transportation network. The Village has also made progress with its recent history of building infrastructure that proactively plans for future growth. In this way, the Village has been highly responsive to the community’s needs and has continued to build upon key priorities for utilities and infrastructure, as listed below.

**KEY INFRASTRUCTURE PRIORITIES**

- Improving roadway connectivity and safety
- Adding to existing trails, pedestrian paths, and recreational cycling infrastructure
- Maintaining local road improvements and expanding the roadway network

One of the Village’s most pressing challenges is the privatization of water and sanitary infrastructure. Homer Glen’s residential water rates far exceed those of its neighbors, which is an ongoing challenge for the community. Homer Glen is part of a community water agency seeking to acquire future water infrastructure.

**WATER & SANITARY INFRASTRUCTURE**

Water data attributes such as location, material, and sizing are not available for public dissemination, as required by the private company managing these utilities, Illinois American Water Co. The privatization of water by this company has made it difficult for the Village to obtain reliable data, increasing the difficulty of identifying data that can be disseminated publicly to aid in proper long-range planning.

Village-owned water and sanitary utilities cover limited geographies within the Village. The overwhelming majority of water and sanitary infrastructure is served by Illinois American Water Co..
The following provides a summary of Village vs. privatized utilities:

- **Water:** Village ownership of the water main is limited to the 159th Street corridor, from Cedar Road to Gougar Road.

- **Sanitary:** Village ownership of sanitary infrastructure is limited to the Fiddyment Creek Sanitary Sewer serving the Cedar Road and Gougar Road corridors. There are 26 lift stations that are primarily outsourced to Illinois American Co., which has led to challenges with rights and access.

It is recommended that the Village work together with all potential utility partners to identify and model existing infrastructure that will be needed to evaluate future development opportunities. Primary projects are located along Bell Road, 151st Street, and 159th Street. Greater coordination between these entities is necessary to plan for the Village’s future infrastructure needs.

**STORMWATER INFRASTRUCTURE**

Homer Glen’s stormwater management system is spread throughout the community to serve public facilities, roadways, residential subdivisions, and commercial developments. Over the last several years, the Village has invested a significant amount of money to resolve drainage and other flooding issues and to improve and upgrade the drainage system. The Village intends to continue investing in the ongoing drainage improvement program.

Underground storm sewers serve a large portion, roughly 67 linear miles, within Homer Glen and consists of drainage ditches and man-made detention ponds. New developments are required to provide stormwater management facilities according to the Village’s current ordinances.
WATER & SANITARY SYSTEM TRANSITION

TRANSITIONING FROM A PRIVATIZED SYSTEM TO A MUNICIPALLY OWNED & OPERATED SYSTEM

The privatization of municipal water systems experienced a heavy increase in the years following the Great Recession of 2008. As municipalities struggled to address their fiscal shortfalls, they were enticed to give up control of many of their utilities, including water systems, to private firms. The rate of privatization also increased further after Flint, Michigan’s municipal water issues became national news in 2015. Figure 10.2 shows how common municipal water privatization is throughout the country.

Although Illinois ranks lower than all of its immediate neighboring states in terms of private water system ownership, it still had 13% of its water systems privatized by 2017, including Homer Glen. Illinois American Water serves four other southwest suburban communities. Another private water company, Aqua Illinois, serves other South Suburbs, including University Park where it has been recently embroiled in a controversy related to lead in the water.

The Northern Will County Water Agency (NWCWA) was formed to address this important community issue. The Agency is comprised of five municipalities (Homer Glen, Bolingbrook, Woodridge, Lemont, and Romeoville) served by Illinois American Water and the American Lake Water pipeline. The agency believes it is in the best interest of citizen taxpayers to own and operate the water pipeline collaboratively, rather than be subject to the actions of a for-profit, publicly traded company.

In 2013, the NWCWA filed an Eminent Domain lawsuit to acquire the pipeline from American Lake Water for fair market value. In 2016, the Will County Circuit Court ruled in
favor of the NWCWA and agreed the Agency has authority to acquire the pipeline. In 2021, a decision on the fair market value of the pipeline will be made by a jury. If the jury issues a fair market value that is reasonable, NWCWA will proceed with the acquisition.

In the future, Homer Glen will have to make some very difficult but necessary decisions regarding its future water and sanitary systems. These decisions will not only concern the main distribution pipeline, but also the individual service lines and the sanitary sewer system that are also owned by Illinois American Water. Public policy decisions will need to be made about how to secure the rights to these systems or alternatively develop a long-term plan to lay new service lines and/or connect to other water providers, such as neighboring communities.

**Alternative 1: No Action:** Homer Glen could continue with the existing arrangement with Illinois American Water. Although water rates are much higher than what residents prefer, the option remains that the Village could decide to continue with existing water services without initiating eminent domain action.

**Alternative 2: Acquisition Option:** The most obvious option is that the Village could choose to acquire their municipal water system from Illinois American. Other communities in Illinois have commissioned external analyses regarding whether to purchase their water system from private operators to avoid a similar situation that Homer Glen is currently experiencing. Although it is enticing to regain control of its water system, it would take a heavy upfront investment by Homer Glen to purchase its water system back, which may not be feasible at this time.

**Alternative 3: Commissioned Study:** The third option is to commission a study to determine whether acquisition of its water system is a good use of public resources. This may be a more reasonable step for Homer Glen to pursue, since it provides a more detailed and nuanced analysis of the costs and benefits of such an acquisition. Furthermore, these types of studies bring in a greater perspective of potential obstacles and challenges that may come up during an acquisition, including a better understanding of the staffing allocations that would be necessary to provide ongoing management and maintenance of their water system. These types of studies often result in detailed due diligence studies, which can cost as much as $400,000. However, these more measured approaches to determining next steps for acquisition of a water system by the public sector are far less costly than pursuing legal action and provides a more measured intermediate step prior to committing to an acquisition approach.

**TELECOMMUNICATIONS**

Having a robust and adequate telecommunications system nowadays is often considered a critical utility, along with electricity, water, and sewer.

According to the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Broadband map, there are three broadband providers in the Village: AT&T, EarthLink, and Xfinity Comcast with speeds up to 987 megabits per second (Mbps). It is worth noting that telecommunications carriers categorize networks using the following grades:

- **Consumer Grade:** Networks that work but are not optimized for operating under extreme weather conditions or human interference
- **Enterprise Grade:** Networks that are designed for flexibility, reliability, and customization
- **Carrier Grade:** Networks specifically designed to support mission-critical applications for telecom carriers
**Roadway Connectivity & Safety:** The Village has noted the lack of north and south arterial connections. Much of the community connectivity is interrupted by subdivisions or disjointed arterials that are impeded by lack of continued access. It is recommended that as the population increases in the medium- to longer-term, north-south arterials are provided with increased investment to support both residential and business-oriented vehicle traffic. This map provides a summary of key infrastructure investments and major roadway connectivity features.

**Mobility Networks:** Development projects are already focused on improving and expanding connectivity of disjointed pedestrian access and bike trails. The 159th Street expansion is completed with more bike facilities joining Will Cook Road to Gougar Road. The existing roadway infrastructure construction projects have prioritized mobility networks for pedestrians and bicycles, with the Village encouraging the continued prioritization of these investments in the future.
While much of Homer Glen currently has Consumer grade internet, businesses and educational institutions rely on Enterprise grade networks and often make location decisions based on the availability of the broadband infrastructure and the grade. Additionally, many critical systems and businesses require redundant fiber, which is a backup in the event that the original telecommunications source is interrupted. Public safety, data centers, hospitals, research facilities, food processing, and cold storage are just a few that often require redundant fiber.

If the Village wishes to attract certain industries, the telecommunications network capacity and availability will most certainly play an important role in attracting new businesses. Enterprise grade, specifically gigabit internet capabilities, are essential for Homer Glen to compete with neighboring suburbs in attracting large, top tier employers. It is recommended that the Village actively pursue federal and state funding to advance efforts toward the necessary fiber infrastructure installation to support business retention, attraction, and expansion.

As shown in the graphic below, small cells including wireless carriers like Verizon are anticipating the need to add small antennas on light poles. In order to issue small cell permits as part of light pole locations, the Village has proactively created a street light locating application and is in the process of training field workers to collect street light data.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Explore opportunity for regional stormwater detention facilities
- Promote best management practices for stormwater management to assure that new developments do not contribute runoff that increases off-site flooding or degrade water quality in surface or groundwater system
- Identify infrastructure needs to support future development opportunities
- Continue to evaluate options to transition the water system from Illinois American Water to a municipally owned and operated system
- Establish a more cohesive stormwater management plan
- Continue to complete sewer extension projects to the Village’s unserved areas
- Complete a broadband analysis and expansion study to enhance local telecommunications capacity

**IMPLEMENTATION ACTION PLAN**

The recommendations above are keyed into the overall Implementation Plan provided in Chapter 12, which outlines details such as phasing, partners, and potential funding resources to support Village officials in putting the Homer Glen Comprehensive Plan Update into action.