



ELBURN, IL

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**Past, Present
and Future**

The Village of Elburn's roots date back to the 1830s, something that residents and village leaders have kept in mind as the community grew from a single homestead a few miles south of town to today's population of 4,721. Elburn's past, present and future are all tied to commerce and transportation, from ox-drawn wagon to the opening of a commuter-rail station in the Village in 2006.



History of Elburn

Settlement of the area that would become the Village of Elburn began in the early 1830s. William Lance and his family settled on land his family claimed on May 2, 1834. The Lance property was located about four miles south of present-day Elburn and about one-and-a-half miles east of the Kaneville Township line.

By virtue of making this claim, the Lances became the first to settle in Blackberry Township. A stream of immigrants began arriving in this new land of fertile soil and opportunity during 1835.

As a side note, the County of Kane was established by a proclamation issued on May 24, 1836.

Agriculture became the backbone of the local economy at that time. To bring the fruits of their labor to the markets in Chicago and other large cities, the Chicago & Northwestern Railroad (C&NW) bought up land stretching from the big city to the town of DeKalb and west in the early 1850s.

When the C&NW laid tracks through Blackberry Township in 1853, the company established a train station, which company officials named Blackberry Station. Businessmen started opening stores around the station. Soon, homes and churches were erected in the nascent town. By the year 1858, Blackberry had become a thriving community of 300 inhabitants.

The town continued to grow in size, both in terms of population and land area. Residents of the community of Blackberry voted to incorporate in 1881 and the Village of Blackberry was established. Within five years, the Village would change its name from Blackberry.

Trustees debated renaming the Village during 1885. The first proposal was renaming the village Melbourne after the city in Australia, but the United States Postal Service already had a town by that name in Illinois.

The Village Board reached consensus at its January 16, 1886 meeting, officially adopting Elburn as the Village's name by shortening the name Melbourne.

The Village of Elburn continued to thrive and progress as it entered the 20th Century. The Village's population grew to 613 by 1910. The Village added gravel streets in 1912 as an amenity for its residents.

Passage of the Women's Suffrage Act in 1909 led to the first votes by the women of Elburn in 1914. The first motion picture theater in Elburn opened in April 1914, adding to the Village's expanding business base. Fifty-two businesses had been established in Elburn by 1915.

Elburn continued to watch progress of the post-industrial age as the Roaring Twenties reached the Village. Residents witnessed the first airplane landing in town in 1920, when a pilot set his biplane down.

Also during the 1920s, parishioners of St. Gall Catholic Church dedicated their building on May 16, 1926. Students began taking classes at the new Elburn High School – now the Elburn & Countryside Community Center – in September 1929.

Celebration was in the air for the first time in 1930, when the first Elburn Days festival was held. The Village dedicated Kildeer Park on July 4, 1934.

More modernization came to the Village during the 1930s, including the paving of Illinois Route 47, formerly known as Sugar Grove Road, which was after the communities to the south of Elburn. During the 1950s, the Village upgraded its water system and added a sewer system, laying the groundwork for further population growth.

Fire service for the Elburn area improved during the 1960s and 1970s. The Elburn & Countryside Fire Protection District hired its first full-time fire chief in 1968 and formed the Elburn Ambulance Service in 1972. The first paramedic was hired in 1975.

A commercial building boom started in 1976, with four new buildings being erected. The grand opening for Blackberry Center was held that year.

Elburn's Public Works Department faced one of its most difficult tasks in January 1977, when the worst snowstorm in more than 100 years hit the area. Similar storms struck Elburn in 1978 and 1979.

Major progress on transportation was in the offing in the early 1990s. Elburn village leaders learned in 1990 of plans by the Metra rail service to build a station west of Geneva. The Elburn Metra station would be years from reality.

The year 1990 also marked the year that Elburn became a Tree City USA for its efforts at beautifying the Village and taking care of trees on public property. The Village installed tornado sirens that year to alert residents of an

impending severe weather.

A new Village Hall was completed in 1993, only four years before the Village sought a special census to determine how many people lived within the corporate limits. That census showed that 2,233 people resided in Elburn.



Elburn Today

The new century would see the beginning of even more expansion. Former Kane County Chairman Michael McCoy once described the Village of Elburn as a “work in progress.” The decisions it makes now will have long-term implications.

That growth prompted Village leaders to adopt the Latin motto “Melior non Maior” – or “Better, not Bigger.” The Village Board has taken heed of the motto when planning new developments within the community.

To help guide development decisions, Kane County established the 2020 Land Resource Management Plan – also known as the 2020 Land Use Plan – to integrate municipal land-use methods into the County's regional planning goals. The goal was to create planned, logical growth of communities while preserving and protecting the natural resources, which represent the communities' heritage.

The leaders of both the Village of Elburn and Kane County recognized that steps had to be taken to ensure that future development reinforced the quality of life most important to the community's residents. In Elburn, these qualities include the small-town atmosphere, the community-minded closeness and honesty, safety, security, the low crime rate, open land and the area's agricultural heritage, and quiet, friendly neighborhoods.

Residents of the Village have a number of houses of worship to attend in the Elburn area, including Community Congregational Church of Christ, Evangelical Fellowship Church, Faith Assembly of God, Lord of Life Lutheran Church, Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, St. Gall Catholic Church, Seventh Day Adventist Church and Valleybrook Community Church.

Community events like Elburn Days continue to grow in popularity. The annual Village festival features a variety

of events for every member of the family. Children and adults alike will enjoy the food, games and entertainment, as well as watching judging of animals for local 4-H clubs. One of the highlights of the festival is the annual Elburn Days Parade, featuring organizations from throughout the region.

The Elburn Chamber of Commerce, which formed from the Elburn Business Council in 1998, had 132 members by the year 2004. The Chamber of Commerce has focused its attention on the growth of the business community, recently promoting the Village through its “Shop Elburn First” campaign.

One of the largest residential developments to date began in 2004, when the Village Board approved the Blackberry Creek Subdivision, a 625-acre project promising the addition of 1,250 new homes.

The United States Census Bureau undertook another special census in Elburn in 2006, showing that the Village's population had grown to 4,721, an increase of about 90 percent since 2000 and 270 percent since 1990.

Several new businesses have also opened in Elburn, and Jewel/Osco began construction on a 65,000-square-foot grocery store, which is expected to open in early 2007.

The Village of Elburn became the end of the Metra commuter-rail line in January 2006, when Metra officials began service to the village. The transportation link brings with it opportunities for more residential and commercial development.



The Future of Elburn

As the Village of Elburn continues to develop along with the surrounding communities, Village leaders are welcoming new residents and businesses into a vibrant and interconnected community.

Elburn officials plan to continue the well-managed rate of growth seen in recent years. While the general housing market in the greater Chicago area has slowed in recent years, Elburn continues to see rooftops rise at a steady rate.

New subdivisions will be linked to the existing Village, rather than have gated communities that do establish identities separate from Elburn. Residents and Village officials alike are considering ideas that include preserving open space and establishing bike routes throughout the Village.

The Village is hopeful the community will become a more diverse mix of people, both socially and economically. Reinforcement of existing community organizations and creation of new ones that will maintain the quality of life in Elburn are another focus.

The primary limit to residential development continues to be the limited availability of sanitary sewer treatment capacity at the Waste Water Treatment Plant. The Village of Elburn is exploring the feasibility of expanding the plant in partnership with certain major developers. In addition, several new residential and commercial projects are in the planning stages.



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