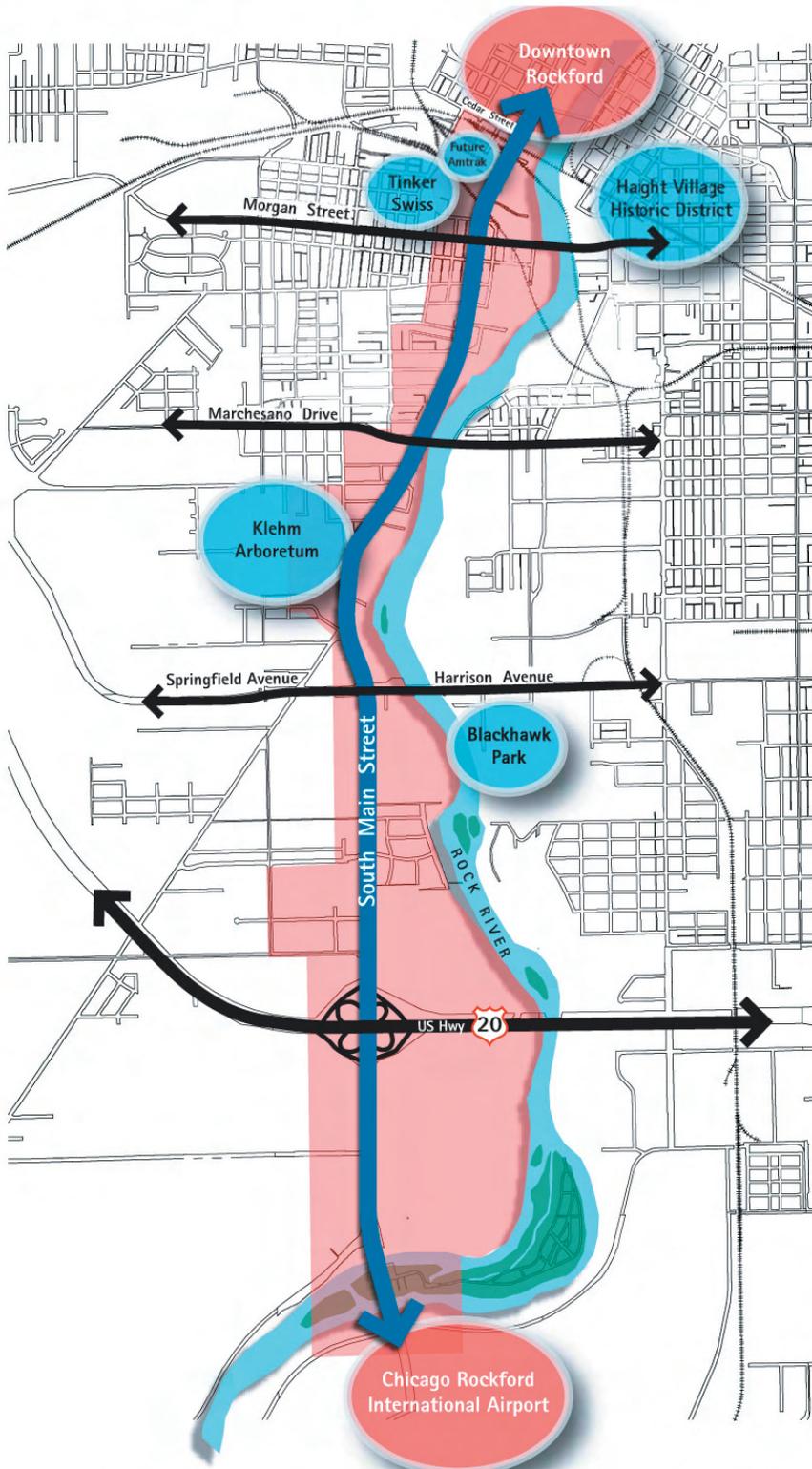




REVITALIZATION VISION



STUDY AREA CONTEXT

The Corridor links several major regional attractions and destinations all within close proximity to Downtown and regional transportation networks.

Legend

-  South Main Street
-  Major Street
-  Railroad
-  Study Area

South Main Revitalization Strategy

Section 6: Revitalization Vision

Revitalization Vision

The South Main Revitalization Strategy provides a vision for how the South Main Corridor can be enhanced and transitioned into a more vibrant, mixed-use, transit-supported district that includes a variety of new retail, residential, office, service, industrial and institutional uses. The fundamentals of this Revitalization Strategy are based on balancing preservation of the community’s existing assets—such as surrounding residential neighborhoods, historic buildings, the Rock River, open spaces, landmarks and key destinations—with strategies for enhancing its character with a combination of physical improvements and appropriate new development intended to provide positive changes along this important roadway.

The following fundamental principles were outlined by the team and Project Study Group, refined, tested and built upon through community participation and used in the development of the Revitalization Strategy. These principles include:

- ❑ Build upon or leverage the momentum of planned and in progress large transportation infrastructure improvements, including the Illinois Department of Transportation’s (IDOT) reconstruction of South Main Street and the Morgan Street Bridge replacement.
- ❑ Create and support regional strategies for increased public access and linkages to the Rock River.
- ❑ Strengthen the community’s existing commercial areas and local business environment by supporting independent shops, retailers and restaurants through marketing, awareness and training.
- ❑ Provide efficient, effective and safe transportation connections and linkages for all modes of transportation including car, bicycle, and pedestrian, as well as create an environment for future transit service to the area.
- ❑ Organize the Corridor into appropriately focused “Character Zones” or sub-areas based on land use, transportation environment and physical condition to establish an appropriate framework for phased revitalization efforts and timing.
- ❑ Strive to achieve a range of higher density multi-family residential opportunities that support current and future resident lifestyle needs and income levels.
- ❑ Build upon and strengthen the cultural and ethnic history of the community and area and its many institutions.



- ❑ Provide for continued streetscape and open space improvements and additions through a coordinated and phased implementation plan.
- ❑ Provide strategies for enhancing and using existing buildings and structures, where feasible. Promote continued environmental cleanup and reuse of area brownfield sites.
- ❑ Enhance and support the needs and goals of key South Main civic institutions, landmarks and activity generators.
- ❑ Promote and support on-going property owner reinvestment in properties.
- ❑ Support and assist the City's economic development goals of attracting and relocating new technology, business and industrial uses within the Corridor.
- ❑ Develop an improved and efficient regulatory framework that provides a clear definition of the City's and community's shared vision for the Corridor and creates a sense of predictability in the overall development process.



South Main Revitalization Strategy

Section 6: Revitalization Vision

Goals and Objectives

The following overarching goals represent the “big picture” guidelines as derived from the South Main planning process. The objectives are more specific elements that are defined within the Revitalization Strategy.

Goal: Land Use|Urban Design

Attract a range of sustainable land uses and development patterns consistent with community character, existing infrastructure capacities and City initiatives in order to achieve a critical mass of market activity that will support existing and future businesses and mixed-use redevelopment.

REVITALIZATION STRATEGY OBJECTIVES

- ❑ Encourage compact, mixed-use development that supports current and future resident lifestyle needs, as well as supports future transit in the area.
- ❑ Promote development/redevelopment of vacant, underutilized and inefficient properties throughout the Corridor.
- ❑ Discourage “mall-style” big box retail, drive-through retail and auto-dominated stores and services within the historic commercial core of the neighborhood.
- ❑ Encourage adaptive use and rehabilitation of key historic buildings and structures found throughout the Corridor, particularly the Barber-Colman buildings.
- ❑ Support City goals for promoting the incorporation of industrial, research and technology businesses in appropriate locations within the Corridor.
- ❑ Provide increased visibility, awareness and access to the Rock River as a linked regional public open space amenity.
- ❑ Create a landmark public open space that provides a destination location for community events and a “Village Market” that promotes local business development and entrepreneurship.
- ❑ Provide for a variety of sustainable public and private open spaces and streetscape environments that improve the physical appearance of South Main Street and Southwest Rockford.





- ❑ Foster a sense of “pride of place” amongst property owners to encourage regular maintenance and improvement of private property and buildings.
- ❑ Create a distinct unifying community, neighborhood or Corridor “brand” with a cohesive design and character.



Goal: Economic Development

Create a vibrant and economically sustainable Corridor that serves the needs of area residents, business owners, employees and visitors.

REVITALIZATION STRATEGY OBJECTIVES



- ❑ Differentiate South Main Street’s commercial activities so they are distinct within Rockford and so its core retail components are unique within the region.
- ❑ Adopt and apply relevant economic development strategies, as appropriate to the scale and challenges of South Main Street’s several sub-areas.
- ❑ Create a vibrant traditional neighborhood core that serves as a convenience shopping center for neighborhood residents and, at the same time, attracts customers from beyond Southwest Rockford to its Latino and African American specialty businesses.
- ❑ Use historic preservation as a tool that adds value to the historic commercial buildings on South Main Street.
- ❑ Direct new commercial development to South Main Street (rather than the East Side) by reducing development barriers and offering incentives – and by making it harder to develop elsewhere in the City.
- ❑ Stimulate local entrepreneurship through community-based financing.
- ❑ Begin to generate activity (e.g., through events and temporary markets) on key catalytic sites in preparation for future development.
- ❑ Start to build local capacity by bringing diverse local skills together in a revitalization partnership.

South Main Revitalization Strategy

Section 6: Revitalization Vision

Goal: Transportation

Develop the South Main Corridor to accommodate all types of roadway users including motorists, bicyclists, pedestrians, and users of transit in a safe and efficient manner to local and regional destinations.



REVITALIZATION STRATEGY OBJECTIVES

- ❑ Develop all streets within the South Main Corridor to accommodate motorists, bicyclists, and transit users of all ages and abilities.
- ❑ Improve access to and mobility along South Main Street.
- ❑ Improve pedestrian safety and encourage walking.
- ❑ Promote a shared use path along the full length of the South Main Corridor.
- ❑ Encourage best practices in access management to minimize congestion along South Main Street.
- ❑ Improve pedestrian access to and facilities at bus stops.
- ❑ Provide adequately spaced crossings on South Main Street to minimize barriers and improve neighborhood connectivity.
- ❑ Provide replacement parking for on-street parking that is eliminated with South Main Street improvements.
- ❑ Encourage access to the Rock River and encourage views of the river that showcase its natural features.
- ❑ Promote local and regional transit at the proposed Amtrak station.



Revitalization Strategy Components

The Revitalization Strategy and supporting illustrative vision plans present a vision for the next 20 years. Development densities shown in the Plan reflect what development is possible considering South Main Street’s physical land and capacity potential, such as block and property sizes, parking layouts, site access and infrastructure. The Strategy includes several “catalytic” or “target” redevelopment opportunities that could increase business and developer interest in Southwest Rockford, which over time could exceed market and development projections. Ideally, the current businesses located on parcels impacted by the IDOT roadway realignment and construction will relocate to other vacant corridor properties in appropriate locations based on their business and site needs. On sites that are not targeted for redevelopment, the plan identifies opportunities for improvements to existing buildings, storefronts, parking lots and landscaping.

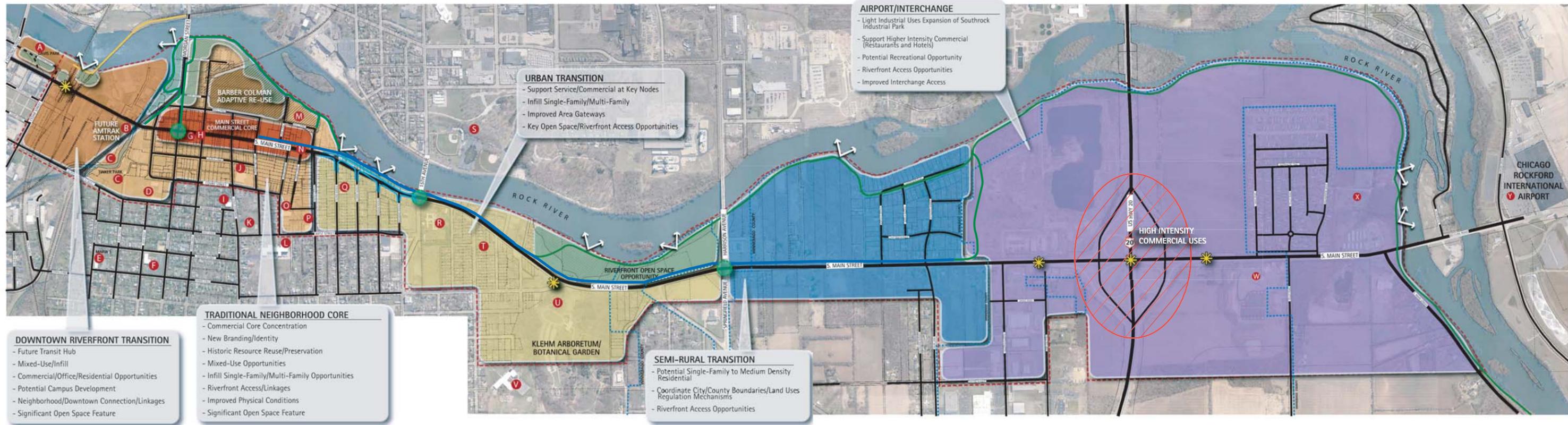
The South Main Revitalization Strategy and vision plan delineates conceptual building massing, parking layouts and site design to illustrate how the area could ideally be developed in a comprehensive, coordinated manner. Actual building locations, heights and densities, as well as landscaping and parking layouts will vary as property owners, business owners and developers generate more detailed site plans.

The following is a more specific description of the framework and individual development components depicted in the Revitalization Strategy.

Revitalization Strategies Framework

To help frame the development recommendations and physical enhancements for the South Main Corridor, the Revitalization Strategies Framework delineates five Corridor sub-areas based on future potential land use conditions and transportation improvements. Illustrative planning concepts were developed for “target” opportunity sites within each of these sub-areas. The sub-areas include (also see **Figure 6.1**):

- ❑ **Downtown | Riverfront Transition**
- ❑ **Traditional Neighborhood Core**
- ❑ **Urban Transition**
- ❑ **Semi-Rural Transition**
- ❑ **Airport | Interchange**



Area Attractions/Landmarks

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| A Davis Park | J King Elementary School | S Blackhawk Park |
| B Future Amtrak Station | K Mandeville Park | T Taylor Park |
| C Tinker Park - Tinker Swiss Cottage Museum, Suspension Bridge | L Washington Elementary | U Klehm Arboretum/ Botanical Garden |
| D Booker Washington Park/ Community Center | M South Park | V Julia Lathrop Elementary School |
| E Maria's Italian Cafe | N St. Elizabeth Community Center | W Faith Center Church |
| F St. Anthony's Church | O New Zion Missionary Baptist | X Gem Field Park |
| G Graham-Ginestra House | P St. Peter and Paul Apostles Church | Y Chicago Rockford International Airport |
| H Ethnic Heritage Museum | Q Southside Church of God | |
| I Montague Branch Library | R Poor Clares Corpus Christi Monastery | |

FIGURE 6.1: REVITALIZATION STRATEGIES FRAMEWORK

South Main Revitalization Strategy

Section 6: Revitalization Vision

Downtown|Riverfront Transition

The Downtown|Riverfront Transition sub-area is defined by Chestnut and Cedar Streets on the north, the Canadian National Railroad on the south, Winnebago Street on the west and the Rock River on the east. The area is largely defined by the vacant rail/switching yard west of South Main Street, active industrial uses and vacant property on the east and Davis Park and vacant downtown buildings, including Tapco and Amerock on the north. Future land uses for this sub-area include opportunities for commercial/retail, light industrial, office and residential development in a compact, mixed-use environment. There is also potential for additional open space, both in the short and long term, as well as river access tying into Davis Park. With future Amtrak service planned for the existing Canadian National Railroad tracks and the possibility of Metra commuter rail on the Union Pacific tracks on the north, this area has the potential to be a key transit hub for Rockford and a true transition from Downtown to the smaller scale neighborhoods to the south.

New development at the catalytic rail yard site could be instrumental in bridging the physical gap from Downtown to Southwest Rockford and the rest of South Main Street.

Participants in community workshops and stakeholder discussions repeatedly noted that the community feels “disconnected” from Downtown due to the large vacant parcels between Cedar Street and the Canadian National Railroad tracks. Future redevelopment in this area, especially along the South Main Street frontage, would help close the physical gap between downtown and the primary commercial and residential areas of Southwest Rockford.



The vacant rail yard property just south of Downtown envisions a future Amtrak station, potential Metra station and mixed-use development (Source: Google Images).



The Rockford Multimodal Station will provide residents of the Rockford metropolitan area with bus, rail and vehicular transportation options (source: Tiger II Grant Application).



Rendering of the future Rockford Amtrak Station (Source: Tiger II Grant Application)



The Plan envisions higher-density housing for the Downtown/Riverfront Target Area, such as townhomes and apartments.



Ideally, the South Main frontage would consist of multi-story mixed-use buildings as an extension of Downtown.

DOWNTOWN|RIVERFRONT TRANSITION TARGET AREA (FIGURE 6.2)

The Revitalization Strategy concept depicts the long-term vision for the Downtown|Riverfront Transition Target Area as a transit-oriented, mixed-use neighborhood with new riverfront open space opportunities. The frontage along South Main Street, including the W.A. Whitney frontage, would be 2 to 4-story mixed-use buildings with commercial/retail on the ground floor and residential or office on upper floors. This development would provide an important physical and visual link, or transition, from Downtown to the commercial and residential areas further south. With the planned Amtrak station and parking lot proposed north of the Canadian National Railroad tracks combined with new commercial, office and residential uses, this portion of South Main Street would become a more active urban environment.

For the remainder of the rail yard site to the west, the Plan envisions higher density residential housing, including 3 to 5-story apartments or condominiums, urban rowhomes and townhomes. A compact grid street system forms the core blocks of the site, tying into Wheeler Drive and an extension of Mill Street across South Main. The Plan estimates approximately 330 residential units on this site for the long-term vision.

East of South Main, the Plan works around the remaining industrial users located on Founders Landing. The frontage is depicted as two 2 to 4-story mixed-use buildings which would match the west side of the street. Access and parking for these buildings would build upon the existing circulation system already in place and ideally be located behind the buildings. Current vacant property (approximately 2.2 acres) along the riverfront would be converted to park space and linked to Davis Park beneath the Union Pacific Railroad bridge to create a terminus to the planned Illinois Railnet bridge bike path. Ultimately, if W.A. Whitney, Rockford Bolt & Steel Company and other active industrial users relocate within the Corridor, additional property would be available on the eastern riverfront to extend this open space system, creating a landmark “Founders Landing Park.”

North of the Union Pacific Railroad overpass, the Plan focuses on how Davis Park can be extended and enhanced as a result of two future City planning objectives: the demolition of the Tapco Building and the elimination of a portion of Wyman Street between Cedar and Chestnut. Essentially, this would create an additional 2.4 acres of potential open space to be used for public gatherings, events and parking. The concept shows the Amerock Building remaining with the potential for rehabilitation and reuse. In addition, as a long-term strategy, a Metra station has been shown with potential access located from an alley/drive south of Cedar Street. The station would be served by diagonal parking from the drive, as well as a potential shared parking structure on the Cedar Street/South Main Street intersection.



SOUTH MAIN REVITALIZATION STRATEGY

- A** ELIMINATE WYMAN CROSSOVER
EXPAND PARKING TO THE SOUTH
- B** DAVIS PARK EXTENSION
- C** SHARED PARKING DECK
- D** FUTURE METRA STATION
- E** RESIDENTIAL TOWNHOME UNITS
- F** 3 TO 5 STORY RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS
- G** 2 TO 4 STORY MIXED-USE BUILDINGS
ALONG SOUTH MAIN STREET
1st Floor: Commercial
Upper Floors: Residential or Office
- H** RAILROAD BRIDGE BIKE PATH
- I** SOUTH MAIN STREET STREETScape
ENHANCEMENTS
- J** FUTURE AMTRAK STATION

SITE DATA

MIXED-USE BUILDINGS: 280,000 S.F.
RESIDENTIAL: 330 UNITS

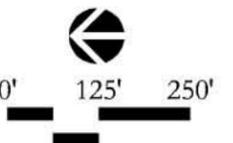
South Main Revitalization Strategy

Rockford, Illinois

Figure 6.2: Downtown Riverfront Transition Target Area: Preferred Concept

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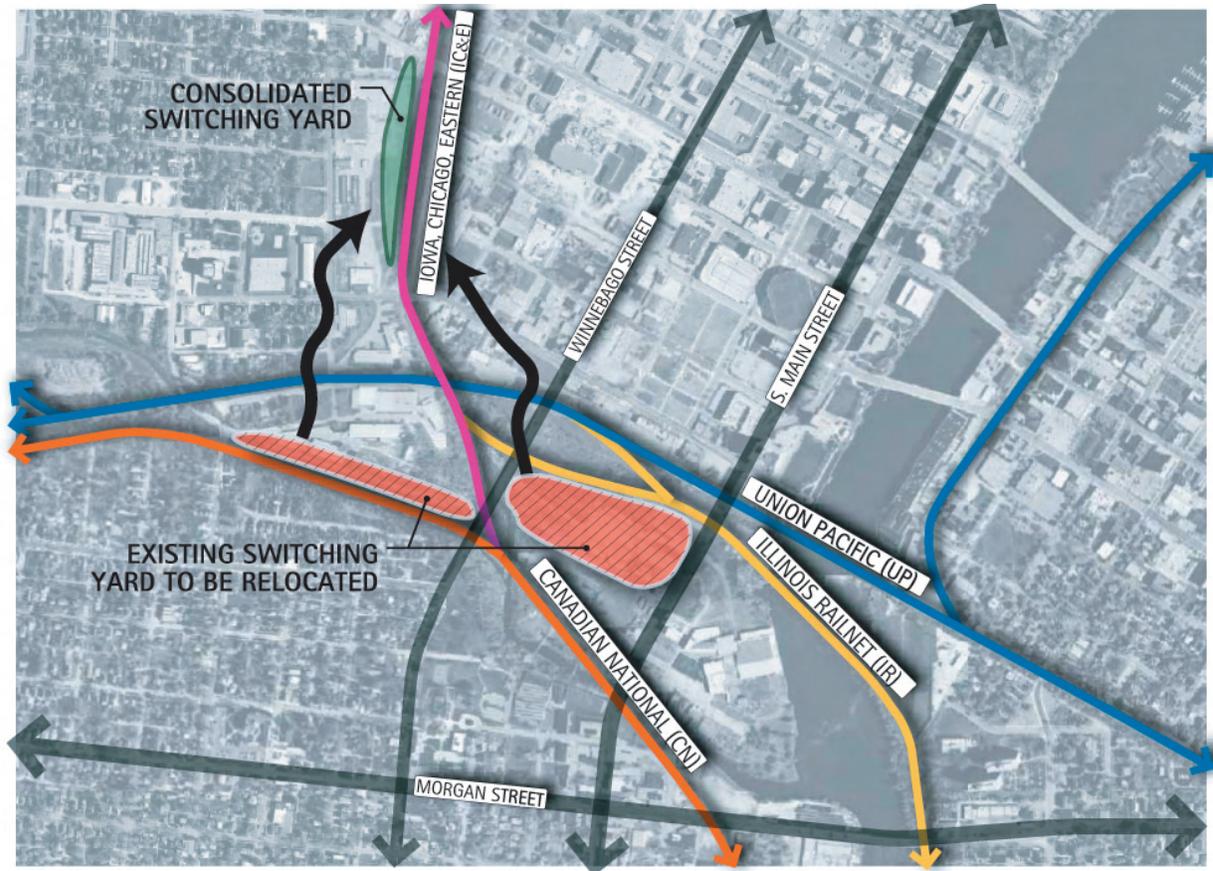
TYLIN INTERNATIONAL



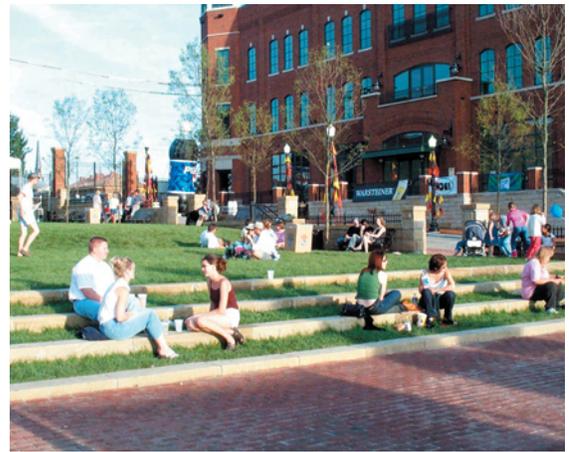
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South Main Revitalization Strategy

Section 6: Revitalization Vision



The Railroad Consolidation Study outlines steps for eliminating portions of track and switching yards currently located on the Downtown/Riverfront Transition Target Area.



To connect to Davis Park on the north, an urban riverwalk character and additional open space could be developed for a portion of Founders Landing.

Conceptual Target Area Phasing

The Downtown|Riverfront Transition Target Area will most likely need to be developed in a phased approach, as it relies upon the timing of the railroad consolidation plan to unfold, as well as an improved economy and housing market. Although a portion of the Illinois Railnet tracks will ultimately be abandoned and the switching yards (currently located on the rail yard site) consolidated further west, these yards must remain active in the short term. Therefore, short-term concepts and strategies were developed to provide guidance for potential implementation. While ultimately the actual development sequence of this site will depend on a number of factors, the following describes an optimal incremental scenario that builds up to the overall Plan vision.

The first phase concept for developing the Downtown|Riverfront Transition Target Area focuses on the Amtrak station, including its parking and circulation, as well as establishing a building frontage with three of the commercial/mixed-use buildings on South Main Street. With the switching yards remaining active, the property to the south could be converted to public active recreation and passive open space. The concept depicts up to six youth soccer/football fields, as well as 2.3 acres of community gardens. In this scenario, shared parking associated with the commercial buildings and/or temporary parking could support the open space.

The second phase concept assumes that the switching yards have been consolidated further west and the remaining site would be available to redevelop. The concept depicts two additional commercial/mixed-use buildings located further north along the South Main frontage, as well as three residential apartment or condominium buildings to the west. The vehicular and pedestrian circulation system would be expanded to form a loop drive system. This phase also shows additional recreation fields and expanded community gardens for the remainder of the site.

The third phase concept introduces approximately 45 rear-loaded townhome residences on the southwest portion of the rail yard site, while keeping the northwest portion open for park space. Ultimately, the long-term strategy envisions that the townhome development would expand to form a residential neighborhood for the remaining western half of the site, as shown in the long-term illustrative Revitalization Strategy Plan.

South Main Revitalization Strategy

Section 6: Revitalization Vision



Phase 1 plan components:

- ❑ *Amtrak Station*
- ❑ *Commercial/mixed-use building frontage*
- ❑ *6 youth soccer/football fields*
- ❑ *2+ acres of community gardens*
- ❑ *Potential Metra station + parking deck*
- ❑ *Expanded Davis Park (north of railroad bridge)*



Phase 2 plan components:

- ❑ *Remaining commercial/mixed-use building frontage*
- ❑ *3 residential apartment or condominium buildings*
- ❑ *Additional recreational fields*
- ❑ *Expanded community gardens*
- ❑ *Riverfront park space (south of railroad bridge)*



Phase 3 plan components:

- ❑ *45 townhome units*
- ❑ *Additional street system and infrastructure extensions*

Phase 4 plan components (Figure 6.2)

- ❑ *44 townhome units*
- ❑ *32 rowhome units*
- ❑ *Completed street system and infrastructure extensions*

Traditional Neighborhood Core

The Traditional Neighborhood Core includes the community's key commercial and retail area, the Barber-Colman complex, active and vacant industrial properties and surrounding traditional residential blocks. The overall sub-area can generally be defined by Morgan Street/Canadian National Railroad tracks on the north, Lincoln Avenue on the south, Winnebago/Court/West Streets on the west and the Rock River on the east. As previously discussed, this sub-area contains numerous key community institutions, landmarks and activity generators, such as Tinker Swiss Cottage Museum and Park, Graham-Ginestra House, Ethnic Heritage Museum, King Elementary School and neighborhood retail, among others.

TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD CORE TARGET AREA (FIGURE 6.3)

Throughout this planning process, the Traditional Neighborhood Core Target Area was largely considered the key redevelopment opportunity due to its historic function as a neighborhood commercial district; central location and visibility; large amount of vacant property; proximity to the Rock River; adaptive use potential; and the presence of the remaining Barber-Colman complex. The Target Area shown in the preferred Revitalization Strategy Plan is generally bounded by Kent Street on the north, Lane Street on the south and extends east to the river.

Of all the locations in the Corridor, this Target Area provides the best opportunity to concentrate new development and physical enhancements to create an impact from which to build. The preferred concept depicts a number of strategies meant to revitalize the district, including:

- ❑ **Commercial Core Enhancements**
- ❑ **Local Business Incubator Space and Support Industry**
- ❑ **Village Market**
- ❑ **Barber-Colman Redevelopment**
- ❑ **New Open Spaces and Linkages**
- ❑ **Shared Parking**



SOUTH MAIN REVITALIZATION STRATEGY

- A** COMMERCIAL CORE BUILDING IMPROVEMENTS
- B** NEW PUBLIC PARKING LOTS
- C** SOUTH MAIN STREET STREETScape ENHANCEMENTS
- D** PUBLIC PARKING LOT AS PART OF ETHNIC HERITAGE CAMPUS - New Corner Plaza
- E** 2 TO 3 STORY MIXED-USE BUILDINGS ALONG SOUTH MAIN STREET
- F** 1 TO 2 STORY LIGHT INDUSTRIAL OR SMALL OFFICE BUILDINGS
- G** NEIGHBORHOOD MARKET SPACE
- H** 4 TO 5 STORY MIXED-USE "CAMPUS" BUILDINGS (OFFICE/RESIDENTIAL)
- I** NEW OPEN SPACE NATURAL PRAIRIE AND RIVER ACCESS
- J** MULTI-USE PATH CONNECTION WITH CONTINUOUS PUBLIC ACCESS TO RIVER
- K** BARBER COLMAN ADAPTIVE REUSE FOR LARGE "CAMPUS" USER
- L** NEW GROCERY USE IN EXISTING BUILDING
- M** BIKE/CANOE RENTAL RIVER ACCESS

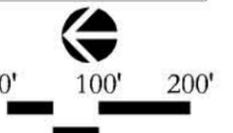
SITE DATA

EXISTING BARBER COLMAN: +/-500,000 S.F.
 MIXED-USE BUILDINGS: 175,000 S.F.
 CAMPUS/OFFICE BUILDINGS: 465,000 S.F.
 LIGHT INDUSTRIAL: 70,000 S.F.

South Main Revitalization Strategy Rockford, Illinois

Figure 6.3: Traditional Neighborhood Core Target Area: Preferred Concept

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ADDITION TO FIGURE 6.3 – TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD CORE PREFERRED CONCEPT

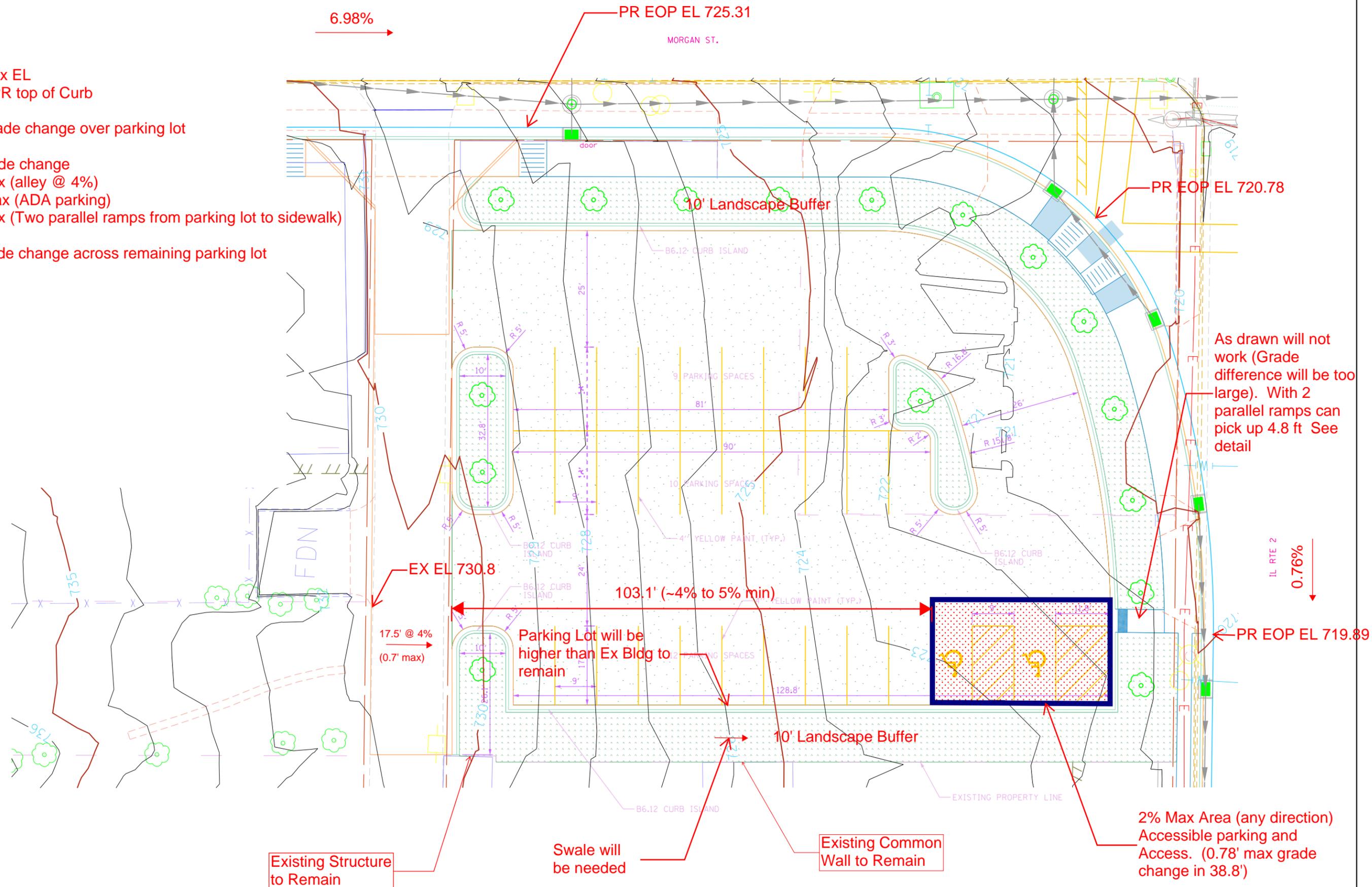
As part of the South Main Street (Illinois Route 2) reconstruction project, the Illinois Department of Transportation will be constructing a parking lot at the Southwest Corner of Morgan & Main. The exhibit on the following page is the final design for the parking lot. While this is a different concept than what is shown in Figure 6.3, adjustments can be made at a later design and planning stage (led by the City of Rockford) to allow for additional signage, greenspace, and seating at this intersection.

730.8 Ex EL
 - 720.27 PR top of Curb

10.5 ft of grade change over parking lot

10.5' grade change
 - 0.7' max (alley @ 4%)
 - 0.78' max (ADA parking)
 - 4.8' max (Two parallel ramps from parking lot to sidewalk)

4.2' min grade change across remaining parking lot



Existing Structure to Remain

Swale will be needed

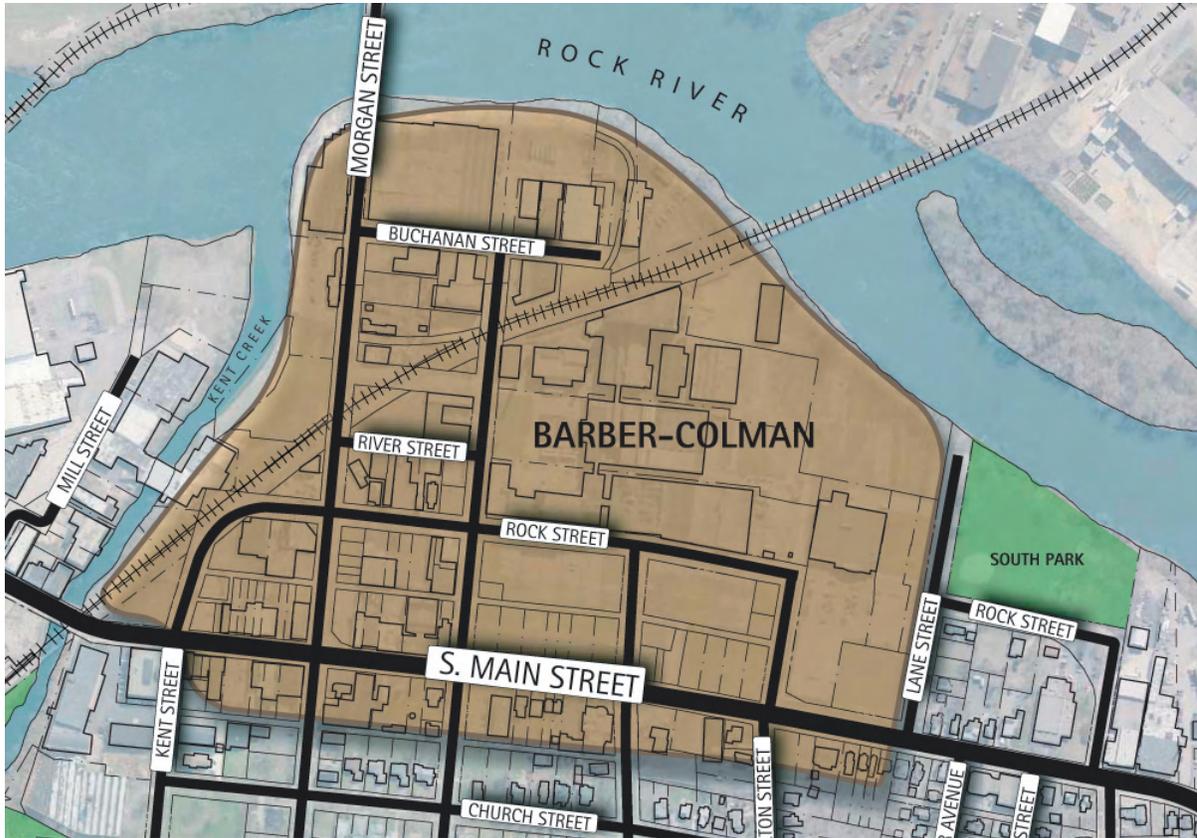
Existing Common Wall to Remain

2% Max Area (any direction) Accessible parking and Access. (0.78' max grade change in 38.8')

FILE NAME =	USER NAME = \$USER*	DESIGNED -	REVISED -	STATE OF ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION	PARKING LOT - SOUTH OF MORGAN ST.			F.A.P. RTE.	SECTION	COUNTY	TOTAL SHEETS	SHEET NO.
FILEL		DRAWN -	REVISED -					742	(32,33) R-1	WINNEBAGO		
	PLOT SCALE = \$SCALE*	CHECKED -	REVISED -		CONTRACT NO. 64821							
	PLOT DATE = \$DATE*	DATE -	REVISED -		ILLINOIS FED. AID PROJECT							
				SCALE: 1:10	SHEET NO.	OF SHEETS	STA.	TO STA.				

South Main Revitalization Strategy

Section 6: Revitalization Vision



The Traditional Neighborhood Core Target Area encompasses the prime commercial frontage along South Main Street, as well as the vacant Barber-Colman site.

Commercial Core Enhancements

For this area, the Revitalization Strategy Plan envisions enhancements to existing buildings combined with new development on vacant sites as an approach to rejuvenating the neighborhood commercial core. Ideally, the existing commercial buildings between Kent and Loomis Streets would undergo façade improvements to upgrade the look and character of the district. These improvements may include removing bars and boards from storefront windows and doors; cleaning and tuck pointing bricks; replacing old windows; painting; removing poor quality materials from building fronts; removing sign clutter/replacing signs; and adding planter boxes, awnings and/or decorative lighting. Building owners should not only focus on the front facades, but also the rear facades, since many of these buildings are highly visible from traffic crossing the Morgan Street bridge and may also have future parking lots located in the rear.

Some before and after visualizations for conceptual façade improvements were developed as part of this planning process, as shown on the following page.



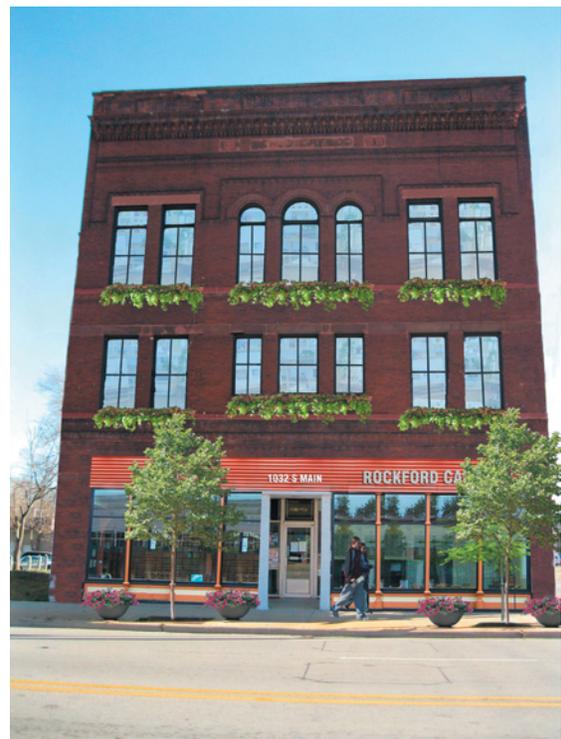
Facade improvements can reflect the ethnicity and character of the surrounding community in a simple and tasteful way.



BEFORE: Many older buildings are in need of facade improvements and maintenance.

South of Loomis Street on the east, the Plan depicts the frontage consisting of an articulated “street wall” of multiple 2 to 4-story mixed-use buildings bisected by plazas that allow pedestrian movement to rear parking areas. The ground floor of these buildings would be new retail/commercial space with upper floors potentially containing office spaces or residential apartments or condominiums. Shared parking lots would be located in the rear of the buildings and accessed from local streets, such as Loomis, Montague and Knowlton. The key strategy is to create a continuous street frontage of active storefronts that replace the existing vacant lots located in these blocks. Ideally, these storefronts would contain small spaces for neighborhood retail, services and restaurants—uses that spur pedestrian activity and support local entrepreneurs. While development of this frontage will most likely not occur all at once, the expectation is that over time the buildings can be built in a phased approach starting from the north and moving south, creating a larger retail shopping and service district over time.

The overall concept plan depicts approximately 60,000 square feet of new commercial space along the South Main Street frontage, while also assuming vacant storefronts in the area will ultimately find new tenants.



AFTER: Facade improvements may include new awnings or sign bands; new windows; brick cleaning; window boxes or planters; and storefront renovations with high quality materials.

South Main Revitalization Strategy

Section 6: Revitalization Vision



Potential Capitol Theater improvements include new windows; removing bars at entries; brick cleaning and facade restoration; new awnings and sign bands; gooseneck lighting; blade signs; store front materials; and window boxes/ planters.



Potential facade improvements include removing bars from store front windows; brick cleaning; painting; new awnings and sign bands; gooseneck lighting; enhanced entrances and store front materials; and window boxes/ planters.



Building and site improvements for this auto service center depicts: new streetscape treatment; removal of paving and addition of landscape area; consolidating curb cuts; simplifying signage and windows; and developing a paint scheme and color palette that does not show dirt and pollution.



South Main Revitalization Strategy

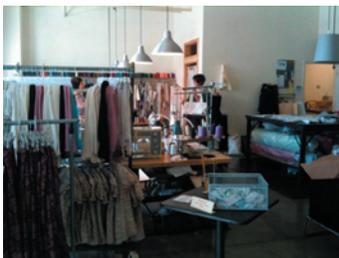
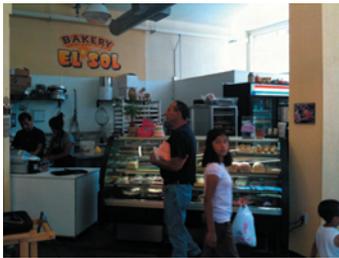
Section 6: Revitalization Vision



View of South Main Street from Morgan Street looking north: North of the tracks, the vision depicts redevelopment of the vacant rail yard site, while south of the tracks the traditional core of buildings and sidewalks would be enhanced.



The Plan envisions redevelopment of the vacant blocks south of Loomis as a mixed-use extension of the existing commercial district.



A key to revitalizing the Traditional Neighborhood Core is to create a “cluster” of local businesses to manufacture goods, provide services and develop products. (Source: J. Bloom)

Local Business Incubator Space and Support Industry

Behind the mixed-use buildings along Rock Street, the Plan shows smaller 1 to 2-story light industrial and/or commercial/office buildings. These buildings would supply small, independent incubator spaces for local businesses that would not normally have locations. In some cases, existing buildings along Rock Street to the north may also provide space for multiple businesses, small manufacturers, artists and entrepreneurs. The main idea is that the users in these buildings would manufacture goods, provide services or develop products that can be used or sold either on-site, within retail space on South Main Street or at a regularly-scheduled outdoor market. The combination of the industry or manufacturing and commercial/retail space would create a “cluster” of businesses that serve local Latino and African American residents, while also attracting shoppers from outside the area.

The Plan shows approximately 70,000 square feet of flexible light industrial or small office space within the Traditional Neighborhood Core Target Area.

South Main Revitalization Strategy

Section 6: Revitalization Vision

Village Market

The Plan depicts a signature space that would be an ideal location to hold large events, seasonal festivals or a regularly scheduled “Village Market.” This area is envisioned as a large open green space or neighborhood commons, ringed by a decoratively paved street system, as well as diagonal parking spaces. The intent of this common space is not to compete with the City Market, but rather provide local businesses with an additional location to sell and promote their goods, while catering to the surrounding neighborhood and attracting visitors to explore Southwest Rockford.

Potential elements of the park space may include a location for a sculpture or water feature, open lawn areas for tents and picnics and multiple seating areas. The surrounding streets, such as Rock and Montague, and parking areas would ideally consist of brick or concrete pavers, providing the park with a more pedestrian feel and “European character.”



A central open space would provide a location for seasonal festivals and community gatherings.



The “Village Market” concept would provide local businesses and start-ups with additional opportunities to promote their goods and services to both the surrounding neighborhood and visitors from outside the area.



Barber-Colman complex

Barber-Colman Adaptive Use

East of Rock Street, the Target Area concept shows the creation of a large “campus” on the Barber-Colman site, which currently represents approximately 500,000 square feet of vacant building space. The recommendation is to reuse the existing buildings, as well as situate new 4 to 5-story mixed-use buildings along an extension of the existing grid street system. To provide better connectivity and access to the campus, Knowlton Street would be extended east to the river. Parking would be provided behind the buildings within the interiors of the blocks. The rehabilitation and use of these buildings by a college/university, local school district, corporation, institution or entertainment use would bring a significant and new population of people to the area. This population would help support local businesses (both new and existing) and the “Village Market,” bring activity to the streets and generate momentum for other redevelopment and physical improvements.

The City has hired a development team to specifically study the Barber-Colman buildings and site, a process that is currently in the early stages. The recommendations made within this Revitalization Strategy are meant to help inform and foster a creative, coordinated vision for this campus.



Some cities have successfully rehabilitated and used old industrial buildings as commercial, office, institutional, residential or entertainment use.

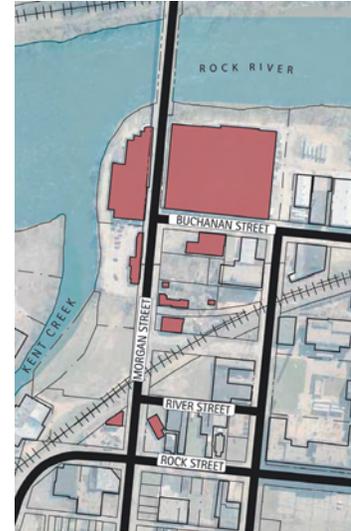
South Main Revitalization Strategy

Section 6: Revitalization Vision

New Open Spaces and Linkages

A major component of the Revitalization Strategy Plan is to provide additional public access to the Rock River, which currently does not exist today. The Traditional Neighborhood Core Target Area concept recommends creating a large 15-acre open space on the riverfront parcels that have been cleared and graded both north and south of the Morgan Street Bridge, as well as an expansion of South Park adjacent to the Barber-Colman site. Ultimately, a continuous multi-purpose bike/pedestrian path will link these open spaces, as well as tie into paths planned within the Rock River Greenway Master Plan. Other potential elements in these spaces include an amphitheater, multiple overlooks, natural prairie restoration areas, playfields, community gardens, a playground and bike/canoe rental kiosks.

In the short-term, these parks would coexist with existing industrial users located adjacent to the river. However, in the long-term if the industrial users relocate, the open spaces can be expanded, forming a large contiguous 22-acre riverfront park, mirroring the look and feel of Blackhawk Park to the east.



A number of buildings have been or will be demolished as part of the Morgan Street Bridge project, creating opportunities for better access to the river. These buildings are shown in red above.



New riverfront open space has the potential to provide activities for a variety of uses including (clockwise from top left): multi-purpose bike/pedestrian paths, an amphitheater, natural prairie restoration areas and community gardens.

Shared Parking

With the upcoming reconstruction of South Main Street, in which on-street parking will not be allowed, the Plan has shown a number of locations for small shared parking lots. East of South Main, existing lots on the corners of Kent and Morgan Streets will remain, while new lots are located with access from the north-south alley behind the buildings. The Plan depicts a new public lot on the southwest corner of Morgan Street and South Main that can serve the existing and new businesses, as well as the Ethnic Heritage Museum. The Plan also recommends that all parking lots be brought up to current zoning code standards and/or improved with decorative metal fences for screening, as well as landscaping and trees, where feasible. These elements would contribute to improving the physical appearance and character of the Corridor and district. The concept shows approximately 52 additional parking spaces between the blocks of Loomis and Kent Streets.



Parking lots should be improved with landscaping and trees, where feasible.

South Main Revitalization Strategy

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Urban Transition

The Urban Transition sub-area describes a large portion of the Corridor from Lincoln Avenue on the north to Harrison/Springfield Avenue on the south. This area contains primarily compact traditional single-family neighborhoods with a small number of townhomes, as well as a mobile home park. It also contains Klehm Arboretum and Forest Preserve property, as well as auto-oriented commercial nodes at the Marchesano Drive and Harrison/Springfield Avenue intersections.

On the west side of South Main Street within this sub-area and extending north into the Traditional Neighborhood Core (generally between 15th and Morgan), there are a number of scattered and vacant commercial properties that are no longer part of an overall commercial district. As a policy direction, the City should consider transitioning these properties into residential uses, creating a more consistent and continuous land use pattern and consolidating/concentrating commercial activity further north. This consolidation will help focus the revitalization efforts in the Traditional Neighborhood Core, which would have a more immediate impact. Some actions that the City may undertake to achieve this transition of land use include:

- ❑ Developing an inventory/map of vacant/underutilized commercial properties
- ❑ Forming an acquisition strategy for these properties
- ❑ Conducting Environmental Assessments (in the case of former gas station, light industrial or dry cleaner sites)
- ❑ Rezoning the properties along this frontage to a residential district that is more compatible with the surrounding neighborhoods

This strategy will likely take a number of years, but can be set into action in the very short-term. With the roadway shift, locating commercial uses fronting South Main Street does not appear to be a viable long-term strategy in this area.

Also within this sub-area, two key Target Areas were developed during this planning process including the Main and Marchesano Target Area and the Harrison/South Main Intersection Target Area, which straddles the Urban Transition and Semi-Rural Transition sub-areas.

MAIN AND MARCHESANO TARGET AREA (FIGURE 6.4)

The Main and Marchesano Target Area preferred concept envisions physical enhancements and redevelopment for the commercial nodes at the Marchesano/South Main and Michigan/Clifton Avenue intersections, as well as infill residential north of Michigan Avenue. Currently, this area consists of auto-oriented commercial “strip” development characterized by large building setbacks with parking lots in front and multiple vehicular curb cuts. The frontages of these properties lack any buffering, screening



The Main and Marchesano Target Area



This image of the shopping center on Marchesano received the lowest score in a Visual Preference Survey at the first community open house. Participants noted the lack of landscaping, trees, sidewalks and appearance of the building as key factors to how it is perceived.

and/or landscaping. Early in the planning process, this commercial strip center received the lowest score in a Visual Preference Survey in terms of its physical appearance and overall appeal. Additionally, further west a large vacant shopping center consists of unoccupied buildings and a vast abandoned parking lot, which was also discussed at community workshops as a key redevelopment opportunity site.

The Revitalization Strategy Plan depicts a mixture of existing building rehabilitation and new commercial development to reenergize the area. The Plan recommends improving the facades for the commercial buildings on the Marchesano/South Main intersection, as well as the parking lots. This may include the following:

- ❑ Using brick or other high quality materials to create a more unified facade and building design.
- ❑ Improving views into the storefronts with new, more prominent windows.
- ❑ Adding a combination of sign bands and/or awnings to create a more traditional “shopping street” feel and to highlight the storefronts.
- ❑ Providing new sidewalks along Marchesano Drive to connect to surrounding residential neighborhoods.
- ❑ Screening all parking lots with decorative metal fences and/or landscaping around the perimeter.
- ❑ Creating “islands” of green space within the parking lots for trees



SOUTH MAIN REVITALIZATION STRATEGY

- A** MULTI-USE PATH CONNECTION
- B** SCREEN PARKING LOTS / CONSOLIDATE CURB CUTS
- C** PARKING LOT IMPROVEMENTS (NEW TREES WITH LANDSCAPE ISLANDS)
- D** FACADE IMPROVEMENTS
- E** NEW TOWNHOMES
- F** NEW COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT
- G** REUSE EXISTING BUILDING - IMPROVE FACADE AND PARKING LOT
- H** NEW POCKET PARK / PLAZA
- I** POOR CLARES CORPUS CHRISTI MONASTERY

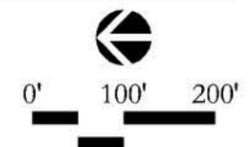
SITE DATA

RESIDENTIAL: 14 UNITS
 RETAIL: 13,000 S.F.

South Main Revitalization Strategy Rockford, Illinois

Figure 6.4: Main and Marchesano Target Area: Preferred Concept

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A visualization of the shopping center on Marchesano depicts parking lot screening, landscaping, new sidewalks and facade enhancements.

and landscaping and to provide better stormwater drainage.

- ❑ Reorganizing parking lots for safer vehicular and pedestrian circulation.
- ❑ Replacing outdated and deteriorating parking lot lights with more attractive pedestrian scale lighting.
- ❑ Screening service and trash areas at the rear of the buildings with trash enclosures, fencing and/or landscaping.
- ❑ Installing street trees along the frontages of Marchesano Drive, West Street and Michigan Avenue.



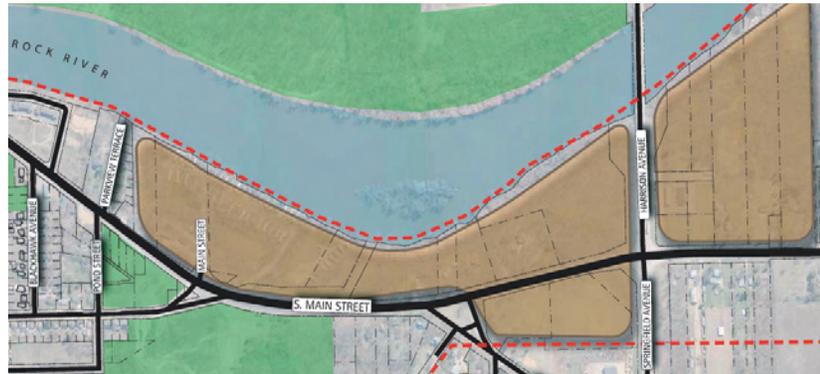
For the vacant shopping center at the Clifton/Michigan Avenue intersection, the Plan envisions rehabilitating the remaining series of storefronts and finding new local businesses to occupy these spaces. In addition, two new commercial buildings would be located along the Michigan Avenue frontage, highly visible and easily accessible. These uses could be restaurants, professional office, convenience stores and/or neighborhood services. In addition to building improvements, the Revitalization Strategy Plan also envisions parking lot and site enhancements, including continuous sidewalks and street trees along Michigan/Marchesano and Clifton, perimeter parking lot screening and internal green islands in the parking lot.

Potential new commercial at the Clifton/Michigan Avenue intersection would ideally consist of a mix of service uses, restaurants and professional office.

Finally, the Plan shows 14 new infill townhomes on the north side of Michigan Avenue, which would provide a higher density housing product for this area.

HARRISON/SOUTH MAIN INTERSECTION TARGET AREA (FIGURE 6.5)

The Harrison/South Main Intersection Target Area is a largely undeveloped portion of the Corridor extending from south of the Harrison intersection to Clifton Avenue on the north. Currently, this area includes Klehm Arboretum and undeveloped frontage on the west and Riverview Mobile Home Park, Forest Preserve property, single-family homes and a gas station/convenience store on the east. Both the City's and Winnebago County's future land use maps show the intersection of Harrison/Springfield Avenue as commercial development on the northwest and southeast corners; park/open space on the northeast corner; and medium density residential further south of Harrison Avenue on the east.



The Harrison/South Main Intersection Target Area

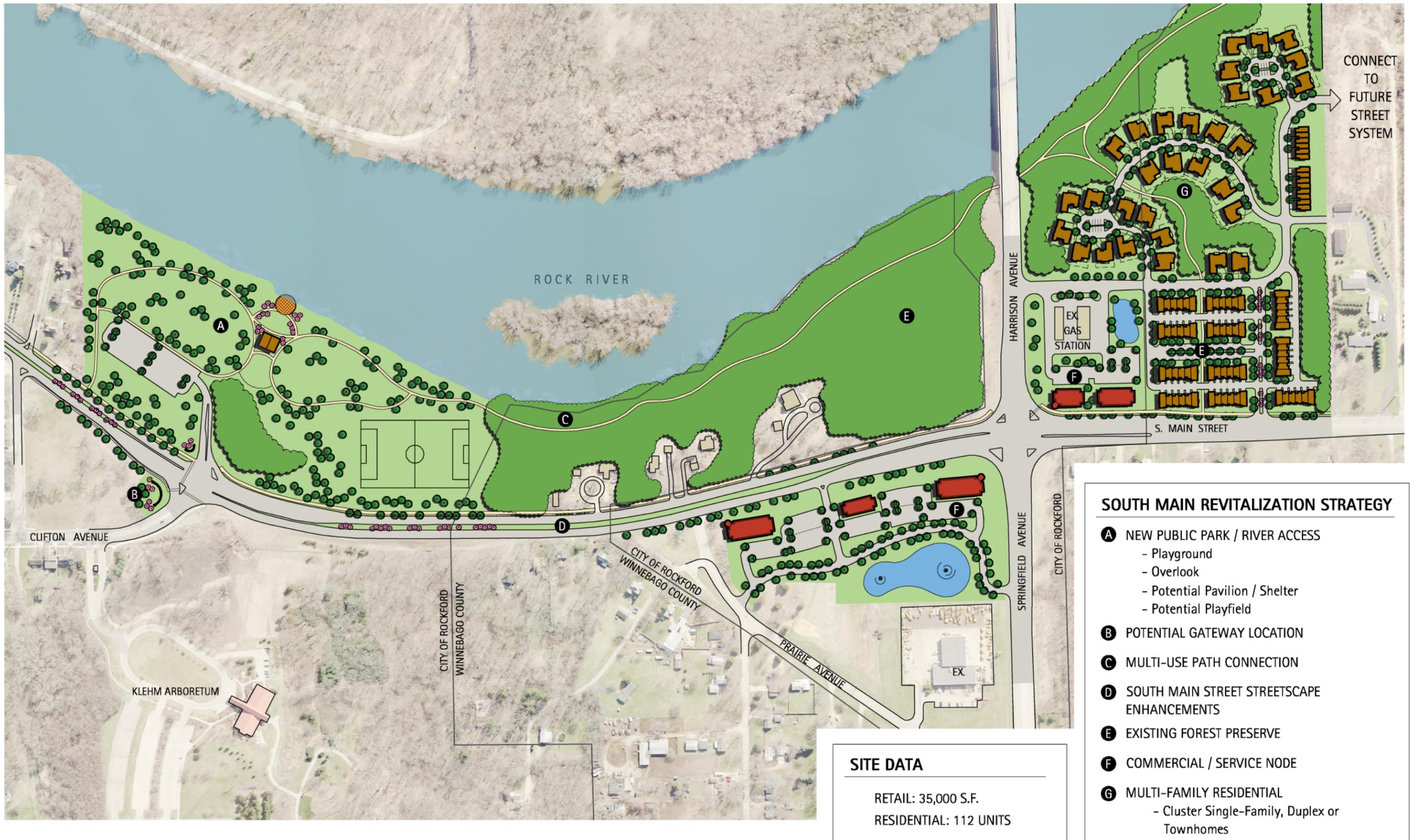


The Plan for this area depicts infill commercial and service uses.

In keeping with the future land use maps, the Revitalization Strategy Plan envisions a variety of uses for this area including auto-oriented commercial; townhomes/rowhomes and cluster single family or duplex residential; and new open space and river connection opportunities.

Commercial

The Plan for the southeast corner of Harrison/Springfield Avenue and South Main depicts infill commercial along the South Main Street frontage. Access for these buildings would be shared with the existing drive for the gas station off Harrison Avenue. Additional commercial uses are shown on the northwest corner of the intersection. A full access point would be located on Springfield Avenue with partial right-in/right-out only access serving South Main Street, due to a center median planned for this portion of the street reconstruction project. Parking lots for these uses would ideally be linked together for efficiency and located in the rear of the buildings. The potential commercial uses for this intersection would most likely be auto-oriented service uses and restaurants or professional office uses. This concept shows a total of 35,000 square feet of commercial space.



South Main Revitalization Strategy Rockford, Illinois

Figure 6.5: Harrison/South Main Intersection Target Area: Preferred Concept

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South Main Revitalization Strategy

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Residential

The Revitalization Strategy Plan shows a variety of residential housing types south of Harrison Avenue and extending east to the Rock River. Along South Main Street, townhomes are shown as an option connecting to future commercial to the north. Further east, the Plan depicts cluster single-family or duplex units that take advantage of the changes in topography to maximize access to the river and views, as well as preserve as much of the existing wooded and natural areas as possible. The street system would connect to the existing driveway at the existing Shell gas station, as well as to the existing apartment buildings further south and could be extended as future development occurs. Any new residential development would also be linked to the overall multi-use/bike path system that is planned in the Rock River Greenway Master Plan. Overall, the Revitalization Strategy Plan shows a total of approximately 102 new residential units as a long-term vision.

Open Space

The Plan envisions that the Riverview Mobile Home Park property be redeveloped into a public park along the riverfront tying into the adjacent Forest Preserve to the south. This property was repeatedly described at workshops and stakeholder interviews as a key open space redevelopment opportunity due to its location across from Klehm Arboretum; position within the 100-year floodplain; prime river access; and proximity to several residential neighborhoods. The concept shows an 18-acre park space with potential for a river overlook, pavilion or shelter, playground, multi-use trail connections and a small recreation field. This park would enjoy full access from the signalized intersection at Clifton Avenue and would serve as a key open space for a portion of the Corridor that is lacking in park amenities and river access opportunities.



The multi-use path could have locations for bike parking within new riverfront open spaces.



Potential park space north of Harrison Avenue envisions a river overlook, multi-use bike paths, a pavilion and a playground.

Semi-Rural Transition

The Semi-Rural Transition sub-area extends from Harrison/Springfield Avenue on the north to Southrock Industrial Park on the south and is bounded by the river on the east. By and large, this entire area is located within Winnebago County and is comprised of deep lots containing larger single-family homes, as well as an older, more traditional suburban single-family neighborhood further south. As previously discussed, the County's long-range land use plan denotes this area as future medium density residential. As described above, the Revitalization Strategy Plan concept for the Harrison/South Main Intersection depicts how a medium density neighborhood potentially could tie into the existing natural topography and context of this area. Since this sub-area has undeveloped portions of land, over time this type of development pattern would be appropriate as residential infill.

Other recommendations for this sub-area include the following:

- ❑ Create zoning standards for this area that match the form, bulk, density and quality of new development desired for the area.
- ❑ Coordinate the City of Rockford/Winnebago County boundary to ensure that future development plans match zoning standards and infrastructure meets potential densities and capacities.
- ❑ Establish a plan and implementation strategy for constructing multi-use path linkages throughout this area as future growth occurs.
- ❑ Create a strategy for acquiring and setting aside riverfront land to maintain opportunities for future public access.

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Airport|Interchange

The Airport/Interchange sub-area encompasses a large portion of both City and County land from just north of Southrock Drive to the Rock River on both the south and east and Central Avenue extended on the west. This sub-area contains Southrock Industrial Park, a large mobile home neighborhood, sporadic commercial uses and Faith Center Church, as well as large parcels of undeveloped property. Both the City and County future land use maps designate the majority of this property as a mix of light industrial and commercial uses, primarily centered on the U.S. Highway 20 interchange with South Main Street.

The City has been marketing the property between the mobile home neighborhood and U.S. Highway 20 as an industrial/business park development with the frontage along South Main as potential commercial uses. In addition, the City and State have plans for a new interchange configuration for U.S. 20, which would reconfigure the clover leaf ramps into a diamond interchange and provide more development opportunities.



The Interchange Target Area



INTERCHANGE TARGET AREA (FIGURE 6.6)

The Interchange Target Area concept depicts potential development of the interchange with a mix of commercial and industrial uses. As the Corridor grows in the future, this interchange would provide the ideal location for a consolidated industrial or business campus due to convenient access to U.S. Highway 20 and the airport; shared synergies between business and industries; and large amount of undeveloped land.



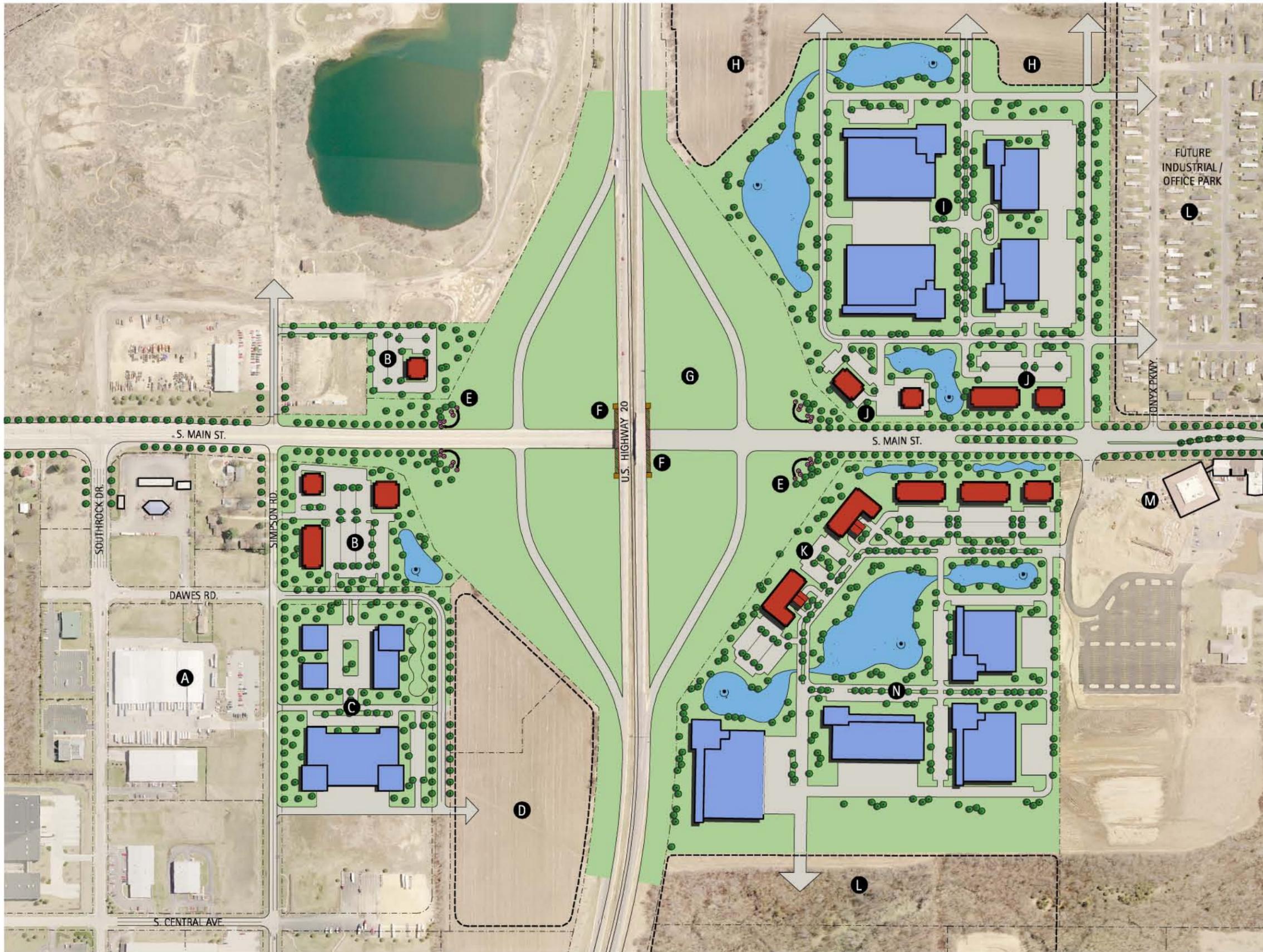
The Revitalization Strategy Plan a shows the existing undeveloped property on the northwest corner of the interchange as an expansion of Southrock Industrial Park. Both Dawes and Simpson Roads have been extended to create better access and new parcels for industrial users. Commercial buildings would be grouped along the South Main Street frontage in highly visible and accessible locations. These businesses would serve both travelers of U.S. Highway 20 and South Main Street, as well as employees in the area. Generally, the Plan shows 35,000 square feet of commercial and 125,000 square feet of industrial for this north portion of the Target Area.



A new industrial/business park would have an attractive, green appearance with common setbacks, ample landscaping and screening of loading/service areas.

South of U.S. Highway 20, the Plan envisions land uses that correspond with the City and County future land use maps. On both the east and west, the main access point for a new industrial/business park would align with the entrance to Faith Center Church. This main drive would access a new modern, more sustainable environment for industries and businesses needing larger facilities. It is designed with a grid system of streets and large efficient blocks that can accommodate a range of building sizes with shared off-street parking and service areas. The concept depicts buildings ranging in size from 45,000 square feet to 100,000 square feet, but the amount of property available could accommodate larger format facilities, if needed.

The new industrial/business park would have an attractive, green appearance with common setbacks, parkway landscaping and screening of loading/service areas. New buildings would be clustered to share service drives and loading/service areas where possible. Such areas would be centered within blocks away from streets to reduce visibility



SOUTH MAIN REVITALIZATION STRATEGY

- A** EXISTING SOUTHROCK INDUSTRIAL PARK
- B** NEW RETAIL DEVELOPMENT
- C** NEW INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT
- D** FUTURE JOHN DEERE RETAIL CENTER
- E** POTENTIAL GATEWAY LOCATION
- F** POTENTIAL OVERPASS GATEWAY SIGNAGE
- G** NEW INTERCHANGE CONFIGURATION
- H** FUTURE INDUSTRIAL / OFFICE PARK
- I** NEW INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT
- J** NEW RETAIL DEVELOPMENT
- K** NEW HOTEL DEVELOPMENT
- L** FUTURE INDUSTRIAL / OFFICE PARK
- M** EXISTING FAITH CENTER CHURCH
- N** NEW INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

SITE DATA

RETAIL: 110,000 S.F.
 HOTELS (2): 36,000 S.F. PER FLOOR
 INDUSTRIAL: 725,000 S.F.

South Main Revitalization Strategy

Rockford, Illinois

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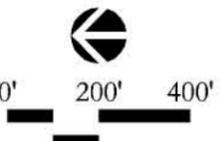


Figure 6.6: Interchange Target Area: Preferred Concept



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and truck turning movements and maximize buildable land area. Ideally, the industrial/business park would also include a shared stormwater detention system. The detention areas delineated in the Plan would provide open space and buffers between uses and could provide a pedestrian path system and park-like amenities for employees.

The Revitalization Strategy Plan shows auto-oriented commercial uses along the frontage of South Main Street on both sides. These uses could be hotels, restaurants, car rental locations or other compatible businesses that would support the industrial/business park, area travelers and/or the airport. The south portion of this concept shows approximately 80,000 square feet of commercial, as well as two hotels, and 570,000 square feet of industrial space. It is envisioned that the industrial campus would be extended as needed in the future both east and west. However, the Plan recommends that any future development plans should set aside an open space buffer along the Rock River for public access and open space linkages.



Shared detention areas have the potential to provide open space amenities and buffers between uses.

ALTERNATE TARGET AREA CONCEPTS

Alternate concept plans were developed for each of the key target opportunity sites within the South Main Corridor study area. These are provided to allow flexibility to the Revitalization Strategy and show options that may be feasible, but ultimately were not the preferred direction in the planning process. See Section 8: Appendix for these concept plans.

Zoning Recommendations

One of the keys to realizing the vision of the Revitalization Strategy Plan will be to update both the City's and County's zoning ordinances to be consistent with the land use strategy shown in the Plan. Although zoning ordinance changes are just one component of the plan implementation strategies, such changes would go a long way towards signaling the City's intent to carry out the Plan's vision and goals. This section describes several potential zoning district map changes that Rockford and Winnebago County should consider to help ensure the zoning ordinance is consistent with the South Main Revitalization Strategy.

Zoning Classifications

As previously noted, the study area is currently classified by 10 City and 9 County zoning districts. Within this long Corridor study area, the allowed uses, densities/intensities, heights and bulks, parking requirements, buffers and other development regulations shift depending on the context and jurisdiction. Some of the land use concepts shown in the Plan may result in a policy and developmental change for how particular parcels, districts and/or areas of the Corridor are classified. The following are recommendations for the focused Target Area sites.



The C-4: Urban Mixed-Use District would be an appropriate zoning classification for the Downtown/Riverfront Target Area.

DOWNTOWN|RIVERFRONT TRANSITION TARGET AREA

Currently, the Downtown|Riverfront Transition Target Area primarily consists of Industrial zoning districts I-1: Light Industrial and I-2: General Industrial. These classifications are consistent with existing land uses and are a product of this area being the manufacturing and rail hub of Rockford's past. However, the Revitalization Strategy Plan envisions this area becoming an extension and transition of Downtown as an active mixed-use environment, including new commercial, office, residential and open space uses. With this shift in land use strategy, the C-4: Urban Mixed-Use District would be a more appropriate zoning classification. The C-4 district is meant to encourage pedestrian-oriented, compact development consistent with the vision for this area. It also allows a wide variety of housing types such as lofts, townhomes and condominiums, which are the types of multi-family housing products shown in the Plan. In addition, the C-4 classification also respects the existing urban form of the commercial district to the south and would provide an ideal transition from Downtown to the neighborhood.

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TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD CORE TARGET AREA

The Traditional Neighborhood Core Target Area, located between Kent Street on the north and Lane Street on the south and extending east to the Rock River, currently consists of three zoning districts: I-1: Light Industrial, C-2: Limited Commercial and C-4: Urban Mixed Use District. The C-4 zoning classification is optimal for the prime redevelopment blocks between Loomis and Lane Streets, as well as the Barber-Colman site. As described previously, this district fosters a more active and walkable urban environment. It also specifically addresses the goal of the continued use and rehabilitation of historically significant buildings or older character contributing buildings. The C-2 district could be an option for the frontage along South Main Street, as this is consistent with the existing zoning for this Target Area and is compatible in terms of allowable uses and urban form.

With some of the riverfront property no longer occupied by industrial buildings, and with a push to gain more public open space at the river, the Plan envisions much of this property becoming park space. The City may consider new regulatory tools that set aside and protect future open space.



The City may consider new regulatory tools that set aside and protect future or planned open space.

MAIN AND MARCHESANO TARGET AREA

The Main and Marchesano Target Area recommends limited new development, instead focusing on improving physical conditions and rehabilitating and re-using existing storefronts. The exception is the addition of new commercial development along the Marchesano frontage east of Clifton on the existing vacant commercial site. Currently, this property is classified as C-3: General Commercial, which allows a very broad range of businesses, including those that allow outdoor storage. The City may consider changing the zoning for this area to C-2: Limited Commercial, which would foster appropriate development that is more respectful of the surrounding residential context.



The vacant shopping center site along Marchesano may be a location to change zoning to C-2: Limited Commercial.

HARRISON/SOUTH MAIN INTERSECTION TARGET AREA

The Plan for the Harrison South Main Intersection Target Area depicts a mixture of commercial and residential uses, while also crossing over the City/County border. The northwest and southeast corners of the intersection envision service commercial uses in the Plan. The zoning for the northwest corner is split between City I-1: Light Industrial and C-3: General Commercial and, therefore, should ultimately be changed to ensure consistency in new development. Ideally, commercial zoning throughout the Corridor, with the exception of the area at the interchange, would be changed to C-2: Limited Commercial. The C-3 zoning district fosters a more auto-oriented character and strip center site design, which is not the desired urban form for the majority of the Corridor. Therefore, it would be appropriate for both the northwest and southeast corners to be classified as C-2 Districts.

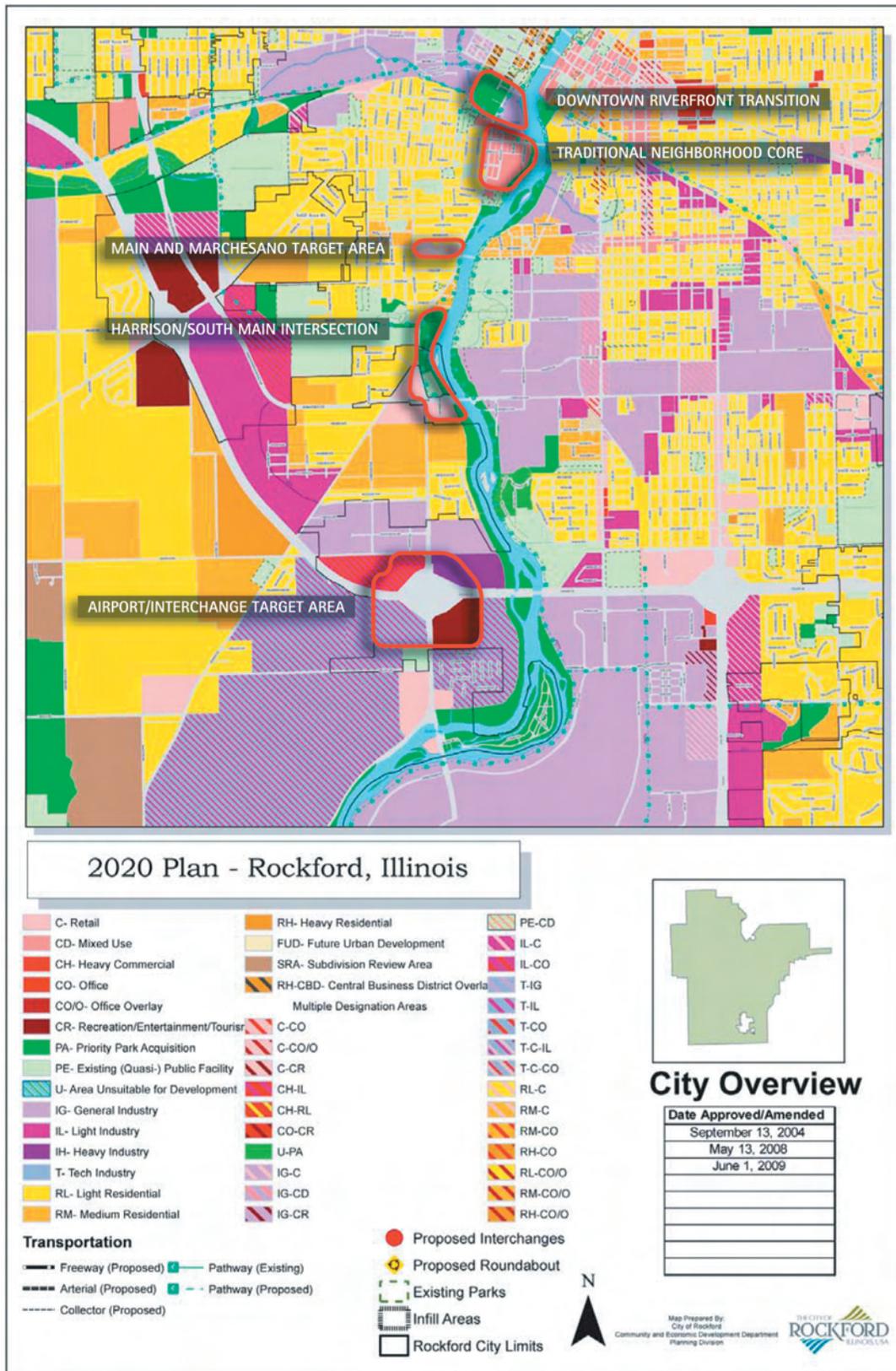
The property east of South Main Street and south of the Harrison/South Main intersection is currently classified as County RR: Rural Residential zoning. Ultimately, as shown in the County's future land use maps and the Revitalization Strategy Plan vision for this area, a more compatible zoning category would be one that allows multi-family residential development, such as R2: Two-Family Residential or R3: Multiple-Family Residential Districts.

AIRPORT/INTERCHANGE TARGET AREA

The Airport/Interchange Target Area depicts more auto-oriented commercial uses along the frontage with industrial/business park uses for the large undeveloped parcels both east and west of South Main Street. This vision corresponds closely to the existing allowed zoning, which currently consists of C-3: General Commercial and I1: Light Industrial. The northwest corner contains an area of Winnebago County surrounded by City-owned land. The County zoning in this relatively small area contains AG: Agricultural Priority District, RR: Rural Residential and CC: Commercial Community District. It is recommended that a strategy is developed to create a more consistent and predictable land use development pattern in this area that complies with the Revitalization Strategy vision and future City/County land use maps.

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Updating both the City's and County's zoning ordinances to be consistent with the land use strategy shown in the Plan and the Rockford 2020 Future land use map (above) will be key to realizing the vision for the Corridor (Source: City of Rockford).

Streetscape Improvements

To complement and build upon the South Main Street roadway reconstruction as well as the Revitalization Strategy Plan, the City has begun developing detailed streetscape design concepts for the Corridor. While the Revitalization Strategy planning process does not articulate a detailed streetscape plan for South Main, it suggests several key improvements and strategies to improve pedestrian safety, circulation and physical character. All streetscape ideas shown are preliminary ideas or designs developed to create a starting point for detailed streetscape designs. The preliminary concepts focus on three key areas that represent different roadway/streetscape conditions based on right-of-way width, adjacent land use condition and proposed roadway cross-section and function. These areas include:

- ❑ **Kent Street to Morgan Street**
- ❑ **Loomis Street to Montague Avenue**
- ❑ **Island Avenue to Illinois Avenue**

The following are suggested Revitalization Strategy Plan streetscape enhancements for the Corridor as a whole, as well as for each focus area.

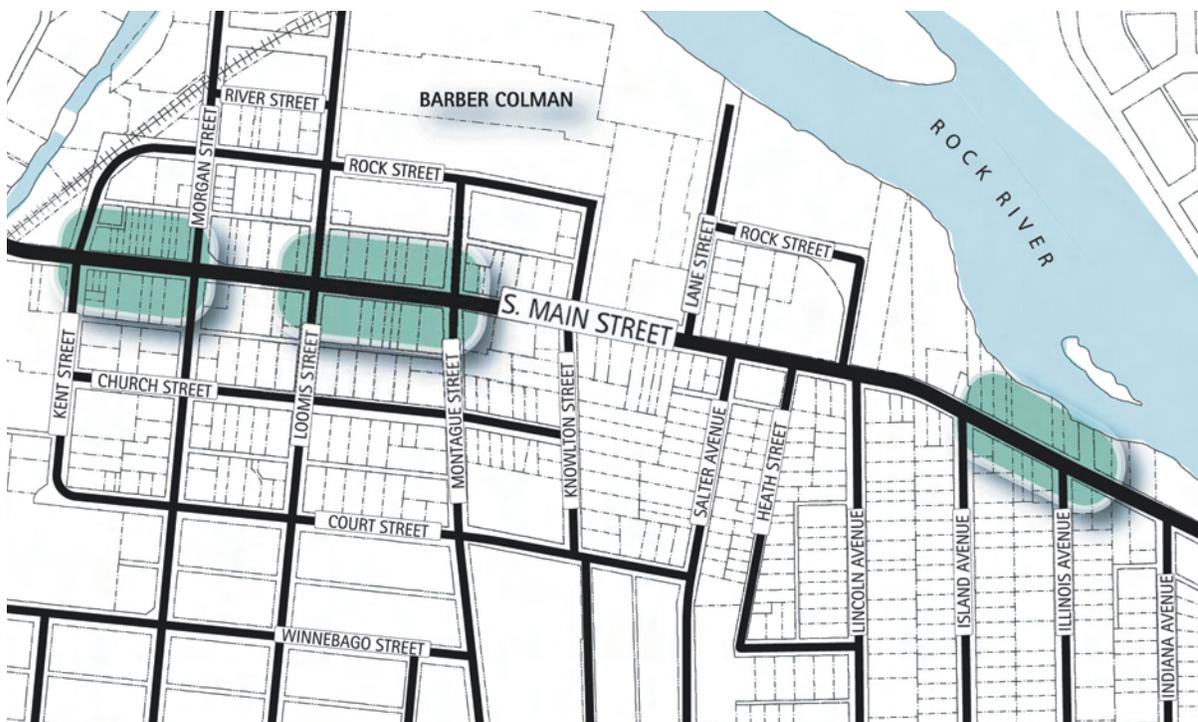
Overall Streetscape Recommendations

- ❑ Develop a cohesive palette of streetscape elements, such as paving, lighting, benches, trash receptacles, bike racks and planters/urns to install in appropriate locations throughout the Corridor. Some potential elements have been shown in the Revitalization Strategy Plan concepts.
- ❑ Coordinate all streetscape elements with the Civic Design Advisory Group, the City’s committee for public design guidance.
- ❑ The City, in conjunction with area merchants and property owners, should investigate opportunities to integrate seasonal festivals, art programs or competitions into the South Main Streetscape. These programs offer a sense of community spirit and pride and can go a long way to “brand” the area.
- ❑ Improve wayfinding and directional signage, directing vehicles to public parking, key institutions and destinations.

South Main Revitalization Strategy

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- ❑ Develop an overall branding program, including custom banners and wayfinding and signage elements. Conceptual branding concepts are shown in the following section of this report.
- ❑ Identify pocket park and new open space opportunities with designs linked to the streetscape theme and a signage/wayfinding package to support a more interconnected and cohesive district/Corridor.
- ❑ Improve intersection pedestrian crossings, including new thermoplastic striping, signage and potentially bollards at corners.
- ❑ Where possible, and in conjunction with a unified streetscape program, new development along South Main Street should seek to consolidate curb cuts in order to minimize pedestrian vehicular conflicts and create a more efficient traffic circulation system.



Conceptual streetscape designs/ ideas are shown for Kent Street to Morgan Street, Loomis Street to Montague Avenue and Island Avenue to Illinois Avenue.

Kent Street to Morgan Street



Where sidewalks exceed 10 feet in width street trees in grates should be provided.



Both pedestrian and roadway lighting should be integrated into the streetscape design.

Within the existing commercial core of South Main Street, the right-of-way is only 72 feet with the majority of the buildings having no additional setback. With the roadway being widened slightly, the sidewalk space will become narrower and will vary from 6 to 11 feet, depending on location. The same narrow streetscape condition also applies to the block south of Morgan Street. The preliminary streetscape enhancements show strategies for creating a unified district despite the narrow sidewalk condition and include the following:

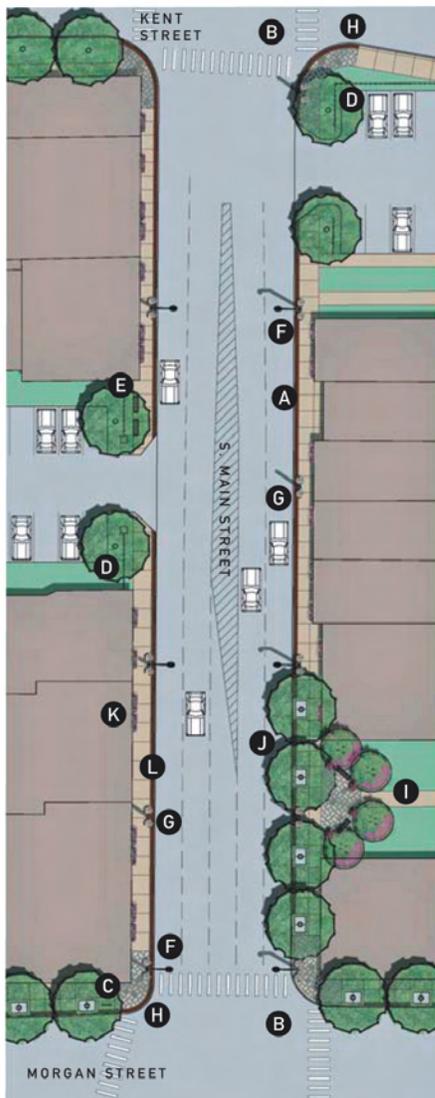
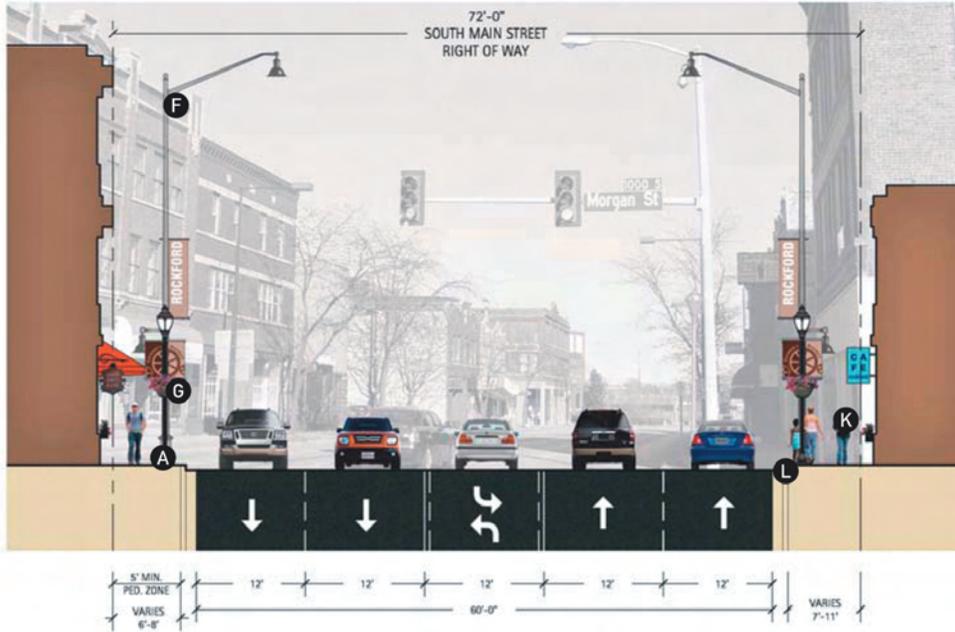
- ❑ Install street trees in tree grates where the sidewalk exceeds 10 feet in width. Appropriate “upright” tree species should be selected for these narrow conditions and a minimum of 5 feet of clear sidewalk space should be provided throughout the district.
- ❑ Consider utilizing hanging planters or baskets on light poles and/or buildings, as well as window boxes in storefronts to provide additional locations for annual flowers or seasonal color display.
- ❑ Integrate shorter pedestrian lights between the taller roadway lights to create a more pedestrian scaled environment.
- ❑ Provide a variety of paving materials for visual interest and contrast, such as brick or concrete paver banding along the curb and at key nodes and intersections.
- ❑ Consider screening existing parking lots with a combination of decorative ornamental metal fencing and landscaping.
- ❑ Combine the streetscape improvements with a façade and signage program to enhance the character of the entire district. Conceptual façade improvement ideas can be found in previous sections of this report.



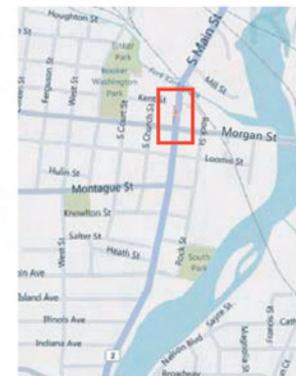
Decorative metal fencing and landscaping should be used to screen parking lots.

South Main Revitalization Strategy

Section 6: Revitalization Vision



LEGEND	
A	Paver Banding
B	Striped Crosswalks
C	Bike Racks
D	Metal Fencing to Screen Parking
E	Benches
F	Roadway Lighting with Hanging Baskets
G	Pedestrian Lighting with Hanging Baskets
H	Decorative Paving at Corners
I	Pocket Park with Seating
J	Street Trees in Grates
K	Window Box Planters
L	Concrete Sidewalks



Loomis to Montague



Raised planters provide opportunities for landscaping, while also creating additional seating opportunities.



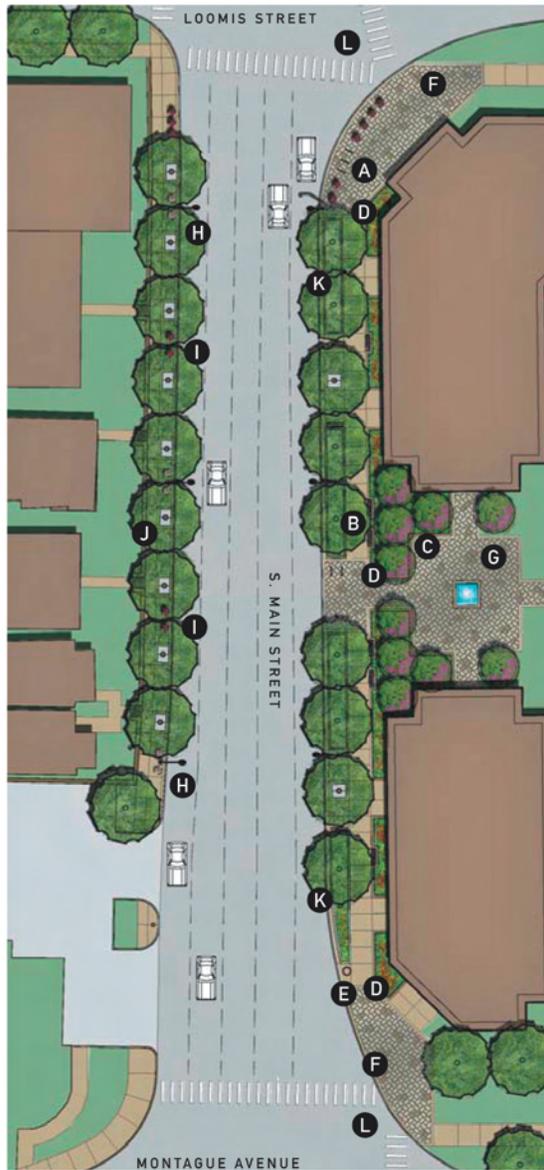
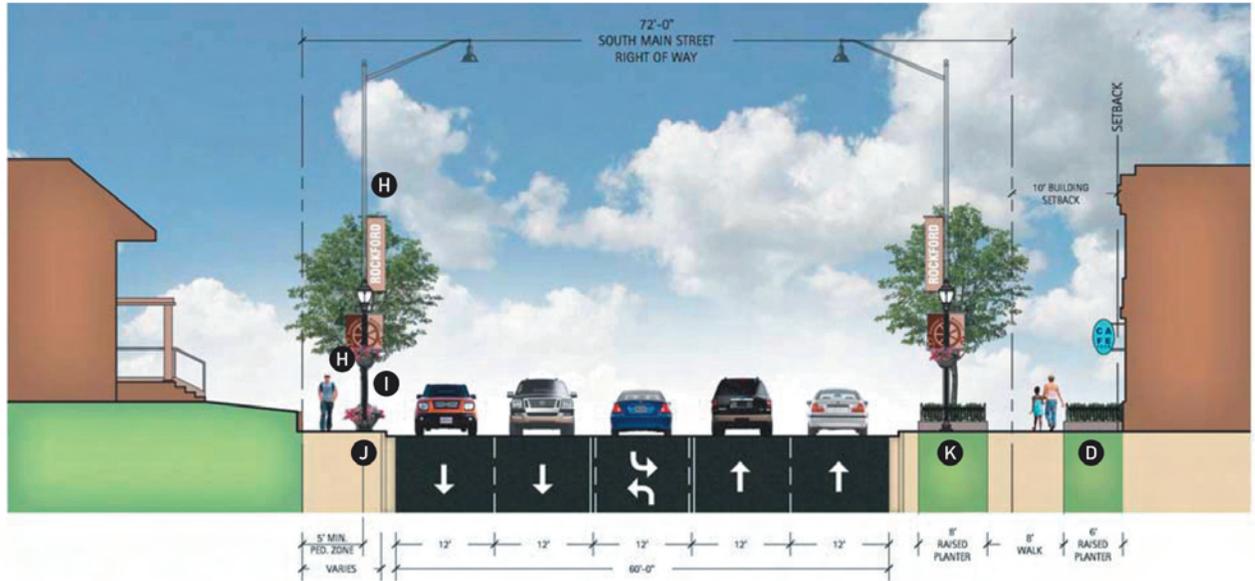
Using a variety of paving materials at key nodes and intersections provides visual interest in the streetscape.

For this portion of South Main Street, the right-of-way is approximately 72 feet, but existing buildings do not immediately abut the right-of-way. On the west there are residential buildings stepped back and separated by a retaining wall. On the east, the lots are currently vacant. Therefore, the streetscape concept for this area demonstrates how a future scenario would ideally combine new building development with streetscape improvements. The same streetscape recommendations would also apply to new development that occurs north of Kent Creek, since a large portion of this is currently undeveloped or vacant property. The preliminary concepts suggest the following design standards and enhancements:

- ❑ Plans in these locations should require a minimum of 15-foot wide pedestrian zone for new development on the east to accommodate a range of streetscape elements, but at a minimum includes a unified street lighting, planting and paving approach. Where feasible, these pedestrian-oriented areas should consider small seating/conversation pockets, enhanced landscape planters, urns or outdoor furniture associated with adjacent retail/restaurant uses, as well as outdoor cafes.
- ❑ Provide a minimum 8-foot-wide clear sidewalk on the east and 5-foot-wide clear sidewalk on the west.
- ❑ Create a defined pedestrian zone on the east separated from the roadway utilizing a series of raised concrete curbed planters with a variety of landscaping and street trees.
- ❑ Install street trees in tree grates on the west side of the street. Space street trees consistently 25 to 30 feet apart throughout this area, where feasible.
- ❑ Integrate shorter pedestrian lights between the taller roadway lights to create a pedestrian scaled environment.
- ❑ Provide a variety of paving materials for visual interest and contrast, such as brick or concrete paver banding along the curb and at key nodes and intersections.
- ❑ Integrate moveable planters or urns as an additional unifying element.
- ❑ If feasible, create planted areas adjacent to buildings to incorporate additional permeable space, as well as a variety of shrubs and perennials.

South Main Revitalization Strategy

Section 6: Revitalization Vision



LEGEND	
A	Bike Racks
B	Benches
C	Ornamental Trees
D	Planting Area with Decorative Railing
E	Trash Receptacles
F	Decorative Paving at Corners
G	Outdoor Dining Opportunity Area
H	Roadway Lighting with Hanging Baskets
I	Pedestrian Lighting with Hanging Baskets
J	Street Trees in Grates
K	Raised Planters
L	Striped Crosswalks



Island to Illinois

North of the 15th Avenue bridge, South Main Street is planned to be relocated, or shifted, to the east to mitigate flooding issues. This realignment will affect approximately 15 parcels of land, including displacement of a number of existing businesses and residents. Relocating the roadway, however, will provide an opportunity for increased public access to the Rock River. The planned cross-section for this portion of the roadway is also intended to have a landscaped median dividing the north and south travel lanes. The Revitalization Strategy Plan preliminary streetscape recommendations for this area include:

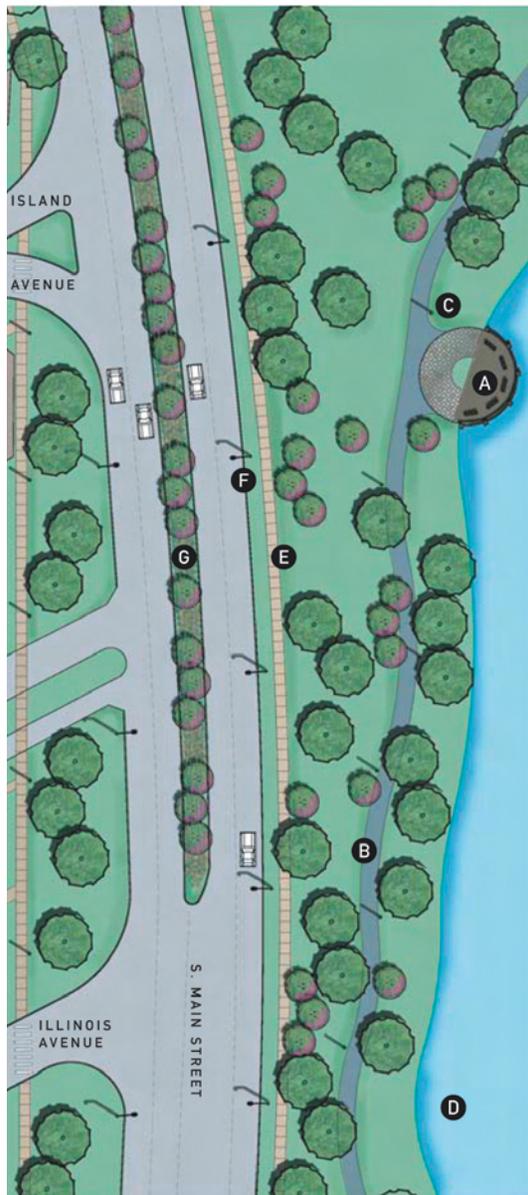
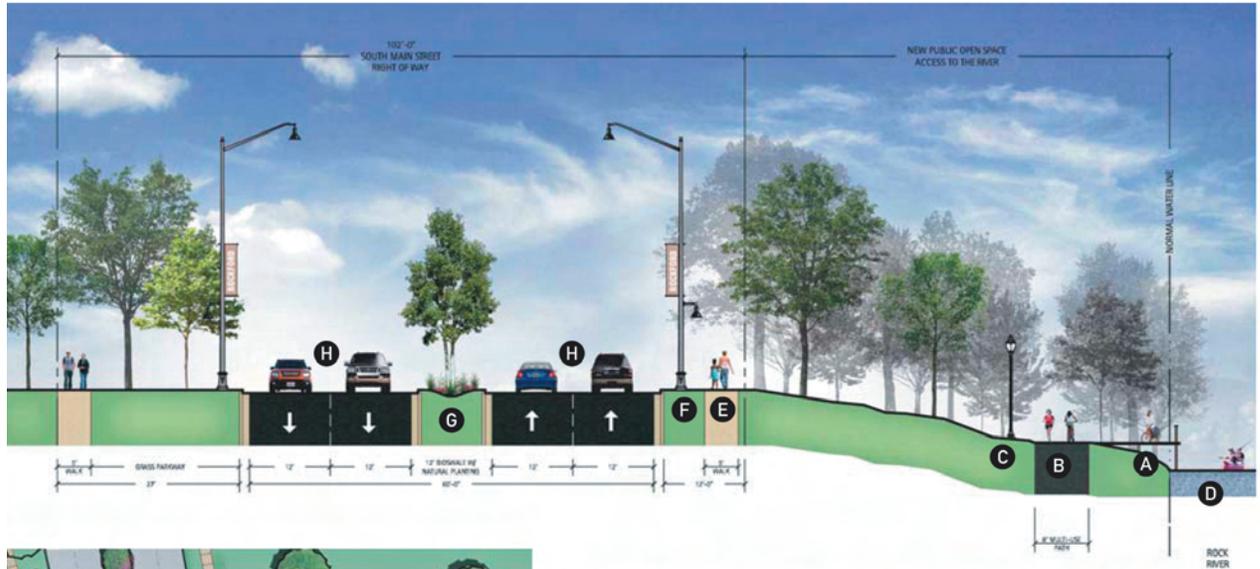
- ❑ Potential for the landscaped median to create a bioswale for the collection and filtration of storm water runoff using native plants. The median could also include groupings of appropriate tree species that thrive in wet conditions.
- ❑ Provide continuous 5-foot wide concrete sidewalks on both sides of the street to maximize connections to surrounding residential neighborhoods and commercial areas.
- ❑ Install new roadway lighting with decorative banners. If possible, provide an additional pedestrian level light fixture to light sidewalks.
- ❑ Integrate a natural park space adjacent to the riverfront, including multi-use bike/pedestrian linkages, a potential river overlook and seating pockets.
- ❑ Form groupings of shade and ornamental trees to create a more informal and “green” roadway edge, as well as filtered and “framed” views to the river.



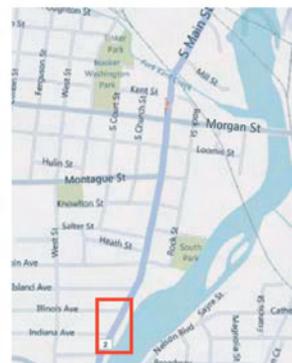
The roadway realignment provides an opportunity to create additional green space along the Rock River.

South Main Revitalization Strategy

Section 6: Revitalization Vision



LEGEND	
A	River Overlook
B	8'0" Multi-Use Path
C	Pedestrian Lighting
D	Rock River
E	5'0" Sidewalk
F	Roadway Lighting with Decorative Banners
G	Bioswale Median with Natural Planting



Gateways | Signage | Branding

An attractive signage and branding program, which incorporates a recognizable graphic logo or image and facilitates travel for motorists and pedestrians, should be a part of a comprehensive streetscape project for South Main Street. A coordinated signage system may include the following components:

Gateway Signs: Such signs should announce arrival to key Corridor locations and play an important role in shaping first impressions in welcoming visitors. Gateway signs should be constructed of high quality materials such as stone, masonry or metal. Where space permits, landscaping and lighting should be incorporated into gateway features. Potential gateway locations include the intersection of South Main Street with the interchange exit ramps, Clifton Avenue in front of Klehm Arboretum, as well as the overpass structures at U.S. Highway 20 and the Union Pacific Railroad.

Identity Signs/Banners: Identity signage and banners can give South Main Street a festive, lively, distinct appearance. New roadway and pedestrian lights installed as part of the street reconstruction should be equipped with banners. Banners can incorporate a logo or “brand” that identifies the street or district.

Directional Signs: In addition to identity and gateway signs, directional signs that facilitate “wayfinding” will be important components of the system. Signage should be placed at key locations to guide visitors to destinations such as activity generators and attractions, schools, institutions and public parking lots.

Parking Signs: Identifies parking lot locations as well as parking regulations.

Information Kiosks: Kiosks can provide orientation and information about South Main Street, local businesses, bus service, special events and history of the area. Kiosks should be placed at key activity generators and open spaces.

During the Revitalization Strategy planning process, numerous gateway, branding/logo, signage and banner concepts were developed and presented at community workshops. Generally, participants responded positively to the idea of creating a new brand for the Corridor and district and agreed that this is a key strategy to revitalizing the area. The following describes preferred concepts for gateway signs, logos and banners that were developed as part of this process.

South Main Revitalization Strategy

Section 6: Revitalization Vision

Gateway Signs

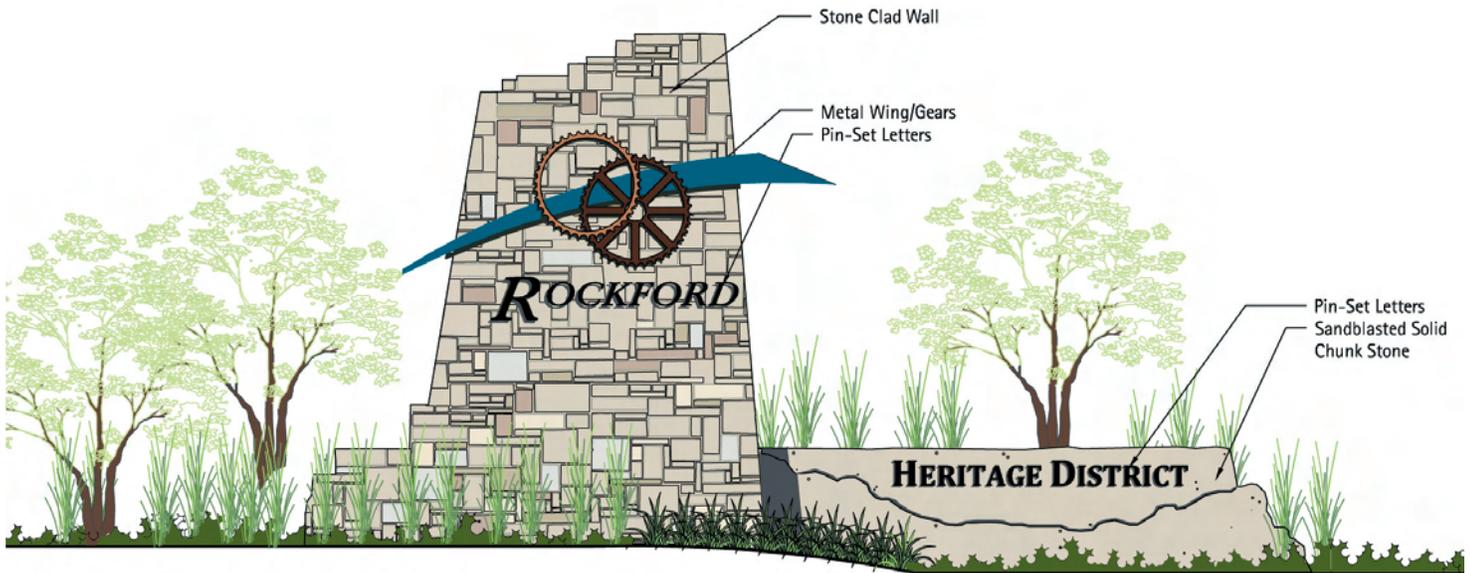
The preferred gateway concept incorporates elements inspired by Rockford's past and present industries, as well its natural setting along the Rock River. The "logo" symbolizes gears as a symbol of the area's industrial past, combined with an airplane wing as an important component of Rockford's current economy. The concept envisions a natural stacked stone in a random pattern forming the vertical structure for the "Rockford" name and logo. A larger piece of horizontal stone balances the sign and provides an opportunity to "brand" the district or area. This stone is meant to represent, or replicate, the local limestone outcropping escarpments found throughout the city and region. The stone materials also provide the flexibility to create low walls as part of the gateway, as well as a setting for complementary landscaping.

Potential locations for these gateways have been shown in the Revitalization Strategy Plan concepts.

Other gateway opportunities can be found at the existing structures of the U.S. Highway 20 overpass near the airport, as well as the Union Pacific Railroad bridge on the north end of the Corridor. The railroad bridge offers the opportunity to engage local artists to paint an image or phrase that represents the history, character and meaning of Southwest Rockford. The community could hold a contest for artists to design a vision for the bridge with the winner commissioned to implement the chosen design.



The Union Pacific Railroad bridge provides an additional opportunity for both a neighborhood and Downtown gateway.



The preferred gateway concept melds elements inspired by Rockford's past and present industries and natural setting along the Rock River.



The triangle in front of Klehm Arboretum presents an opportunity to incorporate gateway signage combined with stone wall elements within a landscaped setting.

A concept for the highway overpass envisions physical improvements to the structure and abutment walls by adding stone veneer to match the gateway concept. In addition, the railing depicts the “gear and wing” logo as a metal insert and decorative lighting is introduced as a design element. One side of the overpass would mark the arrival to the airport, while the south side would announce and welcome visitors to Rockford.



The highway overpass on the south end of the Corridor offers an opportunity to welcome motorists to both the airport and to Rockford. The above view is looking south along South Main Street at U.S. Highway 20.

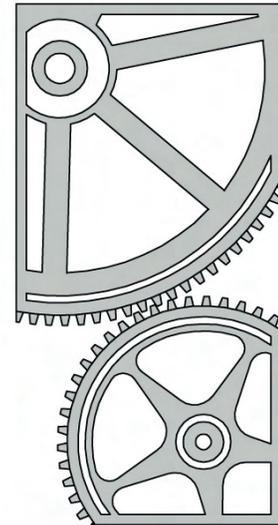
Branding/Logos/Banners

Ideas and concepts for a district brand and logo were created to generate thought and discussion, as well as gauge residents' opinions about community identity. Most residents noted the lack of identity or identifiable image for the area south of Downtown oriented around the South Main Street Corridor. This area includes the historically industrial portion of the study area known as Founders Landing; the smaller scale commercial uses around Morgan Street; the Barber-Colman site; and the predominantly single-family neighborhoods south to Klehm Arboretum. Generally, residents viewed this area--from Klehm to Downtown--as a cohesive district.

The process used this geographic demarcation as a guide in developing concepts for "branding" the district and creating a recognizable name and image to which the area could become associated. The preferred district names at workshops included "Founder's District" and "Heritage District." From these district names, various logos and banners were developed representing the history, diversity and character of the area.

Potentially, one of the first implementation steps from this planning process is to integrate the "brand" and banner concepts into an overall wayfinding and signage program for the Corridor. Since a more detailed streetscape design process is currently underway, the banners may be the first element of that program implemented as new roadway lighting is installed.

FOUNDER'S



DISTRICT



Conceptual logo ideas "branded" the area as the Founder's District or Heritage District.



Various conceptual designs for light pole banners and signage celebrate the area's diversity and industrial past and show variations for promoting the "Village Market." The final logo/brand and district name can be applied to an overall wayfinding and signage program for the Corridor and district.

Transportation and Infrastructure

The following describes transportation impacts of the South Main Street reconstruction project and other transportation and development projects that will affect the Corridor, as well as recommendations for improving the future transportation system. These projects provide an opportunity to promote other improvements to the transportation network that will benefit the neighborhoods. The street network within the Corridor, should be arranged to accommodate mobility for all transportation system users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit users of all ages and abilities. This Complete Streets approach is an initiative that the City of Rockford has promoted throughout the roadway planning and design process.

The impacts of the currently planned South Main Street improvements can be positive or negative. In some cases, the transportation recommendations presented in this section are intended to reinforce the positive aspects of the current roadway plans. In other cases, the recommendations are intended to mitigate potential issues that were identified during the planning process.



The Morgan Street Bridge replacement project will provide much needed new infrastructure to the area. (Source: J. Katz, City of Rockford)

Transportation Impacts

REGIONAL

Roadway

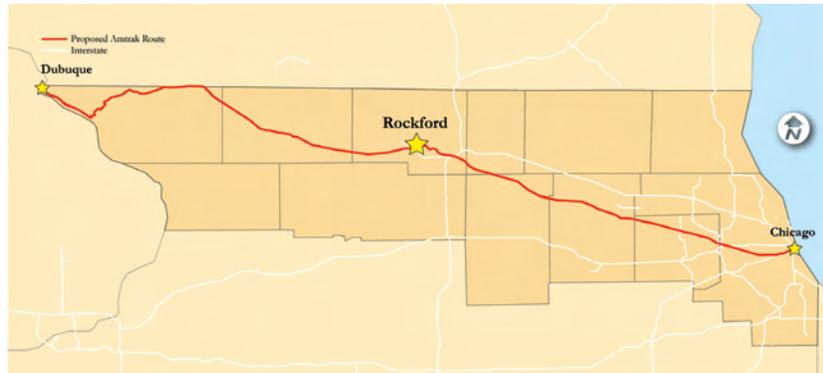
The South Main Street reconstruction will improve regional access and enhance the connection between Downtown Rockford, the Chicago Rockford International Airport and to the regional interstate system (I-39, I-90 and U.S. 20). As shown previously in **Figure 2.1: Regional Transportation Context**, South Main Street is one of several main thoroughfares into Downtown Rockford, but the surrounding community has yet to capitalize on the key physical linkages it provides.

Average daily traffic (ADT) on South Main Street (12,900) is less than the ADT on the other two main gateways into Downtown from the interstate system - East State Street (19,100) and IL-251 Kishwaukee Street (15,500). These numbers suggest that South Main Street is underutilized as a gateway into the City, despite being a quicker way into Downtown from the Interstate system.

The South Main Street reconstruction project and other proposed public infrastructure projects, such as the Morgan Street bridge replacement, are expected to encourage private investment in the Corridor. As additional investment occurs over time, there will be more traffic on South Main Street and the significance of this Corridor as a gateway will grow.

Transit Connections

For nearly a decade, the Rockford region has been promoting the development of a commuter rail connection to the Chicago region. Today, these regional transit connection plans are close to being realized. A feasibility study to reinstate Amtrak service to Rockford (terminated in 1981) was conducted in 2006, concluding in a plan to once again provide this service. The Downtown | Riverfront Transition sub-area will include a future passenger station that will be part of new Amtrak rail service from downtown Chicago to Dubuque, Iowa. The proposed Amtrak route (below), shows the route of the future service.



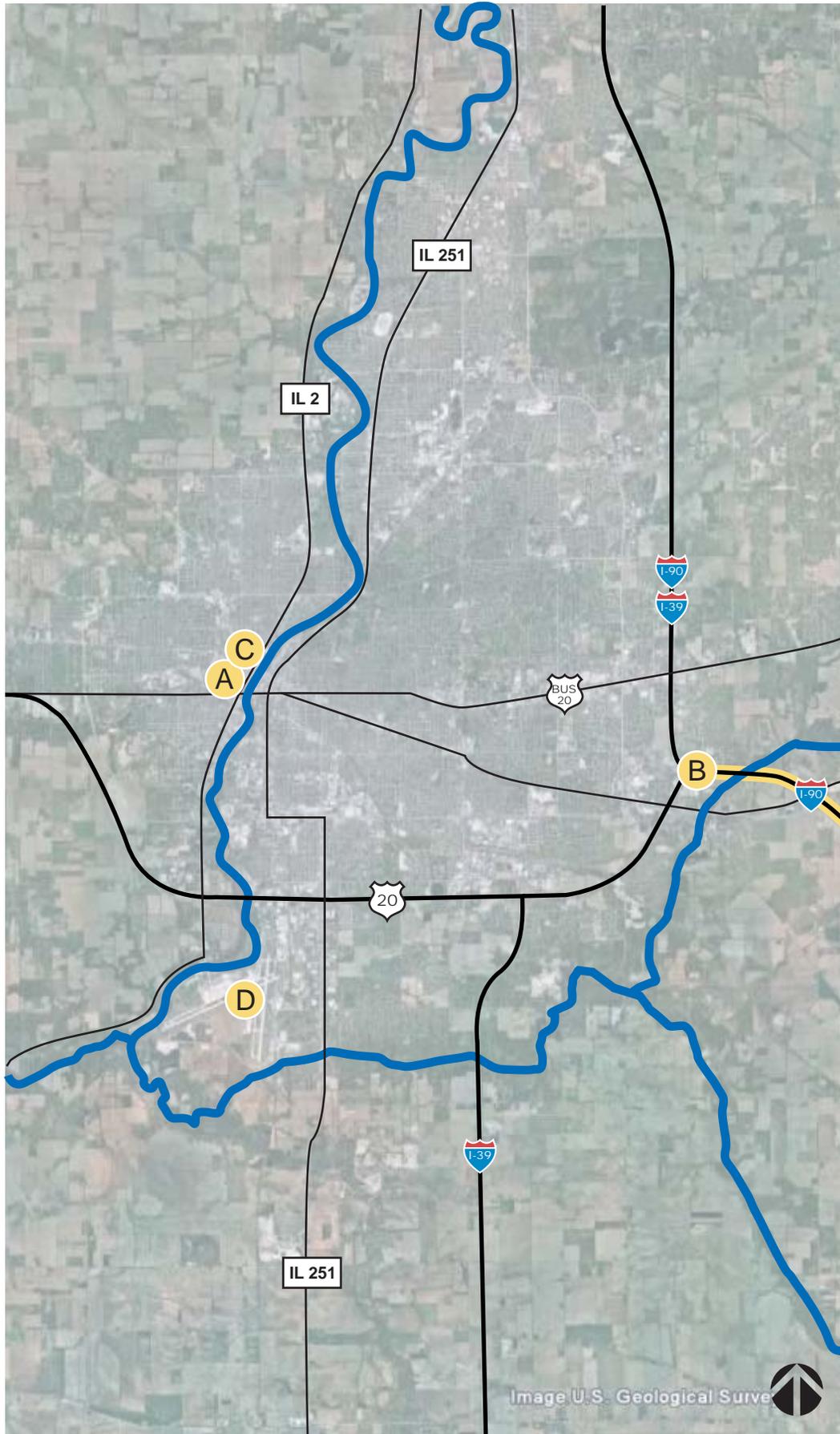
Proposed Amtrak Route from Chicago to Dubuque, Iowa.

The proposed Amtrak Station will be located at the former Downtown station site and will utilize the Canadian National (CN) Railroad right-of-way. The service will include a morning Dubuque to Chicago train and an evening Chicago to Dubuque train as shown in proposed schedule below. The current implementation schedule is for the new service to be in operation by the end of 2014 with construction of the station beginning in 2012 or 2013. The Chicago to Rockford portion of the service is forecast to have 35,100 annual passengers.

**Chicago – West Elgin – Rockford – Freeport
Galena – Dubuque
Amtrak – CN**

Westbound				Eastbound
Daily				Daily
6:15 PM	Dp	Chicago, IL-Union sta	Ar	10:10AM
R 7:28 PM	Dp	West Elgin, IL	Dp	D 8:38 AM
7:54 PM	Dp	Genoa, IL	Dp	8:12 AM
8:22 PM	Dp	Alpine Road	Dp	7:46 AM
8:32 PM	Dp	Rockford, IL	Dp	7:36 AM
9:11 PM	Dp	Freeport, IL	Dp	6:57 AM
10:30PM	Dp	Galena, IL	Dp	5:38 AM
11:25PM	Dp	Dubuque, IL	Dp	5:00 AM

R at West Elgin Eastbound - Stops only to receive passengers
D at West Elgin Westbound,- Stops only to discharge passengers



Legend

- A Planned Amtrak Station
- B Western end of the Planned I-90 Jane Addams Tollway High-Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) or Toll (HOT) Lanes
- C RMTD Downtown Bus Depot
- D Chicago Rockford International Airport

FIGURE 6.7: REGIONALLY SIGNIFICANT TRANSIT TERMINALS

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The region has also studied the potential for implementing commuter rail service between Rockford and Chicago. The Northern Illinois Commuter Transportation Initiative (NICTI) prepared a draft Environmental Assessment in 2009 of this potential commuter rail link. The commuter services would include a station on the Union Pacific Railroad tracks just north of the proposed Amtrak Station in the Downtown|Riverfront Transition area, as shown in the Revitalization Strategy Plan concept.

Currently, the Illinois Tollway is planning to expand the Jane Addams Memorial Tollway (I-90) from Rockford to the Kennedy Expressway. The tollway widening cross section will allow for a high occupancy lane between Rockford and the Chicago area. The details of the high occupancy lanes are still in the planning stage, but it could include express bus service between Rockford and Elgin and the proposed Metra Suburban Access Transit Route (STAR) line. The STAR line involves a proposed commuter rail connection from Joliet to Elgin to Chicago O'Hare International Airport. This Jane Addams Tollway widening effort is in the planning stages and engineering design has not yet begun. However, some preliminary construction will begin in 2012. By 2013 the construction should be fully underway and it will take through 2016 before it is completed.

The Jane Addams Tollway high occupancy lane project will likely delay, for the immediate future, the commuter rail service that was envisioned by NICTI. The Jane Addams Tollway widening will include a high occupancy lane that could allow for an express bus service between the Rockford and Chicago areas.

The Amtrak station site could be used as a park-and-ride facility to provide a regional transit connection to the Jane Addams Tollway express bus system. The Downtown|Riverfront Transition area could provide a significant transit connection along South Main Street and U.S. Highway 20 between Downtown, Amtrak Station, Chicago Rockford International Airport and Jane Addams Tollway transit connection.

South Main Street

BICYCLE

The Grand Illinois Trail and other trails planned as shown previously in **Figure 3.6 Planned Bicycle Improvements** indicate on-street and off-street bicycle facilities that are in the vicinity of South Main Street. Proposed off-street and on-street bicycle will provide important transportation connections between the Corridor sub-areas, Downtown and other neighborhoods. The City and RMAP have been working towards implementing sections of this bike path system in an incremental approach. It will be important to provide connections where crossings



The roadway reconstruction plans to build upon recent bicycle linkages and facilities.



Pedestrian enhancements are a key component of the planned South Main Street improvements.



RMTD bus service provides important connections to jobs Downtown, Southrock Industrial Park and the airport.

are planned in order to create a continuous regional bicycle network that links future residential and commercial development, employment centers and open space amenities.

PEDESTRIAN

Pedestrian circulation and safety improvements are especially important to enhancing the quality of life in the Corridor. Access is expected to be improved as sidewalks are reconstructed or expanded along South Main Street. Access across South Main will also be improved with marked crosswalks at signalized intersections. Specific attention should be given to uncontrolled crosswalks at locations such as bus stops, parks and other pedestrian generators or destinations.

Vehicular speed is a major factor that affects pedestrian circulation and accessibility. At the southern end of the South Main Corridor, automobile speeds are highest, pedestrian crossings are farther apart and pedestrian traffic is more infrequent. On South Main Street near Downtown, pedestrian traffic is higher, crossings are more frequent and automobile speeds are slower.

The South Main Street reconstruction will include the installation of a barrier median that, while intended to reduce congestion and improve traffic flow, has the potential to divide some neighborhoods if care is not taken to facilitate adequate bicycle and pedestrian crossings. These crossings are especially important at churches, schools, parks, bus stops or commercial areas along the Corridor. In order to encourage walking, these crossings must be convenient, visible and closely spaced. It will be important to focus on creating a transportation network that provides for frequent access across South Main Street to preserve and enhance neighborhood connectivity and is sensitive to land use context.

The Rockford Health Council, as part of the 2011 Healthy Community Study, encourages pedestrian and non-motorized activity to promote active, healthy living. By promoting walkable environments, this incorporates physical activity into everyday transportation habits thereby seeking to improve physical health. Neighborhood improvements should encourage the promotion of walking, which is especially important along South Main Street with its commercial land use that can attract pedestrian foot traffic.

Bus

The RMTD provides bus service in the Corridor including important connections to jobs Downtown, Southrock Industrial Park and the airport. The RMTD bus routes along South Main Street will continue to provide service after the South Main Street improvements are completed.

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Permanent bus stops are proposed to improve the transit level of service provided in the Corridor. Other current and proposed fixed-route bus stops along South Main Street are shown in Figure 3.7, Proposed Bus Stops. It will be important to improve access to bus stops through adequate pedestrian facilities and crossings.

PARKING

On-street parking currently is in place along the north end South Main Street between Kent and Montague Streets. With the new roadway reconstruction, parallel parking will be removed to make way for the additional travel lanes and relocated to cross streets and off-street parking lots. Providing shared public parking opportunities within the Traditional Neighborhood Core will be vital to creating a vibrant, urban commercial district.



Providing shared public parking opportunities is vital to creating vibrant commercial districts.

RIVER ACCESS

As envisioned in the Revitalization Strategy Plan, access to the Rock River will improve following the South Main Street reconstruction. Visual access and views will be created, which will highlight the presence of the Rock River, as well as open space along it. It will be important to preserve and enhance this river access to emphasize new park amenities, such as playgrounds, canoe launches, amphitheaters and/or the shared bike path system.

Sub-areas

Traffic circulation impacts in the surrounding neighborhoods will be minimal due to the Corridor's established street grid that provides multiple routes to destinations. This street grid network should be continued as the Corridor develops in the future to encourage travel that does not require all trips within the area to make use of South Main Street. As South Main Street increases in importance as a regional connection, the local transportation grid should also increase in importance for neighborhood and local travel.

Neighborhoods along South Main Street will be impacted by roadway reconstruction project. Once the improvements are made to South Main, the community will have better access to Downtown, the airport and U.S. 20, as well as the potential for increased private investment or new development on properties facing South Main Street.



The proposed Amtrak station and parking provides opportunities for regional connections.

DOWNTOWN | RIVERFRONT TRANSITION AREA

The Downtown | Riverfront Transition will link Downtown with other sub-areas. There are only two streets that connect the Downtown | Riverfront Transition area with Downtown Rockford. South Main Street is the primary street that crosses Kent Creek and the railroad tracks, so this segment will remain the main gateway to Downtown. The majority of Winnebago Street in the Downtown | Riverfront Transition area is grade-separated to cross Kent Creek and a section of the Illinois Railnet tracks and, as a result, is not a feasible option for secondary Downtown access.

The Amtrak station and facilities in the Downtown | Riverfront Transition sub-area will become a significant intermodal transportation center that will accommodate regional transit, as well as a potential transfer facility within the RMTD network. Inter-city bus also could benefit from the development of a regional transportation center in Rockford. Additional transit-related development and increased transportation options and linkages in the station area will encourage mixed-use growth Downtown, as well as in the surrounding target area.

TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD CORE

The Traditional Neighborhood Core area will be affected by improvements to South Main Street, as well as improvements to the Morgan Street Bridge. These two major projects will considerably improve access to Downtown, as well as neighborhoods to the east of the Rock River. The City of Rockford Bike Plan includes a plan for bike lanes on Morgan Street, which would provide a non-motorized connection for the Traditional Neighborhood Core area with neighborhoods east of the Rock River.

URBAN TRANSITION

The Urban Transition area will be affected mainly by the shift in South Main Street to the east, which will add frontage along the west side of the street, as well as access to the planned shared use path on the east side of South Main Street. A trail connection is expected to be made under the 15th Avenue Bridge, but an engineering solution for this location is still being considered. With potential new public open space along the Rock River within this area, an important strategy will be the location and number of east-west crossings and connections.

SEMI-RURAL TRANSITION

The South Main Street reconstruction in the Semi-Rural Transition area is expected to improve access to property located east of South Main along the Rock River. Since much of this is located in the floodplain, it is

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expected to be averted and/or maintained as open space. This provides an opportunity to emphasize access to the Rock River, trail connections and outdoor recreation. A major gateway opportunity exists at the Clifton Avenue intersection with South Main Street and the entrance to Klehm Arboretum. With potential long term residential development south of Harrison/Springfield on the east, South Main Street will be a vital connection for these neighborhoods to other key Corridor destinations.

AIRPORT|INTERCHANGE

The Airport|Interchange area is expected to benefit from an increase in developable land due to the reconfiguration of the U.S. Highway 20 interchange. A diamond interchange, a typical design for developing areas, seeks to reduce travel speeds of vehicles exiting U.S. Highway 20 to a speed more compatible with both existing and planned industrial and residential land uses, as well as the Faith Center Church. This reconfiguration of right-of-way provides space that would facilitate the creation of a gateway to Downtown Rockford, as well as Chicago Rockford International Airport. This reconfiguration also provides opportunities to develop a sizable commercial, industrial business hub with highway and airport access.



The new diamond interchange provides opportunities to develop a sizable commercial and industrial hub with highway and airport access.

Recommendations

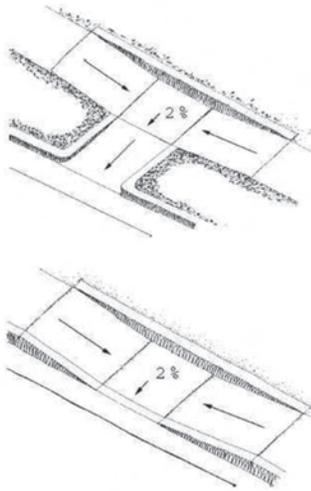
The following recommendations involve the incorporation of guidelines or best practices for development along the South Main Corridor. The Corridor is divided into sub-areas, and recommendations may vary from one sub-area to another.

ADOPT A ROCKFORD COMPLETE STREETS POLICY AND GUIDELINES

The City should adopt a Complete Streets policy that encourages the planning and design of streets that accommodate all users including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit users. In addition, the City should consider guidelines that specifically promote Complete Streets concepts and principles. This will help to promote walking, bicycling, and the use of transit as viable modes of transportation.

ENCOURAGE A GRID-STYLE STREET NETWORK IN THE CORRIDOR

The City of Rockford boasts a connected grid street network. Any new streets that are proposed within all sub-areas should continue to connect the grid that offers multiple routes to destinations. This would help prevent the creation of a circuitous, closed street network that increases overall travel distances, makes it less convenient for walking and bicycling, and increases dependence on South Main Street for all north-south travel. A connected grid will reduce overdependence on South Main Street for some north-south travel.



Sidewalk design standards (source: IDOT Bureau of Design and Environment (BDE) Manual)

MAKE SIDEWALKS CONTINUOUS ACROSS DRIVEWAYS ALONG SOUTH MAIN STREET

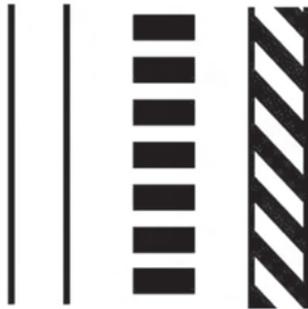
Traffic entering and leaving driveways must yield to pedestrian traffic on sidewalks. To encourage this practice, sidewalks should extend across driveways and the sidewalk material should be consistent across the driveway. For instance, if the driveway is asphalt, the concrete sidewalk should extend across the asphalt to delineate the pedestrian way.

Additionally, the section of the sidewalk across the driveway should have a cross slope no greater than 2% to facilitate proper drainage and avoid creating a hazard for pedestrians using wheelchairs. This is consistent with the sidewalk design standards present in the IDOT Bureau of Design and Environment (BDE) Manual, as well as the Americans with Disabilities Act.

PROVIDE A HIGHLY-VISIBLE, MARKED PEDESTRIAN CROSSING AT ALL BUS STOPS

Every bus stop will result in a pedestrian crossing. Many fixed-route bus stops have been proposed by RMTD at signalized intersections. However, the following bus stops are located at unsignalized intersections:

Standard Continental Zebra



Typical pedestrian crosswalk markings.

- Kent Street
- Salter Avenue
- Island Avenue
- Ogilby Road
- Pond Street
- Parkview Terrace
- Prairie Road
- Ann's Trailer Park Drive
- Seminole Avenue
- Onyx Parkway
- Aquamarine Drive
- Island Boulevard

Pedestrians are more likely to cross at a bus stop than they are to walk to a crossing at the nearest signalized intersection, so it is important that the roadway design take these bus stops into consideration and provide adequate crossing facilities. This includes a highly-visible, continental style marked crosswalk, as well as clear signage.



Legend

- PROPOSED NORTHBOUND STOP
- PROPOSED SOUTHBOUND STOP
- PLANNED BUS PULL-OUT LOCATION

FIGURE 6.8: PROPOSED BUS STOPS

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Five bus stops are located more than ¼ mile from signalized intersections (Ann’s Trailer Park Drive, Seminole Avenue, Onyx Parkway, Aquamarine Drive, and Island Boulevard) where pedestrians are unlikely to walk to the signal to cross. Furthermore, the posted speed following improvements will be 40 miles per hour. At these bus stops, rectangular rapid-flashing beacons (RRFB) are recommended to facilitate pedestrian crossings. The RRFB has a compliance rate of 95% and is activated only when a pedestrian presses the button to cross, which mitigates the concern over motorist delay and provides a gap in traffic to allow pedestrians to cross South Main Street.

ENCOURAGE ON-STREET PARKING ON ALL NEW LOCAL STREETS

Adding on-street parking to a street provides a buffer to pedestrians, improves comfort while walking and slows travel speeds on local roadways where high-speed traffic is not desired. Providing on-street parking in developing areas provides motorists with flexibility to leave the car parked while making several trips, while not relying entirely on surface parking lots. Providing visitors and shoppers with multiple opportunities to park once and make several trips on foot supports economic development, encourages pedestrian activity and increases the number of pedestrians on the street, creating a more active commercial district.



Example of a marked and signed pedestrian crossing.

PROVIDE FLEXIBLE PARKING OPTIONS

Parking is an asset that the City can and should use to support commercial development in areas where the cost of business owner-provided parking may discourage walking and, subsequently, economic development. Generally, parking must be conveniently located near businesses. Proper placement of shared public parking should support “park once” activity, which refers to the idea the customers only need to park once to run several errands or shop in multiple stores. The Revitalization Strategy Plan shows multiple locations for shared parking opportunities within both the Traditional Neighborhood Core and Downtown|Riverfront Transition Area to promote these areas as active, mixed-use districts.

DEVELOP THE AMTRAK STATION AREA AS A REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION CENTER

A park and ride lot in the Amtrak station area would provide an intermodal connection to the express bus service that may be provided with the Jane Addams Tollway (I-90) widening. Providing a park and ride facility may help to build ridership for future commuter rail service, while also providing connections to RMTD and potential inter-city bus services. In addition, this provides multiple new connections to Southwest Rockford both citywide and regionally.

PROVIDE REGIONAL BICYCLE CONNECTIONS

Planned regionally-significant bicycle facilities in the South Main Corridor include the following:

- ❑ Grand Illinois Trail
- ❑ Rock River Trail
- ❑ Morgan Street Bridge
- ❑ Marchesano Drive|15th Avenue Bridge
- ❑ Harrison Avenue

These facilities should be pursued in order to connect the regional bicycle network in conjunction with improvements to South Main Street. The proposed route of the Grand Illinois Trail is a trail of statewide significance and crosses South Main Street by way of Davis Park and Cedar Street. A trail crossing is recommended that would use the planned bicycle bridge across the Rock River to connect to Davis Park under the UP railroad bridge. This connection would continue west on Cedar Street.

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Proposed regional bicycle connections to South Main Street.

The Rock River Trail extends the full length of the Rock River in the South Main Corridor. Access to this trail includes providing South Main Street crossings at Morgan Street, Marchesano Drive|15th Avenue and Harrison Avenue. Due to engineering constraints and narrower right-of-way widths, the Rock River Trail is planned to cross under the 15th Avenue Bridge.

The remaining bicycle crossings occur at signalized intersections, and should be provided when these intersections and bridge are upgraded. Bike lanes are also recommended in the Rockford Bike Plan for each of these crossings. IDOT suggests bike lanes are possible for these roadways, but recommends sidepaths for urban roadways with the speeds and ADT of Morgan Street, Marchesano Drive|15th Avenue, and Harrison Avenue as shown below in the IDOT BDE.

PLAN FOR RIGHT-OF-WAY IMPROVEMENTS AT BUS STOPS

It is recommended that the City set aside space for a paved bus stop with a sidewalk waiting area and room for a potential bench and shelter to accompany the bus stop sign. A typical bus stop pad is roughly 5 to 6 feet wide and can be anywhere from 8 to 12 feet long. An example of typical bus stop layouts for both near and far side stops, are shown on the next page.



Typical bus stop layouts for far and near side configurations.

IMPLEMENT ACCESS MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES IN SUB-AREAS

The design of South Main Street incorporates access management techniques with the installation of a continuous barrier median at several locations. This has the effect of improving safety as well as reducing congestion by eliminating left-turns at unsignalized intersections that would cause conflict with oncoming traffic and create backups in traffic while waiting to turn. The installation of a continuous median renders unsignalized intersections as right-in/right-out only unless left-turn lanes are provided on South Main Street. Other access management strategies include:

- ❑ Limit multiple driveways or curb-cuts for single land uses.
- ❑ Maintain boulevard design along South Main Street and provide access on cross and side streets.
- ❑ Encourage offsets for driveways on opposite sides of local streets and collectors that minimize congestion.
- ❑ Allow and encourage shared driveways or curb-cuts to complement shared parking facilities. Currently, Rockford Zoning Ordinance 50-009 Shared Parking (A-F) allows for shared parking based on the approval by the Zoning Officer. However, adjacent developments with compatible uses may also benefit from the creation of shared driveways. The figure below from the Michigan Department of Transportation Access Management Guidebook shows shared driveways.

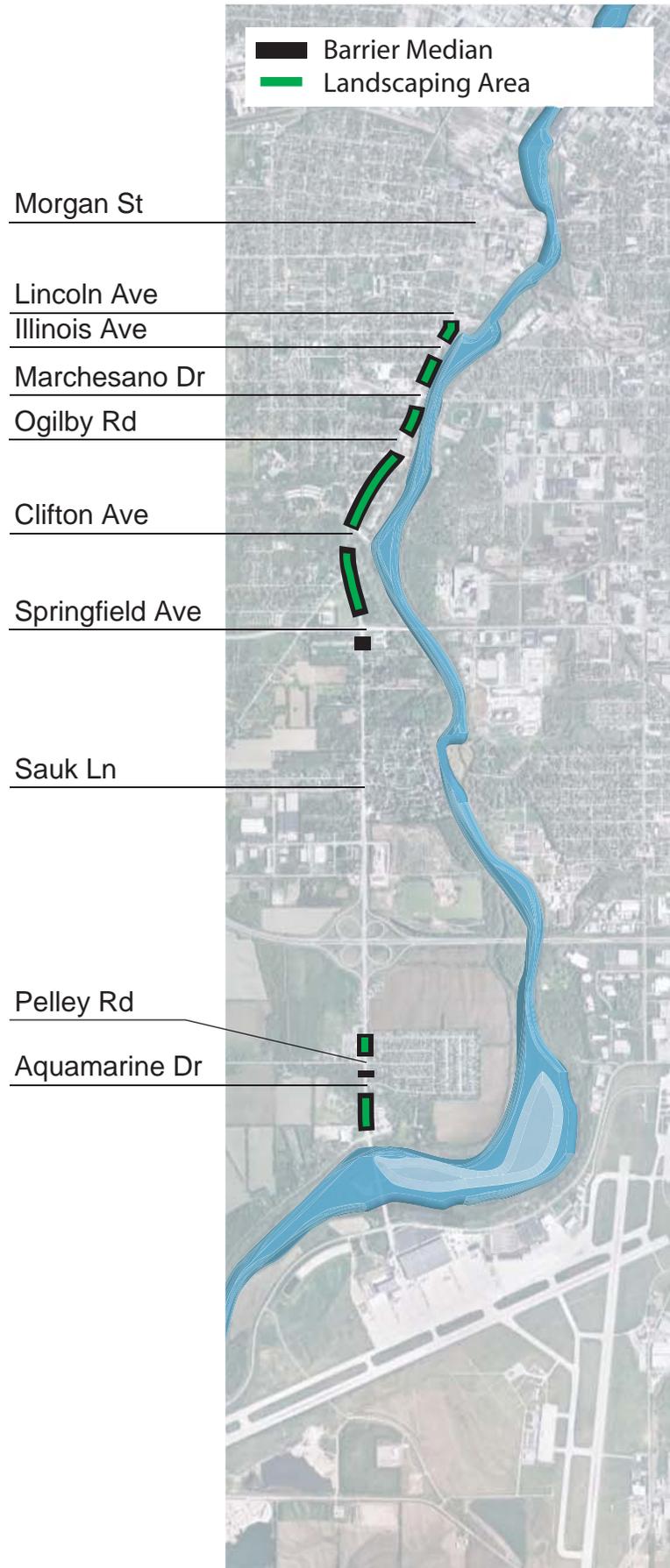
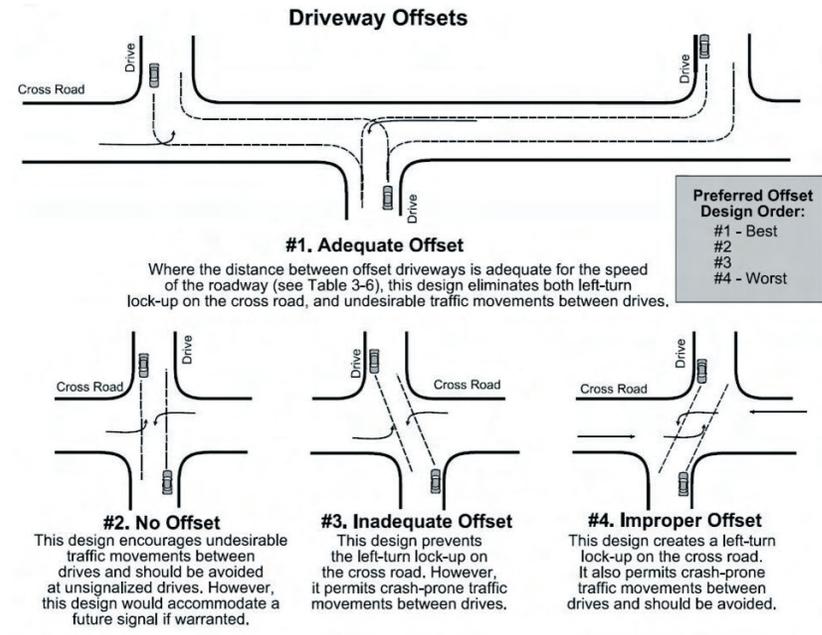


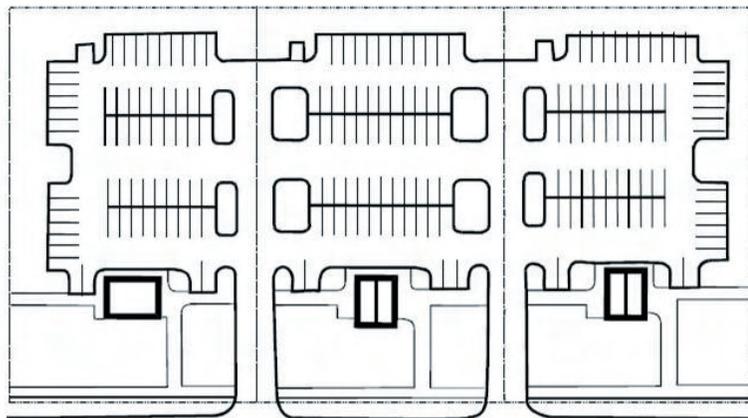
FIGURE 6.9: MEDIAN LOCATIONS

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Example of Driveway Offsets.



Example of shared driveways or curb cuts to access parking lots.

Conclusion

The transportation network in the South Main Corridor will be shaped largely by the reconstruction of South Main Street. Recommendations presented in this section seek to enhance the positive aspects of these improvements and mitigate potential negative impacts of the roadway construction. The improvements to South Main Street, as well as capital improvements in the Corridor, send a clear message to the community about the commitment and renewed investment that City and IDOT have in the South Main Street and Southwest Rockford. It is because of this opportunity that focusing capital improvements in the sub-areas along South Main Street has the potential to promote and trigger economic development in the neighborhoods south of Downtown.

Economic Development Strategies and Recommendations

Economic progress and revitalization within the South Main Street Corridor will require solving two problems: removing development barriers and creating new incentives for reinvestment and revitalization. Addressing these issues will help facilitate private sector involvement and investment along the Corridor.

Currently, there are several barriers to South Main Street's revitalization and redevelopment:

- ❑ **Lack of market confidence.** Entrepreneurs and developers are reluctant to make investments since demand for housing or retail has not been demonstrated and the perceived risks are too high. And while the costs of land and buildings in Southwest Rockford are low, there are few development pressures elsewhere in the city that would motivate a developer to build here.
- ❑ **Capital.** With the lack of confidence on part of the financial sector, developers and investors may not be able to access financing for construction projects and entrepreneurs cannot secure adequate startup capital.
- ❑ **Entrepreneurship.** While lack of startup capital presents one type of challenge, there also has not been evidence of demand by neighborhood-based entrepreneurs seeking to open new businesses. It is possible that such entrepreneurs exist but, since community development organizations are not well established in Southwest Rockford, entrepreneurs do not have access to small business development assistance.
- ❑ **Appearances.** South Main Street will see visual improvements with impending road and streetscape/landscaping enhancements, but it currently presents a distressed appearance. This is true of buildings throughout the Corridor, and especially in the Traditional Neighborhood Core.
- ❑ **East Side development.** Through a combination of available land, local perceptions, and development incentives, East State Street has been the favored area for retail and commercial expansion, which may serve as competition to fledging commercial activities along South Main Street.
- ❑ **Capacity.** Non-profit community groups on South Main have not yet achieved the organizational capacity to establish themselves as credible and competent leaders and facilitators in the revitalization process.

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Established TIFs cover much of the South Main Street Corridor, but other incentives for development are limited. City attention and project-specific incentives gravitate to potentially significant development sites such as the Amerock Building or the Barber-Colman site. Impending South Main Street road improvements and the Morgan Street Bridge replacement will bring new infrastructure investment and investment in adjacent sidewalks and streetscapes. But the road improvements themselves will present new challenges, particularly in the Downtown Riverfront/Transition and the Traditional Neighborhood Core sub-areas, where widening of intersections and the roadway, as well as the removal of on-street parking will impact street front business development.

Federal and state level budget cuts may mean fewer incentives and resources for community development work. Rockford will have to think more creatively than before on securing scarce resources for revitalization activities.

One additional factor that will likely impact revitalization along South Main Street over the next several years are impending Federal and state level budget cuts, which may mean fewer incentives and financial resources for community development work. This also means that mid-sized cities like Rockford will have to think more creatively than before on securing scarce resources for revitalization activities.

Economic Development/Organizational Implementation Strategies

South Main Street traverses several development character sub-areas from an urban context in its northern sector adjacent to Downtown to a semi-rural setting near U.S. Highway 20. Therefore, each sub-area will benefit from planning and implementation strategies that are specific to the issues, conditions and context within each area. However, South Main Street as a whole will benefit by pursuing two basic planning approaches:

- 1. Reinvestment Priorities and Regulations.** Spurring revitalization and new development on South Main Street will require some shift and change in investment and planning priorities on behalf of the City and other agencies and organizations. In particular, the shift may involve removing obstacles to reinvestment, in terms of zoning and other land use regulations, and in creating an environment in which new investment can occur. For example, to set the stage for investment along South Main Street, the City could establish a fast-track, time-definite development approval process and a set of incentives that can catalyze building improvements and new development.

2. Organizational capacity. Organizational capacity in Rockford is fragmented among many different organizations. Three community-based groups work in Southwest Rockford, but none are currently staffed or have the resources to lead significant development initiatives. The two primary Downtown Rockford organizations are reluctant to dilute their efforts by expanding across Kent Creek as they work to focus their Downtown revitalization efforts and build organizational capacity to accomplish specific initiatives.

The most effective organization at the regional level, the Rockford Area Economic Development Council (RAEDC), has traditionally pursued industrial manufacturing targets, but is forward-looking in its priorities and recently added renewable energy, aerospace and high technology industries to its economic development and recruitment strategies. The RAEDC looks to attract large-scale businesses and is less focused on fine-grain, neighborhood economic development, nor does it generally pursue retail businesses. However, the RAEDC recently launched an entrepreneurship program with an emphasis on agricultural businesses, local food and food manufacturing and, in a trial capacity, retail start-ups.

A Community Development Corporation

Neighborhood-based development capacity within the South Main Street Corridor and Southwest Rockford is currently somewhat limited as most groups lack adequate staff and financial resources. Overall, neighborhood organizational capacity requires strengthening in order to implement many of the business recruitment, housing development, and smaller-scale real estate development strategies and recommendations presented in this Plan. South Main Street needs more attention than City staff and elected officials alone can realistically provide. Therefore, it is recommended that a “South Main Partnership” be established as a public-private community development corporation.

Since community development efforts in Southwest Rockford have struggled to gain momentum, it is suggested the new Community Development Corporation (CDC) have the following organizational characteristics in order to ensure its long-term success:

- ❑ **Board of Directors.** Initially, it is recommended the new South Main Partnership establish a small board of directors (e.g., 6-8 people) with representation from the City and South Main Street merchants, developers and residents, as well as the local neighborhood alderman and a high-level representative from

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RAEDC. The RAEDC could greatly assist Southwest Rockford by expanding its interest to include the South Main Street retail zones. Other existing community development organizations, such as SWIFIT, RRDC, RAMBA and Pilgrim's Promise may also be included in the initial board.

- ❑ **Catalytic Projects.** The South Main Partnership should implement catalytic projects such as special events and façade improvements in the Traditional Neighborhood Core zone. It should have policy input on matters relating to South Main Street's other sub-areas; however, in order to have visible impact and build momentum, it should devote significant resources into catalytic projects themselves within the Traditional Neighborhood Core.

Agility and a focus on implementation will benefit from starting with small projects and expanding the organization's capacity to do things over time in both geographic terms and in board participation. Once the Partnership grows its own capacity as a facilitator and developer along South Main Street, it can later lead a broader range of community improvement initiatives, including:

- ❑ Community security
- ❑ Additional street and sidewalk cleaning
- ❑ Housing development
- ❑ Commercial building rehabilitation
- ❑ Business support and retention
- ❑ Entrepreneur development
- ❑ Business recruitment

Initially, the Partnership will require a full-time executive director and part-time administrative staff. Funding a new CDC in the current climate will require a blend of sources from both the public and private sectors. Initially, the City will likely have to play a critical role in financial support of the Partnership. Such funding should be offered with a match requirement to assure that the Partnership has a diversity of resources and that private-sector funding is incorporated from the outset. The initial funding base for the Partnership CDC should include the following:

- ❑ City support (e.g., CDBG)
- ❑ Property owner and merchants contributions
- ❑ Corporate philanthropy (esp. from Southwest Rockford industries)
- ❑ Neighborhood support

Business Improvement Districts and Special Service Area funding mechanisms (discussed later) should be tested for their financial and political viability. Low property values at the present time will, at least for now, limit the utility of the BID and SSA funding tools. In addition, if the Partnership is able to acquire or develop property in the future, the sale or operation of that development can serve as an additional revenue source for the Partnership.

MAIN STREET METHODOLOGY

Since the Partnership should focus its first efforts on the Traditional Neighborhood Core of South Main Street, it should establish a commercial corridor revitalization initiative modeled on the National Trust for Historic Preservation's "Main Street Approach."

The start-up board of directors would lead the Partnership's Main Street initiative, with a volunteer committee providing activity support. The Main Street initiative, as applied in the National Trust's model, should leverage historic preservation as an economic development tool and implement incremental, catalytic projects in three broad areas of work:

- ❑ Design and physical improvements
- ❑ Promotion and marketing
- ❑ Economic restructuring, including business assistance and recruitment)

These work areas are linked by a common revitalization strategy as presented for the Traditional Neighborhood Core. The Core's catalytic projects should also support a strategy that builds on local ethnic diversity and entrepreneurship through new retail, light industrial and residential development.

Main Street programs often have committees representing the different areas of work (e.g., Design, Promotion, and Economic Restructuring, in the case of the South Main Partnership). At the outset, however, it is recommended that all projects are managed by the board of directors and volunteer committees can be established at a later date.

The lists below include the significant organizations who were brought to our attention during this planning process.

SIGNIFICANT ROCKFORD ORGANIZATIONS

Organizations working in Southwest Rockford:

- ❑ SWIFTT (Southwest Ideas for Today and Tomorrow)
- ❑ RAMBA (Rockford Area Mexican Business Association)
- ❑ RRDC (Rock River Development Corporation)

Organizations working in downtown Rockford, with very limited overlap to Southwest Rockford:

- ❑ RDA (River District Association)
- ❑ RRDP (Rock River Development Partnership)

Organizations working citywide or regionally:

- ❑ RAEDC (Rockford Area Economic Development Council)
- ❑ RLDC (Rockford Local Development Corporation)

Sub-Area Implementation Strategies

DOWNTOWN RIVERFRONT/TRANSITION

Development of the Downtown Riverfront/Transition sub-area will, in part, relate to the establishment of future Amtrak service, park development and any changes to the site's industrial users. As noted in Revitalization Strategy Components section of this report, much of this sub-area's redevelopment will also depend on an improved housing market. Depending on frequency of service, the Amtrak service itself will not necessarily stimulate development of a transit-oriented village and therefore the implementation strategies are framed in the context of creating a mixed-use residential neighborhood – with train service.

In the case of housing development, private-sector capacity appears not to be the limiting factor. Several recent projects in the area demonstrate that competent local developers exist; these include the William Brown Loft Apartments, a small-scale mixed use building at West State and Wyman, and sixteen condos on South Main Street. Further, for historic properties (which may affect rehabilitation plans for the Amerock Building and/or portions of the Barber-Colman site), The Brown Lofts and several other Downtown adaptive use and building rehabilitation projects indicate developers' familiarity with historic preservation tax credits. The challenge is one of demand for housing product. While market-based increases for housing demand cannot be predicted in

the current housing climate, local initiatives and catalytic projects in Southwest Rockford can create a favorable context in which preference for housing in the neighborhood can grow.

As a general principle of neighborhood revitalization, residents come first and retail follows later. However, on South Main Street, existing housing must be stabilized and improved, and new neighborhood retail developed, before new residents will choose to move to Southwest Rockford and create additional housing demand. The Traditional Neighborhood Core sub-area (below) must first be made attractive to new residents; it can then set the stage for residential development in this Downtown Riverfront/Transition sub-area.

TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD CORE

The traditional architecture of South Main's northern district functions as a neighborhood convenience center. To anyone passing through, the district presents a poorly maintained appearance with unattractive building changes and alterations. However, this district -- both physically and economically -- has potential to become the commercial heart of South Main Street and an incubator of small-scale retail and light industrial businesses.

Management and Funding

As mentioned previously, a South Main Partnership organization should be established to facilitate revitalization initiatives along the Corridor. The following provides in-depth strategies and recommendations regarding how the Partnership and potential revitalization activities can be funded.

Special Service Area. Special Services Areas (SSA's) have been used in Illinois and throughout the country as an important financing tool for downtown and neighborhood commercial district improvements. A Special Service Area is a State authorized financing program that can be administered by the City or by a designated service provider agency, such as the South Main Partnership, to deliver a wide range of additional services and physical improvements in a defined geographic area such as a central business district or commercial corridor. An SSA is funded by a special tax assessment paid by the property owners in the designated SSA district and can finance a variety of district management activities including marketing and special events, trash and snow removal, and sidewalk/public space maintenance. Special Service Areas can also underwrite infrastructure and building improvements. The SSA itself is a funding mechanism but not in itself an organizational model. Memberships and fee-for-service programs the service provider agency

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may decide to implement separately to generate additional revenues may also supplement property tax assessments.

On South Main Street, property values are currently too low and businesses too marginal to provide sufficient resources for traditional SSA services. The South Main Partnership and the City should consider a two-part alternative to long-term funding: the South Main Partnership can begin the public process to establish a SSA mechanism in the Traditional Neighborhood Core sub-area, so the ordinance is in place as the district becomes more vibrant, new buildings are developed and property values rise. As the Barber-Colman site enters a predevelopment phase and seeks an anchor institutional user, the City can also negotiate a fee (e.g., in lieu of taxes) to partially fund the SSA for an initial five to ten-year period. This arrangement should have appeal to the Barber-Colman tenant by giving it some influence over its immediate environment.

Residential Improvement District. Residential improvement districts are less common than business improvement districts, but can be a similarly powerful tool. Illinois law allows for the creation of residential SSA's; they are most commonly used in new subdivision developments as a supplemental taxing tool to pay for repairs and maintenance and public improvements.

A residential SSA could have a powerful impact on Southwest Rockford, particularly if initially focused on the Traditional Neighborhood Core sub-area. An SSA could potentially pay for cleaning services, neighborhood bicycle and/or foot patrols (e.g., private security staff coordinated with the Police Department), flower planting and light landscaping, and street furniture such as benches and trash receptacles.

SSA's are usually established by ordinance at the request of a developer. (There are usually no residents yet who might oppose it.) The political hurdles to establishing an SSA in an existing neighborhood may be significant, especially in Southwest Rockford where home values and household incomes are low. As a practical approach, it may be most expedient to establish an SSA that applies to rental (e.g., "commercial" residential) properties only. With about half of all housing in Southwest Rockford renter-occupied, such an SSA ordinance may face less opposition. Landlords may be convinced of the value of an SSA as a way to bring additional stability to the neighborhood and as a way to improve residential property values.

Cleaning and patrol services funded by the proposed BID and/or SSA (and managed by the South Main Partnership) may be contracted to a local provider so the Partnership itself can still be operated with one staff person.

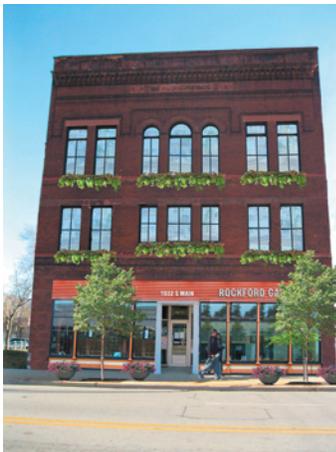


Landscape projects could be funded by an SSA as a way to improve the area's appearance.

Business Improvement District (BID). A BID is a State authorized financing program that municipalities can establish for improving infrastructure and attracting new commercial growth in a designated business improvement district. A BID is adopted by ordinance and is funded by small increments added to local sales or hotel taxes. Sales taxes can be used for several revitalization or redevelopment activities allowed under the BID statute; however, hotel taxes must be used for tourism and convention related activities. A BID remains in place for 23 years and revenues collected within it are placed in a Business District Tax Allocation Fund. A significant advantage of a BID is the flexibility and wider range of activities in which BID monies can be used as opposed to a TIF district or Special Service Area.

Design Management and Clean and Safe

Façade improvements. Façade improvements to commercial storefronts (also discussed and illustrated previously) will be critical on South Main Street, particularly in this Corridor sub-area. Façade improvements stimulated by modest matching grants (e.g., \$10,000 to \$50,000) have been catalytic to revitalization in urban commercial districts across the country. Such programs are very effective at generating the necessary momentum at the start of a revitalization effort. In order to build that momentum, we recommend an aggressive rollout of the program, with a goal to initiate 10 new façade improvements within the Traditional Neighborhood Core within a year.



Facade improvements are critical to improving South Main Street's image.

South Main had a TIF-funded façade improvement program, which no longer operates. A new façade program is needed and should be managed by the proposed South Main Partnership. (As this plan for South Main was concluding, the City re-funded a façade program using \$60,000 of CDBG money.) Most façade incentive programs require a match from the business or property owner, but there is wide variation from place to place in the percentage of the required match. Some façade grant programs are able to stimulate multiple projects using a match of 50% or less. Given the condition of buildings and performance of retail businesses on South Main, we believe a larger subsidy of 75 to 80 percent will be required to stimulate façade improvements.

Beyond financial incentives, an effective façade improvement program also includes the following components:

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- ❑ **Design services.** The program should establish a services contract with a local architect, or with the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, which provides design services to Illinois Main Street communities, to provide free conceptual designs to business and property owners.
- ❑ **Competitive selection.** Application deadlines give business and property owners a reason to act within a specific timeframe – and competitive evaluation of applications provides a motivation for business and property owners to build well-designed, high-quality projects.
- ❑ **Reimbursement-based.** Funding must be provided on a reimbursement basis to assure that the improvement is built as it was proposed. This requirement will inevitably inhibit some larger projects. However, if only a 20% to 25% match is required, the cash required for smaller projects should be achievable.

Additional funds for the South Main Street façade improvement program may come from the existing TIF, future CDBG grants, SSA/BID revenues or by a grant from a local bank or corporation.

Activating vacant development sites. Even before the proposed Village Market signature space is developed, it should be programmed and animated – not just with an annual event, but also regularly, even weekly during the outdoor weather months. Music, movies, food and flea markets can all be used as catalysts to attract people to the space. Out of this activation, people will become accustomed to thinking of the site as a place, and new enterprises can develop incrementally: what may begin as a food truck can later transition to a bricks-and-mortar restaurant in the new Village Market.



The Village Market concept should be programmed to activate the vacant frontage along South Main Street.

CASE STUDY: "POP-UP PIAZZA" (BRISTOL, CT)

In Bristol, Connecticut, a developer (Renaissance Downtowns) is trying to create activity around a 17-acre site as a precursor to full development. They named the vacant site the "Pop-Up Piazza". Using Facebook and other social media, and a website used to solicit ideas from the public (BristolRising.com), the developer has created a calendar of regular events. The first business resulting from this activity – Bare Bones Café – just opened in August 2011. (CLUE Group is currently engaged in this project.)

National Register Historic District. Listing the Traditional Neighborhood Core in the National Register of Historic Places, the nation’s official list of buildings, sites and places worthy of preservation, would provide significant benefits and additional tools to advance the revitalization process. National Register designation allows owners of eligible downtown historic commercial properties to receive Federal Historic Preservation Tax Credits for substantial rehabilitation and adaptive use projects. Designation also allows the neighborhood to leverage its “branding” benefits for heritage-based marketing and economic development efforts that generate increased local tourism and sales dollars. The South Main Partnership and the City could explore the potential eligibility of this segment of the Corridor for listing in the National Register.



Creating a clean, safe and attractive environment will be essential to successfully revitalizing South Main Street.

Clean and safe. Clean, safe and attractive residential and commercial areas – the three characteristics that describe successful urban neighborhoods – will be essential to success here, given perceptions of Southwest Rockford. Volunteer efforts can have an initial impact: Cleanup days demonstrate that the community is involved, and may influence neighbors and teens to be more respectful of their surroundings. A Neighborhood Watch program (i.e., one with “deputized” volunteer patrols wearing a recognizable uniform) can have real and perceived impacts similar to organized cleanups. However, volunteer efforts face two significant challenges: they require organizational capacity to mobilize people and, while they can be great exercises in community-building, volunteer clean and safe crews are not a long-term solution. Interest is typically high at the outset but tends to wane over time.

Business Development and Capitalization

Capitalizing entrepreneurs and small businesses. Several established non-profits in Rockford act as lending intermediaries (including RAEDC and RLDC), providing entrepreneurs with access to traditional financing sources such as SBA 504 loans. However, these funds can only be used for fixed-asset projects (e.g, land and buildings, machinery, etc.); they cannot be used for working capital or inventory.

Due to these limitations, and since small businesses and entrepreneurs are unlikely to qualify for traditional bank financing in the current economic climate, many communities have started to think more creatively about generating new sources of capital. These creative approaches can be described as “community-based financing.” Six variations of community-based financing include:

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- 1. Small investor group.** A community investor group is a variation on the common practice of a small group of business people coming together to start or buy a business. For example, after identifying a clear need for a sit-down, high-quality dining establishment, 18 local business people in Effingham, Illinois, came together in 2006 to invest a total of \$50,000 in a local chef/entrepreneur. That investment, coupled with the chef's owner equity, enabled him to build and open Firefly Restaurant.

A variation on this practice was used to rescue an existing downtown business in Clare, Michigan. When a local bakery was about to close due to retiring owners, the local police department – the entire department, acting as private citizens – put up cash to buy the business. They renamed it “Cops & Doughnuts” and hired a professional manager to run the bakery. The story and the business name brought the community national news coverage. Small investor groups are the most agile and most easily organized of the community-based financing options.

- 2. Cooperative.** A cooperative is a business that is established to serve the needs of a community of customers. Most early retail cooperatives were food co-ops, but there are now cooperative bicycle stores, bookstores and cafés. In a cooperative, each member owns an equal share of the business – and that ownership stake serves to finance the initial business. The business is governed by a board, but may hire professional management for day-to-day operation. As the business begins to earn a surplus, cooperatives are not-for-profit enterprises, it may reinvest the surplus to grow the business. Ultimately, cooperatives typically return their annual surplus to the members on a pro-rated formula. Conversely, if the cooperative loses money, it may need to assess its members to raise additional capital.



A wide variety of businesses can be established as co-ops, such as cafes, groceries and even bookstores.

- 3. Community corporations.** Community-owned corporations are not “cooperatives” per se, but they are their for-profit “cousins.” Shares in the corporation can be purchased by anyone and, unlike a cooperative, any individual can own any amount of equity in the company. A prospectus, which is a required document for selling an equity share in the corporation, would specify the ownership rights of the shareholders – and the risks associated with the investment.
- 4. Community investment fund.** An investment fund provides venture capital equity or loan debt to an entrepreneur. Unlike traditional venture capital, community-development investment funds are “social capitalists;” they are less interested in high rates of return and more interested in stimulating new businesses. These funds typically seek out great business ideas that have a

social-enterprise benefit but cannot gain access to capital, or sufficient capital, through traditional channels. Instead of owning and operating a business directly, the fund allows community members to invest in one or more businesses by investing in the fund. The investment fund generally seeks a modest return and the ability to revolve the capital into additional new businesses over time.

Several models of community investment funds exist nationally, including Kentucky Highlands Investment Corporation, Boston Community Capital, and Pacific Community Ventures – to name a few. Rockford could establish its own fund, which would then solicit and evaluate business plans on a competitive basis. South Main Street entrepreneurs may be able to access capital through an existing fund, Chicago Community Ventures, a regional community investment fund that targets women-owned and minority-owned businesses, or businesses operating in low and moderate-income areas of metropolitan Chicago.

5. **Community loans.** Community loans – or loans made by individual community members – are the debt version of equity models such as the community-owned corporation. In 2008, the owners of Greenlight Bookstore in Brooklyn, NY, invested \$125,000 in a startup business in a retail category that continues to face significant risks. In addition to their own capital and an SBA loan of \$150,000, the owners borrowed money from community residents, which included 25 individuals loaning \$70,000. The business has become profitable and has begun to repay the loans.
6. **Barter.** Perhaps the cheapest way for an entrepreneur to raise money is through a form of “cash barter”. Similar to the community loan model, community members loan money to a new business. But, rather than being repaid in cash, they are repaid through a certificate for goods or services. Claire’s Restaurant in Hardwick, Vermont, used this tool: the loans function something like a pre-paid gift card and are repaid through free or discounted meals at the restaurant. The borrower (i.e., the business) may offer an incentive to the lender, such as a discount on purchases. In return, the business gets access to very inexpensive capital, since the cost of the goods or services provided will be less than the actual debt being repaid.

In many cases in Southwest Rockford, informal businesses create challenges for any kind of structured investment beyond family-based financing. The South Main Partnership should serve a role in connecting existing businesses and prospective entrepreneurs to technical assistance programs that can help them formalize their accounting and operations.

CASE STUDY: FRUITVALE DISTRICT (OAKLAND, CA)

The Fruitvale neighborhood of Oakland, California, showed severe disinvestment in the mid-1990s. Home to a majority Latino and African American population, a local community development corporation (then called the Spanish Speaking Unity Council, later renamed the Unity Council) was working to stabilize residential areas by investing in housing rehabilitation and low and moderate income housing development. Around 1996, the Unity Council partnered with Local Initiatives Support Corporation and the National Trust Main Street Center to become an urban Main Street program and begin improvements to the commercial corridor. Since that time, Fruitvale has made a dramatic turnaround – by building on its diversity and ethnic identity.

Façade improvements. The first projects implemented in Fruitvale were storefront improvements, incentivized by matching grants. The hallmark of this program was its embrace of culturally-expressive façade changes and signs. The colorful façade improvements celebrated the personalities and diversity of the businesses within the buildings. In just a few years, the Main Street program had stimulated more than a dozen projects.

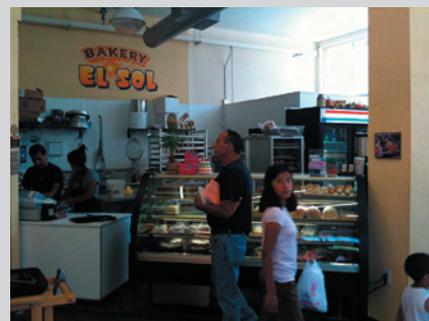


Events. Dia De Los Muertos. The Fruitvale Main Street program created a series of events to draw people to the commercial district, including Dia De Los Muertos (Day of the Dead), which now in its 16th year, has become one of the largest festivals in Oakland.



Housing development. The Unity Council developed a “Transit Village” in Fruitvale, adding 47 affordable-housing rental apartments.

Public market. As part of the Transit Village, Fruitvale built a 7,000 square foot enclosed Public Market, which provides vendor and incubator, spaces to 11 food and other start-up retail businesses. It also provides those businesses with ongoing technical and expansion assistance.



Small-scale manufacturing. The Unity Council partnered with Bay Area fashion designers to establish “Mio: Made In Oakland”, a 5,000 square foot social enterprise with a workforce development mission. “mio” manufactures sample garments for Bay Area designers and, in the process, provides job training to neighborhood minority women and pays them a living wage.

URBAN TRANSITION SUB-AREA

Marchesano/South Main Target Area

The Carniceria El Centenario supermarket and shopping center at the northwest corner of Marchesano and South Main has remained occupied despite viable, with low or no vacancies. It functions as a neighborhood retail center that confirms the potential for niche market development at the proposed Village Market site, further north.

The Marchesano Shopping Center (south side of Marchesano at Clifton) presents several challenges for retail development, including the poor appearance of buildings and lack of landscaping, lack of visibility from South Main Street and lack of strong retail adjacencies. With landscaping and facade improvements, the shopping center can re-tenant as a neighborhood retail center. However, investment will need to come from the owner/developer, as limited South Main resources will initially be prioritized for the Traditional Neighborhood Core Target Area.

The owner/developer should consider several potential incentives for marketing the retail spaces:

- ❑ A “plain vanilla box” investment, where spaces are fit out and do not require a large investment by a prospective small-business tenant;
- ❑ Percentage-of-gross leases, to lessen the risk for a prospective neighborhood retailer;
- ❑ Joint venture investment by the shopping center owner and an entrepreneur; or
- ❑ Using community financing tools discussed in Section 8: Implementation.

INTERCHANGE TARGET AREA

As the market assessment portion of this report notes, much of Southwest Rockford’s household spending is currently captured within the city, but on the East Side. The General Merchandise leakage is about \$5.7 million; if recaptured within the neighborhood, could theoretically support an additional 20,000 to 25,000 square feet of retail space. Retail was considered as one of several potential uses in this sub-area, particularly on the southeast quadrant of the interchange.

South Main Revitalization Strategy

Section 6: Revitalization Vision

Hotel development is envisioned as another potential future use within the Interchange Target Area. Hotels prefer clustered development and, for the present time, excess capacity remains in the hotel zone at East State and I-90. Future hotel development at South Main and Route 20 will be closely related to attracting additional passenger air service to the Chicago Rockford International Airport. The pro forma will likely need a combination of incentives:

- ❑ Room-night guarantees from current/future charter services;
- ❑ Enterprise Zone designation for the southeast quadrant of the Interchange Target Area;
- ❑ City purchase of the property to lease to the hotel owner;
- ❑ Bond to finance land development;
- ❑ Equity investment by the Airport;
- ❑ Equity investment by the City.

Hotel development on this site is a long-term prospect. Retail development will also require City participation and other incentives, but may be more easily achieved, depending on any future air service expansion. In either case, the City should evaluate the potential impact on East Side retailers and hotels before making a decision to participate in a deal.