



# East Gateway Subarea Plan



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The City's East Gateway Subarea is centered on the intersection of Kirk Road and Main Street (IL Route 64), two of the City's busiest streets. Each day over 48,000 cars travel east-west along Main Street, entering the City on its east end, and another 25,000 cars travel north-south along Kirk Road. The East Gateway Subarea is home to many business of varying types, ranging from retail to industrial. A number of restaurants and national retailers are located here, however several high-profile national retailers have closed locations within the Subarea. Some retailers simply could not survive the current recession, such as Borders which closed all of its 511 bookstores across the country including a St. Charles location in 2011; and some have left for other reasons including Sears which closed its location in the Charlestowne Mall in 2011. These business closures of high profile, highly visible sites are a cause for concern in the community which is further exacerbated by the Charlestowne Mall that has experienced significant decline in recent years. Surrounding this volatile retail setting are healthy business parks which help contribute to a diverse local tax base and provide employment opportunities within the City. The East Gateway area represents a significant piece of the local economy, and the Subarea Plan provides a framework of policies and actions to assist the City in keeping the area economically healthy and aesthetically attractive.

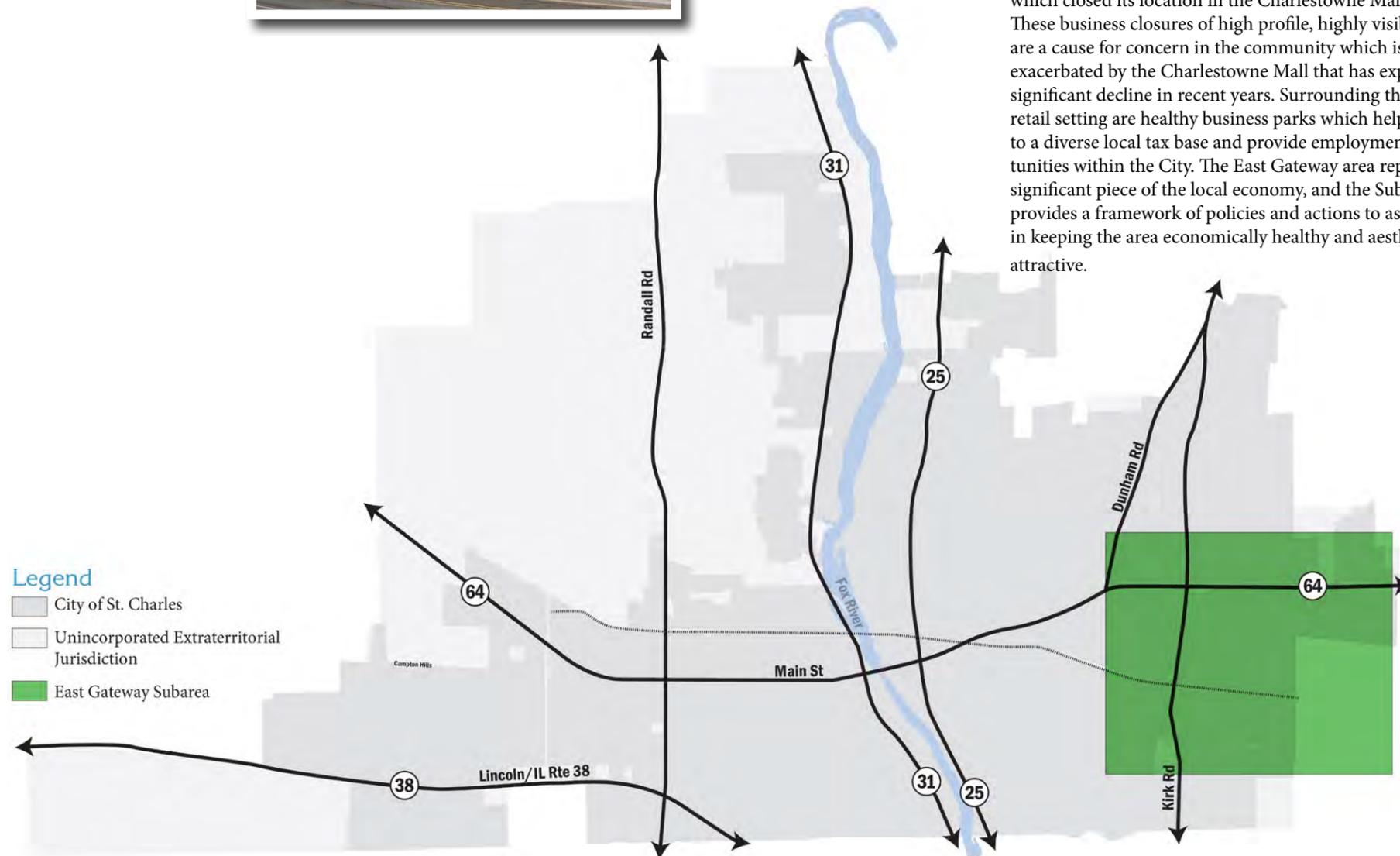
### Subarea Goals

The East Gateway subarea represents a unique opportunity for economic development, revitalization and stabilization with for a specific context within the City of St. Charles. The overall vision for the subarea includes the following:

- » Revitalization of the Subarea's retail areas that maximizes the locational assets within this area of the City.
- » Improved connectivity and circulation within the Subarea providing logical and efficient connections between compatible uses.
- » Better separation of incompatible land uses to protect residential neighborhoods while at the same time help define the City's business areas.
- » Attractive streets and sites to distinguish this Subarea and key corridors from neighboring communities.
- » A mix of uses that that help diversify the City's economy and provide places to live, work, and shop.

### Subarea Objectives

- » Improve the appearance of the Kirk Road and Main Street Corridors to assist in strengthening the community's identity and appearance through installation of streetscaping, wayfinding and gateway elements.
- » Use landscaping appropriately to enhance commercial areas, screen unsightly areas, and provide an attractive streetscape and overall setting for the area.
- » Improve the overall connectivity and mobility within the Subarea through both public streets and internal connection to provide a predictable and navigable environment.
- » Preserve surrounding neighborhoods through the use of screening, buffering, and better separation from commercial development.
- » Create market-responsive development parcels that can accommodate projects of an appropriate scale and phasing over time.
- » Take advantage of proximity to DuPage Airport and Pheasant Run as activity generators.
- » Reposition the Charlestowne Mall site to foster its renaissance or its redevelopment.
- » Enhance the character of both existing and new development through site improvements, facade enhancements, consistent signage regulation, and attractive building design and materials.



## East Gateway Improvement Plan

**Gateway Intersections.** This part of the City is referred to as the Eastern Gateway due to the fact that Kirk Road averages nearly 25,000 vehicles per day, and Main Street (IL Route 64) averages over 48,000 vehicles per day. Serving as a gateway to St. Charles, the City should install gateway features at key points along the corridor to improve both its image and identity. Gateway features could consist of signage, landscaping, decorative lighting, and pedestrian amenities, to attractively greet visitors and residents to the community.

**Primary/Secondary Streetscaping.** The Main Street and Kirk Road corridors are two of the busiest streets in the City and play a key role in shaping perceptions of the community. Streetscaping enhancements along these corridors, including trees in the parkway, decorative street lights, attractive sidewalks, and wayfinding signs, would improve the appearance of the corridors and shape positive perceptions for people passing through the community. A less intensive secondary streetscaping program would improve the appearance of peripheral streets and complement the character of the subarea. Streetscape elements along these streets should complement other streetscaping in the City, but reflect a unique local theme for this important community area.

**Buffering.** Buffering consisting of a mix of trees, berms, fences and landscaping should protect residential areas from the negative impacts of commercial uses. Consideration should also be given to parking lot lighting and security lighting to minimize light cast onto residential properties.

**Landscaping Reduction.** In some areas, landscaping intended to improve the aesthetics of the corridor is actually screening commercial businesses and is detrimental to their operation by restricting their visibility and exposure. Consideration should be given to reducing the landscaping in these areas to provide views to businesses while screening unsightly areas.

**Sidewalk Gaps.** While businesses in this area will continue to cater primarily to customers arriving by car, it should not neglect the pedestrian. The corridor should be safe and welcoming to pedestrians, and pedestrians should be able to pass through this area to access the East Side Sports Complex. The City should ensure a complete pedestrian network exists, installing sidewalks in identified gaps. All sidewalks should be designed and located so that they provide a safe and comfortable environment and are adequately buffered from vehicular traffic. They should also include multi-use paths that can accommodate bicycle traffic where appropriate.

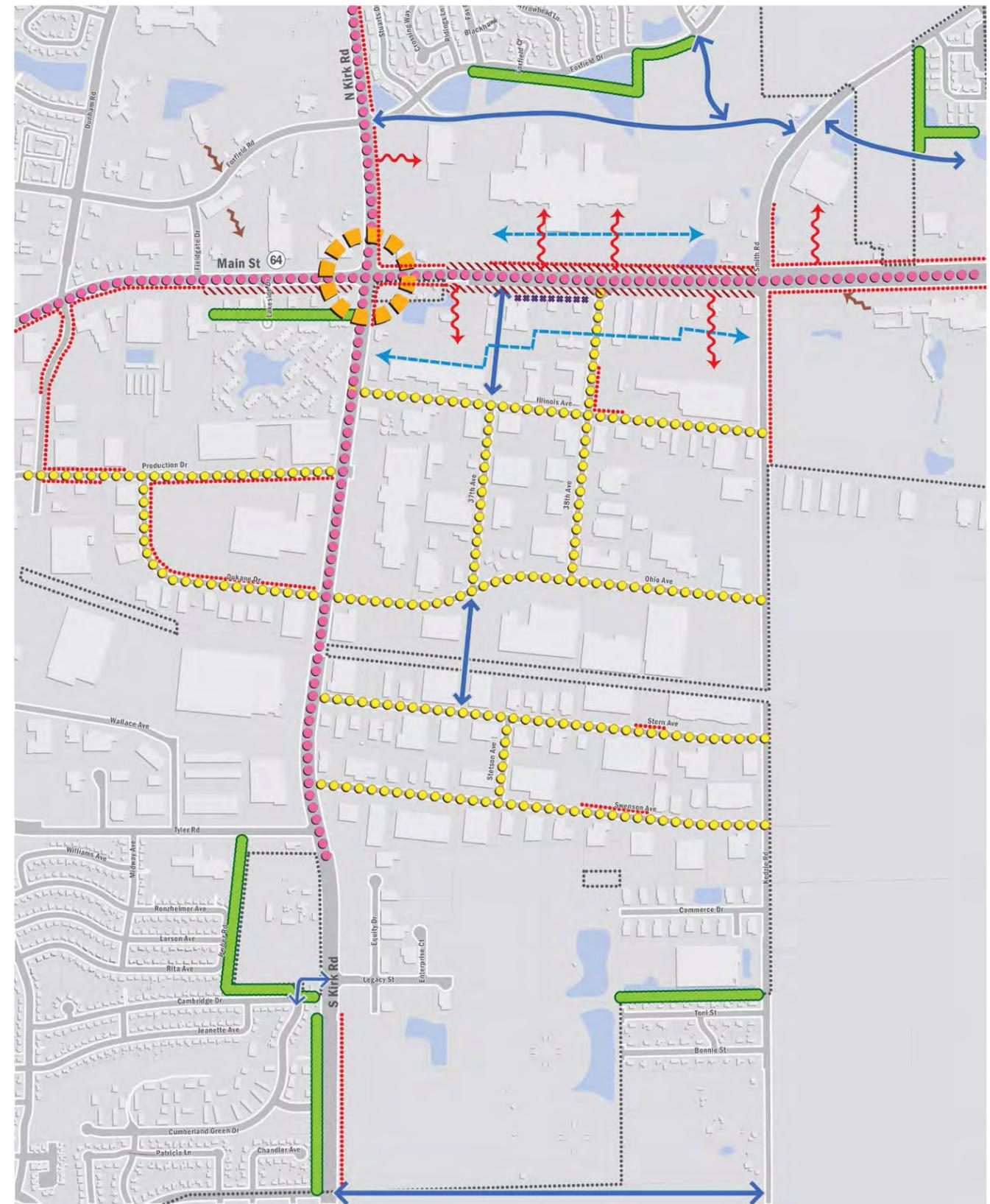
**Sidewalk Connections.** Sidewalks and paths should connect the front entrances of buildings to the sidewalk network within the public right-of-way and bus stops along transit routes within the Subarea.

**Street Connections.** A complete street network is important for efficient movement of vehicles and pedestrians. New connections can break up “super blocks” and create an area that is easier to navigate. The Charlestowne Mall, along with big box retail development and industrial areas, have disrupted the local street grid and hamper circulation. To improve circulation the City should establish connections identified in the framework plan with the understanding that any proposed connections should be analyzed on a case-by-case basis, including a detailed traffic study to ensure that no adverse impacts to adjacent areas are created.

**Hotel Connections.** There are several hotels within the City’s East Gateway, including Pheasant Run, a mixed use resort featuring hotel rooms, a golf course, restaurants and entertainment and exhibition space. Pedestrian connections between hotels and shopping/dining makes the lodging more desirable and provides more customers to local businesses. The City should ensure hotels are adequately connected to the commercial areas and wayfinding assists visitors in locating the local and City-wide shopping and dining opportunities.

**Internal Cross Access.** Provide internal cross access wherever possible between commercial properties, connecting independent and isolated commercial uses with one another. Depending on the existing development pattern, cross access could occur either in the front of or at the rear of the buildings, but should be focused on directly connecting adjacent parking areas which would permit customers to travel between businesses on a parallel network and eliminate unnecessary trips onto Main Street or other major streets.

**Frontage Road Removal.** A frontage road exists along sections of Main Street. The frontage road eliminates curb cuts on Main Street and facilitates unified access to properties via the frontage road accessible from 38th Avenue. The frontage road however is not installed along the entire length and complicates access to a few parcels. The City should explore eliminating the frontage road, investigating the impacts on traffic and options for access and utilization of the right-of-way.



## Catalyst Sites

Catalyst sites are those parcels where redevelopment would have a positive catalytic impact on the surrounding area. In the identification of catalyst sites, certain criteria are considered. Catalyst sites are determined based on the sites exhibiting some or all of the following characteristics: Underutilized buildings or land; Vacant buildings or land; Structural soundness of buildings; Size of property; Ownership (e.g., unified private ownership or City-owned); Visibility and access; Current zoning and adjacent zoning; and Surrounding land uses. Although the sites identified provide alternatives if a property is proposed for future redevelopment, it is not necessarily an interest by the City to acquire or redevelop the site. Listed below are catalyst sites identified in the East Gateway.

**Site A** North of St. John Neumann Church, at the corner of Foxfield Road and Kirk Road, there may be an opportunity to reconfigure this detention basin to provide a development opportunity in the City's Eastern Gateway. Although the site could accommodate a number of commercial uses, it is removed from much of the retail activity in the corridor and opportunity for synergy with nearby uses is limited. The City should promote the site for a use that could complement surrounding uses and turn this tax-exempt parcel into a tax-generating one.

**Site B** South of the Jewel-Osco along Kirk Road, this vacant site provides an opportunity to provide exposure and access for the Charlestowne Mall to Kirk Road. Development of the site should have strong orientation to Kirk Road, but also should be careful not to neglect its rear side that will be exposed to the Charlestowne Mall site.

**Site C** In 2011 the Borders Group declared bankruptcy and closed all 511 stores, including a location in Main Street Commons in the City's Eastern Gateway. The vacancy has impacted the commercial vitality of the center, however the site's access, internal circulation, placement of outlot building are equally detrimental to its economic well being. The City should work with the owner(s) of the parcels that comprise this opportunity area to develop a plan that can address issues affecting the site and incorporate the development of the remaining farmstead at the corner of Kirk and Main Street to jumpstart its revitalization.

**Site D** Constructed in 1991, the Charlestowne Mall has been well maintained and is in good physical condition, however a lack of a critical mass of retailers and a high volume of vacancy have placed the Charlestowne Mall in jeopardy. Once a shopping destination within the community and surrounding area, most retailers have left the interior of the mall. Von Maur, Classic Cinemas, Carson Pirie Scott and Kohls occupy four of the mall's five anchor spaces and are complemented by a handful of smaller retailers and services. Internal hallways are desolate, parking fields are vast and empty and the

Charlestowne Mall needs intervention to reposition the site to improve the mall's future viability or its full-scale redevelopment.

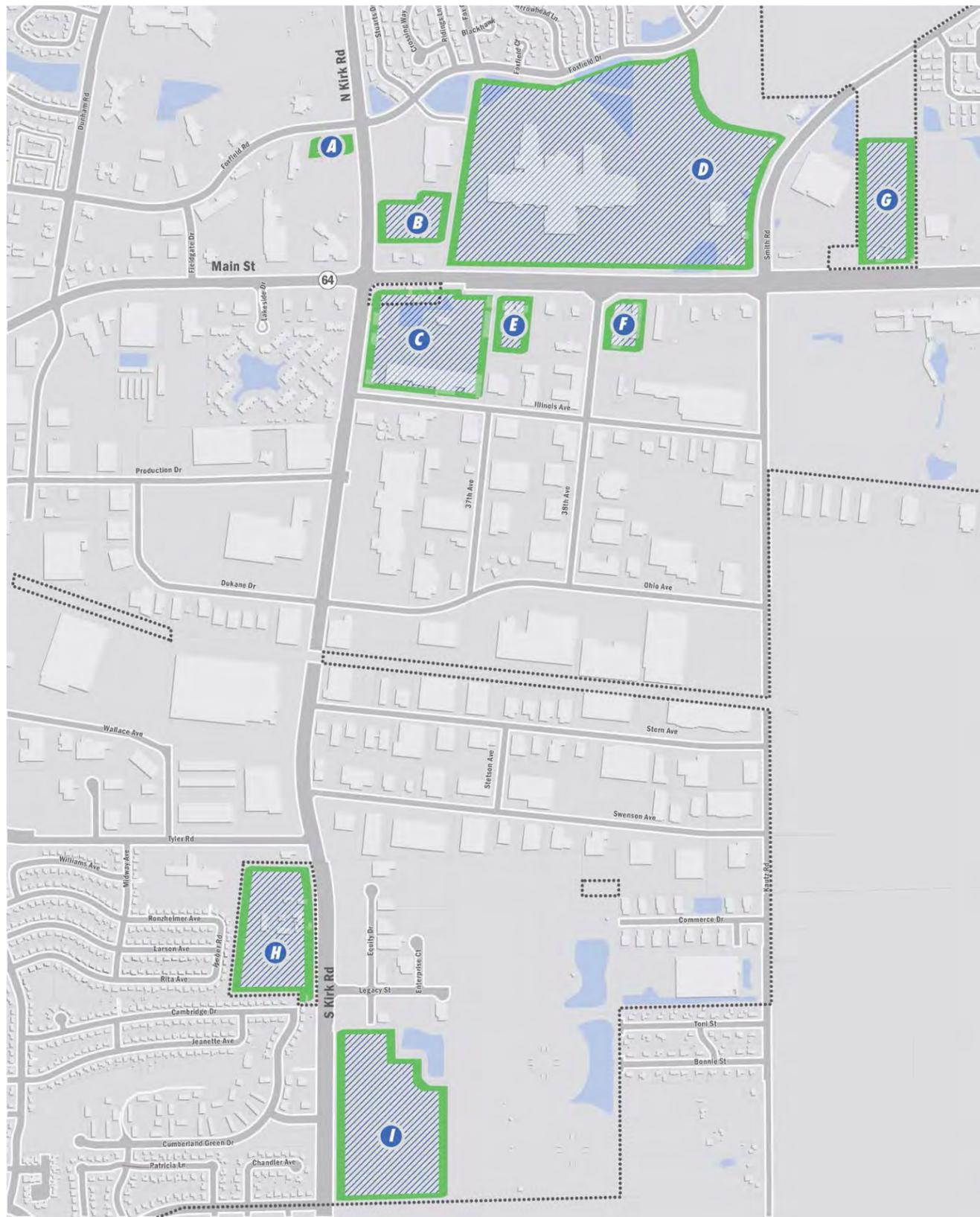
**Site E** This site consists of the mixed use building home to offices and a restaurant. The current placement of the building is inconsistent with neighboring sites and its placement blocks views and disrupts synergies. The site's redevelopment should provide retail opportunities on the Main Street frontage and facilitate connectivity in the rear.

**Site F** This office building is at the intersection of 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Main Street. Like Site E, this building's setbacks are inconsistent of the rest of the corridor and it blocks views and access to Target and other retailers. The site's redevelopment should open up views into the retail centers and facilitate connectivity and synergy along the corridor.

**Site G** East of Walmart there is a large vacant site with frontage and access along Main Street that is not currently annexed to the City. Development of the site's frontage should connect to and compliment Walmart to the west and the Hilton Garden Inn and DuPage Expo to the east. The large site provides opportunities for different land uses, with commercial located at the frontage transitioning to residentially scaled office or residential in the rear.

**Site H** Trellis Farm & Garden is a garden supply center on Kirk Road surrounded on two sides by residential uses. While the Comprehensive Plan is respectful of the family-owned business, the site has strong redevelopment potential and the City must be proactive in articulating a desired use for the site. In the event the site is redeveloped, residential uses are best suited for this site. Although traffic volumes along Kirk Road could support some types of commercial uses, it is recommended that the City focus commercial reinvestment closer to intersection of Kirk and Main Street.

**Site I** South of the Legacy Business Center there is a large parcel of undeveloped land. The site is situated at a key gateway into the community and the City should ensure the site is high quality and helps shape positive perceptions of the community. The site could serve to extend the business/office parks on the City's east side, but its future land use and development should consider what the City of Geneva has planned for the parcel to the south.



## Charlestowne Mall Framework Plan

The Charlestowne Mall site represents the single greatest opportunity to redefine the character and function of the East Gateway. This Framework Plan highlights recommendations that could be implemented regardless of the timing or end vision for the repositioning of the mall structure itself. Within this framework, specific repositioning alternatives can be considered as mall tenancy, local market conditions, and other factors play out over time.

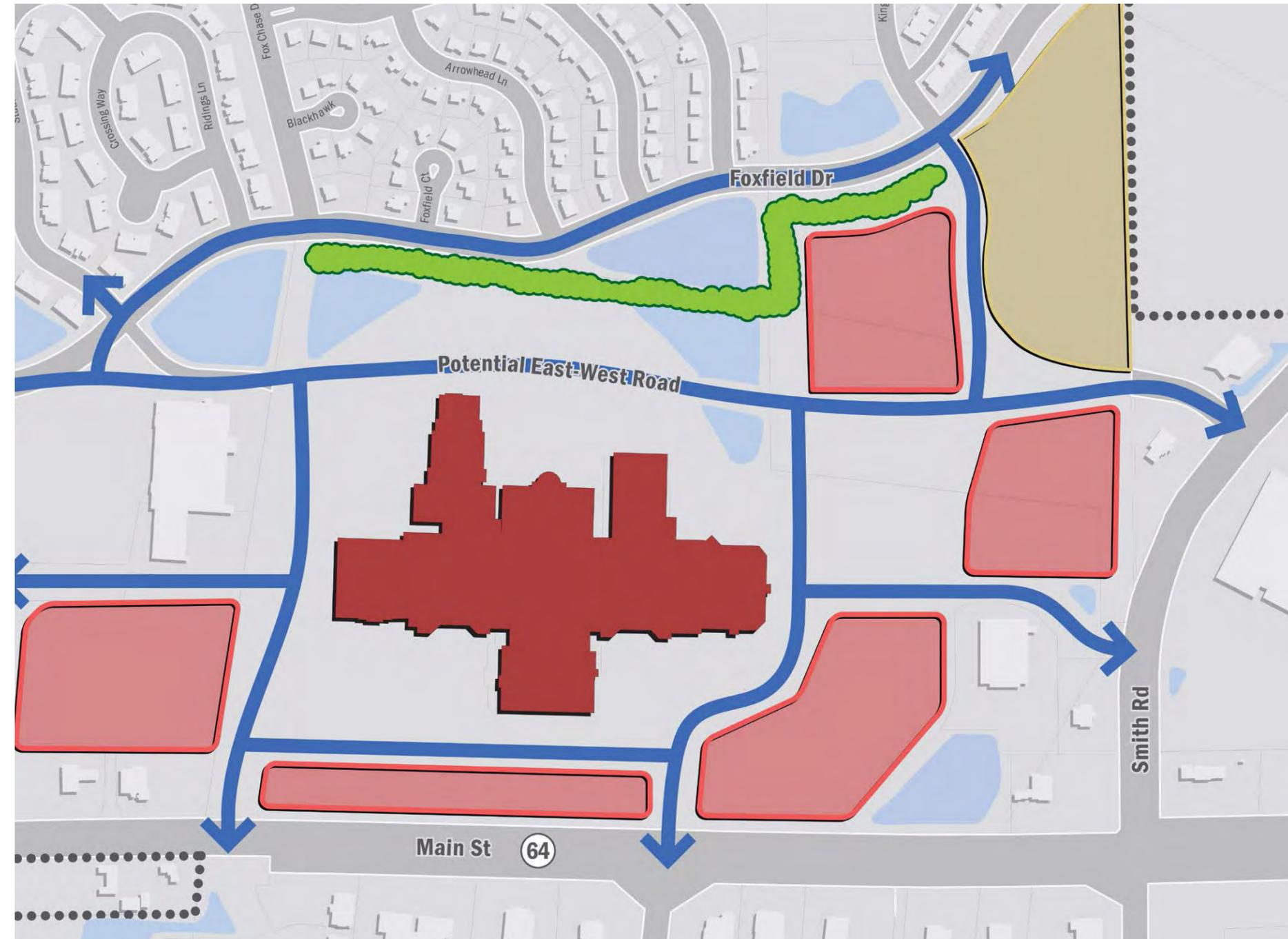
 **Proposed Street or Circulator.** These include public streets and on-site circulators designed to enhance on-site access and mitigate the impacts of traffic on surrounding neighborhoods. The key recommendation is a new street that would run along the north side of the mall property and make Foxfield Drive a residential street.

 **Out Lot Commercial, Retail, and Office Development.** This includes development sites located along Main Street that could capitalize on high visibility and more prominent access point offered by the proposed grid of streets and circulators. This also includes development sites located to the rear of the mall property with less visibility but enhanced access from the proposed grid of streets and circulators.

 **Single Family Attached/Multi-Family Residential.** Attached single family or multi-family development is permitted in this area and would complement existing housing development. It would also increase the number of residents that could support the mall site and other commercial properties in the eastern portion of the City.

 **Natural Buffer/Screening.** Screening and buffering should be provided between commercial and residential uses. This will minimize the impacts of non-residential uses on existing and future neighborhoods.

 **Repositioned Charlestowne Mall.** Within the proposed framework of streets and peripheral uses, the mall structure could be repositioned to be more responsive to contemporary consumer needs. The following page illustrates some proposed alternative approaches.



**Legend**

- Existing Retail Anchors
- Local Commercial/Retail Infill
- Local "Main Street" or Circulator
- Landscaped Open Space or Event Space



**Option A**

This concept illustrates how much of the existing mall could remain intact while access is enhanced through the implementation of a local street network. Most importantly, the existing east-west axis of the mall would be converted to a multi-modal street that would accommodate comfortable and attractive commercial sidewalks, vehicular traffic in each direction, and on-street parking. The mall's existing central space would become a green event or gathering plaza. At each end, roundabouts would provide the opportunity for gateway elements, artwork, or other anchoring elements. Small commercial spaces could be removed to create pocket plaza spaces that could host café seating, kiosks, seasonal markets or other uses in front of primary anchors.

**Considerations**

- » Would maintain much of the existing mall fabric and primary anchors
- » Creates multi-modal access to storefronts throughout the entire mall
- » Creates an attractive streetscape environment for all tenants
- » Roof over the internal street could be completely removed, or partially removed to allow for some areas of year-round activity
- » Does little to address the exterior image and aesthetics of the mall structure and property



**Option B**

This concept demonstrates how the eastern portion of the existing mall could stay mostly intact while the western portion would be reconceived as an entertainment and events complex. By removing retail space on the southwest face of the mall, retail activities could be concentrated towards the eastern end of the mall, and the vacated space could accommodate a plaza or green space. This space could accommodate outdoor events, and would build off of the cinema as the centerpiece of the entertainment complex. It would also extend south towards Main Street, creating an attractive "front door" for the mall by integrating landscaping, water, and sculptural elements. The west end of the entertainment complex could include active ground-floor uses with a decorative parking garage above.

**Considerations**

- » Substantially redefines a portion of the commercial mall for other kinds of intended uses
- » Reduces the overall square footage of retail space in order to concentrate it in another portion of the mall
- » Creates a more attractive identity for the mall from primary corridors
- » Requires a new approach to mall tenant recruitment and programming



**Option C**

This concept illustrates how the existing mall can be fragmented to create a more traditional town center pattern of streets, storefronts and open space. By removing specific retail spaces, a network of local streets can be accommodated in order to create smaller blocks and various points of entry into the commercial environment. These streets would also frame a central "town square" that could host events, markets or other temporary or seasonal activities. An east-west street would replace the existing pedestrian mall axis, and would include commercial sidewalks, streetscaping, and on-street parking. Other individual storefronts could be removed to create pocket plazas that provide more visibility for primary anchors and a place for café seating and other complementary activities.

**Considerations**

- » Preserves the primary tenants as anchors around which other retail and open spaces exist
- » Creates a significant central event or open space that brings users into the heart of the mall environment
- » Requires significant intrusion into the existing mall fabric to create street and open space network
- » Does little to address the appearance or image of the mall from primary corridors

**Charlestowne Mall Repositioning Alternatives**

The Charlestowne Mall has struggled to maintain occupancy, with the majority of its commercial spaces sitting vacant. The following repositioning alternatives illustrate how different approaches may be taken to redefine the form, function, and context of the mall in an effort to make it more competitive in the contemporary market and more responsive to consumer demands.

Each of the alternatives can be accommodated by the Charlestowne Mall Framework Plan on the previous page, though minor modifications would be required. The intent of the alternatives is to provide residents, elected officials, and the development community with somewhat of a flexible roadmap as a number of factors come to pass over time. It should be also noted that a fourth option exists - **Option D** - which would include leaving the mall intact, in its current location, with facade improvements to the existing building, in addition to other improvements made around the periphery of the mall as identified on the Charlestowne Mall Framework Plan (previous page).

## Repositioning Option A



*This figure represents an illustrative development concept for the Charlestowne Mall. The concept is intended to illustrate one possible approach for redevelopment that satisfies the goals, objectives, and guidelines as expressed in the St. Charles Comprehensive Plan. It is not intended to express action on behalf of the City to acquire and redevelop privately-held properties. The final format of redevelopment for these sites will depend upon local property ownership, unforeseen site constraints, and market forces at the time of redevelopment. Although this illustration does not depict it, there are grade changes within the site that any redevelopment will have to address.*

### Potential Improvements

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1</b> Retained Anchor Tenants</li> <li><b>2</b> Roof Removed to Create “Open Air” Shopping Center</li> <li><b>3</b> Mixed-traffic “Main Street” Shopping Corridor</li> <li><b>4</b> Central Plaza and Event Space</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>5</b> Architectural Elements that Stress Public Spaces</li> <li><b>6</b> Commercial Storefront Facade Enhancements</li> <li><b>7</b> Pocket Plazas in Front of Major Tenants</li> <li><b>8</b> Enhanced Landscaping in Plazas and on “Main Street”</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>9</b> More Efficient On-site Circulation</li> <li><b>10</b> New Parking Lot Landscaping</li> <li><b>11</b> On-site Green Space and Stormwater Management</li> <li><b>12</b> Comprehensive Pedestrian Network</li> </ul> |
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