

Downtown St. Charles Strategy Plan

An Appendix to the City of St. Charles Comprehensive Plan



A joint project of
City of St. Charles

and



Downtown St. Charles Partnership, Inc.

St. Charles · Illinois · USA

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Conditional Analysis: Conditions of the “Fabric” of Downtown St. Charles, Illinois

Context



St. Charles is linked to other nearby communities by the Fox River -- a natural resource focus and recreation amenity for the region. St. Charles has found the Fox River to be a natural focal point and is beginning to capitalize on the river as a recreation and scenic resource.

St. Charles is also linked to other Fox River valley communities by transportation infrastructure that generally follows the river. Highway 64 – St. Charles’ Main Street – is one of the few river crossings in the region, a fact that results in heavy concentrations of traffic in the community in general and in downtown in particular. Lower speed arterials follow the river along each bank and enter downtown near what motorists could naturally perceive to be its current edges.

Residential development outside of downtown also continues, with freshly turned earth indicating that the expansion of residential uses will continue in and near St. Charles. These new neighborhoods are primarily targeted to middle, upper-middle and higher income families.



Downtown St. Charles is centrally located within the community. Along Highway 64 beyond the bounds of downtown are outlying commercial areas (around Charlestown Mall to the east of downtown and along Randall Road west of downtown) that are continuing to develop as the community grows.

Boundaries

Downtown St. Charles can be framed in the context of the community and the region. But downtown can also be defined in other ways: there are both legal and perceived boundaries that might become important when considering its evolution.

Directly related to downtown is the city’s current zoning and land use designations. The bulk of downtown is zoned B2C (Central Business) and the area is guided toward the continuation of the patterns of a traditional mixed use downtown. Other zoning designations include a B2T district, which permit business uses as a transition to adjacent neighborhoods (this district is characterized by small scale retail and service businesses housed in residential structures). Residential uses are also defined in the city’s zoning, generally at the periphery of the commercial core. The gradual migration of commercial uses into residential areas (even if the character of residential structures remains intact) is an area of logical focus for this plan.

Two Special Service Areas also define downtown. SSA-1A was established to implement a downtown parking program, which has been effective in the creation of additional parking and one downtown parking structure. SSA-1B supports Downtown St. Charles Partnership operations, programs and services. The two Special Service Area levies generate about \$35,000 and \$160,000, respectively, for each of the SSAs.

Legal considerations are important in framing a plan for downtown, but it is at least equally important to allow downtown to develop according to its perceived boundaries. In fact, based on the community's desire to maintain the sense of downtown St. Charles as a great midwestern small town downtown, the most vital definition will be how it fits into the community. From a perceptual standpoint, downtown is viewed as extending from Mount St. Mary Park on the south to Pottawatomie Park on the north, and from Lincoln Park on the west to Baker Park on the east; the river becomes the obvious focal point; and hillside neighborhoods on both sides of the river become the other edge-defining element.



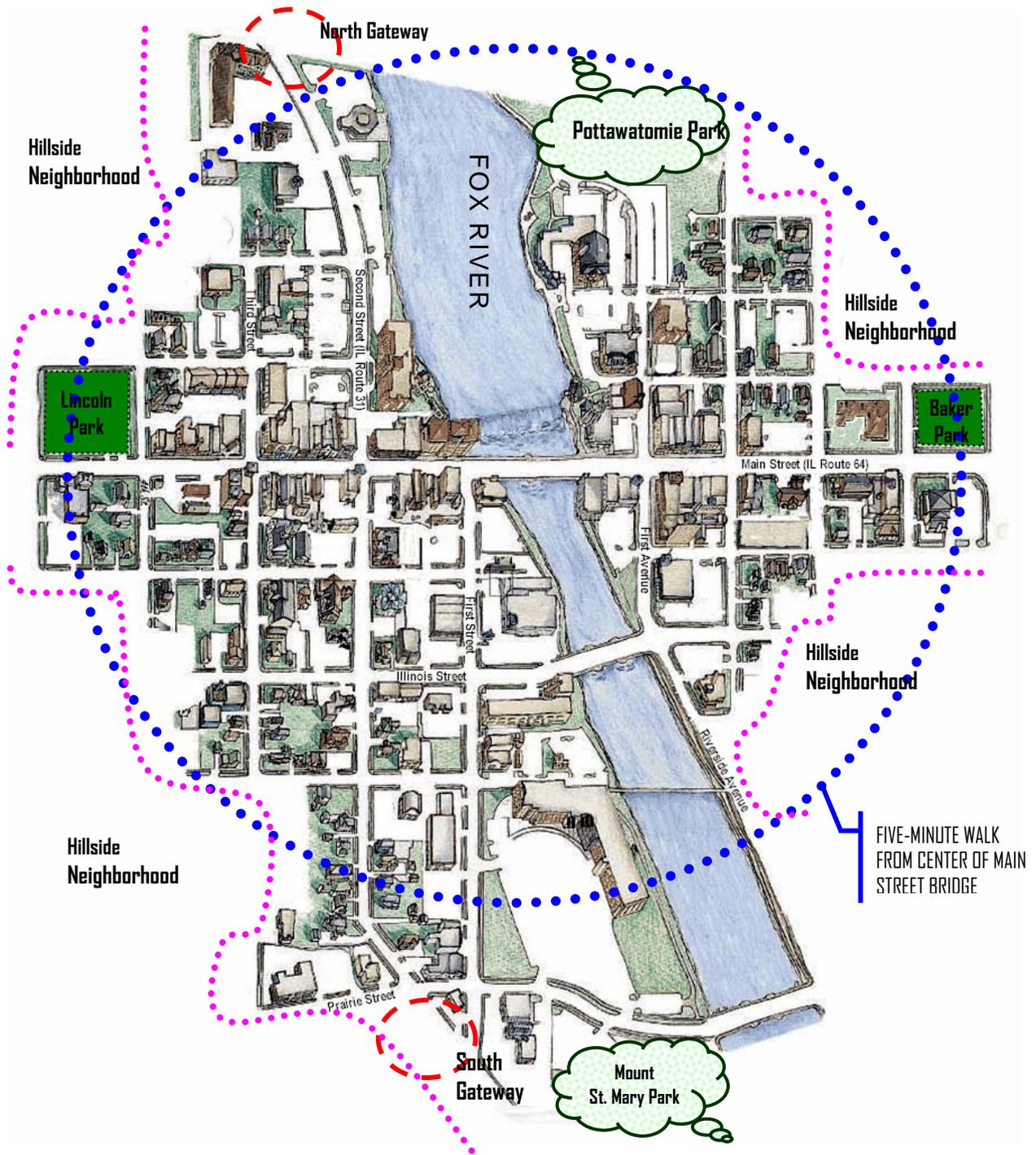
The south vehicular entry to downtown on the west side of the river is an area that should be addressed in the strategic plan. Traffic moving into downtown along First Street passes a series of auto-related businesses. The north entry to downtown also needs attention; while the railroad bridge offers an opportunity for a “portal,” the character of development immediately to its south does not reflect the patterns typically found or desired for downtown. Gateways to downtown are important; where other points of entry might focus on a park or another significant feature, these are uncharacteristic of the community and of downtown in particular.

The distance the average person can walk in a period of five minutes often defines “walkable” zones. The distance is generally one-quarter mile – a distance that roughly corresponds to a radius set at the center of the Main Street Bridge to the perceived boundaries described above. While zoning and land use are important, if downtown St. Charles is to maintain its attractiveness as a downtown, the sense of a walkable district and logical perceptual boundaries should be considered first.

Division of downtown into “districts”

The 1994 Hyett Palma “Market Analysis and Enhancement Strategy for Downtown St. Charles” recognizes “four compatible and complementary districts” – created based on their ability to serve the needs of varied markets. The City’s 1996 Comprehensive Plan also divides downtown – in this case, into quadrants created by the intersection of Main Street with the Fox River.

While the underlying goal of creating more manageable precincts in downtown is important – and maybe even necessary given some of the physical limitations to movement between these areas – downtown needs to be considered as a whole. Simply creating retail clusters may not match the community’s vision, and accepting a geographic quadrant pattern may too readily dismiss the idea of integration. A remedy is not obvious; perhaps a marriage of the two notions presents an opportunity, or maybe there are other ways of considering downtown that result in patterns that more directly support the community’s vision of a mixed use and easily walkable downtown district.



Boundaries for downtown St. Charles can be described by the underlying elements of character as well as by legal definitions.

Riverfront and Parks



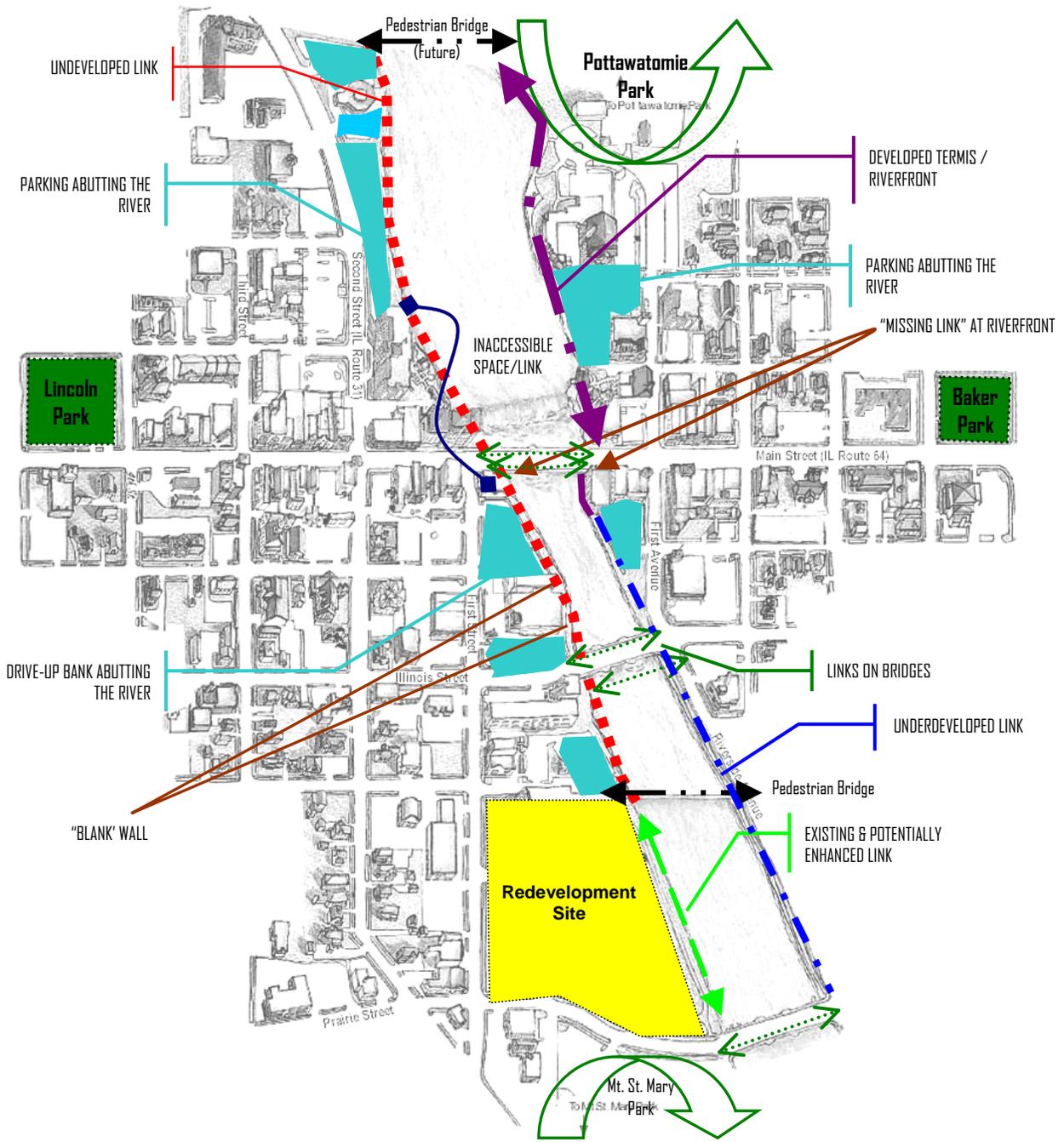
Trails and public space development highlight St. Charles' connection to the Fox River. While the paths are not continuous in downtown – there is no “circuit” available along the riverfront – paths in the Fox River Valley bring a large number of bicyclists to St. Charles during the biking season. Ultimately, a loop generally following the riverfront is desired: the development of a walkway slung under the railroad bridge at the north end of downtown's riverfront will provide a necessary river crossing. A complete circuit along the river's banks is difficult (the Main Street bridge and private development immediately at the river's edge are limiting factors), but the use of downtown streets for a portion of the loop is a reasonable alternative.



The relationship of the river to development in downtown varies. In some areas, uses along the river include parking lots, drive-up banking facilities, and the blank sidewall of the Blue Goose Supermarket. In other areas, the Hotel Baker immediately abuts the river, the Harris Bank provides a walkway along the river, and restaurants offer outdoor seating near the river or indoor seating that takes advantage of river views. A more complete pedestrian promenade has been developed at the river's edge at City Hall and other municipal facilities. Carroll Towers cuts off access to the river with a fence at its north end, and the Hotel Baker and Manor Restaurant are set immediately at the river's edge.

Opportunities for engaging the river will occur as redevelopment of the former Piano Factory Outlet mall site proceeds. Other development projects adjacent to the riverfront in downtown should strive to make strong connections, with public access to the river being a primary goal as indicated by the community's Comprehensive Plan.

In addition to the riverfront, four parks bound downtown. Lincoln and Baker Parks provide “traditional” style open space at the west and east edges of downtown. Pottawatomie Park houses a community center and other community recreation facilities. To the south, St. Mary Park is more passive and a little more remote from the activity of downtown (although this is likely to change as redevelopment activities on the Piano Factory site proceed).



While parks and the riverfront are focal points for downtown, uses along the river are not always consistent with a great riverfront experience.

Traffic



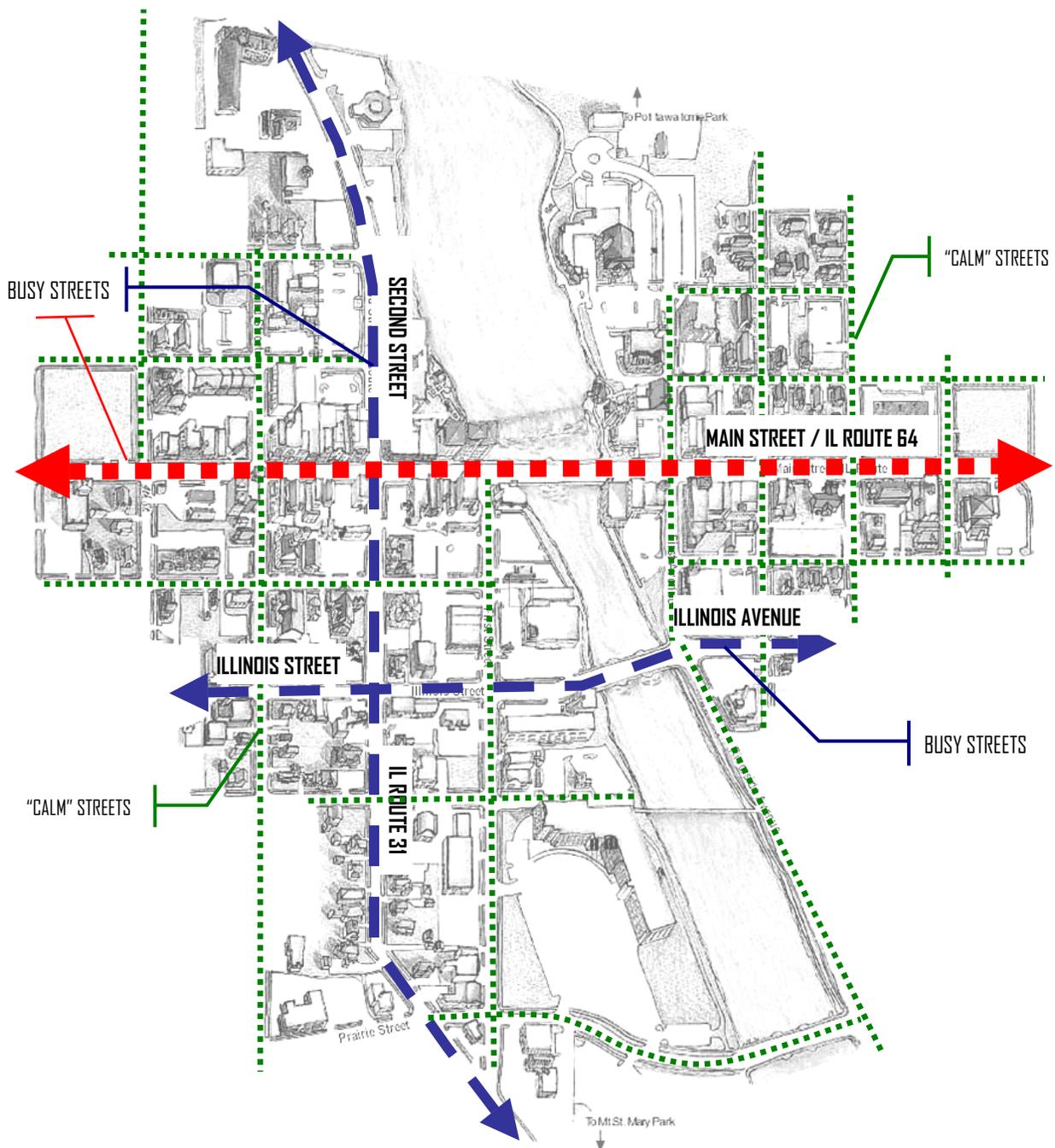
Traffic is one of the most obvious defining elements for downtown St. Charles. With Main Street being a state highway, and with no other reasonable alternative for crossing the river, the traffic volumes will not likely change. The volume of trucks is also significant, but without other river crossing options their presence will likely remain. The speed of traffic is also a defining element, but one that can be managed.

What is interesting is that while Main Street and Second Street (Highway 31) are busy streets, other downtown streets are relatively calm. First Street, for example, is fairly lightly traveled (although land along its length is not currently used to the optimum level) with speeds being more appropriate to a downtown environment and little, if any, truck traffic. While Main Street will always be an important thoroughfare for vehicles – and pedestrians – First Street could provide an ideal walking environment once development occurs that encourages pedestrian activity.



Other streets are similar to First Street: traffic is very local in nature, moving at relatively appropriate speeds and being reasonably accommodating for pedestrians. An exception is Illinois Street – where traffic moves at higher speeds, probably due to the fact that this street provides a local river crossing and because traffic signals are synchronized to expedite through traffic along the route. As redevelopment at the south end of First Street is considered, pedestrian crossing of Illinois Street should be reviewed (however, development of underutilized parcels along First Street would likely encourage traffic to move through this whole precinct at lower speeds).

Most intersections in downtown are difficult for large trucks to maneuver. The physical environment is limiting for large vehicles, and while easing turning radii to accommodate these larger vehicles might slightly ease congestion caused by truck turning, the degradation of the physical environment needed to accommodate more reasonable turning movements would not be desired or encouraged.



Traffic in downtown varies from heavy volumes and high speeds on Main Street to relative quiet on many secondary streets.

Parking

A plan for downtown will, inevitably, direct a great deal of attention to parking. The development of a sound parking strategy for downtown St. Charles will require a thorough assessment of actual parking demands.

Downtown's varied uses and users will result in varying peaks in parking demand that must be considered in relation to the location of parking areas and structures. The ability to share parking is central; the creation of an environment that encourages people to park once and shop twice is vital.

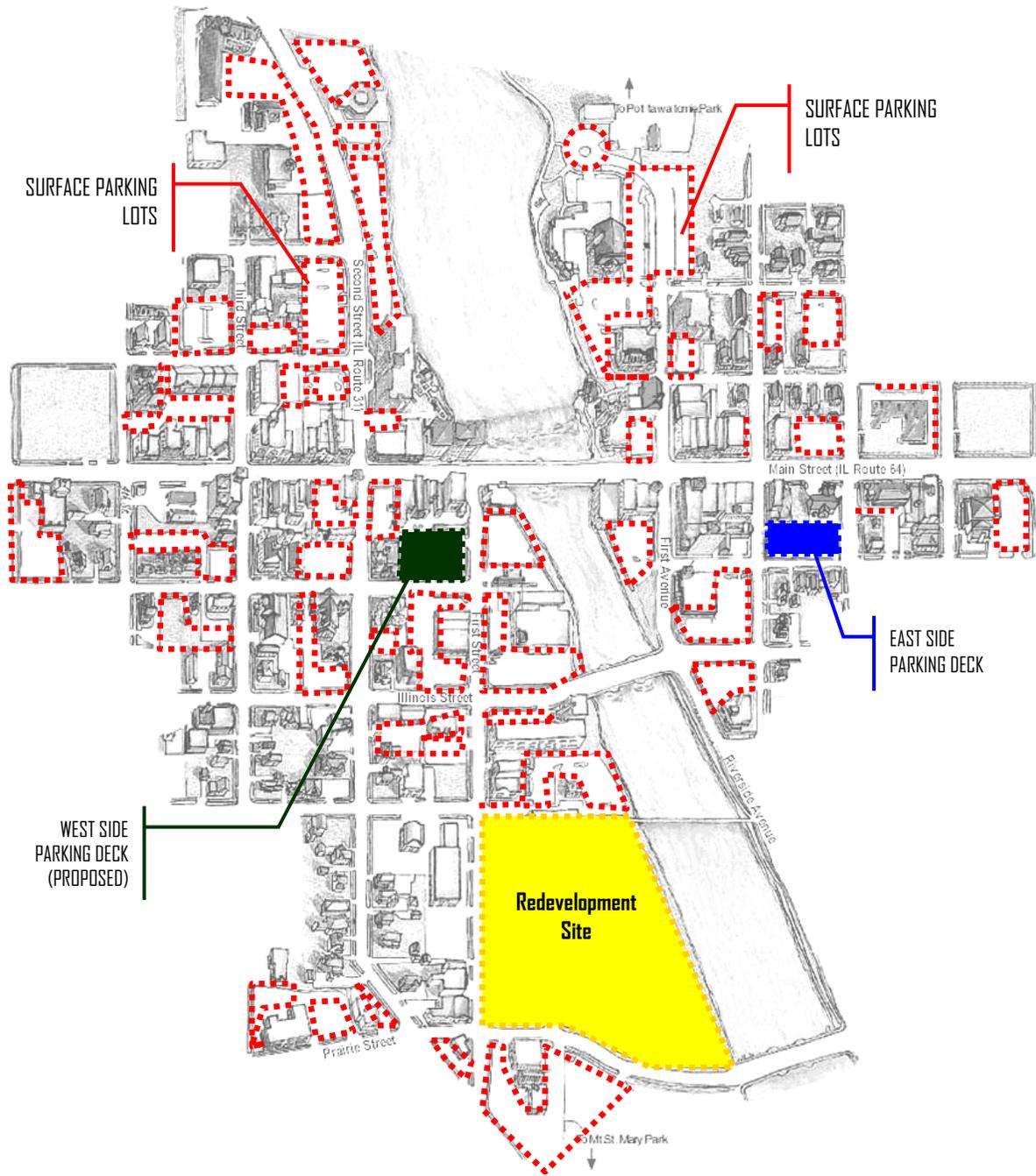
Parking – surface parking or parking in a ramp – is almost a necessary evil in a downtown; you have to have it, and everybody wants it at their doorstep, but it can rip the fabric of a downtown apart in ways that are almost impossible to mend.

In downtown St. Charles, parking is available – there are municipal and private parking areas scattered throughout downtown. As development occurs, however, it is possible that some of these parking areas might disappear. And as the community considers appropriate uses for its riverfront, it is possible that even more parking areas will be eliminated.

The city has already initiated the development of structured parking facilities in two areas of downtown. The program may have to be accelerated if significant development or redevelopment activities occur in downtown. As much as streets, sewer and water are necessary components of downtown's infrastructure, parking, if not considered with equal weight, could severely limit the community's desire for new development activity in downtown.

Two key aspects of parking as it exists today is that it is fairly well distributed throughout downtown and it is largely owned or controlled by the City of St. Charles. While there are some larger parking areas, none dominates the downtown landscape. Even the existing parking structure is small, fitting nicely into its surroundings (*almost to a fault – can people really find it?*); the scale of the new parking structure is compatible with surrounding development.

The actual parking demand (based on current and proposed development) will need to be understood in order to frame a sound strategy for downtown. This will require a comprehensive study of parking supply and demand, and the performance of cost-benefit analyses as new developments that require additional parking are proposed. The distribution of parking and its ability to be shared among a variety of users (users with varying peaks in parking demand) is central; the creation of an environment that encourages people to park once and shop twice is vital.



Parking in downtown seems to be well distributed; a few large surface parking areas detract from the qualities of the downtown environment.

Pedestrian movement

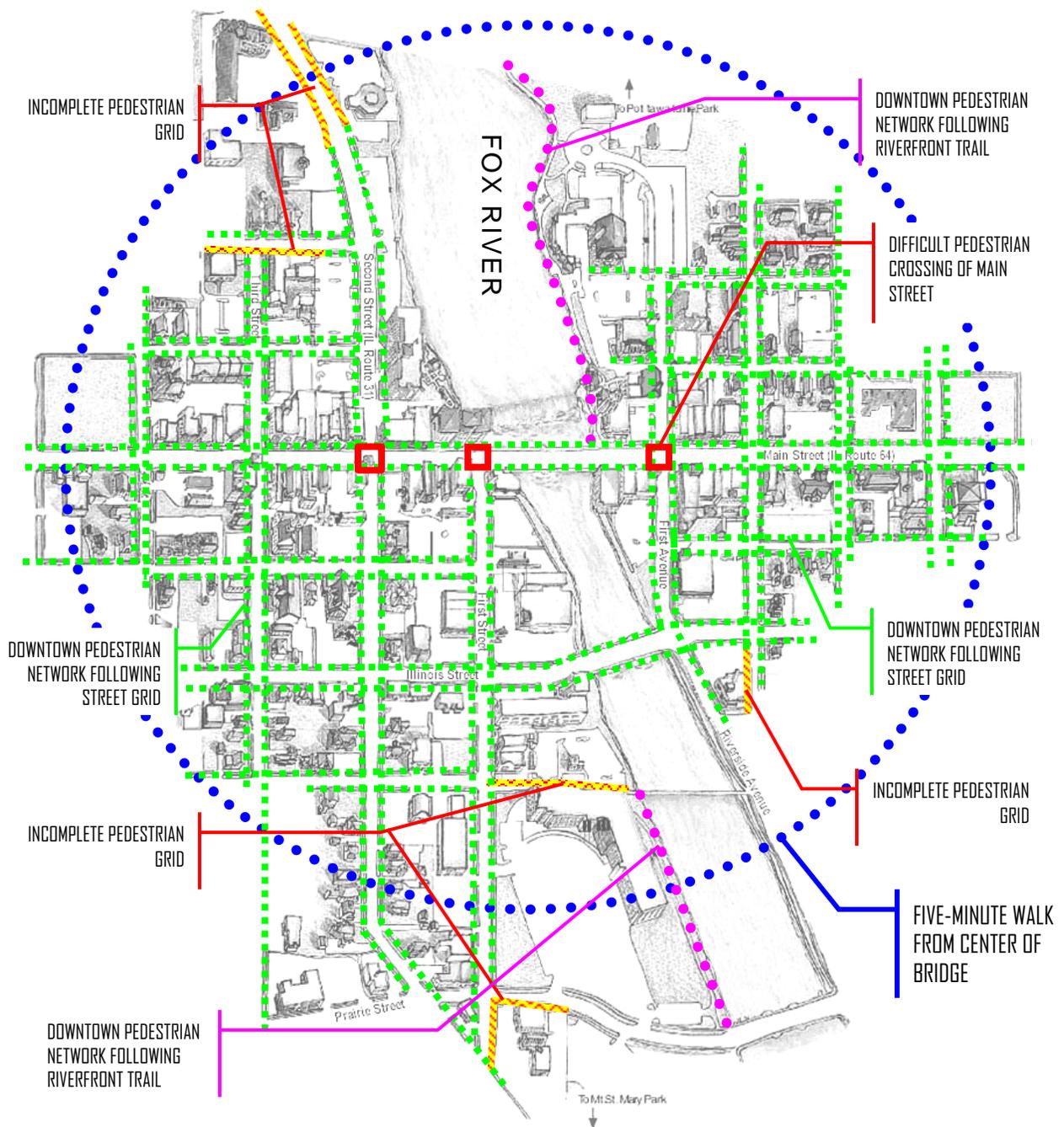
Downtown St. Charles is a very walkable place. Development is compact (related to the five-minute walk boundary), the river offers a wonderful focus, and the majority of downtown's buildings address the street in ways that create interest for pedestrians. Parts of downtown are less attractive to pedestrians, however: where significant portions of the street are lined with parking areas, non-retail uses and uses that are auto dominated, the sense of a comfortable walk is greatly diminished.

Redevelopment or reinforcement of street edges will help to "cure" the pedestrian environment in such non-retail, auto-dominated areas that are not necessarily tailored to accommodate or promote pedestrian activity. One of the most pressing concerns, however, is the difficulty of crossing Main Street; while the crossing is not unsafe, the timing of traffic signals is not conducive to pedestrian activity. Development in downtown might remain focused in the quadrants created by the intersection of the river and Main Street if pedestrian crossings of Main Street are not altered. A more integrated pattern of development might result if pedestrian crossings can be facilitated.

The future of downtown might ultimately rely on two systems of pedestrian movement. The first relates to the commercial nature of downtown, with movement occurring along the street grid; the second focuses on the river, creating a more leisurely pattern of movement focused on the qualities of the river and associated open spaces. Highlights might naturally occur where the two systems intersect.



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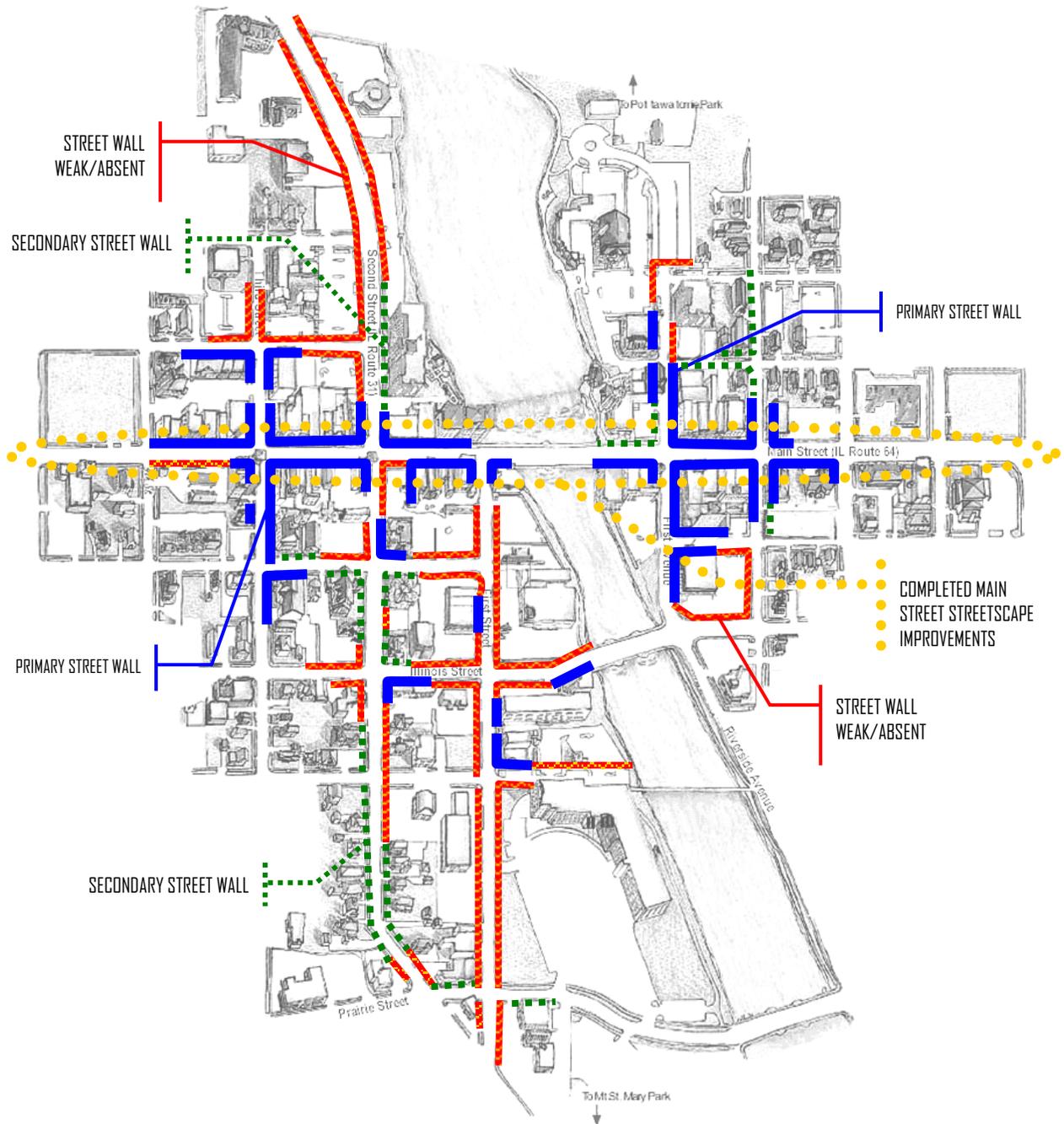
Pedestrian movement within a five-minute walk radius from the center of the Main Street Bridge follows two systems – each with its own purpose and character: a sidewalk system following the street grid; and, ultimately, a trail system following the river.

Streetscape

The sense of a cohesive downtown is enhanced by the presence of a continuous “street wall” -- an edge formed by street-facing facades that directly meet the public sidewalk. In downtown St. Charles, the street wall is enhanced by renovated storefronts and active uses within the buildings. Additional enhancements have been made to the public spaces of Main Street in the form of streetscape improvements. While these features add a great deal to the qualities of Main Street, enhancements to other streets are needed to extend character throughout downtown.



The character of side streets is different, for the most part, than Main Street. These streets are generally narrower, have less traffic, the type of development is different, or they form stronger connections to the river or nearby neighborhoods. In any case, most streets in downtown are not like Main Street, and the resulting character of the streetscape might logically be different.



Many parts of downtown St. Charles could benefit from the kind of public and private improvements that are evidenced on Main Street. As development activity occurs, the definition of the space of the street (the creation of “street wall”) will greatly enhance the pedestrian experience. The diagram above indicates areas where the street wall is weak or absent. Streetscape improvements addressing these areas will offer a more inviting and pleasing downtown pedestrian experience and promote pedestrian circulation throughout the downtown area.

Built environment

Downtown is composed of a mix of uses one would hope to find in a downtown environment: retail of varying



scales including an auto dealership (but no larger volume retailers); entertainment and lodging; professional and personal services; offices; and municipal services. There is very little housing, a pattern that will change as the former Piano Factory Outlet Mall site redevelops. Zoning categories include B2 (Community Business), B2C (Central Business), B2T (Transitional Business), and B3 (Service Business); in the Comprehensive Plan, downtown is guided toward a mixture of uses, with small-scale land use boundaries remaining flexible.

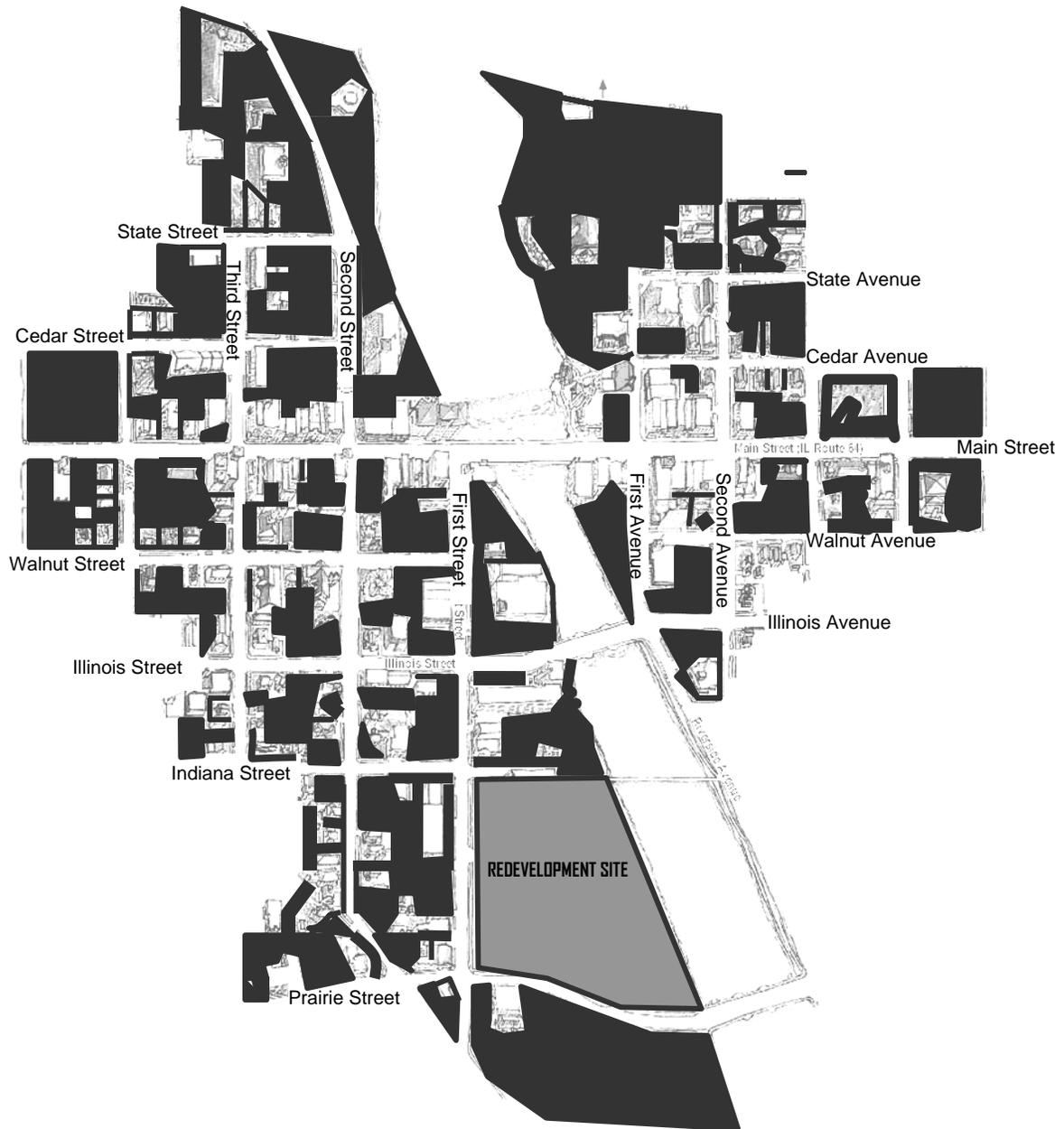
The character of development varies as widely as uses in downtown. There are landmark buildings (City Hall, the Hotel Baker and the Arcada Theater) and renovated structures; buildings with historic character, buildings of a more contemporary style, and buildings that are sympathetic to their historic neighbors; and there are buildings in need of attention (because they detract from their neighbors or utilize treatments that do not build upon the integrity of the original structure).

Buildings in downtown are generally low scale – two or three stories; building widths are narrower along Main Street (generally in the range of 25 to 50 feet), with more expansive single facades (as much as 100 feet in some cases) along side streets. Where variations occur (for example, where buildings are taller or wider than their neighbors), the community has been fortunate – in downtown, the aberrations are the buildings with a landmark quality (City Hall and the Hotel Baker). The scale of buildings – existing and new buildings – should be considered relative to the preservation of landmarks and to maintain the character of a small town downtown nestled in a river valley.



Retail and service uses in houses at the fringe of downtown form transitions to surrounding neighborhoods. Century Corners and the hillside west of the river are expanding with these kinds of uses. The impact of the expansion of these types of uses on the neighborhood should be addressed by the strategic plan.

The relationship between buildings and the ground plane is especially important in downtowns. For comparisons, the “figure-ground plane” sketch is useful. In this type of diagram, all areas outside of public rights-of-way that are not buildings are shaded; in portions of the diagram where shading is predominant, it is likely that the sense of development intensity typical of a downtown is lost. In downtown St. Charles, such a diagram should be employed to further understand where patterns of existing development might support new development activity.

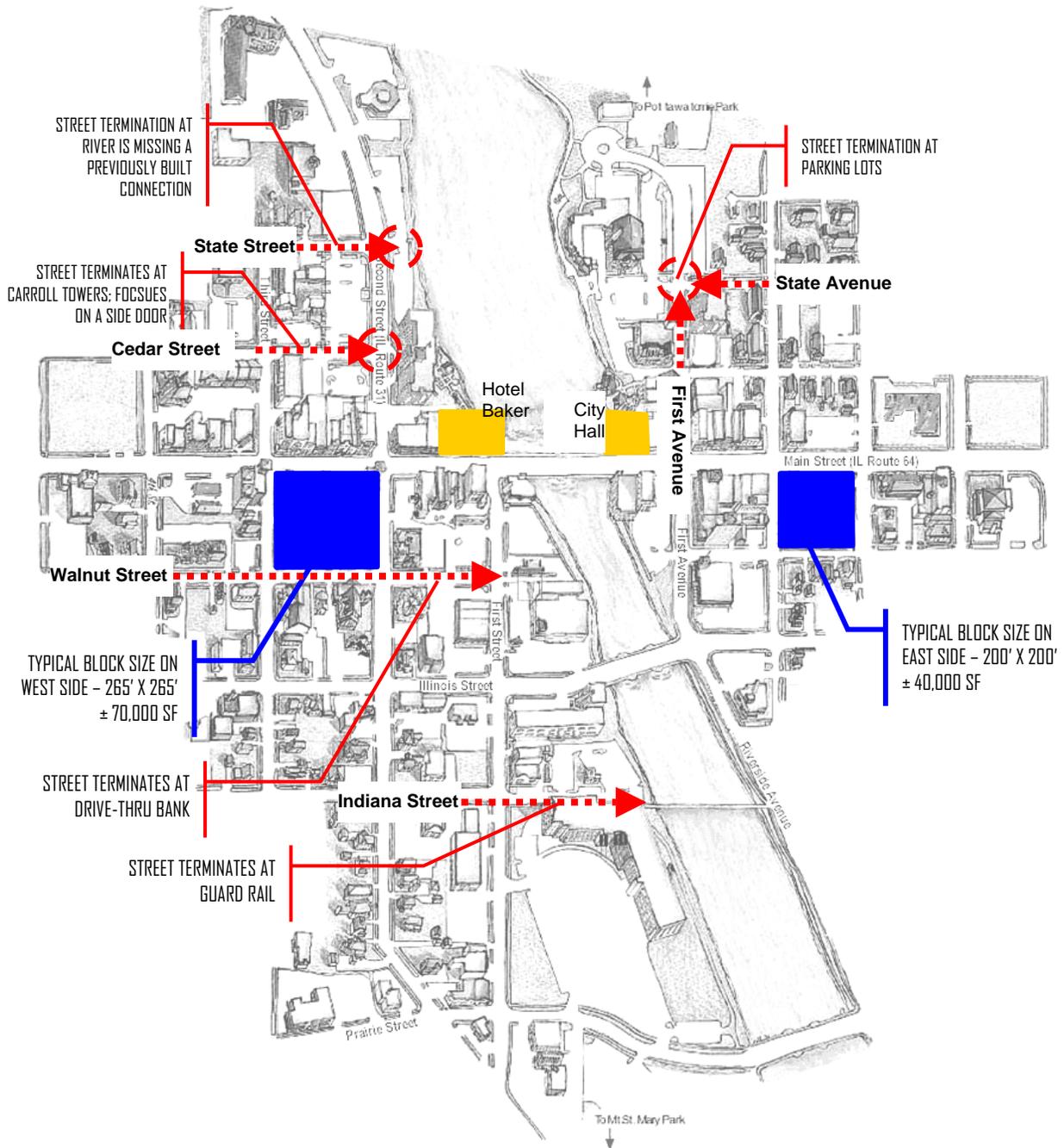


A figure-ground plane study of downtown reveals the amount of space actually occupied by buildings, streets and the river (the white areas in the diagram). The more attractive parts of downtown are those along Main Street; the less attractive parts seem to be those with more black (with the important exception of the hillside neighborhoods).

The underlying pattern of development in downtown is the grid of the streets. Of interest, blocks on the east side of the river are approximately 200 feet square, while those on the west side are generally 264 feet square. While the difference may appear insignificant, the capacity of these blocks to support development is critical. East of the river, blocks contain an area of about one acre; on the west side, the land area in each block nearly doubles. The difference in block sizes could dictate patterns of development that are different on each side of the river in order to preserve the underlying character of downtown.



Terminations of the street grid are also important points of consideration. In particular, when streets terminate at the river, the termination should be “celebrated;” in downtown St. Charles, streets terminate at the river in twisted end guardrails (Indiana Street) or a drive-up bank (Walnut Street). “Land” terminations are also troublesome in some cases: First Avenue terminates in a sea of parking, or in the long view, an electrical substation.



Block sizes and street terminations are typically forgotten elements in the patterns of a downtown; in downtown St. Charles, they are important character-defining elements that should be recognized in the patterns of redevelopment.

Special features

Landmark buildings have already been noted, as has the presence of the Fox River as a focal point for downtown. Each has a way of creating a unique identity for downtown St. Charles, and in the strategic plan, methods must be devised to allow each to remain prominent – even in the face of new development.

One of the more interesting elements of the riverfront is the way that development reaches to the river. The type of development of the public space of the river varies from one area to another (a pedestrian promenade along the Municipal Complex, private spaces next to Carroll Towers and the Hotel Baker, a green edge alongside the grocery store). But it is the variety of built connections that sets the character of the riverfront. A small overlook near the Police Station is very simple; “Fisherman’s Plaza” is more elaborate. The boathouse and the overlook at the Hotel Baker are interesting structures (although public access is limited). Even the overlooks on the Main Street bridge provide a point along the riverfront that varies from other connections to the river. As the riverfront is considered, this pattern of idiosyncratic connections to the river might continue; it adds interest and marks the rhythm of the riverfront.



Public art in downtown is relatively non-existent – which seems odd for a downtown that is so strongly oriented to pedestrians. The introduction of art works in ways that enhance other necessary components of downtown should be considered, rather than simply installing pieces as a way to get art into the environment.

Redevelopment opportunities



When the future of downtown is considered, it will be important to understand what should change. The investigation might be framed by understanding which parcels are susceptible to change. Parcels such as the Harris Bank drive-up facility are underutilized when its location next to the river is considered, and there are other locations where the intensity of development on a parcel is not appropriate for a downtown. Obsolete uses are also likely places for change to occur; the former Piano Factory Outlet Mall site is changing and change is likely to occur in the surrounding area. There are also vacant parcels, or parcels with parking, in locations that are out of context for the downtown that should be considered.

Other places for attention are as simple as uses that are unattractive or do not support the desired character of Downtown (the tire shops at the south end of First Street, for example). While the strategic plan does not advocate



the elimination of all “undesirable” uses, it does suggest ways to more directly integrate them into the fabric of downtown. For instance, there is no reason that a tire shop should not be located in downtown; what it looks like is a strong point of consideration, however. There may also be parcels with land use conflicts, or that are inappropriate to leave as parking lots as structured parking is developed. Downtown’s future should consider the full range of possibilities, but it should also attempt to be innovative in the ways that needed but unattractive uses are integrated with other development.

Opportunities that offer engagement of the river are among the most important to consider. Redevelopment activities that support the community’s goals of public access to the river should be encouraged, but the character of the development is also important. Development that creates a sense of activity on the river should be encouraged (even private balconies for residences along the river create life). Connections within the spaces between north/south streets and the river should be considered; points of connection do not have to occur solely at east/west street terminations at the river or at bridges – a garden path or a mews might offer a more interesting connection (at least one that is different).

Patterns of redevelopment activity, when framed in terms of susceptibility to change, will reveal larger patterns that indicate change, with pockets of existing uses that might otherwise fit desired directions. These small parcels may be the most difficult to deal with; they are appropriate as they exist, but they might limit the ability to create more appropriate patterns on the surrounding parcels. The strategic plan must be able to address the future of these parcels, and allow for design or phasing of redevelopment activities that accommodate such conditions.

Ultimately, the nature of a downtown is evolutionary; the constant change brings renewed life and allows the downtown to maintain its vibrancy. Well-considered redevelopment activities will permit downtown St. Charles to change according to its evolutionary nature, and according to the vision of the community.

The Community's Vision for Downtown St. Charles

The future downtown St. Charles will be a place treasured by those who live, work, shop, and play there. It will have maintained its architectural and historical integrity, small town qualities, and pleasing, safe environment. At the same time, it will be a place of vitality where people go to engage in cultural, social, recreational, entertainment and commercial activities.

Downtown will host a diversity of indoor and outdoor opportunities for shopping, entertainment, dining, recreation, and culture for area families of all types and income levels. Investors, developers and entrepreneurs will capitalize on redevelopment opportunities for attaining this diversity. Redevelopment will be focused on under-utilized parcels, corridors, and riverfront areas.

The physical environment and the social and commercial activities in downtown will reflect a refined community character and values. People will live, work, recreate and shop downtown.

Downtown St. Charles will be a vibrant retail and dining district. Shoppers will enjoy walking and wandering in mercantile sectors featuring a flow of vibrant, diverse and distinctive shops. A quality mix of restaurants and delicatessens will offer shoppers and workers a delightful break. Downtown St. Charles will have a lively nighttime personality. People from throughout the region will be attracted to downtown's quality mix of dining and entertainment experiences.

People will enjoy downtown's recreational qualities centered on the riverfront and parks. Residents and visitors will be seen enjoying a variety of recreational activities, including sightseeing, walking, jogging, biking, picnicking, fishing, canoeing and kayaking.

Main Street will be an artery for vehicular traffic and a pedestrian-oriented stream of economic vitality crossing the natural beauty of the Fox River. Accommodation of vehicular modes of travel will be convenient and functional as well as aesthetically designed.

St. Charles residents, as a whole, will continue to participate in the planning and decision making processes that determine the success and future of the downtown.

Guiding Principles for Downtown St. Charles Design and Development

The Downtown St. Charles Strategy Plan provides direction and focus for initiatives that will achieve the community's vision for downtown St. Charles. These guiding principles provide the basis for strategies presented in this plan and a framework for assessing the appropriateness of downtown development projects that might be proposed in the future.

1. Promote developments and improvements that provide for the public's enjoyment of continuous waterfront activities. The Fox River should always be the primary focal point for the downtown area – it should feel like its centerpiece. Downtown development should embrace and celebrate the community's history as a river town by making optimum use of river views and reinforcing links between the river and development corridors, downtown districts and even the neighborhoods at the edges. A continuous waterfront experience – complete with walking paths, public art and restaurants – should be encouraged and pursued in earnest.
2. Preserve architectural and historical integrity. Downtown's unique history and architecture should be held as community treasures that are irreplaceable. Preserving its past should enhance the distinguishable character of downtown St. Charles. New development, redevelopment and infill construction should be appropriate to the historic qualities of downtown's built environment.
3. Promote a pedestrian-friendly, aesthetically pleasing, interesting and safe environment. Downtown St. Charles should continue to be known as a safe, walkable place where one can feel comfortable and safe whether walking, driving, bicycling or relaxing. Streetscape elements that extend the character of Main Street should be incorporated throughout the downtown district. Public spaces and amenities should be constructed and maintained so as to complement, rather than detract from, the aesthetic qualities of the downtown's historic structures and natural beauty. Public art should be placed strategically to provide links to the riverfront and to serve as interpretive displays that tell a story and "reward" pedestrians as they explore the various areas of the downtown district.
4. Preserve small town character. The scale of development should respect downtown's landmarks and its qualities as a small town nestled in a river valley. Parks, the hillside and neighborhoods define the boundaries of downtown. Development of "downtown uses" should always remain within these bounds.
5. Solidify and maintain a vibrant and diverse retail base that promotes a quality shopping experience. A prevailing sense of activity and intensity of development should draw people throughout all of downtown. Goods and services offered by downtown retailers should appeal to the lifestyles and demands of the growing consumer market. Businesses that promote a quality image of the downtown district that is distinguishable from competing shopping areas should be retained and recruited. Downtown St. Charles' position in the market will be strengthened through the cultivation of quality retail businesses.
6. Prioritize underutilized parcels and corridors for redevelopment. Businesses and non-conforming land uses that undermine the character of downtown should be targeted for redevelopment. However, they should not be disturbed until more intense, higher use development is imminent. A pro-active approach for redevelopment should be planned and executed to prevent the transition to, or an exchange of, marginal uses once land becomes vacant or available for sale.
7. Promote a 24-hour environment featuring a variety of land uses. Downtown land use should be mixed so downtown will grow and flourish as a city center that accommodates a variety of activities. Commercial, office, residential and recreational uses are all desirable uses that enhance downtown's vitality.
8. Offer family oriented experiences and activities for all ages and incomes. Downtown must have attractions and appeal that cater to the lifestyles of residents. Arts, special events, entertainment and recreation strengthen downtown's appeal as an effervescent city center.

Downtown St. Charles Development Goals

Ultimately, the goal for development in downtown St. Charles must be to create attractive patterns of development that support the community's vision, and result in the highest and best use of the limited land resources in downtown. As the conditions of downtown St. Charles are understood, the ability to review opportunities for change must also be considered. A "susceptibility to change" analysis begins to frame the potential for new development or redevelopment within downtown.

A range of factors is useful in this analysis:

- *Regulatory factors* consider land use and conflicts with existing zoning or land use guides; or opportunities where tax capacity is not maximized (implying that current use may not be the highest and best use of the parcel).
- *Site and/or building factors* consider vacant or underutilized parcels or buildings; obsolete buildings (buildings which may no longer be able to serve a contemporary use); or buildings that might require significant repair or renovation.
- *Market factors* consider uses (regardless of the structure that houses them) that are obsolete; or that an attractive alternative to the current use might be possible.
- *Ownership factors* consider transitions in the current business; land and/or buildings that are for sale; or, simply, that the owner is interested in making a change to the land or building.
- *Community factors* consider that a use is not consistent or supportive of the vision for downtown; or that the aesthetics are detracting from downtown's image.

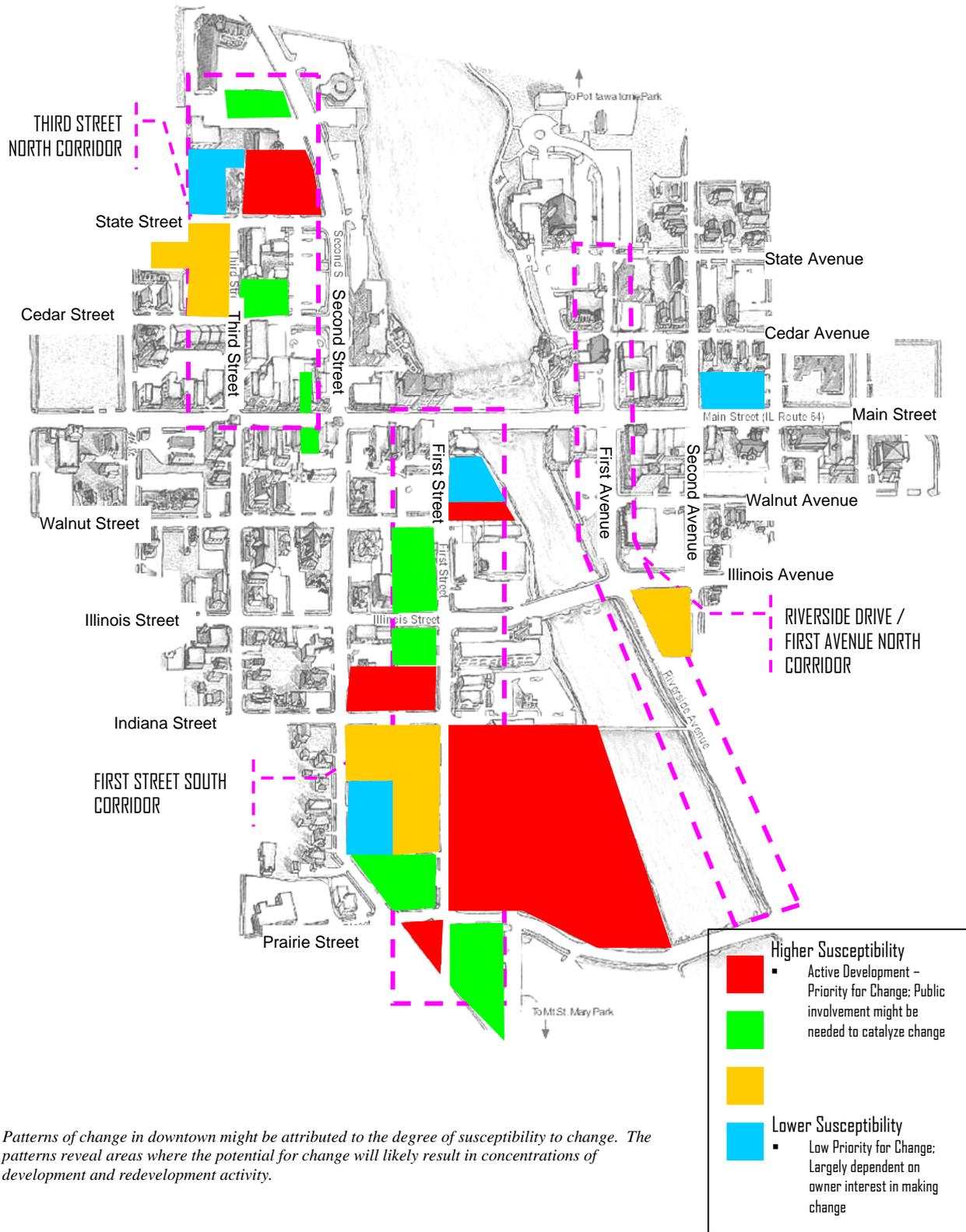
Parcels in downtown were assessed given those factors and general criteria. Parcels with higher susceptibility to change are those where redevelopment should be actively pursued, and where the priority for change might call for city involvement to catalyze and direct development. Parcels with lower susceptibility to change are those where the change is largely dependent on the owner's interest in making the change. Certain assumptions and interpretations have been made in defining susceptibility in downtown St. Charles, and an indication of susceptibility does not mean that a parcel must change. Similarly, a low susceptibility does not necessarily mean that a parcel should not change, or that change will not occur in the near future. The more important direction gained from this analysis of susceptibility to change is the larger patterns that are seen as individual parcels are considered together.

In the diagram of susceptibility appearing on the following page, the definition of corridors of development activity offers insights about where the public sector might take an active role to catalyze and direct development. The resulting "zones" reflect potential development activity based on aggregations of susceptible parcels.

Beyond the identification of likely development activity zones based on susceptibility to change, there are other goals that support development activity along three corridors in downtown:

- First Street South
- Third Street North
- Riverside Drive and First Avenue North

All three corridors offer opportunities for development activity as well as public and private initiatives that support the community's goals of engaging the river and enhancing and expanding the downtown St. Charles experience. In addition, the Century Corners district would benefit from certain enhancements that might increase its coherence, accessibility and identity.



Patterns of change in downtown might be attributed to the degree of susceptibility to change. The patterns reveal areas where the potential for change will likely result in concentrations of development and redevelopment activity.

Downtown St. Charles Development Patterns

Downtowns are evolutionary in their nature. Downtown St. Charles, for all that it has changed in the last five or ten years, has been around since 1834. It would be unrealistic to think that changes that are needed or desired could be implemented in just a few years. The community does not possess the resources to make the desired changes happen so quickly, and such rapid change would be contrary to downtown's evolutionary nature. The development patterns that are proposed in this plan should be considered for implementation over a much longer period – ten, fifteen or even twenty years. While some changes will have immediacy, the goal is to allow downtown St. Charles to continue its evolution in an incremental manner.

General Patterns of Development in Downtown St. Charles

Regardless of one's location in Downtown St. Charles, there are certain patterns that seem logical, appropriate and necessary to keep it vital and maintain its character. Within each of downtown's corridors or districts, the patterns can be shaped to respond to its more specific character and opportunities. Continuity will be created by the consistent use of elements through all the corridors and districts and the overall focus on a pedestrian experience.

Definition of Downtown Boundaries

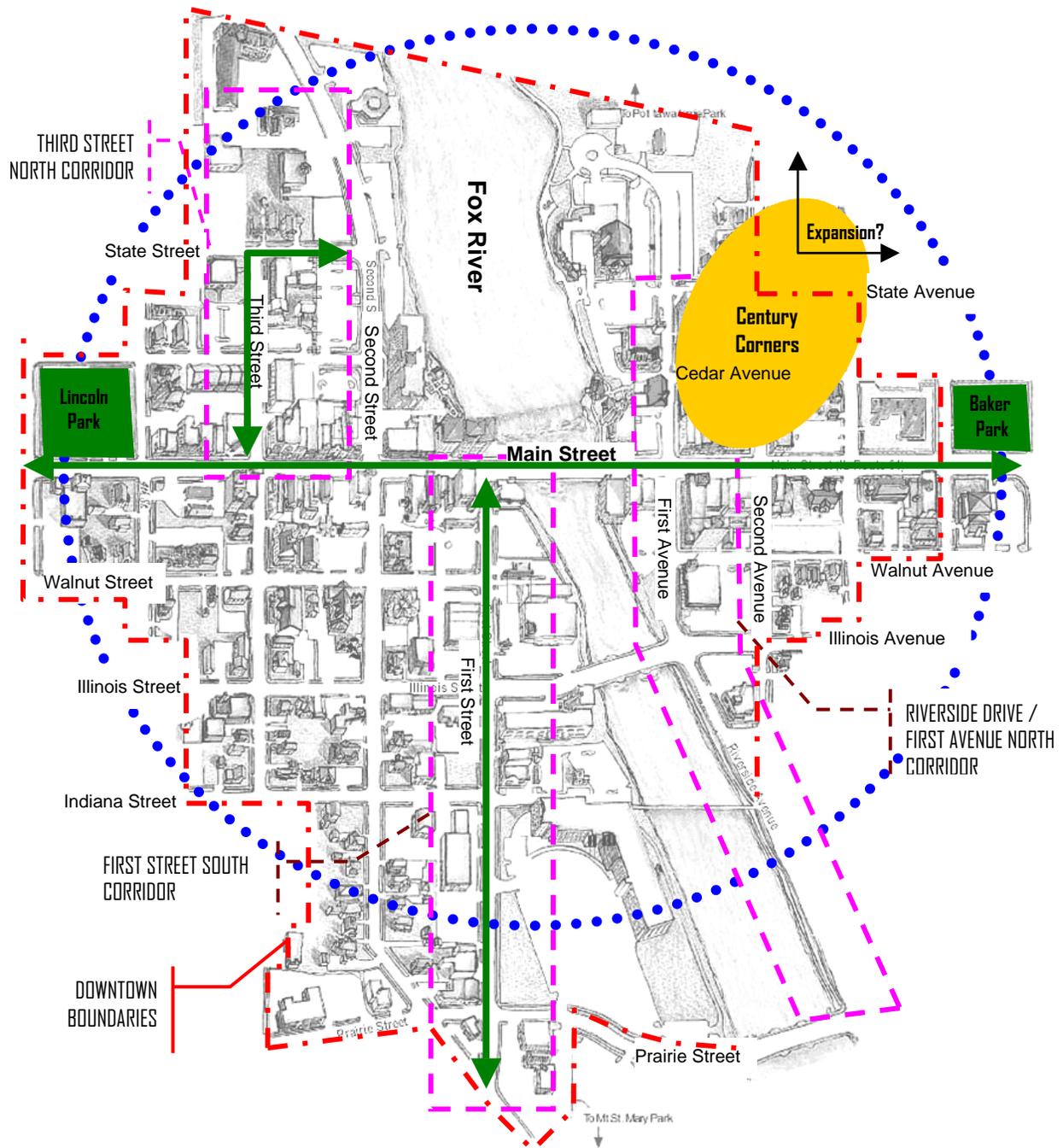
Downtown's strengths include its proximity to the river and its compact quality. These factors must be recognized in any planning efforts for downtown, and the character derived from each should be central to the future of downtown St. Charles. Parks, the hillsides and neighborhoods define the boundaries of downtown, and the river becomes the natural focus. Development of "downtown uses" should always remain within these bounds; expansion outside of these marking features would seem out of context. The application of land use boundaries that do not recognize those features that already define downtown would appear arbitrary and would feel inappropriate. Downtown St. Charles must be defined by boundaries based on those features that are intrinsic to its context.

Defining boundaries reinforces the compact nature of downtown. Nearly all of downtown is within a one-quarter mile radius of the center of the Main Street bridge – a five-minute walk. Establishing a boundary for downtown that is based on a pedestrian scale makes sense for downtown St. Charles, and it happens to coincide with other features that naturally define downtown.

Once boundaries are recognized and established, marking the entrances to downtown with "gateways" becomes more important. In particular, points along Route 31 might be reinforced as gateways; entries to downtown along Main Street seem to be formed by the ways in which buildings, parks and streetscape elements, making gateway statements less critical, but perhaps still desirable.

The topographic qualities of downtown reinforce its "river town" feel, and the river should always be the primary focal point for downtown. As much as the edges of downtown need to be defined to maintain its compact qualities, the Fox River should feel like its centerpiece. That the river is geographically central is not enough; links between development corridors, downtown districts and even the neighborhoods at the edges should be reinforced. Even as the river itself is developed with additional pedestrian amenities, the ways in which those features reach out through downtown should be considered.

Retail and service uses in houses at the fringe of the five-minute walk boundaries form transitions to surrounding neighborhoods. Century Corners and the hillside west of the river are expanding with these kinds of uses. The City of St. Charles should assess how continued expansion might impact the neighborhoods. Limits to B2T zoning boundaries should be established and permitted uses should be considered as a means of maintaining downtown's compact nature and the residential qualities of these neighborhoods.



Logical boundaries for downtown can be framed from the natural patterns of the river valley, the location of significant community features (such as parks), the presence of neighborhoods and the focus on the Fox River. Corridors for development and redevelopment activity generally fall within the bounds of a five-minute walk.

The “Quadrants” of Downtown

There is only one downtown, and the notion that it should be divided into quadrants needs to be reconsidered. Without question, Main Street and the Fox River create barriers, but given the compactness and development potential of downtown, it is more important to focus on creating corridors that link the edges of downtown to Main Street. The strategy for integration is two-fold: extend the basic streetscape character of Main Street along the length of development corridors; and create activity and intensity of development within each corridor. The streetscape patterns might vary with the underlying patterns of each corridor, but the same basic elements should be employed; and, while businesses in each area might be unique, there should be the sense of activity that will draw people throughout all of downtown.

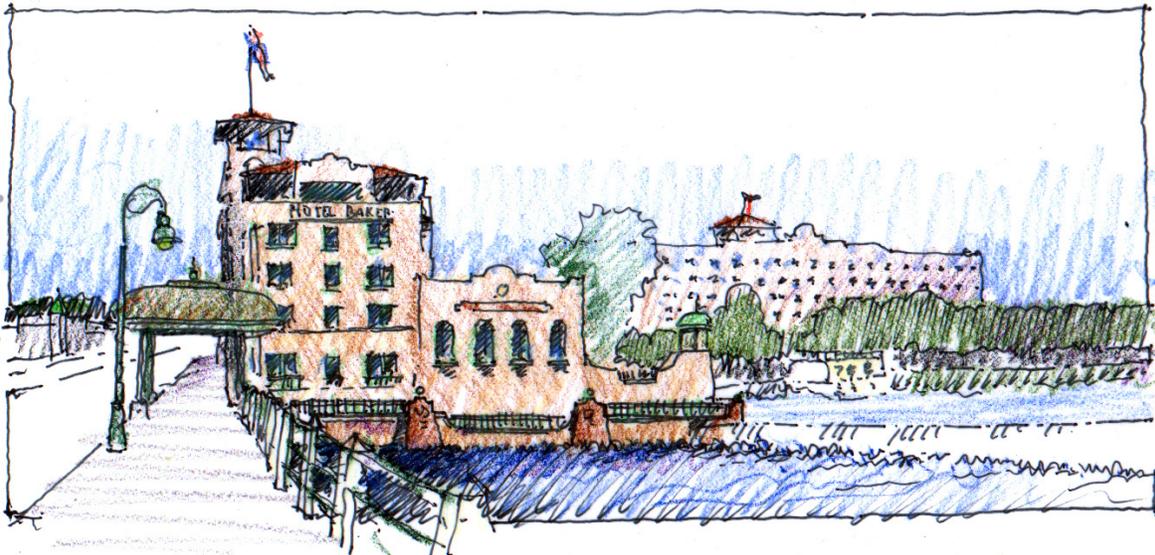
There may still be difficulties in making each of four “quadrants” function as a whole, but the character that is pursued for downtown St. Charles should be of a singular pattern.

Riverfront

The goal for the riverfront is simple: develop a continuous pedestrian loop from the railroad bridge to Mount St. Mary Park. As the loop is considered, the riverfront should express a different character along its length in downtown – recognizing the subtle or dramatic differences in the river environment in downtown as a part of the pedestrian experience. There should be opportunities to create interesting and unique – even idiosyncratic – points of intersection between the river and the pedestrian loop so that no part of the loop seems to repeat itself.

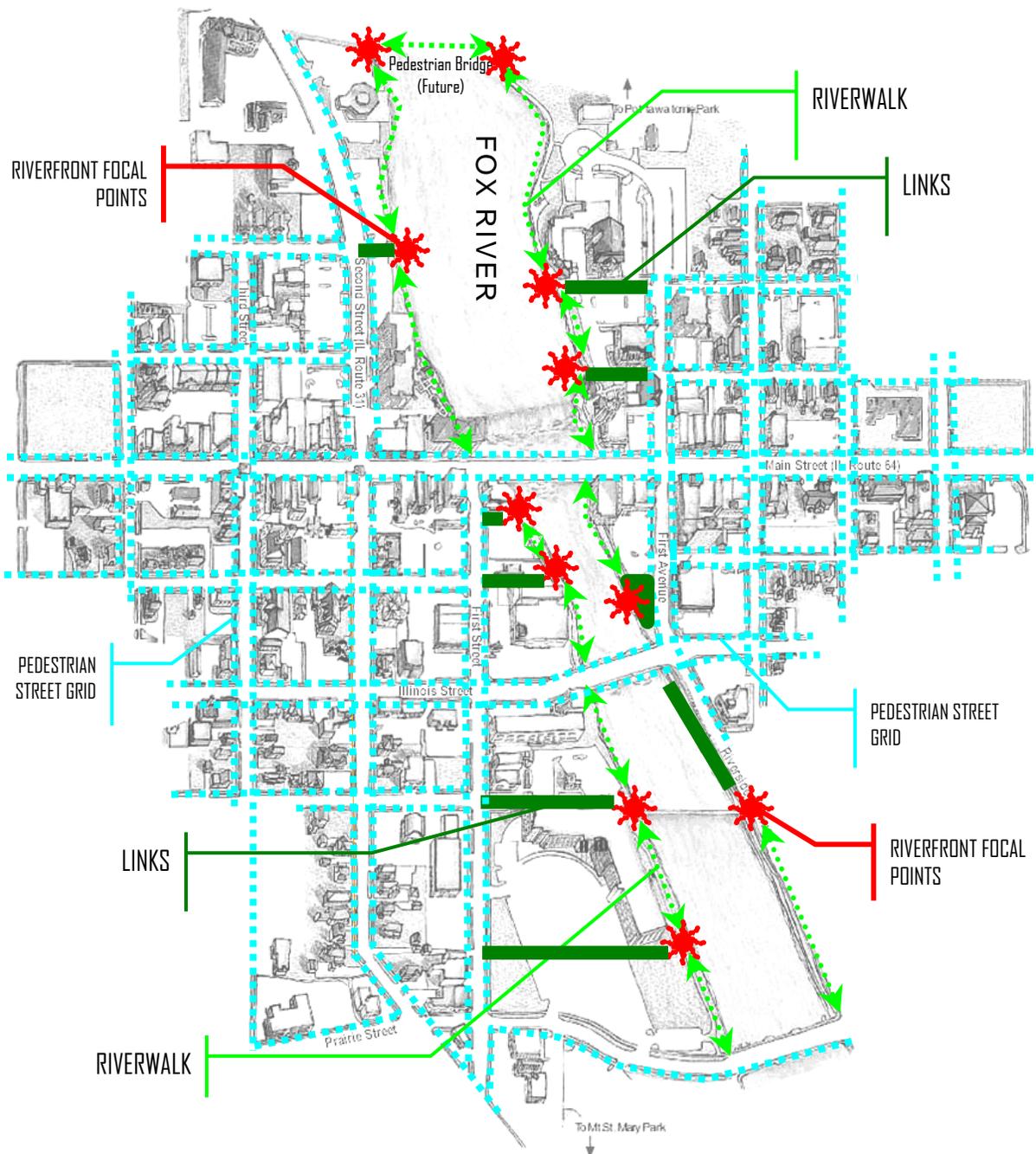
In the effort to enhance the riverfront for pedestrians it is essential to create connections between downtown and the riverfront. Those links should invite people to move easily between the two. Connections that extend the pedestrian network of streets to the riverfront might logically be pursued – following the street rights-of-way with pedestrian facilities. The nature of these connections might offer more consistency than the riverfront experience; conceiving of those links as gardens might seem to build a mental connection between the natural qualities of the river and the urban qualities of downtown.

Because the river is the focal point of downtown, uses that abut the river need to be considered carefully. Elimination or relocation of parking lots and facilities such as the Harris Bank drive-up tellers should be pursued. Long expanses of blank or inactive walls should also be eliminated or screened.



Difficulties in creating a continuous riverfront pedestrian experience occur at several locations. A connection around the base of the Hotel Baker might reflect the architecture of this historic structure, and provide an important link between Main Street and the riverfront north of the hotel.

Probably the most significant challenge on the riverfront is how to make the connection across Main Street to create a continuous pedestrian loop. In fact, this may be impossible; there may simply be too many obstacles in too limited a zone to feasibly overcome. But if the pedestrian network along downtown streets is recognized and enhanced, the notion of integration of the riverfront and downtown pedestrian systems and experiences is logical and even desirable. Attention must then be directed to street crossings, such that they do not become limiting to either system.



Connecting downtown and the riverfront is a major goal of this plan, and these links form the highlights of the pedestrian experience. The development of gardens with strong focal termini celebrates the relationship between an urban experience in downtown and a natural one along the river.

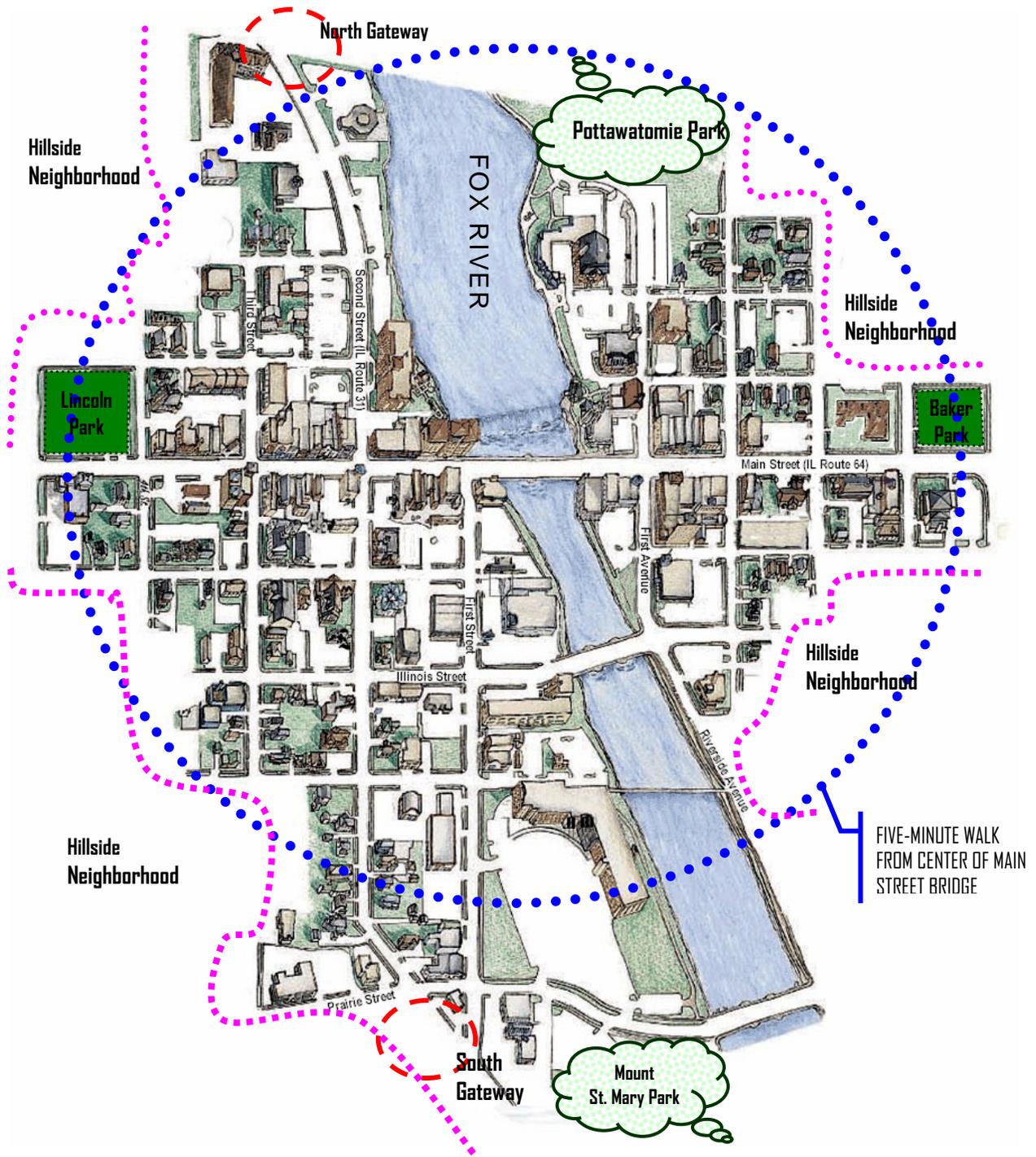
Pedestrian Movement

The pedestrian experience is nurtured by keeping downtown focused on an area that is compact and walkable – this plan recognizes the five-minute walk from the center of downtown as logical limits for downtown. It also places great emphasis on improving the experience for pedestrians in downtown by eliminating (or at least intensely landscaping) surface parking lots, creating active buildings along pedestrian corridors, and, ultimately, eliminating or relocating auto-oriented uses. The development of streetscape improvements along corridors, and then along side streets within the development corridors, will expand and further enhance the attractiveness of downtown St. Charles as a place for pedestrians.

The other factor that cannot be overlooked is the attraction of the riverfront as a pedestrian experience. While it might be possible to experience downtown architecture from an automobile, the riverfront demands a pedestrian perspective. As areas along development corridors evolve, every opportunity for creating links to the riverfront should be seized. And the completion of a riverfront loop should be given high priority.

While both streets and the riverfront offer pedestrian experiences, this plan recognizes that the riverfront provides a system of movement for pedestrians that is separate from the grid of the streets. The quality of the riverfront experience should be different – more restful and leisurely, more of a stroll, more opportunities for encountering public art or finding a quiet spot to rest. The street experience might be more lively and social, more active, more engaging. At times, the two systems will overlap, creating yet a third kind of experience (perhaps one that draws on both the designed qualities of the street and the natural qualities of the river). But it is the diversity of the experience – the chance that the experience will be different during every visit to downtown – that will create memories for people in downtown St. Charles.





A radius forming a five-minute walk boundary (centered on the Main Street bridge) is a key to creating a pedestrian experience in downtown. The boundary of a five-minute walk includes nearly all of downtown, and even reaches into surrounding neighborhoods (reinforcing the notion of these areas being downtown neighborhoods).

Special Features

Memories of downtown St. Charles will result from the elements that are more unique – those that recall the community’s history or begin to tell a story about the people and the place. Focus should be directed on the creation of more thought provoking, more sensual, or more delightful features. Downtown St. Charles should expand on its character as a vibrant downtown on the river by adding public art and creating public and private gardens throughout downtown. The spaces that might otherwise be considered the “left-overs” might become highlights – with art pieces occupying an otherwise “deadly” terminal view, or gardens inserted as the connection between a street and the riverfront.

Features that highlight the historic qualities of downtown St. Charles might also be emphasized. While the buildings and the context of downtown suggest history, identifying the age and evolution of structures might further emphasize downtown as a place of history.

When these kinds of features are added to a downtown, the experience becomes one of discovery and renewal. People are intrigued as new pieces of downtown are revealed to them, and they are enlightened as they form the connections between an art piece and the story it tells of the place. With works that are permanent and temporary, people find

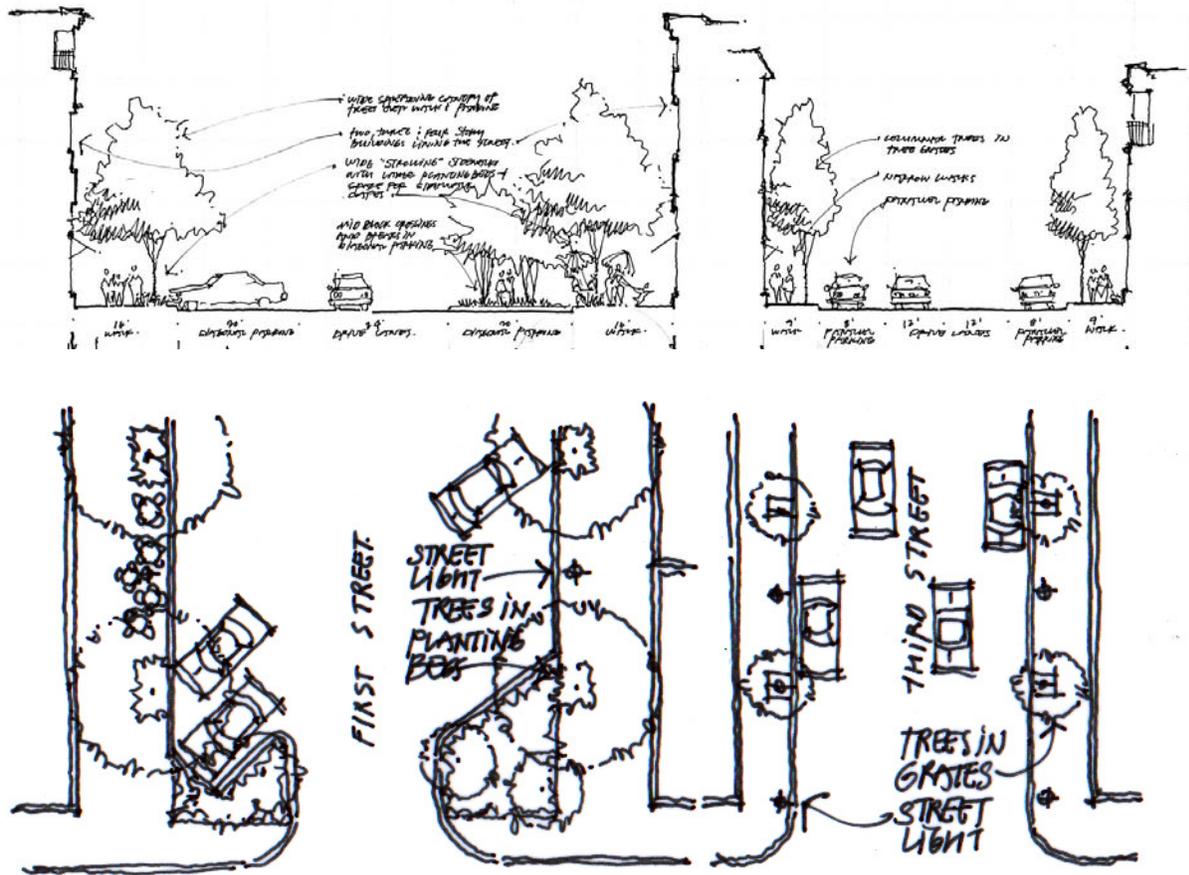
new reasons to visit and explore downtown. With gardens that invite, people return to experience the transition of downtown through the seasons and through time. These features do not produce taxes, they do not add more parking, and they do not solve the ills of a downtown. Newly restored buildings, new development projects and enhanced streetscapes might allow a downtown to “sing,” but we want downtown St. Charles to dance as well.



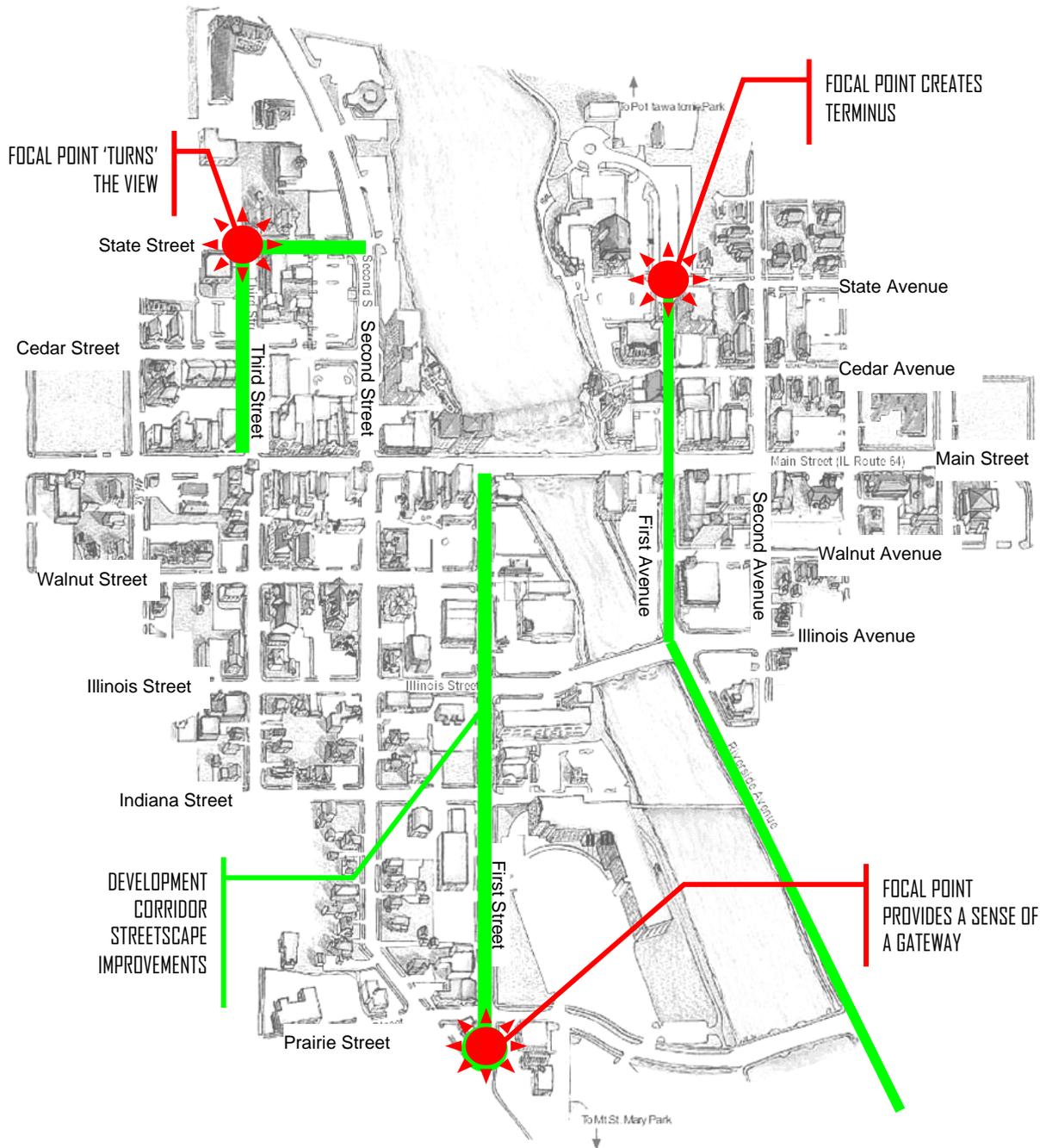
Streetscape

The idea of “streetscape” really goes beyond the commonly held notion of street trees, pedestrian-scaled lights and benches. It has to do with the creation of a continuous experience formed by consistent application of urban design elements and the creation of attractive spaces for people. The streetscape of downtown St. Charles should consider the entire space from façade to façade – including, in fact, the façade and the building itself. The goal in downtown should be the creation of an unbroken streetscape focused on pedestrian activity along the primary streets of each of the development corridors in downtown.

Beginning with the use of elements from Main Street as the primary vocabulary of the streetscape, other streets should be developed in ways that reflect the more individual character of each development corridor – such as their spatial qualities, the form of development, and their orientation and proximity to the river. This strategy would allow both Century Corners and First Street South, for example, to develop a streetscape that makes them feel like they are part of downtown, but there would most definitely be a different feel for each.



The patterns of the streetscape vary along streets in downtown, but are consistent in the application of the elements. Parking should be incorporated on streets to the greatest degree possible, even introducing diagonal parking at points along First Street where the width of the right-of-way and the patterns of development allow.



Streetscape enhancements occur within each corridor, forming strong links to the enhancements already accomplished along Main Street. Focal points within each corridor provide a sense of a gateway (at First Street South), a terminus (at First Avenue), or an opportunity to “turn” the view (Third Street North).

Built Environment

This plan advocates the continued evolution of downtown as a mixed-use environment, striving for both horizontal and vertical mixing of uses (especially relative to the creation of residential uses in downtown). The scale of development should respect downtown's landmarks and its qualities of a small town nestled in a river valley. The character of development should place great emphasis on the detail of buildings – those elements that would be particularly appreciated by pedestrians. The design character of downtown buildings is important as well; new buildings should not mimic downtown's landmarks and should not be fashioned with historic facades. Buildings should reveal downtown's history and continued evolution; old buildings that remain a part of downtown's fabric should maintain their historic architectural integrity. New buildings should be designed with a sense of the traditions of buildings typical of a small town downtown (in terms of scale, height, bulk, fenestration, placement and detail), but with materials and design influences that reflect contemporary development.

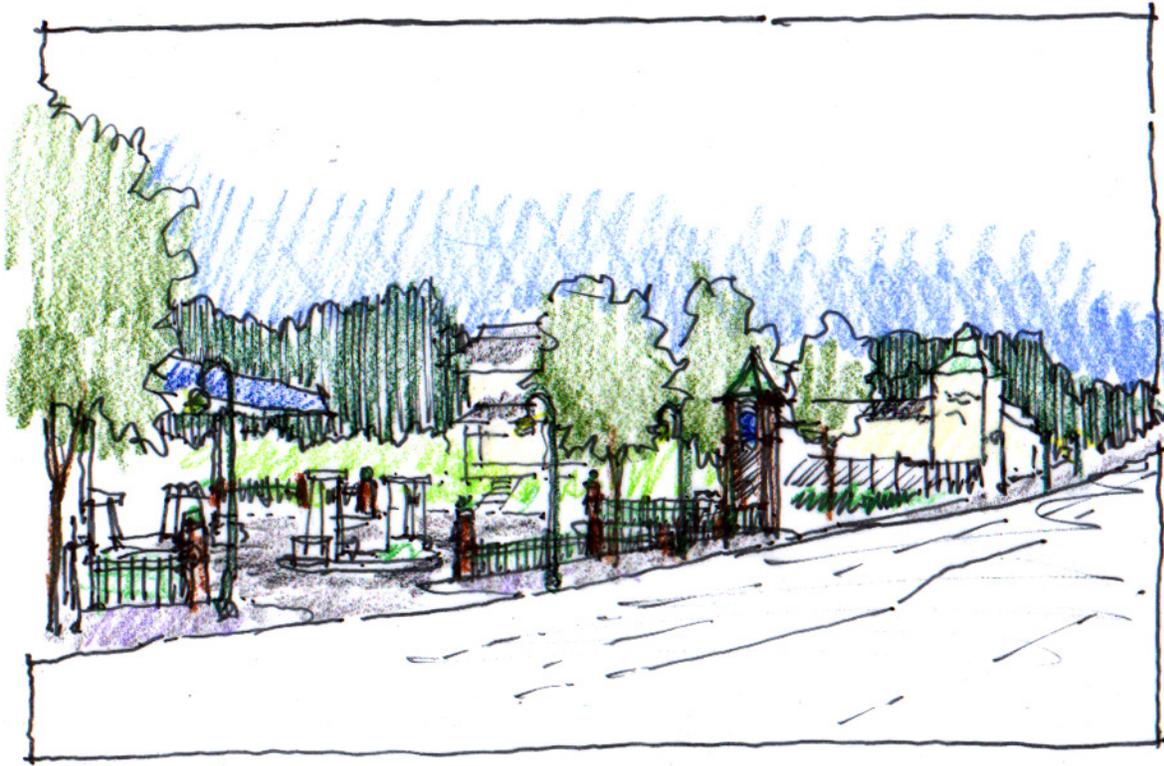
When buildings in downtown are developed, they should be designed with the understanding that the community wants to make lasting improvements. Many of downtown's buildings have been a part of the community for nearly a century, and some for even more than a century. New development should have the same degree of permanence. The ability to insert a variety of uses into the same basic structure during its lifetime is the goal; flexibility is the key.

The extent of non-building space in downtown may have the greatest impact on the image of downtown and the quality of the pedestrian environment. Spaces that are not used for buildings and not dedicated to parking or service requirements of buildings should not be considered "leftovers." These areas (and even those spaces that are used for parking or service) should be developed in ways that are attractive and inviting. An alley, for example, is only used for garbage collection for a few minutes each week; the rest of the time it should not detract from downtown. An alley developed as a linear garden – even if pedestrians are restricted from using it – is far more appropriate to the vision for downtown. Even parking lots can be more highly developed as pedestrian spaces (once someone gets out of their car in a parking lot, they become a pedestrian); parking lots in downtown St. Charles might also be re-considered – a courtyard might be the influence, with more trees, landscaping and other features which more tightly integrate it into the overall experience of downtown.

While all new buildings should be at least two stories, buildings that are three stories might be encouraged, and buildings that are four stories might be allowed in some circumstances (depending on their height relative to nearby buildings and their ability to mitigate their heights with stepped back facades). In fact, from a redevelopment perspective, it should be anticipated that developers will require the largest development possible in order to satisfy their pro formas. If such proposals are considered, they might best be allowed under the provisions of a conditional use, where the city can exercise greater control over the building's design.

The footprint of a building and its placement on a site is equal in importance to its height. Most buildings in downtown are relatively small (in terms of the amount of ground the building itself occupies). While the city will want to respect the needs of contemporary development, an overly expansive building can destroy the fabric and experience of downtown as easily as a large surface parking lot. Building footprints should respect the scale of their neighbors, and larger buildings should respect the rhythm of "bays" in nearby buildings.

In most cases, buildings in downtown should be set at the edge of the sidewalk, but there will be exceptions. What becomes critical in these cases is what is developed in the space between the public sidewalk and the building. Parking lots in front of buildings should be avoided at all costs, but the question remains of what to do with buildings that are only slightly set back from the sidewalk. This space should be an attraction for pedestrians, and to simply "landscape it" will not suffice. Such left-over space might be better developed as an extension of a use within the building: a outdoor dining area for a restaurant, a display area for a flower shop, or even a space developed as a garden (a space that is meant to walk through, not just to look at). Land in downtown St. Charles is precious; the community should make the best use of every square foot available.



Along Main Street, a convenience store tears at the fabric of downtown. The edge of the property might be reconsidered, and improvements made that reinforce the street edge with ornamental fences, brick columns and attractive landscaping. Even the sign might be revisited; its treatment with more architectural influences might offer greater continuity with other features of downtown.

It is possible that, at some point, a development proposal will request a change in the pattern of blocks in downtown, or suggest that streets be closed or changed to one-way patterns. The underlying structure of downtown St. Charles is small blocks and a consistent street grid. To change those basic patterns is to suggest that a single development project is more important than the fabric of the community. The most appropriate development proposals will respect the foundations of development in downtown, and work to make them even more tightly connected to the existing urban qualities of development in downtown.

The public realm must also be considered in the patterns of the built environment. The continuity of the downtown is largely expressed in the patterns of the streetscape, but the ways in which streets themselves terminate or form connections should be respected. Ultimately, the transition should appear seamless. Building placement and design at the ends of streets should focus on highlights of the building, and not result in an arbitrary intersection of the street grid and the design of a building (or worse, result in a driveway entry at a street terminus). Streets should not terminate in a sea of parking, but rather an object of interest. Streets that reach toward the river should be addressed as gateways to the river, rather than “dead ends.” If downtown St. Charles continues to evolve but does not address the ways in which its public and private spaces intersect, an opportunity for creating a seamless downtown environment may be lost.

Development in Century Corners might continue to be different than in the rest of downtown. The patterns are based on residential patterns and structures (not commercial ones, as found in nearly all other downtown areas). Similar patterns might be found in the areas on the west hillside, where commercial uses have been moving slowly into the residential areas. Here, the focus might be on enhancing the pedestrian experience with more neighborhood qualities – narrower sidewalks, less frequent and more residential scaled lighting, and signage that is highly detailed and reflective of the qualities of its related structure (more an extension of the house than an advertisement). Even as these areas transition to become more commercially oriented, they still retain their residential qualities and, in some cases, their residents. The sense of neighborhoods at the edge of downtown is important to the sense of a small town, and the continued evolution of these areas as neighborhoods will be central to downtown’s vision.

Traffic

Traffic in downtowns has always been the proverbial “two-edged sword” – without traffic, downtown businesses suffer; with too much traffic, the pedestrian experience is diminished. In St. Charles, it will be impossible to overcome the volume of traffic on Main Street (unless another river crossing is developed in the immediate region). Alternatives to the use of Main Street as a “through route” should continue to be considered, but if other communities can serve as an example, traffic levels would likely return to the higher levels within just a few years.

It may be more effective to focus on alternatives for local traffic – creating routes that might be preferred by people who are simply moving about the community. The extension of Prairie Street to Route 25, for example, might offer an alternative that would satisfy some local traffic, or at least provide a more local route and entry point into downtown while taking pressure off Main Street. Creating alternative routes for trucks might prove advantageous, but there will always need to be trucks in downtown. Truck turning movements are difficult and often cause traffic problems, but the solution would likely require the acquisition and demolition of downtown buildings, which is not a good trade off and is contrary to the vision for downtown.

Continued monitoring of traffic speeds and management of the traffic that exists in downtown should be priorities. Often, traffic volumes are less problematic than traffic speed. The streetscape improvements along Main Street offer the kinds of traffic calming solutions that would typically be pursued. Traffic speed on Main Street might be best managed through additional enforcement rather than more physical changes. Ultimately, while this is a state highway, it remains St. Charles’ Main Street, and traffic behavior in keeping with “Main Street” qualities should be the goal.

Pedestrian/vehicle conflicts and the number of turning movements at Second Street and Main Street is a second priority for review. Sight lines are limited for southbound Second Street traffic and pedestrian spaces are restricted, particularly on the west side of the intersection. As with pedestrian crossings of Main Street, there is no easy solution at this intersection. Traffic on both Second Street and Main Street are allowed to make right turns on red lights, which present the greatest threat to pedestrians. While it might be investigated, prohibiting right turns on red lights would greatly increase the sense of security for pedestrians – but would likely increase congestion on both streets.

Ultimately, the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) will view traffic signal timing from a traffic flow perspective. Changes in one signal will likely require adjustments to all signals in downtown. Consistent lobbying will be required to force the issue of pedestrian movement and, especially, crossings of Main Street. Departments of Transportation across the country are being asked to look more carefully at their rules, and to give higher priority to modes of transportation other than cars (bikes and pedestrians included).

Traffic on Main Street poses the greatest challenge for pedestrians, not for vehicles. This plan advocates a review of signal timing at traffic signals along Main Street, with a goal of setting the signals to create more frequent breaks in Main Street traffic. With new development and redevelopment activity along First Street South, the intersection of Main Street and First Street South might receive priority.

In addition, pedestrian crossing indicators might be revisited. Residents have indicated that the crossing activation buttons do not appear to respond when actuated, and that it is difficult to discern the buttons that control the crossing indicators. As these concerns are investigated and addressed, the community may also consider the addition of crossing timers – essentially a clock that shows a countdown for the crossing indicator (which permits a pedestrian to know how much time is left in the pedestrian crossing cycle).

The community might even push for more radical approaches to increasing pedestrian safety. Methods of intersection control such as a concurrent stop might have a place in downtown St. Charles. With a concurrent stop intersection, all vehicles approaching the intersection are stopped and pedestrians are given the right-of-way through the entire intersection. There are no turning vehicles or through traffic to present threats to their safety. When the right-of-way is given to cars, there are no pedestrians in the intersection. This approach may have merit for consideration in downtown, but it may result in longer waiting times for pedestrians at intersections.

Directional signage improvements should be considered as part of the downtown traffic management strategy. Signage that clearly guides motorists to parking, shopping opportunities and public facilities could conceivably reduce the number of turning movements that impede traffic flow and threaten the safety of pedestrians. The development and implementation of a professionally designed, comprehensive downtown markers and way-finding signage system should be considered.

Traffic movement along primary streets in the various development corridors is also a consideration as downtown St. Charles continues to evolve. The focus on these streets must be on the pedestrian experience, and the car must take the “back seat.” The movement patterns should encourage most vehicles to enter the development corridor along crossing streets, with access to the parking structures provided primarily from the crossing streets. Streets within development corridors should be developed in ways that dictate the speed of traffic – one lane in each direction, limited (if any) turning lanes, and generous pedestrian ways with amenities that further diminish the perception of the roadway.

Parking

The ability to facilitate parking in downtown will be key to its future. The strategy employed to date has included managing existing parking resources, maintaining on-street parking, and creating off-street parking lots and structures where greater parking demand exists. This plan generally supports and expands this strategy, but calls for one significant change: Creation of off-street surface parking should be discouraged in favor of the other approaches.

Parking management and enforcement strategies should continue to provide for the variety of downtown's users. Computerized tracking and an enhanced fines structure to address frequent violators should be considered as a means of improving turnover of parking spaces intended for downtown shoppers and visitors. The investment in equipment to implement a computerized enforcement system is small when compared to the cost of constructing additional surface lots or parking structures. And the ability to apply an enhanced fine structure could prove highly effective in efforts to direct downtown employees and residents to long-term parking lots intended to serve their needs.

In any development scenario for downtown, retaining on-street parking must be a priority. Cars parked on the street lend a sense of activity and life to downtown streets, and make efficient use of the space that is already used for cars. In some cases, such as the First Street South development corridor, the development of diagonal parking should be considered as a way of increasing the quantity of on-street parking; in other areas where existing development would preclude a street wide enough for diagonal parking (for example, the Third Street North corridor), maintaining on-street parallel parking should be considered mandatory.

Land is probably the most precious of resources in downtown St. Charles, and parking is one of the most consumptive uses of available land. As significant redevelopment occurs and downtown's land uses are intensified, the number of parking spaces needed to meet parking demands will increase. A strategy that contemplates the implementation of parking structures to meet the growing demand prompted by redevelopment is a logical approach.

This plan supports the replacement of public and private surface parking lots, particularly lots along Main Street and the riverfront, as viable parking alternatives are developed and implemented. Surface parking lots abound in downtown (refer to the "figure-ground plane" diagram in the Conditional Analysis section of this plan, page 20). Beyond consuming land, surface parking lots generate little tax revenue and they are unattractive for pedestrians to walk past. While aggregation of parking uses into a parking structure is expensive, the alternatives have to be recognized in terms of these less tangible costs.

Replacement of surface lots should be directed to new development that supports the most intense use of the land possible consistent with the vision and guidelines of this plan. Some surface parking lot replacement might include the creation of temporary "green" spaces in downtown – allowing reclaimed parking lots to serve the aesthetic goals of downtown St. Charles until new development comes on line.

Creating parking structures to serve most parking needs is fundamental to creating the desired development patterns within each corridor. The ability to increase intensity of development and enhance the pedestrian experience is well served by strategically locating structured parking, just as the city has done with the existing and proposed parking structures. These facilities provide an immediate benefit to existing nearby uses, but they may do little to advance future development in areas more remote from the structure. For example, the service limit defined by city ordinance for downtown parking is 500 feet; areas to the south on First Street South will not, therefore be served by the proposed west side parking deck at First and Walnut Streets.

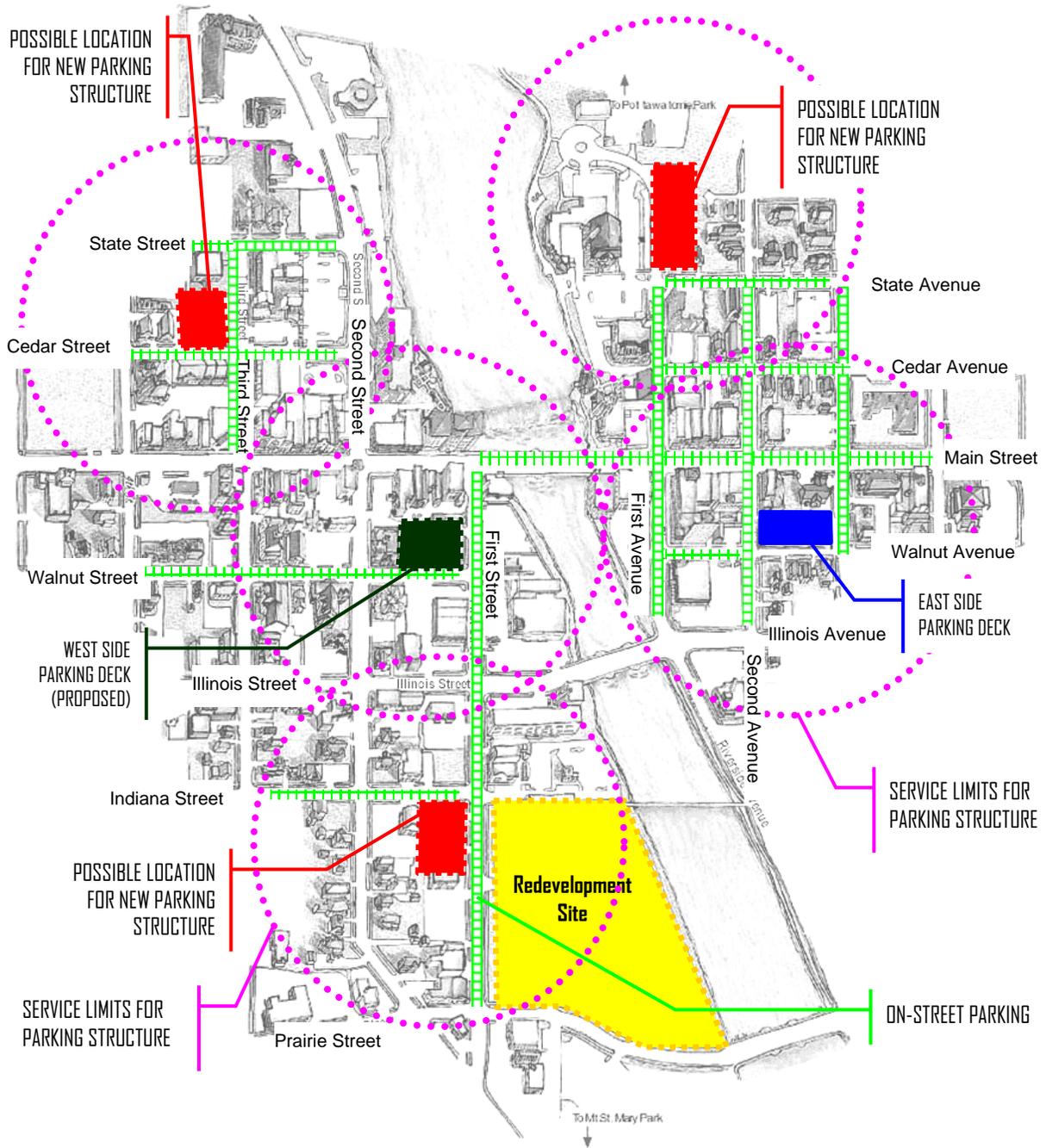
This plan encourages new development projects to anticipate the need for new parking structures, and to phase development projects in ways that maximize development as parking structures are implemented. The design and location of parking structures that might be proposed in the future will require in-depth study to ensure that a sufficient number of spaces can be created both to meet the needs of new development and to replace surface parking intended to be relocated to the new structures. A cost-benefit analysis that considers the expense of creating structured parking and the amount of revenues that might be generated through an increase in tax base and retail sales will be important to the consideration of each parking structure proposed.

As parking structures are proposed, the community should continue to stress the design of the structure and the integration of active spaces along important pedestrian routes, essentially creating storefronts at street level. Unfortunately, retail spaces created at the base of parking structures do not always attract “top dollar” renters. Consideration should be given to the type of business that might see these spaces as a desirable location, and if a suitable tenant cannot be found, the introduction of non-retail uses (such as pedestrian support facilities, art galleries, day care, medical or dental clinics, or public offices) might be considered.

One of the more insightful positions that a community can take relative to parking is to look beyond parking structures as the sole strategy for providing parking in downtown – essentially, creating new models for addressing parking. Under any scenario, the city should maintain its “urban” approach to parking that promotes public parking to meet aggregated parking demands, as opposed to “suburban” parking policies that require developers to provide on-site parking to meet the needs of individual developments. Many communities applying the suburban approach to downtown parking are finding the requirements to be inappropriate and excessive for a downtown.

Some development projects may see the need to provide or maintain off-street surface parking areas. In this case, the parking should be kept to the minimum possible, and the developer should be encouraged to provide a plan for the use of these areas if parking is ever eliminated. The city might also encourage the development of projects that offer offsetting peak parking demands – essentially making the best use of each parking space available in downtown.

Although it is likely that most people who come downtown will travel by car, alternatives should be pursued. Expanding transportation alternatives including public transit and bicycles can decrease the need for parking spaces. In the future, the City should seek out opportunities for alternative modes of transportation and to provide supporting facilities such as bus shelters and bicycle storage.



The implementation of parking structures is fundamental to creating desired development patterns and intensity. In order to maximize development of each site and provide the best opportunities for a great pedestrian experience, public parking structures might ultimately be located in each corridor. The 500-foot service radius for these facilities is important in their location; while there might be overlap, they must be strategically positioned to facilitate parking.

Specific Patterns of Development

The patterns of susceptibility to change indicate that development and redevelopment activities will likely occur in several distinct areas of downtown:

- First Street South
- Third Street North
- Riverside Drive/First Avenue
- Century Corners
- West Hillside

Each has underlying features that suggest a different character results from development and redevelopment activities, and that the market focus might vary for each as well. However, as activities are undertaken in any of the areas, the following goals should apply:

Traffic

- Develop alternatives to Route 64/Main Street for local traffic in downtown.
- Pursue alternatives to reduce truck traffic in downtown.

Parking

- Refine parking management and enforcement programs for optimum utilization of available parking.
- Maintain existing street parking and pursue opportunities to create additional on-street parking.
- Replace parking on or near the riverfront with pedestrian and riverfront amenities.
- Create intensity of development by placing parking structures at key locations in downtown.

Use

- Allow development corridors to evolve with a mix of uses, with primarily retail and office uses at street level and residential or office above; at selected locations, development may be all office or all residential as long as the corridor remains largely mixed in use.
- Develop buildings that can accommodate a range of uses over their lifetime; build to last 50 to 100 years.
- Build at least two stories at all downtown buildings (regardless of use) and no greater than four stories.
- Expand opportunities for housing with projects that are more urban in their scale and density.

Riverfront

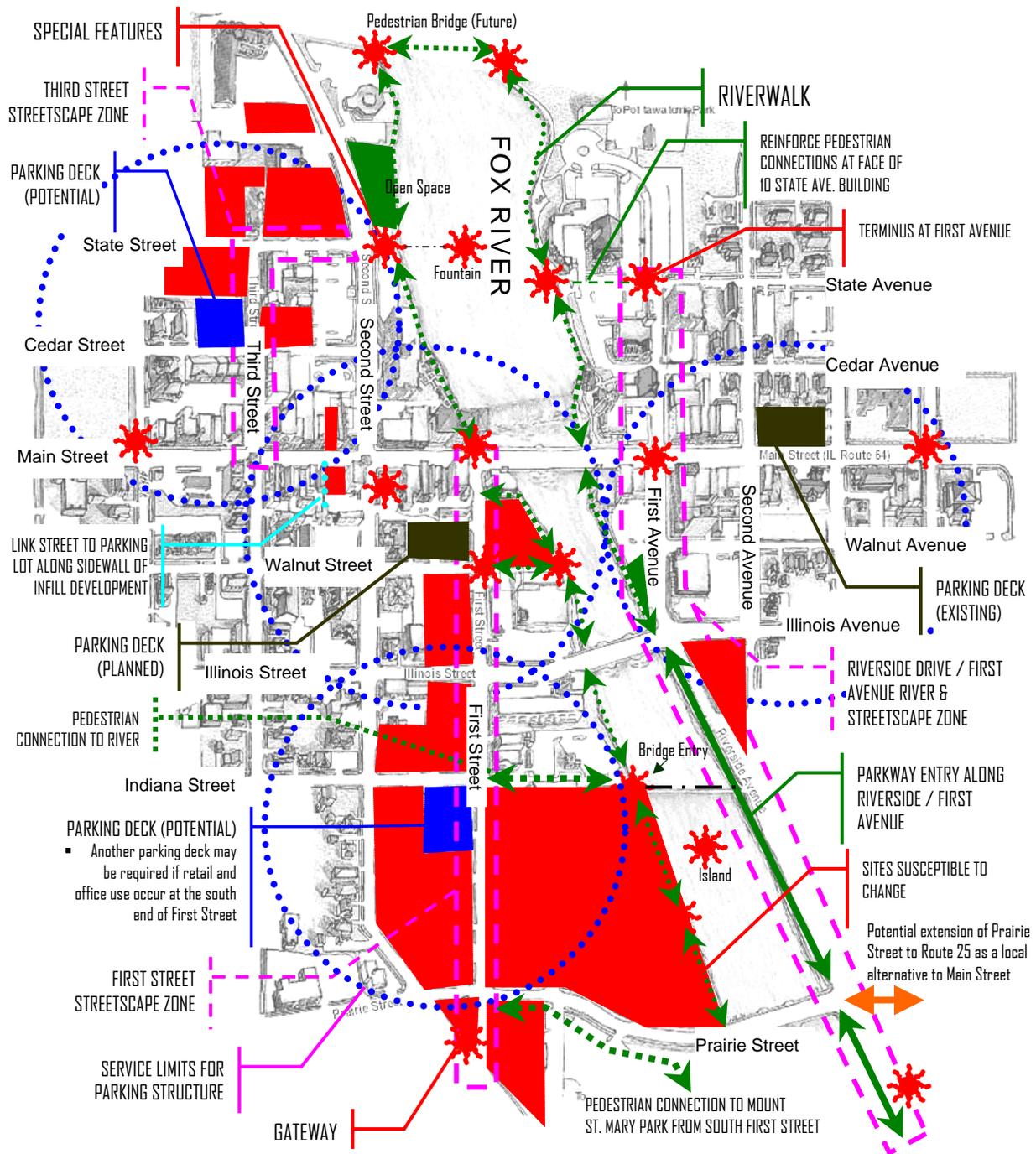
- Create a continuous pedestrian loop along the Fox River from Prairie Street to the railroad bridge; utilize street connections at the Main Street bridge.
- Develop pedestrian connections between First Street South and the river that invite pedestrians to move toward the river.
- Enhance views to the river from major streets (Route 31 north of Main Street, in particular).

Pedestrians

- Create pedestrian experiences on downtown streets and in downtown's public spaces that are a complement to Main Street and the river.
- Keep pedestrian crossings of Main Street at street level unless a truly compelling origin to destination relationship can be defined
- Maintain existing street parking in downtown as a buffer between pedestrians and motorists.

Special Features

- Use works of art at key "urban intersections," at gateways and along the riverfront.
- Employ public art as a way of telling the story of St. Charles, and to offer opportunities for discovery and delight for pedestrians in downtown and on the riverfront.



Development follows corridors that intersect Main Street and captures opportunities for creating greater intensity by looking to redevelop sites that might be susceptible to short or long-term change. Connections to the river and the provision of public parking structures are also key elements of the plan.

The patterns of development in each area are summarized as follows:

- First Street South

Use: strongly commercial near Main Street (street level retail and restaurants, limited office and service at street level; upper levels office or residential); strongly residential at south end (limited retail, office or service at street level; residential at street level or partially elevated above street level; upper levels residential)

Development Focus: mid-sized national retailers; “urban” housing

Character: mid-scale development as a result of potentially larger site; two and three story buildings with four stories as a conditional use; varied setback from the sidewalk, with spaces between developed for active uses; strong links to the Fox River following extensions of street rights-of-way; on-street diagonal parking where right-of-way permits, with public parking structure(s) accommodating the bulk of parking needs

Movement: integration of public parking structure(s) resulting in a strong pedestrian environment

Features: Gateway to downtown at First Street and Route 31; garden links to the Fox River; highly active, “playful” spaces along the street resulting from varying building setbacks

- Third Street North

Use: strongly commercial near Main Street (basically following uses that currently exist); commercial near State Street toward the river (street level retail, restaurant or office; upper level office); residential near State Street to the west (street level office or residential; upper level residential)

Development Focus: “arts and antiques” near Main Street; office near State Street

Character: small and mid-scale development; two and three story buildings with four stories as a conditional use; uniform setback of buildings from public walks; strong focal points at Third Street and State Street to encourage movement from Main Street and to attract attention from the river and Route 31; on-street parallel parking with public parking structure accommodating the bulk of parking needs

Movement: integration of public parking structure(s) resulting in a strong pedestrian environment

Features: mix of routes along streets for pedestrians and interior walkways; termination of Third Street with a feature that directs attention to the river; State Street terminated at the river with a significant focal point

- Riverside Drive/First Avenue

Use: mixed commercial near Main Street; civic along river north of Main Street; residential at south end

Development Focus: “urban” residential at south end

Character: mixed development with a strong orientation to the Fox River; the experience of driving should feel like a parkway entry to downtown; residential at south end feels like an extension of existing residential area to the river; uniform building setbacks from public walks; strong links to the river created at the civic portion of the street; on-street parking and public parking structures; existing surface lots enhanced as “garden parking lots”

Movement: vehicles and pedestrians balanced

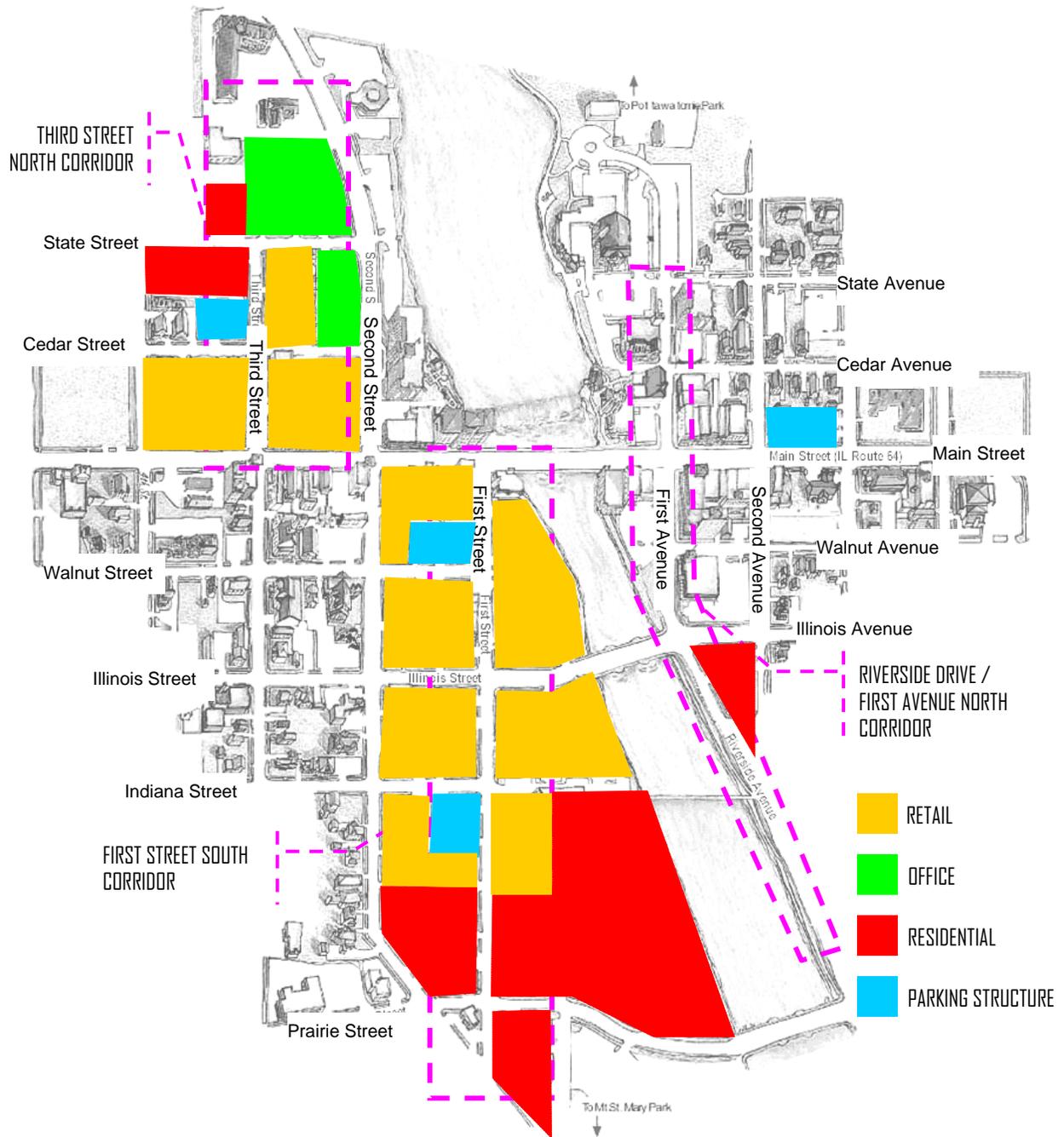
Features: a scenic drive along the river leading to downtown

- Century Corners

Use: small scale commercial and residential
Development Focus: evolution of residential uses to small shops in residential structures
Character: a “residential shopping” district where shops in homes blend with houses that still accommodate residential uses; small scale, traditional “homes” with landscaped yards and gardens at their front doors; street parking for customers and limited off-street parking for employees
Movement: pedestrian movement between destinations encouraged by interesting landscape related to specific uses
Features: unique shops in restored/renovated homes, with highly developed sites as the “streetscape;” preservation of the Century Corners as a downtown neighborhood

- West Hillside

Use: small scale commercial and residential
Development Focus: evolution of residential uses to small-scale commercial uses, with some in residential structures
Character: transitional commercial uses much like Century Corners, although development character is not limited to residential structures; sites developed with character that suggests residential landscape qualities (as opposed to commercial site treatments with large expanses of parking); combination of street parking and limited off-street parking
Movement: vehicle movement with strong accommodation of pedestrians
Features: preservation of the neighborhood at the west edge of downtown



Uses vary within each corridor, with patterns focusing on street level retail near Main Street, street level residential to the south end of First Street, and street level office to the north end of Third Street. In all cases, upper levels should be office or residential.

First Street South Corridor

First Street South is the largest development corridor proposed in this plan, with the most opportunity for change. It is also a very long street. It could form a gateway to downtown at its south end, and it parallels and abuts the river. Existing development along its length is varied, with some re-use projects already in place and some redevelopment projects already in the works. In total, it seems to present great opportunities for expanding the downtown experience and introducing new uses into downtown.

Buildings that do not necessarily highlight the corridor as a gateway to downtown mark its southern end. Ultimately, the plan suggests redevelopment of these parcels. The triangle of land between First Street, Route 31 and Prairie Street should be developed as a gateway feature. This point forms the first impression of downtown St. Charles; as such, it offers a chance to introduce both the garden and art features that this plan advocates. Tax base is lost if this redevelopment is pursued, but a great stride forward is gained in terms of community image.

Redevelopment that creates residential uses at the south end of First Street is encouraged. This part of the corridor is more remote from the core of downtown commercial uses (it is actually outside of the previously defined five-minute walk boundary) and it bears a strong relationship to the park and river as well as the Brownstone housing development at the former Piano Factory Outlet Mall site. The goal for residential development in this area should be intensity and the formation of a downtown neighborhood with strongly urban characteristics. The residential mix might consist of owned and rented units. While some retail or service uses might occupy portions of ground floors, residential uses should predominate.



New “urban” residential uses frame a gateway to downtown at the intersection of First Street and Route 31. The gateway itself might be signage, sculpture or landscape – or a combination of these elements that forms an appropriate image for downtown.

The automobile dealership on the west side of First Street is not the best use of that land. In the long term, the opportunity for re-use of that site should be pursued. Its redevelopment should also be directed toward greater intensity of use and the elimination of large expanses of asphalt. Redevelopment here will be an expensive proposition, so the resulting development will be significant in size. Three story buildings should be anticipated here (even taller buildings might be proposed by a developer), and the buildings, as they are that much closer to the core, might begin to focus more on retail and service uses at street level.

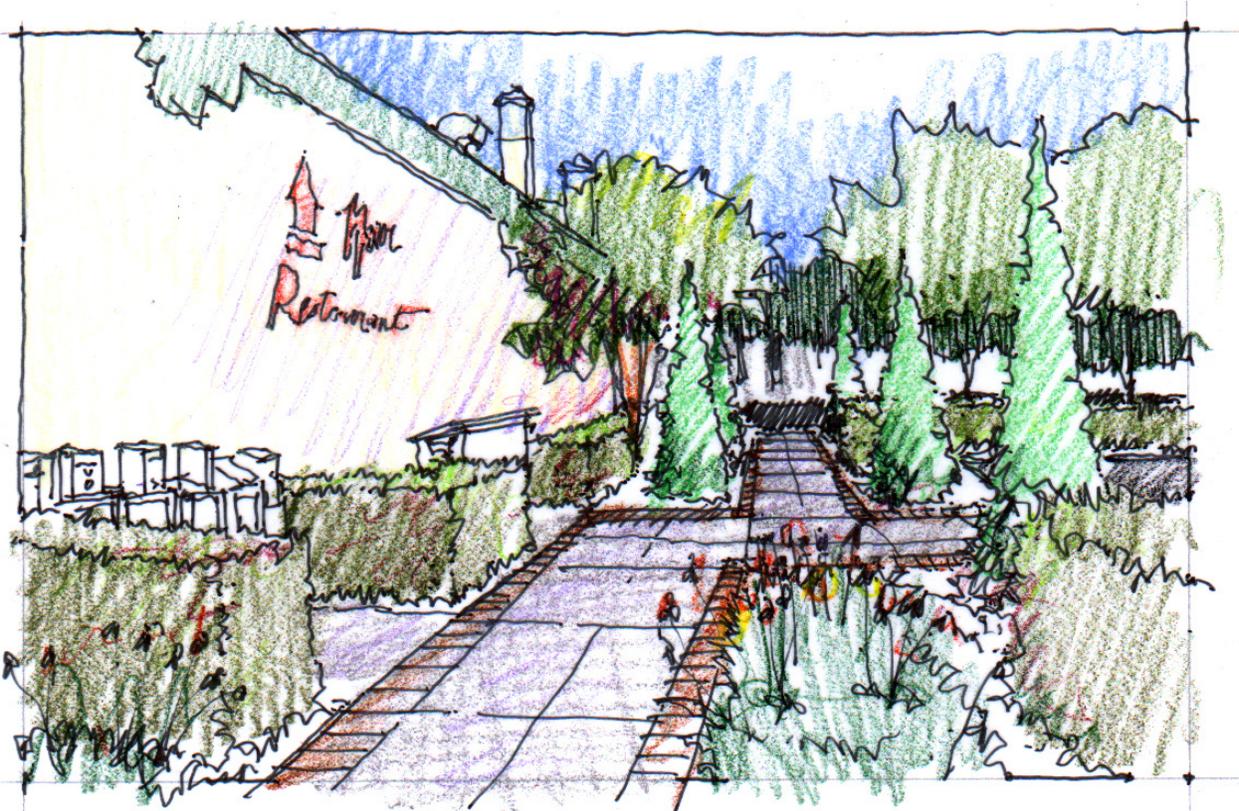
The south end of the corridor is outside of the service limits for the west side parking facility to be located at First Street and Walnut Street. A new parking deck in the area of the auto dealership will be required to maximize intensity of use. Access to the parking facility should occur from a street that crosses First Street rather than from First Street itself. This will, hopefully, result in less traffic on First Street and allow it to become more comfortable to pedestrians.

The ultimate development of parking structures in this corridor will encourage the redevelopment of several smaller properties that currently have their own parking lots. Some properties will not change; this plan encourages the continued existence of the Blue Goose Supermarket in downtown, although enhancement of its parking lot and service areas as noted in the section on General Patterns of Development is also strongly encouraged.



New development along First Street should have highly active spaces along the sidewalk, even if the building is set back slightly. Two story buildings (at a minimum) and the addition of streetscape enhancements will result in a pedestrian environment not found along First Street today.

Of note at the north end of the corridor is the parking lot south of the Manor Restaurant and the Harris Bank drive-through. Both sites are auto-oriented uses that occupy prime riverfront space. Cars will never appreciate this location as much as people will, and the eventual redevelopment of this area to provide a stronger link between the street and the river is a goal of this plan. A small parking area might remain south of the restaurant; there will continue to be service needs as long as there is a restaurant. However, this space could be developed in a way that retains its service function, provides limited parking (the new west side parking facility will be just across the street), and creates a new link to the riverfront. The Harris Bank drive-up teller could be redeveloped with a small building that has an orientation to the river and the street, and to the garden link to the river on its north side. To its south, the extension of Walnut Street might be reconsidered in a way that more appropriately terminates the street and forges a connection to the river (again, with a sense of a garden even as it serves other functions).

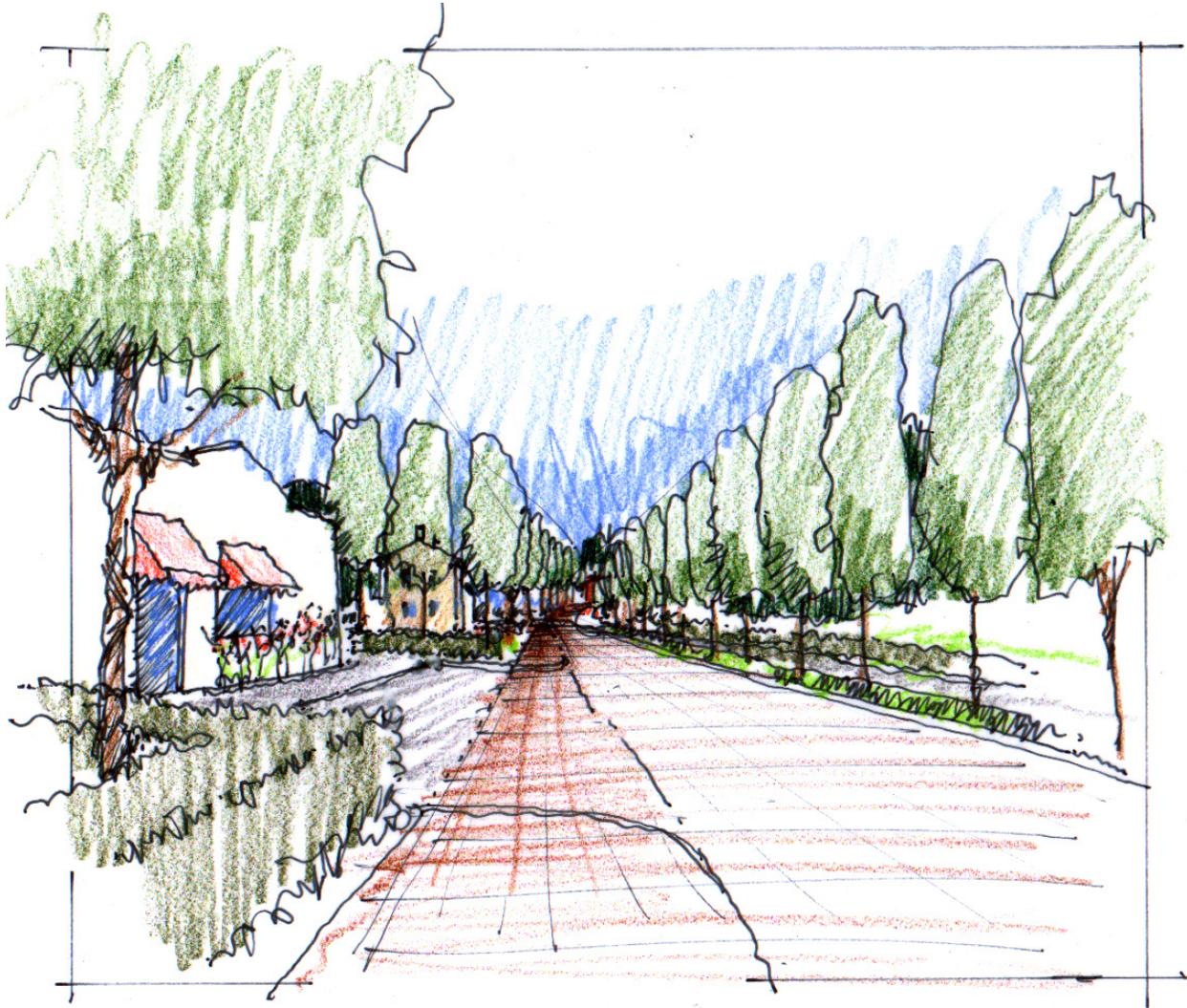


A link to the Fox River from First Street occurs at the south side of the Manor Restaurant. The idea of a “garden link” is introduced, and the parking lot next to the garden is conceived as a “courtyard” rather than a parking lot.



At the end of Walnut Street, the Harris Bank site might be redeveloped with a use that takes greater advantage of its position on the river. An integral part of this project should be the creation of another link to the river that follows the “extension” of Walnut Street to the riverfront.

Every link to the river along First Street South might be reconsidered as it evolves. Indiana Streets terminates in a twisted-end guardrail – with the pedestrian bridge crossing of the river just beyond. One also encounters a historic structure set in the midst of a parking lot along Indiana Street; a reassessment of the historic context of that building and its relationship to the pedestrian network should be pursued. The pedestrian bridge might also be re-visited; an artful entrance to the bridge at the end of a garden-like Indiana Street could dramatically change the terminus of the street and actually invite people to use the bridge.

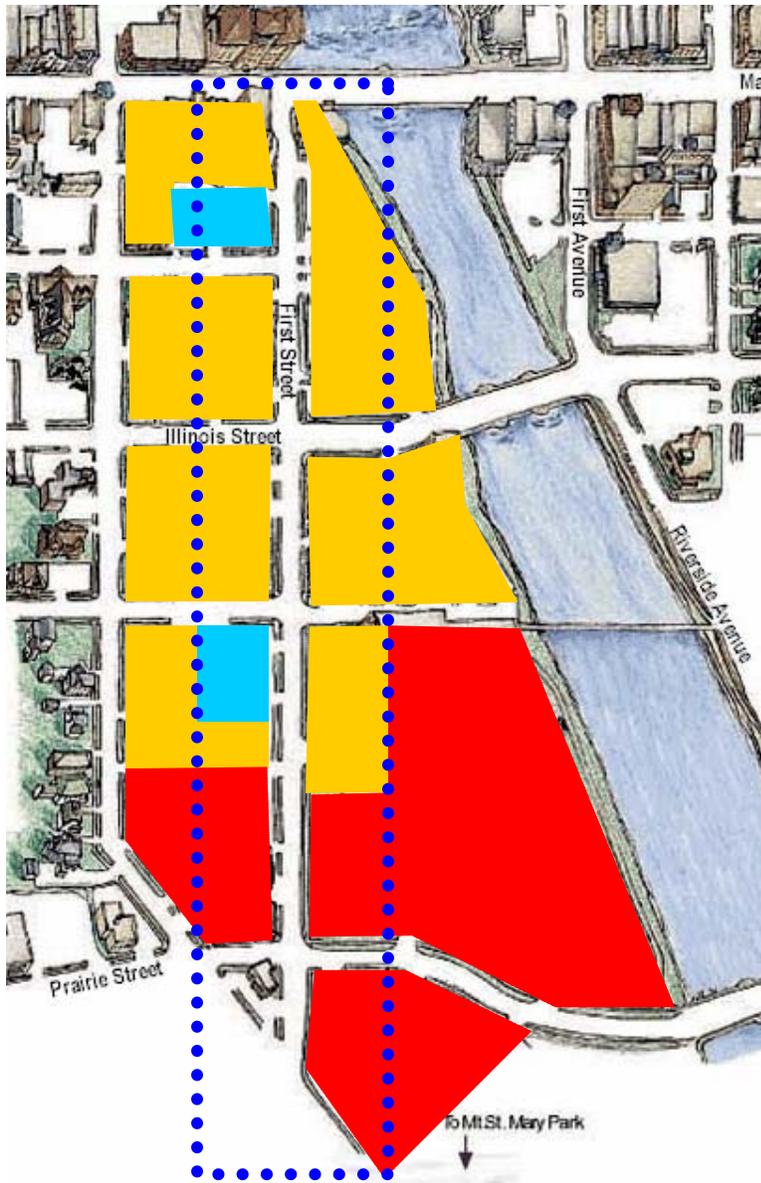


A series of gardens might be the basis for a connection to the river along Indiana Street. Here, the Beith House might be a highlight of the street, and its termination at the pedestrian bridge might be celebrated with an artful entry to the bridge.

The development potential in the First Street South corridor is significant. An estimate of potential development (in terms of new development or redevelopment, not including the Brownstone project at the former Piano Factory Outlet Mall site) includes:

| | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Street level retail and office | 70,000 square feet |
| Upper level office and residential | 70,000 to 140,000 square feet |
| Residential | 40,000 to 60,000 square feet |

Parking for retail and office uses (based on 1 space per 250 gross square feet) would dictate the need for 560 to 840 new spaces. In addition, the replacement of any public surface parking lots may have to be considered as well. Parking for residential only development should occur largely on the development site (with understructure parking encouraged), although visitor parking could occur on streets and some resident parking might even be accommodated in a nearby public parking structure.



FIRST STREET SOUTH
DEVELOPMENT CORRIDOR

PRIMARY STREET LEVEL USES

- RETAIL
- OFFICE
- RESIDENTIAL
- PARKING STRUCTURE

Development along First Street South focuses on street level retail and upper level office or residential uses at its north end. To the south, a new downtown gateway is formed with residential uses of a more “urban” nature framing the gateway.

Third Street North Corridor

While Third Street North does not present the magnitude of development opportunities that First Street South offers, the potential for more immediate change may be far greater. A single property owner controls large areas of land and has expressed an interest in making a change. As a result, this corridor may be the focus for public investment or city incentives to make certain that development and character opportunities are maximized.

As in other areas of downtown where redevelopment might be anticipated, parking will be the key to creating intensity of use and, predictably, structured parking will be required. Redevelopment activities might be largely focused on the blocks north of Cedar Street and extending to the Charleston Center. Uses would be directed toward retail and office uses east of Third Street and transitioning to residential uses to the west of Third Street.



Redevelopment of the public parking lot along Route 31 (provided a new public parking structure is developed) offers the opportunity to highlight the public walkway that exists with buildings and interesting pedestrian spaces, rather than parked cars.

While the direct connection to the river is not available here, views to the river from the first tier of development might be spectacular. Development might be oriented to maximize those views with taller buildings along Second Street (Carroll Towers actually sets a precedent for scale in this area), and lower scale buildings along Third Street (where development might be more in scale with existing one and two-story buildings). Residential buildings, which often provide much greater detail than commercial buildings, might be taller along Third Street, but as stated earlier, not taller than four stories.

A parking structure will facilitate redevelopment to higher intensities in the Third Street North Corridor. A location at the existing parking lot at the corner of Third Street and Cedar Street is central to the corridor (the service limits would encompass the entire corridor), and would also continue to serve the needs of the church and mitigate the impacts of parking on the residential neighborhood for events at Lincoln Park.

In this corridor, focal points are needed to create a sense of attraction and to terminate the corridor appropriately. The intersection of Third Street and State Street provides an opportunity for a unique urban design statement – one that captures peoples’ interest but also “turns” them toward the river or Main Street (depending on their orientation). Such a focal point might be another work of public art, or perhaps a more unique intersection (a small traffic circle) or some combination of the two.

The extension of State Street to the river offers another opportunity for a focal point. Here, the focal point terminates State Street, but it also provides a signal of the Third Street development corridor for people traveling on Route 31. Ultimately, it may also separate parking from park uses along the riverfront, if parking along the riverfront is reclaimed for pedestrian use. What ever this focal point may be, it is a chance to celebrate the intersection of downtown and the river; the feature should be powerful and unique, and be a real attraction for people.



The termination of State Street at the Fox River should be a highlight of this corridor. Development should frame views to this focal point, and give the sense that the street extends to the river. The character of development along the street is important; it does not merely frame the view, it creates a feeling of vitality.

As a parking facility is implemented in this corridor, the need for other surface lots may be greatly reduced. The city parking lot along Route 31 might be redeveloped with buildings at either end and a more intensely developed “garden” parking lot between. The pedestrian way through the center of this block would be maintained – even enhanced – as redevelopment of the parking lot proceeds. Ultimately, this piece of the fabric of the Third Street corridor should stretch to the north and become a focal point for redevelopment north of State Street (much of this area may have their views of the river blocked, so an internal focus might be desirable).

The character of residential development in the Third Street corridor would tend to be more traditional in character – more like the nearby neighborhoods. While single-family homes would not result, the flavor of a building that relies on residential scale and details is appropriate.

The development potential in the Third Street North corridor might be characterized as follows:

| | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Street level retail and office | 50,000 square feet |
| Upper level office and residential | 50,000 to 110,000 square feet |
| Residential | 30,000 to 34,000 square feet |

Parking for retail and office uses (based on 1 space per 250 gross square feet) would dictate the need for 400 to 840 new spaces. As noted for the First Street South corridor, the replacement of any public surface parking lots may have to be considered. Parking for residential only development should occur largely on the development site (with understructure parking encouraged), although visitor parking could occur on streets and some resident parking might even be accommodated in a nearby public parking structure.



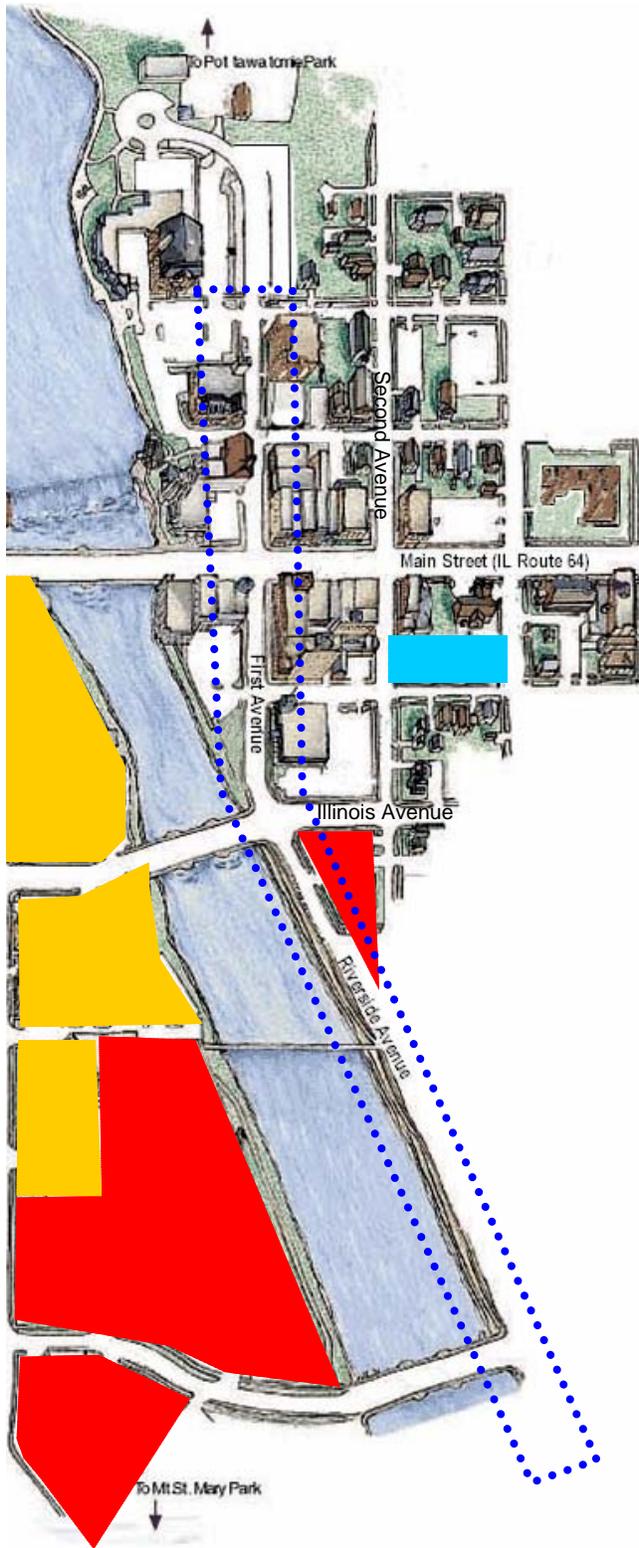
Along Third Street North, street level retail uses similar to those that exist are encouraged near Main Street, with upper level uses focused on office. Along State Street east of Third Street, uses would accommodate street level retail but might be more focused on street level office – creating a greater population of daytime workers in downtown. To the west along State Street, street level residential uses would form the transition to the existing neighborhood.

Riverside Avenue/First Avenue Corridor

Opportunities for redevelopment are limited in the Riverside Avenue/First Avenue corridor. Emphasis might be given to the enhancement of Riverside Avenue as a river experience and gateway from the south, and to creating stronger connections to the river from Century Corners (where the parking lots for City Hall get in the way). Simply renaming Riverside Avenue as “Riverside Drive” could give it prominence as a scenic corridor and relative to other downtown streets (which are named “street” or “avenue”).

The southeasterly corner of “Riverside Drive” and Illinois Avenue might offer the only realistic opportunities for redevelopment in this corridor (other than activities that might somehow restructure the ways that the city’s facilities occupy their site). This site presents an opportunity to extend residential use nearly to the river, and to extend the neighborhood itself to the river.

As in other parts of downtown, development sometimes precludes a connection to the river. In the area of the city’s facilities, attention should be directed to reinforcing the link between First Avenue and the river, particularly along the extension of State Avenue. The intersection of State Avenue and First Avenue might be critical in forming this connection, and as changes to reinforce the link to the river are pursued, the development of an appropriate terminus to First Avenue must be considered. This street should not end in a parking lot; like the intersection of State Street with Third Street North on the opposite bank of the river, a traffic circle and public art would create an object of interest at this important viewpoint.



RIVERSIDE DRIVE / FIRST AVENUE
DEVELOPMENT CORRIDOR

PRIMARY STREET LEVEL USES

- RETAIL
- OFFICE
- RESIDENTIAL
- PARKING STRUCTURE

The focus of "Riverside Drive"/First Avenue is the creation of a scenic drive along the Fox River. While uses will not change as dramatically as in other parts of downtown, new residential uses could extend the sense of the neighborhood to the Fox River.

Century Corners

The character of Century Corners is different than any of the development zones discussed so far; it is a commercial area that has grown from a neighborhood, it is on the hillside as opposed to on the river flats, and its basic identity remains in its neighborhood aesthetic. It is likely that this area will continue to evolve in this pattern, and it should be encouraged to do so. The aggregation of parcels for redevelopment purposes should not be allowed here, as this would destroy the fabric of the district as a neighborhood scaled unique shopping and living environment (with larger structures, gaps in the spacing of structures, or the need for developing parking for the larger use).

Enhancements that might benefit the neighborhood would be those that create consistency in the public realm. Without becoming overly elaborate, sidewalks could be enhanced; accents of brick could create highlights that fit the district's character. Lighting improvements might be used to unite the district – day and night; lighting does not have to be bright, but it should be consistent and it should reflect the historic character of the neighborhood. The points of transition between the public and private realm might also become a focus; walks to the front doors might be accented with plantings at the beginning of the walk, for example, in ways that draw the landscape of the house/shop out to the street.

Care must be taken as improvements are made to make certain that the area's intrinsic character is not lost. For example, a steep slope that was probably difficult to maintain was paved in concrete. The function concern was addressed, but in a way that was detrimental to the qualities of the neighborhood. It was not a "residential" type of solution; change, here, should be rooted in ways that feel connected to a residential landscape.

Eventually, a proposal for redevelopment is likely to emerge for an area of Century Corners. If the site and building plans cannot be imagined as a house with a yard (both respecting the scale, materials and details, and placement of its neighbors), it might be wise to direct that development to other parts of the community.



The appropriate character for public and private spaces in Century Corners is found in the garden landscapes of a residential neighborhood. These spaces should bring beauty, life and a sense of comfort to Century Corners (not simply a functional solution to a problem in the neighborhood's fabric).

West Hillside

The hillside on the southwest side of the Fox River, generally bordered by Prairie Street to the south and Walnut Street to the north, is evolving, in many ways, much like Century Corners. Many of the same considerations might be applied here. Commercial uses are creeping up the hill from the river, and homes have begun to evolve from residential use to commercial use. There are ways in which the transition can be made acceptable, and Century Corners might serve as a good example. One difference might be that Prairie Street and Third Street are more connected routes than any of the streets in Century Corners; as a result, commercial uses have started to emerge along their lengths. Protection of the neighborhood would dictate that further expansion of those commercial uses be prohibited or severely limited, and that those that exist be required to respond to their context with appropriately scaled and patterned plans for site development or improvement. Here and in Century Corners, the sites are yards; they need to be developed with this as the basic pattern.

Like Century Corners, eventually, a proposal for redevelopment is likely to emerge for an area of the West Hillside. The same approach should be applied: if the site and building plans cannot be imagined as a house with a yard (both respecting the scale, materials and details, and placement of its neighbors), it might be wise to direct that development to other parts of the community.

Design Guidelines for Downtown St. Charles Development and Redevelopment

Supporting the general patterns of development described for each corridor in downtown St. Charles are guidelines that direct the character of development on individual sites. The guidelines are not ordinances; development proposals are not bound, at this point, to abide by them. The city may ultimately take the position that these guidelines should be codified, in effect translating them into a set of rules that regulate development in downtown. They might also be used to educate developers about the directions the community desires for development in downtown, or to encourage developers to move in directions consistent with the community's vision by providing incentives to those who choose to follow the guidelines. In any case, the application of design guidelines for development in downtown St. Charles must be considered with regard for the city's Historic Preservation Ordinance, which regulates development in more definitive terms than the guidelines defined here.

Ultimately, guidelines should be seen as a way to encourage creative development. Developers should be allowed to create an individualistic or expressive building within the framework of the guidelines. They are not meant to be so prescriptive that they prohibit creativity or limit options for development. The guidelines are more than a baseline, however; they strive to "set the bar high," anticipating the desire to create the highest possible level of quality for development in downtown St. Charles.

Guidelines for Site Design

Often, guidelines are established to control the character of buildings. But in downtown St. Charles, the character of the site and the relative placement of a building on a site also have a powerful effect on the downtown experience. These guidelines begin with directions for development of sites.

- 1.0 Recognizing that the land area available for development in downtown is limited and that expansion beyond the logical and natural boundaries of downtown would diminish the sense of downtown, the development potential of each downtown site should be maximized.

Guidelines for minimum lot coverage by the primary structure on a site are established as follows (not including plazas, outdoor gathering, displays or sales, or outdoor dining):

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| First Street South corridor | 50 percent |
| Third Street North corridor | 50 percent |
| Riverside Drive/First Avenue | 50 percent |
| Century Corners and West Hillside | match the average lot coverage of structures on the same block within ten percent |

- 2.0 The desire for continuity in the pedestrian experience and development patterns in downtown dictate that buildings be placed in generally consistent patterns. Therefore, the plan establishes standards for building placement for new development that respects patterns that either exist in downtown or facilitate pedestrian activity and interest.

The primary structure on a site should be set at a location relative to the right-of-way line as follows:

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| First Street South corridor | 0 feet or 16 to 20 feet |
| Third Street North corridor | 0 feet or 16 to 20 feet |
| Riverside Drive/First Avenue | 0 feet for commercial uses; 20 feet for residential uses |
| Century Corners and West Hillside | match the average setback of structures on the same block |

In instances where a building is set at 0 feet from the right-of-way, at least 70 percent of the structure should touch the right-of-way line. In instances where a building is set at a location between 16 to 20 feet from the right-of-way, at least 70 percent of the structure should fall within that zone, and the space between the right-of-way and the building should be developed with active spaces (these spaces should not be just "landscaped").

- 3.0 The focus of development in downtown should be directed to buildings and spaces for people. While the plan recognizes that cars will always be a part of downtown, other elements are more worthy of becoming focal points. In addition, facilities for accommodating parking are advocated in each corridor in downtown. Therefore, guidelines encourage restrictions on the location and amount of parking on sites in downtown.

Parking in downtown should be developed in accordance with the following:

- Parking should be located behind or beside buildings, but in no case shall parking be located adjacent to the riverfront.
- Parking should not occupy areas immediately adjacent to an intersection.
- There should be a minimum of 12 feet of separation between a parking area and an adjacent building or public walkway; an additional 5 feet should be required for every bay of parking beyond one bay in each parking lot; the separation space should be developed in patterns that are generally “garden-like” and attractive to pedestrians.
- Visual separation should be required for parking areas that abut public rights-of-way or the riverfront such that a screen of at least 50 percent opacity is present in all seasons to a height of minimum of 28 inches and a maximum of 36 inches.
- For new developments that propose on-site parking, no more than 50 percent of the estimated parking needed should be accommodated on site (except for residential development where 100 percent of the required parking for residents may be accommodated on site); the remaining parking should be accommodated in a public parking area or should utilize street parking.
- Encourage the development of joint-use parking facilities, balancing use on a day-to-day or hour-to-hour basis to achieve the highest possible use of each parking space created.
- Discourage development with excessive normal peak parking demand or development that is not offset by joint-use parking opportunities.
- Parking for downtown uses should be developed at a rate of 4 spaces per 1000 square feet (with the vast majority of those spaces accommodated in public parking structures); parking in Century Corners and the West Hillside should utilize on street parking only for customers, and should not provide for more than 4 off-street parking spaces for employee use per business.
- Include on street parking at the perimeter of development sites in the calculation of parking provided for each development site.
- Prohibit employees or business owners from parking on streets.
- Create preferential parking zones in neighborhoods adjacent to downtown if necessary to keep downtown customers or employees from parking in neighborhoods.

In addition to accommodating parking in ways that foster an inviting pedestrian environment, provisions should be made to accommodate bicycles in downtown. Parking for bicycles should be developed in accordance with the following:

- At least four bicycle parking spaces should be provided at each site in downtown; contiguous properties may choose to aggregate the number of bicycle parking spaces that should be provided and reduce the number of spaces by 25 percent
- Public parking facilities should offer bicycle storage lockers and bike racks equal to 5 percent of the total number of vehicle parking spaces provided (with not less than 25 percent of the bicycle spaces being bicycle storage lockers).

- 4.0 Downtown should create an environment that accommodates cars but places a great emphasis on the pedestrian experience. The development of spaces around buildings is of vital concern in the reinforcement of the pedestrian environment, as is the need for reducing potential conflicts between cars and pedestrians. Therefore, the plan sets guidelines for the development of non-building and non-parking portions of sites, and control points of access to sites for vehicles.

Site areas that are not occupied by buildings or parking should be developed as follows:

- Areas at the front or public entry sides of buildings that are set back any amount from the right-of-way should be developed with active use spaces for pedestrians; such spaces might include areas for outdoor sales or display (if such sales or display occur on a regular and consistent basis), outdoor eating or drinking, or pedestrian accessible garden-like spaces.
- Areas used for service should be developed in a garden-like fashion, but such spaces do not need to be accessible to pedestrians.

Access to sites should be developed as follows:

- Vehicle access to sites should avoid main arterials and corridor streets wherever possible (for parking or service).

- 5.0 The experience of downtown should focus on the pedestrian, and the ways in which pedestrian areas intersect with buildings. Sites should be developed in ways that achieve a certain degree of continuity and consistency so that “left-over” spaces become seams between parcels rather than boundaries or barriers. Therefore, guidelines are established for the use of materials employed in site development:

Sites should be developed using the following patterns or materials:

- A common palette of materials should be defined for sites (with the exception of Century Corners) including:
 - Lighting use of fixtures of the same height, pole type and color, same fixture type and wattage, same mounting height and levels of illumination for all areas not oriented to pedestrian use on all downtown sites; it is the intention that lights in non-pedestrian areas become “background” elements (not focal points) and that they be limited in height to 20 feet.
 - Paving non-pedestrian areas should be paved in concrete; the materials and patterns of paving in pedestrian areas should not be controlled by these guidelines, but the intention should be to create pavements that are durable and are rich in color, texture and detail such that they are attractive to pedestrians.
 - Landscape for the purposes of this plan, a “garden” or “garden-like” space should be construed to mean a space that is largely enclosed by plantings or architectural elements to a height of at least 36 inches, with garden ornaments, sculpture or specimen plantings as a focal point.
 - Signs signs should be incorporated into the design of the building; other than regulatory or directional signs, signs should be permitted as a part of the site development
- Surface parking lots should be 25 percent shaded within 10 years of development.

Guidelines for Building Design

It is the buildings (along with the features of the pedestrian realm) that ultimately should be the focus of downtown. While these guidelines do not encourage the replication of historic structures, they do promote compatibility with the character of existing buildings in downtown. And they place an emphasis on the notion of unity, but not uniformity; the qualities of downtown should be built around individual expression within a general framework. This will allow buildings to be representative of their age, intended use, and ownership.

- 6.0 The goal of building design in downtown is the development of a unified character that yields a strong sense of St. Charles character. Therefore, this plan advocates the creation of standards that form a framework for building design.

Buildings should be developed with the following considerations (not including buildings in the Century Corners and hillside neighborhoods that transition to downtown's commercial core):

- Buildings should be designed with a sense of local character rather than introduced character; formula, franchise and corporate themed buildings, and buildings designed as signs should not be allowed.
- New development should be compatible with existing development that occurs within 100 feet of the development site achieving compatibility through similar "bay" width, scale, massing, bulk and detail.
- Buildings should be designed with their primary axis oriented perpendicular to the primary street.
- The primary entrance to the building should be at the same level as the public sidewalk; for building with multiple tenants, at least half should have entrances at the same level as the public sidewalk.
- Open, framed and transparent recessed entrances at the corner entrance of a building located at an intersection and set 0 feet from the right-of-way should be considered and, in some cases, should be encouraged as a means of maintaining vehicular sight lines and enhancing pedestrian safety.
- Buildings should not exceed a height greater than three stories (except that civic or institutional buildings may have elements that exceed the equivalent of three stories); four story buildings may be acceptable, but should be considered on an individual basis and permitted only as a Conditional Use; for buildings greater than three stories, the fourth story should be set back from the front façade a distance of not less than 8 feet.
- The creation of balconies at upper levels is highly encouraged for all uses, particularly at facades that face streets or the riverfront.
- Detail should be integral to the design of the building, not "standard" elements that are applied to a shell; the use of elements such as gratuitous clock towers or fake dormers should be discouraged.

For buildings in the Century Corners and hillside neighborhoods, the following standards should apply:

- Buildings should have an obvious residential character and employ residential patterns, forms, materials, scale and details.

- 7.0 It is the intention of this plan to forge improvements and change for downtown St. Charles that lend a sense of permanence and stability. Flexibility of building design to accommodate a variety of uses and the use of high quality materials and construction techniques will be critical in this effort. Therefore, the plan requires that development produces quality buildings that have the potential to endure for generations.

Buildings should employ the following materials:

- Materials should be durable, easily maintained, attractive at close distances (for pedestrians on public walkways, for example); materials should be scaled to pedestrians when the structure is within 16 feet of a public right-of-way or publicly accessible walkway.
- Brick, stone, and wood are acceptable finish materials; high quality pre-cast concrete and high quality metal (with a matte or non-lustre finish) and synthetic materials may also be acceptable on an individual basis, provided that such materials should constitute less than 20 percent of the exterior and should be used in combination with other acceptable materials.
- Transparent glass should be used at the majority of street level windows; reflective or mirrored glass should not be acceptable.
- Canvas awnings are highly encouraged at publicly accessible facades; nylon awnings or other synthetic awning material, including any awning meant to be illuminated from within, is highly discouraged; awnings should not carry beyond the façade of one building, even if the ownership between buildings is the same.

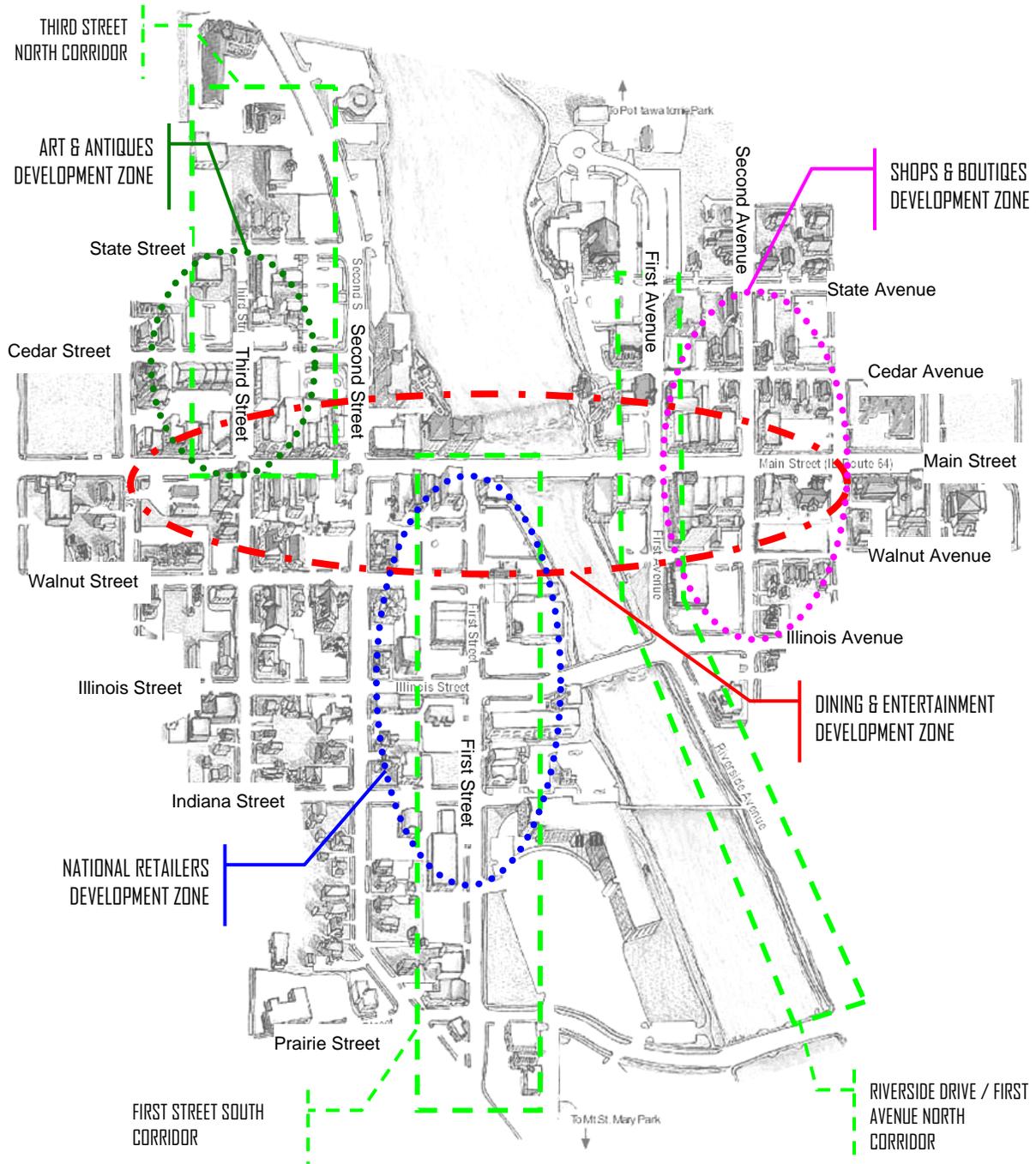
- 8.0 There may be many instances where downtown buildings will not have a “back door.” In a highly pedestrian oriented downtown, pedestrians should be expected to approach a building from just about any side. Therefore, this plan advocates the development of buildings that relate to people at all publicly accessible side, and eliminate a “back door” appearance for service areas and rear entrances.

Buildings should be designed according to the following in order to relate more strongly to pedestrians:

- Facades facing streets or public walkways should be articulated with windows and doors resulting in a minimum of 40 percent window and door area at street level (the zone between the sidewalk and a point 12 feet above the sidewalk); windows should have a generally vertical orientation.
- Entries should be designed to be the highlight of the building.
- Mechanical systems should be integrated into the design of the building and should not be visible from the street or from adjacent buildings.
- Trash storage areas should be completely enclosed and incorporated into the building.

Downtown St. Charles Business Development Strategies

Downtown St. Charles can boast of a diverse, quality business mix. This plan does not suggest moving or eliminating existing businesses, but rather focuses on specific types of retail that might be introduced or expanded to enhance the quality and variety of the downtown business mix.



Business development zones are recognized based on development patterns and existing groupings of businesses within the development corridors. Business development strategies focus on the introduction and expansion of business types that will strengthen the quality and variety of the downtown business mix to promote shopper and pedestrian circulation.

Business development strategies proposed in this plan represent a modified version of business clustering concepts that, effectively implemented, will reinforce the proposed “Great American Shopping Route.” Business development strategies should not be interpreted to suggest that land uses should be strictly regulated in terms of specific types of commercial activity. In fact, mixed uses in the development corridors and throughout the downtown reinforce its organic nature and promote shopper and pedestrian circulation throughout the entire downtown district.

Development corridors and districts identified in this plan have underlying features that suggest a distinct focus in terms of business development strategies.

First Street South Corridor

Mid-sized national retailers, such as Crate & Barrel, Restoration Hardware and Banana Republic, have been suggested by downtown stakeholders and St. Charles residents as examples of businesses that could enhance the downtown St. Charles retail experience. These types of retailers pay a great deal of attention to demographic and psychographic factors within growth regions in the United States and Canada when contemplating new locations for their stores. Their sophisticated level of decision-making also considers labor issues, the affordability and availability of desired locations, proximity to their current stores and the history of performance of those stores.

This plan suggests a “passive recruitment” approach to mid-sized, national retailers. As opposed to active recruitment strategies that are solicitation and sales oriented, a passive recruitment approach is most simply described and applied by assuming a “ready and waiting” posture – with an emphasis on “ready.” Particularly in the case of mid-sized national retailers, the key to effective implementation of passive recruitment strategies rests in the community’s ability to direct development to a location that will enhance the business mix without compromising the downtown’s small town character.

If a national retailer selects downtown St. Charles as a potential site, the guiding principles and development goals advanced in this plan should serve to help the community determine whether the scale and character of the proposed commercial activity is appropriate to the scale and character desired for downtown. If the community chooses to encourage this type of development in the downtown, the retailer or developer should be directed to focus on opportunities in the First Street South Corridor, primarily spanning the west side of First Street from Walnut Street to Indiana Street.

Office, service and residential uses in the First Street South corridor should be accommodated through vertical mixed-use strategies (See the Centralized Retail Management section of report). High-density residential development would be most appropriately directed to the south end of the development corridor, south of Indiana Street.

Under any redevelopment proposal, the Blue Goose Supermarket should be retained. This long-time downtown anchor serves a valuable function as part of the downtown business mix. Retention efforts might require consideration of opportunities for the supermarket’s expansion, particularly if an expansion becomes necessary in order for it to remain competitive in the marketplace and serve the needs of a growing downtown residential population.

Third Street North Corridor

Business development opportunities in this corridor and the surrounding area take cues from the current dominance of antiques. Gifts and home furnishings are also well represented in the Third Street North corridor. The addition of complimentary retail activities such as art galleries, music stores and design studios – and other cultural-oriented businesses – stand to strengthen the corridor’s economic performance.

As the north end of this corridor extends into the Charleston Center area, it tends to take on a vehicular orientation that is different from the pedestrian environment at the south end of the corridor. Therefore, the north end tends to lend itself to convenience retail and service businesses that cater to the more basic, everyday needs of local consumers.

Office and retail development that could occur north of Cedar Street and east of Third Street could result in improvements to existing pedestrian passageways along Third Street and in the mid block between Second and Third Streets. Commercially oriented extensions of either or both of these passageways north of State Street towards Charleston Center could serve to minimize the contrast between the pedestrian and vehicular environments at the corridor’s north and south ends, respectively.

Group marketing by antiques dealers is and will remain beneficial to the corridor. This corridor could also benefit from efforts to increase the number of shoppers circulating throughout downtown. Unified downtown marketing efforts that include the Third Street North Corridor, as a prominent feature of the downtown shopping experience, will capitalize upon and promote the larger downtown retail offering.

The south end of the Third Street North Corridor has been marketed as “Old St. Charles.” However, several of the dominant buildings within the corridor do not reflect the larger downtown’s historical character. For this reason, the term “Old St. Charles” does not appear to be especially useful or appropriate for marketing purposes and, in fact, it may actually have a detrimental effect in giving consumers the perception of a fragmented downtown area.

Office, service, studio and residential uses in this corridor should be accommodated through vertical mixed-use strategies. Noting the pedestrian oriented nature of the corridor’s south end, and the vehicular oriented environment at the corridor’s north end, the effective implementation of these strategies will be greatly dependent on the location and characteristics of each individual parcel involved.

Century Corners District

Retailers in Century Corners largely share the same view regarding the potential for development in the corridor: that development needs in the Century Corners area should be addressed incrementally.

This view holds that expansion of the retail district should occur through a process of locating more shops and boutiques on a parcel-by-parcel basis extending northward on Cedar Avenue. This should be accomplished as residential properties become more appealing to entrepreneurs for commercial use rather than through changes in zoning.

Opportunities to expand Century Corners southward along Second Avenue, across Main Street, should also be considered and pursued. The effective implementation of this strategy will serve to enhance the continuous “looping” nature of the Great American Shopping Route and will also aid efforts to preserve the historic residential character of the South Second Avenue hillside neighborhood.

Century Corners’ existing merchants could benefit from more shops, increased customer foot traffic and additional automobile parking. However, merchants generally agree that these goals should be pursued without making broad sweeping physical changes to their surroundings.

The shops in this area tend to have a distinctive, lifestyle oriented offering. The style of merchandising practiced by retailers has given Century Corners a quality identity and reinforced a consistent image. This distinctive, lifestyle oriented merchandising should continue as the underlying theme for this unique downtown sector.

Missing merchandise categories (see “Merchandise Inventory” in this section) should be actively recruited to match appropriate space as it becomes available. The historic, residential qualities of the physical environment are major contributors to the unique nature of Century Corners’ shops and boutiques. “More” will not necessarily be better unless this unique character is maintained.

The Century Corners district, like the Third Street North retail area, could also benefit from efforts to increase the number of shoppers circulating throughout downtown. Century Corners merchants have an exceptional opportunity to capitalize on the strength of “The Great American Downtown” by marketing a downtown shopping experience that is unique, distinctive and quaint.

Small-scale landscape and streetscape improvements, targeted marketing, and the introduction of new merchants that meet the demands of fashion and style oriented, affluent, female consumers are the keys to smart growth and development in Century Corners.

Main Street Corridor

The Main Street Corridor, with public parks marking its east and west gateways, has a very special entertainment value both by day and night. Businesses, people and automobiles contribute to the dynamics of this street.

The corridor extending along Main Street, and within one block north and south of Main Street, features a series of active landmarks and activities that provide a picture of downtown vitality. The Arcada Theater, the Hotel Baker, and a wide variety of eating and drinking establishments – cafes, grills, delis, pizzerias, coffee houses, pubs, and clubs with live music – reinforce an image of the downtown as a lively dining and entertainment district. During the summer, outdoor concerts and special events – and even fishing opportunities near the Main Street bridge and dam – provide a downtown experience that people of all ages and incomes can enjoy.

During the day, Main Street dining and entertainment activities are interspersed with retail, service, office and government uses. In the evening and into the nighttime, the district takes on a special vitality – alive with lights, pedestrians and vehicular movement.

Business development strategies for the Main Street corridor should include active recruitment and expansion of businesses that augment the district’s evolving dining and entertainment venues. A teashop, establishments with live, non-amplified music and dancing, and a “Family Fun” place with billiards, snooker and pool tables are examples of businesses that are desired by residents and that could expand the downtown’s dining and entertainment offerings.

Market conditions have evolved to a point where the Arcada Theater, previously noted as a landmark and anchor for downtown evening activity, now has an attractive alternative use. While currently successful as a movie theater, large single screen movie houses are becoming increasingly rare as the industry continues to move toward multiplex cinemas. Film industry rules regarding film releases and required run times make it increasingly difficult for large single screen theaters to compete in markets that have one or more multi-screen theaters. Due to movie contract restrictions, it is almost impossible for a movie theater to split its use between films and live performances. It is, however, possible for a "live" theater to occasionally show movies.

If the Arcada Theater should ever cease to operate as a movie theater, its adaptive redevelopment for a use that will continue to anchor downtown nighttime activities should be a high priority. Possibilities include the theater's reuse as a facility for the performing arts including live musical and drama performances. The success of the St. Charles Arts and Music Festival, certain special events, and the current evening activity in the downtown, are indicators that the community will support downtown live theater. A variety of professional and amateur productions could be accommodated – from community theater groups to national touring productions, seminars and noted speakers.

The number of popular restaurants and lounges offer an ideal mix of evening activities when combined with a performing arts theater. It appears that the St. Charles and Fox Valley area will support the type of live theater and events that could find a home at the Arcada Theater in the future.

As Main Street continues to evolve as an evening and nighttime venue, specialty retail businesses that include an art or entertainment component may become viable. Businesses with “working display windows” in which workers and artists create products in view of pedestrians – such as a salt water taffy or fudge shop, a costume or sketch artist portrait studio, a custom hand-crafted jewelry shop, and a stained or blown glass art studio – are examples of businesses that could provide an avenue for retail trade to extend into the evening hours and embellish the nighttime pedestrian experience.

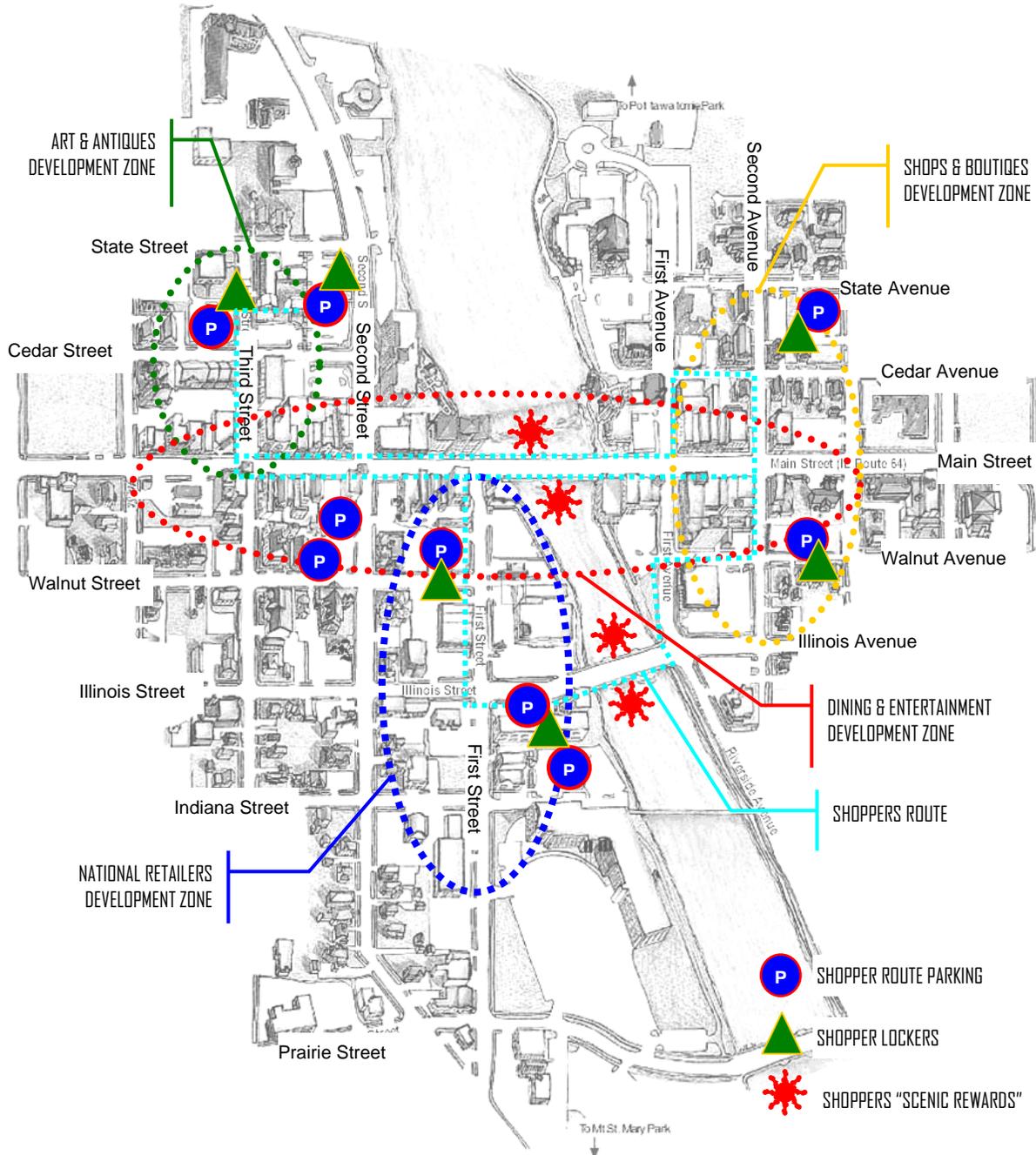
Businesses recruited for this corridor should be pedestrian oriented, but not necessarily pedestrian reliant. Retail businesses that benefit from foot traffic and are complementary to the distinctive life-style merchandising of Century Corners merchants will be most effectively located on the corridor’s east side. Retail businesses that complement and benefit from foot traffic generated by antiques, gifts and home furnishings businesses will be most effectively located on the corridor’s west side.

Main Street is a walking and driving showcase for the community. All businesses recruited for the corridor should reflect the small town character and values that St. Charles residents desire to maintain for future generations to enjoy.

Upper level uses in Main Street Corridor buildings, including residential and office uses, should be compatible with street level commerce. This could be best managed as part of a Centralized Retail Management strategy.

“The Great American Shopping Route”

“The Great American Shopping Route” is proposed as a downtown St. Charles business development and marketing strategy. Business development strategies advanced in this plan are a modified version of business clustering concepts that, effectively implemented, will reinforce *The Great American Shopping Route*. Effective marketing of the route will promote a variety-packed downtown experience and increase pedestrian circulation throughout the downtown area.



“The Great American Shopping Route” is proposed to promote pedestrian and shopper circulation throughout the downtown area. Special features include Shopper Lockers that promote “park once, shop twice” convenience, and scenic views that “reward” shoppers along the route.

Downtown St. Charles Strategy Plan Implementation Strategy

The time frame for this plan’s vision and implementation is twenty years. Because downtown is such a dynamic environment, no set of specific implementation steps can remain valid for such a long time. Even in the short run, economic or other conditions may dictate a different sequence of events. Some projects may be implemented earlier if the right set of opportunities present themselves, or the community may determine that a project should be delayed if others take priority. Because of these limitations, an implementation strategy can only be a general guide for implementing key aspects of the plan.

While many of the actions identified here relate directly to projects or improvements to be accomplished by the City, they also offer direction to potential developers about where and how they can seek to create projects that enhance the community’s vision.

| I. On-going Actions | | | | |
|--|---|-----------------------------|---|--|
| Action: | Description: | Responsible parties: | Anticipated public costs: | Outcome: |
| A. Establish control over key sites as they become available to catalyze appropriate redevelopment | Creating or guiding change in pursuit of the community’s vision for downtown St. Charles may sometimes require the City to establish control over sites where change is imminent. | City of St. Charles | Costs for establishing control over sites vary greatly; some costs may be recovered upon transfer to a developer. | Establishment of the city in a leadership role in partnerships with developers to effect desired change in downtown. |

II. Early Actions – Immediate to Three Years

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| A. Strengthen programs for introducing public art and recognizing historic buildings | Expanding the current efforts toward public art and building recognition will highlight the special qualities of downtown and enhance the pedestrian experience. | Downtown St. Charles Partnership (DSCP) and City of St. Charles | Funding for such programs is typically generated in the private sector, but costs might be shared with the public sector to enhance public spaces, pedestrian routes and links. | Features that tell the story of downtown and the St. Charles community. |
| B. Complete a design plan for the Fox River “riverwalk” and river links | A coordinated, coherent design for the riverwalk and links to the rest of the downtown pedestrian network is critical. Some improvements may be implemented by the private sector so cooperation is key. | City of St. Charles and DSCP | Engagement of an architect / designer to establish a specific design plan that takes into account the multitude of existing riverfront conditions and creatively addresses the vision of this plan. | A framework and design for enhancing the banks of the Fox River as the highlight of downtown |
| C. Begin to implement the “riverwalk” and river links in accordance with a riverwalk design plan. | A plan for implementing the riverwalk and links design should be established; the plan should enlist interested people and organizations to participate, thereby strengthening the sense of community in addition to creating a physical amenity. | City of St. Charles, DSCP, St. Charles Park District, private sector property owners and developers | Funding partnerships will be key to implementation, with the City taking a leadership role. | A riverwalk and links to the riverfront that become valued spaces in downtown and focal points in the pedestrian environment. |

II. Early Actions – Immediate to Three Years (continued)

| Action: | Description: | Responsible parties: | Anticipated public costs: | Outcome: |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| D. Review downtown zoning boundaries and regulations | Limits to zoning boundaries should be established and regulations should be considered to maintain downtown's compact nature and the residential qualities of adjoining neighborhoods. | City of St. Charles | To be reviewed as part of the City's zoning ordinance revision planned for 2001-2002. | Preservation of downtown's small town, pedestrian-oriented qualities. |
| E. Establish a design concept for streetscape enhancements for First Street South, Third Street North, and Riverside Drive/First Avenue | This design can be a first step toward establishing the Development Corridors and should allow for actual improvements to be made concurrent with redevelopment activities. | City of St. Charles and DSCP | Design costs are likely to be 2 to 5 percent of ultimate construction costs; construction costs (on a linear foot basis) may approximate those for Main Street. | A unified streetscape as the foundation for experiencing downtown and a public project that demonstrates a high level of expectation for design in downtown. |
| F. Initiate design and implementation of First Street South and Second Street North Gateways | These points of entry to downtown need to reflect the qualities of downtown and should be given high priority. | City of St. Charles, DSCP, and property owners | First Street South Gateway: property acquisition and development costs. Second Street North Gateway: landscaping, signage and public art. | Creation of attractive entries to important corridors for development; a signal that these corridors are areas for reinvestment. |
| G. Rename Riverside Avenue as Riverside Drive and enhance the route as a river experience and gateway | The name "Riverside Drive" could give the route prominence and its enhancement to create a river experience and gateway from the south could stimulate interest in redevelopment opportunities in the Riverside Drive/First Avenue corridor. | City of St. Charles, St. Charles Park District and DSCP | Costs for enhancing the route as a scenic corridor and riverfront experience could include landscaping, signage, public art and pedestrian / bicycle trail improvements. | An attractive, interesting and active south gateway and scenic corridor for downtown. |
| H. Encourage redevelopment in the 100 block of South First Street | Parking lots in this vicinity will become redundant when the new parking facility at First Street and Walnut Street opens. These factors combined with the low intensity of existing development, properties and businesses in transition and underdeveloped riverfront parcels indicate this area could be prime for redevelopment. | City of St. Charles, property owners and/or potential developers | The costs for encouraging redevelopment should be limited due to the investments that have already been made in the parking facility. A more aggressive catalyst role could include costs for acquiring control of transitional properties and /or relocating the drive-thru banking facility. | A chance to capture the best opportunity for development activity in downtown in the near future; projects that set the tone for redevelopment along the First Street South corridor and riverfront. |
| I. Define alternative routes through St. Charles for local traffic | Alternatives for local traffic to move into downtown and through the community should be considered to facilitate local movement patterns. | City of St. Charles | The costs for alternative routes will vary with the routes chosen. | Alternatives for movement that do not require the local community to face the traffic on Main Street. |

II. Early Actions – Immediate to Three Years (continued)

| Action: | Description: | Responsible parties: | Anticipated public costs: | Outcome: |
|---|---|--|--|--|
| J. Initiate design and implementation of street termini | Streets that terminate at a guardrail, a parking lot or a "back door" should be avoided or changed to focus on the river, a work of public art or a central feature of a building. | City of St. Charles and, possibly, private sector property and building owners | Costs for each project will vary depending on existing conditions at each terminus. Costs could include redesign of the context of the terminus, demolition of existing improvements, new construction and public art. | A complete experience for drivers and pedestrians that leaves no part of the picture to chance. |
| K. Install Shopper Lockers at two or three convenient drive-up locations along "The Great American Shopping Route" | Shopper lockers will promote a shopper convenience and the "park once, shop twice" approach to parking and retail development. | City of St. Charles and DSCP | The cost of the lockers; locating lockers in publicly owned or controlled facilities will minimize costs. | Enhanced convenience for downtown shoppers. |
| L. Complete a comprehensive parking study. | The study should assess parking demand and supply, review the effectiveness of management and enforcement policies, and should suggest strategies to meet estimated demand in the future. The study should also examine the feasibility of building parking structures and eliminating surface parking lots to encourage intensified development. | City of St. Charles and DSCP | Costs include the engagement of a consultant specializing in urban parking management and strategies. | A parking management program that optimizes parking space usage and provides a long-term parking strategy that will encourage intense redevelopment. |
| M. Research Centralized Retail Management (CRM) program models for potential implementation in St. Charles | Certain CRM techniques might be appropriate and effectively applied to reinforce street level retail activity and upper floor office and residential uses in downtown St. Charles. CRM models in other cities should be investigated for possible application in St. Charles. | DSCP | Research costs might include travel expenses. Implementation costs could vary greatly depending on the scope of a CRM program that might be developed. | A quality business mix, increased property values, and improved rents in downtown St. Charles. |
| N. Complete a merchandise inventory of product lines available from existing downtown St. Charles businesses | The information will be key to identifying specific business expansion and recruitment opportunities. The inventory can also be used as a marketing tool to promote the variety of goods available in downtown. | DSCP | Costs include expenses for the inventory survey's printing, distribution, collection and tabulation. Most work can reasonably be accomplished in-house and by staff and volunteers to minimize expenses. | A complete product lines inventory and a prioritized listing of business types for expansion or recruitment. |
| O. Review current business and design incentive programs to assess their effectiveness in meeting emerging issues and catalyzing quality design and redevelopment | Current programs available from the City and local financial institutions are focused almost exclusively on façade improvements. New, enhanced and targeted incentives should be considered as a means of pursuing business development strategies advanced in this plan. | City of St. Charles, DSCP and local financial institutions | Costs to fund and administer incentive programs will vary depending on the type of incentives offered (loans, grants, etc.) and the nature of the activities targeted by the programs. | Increased levels of private sector reinvestment in downtown St. Charles. |

II. Early Actions – Immediate to Three Years (continued)

| Action: | Description: | Responsible parties: | Anticipated public costs: | Outcome: |
|--|--|--|---|--|
| P. Investigate, develop and promote new incentive programs that do not rely exclusively on municipal funding to target business prospects | The low interest façade improvement loan program offered by local financial institutions is a good example. Examples for new programs include a communications technology upgrade grant funded by utilities or an entrepreneurial grant /loan program sponsored by a state agency, university or foundation. | DSCP should facilitate research; the City and DSCP should actively promote the incentives. | Promotional costs to publicize programs. | Additional incentives that leverage private sector investments. |
| Q. Actively recruit smaller, independently owned and operated retail businesses and establishments to complement product lines and offerings in the Art & Antiques, Shops & Boutiques and Dining & Entertainment development zones | The quality of the downtown St. Charles business mix will be enhanced through the effective recruitment and placement of specific business types that advance "The Great American Shopping Route" concept. | DSCP, City of St. Charles, downtown property owners & agents and Realtors | Costs will include professional staff time, research, travel and marketing; these costs might be shared by the responsible parties. | New retail businesses and establishments that enhance the downtown shopping, dining and entertainment experiences. |
| R. Conduct a downtown housing study to assist in promoting residential development, particularly in appropriate areas of development zones and in the upper stories of downtown commercial buildings. | The study should assess the supply and market demand for downtown units – both owned and rented – and profile existing and potential downtown St. Charles resident groups in terms of age, income, marital status, employment, methods of transportation and recreational interests. | City of St. Charles and DSCP | Project costs will include the engagement of a consultant specializing in downtown housing market assessments and development strategies. | Accurate, up-to-date information that can be used to effectively promote housing development opportunities to building owners, investors and developers. |
| S. Develop and implement "The Great American [Dream, Opportunity or Investment]" investor marketing campaign | The development of qualified leads will require a highly professional sales approach and marketing collaterals that capture the attention and interest of quality retailers, developers, and investors. | DSCP, in cooperation with the City, Chamber of Commerce, Convention & Visitors Bureau, downtown property & business owners and Realtors. | The costs of developing and implementing the campaign include design, printing, production, distribution and advertising. | An increased number of qualified leads and the attraction of high quality retailers, investors and developers. |
| T. Develop and implement "The Great American Downtown" consumer marketing campaign | The effective implementation of the campaign concept will require the design and production of high quality collaterals, advertising and events. The Downtown St. Charles Partnership should take a lead role, facilitating cooperation and supporting community events staged in the downtown. | DSCP, in cooperation with the City, Chamber of Commerce, Convention & Visitors Bureau, downtown businesses, downtown festivals and events promoters and media. | The responsible parties and participants should share costs; costs include advertising, publications and events that provide opportunities for sponsors to participate financially and in-kind. | A strong market position for downtown St. Charles and an enhanced image of downtown in the minds of trade area and visiting consumers. |

III. Intermediate Actions – Four to Eight Years

| Action: | Description: | Responsible parties: | Anticipated public costs: | Outcome: |
|---|---|--|---|---|
| A. Remove parking and auto-related uses from the riverfront | Uses along the river that are not conducive to the pedestrian nature of downtown and the riverfront will become more out of character as surrounding sites are redeveloped; efforts should be made to remove or relocate those uses. | City of St. Charles and, possibly, property owners and developers. | In most cases, the costs for removing or relocating such uses will involve acquisition of the site. Some costs may be recouped in redevelopment. | A riverfront that has the sense of being a seamless element of a downtown that is truly pedestrian-oriented. |
| B. Implement a public parking structure in Third Street North corridor | A parking structure in this corridor will better ensure that development is maximized in an area that might otherwise evolve without a more urban character. | City of St. Charles | The costs for this public parking structure will be similar to the per car costs of the parking facility along First Street South, plus a factor for inflation. | Development patterns that achieve a more “urban” character; pedestrian experiences that focus on buildings and spaces created for people as opposed to parking lots created for cars. |
| C. Initiate redevelopment of the south end of First Street with urban residential development | This area provides an opportunity to create a genuine urban housing project. The project should be considered an integral part of the Gateway to downtown. | City of St. Charles | Public investment might be required to catalyze housing development with the type of urban features described in this plan. | An ideal urban housing opportunity providing new choice for housing that takes advantage of downtown. |
| D. Relocate the auto dealership on First Street and initiate redevelopment of the site | The character of the auto dealership will become more out of place as other projects evolve around it. It might also limit the investment that others would otherwise make in this area. The commitment to relocate the dealership may offer investors the assurance they need to move forward with the best possible projects. | City of St. Charles, property owners and developers | Costs may include property acquisition and business relocation. | Redevelopment of a site that will only become increasingly out of context with downtown |
| E. Explore and pursue appropriate ways to initiate redevelopment of the Riverside Drive/First Avenue corridor spanning from Illinois Avenue to Prairie Street | This area offers opportunities for housing like that described for the south end of First Street, and /or a commercial neighborhood use, that will give the sense that the neighborhood extends to the river. | City of St. Charles, property owners and developers | Public investment might be required in this area to catalyze development with urban features that are consistent with this plan. | Downtown housing opportunities that take advantage of the features of downtown and the attraction of the river. |

IV. Long Term Actions – Nine Years and Longer

| Action: | Description: | Responsible parties: | Anticipated public costs: | Outcome: |
|--|---|-----------------------------|---|---|
| A. Implement public parking structure in First Avenue North corridor | The area around the municipal complex has the potential of becoming a great civic space; parking lots currently stand in the way of realizing that potential. The spaces along the river could become more park-like, and provide limited parking, if other opportunities for parking can be created. | City of St. Charles | The costs for a public parking structure in this corridor will be similar to the per car costs of the parking facility along First Street South, plus a factor for inflation. | Development patterns that achieve a more “urban” character; pedestrian experiences that focus on spaces created for people – especially if parking in the municipal complex can be replaced with more park-like spaces. |