



The City of St. Charles, Illinois

# 2013 Comprehensive Plan

Presented for City Council Adoption

Adopted September 2013 • Prepared by Houseal Lavigne Associates • Gewalt Hamilton Associates • Conservation Design Forum



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## City of St. Charles, Illinois 2013 Comprehensive Plan

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This Plan was made possible by the contributions and insights of the residents, business owners, property owners, and representatives from various groups and organizations.

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# Introduction & **1** Background

City of St. Charles, Illinois 2013 Comprehensive Plan



# 1 Introduction & Background

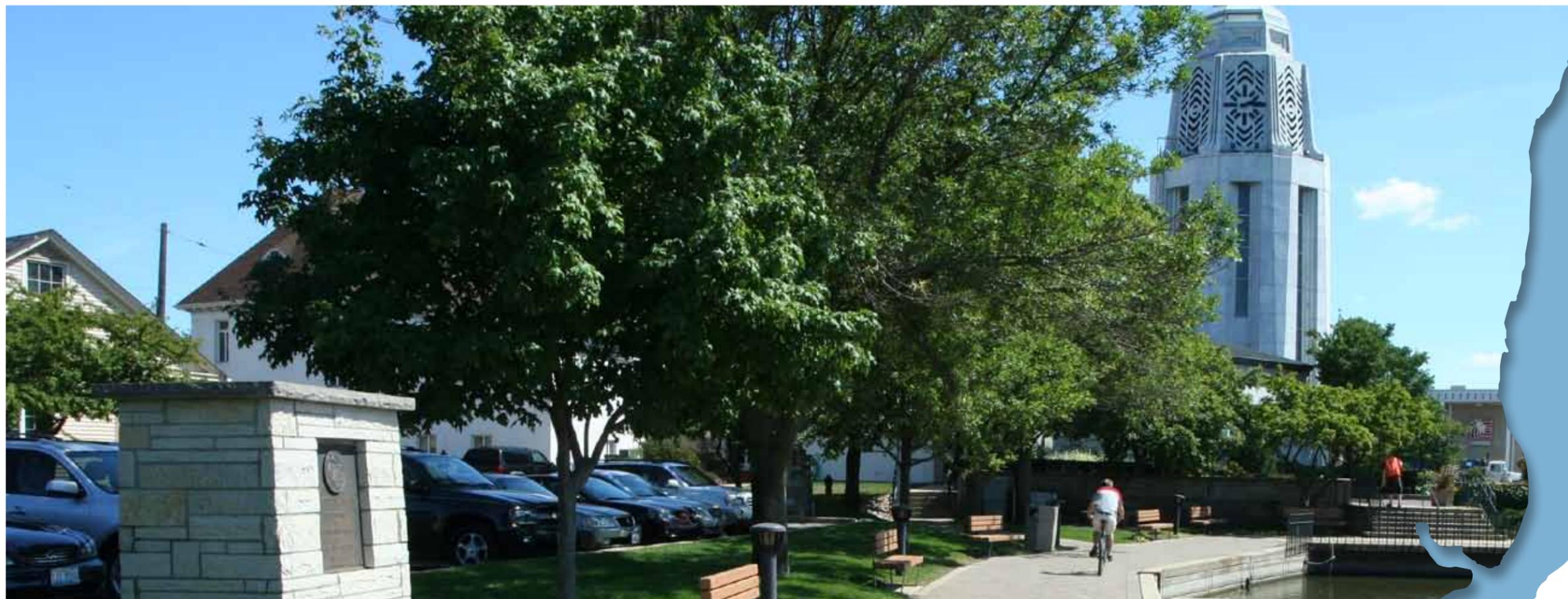
The City of St. Charles, which straddles the picturesque Fox River, is a community with a rich history, an engaged citizenry, historic architecture, and strong sense of community pride. Since being settled in the early 19th century, St. Charles has gone from the camp of just a few Potawatomi Indians, to an industrial and manufacturing center, and finally to a nationally recognized, family-oriented community. In 1950, the population of St. Charles was only 6,709. Today, St. Charles boasts 32,974 citizens. People visit St. Charles for the weekend and then return for good.

The City of St. Charles also has a strong legacy of engaged and progressive leadership. The mission statement of the City reflects this commitment to good governance and community service:

*Preserve our heritage, foster opportunity, build community, and enhance quality of life for all.*

The City has commissioned this Comprehensive Plan in order to uphold this mission statement. The last Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1996. Major changes that have occurred since the last plan's adoption include the First Street Redevelopment (2006), adoption of an Inclusionary Housing Ordinance (2008), and an updated Zoning Ordinance (2006).

An updated Comprehensive Plan will address these changes and others that have occurred in the City in the last fifteen years. This plan will set a course to guide land use decision-making for the next twenty years, ensuring that St. Charles continues to improve upon its legacy with an eye toward the future. The City has commissioned this Comprehensive Plan in part to provide more robust guidance for future development. Historically, St. Charles has experienced much of its growth through annexation. The City recognizes that this type of growth becomes less possible as the City matures, and that new forms of economic growth must be pursued. This plan will provide guidance on these issues, as well as improved information on character and quality, including considerations for neo-traditional neighborhoods and vertically mixed land-uses.



*Preserve our heritage,  
foster opportunity,  
build community, and  
enhance quality of life  
for all.*

*- Mission Statement of  
the City of St. Charles*



## Community History

St. Charles was originally the site of two summer camps of the Potawatomie Indian tribe who camped near the shallows of the Fox River where they forded and fished the river. Settlers arrived in the Spring of 1834, when Evan Shelby and William Franklin from Indiana laid their claim on a tract of land high on the east river bluff, near the current intersection of State and Fourth Avenues.

Settlers were attracted to the area's varied natural setting. To the west were extensive prairie lands while dense woods grew on both sides of the River to the north.

By the mid-1830's, a bridge had been built, as well a saw mill, carding mill, and grist mill. A general store was built at East Main and First Avenue in 1836, an event that spurred further development. The town was initially named Charleston, but later changes its name to St. Charles in 1839 after a dispute with another town in Illinois with the same name.

The path of the current IL Route 64 was initially an Indian trail and later a route of passage between Chicago and the Mississippi River. Hotels sprang up along the route by 1841 to accommodate those passing through. St. Charles was briefly served by a branch of the Galena and Chicago Union rail line, but this service was terminated in 1860 and so had little effect on the economy of the City. In 1871 the Chicago, St. Paul, and Kansas City Railroad established a depot in the town and regular rail service was initiated. By the early 20th century, interurban rail lines connected the City to Elgin, Aurora, Chicago, and elsewhere. Factory work around this time drew hundreds of Swedish, Lithuanians, Belgians, and Danes.

The rise of the automobile in the 1920's created further connections between St. Charles and the surrounding communities. Tourism became a major component of the St. Charles economy and identity in the period between 1920 and 1940. St. Charles became known as a resort town during this period, with the new Hotel Baker and Arcada Theater helping to promote and develop this new role for the City. Despite the influx of visitors, St. Charles did not experience the explosive growth of permanent residents until later. Major industrial development began in the mid 1960's with three manufacturing districts appearing in the community: the Delnor Industrial Park, St. Charles Industrial Park, and the Central Manufacturing District.

The City limits have undergone two major expansions, the first in 1856 and the second nearly a century later in the 1950's. In the 1950's the industrial focus moved from the center of town to the outskirts. This allowed for larger sections of industrial development on undeveloped land and left the downtown area to develop in a more conventional fashion. Main Street during this time period became a dominant organizing feature and the City's primary commercial arterial.

In the 1970's people began to view St. Charles as a desirable city in which to raise a family. Later, the 1980's saw a wave of intensive residential expansion. Along with this growth came large scale commercial development and more annexation, though not on the same scale as previously experienced.

Today, St. Charles has three unique commercial centers and numerous residential neighborhoods surrounding them. While Main Street/64 remains the dominant thoroughfare and a major commercial corridor, new development along Randall Road and to a lesser extent around the intersections of Kirk Road and 64 have become the dominant growth areas in the City. St. Charles is today an award-winning community renowned for its high quality of life and natural beauty.

## Core Qualities

In 1970 the Mayor of St. Charles, C. V. Amenoff, told the tale of the four fox statues adorning the Main Street Bridge. These foxes, it is said, were the son of Charlemagne, a Native American Chief who lived on the land before the City was settled. These foxes represent the four guardians of the still growing St. Charles settlement. The first, the guardian of the civic, business, and industrial life of the community, corresponds to this plan's economic development and community engagement sections. The second and third foxes, the guardians of educational, cultural, and religious expression, will be represented through the creation of the community facilities section of the plan. And the fourth fox, which guards the legacy of the Fox River wandering through the wilderness, will be represented by the parks and open space section of the plan. These are the core qualities that contribute to St. Charles' greatness.

While the Comprehensive Plan cannot possibly live up to the legendary stature of the four foxes, it strives to represent and defend the culmination of their wisdom and to add the additional considerations that will help St. Charles and its people succeed now and in the future. Of course, this plan addresses other topics such as transportation and infrastructure and implementation.

## Community Setting

The City of St. Charles is located approximately 35 miles west of the City of Chicago and straddles both DuPage and Kane Counties. Bisected by the Fox River, St. Charles is in the Fox River Valley and is part of a “tri-city” area along with the Cities of Geneva and Batavia. In some respects, this area demarcates the western boundary of the expanded Chicago metropolitan region due to the size, density, and availability of transit in these cities.

St. Charles is essentially equidistant to I-88, I-90 and I-355, yet none of these major access routes could be considered conveniently nearby. For this reason, St. Charles enjoys a sense of isolation from the surrounding metropolitan region—a quality that some view as an asset and that others see as a weakness.

St. Charles is well known throughout the region, and even nationally, as a great place to live. The City of St. Charles was named one of the “150 Great Places in Illinois,” by the AIA Illinois and one of the “Top 10 Towns to Live In” by West Suburban Magazine. In 2011, Family Circle Magazine rated St. Charles #1 Best Town for Families.

## Planning Jurisdiction

The Comprehensive Plan addresses issues within the municipal boundaries of the City as well as unincorporated areas adjacent to the City. Planning by the City for these unincorporated areas is permitted by state law to promote orderly growth and change. The Illinois Municipal Code (65 ILCS 5/11-12-5) allows a Comprehensive Plan to plan for an area extending 1.5 miles from the current corporate boundary. The Illinois Municipal Code (65 ILCS 5/11-12-9) also encourages negotiations between communities with overlapping jurisdictions.

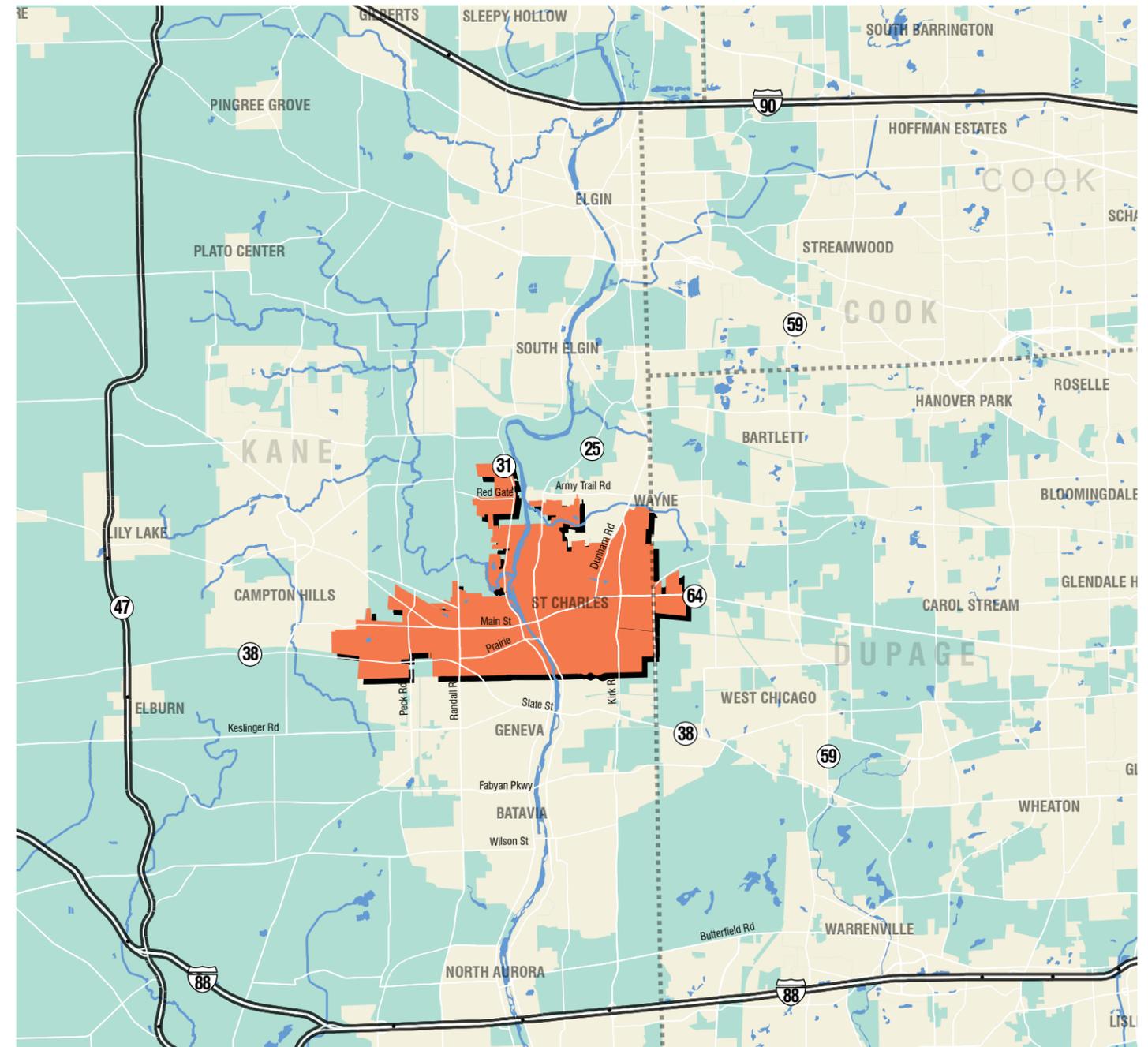
The City’s planning jurisdiction as shown in the maps contained in this Plan is defined primarily by the corporate limits of neighboring municipalities and jurisdictional boundary line agreements with South Elgin (2005), Wayne (2011), West Chicago (2001 and 2013 proposed amendment), and Geneva (1995). Land uses in the northwestern portion of the City’s extraterritorial planning jurisdiction are defined in an inter-governmental agreement with South Elgin and Kane County (2005).

## Past Plans and Studies

A goal of the Comprehensive Plan is to build upon past plans and studies. Care must be taken to ensure that the Comprehensive Plan does not conflict with the goals and recommendations already established, except where conditions have changed and warrant reconsideration of past conclusions. Where possible, the Comprehensive Plan will build off of these previous efforts.

The last complete comprehensive plan was adopted in 1990; two updates to that plan were completed in 1996 and 2003. These plans served as a background for the writing of the current Comprehensive Plan. A thorough summary of the other documents listed below is included in the Existing Conditions Report.

- » 2000 Downtown Strategy Plan
- » 2002 River Corridor Master Plan
- » 2003 St. Charles Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities Plan
- » 2007 Economic Development Plan
- » 2007 Applied Composites Area Plan
- » 2008 Strategic Plan
- » 2010 Transit Circulator Study
- » 2011 Park District Comprehensive Master Plan
- » Kane County 2040 Plan
- » CMAP’s Go To 2040





## Purpose of the Comprehensive Plan

The Comprehensive Plan serves as the City’s official policy guide for physical improvement and development. At the most basic level, the Comprehensive Plan is intended to direct orderly growth and change as well as maintain and enhance the livability of the City. The Comprehensive Plan provides a vision for the future to describe an ideal St. Charles, based on community input and consensus, to ensure that quality of life remains high. In addition, plans and recommendations are provided for key focus areas, including: West Gateway, East Gateway, Downtown, and Main Street.

## The Planning Process

The City of St. Charles’ comprehensive planning process incorporated an eight step program as illustrated to the right. The process was designed to produce a Comprehensive Plan by assessing existing conditions and influences, establishing a vision, and developing policies and recommendations to serve as a guide for community decision making. The planning process was built on a foundation of community input and outreach, the Plan’s recommendations refined based on feedback from the Comprehensive Plan Task Force, City officials, City staff, and the community-at-large. The final Plan focused on both community-wide and area-specific recommendations.

## Use of the Plan

The Plan is comprehensive in every sense of the word: every parcel of the City’s planning area is evaluated; the timeframe is of a length that allows for implementation and tracking; and the types of analyses and subject areas address every aspect of livability. Though not regulatory in nature, as a policy document with such a comprehensive scope, it guides the creation or amendment of City regulations as well as individual actions and investments. For example, the Plan provides policy direction on annexing property, changing zoning, reviewing development and redevelopment projects, and identifying public infrastructure improvements.

The Comprehensive Plan establishes the “ground rules” for private improvement in the community. It is intended to be used by the City Council, Plan Commission, other boards, commissions, and agencies, and City staff to review and evaluate development proposals, to ensure projects are consistent with the long-term planning objectives of the community. The Plan also provides direction to assist in undertaking public improvements, ensuring the City is prepared to meet the challenges of the future and continue to efficiently and effectively allocate its resources.

Finally, the Plan serves as an important marketing tool to promote the City’s unique assets and advantages. As a marketing tool, the Plan can spur desirable development and redevelopment throughout the community, in the growth areas, within the downtown area, or along aging commercial corridors.

## Organization of the Plan

The following Chapters form the City’s updated Comprehensive Plan:

- » Chapter 1: Introduction & Background
- » Chapter 2: Vision
- » Chapter 3: Goals & Objectives
- » Chapter 4: Land Use Plan
- » Chapter 5: Community Facilities Plan
- » Chapter 6: Parks & Open Space Plan
- » Chapter 7: Transportation Plan
- » Chapter 8: Subarea Plans
- » Chapter 9: Culture & Identity Plan
- » Chapter 10: Design Guidelines
- » Chapter 11: Implementation



## Community Profile

An analysis has been conducted to establish a firm understanding of existing market conditions within the community and inform decision making with regard to land use and development. The following community profile is a summary of a more detailed analysis presented in the Existing Conditions Report earlier in the planning process.

The profile begins with a demographic overview of recent trends in population, households, income, and labor force and employment. This is followed by an assessment of St. Charles' competitive position within the residential, commercial, and industrial markets. The analysis identifies the issues the community is facing and will likely face and creates a foundation to assist with future land use designation and planning objectives.

At the time of analysis, data from the 2010 US Census have only been recently released and represent the most accurate snap shot of St. Charles' current population. Given the recent release of data, demographic projections which are based on Census data have yet to be finalized. Additional market data regarding housing, income, and retail demand were also obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey and ESRI Business Analyst, a nationally recognized provider of market and demographic data.

## Demographic Data

Changes in population, households and demographic composition will influence future land use and development as well as other issues within St. Charles. The City of St. Charles has grown steadily over the past decade and has maintained a core population of households with families. Over the last decade, the median age has increased while the typical household has fewer persons. Median household income has increased, but the rate of increase has been slightly slower than that of inflation since 2000. While the economic downturn has affected communities throughout the Midwest, the St. Charles market has not experienced the same level of impact as other markets.

- » St. Charles' population has increased by more than 18% over the last decade to 32,974 in 2010. This represents an average annual growth rate of 1.7%.
- » The number of households in St. Charles has grown by 2,073 (a 20% increase) since 2000 to 12,424 in 2010. This represents an average annual growth rate of 1.8%.
- » Between 2000 and 2010, the median age of the City has increased by nearly 8% to 39.4 years old.
- » It is estimated that the median household income within St. Charles has increased by an average annual rate of slightly more than 1.0%.

### DEMOGRAPHIC SUMMARY City of St. Charles, 2000 - 2010

	2000	2010	Total Change 2000 - 2010
<b>Population</b>	27,896	32,974	5,078 (18.2%)
<b>Households</b>	10,351	12,424	2,073 (20.0%)
<b>Median Age</b>	36.6	39.4	2.8 (7.7%)
<b>Average Household Size</b>	2.62	2.56	-0.06 (-2.3%)

Source: ESRI Business Analyst;  
Houseal Lavigne Associates

## Labor and Employment

### Employment by Industry

Employment estimates for 2009 (the most recent year for which data are available) show that the City's economy is relatively diverse with several industries employing between 5% and 15% of the workforce. Despite recent employment loss, the range of significant employers within St. Charles points to long term economic stability in the community.

#### TOP FIVE EMPLOYMENT INDUSTRIES City of St. Charles, 2009

Industry (NAICS Code)	Employees	
	17,974	100.0%
Manufacturing	2,599	14.5%
Retail Trade	2,345	13.0%
Educational Services, Private & Public	2,131	11.9%
Health Care & Social Assistance	1,828	10.2%
Accommodation and Food Services	1,370	7.6%

Source: ESRI Business Analyst;  
Houseal Lavigne Associates

### Employment Projections

Industries that are projected to be the largest contributors to job growth in St. Charles between 2008 and 2018 include:

- » Health Care and Social Assistance (425 new jobs)
- » Educational Services (224 new jobs)
- » Professional, Scientific & Technical Services (208 new jobs)
- » Administrative Services & Waste Management (206 new jobs)
- » Accommodation & Food Services (201 new jobs).

## Residential Market

### Housing Profile

Overall, the most predominant type of housing in St. Charles is an owner occupied, single family home with three or four bedrooms. Rental units make up approximately 25% of the local housing stock and consist primarily of multi-family structures.

- » Approximately 71% of all housing units in St. Charles are owner occupied and over three quarters of these owner occupied housing units are single family detached homes.
- » Approximately 75% of all rental units in the community are in multi-family structures while only 9.5% are in single family detached homes.
- » An equal number of owner occupied units have three and four bedrooms while rental units typically have two bedrooms.
- » Just under one quarter of all housing units in the City are contained in multi-family units.

### Housing Market Implications

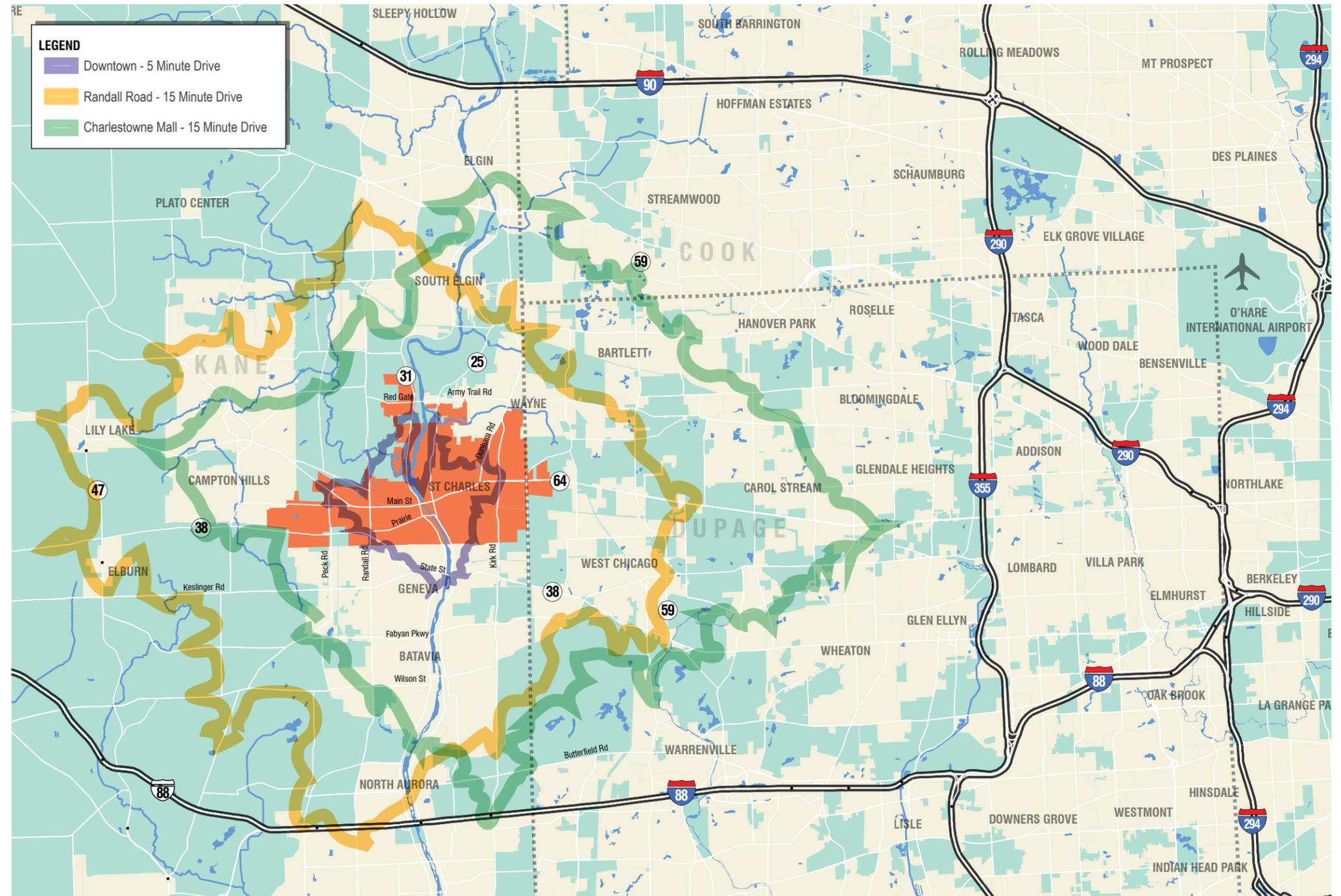
The City of St. Charles is projected to experience continuing growth in the older more affluent age/income cohorts. Younger (25 to 34 year old) households are also projected to increase. Both of these groups are typically the primary market for multi-family and single family attached housing, both for-sale and rental. These units include condominiums, townhomes, row homes, and apartments. On the other end of the spectrum, the City is also projected to experience a moderate increase in some of the lower household income sectors over the next several years. While the increase is not large, officials should continue to monitor the availability of quality affordable housing dispersed throughout the City.

Overall, the St. Charles housing market has been stable in comparison to the larger regional and national market. This should continue to have a positive impact in attracting reinvestment and buyers of all product types.

## Retail Market Market Areas

The potential for commercial development at any given location is influenced by several factors, including local and regional demand for goods and services, the health of commercial districts, the location of surrounding commercial nodes, and the consumer spending patterns of the area's population.

For the purposes of this analysis, separate retail market areas have been defined for the communities three major commercial areas: Downtown St. Charles, Randall Road, and Charlestowne Mall. These retail market areas represent the geography from which St. Charles businesses will draw the majority of their customers and is used in estimating potential demand for retail goods and services. The mall area and Randall Road corridor have larger market areas that reflect their larger regional draw while the downtown has a smaller market area which primarily relies on local residents.





### Retail Gap Analysis

The following analysis uses a comparison of projected spending by market area households to the existing supply of retail space, assessing the potential for retail development. This “gap” analysis provides an indication of “surplus” (positive numbers) or “leakage” (negative numbers) within a given retail category.

#### Downtown St. Charles – 5 Minute Drive

The presence of a surplus within a given retail category suggests that there is at least enough retail space to accommodate demand for the range of goods and services provided by stores in that category. Conversely, leakage indicates that demand exceeds supply and consumers are spending dollars outside of the market area. This leakage could potentially be recaptured and may represent a commercial opportunity within the market area. It is important to distinguish between support in the market and development potential of a specific site or location. The availability of alternative sites, specifications of particular retailers, the number of projects actively pursuing tenants, and similar issues can affect whether market potential translates to development potential.

In analyzing retail supply and demand within the Downtown market area, there is currently an oversupply of retail space of approximately \$297 million. Within the market area, there are approximately 12,707 households contributing to a current retail demand of \$431.7 million. This demand equates to a potential expenditure per household of nearly \$34,000, with a current supply of over \$57,000 per household. This figure includes all retail, eating, and drinking establishments.

#### Randall Road – 15 Minute Drive

For households within a 15 minute drive of the Randall Road corridor, it is estimated that there is an unmet retail demand of nearly \$290 million. The 63,398 households within the market area contribute to a retail demand of approximately \$2.5 billion, while the supply is only \$2.2 billion. This equates to an unmet demand of more than \$4,500 per household.

#### Charlestowne Mall – 15 Minute Drive

Retail supply within the Charlestowne Mall market area is approximately \$608 million less than current demand. There are approximately 81,929 households contributing to a current retail demand of \$3.2 billion. This demand equates to a potential expenditure per household of more than \$39,000, with a current supply of less than \$32,000 per household. As with the other two market areas, this figure includes all retail, eating, and drinking establishments.

#### Development Potential

Downtowns typically serve the local market area, relying on the local population for the majority of their customers. The Downtown St. Charles retail market area is relatively saturated and there does not appear to be any additional opportunities for retail expansion in the near term. While the retail market is saturated at the local level, the Randall Road corridor and Charlestowne Mall area rely on larger market areas where unmet demand still exists.

While the City of St. Charles was incorporated more than 135 years ago, the areas surrounding the community have only more recently been developed. As such, St. Charles is located in a stable, but maturing commercial landscape where the supply of retail space is still shifting to meet the needs of a growing population.

## RETAIL GAP ANALYSIS PROFILE

### Downtown, Randall Road & Charlestowne Mall Market Areas, 2010

	Downtown - 5 Minute Drive Time	Randall Road - 15 Minute Drive Time	Charlestowne Mall - 15 Minute Drive Time
<b>Summary Demographics</b>			
2010 Population	32,567	187,350	250,052
2010 Households	12,707	63,398	81,929
2010 Median Disposable Income	\$58,837	\$65,848	\$65,818
2010 Per Capita Income	\$38,231	\$37,169	\$35,077

	Retail Gap by Market Area (\$M)					
	Downtown		Randall Road		Charlestowne Mall	
<b>Summary</b>						
<b>Total Retail Trade and Food &amp; Drink</b>						
Total Retail Trade	-\$297.4		\$289.8		\$607.6	
Total Food & Drink	-\$242.0		\$260.3		\$513.4	
	-\$55.4		\$29.6		\$94.2	

	Downtown		Randall Road		Charlestowne Mall	
	Retail Gap (\$M)	Potential <sup>1</sup>	Retail Gap (\$M)	Potential <sup>1</sup>	Retail Gap (\$M)	Potential <sup>1</sup>
<b>Key Industry Groups</b>						
<b>Motor Vehicle &amp; Parts Dealers</b>	-\$84.1	-210,200	\$137.3	343,222	\$199.4	498,537
<b>Furniture &amp; Home Furnishings Stores</b>	-\$11.4	-28,398	-\$6.4	-16,041	\$18.9	47,305
<b>Electronics &amp; Appliance Stores</b>	-\$12.5	-31,305	-\$22.9	-57,194	-\$16.7	-41,772
<b>Bldg Materials, Garden Equip. &amp; Supply Stores</b>	-\$15.5	-38,635	-\$65.4	-163,536	-\$41.3	-103,356
<b>Food &amp; Beverage Stores</b>	-\$100.9	-252,257	-\$29.8	-74,554	-\$31.8	-79,424
<b>Health &amp; Personal Care Stores</b>	-\$7.4	-18,455	\$6.1	15,342	\$8.3	20,639
<b>Clothing and Clothing Accessories Stores</b>	-\$14.0	-35,082	-\$8.8	-21,891	-\$7.4	-18,531
<b>Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book, and Music Stores</b>	-\$3.3	-8,266	-\$8.4	-20,917	-\$2.3	-5,677
<b>General Merchandise Stores</b>	-\$14.4	-35,997	-\$34.8	-87,022	\$44.4	110,938
<b>Miscellaneous Store Retailers</b>	-\$20.5	-51,323	-\$10.3	-25,662	-\$14.5	-36,210
<b>Nonstore Retailers*</b>	\$13.2	32,998	\$116.3	290,789	\$140.5	351,192
<b>Food Services &amp; Drinking Places</b>	-\$55.4	-138,576	\$29.6	73,946	\$94.2	235,472

<sup>1</sup> Potential based on an average annual sales per-square-foot of \$400.

Source: ESRI Business Analyst; Houseal Lavigne Associates

\*Nonstore retailing includes all categories of retail uses that do not have physical store (bricks and mortar) locations. This includes internet sales, vending, kiosks, newspaper delivery and related categories.



### Industrial Market

The Chicago area industrial market is classified into several subareas. The City of St. Charles is located within what is considered the Fox Valley market area and includes the DuPage Airport and the communities of St. Charles, Geneva, Batavia and West Chicago. The Fox Valley market is situated between two much larger subareas, the I-88 Corridor and the I-90 Northwest area.

Within St. Charles, the largest concentration of industrial/business park uses is concentrated in the area defined as the East Gateway Industrial District. This area is located on the eastern edge of the City proximate to the DuPage Airport. There are also industrial type uses spread throughout St. Charles, with the second largest concentration being the Foundry Business Park on the west side of the City.

The St. Charles market and larger Fox Valley area is projected to stay on its current pace in terms of vacancy rates, rents, and leasing activity for the foreseeable future. While there are sites available for new development, it is anticipated that speculative development will be minimal. As with the office market, build-to-suit projects will likely be the source of any future development in the near term.

INDUSTRIAL MARKET STATISTICS				
Metropolitan Chicago, Second Quarter 2011				
Submarket	Total Inventory		Vacancy Rate	Under Construction
	Buildings	Square Feet		
<i>Fox Valley</i>	495	32,089,494	11.9%	0
I-90/Northwest	431	25,672,633	10.8%	0
I-88 Corridor	771	61,834,957	10.9%	0
<b>Chicago Metro</b>	<b>16,410</b>	<b>1,193,181,550</b>	<b>10.8%</b>	<b>717,958</b>

Source: ESRI Business Analyst



## Existing Land Use

Land use and development patterns have broad implications for the character, development, and overall well-being of the St. Charles community. The collection and analysis of land use data is important since so many aspects of the health of the community are related to land use. For example, residential and industrial areas should be separated since their uses are not typically compatible with one another. Through careful land use planning, planners can ensure that incompatible uses are separated. The land use pattern in St. Charles contains distinct areas of commercial, residential, and industrial uses, while Downtown is primarily a mix of almost all types of uses.

Existing land use designations describe how an area is used at a given period in time. Land use maps are useful on both a micro and a macro scale. By looking at the entire land use map for the City of St. Charles, it is clear that Downtown, Randall Road, and East Main Street are hubs of commercial activity. On a micro-scale, land use maps are helpful in discerning the fine-grained texture of uses. The mix of industrial and single family uses to the northwest of Downtown, for example, can be clearly seen on the Existing Land Use Map—an observation that could influence future plans.

Following is a description of the land use classifications identified on the existing land use map, as well as examples of how these uses appear in the various neighborhoods of St. Charles. These classifications as well as the land use map itself are based on a parcel-by-parcel field reconnaissance survey.

### Residential

#### Detached Single Family

*Detached structures that house one family and are typically owner-occupied, though this use also includes rental houses.*

#### Attached Single Family

*Residential structures that are connected horizontally. Single family attached housing is typically two stories high, but individual units do not stack vertically.*

#### Multi-family Residential

*Structures that contain multiple housing units, are usually stacked vertically and attached horizontally, and typically have common hallways and other amenities. This category includes senior housing and assisted living facilities.*

### Commercial

*Includes restaurants, retail stores, entertainment venues, grocery stores, for-profit community facilities, and other uses.*

#### Commercial Service

*Provides a service as the primary product.*

#### Office

*Includes medical and dental offices, real estate agencies, financial firms, and other places of business.*

### Industrial

#### Light Industrial

*Involves the manufacture of goods, processing of materials, storage, and distribution.*

#### Heavy Industrial/Manufacturing

*Reserved for major employment centers with heavy industrial uses that create significant pollution, noise, visual blight, and other activities incompatible with nearly every other use.*

### Public

*Local government facilities including government offices, public safety uses, public service agencies, and other uses that are both government-owned and that relate to the operation of the City and the local area.*

#### Quasi-Public

*Quasi-Public facilities include places of worship, community centers, and other uses that are not owned by the government.*

#### Utility

*Locations of permanent utility infrastructure such as pumping stations, treatment plants, and electrical substations.*

### Parks and Open Space

*Designated parks and open space areas are protected from redevelopment and maintained by the park service or other entity.*

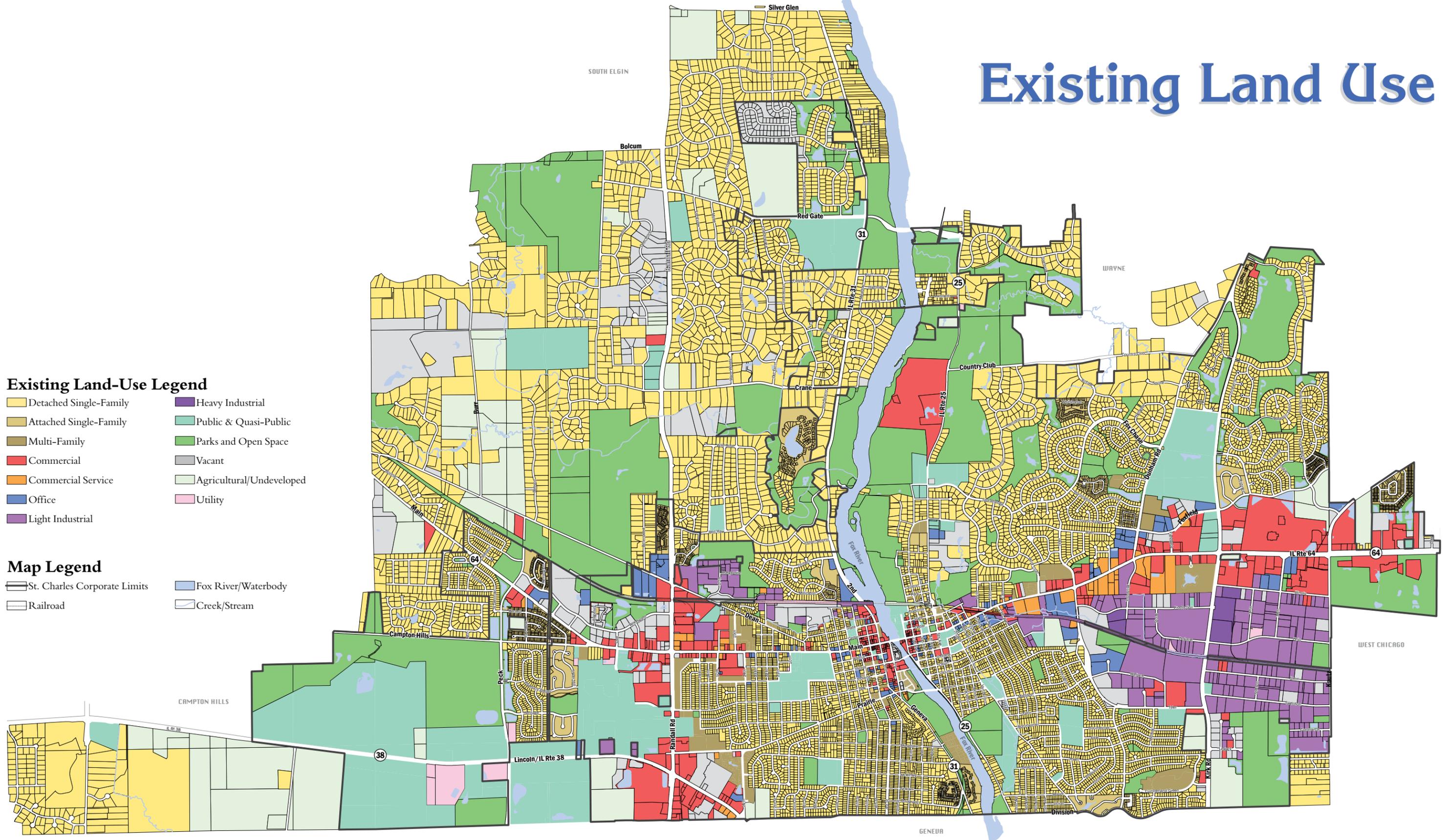
### Agricultural/Undeveloped

*Includes land actively used for agriculture as well as former farmland that could be developed in the future.*

### Vacant

*A parcel is considered vacant when it contains empty lots that can reasonably be considered available for redevelopment.*

# Existing Land Use





## Community Outreach

St. Charles is known as an engaged community with high levels of civic participation. A community outreach strategy was developed with this in mind in order to provide every opportunity for community involvement. The planning process for the St. Charles Comprehensive Plan sought input from a broad spectrum of the community including residents, business and property owners, community service providers, elected/appointed officials, and City staff.

A variety of outreach efforts were used to provide multiple avenues to gather feedback regarding existing conditions and local issues, needs, and the aspirations of City residents. Outreach exercises were also used to promote a sense of community and foster stewardship for the plan by underscoring that participants' voices have been heard and that their ideas have influenced the final decisions.

The following is a summary of the community outreach efforts that were completed in the early stages of the planning process and used to document existing conditions and identify issues. The following activities were conducted as major components of the outreach process:

- » Project Website
- » Project Initiation Meeting and Workshop
- » Community Workshop
- » Business Workshop
- » Subarea Workshops (East Side, West Side, and Downtown)
- » Key Person Interviews
- » Community Wide Visioning Workshop
- » Charlestowne Mall Visioning Workshop
- » Community Open Houses

## Comprehensive Plan Task Force Committee

A Comprehensive Plan Task Force Committee was appointed by the Mayor, with the advice and consent of the City Council, in order to oversee development of the updated Comprehensive Plan. Representatives were appointed from City Council, Plan Commission, Historic Preservation Commission, as well as former and current members of the Housing Commission, Zoning Commission, First Street Design Committee, Downtown St. Charles Partnership Board, and residents at-large.

## Project Website

A project website was created in order to provide a single source for all information related to the Comprehensive Plan process. The website contained project information and updates, meeting notices and summaries, and downloadable copies of draft documents for the duration of the process and beyond. In order to provide convenient and comprehensive information, the project website was linked to the City's website. Visitors also had the option of subscribing to an RSS feed to be notified of updates to the website. The project website will remain active after the plan making process.

## Project Initiation Workshop Wednesday, June 29, 2011

On Wednesday, June 29, 2011, a project initiation meeting was held with the Comprehensive Plan Task Force (CPTF) at City Hall, to set the foundation for the planning program and review and discuss the overall direction and policy issues facing the St. Charles community. The meeting reviewed overall project objectives and concluded with a Project Initiation Workshop. The workshop solicited the views of the CPTF regarding their concerns and aspirations for the City of St. Charles and its planning area.

## St. Charles Comprehensive Plan Project Initiation Workshop

### Wednesday, August 31, 2011

On Wednesday, August 31, 2011, the first Community Workshop for the Comprehensive Plan process was held. The workshop was the first of many face-to-face outreach events scheduled for the Comprehensive Planning Process. During this meeting, residents were given an opportunity to voice their concerns, the things they like about the City, and to hear the ideas of their friends and neighbors. Additionally, this event provided a chance for community members to learn about the purpose of a comprehensive plan and the process to be undertaken.

### Downtown Subarea Workshop

Thursday, September 12, 2011

On Wednesday, October 12, 2011, a downtown community workshop was held at the Baker Memorial Community Center to give the community a chance to voice their concerns about the downtown areas of St. Charles. This was an interactive workshop where residents were able to place labels on a map indicating areas of concern and then follow up with a description on an index card. Following this opening exercise, residents, community leaders, and other stakeholders participated in a discussion.

### East Side Subarea Workshop

Thursday, September 22, 2011

On Thursday September 22, 2011, a community workshop was held at the St. John Neumann Church to give the community a chance to voice their concerns about the area of St. Charles to the East of the Fox River. This was an interactive workshop where residents were able to place labels on a map indicating areas of concern and then follow up with a description on an index card. Following this opening exercise, residents, community leaders, and other stakeholders participated in a discussion about the exercise.

### West Side Subarea Workshop

Thursday, September 28, 2011

On Thursday September 28, 2011, a community workshop was held at the Kane County Circuit Clerk Building to give the community a chance to voice their concerns about the area of St. Charles to the West of the Fox River. This was an interactive workshop where residents were able to place labels on a map indicating areas of concern and then follow up with a description on an index card. Following this opening exercise, residents, community leaders, and other stakeholders participated in a discussion about the exercise.

### Business Workshop

Tuesday, October 4, 2011

A workshop for St. Charles business owners and members of the development community was held on Tuesday, October 4, 2011 at the Council Chambers at City Hall. The workshop provided attendees with an opportunity to identify issues facing the City with an emphasis on the business environment and development regulations. Approximately 30 individuals participated in the workshop, which was conducted as an informal discussion amongst members of the business community, City staff, and the consultant.

### Key Person Interviews

October 11 & 12, 2011

As a part of the Community Outreach phase of the Comprehensive Plan's planning process, confidential interviews were conducted with individuals to discuss existing conditions and potentials within the St. Charles community. Interviewees from all facets of life in St. Charles were asked to participate. These individuals work at local businesses and non-profits, as elected officials, community leaders, and citizens who have a unique connection to the community's history.

Interviews were conducted on October 11 and October 12, 2011 and lasted approximately 30 minutes each. Each interviewee was asked a series of questions regarding the community.

### Community-Wide Visioning Workshop

Wednesday, November 30, 2011

On Wednesday, November 30, 2011, a community-wide visioning workshop was held at the City Hall to provide the community a chance to collaboratively craft a vision for St. Charles. This was an interactive workshop where residents were able to mark on a map the places they would like to see changes to their community. Following this mapping exercise, groups presented a summary of their vision to the workshop attendees.

The groups were encouraged to categorize their ideas by topic. These topics were transportation; parks, open space, and recreation; cultural, arts, and image; sustainability and environment; residential and neighborhoods; community facilities; and a category for ideas that don't fit into one of these defined topics.

### Charlestowne Mall Visioning Workshop

Thursday, August 9, 2012

On Thursday, August 9, 2012, a visioning workshop was held at the City Hall to provide the community a chance to collaboratively craft a vision specifically for the Charlestowne Mall within the East Gateway Subarea. Groups were asked to assume the role of future journalists covering the past 10 years of developments at the Mall.

Using a map, markers, and example photos of different types of development, each table was also asked to develop two distinct visions for the mall site: one which assumes that the mall structure stays but is adapted or repositioned, and another that assumes the mall structure is gone and the entire site can undergo comprehensive redevelopment. Following this mapping exercise, groups presented a summary of their vision to the workshop attendees.

### Community Open Houses

August - December, 2012

Towards the end of the planning process, a series of open houses were held at City Hall. At each open house members of the community could review the current version of the Plan, talk to the project team, and provide feedback and comments. These events were crucial for the formation of the Plan, both because they allowed the project team to hear directly from individual stakeholders and because they kept residents updated about how the Plan was progressing. The dialogue inspired by these open houses led to direct improvements to the Plan at all stages.





# Vision 2

City of St. Charles, Illinois 2013 Comprehensive Plan



# 2 Vision

The Vision provides a basis for identifying the specific goals and objectives needed to lead the City of St. Charles in the direction of implementation. Together, the Vision Statement, and Goals and Objectives begin to present a framework for future policy decisions and actions.

The Vision Statement that follows is a description of the City of St. Charles as the community desires to be in the future and is written as a “retrospective.” The Vision Statement identifies how the City has changed in the 15 years since the updated Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2013.

## In 2028...

St. Charles is a thriving community that has balanced the character of local quality of life, centered upon quality housing and local community services, with regional prominence attributed to its economic, natural, and cultural foundations. What St. Charles has been given by history – the Fox River, a unique and attractive downtown, important commercial corridors and strong neighborhoods – remains intact as the “DNA” around which innovative and complementary investment has occurred.

The City continues to strengthen connections throughout the community by enhancing traffic flow, improving safety, growing its bike path system, and providing effective transit options. The new Fox River bridge crossing at Red Gate Road has created greater mobility and riverfront access for residents travelling by car, bike and foot. Close coordination with IDOT and KDOT has resulted in safer traffic patterns at many of the City’s major intersections, while the comprehensive bike path network connects the Fox River, downtown, major retail corridors, and neighborhood-based schools and recreational areas. Major transit improvements, such as the Bus Rapid Transit service on Randall Road and local circulator routes, allow more people to come to the community for shopping and entertainment.



*The Fox River reflecting Downtown  
on a calm day*

*It is important that the  
settlement which arises on  
the banks of this river will  
develop a character unique  
among other communities...*

*- Legend of the Four Sons of  
Charlemagne*



Downtown St. Charles is truly “everyone’s neighborhood.” It has strengthened its connection to the Fox River through strategic open space and development techniques that provide access to a comprehensive riverwalk. It has balanced the preservation of its historic character with modernization that makes it competitive with other communities throughout Chicagoland. Downtown is fully accessible by car, transit, and bicycle thanks to a managed parking system, proper control of truck traffic, and a wayfinding system that allows residents and visitors to spend entire days enjoying activities and shopping. The historic Arcada Theater is the foundation of its resurgence as an entertainment and cultural center for the western suburbs that has exposed new generations to the community’s local character and regional significance. Nearby college facilities have injected additional intellectual resources into the downtown, as students, professors and visitors take advantage of local services, restaurants and shopping. Additional downtown multi-family housing and the completion of the First Street development have created thriving and exciting places for residents and visitors.

St. Charles has become a more fun place for people of all ages to live. The Fox River is the spine of a system of parks and open spaces that penetrate every part of the City. Local parks provide easy access to places of recreation and tranquility. New developments integrate green space into their designs so that the comprehensive network of parks is held intact and expanded as the City grows. An expanded, interconnected network of sidewalks, trails, and paths provide safe, comfortable, and convenient environment to walk or bike between homes, play space, shopping, and community facilities. Recreation programs continue to provide activities for residents of all ages, so that physical health is a fun and inherent part of the St. Charles lifestyle.

The City has worked hard to ensure that residents and visitors see St. Charles as an attractive and cultured place. Downtown has built upon its historic character to become a regional cultural center. Our prominent commercial corridors, such as Randall Road and East Main Street, have transformed into attractive gateways through investments in public streetscaping and the careful design of private development. Areas of new growth reflect the distinctive character of St. Charles, and are an extension of the fabric and quality of life that makes our community unique.

St. Charles has also become a truly sustainable city and is careful to balance the impact of sustainable practices with a desire to maintain strong community character. St. Charles is more livable, beautiful, and prosperous and is now reaping some of the benefits of the past years prioritizing and implementing restorative, ecologically-focused land management and development practices. We recognize the value of our unique natural assets, and have become leaders in strategies that sustain all vital community assets. The City has instituted a program of Best Management Practices to slow, cool, cleanse, and infiltrate surplus rainwater. Green infrastructure provides and promotes water quality enhancement, water and energy conservation, soil health, biodiversity, and habitat improvement. The core identity of the City is and will continue to be centered on the Fox River as a recreational and educational asset. Both new development and retrofits of existing buildings and infrastructure incorporate sustainable green infrastructure practices. By mitigating development impacts through these restorative practices, the river and the entirety of the public realm continues to improve and attract increased investment in the community.



The City has been successful in capturing development that has transformed portions of the community into strong and sustainable areas. Downtown is a growing commercial and cultural center. The former St. Charles Mall site has been redeveloped with viable uses that are an asset to surrounding neighborhoods. The east side of the community has benefited from the redevelopment of the Charlestowne Mall, the continued presence of Pheasant Run, and the strong employment base provided by industrial development. Collectively, they act as an attractive “front door” to St. Charles that offers great opportunities for living, working, playing and shopping. Randall Road continues to be a critical regional corridor with growth that serves St. Charles and surrounding communities. Development on Randall Road has been modernized to respond to new market needs, and the Kane County Fairgrounds site has become the centerpiece of redevelopment. These pieces, as well as local development in other parts of the City, have created a strong local tax base, broadened the range of local goods and services, and strengthened the regional image of the City.

The neighborhoods of St. Charles are the foundation of its quality of life. Older neighborhoods are stable thanks to reinvestment in existing housing and their ability to meet the needs of a broad range of households. New housing provides increased options for those who want close access to regional commercial goods and services. Multi-family housing development, with a higher proportion of owner-occupied units, contributes to the great character and image of the community. All neighborhoods share a common goal of strengthening local character through high quality housing, easy connections and mobility to surrounding amenities, and a pride in the assets that help establish the identity of St. Charles. Neighborhoods have become safer due to a combination of traffic calming and local policing. Residents of all ages are accommodated by a variety of housing types that allow long-time residents to age in place. High-quality schools, parks, and local services provide the opportunity for residents to be life-long citizens of St. Charles and have become the foundation of a community filled with pride and self-identity.

Together, all of these improvements helped the City of St. Charles evolve substantially since 2013. The positive momentum created by these collective efforts sets the stage for future decades of healthy and sustainable growth, as well as the continued success of St. Charles as an important natural, cultural, and economic resource for the region.

St. Charles has gained prominence in the Chicago region. Its high quality of life – good housing, exceptional local schools, parks and natural features, historic and contemporary development, etc. – has made it a desirable place for all types of families to live. Its unique commercial, cultural and recreational amenities have made it a destination for visitors and tourists from throughout the Midwest. City leadership has responded by making the St. Charles experience as enjoyable as possible, from wayfinding that allows visitors to understand the community, to the local character and identity that etches memories of a truly unique and exciting place.





# Goals & Objectives **3**

City of St. Charles, Illinois 2013 Comprehensive Plan



# 3 Goals & Objectives

The City of St. Charles' Comprehensive Plan looks forward over the next 10-15 years and expresses what the City desires to become in the future. This section presents the Plan's goals and objectives which outline how the City can achieve its desired outcome. The goals and objectives form the framework for planning recommendations, policies, future projects and actions:

**Goals** describe desired end situations toward which planning efforts should be directed. They are broad and long-range. They represent an end to be sought, although they may never actually be fully attained.

**Objectives** describe more specific actions that should be undertaken by the City to advance toward the overall goals. They provide more precise and measurable guidelines for planning action.

Together, the goals and objectives provide specific direction and serve as a guide for the evaluation of development proposals and land use alternatives. They are based heavily on the input and topic areas that resulted from the multi-faceted community outreach process in order to provide a reliable policy guide for decision-making in the City. In addition to the input received from extensive public participation, these goals and objectives are based on input from the Comprehensive Plan Task Force.

**The Goals and Objectives are numbered for reference purposes only and are in no particular order.**

Goals and Objectives have been established for:

- » Residential Areas;
- » Commercial and Office Areas;
- » Industrial Areas;
- » Transportation and Circulation;
- » Infrastructure and Development;
- » Community Facilities;
- » Parks, Open Space and Environmental Features;
- » Image and Identity;
- » Economic Development; and,
- » City Services and Administration.



A mixed use building situated along the Fox River

*These men upon arrival will first build their homes on the hills overlooking this river... Stores will open. Industry will come. Schools will be built, and soon church spires will rise up in the community.*

*- Legend of the Four Sons of Charlemagne*



## Residential Areas

### Goal 1

Maintain the City's image and desirability as a great place to live by preserving and enhancing the diversity, quality, character, safety, affordability, and appeal of residential neighborhoods.

#### Objectives

1. Promote residential development and redevelopment of a variety of housing and dwelling unit types and densities in accordance with the Land Use Plan, and ensure the Zoning Ordinance and other regulatory tools are updated appropriately.
2. Work with home owners associations and property management companies to enforce property maintenance requirements in private residential developments.
3. Strictly enforce buffering, landscaping, screening and lighting requirements of adjacent commercial areas to minimize the negative impacts of commercial development on residential uses.
4. Discourage "cut through" commercial traffic on local streets through signage, enforcement, traffic calming and other measures that focus vehicles on streets designated to carry through-traffic.

### Goal 2

Maintain existing housing stock as the foundation of the City's traditional neighborhoods.

#### Objectives

1. Accommodate residential renovation and redevelopment through an expedient, yet thorough permitting process.
2. Inventory and enhance regulatory protections for the City's historic homes.
3. Preserve sound existing housing through regular, active code enforcement and preventative maintenance programs.
4. Explore the creation of a vacant building registration and inspection program to prevent foreclosed properties from having a detrimental impact on surrounding properties.
5. Prevent the impacts of incompatible development on residential areas through implementation of the Land Use Plan and buffering, screening, and separation requirements where necessary and provide areas of transitioning residential and commercial density and intensity of use between established residential areas and surrounding uses where appropriate.

### Goal 3

Develop new housing that is representative of the local character and take advantage of the local goods and services the City offers.

#### Objectives

1. Consistently administer and enforce residential development regulations, including compliance with setbacks, height, tree preservation, stormwater, bulk, density and other development regulations.
2. Consistently administer and enforce residential construction regulations, including construction hours, fencing, trash and debris, parking, and other construction related activities that can impact nearby properties.
3. Develop a Residential Design & Pattern Book and Manual to ensure that new and infill residential construction (including infill and teardown construction) and additions are of an appropriate scale and character to surrounding architecture.
4. Amend development policies to ensure that new neighborhoods include basic pedestrian infrastructure and open space allowances.

### Goal 4

Enable residents to be life-long citizens by adopting an "aging in place" approach to development, maintenance, and related services.

#### Objectives

1. Explore the creation of a property maintenance program to assist residents, particularly seniors, with affordable lawn cutting and snow removal services.
2. Promote the economic importance, and support the provision of, a variety of housing types (such as single-family, multi-family and senior housing) and economic choices (owner-occupied and rental) within the City that meet the specific needs of elderly residents, including accessibility, single-story units, multi-sensory technologies, etc., and help sustain a high quality of independent living.
3. Maintain the existing affordable housing stock so that long-term residents and workers can afford to live in St. Charles.



## Commercial & Office Areas

### Goal 1

Develop attractive and highly functional retail and commercial areas that are market responsive, create a diverse tax base, and serve the needs of the City's residents and, in some areas, a larger regional market.

### Objectives

1. Maintain a range of retail and service activities throughout the City.
2. Build upon the existing commercial zoning district structure to define and designate more specific functional roles for the various commercial areas within the City distinguished by developments with local, community, and/or regional service markets.
3. Fully implement and enforce design standards expressed in the Design Review Standards and Guidelines (Chapter 17.06 of the Zoning Ordinance) and Corridor Improvement Program.
4. Ensure that new commercial development and redevelopment is designed in scale with, and complementary to, existing adjacent development that aligns with the vision for future character.
5. New or expanded parking structures should be designed to complement the architecture and urban form of the surrounding area.
6. Ensure that all new, improved, and existing commercial developments are effectively screened and buffered from adjacent residential uses.
7. Ensure that all retail, office, and service commercial activities are logically organized by use and concentrated within or near areas of similar or compatible uses.
8. Recognize, support and encourage the catalytic role of new campuses and buildings of higher education in appropriate locations within the City.
9. Recognize, support and encourage the catalytic role of medical services in appropriate locations within the City.
10. Where applicable, require the design of new commercial developments to incorporate public amenities such as parks, plazas, arcades and connections to existing or proposed trails.
11. Integrate existing programs, such as the Downtown Façade Improvement Program and Corridor Improvement Grant Program, with potential new funding sources to assist businesses and property owners with façade improvements, landscaping, parking improvements, and modernization of aging structures and facilities.
12. Continue to evaluate the costs and benefits of using incentives and other techniques to initiate redevelopment of key opportunity sites.
13. Initiate programs to encourage the improvement and rehabilitation of older commercial buildings and areas which are, or are becoming, functionally obsolete including improvements to infrastructure, technologies, functionality, access, and operational footprints.
14. Implement a more systematic and proactive property maintenance and code enforcement process in commercial areas of the City.

### Goal 2

Enhance the economic viability, productivity, appearance and function of the City's commercial corridors, including Randall Road, Main Street, Lincoln Highway, and Kirk Road.

### Objectives

1. Promote a healthy and mutually reinforcing mix of commercial, retail, and service uses along key corridors within the City including Randall Road, Main Street, Lincoln Highway, and Kirk Road.
2. Utilize a "character node" approach by requiring high-quality development along Randall Road and Main Street at key intersections with other arterial or collector streets that serve as the "front door" into the primary commercial corridors.
3. Establish design and improvement standards for commercial areas to guide the scale, appearance, orientation, and overall character of new development.
4. Encourage appropriate signage along corridors to ensure safe traffic movements into, out of, and through commercial areas.
5. Encourage large shopping centers or corporate campuses and office development to enhance the image of major corridors by orienting attractive facades, high-quality signage, and decorative landscaping towards the primary street frontage.
6. Review and update signage ordinances being flexible to the desire and necessity of business identification but mindful of its potential to block views, create visual clutter and detract from the appearance of the City and its commercial areas.
7. Promote the relocation of certain types of incompatible businesses that generate externalities related to aesthetics, access, noise, light or other nuisances to more appropriate places instead of the highly visible locations along major corridors.
8. Develop and install a streetscape program consisting of elements that strengthen the unified theme of the commercial areas such as benches, bus shelters, trash cans, streetlights, medians, way finding signage and other amenities.
9. Work cooperatively with IDOT and KDOT to facilitate desired improvements within their right-of-way including improved landscaping, lighting, and gateway signage.
10. Encourage the integration of transit infrastructure, facilities and technologies into the public right-of-way, private street networks, and major structures or destinations.
11. Identify underperforming and underutilized parcels and sites, such as the southeast corner of Main Street and Kirk Road, and work with property owners and developers to promote their redevelopment, encouraging parcel assembly where appropriate.
12. Promote the modernization and/or redevelopment of the Charlestowne Mall and other outdated commercial sites.
13. Promote coordinated and shared vehicle access to commercial properties along the City's commercial corridors and remove redundant and unnecessary curb cuts to improve traffic flow and vehicular and pedestrian safety.
14. Consider adopting parking capacity maximums that preserve the character of commercial development and reduce storm water runoff.
15. Encourage shared parking programs and policies in commercial areas wherever possible.



### Goal 3

Revitalize Downtown St. Charles as the symbolic “heart” of the community and enhance its role as the City’s primary mixed use pedestrian environment.

#### Objectives

1. Continue to revitalize Downtown with a mixture of uses including commercial, office, restaurant, and residential.
2. Focus efforts and resources on development projects that are likely to catalyze other investment based on the population and benefits they bring to the Downtown.
3. Permit and encourage temporary or seasonal uses, such as a farmers market, on underutilized sites and community open spaces that can attract desirable and complementary activities to Downtown.
4. Continue the implementation of strategies included in the 2000 Downtown Strategy Plan and 2002 River Corridor Master Plan.
5. Maintain Downtown as a pedestrian-oriented area that is unlike any other commercial area in the community through mixed use development and infrastructure focused on walkability.
6. Promote new infill development in the Downtown area and encourage the consolidation of smaller development parcels where possible to foster larger, more coordinated development opportunities.
7. Strengthen or enhance or improve the pedestrian environment on Main Street as the heart of the Downtown area by working closely with IDOT to mitigate the impacts of truck and vehicular traffic, and coordinating pedestrian improvements with roadway enhancements, streetscaping, and private development.
8. Build on the regulatory framework established by the Design Review Standards and Guidelines to foster a desired and predictable built form in the Downtown related to specific elements, including architectural detail, façade transparency, signage type and location, lighting, specific building materials appropriate for downtown, etc.
9. Zoning for the Downtown should be analyzed and amended if necessary to adequately accommodate appropriate new development and establish the desirable physical form of the Downtown.
10. Undue or inappropriate zoning regulations or procedures should be modified or removed as to eliminate unnecessary barriers to Downtown investment.
11. Consider establishing a program to assist with improvements to existing buildings that bring them to current codes and standards so that they can sustain occupancy and market competitiveness.
12. Manage truck traffic in Downtown, to the extent possible given IDOT jurisdiction over several significant corridors, so that it does not negatively impact the character and functionality of the area for patrons, residents and business owners.
13. Ensure parking adequately supports businesses by conducting a circulation and parking needs assessment for Downtown and developing a plan for the continued provision of adequate parking.
14. Require larger development and redevelopment projects within the Downtown to provide detailed parking and traffic studies which plan for current and future parking demand, access and circulation.
15. Promote and encourage shared parking arrangements and facilities wherever feasible to minimize the land area within Downtown dedicated to parking.
16. Require Downtown development to be compatible with the scale and uses of the surrounding area and minimize and mitigate any negative impacts on adjacent land-uses, including noise, pedestrian and vehicular traffic, late hours of operation, litter, etc.



## Industrial Areas

### Goal

Continue to support a diversified light industrial/business park/commercial service economic base that provides employment opportunities within the community.

### Objectives

1. Preserve the integrity of the industrial park by preventing the encroachment of businesses or land uses that could impact the long term viability of industrial areas. Parking needs, traffic issues, and potential impacts to existing or future industrial business operations should be considered when uses such as entertainment or recreational uses, community facilities, schools, places of worship, etc. locate in industrial areas.
2. Establish and maintain regular lines of communication with industrial property owners and businesses.
3. Promote and encourage the improvement and rehabilitation of older industrial buildings and areas which are, or are becoming, functionally obsolete or undesirable including improvements to loading docks, technology infrastructure, access, building facades, signage, streetscaping, landscaping, and parking areas to accommodate more appropriate and market viable uses.
4. Encourage the use of green technology and best management practices (BMPs) in the development and redevelopment of industrial uses and market the City's industrial areas as centers of green technology and light industrial.
5. Reclassify and rezone manufacturing areas which are functionally obsolete due to impactful proximity to residential, small lot size and challenging lot configurations. Identify industrial properties that may be potential brownfield sites in order to assess key redevelopment sites and seek funding for redevelopment.
6. Require all industrial development to meet specific applicable performance standards for noise, air, odor and any other forms of environmental pollution.
7. Utilize appropriate setbacks, screening, buffering, and site design to minimize the negative impacts of industrial uses on adjacent areas, such as noise, vibration, air pollutants, odor, truck traffic, large shadows, etc.
8. Ensure that all uses are effectively screened from adjacent properties and public rights-of-way, through the use of landscaping and fencing.
9. Maintain the public utilities and road infrastructure in all industrial areas to accommodate the state-of-the-art technological needs of the business and the physical and circulation needs of the truck traffic moving in and throughout the area.



## Economic Development

### Goal 1

Prioritize improvements to existing areas and developments including adaptive reuse and redevelopment.

#### Objectives

1. Build on and continue to implement the 2007 Economic Development Plan as a basis for strengthening retail, service, office, and industrial uses through St. Charles.
2. Where appropriate, consider using incentives such as Tax Increment Financing as a means of fostering redevelopment in Downtown, the Charlestowne Mall site, and other areas of the City identified as priority investment locations.
3. Promote the use of tax credit incentives and other grant programs to fund renovation and expansion.
4. Identify resources for the maintenance of the City's physical facilities including buildings, properties, and infrastructure. Consider implementing green infrastructure throughout the public realm to reduce long-term maintenance costs and attract additional funding and support.
5. Identify additional small business assistance programs to stabilize and improve conditions for existing businesses.
6. Renovate or redevelop aging shopping centers and commercial areas, such as the Charlestowne Mall, in order to maximize their contribution to the City's tax base.
7. Enhance the appearance of commercial districts to attract businesses and customers, particularly Downtown and Randall Road.
8. Improve commercial building design and development controls by developing and utilizing Design and Development Guidelines and other tools.
9. Accommodate renovation and redevelopment through an expedient, yet thorough permitting process.
10. Ensure that new development pays its fair share of public facilities and service costs, which are attributable to the demand for additional facilities or services as a result of new development.

### Goal 2

Work with the City's economic development partners to maintain and strengthen a diverse tax base through the attraction, retention, and expansion of businesses in the City.

#### Objectives

1. Support the St. Charles Chamber of Commerce, Convention and Visitor's Bureau and the Downtown St. Charles Partnership and other non-profit organizations who share similar goals in their efforts to attract, market, and promote local businesses.
2. Support the need for the St. Charles Chamber of Commerce, Convention and Visitor's Bureau, and the Downtown St. Charles Partnership to evolve based on their unique combination of successes and new challenges.
3. Coordinate with the St. Charles Chamber of Commerce and Downtown St. Charles Partnership to organize a task force whose mission is to identify opportunities to reduce the cost of doing business in St. Charles in order to enhance the City's competitiveness.
4. Continue to market St. Charles as a community of diverse businesses whose presence enhances the community's reputation as a place to live and work.
5. Promote the City's commercial corridors and Downtown through joint marketing efforts, community events, and district identification signage.
6. Develop and implement a strategic marketing and recruitment plan for targeted businesses types.
7. Coordinate planning and economic development activities in a manner which provides regular opportunities for contact between business and development interests within the City.
8. Seek an appropriate mix of retail, commercial service, office, and industrial uses throughout the City.
9. Maximize retail sales tax-generating uses, where appropriate, by concentrating retailers in Downtown and the City's commercial corridors.
10. Seek opportunities for new employment growth through the retention and expansion of existing employers.



## Transportation & Circulation

### Goal 1

Improve the safety, function and efficiency of vehicular movement and parking facilities within the City.

#### Objectives

1. Work with IDOT and Kane County to install and maintain “intelligent” traffic signals and systems, including synchronized signalization, real-time signalization phasing adjustments, transit and emergency priority technologies, real-time parking management and information systems, etc., along key corridors and routes to facilitate the efficient movement of vehicles within and through the City and minimize the impact of peak traffic flows.
2. Protect and improve the function of the street network through controlled access, land-use decisions, and street/intersection design improvements.
3. Complete logical “gaps” in the existing roadway network, such as extending Woodward Drive east to Randall Road, that would provide a greater level of local connectivity and mobility.
4. Continue to coordinate with relevant agencies to ensure that the Red Gate Bridge crossing is an effective pedestrian and bicycle connection over the Fox River for the north side of the community.
5. Ensure adequate resources are made available for the maintenance of City streets and public rights-of-way.
6. Eliminate or minimize the use of cul-de-sacs and dead end streets in new development and provide for and connect to stub-streets where appropriate.
7. Work closely with existing business owners to consolidate or remove unnecessary, redundant, obsolete or unsafe curb cuts by providing cross access between and shared access into businesses wherever possible.
8. Consider priority parking spaces for no- and low-emissions vehicles in all public parking facilities and the provision of similar spaces in private parking facilities.
9. Explore the feasibility of a car-sharing program and provide development incentives for the provision of car-share parking facilities.
10. Review existing parking in Downtown to identify opportunities to increase parking supply through changes to circulation or the orientation of existing parking spaces.
11. If validated through a parking needs assessment and separate feasibility and engineering analysis, expand public parking facilities in Downtown.
12. Throughout the City, establish a wayfinding signage system that directs motorists to key retail, office, industrial, and community facility destinations.
13. Establish specific traffic and circulation management strategies for areas impacted by congestion at specific times, such as neighborhood blocks surrounding schools or major destinations.



## Goal 2

Provide a coordinated transportation network for pedestrians and bicyclists in order to connect them to employment, shopping and recreational areas.

### Objectives

1. Build on the analysis and continue to implement the recommendations developed as part of the 2003 St. Charles Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities Plan effort to expand the bike path system and create a complete trail system that connects to the regional bike network.
2. Where appropriate, encourage new development/redevelopment to include connections and amenities for pedestrians, bicyclists and commuters.
3. Improve pedestrian and bicycle circulation and safety throughout the City with an emphasis on safer and more convenient routes for non-motorized traffic.
4. Expand the City's network of trails and sidewalks to provide better connections between residential neighborhoods, parks, schools, Downtown, and other commercial areas.
5. Conduct an analysis of potentially dangerous pedestrian crosswalks in Downtown and along other heavily trafficked roads, including Randall Road, East and West Main Street and certain collector streets, and improve them, where feasible, with additional lighting, signalization, bollards, bulb outs and/or curb extensions.
6. Identify key pedestrian routes and budget for streetlight replacement along those routes to include pedestrian-scaled lighting amenities and identify areas throughout the City needing enhanced lighting for pedestrian safety.
7. Budget for on-going maintenance and repair of sidewalks as part of the City's Capital Improvement Plan, including the full utilization of the existing cost-sharing program with private property owners and a proactive stance by the City to address improvements where a larger public benefit exists.
8. Maintain and expand the sidewalk and crosswalk network throughout the City's commercial districts, ensuring that sidewalks are located along both sides of all streets within these areas and that they connect to businesses and other destinations, and that crosswalks are provided that enhance mobility across significant traffic corridors.
9. Continue to implement traffic calming measures where appropriate on neighborhood streets, Downtown streets, and elsewhere to improve pedestrian safety and comfort.
10. Conduct and implement an on-street bike lane feasibility analysis and plan.
11. Work with the Police Department and school district to promote pedestrian and bicycle safety.

## Goal 3

Establish a high-quality public transit system as a vital part of St. Charles's transportation network.

### Objectives

1. Ensure that levels of public transit service are maintained and enhanced throughout the City.
2. Build on the 2010 Transit Circulator Study to create a Comprehensive Transit Plan to identify key traffic generators and destinations within the City and ensure they are adequately served by Bus routes and other modes of alternative transportation.
3. Coordinate with transit providers to align land use policies to provide the greatest possible level of access to areas best served by regional and local bus transit.
4. Work closely with Pace or other transit providers to provide service to nearby Metra terminals in order to maximize regional mobility.
5. Work with area employers and businesses to promote and implement traffic demand management and reduction techniques including the use of public transit, carpooling, walking and bicycling.
6. Promote vanpooling, employer shuttles and Metra feeders as an economical, convenient and environmentally-friendly alternative to driving.
7. Inventory and assess the condition and location of all transit shelters in the City and ensure schedules are adequately posted, shelters are in good condition, and links are in place to City's sidewalk system, community facilities, employment centers and other key destinations.
8. Work closely with Kane County and transit providers to implement a Arterial Rapid Transit (ART) service, including facilities, infrastructure, rolling stock and technologies, for the Randall Road corridor.



## Infrastructure & Development

### Goal

Maintain high-quality, environmentally friendly, and efficient infrastructure systems and networks through regular investment and maintenance to meet the changing needs of the City today and in the future.

### Objectives

1. Continue to budget for and implement the improvement, expansion, and maintenance of the community's infrastructure, including roadways, electric infrastructure, stormwater drainage system, water production and distribution infrastructure, and sewer collection and treatment infrastructure.
2. Continually study pavement and sidewalk condition analysis to identify and prioritize roads and sidewalks in need of repair, and continue the City's sidewalk repair program based on evaluations of concrete deterioration and trip hazards.
3. Use strategic investment in infrastructure to guide development to priority areas and make existing and future growth areas competitive for local and regional economic development.
4. Encourage participation in the City's Sidewalk Gap Program in order to expand the community's pedestrian infrastructure, and take a proactive stance on the improvement of sidewalk segments where a general public benefit exists.
5. Promote the coordination of infrastructure and utility projects with other agencies to reduce City costs through economies of scale and prevent/avoid redundant investments.
6. Investigate and pursue options for continued, expanded implementation of green infrastructure integrated with Best Management Practices (BMP's) for infiltration-based stormwater management throughout the City to address flooding issues, improve water quality, and reduce long-term maintenance costs. Monitor the performance and cost/benefit of these strategies and fine tune them over time to be best adapted for St. Charles.
7. Promote the adaptation of sustainable technologies and application of sustainable management practices to existing development throughout the City.
8. Promote the use of sustainable design, engineering, and development practices for all new development in the City. Encourage the integration of green technologies into buildings, pavement, and landscapes, including green roofs, permeable pavement systems, renewable energy systems, bio-retention, rainwater harvesting re-use systems and other strategies.
9. Promote the use of integrated sustainable practices for the retrofit or redevelopment of all sites in the City. Where practical, demonstrate sustainability with the integration of green practices into public streets, parking lots, sidewalks, parks, and facility renovations over time.
10. Periodically review and update the City's development policies and codes, including the Subdivision Control Ordinance and Stormwater Management Ordinance, and update as appropriate to ensure consistency in the integration of high quality, high performance urban design and ecological water management standards.
11. Continue to seek grants, loans and other sources of intergovernmental funding to assist with capital improvements and projects to minimize the financial impact on the City.
12. Continue to collaborate with environmental advocacy groups such as the Conservation Foundation and others to educate the public about the benefits and values of integrated green practices for individual residential and business sites.
13. Review and evaluate new development and retrofit/redevelopment proposals to ensure pedestrian mobility and amenities are included and prioritized.
14. Plan and budget for beautification elements to be incorporated into planned infrastructure improvements such as landscaped parking lots, planted medians, landscaped sidewalks, and street trees.
15. Consider incorporating the use of solar powered street lights, LED/LEP lights, and other green technologies into future roadway improvements and street lighting replacement.
16. Employ green practices to attract additional alternative sources of funding, support, and revenue for otherwise conventional public infrastructure projects. Combine and leverage various resources to maximize the value of first costs and reduce long-term operational and maintenance costs.



## Community Facilities

### Goal

Ensure the provision of high-quality public facilities, including municipal and educational facilities, for all residents of the City of St. Charles.

### Objectives

1. Support the Public Library District's efforts to modernize and enhance their facility as a civic anchor for the Downtown.
2. Work with the School District to review the existing parking facilities, buildings, drop-off/pick-up areas, and bus parking, including ingress and egress, to ensure they are adequate and if not, identify opportunities for improvement.
3. Work with the School District to ensure proper buffering surrounding school facilities and safe and adequate access to school sites.
4. Ensure the City continues to benefit from an adequate level of fire and police protection throughout the City.
5. Enhance the physical relationship between school facilities and surrounding neighborhoods through enhanced pedestrian connections and better traffic management for buses and vehicles during peak traffic times.
6. Continue to support the operation of other important community service providers, including religious institutions and the Illinois Youth Center and others, and maintain positive and mutually beneficial relationships with each organization.
7. Work with service providers to seek appropriate locations for specialized facilities and services for senior citizens, youth, and disadvantaged populations, in particular daytime facilities for the homeless.
8. Work with other public agencies to maintain adequate and appropriate sites and facilities for the provision of public services.
9. Conduct a comprehensive life cycle assessment for City buildings, equipment, vehicles, facilities, and properties and develop/revise a multi-year maintenance plan and on-going maintenance program.
10. Consider pursuing LEED certification for new or renovated City facilities.
11. Increase efforts to identify alternative sources of funds such as grants to fund a wide range of public projects including, but not limited to City facilities, parks and recreation enhancements, transportation improvements, economic development related projects, and social services.
12. Using various design and signage tools, reinforce community landmarks such as City Hall, the Central and Moody Millington Historic Districts, and the many historic homes and structures in and around the Downtown area.
13. Recognize, support, and encourage the catalytic role of new campuses and buildings of higher education in appropriate locations within the City.
14. Recognize, support, and encourage the catalytic role of medical services in appropriate locations within the City.



## Parks, Open Space & Environmental Features

### Goal 1

Work with the St. Charles Park District to continue to provide opportunities for passive and active recreation through high-quality facilities and programming.

### Objectives

1. Work cooperatively with the Park District and other interested agencies and stakeholders to implement the Park District Comprehensive Master Plan that is intended to guide the development of physical facilities and amenities, recreational programs, protection and restoration of environmental assets, the use of financial resources, creation of a positive image, inter-governmental cooperation, the use of volunteers, and the efficient use of natural resources.
2. Work with the Park District to market and promote the City's trail system including the on-line posting of the existing and proposed trail system.
3. Where appropriate, collaborate with the Park District in identifying grants and securing alternative funding for parks, open space, trail segments, trail connections, and other recreation amenities for the community.
4. Work with the Park District to identify potential park site locations in any identified underserved areas of the community, in particular small-scale playgrounds and pocket parks.

5. Enhance access to and connectivity along the Fox River through open spaces and trails that link to community and regional networks, and manage land use and development along the river to prevent the insertion of uses that detract from the character of or accessibility to the river.
6. Should it be determined that there is the demand or desire for major new parks or facilities, work cooperatively with the Park District to identify the best locations and types of investment, considering access to local and regional roadways, the impacts of traffic, noise, etc. on surrounding areas, potential spin-off development opportunities, the provision of infrastructure to the site, the opportunity cost of developing the property as another use, and other financial, environmental, or physical impacts that may occur.
7. Continue to work with the Park District to address the City's stormwater issues.

### Goal 2

Protect and promote the City's unique environmental assets and promote the importance of environmental issues and sustainable practices to residents and businesses.

### Objectives

1. Provide opportunities for increased public participation in environmental advocacy.
2. With the Park District, continue to link parks and open space with the multi-use trail system.
3. Collaborate with the Park District to ensure adequate resources for the maintenance of City-owned environmentally-sensitive lands and to continue restoration, management, and long-term stewardship of all natural landscapes in the City, especially high-quality, diverse native landscape systems.
4. With the Park District, create a Public Areas Beautification Plan for the City which should include recommendations for improving and increasing green space.
5. With the Park District, install environmental education and interpretive signage throughout the community in locations with natural areas and important environmental assets.
6. Establish local ordinances and regulations to preserve and protect trees and other environmental features throughout the City and its neighborhoods.

7. Establish and/or strengthen zoning, development, and other appropriate regulations to protect and maintain floodplains, flood-prone areas (Localized Poor Drainage Areas), wetlands, remnant natural areas, mature native tree stands, and other environmentally sensitive landscape elements.
8. Continue to actively monitor the outbreak of Emerald Ash Borer and other harmful insects that threaten the City's trees and environmental features and take proactive measures to protect these important community amenities including planting and promoting a diverse array of tree and plant species.
9. Explore sustainably-focused strategies to improve water quality in stormwater detention ponds in the City to prevent or minimize the formation of algae, pest breeding habitat, and plant, animal, and insect species known to be invasive to natural areas. Strategies include reduction in use of lawn chemicals, infiltration/treatment with green infrastructure such as bio-retention for smaller rain events upstream of the pond, constructed wetland/floating restorers, and/or mechanical aeration. Design, implement, maintain and operate these strategies to rely upon renewable resources (water, energy, etc.) to the degree possible.
10. Continue to prohibit the burning of leaves and other landscape waste; encourage composting and integration into local soils to improve fertility and water retention. Promote the use of controlled prescribed burns as a method to manage and steward natural (prairie, woodland, wetland) landscapes when performed under permit by trained personnel.



## Image & Identity

### Goal

Maintain a positive image and identity of the City that is distinct, recognizable, and reflective of its' Fox River setting, natural history, architectural heritage, and legacy of innovation and leadership; amplify this "sense of place" to help distinguish St. Charles from other nearby communities and reinforce local pride.

### Objectives

1. Encourage compatible and high-quality design and construction for all development/redevelopment with an emphasis on site design, building orientation, architecture, building materials and site improvements.
2. Provide for consistent and high-quality maintenance of all local streets, parkways, sidewalks, water towers and other visible municipal infrastructure.
3. Continue the promotion and enforcement of the Design Guidelines for the City's current and future historic districts and landmark sites and buildings.
4. Provide information for walking tours of the City's historic areas through web-based guides or easily accessible printed maps.
5. Implement streetscape enhancements that build upon and strengthen the theme(s) of local St. Charles branding. Integrate locally inspired materials, details, and forms into the streetscape elements- pavement, seating, signage, etc.
6. Create gateway features consisting of signage, walls, sculptures, pylons, fountains, lighting, monuments, and/or landscaping at key locations within the community to announce entry into St. Charles and to distinguish the City from adjacent municipalities.
7. Encourage subdivision and business park monument signs to include the City of St. Charles' name and/or logo to promote the City's identity.
8. Install wayfinding signage to direct vehicles to key community destinations including Downtown, historic districts and sites, major recreational amenities, and important community service providers.
9. Review, update, and strengthen the City's landscape ordinance to ensure new development includes suitable, ecologically-based and aesthetically appropriate landscape areas, treatments, and long-term maintenance strategies integrated with stormwater approaches and other site functions to ensure long-term beauty and performance.
10. Expand and implement landscaping and tree planting and maintenance programs, such as the Corridor Improvement Grant Program, that beautify the residential and commercial areas of the City. Encourage these landscape enhancements to incorporate green infrastructure landscape strategies, especially when incentivized or encouraged by the City.
11. Develop a program to bury and/or relocate overhead utility lines along key commercial areas, including Downtown, Randall Road, and East Main Street, and where possible, coordinate such improvements with other planned capital improvements.
12. Expand the City's Facade Improvement Program to encourage Downtown private property owners to implement landscaping, façade and signage improvements to their sites, buildings and businesses.
13. Implement a program to screen fixed utility locations, such as lift stations, pump houses, transformer sites, antennas, telephone switches, etc.
14. Through development policies and regulations, preserve prominent viewsheds to important natural and built features of the community, including the Fox River, Downtown, outlying historic structures, etc.
15. Review and update signage ordinances being flexible to the desire and necessity of business identification but mindful of its potential to block views, create visual clutter and detract from the appearance of the City and its commercial areas.
16. Strictly enforce landscaping, screening and signage requirements including non-conformity and amortization regulations of non-conforming signs.
17. Review development controls to ensure that they require appropriate screening of public utilities, dumpsters, rooftop equipment, etc.
18. Develop a marketing campaign to promote the advantages and benefits of living, working, visiting, or doing business in the City.



## City Services & Administration

### Goal 1

Continue to provide high-quality and efficient City services to meet the day to day needs of residents and businesses and create a safe and well-organized support system allowing both neighborhoods and businesses to thrive.

### Objectives

1. Provide reliable infrastructure to the residents and businesses within the community including electricity (power and substation locations), water supply and distribution, sanitary sewers, and telecommunications.
2. Ensure the City continues to benefit from an adequate level of fire and police protection throughout the City.
3. Analyze City service levels to identify potential efficiencies in the administration and provision of services and departments.
4. Develop, monitor, and implement a Long-Range Financial Plan for the City and formally adopt long term strategies and solutions to address difficult financial decisions.
5. Maintain a consistent, yet flexible, budgeting process that can adapt to changing economic conditions.
6. Make available existing and/or new financial resources to implement the recommendations of the

Comprehensive Plan.

7. Continue to regularly review and update the City's Zoning Ordinance to appropriately meet the changing needs of the community.
8. Consider increases in the fines charged by the City for property maintenance as a measure to address foreclosed homes and other properties suffering from deferred maintenance.
9. Monitor fees charged for City Services to ensure fees charged are both fair and accurate and consider the use of fee-based services for some City services that are currently provided within the City's tax levy for all properties.
10. Promote the Renewable Energy Program that enables City residents and businesses to purchase electricity from renewable sources in the State of Illinois.
11. Continue to coordinate the review and input of new development proposals with all affected City departments and public agencies such as the School District, and Park District.

### Goal 2

Maintain a high level of communication with residents, business owners, property owners and partner agencies.

### Objectives

1. Continue community outreach efforts for large capital projects, including opportunities for public review and comment such as open houses or online tools to solicit input and feedback.
2. Continue to utilize and promote the "community online mapping tool" introduced during the Comprehensive Planning process to maximize public input on future planning issues and projects.
3. Improve customer service levels at all points of contact with residents and provide regular training to ensure that a consistent message is delivered regarding City policies.
4. Continue to regularly update and publish information through the City's multiple news platforms including the City website, local newspapers and social media outlets.
5. Maintain transparency related to City operations, including public finances and large City expenditures.
6. Establish a protocol for communication with Homeowners Associations to update residents on City projects and gather input.

7. Actively encourage resident participation in notifying the City of potential code violations.
8. Coordinate with the Metro West Council of Governments and adjacent communities, including South Elgin, Geneva, Wayne, West Chicago and Campton Hills, to assist in realizing mutual objectives and addressing issues, such as traffic, environment and growth, which transcend municipal boundaries.
9. Maintain a positive channel of communication with agencies such as Metra, Pace, Regional Transportation Authority, Kane County, Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) and major local service providers for better coordination regarding projects on their properties or within their jurisdiction.





# Land Use Plan 4

City of St. Charles, Illinois 2013 Comprehensive Plan



# 4 Land Use Plan

This chapter provides polices for the future development and use of land within the City of St. Charles. The Land Use Plan is based on several factors and influences, including extensive community input; the Vision, Goals and Objectives identified for the St. Charles community; market and demographic analysis; and an assessment of existing conditions, including the established developed areas and infrastructure of the City and its planning jurisdiction. The plan provides a general assessment of land potential and recommendations for what types of land uses will best meet the needs of the community in the long-term.

The Land Use Plan builds upon the existing land use pattern in the City. In general, the plan emphasizes the protection of residential neighborhoods, the provision of community facilities, diversification of the City's tax base, access to goods and services, capitalization on regional traffic, and the preservation and enhancement of desirable environmental features.

A goal of the Land Use Plan is to assist City staff, residents, businesses, and elected and appointed officials in making future land use and development related policy decisions. While the Land Use Plan is specific enough to provide guidance on land use decisions, it is also flexible enough to allow for individual negotiations and the consideration of creative approaches to land development that are consistent with the overall policies and guidelines included in the Comprehensive Plan.

Due to the importance of residential areas in St. Charles, a Residential Areas Framework Plan and Commercial Areas Framework Plan supplements the overall Land Use Plan with more detail for these areas. In addition, four key areas of the City and its future growth areas are further explored in the Subarea Plans. Subsequent chapters of the Plan will address land uses related to community facilities, parks and open space, and specific sub-areas of the community.

In total, ten (10) distinct land use classifications have been established for the City of St. Charles, including 4 residential and 2 commercial uses. The following land use categories are outlined in this chapter:

- » Rural Single Family Residential
- » Single Family Detached Residential
- » Single Family Attached Residential
- » Multi-Family Residential
- » Public/Semi-Public
- » Parks/Open Space
- » Neighborhood Commercial
- » Corridor/Regional Commercial
- » Mixed Use (Commercial & Residential)
- » Industrial/Business Park



The First Street development's plaza fountain

*You, my firstborn, are to be the guardian of the civic, the business, the industrial life of this community.*

*- Legend of the Four Sons of Charlemagne*

## Residential

Four types of residential land uses are classified on the Land Use Plan: Rural Single Family, Single-Family Detached, Mixed Use, Single-Family Attached, and Multi-Family. Each use is described in more detail below, and the Residential Areas Framework Plan on page 34 provides additional policies and recommendations pertaining to the City's residential lands uses.

### Rural Single Family

The rural single family designation is intended to accommodate large-lot single family development on the outer limits of the City. Rural Residential areas are characterized by large lots that may have developed as part of a formal subdivision or independently in unincorporated Kane County prior to annexation. These areas are typically located on the periphery of the City, removed from the City's busier commercial areas, providing a unique opportunity to live in a rural setting near a vibrant city. They are characteristic of estate properties, including the absence of sidewalks and street trees and open swale drainage systems as opposed to curb and gutter.

### Single Family Detached

Single family detached residential areas should consist primarily of single family detached homes on lots subdivided and platted in an organized and planned manner. Downtown, single family residential areas consist primarily of older buildings, many rehabilitated, with small yards and minimal garage space. Single family residential detached homes are the most prevalent building type in the community, and should continue to be so.

### Single Family Attached

Single family attached structures are connected horizontally, typically two stories high, but individual units do not stack vertically. Single family attached homes can serve as transitional areas between single family homes and commercial or multi-family development, and also act as an intermediate step for residents between apartment/condo living and home ownership. These types of units are also popular for empty nesters and others looking to downsize to a smaller home.

### Multi-Family

Multi-family residential structures contain multiple housing units, are usually stacked vertically and attached horizontally, and typically have common hallways and other amenities. Examples of multi-family residential developments include apartments, condominiums, and senior housing. Most multi-family developments are located in or near areas of intense commercial development with access to goods, services, and the transportation network. Because of market pressures, many single family residences Downtown have been converted to multi-family. In addition to areas designated Multi-Family Residential, the land use plan also provides for multi-family units within the Mixed Use land use designation.

### Recommendations

Detached single family homes are the most common type of residential use within St. Charles. While this is often the most desirable use for a given area, the City should ensure that housing options continue serve the diverse population of the St. Charles community. In particular, development that meets the specific needs of elderly residents, ranging from multi-family units to independent living, should be encouraged to allow residents to age in place. Where multi-family developments are suggested, the City should work to make sure they occur in a more coordinated and organized fashion.

The City should investigate new methods to improve the conditions of all residential neighborhoods, including maintenance programs and incentives for developing vacant properties, while continuing to enforce building and design codes, regulations, and standards.

## Public/Semi-Public

This land use designation includes a variety of uses that are typically classified as public or semi-public and include municipal facilities, other government facilities, schools, religious institutions, and more. These uses provide essential facilities and services to the community and are scattered throughout the City. Many public and semi-public uses are compatible with residential areas, but some are more intense (like public works yards) and may require location within or adjacent to commercial or industrial areas.

### Recommendations

The City should ensure that high-quality facilities and services are available and desirable to the public throughout St. Charles. The City should support existing facilities and services while encouraging new desirable facilities to locate in the City. Detailed recommendations for this land use category can be found in **Chapter 5 – Community Facilities Plan**.

## Parks/Open Space

The Parks/Open Space category includes parks, golf courses, wooded areas, and other public and private natural areas and open spaces. These areas, combined with environmental features including watersheds, wetlands, streams, and water features, make up the City's green infrastructure network. These land use areas and features will require coordinated planning and cooperation with the St. Charles Park District.

### Recommendations

The City should provide adequate open space and recreation to the community while improving public access to these areas. Natural and environmental assets should be protected and enhanced. Detailed recommendations for this land use category can be found in **Chapter 6 – Parks and Open Space Plan**.

## Commercial

Successful commercial and retail areas are important to the City. In addition to diversifying the City's tax base, they generate property tax and sales tax revenue, and provide shopping, dining, services, recreation and employment opportunities for residents. The Land Use Plan designates three types of commercial land uses: Neighborhood Commercial, Corridor/Regional Commercial, and Mixed Use. Each of these commercial uses is described in more detail below, and the Commercial Areas Framework Plan on page 35 provides additional policies and recommendations pertaining to the City's commercial lands uses.

### Neighborhood Commercial

Areas designated as neighborhood commercial are intended toward smaller-scale retail and service commercial areas geared toward providing for the daily shopping, service, and convenience needs of surrounding neighborhoods. Uses in the neighborhood commercial areas should be of a scale and intensity to be considered generally compatible with adjacent and nearby residential uses.

### Corridor/Regional Commercial

Areas designated as corridor/regional commercial are intended to accommodate larger shopping centers and developments that serve a more regional function, drawing on a customer base that extends beyond the City limits. These areas often have a mix of "big box" stores, national retailers, and a "critical mass" of multiple stores and large shared parking areas. Areas designated for general commercial are located primarily in larger consolidated areas along the City's heavily traveled corridors and intersections. Commercial service uses can also have an appropriate place in general commercial areas, but must be compatible with adjacent and nearby retail and commercial shopping areas and be located as to not occupy prime retail locations.

## Mixed Use

Mixed use areas should be characterized by uses and development patterns that provide a vibrant, safe, attractive, and "walkable" pedestrian environment. Mixed use areas should have strong pedestrian orientation and seek to create a more interesting and engaging pedestrian experience, accommodating pedestrian generating uses on the ground floor, and other uses above. Mixed use areas should provide a balance of uses unique to each site based on its location. Retail, entertainment, and dining uses are ideally suited for the ground floor with residential, educational, medical and/or office uses located on the upper floors. The primary objective is to provide an appropriate and compact mix of uses to foster an active and interesting district. Parking in the mixed use areas should be provided on-street, or in subtly located parking garages or parking lots. Although the Land Use Plan designates only Downtown St. Charles as a Mixed Use area, the Commercial Area Framework Plan identifies other locations where Mixed Use development could occur.

## Recommendations

Most of the commercial uses in St. Charles are clustered within the Plan's four subareas: West Gateway, East Gateway, Downtown, and Main Street. Specific recommendations for each of these subareas are presented in **Chapter 9**.

In general, the City should promote a mix of commercial uses that are compatible and consistent with the vision for each commercial district. This can be done through multiple methods including zoning revisions, relocation incentives, development incentives, and others. Potential catalyst projects that could stimulate further redevelopment should be given priority. The City should ensure adequate parking is conveniently available to businesses, possibly by facilitating shared parking scenarios. Site access should be improved not only for vehicles by managing traffic using signal coordination, signal timing, and physical roadway alterations, but also for pedestrians by connecting commercial and residential areas with a complete sidewalk network. The City should enforce standards for design, site configuration, landscaping, buffering and screening, and signage for all commercial development.

## Industrial/Business Park

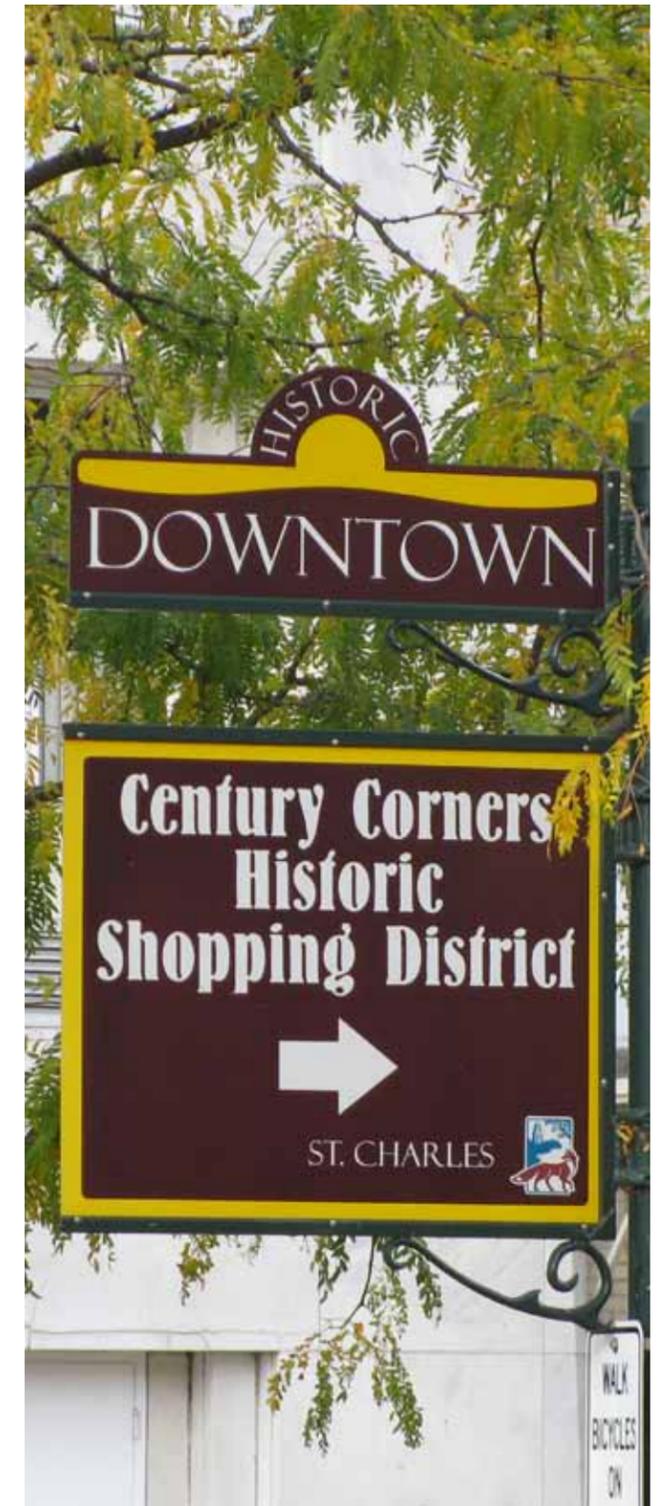
Areas designated for industrial/business park are intended to accommodate a variety of uses ranging from light assembly, storage and distribution, low intensity fabrication operations, research and "tech" industry applications, intense commercial service uses, and more. These areas are also intended to provide for business park/office park uses, which could include "stand alone" office buildings and complexes or several buildings incorporated into a "campus like" setting.

Light industrial uses in St. Charles are concentrated in industrial parks, but they can also be found in commercial and office areas. As a distinct land use, these areas can provide significant employment opportunities, tax revenue generation, and, if developed correctly, can help establish a positive community image.

While these uses create significant jobs and tax revenue, care must be taken to ensure they don't become a source of blight for surrounding uses. At times, their externalities are unpopular with community members, but heavy industrial uses are generally treated as assets as long as care is taken to eliminate their negative effects.

## Recommendations

Although they typically require larger land areas, convenient transportation system access, and separation from residential areas, industrial/business park are important to the City of St. Charles. Where they exist or are planned, careful consideration should be given to their impact on nearby residential areas and they should be well buffered from adjacent neighborhoods. Business parks should be provided with sufficient amenities, such as transportation options, parking, nearby retail and dining options, communal park space, etc., to make them attractive for employers and employees alike. The City should promote and encourage the improvement and rehabilitation of vacant or obsolete industrial buildings. This might involve reclassifying and rezoning obsolete manufacturing. Because many former industrial sites may be contaminated, best management practices and other green technology should be studied for potentially mitigating existing brownfield environmental impacts.



# Land Use Plan

The Land Use Plan builds upon the existing land use pattern in the City. In general, the plan emphasizes the protection of residential neighborhoods, the provision of community facilities, diversification of the City's tax base, access to goods and services, capitalization on regional traffic, and the preservation and enhancement of desirable environmental features.

A goal of the Land Use Plan is to assist City staff, residents, businesses, and elected and appointed officials in making future land use and development related policy decisions. While the Land Use Plan is specific enough to provide guidance on land use decisions, it is also flexible enough to allow for individual negotiations and the consideration of creative approaches to land development that are consistent with the overall policies and guidelines included in the Comprehensive Plan.

## Land-Use Plan Legend

### Residential

-  Rural Single Family Residential
-  Single Family Detached Residential
-  Single Family Attached Residential
-  Multi-Family Residential

### Commercial

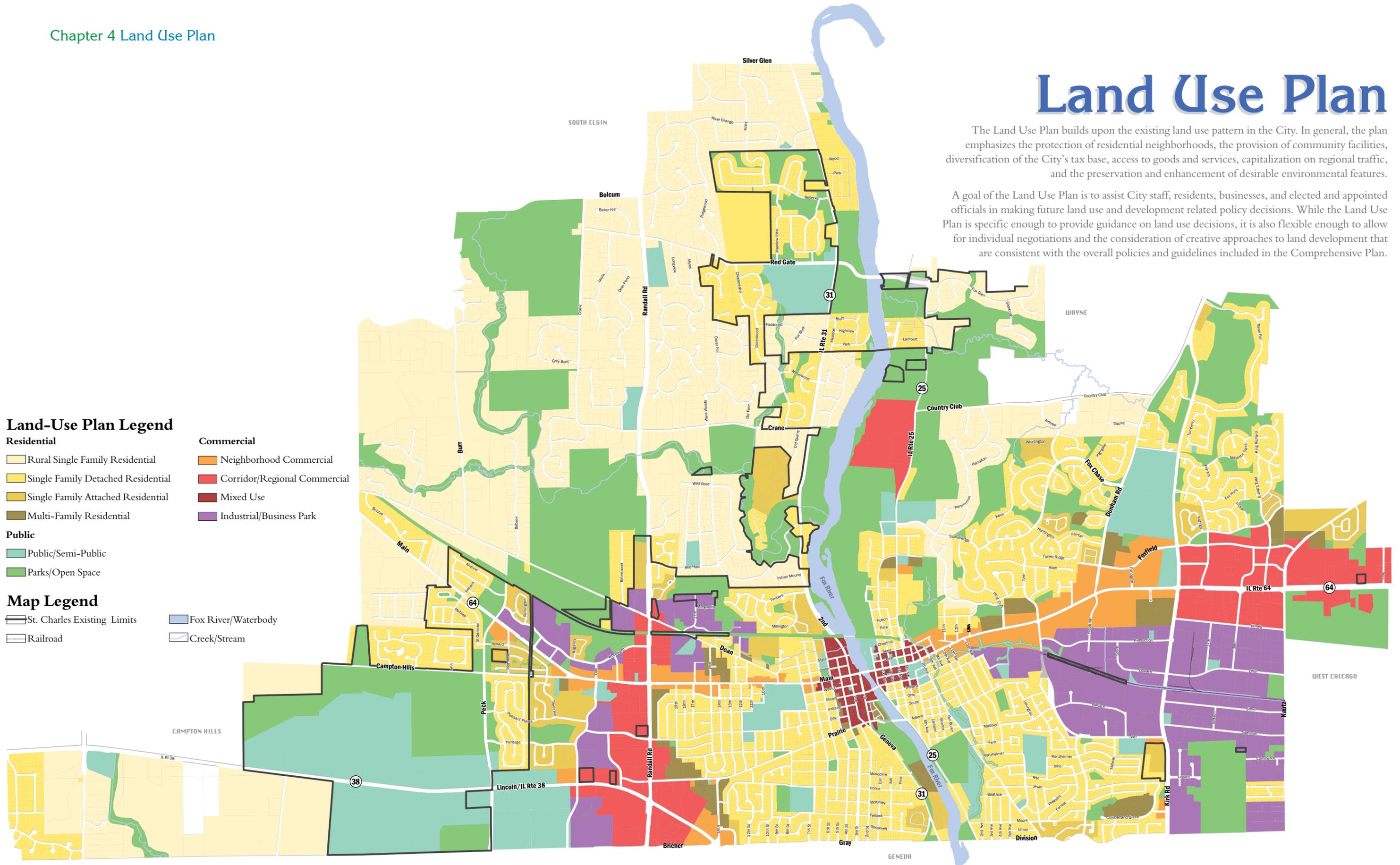
-  Neighborhood Commercial
-  Corridor/Regional Commercial
-  Mixed Use
-  Industrial/Business Park

### Public

-  Public/Semi-Public
-  Parks/Open Space

## Map Legend

-  St. Charles Existing Limits
-  Fox River/Waterbody
-  Railroad
-  Creek/Stream





## St. Charles Residential Areas Framework Plan

The City's housing stock is diverse in age, architecture, and design and the community's residential neighborhoods are one of the most significant contributors to St. Charles's unique character and identity. Throughout the public outreach associated with this Comprehensive Plan process, residents expressed their vision and concerns for the City's residential areas. Building on this input and the Land Use Plan, the Residential Areas Plan provides policies and recommendations for the City's residential areas and further defines the type and locations of each type of residential land use. The location of each residential land use is illustrated in the Residential Areas Plan on page 34.

The Policies identified in the Residential Areas Plan are intended to:

- » Maintain St. Charles's character and identity
- » Ensure quality housing stock remains a staple of the community
- » Maintain the optimal balance of housing types within the community
- » Ensure compatibility between the City's commercial areas and its residential neighborhoods
- » Ensure compatibility between new and existing residential development
- » Encourage a diversity of housing types, sizes and prices

## Rural Residential

The Rural Residential land use designation is intended to accommodate large-lot single-family development on the outer limits of the City. Rural Residential areas are characterized by large lots that may have developed as part of a formal subdivision or independently in unincorporated Kane County prior to annexation. These areas are typically located on the periphery of the City, removed from the busier commercial areas, providing a unique opportunity to live in a rural setting near a vibrant city. Rural Residential areas are characteristic of estate properties, including the absence of sidewalks and street trees, and open swale drainage systems as opposed to curb and gutter. Lot sizes in areas designated as Rural Residential are generally one-half acre or larger.

Although the regional goals articulated in both CMAP's Goto 2040 Plan and the Kane County 2040 Plan promote more compact livable centers that make public transit and commercial areas more viable, there is a need in St. Charles to balance the desired character of the City and provide a range of residential areas that are respectful of both rural and urbanized areas. The designated Rural Residential areas identified in the Land Use Plan reflect primarily existing areas within the City's future growth areas, with abundant natural resources and an existing rural character.

### Single-Family Detached Residential

Single-family detached residential neighborhoods are one of the City's most cherished assets and considered one of its most defining characteristics. Single-family detached residential areas make up the single largest land use in the City of St. Charles and should continue to predominate. Much of the City's character is derived from these neighborhoods and these distinguishing features should be preserved and enhanced.

Lot sizes within single-family detached residential areas generally range between 5,000 and 18,000 square feet. These lot sizes are not exact and exceptions can occur with particular lots or neighborhoods, however this range provides a sound characterization for the residential densities anticipated throughout the City. Single-family residential lot sizes are generally consistent within developed areas and are generally reflective of the City's zoning ordinance, which will regulate development and assist with the Plan's implementation.

An important objective of the Plan is to continue to protect and enhance the City's single-family residential neighborhoods. Future development should be respectful and sensitive to the existing homes while allowing reinvestment in the form of rehabilitation, additions, and new construction in existing neighborhoods. Wherever possible, single-family neighborhoods should be buffered and protected from adjacent incompatible uses.

Historically, as residential development occurred near downtown, the traditional street grid was continued. Within these areas, single-family residential areas consist primarily of detached homes, some of which have been converted to apartments, many rehabilitated, and most with small yards and minimal garage space. Newer residential subdivisions on the other hand, have introduced more contemporary and suburban development patterns including larger lots on curvilinear streets and cul-de-sacs.

Single-family residential areas should consist primarily of detached homes on lots subdivided and platted in an organized and planned manner. There are however, existing town-homes and/or duplexes scattered among the areas which area designated in the Plan as single-family detached residential. Within the single-family areas, it is the overall single-family character that serves as the rationale for the Plan's designation. Single-family residential areas must remain flexible and consider context. There may be situations where single-family attached and multi-family uses are considered appropriate within predominantly single-family detached areas. For example, street frontage, lot depth, and the presence of neighboring non-residential uses should be considered on a case-by-case basis for other types of compatible residential development.

### Single-Family Attached Residential

Single-family attached structures are connected horizontally, typically two stories in height. Single-family attached homes can serve as transitional areas between Single-family neighborhoods and commercial or multi-family development, and also act as an intermediate step for residents between apartment/condo living and home ownership. These types of units are also popular for empty nesters and others looking to downsize to a smaller home.

### Multi-Family

Multi-family residential structures contain multiple housing units, are usually stacked vertically and attached horizontally, and typically have common hallways and other amenities. Examples of multi-family residential developments include apartments, condominiums, and senior housing. Most multi-family developments within the City are located in, or near, areas of intense commercial development with access to goods, services and the transportation network. In addition to areas designated Multi-Family Residential, the land use plan also provides for multi-family units within the Mixed Use land use designation.

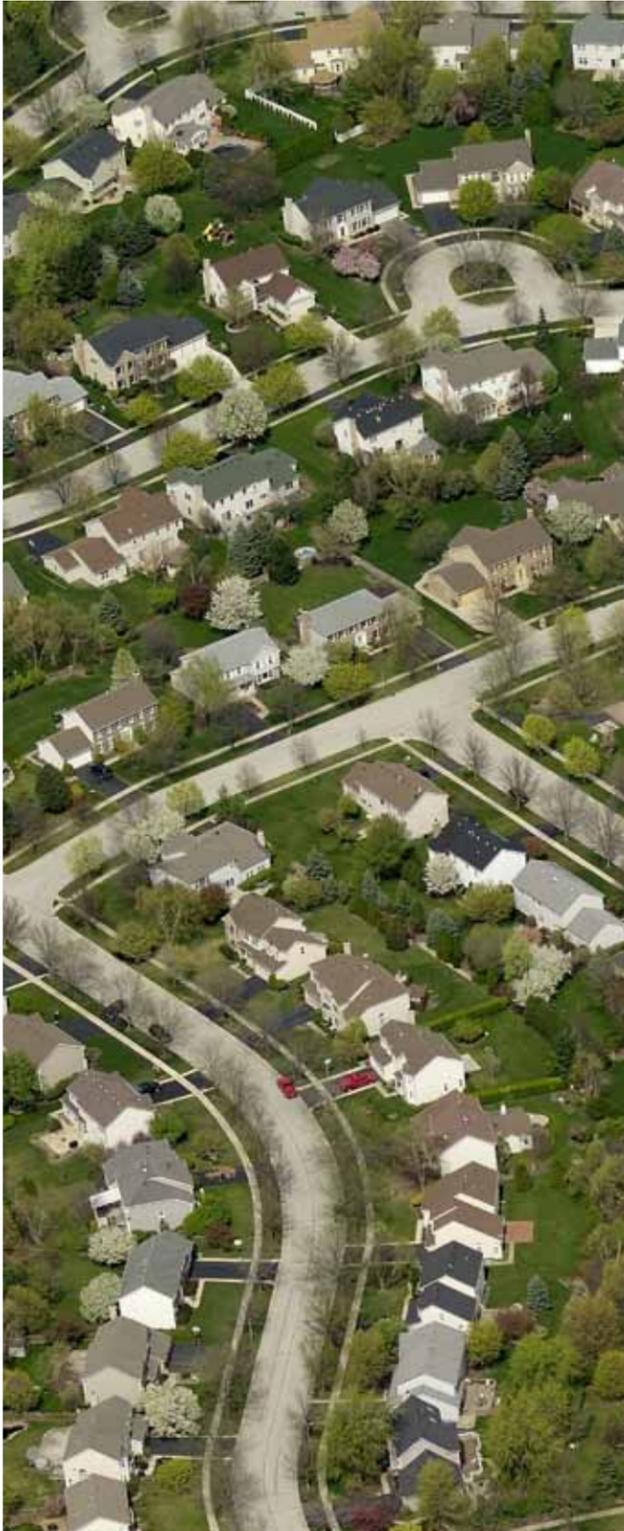
### Mixed Use

The Land Use Plan for St. Charles includes a designation for Mixed Use within the Downtown. Mixed Use areas should be characterized by uses and development patterns that provide a vibrant, safe, attractive, and "walkable" pedestrian environment. This includes active commercial uses on the ground floor, and opportunities for multi-family residential units on upper floors. Although the Land Use Plan designates only Downtown St. Charles as a Mixed Use area, the Residential Areas Framework Plan identifies other locations where Mixed Use development could occur, including the former St. Charles Mall Site along IL Route 38 and the current Charlestowne Mall site on the City's east side.

### Senior Housing

Senior Housing is an essential component of the City's residential offerings and should be appropriately accommodated in select locations. The notion of "aging in place" is important, as it allows residents to remain in the City as they progress through the different stages of life. Although the Residential Areas Plan does not call out specific locations for senior housing, the Plan does recognize the importance of developing additional senior housing within the community to accommodate the City's existing and future senior population.

In general, senior housing can be in the form of single-family detached, attached, or multi-family dwellings. As locations are considered for accommodating senior housing development, preference should be given to proximity of transit, goods, and services. The ability to walk to restaurants, shops, transit, recreation, entertainment, and services is often important to seniors as it reduces their dependence on the automobile for daily needs. Given issues of proximity, areas within or near the Downtown, Randall Road, or near the intersection of Kirk Road and Main Street should be considered ideal for senior housing.



## Residential Land Use Policies

The Residential Land Use Policies focus on enhancing the City's overall residential character by improving existing residential areas and promoting new high-quality residential development in appropriate locations. The following policies will assist the City in future decision making regarding residential land use throughout the City.

### **Preserve the character of the City's existing single family residential neighborhoods.**

The City's residential areas are composed of a number of unique and distinct neighborhoods. While they may differ in configuration, unit type, and lot size, these neighborhoods are well established and have their own character. Development and reinvestment within these neighborhoods should be context sensitive, and compatible with the established neighborhood character and fabric. Regardless of the location or housing type, residential development or redevelopment should be carefully regulated to ensure compatibility with the scale and character of surrounding and adjacent residential neighborhoods. New infill development, teardown redevelopment, and alterations to existing development should maintain a setback, height, bulk, and orientation similar to its surroundings.

### **Maintain a diverse and affordable mix of housing types to allow St. Charles to continue to attract and retain families and residents.**

The City defines affordable housing as "housing in which mortgage, amortization, taxes, insurance, and condominium or association fees, if any, constitute no more than 30% of the gross annual household income for a household of the size that may occupy the unit." Making affordable housing available also provides workforce housing – housing that is affordable to "critical service" employees that contribute to the quality of life in the City, as well as providing a range of housing options for first time home buyers, young families and to facilitate "aging in place". Title 17.18 Inclusionary Housing of the City Code seeks to provide Affordable Dwelling Units within new residential developments by requiring developers to provide a proportionate share of affordable housing, or fees in lieu thereof, to ensure that an adequate stock of affordable housing is, and remains, available in the City of St. Charles.

### **Locate new multi-family residential developments in appropriate locations within the City and consider the implications of concentrating units in one location or area of the City.**

Throughout the outreach exercises associated with the Comprehensive Plan, residents expressed concerns over the concentration of apartments on the City's west side. Citing issues such as traffic, lack of pride in ownership, transient school children, and straining municipal infrastructure, residents are opposed to more "rentals" in the community. Apartments, however, are an important component of a healthy housing stock, expanding housing options for those wishing to live in St. Charles but cannot afford, or have chosen not to, own their home. Apartments are also only a subset of the dwelling types that comprise multi-family housing, which can be owner occupied (i.e. condominiums). In addition to assisting with the community's goals to provide affordable housing in the community, multi-family housing contributes to residential density which can improve the viability of shopping areas in the community. Recognizing that this Plan is dynamic and not "set in stone", the City should promote multi-family housing in areas identified in the Land Use and Residential Areas Plans, but consider proposals in other areas provided any significant impact on schools, traffic, and other infrastructure can be mitigated.

### **Seek opportunities to provide senior housing within the City considering locations that are within close proximity to recreation, public transit, healthcare, and daily goods and services.**

The City seeks to provide opportunities for residents to "age in place", meaning that housing within the community accommodates all stages of life. As members of the community become older, and their lifestyles change, the City's diverse housing stock should provide opportunities to remain in the City of St. Charles. Although the Residential Areas Plan does not call out specific locations for senior housing, the Plan does recognize the importance of developing additional senior housing within the community to accommodate the City's existing and future senior population. From active living through assisted living, the City will continue to provide a wide range of housing types to accommodate its seniors.

### **Consider the potential impact of new residential development on schools, municipal services and traffic.**

As a mature community, the City's infrastructure is well

established, particularly in the older areas of the community. Unlike emerging suburbs that are continuously growing, widening roads and building schools as necessary, the community infrastructure in St. Charles is well established and not as easily adaptable. Although road and intersections can be widened, and schools expanded, a less costly approach would be to work within the framework of the City's well established infrastructure, evaluating proposed development's impact on City systems and working with developers to mitigate and minimize strains on local systems.

### **Continue to work with the St. Charles Park District to ensure the residential areas of the City are well served by neighborhood parks and recreation.**

Parks are a contributing factor to the high quality of life in St. Charles. To ensure the community continues to be well served by parks and recreation, the City should continue to administer its parkland dedication as specified in Title 16.10 Dedications of the City Code. Although the existing parkland dedication requirements may satisfy the provision of open space for larger subdivisions, a provision in the Code allows for cash-in-lieu of a park dedication if the park size is not "practical." As the City matures, it is expected that most of the future growth will consist of smaller infill development with smaller dedication requirements, and accepting cash donations may leave these developments under served by "close to home" park space. The City should work with the Park District to better define "practical" and better align this policy to reflect the changing character of residential development within the City and consider accepting smaller park dedications to provide adequate open space for infill subdivisions.

### **Discourage and/or prohibit "cut-through" traffic in residential neighborhoods as necessary.**

The City's residential neighborhoods are one of its most cherished assets and the residents value their homes and neighborhoods for comfort and safety they provide. Non-local, or "cut through", traffic is a threat to neighborhoods, as motorists use quiet neighborhood streets as a means of bypassing traffic on more heavily-traveled routes. With commercial corridors throughout much of the City, almost all neighborhoods are susceptible to cut-through traffic. A combination of signage, improved traffic enforcement, and traffic management measures should be used to discourage cut-through traffic in all residential areas when it is identified as a problem by residents and threat to a neighborhood's safety and residential quality of life. Through traffic should be routed



around residential neighborhoods on arterial roadways and collector streets designed to carry higher volumes of traffic with minimal impact on residential areas.

**Continue to expand sidewalk network to provide better connections between residential neighborhoods, parks, schools, and employment areas, while being cognizant of the character of individual neighborhoods.**

Title 12.30 of the City Code requires sidewalks on both sides of streets within the City. However, some of the City's neighborhoods were constructed before this policy and as a result there are gaps in the City's sidewalk network, particularly in older areas of the City. The City's sidewalk network should continue to be expanded to provide better connectivity between the community's residential neighborhoods, parks, schools, and employment centers. Within residential areas, sidewalks should be installed and maintained as determined by the City through a public engagement process, understanding that construction of traditional sidewalks may negatively impact the more rural character of some neighborhoods. Sidewalk installation should consider the desires of residents and the existing character of neighborhoods; however, preservation of character should not supersede pedestrian safety and connectivity. The City should be cognizant of the differences in the character of individual neighborhoods when determining locations and types of sidewalk installation.

**Enforce property maintenance codes for residential properties.**

Maintaining residential properties is important to protect property values and preserve the character and desirability of residential neighborhoods. City Code Title 15.40 adopts and modifies the 2012 edition of the International Property Maintenance Code that established minimum standards for upkeep and appearance. The recent economic downturn and associated foreclosures has drawn attention to the impact a neglected home can have on adjacent properties. As a component of, or in addition to this program, the City should also explore the creation of a vacant building registration and inspection program to help prevent foreclosed and/or neglected properties from falling into disrepair. The City should also explore the creation of a property maintenance program to assist residents, particularly seniors, with affordable lawn cutting, snow removal, and other appropriate services.

**Ensure residential areas are adequately screened/buffered from adjacent non-residential uses and activity.**

The composition of the City's commercial districts along corridors that transect the City means that there are many areas where commercial uses abut residential properties and neighborhoods. The use of horizontal and vertical buffering and screening, including berms, fencing, and landscaping, should be promoted to protect neighborhoods from abutting commercial or industrial land uses. The City should identify areas where land use conflicts are problematic and explore

solutions to mitigate the conflicts, including buffering and screening. Additionally, the City's landscape ordinance could be revised to require enhanced screening and an amortization schedule to ensure compliance for non-conforming properties within a set time frame.

**Prioritize infill development over annexation and development**

While the era of substantial residential growth is over in St. Charles, there remain some isolated opportunities for residential development on the City's west side. While most of these opportunities are within unincorporated Kane County, they fall within the City's 1.5-mile extraterritorial planning jurisdiction defined by State statute. It is recommended that the City carefully consider annexation and growth into these areas while vacant and/or underutilized residential properties exist within the City's boundaries. When residential development does occur within the City's growth areas, it should occur in areas immediately adjacent to existing developed areas so as to prevent "leap frog" development and the resulting costs and burdens of unnecessarily extending infrastructure systems in an unwise manner.

**Transition densities to maximize compatibility**

As St. Charles approaches its full build-out, its new growth and investment will shift from new development in outlying areas to redevelopment of infill sites, and many of the available infill parcels are situated between established residential areas and the City's busy commercial districts. This shift will create new challenges and obstacles for development not associated with easier "green-field" development, including: adaptive reuse, fixed/smaller parcel sizes, greater neighborhood sensitivity, and increased density/intensity. A recommended strategy for improved compatibility is place similar density and lot sizes adjacent to existing residential areas and then to transition to high residential densities moving closer to commercial areas and busy streets. This approach assists with compatibility of adjacent use areas and provides additional density to serve as a transitional land use.

# Residential Areas Framework Plan

The City's housing stock is diverse in age, architecture, and design and the community's residential neighborhoods are one of the most significant contributors to St. Charles's unique character and identity. Throughout the public outreach associated with this Comprehensive Plan process, residents expressed their vision and concerns for the City's residential areas. Building on this input and the Land Use Plan, the Residential Areas Plan provides policies and recommendations for the City's residential areas and further defines the type and locations of each type of residential land use.

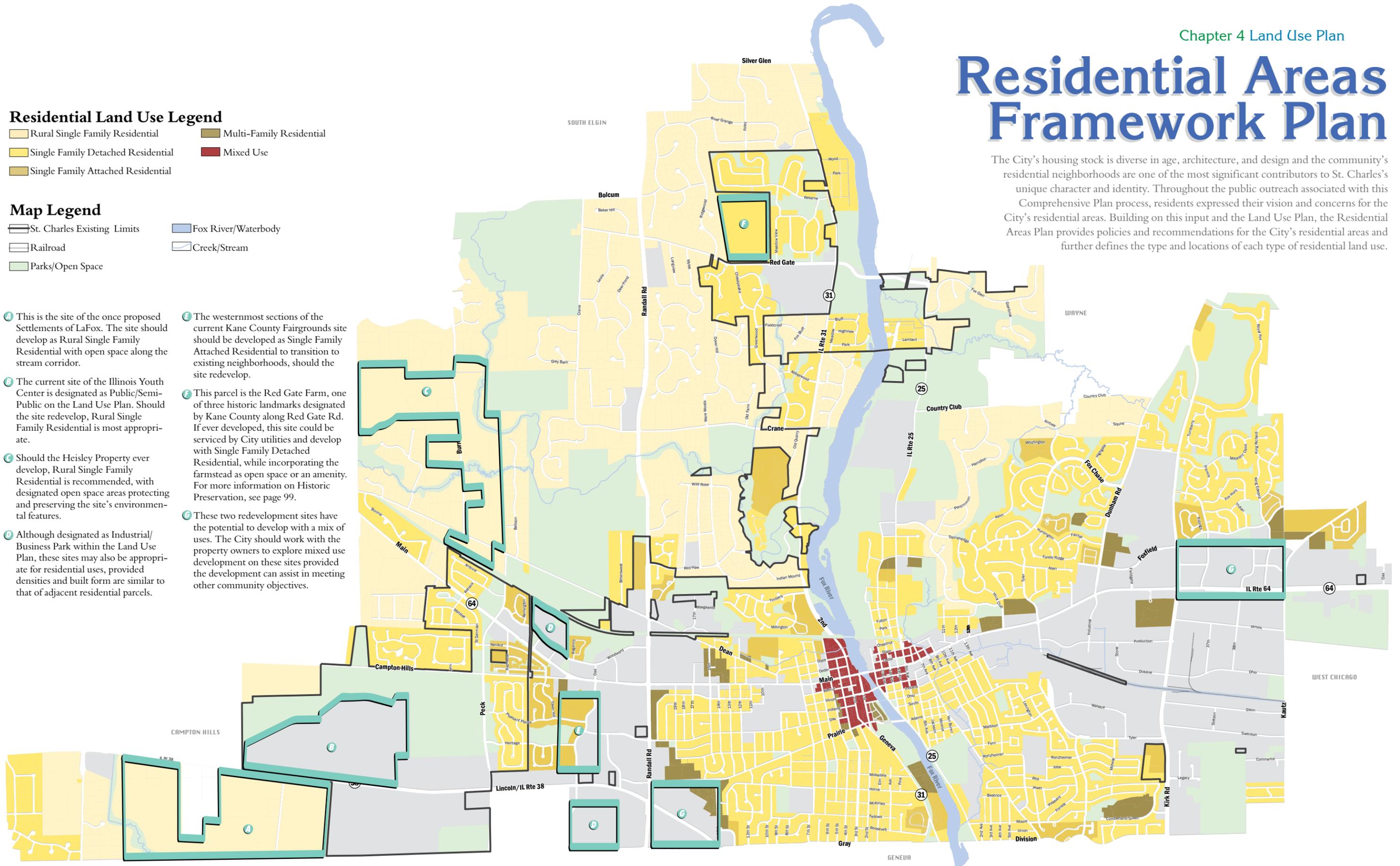
## Residential Land Use Legend

- Rural Single Family Residential
- Single Family Detached Residential
- Single Family Attached Residential
- Multi-Family Residential
- Mixed Use

## Map Legend

- St. Charles Existing Limits
- Fox River/Waterbody
- Railroad
- Creek/Stream
- Parks/Open Space

- A** This is the site of the once proposed Settlements of LaFox. The site should develop as Rural Single Family Residential with open space along the stream corridor.
- B** The current site of the Illinois Youth Center is designated as Public/Semi-Public on the Land Use Plan. Should the site redevelop, Rural Single Family Residential is most appropriate.
- C** Should the Heisley Property ever develop, Rural Single Family Residential is recommended, with designated open space areas protecting and preserving the site's environmental features.
- D** Although designated as Industrial/Business Park within the Land Use Plan, these sites may also be appropriate for residential uses, provided densities and built form are similar to that of adjacent residential parcels.
- E** The westernmost sections of the current Kane County Fairgrounds site should be developed as Single Family Attached Residential to transition to existing neighborhoods, should the site redevelop.
- F** This parcel is the Red Gate Farm, one of three historic landmarks designated by Kane County along Red Gate Rd. If ever developed, this site could be serviced by City utilities and develop with Single Family Detached Residential, while incorporating the farmstead as open space or an amenity. For more information on Historic Preservation, see page 99.
- G** These two redevelopment sites have the potential to develop with a mix of uses. The City should work with the property owners to explore mixed use development on these sites provided the development can assist in meeting other community objectives.





## St. Charles Commercial Areas Framework Plan

The Commercial Areas Framework Plan provides guidance for the different commercial areas throughout the City. The Plan designates appropriate business and commercial types and activity levels along key corridors within the City and at other select locations.

Successful commercial and retail areas are important to the City. In addition to diversifying the City's tax base, they generate property tax and sales tax revenue, and provide shopping, dining, service, recreation and employment opportunities for residents.

The Policies identified in the Commercial Areas Framework Plan are intended to:

- » Provide residents with access to necessary goods and services
- » Provide opportunities for employment
- » Maintain a diverse tax base that lessens the tax burden on residents
- » Ensure compatibility between residential and commercial areas
- » Encourage a diverse mix of commercial uses to provide a variety of goods and services

## Neighborhood Commercial

Areas designated as neighborhood commercial are intended for smaller-scale retail and service commercial areas geared toward providing for the daily shopping, service, and convenience needs of surrounding neighborhoods. Uses in the neighborhood commercial areas should be of a scale and intensity to be considered generally compatible with adjacent and nearby residential uses. Grocery stores, gasoline service stations, pharmacies, personal and financial services, smaller office uses, convenience and specialty retailers, and more are appropriate.

Neighborhood commercial uses should be located along major corridors and at key intersections, along the edges of residential neighborhoods as identified in the Land Use Plan. Many neighborhood commercial properties, especially those along Main Street are relatively shallow and present challenges for redevelopment. Because many of the properties along this corridor are adjacent to residential areas, buffering, screening, and setbacks should be used to protect adjacent residential neighborhoods. Hours of operation and intensity of use may also become an important issue in some neighborhood commercial areas.

Commercial service uses can also have an appropriate place in this land use designation by providing necessary services for nearby residents. Commercial services uses within the Neighborhood Commercial areas must be compatible with adjacent and nearby residential areas and be located as to not occupy prime retail locations.

## Corridor/Regional Commercial

Areas designated as Corridor/Regional Commercial are intended to accommodate larger shopping centers and developments that serve a more regional function, capitalizing on traffic volumes along the City's busy streets and drawing on a customer base that extends beyond the City limits. These areas are appropriate for "big box" stores, national retailers, and regional malls or a "critical mass" of multiple stores and large shared parking areas. Commercial service uses can also have an appropriate place in general commercial areas, but must be compatible with adjacent and nearby retail and commercial shopping areas and be located as to not occupy prime retail locations.

The Land Use Plan identifies Corridor/Regional Commercial in the City's east and west gateways, clustered around Kirk Road and Randall Road, two busy north south streets that bisect the City. Both of these areas are ideally suited for a large scale commercial/retail development capable of drawing from a larger region. At both locations, access and visibility is ideal for a more regional commercial draw, and heavy traffic volumes provide visibility desired by retailers. As development and redevelopment is considered in these areas, consideration should be given to maximizing revenue generating opportunities. It is also important to recognize the importance of promoting high-quality development in these locations as they serve as gateways into the City and are pivotal in shaping perceptions of St. Charles as visitors enter the City.

Both the Kirk Road and Randall Road corridors are critical to

the economic livelihood of the City and both have challenges and issues that must be addressed in order to maintain their vitality. In addition to the recommendations and policies provided in this section of the Plan, Chapter 8 – Subarea Plans provides additional actions and considerations to maintain these areas as vital commercial centers.

## Mixed Use

The Land Use Plan designates Downtown St. Charles as Mixed Use, characterized by land uses and development patterns that provide a vibrant, safe, attractive, and “walkable” pedestrian environment. Although the Land Use Plan designates only Downtown St. Charles as a Mixed Use area, the former St. Charles Mall Site along IL Route 38 and the current Charlestowne Mall site on the City’s east side have potential for mixed use development.

Mixed Use areas should have strong pedestrian orientation and seek to create a more interesting and engaging pedestrian experience, accommodating pedestrian generating uses on the ground floor, and other uses above. Retail, entertainment and dining uses are ideally suited for the ground floor with residential and/or office uses located on the upper floors. The primary objective is to provide an appropriate and compact mix of uses to foster an active and interesting district. Parking in the mixed use areas should be provided on-street, or in subtly located parking garages or parking lots.

Built form is a critical consideration within Mixed Use areas. Within mixed use areas, buildings should be located at, or near, the front property lines fronting the street to create a “street wall” – a continuous row of buildings and storefronts that encourages walkability and helps to establish a safe and attractive pedestrian environment. However on the edges of Downtown, where businesses are located in converted homes, this built form may not be practical or consistent with the character, such as the area known as Century Corners. Although mixed use is preferred in these areas, individuals uses located in converted residential structures is also appropriate.

## Downtown Office

Offices in Downtown should be encouraged to locate above the ground floor whenever possible in order to preserve these areas for retail businesses. If located on the ground floor, offices should maintain attractive window displays that are not covered by blinds or other materials in order to maintain visual interest for pedestrians. Offices in converted houses provide an important transition area between the commercial activities of Downtown and nearby residential areas and should remain. Parking, loading, signage, lighting and business operations should be of a nature and scale that is compatible with surrounding residential uses.

## Mixed Use Outside of Downtown

The Land Use Plan identifies both the Charlestowne Mall site in the City’s East Gateway and the Old St. Charles Mall site in the West Gateway as Corridor/Regional Commercial areas. However, both of these sites have potential for Mixed Use development, and similar to Downtown, each could foster a pedestrian-oriented mixed use node, with a mix of retail, restaurant, entertainment, recreation, and residential uses. This dynamic mix of uses in close proximity to major arterial streets has the potential not only to create a vibrant and inviting destination but also serve as a catalyst for needed investment in these important areas of the City. Building orientation in the area should have a strong orientation to major streets and careful consideration should be given to its impact on adjacent residential areas. Additionally, residential uses/development within these mixed use areas should refer to the Residential Areas Framework Plan for additional considerations and recommendations. In these areas, it is important to maintain a healthy balance of users.

## Industrial/Business Park

Providing for employment uses is an important goal of the community and Land Use Plan includes several areas within the City designated as industrial/business park. These areas intended to foster employment and diversify the City’s tax-base, accommodating a variety of uses ranging from light assembly, storage and distribution, low intensity fabrication operations, research and “tech” industry applications, intense commercial service uses, and more.

In addition to light-industrial uses, these areas are also intended to provide for business park/office park uses, including “stand alone” office buildings and complexes or several buildings incorporated into a “campus like” setting.

Light industrial uses in St. Charles are concentrated in industrial parks, but they can also be found in commercial zones and office areas. As a distinct land use, these areas can provide significant employment opportunities, tax revenue generation, and if developed correctly, can help establish a positive community image.

While these uses create significant jobs and tax revenues, care must be taken to ensure these areas remain competitive and care is taken to eliminate the negative externalities associated with industrial uses. Without careful planning, active code enforcement, and actively marketing these areas of the City, industrial uses can become a source of blight for surrounding areas. Poorly screened or buffered industrial sites or neglected industrial buildings can detract and negatively affect adjacent properties and property values.

As indicated on the Land Use Plan and the Commercial Areas Framework Plan, Industrial/Business Park uses are designated in areas where they can capitalize on close proximity to regional transportation networks while minimizing negative impacts on residential neighborhoods. These areas are located primarily in the: 1) Eastern Gateway, along Kirk Road south of Main Street; 2) Western Gateway, east of Randall Road north of Dean Street; and, 3) north of Main Street, west of Randall Road in an area referred to as Corporate Reserve. In addition to the policies and recommendations contained in this section of the Plan, Chapter 8 - Subarea Plans also provides recommendations specific to some of the Industrial/Business Park sites in the community.



## Commercial Area Policies

### **Continue to promote mixed use development within Downtown while respecting the historic fabric of the community.**

The First Street Redevelopment has emerged as a positive and potentially catalytic example of how desirable and marketable new development can occur while respecting the established scale and character of the community's historic core. In addition to serving as a guide for new development, the new Downtown Subarea Plan identifies development/redevelopment opportunities, strategies for preserving buildings and areas that contribute to the unique character of the district, and ways to improve the appearance and function of Downtown.

### **Actively market redevelopment opportunities in the City's East Gateway and Kirk Road corridor.**

The intersection of Kirk Road and Main Street is both a gateway into St. Charles and part of a larger commercial district. With the recent departure of Sears from the Charlestowne Mall and Borders from a nearby strip center, the commercial vitality of this area should be a primary focus of the City's economic development efforts. The Subarea Plan for this area presents strategic improvements and development/redevelopment scenarios that could reposition the Charlestowne Mall and this important gateway area. These concepts and the new Comprehensive Plan should be used to articulate the City's vision for this area and help market the sites.

### **Actively market redevelopment opportunities in the City's West Gateway and Randall Road corridor.**

Randall Road is an important regional corridor that serves as a western entrance to community. There are several underutilized properties throughout the corridor which disrupt continuity, commercial synergy, and have created a disjointed the corridor's appearance and function. The Randall Road Corridor subarea plan establishes and articulates unified goals and objectives for this key area of the City, and the City should use these plans to assist its economic development efforts as it seeks to maintain the corridor as a thriving commercial district.

### **Promote a mix of attractive commercial uses along the Main Street Corridor that provide a range of goods and services to the St. Charles community.**

A wide range of commercial uses exist along the Main Street corridor, providing a variety of goods and services to residents. As a primary east-west route through the City, Main Street contributes to the overall character, image, and appearance of St. Charles. In general, some commercial areas are newer, well maintained, well occupied, provide a desirable mix of uses, and are generally considered attractive. Others however, are older/dated, suffer from deferred maintenance and obsolescence, and suffer from a less desirable mix of uses and higher vacancy rates. The City should continue to promote reinvestment along this key commercial corridor and maintain Main Street as a unique commercial corridor that can accommodate a wide array of business types to cater to the diverse needs of the St. Charles community.

### **Continue to work with property owners and community members to finalize an acceptable development for the former St. Charles Mall Site.**

This 30-acre site may represent the most significant redevelopment opportunity within the Randall Road corridor. Despite great potential, the opposition voiced by some members of the St. Charles community to past development proposals has highlighted the need for a clear vision for this site. Throughout the outreach exercises conducted as part of the Comprehensive Plan, the citizenry remained split on appropriate uses for the site. **Chapter 8 – Subarea Plans** provides three development alternatives for the site, however the ultimate solution may be an even different concept altogether. Currently the vacant site is impacting the commercial vitality of the area and negatively impacting nearby sites. What is desired by many residents may not be economically feasible, which is likely the primary reason the site remains vacant.

### **Work with the Kane County Fairgrounds to explore utilizing their Randall Road frontage as commercial uses that can generate tax revenue and complement other shopping areas along the corridor.**

The Kane County Fairgrounds is located on the west side of Randall Road, north of Lincoln Highway/IL Rte 38. In addition to the annual "County Fair", the Fairgrounds hosts events year-round, including flea markets, dog shows, and private parties. When the Kane County Fairgrounds established itself at this location, Randall Road was not the commercialized corridor it is today. Although the Fairgrounds generates tourism for the City, as well as admission tax for special events, it is a single-purpose, destination type facility that may not necessarily have to be located along Randall Road. The City should work with the Kane County Fairgrounds to develop the Randall Road frontage, including exploration of alternative improvements that could help better connect the commercial areas located to the north and south of the fairgrounds.

### **Consider regulatory tools to prevent big box vacancies and blight.**

There are several big box vacancies throughout the community that are negatively affecting the City's commercial areas. Although the Comprehensive Plan has provided a direction for future land uses for these areas, there is no protection when big boxes become vacant in the future. Communities across the country are using several techniques to combat "big box" blight when a large stand-alone or anchor retailer closes and leaves a vacant store. Even before a new big box is approved, some communities are preparing for their eventual demise. While a developer or property owner has a financial incentive to fill a vacant space, other considerations (such as keeping out competition or the size and mass of the building) may inhibit them from filling a vacancy in a timely manner. A municipality may draw from a large toolkit to avoid a situation which may encourage blight. Collectively, these regulatory tools are known as "white elephant ordinances."

### **Evaluate commercial landscaping requirements to ensure landscaping is appropriately used to enhance the appearance of a site and screen unsightly uses.**

Requiring commercial development to install trees, shrubs and other landscaping at the time of their development serves to improve its appearance and the appearance of the community. Along corridors, parkway landscaping helps beautify the area, complementing site architecture, screening utilities, and softening views to large fields of parking. The City of St. Charles is currently facing two issues with its commercial landscaping: (1) in the older commercial areas that developed prior to landscaping requirements, the landscaping is too sparse and the areas are unattractive; and, (2) in the newer commercial areas some of landscaping is screening commercial businesses and restricts their visibility and exposure. The City should evaluate their current landscaping requirements to make sure requirements are not too excessive and detrimental to commercial visibility. Additionally, the City should consider an amortization schedule requiring non-conforming sites to become compliant with the City's landscaping requirements within a specified time period to improve the appearance of the City's older commercial areas.

### **Continue to expand sidewalk network to provide better connections between the City's commercial and employment districts and its residential neighborhoods.**

The City's key commercial corridors did not prioritize or give due consideration to pedestrian circulation as they were developed over the decades. This has resulted in an incomplete and fragmented sidewalk network. While this reflects a past development practice in suburban communities that emerged catering to the automobile, today's best practices promote healthy communities and walkability. The City's sidewalk network should continue to be expanded to provide better connections between the community's residential neighborhoods and its commercial districts.

**Relocate existing industrial uses from other areas of the City into designated industrial areas elsewhere in the community when opportunities arise.**

Industrial uses, when organized into parks, provide a level of protection for the uses themselves and for surrounding uses. When isolated, these uses need to be compatible with surrounding and adjacent uses. Like many older communities, St. Charles developed its business areas along its waterways and railroads, the key transportation methods of that time. Since then the Fox River has transitioned from an industrial waterway to a valuable recreation amenity and source of community pride and the Union Pacific Railroad has been decommissioned throughout most of the City. Today isolated industrial properties seem out of context, and many have become surrounded by residential uses. The City should work with these uses to relocate industrial uses to areas designated for Industrial/Business Park in the Land Use Plan, removing land use conflicts from neighborhoods.

**To the extent possible, mitigate the negative effects of industrial uses on adjacent and nearby residential properties through use of setbacks, screening, buffers, orientation of activity, and more.**

The composition of the City's commercial districts along corridors that transect the City means that there are many areas where commercial uses abut residential properties and neighborhoods. The use of horizontal and vertical buffering and screening, including berms, fencing, and landscaping, should be promoted to protect neighborhoods from abutting commercial or industrial land uses. The City should identify areas where land use conflicts are problematic and explore solutions to mitigate the conflicts, including buffering and screening. Additionally, the City's landscape ordinance could be revised to require enhanced screening and an amortization schedule to ensure compliance for non-conforming properties within a set time frame.

**Utilize partnerships to assist in implementation of Plan recommendations and the City's vision.**

The City should continue to work with local economic development partners to attract, retain and expand businesses in St. Charles. It is important that the City support the efforts of the St. Charles Chamber of Commerce, the St. Charles Convention and Visitors Bureau, and the Downtown St. Charles Partnership to market and promote local businesses and available development opportunities. The City should utilize the expertise and network of these partners to develop and implement a strategic marketing and recruitment plan for targeted businesses and store types.

**Limit the infiltration of recreation and non-industrial uses into the City's industrial and business parks**

The City's larger industrial areas should be preserved and specifically targeted to industrial/business park improvements rather than athletic, institutional, or other uses. Over time, the intrusion of non-industrial/business park uses can reduce the desirability of an area from being sought out for new industrial investment and businesses.

**Appropriately transition from more intensive uses within Downtown to the residential areas that surround it.**

Downtown St. Charles is surrounded on all sides by established residential neighborhoods. The City should continue to utilize a transitional zoning district to transition from intense uses in the Downtown core to more compatible uses on the periphery.

**Improve the appearance of the City's commercial areas by promoting high quality development, rejecting national "templates", and maintaining a façade improvement program.**

A goal of the Comprehensive Plan is to improve the appearance and function of the existing commercial areas and attract new commercial development to both available and under-performing sites. The City's commercial districts are high-profile areas and corridors that attract visitors, have traffic passing through, and therefore play a significant role in defining the image of the community. Each new commercial development should be considered an opportunity to incrementally improve the appearance and character of the community. Consideration should be given to discouraging national "templates" of chain stores and ensuring that new development uses quality-building materials and provides attractive architecture as viewed from all sides. In addition the City should maintain a Façade Improvement Program to assist businesses and property owners with improvements to signage, façade improvements, landscaping, parking areas, and the modernization of aging structures and facilities.

**Consider other activity generators within the City's commercial districts, provided they contribute to the vitality of and economic livelihood of the area.**

A number of Kane County facilities exist within or adjacent to St. Charles. The County Circuit Court and Branch Court facility are in the City on Randall Road. The Judicial Center, including court facilities, the Sheriff's office, and the Juvenile Justice facility, is located on Illinois Route 38 in unincorporated St. Charles Township (on the Geneva side of the jurisdictional boundary line). To complement nodes of corridor commercial uses, non-commercial uses that generate significant activity should be considered appropriate within the City's commercial districts. For example, institutional uses such as higher education facilities and medical service providers can function as catalysts for new development within a commercial area and/or provide a steady customer base.

**Improve the appearance of the public right-of-way through streetscape improvements.**

The City should continue its installation of the streetscape program consisting of elements that strengthen the unified theme of commercial areas such as benches, bus shelters, trash cans, streetlights, way finding signage and other amenities. In coordination with IDOT and KDOT where appropriate, the City should facilitate desired right-of-way improvements including improved landscaping, lighting, and gateway signage consistent with the Sub Area Plans.

**Maintain signage regulations that provide a balance between business identification and minimizing visual clutter along the City's corridors.**

Some of the City's commercial areas suffer from excessive or oversized signage and visual clutter which detract from the character of these areas. Just as with commercial structures, commercial signage should also be designed to respect the scale and character of surrounding development. Amortization should be considered to eliminate over time the signage that is non-conforming.

**Provide attractive gateways into the City and the City's commercial areas.**

Many of the entry points to the City occur in commercial areas, including Randall Road on the City's west side and the Kirk Road on the City's east side. In these areas, gateway signage and other enhancements such as lighting, monument walls, landscaping and public art should be installed at highly visible locations to signify entry into St. Charles and to distinguish the City from Geneva, West Chicago, Campton Hills, South Elgin, Wayne, and other nearby communities.

**Promote reinvestment and/or redevelopment of outdated shopping centers.**

As one of the first communities to develop along Randall Road, the City's older commercial centers stand in contrast to newer shopping areas constructed in neighboring communities. Some development along the Main Street corridor has also not aged well, and dealing these properties can be troublesome for many reasons. Frequently, they are owned by trusts, pension funds, or pools of multiple owners who are more likely to be absentee owners living outside of the community. Additionally, the mortgage may long be paid off which means that existing tenants, however marginal, are often sufficient for the owners. Based on these and other factors, the need to remain competitive may not be as compelling. The large land area and high visibility of shopping centers makes their maintenance and potential deterioration an important issue for the City to address. The City should require that commercial properties be maintained to an adopted standard to prevent their neglect and deterioration. Neglect and deterioration have environmental, fiscal, economic, and aesthetic impacts on the City as a whole. Aging shopping centers can be modernized through several mechanisms, including signage, landscaping, improved access and circulation, modern tenant spaces/layouts, building orientation and visibility, outlots, and parking lot maintenance.

**Continue to evaluate funding sources and mechanisms to assist implementation of the Comprehensive Plan.**

Financial incentives are an effective tool that the City can use to encourage businesses to make improvements to their properties. The City should continue to consider additional incentives such as sales tax rebates, TIF, and SSA funds to provide assistance to businesses. Additional City resources should also be dedicated to the pursuit of grants, low-interest loans, and other state and federal funds to assist in realizing Plan and community objectives.

**Improve access management along the City’s commercial corridors.**

As a community approaching full build out, the commercial areas of St. Charles are well defined – located along the City’s arterial corridors. In some areas, incremental commercial development has resulted in poor access management. Along Main Street and Randall Road, many individual businesses have established one or more driveways located within close proximity to one another. This can be problematic with regards to traffic and pedestrian safety and traffic flow. The City should work with IDOT and KDOT, as well as property owners, to improve access management within corridor commercial areas in order to improve traffic flow and safety. Along these commercial corridors, the City should work to minimize curb cuts, consolidate the access points, and facilitate cross-access easements and shared parking agreements between adjacent properties. These improvements would serve to increase safety for motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists by minimizing points of conflict and creating predictability for the location and frequency of ingress and egress.

**Establish policies, guidelines, and standards to improve surface parking lots in the City.**

Parking areas throughout the City should be safe and well-maintained. To achieve this, parking areas should consider both the automobile and the pedestrian to minimize light pollution and glare to neighboring properties. A combination of perimeter landscaping, berms, masonry walls, and/or decorative wrought iron fencing can be used to effectively screen surface parking lots, but care should be taken not to restrict views to business. In order to reduce the percent of land area devoted to surface parking, the City should encourage shared parking agreements. Neighboring businesses with differing peak demand times for parking or businesses with a low volume of customers are best suited to enter into a shared parking agreement. This reduces the number of access points along a corridor and creates opportunities for additional green space or development.

**Focus retail development at key nodes/intersections along the City’s commercial corridors.**

Busy streets do not alone equate to demand for unlimited expanses of retail development. The market can only support so much commercial development, and within the City’s competitive market position, having expectations for all corridors to be retail may not be realistic. Instead, retail development should be clustered near key intersections and activity generators, like Main Street & Kirk Road and Lincoln Highway & Randall Road. Although retail may be preferred, office, service, and possibly even multi-family uses can be complementary and supportive of retail nodes and considered appropriate in areas designated for commercial uses.

**Support and incentivize the relocation of uses to maximize the potential of the City’s commercial areas.**

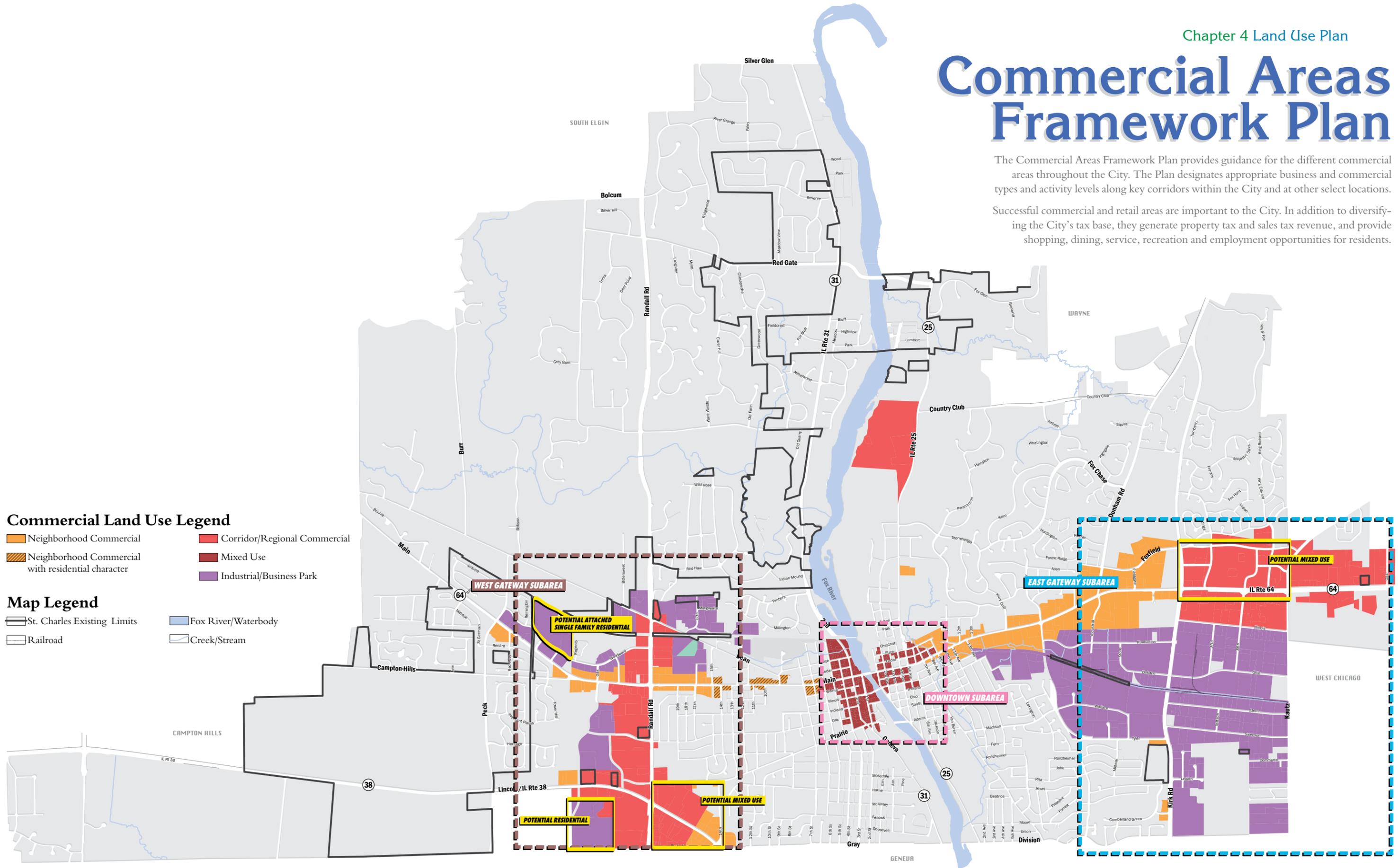
In order to maximize redevelopment potential of its limited commercial areas, the City should continue to identify uses that are better suited for alternate sites or locations. Those businesses and sites should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis based on land use, regulatory issues and the respective needs of the particular business. For example, the Regional Repositioning Concept of the Old St. Charles Mall site, proposes relocating the Jewel-Osco (a neighborhood level commercial use) from Randall Road to Lincoln Highway to allow the development of a regional commercial use along Randall Road. Alternate sites should be identified and relocation assistance provided, where applicable, in order to ensure that viable businesses remain in the City. Assistance can range from reimbursement of expenses to grants or loans for building and/or site improvements at an alternate location.



# Commercial Areas Framework Plan

The Commercial Areas Framework Plan provides guidance for the different commercial areas throughout the City. The Plan designates appropriate business and commercial types and activity levels along key corridors within the City and at other select locations.

Successful commercial and retail areas are important to the City. In addition to diversifying the City's tax base, they generate property tax and sales tax revenue, and provide shopping, dining, service, recreation and employment opportunities for residents.



### Commercial Land Use Legend

- Neighborhood Commercial
- Corridor/Regional Commercial
- Neighborhood Commercial with residential character
- Mixed Use
- Industrial/Business Park

### Map Legend

- St. Charles Existing Limits
- Fox River/Waterbody
- Railroad
- Creek/Stream





# Community Facilities Plan **5**

City of St. Charles, Illinois 2013 Comprehensive Plan



# 5 Community Facilities Plan

The City of St. Charles is a great place to live in part because of the dedication of the various government and non-profit organizations that provide necessary services to residents. Community service providers are essential to maintaining the public facilities, services, and organizations that make a community work, and are key contributors to the quality of life enjoyed by residents and the experience of visitors. Community facilities include public and quasi-public uses provided by the City, the County, and other governmental districts and organizations including schools, emergency responders, utilities, and the library.

This chapter highlights St. Charles' community facilities and presents recommendations to help ensure high-quality facilities and services are available and desirable throughout the City, today and in the future. The recommendations presented in this section support existing community facilities and services while encouraging new desirable facilities to locate in the City, and provides strategies and recommendations to ensure the City continues to be well served as it grows.

The Community Facilities Plan presents general policies and guidelines for community facilities; however, it is not intended to supersede goals and policies of other agencies, or substitute for the more detailed planning which should be undertaken by the City and other service agencies and organizations such as the County, school district, and park district. Since many of the community facilities are not under the control or direction of the City of St. Charles, it is important that the City maintain active communication and coordinate planning efforts with other agencies. The following recommendations underscore the need for the City to work with other service providers to accommodate the appropriate expansion of community facilities within the City.



The auditorium at St. Charles North High School

*Education will become important in the life of this growing community. And you, my second son, are to be the guardian of this educational and cultural expression.*

*Soon after this community has been settled, men will band together to worship and you, my third son, are to be entrusted with the guardianship of this religious expression.*

*-Legend of the Fours Sons of Charlemagne*



## City Government and Facilities

The City of St. Charles runs smoothly thanks to the dedication of its city government. City Hall, located prominently on the Fox River near the Main Street Bridge, houses most of the City Government offices including the Mayor's Office, City Council, the City Administrator's office, finance department, human resources department, community development department, and economic development department. Together these people and their respective departments provide the city with services providing for the daily needs of residents.

## Public Works

The Public Works Department is responsible for keeping the necessary infrastructure in St. Charles running smoothly, including electric utilities, water utilities, wastewater treatment, sanitary sewers, stormwater utilities, refuse/recycling, streets, sidewalks, municipal buildings, grounds, and the motor fleet for the City of St. Charles.

The Public Works Department is subdivided into four divisions:

- » Public Services Division
  - » Streets and Facilities Service Area
  - » Stormwater/Drainage
  - » Fleet Service Area
- » Electric Utility Division
- » Public Works Engineering Division
- » Environmental Services Division
  - » Sanitary Sewer
  - » Water

The City has two separate wastewater treatment facilities, the Main Treatment Plant at the Public Works Facility on 7th Ave., and the West Side facility that serves most properties west of Randall Road. Currently, the City is renovating the Main Facility biosolids plant. Additionally, the Department plans on adding another water tower at the former Little Woods School site.

## Public Safety and Emergency Service

The St. Charles Fire Department has three stations plus a training tower. The police department, located just north of City Hall on the Fox River, runs a number of crime prevention and education programs in addition to fulfilling its law enforcement role. At this time, the Fire Department has no plans of adding any new facilities in St. Charles but will refurbish Stations 2 and 3, as well as the training tower.

## Recommendations

It is important that essential public services that affect the health and safety of the St. Charles community are sufficiently planned. An expansion of the West Side wastewater treatment facility, a fourth additional fire station, and increased indoor parking for the police department are examples of potential projects that could be on the near term horizon. As utility infrastructure continues to age, the City should create a public works strategy that maps out improvement projects over the long term. This should include both repairing failing facilities and upgrading those that may be inadequate.

Consideration of the sustainability of public facilities and equipment – acquisition costs, maintenance costs, operational lifetime, environmental impact, and more – should be integrated into all regular maintenance and special projects moving forward. New and renovated buildings, for example, could incorporate LEED requirements when feasible and appropriate.



## Schools

### Primary and Secondary Education

St. Charles is served by District 303, which currently has 12 elementary schools, 3 middle schools, and 2 high schools. The district was formed in 1949 through the consolidation of a number of fragmented school districts. Today, 13,800 students attend the district's high performing schools. In addition to the public schools, a number of private schools are located in St. Charles. The good school system in St. Charles is a significant draw for new residents and is an important component for attracting new residents and businesses. It is also an asset treasured by current residents who desire to see it achieve even further levels of excellence. Family Circle Magazine ranked St. Charles number one in its "Best Cities and Towns for Families" award, in part due to the strong school system. The schools themselves have also won numerous awards including three U.S. Department of Education "Blue Ribbons," a spot on the U.S. News and World Report "Best High Schools" list, as well as more local awards.

### Higher Education

While not currently possessing a college or university, there are many benefits that could result from a main or satellite campus of a higher learning institution locating in St. Charles. Universities bring with them residential demand by professors and students; secondary commercial activity; technology infrastructure, arts and culture, and other components of an intellectual economy; investment in the entire school system; and prestige for the City. A college or university would not only expand the range of education available within the City but would also be a productive use of available land that is otherwise unutilized.

### Recommendations

To support and provide for the needs of the schools and school children within St. Charles, and to ensure that schools remain a valued asset for the community, the City should work with the School District to identify and prioritize future infrastructure projects. These may include direct physical improvements such as safe vehicle and pedestrian connections, as well as indirect improvements like screening and buffering from surrounding residential neighborhoods.

The City should investigate policies and programs to actively attract a university, community college, or other educational institution to locate a campus in St. Charles. Large underutilized or vacant parcels near both the former St. Charles Mall site and Charlestowne Mall are well suited for a campus use.

## Public Library District

The St. Charles Public Library is located downtown just east of City Hall and south of Main Street and has four remote drop-off locations, including two in the City. The library houses over 400,000 books and other materials. It also provides a full calendar of activities for both children and adults. The library is planning a renovation and remodeling or expansion of the facility in the next 3-10 years. An interim parking lot was constructed in 2012.

### Recommendations

The City should work with the Library to ensure it has enough capacity to serve all St. Charles residents now and in the future. The City should also look for opportunities to collaborate on programming that may serve multiple missions, such as using the Library as a venue for public meetings. The Library expansion could strengthen the eastern gateway into downtown.



## County and Other Facilities

A number of Kane County facilities exist within the boundaries of St. Charles and its planning area, including the Kane County Courthouse, Kane County Sheriff, Traffic Court, Judicial Center, and Juvenile Justice Facility. While government facilities such as county buildings have historically been located in downtown areas and civic hubs, the Kane County buildings are mostly located in commercial corridors coexisting with retail and function as more of an office type use than a traditional civic use.

The Kane County Fairgrounds (not owned or operated by Kane County) is located on the west side of Randall Road, north of Lincoln Highway/IL Route 38. In addition to the annual “County Fair,” the Fairgrounds hosts events year-round including flea markets, dog shows, and private parties. When the Kane County Fairgrounds established itself at this location, Randall Road was not the commercialized corridor it is today.

Other quasi-public facilities include fraternal and veterans organizations and numerous places of worship. These facilities often act as *de facto* community centers for area residents.

## Recommendations

The City should continue to work with the County to plan for potential expansion, relocation, or construction of facilities. In particular, the City should encourage and assist the County to locate its facilities away from commercial corridors and toward more use-appropriate areas of the City.

Although the Fairgrounds generates tourism for the City, as well as admission tax for special events, it is a single-purpose, destination type facility that may not fit the surrounding context along Randall Road. The City should explore development of the Fairgrounds’ Randall Road frontage, including alternative improvements that could better connect the commercial areas located to the north and south of the Fairgrounds.

The City should continue to encourage the location of quasi-public facilities in the community as they provide a variety of services to area residents.

## Healthcare

St. Charles is served by Cadence Health in nearby Geneva, Illinois. St. Charles also has a number of health facilities for non-emergency care including the Tri City Health Partnership, a free medical clinic for residents without insurance benefits. In addition, there are several retirement and assisted living facilities, small doctor’s offices, dental offices, and other healthcare facilities throughout St. Charles.

## Recommendations

The City should continue to work with healthcare providers to ensure that they remain in the community and that they continue to provide high-quality medical services. In addition, the City should work with other organizations to seek appropriate locations for specialized facilities and services for senior citizens, youth, and disadvantaged populations, in particular daytime facilities for the homeless.

# Community Facilities Plan

The Community Facilities Plan presents general policies and guidelines for community facilities; however, it is not intended to supersede goals and policies of other agencies, or substitute for the more detailed planning which should be undertaken by the City and other service agencies and organizations such as the County, school district, and park district. Since many of the community facilities are not under the control or direction of the City of St. Charles, it is important that the City maintain active communication and coordinate planning efforts with other agencies.

## Community Schools Key

- |                                  |                                |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 Ferson Creek Elementary School | 10 The Goddard School          |
| 2 St. Charles North High School  | 11 Richmond Elementary School  |
| 3 Wredling Middle School         | 12 Haines Middle School        |
| 4 St. Charles East High School   | 13 Munhall Elementary School   |
| 5 Wild Rose Elementary School    | 14 Fox Ridge Elementary School |
| 6 St. Patrick Catholic School    | 15 Davis Elementary School     |
| 7 MadesJohnstone Center          | 16 Kensington School           |
| 8 Thompson Middle School         | 17 Bridges Montessori School   |
| 9 Lincoln Elementary School      |                                |

## Government/Community Facility Key

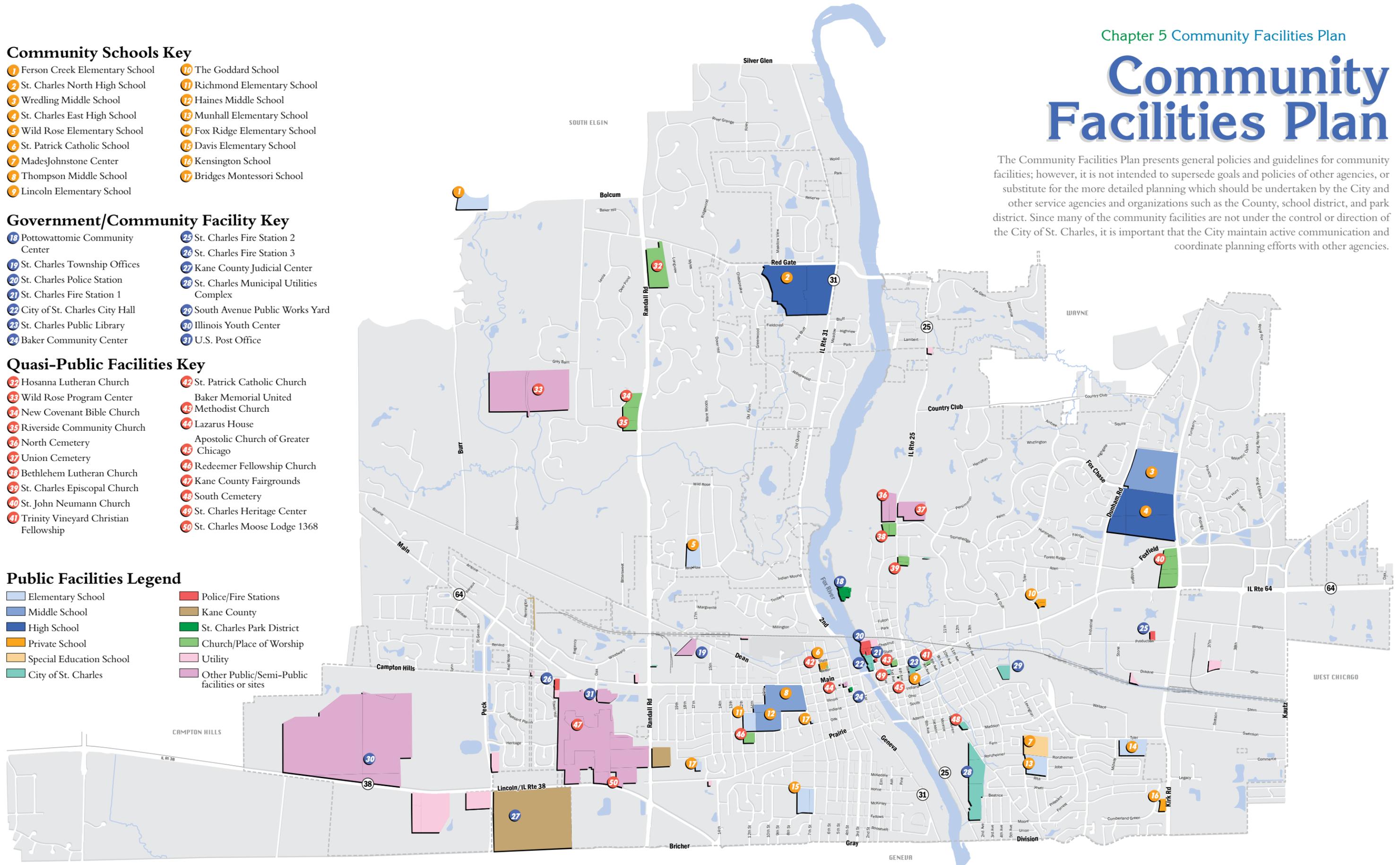
- |                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| 18 Pottawattomic Community Center | 25 St. Charles Fire Station 2              |
| 19 St. Charles Township Offices   | 26 St. Charles Fire Station 3              |
| 20 St. Charles Police Station     | 27 Kane County Judicial Center             |
| 21 St. Charles Fire Station 1     | 28 St. Charles Municipal Utilities Complex |
| 22 City of St. Charles City Hall  | 29 South Avenue Public Works Yard          |
| 23 St. Charles Public Library     | 30 Illinois Youth Center                   |
| 24 Baker Community Center         | 31 U.S. Post Office                        |

## Quasi-Public Facilities Key

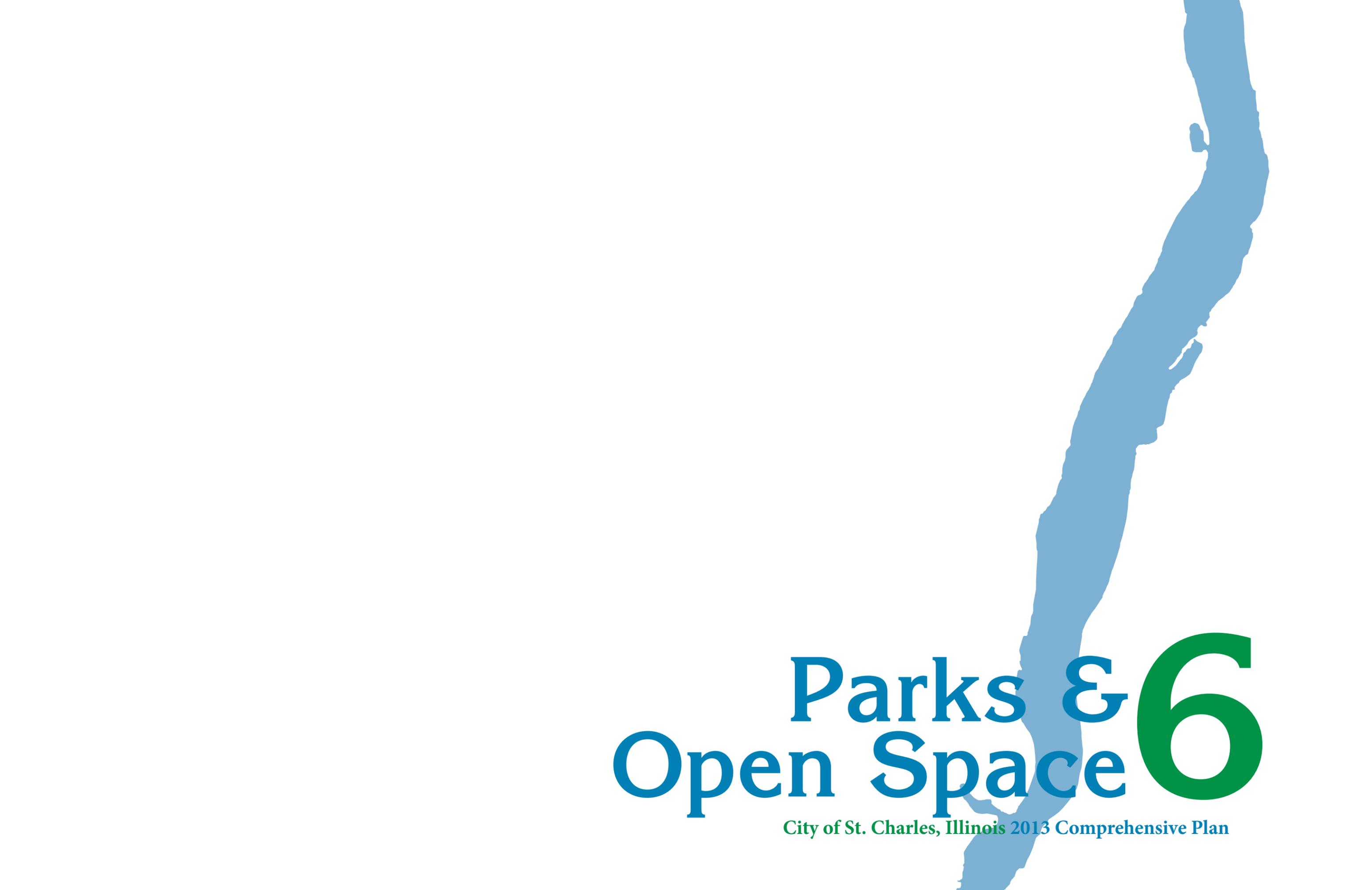
- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 32 Hosanna Lutheran Church               | 42 St. Patrick Catholic Church         |
| 33 Wild Rose Program Center              | Baker Memorial United Methodist Church |
| 34 New Covenant Bible Church             | 43 Methodist Church                    |
| 35 Riverside Community Church            | 44 Lazarus House                       |
| 36 North Cemetery                        | Apostolic Church of Greater Chicago    |
| 37 Union Cemetery                        | 46 Redeemer Fellowship Church          |
| 38 Bethlehem Lutheran Church             | 47 Kane County Fairgrounds             |
| 39 St. Charles Episcopal Church          | 48 South Cemetery                      |
| 40 St. John Neumann Church               | 49 St. Charles Heritage Center         |
| 41 Trinity Vineyard Christian Fellowship | 50 St. Charles Moose Lodge 1368        |

## Public Facilities Legend

- |                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| Elementary School        | Police/Fire Stations                         |
| Middle School            | Kane County                                  |
| High School              | St. Charles Park District                    |
| Private School           | Church/Place of Worship                      |
| Special Education School | Utility                                      |
| City of St. Charles      | Other Public/Semi-Public facilities or sites |







# Parks & Open Space **6**

City of St. Charles, Illinois 2013 Comprehensive Plan



# 6 Parks & Open Space Plan

Natural resources, environmental features, parks, and open space are all important components of St. Charles and contribute significantly to the overall quality of life for City residents. Public parks and open space provide places for residents and visitors to recreate and enjoy nature, are integral to the health and well being of the community, and celebrate the City's history and personality. Neighborhood parks allow children a place to play without being driven and provide the community a nearby, central gathering place for picnics, sports, and other activities. The Fox River, a focal point for the entire City, ties the whole system together.

St. Charles has many significant environmental features such as streams, wetlands, and wooded areas that add significantly to the character of the community. These elements that occur without human intervention play as vital a role as designed and cultivated city parks. The City recognizes the value of these assets and seeks to protect and enhance them. Sustainable techniques for building, maintaining, and operating all aspects of the City are present throughout of the Comprehensive Plan, but the Parks and Open Space Plan proposes particular recommendations for sustainable, "green" initiatives.

This chapter presents the policies and recommendations pertaining to parks and open space which generally seek to preserve important and sensitive environmental features. A primary goal of the Parks and Open Space Plan is to provide adequate open space and recreation to the community, indicating instances when acquiring and developing park sites may be necessary. In addition, the plan aims to improve public access to these areas.



*Amid this beautiful setting, it is only natural that recreation will flourish, and you, my last-born, shall be the guardian of this natural recreation expression of man living in these surroundings.*

*-Legend of the Fours Sons of Charlemagne*

## St. Charles Park Sites

St. Charles's parks are among the City's most cherished assets. Providing space to recreate and reflect, the parks are popular destinations and landmarks for many residents. At this time, the Park District does not plan on adding a new facility but does plan on improving several parks and playgrounds. The biggest improvement will be a community/athletic center complete with gymnasiums, recreation program rooms and possible indoor playing fields.

The St. Charles Park District is a leader in the creation and maintenance of excellent park facilities, one of the many assets that contribute to an outstanding quality of life in the City. The park system includes playgrounds, sports fields, aquatic facilities, trails, passive spaces, and natural areas. The Park District has expertise in both developed park facilities and in the protection, restoration, and stewardship of natural areas, and the park system is replete with both.

The following is a summary of the most prominent of St. Charles' park space with a brief description of their amenities. For a more detailed, comprehensive listing of the Parks in St. Charles, please consult the St. Charles Park District Comprehensive Master Plan.



### Pottawattamie Park

This park is one of the most popular within the City of St. Charles, boasting 92 acres of recreational amenities including a historic 9-hole golf course, a miniature golf course, Swanson Pool, equipment and pavilion rentals, and extensive programming. The Park sits on the banks of the Fox River north of downtown and within close proximity to City Hall and the other downtown civic uses.



### James O. Breen Park

This 348 acre complex provides 18 soccer fields, rugby and football fields, a dog park, disc golf, the Hickory Knolls Discovery Center, and Otter Cove Aquatic Park. The park is located at the Corner of Campton Hills and Peck Roads.



### East Side Sports Complex

This 82 acre park has softball/baseball fields, a soccer field, 10 multipurpose playfields, a skate park, tennis and sand volleyball courts, basketball courts, playgrounds, a dog park, a fishing pond with pier, and other amenities. The park is located at 3565 Legacy Boulevard east of Kirk Road about one mile south of Rt. 64.



### Baker Memorial Park and Lincoln Park

Each of these classic downtown parks occupies a city block and provides a break from Downtown's urbanized areas. They serve as meeting spaces and places where residents can spend leisure time. While small compared to the large community parks in the City, these mini-parks contribute substantially to the sense of place in Downtown St. Charles.



### Mount St. Mary Park

Mount St. Mary Park, a riverfront park that includes a playground, tennis and basketball courts, a shelter, and other amenities is significant because it is located in close proximity to the Downtown area and hosts civic events such as a yearly art exhibition. It is within walking distance of the First Street development and serves as an important recreational amenity for Downtown residents and visitors.



### Leroy Oakes Forest Preserve

Leroy Oakes Forest Preserve, with its variety of natural amenities, includes a creek that flows year-round, 130 feet of elevation difference throughout the park, an original and restored prairie land, and horse trails. The Preserve is also the trailhead for the Great Western Trail. The property is owned and managed by the Kane County Forest Preserve District.



### Acquisition and Expansion Strategy

The St. Charles Park District Master Plan lays out a vision for the future of the Park District and also describes the need and desire for future acquisition. It is the policy of the St. Charles Park District to continue to aggressively acquire land for future park space and preservation. The Park District will accomplish this expansion via acquisition of large parcels of land, riverfront and natural areas, cooperation with developers, and intergovernmental cooperation.

The Park District has identified the following areas for acquisition:

- » Sites in the City: 1) Expansion of Delnor Woods Park, located on Fifth Avenue northeast of Downtown. The expansion was acquired by the Park District in 2012; and 2) Expansion of the James O. Breen Community Park, which will involve working with the Illinois Department of Corrections to acquire additional property.
- » Potential Land-Cash donation sites in connection with development: 1) Heisley Property on Burr Road north of Dean Street; and 2) The former Settlements of LaFox site on IL Route 38 at Brundige Road.
- » Kane County Forest Preserve District acquisitions, including: 1) Heisley Property; 2) Wildrose Girl Scout Camp; and 3) Privately owned wetland areas along Ferson Creek.

### Recommendations

With an understanding of the role played by parks and open space throughout St. Charles, the City should continue to work closely with the Park District in implementing its Comprehensive Master Plan. This may involve actions such as coordinating the selection of new park locations and facilities, offering incentives to developers to provide open space, developing joint programming, assisting in locating funding sources, and others. The City should also ensure that all current and future parks are well connected by roadways, walking and bicycle paths, and transit to the rest of the City.



## The Fox River

The Fox River is the symbolic and physical “heart” of St. Charles, bisecting Downtown and anchoring the City overall. One of St. Charles’ most prominent features, it provides recreation, scenery, and a strong sense of place. The river has played an important role throughout the City’s history, from its founding to today. An iconic feature in both the scenic vistas Downtown and the minds of residents, the river warrants special attention as a key environmental feature.

## Recommendations

To protect and enhance the appearance, health, and longevity of the Fox River, the City should regulate riverside development to minimize environmental impacts, balance the need to develop while maintaining access and views, and avoid uses that do not fit with existing development and that would work against the character desired for riverfront areas. The City should bolster and implement a long-term green infrastructure plan that promotes slowing, cooling, cleansing, and infiltration to the degree possible of all rainwater before discharge to the Fox, which will improve water quality, aquatic habitat, and beauty. Also, the City should work to improve access to the river through open space and trails. The Fox River is a special opportunity to strengthen Downtown as a destination for visitors and residents alike. Nearby seasonal events, aesthetic enhancements like illuminating the dam, and retaining the image of the river in promotional efforts will cement the Fox River as the anchor of St. Charles.

## Conservation

### Surface Water

Besides the Fox River, two tributaries, Ferson and Norton Creeks, contribute to the natural beauty of St. Charles. In addition to the rivers, creeks, and streams, St. Charles has a number of lakes and ponds—most of which are man-made detention ponds created for the management of storm water.

### Wetlands

Natural wetlands are an essential element of St. Charles/ Kane County landscape ecology. When properly protected and managed, wetlands are places of great biodiversity and provide habitat for a wide array of native plant species, birds, beneficial insects, and other fauna. St. Charles’ wetlands are one of its most beautiful natural amenities. Most of the wetlands along the Fox River are protected through public ownership, but many are not protected and are subject to redevelopment, thus eliminating their contributions to the biodiversity, pristine beauty, and natural heritage of the community.

### Flood Plain

Because St. Charles has a major river and other natural waterways flowing through it, flooding is a concern. The Federal Emergency Management Service has designated the area sitting within the 100 year floodplain as protected in order to promote public safety while also preserving the natural environment adjacent to bodies of water. The implications for any planning effort are that development must take the floodplain into account and all recommendations should reflect this requirement.

## Vegetation

Prior to its settlement, the St. Charles area was dominated by ecologically rich prairies, fens, sedge meadows, and open-grown woodlands. Today, while most of these natural landscapes have been cleared and replaced with agricultural and development land uses, there are still a few remaining pockets of remnant native landscape. Today, while much of the vegetation has been removed to provide for agriculture and other development, there are still pockets of native vegetation. Places like Leroy Oakes Forest Preserve, Ferson Creek, Norris Woods, and Arthur Andersen Woods protect these areas for current and future generations. Many of these forest preserves abut or even exist within residential communities in the City, providing a unique sense of coexistence and harmony with nature within a city environment. This is one of St. Charles’ most unique and valuable attributes and should be highlighted and strengthened.

## Alternative Energy

Contributing to economic and environmental sustainability, utilizing green and alternative energy sources can address multiple mission areas simultaneously. Methods for generating alternative energy that may be viable in St. Charles include wind, solar, and geothermal. Even approaches short of novel energy systems, such as energy conserving construction methods for new buildings and renovations, can still have meaningful contributions on reducing environmental impacts.



### Recommendations

Working with the Kane County Forest Preserve District, the Park District, other organizations, and local stakeholders, the City should continue to preserve, protect, and improve streams, wetlands, and water bodies within the community. In an effort to protect the watershed, waterways, and other aquatic resources, the City should work to minimize impervious surfaces to the degree practical, and to implement integrated green infrastructure practices including permeable pavement systems, bio-retention, and other best practices. The City should encourage, demonstrate, and incentivize sustainable water management measures. The City should also encourage the use of native/naturalized landscape systems when designed, installed, and managed properly as an alternative to turfgrass in certain passive landscape areas.

Some areas of the community, most notably Tyler Road at the 7th Avenue Creek and Main Street at 8th and 9th Avenue, are prone to flooding during significant storm events, creating safety concerns and causing property damage. Measures the City can take to improve conditions include prohibiting development or fill in existing floodplain, flood prone, or wet areas, reclaiming filled floodplain where practicable, and the continued integration of infiltration-based green infrastructure practices; prioritize areas prone to flooding that have the most negative impact. Consider and evaluate regional strategies that integrate a range of solutions (rather than an “end-of-the-pipe” approach).

The City should promote increased energy efficiency for both new construction and upgrades to existing structures. The City should consider the creation of an environmental policy which deals specifically with energy-efficient building design and construction, outlining the need to upgrade the energy

efficiency of existing buildings. Part of this policy should be to improve programs assuring energy efficiency in new construction.

The City should encourage residents and businesses to use alternative energy sources, such as solar, wind, and other renewable energy sources. To encourage alternative energy use, the City should educate the public regarding the benefits of alternative energy and work with developers to include these energy sources in their projects.

### Education and Involvement

Protecting the open space and environmental features cannot be based on the efforts of government alone. The community, already invested in so many other aspects of life in St. Charles, needs to be actively involved in making sure the City functions as a sustainable place to live and work. Keeping the public and officials current on the latest trends and techniques being used to promote sustainability will assist the City in future decision making.

### Recommendations

The City should take a leadership role in coordinating educational opportunities for the public, as well as elected and appointed officials about the importance of sustainability. The City should also host educational sessions such as training seminars and workshops, and provide educational materials.

# Parks & Open Space Plan

Natural resources, environmental features, parks, and open space are all important components of St. Charles and contribute significantly to the overall quality of life for City residents. Public parks and open space provide places for residents and visitors to recreate and enjoy nature, are integral to the health and well being of the community, and celebrate the City's history and personality.

Neighborhood parks allow children a place to play without being driven and provide the community a nearby, central gathering place for picnics, sports, and other activities. The Fox River, a focal point for the entire City, ties the whole system together.

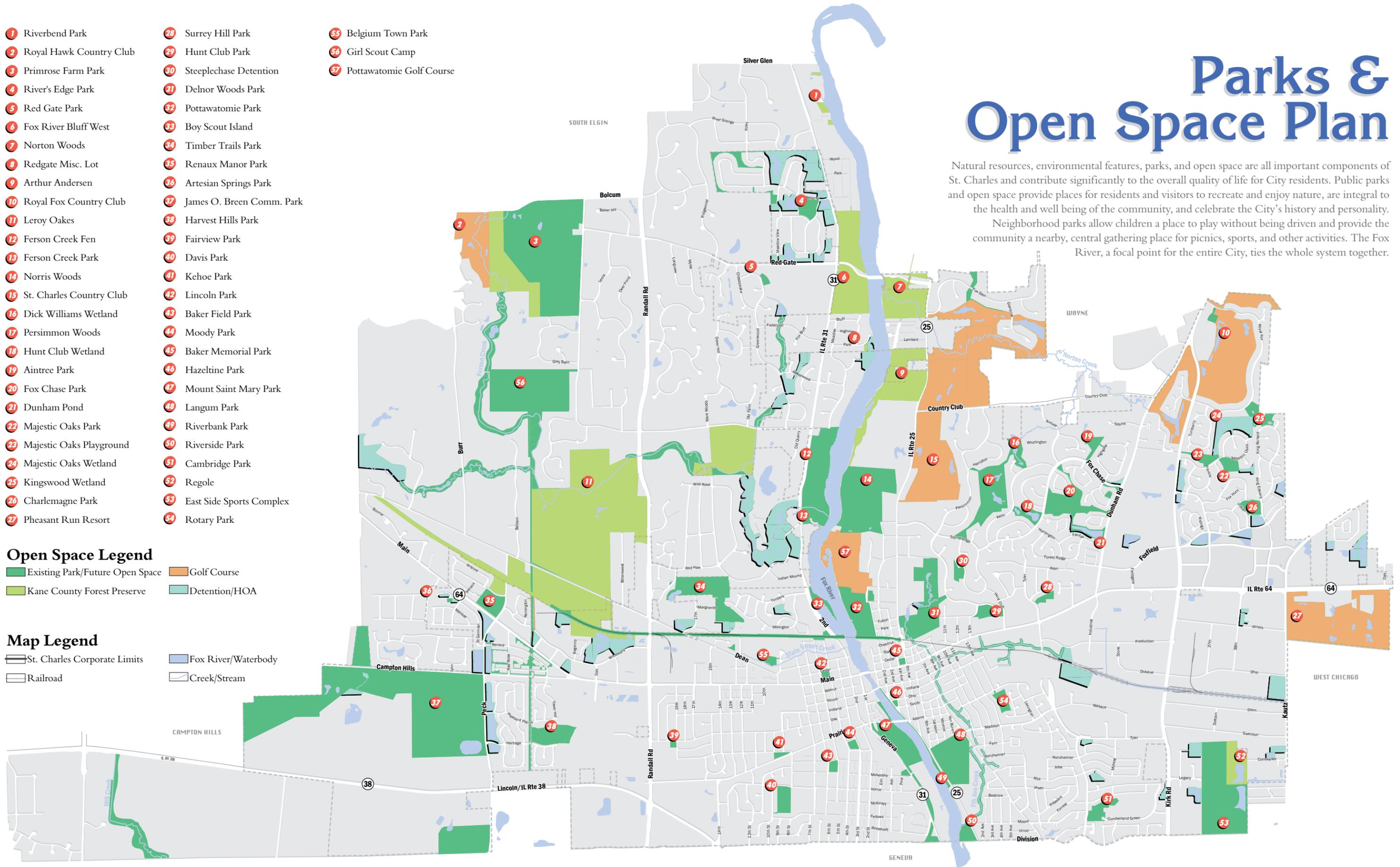
- 1 Riverbend Park
- 2 Royal Hawk Country Club
- 3 Primrose Farm Park
- 4 River's Edge Park
- 5 Red Gate Park
- 6 Fox River Bluff West
- 7 Norton Woods
- 8 Redgate Misc. Lot
- 9 Arthur Andersen
- 10 Royal Fox Country Club
- 11 Leroy Oakes
- 12 Ferson Creek Fen
- 13 Ferson Creek Park
- 14 Norris Woods
- 15 St. Charles Country Club
- 16 Dick Williams Wetland
- 17 Persimmon Woods
- 18 Hunt Club Wetland
- 19 Aintree Park
- 20 Fox Chase Park
- 21 Dunham Pond
- 22 Majestic Oaks Park
- 23 Majestic Oaks Playground
- 24 Majestic Oaks Wetland
- 25 Kingswood Wetland
- 26 Charlemagne Park
- 27 Pheasant Run Resort
- 28 Surrey Hill Park
- 29 Hunt Club Park
- 30 Steeplechase Detention
- 31 Delnor Woods Park
- 32 Pottawatomie Park
- 33 Boy Scout Island
- 34 Timber Trails Park
- 35 Renaux Manor Park
- 36 Artesian Springs Park
- 37 James O. Breen Comm. Park
- 38 Harvest Hills Park
- 39 Fairview Park
- 40 Davis Park
- 41 Kehoe Park
- 42 Lincoln Park
- 43 Baker Field Park
- 44 Moody Park
- 45 Baker Memorial Park
- 46 Hazeltine Park
- 47 Mount Saint Mary Park
- 48 Langum Park
- 49 Riverbank Park
- 50 Riverside Park
- 51 Cambridge Park
- 52 Regole
- 53 East Side Sports Complex
- 54 Rotary Park
- 55 Belgium Town Park
- 56 Girl Scout Camp
- 57 Pottawatomie Golf Course

## Open Space Legend

- Existing Park/Future Open Space
- Golf Course
- Kane County Forest Preserve
- Detention/HOA

## Map Legend

- St. Charles Corporate Limits
- Fox River/Waterbody
- Railroad
- Creek/Stream





# Transportation Plan 7

City of St. Charles, Illinois 2013 Comprehensive Plan



# 7 Transportation Plan

Part of St. Charles' "small town" attraction and popularity as a destination is the fact that the City has placed a high priority on developing and maintaining a comprehensive network of multi-modal travel options for its residents. The existing transportation network in St. Charles consists of an integrated system of regional and local roadways, transit service, and a robust trail network for non-motorized travel.

This chapter focuses on strategic improvements to maintain a balanced transportation system through the safe and efficient movement of pedestrians, bicycles, and private vehicles. It follows a Complete Streets approach that accommodates all users. Since it is the design of the street system that affects how people can get around, short blocks, connectivity, and a grid system are recommended to provide multiple choices for bicycles, pedestrians, and automobiles.

The Transportation and Mobility Plan explores city-wide policies and builds upon relevant recommendations in the 1996 Comprehensive Plan, the St. Charles Bike Facilities Map, an existing conditions assessment, and input received during the community outreach process. While each subarea plan provides specific recommendations unique to the development patterns of that area, the plan covers more general policy recommendations related to functional classification, agency coordination, traffic circulation, Complete Streets, trails and bicycle mobility, sidewalks and pedestrian access, parking, and transit.



*These four sons of Charlemagne are now represented on the Main Street bridge, monumental guardians of this community.*

*-Legend of the Fours Sons of Charlemagne*



## Jurisdictions

There are several jurisdictional interests that govern the St. Charles roadway network, including IDOT, Kane County Division of Transportation, and the City of St. Charles. With several roads and roadway segments on the north and south ends of the St. Charles outside of the City’s jurisdiction, the City’s ability to make improvements, control access, or unify roadway character is limited. In light of this, coordination and cooperation between the governing agencies will be required to accomplish the goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan. The City should work closely with these entities to ensure that improvements to roadways are aligned with the City’s plan for a balanced transportation system.

## Functional Classification

An important part of a well-planned roadway network is the relationship and hierarchy of roads to land uses. The functional classification of a road describes the character of service intended for the roadway and degrees of travel mobility and land access the roadway provides. Overall, a roadway system should be made up of a balance of mobility and access. In Kane County, the classification groupings include Strategic Regional Arterials (SRA), Principal Arterials, Minor Arterials, Collectors, and Local Streets.

The **Strategic Regional Arterial (SRA)** system has been developed to serve as a sub-tier to the freeway system. It is intended to be a comprehensive network that can handle high volumes of through traffic for long distance regional traffic. SRAs are distinct insofar as they are strategically located and spaced within the regional network. Land access is a low priority exemplified by its special access and design standards. The SRAs serving St. Charles are Main Street, Kirk Road/Dunham Road and Randall Road. Main Street (IL 64) is under the jurisdiction of the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), while both Kirk Road/Dunham Road and Randall Road are under the jurisdiction of Kane County. New corridor elements are subject to the more restrictive SRA criteria in determining the need for and spacing of traffic signals and access points.

**Principal Arterials** are high volume streets that place a greater emphasis on mobility rather than access to land, and include fully and partially controlled access. These roadways are continuous and regional in nature, connecting to SRAs and other arterials in adjacent communities, as well as important centers of activity in a metropolitan area. The principal arterials serving the City are IL 25, IL 31, and IL 38. Each is under the jurisdiction of IDOT and corridor features are subject to IDOT approvals.

**Minor Arterials** supplement the principal arterials by accommodating trips of moderate length through the City and distribute travel to areas smaller than those served by a principal arterial. Although its main function is still traffic mobility, a minor arterial performs this function at a somewhat lower level and places more emphasis on land access than a principal arterial does. Bolcum Road and the future extension to Red Gate Road, including the new river crossing, are examples of minor arterial corridors in the City. Smith Road/Kautz Road, Red Gate Road, LaFox Road, and Peck Road are also minor arterials.

**Collectors** have an even distribution of mobility and access. Residential properties may have direct access to collectors. They can be continuous through a community and their function is to connect arterials to local roadways. Travel on collectors occurs at lower speeds and shorter distances than on arterials. Some examples of collector streets in St. Charles are Country Club Road, Dunham Road, Crane Road, Dean Street, Campton Hills Road, Prairie Street, 7th Avenue, and 3rd Street.

**Local Streets** are all roadways in the City that do not belong to any of the other functional classifications. Local streets provide direct property access and accommodate shorter, local trips to adjoining collector or arterial streets. Most are narrow with slower speeds and are often residential in nature. Local roads are typically public City roads, although some are private roads constructed by developers and maintained by private property owners.

## Traffic Circulation

### Primary Travel Corridors

The St. Charles roadway network is its circulatory system in which traffic should flow freely. The City’s arterial roads are the most critical links in the road network, conveying large amounts of traffic to and from local and collector streets, as well as providing access to most of St. Charles’s commercial areas.

#### East-West

As the primary east-west arterial and river crossing, Main Street is the highest traffic volume corridor through St. Charles by far. Truck and other non-local traffic along Main Street is high because the roadway provides the only arterial river crossing in the community. The primary traffic concern is in Downtown, where trucks aggravate congestion, amplify traffic noise, and generally conflict with the walkable environment. The bridge at Red Gate Road will help alleviate congestion along Main Street, but a lot of truck traffic will remain since Main Street will continue to be a Strategic Regional Arterial and designated truck route. The City should continue to work with IDOT to balance the function of the roadway by enhancing and buffering the pedestrian experience with landscaping, appropriate intersection design, pedestrian amenities, decorative lighting, and wayfinding. The City should also install prominent gateway features at both ends of the corridor to announce arrival into the community and create a positive image for people passing through.

#### North-South

Randall Road and Kirk Road/Dunham Road, both SRAs, are the primary north-south travel corridors, with IL Route 25 and IL Route 31 acting as secondary routes. Because of their function as arterials, these corridors should provide efficient vehicular mobility but not neglect the pedestrian environment. Considering that traffic projections indicate these arterials will experience increased volumes and capacity deficiencies, future improvements will likely be necessary. The City should coordinate with Kane County and IDOT to ensure improvements follow a context sensitive approach that is aligned with the City’s goals and respects each section of the corridor as unique.

## Network Improvements

A complete street network is important for efficient movement of vehicles and pedestrians, and to minimize unnecessary vehicle trips by providing alternate travel routes. There are several possible network connections and modifications that will help improve the safety and efficiency of vehicular circulation. They will provide travel flexibility within the City without encouraging residential neighborhood cut-through movements.

- » Extend Charter One Avenue/King Edward Avenue to provide a connection between Smith Road and Foxfield Road, improving residential access flexibility and reducing through traffic north of Charlestowne Mall.
- » Extend Division Street east to Kautz Road.
- » The City may wish to further study establishing a collector street between IL 25 and 7th Avenue to serve east-west traffic.
- » Extend Gray Street west to 14th Street/IL 38.
- » The City should ensure that the Woodward Drive connection is completed and connects to Randall Road, even extending east to 17th Street.
- » Realign Campton Hills Drive at its intersection with Main Street and extend to Woodward Drive.
- » Create a north-south collector south of Main Street between Randall Road and Peck Road that extends and realigns Oak Street to intersect Lincoln Highway and Bricher Road opposite Fisher Drive.
- » Extend Heritage Street as an east-west collector to connect with Randall Road/Oak Street.
- » Curb cuts and driveways should be consolidated, shared, and generally minimized where possible along commercial corridors such as Main Street, Randall Road, Kirk Road, and IL 38.
- » Create a roadway connecting Tyler Rd. and E. Main Street at 13th Ave. along the railroad right-of-way. Study a potential connection to Illinois Ave at 13th Ave.

Additionally, the City supports these network improvements if pursued by other jurisdictions:

- » Realign Bolcum Road to intersect Crane Road opposite Red Gate Road.
- » Realign Burr Road to intersect Peck Road at Dean Street to create an arterial alternate to Randall Road.

## Network Connectivity

Some of the newer subdivisions of St. Charles were developed with excessively long blocks and minimal connectivity, resulting in fewer alternative routes for pedestrian and vehicle travel and increased vehicle speeds. In some cases, it also encourages cut-through traffic on local and residential streets that weren't intended to handle the traffic. This is caused by the arterials becoming overly congested because of the limited route options. A grid pattern, like the older development pattern occurring near Downtown, features more street intersections and shorter blocks, which provide alternative routes for pedestrian and local vehicle travel and tends to slow traffic. The City should ensure new development provides a well connected roadway network with shorter block lengths and a balanced street hierarchy with well-spaced collectors. In addition, the City should plan for roadway connections and modifications that will improve the existing roadway network.

## River Crossing

The limited number of river crossings creates an east-west bottleneck in the City, causing a significant amount of non-local traffic on Main Street and delays for local travel. Planned signal modifications in the area will help improve traffic operations, as will the Red Gate Road Bridge. However, Main Street will continue to carry heavy truck volumes. A separate truck bypass along the abandoned railroad river crossing has long been a topic of discussion in the City as relief for the east-west traffic flow issues on Main Street and congestion Downtown. Based on the significant impact to adjacent land and neighborhoods along the right-of-way, however, a truck bypass is not desirable or practically feasible. An opportunity for an additional bridge crossing exists at Division/Grays Streets, along the border with Geneva. A bridge at this location would require further study to determine the potential impacts and benefits.

## Traffic Calming

Traffic calming involves the installation of physical measures on the roadway to reduce traffic speeds in the interest of safety and livability. Neighborhood traffic calming could also include changes in street elements and alignments to discourage cut-through traffic and control volumes on local streets. It is important to recognize the difference in objectives when determining appropriate traffic calming techniques. The function of the street is important since arterials (i.e. Main Street) and collectors (i.e. Prairie Street) are designed to handle more traffic and, in doing so, minimize cut-through traffic on local and residential streets.

The City has had a Traffic Calming Policy in place since 2008. The policy applies to local streets and residential collector streets with a speed limit of 30 mph or below. The policy states that traffic calming measures are not to be used to deter people from using certain public streets, but rather are intended to ensure that traffic is traveling at a safe speed.

Examples of traffic calming techniques that may be appropriate for City collector and local streets include narrow streets and lane widths to lower speeds; landscaped curb bump outs; refuge islands to reduce crossing distances; and on-street parking to provide a pedestrian barrier and narrow the roadway. Examples of traffic calming techniques appropriate for most roadway types include reduced lane widths, street trees, textured or otherwise enhanced crosswalks, and pedestrian refuge islands, especially across roadway with landscaped medians.

## Truck Noise

Traffic noise along some of the arterial corridors is excessive, especially along Main Street through Downtown, making the pedestrian environment unpleasant for walking and shopping. Heavy truck traffic sounds are intensified by tire and roadway noise from the concrete pavement surface finish. The City should work with IDOT to diamond grind the pavement surface, a common rehabilitation technique that reduces road noise by altering the surface texture.





### Intelligent Traffic Systems

Many of the traffic signals along the major arterial corridors are on an interconnect system that allows the signals to be timed together to facilitate efficient traffic flow. During peak periods, real-time phasing adjustments could further minimize impacts. The system is also connected to the emergency “pre-emption” equipment and adjusts accordingly when emergency vehicles prompt the signals along a corridor. Intelligent Traffic Systems (ITS) such as this offer many possibilities to the City, from helping to reduce traffic congestion to improving communication for transit users. The City should expand the synchronized signal interconnect system where possible and work with other jurisdictional agencies to enhance corridors outside the City’s jurisdiction. Additionally, other technologies should be explored such as Traffic Signal Prioritization (TSP) for transit, which will be the foundation of the potential bus rapid transit line along Randall Road.

### Driveways & Cross Access

Though new development, along the Randall Road corridor for example, minimizes access points, many of the older commercial driveways are oversized and redundant. Curb cuts and driveways should be consolidated, shared and generally minimized. Internal cross access should be provided wherever possible between commercial properties, connecting adjacent parking areas either in the front or rear of the buildings. Design of the access drive should indicate that the pedestrian is given priority and pedestrian refuge medians should be considered for wider driveways that require more than two lanes. The City should work with area businesses to consolidate curb cuts and require access design to give priority to the pedestrian crossing/sidewalk.

### Roadway Maintenance

The City of St. Charles has an Annual Street Rehabilitation Program which ranks existing pavement conditions and prioritizes rehabilitation based on several factors, including costs, user benefits, and future large capital projects. The Public Works Department then recommends a 5-year improvement plan to address patching, crack filling, grinding, and resurfacing, as well as total removal and replacement of the pavement. The City should continue to economically maintain and extend the life of its roadway infrastructure by strategically planning for improvements in this way.

## Parking

### Downtown Parking

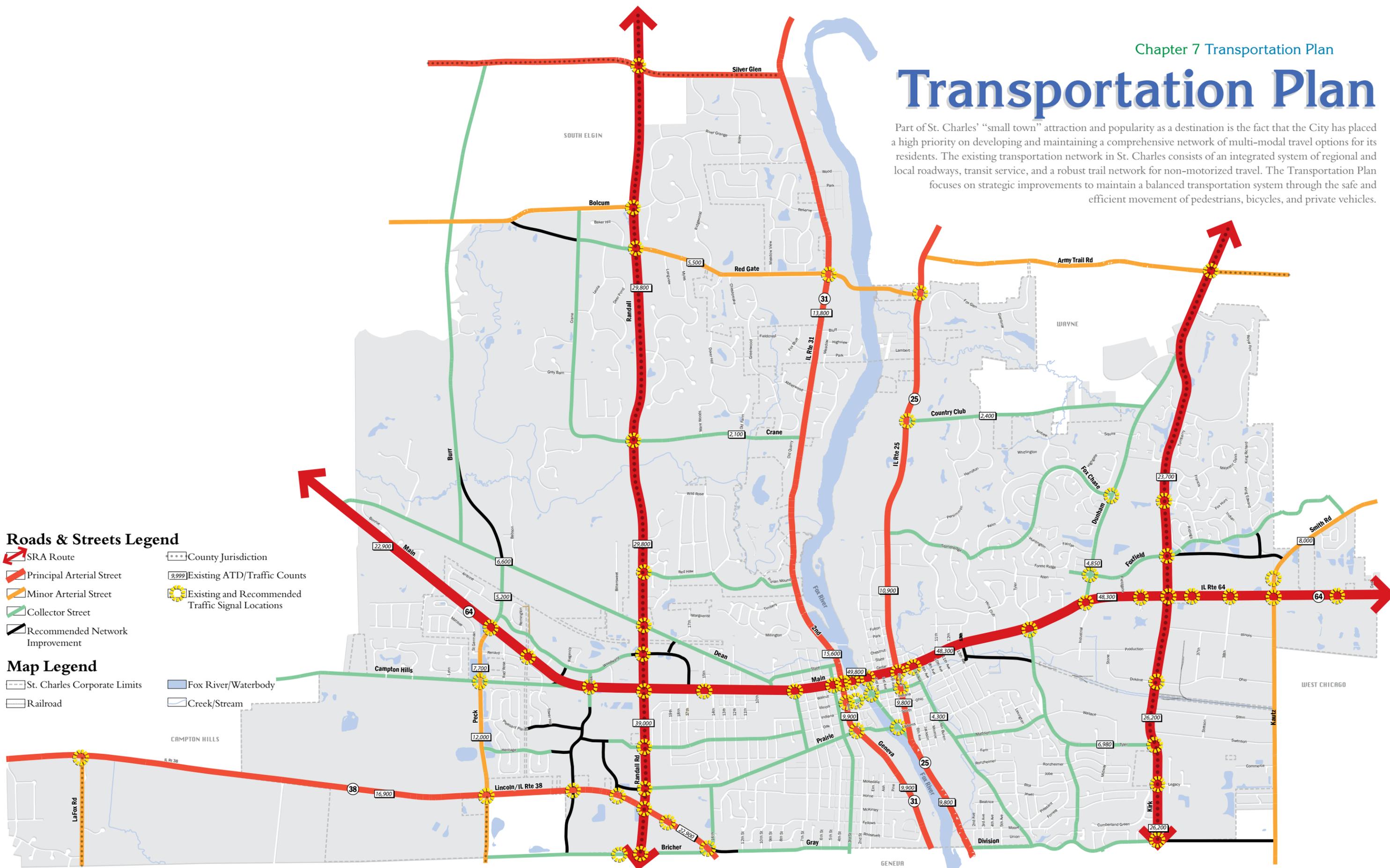
Adequate and convenient parking is essential for the success of Downtown St. Charles. Parking, however, should not be over emphasized at the expense of a walkable, inviting downtown. It should include an interesting and stimulating pedestrian environment where very few downtown trips generate more than one parking action, converting drivers to pedestrians while they are downtown. The City should comprehensively evaluate its existing supply of centralized public parking and identify opportunities for increased on- and off-street parking through modifications to circulation and layout. If further study indicates that additional parking is needed, the City should expand its public parking facilities, possibly through consolidation of surface parking lots into a parking structure. The City should also continue to explore ways to improve the efficiency of the existing public parking supply through time restrictions, enforcement, permitting, wayfinding, real-time signage, and marketing. It should continue to enforce parking time limits and monitor effectiveness to identify adjustment opportunities.

### Appearance & Sustainability

Parking along the older portions of commercial corridors is predominantly surface parking located at the front of buildings. Many of the lots were built prior to City regulations that require perimeter and internal landscaping. The City should work with property owners to screen and improve parking fields with pedestrian-scale lighting, perimeter screening, fencing, and landscaped islands. St. Charles should encourage or incentivize the integration of sustainable green infrastructure practices within parking areas, including high-performance permeable pavement systems, reflective pavement and/or increased shading through trees and other elements, bio-retention landscape elements, dark-sky compliant, energy-efficient lighting, recycled content materials, etc. to reduce surface water runoff, improve water quality, and mitigate urban heat islands. The City should also monitor parking demand and adjust minimum parking requirements, or eliminate them altogether, to prevent retailers from oversupplying parking, creating large, unused parking fields. The City should consider providing priority parking spaces for car-share and no- and low-emissions vehicles in its public parking facilities and incentivize the provision of similar spaces in private parking facilities. Additionally, new development should be required to provide convenient on-site bicycle parking.

# Transportation Plan

Part of St. Charles' "small town" attraction and popularity as a destination is the fact that the City has placed a high priority on developing and maintaining a comprehensive network of multi-modal travel options for its residents. The existing transportation network in St. Charles consists of an integrated system of regional and local roadways, transit service, and a robust trail network for non-motorized travel. The Transportation Plan focuses on strategic improvements to maintain a balanced transportation system through the safe and efficient movement of pedestrians, bicycles, and private vehicles.



### Roads & Streets Legend

- SRA Route
- Principal Arterial Street
- Minor Arterial Street
- Collector Street
- Recommended Network Improvement
- County Jurisdiction
- Existing ATD/Traffic Counts
- Existing and Recommended Traffic Signal Locations

### Map Legend

- St. Charles Corporate Limits
- Fox River/Waterbody
- Creek/Stream
- Railroad



### Complete, Green Streets

A Complete Streets policy formalizes a community's intent to plan, design, operate, and maintain streets so they are safe for users of all ages and abilities. It directs decision-makers throughout a development process to plan, design, engineer, and construct community streets to accommodate all anticipated users including pedestrians, bicyclists, public transportation users, and motorists. Complete Streets elements vary based on the surrounding context but may include separated sidewalks, bike facilities, accessibility improvements, pedestrian refuge islands, high visibility crosswalks, curb extensions, and transit enhancements. The integration of green infrastructure practices in concert with these Complete Streets elements will yield public space that attracts community investment and contributes to the quality of life in the City. St. Charles should adopt a Complete Streets policy to ensure new road projects and roadway repairs accommodate all users.

### Trails and Bicycle Mobility

St. Charles places a high value on its trail system and should continue to be proactive in establishing and expanding its trails and bike facilities. Alternative modes of transportation are important in reducing vehicular traffic as well as providing recreational opportunities for residents and tourists alike. Bicycling and walking are encouraged, and the City is proactive in providing the infrastructure for active transportation which consists of a robust network of trails and off-road shared use paths, as well as on-street bikeways and sidewalks. Currently, the City has an Existing and Future Bikeways Map and Current Bicycle and Pedestrian Ways Map that identify existing trails and future bike facilities and trails. Kane County also has a Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan which builds on the County's extensive regional trail system. The City should continue to coordinate with Kane County and adjacent communities to strategically plan for community bikeway projects that consider the City and surrounding areas as a whole network.

### Bicycle Mobility

The Transportation Plans strives to connect residential neighborhoods with Downtown, schools, parks, commercial areas, and other activity nodes. Continuity of bikeways is essential for encouraging bicycle travel and ensuring safety. Where possible, the City should accommodate bicycle/trail crossings on arterials at signalized intersections. These crossings should be priority locations for design features that improve crossing safety. Unnecessary obstacles to efficient mobility should be minimized such as frequent commercial access drives.

### River Corridor

The River Corridor Master Plan recommends continuous pedestrian access along the shoreline on both sides of the river in downtown St. Charles. Pedestrian walkways would be provided along the river under each vehicular bridge, and a new pedestrian bridge is suggested crossing the river at Walnut Street. The City should plan accordingly as portions of the shoreline are currently privately owned. The plan focuses on pedestrian access, though the City should incorporate bike facilities in the design, maintaining bike access along the river front.



### Trail/Bikeway Gaps

The City should continue to establish and expand its trails and bikeways as identified in the St. Charles Existing and Future Bikeways Map. It should also work with relevant agencies to secure grants and other funding to expand the City's trail network. Public outreach revealed some of the priority concerns related to the network yielding these key focus areas:

- » The City is planning to accommodate bicycle traffic along Main Street from Downtown toward Charlestowne Mall, in which case the sidewalk should be widened and commercial access drives minimized.
- » In conjunction with the Red Gate Road Alignment and Bridge project, a major trail connection will be established between the existing Fox River Trail on the east side of the river and the existing trail on the south side Red Gate Road. Priority should be given to connect the Red Gate Road trail to the Randall Road system.

- » The City should ensure that any planned improvements to the IL 31 corridor incorporate bike facilities between Silver Glen Road and Downtown.
- » Prioritization should be given to implementing bike facility connections to Downtown as it is a key activity node within the City.
- » Bike and pedestrian facility connections are lacking between neighborhoods and should be considered a priority in order to connect residents with their neighbors, schools, and parks.
- » Similar to traffic circulation, the limited number of river crossings in the City limits east-west trail connections. The City should pursue converting the abandoned Union Pacific right-of-way and river crossing to a trail that would function as the primary crosstown bikeway, connecting several north-south trail corridors and extending a key segment of the regional trail network, the Great Western Trail.

### On-Street Bike Facilities

There are several existing roadways in the City where pavement widths would allow for on-street bike facilities which include marked bike lanes, marked shared lanes, unmarked shared lanes, and paved shoulders. On-street bike facilities are identified as part of the St. Charles Existing and Future Bikeways Map and should continue to be considered a key part of the overall bikeway network. The City should conduct an on-street bike lane feasibility analysis that further identifies appropriate on-street facility types and expands on the current plan.

### Bike Parking

While a connected network of trails, bike facilities, and sidewalks can support an active population, other facilities such as bicycle racks, bicycle lockers, public restrooms, and benches are necessary secondary amenities. A lack of convenient and secure bicycle parking is a leading factor preventing people from cycling to their destination. The City should continue to provide public bicycle racks at key activity nodes such as parks, Downtown, and other commercial areas. The City should continually locate and strategically plan for additional areas of bike parking. Not only should the City provide public bike parking, it should establish a minimum bike parking requirement for all new commercial and institutional development.



## Sidewalks and Pedestrian Access

The City's key commercial corridors do not prioritize pedestrian circulation since they were developed catering to the automobile, often leaving the pedestrian experience hostile and uninviting. These areas have an incomplete and fragmented sidewalk network. While this reflects a past development practice in suburban communities, today's best practices promote healthy communities and walkability. St. Charles has liberally invested in capital improvements, infrastructure updates, and grant programs to enhance pedestrian mobility and should continue the efforts to improve transportation mode choice through enhanced pedestrian mobility.

## Pedestrian Experience

Improvements should be promoted that create a pleasant pedestrian experience, especially along commercial corridors and near schools and parks. Improvements include closing gaps in the sidewalk network, providing a physical separation from traffic, landscaping, minimizing access drives, and streetscape enhancements like benches, transit shelters, lighting, and wayfinding. The pedestrian experience also includes site design elements which should always include on-site pedestrian networks that connect the building entries with the public right-of-way and adjacent sites.

## Sidewalk Connections

The City of St. Charles has a program to fill existing sidewalk gaps in the system, sharing the costs of the construction with residents. The City should continue this program to expand its sidewalk network and provide better connections throughout the community. The City should prioritize sidewalk installation near schools, parks, churches, transit, commercial areas, and along arterial and collector roadways where sidewalk should be provided on both sides of the street.

A continuous sidewalk system is the first step to a complete pedestrian network, and the City should continue to require new development to provide sidewalk installation and any associated right-of-way. Furthermore, site design should always include on-site pedestrian networks that connect the building entries with the public right-of-way and adjacent sites.

## Pedestrian Crossing Enhancements

It is important for the City to recognize that signalized intersections along the arterials and some collector streets will accommodate not only large vehicles such as buses and trucks, but also pedestrian and bicycle crossings, since signalized intersection are the safest place to cross. Design features should be implemented where possible to improve safety with slower turning speeds and shortened pedestrian crossing distances. Elements to consider include minimized curb radii, narrow travel lanes, high-visibility crosswalks, pedestrian signal heads with countdown timers, raised right-turn lanes, and pedestrian refuge medians. The outreach process revealed that residents consider the length of time given to the pedestrian signal phase to be too short at many locations. The City should implement longer pedestrian phases, working with IDOT and Kane County where appropriate. St. Charles has utilized some of these features Downtown, but should work with other governing agencies to make sure intersection design is as pedestrian friendly as possible outside of its jurisdiction.

## Access Drives

Many older commercial driveways in the City are oversized and redundant. Wherever possible, curb cuts and driveways should be consolidated, shared, and generally minimized along commercial corridors. Design of the access drives is also important. Appearance of the sidewalk and level elevation should be maintained across the driveway to indicate that the pedestrian is given priority. Pedestrian refuge medians should be considered for wider driveways that require more than two lanes. The City should work with area businesses to consolidate curb cuts and require access design to give priority to the pedestrian crossings and sidewalk.



## Public Transit

Transit service in the City is provided by Pace Route 801 fixed bus service, Pace Route 592 Call-n-Ride shared-ride service, and Ride in Kane Dial-a-Ride. The nearest commuter rail service is provided by the Metra Union Pacific West Line via the Geneva station south of St. Charles. The Union Pacific West (UPW) Line links Elburn with downtown Chicago at Ogilvie Transportation Center.

## The Tri Cities Transit Area

St. Charles is grouped within a transit subarea by Kane County, which includes the Cities of Batavia, Geneva, and St. Charles, the Village of Wayne, and unincorporated areas of Kane County. The subarea, called the Tri Cities Transit Area, is primarily served by the Metra station in Geneva and the Kirk Road, Randall Road, and IL 25 transit corridors. The grouping was established to formulate transit ideas for municipalities contiguous with one another, and to offer opportunities for the communities to pool ideas and resources to lessen their reliance on the automobile. The City should continue to take advantage of this grouping and take the lead in organizing member municipalities and agencies.

## Transit Facility Plans

Kane County identifies St. Charles as a planned transportation center that, as planned, will connect to larger transportation hubs such as downtown Elgin and downtown Aurora, as well as the Geneva Metra station. The City should work closely with the transit agencies to promote a Park-n-Ride facility in St. Charles and shuttle service that would connect to the Geneva Metra station. The Plan also promotes Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) along the Randall Road, Kirk Road, and IL Route 25 transit corridors, which may involve providing dedicated right-of-way for bus service and traffic signal preemption capabilities. The City should pursue implementation of these plans and coordinate with Kane County and Pace to understand the long-term impacts of BRT, especially along the Randall Road corridor, including unique facilities, rights-of-way, and technologies. Furthermore, development site plans along existing and future transit corridors should be submitted to Pace for review.

## Pace Route Restructuring

In 2011, Pace made significant reductions to the fixed route bus service through St. Charles, including both routes that previously operated east-west through the community along Main Street. Currently, only one fixed route operates through St. Charles along Randall Road, serving just the very western part of the City. Predictable east-west public transportation service is essential to connect the community with key activity nodes and employment centers. The City should work closely with Pace to understand the long-term feasibility of reintroducing fixed route service throughout the City. Land use policies should be coordinated with Pace service plans to provide the greatest possible level of access to existing and future areas served by bus transit.

The Route 592 St. Charles-Geneva Call-n-Ride service was initiated in part to offset the adverse effects of the reduced fixed route service. This is a curbside-to-curb transportation service based on advance reservations. The City should keep an open dialog with riders and Pace to understand opportunities for service improvements.

## Activity Generators

Commercial areas and employment centers are key activity generators that centralize a lot of potential transit riders. Increasing transit use in these areas would translate into reduced traffic congestions. The City should work closely with Pace to explore all possible ways to provide transit access from the Geneva Metra station to major commercial and employment centers, including fixed route restructuring and the Vanpool Incentive Program (VIP). The City should work with local employers and businesses to identify locally-sponsored services that supplement the public transit service, including carpools and shuttles. Also, employers should be encouraged to offer incentives for transit use by employees.

## Transit Circulator

In 2010, the City of St. Charles initiated a public outreach process to gauge the public's interest in a transit circulator that would allow for an alternative to personal automobile transportation throughout the City. Public input as part of the Comprehensive Plan indicates that City residents are very interested, especially since the Pace route restructuring that eliminated the vast majority of their fixed route service. Key focus areas for a circulator identified in the outreach process included the Main Street corridor, Downtown, and the Geneva Metra station. A frequent suggestion was for a streetcar/shuttle bus to be introduced between 1st Street and the Geneva Metra station as means for both residents and tourists to access Downtown St. Charles from Metra. The City should further study the feasibility of a local circulator or shuttle system with service to key activity nodes and build on the study to create a Comprehensive Transportation Plan.

# Pedestrian Mobility & Transit Plan

St. Charles places a high value on its trail system and should continue to be proactive in establishing and expanding its trails and bike facilities. Alternative modes of transportation are important in reducing vehicular traffic as well as providing recreational opportunities for residents and tourists alike. Bicycling and walking are encouraged, and the City is proactive in providing the infrastructure for active transportation which consists of a robust network of trails and off-road shared use paths, as well as on-street bikeways and sidewalks.

### Trail/Bike Route Legend

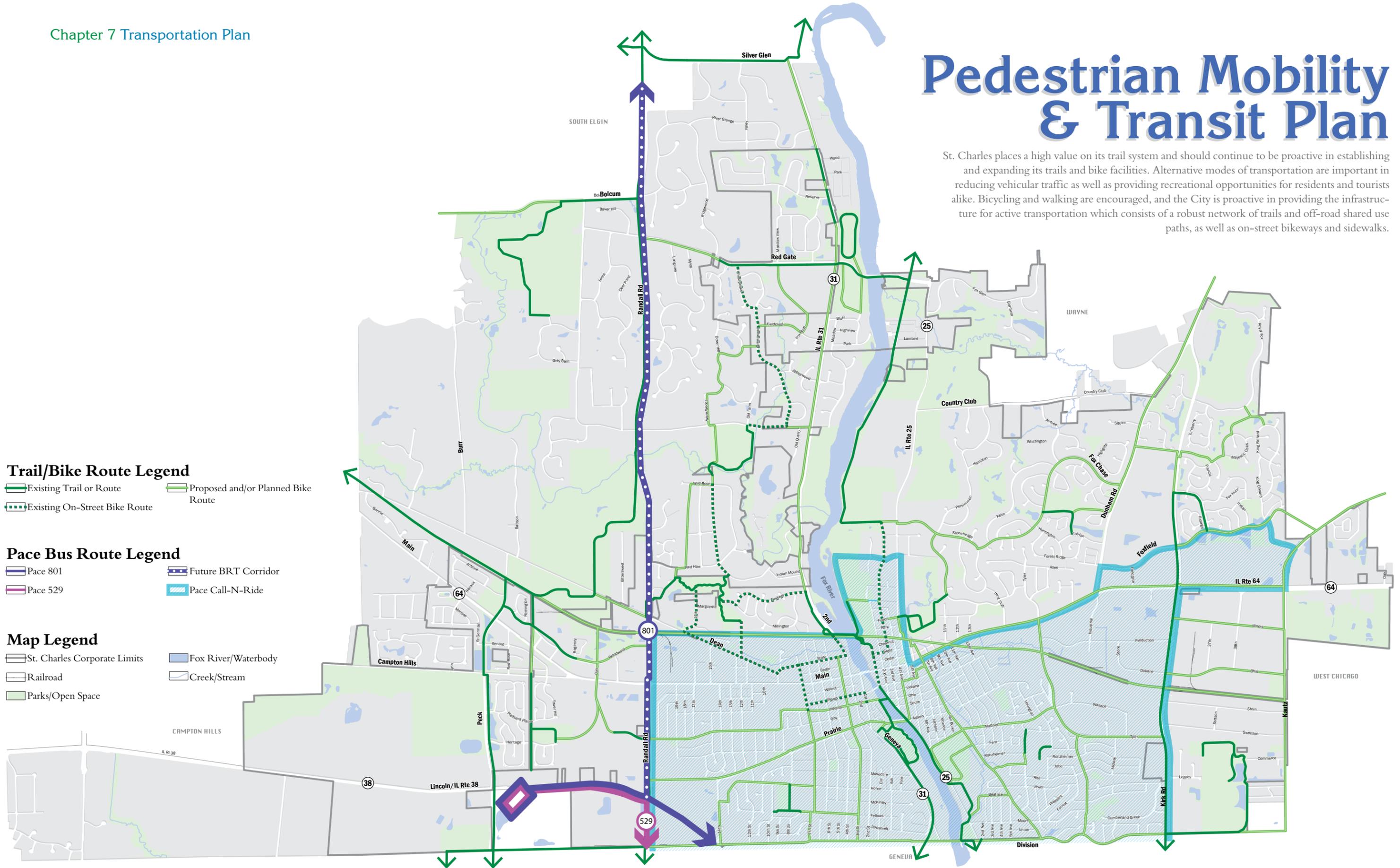
- Existing Trail or Route
- Proposed and/or Planned Bike Route
- Existing On-Street Bike Route

### Pace Bus Route Legend

- Pace 801
- Future BRT Corridor
- Pace 529
- Pace Call-N-Ride

### Map Legend

- St. Charles Corporate Limits
- Fox River/Waterbody
- Railroad
- Parks/Open Space
- Creek/Stream





# Subarea Plans **8**

City of St. Charles, Illinois 2013 Comprehensive Plan



# 8 Subarea Plans

The purpose of examining targeted subareas is to provide more specific recommendations for areas of the City that are of most concern to residents, are most likely to change, face increased redevelopment pressure, have significant vacant or underutilized properties, are “tired” and in need of revitalization, or all of the above. Each Subarea Plan starts with a vision and goals on which to base recommendations for physical changes, desirable development, transportation and circulation, and other improvements.

The Subarea Plans are intended to provide a framework for the redevelopment and revitalization of each area, and to establish policies for the City moving forward. Three of the Subarea Plans include a hypothetical redevelopment concept for a key site within the district. These scenarios are not meant to be firm construction plans, but merely illustrations of what could be possible if the City adopts the recommendations in the plan. They represent the culmination of the process, converting the vision of the subarea into real change.

This chapter includes the following Subarea Plans:

- » Downtown
- » West Gateway
- » East Gateway
- » Main Street



*An aerial view of the Downtown crossing over the Fox River*

*I would like you, my four sons, to be the guardians of this growing settlement, to see that it does become a great community...*

*-Legend of the Fours Sons of Charlemagne*



A large, dark bronze statue of a Native American man stands prominently on the right side of the frame. The man is depicted in a three-quarter view, looking towards the left. He has long, dark hair and is wearing a detailed, textured garment that appears to be a tunic or a shawl. A long, thin object, possibly a pipe or a staff, is tucked under his right arm. The statue is set against a vibrant blue sky filled with scattered, fluffy white clouds. The overall scene is bright and clear, suggesting a sunny day.

# Downtown Subarea Plan



## Downtown Subarea Plan

Downtown is the historic heart of the St. Charles community. Its traditional Main Street, the Fox River, and civic uses give it a unique prominence and character. Recent investment in commercial, residential and office activities points towards a positive future as a revitalized vibrant center for the City and its residents. This Downtown Subarea Plan includes a series of recommendations aimed at preserving and enhancing this important part of the City of St. Charles and capitalizing on specific advantages that make it one of the Chicago region's greatest places and a source of community pride.

## Subarea Goals

The vision for Downtown St. Charles includes the following important components:

- » Full utilization of the Fox River as a recreational and environmental asset
- » Preservation and enhancement of the Downtown's historic architectural character
- » Accessibility for all modes of transportation, including vehicles and pedestrians
- » Enhanced cultural activities that serve as both local and regional attractions

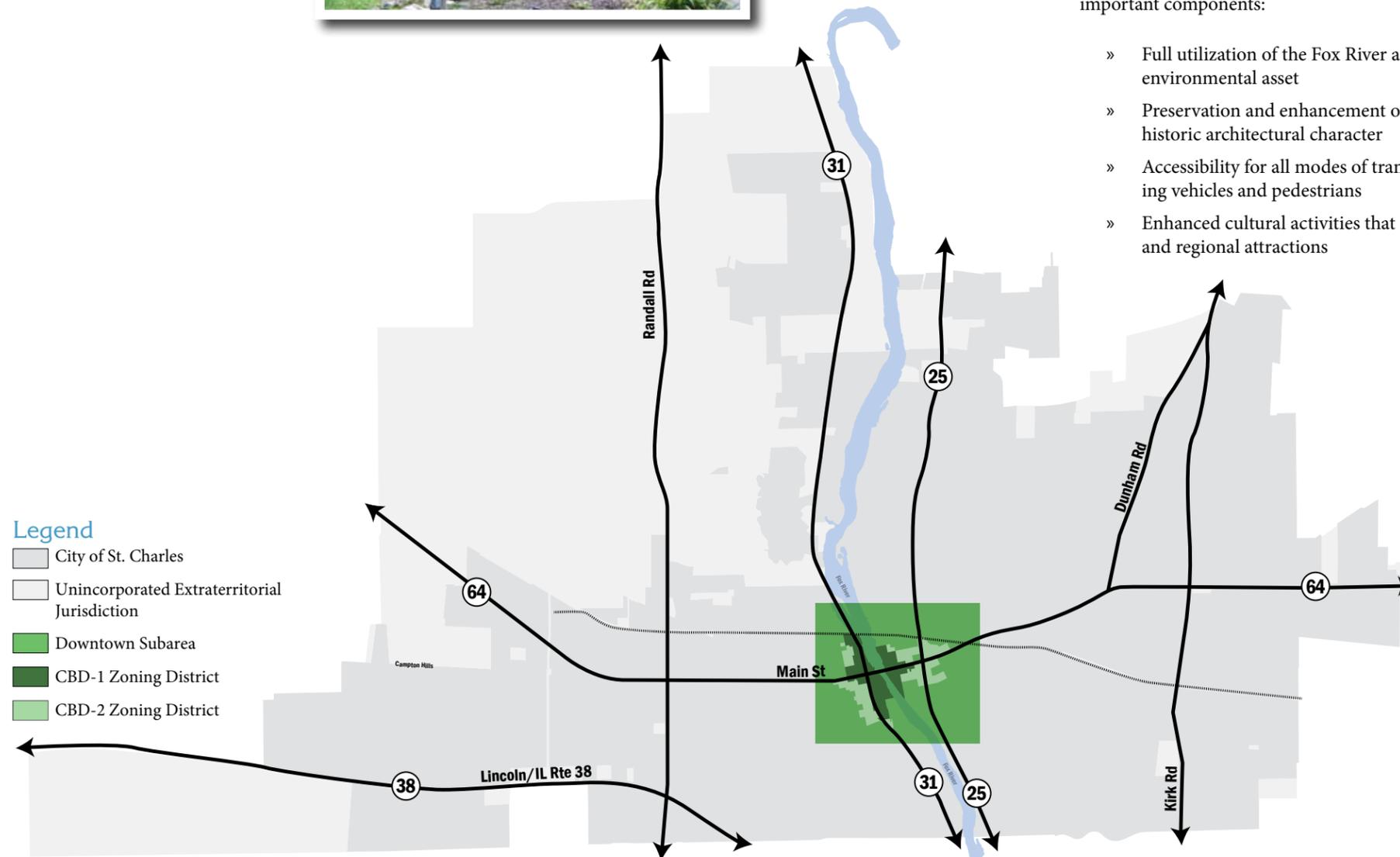
## Subarea Objectives

The following goals can help achieve the vision for Downtown:

- » Encourage development practices that minimize environmental impacts on the Fox River and consider its presence and benefits.
- » Provide continuous open space and bike/pedestrian access along the Fox River corridor as envisioned in the 2002 River Corridor Master Plan.
- » Provide a high level of physical and visual access to the Fox River from all portions of Downtown.
- » Recognize Downtown's important architectural resources, and establish programs to preserve and enhance them.
- » Require new development to meet high standards of site and building design that are compatible with the historic character.
- » Enhance the public realm through streetscaping and gateways.
- » Move people using all modes of transportation safely and efficiently throughout Downtown.
- » Mitigate the impacts of truck traffic on Main Street.
- » Maintain and strengthen a comprehensive pedestrian network.
- » Better manage parking capacity and access throughout Downtown, especially as new development comes on-line.
- » Strategically coordinate civic and cultural events to attract residents and visitors to various portions of Downtown and different times of the year.
- » Enhance mobility between Downtown and surrounding neighborhoods, communities, and other assets, such as other commercial centers, major bikeways and trails for all modes of travel.

### Legend

- City of St. Charles
- Unincorporated Extraterritorial Jurisdiction
- Downtown Subarea
- CBD-1 Zoning District
- CBD-2 Zoning District



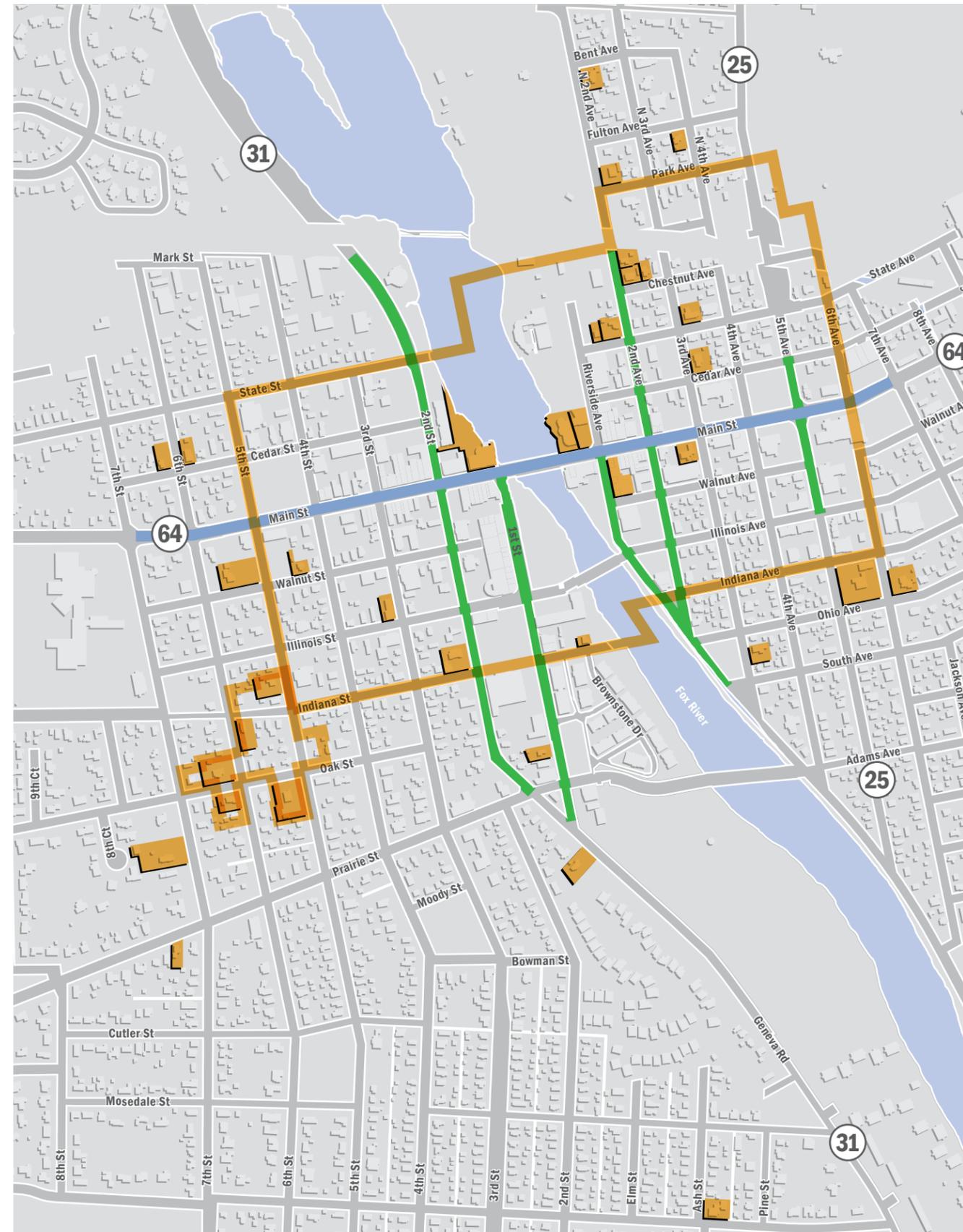
## Downtown Framework Plan

Downtown St. Charles is, and should continue to be, a vibrant place with several systems working in concert with one another. This Framework Plan identifies several of the key principles that will assist City in guiding improvements and developments that ensures the area will evolve in a way that is consistent with the community's vision.

### Image & Character

Downtown is made up of several blocks of varying types of development forms and uses. Within these blocks, however, there is a clear hierarchy of "corridors" that provide the most character-defining experience. The value of traditional downtowns like St. Charles' are most often derived from their intimate scale and focus on the pedestrian. In that regard, development in Downtown St. Charles can be managed by identifying and defining design principles for its various frontage types. The following frontage types are identified in this Framework Plan: Main Street (IL Route 64) frontage, Gateway Corridor frontage, Local frontage, and Fox River Frontage.

This page and the following figure identifies and describes how development can be managed in the various frontage types in order to preserve the character of Downtown and ensure that it is functional and competitive for new investment.



**Main Street (IL Route 64) frontage** is the traditional heart of Downtown, and includes much of the City's most significant architecture, including Hotel Baker, City Hall, the Arcada Theatre and several others.

**Gateway Corridor frontage** includes those streets that offer primary entry into the Downtown and, therefore, provide the first impression. These streets include 2nd Street/ Geneva Road (IL Route 31), 1st Street (south of Main Street), Riverside Avenue, 5th Avenue (north and south of Main Street) and 2nd Avenue (north and south of Main Street).

**Local frontage** includes the remaining streets that, while having a role in defining Downtown's character, also satisfy more utilitarian functions in terms of access and secondary uses.

**Fox River frontage** includes properties that abut the Fox River. This is a unique and critical component to Downtown, and should be preserved as a public amenity.

**Historic District & Landmarks.** The City of St. Charles has adopted Historic Preservation Ordinances to foster awareness of the City's rich history including its historic sites and buildings. The City's Historic Preservation Commission is responsible for ensuring modifications and renovations, along with new development and construction, are consistent with the standards established for the historic district. The City's history is important in maintaining its cultural fabric and identity. This value is recognized by the City's residents and the City should ensure that this rich and unique history is not lost but rather complemented and enhanced with new downtown investment and development.



**Main Street Frontage**

**Building Massing & Placement**

Buildings should have no front or side yard setbacks, built to the front and side lot lines to create a continuous streetwall, and be compatibly scaled with surrounding development.

**Building Facade Orientation and Design**

Facades should have strong orientation to the public sidewalk, with welcoming entrances. Attractive and safe rear entrances from rear parking areas or public walks should also be provided where appropriate.

**Architectural Style and Design**

Buildings should use traditional building materials and design elements, and generally align with surrounding buildings in terms of horizontal elements and vertical rhythm.

**Vehicular Access & Parking**

Parking should be located at the rear of the lot, and no curb cuts should be provided from the public street. Where parking exists along the front property line, a masonry wall should be constructed to hide parking and maintain the streetwall.

**Bicycle Access & Pedestrian Mobility**

All buildings should provide an attractive and discernable public entry from the sidewalk, and to the extent possible, bicycle parking should be provided at the rear or sides of buildings, near parking areas or other pedestrian accessible areas.

**Land Use**

Uses should be mixed, with multi-family and/or office above traditional downtown mixed use activities such retail, restaurant, and local services. While retail and entertainment are preferred for ground floor uses, service and office uses that have high visitation and create foot traffic downtown should be permitted.



**Gateway Frontage**

**Building Massing & Placement**

Buildings should be generally located on the front lot line, although small setbacks could accommodate gateway landscaping. To the extent possible, buildings should be built to the side lot lines to create a continuous streetwall.

**Building Facade Orientation and Design**

Facades should have strong orientation to the public sidewalk, or angled toward key gateway intersections, with welcoming entrances. Attractive and safe rear entrances from rear parking areas or public walks should also be provided where appropriate.

**Architectural Style and Design**

Buildings should use traditional building materials and design elements, and generally align with surrounding buildings in terms of horizontal elements and vertical rhythm. However, more flexibility and creativity should be encouraged within this general framework.

**Vehicular Access & Parking**

Parking should be located to the rear of the lot, and minimal curb cuts should be provided from the public street. Development should share curb cuts and provide access from side streets instead of gateway streets wherever possible.

**Bicycle Access & Pedestrian Mobility**

All buildings should provide an attractive and discernable public entry from the sidewalk, and to the extent possible, bicycle parking should be provided at the rear or sides of buildings, near parking areas or other pedestrian accessible areas.

**Land Use**

Uses should be mixed, comprised of traditional downtown mixed use activities such retail, restaurant, and local services, as well as secondary uses including offices and services with less customer visitation. Multi-story mixed use buildings should also be encouraged. Multi-family may also be appropriate on the fringe areas of Downtown.



**Local Frontage**

**Building Massing & Placement**

Setbacks may vary based on the use, but should not allow parking areas in the front of commercial buildings (i.e. strip commercial).

**Building Façade Orientation and Design**

Facades should be oriented towards the public sidewalk, and provide direct pedestrian linkages between the front entry and public sidewalk and/or parking areas.

**Architectural Style and Design**

Façade design and style may vary but should be generally compatible with the materials and architectural elements used in other portions of Downtown.

**Vehicular Access & Parking**

Curb cuts access can be provided from these streets. However, development should strive to minimize the number of curb cuts through effective on-site circulation and cross-access arrangements.

**Bicycle Access & Pedestrian Mobility**

All buildings should provide an attractive and discernable public entry from the sidewalk. Bicycle parking should be provided with other parking areas.

**Land Use**

Uses can include a broad range of activities appropriate in Downtown, including retail, service, office, multi-family and single-family residential, and low-impact auto-related services.



**Fox River Frontage**

**Building Massing & Placement**

Buildings should address both the Fox River and their frontage street. River frontage setbacks should be an adequate distance to accommodate public access to and along the river corridor.

**Building Façade Orientation and Design**

Facades should have strong orientation to both the Fox River and frontage street, with parking located on the internal portion of the lot.

**Architectural Style and Design**

Since buildings along the Fox River are visible from several locations in Downtown and accessible from all sides, they should utilize “360° architecture” with traditional building materials and design elements on all sides, and generally align with surrounding buildings in terms of horizontal elements and vertical rhythm.

**Vehicular Access & Parking**

Parking lots should be discouraged along the Fox River. Access to onsite parking and service areas should be discretely provided from the local public street and be well screened. Where parking must be located along the river, the site design and screening should be assessed on a case-by-case basis to ensure compatibility with Downtown character.

**Bicycle Access & Pedestrian Mobility**

All buildings should provide an attractive entry from the public sidewalk, and provide bicycle parking accessible from the riverfront. Development should also dedicate space for a continuous pedestrian or bike path along the Fox River.

**Land Use**

Uses should include traditional downtown uses such as retail and restaurants, recreational activities, as well as all types of residential development. To the extent possible, development should integrate outdoor plazas or parks that provide an attractive seasonal asset to their primary use.

## Downtown Improvement Plan

**Fox River.** The Fox River was the focus of the City’s initial settlement and today remains a focal point of the community. The Fox River corridor provides a scenic setting, relief from the urban environment, and a number of other tangible and intangible benefits. The City should continue working with the Park District to realize the established vision and enhance public access to the river.

**Downtown Retail Overlay District.** The Downtown Overlay District is intended to preserve the economic vitality and pedestrian character of Downtown’s shopping core by limiting uses on the first floor that “typically generate relatively little pedestrian activity or are otherwise incompatible with a pedestrian oriented shopping area.” While this is an admirable objective, defining “typical” can result in missed opportunities. In addition, while all successful and vibrant downtowns have a large component of retail, they are also characterized by a varying mix of uses that generate activity at all periods of the day. Furthermore a detailed market analysis conducted as part of this process found that key retail categories are fairly saturated within the Downtown’s trade area. Given the number of vacancies Downtown, along with current market and economic conditions, the City should consider relaxing use restrictions in the District to fill storefronts on a temporary basis until demand for downtown retail space is stronger.

**Gateways.** While streetscaping in Downtown distinguishes this part of the City from other areas, the differences can be subtle to a casual observer and the edges of Downtown are not well demarcated. Given the importance of Downtown, the City should install gateway features at key entry points, that are integrated to the extent possible, with redevelopment of prominent parcels and highly visible locations. North-south gateways are currently less defined and would benefit most from enhancement. Gateway features consisting of signage, lighting, and landscaping should complement the existing streetscape and announce entry into Downtown St. Charles.

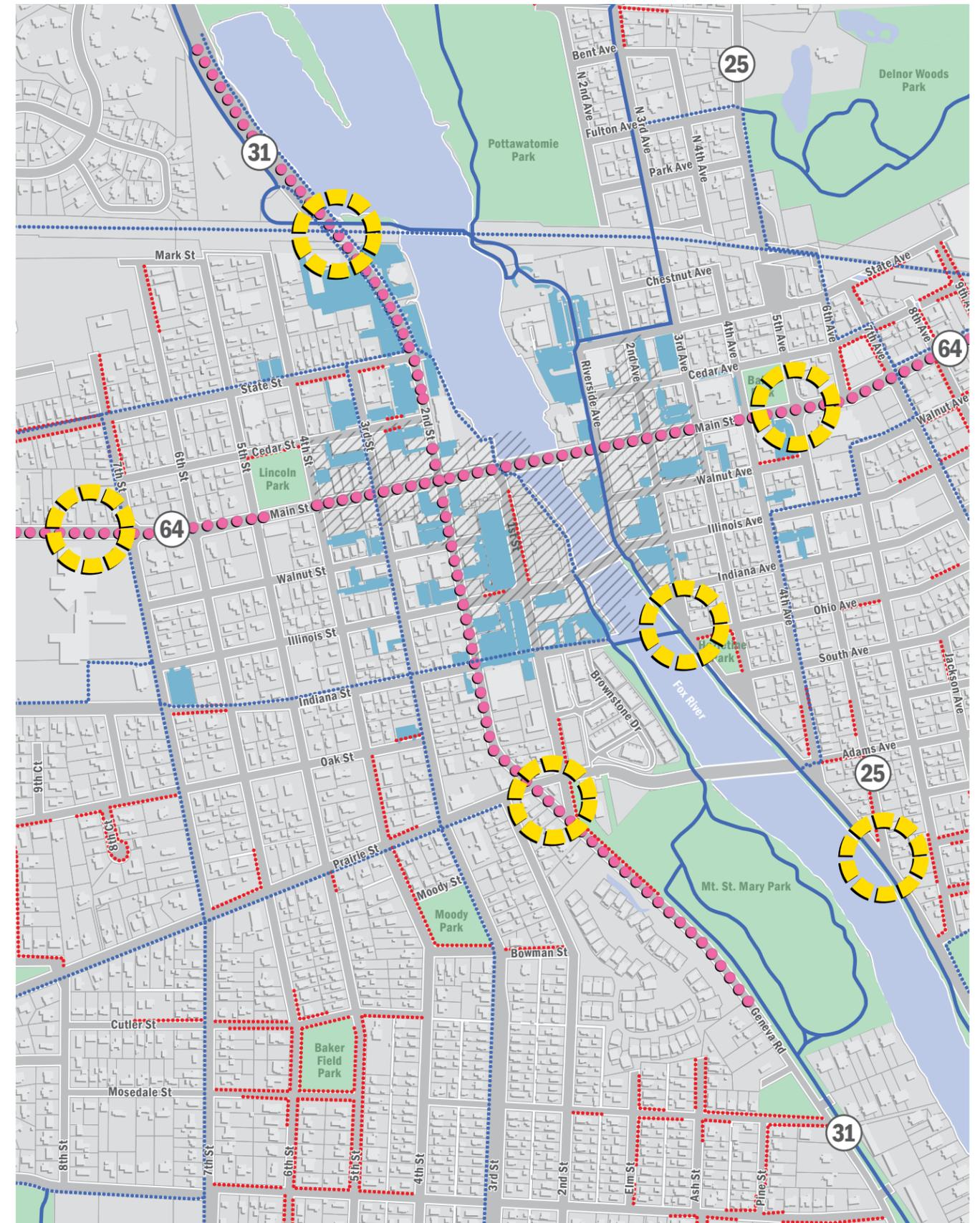
**Wayfinding.** Wayfinding should continue to be provided throughout Downtown, and additional opportunities for signage and new community destinations identified. Guidance should be provided to important downtown sites such as Pottawatomie Park, historic Main Street, and other local landmarks (public and private), and supporting functions such as public parking lots and structures or visitors information.

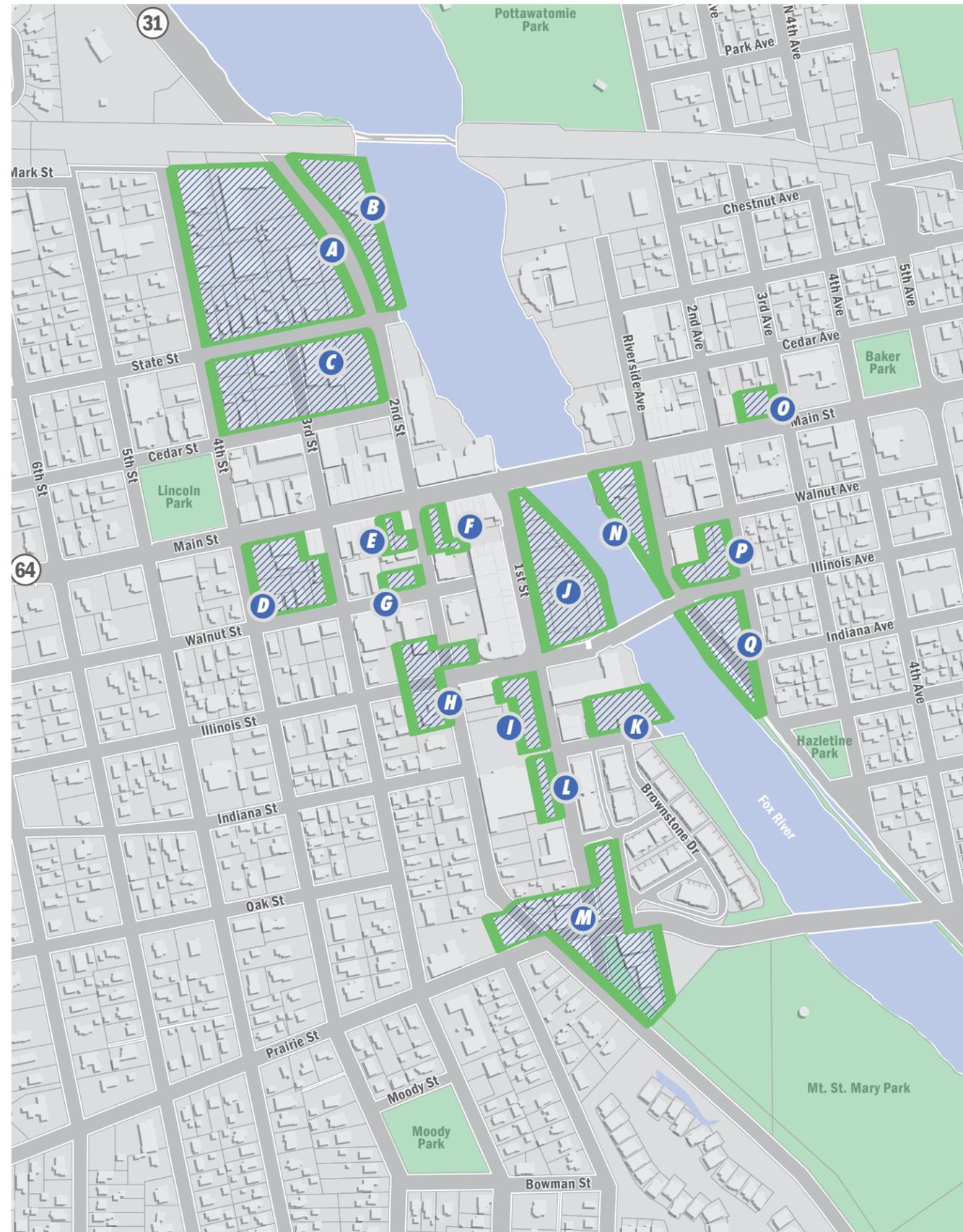
**Pedestrian Friendly Streets.** Downtown must be able to efficiently and safely move vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians. Given the combination of a pedestrian-oriented environment, the Fox River, Main Street/IL Route 64, and the function of Downtown St. Charles as a regional attraction, effectively balancing a number of transportation related functions can be challenging. Truck traffic on Main Street/IL 64 and Geneva Road/IL 31 impacts Downtown St. Charles by placing loud and slow moving vehicles on the corridors. This is further exacerbated by the grooved concrete roads that provide the traction necessary due to the sloping terrain, creating noise and vibrations that impact the pedestrian atmosphere. The City should continue to explore solutions to this issue, including working with IDOT on changing the road surfaces; identifying a local re-route that would remove truck traffic off a portion of these streets; or identifying bypass routes that would remove truck traffic entirely from the Downtown. The preferred alternative should balance net impact with costs and influences on other areas of the City and region.

**Parking.** Parking management is an important issue in Downtown St. Charles. Unlike a commercial corridor like Randall Road where surface parking predominates, providing convenient access to store entries, parking in a downtown is subtly provided for the “area” by both the City and local businesses. Parking is currently located strategically throughout Downtown, on the street, in public and private surface lots, and two parking structures that have recently been built to accommodate demand. The City should continue to provide parking strategically in all areas of Downtown, and carefully monitor demand to ensure that both current and future needs are met. The parking needs of each site should be taken into account as each site is being considered for development. Before new structures are built, the City should consider real-time signage and wayfinding that guides drivers to structures with open capacity to ensure all existing parking is utilized.

**Sidewalk Gaps & Crosswalk Improvements** The very nature of Downtown requires a comprehensive sidewalk network with safe crossings and signage. The presence of the Fox River makes Downtown a regional destination that is linked to other communities. Private development and public improvements in Downtown should work in concert to build a comprehensive bike path network that allows for constant movement along the river corridor with easy access to Downtown goods and services.

**Existing & Future Trails.** The City and Downtown are well served by a bicycle network that connects nearby parks and neighborhoods with a larger regional trail system. The trail system provides both opportunities for recreation and economic development. The City should continue to implement the trail system as planned, and where possible, promote connections to parks, neighborhoods, and local businesses.





## Catalyst Sites

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

It should be recognized that some of the catalyst sites are existing public or private parking lots. The parking supply near each site should be assessed as each is considered for development. Downtown parking is further discussed on p. 70 and p. 85. This subarea plan proposes the following for opportunity sites in the Downtown.

**SITE A** North 2nd Street is an important northern gateway for Downtown currently hosting several small retail and office uses. Existing uses fail to convey the desired character or atmosphere for this area of the City and Fox River frontage. Redevelopment should create an attractive gateway for Downtown with strong frontage on 2nd Street. Uses in this area may include retail, office, multi-family, or mixed use. In addition, the City should explore the possibility of adding a traffic signal at the intersection of State Street and IL Route 31 in order to provide a safe path for pedestrians to cross.

**SITE B** On the east side of Route 31 is a parcel isolated from other Downtown activity by heavy traffic. The City should take measures to better connect this site to the rest of Downtown, or consider this area as an opportunity to provide additional open space along the Fox River. Existing parking on the site could be accommodated elsewhere, such as Site A or Site C.

**SITE C** The existing City-owned parking lot on 2nd Street is an important resource for Downtown businesses. However, it also compromises the character of a key Downtown entry and represents a missed opportunity for more active development. Consideration should be given to transforming this entire block and potentially parcels west of 3rd Street into a mixed use development capable of catalyzing development on the north side of Main Street. Mixed use buildings with a parking structure could replace the surface lot and other development. Ground floor commercial uses could line 3rd Street with a centralized parking structure to maximize street activity.

**SITE D** This site represents a significant development opportunity in the Downtown, but would require parcel assembly, which could affect the site's redevelopment potential. The Main Street frontage of this site should be redeveloped with structures built to the front lot line, with a character similar to the existing traditional fabric at the east end of the block. A prominent corner element at 4th Street would provide an attractive landmark when approaching Downtown from the west. The Walnut Street frontage, currently occupied by commercial uses in residential structures, could be redeveloped with uses that transition to the surrounding neighborhood, such as moderate multi-family housing or townhomes. A parking lot behind commercial uses fronting Main Street could also be explored as a viable option for the site.

**SITE E** This opportunity site represents an ideal Main Street infill scenario. Traditional buildings on the remainder of the block are occupied and well maintained, and the facing block on the north side of Main Street is fully intact. Infill development should complete the street wall and reflect the character of existing architecture. The 2nd Street frontage could also be redeveloped with an infill structure that creates a more complete street wall and complements potential redevelopment across the street.

**SITE F** This site is currently the parking area for the Szechwan Restaurant. Redevelopment potential of the site is limited since the restaurant uses the lot for building access and fenestration. However, the site could be redesigned as a public plaza that would serve as an extension of the 1st Street plaza to the east. A plaza at this location would provide a Main Street open space in the heart of Downtown that complements Lincoln Park to the west and Baker Park to the east. The plaza could be fully linked to the 1st Street plaza by removing or reconfiguring the drive-thru function of the existing Private Bank on 2nd Street just south of the opportunity site.

**SITE G** The parking lot on the northwest corner of 2nd Street and Walnut Street represents an opportunity to transform the character of the 2nd Street gateway corridor. This site should be redeveloped as a zero-setback commercial or mixed use structure with parking accessed from Walnut Street. Lost parking capacity can be mitigated by existing or future structured parking on nearby blocks.

**SITE H** The intersection of 2nd Street and Illinois Street is a prominent location in Downtown. While the southeast corner has an attractive building with a Francesca's Restaurant, the other three quadrants are underutilized considering the setting. These properties should be redeveloped with mixed use, multi-family or green space that enhance the character of 2nd Street as a gateway corridor from the south.

**SITE I** Through recent redevelopment, 1st Street has emerged as an important character street in Downtown. An opportunity exists to extend this high quality character south, along a narrow portion of the public parking lot that fronts on 1st Street. Mixed use, which could include multi-family, could be built at this location if the displaced parking could be accommodated elsewhere.

**SITE J** The western portion of 1st Street development has been constructed and contributed positively to the energy and appearance of Downtown. This site represents the eastern half of the development which stalled during the economic downturn associated with the housing market collapse. It is recommended that the City continue to promote the approved plan as a viable option for this site, including the residential units that will bring more residents to the Downtown area.

**SITE K** The terminus of Indiana Street into the west bank of the Fox River is an important opportunity to redevelop a site so that it capitalizes on its riverfront location. The current site hosts the Beith House Museum. Redevelopment could accommodate this use while adding waterfront redevelopment such as a café or restaurant.

**SITE L** Immediately east of the Blue Goose Market is a small parking lot and green space that fronts on the west side of 1st Street. This area is a critical gap in the 1st Street environment. Development on this lot should reflect the design character of other recent development on the street, and add to the comfortable scale established by the surrounding context.

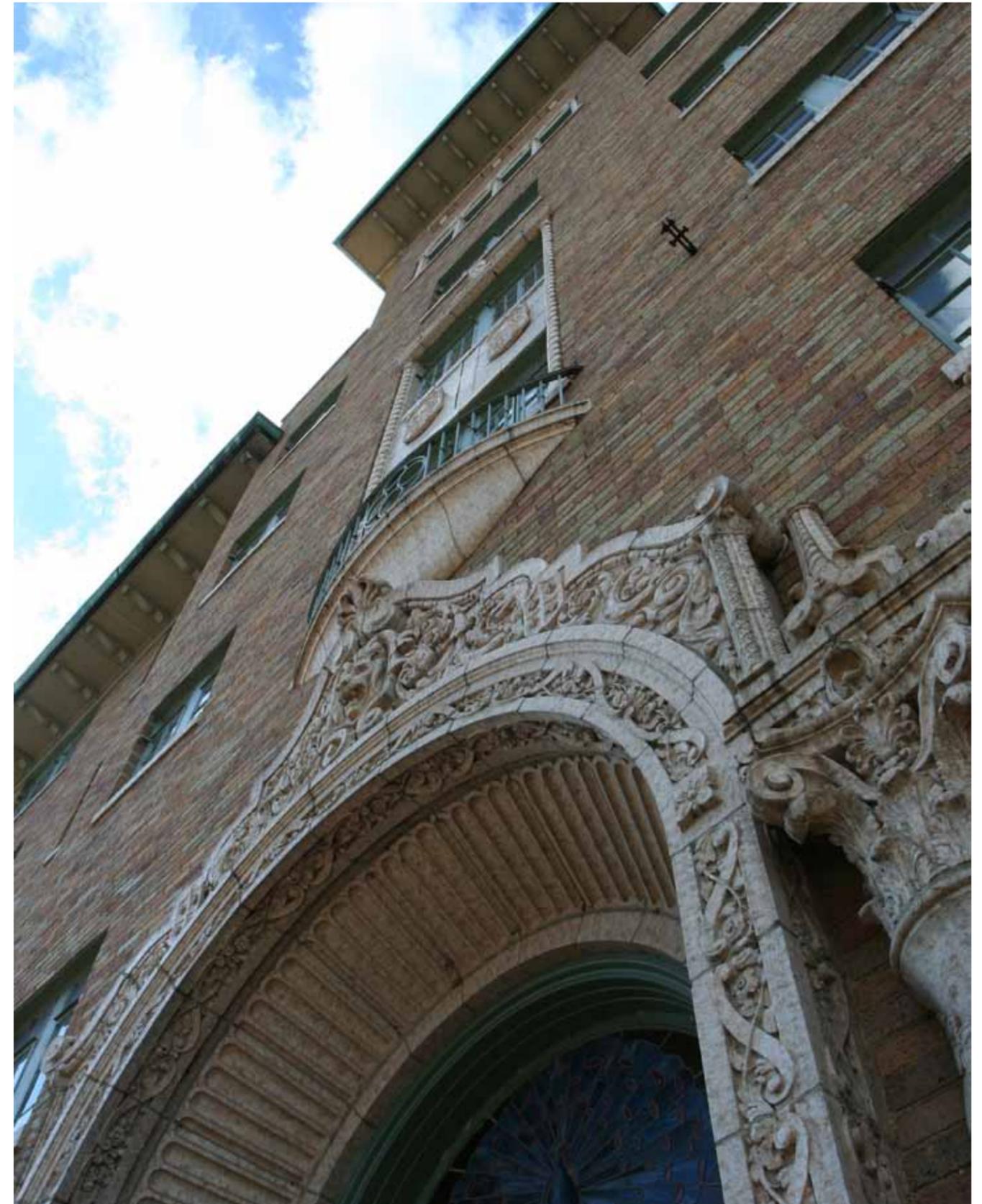
**SITE M** This area represents the southern gateway to Downtown, and existing uses and character around the intersection contrast with the community's vision for Downtown. Comprehensive redevelopment of this key intersection should transform the gateway into an attractive announcement of arrival into Downtown St. Charles. 1st Street and 2nd Street frontage could include mixed use or multi-family development, though viewsheds to important buildings and features, such as the historic Victorian house at 411 S. 2nd Street or Mount St. Mary Park, should be preserved. This opportunity may warrant further study to ensure that several urban systems are adequately planned for, such as open space linkages throughout Downtown and to the Fox River, bicycle pathways, traffic engineering, and signage and wayfinding.

**SITE N** This opportunity site benefits from a prime location, fronting on the Fox River and Main Street, and sitting directly across from City Hall. Redevelopment of this site should result in a building that extends the traditional scale and character of adjacent buildings on the block. Due to its high visibility from the west side of the Fox River, the new building should integrate an attractive riverfront facade, similar to the Hotel Baker. The rear portion of the site should include low-scale development along Riverside Avenue and/or open space along the Fox River.

**SITE O** Main Street in Downtown should strive to be a continuous streetwall of well-designed and pedestrian-scaled development. This parking lot at Main Street and 3rd Avenue is a significant opportunity to re-establish the traditional fabric of downtown. While Baker Park and Baker Memorial United Methodist Church are significant landmarks on relatively open lots and begin to set impressions and expectations for Main Street, their efforts are diminished by the presence of a surface parking lot at this key site. At a corner with prominent visibility from the large setback of the adjacent church, the building should be attractive on both the Main Street and 3rd Avenue facades.

**SITE P** The existing River Rockhouse parking lot could be used to relieve parking demand for other nearby blocks east of the Fox River. This opportunity site should be considered for a parking structure that would replace capacity lost by redevelopment of the BMO bank site and other parking areas along Main Street. Due to the terrain of the site sloping down from the east towards the Fox River, the upper level of a multi-level structure would be approximately at-grade with 2nd Avenue, minimizing the impacts of such a structure on residential development to the east.

**SITE Q** This opportunity site represents the greatest potential for riverfront redevelopment on the east side of the Fox River. This site currently hosts a small office building and modest open space. However, it is the southern gateway to downtown along Riverside Avenue. Redevelopment of the site could vary based on the City's ability to address transportation and circulation. Redevelopment should also include a significant gateway feature at the southern end of the site, and gathering spaces for riverfront events, cafes, or other activities and uses.



## Downtown Redevelopment Concept



### Potential Improvements

- 1 Existing City Hall
- 2 Main Street Bridge
- 3 Retrofit Harris Bank Building
- 4 Existing Arcada Theatre
- 5 Proposed Riverfront Park
- 6 Approved First Street Downtown Redevelopment: Building #1
- 7 Approved First Street Downtown Redevelopment: Building #2
- 8 Approved First Street Downtown Redevelopment: Building #3
- 9 Approved First Street Downtown Redevelopment Parking Deck with Rooftop Park
- 10 Approved First Street Downtown Redevelopment: Building #9
- 11 Existing First Street Development Parking Deck
- 12 Illinois Street Bridge
- 13 Existing River Rockhouse Building
- 14 Riverside Avenue Mixed use Redevelopment
- 15 Parking Garage on 2nd Street
- 16 Mixed use Redevelopment Fronting on Riverside Promenade
- 17 Gateway Mixed use Redevelopment Fronting on Riverside Avenue Promenade
- 18 Riverside Promenade on former Riverside Avenue

*This figure represents an illustrative development concept for Downtown Catalyst Sites M, N, and O. The concept is intended to illustrate one possible approach for redevelopment that satisfies the goals, objectives and guidelines as expressed in the St. Charles Comprehensive Plan. It is not intended to express action on behalf of the City to acquire and redevelop privately-held properties. The final format of redevelopment for these sites will depend upon local property ownership, unforeseen site constraints, and market forces at the time of redevelopment.*



# West Gateway Subarea Plan



### West Gateway Subarea Plan

The West Gateway subarea in St. Charles includes both tremendous opportunities and significant challenges for the City of St. Charles. Located in the southwestern portion of the community, the subarea's primary focus is Randall Road, where some of the City's best opportunities for economic development exist along the corridor, however their successful implementation will not necessarily be easy. St. Charles was one of the first communities to take advantage of Randall Road as an economic development engine, however, much of this initial development is now obsolete due to changing consumer taste and more contemporary development in neighboring communities. Realizing the full potential of the Randall Road Corridor will entail repositioning and redevelopment of existing uses, which is often more complicated than green-field development. This subarea plan sets forth a framework that will help the City make the most of a diverse range of uses, lot configurations and development character on Randall Road, understanding that achieving all of the goals and objectives will require cooperation with property owners and community support.

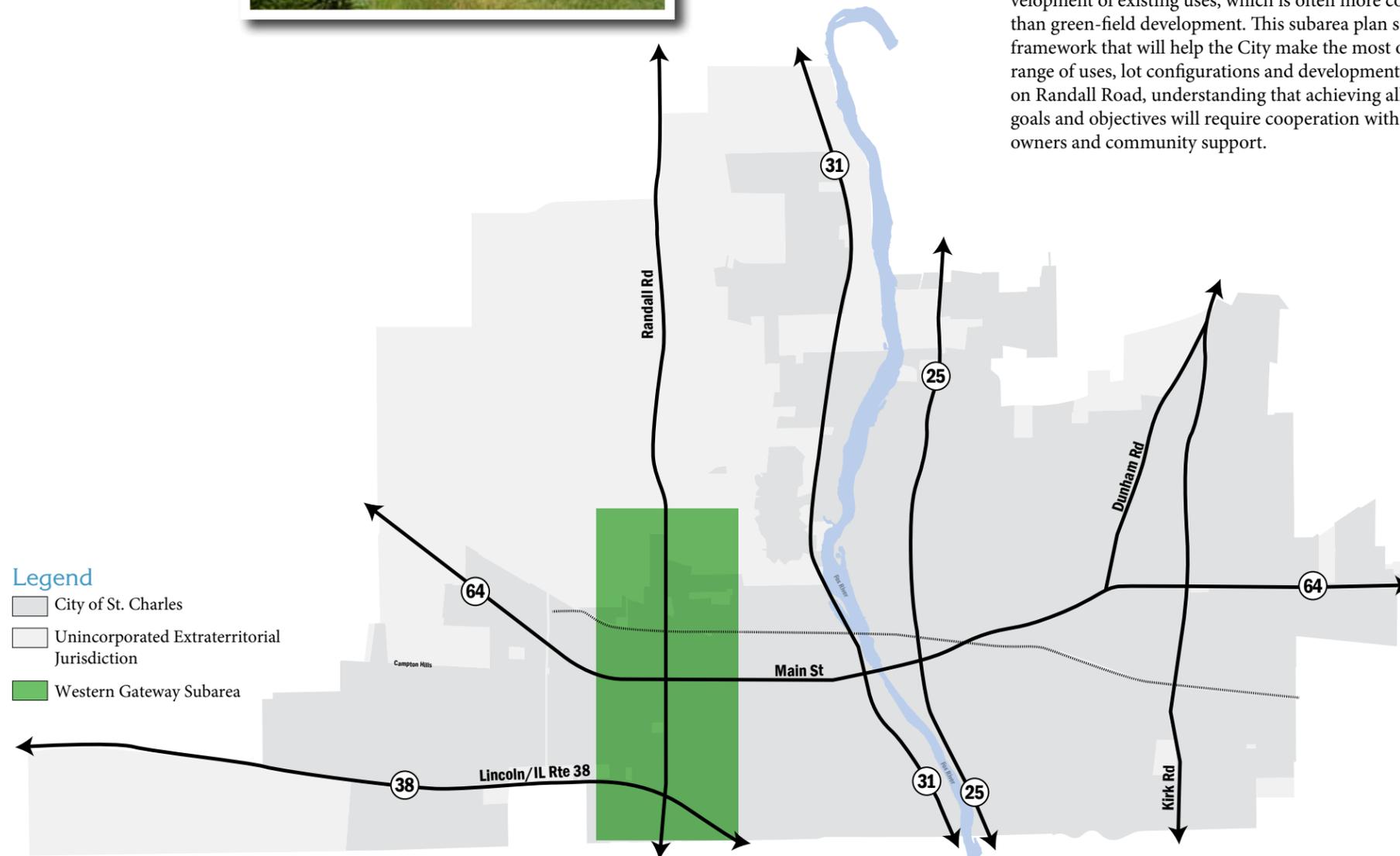
### Subarea Goals

The West Gateway subarea represents unique opportunities within a specific context. These opportunities and goals are not meant to compete with each other; rather, they should complement each other in order to draw people to the history of the riverfront. The overall vision for the subarea includes the following elements:

- » An economically competitive corridor that capitalizes on its unique advantages and regional position and complements downtown.
- » Redevelopment and repositioning to include the next generation of regional development and services.
- » An attractive environment that is distinguishable from adjacent communities and respectful of surrounding neighborhoods.
- » A multi-use area that provides a balance in and ease of access between residential, commercial, and retail activities.

### Subarea Objectives

- » Improvement of the appearance of the Randall Road Corridor and the identity of the St. Charles community through installation of streetscaping, wayfinding, and gateway elements.
- » Enhancement of the character of both existing and new development through on-site landscaping, attractive building design and materials, and more consistent signage regulation.
- » Improved mobility and access throughout the corridor, including between adjacent development sites or blocks.
- » Comprehensive bicycle, pedestrian, and transit access through infrastructure and technology improvements.
- » Preservation of surrounding neighborhoods through the use of screening and buffering from commercial development.
- » Redevelopment of the St. Charles Mall site with activities and a character that complement Randall Road and maintain an appropriate relationship with adjacent neighborhoods.
- » Creation of market-responsive development parcels that can accommodate projects of an appropriate scale and phasing over time.
- » A transitioning land use pattern that is supportive of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) along Randall Road.
- » Achieve balance by promoting connections between the Downtown and the West Gateway area without competing with the Downtown.



**Legend**

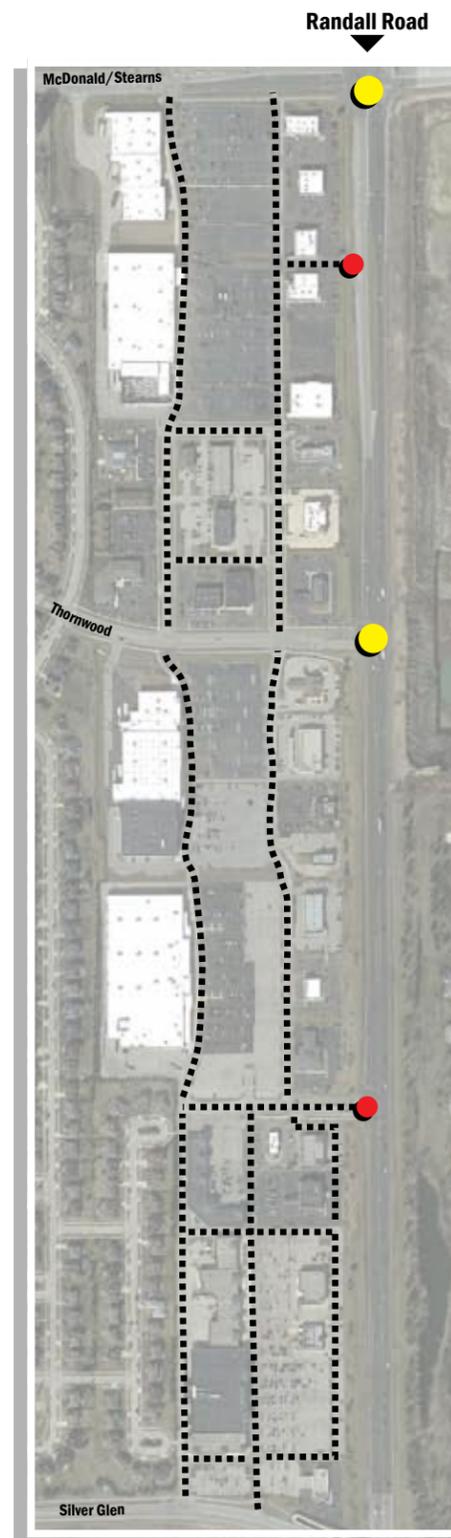
- City of St. Charles
- Unincorporated Extraterritorial Jurisdiction
- Western Gateway Subarea

## Randall Road Connectivity Comparison

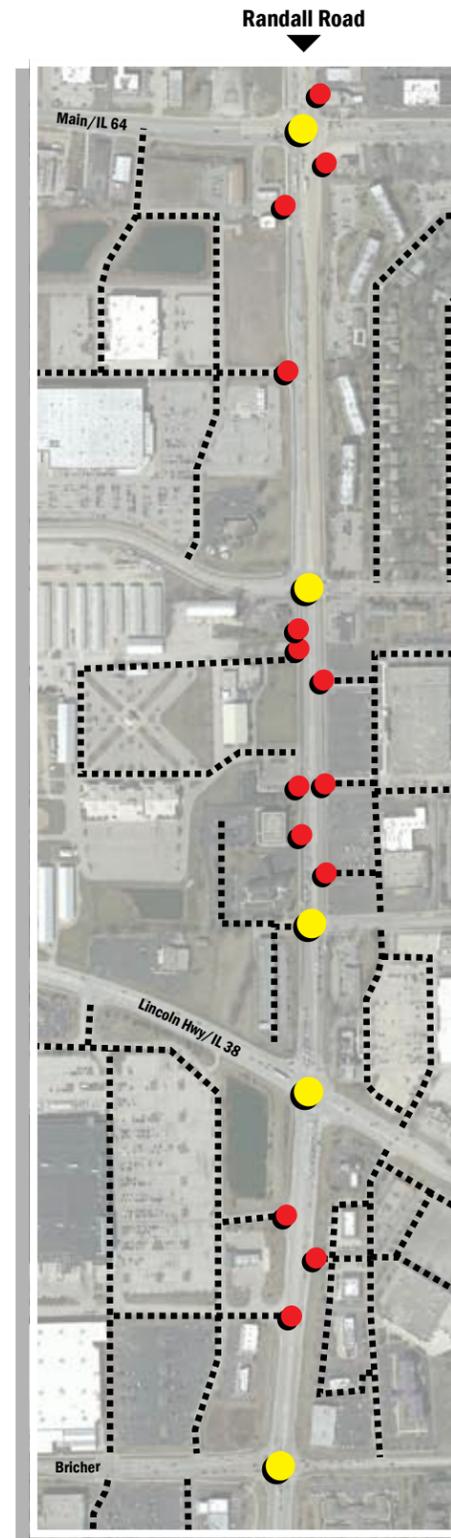
Over the course of the last 20 years, the Randall Road Corridor has blossomed into a regional commercial center with almost every national retailer present along the corridor. The City of St. Charles was among the first to develop along Randall Road, in more recent years neighboring communities have followed suit. A review of the different development patterns along the corridor reveals a contrast between the development pattern in St. Charles, which can be characterized as piecemeal and uncoordinated and other communities which are better coordinated and connected.

### Legend

-  Internal Circulation/Cross Access
-  Driveway/Curb Cut
-  Street Intersection



*In South Elgin, development utilizes driving aisles and internal access streets that parallel Randall Road. Building frontage and setbacks are consistent, and there is ease of circulation between sites, despite variable patterns of buildings and parking areas along the corridor.*



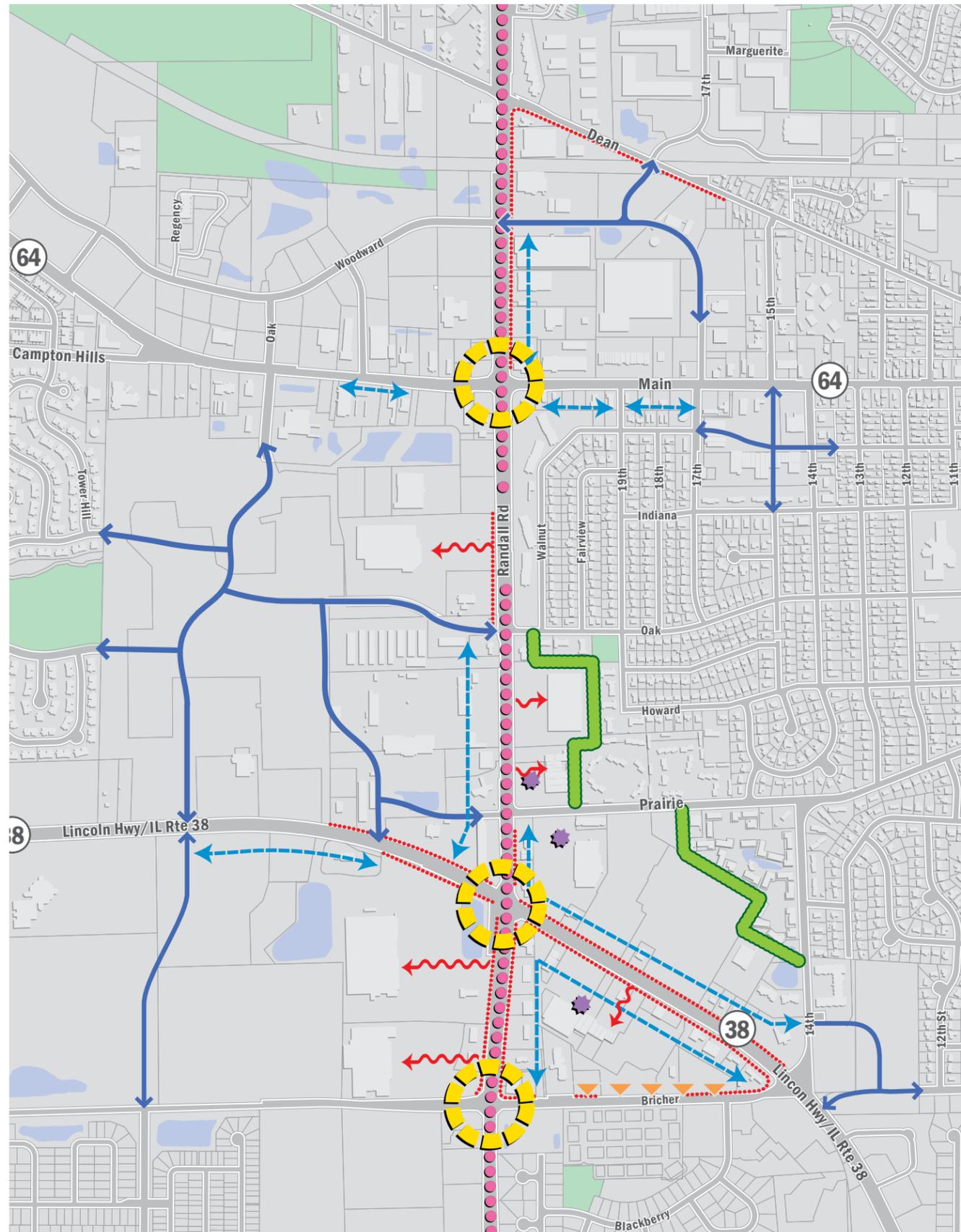
*In St. Charles, interspersed parcels have varying depth (140' to 1,100') and width and there appears to be little coordination in its subdivision or long-range vision. With this development pattern it is difficult to establish consistent development typology or circulation patterns between lots. As a result, access to adjacent lots often requires use of Randall Road and cross access is almost non-existent.*



*Bent Tree Drive functions as a parallel route east of Randall Road in Geneva, while Merchants Drive (a dedicate road within the commercial site) provides a parallel route on the west. Parcels in Geneva have a consistent depth with logical connections between lots and blocks.*



*Though parcel depths vary from 225' to 900' in Batavia, parcels and sites are linked by continuous streets that provide easy access between developments and to surrounding residential areas. Several contiguous blocks can be accessed without using Randall Road.*



## West Gateway Improvement Plan

**Gateway Intersections.** This part of the City is referred to as the Western Gateway due largely to the fact that Randall Road averages more than 40,000 vehicles per day and is one of the busiest streets in all of Kane County. Serving as a gateway to St. Charles, the City should install gateway features at key points along the corridor to improve both its image and identity. Gateway features could consist of signage, landscaping, decorative lighting, and pedestrian amenities to attractively greet visitors and residents to the community.

**Streetscaping.** The Randall Road Corridor is one of the busiest streets in the City and plays a key role in shaping the perceptions of the community. Streetscaping enhancements along the corridor, including trees in the parkway, decorative street lights, attractive sidewalks, and wayfinding signs to community destinations would improve the appearance of the corridor and shape positive perceptions for people passing through the community. Streetscape elements along Randall Road should complement other streetscaping in the City, but reflect a unique local theme for the corridor.

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

**Parking Improvements.** Several parking lots along the corridor were constructed prior to current City regulations which require perimeter and internal landscaping. The City should work with these property owners to improve these parking lots, retrofitting them with landscaped islands and perimeter screening to help conceal large parking fields, provide shade to reduce the heat island effect, and improve the appearance of these parking areas. Additionally, the City should consider the use of “parking maximums” instead of the traditional parking minimums to prevent retailers from building unnecessarily large parking lots along the corridor.

**Sidewalk Gaps.** Although the Randall Road corridor will likely continue to be an auto-oriented corridor, it should not neglect the pedestrian. In addition to being accessible by car, the corridor should be safe and welcoming to pedestrians. The City should ensure a complete pedestrian network exists within the Western Gateway, installing sidewalks in identified gaps. All sidewalks should be designed and located so that they provide a safe and comfortable environment and are adequately buffered from vehicular traffic. They should also include multi-use paths that can accommodate bicycle traffic where appropriate.

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

**Street Connections.** A complete street network is important for efficient movement of vehicles and pedestrians. Several streets stub into the County Fairground site in anticipation of future development. Should this property ever redevelop with other uses, it is important that the City ensure these connections are completed as well as other street connections identified in the framework plan. Extending or establishing local streets where appropriate will break up the large super-block development pattern and improve circulation along the corridor and surrounding neighborhoods for both vehicles and pedestrians and minimize traffic travelling along Randall Road. However, any proposed street connections should be analyzed on a case-by-case basis to ensure that there are no significant impacts to existing neighborhoods. This should require a professional traffic impact study.

**Bricher Orientation.** Even though the Taco Bell is located along Bricher Road, it all but neglects the Bricher Road frontage in favor of higher vehicle counts along IL Route 38/ Lincoln Highway. The City should promote this area of the Western Gateway to develop as supporting commercial uses that do not necessarily need the high traffic counts IL Route 38 and Randall Road provide, and encourage uses that benefit from high traffic volumes, such as Taco Bell, to develop along these corridors instead.

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

## Catalyst Sites

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

**Site A** North of the Mercedes dealership there is a 3.4-acre “pad-ready” site that provides an easy development opportunity along Randall Road. Although the site could accommodate a number of commercial uses, it is removed from much of the retail activity in the corridor and opportunity for synergy with nearby uses is limited. The City should promote the site for a use that could complement the adjacent dealership, including another car dealership that could maximize the site’s tax generating ability.

**Site B** A vacant outlot exists in front of Harley-Davidson. The City should continue to support and encourage commercial uses that can capitalize on Randall Road traffic and complement adjacent uses with the understanding that the size and depths of these sites will limit the potential to more convenience type retail uses and/or restaurants.

**Site C** The Kane County Farm Bureau is an office use along a commercial corridor and creates no synergy or benefits to nearby commercial uses. Although the site is not currently annexed to the City, the City should work cooperatively with the agency to find a more suitable site in the community to allow the site to redevelop to a retail or restaurant use that could benefit from proximity to Costco and Randall Road.

**Site D** The Kane County Fairgrounds property is home to the annual Kane County Fair, and throughout the year hosts other events, including dog training, expos, and a flea market. The site is highly visible and with most of the activities internalized, does little to capitalize on high traffic counts and the commercial potential of Randall Road. The City should work cooperatively with the owners, encouraging them to explore either a) development of commercial uses along the Randall Road frontage; or b) relocation to another site in the County to facilitate the redevelopment of the entire site.

**Site E** At the intersection of Randall Road and Lincoln Highway is a strip center and Moose Lodge #1368. This site has great visibility but poor access and the current development fails to maximize the location’s potential. The City should encourage the property owners to consolidate their parcels to facilitate redevelopment of a larger magnitude that would maximize this location’s potential.

**Site F** Situated between the Meijer on Randall Road and the Kane County Government Center is a 55-acre site known as Bricher Commons. Portions of the site have excellent visibility and frontage to Lincoln Highway, however not all of the site can capitalize on the visibility and access that IL Route 38 provides. The northern areas of the site should develop with commercial uses fronting Lincoln Highway with either multifamily, single-family attached, or offices and commercial services, in the rear and interior of the site.

**Site G** A stormwater detention pond of the Meijer development is located at the intersection of Lincoln Highway (IL Route 38) and Randall Road. The City should encourage Meijer to explore vaulting detention and/or reducing its parking lot to facilitate the development at this key intersection.

**Site H** The Jewel-Osco is an active grocery store providing nearby residents with access to daily necessities. Situated between the old St. Charles Mall site and Randall Road, the store is a neighborhood commercial use located on a regional commercial corridor. Through either a land-swap or incorporating the site into the larger redevelopment of the St. Charles Mall, the grocery use could be located further east with strong orientation to Lincoln Highway/IL 38 allowing the Randall Road frontage to develop more intensely maximizing its location along the regional corridor.

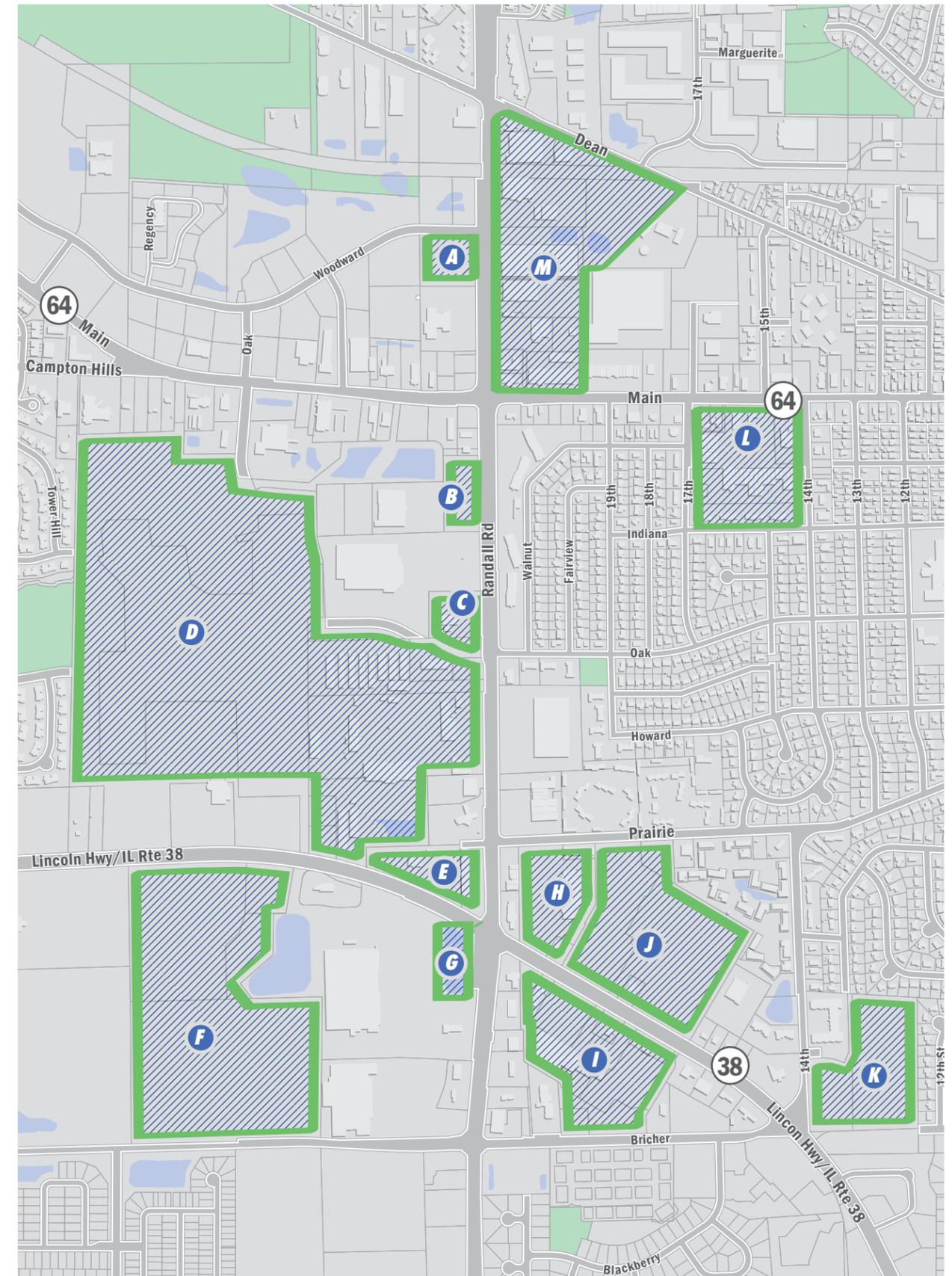
**Site I** The Tri-City Center is a neighborhood scaled shopping commercial center with strong orientation to Lincoln Highway and limited visibility from Randall Road. The mall has struggled to stay competitive and is characterized by excessive vacancies. Redevelopment of the site should explore repositioning the site towards Randall Road, which averages 39,000 cars per day (Lincoln Highway averages only 17,000). Redevelopment of the site should also explore improving the site’s visibility and access to Randall Road by acquiring and eliminating some of the existing outlot buildings.

**Site J** This 30-acre site may represent the most significant redevelopment opportunity within the Randall Road corridor. Despite great potential, the opposition voiced by some members of the St. Charles community to the St. Charles Towne Centre proposal highlights the complexity and sensitivity of the site’s future development. Throughout the outreach process, residents voiced different ideas for the site, underscoring the fact that the community remains split on the best use of the site. On the following page, this Plan presents 3 different alternatives for the site’s redevelopment. It is important to note that the final development option should be market viable. Due to the significance and complexity of this site, any redevelopment proposal should be subject to the Planned Unit Development approval process.

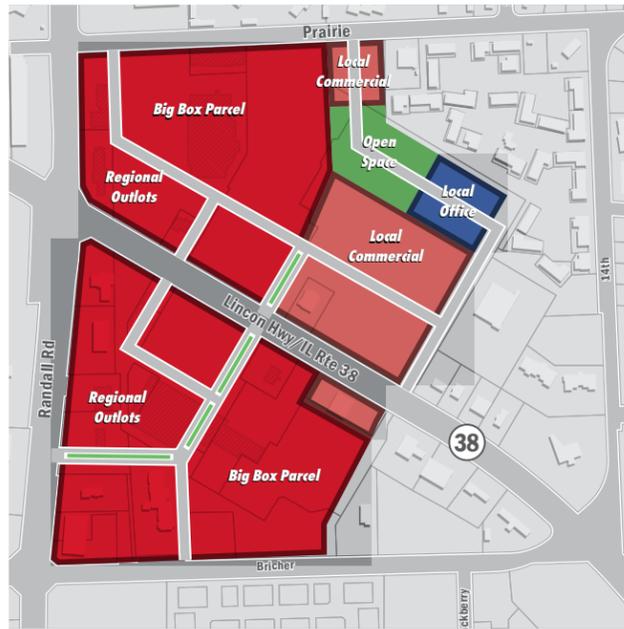
**Site K** Known as the Anderson PUD, this 17-acre site is located at the intersection of Lincoln Highway and Bricher/14th. The southwest corner of this site is situated at a signalized intersection and is well suited for neighborhood commercial development. The remainder of the site should develop as a mix of residential densities, transitioning from higher densities on the south and west to lower densities compatible to the adjacent residential uses to the north and east.

**Site L** The Valley Shopping Center is outdated and struggling to compete with other commercial areas in the City. Its depth is inconsistent with other commercial sites along the Main Street Corridor and the site should consider partly reverting back to residential uses.

**Site M** This area of Randall Road can be best described as a fragmented mix of uses that fail to create any synergy among one another. The railroad that once divided this area has been abandoned, and the potential for Woodward Drive to connect across Randall Road to 17th Street and Dean Street would allow the property owners in this area to create a sizeable cohesive development. As a primary gateway site to the City of St. Charles, the site presents an opportunity for the City to maximize the potential of this key area along Randall Road.



# St. Charles Mall (Site H, I and J) Redevelopment Alternatives

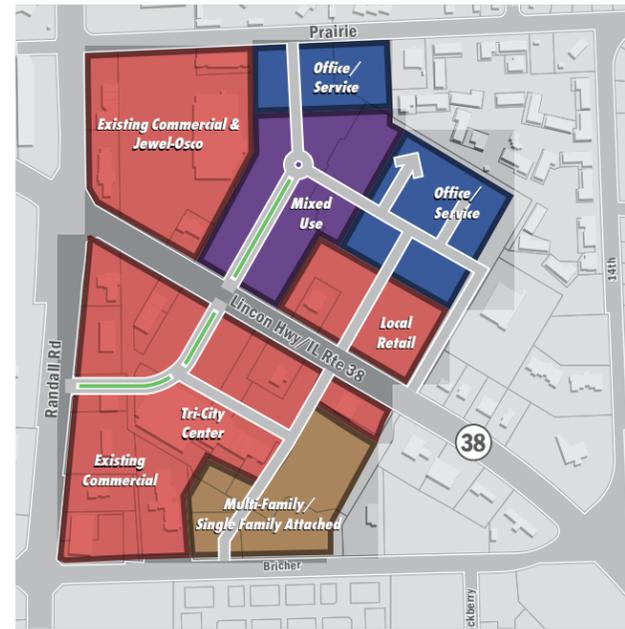


## Regional Repositioning

This concept illustrates how the redevelopment area can be repositioned to better capitalize on Randall Road as a regional commercial corridor. By relocating both the Jewel-Osco, along with portions of the Tri-City Center to front Lincoln Highway, deeper development parcels can be created that front on Randall Road. These new lots would utilize existing Randall Road development as out lots, and could accommodate regional big-box development, however consideration should be given to taking some of this development offline to improve exposure and access to Randall Road. Other small-format development could be developed along the Lincoln Highway frontage to serve nearby residents and patrons from throughout the region traveling along or shopping within the Randall Road corridor.

## Considerations

- » Can accommodate regional commercial development and big-box, as well as other regional uses such as entertainment, educational facilities, etc.
- » Preserves much of the existing out-lot development fronting on Randall Road
- » Represents no significant deviation from current Randall Road development pattern or function
- » Relocates local retail and services
- » Adds no unique character elements to Randall Road corridor
- » Competing with established retail areas on Randall Road
- » Will require additional assembly and/or cooperation with other property owners
- » Provides adequate parking, appropriately screened and landscaped to appear subtle and discreet from surrounding neighborhoods



## West Neighborhood Center

This alternative concept preserves much of the existing development along Randall Road and recognizes the limited commercial potential of the mall site should this occur. The Tri-City Center remains, hopeful that the Mall site's redevelopment will foster more synergy along the corridor. The eastern portions of both the mall site and the Tri-City Center site would be redeveloped as a series of mixed use or multi-family/townhouse nodes that provide local retail and services along Lincoln Highway. Densities and housing types should be mindful of market viability, reflecting the need for more aging and affluent households. Both residential and commercial areas should feature attractive pedestrian environments as well as appropriate transitions to surrounding neighborhoods. Redevelopment should be sensitive to differences in building height to avoid harsh transitions.

## Considerations

- » Preserves existing development commercial development
- » Creates the small opportunity for a unique "Main Street" environment
- » Provides the opportunity for new residential units creating a potential customer base for businesses
- » Does not take full advantage of the prominence of Randall Road as a regional commercial corridor
- » Tri-City revitalization may be dependent on the success of the Mall redevelopment
- » Does not require site assembly or participation of other property owners



## Comprehensive Mixed Use Center

This alternative concept illustrates a redevelopment effort coordinated between both the old mall site and the Tri-City Center site. Randall Road remains fronted with existing shallow-lot retail, while Lincoln Highway/IL Route 38 consists of mixed use development. Interior portions of each block could accommodate a number of uses, while peripheral edges of the redevelopment area accommodate multi-family/townhouse development that transitions to surrounding neighborhoods. Redevelopment should be sensitive to differences in building height as to avoid inappropriate transitions. Open space establishes a framework throughout the site and provides a unique amenity.

## Considerations

- » Offers the greatest potential to alter the character of the Randall Road and Lincoln Highway corridors
- » Integrates a variety of uses that may be more responsive to changing market trends
- » Provides the opportunity to fully integrate infrastructure and open space systems into development
- » Represents a comprehensive master planned development concept that can be difficult to effectively implement
- » Replaces a majority of the existing investment in the development area
- » Requires policy and regulatory changes to foster implementation
- » Will require additional assembly and/or cooperation with other property owners
- » Allows residential uses above commercial uses, but not stand-alone multi-family buildings
- » Promotes multi-family products and amenities that foster owner occupied units, such as covered parking, high quality finishes, integrated recreation, etc.

## Concept Legend

- Regionally-Oriented Retail
- Locally-Oriented Retail
- Mixed Use
- Office/Secondary Commercial
- Multi-Family/Single Family Attached
- Integrated Open Space

## Potential Redevelopment Models

### Single Family Attached/Multi-Family



### Local Retail



### Mixed Use



### Integrated Open Space



## Regional Repositioning Alternative



### Potential Improvements

- 1 Local retail with possible upper-story office (15,000 s.f. footprint)
- 2 Local retail with possible upper-story office (46,000 s.f. footprint)
- 3 Redevelopment of existing Meijer Detention for out-lot commercial (16,000 s.f. total)
- 4 Out-lot commercial development (7,700 s.f.)
- 5 Out-lot commercial development (10,000 s.f.)
- 6 Out-lot commercial development (8,000 s.f.)
- 7 Regional retail development (144,000 s.f.)
- 8 Local commercial development (20,000 s.f. total)
- 9 Stormwater detention area/open space buffer against residential properties
- 10 Local commercial development (65,000 s.f. total)
- 11 Local office/service development (18,000 s.f.)
- 12 Local commercial anchor (67,000 s.f.)
- 13 Existing out-lot development
- 14 Out-lot commercial development (6,400 s.f.)
- 15 Coordinated intersection and access between commercial centers
- 16 Existing out-lot development
- 17 Buildings removed to provide views and primary entry into regional shopping center
- 18 Existing commercial and hotel development
- 19 Regional retail development (105,000 s.f.)
- 20 Local commercial development (66,000 s.f. total)

*This figure represents an illustrative development concept for Catalyst Sites E, G, H, I and J, and includes the former St. Charles Mall area. The concept is intended to illustrate one possible approach for redevelopment that satisfies the goals, objectives and guidelines as expressed in the St. Charles Comprehensive Plan. It is not intended to express action on behalf of the City to acquire and redevelop privately-held properties. The final format of redevelopment for this site will depend upon local property ownership, unforeseen site constraints, and market forces at the time of redevelopment.*





# East Gateway Subarea Plan



### East Gateway Subarea Plan

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

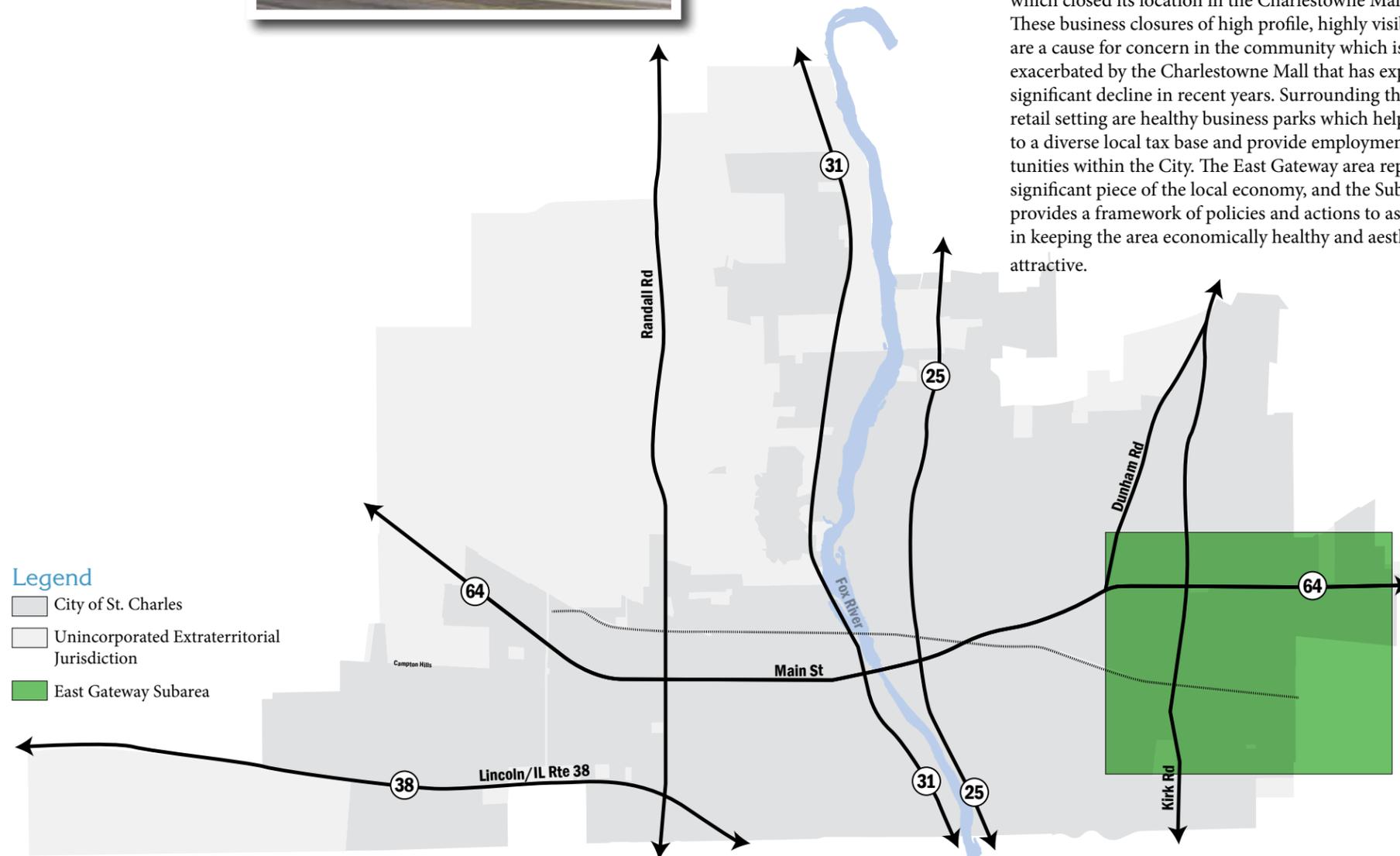
### Subarea Goals

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

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

### Subarea Objectives

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



## East Gateway Improvement Plan

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

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

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

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

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

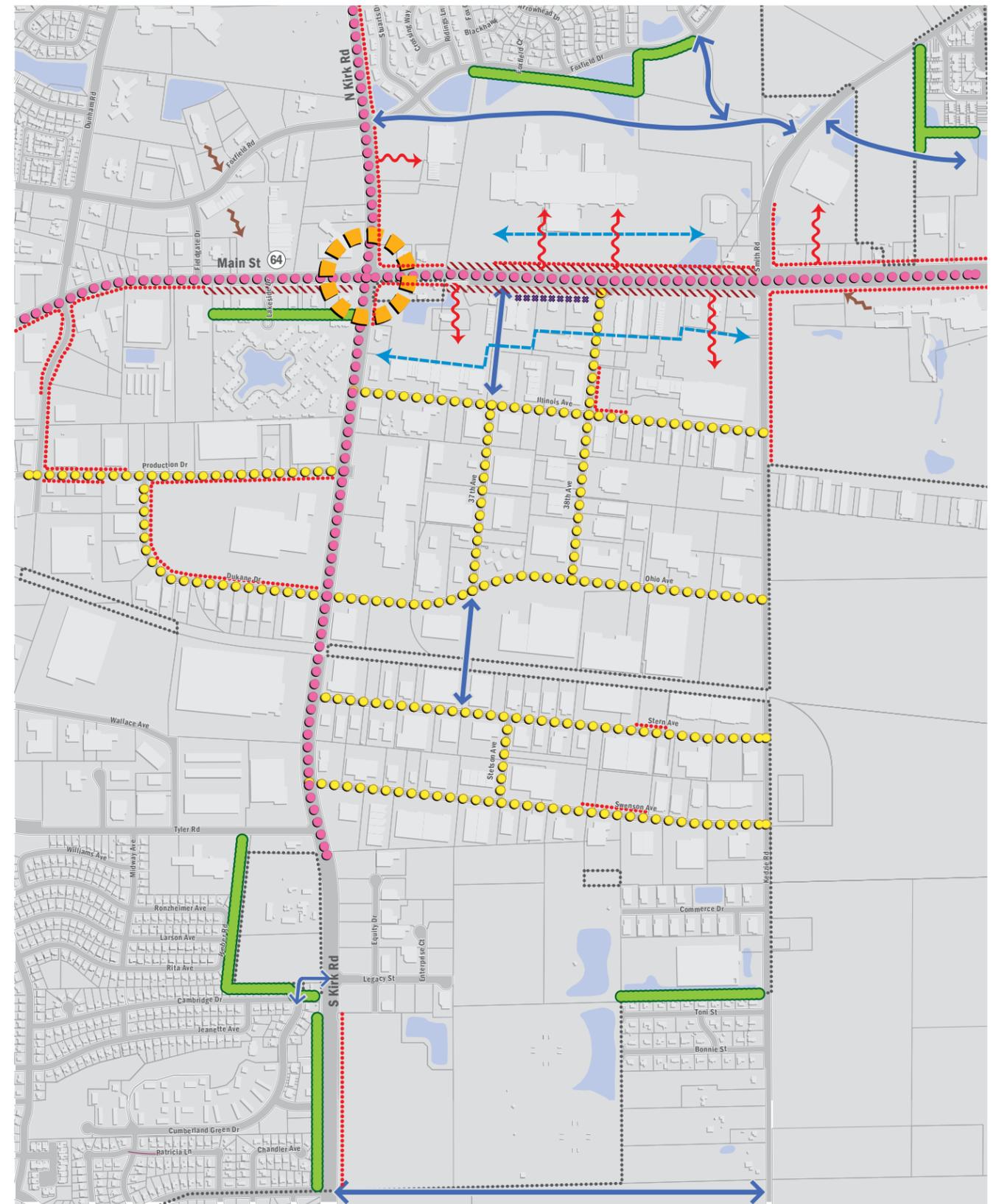
**Sidewalk Connections.** Sidewalks and paths should connect the front entrances of buildings to the sidewalk network within the public right-of-way and bus stops along transit routes within the Subarea.

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

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

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

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



## Catalyst Sites

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

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

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

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

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

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

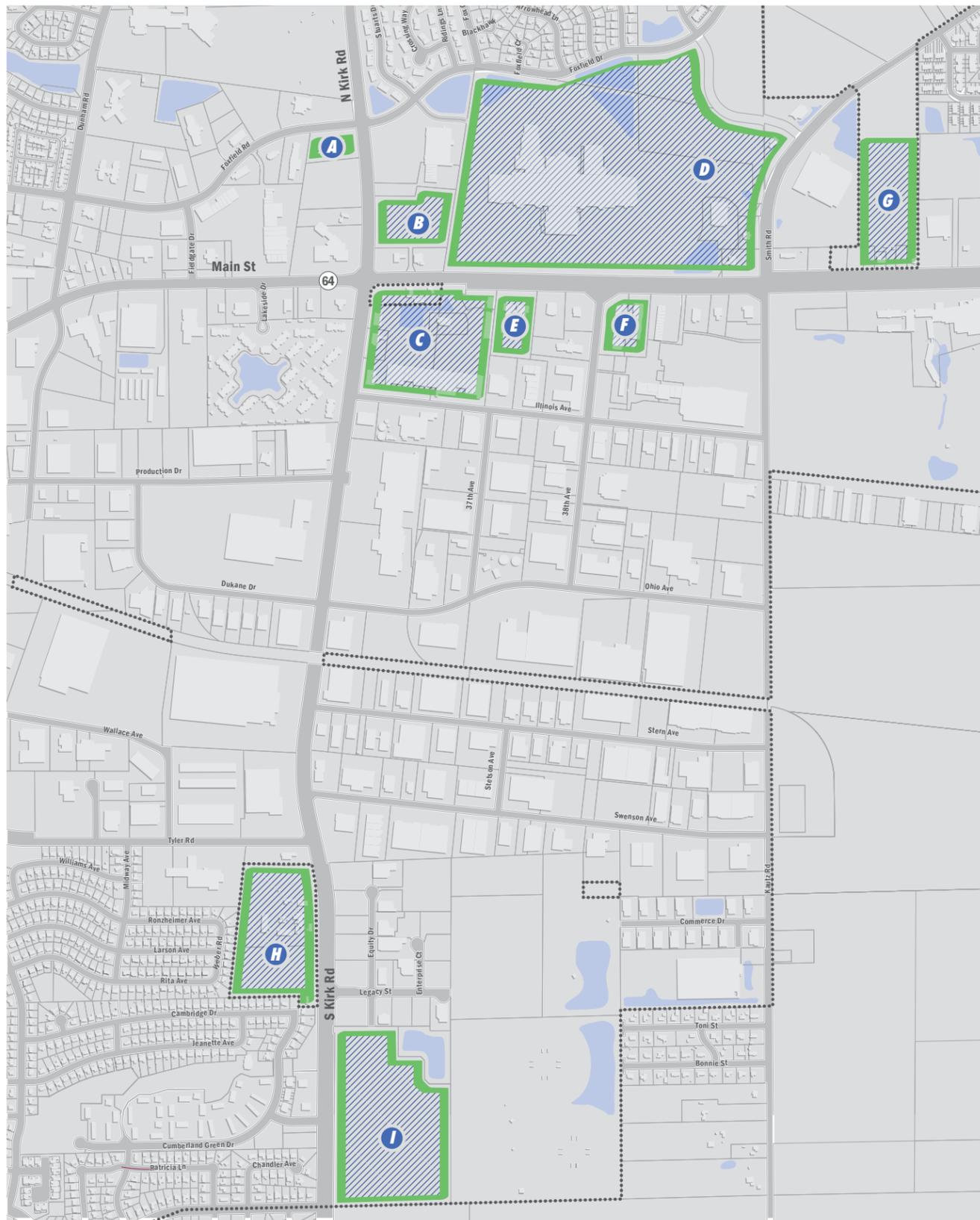
**Site E** This site consists of the mixed use building home to offices and a restaurant. The current placement of the building is inconsistent with neighboring sites and its placement blocks views and disrupts synergies. The site's redevelopment should provide retail opportunities on the Main Street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

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

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

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

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



## Charlestowne Mall Framework Plan

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

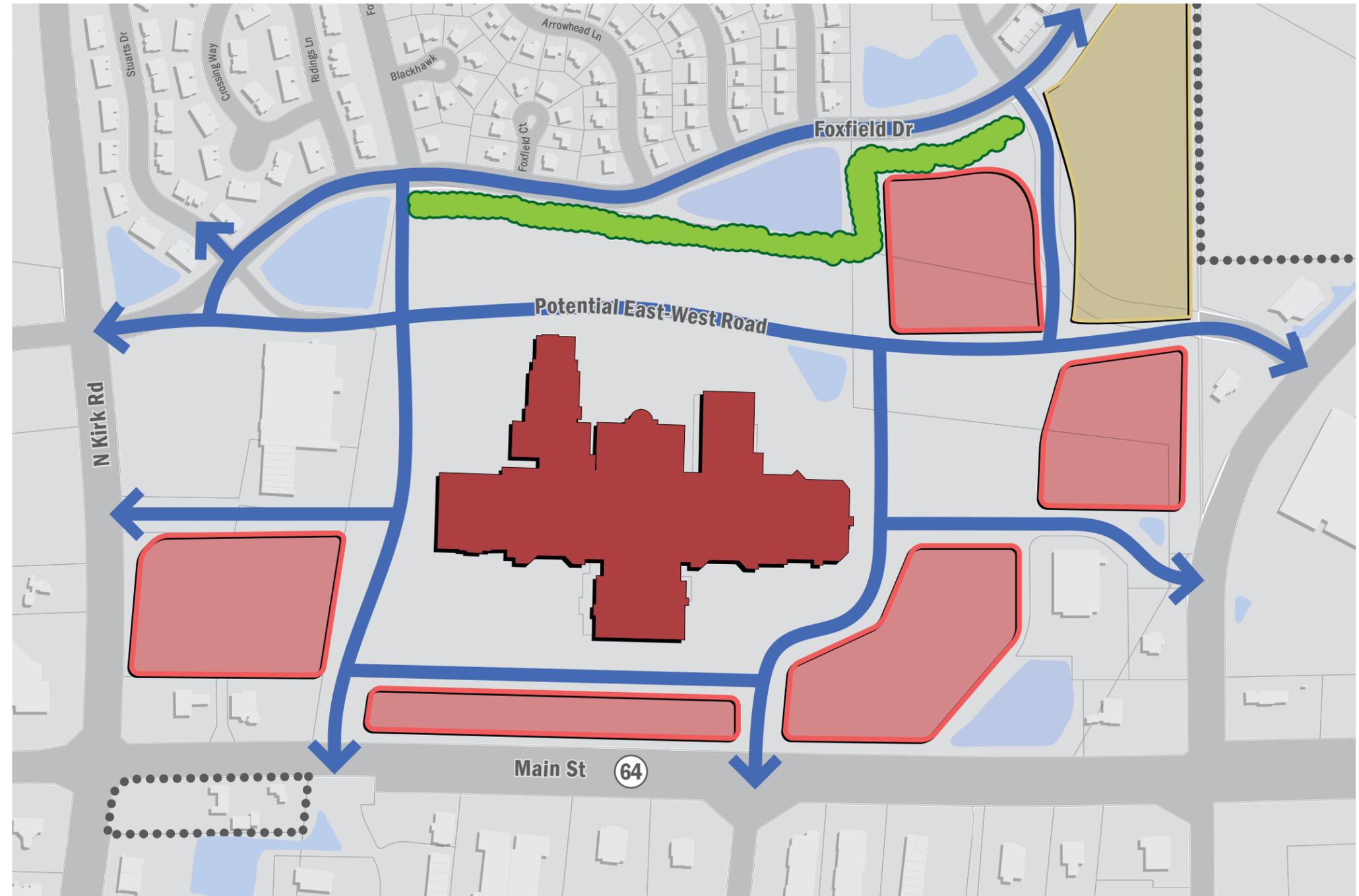
 **Proposed Street or Circulator.** These include public streets and on-site circulators designed to enhance on-site access and mitigate the impacts of traffic on surrounding neighborhoods. The key recommendation is a new street that would run along the north side of the mall property and make Foxfield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

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

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

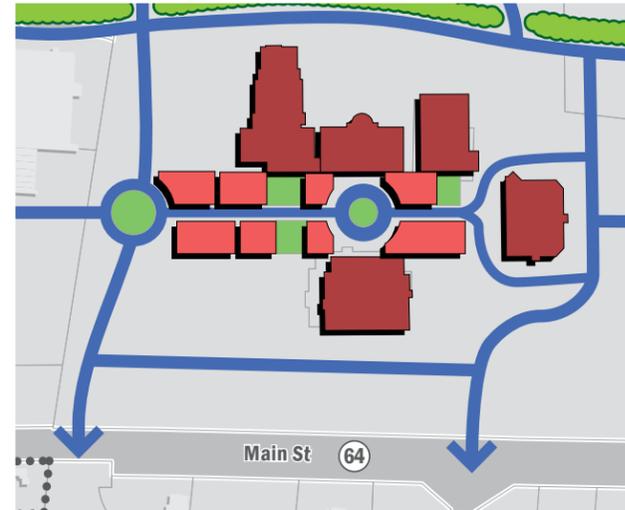
 **Natural Buffer/Screening.** Screening and buffering should be provided between commercial and residential uses. This will minimize the impacts of non-residential uses on existing and future neighborhoods.

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



**Legend**

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

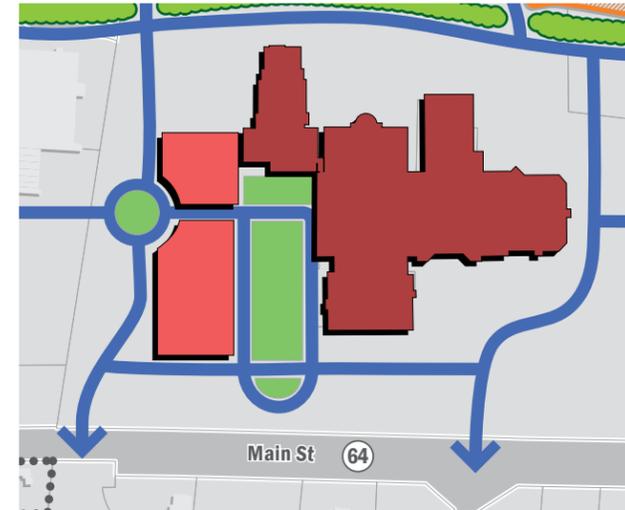


**Option A**

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

**Considerations**

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



**Option B**

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

**Considerations**

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



**Option C**

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

**Considerations**

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

**Charlestowne Mall Repositioning Alternatives**

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

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

## Main Street Shopping District Concept



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

### Potential Improvements

- 1** Retained Anchor Tenants
- 2** Roof Removed to Create "Open Air" Shopping Center
- 3** Mixed-traffic "Main Street" Shopping Corridor
- 4** Central Plaza and Event Space
- 5** Architectural Elements that Stress Public Spaces
- 6** Commercial Storefront Facade Enhancements
- 7** Pocket Plazas in Front of Major Tenants
- 8** Enhanced Landscaping in Plazas and on "Main Street"
- 9** More Efficient On-site Circulation
- 10** New Parking Lot Landscaping
- 11** On-site Green Space and Stormwater Management
- 12** Comprehensive Pedestrian Network





# Main Street Subarea Plan



## Main Street Subarea Plan

The Main Street subarea connects many of the City's most prominent areas or amenities. At its western end are a variety of uses clustered near the intersection with Randall Road. Just over one mile west on Main Street, Downtown St. Charles and the Fox River mark the heart of the community. East of Downtown, the Main Street corridor is home to traditional lots hosting small commercial developments that serve local needs. Further east, Main Street provides access to regional shopping and industrial activities. One of the inherent challenges in improving Main Street is the fact that it includes such a diverse spectrum of lot types, block configurations, land uses and contexts. Fortunately, several specific issues along Main Street related to land use and development are already addressed in the other subarea plans within this document. As a result, the Main Street Subarea Plan focuses specifically on local transportation and accessibility issues. By addressing these issues, the Main Street Subarea Plan, other subarea plans, and City-wide plans that are all parts of the Comprehensive Plan document will present a holistic set of improvement recommendations to maximize Main Street's potential as both a cross-town connector and local commercial corridor.

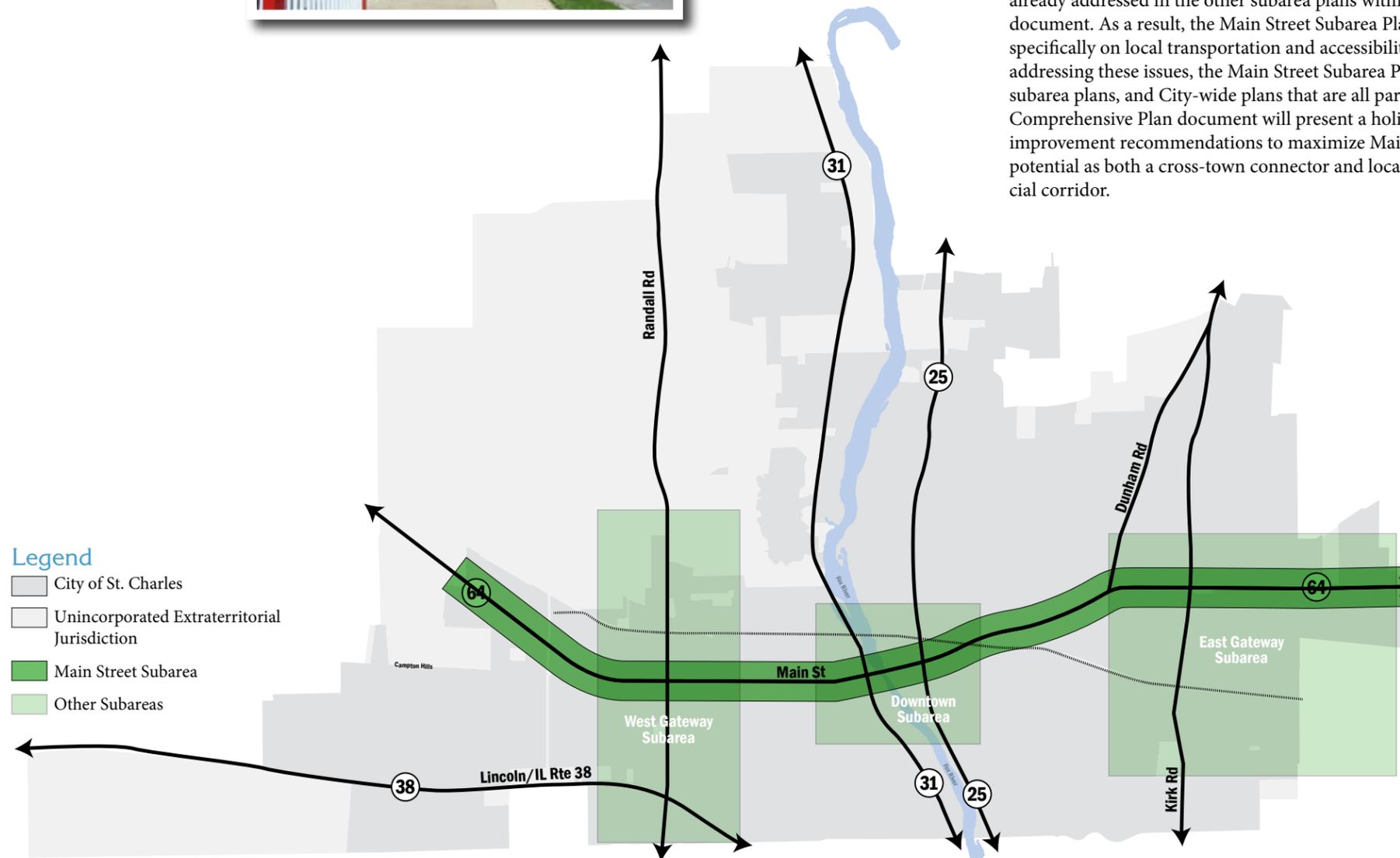
## Subarea Vision

The Main Street subarea represents an opportunity to create a corridor that enhances the character of the community as whole. The overall vision for the subarea includes the following elements:

- » A corridor that presents a unified image and identity for St. Charles, but recognizes the individual character of the areas through which it passes.
- » Optimal access to uses and destinations throughout the full length the City.
- » Access and traffic management at the individual site level in order to create a more efficient corridor at the City-wide level.

## Subarea Goals

- » Enhanced traffic management and site access through improvements such as curb cut reductions, on-site circulation and cross-access between adjacent lots, and signage and wayfinding.
- » Accommodation of multi-modal transportation infrastructure, including sidewalks and bicycle paths, to enhance local access for non-motorists.
- » Greater connectivity to adjacent neighborhoods so that residents have more direct access to basic goods and services provided along the corridor.
- » Improved community and corridor character through the use of gateways, streetscaping improvements, landscaping, and other elements.



## Main Street Subarea Improvement Plan

The Main Street corridor faces many challenges as local and City-wide mobility become more critical to providing access to necessary goods and services. The following is a menu of potential improvements that, collectively, can create a more efficient and safer corridor for multiple modes of movement. Some of the improvements are on-going or already planned, while others represent new concepts designed to take advantage of other investment in the local transportation network. It is important to note that, while some recommended improvements on their own seem minor, their incremental benefit is amplified as other recommendations are implemented.

The following pages illustrate where these improvements may be applicable along the entire length of the Main Street corridor in St. Charles.

 **Existing Traffic Signal.** Traffic controls currently in place in order to manage flow along the corridor, provide appropriate opportunities for entry from intersecting streets, and control the speed of vehicular traffic in the community.

 **Proposed Traffic Signal.** Potential new traffic signals that would provide controlled access to key destinations, eliminate extended stretches of high-speed traffic flow, and ensure that the larger transportation network operates efficiently.

 **Roadway Connection.** Proposed new street segments that would create greater access between Main Street and surrounding areas, and/or alleviate traffic volumes and congestion on other segments of the roadway network. This includes a segment of the abandoned rail corridor that would connect the intersection of Main Street and 11th Avenue to Tyler Road just north of Stern Avenue.

 **Intersection Realignment.** Proposed improvements to intersection geometries that could include new dedicated turning lanes, reconfiguration of side streets to create more logical intersections, the minor relocation of Main Street to enhance traffic flow or visibility and safety, etc.

 **IDOT Capital Improvement Area.** Segments of roadway identified in IDOT's capital improvement program to undergo widening, signalization improvements, crosswalk enhancements, etc.

 **Roadway Widening (Under Construction).** On-going roadway widening to either five or six lanes as part of IDOT's capital improvement program

 **Extend Landscape Median.** Proposed extension of a center landscaped median into other portions of the Main Street corridor in order to improve corridor character and aesthetics, yet provide minimal impacts to turning movements and roadway operations.

 **Curb Cut Reduction/Consolidation.** Proposed removal of excessive curb cuts through consolidation or management of on-site circulation in order to minimize conflict points on Main Street while maintaining on-site circulation and parking capacity.

 **Proposed Cross-Access.** Proposed cross-access between the parking areas of adjacent development lots in order to enhance on-site circulation and foster the removal or consolidation of curb cuts as described above.

 **Sidewalk Infill.** Proposed new public sidewalk segments that would result in a comprehensive sidewalk network providing for a safe and well-connected pedestrian network along Main Street and to adjacent neighborhoods and destinations.

 **On-site Pedestrian Connection.** Proposed pedestrian connections on private development lots that provide safe and direct access through parking or landscaped areas from the public sidewalk to the entry point of uses along the Main Street corridor.

 **Enhanced Pedestrian Crossing.** Proposed improvements to pedestrian crosswalks, including more visible crosswalk striping, pedestrian crossing and countdown signals, lighting, push-button phasing, etc.

 **Existing/Future Trail or Bikeway.** Existing or proposed trail segments intended to enhance non-motorized mobility by providing access to regional trail segments, key destinations in the community, or sidewalks and bike paths in the public right-of-way.

 **Roadway Surface Diamond Grind.** Proposed diamond ground of roadway surface in order to maintain the safety of the roadway while reducing noise associated with traffic flow through Downtown St. Charles.

 **Parking Lot/Site Screening.** Proposed installation of decorative landscaping and/or fencing in order to enhance the character of the corridor by mitigating the negative impacts of large parking areas or unsightly activities, while maintaining visibility for use dependent upon visual access to signage or structures.

 **Transit Activity Node.** Specific areas or uses that should be given special consideration in terms of access to transit services in order to capitalize on their intensity and proximity to the Main Street corridor.



### Existing and Recommended Improvements

-  **Existing Traffic Signal.** Traffic controls currently in place to manage flow, provide opportunities for entry from intersecting streets, and control vehicle speed.
-  **Proposed Traffic Signal.** Potential new traffic signals to provide controlled access to key destinations, eliminate high-speed traffic, and ensure efficiency.
-  **Roadway Connection.** New street segments to create greater access and/or alleviate traffic volumes and congestion.
-  **Curb Cut Reduction/Consolidation.** Removal of excessive curb cuts to minimize conflict points.
-  **Proposed Cross-Access.** Cross-access between adjacent parking areas to enhance on-site circulation.
-  **Sidewalk Infill.** New sidewalk segments for a safe and well-connected pedestrian network.

-  **On-site Pedestrian Connection.** Pedestrian connections on private lots for safe and direct access through parking or landscaped areas.
-  **Enhanced Pedestrian Crossing.** Improvements to crosswalks including striping, crossing and countdown signals, lighting, push-button phasing, etc.
-  **Existing/Future Trail or Bikeway.** Trail segments to provide access to regional trails, key destinations, or sidewalks and bike paths.
-  **Parking Lot/Site Screening.** Decorative landscaping and/or fencing to enhance the character of the corridor and mitigate the negative impacts of large parking areas or unsightly activities.
-  **Transit Activity Node.** Specific areas/uses that should receive special attention to transit access to capitalize on their intensity and proximity to Main Street.



## Chapter 8 Subarea Plans

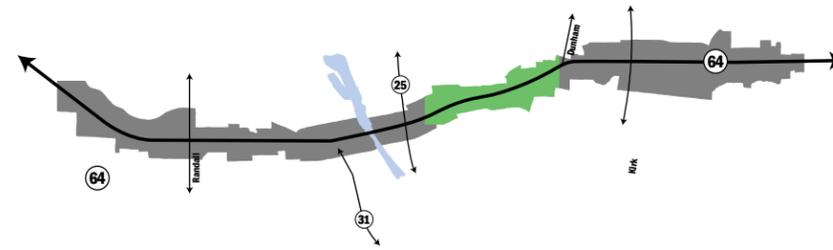
### Existing and Recommended Improvements

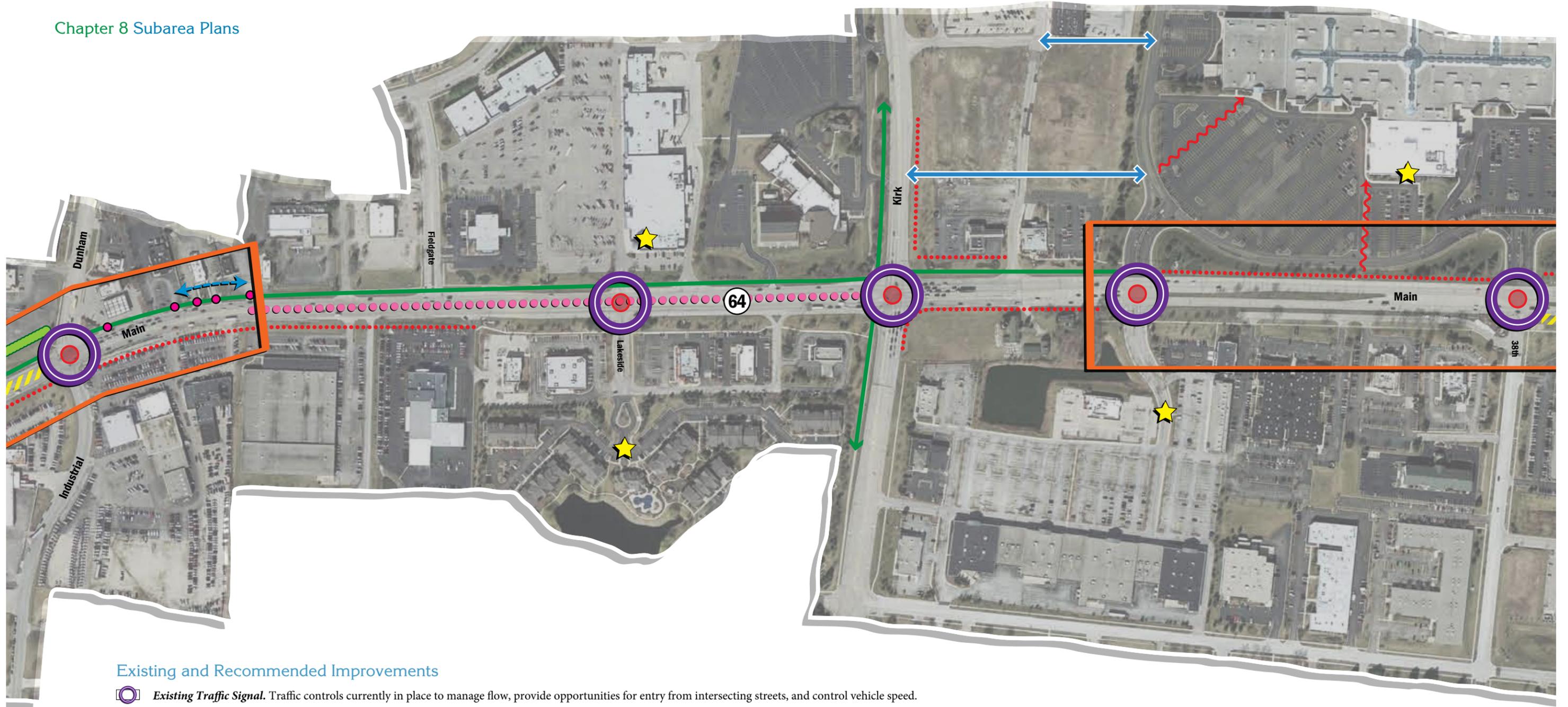
-  **Existing Traffic Signal.** Traffic controls currently in place to manage flow, provide opportunities for entry from intersecting streets, and control vehicle speed.
-  **IDOT Capital Improvement Area.** Roadway identified by IDOT to undergo widening, signalization improvements, crosswalk enhancements, etc.
-  **Roadway Widening (Under Construction).** On-going roadway widening to either five or six lanes as part of IDOT's capital improvement program.
-  **Curb Cut Reduction/Consolidation.** Removal of excessive curb cuts to minimize conflict points.
-  **Proposed Cross-Access.** Cross-access between adjacent parking areas to enhance on-site circulation.
-  **Enhanced Pedestrian Crossing.** Improvements to crosswalks including striping, crossing and countdown signals, lighting, push-button phasing, etc.
-  **Existing/Future Trail or Bikeway.** Trail segments to provide access to regional trails, key destinations, or sidewalks and bike paths.
-  **Roadway Surface Diamond Grind.** Proposed roadway surface grinding to maintain safety while reducing noise.
-  **Parking Lot/Site Screening.** Decorative landscaping and/or fencing to enhance the character of the corridor and mitigate the negative impacts of large parking areas or unsightly activities.
-  **Transit Activity Node.** Specific areas/uses that should receive special attention to transit access to capitalize on their intensity and proximity to Main Street.



### Existing and Recommended Improvements

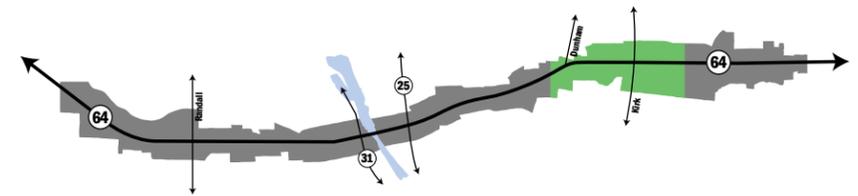
-  **Existing Traffic Signal.** Traffic controls currently in place to manage flow, provide opportunities for entry from intersecting streets, and control vehicle speed.
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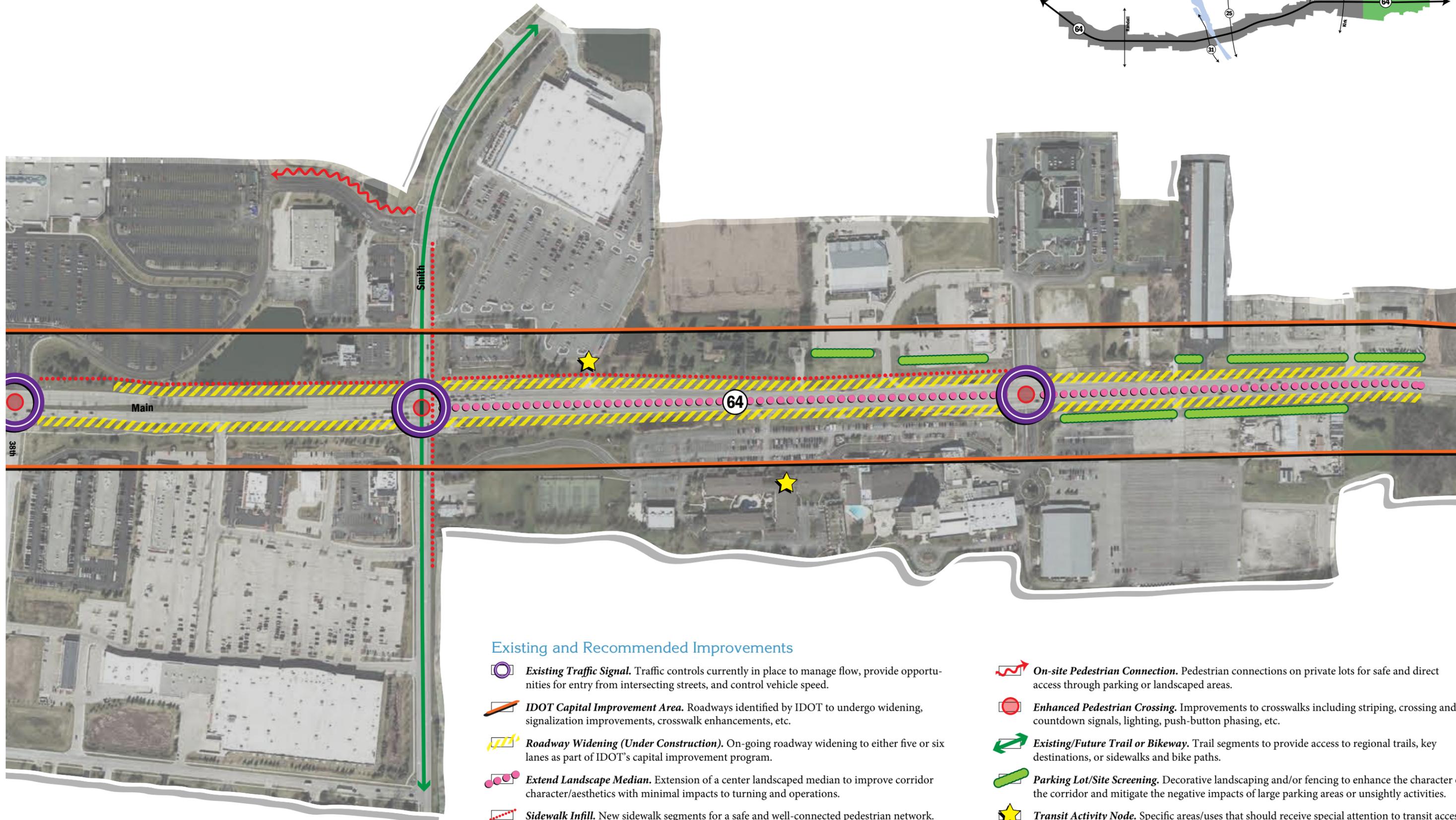
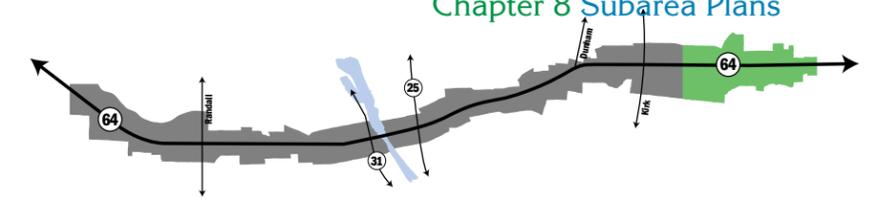




**Existing and Recommended Improvements**

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-  **Extend Landscape Median.** Extension of a center landscaped median to improve corridor character/aesthetics with minimal impacts to turning and operations.
-  **Curb Cut Reduction/Consolidation.** Removal of excessive curb cuts to minimize conflict points.
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**Existing and Recommended Improvements**

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# Culture & Identity Plan 9

City of St. Charles, Illinois 2013 Comprehensive Plan



# 9 Culture & Identity Plan

The Culture and Identity Plan recognizes the importance of arts and cultural components of the community, overall community character and aesthetics, and how these different attributes work together to establish an “identity” for St. Charles. Throughout the planning process, many residents and business owners indicated a desire to see the City’s unique, distinct identity and “sense of place” preserved. This chapter aims to assist the City in guiding planning and policy decisions to maintain the appearance and image of the community. The overall goal is to keep or improve the character and overall attractiveness of the City through landscaping, pedestrian amenities, entry features, development design criteria, signage improvements, and more.

The City also recognizes the importance of arts and culture in shaping the fabric of the St. Charles community for residents, businesses, and visitors. Arts and culture, combined with other community facilities, services, and events, form the identity and image of the City and help to shape the St. Charles experience.

Together, these components direct how St. Charles is perceived by its residents as well as by individuals from throughout the greater Chicagoland region, State of Illinois and beyond. This chapter provides recommendations regarding several different components related to community identity and community culture for both the long-term and short-term.



*...a great community in which men can live, can work, can be educated, can worship, and can play.*

*-Legend of the Fours Sons of Charlemagne*

## Development Character and Urban Design

Today's St. Charles is a result of a historical legacy built on specific influences, just as today's investment in the City will directly define its future character. The following paragraphs describe the key character-defining elements of the community, and how future growth might define the image of St. Charles as a City both built on its history and responsive to contemporary demands of residents, businesses and visitors.

### The Fox River

The Fox River is an omnipresent element in St. Charles. Because it is so integrated into the physical fabric and civic life in St. Charles, it appears in multiple chapters throughout the Comprehensive Plan. Early development patterns were shaped by its alignment, and industrial, recreational and environmental systems have all thrived because of it. Within the context of the Culture and Identity Plan, the river serves as a cornerstone feature of the City's identity. Changes that diminish this role should be minimized, and those that enhance it should be encouraged.

As development or redevelopment occurs along the riverfront, careful consideration should be given to the factors related to physical access to the riverfront, the visual aesthetics of the river and surrounding development, critical viewsheds from different portions of the surrounding context, and the environmental quality of the river corridor.

### Neighborhood Character

St. Charles' neighborhoods provide a broad spectrum of housing types and character. The City should promote the preservation of existing neighborhood character through infill standards and the preservation of parkway landscaping. New neighborhoods should reflect or establish a unique local character defined by characteristics of the development area.

### Commercial Character

The Downtown, East Gateway, West Gateway, Main Street and smaller local commercial areas vary greatly from the character of the built environment and markets they serve. However, they all represent areas where many people, from St. Charles and beyond, experience the City. Individual commercial districts should strive to reflect a unique but unified character. Chapter 10 of this Plan sets forth a series of development guidelines that address site design, access, architecture, landscaping, and other character-defining elements for commercial development. These guidelines should be applied to all commercial districts, with appropriate flexibility provided for unique local character and identity.

### Streetscaping & Public Art

An attractive streetscape can have a tremendous impact on the overall character, image, and identity of a community. Although the type and scale of streetscaping will vary throughout different areas of the City, a unifying design theme or design element should be used for consistency. The existing downtown streetscape improvements have been focused on a pedestrian scale, while also creating an attractive atmosphere as viewed from a vehicular perspective. Other portions of the City could benefit from investment in the public realm. Additionally, larger private development should be encouraged and incentivized to design and implement internal street systems as Complete, Green Streets in accordance with recommendations elsewhere in this document. Shade trees, walkways, permeable pavement systems, bio-retention, as well as signage and other furnishings should all be done to reinforce St. Charles identity and overall infrastructure performance.

Public art is an element or quality of the cityscape that can help define the character and quality of a place, and reinforce local priorities and pride. As the Pride of the Fox, some of St. Charles public spaces are adorned with foxes, local stone and metal, references to the river, the Native American pre-settlement history, and other natural and cultural references. The integration of these and other local natural and cultural references throughout the public realm in various ways will help to amplify the visual and spiritual connection to the Fox River and bridge the past with the future. The employment of local/regional artists and craftsmen as part of public improvement projects (as well as private investment in infrastructure) will help to further beautify and differentiate St. Charles in an authentic way.

### Landscaping, Buffering, and Screening

Active, healthy neighborhoods have a mix of uses so that residents can live, work, and play without having to travel unreasonable distances, and so that visitors can enjoy the full range of what a neighborhood has to offer. This means that urban corridors often include business uses that abut less intensive areas and neighborhoods. When service areas, utilities and mechanical systems, dumpster areas, and other necessary but unsightly elements are adjacent to residential properties, or detract from the overall character and appearance of the corridor or community, screening should be used to enclose or hide these site activities from public view. Careful consideration should be given to the impacts of service or utility activities and infrastructure on the appearance and image of commercial areas and neighborhoods.

### Recommendations

As development or redevelopment occurs along the Fox River, careful consideration should be given to the following factors:

- » To the greatest extent possible, physical access to open spaces and trails along the Fox River should be established or maintained.
- » High-quality design should ensure that development along the river is attractive, and that critical viewsheds are preserved for all to enjoy.
- » Existing or potential new environmental impacts should be mitigated through on-site filtering of stormwater before discharge into the river, preservation of adjacent trees and native plantings that reduce erosion, and the prohibition of uses that negatively impact the river corridor through air/water quality impacts, noise, access to sunlight, etc.

- » New neighborhood development or local infill should respect the surrounding context in the design of street networks, infrastructure, housing stock, and other built elements. Infill development should strive to reflect the context in terms of site design, massing and scale, and architectural design. New neighborhoods should be designed to integrate local site characteristics, such as existing trees, unique topography, local building materials, etc. In all areas of the City, efforts should be made to preserve the tree canopy and other character-defining elements.
- » Commercial development should integrate high-quality design and construction with an emphasis on site design, building orientation, architecture, and building materials. The City should continue to enforce Design Guidelines and offer the Façade Improvement Program in Downtown, and consider implementing a similar program elsewhere in the City.
- » A comprehensive streetscape program should be explored for the City's key corridors and gateway areas. This streetscape plan should integrate green infrastructure, local branding, pedestrian and bicycle-scale use, locally-inspired art and craft, and other elements that have been discussed elsewhere in this document. Although streetscape elements may and should vary in different locations, the overall themes and performance characteristics should be consistent.
- » The City should continue to explore opportunities for public art throughout the community at both City-wide and local levels. Community gateways could include artwork that announces entry to the City, while significant open spaces or event locations could include public artwork that reflects City-wide values or vision. Local public art could be installed throughout neighborhoods to reinforce St. Charles' identity as a mosaic of unique neighborhoods within the larger context of a community.
- » The City should require and enforce the use of buffering techniques, such as setbacks, landscaping, fencing, and berms, where they can negatively impact surrounding development. These techniques can mitigate nuisances such as noise, light, or building scale.

## Arts and Culture

Activities are just as critical to defining local character as the built environment. Activities provide the reason for residents and visitors to gather and be a part of a unique experience. The following paragraphs describe the ways in which St. Charles can build upon its current arts and culture community to strengthen its image as a sophisticated and important City.

### Performance Venues & Museums

Performance spaces are important amenities that support arts and culture in a community while providing an additional marketing tool to attract visitors and new residents into the City. The Arcada Theater on Main Street in Downtown, built in 1926 to show Vaudeville acts and silent movies, was restored in 2005. The Dellora Norris Cultural Arts Center on Dunham Road, founded in 1978 and partially funded by the Norris foundation, includes an art gallery and a 1,000-seat theater. Pheasant Run Resort's theater is home to the Fox Valley Repertory. The Steel Beam Theater on Main Street offers classes, children's theater, and high quality performances.

The rich history of St. Charles is on display at the St. Charles Heritage Center, which has artifacts and displays spanning from the early days of Native American settlement in the region to the 1950's and beyond. The City should support the mission of the Heritage Center, and strive to expand its exposure.

### Historic Preservation

There are two historic districts in St. Charles: the Central Historic District, and the nearby, smaller Moody Millington Historic District. The City has also identified 37 historic landmarks around these areas, nine of which are included in the National Register of Historic Places. The St. Charles Historic Preservation Commission has developed design guidelines for residential and commercial properties that are landmarks or within the bounds of the historic districts. These areas, as well as others, define the unique character of the community. Historic sites also help define the character of the semi-rural areas surrounding St. Charles. Kane County has designated landmarks within the City's Planning Area, including three along Red Gate Road: Red Gate Farm, Seven Oaks Farm, and the Harlow Hooker Homestead. The farmsteads comprise some of the last remnants of the 32 original Colonel Edward John Baker Farms.

### Civic and Religious Centers

Civic facilities and activities frequently bring together a broad range of people from the St. Charles Community, and represent local investment from the government in the quality of life for its citizens. As a complement to civic facilities, St. Charles has a number of places of worship located throughout the community. Religious institutions contribute to the quality of life for residents and visitors and underscore the importance of religion in the community. These religious institutions are located throughout all areas of the City and consist of almost all denominations.

### Recommendations

The City should support facilities that provide venues for performances, activities, and other events. These are important locations for people to gather and experience a unique activity or place within St. Charles. The City should also partner with performing arts centers and museums to identify opportunities to expand the reach of their services and long-term community investment through educational programs, marketing, and childhood programs.

The City should prioritize the preservation of its historic resources. This can be done through fiscal incentive programs, education and awareness, partnership with outside funding opportunities, and by fostering long-term relationships with developers, designers and contractors who understand and are committed to historic preservation.

The City should ensure that its civic facilities and programs are sustained over time in order to foster community engagement and pride. The City should also work closely with religious entities in order to maintain engagement and dialogue with residents, support local cultural events, and explore opportunities to cooperate regarding programming and facilities.

## Marketing and Branding

Perception is often different than reality, and it is critical that the St. Charles community control the way others perceive it. Marketing and branding is critical in order to celebrate what St. Charles offers and ensure that misperceptions do not create obstacles to investment in the community. The following paragraphs describe ways the City can proactively market the community and establish a positive local and regional identity.

### Establish a Brand

Establishing an identity or "brand" for a city can be challenging. Luckily, building on the Fox River, the story of Charlemagne, and the history of the City, St. Charles already has a strong foundation for a community brand. This represents a clear opportunity to deliver a clear and positive message about the community.

### Gateways, Wayfinding, and Signs

Gateway features announce entry into the community and instantly communicate a sense of character and identity. The City should work with private property owners, in addition to projects in the public right-of-way, to invest in gateway features along key corridors and at key intersections that function as entry points into the City. Once in a commercial area, wayfinding signage can help guide residents or visitors to important destinations. This enhances accessibility throughout the community and allows the City to prioritize investment in areas where most people will be travelling.

### Marketing Campaigns

Simply having a great City may not be enough to attract investment from a region with such a large geographic coverage area. A comprehensive marketing campaign can target specific groups within the broader regional audience, and strategically spread a controlled and carefully crafted message about St. Charles.

## Recommendations

The City should define a clear brand that can be integrated into marketing materials, investments in streetscaping and public art, etc.

The City should establish a community gateways program that establishes design elements or "themes" (e.g. City logo, building materials, landscaping, and hardscaping) that can be consistently utilized as throughout the community to provide a sense of identity that is easily recognizable as "St. Charles" and that creates a connection to the larger community.

The City should establish and implement a wayfinding program. It should include standards to ensure that signage is attractive and easily recognizable. It should also work with local business districts to consider establishing a signage program that creates a consistent and appropriate aesthetic.

The City should work with local entities, agencies and not-for-profits in establishing a comprehensive marketing campaign. This campaign would build upon the brand for the City, its foundation of arts and cultural amenities, the Fox River, and the character of the City's neighborhoods and commercial areas. The marketing campaign should be designed to reach a broad range of audiences, including potential residents, tourists and visitors, developers, etc.





# Design Guidelines 10

City of St. Charles, Illinois 2013 Comprehensive Plan



# 10 Design Guidelines

St. Charles is a community of unique character, starting with the Fox River and carrying through its neighborhoods, civic spaces, and commercial areas. The commercial areas collectively represent the area of the City that most frequently establishes the “first impression” for residents, visitors, and potential investors. This chapter establishes a series of development guidelines aimed at enhancing the aesthetic character, functionality and competitiveness of St. Charles’ commercial areas.

The guidelines included in this chapter can be used to guide commercial development throughout the City. The Gateway and Corridor Design Guidelines are appropriate for the West Gateway, East Gateway, and Main Street subareas, and the Downtown Design Guidelines are appropriate for the Downtown Subarea. (All subarea plans are included in Chapter 8 of this Plan.) Principles of either set of guidelines could be applied to smaller local commercial areas, depending on the established and desired character for each.

Each set of guidelines addresses the critical components of development that define character and image. These include site planning and design, building massing and architecture, materials and details, site access and circulation, landscaping, signage, and others. While these guidelines are not regulatory from a zoning perspective, they should be referenced during the evaluation of development proposals.



*This mixed use area includes a public plaza with outdoor seating and a water feature*

*Today, St. Charles is a truly great community, the Pride of the Fox, located in the Beauty Spot of the Fox River Valley.*

*-Legend of the Fours Sons of Charlemagne*

## Downtown Design Guidelines

Downtown St. Charles is a unique place that has successfully blended historic architecture and contemporary development in order to create a generally cohesive pedestrian-oriented environment. Regardless of the era of development, the Fox River has always been and will continue to be a major influence in how people perceive and use the downtown area. The following guidelines aim to strengthen parts of the downtown that are valued, and transform those that don't necessarily fit within their context, whether it be mixed use, commercial, open space or residential development.

## Building Height, Bulk & Proportion

- » Downtown buildings should create a “streetwall” by limiting or eliminating gaps between buildings, and should create a sense of enclosure by constructing buildings to the front lot line with an adequate scale to create a defined public realm.
- » New development within the Downtown should avoid extreme differences in building height. Consideration should be given to the height of adjacent buildings.
- » Design elements that extend beyond the typical building height could be acceptable in select locations, provided they are in character with the surrounding area. Vertical architectural elements could include clock towers, spires or bell towers. These elements should be considered as design “highlights” at key locations.
- » Upper stories of buildings within the Downtown should be set back to soften the bulk and visual scale of the building.
- » Townhomes and other multi-unit buildings within the Downtown should be of a similar scale to mixed use buildings and also utilize upper floor setbacks. Where townhomes or multi-unit buildings directly border or face single-family uses, the height of these buildings should be compatible with the single-family homes.



*A continuous streetwall and controlled building heights create a comfortable pedestrian environment*

## Building Placement and Orientation

- » Buildings within the Downtown, especially on Main Street, should be positioned at the front property line. Buildings located on corner lots should be built out to both fronting property lines.
- » In other areas of the Downtown, buildings can be set back from the sidewalk, appropriate for the site and in keeping with adjacent uses in the district and consistent throughout each block front.
- » On Main Street, new construction should occupy the entire width of the lot to avoid gaps between buildings and discontinuities in the streetwall, except where pedestrian access to rear parking is designed and planned for.
- » In other areas of Downtown, spaces may be left between buildings to provide pedestrian access to rear parking areas. Where neither a building façade nor pedestrian access is provided, the “streetwall” should be maintained through the use of landscaping, pedestrian amenities or decorative fencing.
- » Buildings throughout the Downtown should face the street, with strong pedestrian orientation.
- » The placement of buildings at odd or irregular angles to the street should be avoided. However, corner buildings might take advantage of their prominent locations with angled, rounded or recessed corner entrances or other small setbacks.
- » Buildings located along the Fox River should incorporate elements that enhance physical and visual access to the waterfront, such as plazas, patios, seasonal spaces, and facades with a high level of transparency.

## Architectural Style

- » Development within the Downtown should consist of traditional architectural styles. Modern architectural styles are discouraged.
- » New buildings need not be historic replicas, but should offer high quality and compatible interpretations of the traditional styles present within the historic and traditional downtown and within the residential areas of St. Charles.
- » Regardless of style, new buildings should use traditional masonry materials and reflect the predominant scale, height, massing, and proportions of the traditional downtown.
- » New buildings should incorporate decorative cornices, columns, reliefs, terra cotta tiles, and other significant façade detailing.

## Building Materials

- » New buildings should be constructed of traditional masonry building materials such as brick or stone; these materials should be used on all sides of the building. Stucco, siding of all types, and any other exterior wall coverings are discouraged and should be minimized.
- » Recommended accent materials include stone, simulated stone, terra cotta, and wood and metal trim.
- » Since parking will be promoted in the rear of the buildings, new construction within Downtown St. Charles should have “360 degree” appearance, with design and detail consideration for all visible sides.
- » Rough sawed wood, aluminum panels and siding, and plastic or metal panels should be discouraged within the Downtown.
- » Exterior insulation finish systems (EIFS) or Dryvit should be discouraged within the Downtown.
- » Buildings along the Fox River should use high-quality building materials on all sides in order to maintain appropriate character from both the public street and riverfront views.

## Doors, Entrances & Windows

- » The front doors of new buildings should reflect the scale, placement, and proportions of the existing downtown; recessed entrances are encouraged.
- » Main entrances should be at the front of the building and face the sidewalk. Buildings situated on corner lots may take advantage of their prominent locations with angled, or rounded corner entrances.
- » Doors and entryways of buildings should be compatible with the original style and character of the façade.
- » Large ground-floor display windows and bays are strongly encouraged for retail and entertainment uses within the Downtown and should be consistent with historic downtowns.
- » Windows on the upper floors of new buildings should appear to be “punched” openings within a solid wall, rather than as continuous rows of windows separated only by their frames. Curtain-wall window treatments are not appropriate within the Downtown area. Upper floor windows should be recessed, not flush with the surface of the building.
- » Windows should complement the architectural style of the building.
- » Window glazing should be clear or slightly tinted; dark, mirrored, or reflective glass should be discouraged.
- » Where existing windows are important architectural features in a building’s façade, window size and configuration should be maintained; window openings should never be covered over or boarded up.
- » Ground floor windows can be used for displays, however business owners are encouraged to allow full and unobstructed views into their businesses. Obstructing windows from the interior of a building with shelving, display cases, signage or other objects is not permitted.

## Rear Yards & Rear Facades

- » The backs of existing commercial buildings should be well kept, with rear facades being “comparable” to front facades.
- » Secondary rear entrances to stores and shops are encouraged in blocks where public parking or pedestrian walkways are located behind the buildings.
- » Trash receptacles, dumpsters and service areas should be located inside the primary building or be fully enclosed in small masonry structures.
- » Outdoor storage and service facilities should be screened from view along sidewalks and roadways through the use of low masonry walls or evergreen plantings.



*Well designed rear yards can both maintain necessary functionality and ease activity on the main corridor.*

## Parking Areas

- » Parking lots should be located behind buildings. Parking lots in front of buildings should be discouraged within the Downtown.
- » Vehicular access to parking lots should be provided from alleys or side streets. Curb cuts and access drives are discouraged along pedestrian shopping streets.
- » Pedestrian access to parking lots should be provided through planned walkways located in gaps between buildings.
- » Parking lots should have curbed perimeters; landscaped islands and clearly marked pedestrian pathways are encouraged within the interior of parking areas.
- » Parking lots should be screened from view along sidewalks and roadways through the use of low masonry walls or evergreen plantings and decorative fencing.
- » All parking lots should be paved, well marked, sufficiently lit, and provided with proper drainage in concert with integrated green infrastructure strategies. Permeable pavement, bio-retention, shade trees, dark-sky compliance lighting, and low-input native/adapted landscape features all encouraged to provide multiple stacked, long-term benefits and savings.
- » Parking lot lighting should consist of vehicular scale lighting and pedestrian scale lighting. Excessive lighting and light pollution should be avoided.
- » Parking lots should include appropriate landscape elements and materials to shade/cool surfaces and minimize the impact of large expanses of pavement. Landscaped canopy tree islands, integrated with bioretention, should be located at a sufficient density and spacing in parking lots to provide these and other benefits. Plantings should be low-input, ornamental, and contribute to the local St. Charles aesthetic, i.e. perennial grasses and flowers, and be tolerant of year round maintenance implications, i.e. snow/salt accumulation if required.
- » Landscape islands should consist of canopy trees, attractive groundcover, and/or decorative bushes.

## Rooflines & Parapets

- » The roofs of most commercial buildings should be flat, although sloped roofs can be used if masked by decorative parapets.
- » Roof parapets should be utilized to create an interesting building profile and to hide vents and other rooftop equipment.
- » Cornices, and other decorative detail are encouraged along the rooflines of buildings.
- » Sloped mansard style (shake or shingle) roofs should be discouraged within the Downtown.
- » Rooflines and architectural details should complement the buildings architectural style, and contribute to the Downtown’s character, image and appeal.

## Color

- » The predominant colors for Downtown buildings should consist of earth tones. The natural brick and stone colors should predominate. Darker or lighter hues could be used as accent trim.
- » Ceramic tile, terra-cotta, brick, stone, and glass surfaces should not be painted, unless it is appropriate to the architectural style.



*Front yard parking and building styles found elsewhere in the City would not be appropriate in Downtown.*

## Lighting

- » Lighting should be used to illuminate entries into the Downtown, signage, displays, pedestrian and parking areas, and significant architectural elements.
- » Building lighting should be subtle and understated; light fixtures should be designed and oriented to produce minimal glare and spillover onto nearby properties.
- » Most exterior lighting sources should be concealed to provide direct illumination; where concealment is not practical, light fixtures should be compatible with overall storefront design. Spot lighting is not encouraged for commercial buildings within the Downtown.
- » Incandescent lighting creates a warm atmosphere and is encouraged; if neon lighting is used, colors should be compatible with and complement the façade of the building. High pressure sodium (orange lighting), or a diffused, soft white light is encouraged; Extensive lighting should also be avoided to reduce light pollution.
- » Street lighting within the Downtown should be at a pedestrian scale. Light standards should be between 12'-15'. Parking areas within the Downtown should contain both pedestrian and vehicular scale lighting.
- » A common style of pedestrian-scale light fixtures should be selected and used throughout the Downtown. The style of light fixture should enhance the desired atmosphere of the Downtown and complement the architecture of buildings.



*Pedestrian lighting should be warm, attractive, and human scaled.*

## Signs

- » Raised, individual letters mounted directly on the building, as well as signs that use light colors for lettering and darker colors for backgrounds, is encouraged throughout the Downtown.
- » Wall-mounted signs should be designed as an integrated component of the building façade, and should not cover important architectural details.
- » Exterior signs should be limited to business identification and description. Signs for special promotions, sales, products, and advertising signs is discouraged.
- » The size, material, color, and shape of signs should complement the architectural style and scale of the building.
- » When a building contains multiple storefronts, signage for all businesses should be compatible in design and consistent in placement.
- » Pole signs and internally illuminated box signs should be prohibited in the Downtown.
- » Street numbers should be prominently displayed at the main entrance to every home or business and be clearly visible from the street. Consideration should be given to a consistent style and placement of street numbers within the Downtown.
- » The City should establish a comprehensive wayfinding signage system that can direct visitors to the Downtown. Directories and signage located in parking lots, prominent public spaces, or areas of historic significance could also guide visitors and provide information about important destinations, sites or buildings.

## Residential Areas

- » The height of new multi-family buildings that directly border or face single-family uses should be compatible with adjacent single-family houses.
- » New housing construction should reflect the traditional scale and character of a traditional Downtown, particularly in terms of masonry building materials, colors, mass and proportion, and fenestration.
- » New housing should also reflect the appearance and design of established residential areas in the community.
- » Rowhouse buildings are encouraged to be located at or near the sidewalk and aligned with and “face” the street.
- » Multi-family sites should be attractively landscaped, particularly front setbacks and the perimeter of parking and service areas.
- » Where possible, parking to serve multi-family uses should be located inside the primary buildings; if garages are provided, they should be located behind the residential buildings and should have access via alleys or side streets.
- » Conservation design and development concepts are encouraged for all residential development within the Downtown. Porous brick driveways, naturalized drainage swales bioswales, and narrower roadways are examples of some techniques that could be promoted.

## Awnings & Canopies

- » Awnings should be properly placed above entrances and may extend over storefront windows.
- » The color of awnings and canopies should complement and enhance the overall color scheme of the building façade.
- » Awnings and canopies should be positioned at least eight feet above the sidewalk.
- » Awnings should be made of a canvas or durable fabric material that can be easily cleaned. Hard plastic, or other materials that could be cracked or broken are not encouraged. Awnings and canopies that become windblown or torn should be repaired immediately.
- » Back lit awnings and canopies, shingle and mansard canopies, and metal and plastic awnings should be discouraged within the Downtown.
- » Awnings and canopies should be used only when they are compatible with or complement the architectural style of the building. Awnings should not appear out of place, “forced”, or as an afterthought.



*Context and subtlety are important for awnings and other accessory embellishments.*

## Landscaping and Site Improvements

- » A local Fox Valley aesthetic will be reinforced through the use of native/adapted trees, shrubs, vines, perennial grasses, and forbs as appropriate for the context, habitat, and conditions of a particular site. The use of these plants, along with adapted cultivars and non-native companion plants is encouraged for all ornamentally planted spaces within the downtown. Low-input turf should be used and maintained with minimal water and chemical use where appropriate for use and context.
- » Planters and landscaped areas should buffer parking and service areas from adjacent uses. Plantings should consist of low evergreen and/or deciduous shrubs planted in conjunction with low-growing annual or perennial plants and groundcover. Large expanses of exposed mulch should be avoided.
- » In conjunction with landscaping, decorative fencing is encouraged to delineate and screen parking and service facilities, outdoor storage areas, etc. Low-profile, decorative wrought iron fencing or masonry walls are recommended. Chain link fencing is not encouraged within the Downtown.
- » All landscaping should be maintained in a healthy and attractive condition. Maintenance programs should be established as part of new development approvals to ensure that private landscaping is adequately cared for and that its value is retained over time. Internal irrigation systems are required.
- » Locations of high visibility such as entrances, signage locations, etc. are good opportunities to integrate naturalistic, ornamental perennial plantings that reinforce the local St. Charles character.
- » A Streetscape Improvement Program should be implemented to “visually unify” the Downtown. The City should develop and implement a detailed Streetscape Improvement Plan for the entire Downtown to establish a visual identity for the streets, and to link together the diverse land uses. Streetscape improvements to the Downtown should include coordinated landscaping on both sides of the street; pedestrian lighting; distinctive signage and banners; coordinated street furniture including benches, bike racks and trash receptacles; accent landscaping at key locations; and gateway signage.
- » Regularly spaced street trees should be planted rows along both sides of all streets within the Downtown. Trees should be located within the sidewalk through the use of iron tree grates. Trees should be planted at an appropriate spacing to provide consistent greenery and accommodate other decorative streetscape elements. Tree grates should be located adjacent to the back of the curb.
- » Along commercial area streets, sidewalks should be at least 10’ wide in order to accommodate an adequate walking zone and streetscape area. In residential areas in the Downtown, sidewalks should be at least 5’ wide and separated from the curb by a parkway.
- » Parkway landscaping should consist of salt-tolerant street trees, shrubs, groundcover and perennials.
- » Within the shopping areas, plantings in raised beds, planters, urns, or other containers should be promoted along the curb line in selected locations and to highlight key entrances and activity areas. Plantings need to be attractively maintained throughout all seasons. Consideration should also be given to an appropriate mix of plant materials to ensure screening and greening still occurs during winter months.
- » All landscaping within and adjacent to the public right-of-way should be compatible with existing plant materials in the area and be composed of native and salt tolerant species.
- » Street trees and other landscaping along the public rights-of-way should be protected from motorized traffic.

## Public Improvements

- » Where feasible, streets within the Downtown should be designed to support vehicles, bicyclists, and pedestrians on a relatively equal basis. While accommodating vehicular traffic, streets should also promote walking, cycling, and an overall sense of place.
- » Streets within the Downtown should be designed and controlled to reduce the speed of traffic, particularly along streets with shopping and storefronts. Streets should be no larger than 4 lanes wide (2 lanes for parallel parking and 2 lanes for the movement of vehicles).
- » To improve visibility and safety, pedestrian crosswalks within the Downtown should be made prominent and noticeable by using paving materials, texture and color. Striping, small pylons and special bollard lighting fixtures might also be used to highlight crosswalks.
- » Sidewalks should be provided along both sides of all streets within the Downtown.
- » All public and private sidewalks within the Downtown area should be accessible to the disabled and comply with appropriate ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) standards.
- » Pylons and bollard lighting should be considered as accents and for ornamental purposes. These fixtures could be used to highlight crosswalks, open spaces, seating areas, and major pedestrian ways.
- » “Gateway” signs should be developed along Main Street, as it serves as one of the primary entry ways into the Downtown. Gateway features might include special landscaping, lighting and paving.
- » Banners attached to street light standards will distinguish the Downtown and could also be used to commemorate special events within the City is encouraged. Banners could be changed periodically during the year.
- » Improvement and development of Downtown should include a unified system of “street furnishings,” such as seating areas, trash receptacles, drinking fountains, bike racks, and other pedestrian amenities. Street furnishings should be consistent with the materials, colors and architectural styles.
- » Trash receptacles should be placed at key locations within the Downtown. Benches, fountains and other pedestrian amenities should be located at key intersections and high activity areas. Bike parking should be provided in visible areas and near main parking areas.
- » Whenever possible, utility lines within the Downtown should be placed underground or located discretely in rear alleys.
- » Integrated green infrastructure as describe elsewhere is encouraged in new and retrofit/replacement of existing Downtown streets, sidewalks, parkways, parking facilities, and other public spaces. Permeable pavement, bio-retention, shade trees, and other strategies provide multiple benefits and reinforce the St. Charles themes and sense of place.



*Public rights-of-way should accommodate pedestrians and motorists while integrating landscaping, street furniture, and other streetscaping features. Transparent building facades can blend private spaces seamlessly into the public realm.*

## Gateway & Corridor Design Guidelines

These guidelines and development policies apply to all primary gateway areas and all major commercial corridors. They are intended to foster attractive and appropriate commercial development and redevelopment that is mindful of the fact that these areas were primarily designed with a vehicular orientation. Today, however, it is recognized that this approach is deficient and that even auto-oriented corridors should provide a safe and attractive pedestrian and bicycle circulation network with appropriate amenities. Commercial development within the commercial corridors will contribute significantly to the overall image and character of the City as perceived by motorists passing through the City as well as those shopping, dining, or visiting the area.

## Building Scale & Design

- » A multiple-story architectural element, such as a clock tower, spire, or bell tower, may be appropriate as a design “highlight” at key locations along the corridor.
- » Distinguishing architectural features are encouraged, such as decorative cornices, columns, reliefs, and other façade ornamentation and detailing.
- » Covered walkways and colonnades are encouraged along the fronts of the buildings to create a pedestrian orientation.
- » Architectural details should be visible from the street. Buildings should not be setback so far as to diminish the aesthetic impact of the building on passing pedestrians and motorists. Buildings should be attractive at both a pedestrian and vehicular scale.
- » Buildings can have either a pitched or flat roof, but rooflines should complement the overall design and architecture of the building. Rooflines and parapets should look complete when viewed from all sides of the building.
- » Rooftop-mounted equipment and vents should be screened from view along all sides of a building. Rooftop screening should be incorporated into the overall design of the building and be an integral part of the architecture.
- » Dumpster enclosures should be of materials and incorporate design elements that complement the primary structure. Dumpster enclosures should be well landscaped and located at the rear or sides of buildings so as to be unseen from the public street or primary building entry.



*Attractive buildings close to Randall Road provide a sense of scale and enhanced character to the corridor, however sidewalks should extend along both sides of all streets and connect to local businesses*

## Building Placement & Orientation

- » Buildings should have a strong visual and physical relationship to the corridor to enhance the identity and pedestrian orientation of the corridor. Buildings should be attractive at both a pedestrian and vehicular scale.
- » Although the corridor is primarily oriented to the automobile, commercial buildings should have a strong pedestrian orientation with display windows, attractive detailing, and convenient and “hospitable” entrances.
- » The East and West Gateway areas are characterized by large building setbacks, side yards, and surface parking lots. Where this exists a street frontage should be maintained through the use of low-profile landscaping and decorative walls or fencing.
- » All buildings should “front” the corridor wherever possible. When front doors do not face these primary streets, display windows or distinctive facade treatments should be provided along the visible public road frontages.
- » Long, blank facades along the corridor should be avoided. Articulation and covered walkways, such as arcades, are encouraged along the fronts of multi-tenant commercial buildings to create interest and a “pedestrian-friendly” orientation.
- » All service entrances, dumpsters, loading facilities, and outdoor storage should be located at the rear of buildings. They should be screened from view along sidewalks and roadways through the use of decorative screening, masonry walls, and/or evergreen plantings.

- » Any business permitted to have a “drive-thru” facility should be sited so that drive-thru lanes and pickup windows are not prominently featured. Any canopies over drive-thru windows or lanes should match the material and architectural character of the primary building.
- » Any outdoor seating areas, such as those provided by restaurants or cafés, should be well landscaped and incorporated into the overall site design. Outdoor seating areas should be set back and screened from parking areas and driving aisles.
- » Awnings and canopies could be used to provide weather protection and to add visual interest at the street level. They should be integrated into the façade and be in character with the architectural style of the building. Arched or rounded awnings should be discouraged, unless they are compatible with and appropriate to the architectural style of a building. Internally illuminated or back lit awnings and canopies, shingle and mansard canopies, and plastic awnings should not be permitted.
- » Buildings should be used to frame outdoor plaza or seating areas in order to create attractive and pedestrian-oriented seasonal spaces.
- » Architectural massing elements, such as turrets, chamfered corners, or articulated facades, should be used to define important public spaces or prominent locations throughout gateway areas, such as pedestrian shopping areas or gateway intersections.

## Building Materials & Colors

- » The use of appropriate building materials is a key to compatible new development and rehabilitation of existing structures. Quality materials should be used on all sides of the building, providing an attractive “360 degree” appearance.
- » New commercial and industrial buildings should be constructed primarily of traditional masonry building materials such as brick or stone. These materials should be used on all sides of the building. Recommended accent materials include stone, simulated stone, terra cotta, and wood or metal trim.
- » “Exterior insulation finish systems” (EIFS) should not be permitted as a primary building material. Stucco, consisting of 3-coat Portland Cement, should be used instead. Rough sawed wood, aluminum siding, and plastic or metal panels are discouraged within the gateway commercial areas.
- » The predominant colors for new buildings should consist of earth tones. While the natural brick and stone colors should predominate, contrasting and complementary colors should also be used to accent building components, highlight architectural elements and to help distinguish St. Charles’ gateways.
- » Damaged and deteriorated exterior building materials should be repaired or replaced.



*Recent facade enhancements should be emulated in order to foster a more contemporary image for Randall Road.*

## Transit, Bike & Pedestrian Mobility

- » Development sites should provide a continuous sidewalk and/or bike path along both sides of the street.
- » Development should provide a clearly marked and continuous pedestrian path from public sidewalks within the right-of-way to building entrances.
- » Sidewalks and multi-use paths should be sited and designed so that they provide adequate buffering from vehicular traffic on roadways.
- » Circulation plans should minimize conflict points between pedestrian and vehicles and ensure visible and accessible cross walks are installed where conflicts occur.
- » Development should provide on-site bicycle parking and/or storage at an appropriate ratio to vehicular parking.
- » Where appropriate, development should integrate on-site transit facilities and amenities, and account for and designate on-site circulation routes for transit vehicles or private shuttles.



*Pedestrian networks should be made more comprehensive and safer by reducing crossing distances, installing missing segments, and creating buffers against traffic in both the public and private realms.*

## Lighting

- » Lighting helps promote safe and secure parking and pedestrian areas, and it can also serve to enhance the appearance of a property.
- » Lighting should be used to illuminate entries, signage, displays, and pedestrian and parking areas, as well as to highlight significant architectural elements.
- » Front and rear building entries should be adequately lit for overall security and visibility.
- » Building lighting should be subtle and understated. Light fixtures should be designed and oriented to produce minimal glare and spillover onto nearby properties.
- » Down-lighting should be encouraged on all commercial buildings; spot-lighting should be limited to major features and key landmarks, including gateway entry features.
- » Incandescent lighting creates a warm atmosphere and should be encouraged. If neon lighting is used, colors should be compatible with and complement the façade of the building. High pressure sodium (orange lighting), or a diffused, soft white light is also encouraged. Metal halide lighting should be avoided. Excessive lighting should be avoided to reduce light pollution.
- » Most exterior lighting should be concealed to provide indirect illumination. Where concealment is not practical, light fixtures should be compatible with building architecture.
- » Parking lots should be retrofitted to create a more pedestrian scale and minimize light pollution and glare. This can be accomplished by using shorter lighting standards (12'-18') to help establish pedestrian environments within individual developments. Taller light standards (25'-40') and flood lighting should be avoided.
- » Light poles and standards with an historic or traditional design should be used for all parking lots, walkways and pedestrian areas.
- » Bollard lighting can be appropriate as accent lighting and could be used in pedestrian seating areas and to highlight pedestrian walkways and crossings in parking lots.



*Images above depict two types of parking lot lighting. The image on right (discouraged) is flood lighting, where fixtures flood areas, requiring fewer fixtures but contributing to light pollution. The image on the left (encouraged) directs light downward minimizing spillover lighting.*

## Vehicular Access and Storage

- » Development should create logical linkages to surrounding areas by extending existing street grid patterns and incorporating on-site streets wherever possible.
- » Adequate parking is essential within gateway areas, however, excessive parking can be detrimental to its aesthetic. Within St. Charles' gateways, parking lots should be designed and located so that they are safe, attractive and efficient.
- » Parking areas of no more than 60 feet in depth should be located between the building and the public rights-of-way. This depth will be sufficient to accommodate a single driving aisle with 90° parking on both sides. Additional parking areas can be provided adjacent to the building on interior portions of the lot.
- » The number of curb cuts along corridors should be minimized, adjacent parking lots should be connected, and access points should be unified. Development should either create new internal streets or take advantage of existing ones, and all parking areas should be accessible from cross streets whenever possible to prevent cars from having to use primary streets to access adjacent lots.
- » All parking areas should be paved or bricked, striped and have surfaces in good condition. The use of pervious brick paver systems is encouraged.
- » Parking lots should be screened from view along sidewalks and roadways through the combined use of free forming berms, low masonry walls, hedge plantings, and shrubs.

- » Parking lots should have curbed perimeters and curbed landscaped islands. Clearly marked pedestrian pathways should be provided within the interior of parking areas to avoid large expanses of asphalt and to enhance pedestrian safety.
- » Parking lot landscaping should include "landscape islands" at a suitable ratio to provide visual relief from large fields of parking. Landscape islands should consist of canopy trees, attractive groundcover, and/or decorative bushes.
- » All parking lots should be designed for proper drainage and should consider the use of best management practices, including bioswales, to store and filter runoff.
- » Parking lots that are used during evening hours should be adequately illuminated.
- » Whenever possible, parking lots should be shared between multiple stores and businesses to allow for a more efficient lot layout and to minimize curb cuts. Cross access between adjacent parking lots should also be encouraged.

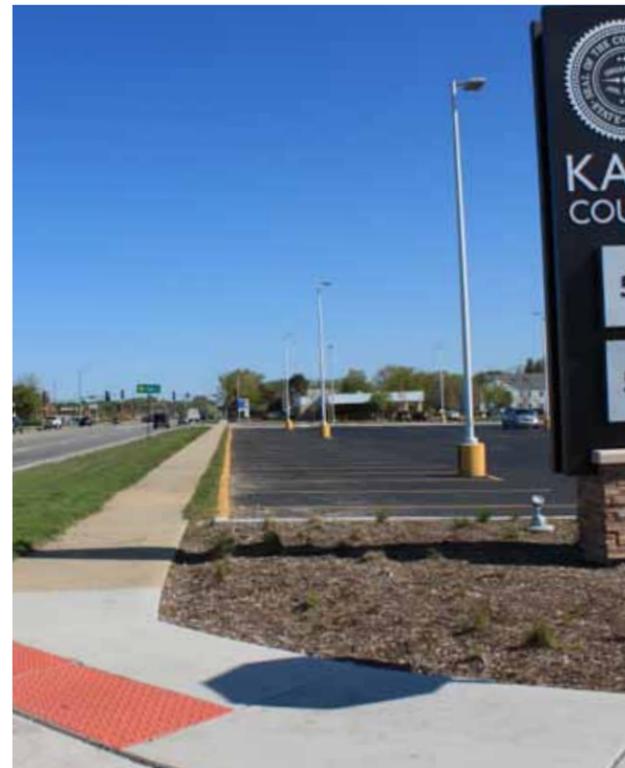


*Large development lots should incorporate well streetscaped street networks in order to create more efficient and attractive linkages between uses.*

## Landscaping and Site Improvements

- » A local Fox Valley aesthetic will be reinforced through the use of native/adapted trees, shrubs, vines, perennial grasses and forbs as appropriate for the context, habitat, and conditions of a particular site. The use of these plants, along with adapted cultivars and non-native companion plants is encouraged for all ornamentally planted spaces. Low-input turf should be used and maintained with minimal water and chemical use where appropriate for use and context.
- » Planters and landscaped areas should buffer parking and service areas. Plantings should consist of low evergreen and/or deciduous shrubs planted in conjunction with low-growing annual or perennial plants and groundcover. Large expanses of exposed mulch are to be avoided.
- » A landscaped buffer at least five to eight feet in width should be provided around the perimeter of surface parking lots. Perimeter landscape plantings will include a continuous hedge accented by trees and ground cover but should not obstruct tenant signage and views to buildings and site features.
- » In conjunction with landscaping, decorative fencing is encouraged to delineate and screen parking and service facilities, outdoor storage areas, etc. Low-profile, decorative wrought iron fencing or masonry walls are recommended. Chain link fencing should not be permitted within this important gateway subarea.
- » All landscaping should be maintained in a healthy and attractive condition. Maintenance programs should be established as part of new development approvals to ensure that private landscaping is adequately cared for and that its value is retained over time. Internal irrigation systems are preferred and encouraged.
- » Where site size or configuration does not allow for the minimum five-foot perimeter landscaping, vertical landscaping elements should be employed to provide an effective screen between parking lots and the public right-of-way.
- » Locations of high visibility such as entrances, signage locations, etc. are good opportunities to integrate naturalistic, ornamental perennial plantings that reinforce the local St. Charles character.

- » Trees, shrubs, walls/fences, “living” or green walls, and/or vining structures should be used to screen in-tense commercial or other potentially conflicting land uses from residential properties. Visual screening, sound attenuation, and locally authentic, aesthetic beauty are all important considerations.
- » All landscaping within and adjacent to the public right-of-way should be compatible with existing plant materials in the area and be composed of native and salt tolerant species.



*Many areas of the corridor lack landscaping along the edge of parking areas. Appropriate amounts of perimeter landscaping would be needed to improve corridor character and clearly delineate automotive and pedestrian zones, however excessive landscaping can “hide” businesses and this should be avoided.*

## Business Signage

- » Exterior building signs should be limited to business identification and description; exterior advertising signs should not be permitted. The size, material, color, and shape of building signs should complement the architectural style and scale of the building.
- » Wall-mounted signs are encouraged, although signage should not project above the cornice line or be mounted on the roof of a building.
- » Raised, individual letters mounted directly on the building, as well as signs that use light colors for lettering and darker colors for backgrounds, are preferred. Box signs should be prohibited.
- » When a building contains multiple ground-floor tenants, signage for all businesses should be compatible in design and consistent in placement.
- » Street numbers should be prominently displayed at the main entrance to every business and be clearly visible from the street.
- » Free-standing signage within the corridors should be limited to low-profile monument signs for multi-tenant commercial properties. Monument signs should be attractively landscaped and constructed of traditional building materials similar to the primary building on the site.
- » The letters of a monument sign should be internally illuminated with a white light source. External illumination may be appropriate for a natural metal or engraved stone monument sign. Excessive light and light pollution should be avoided.
- » “Gateway” signage and design features at key locations along the corridors are encouraged. Gateway treatments may include special signage, landscaping, and/or lighting. Where necessary, private development sites should accommodate gateway elements or incorporate prominent architectural features that demonstrate the importance of a certain location.

- » The size of signs should complement façade proportions, and should be constructed from the appropriate scale of the building.
- » The design and color of the sign should complement the architectural style of the building, and integrated as a component of the building’s facade.
- » Internal illumination is preferred for building mounted signs. Externally lighted signs may also be acceptable if they are compatible with other architectural components.
- » Pole signs, pylon signs, and billboards should be prohibited and the City should actively work towards amortizing and removing existing non-conforming signs.

## Public Realm

- » All streets should be designed to accommodate all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and vehicles.
- » Buffers should be provided between pedestrian and vehicular traffic, and may include on-street parking or landscaping and hardscaping elements.
- » Decorative streetscaping should be integrated into the right-of-way in order to establish a uniform character throughout a specific area. Streetscaping elements could include decorative paving materials for the roadway, parking lanes, furniture zone or sidewalks, amenities such as trash receptacles, bike racks and benches, decorative trees that provide a sense of scale and enclosure, landscaping that provides a buffer between pedestrians and vehicular traffic, decorative pedestrian or roadway lighting, and roadway landscaping or medians.
- » Streetscaping elements should incorporate native plants and hardscape materials, and should be resistant to salt and harsh climatic conditions in order to maintain high aesthetic value over time.
- » Comprehensive pedestrian systems, including safe sidewalks, clearly delineated crosswalks, information, and signalization, should be provided throughout gateway areas.
- » Private development should accommodate public uses or spaces that complement the function and character of an area, such as environmental or multi-modal transportation corridors, important pedestrian linkages, or pockets parks as a component of a larger redevelopment project.
- » Wherever possible, utilities should be buried or screened from view of the public street. This includes utility lines, substations, or stand-alone utility boxes.
- » Regional and local gateways should be installed to denote entries to or centers of the West Gateway, East Gateway, or other subareas. Gateways should reflect local character in terms of materials, design theme and aesthetic.
- » Regional wayfinding should be provided to direct travelers to various landmarks such as Downtown St. Charles, the Fox River, the Kane County Judicial Center, etc. Such wayfinding signage should be clear and informative, yet integrate decorative elements that are unique to St. Charles.
- » Local wayfinding should be used to direct travelers to destinations within the gateway area, such as the Kane County Fairgrounds, major retail centers, or prominent entertainment activities. The design of such wayfinding signage could vary between subareas, allowing different developments to strengthen their own unique local character.
- » Formal plazas should be integrated into significant redevelopment projects, and should have an active relationship with surrounding buildings in terms of physical and visual access, and the nature of activities that can occur in the plaza.
- » Parks and green space should be integrated into redevelopment projects. Such spaces can serve as stormwater detention areas when needed. They can also provide a passive open space that complements surrounding development.
- » Parks should include some significant amount of passive open space so that they are viewed as generally accessible to all and able to accommodate a variety of activities that support surrounding development and neighborhoods.



*Public rights-of-way should do more to accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists.*



# Implementation 11

City of St. Charles, Illinois 2013 Comprehensive Plan



# 11 Implementation

This chapter presents an implementation framework that the City can use to initiate and undertake key recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan. The actions and strategies identified in this section set forth the “next steps” to be taken in continuing the process of community planning and enhancement.

For the Comprehensive Plan to be successful, it must be based on support and participation between the City, other public agencies, various neighborhood groups and organizations, the local business community, property owners, developers, and residents. The City should be the leader in promoting cooperation and collaboration with these and other community stakeholders to implement the Comprehensive Plan.

This chapter briefly highlights several steps that should be undertaken to initiate and sustain the plan implementation process. These include:

- » Adopt and use the updated Comprehensive Plan on a day-to-day basis;
- » Prepare an implementation action agenda;
- » Review and update the Zoning Ordinance and other development controls;
- » Review and update the Capital Improvement Program (CIP);
- » Annually, prepare a 5-year action plan to prioritize objectives for the future and list accomplishments of preceding years;
- » Promote cooperation among various agencies, organizations, community groups, and individuals;
- » Enhance public communication;
- » Update the Comprehensive Plan on a regular basis; and,
- » Explore possible funding sources and implementation techniques.



*The Fox River dam, an iconic part of the Downtown scenery*

*The guardianship of his four sons is now testamentary to the will of Charlemagne.*

*-Legend of the Fours Sons of Charlemagne*

## Adopt and Use the Plan on a Day-to-Day Basis

The Comprehensive Plan was adopted in accordance with the statutes of the State of Illinois. In June 2011, the City Council appointed a citizen Task Force to oversee the drafting of a new Comprehensive Plan. The Task Force submitted a complete plan draft to the City Council in December 2012. The City Council referred the plan for review and recommendation by the Plan Commission. The Plan Commission reviewed and recommended approval of the plan, subject to revisions, in March 2013. The Planning and Development Committee of the City Council recommended approval of the plan, subject to revisions, in July 2013. A formal public hearing was held by the City Council on August 5, 2013. The Comprehensive Plan was adopted by City Council ordinance on September 3, 2013. The Comprehensive Plan will be used as the City's guide for administering City Code Title 16 "Subdivisions and Land Improvement" and Title 17 "Zoning".

The Comprehensive Plan should become the City's official policy guide for land use, development, and community improvement. It is essential that the Plan be adopted by the City Council and then be used on a regular basis by City staff, boards, and commissions to review and evaluate all proposals for improvement and development within the community in the years ahead.

Community Development staff should meet with Department heads to explain the purpose and benefits of the Comprehensive Plan. To further educate the community about the Plan, the City should:

- » Make copies of the Plan available online for free, provide hard copies at City Hall for purchase, and have a copy on file at the public library for reference;
- » Provide assistance to the public in explaining the Plan and its relationship to private and public development projects and other proposals, as appropriate;
- » Assist the City Council in the day-to-day administration, interpretation, and application of the Plan;
- » Maintain a list of current possible amendments, issues, or needs which may be a subject of change, addition, or deletion from the Comprehensive Plan.

## Review of Zoning and Development Controls

Zoning is an important tool in implementing planning policy. It establishes the types of uses allowed on specific properties and prescribes the overall character and intensity of development to be permitted.

Adoption of the new Comprehensive Plan should be followed by a review and update of the City's various development controls including the zoning ordinance, the subdivision ordinance, and other related codes and ordinances. It is essential that all development controls be consistent with and complement the new Comprehensive Plan.

## CIP - Capital Improvement Program

Another tool for implementing the Comprehensive Plan is a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). The CIP addresses the procurement, construction, and maintenance of capital assets, including buildings, infrastructure, technology, and major equipment. The CIP is critical to water, sewer, transportation, and other essential public services. The CIP establishes schedules, priorities, cost projections and funding options for public improvement projects within a five-year period.

The CIP typically schedules the implementation of a range of specific projects related to the Comprehensive Plan, particularly the restoration and upgrading of existing utilities and infrastructure facilities, expansion of infrastructure into developing areas, construction and development of new facilities (i.e. fire stations, public works facilities, etc.), and can include such items as the water system, sanitary sewers, stormwater facilities, the street system, and streetscape enhancements.

The CIP aims to reflect and help implement the City Council's goals, of which the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan should be a part.

As financial resources in St. Charles will always be limited and public dollars must be spent wisely, the City should continue to use the CIP to provide the most desirable public improvements and stay within budget constraints.

## Implementation Table/Action Agenda

The City should prepare an implementation table that identifies projects and activities to be undertaken, the priority of each project or activity, the role of the City and other participants, and potential funding sources and assistance programs that might be available. This table should be updated annually to coincide with the annual updates to the Capital Improvement Plan and the City's annual budget plan.

## Cooperation

The City of St. Charles should assume the leadership role in implementing the new Comprehensive Plan. In addition to carrying out the administrative actions and many of the public improvement projects called for in the Plan, the City may choose to administer a variety of programs available to local residents, businesses, and property owners.

For the Comprehensive Plan to be successful, however, it must be based on a strong partnership between the City, other public agencies, various neighborhood groups and organizations, the local business community, and the private sector.

The City should be the leader in promoting the cooperation and collaboration needed to implement the new Comprehensive Plan. The City's partners should include:

- » Other governmental and service districts such as the school district, park district, Kane County, private utility companies, the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), the Forest Preserve District of Kane County, etc;
- » Builders and developers, who should be encouraged to undertake improvements and new construction that conform to the Plan and enhance the overall quality and character of the community; and,
- » The St. Charles community, since all residents and neighborhood groups should be encouraged to participate in the on-going planning process, and all should be given the opportunity to voice their opinions on improvement and development decisions within the community.

## Public Communication

Implementing the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan will require the support and extensive participation of the community. Successfully communicating with local residents, businesses, and property owners should be a priority of the City.

The City should prepare a brief summary version of the new Comprehensive Plan and distribute it widely throughout the community. It is important that all local residents, businesses, and property owners be familiar with the Plan's major recommendations and its "vision" for the future.

The City should also consider additional techniques for responding quickly to public questions and concerns regarding planning and development. For example, the City might consider a special newsletter or website feature that focus on frequently-raised questions and concerns regarding planning and development or new City projects.

## Regular Updates

It is important to emphasize that the Comprehensive Plan is not a static document. If community attitudes change or new issues arise which are beyond the scope of the current Plan, the Plan should be revised and updated accordingly.

Although a proposal to amend the Plan can be brought forth at any time, the City should regularly undertake a systematic review of the Plan. The City should initiate review of the Plan at least every three to five years. Ideally, this review should coincide with the preparation of the City's budget and Capital Improvement Plan and the preparation of an annual action agenda.

In this manner, recommendations or changes relating to capital improvements or other programs can be considered as part of the commitments for the upcoming fiscal year. Routine examination of the Plan will help ensure that the planning program remains relevant to community needs and aspirations.



## Potential Funding Sources

A description of potential funding sources currently available is summarized below. It is important to note that because the following sources are subject to change, the City should continue to research and monitor grants, funding agencies, and programs to identify new opportunities as they become available.

### General Funding Sources

#### Tax Increment Financing (TIF)

There are currently six TIF districts of St. Charles: Hotel Baker, Foundry Business, St. Charles Mall, First Street, Lexington Club, and St. Charles Manufacturing Redevelopment TIF Districts. The City may continue to use the provision of TIF funding to incentivize and attract desired development within key commercial areas. TIF funds can typically be used for infrastructure, public improvements, land assemblage and in offsetting the cost of development – including, but not limited to engineering, stormwater, and other site related issues.

TIF utilizes future property tax revenues generated within a designated area or district to pay for improvements and incentivize further reinvestment. As the Equalized Assessed Value (EAV) of properties within a TIF District increases, the incremental growth in property tax over the base year that the TIF was established is reinvested in the area. Local officials may then issue bonds or undertake other financial obligations based on the growth in new tax revenue within the district. The maximum life of a TIF district in the State of Illinois is 23 years although the TIF district can be extended via approval from the Illinois state legislature. Over the life of a TIF district, the taxing bodies present within the district, such as school or park districts, receive the same amount of tax revenue that was generated in the base year in which the TIF was established. There are provisions that allow for schools to receive additional revenue.

### Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG)

The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program is a flexible program that provides communities with resources to address a wide range of unique community development needs. St. Charles is not an entitlement community and must apply to receive funds via the Kane County CDBG Program. The CDBG Program provides annual grants on a formula basis to 1,225 general units of local government and States. A grantee must develop and follow a detailed plan that provides for and encourages citizen participation. This integral process emphasizes participation by persons of low or moderate income, particularly residents of predominantly low- and moderate-income neighborhoods, blighted areas, and areas in which the grantee proposes to use CDBG funds. Over a one-, two- or three-year period, as selected by the grantee, not less than 70 % of the funds must be used for activities that benefit low- and moderate-income persons.

### Façade and Site Improvement Programs

Façade and site improvement programs can be used to help improve and retain existing business by offering low interest loans or grants earmarked for improving the exterior appearance of designated properties. In addition to existing businesses within the City's Downtown area, where it is already in place, this program should also be considered for businesses in other areas of the City including the commercial corridors and aging commercial centers.

### Signage and Awning Program

The Downtown St. Charles Partnership (DSCP) administers this grant program to Downtown businesses wishing to improve signs, awnings, lighting, and other external appearance features. Funding for the program comes from a city-authorized Special Service Area (SSA) that applies to downtown properties. The City should consider adopting a similar program in other districts with heavy pedestrian-oriented commercial use.

### Corridor Improvement Grant

The Corridor Improvement Program is designed to enhance the physical appearance of private property along the City's most traveled corridors. Eligible businesses can receive grants for beautification and physical improvement projects.

### Special Service Area (SSA)

SSAs can be used to fund improvements and programs within a designated service area. An SSA is essentially added to the property tax of the properties within the identified service area and the revenue received is channeled back into projects and programs benefiting those properties. An SSA can be rejected if 51% of the property owners and electors within a designated area object. SSA funds can be used for such things as streetscape improvements, extra trash pickup, or the subsidizing of staff to market a commercial area. The City currently uses SSAs to provide special services in the downtown (SSA #1A for public parking and SSA #1B for downtown revitalization) and as a back-up funding mechanism for the maintenance of stormwater detention areas.

### Incubator Programs

Business incubators provide low-cost space and specialized support services to small companies. Such services might include administrative consulting, access to office equipment and training, and assistance in accessing credit. Incubators are typically owned by public entities such as municipalities or economic development agencies who then subsidize rents and services with grants. In addition to job creation and generating activity, the goal is to have startup businesses grow and relocate to larger spaces within the municipality.

### Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT)

Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) is a tool similar to tax abatement. The City can use PILOT to reduce the property tax burden of a desired business for a predetermined period. In this instance, a local taxing body and a property owner will agree to the annual payment of a set fee in place of the property taxes. Payments are typically made in the form of a fixed sum, but they may also be paid as a percentage of the income generated by a property.

In addition, PILOT can also be a means of reducing the fiscal impact on the City of a nonprofit, institutional use, or other non taxpaying entity locating to a key site. While such uses can be desirable as activity generators, they can also negatively impact municipal services. Provisions can be made to offset that negative impact by allowing taxing bodies to be compensated for at least a portion of the revenue that would otherwise be collected in the form of property tax.

### Foundation and Specialized Grants

The successful implementation of the Plan requires realization of projects that range in scale and scope. One type of funding source that becomes increasingly significant when issue-specific projects or programs (tourism, performing arts, historic preservation, small business assistance, etc.) are considered is the foundation grant. The City should continue to dedicate resources to monitoring and exploring foundation grants as a funding tool.



### Business District Designation

Business district development and redevelopment is authorized by Division 74.3 of the Municipal Code of the State of Illinois. A municipality may designate, after public hearings, an area of the municipality as a Business District.

Business district designation empowers a municipality to carry out a business district development or redevelopment plan through the following actions:

- » Approve all development and redevelopment proposals.
- » Acquire, manage, convey, or otherwise dispose of real and personal property acquired pursuant to the provisions of a development or redevelopment plan.
- » Apply for and accept capital grants and loans from the United States and the State of Illinois, or any instrumentality of the United States or the State, for business district development and redevelopment.
- » Borrow funds as it may be deemed necessary for the purpose of business district development and redevelopment, and in this connection issue such obligation or revenue bonds as it shall be deemed necessary, subject to applicable statutory limitations.

- » Enter into contracts with any public or private agency or person.
- » Sell, lease, trade, or improve such real property as may be acquired in connection with business district development and redevelopment plans.
- » Expend such public funds as may be necessary for the planning, execution, and implementation of the business district plans.
- » Establish by ordinance or resolution procedures for the planning, execution, and implementation of business district plans.
- » Create a Business District Development and Redevelopment Commission to act as an agent for the municipality for the purposes of business district development and redevelopment.

### Community Development Corporations

Many communities use Special Service Areas or Tax Increment Financing (as appropriate) to fund the start up and/or operation of a Community Development Corporation (CDC) to oversee a range of redevelopment activities for a specific geographic area, particularly commercial areas and central business districts. A CDC is typically an independently chartered organization, often with not-for-profit status, that is governed by a board of directors. The directors typically bring expertise in real estate or business development along with a demonstrated commitment to the community. CDCs are often funded through public-private partnerships with financial commitments from local financial institutions or businesses and a public funding source (TIF, SSA, etc.) to provide for both operating expenses and programs, as appropriate. CDCs may undertake traditional chamber of commerce-like activities such as marketing, promotion, workforce development, information management, and technical assistance to small businesses, but may also administer loan programs or acquire and redevelop property in the community.

Many communities create CDCs under the umbrella structure of an established chamber of commerce in the community so that missions are complementary and do not overlap. An example of a distinctive CDC activity is the facilitation or administration of a revolving loan fund or a community lending pool capitalized by commitments from local financial institutions to provide low-interest/low-cost loans. Such funds typically target both new and expanding businesses for such redevelopment activities as interior improvements, façade and exterior improvements, building additions, site improvements, etc. Some state and federal small business assistance programs are structured to work in combination with CDC administered loan programs. Another distinctive activity of a CDC is property acquisition and redevelopment, which is most successful when the organization is mature in both expertise and capacity (particularly if the CDC intends to manage property after redevelopment).

## Transportation Funding Sources

### MAP-21

On July 6, 2012, President Obama signed into law Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21), a two-year transportation reauthorization bill. MAP-21 replaces the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), which expired in September 2009 and was extended nine times. The goal of MAP-21 is to modernize and reform the current transportation system to help create jobs, accelerate economic recovery, and build the foundation for long-term prosperity. MAP-21 continues funding for numerous programs previously funded through SAFETEA-LU.

Given the recent passage of MAP-21, it is still uncertain how changes in Federal policy will ultimately impact existing funding programs. The City should continue to keep informed as to the status of these programs and any new funding sources that may be introduced in the near future as a result of MAP-21.

The following discussion summarizes grant programs covered under MAP-21 that could be utilized by the City to make enhancements to local transportation infrastructure, including roadways, bridges, sidewalks and trail.

### Safe Routes to School

The SRTS program has provided funding for the planning, design, and construction of infrastructure-related projects that will substantially improve the ability of students to walk and bicycle to school, including:

- » Sidewalk improvements;
- » Traffic calming and speed reduction improvements;
- » Pedestrian and bicycle crossing improvements;
- » On-street bicycle facilities;
- » Off-street bicycle and pedestrian facilities;
- » Secure bicycle parking facilities; and,
- » Traffic diversion improvements in the vicinity of schools.

### Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program (ITEP)

The Illinois Department of Transportation administers the ITEP and has funded projects including bicycle/pedestrian facilities, streetscaping, landscaping, historic preservation and projects that control or remove outdoor advertising. In the past, federal reimbursement has been available for up to 50 percent of the cost of right-of-way and easement acquisition and 80 percent of the cost for preliminary engineering, utility relocations, construction engineering and construction costs.

### Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ)

The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) has been the administrator of CMAQ funds for the northeastern Illinois region. CMAP has supported a wide range of projects through the CMAQ program including improvements to bicycle facilities, commuter parking, transit facilities, intersections, sidewalk improvements, and signal timing. Funds have also been used to make transportation improvements to eliminate bottlenecks and limit diesel emissions, and to create promotional campaigns to enhance use of transit and bicycles.

### Surface Transportation Program (STP)

In the past, these funds have been allocated to coordinating regional councils, specifically the Kane-Kendall Council of Mayors, to be used for all roadway and roadway related items. Projects in this funding category have required a local sponsor and have been selected based on, among other factors, a ranking scale that takes into account the regional benefits provided by the project among other factors.

The Kane/Kendall Council of Mayors is the body designated to select and program local STP projects in the Kane County region. The Council's STP funds have been used to fund a variety of project types including roadway rehabilitation, reconstruction, and restoration; widening and adding lanes; intersection improvements; traffic signal improvements; and green infrastructure funding.

## Parks and Open Space Funding

### Illinois Department of Natural Resources

The City should work with the Park District to identify projects where a cooperative pursuit of parks and open space grants may be beneficial. The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) administers seven grants-in-aid programs to help municipalities and other local agencies provide a number of public outdoor recreation areas and facilities. The programs operate on a cost reimbursement basis to local agencies (government or not-for-profit organization) and are awarded on an annual basis. Local governments can receive one grant per program per year, with no restrictions on the number of local governments that can be funded for a given location. IDNR grants are organized into three major categories: Open Space Lands Acquisition and Development (OSLAD); Boat Access Area Development (BAAD); and Illinois Trails Grant Programs.

### OSLAD

The OSLAD program awards up to fifty percent of project costs up to a maximum of \$750,000 for acquisition and \$400,000 for development/renovation of such recreation facilities as playgrounds, outdoor nature interpretive areas, campgrounds and fishing piers, park roads and paths, and beaches. IDNR administers five grant programs to provide financial assistance for the acquisition, development, and maintenance of trails that are used for public recreation uses (bike paths, snowmobile, off-highway vehicles, motorized and non-motorized recreational trails, etc.).

### Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)

Land and Water Conservation Fund grants are available to cities, counties, and school districts to be used for outdoor recreation projects. Projects require a 55 percent match. All funded projects are taken under perpetuity by the National Park Service and must only be used for outdoor recreational purposes. Development and renovation projects must be maintained for a period of 25 years or the life of the manufactured goods.

### Recreational Trails Program (RTP)

The Recreational Trails Program is a federally funded grant program for trail-related land acquisition, development or restoration. The grants are awarded based on the results of a competitive scoring process and the application's suitability under funding provisions included in Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient, Transportation Equity Act: a Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). A minimum 20 percent match is required by the applicant. A funding requirement targets 30 percent of the funding for motorized trails, 30 percent for non-motorized trails and 40 percent for diversified trail use. RTP grants are to be used for motorized or non-motorized trail development or renovation and preservation. Projects require a minimum match of 20 percent. All projects must be maintained for a period of 25 years. Eligible applicants include cities and counties, schools, and private, non-profit and for-profit businesses.