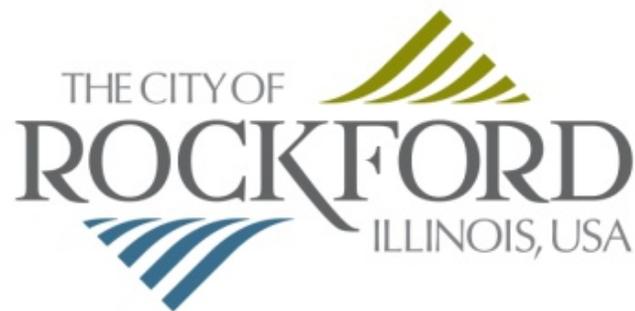


2020 Plan Update Process

Phase 2: Analysis

Plan Element Review
Current Conditions Data

This Packet contains all the current Plan Elements with Staff Commentary and Current Condition Maps. This documents is meant for use by the Rockford 2020 Plan Update Task Force



Plan Element 1:

Issues and Opportunities

Community Vision

The “vision” of this plan is to contribute to the realization of the mission statement generated in the “Blueprint for Rockford’s Future” — to strengthen and focus this community’s commitment to improve the lives of all its’ people. While many of the focal points are the same as those in Blueprint — linkages, access and neighborhoods — the emphasis is different. Here, in the 2020 Plan, the emphasis is on the use of the land and on physical facilities; in Blueprint, the emphasis leaned more towards solving problems through partnerships. What is needed for success is a combination of the two approaches.

Community Goals and Principles

- **Land Use:** Guide Rockford’s development through the 2020 Plan, Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision Ordinance and Building Code, following the principles of Smart Growth,

Staff Commentary: Sustainable Growth and New Urbanism have emerged as recognized planning and design methods since the 2004 plan adoption.
- **Transportation:** Improve transportation infrastructure, services and networks (Airport, transit, roadways, and pathways) to provide efficient and accessible movement of all Rockford residents and goods throughout the community.

Staff Commentary: Passenger and freight rail transit is not included in the 2004 plan.
- **Community facilities:** Develop and provide easy access for all Rockford residents to the quality and types of resources and services people need to improve their quality of life, and to develop to their fullest potential.
- **Telecommunications:** Ensure that all Rockford citizens and businesses have access to the latest telecommunications services.
- **Housing:** Ensure that all Rockford residents have a decent and affordable home and a suitable living environment.
- **Economic development:** Bring businesses, the community and other resources together for the entire community of Rockford to attain a robust and diverse economic environment.
- **Neighborhoods:** Ensure that all Rockford residents live in neighborhoods that are safe and that are at least either stable or improving.

- **Natural resources:** Safeguard and improve environmental features as a means of promoting sustainable urban development, revitalization and a good quality of life in Rockford.
- **Historic preservation:** Identify, protect and preserve Rockford's historic resources in order to enhance the quality of life and economic wellbeing of current and future generations.
- **Community design:** Improve the aesthetics and enhance the identity of Rockford as whole as well as constituent neighborhoods, major road corridors and gateways, and the riverfront.
- **Public participation:** Engage the public through community outreach, consensus building and public education.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Ensure that the 2020 Plan remains viable while still consistent with its original evaluation principles through a regular review and amendment process.

Plan Element 2:

Land Use

The development and use of land is the result of a complex process involving legal, social, economic and environmental aspects. This plan is just one component of the City's regulatory role in that process. As Rockford's official comprehensive land use plan, it provides a general framework to guide future long-term land development decisions and actions by both the public and private sectors. Other elements are the City's zoning, subdivision and building regulations, as well as incentives offered through various Economic Development and housing programs. Each of these plays a separate part in the process with each of the regulatory codes addressing a different level of development, going from the very general (land use plan) to the very specific (building code).

Land Use Plan

Provides a generalized map of the community showing where broad types of uses should be allowed, with more specific guidance in the accompanying text; establishes corridors for the construction of new streets and roads.

Subdivision Ordinance

Governs the division of land and establishes minimum requirements for improvements such as streets, sidewalks and drainage detention areas; used for review of developments up to 1½ miles beyond the city limits.

Staff Commentary: *Current ordinance adopted in 2007*

Zoning Ordinance

Governs the site-specific designation of allowed uses on individual parcels of land, as well as parking and landscaping requirements, location of buildings, location and size of signs, traffic circulation and access; current ordinance adopted in 1993, updated in 1997. Ordinance is based on the concept of performance zoning which allows maximum flexibility for the developer while at the same time resulting in the most specific designation of what is allowed on a particular parcel. In addition, incorporating performance requirements into the overall mix of zoning requirements can make seemingly incompatible uses compatible.

Staff Commentary:

- *Current ordinance adopted in 2008; updated regularly as per state statutes.*
- *The zoning ordinance is adopted for the purposes of:*
 - *protecting and promoting the public health, safety and general welfare;*
 - *implementing adopted plans and policies*
 - *enhancing residents' quality of life*
 - *protecting the character of established residential neighborhoods*
 - *maintaining economically vibrant as well as visually attractive business and commercial areas*
 - *retaining and expanding the city's business and employment base*
 - *promoting mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented development patterns*
 - *accommodating pedestrian, bicycle, and transit use*

- *maintaining orderly and compatible development patterns that promote an appropriate mix of land uses and protect and conserve property values*
- *ensuring adequate light, air, privacy and access to property*
- *promoting environmentally responsible development practices*
- *promoting rehabilitation and reuse of older buildings*
- *maintaining a range of housing choices and options*

Building Code

Governs construction and/or renovation of structures; the City adopts the most recent editions of BOCA and International Codes for Building, One and Two Family Dwellings, Electrical, Mechanical, Fire Prevention, and Property Maintenance with local amendments; and the Illinois Plumbing Code and Illinois Accessibility Code.

The efficient functioning of each of these regulations requires the cooperative efforts of several departments of city government. This is something the City has worked very hard to achieve and plans to improve in the years ahead, partly with the aid of technology. Development of a computerized geographic information system (GIS) will enable all departments to share information, thus minimizing the chances of their working at cross purposes because of conflicting information. This should not only improve staff efficiency, but also provide developers with a more direct path through the regulatory maze.

The following pages describe how the land use planning decisions were made in preparing this plan, as well as further steps that will need to be taken to implement the plan.

Staff Commentary:

- *Development of a computerized geographic information system (WINGIS) and sharing information through ROCKSTAT has enabled all departments to share information, thus minimizing the chances of their working at cross purposes because of conflicting information.*

Basic Concepts

The land use section of the original Year 2000 Plan begins by alluding to the complexity of the development process, concluding with the statement that “. . . our land use pattern did not come about by accident; it is the result of public decisions — plans, laws and expenditures — coupled with private investment choices.”

Making land use decisions hasn't gotten any easier in the 15-20 years; if anything, it's gotten even more complex. Now, in addition to all the standard land use issues planners have always faced, we also need to incorporate recent decisions and trends ranging from such things as brownfields and riverfront development to big box retailers and the need for affordable housing and vacant storefronts will keep moving outward. The same forces affecting older parts of Rockford will affect what is now the fringe area a generation or two later. In other words, today's winners will become tomorrow's losers. We also need to consider plans that are being made by other jurisdictions near Rockford or that include Rockford, such as the Rock River Reclamation District (while they need to take our plans into consideration as well). This is done to a certain extent within the regional transportation planning process, but needs to be expanded to cover all land use issues. All of these things came into play in the creation of this plan and the map that goes with it.

Staff Commentary:

- *Development of a computerized geographic information system (WINGIS) and sharing information through ROCKSTAT has enabled all departments to share information, thus minimizing the chances of their working at cross purposes because of conflicting information.*
- *Sustainable development practices, infill and adaptive reuse of existing structures in now part of Rockford's development strategy*
- *Rockford Metropolitan Agency for Planning adopted a 2040 Long Range Transportation*

Land Use Planning Principles

Specific principles that were considered in drawing up the map of the 2020 Plan include the following:

- **Compatibility between land uses** is the most basic concept used in this or virtually any other land use plan. Land use designations on this plan map generally reflect conventional wisdom as to what is and is not compatible in undeveloped areas. For example, whenever commercial or industrial uses are shown next to residential, they are generally office or light industrial, the types of uses considered to have the least amount of negative impact. Obviously, residences somewhere will have to have something other than other residences as neighbors. It is the job of this plan, combined with zoning and subdivision regulations, to make the impact of those adjoining uses as painless as possible.
- A second basic principle underlying this plan is the concept of requiring **full urban services** for any new development in the City or in the extraterritorial area in which it exercises subdivision control. The concept of service districts served as the cornerstone of the Year 2000 Plan. The idea behind this was for all new development within the urbanized area to use full urban services. The reasoning behind this is pretty simple. Public improvements such as water and sewer lines are expensive to install; like anyone else, the City wants to get the greatest return it can on its taxpayers' investment. One way to ensure that is not to allow any new development within the area likely to become a part of the City of Rockford to be built with private wells and septic systems. This minimizes the possibility of any new roadblocks to the efficient delivery of water and sanitary sewer services to new parts of the City.

An additional reason for requiring full urban services — City water; sanitary sewer; urban streets with curb, gutter, storm sewers and sidewalks; storm water detention; street layout standards for block length; and appropriate utility easements — rests with the fact that the areas in question will at some point in the future become part of the City. By having them develop to City standards from the start, we will avoid the problems inherent in trying to bring them up to standard at a later date after they're annexed. New development on the fringes has to be viewed as part of the total fabric of the City 15 or 20 years from now, not just as it exists today.

The reason for this position is evident through developments that occurred on well and septic before 1981 that have since become barriers to the orderly growth and development of the City of Rockford. Much of the City is surrounded by these areas and the residents in time demand sanitary sewer and/or City water when their private systems fail. Retrofitting these areas is very costly, and the residents often oppose annexation because they have benefitted from their proximity to the City without having to pay City taxes.

Finally, development on private well and septic systems wastes land, an invaluable commodity, especially in this part of the country where some of the most productive farmland in the world exists. While Rockford certainly is no longer a community of farmers, it most certainly is still — and always will be — a community of consumers. It behooves us to afford this land as much protection as we possibly can.

The outer limits of planned urban development were drawn through a combination of the Ultimate Annexation Boundary adopted by Rockford City Council in 1984 and updated in 1993 as part of a comprehensive package of annexation policies, and through growth management studies to determine which areas around the City are most likely to be able to be served by sanitary sewer by 2020. The latter was done in conjunction with information provided by the Rock River Water Reclamation District. In this way, we have ensured as much as possible that the public is aware of a desire by City decision makers to incorporate all of these areas into the City, and the physical ability to do so within reasonable cost constraints. Where these studies showed areas within the 1½ miles of the city limits where the City has planning jurisdiction and where it is highly unlikely that sanitary sewer would ever be available, the new plan map shows the designation “SRA.” This stands for “subdivision review area,” and is intended to ensure that the City retains review authority for new subdivisions proposed within these areas. This is important for several reasons — to ensure (a) the continuity of the transportation system through the subdivision process; (b) the adequacy of the infrastructure in emergency situations, since the City may be called upon to provide emergency services from time to time; (c) the adequacy of public improvements so that if these areas are annexed at some point in the future, the City will not be faced with demands to rebuild public improvements immediately upon annexation; and (d) if a major policy decision by the Rock River Water Reclamation District changes the Urban Service District, the City can take this into account and prevent premature development.

- Equally important is the aim of achieving **balanced growth patterns** citywide. While it may not be possible to overcome the imbalances of the past 20 to 30 years right away, we can make significant progress in this area. The West State Street Corridor Study begun by RATS in 2001 and completed in 2003 represents a key step in this process. The resulting plan was not just a street improvement plan, but a comprehensive improvement plan for the West State corridor from downtown to Meridian Road. Now called Context Sensitive Design, this was one of the earliest projects of this type approved by IDOT. Because of right-of way acquisition requirements (over 250 parcels) and costs this project took a considerably longer period of time to implement than basic corridor improvements. The road improvement for the first segment of this corridor improvement, from Downtown to Independence Avenue, was completed at the end of 2013. The plan also includes landscaping and signage treatments, building façade enhancement and renovation proposals, enhanced roadway lighting standards, and a bike path alignment. These are to be initiated during 2014. The City has begun work to implement the second segment. Proposals from the West State Street Corridor Study have been incorporated into the 2020 Plan to ensure consistency between the two plans. Full implementation of its proposals will help ensure not only a more balanced growth between the east and west sides, but also a greater diversity of retail, service and employment opportunities on Rockford’s west side than exists currently. Similar comprehensive looks were also subsequently taken at other major corridors including North and South Main Streets and Kishwaukee Street. Updating the Action Plan and regular monitoring are important to keeping the Plan current as detailed corridor studies are prepared.

Other key components to this principal are the proposal to modify existing annexation policies so that development in rapidly growing areas will occur in a more logical pattern. It is important that the Annexation

Policies be reviewed and modified as necessary prior to the next major housing “boom” expected when the economy substantially improves.

- A fourth element in generating the land use component of the plan map is including the impact of *proposed new streets and roads*. While new roadways do not always have an immediate major impact on neighboring land, the possibility certainly exists each time a new one is built, especially an arterial. The most dramatic examples of changes resulting from new roads built in the last 20 years are the rapid transformation of the North Perryville Road and East Riverside Boulevard corridors from farmland to a mixture of residential, commercial and office development. On the other hand, extension of Seminary Street to Harrison Avenue has not brought significant land use changes, although it certainly has eased circulation within the area. Clearly location makes a difference in the degree and type of impact a street improvement has. Seminary is not in a major growth corridor, plus, near Harrison, it is encumbered by traversing a Brownfield area in the Superfund Area, hence its limited impact. North Perryville and East Riverside, on the other hand, are both in the heart of the northeast growth area. These differences in potential impact had to be evaluated as the plan map was prepared.
- **Existing land use** and subdivision plats that have been recorded but are not developed yet also play a major role in drawing up a plan map. In developed areas, the plan map usually reflects what is there. However, some changes have been made in areas that are in transition now or may be within the next 10 to 15 years. A prime example of the latter is along the east bank of the Rock River downtown. Historically, industrial uses have been located there to take advantage of the Rock River and/or the rail line that goes up Madison Street. Neither of these resources is a factor now for the industries that remain. Consequently, the plan map envisions this area, especially north of State Street, evolving into one of mixed use buildings that would house retail shops, restaurants and offices on their lower floors and residents above. This is not a new idea — the same approach was espoused in the 1986 Bullseye! Plan for downtown and is a centerpiece of the 1997 “Neighborhood Concepts” plan prepared by River East. The factors used in mapping these transitional areas were (a) determining what would be a viable use in the area; (b) what would have the greatest positive impact on neighboring uses; and (c), in cases where older, possibly historical buildings are present, what types of things could make use of existing buildings.
 - **Staff Commentary:**
 - *The recent extensive renovation/adaptive reuse of the Prairie Street Brewhouse is an example of successful conversion of a former industrial complex.*
- Getting **maximum impact from the visibility achieved from heavily traveled roadways** such as I-90 has a limited impact on the land use map in terms of geographic area, but can potentially have a huge impact in terms of putting the community’s best foot forward. In drawing up the proposed land use maps for this plan, roadways such as I-90, US 20, the Springfield/Harrison connection, and Perryville Road were viewed as an asset to be tapped, both as a potential showcase for what Rockford has to offer, and as a significant tax base. For that reason, the plan map shows commercial, office, technology parks and industrial uses along these highways. The plan map generally avoids placing residential uses along these roadways, and recommends a policy of not allowing development of tax exempt uses in these areas.

Staff Commentary

- *The Lowe's Distribution Center is industrial development project along a major transportation roadway.*
- *The recent commercial retail center constructed at E. Jefferson & N. 3rd Streets is an example of improving a vacant site utilizing context sensitive retail design.*
- *Other plans adopted by the City earlier that have a land use component were referred to as this plan map was prepared. Most of these are alluded to in the first section of this document on pages 4 and 5.*
- *Incorporating Smart Growth Principles in the land use plan map is essential to encouraging development and development patterns that will retain and attract businesses, industries and residents to the City. What is termed "Smart Growth" really only means making informed decisions about how and where to grow. By using Smart Growth, Rockford should be able to grow in ways that support economic development and jobs; create strong neighborhoods with a range of housing, commercial and transportation choices; and make the best use of existing public investments in streets, sewers and so forth.*

Staff Commentary

- *Sustainable Development Principles and New Urbanism are considered best practices in Smart Growth development*

There are ten major Smart Growth principles and literally hundreds of related policies identified in the ICMA "Getting to Smart Growth" publications. Many of these principles are already in place to a greater or lesser degree in the City of Rockford, but there is considerable opportunity to further incorporate these principles into the City's decision-making process as we continue ask the questions "how and where should we grow" and "what do we need to do to strengthen the vitality of the City as it is today." The following smart growth related policies and actions are recommended as part of the 2020 Plan:

- *Promote mixed use development* The Zoning Ordinance has been enhanced to encourage mixed use developments and flexibility in land uses, both in new construction and in adaptive reuse; TIF and other financing should be used to assist with the financing of mixed-use developments; planned mixed uses need to be incorporated into subarea/neighborhood plans; and incentives for ground floor retail and upper level residential in new development and re-use of existing structures all need to be enhanced.

Staff Commentary

- *The 2008 Zoning Ordinance has incorporated this policy, especially within the Central Planning Subarea.*
- *Take advantage of compact building design* Provide open space in compactly developed areas, such as the Mid Town District; manage existing on-street and surface parking lots effectively; redevelop vacant warehouse space into residential units; reduce minimum lot size requirements in appropriate areas; and take steps to provide a wide variety of housing types and housing densities in appropriate locations with appropriate transitions between different densities

Staff Commentary

- *The 2008 Zoning Ordinance has incorporated this policy*

- Create a range of housing opportunities and choices Promote employer-assisted housing programs; encourage housing downtown and in or near existing commercial areas; develop and implement a program to identify and dispose of vacant land and abandoned buildings as part of the neighborhood revitalization process; and investigate the adoption of special rehabilitation building codes to regulate the renovation of existing structures. (Efforts are being made through the Building Code and the City's new demolition program to implement this overall policy)
- Create a walkable community Use Capital Improvements funding to retrofit existing arterial and collector streets with sidewalks in conformance with a pedestrian master plan/ sidewalk improvement plan; require building and site plan design which makes commercial areas more walkable; design streets to facilitate safe pedestrian crossings; consider traffic calming techniques where traffic speed through residential neighborhoods is excessive; connect walkways, parking lots, greenways and developments so as not to create barriers to access; provide sidewalks for safe pedestrian access to schools, including the Community College; use trees and other green infrastructure to provide shelter and separation for pedestrians from automobile traffic; provide safe pedestrian routes to transit; and make places walkable for aging populations and those with disabilities (Through TIF, Zoning and Subdivision processes, the City has made strides in providing sidewalks along arterial streets, especially East State Street)
- Foster a distinctive, attractive community with a strong sense of place Establish matching grants or revolving loan funds for historic preservation; turn underused highways into boulevards; develop a comprehensive way finding system to and within downtown ; highlight cultural assets through public art and event nights; make retail centers attractive destinations; revitalize the entire waterfront, starting downtown; plant trees throughout the community and preserve existing trees during new construction; create active and secure open spaces; define neighborhoods with visual cues – signage, entryways, street lighting etc.; preserve scenic vistas through the appropriate location of telecommunications towers and improved control of billboards; and enact clear design guidelines so that streets, buildings, and public spaces work together to create a sense of place.

Staff Commentary: *The River walk constructed along the Riverfront Museum campus and the replacement of the Main Street pedestrian mall utilized context sensitive design principles to maximize pedestrian and vehicular movement while responding to the existing built environment.*

- Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty and critical environmental areas Create a network of trails and greenways; partner with non-governmental organizations to acquire and protect land, including the purchase of development rights; support tree preservation through public-private partnerships; and employ development strategies that better protect and preserve open space in edge areas by focusing development in areas where adequate infrastructure already exists. One simple step the City can take to help ensure that environmental factors are given due consideration in the development process is to make sure that groups such as the Audubon Society and the Sierra Club receive agendas for the Zoning Board of Appeals. This would give them notice of most development proposals before the City.

Staff Commentary: *Land acquisitions in conjunction with the Morgan Street Bridge and the South Main Corridor Improvements will soon result in a major greenway/pathway from Downtown to the 15th Avenue Bridge.)*

- Strengthen and direct development towards the existing urban area Strengthen state and local brownfields programs; consider the use of split-rate property taxes to encourage development on vacant or blighted pieces of land in existing communities; conduct an “infill checkup” to evaluate and prioritize infill and brownfield sites for development; facilitate programs and support community-based organizations for neighborhood revitalization; create economic incentives for businesses and homeowners to locate in areas with existing infrastructure; and identify priority areas for receipt of infrastructure funding based on cost/benefit analysis.

Staff Commentary:

- *The State of Illinois adopted a Historic Tax Credit program for River Edge communities. The tax credit rate set at 25% of total qualified eligible development expenses.*

- Provide a variety of transportation choices Require sidewalks in all developments; evaluate parking needs, parking requirements and their impacts on pedestrian movement and transit service; cluster freight facilities near the airport and rail terminals; consult with emergency responders when developing smart growth plans; use cleared brownfields for freight distribution and consolidation centers; provide transit users with customized transit information; and create a comprehensive bicycling program.

Staff Commentary:

- *Sidewalks and pathways are standard practice in major Corridor improvement projects.*
- *The 2008 zoning ordinance strengthens requirements for sidewalks with new and existing land and building improvements.*

- Make development decisions predictable, fair and cost effective Educate elected leaders and public officials about smart growth; direct development along corridors to create stronger districts ; consider steps to simplify the Zoning Ordinance and other land development regulations; implement geographic information system-based planning into the development process; provide financial incentives to aid the development of smart growth projects; conduct smart growth audits of development regulations; encourage demand for smart growth through consumer incentives and display zoning regulations and design goals in pictorial fashion to better illustrate development goals.

Staff Commentary: *The multi-departmental Process Improvement initiative has made important strides in this direction.)*

- Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions Conduct community visioning exercises to determine how and where Rockford should grow; cultivate relationships with schools, colleges, and universities; bring developers and the development community into the visioning process; conduct place audits to determine barriers and opportunities for smart growth; develop community indicators to make sure that development is meeting community goals; illustrate complex concepts with photographs, videos and other imagery.

All of these concepts were taken into consideration as the map for this plan was prepared. With these providing the basic framework, land use decisions were made based on whether an area was (a) developed and stable, (b)

developed and either in transition or facing transition in the foreseeable future, (c) undeveloped and facing strong development pressure, or (d) undeveloped and facing challenges for development to occur.

It should be borne in mind that, except for the proposed targeted infill areas, the 2020 Plan map shows generalized land use. As a follow up to this Plan, the City should begin the process of preparing more specific subarea plans for those areas that are largely undeveloped at this state, and for those that are in transition.

Such plans would include the following information:

- Existing and planned major water and sanitary sewer trunk lines;
- Existing and planned collector and arterial roadways;
- Planned macro storm water management facilities;
- Sensitive environmental features that need to be preserved;
- Existing and planned land use;
- Properties that may qualify for designation as landmarks or historic districts by the City of Rockford;
- Cost/benefit analysis of providing infrastructure for development

Staff Commentary:

- *Existing Commercial and Residential areas experiencing decline and specific strategies/ initiatives to reverse this trend;*
- *Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Districts and Enterprise Zones are public financial tools utilized in subarea planning;*
- *The Mid Town North neighborhood plan was prepared shortly before the adoption of the 2020 Plan*
- *Four subarea plans were prepared since the 2004 plan adoption: 1) College-Seminary Focus Area Plan, 2) Hope VI Focus Area Plan, 3) Kishwaukee Corridor Plan, and 4) South Main Revitalization Study*

Planning Rockford's Geographic Boundaries

In 1984, the City adopted a comprehensive set of annexation policies for the first time. These were designed to address several concerns — irregular boundaries and unincorporated islands, both of which led to inefficiencies in the delivery of City services; inconsistency in how annexations were handled; lack of a defined limit for City expansion; and the need for a comprehensive annexation program in order to protect the City's economic base. Over the past 30 years, Rockford has annexed roughly 25 square miles and brought in properties with assessed valuations today of over \$210 million, which translates into approximately \$5 million in property tax dollars annually.

While these annexations are obviously important in terms of the tax dollars they generate, they are important for other reasons as well.

- **Delivery of service:** A major motivating factor in the annexation program is to create some degree of logic to the City's corporate limits. Difficulties arise from both irregular outer boundaries and from islands of unincorporated land inside the City. These irregularities lead to confusion in determining who should respond to emergency calls; to duplication of services by both the City and Winnebago County in patrolling fringe areas and islands; and to gaps in what should ideally be continuous services, such as street maintenance, snow removal and garbage pickup. The straighter we can make our boundaries and the fewer

internal holes there are, the better both Rockford and Winnebago County will be able to provide fast, efficient service to their citizens.

Staff Commentary:

- *Bradley Heights was recently annexed into the City of Rockford*
- **Planning public improvements:** Just as important as determining who serves what areas now is trying to plan for who will most likely serve what areas 5, 10 or 15 years from now. For example, knowing our ultimate limits enables us to plan where and how many fire stations we will need in the foreseeable future, where we will get the most return from investments in infrastructure such as roads and water mains, and where the latter should be looped and where they should be “straight” so they can be further extended in the future.

Staff Commentary:

- *Creating shove ready sites for industrial use with public services and rail access is in high demand*
- *Location of industrial sites near State and Federal highway systems is part of business location factors*
- *Sites with high-level electrical power is in high demand*

In pursuing its annexation policies during the late 1980’s and 1990’s, the City succeeded in bringing four islands in the Ken-Rock area into the City (with added help from the Superfund money spent to connect homes in the area to the Rockford water system), simplifying the boundary with Loves Park along Forest Hills Road and East Riverside Boulevard, bringing the Greater Rockford Airport into Rockford, and extending the corporate limits eastward to the Boone County line.

Staff Commentary:

- *The City has annexed a 1000 acre industrial site with rail access south of the Greater Rockford Airport and extending into Ogle County.*

In some ways, potentially the most important element of the annexation program is the agreements worked out between Rockford and five of its municipal neighbors — Cherry Valley, Loves Park, Machesney Park. By having long-term agreements saying who can annex where, we can each concentrate on providing services within a specified area instead of spending vast sums of money to entice income-generating developments into our municipality. Unfortunately, while this has been the goal, the reality in practice has been that the City continues to heavily subsidize and offer incentives to Greenfield development even after these boundary agreements have been put in place. This has been done primarily to entice specific retail sales tax generators to choose a Rockford site rather than one in another community. The end result has been that capital investment dollars that could be targeted for the rehabilitation or replacement of existing infrastructure is diverted to Greenfield development. This is particularly true for water main, sanitary sewer and transportation investment.

Staff Commentary:

- *The City now has boundary agreements with the Village of Rockton and Village of Davis Junction*
- *The City does not have boundary agreements with the Village of New Milford, the Village of Winnebago and the City of Belvidere.*

Over the next 20 years, Rockford should work to achieve the following:

- Carrying out a complete reevaluation of the City's annexation policies and practices, with special attention being paid to the following issues:
 - How and when incentives and subsidies will be made available;
 - Balance the demands for growth with the need to provide public improvements in older areas that have been in the City for years;
 - Acceptable timing for pre-annexation agreements in areas where there is no threat to annex to another municipality and where development is premature; and
 - Revision of the priority annexation areas and the Ultimate Annexation Boundary. This should be completed as soon as possible and then revised every 10 years.
- Pursue the same sort of aggressive annexation program along West State Street that the City did for East State Street during the 1980s and '90s. Such a program should be based on the findings of the West State Corridor Study conducted under the auspices of RATS (*now called RMAP*). As part of this, the Department of Public Works recommends waiving connection fees and offering free water hookups as incentives to annex properties that act as major barriers to balanced growth and economic development in low- and moderate-income areas. For example, because of the increasing growth of the Village of Winnebago, in addition to new housing on the West side, the West State and Meridian intersection could have the potential for larger commercial development. However, there are several unincorporated properties that keep this property from being served by public utilities and being annexed into the City. Developing and implementing a program similar to the one the City used to get to the Tollway should lead to more services for this part of the community.
- Continue to annex along East State Street to fill in the few gaps remaining east of Perryville Road, and to expand into Boone County, when development pressures warrant such expansion. The latter should occur in concert with property owners, with Rockford annexing only into those areas where it has excess sewer capacity. This is a fairly limited area extending less than a mile into Boone County, including roughly a half mile on either side of State Street. (See Plan Maps 43 and 44.) As annexation occurs, the City should make every effort to protect and take advantage of the distinctive natural character of this area, possibly through design guidelines incorporated into an overlay district in the Zoning Ordinance.
- Continue to work on priority areas listed in the annexation policies that are largely developed and where annexation will occur in small pieces. This includes West State Street, the northeast islands around Edgebrook and Highcrest, Charles Street, and unincorporated areas in the southwest and southeast, including properties south of US 20 that are east of 20th Street and north of Samuelson Road. Primary emphasis should be on areas where uneven boundaries or islands act as barriers to balanced growth, and areas where there is a lack of economic development activity.
- Work with the Rock River Water Reclamation District to create the same type of joint agreements that the City had with the Spring Creek Basin for any new projects in which the City participates.
- Develop long-term annexation agreements with the Villages of Winnebago and New Millford, and the City of Belvidere.

- Prevent new development on private well and septic systems within the Ultimate Annexation Boundary.

Promoting Targeted Infill Development

Many areas of the City of Rockford contain potentially valuable land that is underused, primarily because of land ownership patterns detrimental to land assembly for orderly development. Developments of large, single-ownership “greenfield” tracts have been the norm in the Rockford area for decades, simply because they are the easiest to develop. Greenfield development, however, often requires extension of utilities, highway and street construction, often at considerable cost to the City. In the meantime, many potentially valuable areas located along arterial streets have been left behind in the process.

“Infill” is development of vacant land that is surrounded by developed land. The term means literally to fill in the land. The City has put together development proposals for the underused areas which seem to have the most potential for infill development but which require land assembly and the construction of public streets before development can take place. Several of these areas have had development proposals which have failed due to the difficulties in assembling the land to enable orderly development.

It is likely that these areas would develop if the City were to provide financial assistance for street construction costs, similar to what it has provided in its Industrial Incentives Program. [See Appendix C: Implementation of the Targeted Infill Development Program (TIDA).] This financial assistance would encourage development by offsetting the excessive land assembly costs inherent in the obsolete “farmette” type of land ownership along these arterial streets. Many of the land owners assume a high value for their property because of frontage on an arterial, for example, even though their individual parcel may have only 100 feet of frontage and 600 feet of depth. Control of zoning has prevented strip commercial development with multiple access drives, but these areas have been left underused. As a result, the tax base is also underdeveloped, and there are major gaps in the local and collector street system as new development has bypassed these areas in favor of larger tracts requiring no land assembly.

Staff Commentary:

- *Targeted infill is particularly difficult during hard economic times. The basic premise of creating subdivisions is being able to create lots on both sides of the public street improvements. Many of the Targeted Infill areas have historic land ownership patterns that do not allow this, making development impossible without financial assistance.*

Area Selection

Several areas have been identified throughout Rockford that are in need of some type of infill development. Nine are identified in this Plan as the ones most in need of infill development. The areas were selected based on their overall importance as they relate to development and maintenance of the City, using the following criteria:

- The area contains underused or partially developed land.
- It is in or adjacent to the City, including some areas that were forcibly annexed by the City at some point in the past.
- It needs a catalyst for development to occur, such as City participation in construction of a collector level road, water mains, or sanitary sewer.
- Current land ownership patterns are detrimental to land assembly and orderly development.

The purpose for establishing these infill areas is not just to promote development of currently vacant land, but also to establish land use designations that will promote the best use of each area while trying to protect and preserve existing uses. Standards for infill development are straightforward. The development should provide transitioning and adequate buffering from new commercial and higher density uses to currently existing low density and residential uses. Any new development should be harmonious in both use and design to its existing surroundings and uses. New streets will be designed to promote better access and use of infill areas. Ideally, new development in these areas will set the standard for private development in all parts of the City.

The nine infill areas are discussed in more detail in Appendix C. Three maps are included for each area – one to identify the current status of public utilities, one the zoning and land use, and one the proposed land use and street system plan for each area.

The nine infill areas are as follows:

- Area 1: Newburg Road to Alma Drive, between Phelps Avenue and South Mulford Road (87 acres)
- Area 2: Southeast quadrant of North Alpine Road and East Riverside Boulevard (76 acres)
- Area 3: Sandy Hollow Road to the railroad to the north, between 20th Street and South Alpine Road (717 acres)
- Area 4: West State Street to Auburn Street, between North Springfield and North Pierpont Avenues (225 acres)
- Area 5: Safford Road/Kilburn Avenue to West Riverside Boulevard, between North Springfield Avenue/West Riverside Boulevard and Fleetwood Drive/Idlewood Terrace (1,153 acres)
- Area 6: Ogilby Road to Montague Street, between South Pierpont and South Central Avenues (434 acres)
- Area 7: Auburn Street to Safford Road, between North Springfield and North Pierpont Avenues (310 acres)
- Area 8: Liberty Street to West State Street, between Daisyfield Road and Lexington Avenue (325 acres)
- Area 9: Elm Street to School Street, between North Avon Street and Fairgrounds Park and Kilburn Avenue to the east (88 acres)

These nine Targeted Infill Development Areas present similar needs and solutions, although each has unique features and challenges. All areas require extension of public utility services and roads, but how far those services will need to be extended, and how many roads, are just a few of the differences these areas possess. All met the criteria established for selection in the TIDA Program, each to its own degree, providing separate challenges unique to each area.

Planning in Context to the Surrounding Area

Context-sensitive design has recently become a catchphrase in transportation planning. What it involves is taking land use, environmental and other factors into consideration when designing a new roadway or improving an old one. In reality, this concept needs to be applied to everything the City does, not just streets. Nothing that any of us does occurs in a vacuum. Whether it is land use, historic preservation, housing, economic development, public works, finance, police or fire — virtually every decision made by the City should be sensitive to the context or environment which that decision impacts. In preparing this plan, we have tried to take into consideration the variety of factors that

impact an area in determining what would be the most appropriate land use, and what would be acceptable transportation improvements. Infill development, for example, must be sensitive to its surroundings if it is to succeed.

Finding and Using New Tools for Redevelopment

The City of Rockford will need to investigate the development of new tools to use in addressing the various challenges it faces. While use of conventional tools, such as federal CDBG funds, and creation of TIF districts, has led to significant improvements in some of Rockford's distressed and transitional neighborhoods, both residential and commercial/ industrial, they will only go so far. The City makes every effort to ensure that it gets the greatest impact possible from expenditure of those dollars. In the immediate future, we will review how all the currently available resources have been used in a comprehensive manner, evaluate their overall effectiveness and, if needed, propose changes for their future use. For example, the suggestion was made during public input meetings on this Plan that the City be "more creative" in how it uses TIF funds, including setting up a revolving loan fund that could benefit a lot of people, not just one or two new projects each year. To take the next step up, the City should investigate the feasibility of such things as:

- Creation of a locally funded Housing Trust Fund that would be free of federal and state requirements. This could be used for a variety of things, ranging from helping people meet zoning requirements by paving their driveways to providing assistance to homeowners in historic districts. A similar approach has been used in Des Moines, resulting in the investment of \$115,750,000 in loans and grants to assist over 2,500 housing units since 1991 by the Neighborhood Finance Corporation.
- Adoption of a Housing Occupancy Permit requirement to help ensure that the community's rental housing is decent, safe and sanitary.
- Amortization of certain types of undesirable businesses and/or land uses.
- Creation of a locally funded Business Development Fund to provide assistance to businesses that would be less restrictive than federally or state-funded programs.
- Creation of a Problem Property Resolution Team within City Hall to deal with vacant and abandoned properties that drags down the surrounding area. This Team could concern itself with residential and non-residential properties as well.

For those new programs requiring a local source of funding, the City should investigate the following possibilities. Unfortunately, virtually all of them would require passage of special legislation at the state level; all, however, are worth at least looking at.

- Adding a fee to real estate transactions within the City;
- Adding another ¼% to the sales tax for business development;
- Establishing a citywide Special Service Area to create a funding base;
- Establishing a business registration fee; and/or
- Establishing a system of development impact fees for new capital improvements in new developments. with first priority of such fees going to park and open space. This would involve creation of a special fund at the

Rockford Park District where cash-in-lieu funds could be kept for use in areas where the funds were generated. (See page 70 for further discussion of this.)

Staff Commentary:

- *More recently, this program has been used to prepare the site for the Indoor Sports Facility and the site for the Future Amtrak Station, among others.*
- *Although not a new tool, the USEPA Brownfields program was first used for a major Cleanup Project during 2005, but was a major tool in the preparation of the site for the Federal Courthouse and the site for the Winnebago County Justice Center.*
- *Redevelopment tools currently used by the City include U.S. EPA Brownfield funds, Enterprise Zone Programs, Tax Increment Financing Districts, and the Illinois State River Edge Zone*
- *The Problem Property Resolution Team was formed in 2012.*
- *The City has recently taken steps to implement a local registry for landlords*
- *The 2008 Zoning Ordinance includes the moratorium of billboards as well as an annual registration fee for each remaining billboard*

Land Use Areas: Current and Future

We have determined how many acres we have proposed for each use on the updated 2020 Plan map. We estimated current land use acreage in 2003. Using WINGIS we have been able to estimate acreages for current land uses within Rockford. Both are shown in Table 8 below.

While it is difficult to estimate exact trends in land use areas, it is expected that a slightly larger percentage of industrial land will be needed to provide the industrial sites of the future, many of which are land consumptive. Historically, prior to the dominance of the automobile for personal transportation, industrial land was probably a higher percentage than it is today and public/quasi-public a much lower percentage. Residential and commercial uses were more likely to be mixed together, consuming less land than today when homes are built on larger lots and commercial areas are surrounded by extensive parking areas. In the future, although some industrial land will either be adapted to new uses or remain vacant because it is no longer suitable for industrial use, this trend will be more than offset by new industrial developments involved in transportation, distribution, packaging and other related industries that are attracted to the area by the Greater Rockford Airport, Global III in Rochelle, and facilities like UPS.

Staff Commentary:

- *The Lowe's Distribution Center*

Table 8 Estimated Current Area by Use, 2003				
Land Use Area	Acres	Parcels	Square Miles	% of Total Area
Residential	12,967	48,109	20.3	34%
Industrial	5,500	2,335	8.6	14%
Commercial	2,986	3,259	4.7	8%
Public/Quasi-Public	5,736	1,228	9.0	15%

Vacant	2,430	2,215	3.8	6%
Streets, waterways and drainage (approximate)	8,750	N/A	13.7	23%
Total	38,369	57,146	60	100%

2014

DATA from WINGIS

In preparing the Plan maps, we left substantial areas of older industrial development in industrial categories despite their limited usefulness as industrial sites. This includes some significant brownfield areas along Harrison Avenue, Kishwaukee Street and 11th Street. Limitations imposed by their brownfield status are compounded by the fact that virtually all of the industrial structures are obsolescent by today's standards. However, because of the huge area involved, the limited funds for remediation, and the unknown capacity for reclaiming these properties as viable uses within the next 15-20 years, the map has been left to reflect past and existing uses in most areas. As the City's expertise and capacity in this area evolves, the Plan will be modified to reflect that.

Plan Map Designations

The 2020 Plan map provides for a full spectrum of land uses and of transportation facilities. To aid in proper use and interpretation of these maps, the following definitions for each category are provided.

- **Multiple designations:** All sites included in this category are considered appropriate for more than one use. To determine which uses are included, match the letters shown on the site with letters in the map legend. For example, a site marked RM-IL would be considered suitable for medium-density residential and/or light industrial development. However, initial development will impact the subsequent land use pattern within each multiple designation area.
- **Future Urban Development (FUD):** Areas that are unlikely to have access to sanitary sewer by 2020, but which will be suitable for urban development at some point in the future, are designated as Future Urban Development areas. The intent is to not allow non-urban development, i.e., development on private wells and/or septic systems, to occur before sewers can be installed. Since the original adoption of the 2020 Plan Pre-annexation Agreements have been negotiated with property owners within the FUD areas. Development will not occur until full public utilities are available.
- **Residential Categories:** In addition to strictly residential uses, allow other nonresidential uses that are customarily found in neighborhoods and which are allowed in these areas as permitted uses or with a Special Use Permit in Rockford's Zoning Ordinance. Examples of these could include day care facilities and public schools.
 - *Subdivision Review Area (SRA):* Areas within the City's planning jurisdiction (within 1½ miles of the City limits) that are unlikely to receive sanitary sewer service. The City retains review authority over any new subdivisions in these areas to ensure such things as continuity of the transportation system, and adequate infrastructure to allow entrance of all forms of emergency services into the subdivision.

- *Low-Density Residential (RL)*: A range of 2-7 dwelling units per acre; could include single-family homes, townhouses, duplexes or any combination of these.
- *Medium-Density Residential (RM)*: A range of 5-15 dwelling units per acre; could include single-family homes, duplexes, townhouses, apartments, or any combination of these.
- *High-Density Residential (RH)*: More than 15 dwelling units per acre; could include townhouses, garden apartments, multistory apartments, or any combination of these.

- **Commercial Categories**

- *Retail (C)*: Stores selling merchandise; no outside storage. Example: Clothing store.
- *Office Overlay (CO/O)*: Office development in existing buildings, including those built as single-family homes, where those buildings have historic value. Office use would only be allowed if placed in the existing building.
- *Recreation/Entertainment/Tourist (CR)*: Establishments catering to tourist, convention and local markets. Examples: Motels and restaurants.
- *Office (CO)*: Concentrations of office space. Examples: real estate office, medical office.
- *Heavy Commercial (CH)*: Activities requiring a large land area but with low traffic volume; may include substantial outdoor storage. Examples: car dealer, lumber yard.
- *Commercial Mixed Use (CD)*: Allows a mixture of retail and office commercial with residential uses; roughly equivalent to the C-4 District in the Zoning Ordinance. Example: Mixed use buildings on Broadway and on 7th Street.
- *Central Business District (CBD)*: Rockford's downtown, also known as the River District; includes a broad range of commercial and residential uses.

- **Industrial Categories**

- *Light Industry (IL)*: Office/research parks; small, clean manufacturing plants; and other industrial-type uses that would not negatively impact adjacent residential areas.
- *Tech Industry (T)*: Technology-based employment centers; environmentally clean operations; no outdoor storage.
- *General Industry (IG)*: Most manufacturing and processing operations, including large plants and warehouses; and uses generating large amounts of truck, rail or auto traffic.

- *Heavy Industry (IH)*: Potentially hazardous or noxious uses that should be kept separate from non-industrial activities.

- **Public/Quasi-Public Categories**

- *Existing Facility (PE)*: All existing parks, forest preserves, public schools, colleges, country clubs, public buildings, and country clubs; other properties open to the public, such as churches, that are on large lots (minimum of 5 acres).
- *Priority Acquisition Area (PA)*: Sites suitable for parks or public open space which have a high priority for acquisition by the year 2020 by the Rockford Park District or the Winnebago County Forest Preserve District; environmental elements such as existing tree lines in rural or undeveloped areas that should be protected when development does occur. This designation was also used for the new federal courthouse site and the Winnebago County Justice Center, both in downtown.
- *Area Not Suitable for Development (U)*: Major wetlands, floodways and/or forested areas generally not suitable for development but may be suitable for long-term open space use or agriculture. During the public comment period for this Plan, it was pointed out that flood zones are included in two different categories, PA and U. The suggestion was made that any flood zones be shown as a combination of these two (i.e., as PA-U) on the maps to distinguish them from forested areas that need to be protected. During the next two years, the City will work closely with the Winnebago County Forest Preserve and the Rockford Park District to determine what the most appropriate designation for these areas should be.

- **Transportation Categories**

- *Freeway*: Controlled-access, divided highway with at least four lanes. There are no traffic stops and no cross traffic. Examples: I-90, I-39 and US 20 By-Pass.
- *Arterial*: Major street or road providing through-traffic movement between areas across the City. Examples: Springfield/Harrison.
- *Collector*: Major interior street providing circulation within and between neighborhoods and connecting them to arterials. Examples: Arnold Avenue, Halsted Road.
- *Local street*: Provides internal circulation within a neighborhood.
- *Railroad*: All existing rail lines are shown.
- *Pathway*: Paths for use by pedestrians and bicyclists. Plan map only shows what are termed Class I facilities, i.e., pathways that are constructed completely separate from roadways. Examples: Perryville Pathway, Mel Anderson Pathway.

Plan Map Changes

The original Year 2000 Plan map was adopted by City Council in 1981, followed by several sets of amendments over the years, the last one being in 1994 when the Year 2000 Plan Map became the 2010 Map. These were usually based on a combination of things — major zoning amendments; requests from property owners; the sale of public buildings, usually schools; construction of new transportation projects not anticipated in the Year 2000 Plan, such as the I-90/Riverside Boulevard interchange; or incorporation of elements from other plans, such as adoption of the bikeway plan in 1982.

What set the 2020 Plan apart from these earlier amendments is that it represented the first time that both the map and the text had been reviewed and modified on a comprehensive basis. While this resulted in very little change in some parts of the map, it had completely altered its complexion in other areas.

Staff Commentary:

- *The 2020 Plan Map has been amended twice since the original adoption in 2004.*
- *Summary of the Major Plan Map Changes Since the Original Adoption of the 2020 Plan Map in 2004*
- *Since September of 2004*
- *Significant changes occurred with the 2010 Plan Maps*

Plan Element 3:

Transportation

Transportation systems affect most aspects of how we live - how and when land is developed and for what use; economic activity; movement and trade of goods; jobs (and therefore wages) for local residents; energy and resource allocation; access to the places where we work, go to school, obtain health care, shop or get entertained; environmental quality; general social equity; and the overall livability of our community. Therefore, how and how well a transportation system functions have deep and long-term consequences for a community. Consequently, it behooves us to look at all aspects of Rockford's transportation system and its potential impacts as we plan for the future.

As is the case with the rest of the urbanized area, transportation planning for Rockford is carried out by the Rockford Area Transportation Study (RATS). The RATS Long-Range Transportation Plan adopted in 1995 and updated in 2000 is included by reference as a part of the 2020 Plan, with some modifications. Because the RATS plan is regional in nature, it does not reach the level of detail required by a plan such as this one that relates to one municipality only. One role of the 2020 Plan is to provide that necessary detail in the form of proposed local connecting streets. Another equally important role is to address other aspects of transportation such as the non-transportation impacts of transportation "improvements" and how to minimize the negative ones. It should also be noted that, although the RATS Long-Range Transportation Plan was updated in 2000, the update included very few modifications over the previous version and was intended primarily to meet minimum federal requirements. It is anticipated that there will be significant and comprehensive revisions to the LRP in 2004-2005 upon the completion of the Winnebago-Boone County Transportation Study now in process. Once this occurs, the revised LRP should be adopted as an amendment to the 2020 Plan.

Staff Commentary:

- *Rockford Area Transportation Study (RATS) is not called Rockford Metropolitan Agency for Planning (RMAP)*
- *RMAP adopted a 2040 Long Range Plan in 2010.*
- *The RMAP Long Range Plan is regional so detailed plans related to Rockford will require evaluation in conjunction with the City's 5-year Capital Improvement Program (CIP)*
- *The Rockford 2020 Plan does not include or reflect policies, goal and strategies*

Goals

The following statistics illustrate the magnitude of the transportation situation in the Rockford area. Each day, more than 790,000 trips are made in the Rockford urban area (Rockford, Loves Park, Machesney Park, Cherry Valley and surrounding urbanized areas). On average, these trips are 6.3 miles long, making the average total miles traveled in the urban area nearly 5 million miles a day. Fuel cost alone for these trips is in the order of \$600,000 daily. Recent surveys show over 625 miles of roadways in the City of Rockford alone. Clearly, providing an efficient transportation system in Rockford and the surrounding area is no small task.

The overall goal of the 2020 Plan is to provide a transportation system that is safe, efficient and gets both people and goods where they want or need to be with as little aggravation as possible. At the same time, an attempt has been made to minimize the negative impacts of streets and highways on adjacent land uses, especially residential ones.

The end result should be a system that meets residents' needs within their neighborhoods, throughout the City as a whole, and as a link to the rest of the urban area.

In doing this, it is critical to take into account the fact that Rockford's transportation needs are diverse. With that in mind, the 2020 Plan seeks to provide for a multi-modal transportation system that does the following:

- Provides for both motorized and non-motorized travel;
- Serves shipping and other economic development needs as well as those of individuals;
- Provides for recreational as well as utilitarian needs;
- Serves the needs of all segments of Rockford's population;
- Serves the needs of those who are disenfranchised from, do not desire to use, or are otherwise unable to take full advantage of the predominantly automobile-oriented transportation system that dominates our community.

To achieve these goals, the 2020 Plan not only seeks to continue to improve and expand our system of streets and highways, but also to improve our system of pedestrian walkways and bicycle pathways, and our public bus and paratransit systems.

In addition to providing for better transportation within the corporate limits of Rockford, this plan recognizes that Rockford is not a self-contained, independent, closed community. The physical and economic health of Rockford depends on interaction, exchange, communication and commerce with the surrounding region, the country and the world. This plan, therefore, seeks ways to improve our transportation interconnection with and accessibility to adjacent municipalities, counties and regions.

Staff Commentary:

- *More recent figures compiled by RMAP show major increase in all the metrics identified above*
- *The average trip made for all purposes (to/from work, commercial trucking, shopping, family/personal errands and others) is 9.7 miles long (2009)*
- *Travel costs for all tri[ps] in the study area is approximately \$4,000,000 per day*
- *The City of Rockford current has 735 miles of roadways, measured at the center line*

Components of a Multi-modal Transportation System

Physically, a multi-modal transportation system has many diverse components, all of which must be planned for together and coordinated if they are to gel into a true system. What follows is a partial list (there are many subcategories) of the facilities or services that comprise such a system:

- **Paved roadways** for vehicular traffic, which are divided into four basic classes:
 - *Freeways* Controlled access or limited access highways, such as I-39, I-90 and US 20 (the Bypass). Generally, freeways are designed to accommodate traffic volumes up to and sometimes in excess of 1,700 vehicles per lane per hour. This is accomplished by the freeway designs where the only access allowed is at grade-separated interchanges.

- *Arterials* Highways designed for high speed and/or high volume traffic. Arterials may limit access for abutting properties (such as East State Street east of Arnold Avenue and parts of Mulford Road), although some (such as Spring Creek Road) do not. Arterials provide the basic framework of the city's transportation system. They vary widely in capacity depending on the number of direct access points, intersection control and other factors. Well designed arterials can accommodate between 1,000 and 1,300 vehicles per lane per hour. An arterial with access limited to signalized public street intersections is called an expressway.
- *Collectors* Roadways designed for lower-speed, lower-volume traffic than arterials. Collectors "collect" traffic from neighborhoods and direct it to the nearest arterial (or disperse it from the arterials into the neighborhoods). Access is not controlled as strictly as with arterials; in most cases, driveway cuts may be allowed from every property. Collector roadways also vary widely in the traffic they can accommodate. They are generally designed for roughly 900 vehicles per lane per hour but many collectors in Rockford carry considerably more traffic.
- *Local streets* Roadways that allow direct access to individual homes and businesses. Through-traffic is discouraged from using these streets, particularly in residential neighborhoods; however, heavier use can occur when nearby higher level roadways become congested or blocked. Local streets, as designed in the Rockford area, can often accommodate traffic volumes close to that of collectors but volumes in excess of 400 vehicles per hour can be oppressive, especially in residential areas.
- **Sidewalks** Paved pedestrian facilities.
- **Bikeways** Paved facilities for bicyclists and in-line skaters.
- **Pathways** Paved facilities for use by both pedestrians and bicyclists.
- **Mass transit services**
 - *Public transit buses:* Full-sized buses that generally travel on fixed routes with regular schedules.
 - *Public paratransit buses:* Smaller buses and vehicles that transport people door to door or curb to curb on an on-call basis.
 - *Private buses and taxi services.*

Impact of Streets & Highways

Street projects do not exist in a vacuum. They have the potential for significant impacts, good and bad, on adjacent land uses. This has led to the use of what has been termed "context-sensitive design" in some areas, a concept that this plan recommends be adopted by RATS. Context-sensitive design involves taking into consideration the land use and environment next to a roadway that is being planned or designed. Designers make decisions based on the impact of the roadway on the community, not just on geometrics and other engineering considerations. The ultimate goal of this approach is to find ways to meet the needs of motorists while at the same time addressing the concerns of the community that the road passes through.

In preparing this Plan, we have tried to take into account not just how to get people from Point A to Point B as efficiently as possible, but also safely and with as little impact on residential areas as possible. Sometimes this has to be done in ways that are not evident on a plan map, such as traffic control measures. A prime example of where "unmappable" measures are needed is dealing with the high volume and/or speed of traffic using collector streets within residential neighborhoods. The collectors are needed to connect the local neighborhood streets with the arterial streets, but they need to be designed in a way that gives residents along those streets the same measure of safety and, if possible, privacy as those who live on strictly local streets. One way to do this is by using what have become known as "traffic calming" measures. Any number of things can be done to slow down traffic - speed humps, curves in a street, traffic circles, or narrower streets. However, as Rockford's experience has shown, traffic calming devices can have an adverse impact to the extent that drivers simply move over a street to avoid them, thereby causing a new problem on another street. Another option the City could consider would be to require larger front yard setbacks for homes fronting on collector level streets, as well as more intense landscaping, through the subdivision and zoning ordinances.

In similar fashion, internal circulation within major commercial areas, such as what is commonly referred to as "The Strip" on East State Street from the Rockford College area east can create serious problems for motorists and pedestrians alike. Some approaches considered by the Rockford Gateway Association in their 1995-96 planning effort should be considered by the City and, where appropriate, adopted. These approaches are outlined below. At the same time, we need to recognize that the City has made it possible for some of these conditions to exist. In the future, any waivers of standards contained in the zoning or subdivision ordinance should require an evaluation of the long-term impact of the waiver - not just on the subject property, but on adjoining ones. Criteria would need to be developed for the City to use in determining when a waiver could be allowed and when it should not. While this may cause some short-term difficulties for developers or property owners, it avoids creating long-term problems that the City - and all of its taxpayers - will have to deal with for years to come.

The Gateway Association's proposals for improving circulation along the Strip include the following:

- Begin with a complete evaluation of traffic circulation along the Strip, both internally and along the major traffic corridors. Include new aerials as a component of the study, ideally two sets of them - one taken on a weekday and one on a weekend since problem spots may differ. The objective is to determine where the bottlenecks are, their relative degree of severity, and the best way to cope with each without compounding problems elsewhere.
- Based on this evaluation, identify through routes for collector and frontage roads, with special attention to situations where significant improvements in traffic flow can be made by filling in gaps in existing roadways. An efficient system of collectors and frontage roads is important for two reasons - it can reduce traffic on East State Street and other major arterials by reducing the need to re-enter a major roadway to go from store to store, and it can provide pedestrians and bicyclists with a safer alternative to travel on a major roadway. At the same time, ensure that there is sufficient spacing between streets so that new problems of traffic backups (such as what now sometimes occurs at North Trainer Road at State Street with additional traffic backing up on Puri Parkway) are avoided.
- Where appropriate, incorporate elements of the previous step into the City's Capital Improvements Program.

- To increase safety, find a way to make it obvious to drivers that internal streets, such as Puri Parkway, are real city streets, not just an extension of adjoining parking lots.
- Work with developers to find ways to increase safety within parking lots for both pedestrians and motorists. We need to find ways to better mediate or balance the often divergent needs of pedestrians and automobiles within individual parking lots and within the "Strip" as a whole, especially when reviewing and approving site designs for new development.
- Continue to expand the system of pathways in the area, as shown on the Plan map.
- Make names of cross streets and addresses easily visible for motorists.
- Clearly indicate where lanes are for turning only or are ending, and when there are multiple turn lanes. This should be done in such a way that drivers have sufficient time to change lanes if necessary.

City of Rockford CIP Project Selection Policies
1. Contribute to an equitable distribution of service for facilities throughout the City. 2. Encourage private capital investment, improving the City's tax base, and improving job opportunities. 3. Benefit the greatest number of City residents. 4. Eliminate conditions detrimental to the health, safety and general welfare of the community. 5. Are cost effective in terms of capital outlay and probable operating costs. 6. Are coordinated with other public or private projects. Priority goes to those projects that have the necessary funding available to do integrated work. Major projects should be tied with special assessments where possible. 7. Have a positive environmental impact.

These proposals should be used in planning all major transportation corridors and the adjacent development. On North Perryville Road, for example, McFarland Road will be used to provide access to the commercial properties fronting on Perryville while the connection of Rote Road between Perryville and Bell School Roads provides a local traffic circulation function as well as a through-traffic function.

Finally, streets and roads need to be viewed within the context of their surroundings, not simply as a means for cars and trucks to get from one place to another. This means balancing the need for additional traffic lanes on, for example, East State Street, against the long-term results of creating a sea of pavement through the middle of what is today a prime retail area. Put another way, in 20 or 30 years when retailers have moved on to other areas, how will the community view the 6-10 lanes of pavement that now constitute East State Street along with the acres of parking lots bordering it? It is the recommendation of this Plan that the City evaluate alternatives for softening the effects of such major streets through such things as parkways or boulevards, while at the same time determining what needs to be done to make areas such as The Strip as redevelopable as possible in the long term. At the same time, we would be wise to begin thinking about what the next means of individual transportation will be. After all, it has only been the last 50-60 years that the automobile has achieved supremacy. At some point in the future, it too will pass into history in favor of something newer and better.

Framework For Acquisition, Preservation and Protection of Future and Existing Right of Way

With the adoption of the new Subdivision Ordinance last year, the City took additional steps to ensure the

construction and right of way dedication of the collector road system through the subdivision process. Planned arterial streets are more difficult to protect and a comprehensive approach must be applied, including the following: 1) dedication of right-of-way of County and Township roads when the adjacent subdivision plat is approved and recorded; 2) working with the Winnebago County Highway Department to preserve future right-of-ways through the County's "reserved right -of-way" powers; and 3) acquisition of property for sale along arterial streets planned for major improvements ie. widening from two to four lanes, providing right and/or left turn lanes.,etc. The combination of these three techniques will help ensure effective protection of planned rights-of-way.

Maintenance of Existing Transportation Components

Rockford has invested nearly \$300 million in rebuilding its infrastructure since 1982. This includes streets, bridges, and drainage and water systems. Since the mid 1980s, decisions on which capital improvements will be done have been governed by policies contained in the Capital Improvements Program. These policies contain criteria for financing projects as well as for selecting projects. As the Public Works Department completes development of a pavement management system, the information it generates can be added to the decision-making process in selecting projects each year. Since the CIP policies were last reviewed by City Council in 1986, the City should reevaluate them in light of developments over the last 15 years and of technological changes that allow for better information on which to base decisions.

In addition to roadways, other components of the existing transportation infrastructure that need to be maintained are the City's sidewalks, pathways and alleys. Currently, the City's policy is to share the responsibility for maintaining these less intensely used facilities with adjacent property owners. Sidewalks (and, potentially, pathways or bikeways) are maintained through a 50/50 program whereby adjacent property owners pay half of the reconstruction costs and the City pays the other half. Annually, the City budgets approximately \$150,000 to this program, allocating the funds on a first-come/first-serve basis. Related to this, the City also allocates \$25,000 or more per year for the construction of ADA-approved wheelchair curb-cuts/ramps on the City's sidewalk system. Similarly, the City assists in the maintenance and rebuilding of alleys, with the City paying 70% if all of the owners along an alley agree to pay the remaining 30%. The City annually allocates \$50,000 for the alley program. The 2020 Plan recommends continuation of these sidewalk, pathway and alley maintenance programs. When financially possible, this Plan recommends increased spending in these programs. Recent sidewalk surveys have noted extensive segments of deteriorated sidewalks or sidewalk conditions that are troublesome for frail pedestrians or persons with disabilities. Those attending the public information meetings on the Draft 2020 Plan in 2002 repeatedly asked for the installation of sidewalks throughout Rockford but especially in areas linking with schools, bus routes and commercial destinations.

Staff Commentary:

- *Ongoing evaluation of sidewalk installation in developed areas is needed.*
- *Sidewalk improvements within existing TIF Districts should be evaluated as part of the 2020 update*

Streets and Highways: Performance Measures

New roadways are built and major roadway capacity improvements made for one of three reasons - to reduce or contain existing traffic congestion; to accommodate new development in order to avoid creating congestion; or to complete a missing link in our Basic Street and highway system.

A, B, C	Generally free flowing at high speeds, good vehicle spacing	1,185	94.9%	1,300	93.7%
D	Traffic flow and spacing become limited, speeds decline	23	1.8%	51	3.7%
E	Flow and spacing severely limited and speeds are slow	7	0.6%	23	1.7%

F	Stop and go traffic, no spacing between vehicles	33	2.6%	13	0.9%
Total		1,249	100.0%	1.387	100.0%

Status of major road improvements proposed in the Year 2000 Plan and the RATS Long Range Transportation Plan.

- **I-39 between Rockford and Bloomington, Illinois:** Completed and experiencing traffic volumes beyond preconstruction forecasts.
- **South Alpine Road from Linden to Samuleson Road:** Completed and in use.
- **Seminary Street:** Extended south to Harrison Avenue; completed and in use.
- **Harlem/Elmwood Bridge:** Completed and in use as a toll bridge.
- **North Mulford Road:** Extended from Riverside Boulevard to Perryville Road; completed and in heavy use.
- **Spring Creek Road:** Realignment from Reidfarm Road to Perryville Road; completed and in use.
- **North Perryville Road:** Extended north from East State Street to Illinois Route 173; completed and in heavy use.
- **Springfield/Harrison Connection:** Completed between South Main and West State Streets and in use, making it the most recently completed major link in Rockford's street system.

- **South Central Avenue Connection:** Partially completed and continuous north of Ogilby Road; connection southward permanently blocked by creation of Klehm Arboretum.
- **Highcrest Road:** Connection from Mohawk to Guilford Roads; project is uncompleted and of low priority, but retained in this Plan.
- **The Woodruff Expressway:** This long-planned crosstown expressway was the subject of an extensive justification / feasibility study in recent years. However, active pursuance of the project was again rejected because of its high cost (over \$200 million), its disruptive influence on Rockford neighborhoods, and its less than convincing benefits compared to costs and alternatives. As a complete crosstown proposal, this project will not be actively pursued unless traffic conditions and funding situations change significantly. However, the easternmost segment of the proposal warrants further consideration. Specifically, the segment between Harrison Avenue and Perryville Road that also connects with I-39 could pose a valuable means of collecting and disbursing growing traffic volumes in that region (see the Woodruff Spur, below).

Staff Commentary:

- *The 2020 plan states recommends evaluation of the easternmost segment of the proposal, specifically the segment between Harrison Avenue and Perryville Road connecting to I-39*
 - *The RMAP 2040 plan does not include this project or any of the connecting components*
- **Woodruff Spur:** The interchange of US 20 with I-39 was designed, engineered and graded in anticipation of the future construction of a northward extension or spur that would traverse the half mile distance between the interchange and the proposed Woodruff Expressway alignment. This spur could be of value if it were constructed to the Woodruff alignment and extended eastward to Mulford Road which could be improved north to Harrison Avenue. Extension westward would also be beneficial, but more costly. Further investigation and evaluation of these alternatives is recommended as part of this 2020 Plan.

Staff Commentary:

- *The RMAP 2040 plan does not include this project.*
- **Additional I-90 Interchanges:** The Year 2000 Plan recommended construction of a new I-90 interchange at Illinois 173. However, in the mid-1980s, Illinois 173's priority was interrupted by the opportunity to construct a new interchange at East Riverside Boulevard and I-90. Illinois 173 is reestablished, as part of this 2020 Plan, as the area's next priority interchange. High but second priority is recommended for another I-90 interchange in the vicinity of Town Hall Road in Boone County. Although both of these sites are well beyond the Rockford City Limits, these projects are of such regional significance to be noted in this Plan.

Staff Commentary:

- *Evaluation of an interchange at I-90 and Spring Creek Road extension is ongoing*
- **Madison/First Street Crossover north of Jefferson Street:** This project was first planned in 1970 as a means of directing traffic from Madison Street, which ends just south of Grove Street, to First Street, enabling drivers to cross the proposed Woodruff Expressway south of east downtown and then connect to Seminary

Street. This was before Haight Village was recognized as a historic district and as a residential neighborhood worth preserving. Consequently, although it is included in the RATS Long-Range Plan, this project is dropped from this 2020 Plan. It is considered too expensive and disruptive to be warranted given current and projected traffic volumes.

As an alternative, the City (and RATS) should investigate the feasibility of a crossover from Second to Third Streets north of Jefferson, thereby diverting through traffic to Kishwaukee Street (IL-251) before it ever gets to Haight Village and making Third Street a two-way street as the arterial and Second Street as a two-way collector south of Whitman Street. This realignment would eliminate the major truck turning movements at S. Second / Walnut St. and at Kishwaukee St /First Ave for trucks following Ill. 251

Staff Commentary:

- *The City and RMAP evaluated this recommendation after the 2004 plan adoption of a crossover from Second to Third Streets north of East Jefferson Street; further evaluation should be included in the 2020 update*
 - *The extension of South Madison Street to College Avenue is included in the RMAP 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan*
- **Prospect Street/Fifth Avenue Crossover:** Another project included in the RATS Plan but considered to be too disruptive and expensive is the proposed crossover that would link Prospect Street and Fifth Avenue to form the southeast segment of an inner loop. Construction of this project would bring with it a considerable cost, not just for construction but also for property acquisition and relocation, and in serious negative neighborhood impacts. For the project to have its optimum effect, North and South Prospect would have to be aligned, thereby eliminating the offset intersection at East State Street. The most likely means of doing this would be to shift South Prospect eastward, resulting in the demolition of nine or ten structures, many of them of historic quality. This project is not included in the 2020 Plan.

Staff Commentary:

- *This project is not included in the RMAP 2040 Plan.*
- **Realignment of Rockford/Welty at State Street:** Similar to Prospect Street, this offset intersection greatly reduces through-movement capacity on State Street and contributes to congestion in that area. However, because of its expense and potential disruptiveness to nearby residential neighborhoods, the proposed project is not retained in this plan. A much less disruptive project would be to realign North and South Rockford Avenue with the actual intersection occurring between them. This alternative option is what is shown on the Plan map.

Staff Commentary:

- *This project is not included in the RMAP 2040 Plan.*
- **Alpine Road/State Street Intersection:** The corner of State and Alpine has been a problem intersection for many, many years. How to improve it was a topic of serious discussion when the Year 2000 Plan was prepared. Because standard changes to the intersection - adding turn lanes, for example - are complicated by the presence of several businesses that would have to be moved and a cemetery, RATS came to the

conclusion that the only way to really resolve the problems at this intersection would be to build an interchange instead, This first appeared in their 1996 Long-Range Transportation Plan. The project is retained in this 2020 Plan but is assigned low priority until such time traffic conditions absolutely dictate implementation and all less disruptive alternatives have been exhausted.

Staff Commentary:

- *This project is included in the RMAP 2040 Plan.*

One major change from the original Year 2000 Plan map was the location of the newest interchange on I-90 in Winnebago County. While the Plan proposed a new interchange at Illinois 173, one was actually built at East Riverside Boulevard instead, resulting in major land use changes along the East Riverside corridor. This serves as a prime example of the impact a transportation project can have on its surroundings - what had been planned as primarily residential has become a major commercial and office center for both Rockford and Loves Park.

Three other major projects being considered by RATS that could impact the City of Rockford in the future are:

- **Northwest Bypass:** Recently, RATS was assigned the task of determining the need and feasibility of a major new roadway in the northwest and north part of the urban area that would function as an outer ring road, similar to how US 20 functions on the south side of Rockford. This work has not yet reached the stage where definitive recommendations can be made, but there appears to be substantial logic supporting the need for such a facility. It is likely that this northwest territory will become a prime growth area for Rockford in the next 10-30 years. Areas on the east are fast filling in and the northwest area is becoming more and more attractive, especially if public sewer, water and adequate transportation facilities are provided. A western terminus for the project has not been determined yet. While early discussions have centered around Winnebago Road, Rockford's Department of Public Works recommends that it be at Meridian Road. The rationale behind this is that Meridian Road is closer into the urban center that a west side bypass would be intended to serve. To the north the facility is likely to fall somewhere between or coincide with Latham or Roscoe Roads. Ideally, from a circulation and continuity standpoint, the facility would cross the Rock River and extend eastward to intersect with I-90. However, this eastward segment may be impossible due to existing development, in which case the facility might terminate at North Second Street. The 2020 Pan recommends continued consideration of this concept.

Staff Commentary:

- *This project is not included in the RMAP 2040 Plan.*

- **Illinois 2:** Throughout Rockford and in developing areas both north and south, Illinois 2 serves as a major facility for north-south movements west of the Rock River. IDOT currently has plans or is developing plans to improve several segments of this roadway. Most notable is the stretch north of Elmwood Road, all the way to Roscoe. Current plans are to expand this roadway from 2 lanes to 4 lanes. The 2020 Plan endorses this project. However, it is equally important to evaluate the role of Illinois 2 as it traverses highly developed portions of Rockford, including its downtown. If the role of the marked route (as opposed to plain Main Street) is to facilitate the movement of through traffic, then the traveling public might be better served if this designation as a State route were to be moved to other roadways, possibly to Riverside Boulevard and Springfield Avenue, then south along the Springfield-Harrison extension. Obviously, the section of Springfield

that is owned by IDOT would need to be improved to accommodate truck movements. This would help reroute truck traffic around sensitive neighborhoods, including the downtown area. This would also be a short-term measure to accommodate traffic until such time as the proposed Northwest ByPass can be built. Another state route that could help facilitate truck traffic is IL 251. The City is conducting a feasibility study in order to facilitate a two-way realignment of IL 251 between the Whitman Street interchange and Walnut Street that would greatly improve truck movement within the downtown area. It is the recommendation of this plan that RATS and IDOT seriously consider such a change before making any significant changes to Main Street north of US 20. Also, the potential of restoring IL-2 as a two-way street through the downtown should be considered in conjunction with the State Route bypass (Harrison/Springfield/West Riverside).

Staff Commentary:

- *The reconstruction of IL-2 South Main Street is underway*
 - *The signalized intersection at North Main and Auburn Streets was reconfigured to a round-about intersection; completed in 2013*
 - *The reconstruction of IL-2 from Elmwood Road to the Village of Rockton is underway; 2014 completion date*
 - *IL-2 North Main Street (between Auburn Street and West Riverside Boulevard) is now in the design/engineering phase with planned construction in 2015.*
 - *Evaluation of the IL-2 alignment within the Central Planning Subarea should be included in the 2020 update process*
-
- **West State Street/Business US 20:** RATS and a consultant have completed the evaluation of West State Street from just west of downtown to Meridian Road. This study provides a framework for the physical and functional enhancement of the West State Street Corridor. The objective of the study is to illustrate unified corridor enhancement strategies and policies in order to guide new development, redevelopment, improvement of existing businesses and beautification of public rights-of-way. From the Study, a conceptual plan was developed with recommendations and cost estimates for corridor improvements, including roadway improvements, driveway consolidation, landscaping and signage treatments, natural buffer areas, lighting, and a potential bike path alignment. Because the State of Illinois has programmed major roadway improvements for this corridor in its five-year plan, this Study was being carried out as a coordinated effort involving the State, the City of Rockford, and Winnebago County. The recommendations of this planning effort, the West State Street Framework Plan, have been incorporated into the 2020 Land Use and Transportation Plan Maps.

Additional proposed streets and roadways are shown on the maps that accompany this Plan. These include everything from freeways, such as the I-39 extension, to local streets. For a complete listing of proposed streets, see Table 10 beginning on the following page.

New Minor Roadway Components

New roadway components below the arterial level are considered separately for obvious reasons but mostly because of the way in which such roadways are funded and built. Local streets and collector roadways are primarily created by the private sector as part of the land development process. They are then turned over (dedicated) to the public sector

for future control and maintenance. Public control over these roadways has four major components, all of which are specified in the land development or land subdivision process - spacing, construction standards, access control, frontage and setbacks, and funding.

- **Spacing of local streets is simple.** Under the City's Subdivision Ordinance, all properties must have access to a public street. This is generally accomplished by the developer's building a local street (which all properties have access to) which is then connected to an existing street. Spacing of collector streets is set by the long-standing local policy that the publicly-provided arterial streets are, on the average, set one mile apart with at least one privately provided collector street half way between each arterial.
- **Construction standards** are also part of the City's subdivision and development codes. Typical local streets have a minimum 60-foot right-of-way, 30-foot paved area; include curbs, gutters and storm sewers; and are paved to accommodate the vehicle weights of automobile and light truck traffic. Collector streets have a minimum right-of-way of 66 feet, 30 feet of paved area, and other standards similar to local streets. In commercial and industrial areas and areas where heavier vehicles are frequent, the construction standards are greater.
- **Access** is very loosely controlled on local streets. Reverse frontage has sometimes been required on collector streets, but the extra cost of this has not been well received by local developers. Setbacks are typically half the right-of-way width, and minimum width of lots at the front setback line is usually 60-70 feet. Minimum lot sizes are also set.
- **Funding** of local and collector streets is the developer's expense with the exception of bridges and other attributes that are beyond the norm.

While the existing framework for creating new local and collector streets works well in most cases, a number of problems or concerns have been voiced in recent years. The 2020 Plan does not have a solution to these situations, but they are posed here for further study and consideration.

- As was noted earlier, street projects do not exist in a vacuum. Streets have the potential for significant impacts, good and bad, on adjacent land uses. It is becoming increasingly apparent that moving people (and goods) from point to point as efficiently as possible is not the only concern. Equally important is how to get them there safely and with as little adverse impact on the community as possible. As noted above, residents along many collector and local streets frequently complain regarding the volume and speed of the motoring traffic. Unnecessary through-traffic movements need to be discouraged from local streets. Collector-level streets that traverse residential areas need special design considerations that will give the residents along those streets the same levels of safety and, if possible, privacy that exists along local streets. These considerations can include using traffic calming measures, requiring larger front yard setbacks for homes along collector streets, and/or requiring more intense landscaping along collectors within residential neighborhoods. All need to be evaluated for their effectiveness in meeting the needs of Rockford residents.
- Some members of the planning/engineering community, locally and nationwide, have voiced concerns that many local street standards have been set too high, thereby causing unnecessary construction and maintenance expense and a waste of land resources. Conversely, there are arguments that collector street

design standards are too low, thereby inherently causing the complaints from residents noted above. Rockford's standards for local streets should be reevaluated in light of information contained in the recently released third edition of Residential Streets, jointly published by the Urban Land Institute, the National Association of Home Builders, the American Society of Civil Engineers and the Institute of Transportation Engineers.

- The abandonment of the rather boring but functional grid pattern arrangement for local streets has fostered problems of roadway continuity. Extra effort should be devoted, as part of the land development/subdivision process to ensure that collector roads are both continuous and logically laid out so that unfamiliar travelers can make their way easily through subdivisions without becoming lost.
- The practice of requiring land developers to construct and dedicate collectors is troubled by the fact that these roadways often serve more than one development creating disputes over equitable cost sharing.

Table 10: Proposed Streets and Roadways

MAP #	LOCATION
Freeways	
22, 31	Extend I-39 north to the Union Pacific RR Not included in the RMAP 2040 Plan
22	Construct new freeway from the I-39 extension east along the Union Pacific RR to South Perryville Road Not included in RMAP 2040 Plan.
New Interchanges	
19	Replace the at-grade intersection of East State Street and Alpine Road with an interchange
19, 23	Replace the at-grade intersection at 5 Points with an interchange Not included in the RMAP 2040 Plan.
Arterial Streets and Roadways	
2, 3	Connect Owen Center Road to North Main Street, " 1 mile south of Latham Road Not included in the RMAP 2040 Plan
4	Extend Elmwood Road west to Kilburn Avenue Not Included in the RMAP 2040 Plan.
6	Connect Bauer Parkway to Elmwood Road west of North Main Street
9, 10	Extend North Lyford Road north from Spring Creek Road to East Riverside Boulevard
10	Extend Perry Creek Parkway east to North Bell School Road
17A/18A	Construct Chestnut Street crossover from West State Street to existing Chestnut Street in conjunction with the Winnebago County Criminal Justice Center Completed Project
19	Construct a connection between Highcrest Road and Guilford Road
33, 34	Extend Falcon Road west from Belt Line Road to Kishwaukee Road, providing a connection

- around the Airport **Completed Project**
- I-6* Modify the intersection of Michigan Avenue and Montague Road to form a T intersection **Completed Project**
- I-9 Construct Jefferson Street crossover at West State Street **Under Construction—to be completed during 2014.**

Collector Streets and Roadways :Note the RMAP 2040 Plan does not include most Collector Streets

- 2, 3 Connect Owen Center Road to North Main Street north of Elmwood Road **Not included in the RMAP 2040 Plan.**
- 4 Construct a new roadway to connect Porter Road and Clikeman Road **Not included in RMAP 2014 Plan**
- 5 Connect Lost Trail to Toulon Drive **Not included in RMAP 2014 Plan**
- 9, 10 Reconfigure North Bell School Road north of Spring Brook Road so that it connects to Riverside Boulevard and aligns with Harvey Road to the north **Completed Project**
- 10 Extend McFarland Road south to Rote Road **To be Completed in conjunction with the Meier Development.**
- 11 Extend Shaw Woods Road south to Guilford Road **Not included in RMAP 2014 Plan**
- 13 Extend Eddy Avenue west to Huffman Boulevard **Not included in RMAP 2014 Plan**
- 15 Extend Mila Avenue from North Memorial Boulevard to North Meridian Road **Not included in the RMAP 2040 Plan**
- 15 Extend North Memorial Boulevard from Doris Avenue to Safford Road **Not included in the RMAP 2040 Plan**
- 15, 16 Extend North Memorial Boulevard from West State Street to School Street
- 18 Construct crossover at State Street between North and South Rockford Avenues **Not included in the RMAP 2040 Plan**
- 19 Connect Easton Parkway to the Rockford College Entrance at East State Street **Not included in the RMAP 2040 Plan**
- 20 Connect Orchard Avenue to Laurel Cherry Drive **Not included in the RMAP 2040 Plan**
- 20 Extend North Trainer Road north to Guilford Road at Shiloh Road **Not included in the RMAP 2040 Plan**
- 21 Connect the pieces of Walton Street (parts of which were formerly called Tower Drive) **Completed Project**
- 21 Construct a set of collector streets south of East State Street east of Showplace Drive **Not included in the RMAP 2040 Plan**
- 22 Connect the pieces of Arnold Avenue between Charles Street and Harrison Avenue **Not included in the RMAP 2040 Plan**
- 25 Connect Sauk Lane to West Harrison Avenue extended and to Prairie Avenue extended **Not included in the RMAP 2040 Plan**
- 29 Extend Lookout Drive west to 11th Street **Not included in the RMAP 2040 Plan**
- 30 Extend Houston Road north to Scarlet Oak Drive/Linden Road **Not included in the RMAP**

2040 Plan

- 30 Extend Maywood Drive from Golden Prairie Avenue to Blackhawk Road **Not included in the RMAP 2040 Plan**
- 30 Construct a series of collectors tying together Linden Road, Samuelson Road and Antelope Drive **Not included in the RMAP 2040 Plan**
- 30 Extend South Alpine Road south of Samuelson Road to 35th Street **Not included in the RMAP 2040 Plan**

Collector Streets and Roadways (continued)

- I-3 Connect Reed Avenue to American Road; connect O'Connell Street to Balsam Lane **Not included in the RMAP 2040 Plan**
- I-5 Connect Halsted Road to Safford Road **Not included in the RMAP 2040 Plan**
- I-5 Construct new portions of Penn Road from Kilburn Avenue to Searls Ave **Not included in the RMAP 2040 Plan**
- I-7 Connect Webster Avenue between North Springfield and North Pierpont Avenues **Not included in the RMAP 2040 Plan**

Local Streets: These are not included in the RMAP 2040 Plan

- 7 Connect Tatum Road to North Alpine Road at Innsbruck Drive
- 8 Connect two portions of Hermitage Trail together **Completed**
- 9 Extend Glen Drive east to the new North Bell School Road with the new street extending north from this to East Riverside Boulevard 1/4 mile east of McFarland Road **Bell School connected through; Bend Rd. not completed.**
- 17A/18A Cul-de-sac South Third Street on both sides of the UP RR bridge (south side of Haight Village) **Completed**
- 20 Construct a series of local streets in the area bounded by Mulford Road, Fincham Drive, Stony Creek Way and Newburg Road
- 21 Extend McIntosh west to North Lyford Road
- 22 Extend Sockness Drive west to complete the loop with International Drive
- 24 Connect Johnson Avenue to Rexford Drive
- 24 Extend Marshall Street south to Sandy Hollow Road
- 30 Connect Big Foot Trail to Antelope Drive
- 30 Connect the two parts of Lund Avenue
- I-1 Connect Conrad Avenue between South Phelps Avenue and South Mulford Road; connect Orchard Avenue to Laurel Cherry Drive; construct 2 new north-south streets in the area bounded by Newburg and South Mulford Roads, Alma Drive and South Phelps Avenue
- I-2 Construct a series of local streets in the southeast quadrant of North Alpine Road, East Riverside Boulevard
- I-3 Extend local street from Wintergreen Drive north to new Laude Drive/American Road collector
- I-4 Construct a series of local streets in the area bounded by West State Street, North Pierpont

Avenue, Auburn Street and North Springfield Avenue

I-5 Construct a series of local streets in the area south of West Riverside Boulevard on either side of North Central Avenue

I-6 Construct a series of local streets in the area east of South Pierpont Avenue and north of Ogilby Road

I-8 Extend Liberty Street west to Daisyfield Road; construct new streets in area bounded by Daisyfield Road, Liberty Street, South Springfield Avenue and West State Street

I-9 Connect Leather Court to Hess Court and extend northward, ending in a cul-de-sac

I-9 Connect the Leather Court extension to Underwood Street south of Hess Court

I-9 Reconfigure the Ogden Avenue/Mulberry Street intersection so it no longer intersects with West Jefferson Street **Completed**

I-9 Construct a new street from the west end of Acorn Street north to School Street

I-9 Eliminate Tanner Court; Maple Street west of Kilburn Avenue; Lee Street north of Maple Street

* Map numbers beginning with an I are Infill Area maps found in Appendix C.

- More troublesome is the timely completion of missing collector links. A collector does not function as a real collector until all links are constructed and it becomes continuous. In the meantime, persons living along such discontinuous collectors begin to perceive them as local streets. In turn, completion of the final missing links is often thwarted by public opposition.
- Another significant problem that has intensified over the last two decades result from the internal circulation arrangements (for both motorists and pedestrians) within major strip commercial areas. The best example is the East State Street Strip between Alpine Road and the I-90 Tollway. Internal circulation within this strip is haphazard, at best. Important collector links are missing. Local circulation and/or frontage roads are discontinuous and/or poorly defined or missing altogether. Travel between abutting businesses or parking areas is often blocked by physical barriers. The result is inconvenience for shoppers and traffic congestion on the arterials because motorists are forced back onto the arterials to access adjacent or nearby businesses. Equally troublesome is the distinct lack of sidewalks and other accommodations for pedestrians in this auto-oriented area.
- In 1995-96, a planning effort was initiated by the Rockford Gateway Association to address some of these situations in the State Street corridor. This Plan recognizes that effort and recommends implementing those proposals. (See page 124.)

In conclusion, with regard to streets and roadways, especially those major facilities (collectors and above) that are designed primarily for motorized traffic, this Plan emphasizes the increasing need to recognize these facilities within the context of their surroundings, not just as conduits for cars and trucks. Unlike other conduits, i.e., storm or sanitary sewers, roadways do not fully contain the materials that flow through them. The noise, pollution and hazards created

by the cars and trucks spill openly, and often harshly, onto the adjacent land uses. It is not good enough just to provide access to a land use, especially if the means of access degrades the land use itself. We must begin to view roadways the same as we view sanitary sewers and water mains. Just as we are intolerant of leaks of effluent or water, we must begin to correct for the leaks of noise, pollution and hazards from our roadways. It is the recommendation of this Plan that the City constantly seek, evaluate and, where feasible, implement alternatives that will eliminate or, at least, soften the adverse effects of major roadways on surrounding uses. In doing this, we need to find a way to balance the critical role of roadways to the economy and our community in general while limiting any negative impacts they may have.

Sidewalks, Bikeways and Pathways

Everyone becomes a pedestrian at some point every day, whether it's to walk from their car to their office or a store, between bus stops and their home and place of employment, or along neighborhood sidewalks for an evening stroll. Everyone who leaves their home has to walk or wheelchair for at least a short distance at some point during the day. For that reason, how we provide for pedestrians is of critical importance. How we accommodate and plan for the needs of pedestrians, as well as other non-motorized means of transportation, should be viewed as being of equal importance as how we accommodate and plan for automotive traffic.

The goal of this portion of the Plan is to define ways in which Rockford can strive to make walking trips in Rockford accessible, convenient, safe and enjoyable. Basic policies to be followed include:

- Providing a physical environment that encourages walking and that through its location, design and maintenance provides convenient, accessible, safe and enjoyable pedestrian travel. This physical environment should take into account how the land use pattern, street pattern and site design impact pedestrian travel.
- Developing and implementing in conjunction with the Rockford Park District and the Rockford School District education programs that improve pedestrian safety and promote awareness of pedestrian transportation issues and the benefits of walking.
- Encouraging the perception of streets as community space, not just the domain of motorized vehicles.
- Encouraging good design to enhance the feel and look of the pedestrian environment. The pedestrian environment includes open spaces such as plazas and courtyards, as well as the building facades that give shape to the street. Amenities such as street furniture, banners, art, plantings and special paving, along with historical elements and cultural references, should promote a sense of place.
- Enforcing laws and regulations guiding the interaction between pedestrians and motorists. This could extend to installing cameras at problem intersections to catch drivers running red lights or committing other infractions that endanger pedestrians.

To accomplish all of the above, this Plan endorses and encourages pedestrian and non-motorized means of transportation and the continued development and expansion of the City's system of sidewalks, bikeways and pathways. This pedestrian system has great value. It reduces trip demand on our highway and bus systems. It

provides a means of wholesome exercise for the general citizenry. It has significant recreational/leisure value. It provides a means of safe transportation for children and adults alike who are disenfranchised from the automobile-oriented system. It is pollution-free. It contributes to overall aesthetics, appearance and livability of the community. This Plan endorses the sidewalk, bikeway and pathway plans and recommendations of the RATS Long-Range Plan. It also endorses taking the following concrete steps to ensure the presence of a complete pedestrian system:

- Severely limiting waivers for sidewalk construction in the development process to extreme cases only, such as a small cul-de-sac with just three houses on it.
- Completing a comprehensive survey of the City's sidewalk system to determine where the gaps are as a preliminary step to preparing a CIP for sidewalks. Initial attention should be paid to arterial and collector level streets ; to public streets in the areas surrounding public and private schools; and to enable people who ride the bus to get to their bus stop safely. Once, the survey is complete, missing sidewalk segments should be prioritized according to these three objectives, and added to the CIP bond program.
- Consider reconstructing or constructing sidewalks at the same time the adjacent street is rebuilt or resurfaced, especially when the sidewalk would be beneficial to meeting these three objectives.
- Reevaluate how the City's 50/50 Program works.

In addition to streets and roads, the 2020 Plan map shows an extensive system of existing and proposed pathways. (See listing in Table 11.) These are all termed Class I facilities, i.e., pathways where the facilities are completely separated from motor vehicle traffic lanes. They are designed for the exclusive use of bicycles and pedestrians with as little cross flow with motorized traffic as possible. These Class I pathways represent the greatest difference between this plan map and the original Year 2000 Plan map. When the Year 2000 Plan was adopted in 1980, the only existing pathway was the Bicentennial Recreation Path along the east bank of the Rock River just north of downtown and the Pecatonica Prairie Path. Since then, eight additional pathways have been constructed.

Staff Commentary:

- *Planned, Designed and Engineered pathways should be evaluated and including in the 2020 update process*

Bicycle system planning has been a part of the Rockford Area Transportation Study for the past 20+ years. The Rockford area has chosen the "separate pathway" system of providing for mixed bicycle/pedestrian/rollerblade traffic with, when the Plan is fully implemented, paved trails that will 1) parallel the Rock River north and south; 2) radiate from the downtown in several directions; 3) form a grid to connect with other trails; and 4) link with the Grand Illinois Trail System. (The design of these trails is regulated by the state and federal governments and must meet strict standards because they are often constructed using state and federal funds.) These trails would be supplemented by the local residential street system to provide a high level of service overall. The overall system, however, is only about 20% complete, with some portions of the community having excellent access to major trail segments and other parts of the community having no safe access except by automobile.

Table 11

EXISTING & PROPOSED PATHWAYS

MAP #	LOCATION
Existing Pathways	
<p>6 8, 10, 11, 20 11 13, 14, 18 14, 15 17A/18A 20 22, 23 41,42</p>	<p>Along the west bank of the Rock River from Harlem Road to West Riverside Boulevard, then across the bridge to Martin Park in Loves Park</p> <p>Along North Perryville Road from East Riverside Boulevard to Colosseum Drive, then west to the Perryville Path loop</p> <p>Along Reidfarm Road from Spring Creek Road to Sentinel Road</p> <p>Bicentennial Recreation Path along the east side of the Rock River from the YMCA into Loves Park</p> <p>Mel Anderson Recreation Path from Safford Road to Talcott-Page Memorial Park, traversing Searls Memorial Park and the Kent Creek floodway</p> <p>Along the west bank of the Rock River from Davis Park to Jefferson Street, then under the Jefferson Street bridge to the Riverview Ice House</p> <p>Perryville Path loop south to Guilford Road, just west of the Rockford Museum Center, with extension south to Garrett Lane, then east along Garrett Lane to the west side of Perryville Road, then south along Perryville Road to Argus Drive</p> <p>Along the south side of Charles Street from Forest View Avenue to Bluebell Trail</p> <p>Pecatonica Prairie Path west from Meridian Road</p>
Proposed Pathways	
<p>4 4, 15 4 6 6 6 6, 13, 14 9, 10, 21 10 12, 13</p>	<p>Parallel the proposed collector street connecting Porter and Clikeman Roads</p> <p>Extend the Mel Anderson Recreation Path westward from Safford Road to Meridian Road, traversing Lockwood Park and Anna Page Conservation Forest</p> <p>Construct path within Anna Page Conservation Forest to connect the two preceding pathways</p> <p>From Boylan High School to the existing pathway along the Rock River, traversing the rear portion of the Singer Mental Health and Development Center property and the River Bluff Nursing Home property</p> <p>Along Bauer Parkway from North Main Street east to Northrock Drive</p> <p>On the west side of the Rock River from Halsted Road to West Riverside Boulevard</p> <p>Connect the Mel Anderson Recreation Path to the Rock River Path, following railroad right-of-way to West Riverside Boulevard</p> <p>In the ComEd right-of-way just west of Paulson Road from East Riverside Boulevard to East State Street</p> <p>From North Perryville Road east along Rote Road extended to North Bell School Road, then southwest to Guilford Road midway between Perryville and Bell School Roads</p> <p>Along Spring Creek Road from the Rock River to Spring Brook Road</p>

- 14 Extend the Mel Anderson Recreation Path south from Talcott-Page Memorial Park to the Union Pacific RR **There have been major steps made to implement this project. Sections of the needed right-of-way have been acquired.**
- 14 Bisect Summerdale Park
- 16 Along West State Street from Laclede Avenue across Meridian Road
- 16 Along South Memorial Avenue from Claremont Street to the south end of Memorial Avenue, then across Ingersoll Memorial Park and Golf Course to Dennis School
- 16 Connect pathways along Cunningham Road and West State Street via Park-Er-Woods Park
- 16, 17 Along South Pierpont Avenue from Cunningham Road to Levings Park, south to Montague Road, east across the north side of Klehm Arboretum to South Main Street, south to West Harrison Avenue, east to the Rock River
- 16, 17, I-8, I-9 Along West State Street from Meridian Road to Kent Creek **The section from Kent Creek to Independence Ave will be constructed during 2014.**
- 16-18, Along railroad right-of-way north of Cunningham Road from Meridian Road to South 22-24 Mulford Road
- 17, 18 Extensions from the preceding path south to Levings Park; south to Tinker Street; south to Morgan Street, then across to the east side of the Rock River, with extension into Blackhawk Park
- 18, 25, Along the east side of the Rock River, from the Union Pacific RR south to the Kishwaukee 28, 34 River
- 19 From Hunter Avenue just north of Charles Street through Twin Sisters Park to Dahlquist Park
- 19 From the east end of 9th Avenue at East High School across Charles Street and north to Wind Point Drive
- 19, 20 From the west end of Strathmoor Drive, west across the Rockford College campus into Aldeen Park
- 19, 20 From South Alpine Road through Alpine Park east to the east side of the Gregory School site
- 19, 23 Extension from the preceding pathway south through Alpine Park to Forest View Avenue
- 21 Along North Perryville Road from Garrett Lane to Argus Drive, then east to Bell School Road, then south to Walton Street, then east along East State Street to Lyford Road. **Portions of this system are currently under construction.**
- 22 South side of Charles Street from Bluebell Trail east to Rockford's Planning Area limit
- 29, 33, From Riverdahl School south along the railroad right-of-way to Kilbuck Forest Preserve 38
- Along the West Side of the Rock River from Davis Park to Harrison Avenue. The Section from Davis Park to the 15th Avenue Bridge will be constructed within the next two to three years.**
- I-7 Along the west side of North Pierpont Avenue from Auburn Street to Safford Road

The City of Rockford and the Rockford Area Transportation Study have incorporated pathway planning into corridor planning and brownfield redevelopment planning. Both the West State Street Corridor Study and the South Main Street Corridor Study have included separate pathways in their proposed designs. The Concept Plan for Barber

Colman Village includes a pathway along the Rock River and Kent Creek, linking with the proposed Davis-Pec Path. Although these pathways are several years from being completed, our Pathway Plan did result in the pathway connection on Bauer Parkway, including the bridge across the Rock River.

Staff Commentary:

- *The pathways identified in this section are a few years away from being completed*

The 2020 Plan identifies both the existing and proposed pathways which together comprise the Pathway Plan for the City of Rockford. The Rockford Area Transportation Study includes a much larger area and extends this pathway plan to surrounding areas.

The **key performance measures** for these non-motorized transportation facilities are as follows:

- < Sidewalk miles, bikeway miles, and pathway miles
- < Arterial Street sidewalk miles, Arterial Streets without sidewalk (miles)
- < Collector Level street sidewalk miles, Collector Level Street without sidewalk (miles)
- < Local Street sidewalk miles, Local Streets without sidewalk (miles)

Public Mass Transportation

Public mass transportation is provided in the City of Rockford and vicinity by the Rockford Mass Transit District (RMTD). By its mission statement, "RMTD is dedicated to providing safe, efficient, affordable, dependable and accessible transportation to the people of Rockford and the surrounding area."

RMTD has been in operation since the early 1970s under a charter granted in accordance with the laws of the State of Illinois. It is governed by a three-member Board of Trustees appointed by the Mayor of Rockford.

Currently, RMTD maintains a fleet of 35-40 full-sized buses, 27 of which are in operation during peak hour over a regularly scheduled fixed route system extending throughout Rockford and surrounding areas. This includes contractual service to Loves Park and Machesney Park. Service extends north to West Lane Road, east as far as Showplace 16, south as far as Jefferson High School and the Greater Rockford Airport, and west as far as Farm & Fleet. RMTD also operates a fleet of 15-25 smaller paratransit vehicles, using them to provide demand/response, door-to-door or curb-to-curb service for people with disabilities. All told, RMTD provides over 1.5 million passenger trips annually with a staff of 107 employees, 54 of whom operate fixed-route buses.

RMTD implemented a new route system in March of 2004. Standard-fixed route service (Monday through Friday) runs from 5:15 AM through 6:45 PM on 15 routes throughout the Rockford area. During that time, the buses do not exceed one-hour headways (the time between buses at the same spot on a route). During morning and evening peak ridership times, headways are reduced to a half hour on many routes. By contractual agreement, RMTD operates three standard routes through Loves Park and Machesney Park., two of which continue into Rockford .

Of the 15 total routes, 12 operate from the downtown transfer center while 3 serve outlying areas and do not come to downtown Rockford. These three "external routes" serve the following areas:

- The State Street Circulator covers East State from K-Mart to Showplace 16;
- The Alpine Crosstown covers Alpine Road from IL-173 (West Lane Road) to RVC-Jefferson High School (Samuelson Road); and
- The Loves Park Route travels North Second Street and surrounding neighborhoods from Landstrom Road to IL-173.

Staff Commentary:

- *Currently there are 22 routes with service to Belvidere, IL*
- *Service recently added (2013) to the Regional Office of Education Star Program on Safford Road (Route #25)*
- *Updates to routes should be included in the 2020 plan update*
- *Evaluation of long-term public transit needs should be evaluated as part of the plan update process*
- *The East Side Transfer Center was constructed since the 2004 plan adoption*

This new route system offers several points where two or more routes connect in outlying areas while still retaining the radial pulse system from the downtown transfer center.

Transit service is irreplaceable for the area's transit dependent population, i.e., the financially poor, elderly citizens, citizens with disabilities, those too young to have a drivers license, people who have lost their driver's license, and countless others who are disenfranchised from the auto-oriented system because they cannot drive, cannot safely drive, do not like to drive or do not have access to an automobile. Disruption of public transit service would create tremendous hardship for these individuals and would result in loss of jobs, health care and other rippling effects throughout the community. Continuation of reliable, safe public transit is extremely important to the overall welfare of the community.

Recent modifications of welfare law have made mass transit even more important. Welfare reductions forced hundreds of people to seek independent means of support. Most were transit dependent when they were on welfare. The automobile-oriented transportation system was beyond their means or abilities. As they left welfare and began to acquire gainful employment, they became even more dependent on public transit for access to jobs.

The recent major changes to the RMTD route structure were made after an intensive review by a consultant and with the needs of the transit-dependent population in mind. The performance of the new route system should be closely monitored and evaluated. Other possibilities and/or needs for service expansion are likely to develop as the community grows and changes. Although some items are more important than others, implementation should proceed where opportunities arise or where public and financial support can best be rallied.

As with all public services the primary obstacle to such expansions is funding. RMTD should be constantly on the lookout for additional revenue sources. Further, this Plan recommends that the City of Rockford continue to be as financially-supportive of public transit to the fullest extent possible. To the extent that funding support can be obtained sufficient for sustained implementation, this Plan recommends the following:

- **New Route System.** The performance of the expanded route system should be closely monitored and evaluated for possible adjustments. This expanded system should be considered a major step forward in serving the transit-dependent population.

- **Night Service.** Night service is essential to aiding people as they become part of the work force. Second or third shift hours often represent the primary opportunities for new jobs. RMTD started limited night service in January 2001, but expansion to this beyond 11:45 may still be needed and should be explored.
- **Day Care Facility.** A serious obstacle for parents who are seeking jobs is finding competent and conveniently located care for their children or other dependents. The situation is even more difficult for those who are transit dependent. With the current 30-60 minutes bus headways, taking a young child to a care facility by bus requires that the person get off the bus, drop off the child and then wait 30-60 minutes for the next bus. On return, they encounter another 30-60 minute wait. To remedy this situation, RMTD has proposed construction of a care facility in close proximity to the downtown transfer center. All buses lay over at the transfer center for 5-10 minutes. With this arrangement, parents will be able to drop off their children and return to the bus without having to wait for the next bus run.
- **Classroom/Training Facility.** While there is no shortage of classroom or training facilities in the Urban Area, there is a distinct lack of such facilities in close proximity to the most transit-accessible point in Rockford, the Downtown Transfer Center. RMTD, in cooperation with several of the area's social service agencies, proposes to construct a small classroom/training room/meeting facility adjacent to the Transfer Center. The current proposal is for the training facility to share the same building with the Day Care Facility, proposed above.
- **Shorter Headways.** For all bus patrons, whether they be regular frequent riders or just occasional users, a long wait time at the bus stop is a serious inconvenience - more so in winter or during other periods of inclement weather. Miss a bus by 30 seconds. . . and the bus patron has a minimum of a half-hour wait for the next bus, often an hour wait, and sometimes longer. For the transit patron whose personal schedule does not coincide with the bus schedule, the current bus headways can necessitate arriving at a destination a half-hour or more earlier than desired, returning a half-hour or more later, or both. Making multi-stop trips by bus can be extremely time consuming. To the extent possible, RMTD should strive to reduce bus headway times.
- **Link to Chicago/Metra.** Community interest in establishing a commuter rail link between the Rockford Urban Area and the Chicago Urban Area has been rekindled in recent months. RMTD's role in such a link is uncertain at this time but could range from a highly active leadership role to one of simply providing bus links to the rail terminals. RMTD has been engaged in preliminary discussions with Chicago's Metra and should continue exploring options and feasibilities.
- **Regional Maintenance Center.** At the request and with financial assistance from IDOT, RMTD has initiated a paratransit vehicle regional maintenance program for all agencies operating publicly-provided paratransit vehicles in northwestern Illinois. This program was conceived because competent cost-effective maintenance services for these unique and, sometimes, difficult to repair vehicles, was hard to find. In assuming this role, RMTD adds to its capabilities of maintaining its own vehicles, and helps reduce overall paratransit costs statewide. By making paratransit maintenance more efficient, RMTD helps to extend the State's limited paratransit funding resources - resources that RMTD taps on a regular basis for operating and capital equipment assistance. RMTD should continue, periodically evaluate, and appropriately nurture this new program to ensure cost-effective vehicle maintenance and operation, and maximum vehicle life.

Staff Commentary:

- *On-going evaluation of service times, routes and headways is occurring through RMTD and RMAP*

Public Transit and Congestion Management

The term "Congestion Management" has a specific meaning defined by federal law. Coined first in the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) and reinforced by the successor to ISTEA, the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century, TEA-21, Congestion Management refers to planning processes, programs, and specific measures which, when taken together as a system, are applied to the problems of measuring, monitoring, and reducing or minimizing motor vehicle congestion on our roads and highways.

To qualify for federal funding assistance for transportation improvements, the states and large communities such as the Rockford Metro Area, must have a Congestion Management System (CMS) developed in accordance with Federal guidance and included and approved by the Federally-required Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), which in this area is the Rockford Area Transportation Study (RATS).

A CMS has been developed and approved by RATS and was recently reinforced in the RATS Long-Range Transportation Plan. The 2020 Plan supports the activities and strategies recommended by RATS to monitor and manage vehicular congestion. Among the strategies identified as related to public transit, that this Plan supports are the following:

- By-pass ramps and turnouts for bus stop/passenger boardings and deboardings to improve traffic at bus stops and increase safety for drivers and passengers.
- Vehicle upgrades that would take advantage of technological advances and improvements such as GPS and bus surveillance systems.
- Vehicle Management Systems to strengthen RMTD's already strong maintenance program.
- Park and Ride Lots may become important as RMTD expands its service to outlying communities.

Staff Commentary:

- *The Eastside Transfer Center includes 125 parking spaces.*
- Signal preemption would give buses the ability to override signal timing (extending green time) which can be helpful in heavy traffic corridors where maintaining time points is difficult. In corridors without bus turnouts, signal preemption could also decrease congestion by allowing buses to flow more freely and not block traffic. The City should explore this concept wherever major signal upgrades are considered.

The **key performance measures for mass transit** are as follows:

- Route miles: system, annual , weekly
- Passenger miles: annual, daily
- Passengers: daily, annual
- Fairbox Revenues: daily, annual

- Fairbox revenues as a percentage of operating expenses: annual
- The key performance measures for individual routes are similar:
- Route miles: daily, weekly, annual
- Passenger miles: daily, weekly, annually
- Passengers: daily, weekly, annual
- Farebox revenues: daily, weekly, annual
- Farebox revenues as a percentage of operating expenses: daily, weekly, annually

Greater Rockford Airport

As the 23th busiest airport in the country for freight traffic, the Greater Rockford Airport (GRA) clearly plays a key role in the community's economy. What that role should be in the future is being determined now as the City works to find ways to expand the Airport's role into the realm of passenger service. The GRA has the capability of boarding almost a million passengers a year, with a modern terminal facility, ample parking and a highway system that serves the Airport. After several years of marketing efforts, GRA now has non-stop service to Orlando and Las Vegas. Efforts are being made to expand service beyond this foundation.

Staff Commentary:

- *Flight destinations now included Phoenix, AZ, Fort Meyers and Tampa Bay Florida, Cancun, Puerto Vallarta and Punta Cana*

The City of Rockford, in conjunction with the four other jurisdictions who appoint members to the GRA Authority's Board, the Chamber of Commerce and members of the local business community, need to continue to work together to raise the profile of the GRA in Washington, in Springfield and in the corporate offices of airlines throughout the country. It is only through such concerted efforts that we will draw additional passenger service back to the GRA. At the same time, we must not lose sight of the critical role that freight plays at the Airport, and in Rockford's economy. We need to continue to evaluate how we can capitalize on the location and infrastructure already in place to build on the freight traffic already going through GRA. With continuing congestion problems at Chicago's O'Hare Airport, the GRA has great potential to continue to grow as the freight logistics hub of the Midwest. To accomplish this, we need to determine what we and/or the GRA can do to strengthen the Airport's position as a freight terminal.

And finally, we need to investigate the possibilities of converting the airport into a "travelport" — a transportation hub where travelers can choose from a variety of transportation modes — air, rail or automotive. As a component of this, the high speed rail service between Rockford's Airport and O'Hare should be reevaluated if and when discussions concerning capacity at O'Hare and a Third Chicago Airport become major discussions again.

Passenger Rail Service

Rockford's last regularly scheduled passenger rail service, Amtrak, ended operations here over 20 years ago. Several attempts have been made since then to reintroduce passenger service to Rockford, none of them successful. In the last few years, these efforts have gained momentum as efforts have been made to convince METRA to expand its commuter service to Rockford while at the same time exploring the possibilities of bringing high speed rail service to the community. Either approach will enable us not only to provide a convenient way to travel to and from Chicago, but will also allow us to market Rockford to existing and potential employers and employees in a way that we have

not been able to in the past. Because of this, efforts to bring either METRA or some other form of passenger rail service to Rockford need to continue unabated until we succeed in bringing service here. A feasibility study funded through RATS will soon be underway.

When rail service does return to Rockford, we must be sure to plan how it will enter and traverse the community so that we don't create new problems as we solve an old one. This means careful planning along the corridor the service will take and, most importantly, of any new stations that may be created. Properly planned, such stations can play an important economic development role for the area that surrounds them; improperly planned, they can cause severe problems for the adjacent area.

Staff Commentary:

- *Passenger rail service will be restored (via AmTrak) by the fourth Quarter of 2015, starting with one in-bound and one out-bound trip.*
- *Service demand will determine the number of daily trips, after 2015.*

Rail Freight Service

Four rail companies currently provide rail service to and through Rockford. These are the Canadian National with its through line from Chicago to Omaha and industrial spurs; the Union Pacific line, Chicago to Rockford with a spur to Loves Park; Illinois RailNet, a short-line from Rockford to Rochelle; and the Iowa, Chicago and Eastern operating between Janesville and its east west main line in Davis Junction sharing the Illinois RailNet bridge over the Rock River and trackage to Davis Junction.

The recently completed Railroad Consolidation Study performed by Wilbur Smith and Associates for the City of Rockford identifies ways to free-up rail corridors, rail yards and bridges over the Rock River for other land uses through rail consolidation. If the City is successful in implementing the recommendations of this study, there will be two railroad bridges, a five-mile long rail corridor and two rail yards near downtown available for redevelopment. The City Council has approved the Rail Consolidation Study, and the recommendations of this study are included in this plan as Appendix D.

Staff Commentary:

- *The Willbur Smith & Associates study was completed in 2003.*
- *The City has been successful in implementing the first major recommendations of the study, with the decommissioning of one (1) railroad bridge for conversion to a pathway connecting existing and planned pathways along the east and west bank of the Rock River*

Plan Element 4:

Community Facilities and Services

Standards

The City of Rockford's standard requirements for construction and sizing of streets, alleys, public ways, drainage and sewers are included in its Subdivision Regulations, which are contained in Appendix G. (More specific requirements are contained within *Engineering Design Criteria for Public Works Improvements, City of Rockford*, published by the Rockford Department of Public Works. These were last revised in 1997 and are hereby adopted by reference.)

Staff Commentary:

- *Design criteria were included in the 2007 Zoning Ordinance update.*

For those facilities not provided by the City of Rockford, i.e., schools and recreational facilities, the City defers to the standards adopted by the Rock River Water Reclamation District, the various school districts present within Rockford's city limits and by the Rockford Park District.

Staff Commentary:

- *Sanitary sewer is not a facility provided by the City of Rockford*

Parks

The Rockford Park District has long been viewed as a major asset to this community for the quality, quantity and variety of facilities they provide. However, the combination of limited financial resources and rapid growth on Rockford's east side has left some gaps in services provided by the District, especially at the neighborhood park level. As we plan for the future, our goal will be to meet Park District standards throughout the City of Rockford. These standards are spelled out under "Levels of Service" below.

- **Levels of Service:** Rockford Park District policy is to provide the full range of open space areas needed to provide and support a diverse recreation program, including but not limited to such facilities as tot lots, paths, neighborhood parks, activity centers, large park areas, and riverfront.
 - Open Space Standard: The Park District will strive to meet the following standards for parks for all residents of the City of Rockford by 2020.
 - A minimum of 10 acres of park land for more highly organized recreation activities per 1,000 population (currently 1,500 acres total).
 - A minimum of 10 acres of natural park land for passive activities per 1,000 population.
 - Neighborhood parks located within one-half mile of citizens' homes.
 - Priority for acquisition and development will be given to (not ranked):
 - Economically disadvantaged neighborhoods currently underserved.
 - Rapidly developing neighborhoods with limited available land.
 - Land for inter-connecting paths, linking activity centers and/or paths.
 - Riverfront land with focus on the River Cultural Corridor.
 - Land needed to assure continued growth of major activity centers.
 - Land needed to round out the completion of an existing park area.

- Land for large playfields such as a second Sportscore.
 - Land which preserves open space for public use, to include, but not be limited to, riverfront land.
 - Native plantings and landscaping on District properties, especially around detention/retention areas ¼ acre or larger in areas where it does not conflict with other activities on the site.
 - Support the Greenways Plan.
 - Additional greenways along the Rock River and its tributaries.
 - Open and/or green space to link residential areas.
- Rockford Park District's suggested standard: That diverse activities be offered proportionally within available resources in each quadrant of the District, and shall include team and individual sports and games; creative art and cultural activities including visual and performing arts; environmental recreation; special events and other programs that offer opportunities to learn and participate in lifelong leisure activities.
 - Continue to give priority to programs and services
 - That provide opportunities for youth to develop lifelong leisure competency;
 - For youth, especially ages 5 to 17, with special attention given to activities during non-school hours, weekends and holidays;
 - That meet the needs of the disadvantaged in all age groups to ensure that everyone will have access to Park District programs;
 - That provide more active programs for the older adult populations which will grow substantially during the next 5 to 10 years;
 - That reflect the growing diversity of our population; and
 - At times and locations that meet the needs of participants.

Staff Commentary:

- *A portion of the River walk has been constructed along the west bank of the river*
 - *Sportscore II was developed in Loves Park, east of Interstate 90*
 - *Reclaiming First includes a downtown Indoor Sports Center, at the former Ingersoll building*
- **Provision of services:** The City of Rockford will aid in whatever way it can in the provision of recreational services to its citizens. However, this is primarily a responsibility of the Rockford Park District. The one way in which the City can play a role financially is through establishment of impact fees on new development. This possibility should be investigated thoroughly by the City and other jurisdictions within the Rockford Park District. If such fees are imposed, it should be done jointly with all other jurisdictions within the Park District with a reasonably uniform schedule of fees being set within all municipalities and the County.

The other significant role the 2020 Plan can play in ensuring future development of recreational facilities is through the designation of acquisition areas and proposed pathways on the Plan map. The map shows several significant areas for acquisition, primarily in either heavily wooded areas or near a river or creek, and several miles of proposed pathways throughout the community. While there clearly is a need for parks at the neighborhood level in some areas of the City, the Plan map does not extend to that level of detail. The City's primary roles in providing new locations for neighborhood and community parks are financial assistance through the impact fees mentioned above, and working with the Park District staff in finding attainable and workable sites for new parks.

Staff Commentary:

- *Recreational facility planning is not included in the 2020 plan; should be incorporating*

- **Coordination with other service providers:** The staff and elected officials of the City of Rockford will work with the Rockford Park District as they plan for the future development of Rockford's excellent park system. This should involve:

- Working with the Park District in development of a new Park and Open Space Plan to replace the one done in 1973. Even without the financial difficulties the District now faces, after 30 years, it is more than time to revisit what level of service will be provided to our citizens, and how.
- Working with the Park District and other local jurisdictions in establishing an equitable system of impact fees throughout the Rockford Park District.
- Continuing to work with the Park District and other transportation providers in creation of new pathways, and maintenance of all existing pathways.

Staff Commentary:

- *City and Park District planning staff have started conversations on updating the Parks and Open Space plan.*
- *Context Sensitive Design now offers a common language when developing pathways within major transportation corridors*

Rockford Public Library

The stated mission of the Rockford Public Library is to "enhance community life and development by informing, educating, entertaining, and providing cultural enrichment to all people of all ages and by continuously collecting information to address the diverse interests of our dynamic community." It currently does this with a variety of programs and facilities.

- **Levels of service:** Rockford Public Library operates six facilities – an 80,000 square-foot main library plus five branches. Future levels of service are being evaluated by the Library now as it works through a long-range facility study. (See below under "Provision of services.") Until that is completed and adopted by the City, the goal will be to maintain the current level of service, at least in terms of the number and location of facilities.
- The **Main Library** serves as the headquarters of the municipal library system and is an anchor institution for Rockford's downtown River District. It is a remodeled Carnegie building first erected in 1903 and renovated most notably in 1967 and again in 1989. The building is a full service, 80,000 square-foot public library facility offering reference and reader advisory services, a 250,000+ collection of materials, over 20 public Internet/word processing computers, online circulation services, a web-based catalog and literature-based programs for all ages. In addition, Administrative, Collection Management, Information Technology and Maintenance services are also housed in this facility.

Staff Commentary:

- *The Main Library is located on former coal gasification plant. The plant was in operation prior to the construction of the library.*
- *Environmental cleanup at the site will begin in 2015, with temporary and/or permanent relocation of the main library*

- *The former New American Theater, now known as the Nordloff Center, is owned by the Rockford Public Library. The building was donated to the library in 2012. Nordloff Center is now integrated within the library's overall operations and programming.*
- The **Montague Branch Library** – the only branch library building owned by RPL – was built in 1925 and is located at the corner of South Winnebago and Montague Streets in southwest Rockford. It was totally renovated and expanded in 2001 from 5,000 to 10,000 square feet and is ADA compliant. Its features include a wireless computer environment; and the Constance Lane Community room, which is open to neighborhood groups, churches, literacy tutors and government agencies. The Library is an important, sustaining institution to the southwest side of Rockford. Over the years it has welcomed the Polish, Italian, African American and most recently Hispanic-speaking families that first moved to Rockford's southwest side. The two-story brick building with orange-tiled roof is considered a landmark to residents throughout the entire community because of generational connections to relatives who have assimilated throughout the years into the surrounding community. Services include checking out of materials; registration of library cards, reserves, reference/Internet access; word processing; daily delivery to and from other library locations; 24-hour book drop; community bulletin board and programming for both children and adults. Programming and outreach services are a priority at this location. A web-based computer management system supports circulation activity, the library catalog and acquisitions. The collection of materials and programs target families and children. A well-developed collection of Spanish language and multi-media materials are located at this branch.
- The **Lewis Lemon Branch Library**, located in the Lewis Lemon Global Academy, opened in 1994 as part of a community center concept in collaboration with the school, YMCA and Park District. It is located in west-central Rockford near Central Avenue. There is both a school and public entry. At 2400 square feet, this library is RPL's smallest facility. It houses a collection that targets an African American neighborhood and provides the same types of services as the Montague Branch.
- Located in northwest Rockford, the **Rockton Centre Branch Library** moved from the back of the mall to a new and more-visible 8,000 square-foot location inside the Rockton Avenue Shopping Centre. Rockton Centre first opened its doors in April 1961 as a storefront in the mall. In 1975, it moved behind the center to a larger facility. The decision in 2000 to move it to the front of the mall resulted in an immediate increase in circulation. The branch's collection focuses on topics and formats appropriate for the older adult. This branch has one of the largest large print book collections in the branches. Free Internet and word processing services are also available at this branch facility.
- In terms of circulation, the **Northeast Branch Library** is Rockford Public Library's busiest branch. The facility opened at its present 7,200 square-foot location in 1986 near the busy intersection of North Alpine Road and East State Street. With continued growth of the east side, the Library board will be seeking a northeast solution to better serve the eastern part of the city. The collection focuses on a variety of formats and is diverse in topics and formats. The branch features a variety of programs and story times for children. Free Internet and word processing services are also available at this branch facility.

Staff Commentary:

- *The Northeast Branch is now called the East Branch library*
- *The facility was relocated to the former Barnes & Noble location at East State Street and Mill Road.*

- Located in southeast Rockford, the **Rock River Branch Library** moved to its present location in 1998 and is the library's largest branch facility in terms of square footage at 10,500 square feet. From 1971 to 1998, the branch was located in the 11th Street Shopping Centre - strip mall across the parking lot from its present location. June 2001 marks the 30th anniversary of the branch library at this shopping center. Rock River Branch Library provides popular materials in a wide variety of topics and formats. This branch specializes in materials for job searches and career development and provides programs and story times for children and adults. Free Internet and word processing services are also available at this branch library.
- **Provision of services:** As mentioned above, the Trustees and staff of Rockford Public Library are currently in the midst of a long-term facility study that will plan for library service development over the next 20 years throughout the City. Under consideration will be a renovation and expansion of the Main downtown library to position the facility for delivering 21st Century Best Practices in Library Service, the development of a major regional facility on the east side and improvements to the Lewis Lemon, Rockton Centre and Rock River Branch facilities. That study should be completed by midyear 2004. Upon its completion, it will be considered as an amendment to this 2020 Plan.
- **Coordination with other service providers:** The Rockford Public Library is a member of the Northern Illinois Library System (NILS), one of twelve regional library systems in Illinois funded by the Illinois State Library. NILS' **primary** purpose is to provide an informational and technical link for its member libraries. The RPL coordinates its services with those of other providers through its membership in NILS.

Schools

The City of Rockford is served primarily but not exclusively by the Rockford School District. (Small areas of the City are served by the Harlem and Winnebago School Districts.) All are suffering varying degrees of financial difficulties, a not uncommon occurrence in Illinois as a whole. In the case of the Rockford School District, these financial problems are complicated further through frequent changes in leadership and a decade of being under court-ordered mandates.

Staff Commentary:

- *Coordination between City of Rockford, Rockford Park District and Rockford Public Schools planning staff is ongoing. Regularly scheduled meetings were restarted in early 2014.*
- **Levels of Service/Provision of Services:** As the 2020 Plan is being written, the District is once again changing Superintendents while facing a shortfall of some \$30 million. Rather than offering a formulaic set of standards for local schools, the City supports the following three steps as being valuable in finding a way for the District to work out of its current difficulties so that it can focus on its primary role – providing a first class education for Rockford's young people.
 - Completion of an analysis of School District finances by a group of financial experts from within the local government and business communities. Their task is to make recommendations to the District on how to improve its financial standing. The advantage to this approach is one of having fresh eyes look at the issues involved and recommend solutions.
 - With Rockford College acting as overall coordinator, establish a serious community dialog on our schools, involving the business community, parents, educators, students, other community leaders and citizens. The goal will be to determine directions, goals and purposes for the schools.

- Creation of a permanent structure to provide for citizen involvement in the District.

Staff Commentary:

- *Rockford College changed its name to Rockford University in 2013*
- *Rockford University is currently undergoing major campus renovation to accommodate current and future growth*

- **Coordination with other service providers:** Beyond these three activities, the Plan proposes the following strategies for future cooperation between the City of Rockford and the school districts operating within it:
 - Increased cooperation of clearly independent entities – local school districts and the City of Rockford – in the decision-making process. While they may be independent in the sense of having separate taxing authority and governing bodies, they nonetheless are interdependent in the sense that what one does can affect the other, and that what all do affects the community as a whole.
 - As part of this cooperation, regular discussions between the City and schools districts to discuss current needs and issues as well as pending plans and projects. The objective is increased collaboration on joint solutions meeting the widest range of needs.

Water Supply

The City of Rockford has an excellent water supply system. It plays a key role in Rockford's Fire Department having received a "2" ranking from ISO, one of the few departments in Illinois to do so. This plan does not propose any changes in how the water system operates. It does propose the following:

- **Levels of service**
 - Maintain an ISO 2 rating for the Water Division while working to achieve a "1" rating. (These ratings are based on three factors – quantity and flow of water, water quality, and pressure.)
 - The Water Division will complete a Strategic Plan by 2005 which will address the issue of levels of service, among other things. That Plan should be adopted as an amendment to the 2020 Plan once it has been completed.
 - Continue to require that all new development within the City of Rockford hook up to City water.
 - Provide access to water service to all existing development within the City by 2020. This does not necessarily mean that everyone would be hooked up to water, but it does mean that water mains would be installed so that everyone would have the option of hooking up.
- **Provision of services:** The City will continue to require developers to install water service within any new developments. Should the City require a main that is larger than what is needed for the specific development in order to ensure adequate service to other properties, the City will pay the difference in cost for the larger service. For example, if a new subdivision only needs 8-inch mains but a 20-inch main is needed to maintain the functionality of the system as a whole, the City would pay the difference between the cost of the 8-inch versus the 20-inch main.

New construction of water mains by the City is programmed through Rockford's Capital Improvements Program (CIP). Generally speaking, water projects are driven by road projects. CIP project selection policies

for both transportation and water projects are the same and are listed in the transportation section on page 52. These policies, or some variation on them, should remain in effect for the life of the 2020 Plan.

- **Coordination with other service providers:** The staff of the Rockford Water Division attends regular meetings of the Groundwater Protection Planning Committee, a consortium of local agencies that provide water. Through these meetings, they are able to learn of what other agencies are doing and vice versa. The Division staff will continue to attend these meetings in the future to ensure coordination with other water service providers. This coordination should rise to a higher level after each agency has had the opportunity to enter information about its delivery system in WinGIS, the local geographic information system. This should happen by 2005.

Staff Commentary:

- *All agencies now enter their information into the WinGIS system.*

Sanitary Sewer

The Rock River Water Reclamation District (RRWRD) provides sanitary sewer service not only within the City of Rockford, but also throughout most of eastern Winnebago County, with services as far south as the southern part of New Millford and as far north as McCurry Road in the Village of Roscoe. To the east, Reclamation District lines end at the Winnebago/Boone County line in Loves Park and Cherry Valley, but they accept flow from lines located in Boone County.

During the late 1980s and early '90s, the City of Rockford and RRWRD jointly funded several major sanitary sewer projects. These included the Spring Creek Trunk, the North Branch of Keith Creek Trunk, the Kishwaukee Trunk and the Northwest Trunk. These major projects enabled annexation and much of the commercial development that has taken place and is continuing to take place along Perryville Road, Riverside Boulevard, and East State Street east of the Tollway. It should also be noted that there was developer participation and participation by the City of Loves Park in the funding of the Keith Creek sewer. Smaller jointly-funded projects such as the Alma Nelson sewer and the Mack Truck Trunk complimented these four major projects. After the mid-1990s the development of these joint projects slowed considerably, while the Reclamation District focused its efforts within communities to the north.

Staff Commentary:

- *The Reclamation District is expanding the Fuller Trunk from the southwest south of Rockford to serve the Village of Winnebago, located west of Rockford along U.S. Bypass 20.*

- **Levels of service**
 - Continue to require that all new development within the City of Rockford and its extraterritorial review area hook up to sanitary sewer.
 - Provide access to sanitary sewer for all existing development within the City by 2020. As with water, this does not necessarily mean that everyone would be hooked up to sewer. It does, however, mean that the necessary infrastructure would be installed so that everyone would at least have the option of hooking up.
- **Provision of services:** As the map on page 75 shows, sanitary sewer trunks now serve most of the drainage basins within the City of Rockford and the surrounding area, with some major exceptions. Clockwise from the

northeast, these unserved areas include the following basins/sub-basins: West Beaver Creek to the North Branch of Keith Creek; the Blackhawk Trunk; the Airport and portions of the Kishwaukee River and Kilbuck Creek basins to serve the Rockford Global TradePark Industrial Redevelopment area; the Southwest Basin; the Fuller Creek Interceptor to serve the South Branch of Kent Creek; the North Branch of Kent Creek and Mud Creek.

Each of these basins each has a different set of circumstances and development issues associated with it. Providing sewer service to each will need to be considered at some point to enable continued orderly growth and development of the City. However, it is critical that the City evaluate each potential project and determine a priority list of projects to present to the RRWRD. Ideally, the City and the RRWRD will jointly prepare a capital improvement program for sewer construction within the City and its extraterritorial area (1½ miles beyond the corporate limits). The following is a general description of each of these potential sanitary sewer projects.

- **West Beaver Creek to the North Branch of Keith Creek:** This sub-basin is located north of the Kishwaukee Basin and south of the Keith Creek Basin roughly bounded by Spring Brook Road, the Tollway, Rote Road and the Boone County Line (see map) This project would require gravity sewer to the southeast, a pumping station near the Boone County line, and a force main to the North Branch of Keith Creek. The pumping station would be required because this sub-basin drains to Beaver Creek and the Kishwaukee River instead of the Rock River. The majority of this area is planned for residential use, with technology-based industry planned near the Tollway and some commercial at major street intersections. There is no City water currently available within this basin east of the Tollway, and the sanitary sewer is more costly to develop than a typical gravity sewer. There has been one development proposal (eventually turned down by the City) and numerous inquiries about development within this sub-basin, which lies immediately west of several “estate “ type subdivisions along Shaw Road in Boone County.
- **Blackhawk Trunk Basin:** This basin extends east from 20th Street to I-39 and would serve the remaining area south of Jefferson High School to the Kishwaukee Basin, just south of Blackhawk Road. (See map) This area is planned primarily for residential use, although commercial development would be expected near South Alpine and Linden Roads as the number of rooftops increases with the development of this sanitary sewer project. Sanitary sewer costs are high for this project because of the terrain and exposed bedrock. Unfortunately, the benefits of providing this sewer, including payback through connection fees, are considerably reduced by the fact that approximately one-third of this basin was allowed to develop on well and septic, some during the sewer moratorium during the late 1960s but some during the mid-1980s. A major vacant tract was recently annexed with the provision that only the small northerly portion of the tract could develop now while the majority would be required to wait for the first phase of the Blackhawk Trunk.

- **Rockford Global TradePark Redevelopment Area** (the Greater Rockford Airport Area including the downstream portion of the Kishwaukee River and Kilbuck Creek basins). This recently created Redevelopment Area includes several potential TIF Districts all with the specific intent of creating jobs through industrial development. Sanitary sewer service is incomplete and not sufficient to allow significant new industrial development. The needed sanitary sewer improvements would provide gravity sewer in these basins and would include a regional pumping station on the Greater Rockford Airport property near Cessna Drive replacing three upstream pumping stations serving the area south of Leonard Road near 11th Street and Falcon Road. These improvements would be critical to attracting industrial development to this Redevelopment Area.
- **Southwest Basin:** South of the Fuller Creek basin, the Southwest Basin is formed by an unnamed creek which enters the Rock River between Rock Creek and Fuller Creek. This basin is downstream from the Reclamation District treatment facilities, so a pumping station and force main would be required along South Main Street. Although much of this basin is planned for light industrial use because of its proximity to the Greater Rockford Airport, it is not likely to develop until the Rockford Global TradePark Redevelopment Area sanitary sewer improvements are made and the TradePark is substantially built-out.
- **Fuller Creek Interceptor - South Branch of Kent Creek:** Because of severe downstream capacity limitations in the South Branch of Kent Creek, Phase 1 of the Fuller Creek Interceptor was designed and constructed in the early 1980s to accommodate much of the Fuller Creek Basin and the upstream portion of the South Branch of Kent Creek. (See map). Phase 2 of this project would require a regional pumping station and force main in the vicinity of Bypass 20 and Kent Creek (south branch). Gravity sewer would serve this basin west and northwesterly from the pumping station. Much of this basin east of Meridian Road was developed on well and septic 40 or more years ago. Small pumping stations along with retrofitted sanitary sewer have provided temporary solutions in some portions of the basin, particularly Park-Er-Woods. The majority of this large basin is located west of Meridian Road and is largely undeveloped. There has been considerable interest in residential development in this area. There is potential for commercial development along West State Street on either side of Meridian Road. There are numerous barriers to annexation by the City, and, coupled with the additional expense of the pumping station/force main and existing development on well and septic, this proposed project requires careful consideration.

Staff Commentary:

- *The Fuller Creek project is currently under construction*
- **North Branch of Kent Creek :** This is a large basin that is difficult to serve in a cost-effective manner because the gravity route of the main trunk of this sewer would traverse over one mile of Park District property and about the same distance of undevelopable, City-owned, flood-control property. In addition, the northern sub-basin through Tullocks Woods and Lakewood Subdivision was developed on well and septic 40 years ago and is now in need of expensive sewer retrofit. The southwest sub-basin is the most promising for new development because it does not have parkland or extensive existing development on well and septic. Overall, this basin is almost entirely planned for residential development or future urban development

(probably residential), with the exception of the existing Pierce Chemical Company at North Meridian Road near Porter Road.

- **Mud Creek Basin:** This is a very large basin lying northwest of the city limits. Approximately one- third of this basin is located on the Machesney Park side of the Boundary Agreement between the City of Rockford and the Village of Machesney Park. Development on well and septic is minimal, nor has there been a major demand to develop this area up to now. This basin is designated for future urban development to be initiated when the sanitary sewer is programmed. There are two factors, however, which may accelerate this sewer project. First, the Illinois Department of Transportation has programmed major improvements to Illinois 2 from Elmwood Road north over the next few years; this is expected to promote more interest in this land for development. And secondly, the sewer would serve a portion of both Rockford and Machesney Park, facilitating the funding for the sewer project.

A detailed cost-benefit analysis of each of the seven sanitary sewer basins is recommended as a prerequisite to determining priorities for these seven major projects and their sub-components or phases. Once the City has determined what its priorities are, a formal presentation should be made to the Reclamation District to facilitate appropriate programming of these projects and their individual components. However, because of the economic development and industrial job development potential associated with the Global TradePark Redevelopment Area, the initial phases of this project should be assigned the top priority by the City and the Reclamation District.

- **Coordination with other service providers:** Clearly, the key to success in expanding sanitary sewer service within Rockford is coordination with the Reclamation District by virtue of the fact that the District controls the sewer system. To that end, City staff regularly attends quarterly meetings sponsored by the District to update the various jurisdictions they serve on their plans and activities. It is imperative that the City work with the District in establishing a program for sewer improvements for the next 15-20 years, and that the City do everything in its power to make sure that the District sticks to that program (except for any mutually agreed modifications).

Public Safety

While police and fire stations are obviously physical structures, actually selecting a specific site for any future ones at this time is premature. However, there are some basic factors that need to be considered when the time does come to make a decision about specific locations.

Staff Commentary:

- *Geographic-based policy is shifting facility operations from the Public Safety Building to Three District sites.*
- *The Fire Department will construct a new Fire State #3 to replace the current fire station located within the IL-2 South Main Street corridor, due to road realignment and reconstruction.*
- **Level of service:** Both the Rockford Police Department and the Rockford Fire Department must cope with the realities of serving an ever-expanding geographical area. At the time the original Year 2000 Plan was adopted, the City of Rockford covered roughly 41 square miles; at the time this is being written, this figure has increased by nearly 50% to 60 square miles. Despite the increased coverage required of each department, the

Police still operate out of a single facility — the Public Safety Building downtown — while the Fire Department continues to work from 11 stations, albeit some of them in different locations from where they were in 1981.

For the Rockford Police Department, the goal is to maintain current levels of basic service throughout the community, while continuing specialized programs such as community policing. As law enforcement methods evolve over the next 15-20 years, the Police Department will do its utmost to accommodate those methods when they meet local needs. For example, the Police Department could, in conjunction with other City departments, produce general guidelines for achieving crime prevention through environmental design for use by property owners and developers.

For the Rockford Fire Department, service goals are as follows:

- Maintain a response time of 5 minutes or less for 90% of fire and ambulance calls;
- Maintain an ISO-2 rating or better; and
- Work to maintain a maximum distance of 1½ miles between any point in the City and the nearest fire station.

Staff Commentary:

- *The serve area is now over 65 square miles.*
 - *Total square miles increased, since the 2004 plan adoption, to accommodate larger industrial tracts for future employment centers.*
- **Provision of services:** Because of the different ways that police and fire services are handled, one constantly patrolling while the other responds to calls from fixed locations, their facility needs differ. However, every effort should be made to combine these services in a single facility if and when satellite police stations become a reality. Such a possibility already exists with the combined fire and police station being proposed for the Rote and North Lyford Road area on the far east side of town. (This may also accommodate an east side training facility for the Fire Department as well as some activities of the Department of Public Works.)

With the County Sheriff's Department moving into the proposed new Winnebago County Justice Center in the near future, the PSB will need substantial repairs and remodeling if it is to continue to serve effectively as the main headquarters of the Rockford Police Department. Should any additional police substations be needed, their location would be based on the following factors:

- Visibility from and access to main arterial streets;
- Size of the area to be affected and its relationship to existing facilities;
- Rate and type of calls for police assistance within an area;
- Demographics of the area in question, including the number and type of residences; age, income, and employment status of the residents;
- Types of businesses within the area; and
- Traffic flow (e.g., how difficult is it to traverse the area).

Areas under consideration for sites by the Police Department include the Airport, East State Street and Mulford Road, Perryville and Olde Creek Roads, South Alpine and Sandy Hollow Roads, North Main Street and West Riverside Boulevard, 3600 West State Street (in front of Concord Commons), as well as the North Lyford Road site.

Because of the need to have fire protection emergency response facilities within certain distances of everyone, the demand for new fire stations will exceed those for police substations. In addition to the east side station mentioned above, gaps in existing services to areas already in the City could result in construction of two new stations on Rockford's southeast side, one in the vicinity of 11th Street between 18th Avenue and Sandy Hollow Road, and one in the vicinity of Jefferson High School. The former would replace Station 7 on Samuelson Road which is severely limited in the area it can readily serve by the presence of the Greater Rockford Airport on its west side, with the Rock River just beyond that. The latter would serve a newly developing area of primarily single-family homes further to the south and east.

Future fire stations may be needed if Rockford develops to the extent shown in this Plan. Specifically, a new station would be needed to the northwest once development goes north of Elmwood Road west of the current city limits. An additional southwest station will be needed as the area inside the US 20 Bypass is filled in, but especially once the City expands outside US 20 in this area. While some of this area could be served by relocating Station 3 from its current site on South Main Street, it would remove an important anchor from that neighborhood while still not providing a long-term solution to the problem of properly serving Rockford's far southwest area. At some point, an additional station will still be needed. Consequently, Station 3 should remain where it is.

Staff Commentary:

- *See previous comments*
- **Coordination with other service providers:** Both the Police and Fire Departments have a longstanding record of working with other organizations in the community to ensure that Rockford residents receive the best service possible. The Police Department works with agencies such as DCFS, Janet Wattles Center, Contact and the Red Cross to provide services where needed. The Department also has special outreach programs, providing officers in schools for the Rockford School District and through its Community Services officers, its Bike Patrol and its RHA Patrol.

The Fire Department participates in MABAS, the Mutual Aid Box Alarm System. Through this system, the Rockford Fire Department will back up other departments within the system when called upon to do so, and vice versa. The Rockford Fire Department also coordinates with other local jurisdictions as operator of the County-wide 9-1-1 system.

Plan Element 5:

Telecommunications

Telecommunications is a major industry shaping economic development, business and daily lives. Businesses want the most cutting edge technology that is out there, and residents want good affordable service. Unlike other utilities, the Telecommunications Act of 1996 allows anyone to enter any communications business in any market. The City cannot prohibit telecommunications services, but telecommunications facilities, towers, and usage of right-of-way can be monitored and managed. However, the City needs to be very careful in dealing with telecommunications, hence the telecommunications portion of the 2020 Plan.

According to the *Growing Smart Legislative Guidebook*, telecommunications refers to “any origination, creation, transmission, emission, storage-retrieval, or reception of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, or intelligence of any nature, by wire, radio, television, optical, or other means.” A Telecommunications Facility refers to “any facility that transmits and/or receives signals by electromagnetic or optical means, including antennas, microwave dishes, horns, or similar types of equipment, towers or similar structures supporting such equipment, and equipment buildings.”

The optimal goal for the City is for all citizens, businesses and organizations in Rockford to have access to the latest telecommunications services available. The City should use telecommunications technology to:

- Provide its citizens with information in an affordable and timely manner.
- Bridge gaps within society.
- Cultivate communication.
- Foster economic development.

The current Zoning Ordinance only addresses size and height restrictions of telecommunications towers. The City of Rockford should update the ordinance to meet with the goals of this section of the 2020 Plan.

Staff Commentary

- *The 2008 Zoning Ordinance provides additional guidelines for telecommunication tower design and locations.*

Fiber Optic Lines

Fiber optic cable is what transmits the Internet using City right-of-way both above and below grade. The map shown on the following page was produced by the Council of 100 to illustrate where fiber optic lines currently exist in Winnebago County. The map also identifies industrial parks, which could not only be high users of telecommunications services but are also favorable sites for telecommunications facilities.

Because fiber optic lines use public rights-of-way, the City must insure that they are used efficiently. Rockford currently has a permitting process for telecommunications and a franchising fee for SBC (Ameritech). The Public Works Department has a draft ordinance based on the model right-of-way standards ordinance created by the Illinois Municipal League. There have been attempts for the City to adopt this model that have been unsuccessful. The City should continue to try to adopt this model or at least update current right-of-way policies to address the

telecommunications industry more progressively. Also, some telecommunications providers claim that franchise agreements violate the Telecommunications Act of 1996, the model ordinance states:

“The League believes that [the model’s] provisions strike a fair compromise between honoring the municipality’s contractual obligations under existing franchises and abiding by the Telecommunications Act’s mandate to provide a level playing field to all providers of telecommunications services.”

Staff Commentary

- *The City of Rockford is a participating member of the iFiber network, covering nine counties in Northwest Illinois. Currently there are 487 entities within the network*
- *The current map of Fiber Optic routes is located here: http://www.rockfordil.com/public/resources/resource_80/FiberOpticMap.pdf*

Telecommunications Facilities

The need for and importance of towers will only continue to increase as time goes on. Currently, the major use of towers is to provide cellular phone service. The entire City of Rockford is covered by at least one cellular phone company. Wireless Internet, also known as Wi-Fi, is becoming, and will continue to become, increasingly popular. Some cities have even used Wi-Fi as a downtown revitalization strategy or an economic development tool by providing free Wi-Fi service in selected areas. The growth in Wi-Fi will require additional towers in the area to facilitate new demands in service. The Zoning Ordinance currently only addresses antenna support structure and needs to be updated to accommodate the growing need for new antennas. The most important issues to address are permitted locations of antennas, safety and cohesiveness.

Goals and Policies

Telecommunications facilities should:

- Accommodate a minimum of three providers as allowed by height restrictions.
- Give adequate compensation for use of public rights-of-way.
- Be provided in a publicly safe manner.
- Be cohesive with the surrounding environment.

Priority will be given to favorable locations such as:

- Existing public structures provided that the tower is compatible with the structure and does not adversely affect the structure or architectural significance.
- Collocation sites.
- Industrial zoned areas.

Facilities should not:

- Locate near airports where they could disrupt operations.
- Locate in historic districts.
- Interfere with health institutions or school facilities.
- Locate in or near residential areas whenever possible.

Telecommunication Providers

The Council of 100 has done a survey of area telecommunications providers. That information is summarized below.

- **Choice One Communications:** Choice One Communications is a facilities-based CLEC whose main thrust is delivering a full range of competitively priced business telephone services. Services in the Rockford area include:
 - Local and long distance phone services
 - Voice mail
 - Dedicated T-1 Service
 - DSL Internet access
 - Internet/Data services, including Web design and Web hosting
 - Dedicated internet/Data Service
 - VPN - Virtual Private Networks
 - Firewall security
 - NAT - Network Address Translation
 - On-line billing and payment
 - Bundled services
- **Insight Communications** holds a franchise with the City of Rockford to provide cable TV service in the City. In addition to cable TV, Insight provides high speed internet access via cable modem to its customers.
- **McLeod USA** is a facilities-based telecommunications provider headquartered in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, offers a variety of services, including local and long distance services, voice mail, teleconferencing and calling card services to both businesses and residential customers, Internet access, Virtual Private Networks, and Virtual Internet Service. Services in the Rockford area include:
 - Dedicated Internet Access
 - KnowledgePortal™ - an application enabling businesses to create, manage, and deliver streaming-media based interactive presentations from the company's own Web site, in real time and with real quality
 - VPN - flexible, affordable, custom solutions utilizing a nationwide network of over 360
 - POP's, nearly 900 dial-access cities (local call), and IPSec security software which affords data encryption to ensure security
 - Enhanced 800 Service - a repertoire of features including Deal Locator, which automatically routes the caller to the store or location nearest to them,
 - Messaging/Menuing, Percentage Allocation, which allows the routing of calls to the same toll-free number on a percentage basis, Whisper, a voice announcement identifying tollfree calls, and more
 - Dedicated/Shared Web Hosting - dedicated lines and telephone company servers allows service to expand as the company grows
- **SBC** (formerly Ameritech), originally one of the Bell companies, offers the following services in Rockford:
 - Local phone service
 - DS3
 - DSL

- SONET
- ISDN
- **TDS METROCOM** is a Wisconsin-based company offering services to the Rockford area and eastern Lake and Cook counties. Services in the Rockford area include:
 - Digital and analog phone service
 - CENTREX
 - 800 service
 - Calling card
 - Voice messaging
 - Internet access--dial-up
 - DSL--for single user or LAN
 - Private lines -- LAN-to-LAN connection, video conferencing, host-to-host connections
 - ISDN
 - DS3
 - VPN
 - SONET technology
- **Definitions**
 - CENTREX: Central office exchange service
 - CLEC: Competitive long exchange carrier
 - DS3: A dedicated phone connection supporting data rates of about 43 megabytes
 - DSL: Digital subscriber lines
 - ISDN: Integrated service digital network
 - NAT: Network Address Translation
 - POPs: Post office protocol
 - SONET: Synchronous optimal network
 - VPN: Virtual Private Networks

Staff Commentary

- *The Council of 100 is now the Rockford Area Economic Development Council (RAEDC)*
- *The following providers are identified by RAEDC as the local providers of telecommunications: AT&T, McLeod USA, Comcast, TDS Metrocom, ChoiceOne Communications*
- *The update process will confirm all current providers and types of services*

Winnebago County Fiber Optic Map

Courtesy of the Council of 100

Staff Commentary

- *The Council of 100 is now the Rockford Area Economic Development Council (RAEDC)*
- *See above for link to Fiber Optic Map.*

Plan Element 6:

Housing

The housing section of the Year 2000 Plan began with the following goal from the Federal Housing Act of 1949: “A decent home and a suitable living environment for every American family.” That was our goal in 1980, and it remains our goal today. Our mission over the next 20 years will be to hold onto the positives of increased affordability while bringing the negatives under control. If the latter is to be accomplished, it will most likely be through activities generated at the neighborhood level, not by City housing programs. However, sustaining affordability can most definitely be influenced by a continuation and evolution of housing programs and policies.

In 2003, the *City of Rockford, Illinois Housing Market Study* (generally referred to as “the Housing Study” in this section of the Plan) was prepared by Western Economic Services to support the City’s Consolidated Strategy and Plan Submission as well as the 2020 Plan. The Housing Study uses data from the U.S. Census Bureau, the Rockford Township Assessor, the University of Illinois, the City of Rockford Building Department, and a housing survey conducted by Western Economic Services.

Current Housing Market

To recap some of the basic demographic data included in pages 14-19, the 2000 Census reported the population of Rockford to be 150,115. While this represents an overall growth of 7.7% from 1990 to 2000, the West Side of the City has been declining in population as the East Side has been growing. The housing market has felt the affects of this. Total housing units in Rockford has increased by 9.3% during that same time period; however, that growth was not evenly distributed throughout the City as the Northwest and Southwest declined by 1.0% and 4.8%, respectively.

Staff Commentary:

- *The plan update will include 2010 Census and recent Census Community Survey information*

Rockford has been becoming more diverse as the racial composition has been changing. The White population declined 3.4% over the last 10 years but the African-American and Asian-American population increased by 25% and 55%, respectively. The Hispanic population has also been increasing, almost tripling citywide between 1990 and 2000. Although the White population has been declining citywide, it increased in the Northeast quadrant. At the same time, the African-American population decreased in the Southwest while the Asian-American population showed steady growth throughout the City.

Staff Commentary:

- *The plan update will include 2010 Census and recent Census Community Survey information*

The “Who We Are” section of the 2020 Plan shows how the number of households has changed by quadrant over time. (See page 18.) What it does not show is that the number of housing units (occupied units, i.e., households plus vacant units) increased at an even faster rate overall. This means that the citywide vacancy rate increased from 3.8% in 1990 to 6.9% in 2000 with the actual number of vacant units more than doubling during that time.

Table 12	Total Housing Units in Rockford, 1990-2000
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	1990	2000	% Change
Northeast	13,417	16,476	22.8%
Northwest	14,286	14,147	-1.0%
Southeast	22,996	25,861	12.5%
Southwest	7,447	7,086	-4.8%
Total	58,146	63,570	9.3%

Median household income in 1999 for Rockford’s population as a whole was \$37,667. However, there were substantial differences among racial and ethnic groups. Median household income was \$40,003 for Whites; \$26,236 for African-Americans; \$39,191 for Native Americans; \$57,556 for Asian-Americans, and \$30,255 for people of 2 or more races. While persons above poverty increased 6.5%, persons below poverty grew at an even faster rate — 12.3%. Employment in Rockford went up 4% from 1990 to 2000 citywide but, as with everything else, the gains were not universal. Employment dropped on the West Side and increased on the East Side.

Staff Commentary:

- *The poverty rate continues to increase*
- *The plan update will include 2010 Census and recent Census Community Survey information*

The Housing Study found that there is not a strong need for additional single family detached starter housing in Rockford. In fact, the City seems to have an excess of this type of housing. During the past two decades and especially the past ten years, new housing development on the edge of the City’s built-up area has been primarily of the “starter home” variety. While this led to a slight increase in home ownership rates from 1990 to 2000 (60% vs. 61%), it also has led to two major problems. First, it tended to increase the rental vacancy rate as renters moved up into better units in a several tier process, leaving behind the more marginal units. The second problem to arise is that with the majority of new construction being starter homes, there is little choice for the “move-up buyer” or more affluent buyers. These “move-up buyers” have instead been moving outside the City for other markets such as Boone County, Roscoe and others. This loss of the more affluent home buyers shows in some of the demographic trends for Rockford from 1990 to 2000 especially. There is a need for new developments to offer a wide range of choice for buyers wishing to move up from starter homes while staying within the City of Rockford. The City would like to attract these new more affluent developments to balance the City’s housing choice and demographics.

Current Housing Structures Condition

The study reported housing condition data from the Rockford Township Assessor. The physical conditions of the City were broken down into ten categories: excellent, very good, good, average, fair, poor, poor minus, very poor, very poor minus and unsound. It is important to note that the condition of the neighborhood is factored into the individual housing condition assessment. Authors of the Study drew the following conclusions from the data:

- 79% of the dwellings in the City are of fair or above condition.
- 21% of the dwellings are of poor or below condition, almost 9,000 dwellings.
- The Northeast has the best housing conditions. Only 2% of the dwellings were considered poor or below, while 98% are fair or above and 53% of the dwellings were considered good, very good or excellent.

- The Southwest has an unfair share of low quality housing. 79% of dwellings were considered poor or below while not a single dwelling was considered good, very good or excellent. Compared to the City as a whole, the Southwest has 28% of the dwellings considered poor or below yet only 11% of the total housing units.

CDU	Northwest	Northeast	Southeast	Southwest	Total
Excellent	109	496	0	0	605
Very good	88	1,292	7	0	1,387
Good	1,772	5,069	2,404	0	9,245
Average	3,680	5,411	7,064	40	16,195
Poor	1,323	188	2,088	944	4,543
Poor minus	879	31	667	864	2,441
Very poor	655	27	464	623	1,769
Very poor minus	22	2	31	34	89
Unsound	33	1	47	39	120
Total	11,278	12,881	15,590	3,159	42,908

The housing stock in Rockford is getting older and needs to be dealt with. The study states:

These statistics are discouraging, as they imply that a number of housing units are not being sufficiently maintained. The City of Rockford’s dilapidated housing stock is increasing, even though the City has taken steps over the last decade to eliminate some of the most blighted housing units. Renewed efforts to remove blighted housing must be considered now. A goal of 1,000 additional units over the next five years may help turn the tide.

Housing Needs

Single-family housing is the largest sector of the housing market currently comprising 65% of the total market, an increase of about 2 percentage points from 1990. In the Northeast, single-family units’ make up 72%, while in the Southwest, they make up only 57% of the market. The study conducted a telephone survey to “gage the perceptions of housing needs throughout the City of Rockford.” In terms of types of needed housing, the survey found that the Northeast is in need of affordable rental housing, although the study reports that there is an abundance of rental housing City-wide. The Southwest is in need of for-sale housing, yet was found to be the most affordable. Perceptions of the condition of housing in the Southeast and Northwest sides were shown to be more favorable than the Assessor’s data described in the Housing Conditions section.

Staff Commentary:

- *The update will include current conditions data.*

The second part of the survey was to determine the degree of need for the following housing activities:

- homeowner repair and maintenance,
- emergency rental assistance,
- development of affordable rental units,
- rehabilitation of rental units,

- construction of affordable new single-family units,
- rehabilitation of single-family units,
- assistance for developers of affordable housing,
- down payment grants, home buyer education classes,
- low interest financing for home repair or remodeling, and
- Easier methods to condemn and demolish unsuitable housing units.

The survey found that the Northeast side has little or no need of any of these housing activities. The Southeast and Northwest have moderate needs, yet extreme need exists in the Southwest. Easier methods to condemn and demolish unsuitable housing units was one of the most frequent needs listed, as was aid for homeowners to rehabilitate their homes.

Amenities for affordable housing developments are needed as well. By way of a special use permit, lot size can be reduced from a minimum of 7,700 square feet to a minimum of 6,600 square feet with a minimum lot width of just 60 feet. The combination of smaller lots and basic housing designs generally keeps the cost of homes in these subdivisions under \$90,000. Thus far, most of these have been built on the east side at various locations — Kylemore East and Linus View behind the State Street Strip, Harrison Park east of the main Post Office, Bluffside Heights off 20th Street south of US 20, Jefferson Ridge south of Jefferson High School, and University Center near NIU's Rockford campus. However, new construction has also begun to occur on the West Side in Lincolnwood Estates and Emerson Estates. The one thing lacking in most if not all of these subdivisions and that needs to be addressed is community open space. Virtually every square foot of land is developed, leaving little opportunity for any type of amenities. We need to find ways to address this, such as adoption of a land dedication ordinance.

Staff Commentary:

- *Linden Pointe near Alpine and Linden Roads is a more recent subdivision development with affordable price points*
- *Since 2008, there has been little to no activity in the new single family construction market segment.*
- *Most of the subdivision identified above contain inventory of vacant lots*

Cost Burden

When it is said that a household is experiencing a cost burden, it means that 30% or more of the household income is going to housing costs. This includes utilities, interest, taxes, and insurance as applicable as well as the direct cost of either rent or a mortgage. A severely cost burdened household pays 50% or more of its household income on housing. Burden is not only an individual problem, but it can cause serious problems in a community. "For renters, any particular economic setback could cause the householders to fall behind in rental payments, thereby becoming at-risk of eviction and homelessness. For homeowners, these data suggest that these householders lack sufficient resources to conduct routine and periodic maintenance on their homes." (page 19 of the study)

In Winnebago County, 32.2% of renters and 18.6% of homeowners are experiencing a cost burden. Equivalent figures in the City of Rockford are somewhat higher — 34.4% of renters and 19% of homeowners. From 1990 to 2000, the percent of renters experiencing a cost burden has gone down 2.1% for the City of Rockford. Although all quadrants experience a decrease, the Southwest had the largest decrease of 10%. However, owner occupied households with a

cost burden increased 4.5% citywide from 1990 to 2000. The Northwest quadrant had the largest increase of (6.7%) and the Southwest quadrant has the highest percent in both 1990 and 2000, but all quadrants increased from 1990 to 2000.

Staff Commentary:

- *The figures above will be updated to include 2010 Census and the most recent Census Community Survey data.*

Special Needs Housing

Special needs housing refers to housing for the disabled, elderly, and other non-traditional housing needs. The housing needs survey conducted by the study also included questions about unmet special needs housing. Meeting the needs of the homeless was a major concern, but housing for the elderly, disabled and victims of domestic violence were also found to be needed.

The U.S. Census Bureau predicts that for the state of Illinois, the population over 65 years of age will rise from 12% in 2000 to 17% by 2025; by 2030, that number could be as high as 20%. That would be over 27,000 people over age 65 in Rockford in 2020. This is an enormous increase in the need for housing for elderly and retired persons. Many of these people will be on limited incomes and not have the desire or ability to take care of the homes they live in now. However, Christopher Williamson, AICP reports in his article, *The War of the Ages*, that Baby Boomer household incomes are \$10-\$15,000 higher than median and that home ownership will be the rule as the Census tells us that home ownership increases with age. He also states:

“Baby boomers have three choices when they retire: Stay in their current homes, move locally, or leave the area. And they may move several times after age 65. Each choice has consequences for local planning.”

These Boomers may be drawn to Active Adult Retirement Communities popular in the Southern and Western United States. The City should encourage these Active Adult Retirement Community developments to retain our aging higher income population as well as attract retirees from surrounding areas and nearby Chicago. Another type of retirement community gaining popularity is a Continuing Care Retirement Community or CCRC as reported by the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP). These communities offer a variety of services depending on the care required by the individual. A CCRC community may include independent living units, assisted living units and nursing home accommodations. The City should accommodate these types of developments and also support partnerships between these communities and institutions such as local hospitals.

Staff Commentary:

- *The Jane Addams housing development was demolished in 2008.*
- *New development for disable adults has replaced most of the former footprint*

Forecast

The study predicts that the population of Rockford will be over 162,000 by 2020. That is a gain of about 12,000 people. Currently the West Side has been losing population while the East Side has been gaining. The study forecasts population assumes that this trend will not continue when forecasting the population of the City. This is a forecasted

increase in population, but the increase in housing units has been much higher. The housing study reports that, "...the growth rate Citywide in total housing units over the decade is higher than the growth in households and occupied housing." If we continue at this rate, the amount of vacant housing will continue to rise. The study recommends the demolition of 1,000 housing units. Before this action is taken, there should be more investigation as to what affect this course of action will have on neighborhoods, what alternatives there are and what is best for the City of Rockford.

Staff Commentary:

- *Significant increase in new housing construction within the City of Rockford boundaries as well as increase in new primary and secondary employment is necessary to achieve the 2020 population forecast.*
- *The update will include revised population forecasts.*

Barriers

Vacant/Abandoned Homes: The study reports that there are over 4,000 vacant units in the City. Over 1,200 of these units are in a category that includes abandoned, boarded up, and other unsuitable empty housing units. This number increased 18% from 1990 to 2000. Of these, 42% are in the Southeast, 28% are in the Southwest, 20% are in the Northwest and 9% are in the Northeast. Many of these vacant homes have not been dealt with because of the ordeal of acquiring the properties and the cost of demolition and/or rehabilitation.

Staff Commentary:

- *The West State Street and Kishwaukee Street Corridor improvements have removed several visible vacant/abandoned homes.*
- *Vacant and abandoned homes still remain in each planning subarea*
- *City Council recently approved a new metric to identify vacant and abandoned homes for demolition. The number of homes scheduled for demolition will increase in 2014.*

Rehabilitation: Housing in Rockford's central city is getting older. Rehabilitation of older homes can be quite difficult and costly. Making rehabilitation an easier and less costly process should be a goal of the City. The only solution for some of these homes may be demolition, however, this could negatively affect a neighborhood unless infill strategies are created and implemented along with demolition. Some homes in poor condition may have an opportunity for rehabilitation, but it can be time consuming and quite costly. Lead abatement, zoning, code compliance and historic preservation can make the rehabilitation process not cost effective.

Staff Commentary:

- *The 2008 Zoning Ordinance incorporates some changes to improve opportunities for rehabilitation*

Affordable Housing: In the City of Rockford, 34% of renters and 19% of homeowners are experiencing a cost burden. This would indicate that there is a shortage of good affordable housing in the City. Barriers to creating affordable housing include lead, homeowners insurance, cost estimating, financing layers, flood insurance, security during rehab/construction, asbestos, taxes, acquisition, financing through an array of programs and building codes. While several subdivisions of "affordable" homes have been built, they are still beyond the means of many households.

Staff Commentary:

- *Figures will be updated*

Goals and Objectives

1. Improve current housing stock:

- Encourage and facilitate collaboration and coordination among planning, housing and code enforcement trade associations and interest groups.
- Meet with township and County assessors to find ways to resolve financial roadblocks encountered by those interested in redevelopment of older buildings caused by low assessments since mortgage financing is typically offered at a percentage of real estate value.
- Work with the State of Illinois to find ways to minimize the hazards of lead paint while at the same time ensuring financial feasibility of rehabilitation of our older housing stock.
- Ensure that transportation improvements foster and support the revitalization of existing neighborhoods.
- De-densify neighborhoods where appropriate.
- Engage neighborhoods in planning for revitalization.
- Encourage housing strategies to revitalize older neighborhoods while taking steps to minimize displacement of existing businesses and residents. In creating these strategies, the City must find a way to evaluate the potential impact of expenditure of its limited financial resources. For instance, spending \$300,000 to rehab 3 homes scattered across the City may not have as much positive impact as spending \$300,000 to rehab 3 homes in a single neighborhood.

2. Address vacant units.

- Support the removal of derelict vacant housing units (1,000 units recommended by the study) provided:
 - There are criteria for deciding which structures will be targeted for demolition.
 - There is a strategy for how the units to be removed are chosen, when they will be removed, and what will replace them.
 - There is consideration of how it will affect the surrounding neighborhood and residents.
 - The potential loss of Rockford's historic character is considered including the affects on potential historic districts and landmarks.
 - There are sufficient funds/resources to remove the unit and replace it with a use that is valuable to the City and improves the surrounding environment. For example: If a derelict abandoned home is removed and replaced with lawn, the lawn must be maintained by the City. A possible solution to this problem would be to sell the parcel to neighboring homes and it would then become their responsibility to maintain.

- Promote infill housing strategies that result in new housing that is compatible with existing housing stock. New housing should not only have good immediate utility, it should also represent a long-term value added investment to the neighborhood. As part of this effort, the City will evaluate how the Zoning Ordinance impacts redevelopment in older areas, amending the ordinance where necessary facilitate such redevelopment.

3. Build new housing that is an asset to the City.

- Encourage residential construction that is consistent with the principles of smart growth, and that is energy efficient and does not place undue demands on the natural environment
- Stimulate business involvement in addressing the shortage of attainable workforce housing.
- Encourage more affluent new developments to capture those moving elsewhere in Winnebago County or to Boone County.
- Develop and maintain a comprehensive housing plan which goes beyond the scope of the City's latest Consolidated Plan by
 - Analyzing needs for all types and price ranges of housing;
 - Evaluating the quality of the existing housing supply by type, price range, tenure and location, including that of the new "affordable" subdivision referred to above;
 - Recommending ways to improve the quality of where we live; for example, addressing the need for open space in the new affordable subdivisions; and
 - Recommending specific measures to address any gaps in the housing supply that may be identified as a result.
- Encourage and promote creation of new market-rate housing in the downtown area.

4. Provide adequate special needs housing.

- Encourage and entice Active Adult Retirement Community and Continued Care Retirement Community developments.
- Work to ease barriers to affordable housing.
 - Try to find new funding sources that do not have strict code requirements.
 - Promote solutions to ease process of vacant housing acquisition and demolition.
- Work with local service providers to strengthen Rockford's support system for the homeless.

Current Strategies, Programs, and Activities

The City of Rockford's "Consolidated Strategy & Plan Submission for Fiscal Years 2000-2005 for Housing and Community Development Programs" is included by reference as part of the 2020 Plan. This outlines how the City plans to spend CDBG, Home Investment Partnership and Emergency Shelter Grant funds through 2005. The City gives as its mission statement in the Consolidated Plan:

"To develop quality programs and projects that help meet the needs of low/moderate income individuals and neighborhoods; foster community-wide partnerships; and build diverse, viable neighborhoods using the strengths of residents."

The Plan's primary goal is "To build viable, diverse, and self-sustaining neighborhoods within the City of Rockford, with special emphasis on the existing Community Development neighborhood strategy areas [of South Main, Mulberry Forest, St. Paul's Place, and the 7th Street TIF area] by concentrating efforts and resources." It includes a series of objectives and action steps in the areas of housing and economic development to enable Rockford to accomplish this. These include:

- **Affordable housing:** Increasing the supply of standard affordable housing Citywide or within the CDBG target area; removing hazardous conditions such as lead-based paint and other barriers from the affordable housing supply Citywide; reducing the barriers for lower-income persons to buy their own homes and increasing the incidence of home ownership for low-income people; reducing the infrastructure that supports crime and blight in lower income neighborhoods; and increasing lower income persons' awareness of affordable housing options and their housing rights
- **Partnerships:** Helping to build the capacity of local non-profits, boards, coalitions, etc. which help meet the special needs of lower-income people; increasing the financial resources available for affordable housing and lower-income neighborhood-based services which complement and enhance the City's entitlement program.
- **Economic development:** Reversing economic disinvestment in distressed areas of Rockford and fostering more self-sufficient neighborhoods capable of meeting their own employment needs and essential goods and services; creating or attracting job opportunities for low/moderate-income persons; retaining or expanding existing businesses located in or servicing low/moderate-income areas; attracting businesses and development to low/moderate-income areas; and creating business ownership opportunities for low/moderate-income residents, especially minorities and women.
- **Homeless:** Facilitating creation of a continuum of care system for homeless persons in or entering our community.

The City works to achieve these goals through a variety of programs and services. In the area of housing, the City of Rockford provides:

- Loans and grants to homeowners for improvements needed to bring their property into compliance with all local building codes;
- Grants and loans for new owners to buy and repair boarded, vacant or abandoned properties;

- Assistance for new homeowners in making down payments and paying closing costs; and
- Grants for the rehabilitation of rental units.

Staff Commentary:

- *The plan update will include more recent programs offered by the City.*

For participants in these programs, the City provides both construction and financial counseling to aid them in finding the best ways to pay for and complete their projects. While we anticipate that the details of some of these programs may change over the next 20 years, the basic thrust of making decent housing affordable for lower-income families will remain.

Plan Element 7:

Economic Development Strategy

The City of Rockford is committed to strengthening its economic development and closely related programs through multiple and related efforts. City initiatives will be coordinated with State DCEO (Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity) and regional Rockford Area Council of 100 Initiatives to comprise a multifaceted action plan for Economic Development.

Staff Commentary:

- *The Council of 100 is now called the Rockford Area Economic Development Council*

Statewide and Regional Initiatives

Illinois DCEO will implement its “Opportunity Returns” program focusing on the following:

- Infrastructure projects—specifically transportation and sewer and water projects
- Manufacturing modernization, including incentives programs to small and mid-sized businesses to improve competitiveness and efficiencies
- Workforce development initiatives, especially those that result in job creation
- Brownfield redevelopment and remediation
- Creative use of existing program funding, such as the Enterprise Zone, Community Development Assistance and the Economic Development for a Growing Economy programs

Staff Commentary:

- *River Edge Zone and Tax Increment Financing Districts are additional funding sources available at the local level.*

The Rockford Area Council of 100 adopted a new mission statement in April 2004 which states, “The Mission of the Council of 100 is to retain and recruit employers to grow quality jobs.” The Council has made a commitment to help create 5,000 jobs during the next three years. Additionally, it has identified four strategic objectives in their Draft 2004-2006 Prospectus. These four strategic objectives are as follows:

- **Business Recruitment**, including pro-actively identifying sites and buildings that are market ready, updating their target-industry focus to analyze opportunities associated with logistics and distribution, developing a higher profile within the Chicagoland area, and a strengthened marketing program, to mention a few.
- **Business Expansion**, including identifying and developing client relationships with existing enterprises, coordinating financial programs and incentives such as tax abatements and credits, promoting local customer-supplier relationships to replace imports and develop new markets, and participating in networks of technology companies and entrepreneurs.
- **Trade Development**, including providing international trade clients and potential clients with valuable tools for conducting international trade and finding new markets, benchmarking with other economic development organizations and trade associations and implementing “best practices” in international trade

development, maintaining a comprehensive manufacturing database, and forming technology industry/research alliances to obtain the latest technology.

- **Regional Leadership**, including advocating for federal and state roadway funding for the region, supporting the aspirations of Rockford and Belvidere for Metra Service to Chicago, and communicating the needs and challenges of primary employers to local area governments, and others

Staff Commentary:

- *The plan update will incorporate the most current RAEDC Strategic Objectives*

City of Rockford Initiatives

1. Expand Rockford's employment base

The City of Rockford will be more aggressive in coordinating efforts with the Council of 100 and other economic development organizations in the area to achieve the goal of retaining and recruiting employers who will grow quality jobs in the Rockford area. This will include a three-pronged approach:

- Implementation of an aggressive program of business retention and expansion for primary employers of all types and sizes. The focus will be on existing primary employers and entrepreneurial ventures that have potential to become part of the region's economic base.
- Work with the Council of 100 in creating a recruitment team that will act as a sales force for the Rockford region in order to attract new businesses and investment, targeting new primary employers that will diversify and strengthen our economic base.
- Work with the Council of 100 and others to create a positive business climate in the region.

2. Implement the Tax Increment Finance Districts (TIFs) within the Rockford Global Trade Park Industrial Redevelopment Planning Area

The City of Rockford approved the Redevelopment Planning Area in early 2004 and has begun efforts to recruit new employers and create the first of what could be several TIF Districts within the Redevelopment Planning Area surrounding the Greater Rockford Airport. One of the key elements to the development of a future TIF or TIFs is the need for major improvements to the sanitary sewer system, especially the development of a Regional Pumping Station and Force Main to replace the several smaller pumping stations near 11th Street. Transportation system improvements, including the construction of a new Beltline Road, are also critical to realize the full development potential of this prime location for trade-related industry. Land assembly and potential land use conflicts are also challenges, but they are outweighed by the fact that this geographic location is recognized as the prime location in the Region for this type of economic development activity, specifically global trade. This area will be a primary focus of the City in its efforts to increase the number of quality jobs in the community.

Staff Commentary:

- *The plan update will incorporate the creation of Global Trade Parks and projected developed and implemented since its creation*
- *PCI (Anderson Packaging) and BE Aerospace are two examples of most recent project expansions.*

3. Protect Rockford's Economic Base / Financial Resources

The City of Rockford must focus on more than job creation and retention and strengthening the region's position. It must also provide for its own economic future and ability to provide and improve City services. One way in which a city provides for its future, and the future of its citizens, is to ensure that its tax base will continue to grow. The reason for this is simple — the more taxpayers there are, the less each one has to pay. If, on the other hand, the number of taxpayers remains static and/or the value of real estate does not increase, then the amount each one pays will increase over time simply through the effect of inflation. The property tax and sales tax are the City's primary revenue sources, accounting for % of its total revenues.

For many years, the City of Rockford has worked hard to protect and enhance its economic base. Using a multifaceted approach, it has looked for ways to protect, expand and diversify its employment base. Implementation tools include active development, economic development and housing programs within city government, carried out in close cooperation with the private sector, as well as the annexation program that has been in place since 1984. The last has been especially important in strengthening the City's retail sales tax base, enabling Rockford to accommodate the shift to the "big box" stores within the city limits. Loss of this type of retail to other jurisdictions, as was the case with the regional shopping malls, would have been devastating to the City's retail sales tax base.

Though industry remains the heart of Rockford's economy, the service sector has come to play an increasingly important role in the past 20 years. In 1980, 20% of Rockford's workforce was employed in the service sector; by 2000, this had risen to 43%. Retail constitutes a significant portion of this. While the retail portion of our economic base is healthy, we cannot take its future well-being for granted. To ensure that it continues, the City should:

- Develop a process for dealing with vacant "big boxes" or franchise establishments as they occur. Over the course of the next 15-20 years, retail marketing will inevitably change to something else. As this occurs, Rockford needs to be prepared to deal with the immediate consequences, i.e., vacant stores. While an individual vacancy may not have a devastating effect, it would not take many more than that, especially of something the size of Wal-Mart or Lowe's, to seriously impact the viability of a commercial area. An important first step in this process is to carefully monitor big box and other retail cycles to be ready to step in in a timely fashion.
- Continue the Small Business Loan and similar programs to encourage business start-ups.
- Take steps to secure the "second store" or the next store for major retailers within the City of Rockford. If everything goes as planned, the City of Rockford will have three of four Wal-Marts in the region with the fourth being in Belvidere. Kohl's, Target and Home Depot have all opened a second store in Machesney Park. Both Menard's stores are located outside the City.

Staff Commentary:

- *The City now has three (3) of five (5) within the region, with another stop opening in the Village of Rockton, IL*
- Encourage the continuous upgrading and active marketing of existing retail centers.

- Promote new development that produces a net revenue gain for the City, taking into account public infrastructure and public service costs
- Establish basic criteria that projects must meet in order to receive any type of incentive from the City. For example, one that was mentioned frequently during public input meetings on this plan is that the project must create jobs that pay a living wage. Others were to limit the use of incentives to areas where development is not likely to occur without them, and tying incentives to an agreement in which the recipient agrees to stay at that location for a specified time.
- Systematically plan for the redevelopment of the community's older commercial areas *before* they become more of a negative than a positive. Each of these areas is unique, deserving its own planning effort. Since not all of these areas developed during the same time period, the challenges they present will differ. For example, the 1920s and '30s-era buildings at Main and Auburn may require a different approach than the 1960s-era development near East State and Fairview. In any of these cases, redevelopment may not always result in new commercial life in an area; it may result in a change in use, not unlike what is taking place downtown. The important fact is that it be a viable use and one that is a positive for the neighborhood. Rockford Plaza at 20th and Charles Streets is a prime example of what can occur. In the 1990s, it was transformed from a moribund and fragmented strip mall to the active center it is today, combining offices, a medical clinic and retail. As can be seen from the following list, several areas fall into this category, making the first task one of determining priorities among them:
 - 5 Points;
 - State Street west of downtown;
 - North Main and Auburn;
 - Portions of 11th Street;
 - Portions of Kishwaukee Street;
 - Victorian Village;
 - Broadway;
 - North Main and West Riverside;
 - Auburn Street;
 - Kilburn Avenue;
 - East State Street from Fairview Avenue to Rockford College; and
 - Highcrest Center.

For these commercial areas and similar areas, the city should promote development and redevelopment for mixed uses that produce a net revenue gain for the City. This same recommendation holds true for targeted infill areas.

- Work to redevelop and/or fill vacant office space already existing within Rockford before building new office development on the fringe.
- **Get signs under control.** Nothing detracts from a commercial area like a sea of competing signs. Things have improved substantially since mobile signs were banned in Rockford in 1993, and they should improve even more in the near future with implementation of the billboard ordinance passed in 2002. What remains is to address the visual clutter that occurs along major commercial corridors. Rockford has more than one location where business signs are so tightly spaced it is virtually impossible for someone

driving by to be able to read more than a tiny fraction of them. This becomes self-defeating for the businesses involved and presents a less-than-appealing face to driving public.

- In addition, the city should consider the following revenue-related recommendations:
 - develop a process to evaluate revenue production and tax burden on different types of taxpayers resulting from various combinations of taxes and fees
 - identify cities that are Rockford's chief competitors for development and conduct an annual survey of their tax rates and fees for an annual report and evaluation

Revenue is one side of the financial equation while expenditure is the other side. In recent years, the City has had sales tax revenues fall short of expectations and has had to lay off staff and make other cuts to balance the budget. Relating to the expenditure side of the equation, the City should:

- Continue to identify more efficient and more effective ways to deliver city services
- Constantly review staffing levels in light of changing workloads

4. Protect Rockford's Physical Resources

During this time, the City has not lost sight of what has historically been the heart of its economy — industry. In 1991, the Department of Community Development completed a Strategic Plan for Industrial Development. This had two primary purposes — to assemble relevant infrastructure information about all land within Rockford's ultimate annexation area that had been proposed for industrial development; and to identify sites with the highest potential for development, rating them and identifying the basis for incentive packages that would facilitate industrial development. As a result, the Industrial Incentives Program was created, resulting in \$100,000 being set aside annually for public improvements that would lead to new industrial construction. The funds were awarded on a competitive basis over the 10-year life of the program. The data in the Strategic Plan were used in determining appropriate areas for industrial development in the 2020 Plan, and for identifying potential industrial recovery TIFs. The City should continue with the following efforts:

- With the Council of 100, take steps to ensure an adequate supply of land for base employment development for the production of export goods and services, including an inventory of parcels suitable for industrial development as well as vacant industrial structures after the WinGIS is fully operational.
- Maintain adequate capacities in public utilities to accommodate planned industrial development, including a Capital Improvements Plan to include sanitary sewer as well as the City's utilities and services
- Extend public utilities and transportation facilities into all areas planned for base employment use, including appropriate sizing of water and sewer lines to serve expected needs, coordinating with the Reclamation District
- Seek state and federal economic development funds to provide these utilities for future base employment

- Develop and maintain the capacity of the transportation system to further attract these industrial developments and handle traffic demands, working with the Illinois Department of Transportation and the Winnebago County Highway Department.
- Promote the development of transportation-related goods and services as a special focus of Rockford's economic base, strengthened by the Greater Rockford Airport and the Union Pacific Railroad's "Global III" in Rochelle.

Staff Commentary:

- *This section requires significant update.*

5. Address Rockford's Brownfields

One issue that crosses over between concern for the natural environment and economic development concerns is "brownfields." These are abandoned, idle or underused industrial and commercial facilities where there is real or perceived environmental contamination. Several issues are involved in evaluating the impacts of brownfields. Some of the major ones include:

- **Environmental justice:** Since brownfields are usually in the older parts of cities, minorities and lower-income persons are more likely to be impacted by them than are non-minorities and middle- and upper-income persons.
- **Public health and safety:** The level of contamination in any particular brownfield can run the gamut from negligible to a genuine threat. The largest hurdle in many cases is determining what that threat truly is, and then deciding how best to handle it in light of proposed use of the site and surrounding uses. Other related issues can arise when brownfield properties are abandoned, such as increased crime and/or dumping on these sites.
- **Financing:** Cleanup costs are generally the biggest obstacle to redevelopment of older industrial areas. There is the actual cost itself, frequently compounded by the lack of significant public assistance in dealing with these costs. In comparison, "greenfields" development is frequently the recipient of public infrastructure investment, giving it an even greater advantage over brownfields development.
- **Public policy:** When it comes to brownfields, we cannot afford to walk away from or minimize the public infrastructure that's already in place – streets, storm sewer, sanitary sewer, water – nor can the utilities (gas, electricity, phone). Brownfield sites also tend to be closer to emergency services (police, fire, ambulance) and, therefore, cost less to serve than greenfield sites. Brownfield sites are often near (or in) neighborhoods that can provide workers, as compared to greenfield sites where everyone drives. These are all strong public policy reasons to support brownfield redevelopment; unfortunately, the fear of liability and the unknown create a climate that discourages their redevelopment. A lot of progress has been made on this front, but it is still a major obstacle.
- **Liability:** Here we come to the crux of the matter. The prospect of liability for cleanup of a site frequently frightens off potential buyers and/or developers of brownfields sites. By law, you and maybe even your banker are liable for the entire cost of cleaning up the site, even if the problem was created years before you had anything to do with the site.

Staff Commentary:

- *This section requires significant update.*
- *Brownfield funding increased amount and use since 2004*
- *The U.S. Federal Courthouse and the Winnebago County Criminal Justice facility utilized brownfield funding*
- *Federal and State EPA fund availability is declining and becoming more competitive*

In dealing with the issue of brownfields, the City of Rockford needs to continue to be proactive and search for ways to simplify the redevelopment process for these sites. Some important steps have already been taken. The City received a \$200,000 Brownfields Assessment Pilot Program grant from the USEPA in late 1999. This is being used to identify Enterprise Zone brownfield properties that appear to have redevelopment/reuse potential. USEPA also awarded Rockford a \$500,000 Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund Grant to help finance the cleanup of brownfield sites in the Enterprise Zone that are also in IEPA's Voluntary Cleanup Program. In late 2003, the City received a \$400,000 Brownfields Assessment Grant for evaluation and testing of sites within Barber Colman Village, the Criminal Justice Center site, and the Harrison Avenue section of the IL-251 corridor. To continue to move forward, the City should carry out the following work:

- **Within the Superfund Area:** Inventory and evaluate the current and planned future uses of industrial and nonindustrial areas to establish a solid data base, then develop a detailed plan for the future development or redevelopment of the Superfund Area with owner and resident input. At the same time, continue to pursue innovative approaches to handling the liability issue such as the proposed special service tax.
- **Outside the Superfund Area:** Identify the types of properties that would be considered brownfields and the problems associated with them; inventory major brownfields sites (2.5 acres or more) with their current and planned uses. Develop a plan of action of what the City and other government bodies can do to alleviate the negatives, and of what the private sector can do.

Staff Commentary:

- *All brownfield sites were inventoried as part of the RMAP Sustainability Plan*
- **For all brownfields sites:** Develop an information program to educate owners of brownfields on the implications of brownfield status for their property, on potential uses of their property, on how their property can be adapted for those uses, and on recently enacted legislation that expands and extends federal tax credits for cleanup costs. Continue to pursue innovative approaches to the problem, such as the special service area, tax increment financing areas, USEPA Brownfield Cleanup Grants, business development districts, and Industrial Jobs Recovery Act districts (i.e., industrial TIFs). And finally, review City building, zoning and subdivision regulations to eliminate any possible delays and bottlenecks that adversely affect redevelopment of industrial sites. One possibility might be to allow increased density to offset the increased costs of developing a brownfield site.

There will always be cases where the owner of a brownfield site allows it to deteriorate and/or refuses to maintain or improve it. These types of cases will have to be dealt with through aggressive code enforcement by the City.

6. Strengthen the Role of Downtown

When the original Year 2000 Plan was written, downtown Rockford had been on the decline for some time. Little mention was made of downtown in the Year 2000 Plan other than a need to revitalize it as a commercial center. Unfortunately, its role as the area's retail center had already pretty much passed it by. The last of the major stores, J. C. Penney, closed in 1980, and there was very little in the way of small retail establishments left. The decline continued for a few more years to the point where downtown was virtually deserted, or at least gave the appearance of being so.

Since that time, Rockford's downtown has established itself as the area's governmental, legal, and entertainment center. It has a thriving arts community, strong commitments from both City and County governments in terms of renovation of office space for their respective staffs, development of a first class festival park on the riverfront in Davis Park, and major entertainment facilities such as the MetroCentre, NAT, the Coronado Theatre and the Midway Theatre. Several buildings have been redeveloped on both sides of the river, primarily for office use but also for retail businesses, residences and artists' studios. Downtown has become the home of several special events, the prime ones being Fourth of July, On the Waterfront and First Night.

Staff Commentary:

- *The downtown area has experienced significant public and private sector investment since 2004*
- *Updates to special events and organizations will be included in the update*

The common thread running through all these efforts is the recognition by both the public and private sectors that if Rockford is to be a first class city, it must have a viable downtown. (See Appendix E for goals and policies from various downtown plans done in the 1980s and '90s to see how we have done in implementing these plans.) Rockford's perception by those outside the community is frequently colored by their perception of its downtown. The stronger it is, the stronger the community as a whole will be viewed, and vice versa. Based on research done in Kansas City, the strength of a city's downtown impacts on the economic strength of the community as a whole. They found that:

- Those cities with faster-rising downtown populations enjoyed, on average, faster-rising home values across the metropolitan area.
- Those with stronger job growth downtown showed, in most cases, stronger area wide job growth and population growth.
- And those with better downtown job growth also tended to have better metropolitan economic growth.

[Taken from the *Kansas City Star*, September 22, 2002.]

In addition, downtowns are normally a key element of each city's unique identity. Every growing mid-size city has commercial strips similar to East State Street east of Alpine Road, frequently with the same stores and restaurants; and all have burgeoning residential subdivisions on the fringe like those that have sprung up around Rockford. However, each city's downtown is unique and as such needs to be the focus of continuing efforts to maintain an acceptable level of activity. Two steps that can be taken to protect downtown are to (a) enhance its unique appearance through preservation of its original architecture and (b) improve the ability of visitors and new residents to find their way around downtown through improved delineation of corridors and provision of unified signage.

We anticipate that downtown Rockford will continue its current role as a center for the activities mentioned above — government, the law, and entertainment. To make the next step up, downtown must become a truly 24-hour

center. This translates into a need for additional market-rate housing downtown, a need that is recognized in this plan with the inclusion of residential uses on both sides of downtown and a need that was addressed in the 1993 "Downtown Rockford Market Rate Housing Study" prepared for the Rockford Central Area Corporation. Part of the challenge in providing new downtown housing is to create a truly mixed community, not a monoculture "yuppiedom" designed for one small part of the community.

It is highly unlikely that downtown will ever return to its place as the area's regional shopping center, at least in the foreseeable future. However, this fact should not blind us to downtown's other possibilities, possibilities that give downtown just as vital a place in the community as shopping. In pursuing these possibilities, the City and other members of the downtown community should pursue the following objectives:

- **Residential Development: Increase the amount and variety of downtown housing.** The development of a variety of housing types (townhouse, multi-unit apartments, loft apartments, etc.) can play a part in achieving an expanded and diverse downtown population.
- **Downtown Entertainment: Expand the number and variety of destination entertainment venues in the downtown.** Downtown should be the first choice location for one-of-a-kind cultural and entertainment venues. Sites such as the Coronado Theatre, the MetroCentre, New American Theater, the Rockford Art Museum and Davis Memorial Festival Park bring visitors who increase weekday and weekend activity throughout downtown. Other venues, such as the growing number of non-franchise restaurants, contribute to the vibrancy of nightlife and should also be encouraged.
- **Balanced Transportation: Provide attractive and efficient options for travel within downtown.** Downtown should be a place where it is easy to move around and where major destinations are easily accessible. Parking should be easy to find and close to major destinations; transit should connect destinations; and information on the availability of parking and transit, and the location of major destinations should be plentiful.
- **Quality of the Pedestrian Realm: Make walking attractive, easier and convenient.** One of the major objectives of the Bullseye! Plan from 1986 was to make downtown pedestrian friendly. This remains a primary objective. The pedestrian environment in downtown should be welcoming, offering landscaping, adequate lighting, safe and clearly defined crosswalks, a minimum of blank, monolithic walls and plentiful, easy to understand directional signs.
- **Downtown's Unique Assets: Take maximum advantage of the special features found downtown.** The Rock River has special appeal for a wide range of activities; new public and private development should work to amplify that appeal. Downtown's rich architectural heritage should be protected, maintained and enhanced with new high-quality development. To accomplish this, the City must actively encourage/pursue the redevelopment of historic properties such as the Chick House at the south end of the Mall while at the same time creating basic design guidelines for new construction. It must also work to eliminate unimproved lots such as the one that has existed at the corner of State and Church Streets for several years. At the very least, properties such as this should be acquired by the City and land banked as green space until a new use can be found for them.

- **Downtown's Neighborhoods:** An important element in downtown's future success is the state of the neighborhoods that surround it. The City is already engaged in an intensive planning effort centered on the design and construction of a new Morgan Street bridge. That plan is intended to address transportation, housing, recreational, historical and urban renewal efforts in order to continue the revitalization of this area and integrate it as a vital component of the downtown experience. The area lying between the Rock River and South Main Street from Morgan Street to downtown includes the area where Rockford was founded, and is now home to a vibrant and growing Hispanic business district. Developing a plan for this area will be instrumental in enhancing and sustaining not only a renewed South Main district, but also downtown.
- **Everyone's Neighborhood:** What all of this boils down to is that downtown is everybody's neighborhood. If it is to function as our cultural and community center, we need to give it the attention it deserves. As part of that, the City needs to have staff dedicated solely to the maintenance and upkeep of downtown. Just as regular maintenance is important to the public's perception of any other public space, is it a shopping center or a sports facility or a theater, it is a key element in the continued viability of our downtown.

The success of these efforts, however, will not rest solely with the City of Rockford. Members of the private sector and other governmental bodies located downtown bear an equal responsibility to make our downtown one we can all be proud of.

Staff Commentary:

- *There is significant progress related to public, private and public-private partnerships helping to achieve the goals listed above.*

7. Enhance the Role of the Riverfront

As was mentioned in the first section of this plan, Rockford's Riverfront has assumed a role of prime importance in the community. With this in mind, we have made a concerted effort with this 2020 Plan to protect as much riverfront as possible, guaranteeing the greatest degree of public access possible. In some areas, this results in just a narrow band of proposed public acquisition areas such as in the area south of Harrison Avenue; in some, just a pathway, such as the Riverside Boulevard area; and in some, major acquisitions, such as those proposed along the Kishwaukee River near the Airport. In all cases, the intent is to make the most of an irreplaceable asset.

In addition to the geographical areas along the river proposed for acquisition, this plan endorses continued implementation of the policies, goals and objectives of the three plans mentioned earlier on pages 4 and 5. These provide a much more detailed framework for protection and wise use of the Rock River corridor as it traverses Rockford. Similar detailed planning efforts need to be directed towards the city's other riverfront area along the Kishwaukee River in conjunction with the Greater Rockford Airport, the Rockford Park District, the Winnebago County Forest Preserve District and the Rockford Area Transportation Study. At the same time this is done, the Rock River plans should be reevaluated in light of what's occurred in the 15 years since they were adopted. .

Specific recommendations include the following:

- The City should evaluate all riverfront proposals for compliance with the principles contained in earlier plans until updated plans are prepared. The goals and objectives for those earlier plans are contained in Appendix F. Current proposals include several components of the River District Framework Plan as well as the Barber Colman Village Redevelopment Concept Plan.

- More specifically, the City should standardize river setbacks in all zoning districts so that they match what is in the C-4 District as well as a landscaping requirement.
- The City should make every effort to convince property owners to beautify existing riverfront development.

Within this plan, we have provided ample area for industrial, commercial and office development to expand within Rockford's planning area. The goal is to provide places for people to work throughout the community, with good transportation access. Taking this in conjunction with a continuation of the economic development policies already in place will help to ensure the continued economic health of the City of Rockford and of its citizens.

Another key to Rockford's continued vitality is the economic health of the surrounding area. While in some ways we must view ourselves as an island — in protecting our sales tax base, for example — we must in general view ourselves as part of a region. As such, we need to ensure as much as possible that Rockford's plans for the future are in sync with those of the surrounding area. This has been done for many years in the transportation arena through RATS. This approach needs to be expanded to other aspects of land use planning to ensure a good transition from Rockford to neighboring communities, and to ensure the economic health of all of us.

Staff Commentary:

- *The Indoor Sports Complex, Amerock (Ziock) Hotel & Conference Center redevelopment, Prairie Street Brewhouse, and the 300 & 400 E. State Street blocks are examples of current activities within the downtown area.*

Plan Element 8:

Neighborhoods

Our neighborhoods are the building blocks of our city. They provide a sense of place and historic foundation that is not found in other nearby communities. Some of our neighborhoods are flourishing while others are struggling. Our ultimate goal is for all City residents to live in neighborhoods that are safe, clean and, to the greatest extent possible, cohesive. When we achieve this goal, all Rockford residents should be living in neighborhoods that are either stable or improving; none should be in neighborhoods facing serious decline. In trying to improve the state of our neighborhoods, the City is keeping the following five requirements for successful neighborhood revitalization in mind:

Staff Commentary:

- *The housing crisis of 2008-2013, and resulting foreclosures, have impacted most, if not all, neighborhoods.*
- *Neighborhoods in decline prior to 2008 have been impacted the most*

- **Commitment:** Comprehensive revitalization is a complicated and difficult process, especially in very troubled neighborhoods. It typically takes longer than one or even two political cycles to see initial results. Consequently, community and political leaders must have a strong commitment to comprehensive neighborhood revitalization for these efforts to have a realistic chance of success.
- **Communication:** For truly comprehensive revitalization to occur there must be open and ongoing communication both among City departments and between the lead agency (the Department of Community Development) and the private sector, neighborhood residents, and organizations. The City must take the lead in both providing information and soliciting input from residents and businesses within a neighborhood.

Staff Commentary:

- *The Rockford Housing Authority and Winnebago County Housing Authority have increased their participation in neighborhood revitalization efforts*

- **Coordination** By its very nature, successful comprehensive neighborhood revitalization demands careful coordination. Departments and agencies that do not ordinarily work together must communicate and coordinate their work plans. For example, it may be necessary to coordinate the efforts of agencies involved in making physical improvements, such as Public Works, with those of departments responsible for providing services for a plan to be most effective. At a minimum, preparation and implementation of neighborhood plans will require the coordinated efforts of staff from the Building, Community Development, Fire, Human Services, Police and Public Works Departments. In addition, there may be a need to involve staff from other jurisdictions, such as the Winnebago County Health Department and the Rockford School District.
- **Flexibility:** When working with established programs and resources, the City must be willing to alter rules or requirements to use programs more effectively in particular situations. For example, the City has never had a program to assist homeowners in simply paving gravel driveways (a requirement of the Zoning Ordinance).

There may be some instances where this would be well worth the expense in a neighborhood where several homes have gravel drives but the housing stock is otherwise in good condition.

- **Neighborhood Organizations:** Among the more difficult issues associated with comprehensive neighborhood revitalization is how to ensure the presence of strong, informed, self-sustaining neighborhood organizations. These groups are probably the best source of input from residents to design and implement a plan that responds to their needs. However, establishing and strengthening such organizations is difficult, especially in low- and moderate-income neighborhoods that face many other challenges. Although the City can support these groups in various ways, the process for revitalization is very labor intensive and the desire for organization and continued participation must ultimately lie with the neighborhood residents

Although Rockford has a broad sense of what a neighborhood is, 'Rockford neighborhood' does not have a clear definition. Known neighborhoods have varying boundaries depending on what organization is contacted. And there are gaps in the City with no neighborhood identification at all. Historic districts, schools, land use, roads and political districts all affect how a neighborhood boundary is perceived. This inconsistency in boundaries can inhibit communication and resource sharing between organizations working to improve neighborhoods. While these organizations are working to better the communities they serve, the neighborhoods, and the City as a whole, could be better served if there a more uniform framework for communication among these organizations. This includes Neighborhood Network, individual neighborhood organizations, support organizations, schools and the City. A first step in opening the lines of communication could be a round table discussion. This would allow all organizations to sit down together and talk about what a Rockford neighborhood is, what resources each organization has, and how the organizations can support each other as well as the neighborhoods they serve.

Staff Commentary:

- *Vital Signs, implemented through RMAP in 2013, is an important source of data for neighborhood and city-wide planning*
- *In 2010, priorities shifted to corridor development planning*
- *Engaging neighborhood ward and associations partners is a goal of the CED and entire City*
- *The City completed two (2) neighborhood plans and three (3) corridor plans since the 2004 plan adoption.*
- *The Rockford Housing Authority developed a Neighborhood Transformation plan for the Ellis Heights Neighborhood (document finalized in 2014)*
- *Neighborhood planning can play a significant role in linking Social, Economy and Environmental strategies to people.*

Conservation Plan for Rockford Neighborhoods

Another way to facilitate communication and create consensus would be to create a Conservation Plan for Rockford Neighborhoods. This citywide plan would be a combination of a comprehensive and strategic plan — a plan for creating neighborhood plans, if you will. It would set initial guidelines for what is to be explored more deeply in individual neighborhood plans and establish general principles for all neighborhoods to work from without having to wait for an individual neighborhood plan to be created. It would also shorten the neighborhood planning process by accomplishing some tasks initially. Hopefully, this would also aide organized neighborhoods in achieving their goals. Elements that could be covered in the Conservation Plan for Rockford Neighborhoods include, but are not limited to:

1. A definition of each neighborhood and clear, agreed-on boundaries.

A goal of this portion of the plan should be to determine neighborhood boundaries that can be used by all organizations as they work with individual neighborhoods. This does not mean that neighborhood organizations have to take on these boundaries or that funding and programs have to follow these boundaries. The purpose is to facilitate information sharing between groups. Factors that can be used to determine neighborhood boundaries include, but are not limited to:

- Neighborhood/community organizations
- Style, type, age and other characteristics of structures
- Historic significance
- Historic settlement (when, what ethnic groups, how)
- Subdivisions
- Transportation elements (historical and current)
- Residents' understanding of neighborhood boundaries
- School districts
- City understandings of neighborhood boundaries
- Organization understandings of neighborhood boundaries

2. Analysis of the current state and trends of all neighborhoods.

Create a neighborhood "EKG" — a set of indicators showing how each neighborhood stacks up against the City as a whole. These indicators will be selected primarily but not exclusively from the Census. The types of questions that the EKG will answer about each neighborhood? Is its homeownership rate higher or lower than the City, how does the educational attainment of its residents stack up, and so forth. This information can use GIS and the Internet in the creation and displaying of the neighborhood EKG.

3. Identification of what should be preserved, added, removed or kept out for each neighborhood.

This would be a "mini framework plan" for each neighborhood. Putting out general guidelines for neighborhoods, still speaking generally. For example, in XYZ neighborhood we want to preserve the character and remove crime. Later, the neighborhood plan would say specifics such as what the character is and how to preserve it and what are the actual problems with crime and how do we deal with it? The neighborhood EKG, city staff, community organizations and citizen input would identify what these elements are.

4. Identification of action steps by types of neighborhoods.

Using the neighborhood EKG, neighborhoods could be classified (i.e., deteriorating, fair, stable, etc.) and action steps for each type of neighborhood created. Deteriorating neighborhoods are first priority for neighborhood plans; stable neighborhoods should maintain this status by doing the following things, and so on. This would allow some direction and guidance for neighborhood organizations and residents.

5. Steps for implementation.

Assign responsibility for implementing each action step and a time frame for when it should be completed.

7. Process for evaluation of the plan.

The Neighborhood Conservation Plan would not initiate specific programs, but action steps could be reviewed for progress. The neighborhood EKG could possibly be used as an evaluation tool as well. If benchmarks are set, and an EKG indicator reaches that benchmark, we know we are making positive progress. Other evaluation techniques would be considered.

Staff Commentary:

- *The Rockford Housing Authority prepared a "Neighborhood Planning Handbook" in 2013. The handbook incorporates the above recommendations within the framework of HUD Choice Neighborhood program. The Handbook was used to provide the framework for the Ellis Heights Transformation Plan.*

Healthy Neighborhoods Planning Program

The City has started on a Healthy Neighborhoods Planning Program which it plans to continue for several years to come. The objective is to evaluate every neighborhood in the City, preparing specific plans for at least two individual neighborhoods each year. The Mid Town North Plan for 2003-2007 was the first of these plans.

Staff Commentary:

- *The Mid-Town North Plan 5-Year plan was completed in 2003.*
- *The College-Seminary Focus Area and Hope VI Plans were completed in 2008*
- *Both plans are formal amendments to the 2020 Plan*

Following the *Policy Guide on Neighborhood Planning* adopted by the American Planning Association in 1998, any neighborhood plans should fit within the framework of the policies below.

- Any neighborhood planning should be done within the context of Rockford's community-wide plan, i.e., the 2020 Plan.
- Planning decisions should be made at the most appropriate level. Those that have limited impact on the community as a whole should be made by, or on the basis of given advice by, those neighborhood groups most directly affected. On the other hand, planning decisions affecting Rockford as a whole or a larger part of the community should not be overly influence by a single neighborhood's needs or interests.
- Neighborhoods should be encouraged to seek the best organizational structure suited to achieve their goals and objectives such as, but not limited to, neighborhood associations, co-ops or development corporations.

- To be effective, neighborhood planning often needs to go beyond addressing the physical conditions of the area to examine issues of social equity. To that end, the City of Rockford will work with other social service, housing, economic development, public health, educational, recreational, judicial and other organizations to ensure that the issues of social equity, children and families receive attention from its planners.

Mid-Town North was chosen as the first neighborhood plan to be completed because of the effects on the neighborhood from the relocation of Charles Street and the SwedishAmerican Hospital expansion. South Main has been chosen as the second neighborhood plan to be completed because of its effect on the redevelopment of Barber Colman Village. After the South Main plan is completed, two criteria will be used to choose neighborhoods to plan. The first is the neighborhood EKG, a set of indicators as described in part 2 of the Conservation Plan for Rockford Neighborhoods section of this element. The second step, which will be done on an annual basis in the future, will be to put out a request for requests, if you will. Neighborhood organizations will be asked to submit a request for the City to work with them in creating a plan for their neighborhood. Those submitting requests would be evaluated on the basis of their EKG.

Staff Commentary:

- *The plan developed by SWIFTT was not approved by City Council nor included in 2020 Plan amendments since 2004.*
- *As part of the neighborhood plan development process, Neighborhood organizations were asked to submit a request to the City to work with them in creating a plan for their neighborhood. The EKG indicators were used to evaluate requests*
- *Since 2004, the City (with consultants) developed two corridor plans: IL-251/Kishwaukee Street and IL-2/South Main Street.*

Neighborhood plans and planning should address a wide range of issues, tailored to meet the specific needs of the specific neighborhood. Each neighborhood plan that is created should include the following elements (understanding that some elements may need to be adjusted for specific neighborhoods):

- A definition of neighborhood boundaries, including a description of how they were derived and how they apply to municipal service areas.
- A directory of who is involved in the planning process and who should be involved;
- A vision statement.
- Goals and objectives that will serve to implement the vision statement.
- A physical plan of the neighborhood indicating proposed improvements to it
- Specific tasks and assignments spelled out in an implementation chart, including short-term and long term tasks.
- Design guidelines, especially for infill construction.
- Links to citywide objectives.
- A directory of resources.
- Short-term implementation projects to build support and momentum.
- Statistics about the neighborhood, including population, employment, education, etc.
- Maps showing neighborhood resources such as churches, libraries, parks, historic sites, major employers, neighborhood landmarks and demographics.

- A date of adoption and date for the next review or update of the plan.
- A statement of acceptance by the City of Rockford.

Neighborhood Academy

A neighborhood academy can be used to train neighborhood leaders and provide public education on community topics. Cities such as New York City; Nashville, TN and Milwaukee, WI have had success in community education through a neighborhood academy. The typical structure of a neighborhood academy is that courses are offered to residents for free and nonresidents at a small fee. A space in a community center or a separate structure is usually the location for courses; however some cities are offering online education resources. The topics can include, but are not limited to:

- Neighborhood Organizing
- Neighborhood Revitalization
- Community Safety
- Parenting
- Teen/Youth Issues
- Job Hunting/Resume Building
- Zoning and Code Compliance
- Housing Rehabilitation

The Mid Town North neighborhood plan states as a goal, "Set up a pilot Neighborhood Academy offering a variety of workshops to give residents the knowledge and information they need to help make a difference in their neighborhood." Another goal is to, "Establish a permanent Neighborhood Academy that will offer workshops to residents citywide." Departments to be involved in this venture include Community Development, Human Services, Police and Fire, the Community Foundation NIL and the Neighborhood Network. Planned time line for the project is for the pilot to be started up sometime in 2004-2005 and the citywide neighborhood academy to start in 2006.

Role of the City of Rockford

- The City will incorporate neighborhood-level perspectives into its decision-making and planning processes.
- City staff will ensure compatibility among the 2020 Plan, zoning ordinances, the CIP, and any other City planning documents and any approved neighborhood plans.
- The City will establish citywide goals and criteria for approving neighborhood plans. These criteria will be developed with the participation and support of the neighborhoods.
- The City will take approved neighborhood plans into consideration when determining funding for such things as transportation, community policing, solid waste services, housing, economic development, tourism and the Rockford Public Library.
- The City will evaluate the costs and benefits of changing the current policy of pursuing violations of minimum property standards only when there is a complaint to one which is systematic and undertaken on a subarea basis according to a defined schedule. Further research will also be undertaken to institute a form of apartment licensing to ensure compliance with minimum standards. Should it be decided that the benefits outweigh the costs; the City will take the steps necessary to implement such a program.

- The City will involve and educate its elected and appointed officials and its employees about the importance of neighborhood plans, the planning process and the role they play in implementing those plans.
- The City will provide regular opportunities, both formal and informal, for neighborhood leaders to meet among themselves and with local officials to discuss how the implementation of neighborhood planning is going and to provide input into the implementation process.
- The City will work with major institutions such as the three local hospitals to develop strategies designed to bring some of the economic and social benefits of those institutions into the lives of neighboring residents.
- The City will identify those neighborhoods that show early signs of deterioration and work with those neighborhoods to find ways to change the momentum to a more positive direction. The objective would be to devise means to keep these areas from deteriorating to the point where they would become significant problem areas, and to monitor their progress over time.
- The City will identify those neighborhoods that serve as transition between more solidly residential areas and nonresidential areas. This may be by design, as in the apartments behind the commercial area along Wansford Way in Harrison Park Subdivision. More often, it occurs as areas change from residential to office or commercial uses over time. A prime example would be the 600 and 700 blocks of North Church Street where numerous office and commercial uses have taken over what once was a purely residential neighborhood. The City's job will then be twofold:
 - To ensure that City ordinances protect residents in newly developing areas when they are adjacent to non-residential development, and ensure that those ordinances are uniformly enforced; and
 - To ensure that any changes in land use in established neighborhoods follow good planning and development practices and are carried out in a way that does not harm remaining residential areas.

Staff Commentary:

- *Bank foreclosures and little to no new housing construction are contributing to neighborhood distress*
- *Most neighborhoods experienced some level of decline since 2004.*
- *Neighborhoods along Keith creek were negatively impacted by the 2006 and 2007 floods. Approximately 100 homes were removed within Vital Signs Districts 4, 25, 30, and 33*

To return to premise put forth at the start of this section — neighborhoods are the building blocks of any city. It is the City's intention to ensure the future viability of these building blocks in the future to the greatest extent possible through implementation of the actions proposed in the 2020 Plan.

Plan Element 9:

Natural Resources

Primary objectives of our efforts to protect the natural environment are to safeguard and improve environmental features as a means of promoting sustainable urban development, revitalization and quality of life. High priority is given to protecting our water, both surface and ground water. Other facets of concern are protection of floodways and floodplains, redevelopment and reuse of Rockford's brownfields, protection of mature trees, maintenance of required landscaping, and protection of our riverfronts and greenways.

Staff Commentary:

- *Two (2) 500 year floods occurred in 2006 and 2007 on the lower portion of Keith Creek.*
- *Flooding resulted in the removal of over 100 residential structures.*

Protection of the natural environment is clearly important to local citizens. In a poll carried out by Health Systems Research at the University of Illinois College of Medicine/Rockford on behalf of Rock River Valley Green Communities, nearly 9 out of 10 respondents (89%) stated that they were concerned about the environment. This figure includes the 36% who were very concerned and the 53% who were somewhat concerned. When asked to rate how the area's environmental quality has changed over the past 10 years, responses were fairly evenly divided between those believing it is better (27%), the same (29%) and worse (30%). Other results of the survey:

- Three out of four residents favor preserving open space.
- Only 25% agreed with the statement that land owners should be allowed to use their land however they want. Nearly half (46%) disagreed with the statement.
- There was strong agreement that development should occur in areas with access to public utilities (85%) and that vacant city land is used before extending development into the countryside (83%).
- Nearly 75% of respondents supported requiring impact fees for new development to finance schools and parks.
- Nearly 7 out of 10 respondents (69%) agreed that revitalizing downtown business districts, existing commercial corridors and residential neighborhoods should be a priority of public investment.
- Opinion was fairly evenly divided on the use of public funds to beautify roads entering urban areas — 37% agreed with the idea, 24% disagreed and 38% had no opinion one way or the other.

Staff Commentary:

- *The survey was conducted in 2004.*

Proposals included in the Plan address most of these concerns. However, it may be necessary for the City to broaden its approach to the natural environment to ensure that it receives true protection. For this to be most effective, it will need to be done at least on an urban area basis rather than simply within Rockford's corporate limits. The process should include a comprehensive inventory and analysis of natural resources in the area, a determination of how best to provide long-term protection for various categories of resources (e.g., wetlands and floodplains), development of a

regional framework for achieving such protection, and adoption of regulations and policies to be implemented regionally.

Staff Commentary:

- *The Regional Greenways Plan was an important plan to protect and preserve our riverfront and floodplain greenways and associated wetlands as well as other greenway corridors such as former railroad right of ways.*

Groundwater Protection and Stormwater Management

For the first time, the Plan map shows wellhead protection areas around each of the City's water wells. These are in turn tied to provisions of Rockford's Zoning Ordinance which strictly regulates the types of uses that can be built within these areas. This combined with the requirement for any new development in the City or its extraterritorial area to have full urban improvements, including sanitary sewer, should aid in protecting our ground water supply.

Another aspect of protecting our water supply revolves around the issue of stormwater management. Although Rockford has enacted and enforces a flood detention ordinance, it is largely inadequate when dealing with macro stormwater management and quality. Requiring each new development to provide for detention on a piecemeal basis does not adequately address the larger stormwater management needs for various basins. The Department of Public Works has specifically identified the northeast and southeast as areas where further stormwater management plans need to be developed to identify better stormwater management facilities and best practices. As these plans are developed over the next 5 to 7 years, they should be adopted as amendments to this 2020 Plan as an integral part of the City of Rockford's environmental practices.

Staff Commentary:

- *The 500-year floods in the Keith Creek basin led to the removal of over 100 residential structures.*
- *A greenway corridor is now in place along most of the waterway*

A final part of the stormwater puzzle lies with flooding. Maps for this plan show areas identified as floodway on existing flood insurance maps for Rockford as Undevelopable, Priority Acquisition Area, or Existing Public Facility. Areas within the 100-year floodplain are shown as a variety of uses, with the understanding that special care must be taken with development in these areas. The flood insurance maps created by FEMA for the Rockford area were used in mapping these areas. These maps are over 20 years old, are not as accurate as they should be, nor do they cover the entire City. WinGIS, the multijurisdictional GIS agency that the City of Rockford participates in, is already working with FEMA to generate new and improved flood maps for the entire County. Once these are available, this portion of the 2020 Plan map should be reevaluated and, where appropriate, amended.

This Plan also expands the areas designated for public acquisition of open space along the Rock and Kishwaukee Rivers as well as some wooded areas. In some cases, this is to provide for a continuous pathway system; in others, it is to protect a valuable natural resource. (See the discussion above on pages 103-104 on the importance of the riverfront in Rockford's future.) Perhaps, over time, we can use our rivers to unite us rather than divide us.

Staff Commentary:

- *An extensive amount of riverfront property was acquired in conjunction with the Morgan Street Bridge and South Main corridor roadway reconstruction project. A major section of the Rock River pathway system will be constructed between Morgan Street and 15th Avenue (anticipated completion date: 2015)*

Brownfields

A major portion of the land included in the City of Rockford falls under the heading of brownfields – largely industrial properties that are vacant or vastly underused, due in part because of environmental hazards that *may* be present on the site. This issue is discussed at length under Plan Element VII, Economic Development. However, it is important to reiterate here the critical nature of dealing with these sites, not only for economic reasons but for environmental ones as well. While not every brownfield site poses a severe environmental hazard, there are undoubtedly many in Rockford that do due to the types of heavy manufacturing that historically has taken place here. These sites need to be evaluated and, where needed, remediated so that the land can be put back into use. Specific proposals for doing this are included in the Economic Development section of this Plan.

Staff Commentary:

- *Since 2004, there has been extensive Brownfield Cleanups at the Ingersoll site, the Barber Colman site and the Tapco Site and other sites will soon be cleaned up.*
- *Other activity includes extensive Brownfield Assessment work at several sites Downtown and on West State Street with several No Further Remediation (NFR) letters issued.*

Tree Preservation and Landscape Maintenance

Finally, elements of the natural environment that confront us with virtually every new development are retention of older trees and long-term maintenance of mandated landscaping. A series of studies by groups such as the Urban Land Institute and the National Association of Homebuilders show that trees are not frills or cosmetic add-ons. Rather, they constitute a basic element of infrastructure and play a major role in contributing to community pride, quality of life and economic development. Mature trees especially can contribute to the value of a new development, be it residential or commercial. Specifically, mature trees and landscaping can

Filter noise, dust and fumes;

Moderate the effects of sun, cold and wind;

Modify the rate of storm water runoff and soil erosion to adjacent properties; and

Reduce glare from the sun, vehicle headlights, and parking lot area lighting.

In addition to environmental impacts, there is also growing evidence that tree protection and good landscaping can add significantly to the value of a project by making it more attractive to consumers. For example, according to the NAHB's *Building Greener Neighbors*, lots with mature trees sell for an average of 20% to 30% more than similarly sized lots without trees, and that mature trees saved during development add more value to a lot than new landscaping added after construction. A similar type of argument can be made for street trees, i.e., their importance lies not only

with their impact on noise and air quality, but also from their role as the community's primary public space. Strong, mature street trees help to identify Rockford as the kind of place people want to be.

The City of Rockford has already taken an important first step in protecting mature trees through the landscaping, buffering and tree preservation chapter in its Zoning Ordinance (Section 1400). However, these provisions apply primarily to parking lots and open sales lots, outside storage lots and the like. The City should investigate broadening the scope of this ordinance to include mandatory protection of healthy, mature trees regardless of the type of development or whether there are paved parking or storage areas or not. At the same time, the City needs to ensure adequate staffing to enforce these provisions of the ordinance. Such ordinances are becoming more common across the country as more communities realize the importance both environmentally and aesthetically of protecting mature trees and landscaping.

Protecting mature landscaping and trees is only part of what needs to be done. A second step would be not only to require that certain types of landscaping be installed in certain situations, but that it is maintained to a certain standard over time as well. If the effects of lack of maintenance could be limited to the property directly involved, this issue would not be so important. However, failure of one property owner to maintain required landscaping not only flies against the intent of the ordinance that required it in the first place; it also has a negative impact on neighboring properties. In those cases where the property is on a major thoroughfare such as State Street, it can affect how travelers coming into Rockford view the community as a whole. In other words, it's not just concern for the environment or for aesthetics; it's also economics that point to the need for better maintenance of landscaping. Existing ordinances should be amended to include as part of the approval process submission of a long-term maintenance plan for any required landscaping, including litter and debris cleanup, and replacement of all dead plant material covered by the agreement. Then we need to make sure we have the resources to (a) comply with them on municipal sites and (b) enforce these ordinances throughout the community.

Staff Commentary:

- *The 2008 Zoning Ordinance provides preservation of existing mature trees by issuing credits for these trees against normal shade tree requirements.*

Plan Element 10:

Historic Preservation

Community character has a physical dimension. Its preservation tells us who we are and how we got here, and it helps us shape the direction in which we want to go.

The only direct reference to historic preservation in the Year 2000 Plan was the recommendation that the City designate “appropriate areas as historic districts in order to protect the character of these neighborhoods from incompatible uses.” While a separate historic preservation plan was prepared and adopted in 1985, it was not conceived as an integral part of the comprehensive plan nor was it adopted as such.

In this plan, we recognize that historic preservation is important not only in retaining the physical evidence of the history and individual character of Rockford, but also as a tool in maintaining the viability of our older neighborhoods. In at least one case, that of Haight Village, historic district designation has played a key role in bringing a neighborhood back from one verging on blight to one that has established a greater level of stability. The assessed valuation within Haight Village increased by 148% between 1977 and 1999, compared with an increase of just 42% for a neighborhood just across Kishwaukee Street that was very similar to Haight Village at the time it was designated a district in 1980.

We also recognize that historic preservation, like anything else, does not exist in a vacuum. Just as historic sites must be evaluated within the context of their surroundings and their history, they must also be viewed within the wider context of preservation of the community as a whole. However, this wider context needs to be evaluated very carefully and should not be used as a means of getting rid of something simply because it’s old, beat up and nobody seems to want it at the moment. When deciding whether or not to preserve something, we need to bear in mind that once a building or site has been destroyed, it’s gone forever; there is no going back.

The overall goal of the 2020 Plan as it relates to historic preservation is for the City of Rockford to identify, protect and preserve Rockford’s historic resources in order to enhance the quality of life and economic wellbeing of current and future generations. The City officially recognizes the important role of historic preservation in the life of the community and will work to ensure that municipal actions encourage and promote the preservation of Rockford’s historic resources. In order to accomplish this, the following steps need to be taken:

1. Provide a solid planning and informational basis for historic preservation.

- Update Rockford’s 1985 Preservation Plan, outlining a comprehensive approach for the City to follow in carrying out its historic preservation program for the next 15-20 years. A new plan would include many of the work elements listed below, plus it would address the following areas of concern:
 - Show how historic preservation in Rockford, which has heretofore focused on sites relating to the community’s European heritage, can expand and embrace all those groups making up Rockford’s past, including African-American, Latino and Asian.
 - Address the need to work with Rockford’s large institutions, such as the three hospitals, in protecting the neighborhoods around them while still allowing the institutions to grow and prosper.

- Look for ways to help fund renovation of historic resources, whether they be single-family homes or something as grand as the old National Guard Armory on North Main Street.
- Complete the comprehensive survey of Rockford's historic resources.

2. Integrate historic preservation into other City functions, including neighborhood planning and redevelopment, zoning processes, and public improvements.

- Build a working relationship between staff of the Rockford Historic Preservation Commission (RHPC) and staff in Public Works, Neighborhood Development, Economic Development and Zoning to bring consideration of preservation issues to the fore.
- With assistance from such groups as the National Trust for Historic Preservation, work to find viable solutions for problems related to redevelopment/renovation of older properties.
- Ensure that preservation and redevelopment issues, such as lot size and setback requirements, are addressed when the Zoning Ordinance is rewritten.

3. Build community support for preservation activities.

- RHPC and its staff should continue to work with River District, Mid Town District and other interested organizations in creation of workshops on preservation-related topics.
- Work with neighborhood groups in existing and potential historic districts to increase understanding of what local historic designation does and does not do.
- Work with local educators to introduce the basics of historic preservation to students.
- Work with neighborhood groups interested in pursuing historic district status.

Staff Commentary:

- *Several Historic Districts were created or expanded since 2004.*
- *Several commercial and industrial buildings have been designated historic, including the Amerock (Ziock) Building, Chick House (hotel), and the Prairie Street Brew House, and the National Guard Armory*
- *The City is current reviewing proposals for the adaptive reuse of Amerock and Chick House.*
- *Current status of historic districts and individual designations is listed toward the end of this section.*

4. Build on existing heritage tourism efforts within Rockford.

- Find ways to take advantage of areas where a "critical mass" of historic sites exists, such as the South Main areas where Tinker Swiss Cottage Museum, the Graham-Ginestra House and Ethnic Heritage Museum are all located.
- Continue to assist groups such as River District in planning and carrying out walking tours of historic areas.

5. Broaden the base of historic preservation in Rockford by working to establish a local private organization that can serve as an advocate for preservation, and that can serve as a private funding source for preservation initiatives and projects.

As a first step towards recognizing the importance of preservation, the map on the next page shows existing historic districts and outlines areas of the City with potential as historic districts, based on information contained in the various surveys that have been carried out by the RHPC over the years. These potential historic districts include the City's oldest neighborhoods, many of which would benefit from the Healthy Neighborhoods Planning Program.

Staff Commentary:

- *Locally designated Landmarks (as of January 2013):*
 - *Freeman School (Now Freeman Square), 910 2nd Avenue*
 - *Erlander Home, 404 South 3rd Street*
 - *7th Street Passenger Depot, 701 7th Street*
 - *Beyer Stadium Gatehouse, 311 15th Avenue*
 - *Herrick-Logli Cobblestone House, 2127 Broadway*
 - *Lincoln Middle School, 1500 Charles Street*
 - *East High School, 2929 Charles Street*
 - *Anderson Building, 803 North Church Street*
 - *Garrison School, 1105 North Court Street*
 - *Winnebago County Courthouse Annex/Jail, 403 Elm Street*
 - *Elks Club Building, 210 West Jefferson Street*
 - *Tinker Swiss Cottage Museum, 411 Kent Street*
 - *Times Theatre, 222-230 North Main Street*
 - *Coronado Theatre, 312-324 North Main Street*
 - *Liebling (Jackson Piano) Building, 330 North Main Street*
 - *Illinois National Guard Armory, 605 North Main Street*
 - *Burpee Museum of Natural History, 737 & 813 North Main Street*
 - *Chick House, 119-123 South Main Street*
 - *Graham-Ginestra House, 1115 South Main Street*
 - *West Middle School, 1900 North Rockton Avenue*
 - *Rockford City Hall, 425 East State Street*
 - *Shumway Market Building, 713 East State Street*
 - *Midway Theatre, 721 East State Street*
 - *Lake-Peterson House, 1313 East State Street*
 - *Four Squires Building, 203 West State Street*

- *National Register of Historic Places (as of January 2013):*
 - *Charles Lundberg House, 946 North 2nd Street*
 - *Greenwood Cemetery, Chapel, 1011 Auburn Street*
 - *Herrick-Logli Cobblestone House, 2127 Broadway*
 - *Garrison School, 1105 North Court Street*
 - *Valencia Court Apartments, 500-518 Fisher Ave*
 - *Jacoby House, 2 Jacoby Place*
 - *Rockford Elks Lodge #64, 210 West Jefferson Street*
 - *Tinker Swiss Cottage Museum, 411 Kent Street*
 - *Peacock Brewery, 100 Prairie & 500 North Madison Streets*
 - *Soldiers' & Sailors' Memorial Hall, 211 North Main Street*

- *Coronado Theatre, 312-314 North Main Street*
- *Beattie Park Mound Group, 401 North Main Street*
- *Illinois National Guard Armory, 605 North Main Street*
- *Chick House, 119-123 South Main Street*
- *The Brown Building, 228 South Main Street*
- *Ziock Building, 416 South Main Street*
- *Graham-Ginestra House, 1115 South Main Street*
- *Spafford House, 501 North Prospect Street*
- *Laurent House, 4646 Spring Brook Road*
- *Lake-Peterson House, 1313 East State Street*
- *Rockford Morning Star Building, 127 North Wyman Street*

- *Local Historic Districts (as of January 2013):*
 - *Haight Village (area bounded by South Madison Street, Walnut Street, Kishwaukee Street and the Union Pacific RR tracks*
 - *Indian Terrace (Indian Terrace south of the Armory and including Beattie Park)*
 - *Garfield Avenue (600 through 900 blocks)*
 - *Browns Hills/Knightsville (most of the area lying between North Second Street and the Scandinavian Cemetery plus the four houses just north of the YMCA on the west side of North Second Street.*
 - *Northeast State and Main (201,203 and 211 West State Street and 107 and 109 N. Main St.)*

- *National Register of Historic Places (5 Districts are listed on the National Register of Historic Places):*
 - *East Rockford Historic District (East State Street from the Rock River up to and including the Faust Landmark plus about half a block in each direction on the cross streets*
 - *Haight Village (generally the same area as the Local District described above plus structures on the West Side of Madison Street)*
 - *7th Street Commercial District (generally those properties fronting on 7th street from Charles Street to Keith Creek)*
 - *Barber Colman Company Historic District (all 9 remaining structures plus the guardhouse on the Barber Colman site on Rock Street)*
 - *West Downtown Rockford Historic District (generally follows an irregular boundary from Park Avenue as far south as Elm Street and from the alley west of Church Street east to Wyman Street)*

Plan Element 11:

Community Design and Identification Efforts

Rockford's Gateways

As communities became more and more competitive in the 1980s and '90s, people's perceptions of those communities assumed greater importance. A key component of this perception is what visitors or new arrivals see when they enter a community for the first time. Some steps have been taken locally to improve some of our gateways, primarily East State Street through the efforts of the Rockford Gateway Association; and West State Street through the recently prepared corridor plan. However, the fact remains that many of our gateways project a less than positive image of this community. Here are a few examples gleaned from comments made by the public during input sessions for this plan during 2002.

- The first shopping center you see when entering Rockford on North Main Street is North Towne. This does not convey a good image of the City. (During 2003, the mall portion of North Towne was removed and renovations will continue during 2004.)
- Kishwaukee and 11th Streets both convey the image of an old manufacturing town that is not doing well as evidenced by vacant and/or deteriorated factories, old homes in disrepair, marginal commercial businesses and used car lots.
- As we try to draw more and more people to Davis Park, we need to consider what they see on the way in along South Main Street and how it affects their overall view of Rockford.
- There's nothing to tell you that you've arrived in Rockford when you come in via West State Street.
- There were several comments, pro and con, about the welcome panels at I-90 and East State Street. The most specific concern was that they say Rockford is "stuck in the 1970s."

Staff Commentary:

- *Major corridor improvements were made to Kishwaukee during 2010-2011 and major park/open space improvements were made near Keith Creek. However parts of the corridor still have vacant or underutilized industrial buildings that will continue to be a blighting influence until repurposed or removed.*
- *There has been progress during the past decade including removing surplus industrial buildings at Barber Colman and at the South Main Rail Yards site, the latter of which opened up a view of Tinker Swiss Cottage from South Main Street. More recently the Tapco Building was removed which opened up a view of Davis Park from South Main Street. Major Improvements to South Main Street are currently under construction and should be completed during 2015.*
- *However, this is in the process of changing as the City of Rockford and the Illinois Department of Transportation implement the West State Street Corridor Plan (2002). The first 1.2 miles of this corridor improvement program, from Kilburn Ave. to Independence Ave. is largely completed at this time. These improvements will be continued further west and be complimented by a linear park and pathway system*

Gateway plans begun by the Rockford Gateway Association for East State Street several years ago need to be finalized and implemented, and new ones developed for each of the City's other major entryways — West State Street, North and South Main Streets, Kishwaukee Street, North 2nd Street, 11th Street, South Alpine Road and East Riverside Boulevard. While the 2020 Plan obviously includes these areas, it does not get down to the level of detail required for a true gateway plan. A brief description of the ongoing planning process for East State Street gives an idea of what can be involved in one of these plans.

Staff Commentary:

- *Business Associations within Major Commercial corridors are more involved with design development and implementation to improve corridor aesthetics.*

The East State approach is further along than any of the others because of the creation in 1990 of a private, not-for-profit organization called the Rockford Gateway Association, or RGA. Membership consists primarily of businesses along East State, with input from various public agencies such as the Rockford Park District and the City of Rockford. According to its mission statement, RGA's goal is to "Influence purposeful development of an attractive entrance to the Rockford Community along the East State Street Corridor." Through active fundraising, including grant funding, the RGA has been able to create the landscaping on the north side of East State Street at the I-90 interchange, complete with the welcome panels. They have worked to create a strategic plan for the entire corridor from Fairview Boulevard east to the Boone County line, although most of their efforts have been in the Alpine Road to I-90 area. Their plans focus on three areas — signage, circulation and image. The process being used to create the corridor plan involves a combination of brainstorming sessions attended by a wide variety of people representing various interests, with smaller task forces focusing on each of the three topics being dealt with. The difficulty lies in arriving at plans that dare to dream but that are still not totally beyond the realm of possible achievement. Because of this and the volunteer nature of the work being done, it can be a lengthy and time consuming process.

Similar approaches should be tried in other corridors as well. Some work has already been done along South Main Street in the area around Klehm Arboretum, and a major planning effort was recently completed for the West State Street corridor. At minimum, any gateway plans should address the following issues while allowing the distinct character of each corridor to come through.

- **Circulation:** What are the best ways to move both vehicular and pedestrian traffic through and within the gateway area? Other gateways should learn from what has and has not worked in the East State Street corridor, clearly the most heavily developed of all of them.
- **Landscaping:** Where appropriate (and where space is available), landscaping should be incorporated into gateway plans for the right-of-way. A good example of what can be done is the newly built section of Charles Street between 9th and 11th Streets. Including a landscaped median made a huge difference in how the new street has been perceived, both by residents along it and by those who drive the street every day. The major difficulties here are finding room in the right-of-way to include landscaping of sufficient quantity and quality to have an impact, finding an organization that will maintain the landscaping once it's installed, and getting the cooperation of IDOT on those roadways where they have jurisdiction.
- **Lighting and street furniture:** Successful gateway improvements are frequently in the details. These details can include such things as street lights, trash cans and benches. While their importance may vary from one

gateway to another, well designed fixtures can make a difference in even the most generic of streets while at the same time serving a clearly functional purpose.

- **Signage:** It's important that people coming into the community for the first time be able to find their way to their particular destination with minimal difficulty. Signage is a key part of this. This includes not only signs directing people to different major destinations, such as the Sportscore or Metro Centre, but also informing them of where they are in as clear a fashion as possible. This requires street signs that can be found and read easily that identify both the street being traveled on and any cross streets. It also requires easily identifiable street numbers for businesses along these major routes. From a more aesthetic standpoint, distinctive banners could be used to mark each gateway, giving each its own unique identity.
- **Design and Image:** Investigate ways to improve the aesthetics of each corridor. The specifics will vary depending on the area being considered. In some cases, such as State Street, it may involve a combination of design guidelines incorporated into Rockford's Zoning Ordinance to avoid the creation of any more bland big box stores, to a regular program of clean ups to clear trash from drainage ditches. In other cases, where there are large numbers of older industrial buildings, it may be necessary to create incentives as well as disincentives to convince owners of older, possibly derelict buildings to maintain their properties. This would involve expanding the Neighborhood Standards program into nonresidential areas.
- **Land Use and Historic Preservation:** Several of Rockford's major gateways are enhanced by architecturally significant and/or historic structures, many of which are single-family homes. East State Street between Fairview Boulevard and 9th Street, and North 2nd Street both has distinctive homes with significant architectural character. Most of the homes along North 2nd Street are located within the Brown's Hills/ Knightsville Historic District. East State Street's homes, however, are not within a historic district. Although mostly intact, heavy traffic, pressures for commercial development and institutional expansion have all had negative impacts on the residential section of this important gateway. In some cases, the City has allowed offices to be established in residential structures, preserving the structures and their residential appearance. The City must not take this attractive gateway for granted, especially considering that engineering for transportation improvements for this section of East State Street has been programmed by IDOT. The City must keep in mind that this two-mile section of East State is often a major portion of a visitor's first impression of Rockford while to many others it is their daily impression of Rockford.

Future gateway plans must be developed with public and private cooperation and with the commitment of businesses and residents along each corridor. However, it is equally important that the City take a leadership role in developing these plans for the simple reason that the impact of these gateways reaches much farther than their adjoining neighborhoods. They are a reflection of who we are as a whole community. The City, through its powers of providing quality infrastructure, zoning control, property maintenance, economic development, and public financing, must be a leader when it comes to ensuring that Rockford has the most inviting and attractive gateways in the State of Illinois. This City has long suffered from a negative image, both from internal and external forces. The major gateways to our City are like mirrors, reflecting an image of what we see as a community and what visitors see as their first impression. We need to ensure that that first impression is a good impression.

Staff Commentary:

- *Business Associations within Major Commercial corridors are more involved with design development and implementation to improve corridor aesthetics.*
- *The Metro Centre is now called the BMO Harris Bank Center*
- *The 2008 Zoning Ordinance update contains significant improvements in development standards. Part 5 should be included in the analysis for policy and/or strategy adjustments for the 2015-2020 Implementation Plan*

Community Design

Once new arrivals or visitors have passed the gateway through which they entered Rockford, what do they see? Does Rockford *look* like the kind of place they would want to spend some time in, maybe even move to, or move their business to? Is there anything distinctive about it? Does it look like a community that holds high standards for new development?

Concerns about appearances are based on more than just a desire of a few to control how things look. They are also based on economics. A community's image is important to its economic well-being. The best places to live, work and visit are generally those that are willing to uphold their standards in the face of pressure to allow lowest common denominator development. Businesses evaluate locations based on their economic potential. If the potential is there, then they will usually accommodate local design, landscaping and/or signage requirements.

In 1986, the American Planning Association published a report by Attorney Christopher Duerkson entitled "Aesthetics and Land-Use Controls: Beyond Ecology and Economics." In it, he addressed the increasing acceptance by the courts of land-use regulations based on aesthetics, approving increasingly widespread efforts by local governments across the country to "protect what is special about their communities." Other communities have used these concerns to protect everything from historic properties to scenic views to trees. They have also used them to regulate signs and billboards as well as the growing array of outdoor communications towers and antennas.

Rockford does have a program in place to protect its historic resources, and has worked hard over the past 15-20 years to enhance the image of its downtown. However, its involvement in visual design issues elsewhere has been largely limited to landscaping requirements for nonresidential properties. In the years ahead, we need to broaden this scope, taking the necessary steps to ensure that Rockford is not only a highly affordable community but also a highly desirable one to live and do business in.

To delve more deeply into the problem, we need to assess what design-related issues exist that need to be addressed. These could include the following:

- **Generic design**, especially among big box retailers. A phenomenon of the 1990s, big boxes are just that — big boxes. They are generally one-story masonry buildings with no windows, no ornamentation beyond the franchise name, and an ocean of pavement in front for parking. At best, they are bland, anonymous buildings. At worst, they present a hostile front to the world with no apparent place for pedestrians and no relation to their neighbors. Communities with good design review mechanisms, land use plans and zoning policies are in a much stronger position to negotiate with national retail chains than those without them.

- Related to generic design is **franchise or corporate design**. National retail chains can break away from their rigid, formulaic designs and have in fact done so in communities where they have had to deal with strong design review policies and mechanisms. For example, the City of Chicago has an agreement with Walgreen's that defines how new Walgreen's stores should relate to the neighborhood in which they are located. The City of Rockford should explore taking a similar approach.
- **Residential design**, including that of single-family homes. Many people have noted with dismay the increasing prevalence of what have been termed "snout" houses. These are single- or two-family homes where the garage projects forward toward the street, becoming the most prominent feature of the house. This type of construction has been found to be objectionable not only for aesthetic reasons, but also because it limits the chances that one of these subdivisions will ever become a neighborhood. Another discouraging trend is for builders to use the same basic design throughout an entire subdivision and in virtually every subdivision they build. A more varied approach is needed and should be considered when the Zoning Ordinance is revised.

In assessing these developments, we need to determine how Rockford residents feel about how their community looks. This is most commonly done by means of a visual awareness survey or program. A similar approach was recently used by the Rock River Valley Green Communities group to elicit opinions on environmental preferences. Their survey included input on topics ranging from the appearance of natural areas to that of commercial signage. We need to research the known impacts of aesthetics on a community's economic health. We need to find out how other communities deal with the issues of residential and commercial design to garner new ideas and concepts. Then we need to put all this together to create a cohesive approach to dealing with design and appearance throughout the community. The final component will be to ensure that the City has sufficient staffing to enforce whatever standards are adopted.

Staff Commentary:

- *Traditional Urban and Suburban forms are the primary physical attributes within the City of Rockford boundaries.*
- *Traditional Urban form is described as square and rectangular blocks connected by streets for people and commerce movement. This development pattern is primarily located in the Central Planning Subarea and in immediately adjacent Vital Signs Districts. The Northwest and Southwest Planning Subareas contain significantly more Traditional urban than suburban physical attributes*
- *Suburban form is described as curvilinear blocks connected by local, collector and arterial streets. This development pattern is primarily located in the Northwest, Northeast and Southeast planning subareas.*
- *Pedestrian and bike movement is addressed in the Transportation section but may need evaluating as part of design standards.*
- *The 2008 Zoning Ordinance update provides base-level design standards (see Parts 2, 3 and 5 for more information)*
- *Providing additional guidance, best practices, policy adjustments and/or strategies for streets, sidewalks, parking facilities, lighting, and landscaping will be considered.*

Plan Element 12:

Public Participation

Community Outreach

The vision of this plan is “to strengthen and focus this community’s commitment to improve the lives of all its people.” Improving the lives of all Rockfordians will take the contribution of Rockfordians. However, not all citizens have the means or desire to participate. Often times, these are the people whose opinions are most valuable to the planning process. The City will stay committed to involving as many people as possible in the planning process and ensuring that these people are a diverse group representing the demographics of Rockford.

- 1. Public Meetings:** In April and May of 2002, 7 public meetings were held at various community locations to present the initial draft of the 2020 Plan. These meetings centered on a set of discussion questions asking how, when and with what resources development should occur. The public input was analyzed and incorporated into the Plan where possible.
- 2. Website:** The executive summary was posted on the City of Rockford’s website for public review. Elements of the final Draft Plan will be posted on the website as they are completed for public review. The final 2020 Comprehensive Plan will also be posted on the website after adoption for public access. As the neighborhood plans are created, the website will once again be used to try to reach residents who do not often get involved in the planning process.

The website planning process participation would aim at:

- Youth,
- People unable to attend public meetings for a variety of reasons,
- People who attend public meetings but would like to participate more or keep up-to-date on the latest progressions of the plan.

The website could also be used as an evaluation tool for the 220 Plan as well as other plans. Public comment can be given through the website, surveys could be conducted and general information could be given. Evaluation is scheduled annually. These evaluations will also be posted on the website.

- 3. Community Q&A Day.** Before the official public hearing for the Plan takes place, the City will host a community Q&A day. The meeting will be scheduled once all elements of the final Draft Plan have been posted on the city website and after an adequate amount of time for the public to access and review the documents. At the community Q&A day, staff members will be available to the public to sit down and discuss the plan one on one with community members. The public can ask questions and make comments. This will allow all members of the community to speak face-to-face with a Planning Department staff member so that there will be no misunderstandings after the plan has been adopted. If this is successful, a similar approach can be used for other planning processes in the future.

Staff Commentary:

- *Methods and platforms for civic engagement have evolved since 2004. Online-platforms are more prevalent and utilized in the plan development process (i.e., web-based surveys, dashboards, apps, social media apps)*
- *Evaluating and developing new approaches to increase youth participation in the planning process is recommended.*

Consensus Building

The City of Rockford has 10 departments, a 14-member City Council broken into 3 standing committees, and works with numerous organizations on various tasks. Managing so many stakeholders takes coordination and consensus building. It is also important to have the support of the City as a whole, and goals that the whole city can benefit from. Once again, creating consensus throughout the city can be quite difficult as everyone has different personal goals, needs and wants. Whenever possible, the City will implement goals, programs and activities that are decided by consensus rather than majority rule. Although the consensus building process can be difficult and time consuming, the City will encourage the use of consensus building in its decision making.

- 1. Neighborhood Plans:** The Healthy Neighborhoods Planning Program has a goal of creating 1-2 neighborhood plans each year. These plans will be a more strategic approach specific to a single neighborhood than the broad comprehensive plan. Citizens are often more likely to get involved in local planning than comprehensive planning. The issues seem more relevant, neighborhood plans are implemented in a shorter amount of time and people feel that they are more affected by their local environment. The neighborhood plans can be used as a tool to engage the community in the planning process. *You can read more about this program in the Neighborhoods section of the 2020 Plan.*
- 2. Existing Plans:** In creating the 2020 Plan, all current plans and ordinances were consulted. This was done to ensure there would be no conflict of goals. After adoption, the 2020 Plan will serve as a guide for all other planning endeavors. The goals and strategies set forth in the Plan will set the fundament for other plans, programs and activities. This will ensure that City activities will be working in the same direction to the same end and will not overlap or conflict. When any new plan is undertaken, preexisting plans pertaining to that topic area as well as current plans affecting the new one will be consulted.
- 3. Interdepartmental Involvement:** Each section of the plan calls on various departments to get involved. Since they are the ones that will implement the Plan, their involvement is critical. It will also be actively sought out during the creation of other plans, programs and strategies.
- 4. Round Table Discussion:** A well-known consensus building process is the round table discussion. It provides a way for stakeholders of a certain issue to sit together and discuss without finger pointing or name calling. It allows people to sit as equals, giving no stakeholder the advantage of power. A round table discussion could be used during the creation of certain plans. It could also be used for certain topic areas that have a lot of stakeholders that are not communicating and cooperating as well as they should. Some of these topics could include, but are not limited to; neighborhoods, affordable housing, downtown or homelessness.

Public Education

Educating the public on planning trends and issues is very important in the healthy development of the City of Rockford. There are two major reasons for public education. The first is that planning is a complex and complicated field. To this day, it often has controversy surrounding it. Only through better understanding can “plan” transform from a four-letter word to a tool to make Rockford a better place to live, work and play. The second reason is that involving the public in planning and City government in general first requires a knowledgeable public. Knowing and understanding best practices, options to traditional development, and other community’s successes and failures can help the City and public make better decisions.

- 1. Neighborhood Academy:** The Neighborhood Academy’s purpose is to bring neighborhood leaders and residents together to learn more about how to better their communities. The academy would meet in a community space and have courses geared to neighborhood improvement and family issues. *You can read more about the Neighborhood Academy in the Neighborhoods section of the 2020 Plan.*
- 2. Plans:** What is a comprehensive plan? What does it do? How does it affect Rockford? Not everyone knows the answers to these questions. However, it is important that Rockfordians are able to answer these questions before they delve into the 2020 Plan. Included in the 2020 Plan are two sections that try to answer the above questions — the “Introduction” and the “Why a 2020 Plan?” sections. These sections are included in the beginning of the 2020 Plan to try to inform readers what the comprehensive plan is all about. Also, when posted on the website, there will be a brief explanation of what the 2020 Plan is and how it affects Rockford.

This model will be applied to other plans as they are written. It is important to first identify why the plan is being written to gain support from City Council and citizens. Secondly, it is important to educate the public on plans because they can have a positive impact on the City and strengthen the relationship between the City and its citizens.

- 3. Evaluation of the 2020 Plan:** The 2020 Plan will have annual evaluations to determine how the Plan is being implemented, how it is affecting the City and find adjustments that need to be made. These evaluations will be made available to the public along with explanations of what the evaluations mean. These evaluations will help to show the community that the City does implement the plans that are created and that they are intended to serve the City of Rockford. *You can learn more about the evaluation of the 2020 Plan in the Monitoring and Evaluation section of the 2020 Plan.*

Plan 13:

Monitoring, Evaluating & Amending the 2020 Plan

The universal feeling whenever a plan of any sort is prepared and adopted is that it *not* becomes one of those plans that sit on the shelf gathering dust. One way of avoiding this pitfall is to include in the plan a definite set of actions to be accomplished, with statements as to who is to do the work and within what time frame. We have done this in the implementation matrix found at the end of every section of the plan. The next step is to build a process in which the proposed actions listed in these tables will be monitored and evaluated on a regular basis and, if needed, the plan amended.

Monitoring the Plan

It will be the responsibility of the Planning Division to monitor implementation of the 2020 Plan on an ongoing basis. This should include, at minimum, an annual review of the status of proposals in the Plan. To simplify this process, a table listing all of the implementation items is included in Appendix H. The individual assigned the job of monitoring how implementation is progressing will do so by tracking what's in the table. For this effort to be successful, a variety of agencies and departments will need to provide input to the individual charged with monitoring implementation of the Plan. This could be accomplished through an annual meeting of an interdepartmental team that oversees activities proposed in the Plan. This approach will also help reinforce the notion that the Plan is a living document, not just something that gets published and then forgotten; and that it is something that all departments need to consider, not just planning.

A critical tool for monitoring of the Plan will be the GIS system which should become fully functional by mid-2004. The first step in using GIS for this purpose will be to add the 2020 Plan land use designations to the system. Once this is done, an accurate figure of what is planned for each use category can be determined. Once these basic tasks are accomplished, the GIS can be used in a variety of ways to monitor compliance with the Plan, including the following:

- Tracking construction, demolition and rehabilitation permits to show patterns of growth and redevelopment.
- Tracking new subdivisions as they are recorded to show where new development is going (and possibly infill).
- Tracking zoning changes and Special Use Permits for compliance with the Plan and as an indicator of growth patterns.
- Comparing assessed valuations of parts of the City over time as an indicator of which areas are getting stronger and which less so.
- Comparing the type of new construction with Plan designations to see if they match. Significant mismatches would serve as a red flag for areas that need to be reevaluated.

Information compiled in this monitoring process will form the core of the annual review of the Plan.

Scheduled Reviews of the 2020 Plan

Starting one year after adoption of the 2020 Plan, the Planning Administrator will submit an annual report detailing the performance of the Plan over the preceding 12 months to the Mayor and City Council. This report will reference information contained in the monitoring table described above plus new and pertinent information about the community, changes in the Plan's underlying assumptions or any other factors affecting the health or welfare of the community. The report may include specific proposals to amend the Plan. At minimum, the report will include:

- The implementation matrix with updates included;
- Comments and suggestions from the interdepartmental team that reviews implementation each year;
- Verbal description of changes that have occurred since the last annual report, including such things as major annexations, road construction and zoning map amendments;
- Brief discussion of neighborhood or special topic plans (e.g., a river corridor study) either in process or adopted in the previous 12 months and their "fit" with the 2020 Plan;
- Description of any requests for map and/or text amendments to the Plan from other agencies, organizations, or private individuals;
- Description of how the Plan was used to direct major spending, regulatory and construction decisions;
- Description of how development and redevelopment did or did not coincide with the Plan;
- Review of any Plan amendments adopted during the preceding 12 months with an explanation of why they were made and what their impact has been;
- Discussion of how the City has changed in ways that may call for amendments to the Plan; and
- An implementation plan of action for the following year.

The final item should address any requested changes which would then enter the amendment process described below. The annual report will be submitted to City Council and made available to the public. Each year's report will be posted on the City's website, and should be the subject of public meetings to increase awareness of what progress has been made and to solicit input on how the Plan could be improved.

At least once every five years, the Planning staff will conduct a formal review of the entire Plan – text and maps. As a result of this review, they will submit to City Council proposals for changing those features and sections that are judged to be outdated and/or not serving their purpose.

After ten years, the process for formal review should be expanded to involve an ad hoc advisory group of Rockford citizens who would work with planning staff in completing a full review of the 2020 Plan. This review should include a comprehensive review of Plan maps and implementation matrices, as well as an update of population projections.

Staff Commentary:

- *Developing a 5-Year Implementation Plan is part of improving the monitoring, evaluating and implementation of the 20-year plan policies and strategies.*
- *A Regional Framework is now provided by the Rockford Area Metropolitan Agency for Planning. We recommend evaluating the 2020 plan, and subsequent 5-year plan for Conformance, consistency and compatibility to the RMAP 2040 plan and other accepted regional framework plans*
- *Plan alignment with the City's Capital Improvement Program and Consolidated Plan is a goal of the 2020 plan update process*

Amending the 2020 Plan

While the Plan needs to be flexible enough that it can be amended on a regular basis, it should not be so flexible that a Plan amendment is viewed as being the equivalent of a zoning change. To that end, it is recommended that amendments only be processed twice a year unless exceptional circumstances warrant a more frequent change. Proposed amendments can come from a number of sources – from the internal review involved in preparation of the annual report; proposals from other City departments; written suggestions or requests from organizations or individuals outside City government; and/or requests from City Council members. In addition, the City could solicit proposals for Plan amendments through a variety of ways – neighborhood or other public meetings, the City website, or requests through the news media, to name a few.

Evaluation of proposed amendments will be based on the following criteria:

- The proposed change is consistent with the basic principles of the 2020 Plan.
- The change is a creative idea or concept that will benefit the community and that was unforeseen during the preparation of the 2020 Plan.
- The change does not create an adverse impact on any of the following:
 - Public facilities and services, including roads, sewers, water supply, drainage, schools, parks and public safety agencies, unless the impact can be substantially mitigated..
 - Surrounding properties. New development should be consistent with the physical character of the surrounding neighborhood or upgrade and improve its viability.
 - The natural environment including trees, slopes and groundwater, unless the impact could be mitigated by improvements on the site or in the same vicinity.
 - Landmarks or other historically significant structures or properties.
- The change allows a more viable transition to the planned uses on adjacent properties than the current land use.
- There is a change in City policies or neighborhood characteristics that would justify the Plan change.
- The change results from a neighborhood or other plan adopted by the City of Rockford.
- The change helps the City meet its affordable housing goals as specified in the Consolidated Plan.

In 1918, William H. Fulton, Secretary of the Rockford City Plan Commission, wrote that:

“Such an undertaking as the Plan involves, is a challenge to our civic spirit. It offers a curriculum in community effort. Can we achieve it? Yes, if we work together, if as members of one body we unselfishly seek the good of the whole, emphasizing not the things that divide, but the things that unite us”.

This quotation, from the Rockford Plan of 1918, demonstrates that even in the very first effort to plan for the Rockford’s growth, people were concerned that the only way to achieve positive results was to work together. This is even truer now than it was 85 years ago.

We are confident that the 2020 Plan is a pragmatic and realistic tool for City officials to use in guiding Rockford’s day-to-day development. However, for this to happen will require a concerted effort on everyone’s part to make this a

living plan, not just some words to go along with a map. There are several instances in which this plan recommends specific actions; these need to be followed up on, if only to determine on a case-by-case basis if they are actions that truly need to be carried out. Then there is the map of proposed land use and transportation corridors. These need to be consulted as the City continues to develop (and redevelop), and as it plans its capital improvements program.

Finally, while this is very definitely a plan for the City of Rockford, Rockford does not exist in a vacuum. Its land use and transportation needs should be regularly reevaluated within the context of what is going on around it. Perhaps at some point in the future we will be able to develop a truly regional plan. In the meantime, we need to keep in mind what — and whom — we are planning for.

Staff Commentary:

- *Current implementation challenges will be identified during the review process*
- *Examples of implementation challenges are:*
 - *Demographics*
 - *Growth projections*
 - *Evolving technology*
 - *Public-private partnerships*
 - *Safety*
 - *Economic climate*
 - *Sustainable funding sources*