



DOWNTOWN ROCKFORD STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

PLANNING AREA: CENTRAL

DRAFT FOR REVIEW
JULY 2015

PREPARED FOR:



PREPARED BY:





PREVIOUS PLANS



STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT



FOCUS AREAS



EXISTING CONDITIONS



A TLC APPROACH



IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

MOBILITY

LARGE REDEVELOPMENT

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

URBAN DESIGN



APPENDIX

MARKET ANALYSIS

SURVEY SUMMARY

PREVIOUS PLANNING

Rockford has no shortage of plans. The City has seen numerous plans over the last decade that generally agree on the following things: direct mixed-use development towards the downtown area; connect the existing pieces of water front parks and trails; add residential dwellings to downtown area; and enhance mobility in and around downtown through alternative modes of transportation such as bikes, trolley, and water taxis. By mining these previous plans for key recommendations, we focus on implementation strategies for the recommendations, rather than just creating another shelf document that is years from realization.

MINING PREVIOUS PLANS

Numerous planning studies were conducted over the last 15 years with focus areas that included Downtown Rockford. We carefully searched each plan for its primary recommendations and mapped them to understand where and what the priorities are for the Downtown area. The planning studies reviewed were:

RIVER DISTRICT
FRAMEWORK PLAN

PRAIRIE STREET
BREWHOUSE PLAN

ROCKFORD RIVER WALK
VISION PLAN

RIVER DISTRICT
FRAMEWORK PLAN
UPDATE

DOWNTOWN PARKING
STUDY

MUSEUM CAMPUS
MASTER PLAN

REDEVELOPMENT
FRAMEWORK PLAN

SOUTH MAIN CORRIDOR
REVITALIZATION
STRATEGY



BUILDING ON PREVIOUS PLANS

Relevant recommendations were pulled and brought into the current context of Downtown Rockford. These recommendations served as the foundation for our implementation strategies.

The relevant recommendations include:

MUSEUM CAMPUS

1. Expand existing facilities
2. Enhance Park along waterfront
3. Add boat facilities
4. Pedestrian bridge across the river

MADISON STREET (NORTH)

1. Park along waterfront
2. Expand Marina facilities
3. Expand harbor
4. Add residential east/west of Madison
5. Pedestrian bridge to Museum Campus

MADISON STREET (SOUTH)

1. Trolley line/station
2. New residential
3. Connection to future Whitewater Park

DAVIS PARK

1. Connect to Courthouse
2. Infill buildings around

Main Street

1. Plaza/Parking Lot
2. Entertainment area



STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Stakeholders were engaged throughout the process of the Implementation Plan. The project kicked off with group and individual interviews with a multitude of stakeholders identified by the consultant team and the City of Rockford. The content developed throughout the process was presented back to stakeholders a number of times, and was refined to incorporate feedback received. Interim and final implementation strategies were then presented to City Council and the Planning Department for approval. A public survey was also conducted which solicited input from the general public.

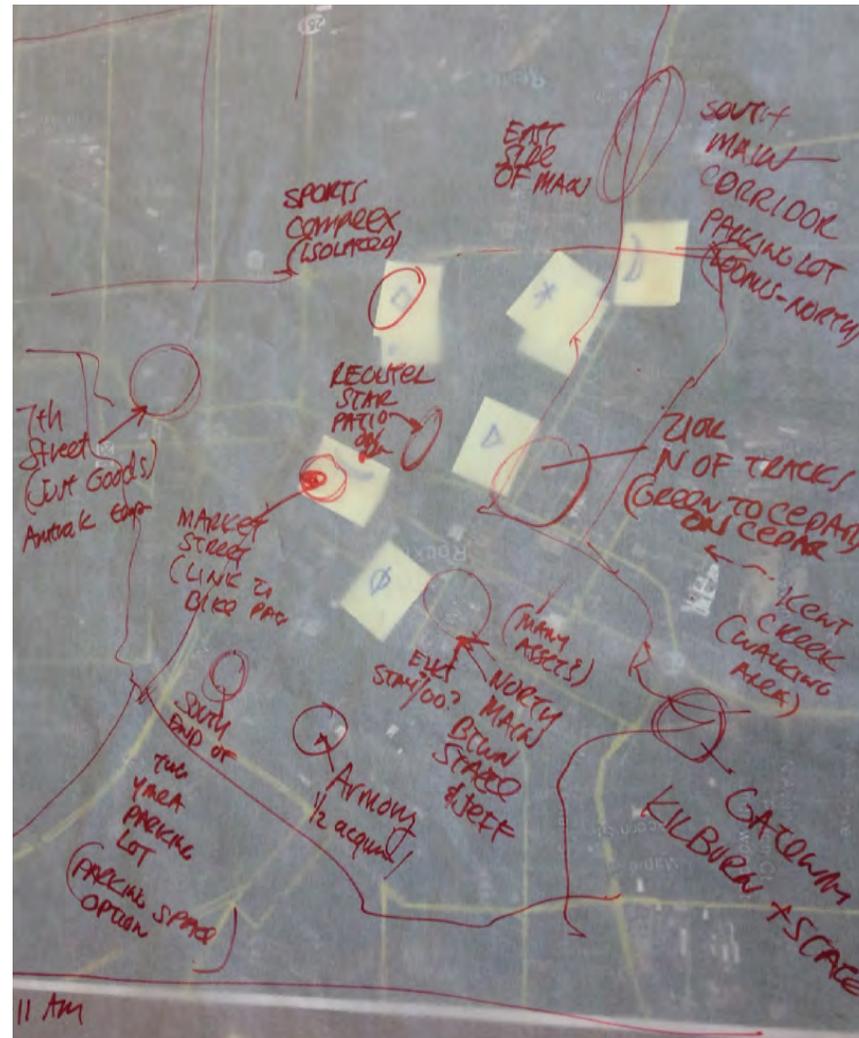


STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Stakeholder interviews were conducted on November 21, 2014 in Downtown Rockford. Broken into four separate groups, participants identified catalytic sites throughout Rockford, as well as events and projects currently underway in downtown and nearby neighborhoods.

PARTICIPANTS IN STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS:

Rockford Area Venues & Entertainment (RAVE);
Rockford Area Economic Development Council (RAEDC);
Public Art Committee;
Rockford Economic Development;
Education & Entrepreneurship Network (EDEEN);
Rockford Etsy Team;
Library staff;
Friends of Ziock group;
Rockford City Market;
Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau (RACVB);
Rockford Parks Department;
City Staff;
Alderman Getchus
Alderman McNamara
Alderman Hervey



ASSETS TO BUILD ON

Stakeholders identified a number of existing assets that should be leveraged for maximum gain. The main assets to build upon include:

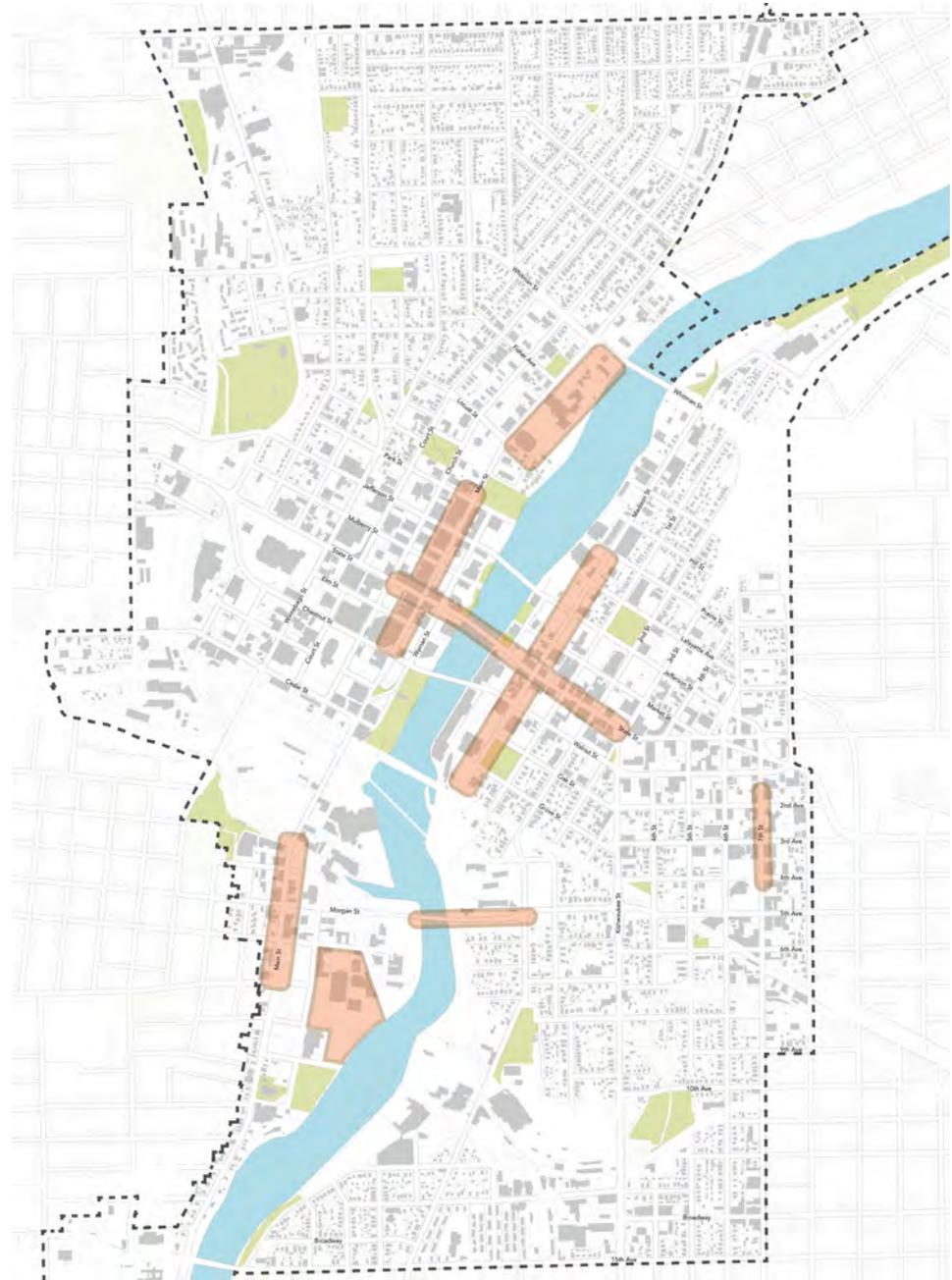
1. Events bring a lot of people to Downtown.
2. Many organizations and citizens are already engaged with street and storefront activation.
3. Development is already underway that can be leveraged (Amerock Hotel, Ingersoll Sports Complex, Prairie Street Brewhouse, etc).

CHALLENGES

Stakeholders also identified challenges that deter downtown development. These challenges became critical points to be addressed through the implementation strategies.

1. There are unused or underutilized storefronts and parcels along primary retail streets.
2. There are many groups doing great things in the downtown, but efforts need to be better coordinated.
3. There is a lack of consistency in design standards throughout the downtown.
4. Downtown needs more people in it to maintain the day-to-day vibrancy.

CATALYTIC AREAS IDENTIFIED BY STAKEHOLDERS

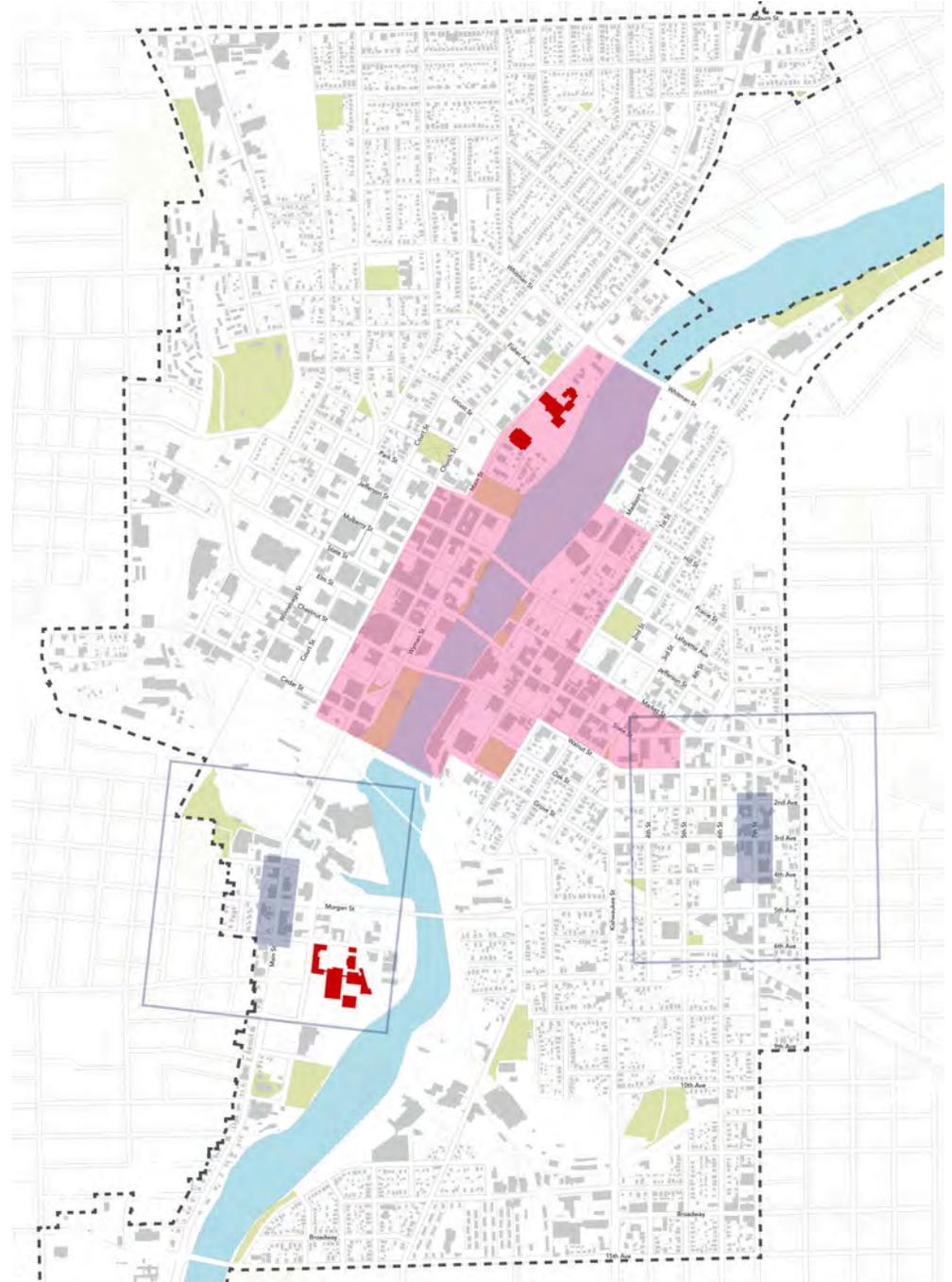


FOCUS AREAS

One of the first points of distinction between the Strategic Action Plan and previous planning efforts is the identification of a focus area within Downtown Rockford. While there is no official boundary for the Downtown, the River Edge Zone was first presented as the study area. This area is 4 square miles and within it has multiple areas with unique characteristics, challenges, and assets. In order to create any effective implementation strategies, we believe it is necessary to narrow the Action Plan to a digestible focus area so efforts are geographically concentrated, rather than spread too far.

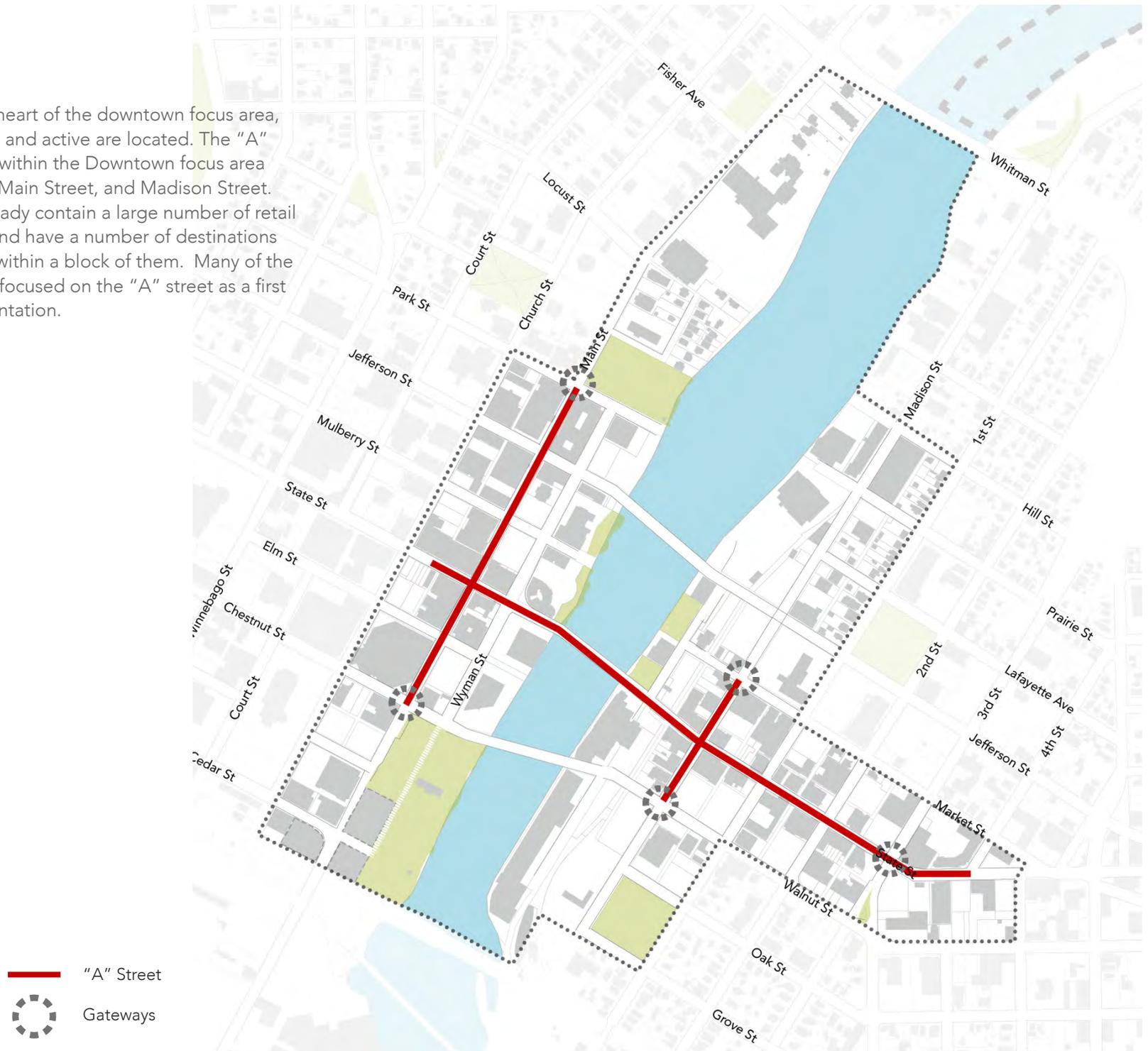
FOCUS AREA

Based on Stakeholder Interviews and input from the City of Rockford, the narrowed focus area was selected within the River Edge Zone as the primary area of implementation for the Downtown Strategic Action Plan. Additionally, nearby neighborhood centers were also identified where strategies can be replicated, as well as larger redevelopment areas that merit additional planning processes of their own.



"A" STREETS

A streets are the heart of the downtown focus area, along which retail and active are located. The "A" streets identified within the Downtown focus area are: State Street, Main Street, and Madison Street. These streets already contain a large number of retail establishments, and have a number of destinations fronting them or within a block of them. Many of the strategies will be focused on the "A" street as a first point of implementation.



"A" STREET:

A street that is designed with or otherwise characterized by features that promote the safety, comfort, and convenience of pedestrians. Such streets typically feature sidewalks at least five feet wide, narrow streets, buildings pulled up close to the street, pedestrian-scaled lighting, on-street parking, aligned building facades, building entrances on the street, and a modest turning radius.

As defined by The Lexicon of New Urbanism
Duany, Plater-Zyberk Co.

"A" STREET IN ANN ARBOR, MI



SIDEWALK
CAFES

HUMAN
SCALED
LIGHTING



STREET
PARKING

WIDE
SIDEWALK

ALIGNED
BUILDING
FACADES

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The existing conditions analysis and mapping of strengths and challenges provided a backdrop for the implementation strategies. Downtown Rockford has great bones, with several high-investment projects underway, a number of historic buildings ripe for redevelopment, unique existing businesses, and extremely popular events that bring thousands of people to Downtown Rockford. Challenges include high-speed, one-way streets that make navigating through Downtown difficult and dangerous for pedestrians, large areas in key locations dedicated to surface parking, and a limited number of people living in the Downtown area.

AMEROCK BUILDING (FUTURE HOTEL)



BMO HARRIS BANK CENTRE



ROCKFORD CITY HALL



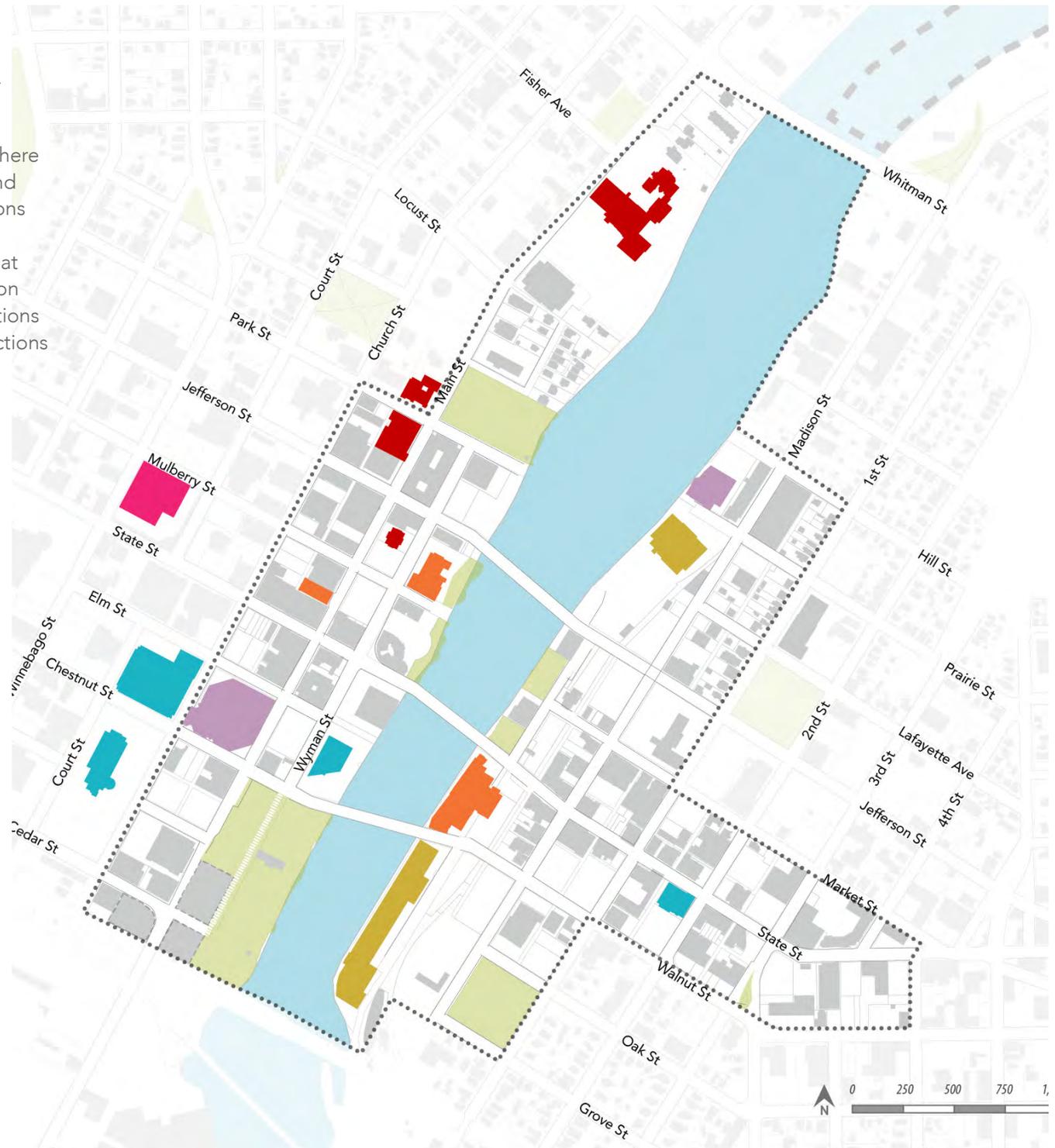
INGERSOLL SPORTS COMPLEX



DESTINATIONS IN THE FOCUS AREA

Destinations play an important role in maintaining street life in a downtown. There are a great number of destinations in and around the focus area. These destinations bring people to Downtown and are an opportunity to capitalize on the draw that they have. Several of the implementation strategies focus on the existing destinations and enhancing them with better connections and increased retail programming.

-  Cultural
-  Civic
-  Sports
-  Community
-  Recreational
- 



ROCKFORD STROLL ON STATE



FRIDAY NIGHT FLIX AT DAVIS PARK



SCREW CITY BEER FEST



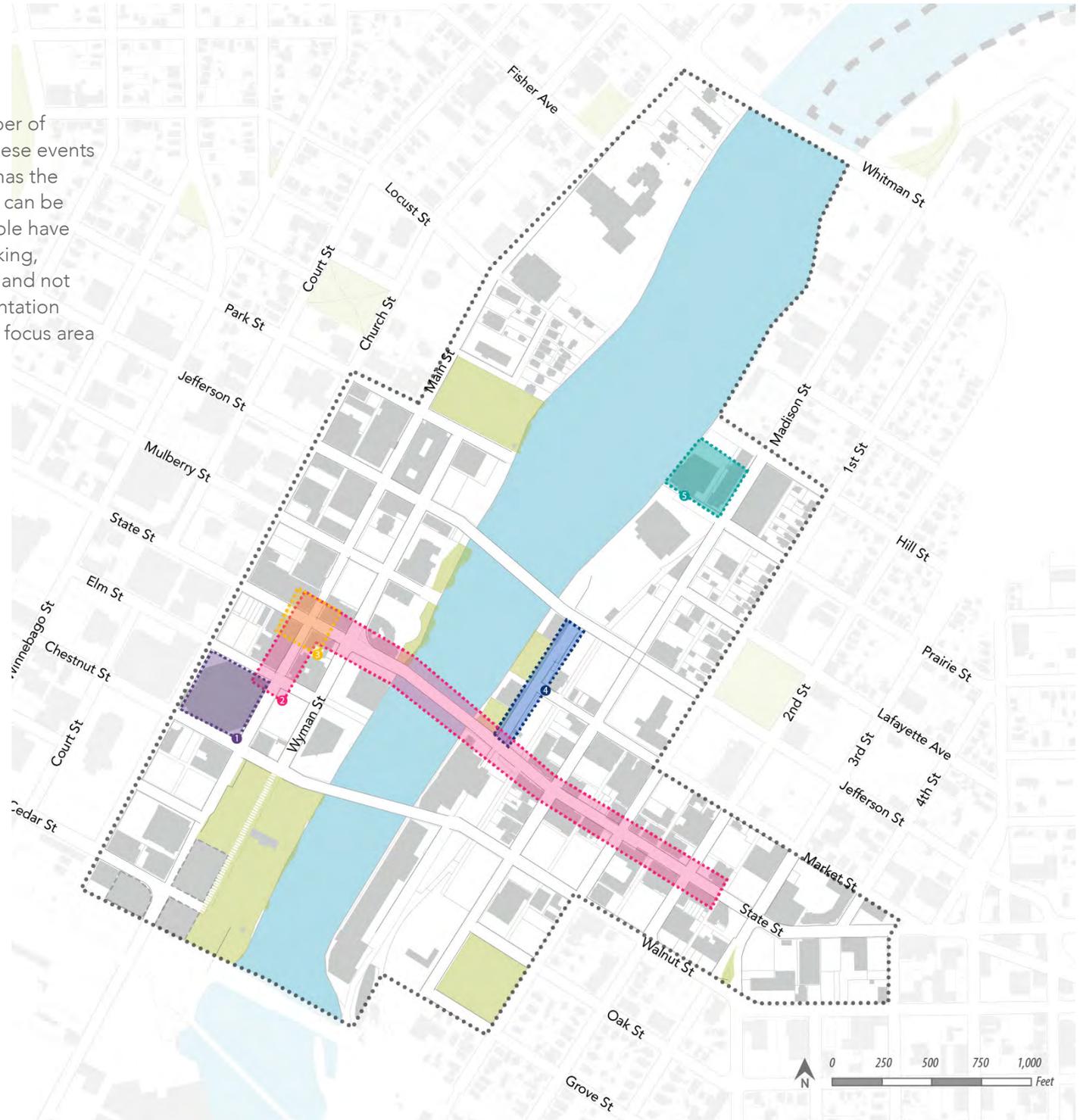
ROCKFORD CITY MARKET



EVENTS IN THE FOCUS AREA

Downtown Rockford hosts a large number of popular events throughout the year. These events are evidence that Downtown Rockford has the ability to draw people to its businesses, can be an vibrant place, and that the view people have regarding Downtown safety, lack of parking, and lack of businesses are perceptions, and not necessarily facts. Many of the implementation strategies use the existing events in the focus area as a testing ground for improvements.

-  City Market
-  Stroll on State
-  Ice Hogs
-  Screw City Beer Fest
-  Dinner on the Dock/
Handmade Market/
Meltfest



PARKING SURPLUS IN THE FOCUS AREA

Parking has been identified as a major concern among residents of Rockford, as well as the City of Rockford. The 2008 Walker Parking Study noted that unlike the perception that there is a lack of parking in the Downtown area, there is actually a surplus of approximately 1,885 spaces.

On the East side, there is a surplus of 480 parking spaces, whereas the West side has a much greater surplus with 1,405 spaces. This is likely due to the fact that there are 3 structured parking decks, which are underutilized.

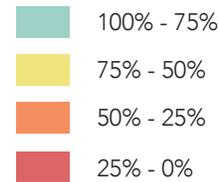
Given the parking surplus, 100,000 sf of vacancy can be easily infilled and accommodate the additional parking spaces needed, even with the parking displaced by the development. Easily accommodate all vacancy



ON-STREET PARKING AVAILABILITY

The Walker Parking study was conducted in 2008. We conducted parking utilization analyses to understand what the current state of parking in the focus area is. A small percentage of the on-street parking is utilized to its full capacity. Most on-street parking has over 50% availability. This doesn't even include the fact that on-street parking is not allowed on some streets. The current parking demand can be easily accommodated with the existing parking supply.

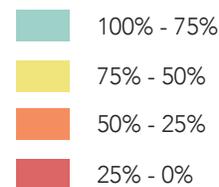
On-Street Parking Availability



PARKING LOTS & GARAGES AVAILABILITY

The parking lots and garages seem to more utilized, though there is still a significant amount of availability. Part of the underutilization may also be due to the fact that some of the parking lots are dedicated for specialty uses that only see patrons on certain days of the week. This can be alleviated by increasing shared parking where uses that occur during different days of the week or different parts of the day can use the same parking facilities.

Parking Lots & Garage Availability



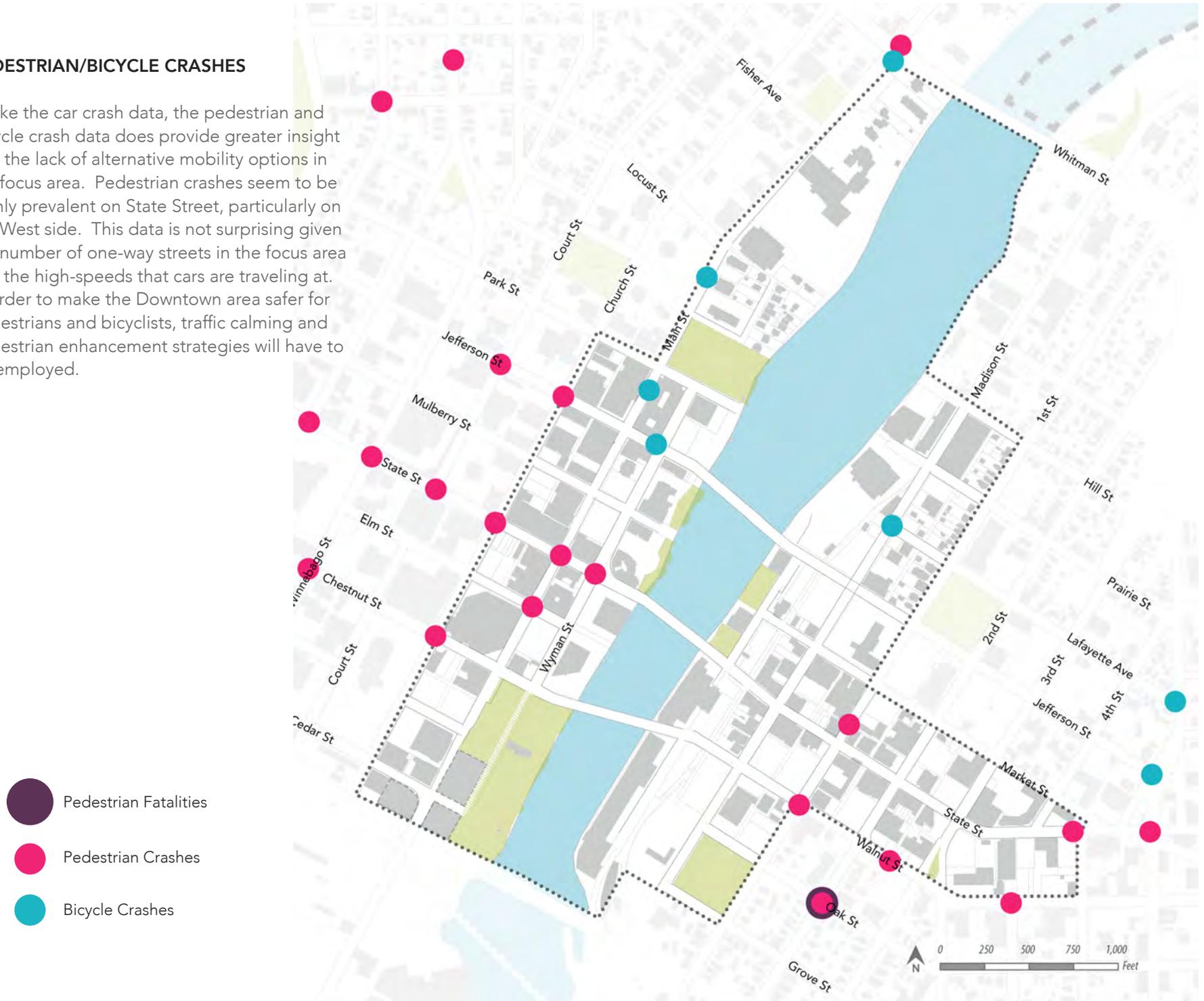
CAR CRASH HOT SPOTS

The car crash hot spots data is not particularly alarming. However, there are a couple of spots that could benefit from traffic calming strategies, particularly on State Street and 2nd, as well as hot spots on Jefferson Street.



PEDESTRIAN/BICYCLE CRASHES

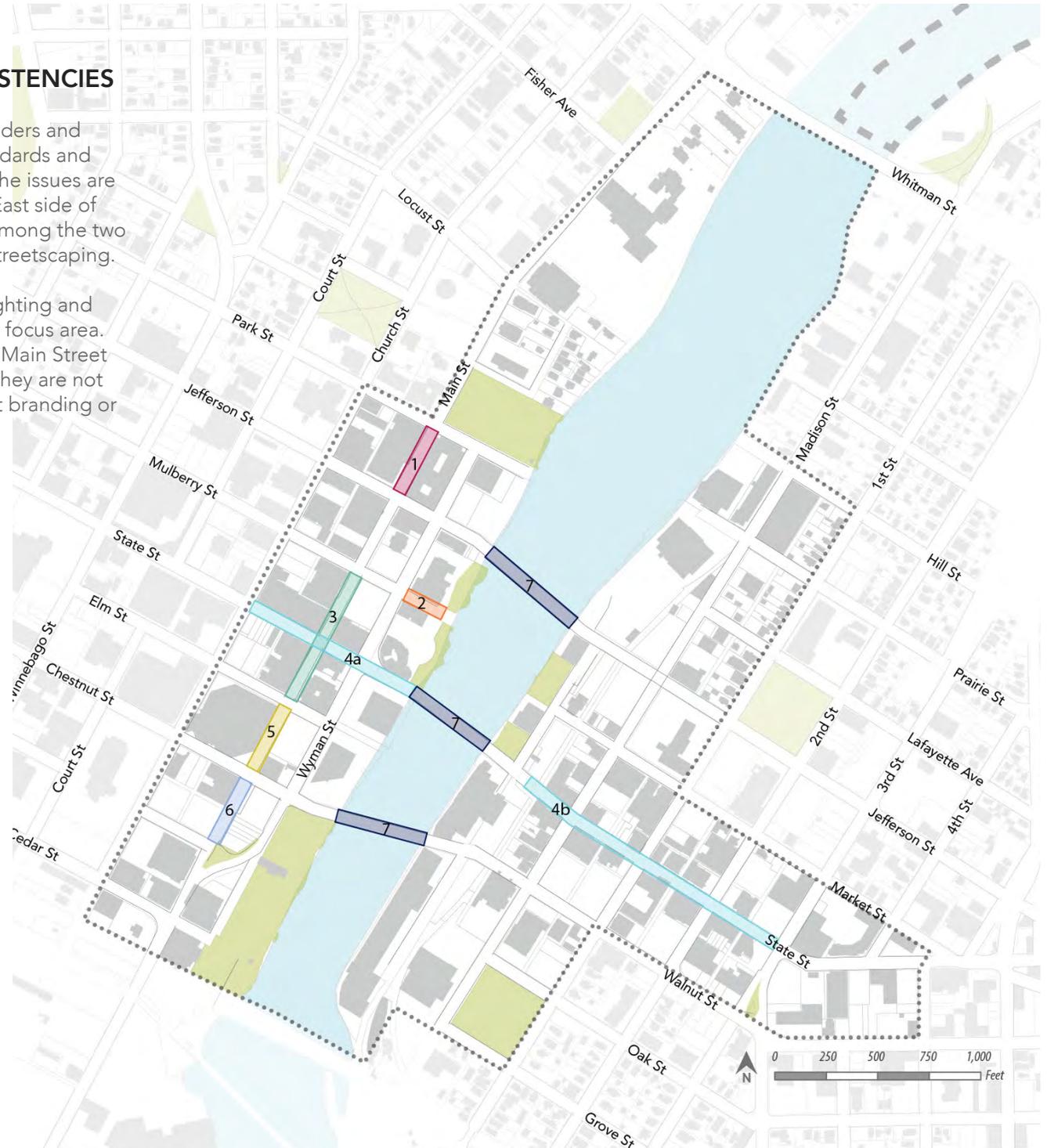
Unlike the car crash data, the pedestrian and bicycle crash data does provide greater insight into the lack of alternative mobility options in the focus area. Pedestrian crashes seem to be highly prevalent on State Street, particularly on the West side. This data is not surprising given the number of one-way streets in the focus area and the high-speeds that cars are traveling at. In order to make the Downtown area safer for pedestrians and bicyclists, traffic calming and pedestrian enhancement strategies will have to be employed.

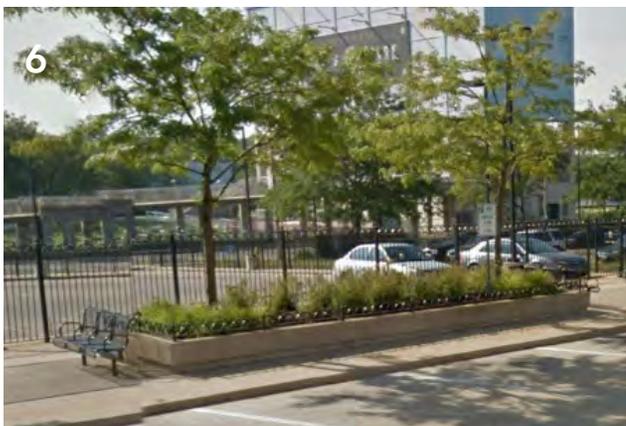


EXISTING STREETScape INCONSISTENCIES

One of the challenges identified by stakeholders and the City of Rockford is the lack of urban standards and the inconsistencies in streetscape design. The issues are especially evident when one compares the East side of the River to the West side. However, even among the two sides, there are extreme inconsistencies in streetscaping.

The map illustrates the variety of different lighting and landscaping elements found throughout the focus area. While some elements such as in Image 3 on Main Street and Image 4B on State Street are pleasant, they are not used enough to create any sort of consistent branding or overall aesthetic of the Downtown.





A TLC APPROACH

Long-term planning processes often result in recommendations that are costly, resource-intensive, and have a timeline of 15-20 years. A **T**[actical], **L**[ean], **C**[limax] approach, on the other hand proposes shorter-term implementation tactics that ultimately lead to high-investment climax conditions. This approach allows for testing through prototypes, and more immediate results that lead to incremental, but impactful development. The implementation strategies are subdivided into TLC strategies that take a larger goal and show how to bring it to fruition through short, mid, and long-term steps.

TIME short-term

TACTICAL
(small-scale interventions)

LEAN
(1-story storefront)



COST low

long-term

CLIMAX
(4-5 story mixed-use)



high



TACTICAL

WHAT IS A "TACTICAL" APPROACH?

The "tactical" part of the TLC approach focuses on tactical interventions to accomplish a larger purpose. Tactical Urbanism, as it is often coined, asks the question "what can we do right away?". The implementation strategies outline low-risk, temporary solutions to help test the market for future, long-term, permanent improvements. These interventions are an opportunity to solicit public excitement or disapproval towards a certain idea. They are also a way to empower everyday citizens to take challenges into their own hands and come up with solutions that can be carried out quickly and with limited resources.

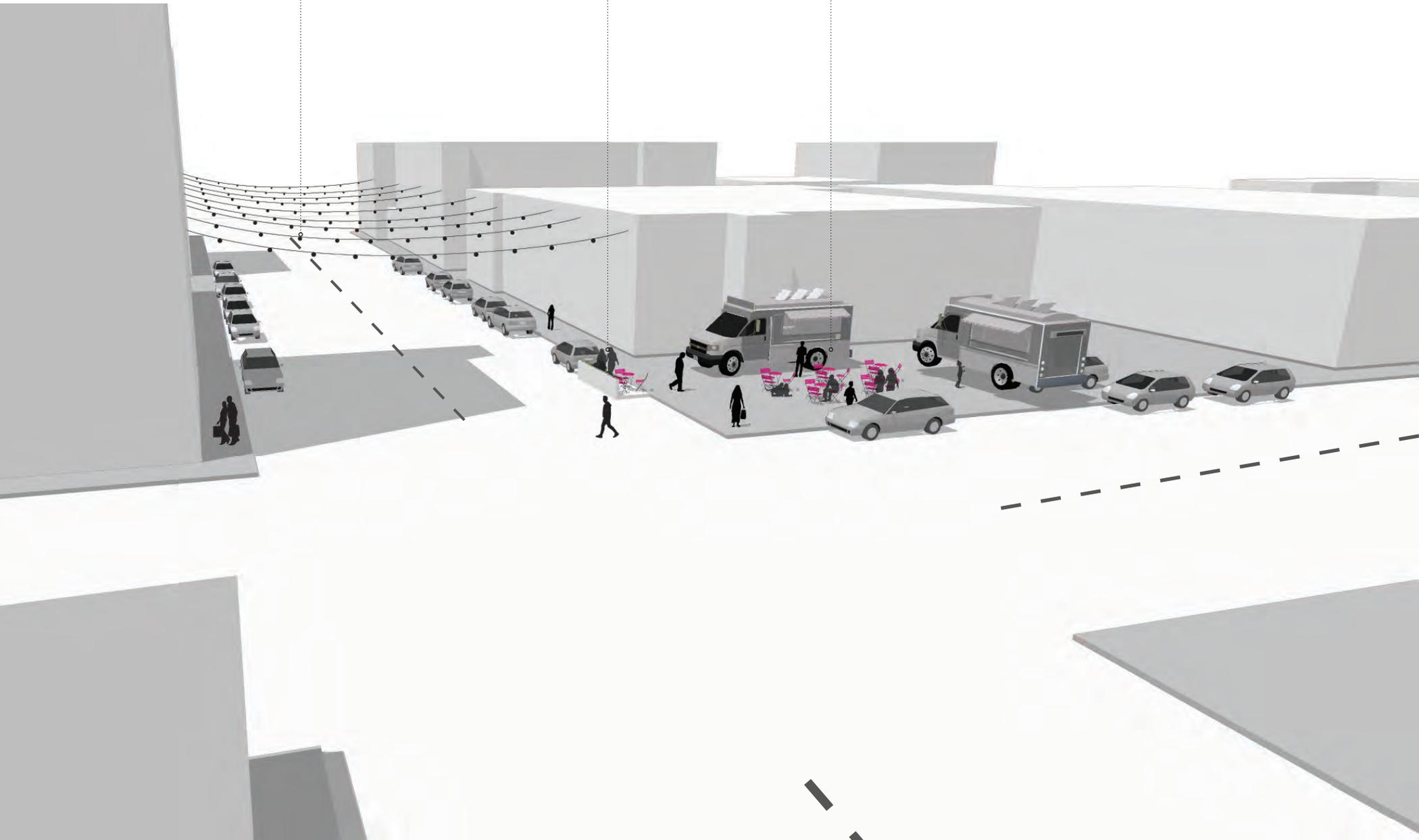
WHAT DO TACTICS LOOK LIKE?

Tactics can be quite simple or elaborate, depending on availability of time and resources. Some interventions include: covering an unsightly blank wall with artwork, decorating vacant storefronts with lighting, or testing future public spaces with a temporary park set up for one day.

Street Lighting

Temporary
Parklet

Temporary
Vendor Spaces



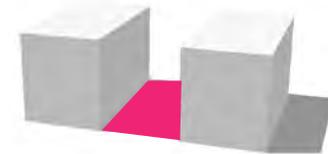
WHERE CAN TACTICS BE IMPLEMENTED?



Blank Wall



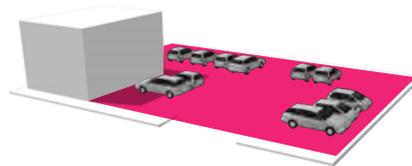
Vacant Storefront



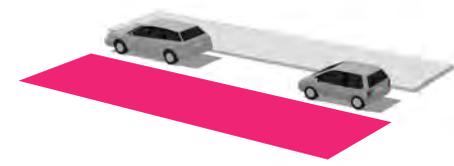
Vacant Lot



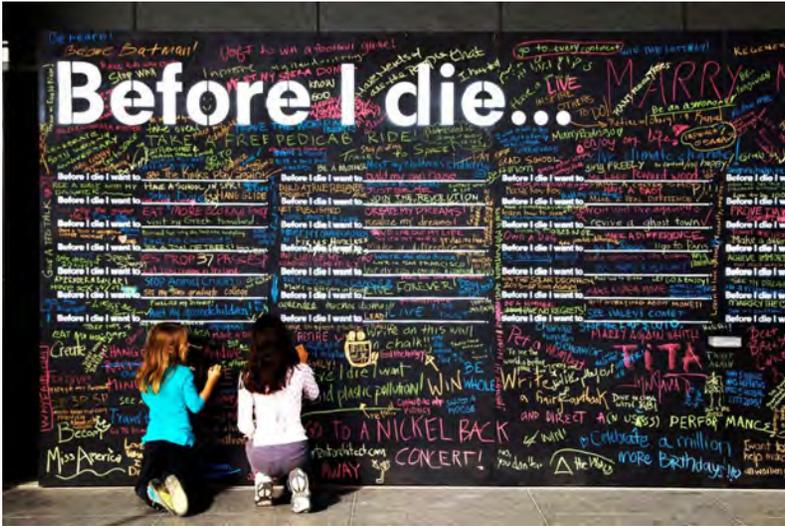
Parking Space



Parking Lot



Street





LEAN

WHAT IS A "LEAN" APPROACH?

Lean strategies are the middle-ground between Tactical Urbanism and Climax development, with an aim to work around the "red tape" that often hinders development and increases costs. Lean strategies are intended to be flexible and adaptable, with a higher level of permanency than tactical interventions. Lean strategies require more resources than tactical ones, however, are still less costly and resource-intensive than climax developments. An example of a lean strategy would be a 1-story retail building or a shallow, retail space made of shipping containers instead of the 4-5 story mixed-use development.

WHAT RESOURCES ARE REQUIRED IN A "LEAN" APPROACH?

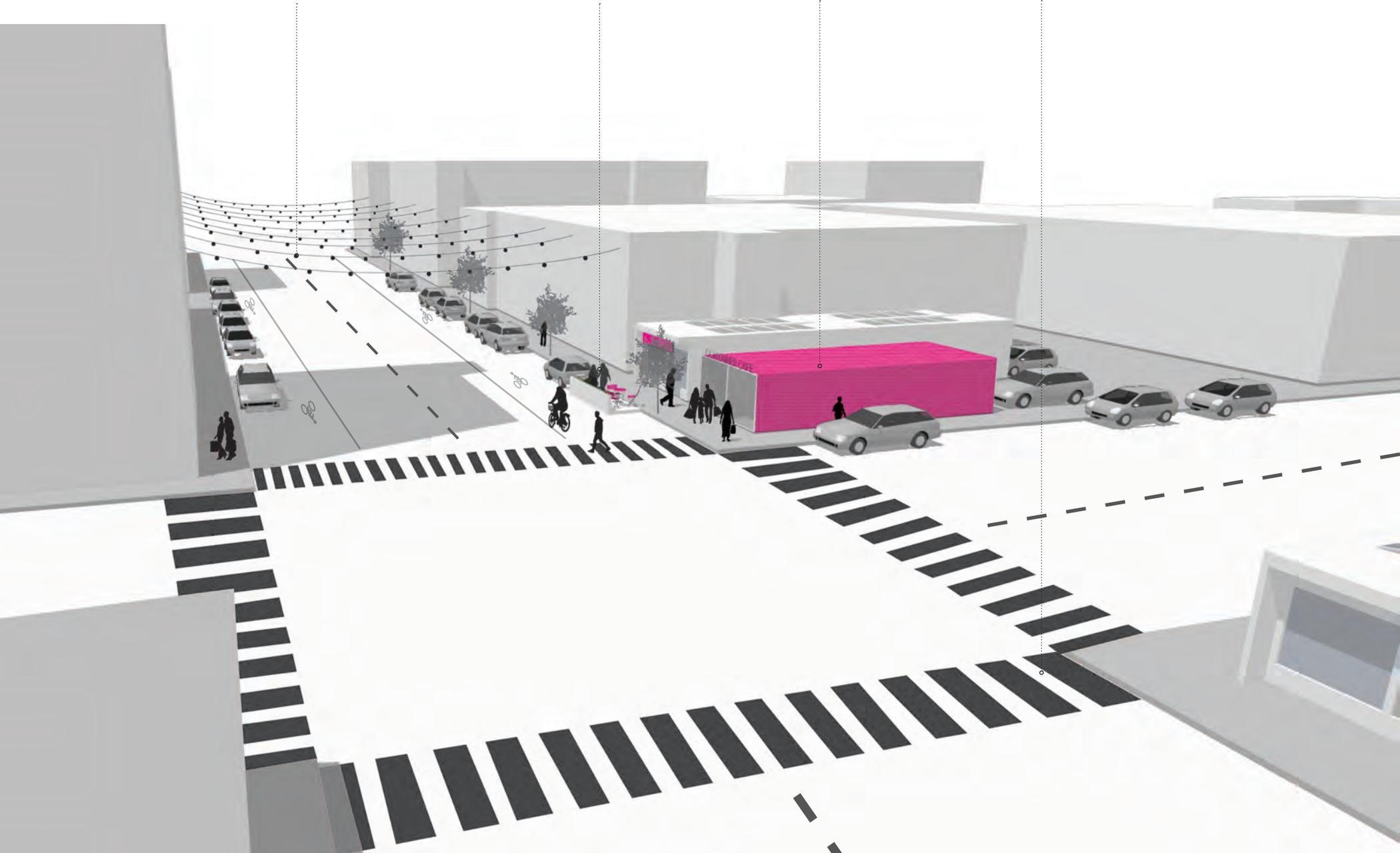
While lean strategies are meant to work around the financial barriers of high-investment developments, they too need creative methods of execution as some strategies (such as shipping containers and temporary pop-up shops) will be a novel idea in many cities and the zoning and legal mechanisms to bring them to fruition will not be in place.

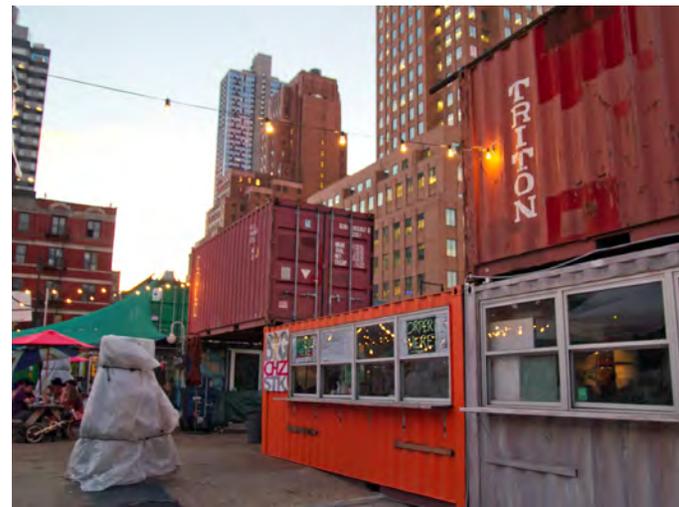
Street
Lighting

Temporary
Parklet

Lean development/
Pop-Up Spaces

Improved
Pedestrian
Amenities





WHAT FORM DO LEAN STRATEGIES TAKE?

Lean strategies can take a multitude of forms, with the caveat that they can be implemented in a relatively short time-frame and are less costly than other strategies that would normally be used to accomplish the same goals. Lean strategies are often intended to be replaced by higher investment developments when the market allows for it and finance mechanisms are available. In the case of Downtown Rockford, lean strategies are proposed as a way to fill storefront and parcel vacancy and test mobility improvements such as bike lanes and road diets.

LEAN RETAIL

Lean retail ranges from testing businesses in vacant storefronts for a period of 3-6 months, to putting up temporary retail in shipping containers in a vacant lot, to building a simple, yet attractive, 1-story retail building. Other lean strategies that can also be used include:

- Limiting depths of retail stops to 20'. If the goal is to complete a street wall with continuous storefronts, the depth of the store is not as important.
- Creating micro-shops and shared business spaces. More and more retailers and restaurateurs are leaning towards smaller business footprints with shared spaces. This limits the amount of startup capital that a business might need and allows grouping of complementary businesses.



CLIMAX

Climax development is the end goal. In the case of Rockford and many other cities, it's what previous plans have called for from the get-go. Climax might look something like a four-story mixed-use building, a new apartment building, or even the permanent adjustment of street sections. This type of development takes a great amount of time, planning, and secure financing. Climax projects often require many partnerships, need greater assurances on return on investment, and more time and thorough planning when it comes to design and engineering.

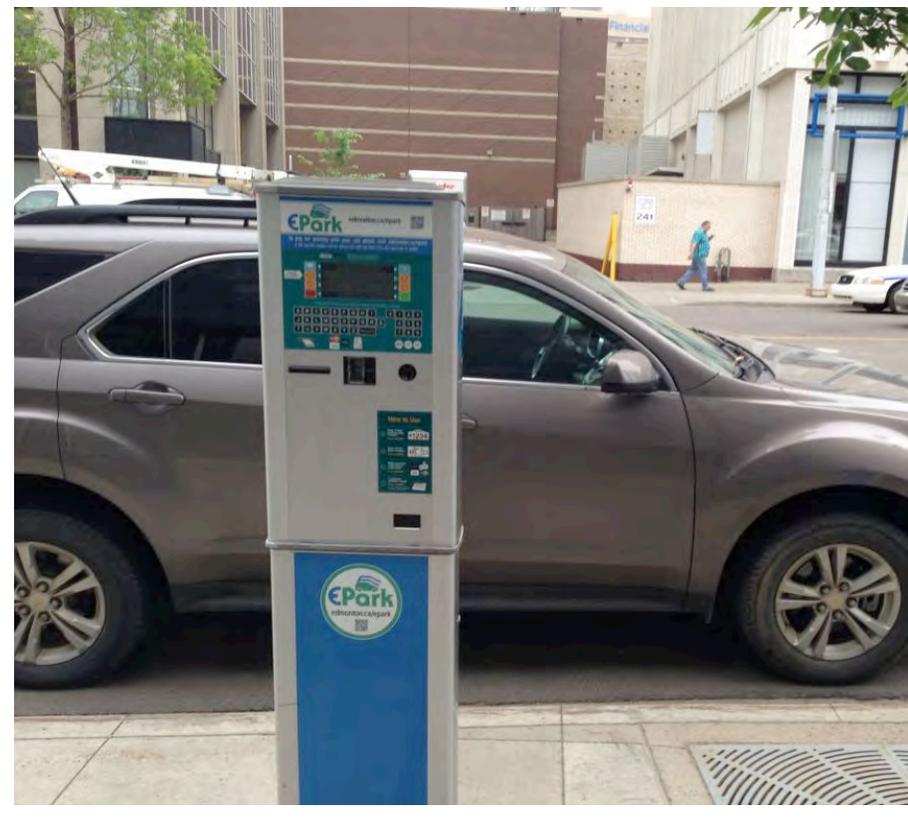
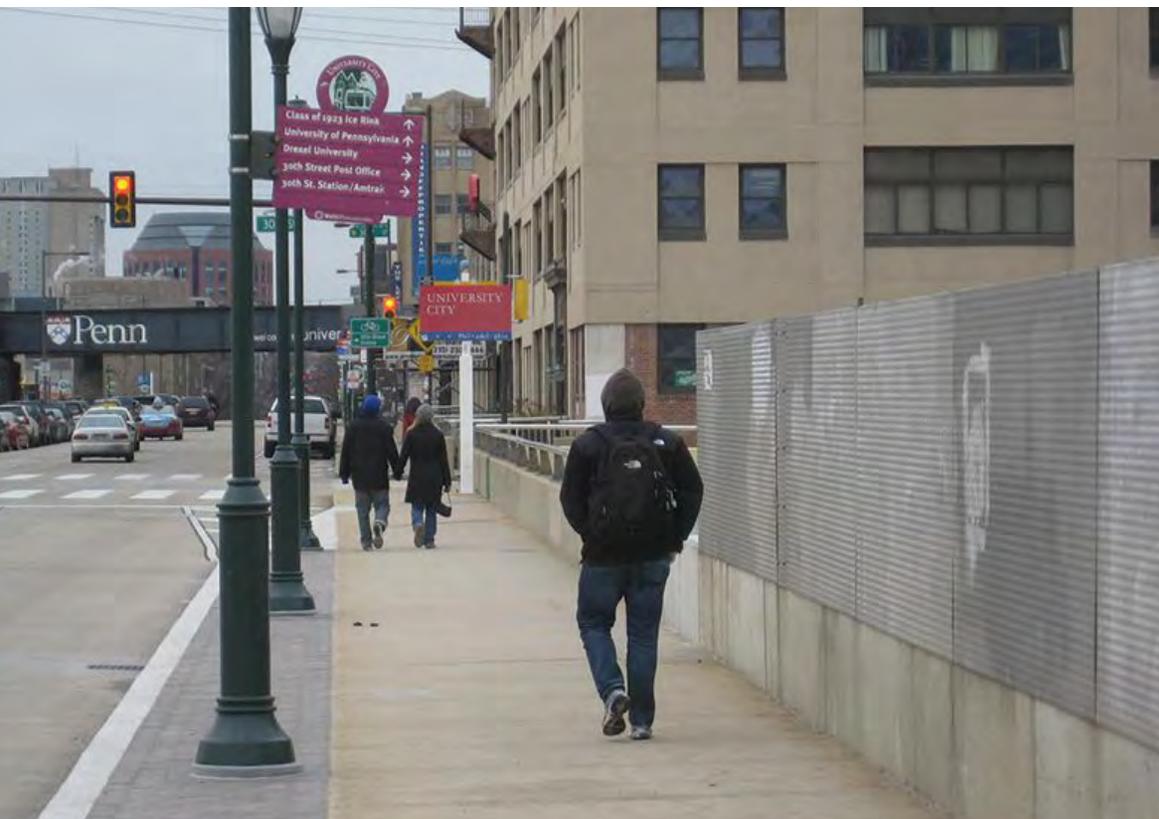
Expanded Outdoor Seating/Parklet

Climax Mixed-Use Development

Improved Pedestrian Amenities

Permanent Streetscape Improvements





WHAT IS THE CLIMAX CONDITION FOR DOWNTOWN ROCKFORD?

Downtown Rockford currently has many climax projects in the pipeline including: Davis Park redevelopment, redevelopment of the Amerock building into a hotel, Amtrak service and station, and the renovation of the Ingersoll Sports Complex. These projects have and will take years to come to fruition and are the result of complex partnerships and financing mechanisms. The completion of these highly catalytic projects will likely lead to further development. Additional climax development in Downtown Rockford will likely include the addition of mixed-use developments, multi-story residential developments, and well-connected waterfront park spaces and trails.

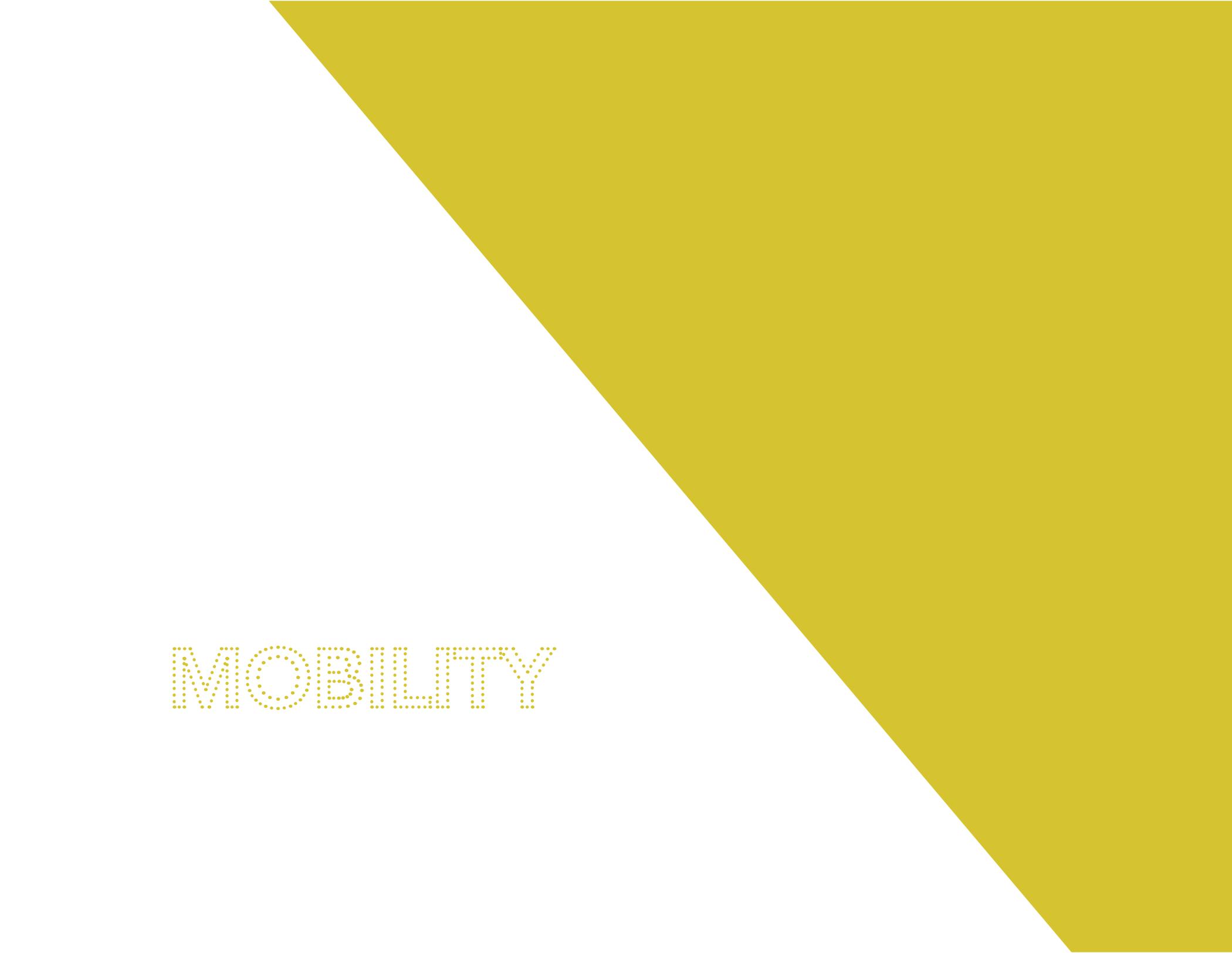
WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS TO IMPLEMENTING THAT CONDITION IN THE NEAR FUTURE?

Climax projects generally require land ownerships, large amounts of money, community backing, and partnerships to come to full realization. There is also an opportunity cost with climax projects, where land and money is held out of for long-term, high investment projects, sometimes at the cost of smaller, but more immediate development opportunities. The City should continue to pursue climax opportunities in the background, however, should also be pursuing lean and tactical opportunities simultaneously.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

The Implementation Strategies are organized into 4 sections: MOBILITY, LARGE REDEVELOPMENT, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, and URBAN DESIGN. A list of end goals are provided for each section and each goal has associated TLC strategies. Partners, timelines, and funding sources are also provided as they relate to each strategy.

The goal of the Implementation Strategies is to provide a clear roadmap for accomplishing the goals laid out by previous planning efforts, as well as, additional goals identified by stakeholders and the City of Rockford.



MOBILITY

- 1 Improve pedestrian mobility and safety throughout Downtown.
- 2 Improve mobility on Chestnut, Walnut, and Jefferson corridors.
- 3 Improve bike connections to and through Downtown.
- 4 Create more on-street parking in Downtown.
- 5 Improve parking strategy throughout Downtown to balance demand.

- 1 Improve pedestrian mobility and safety throughout Downtown.

		STRATEGIES	LEAD AGENCY	PARTNERS	TIMELINE	FUNDING
TACTICAL	1	Test shared-use space on State Street for 3 months	Public Works		Summer 2015	

LEAN	1	Utilize parking spaces as temporary parklets	Public Works	River District	Summer 2015	
	2	Refresh/add crosswalk striping and tighten curb radii on identified intersections	Public Works		2017	CIP
		Conduct a study on the current use of CIP funding and other funding sources to evaluate how improvements can be financed.	COR	Public Works	2015	

CLIMAX	1	Permanently reduce travel lanes on State Street Bridge to one in each direction	Public Works	IDOT	CIP 5-Yr Plan; 2020	
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CONVERT PARKING SPACES TO PARKLETS

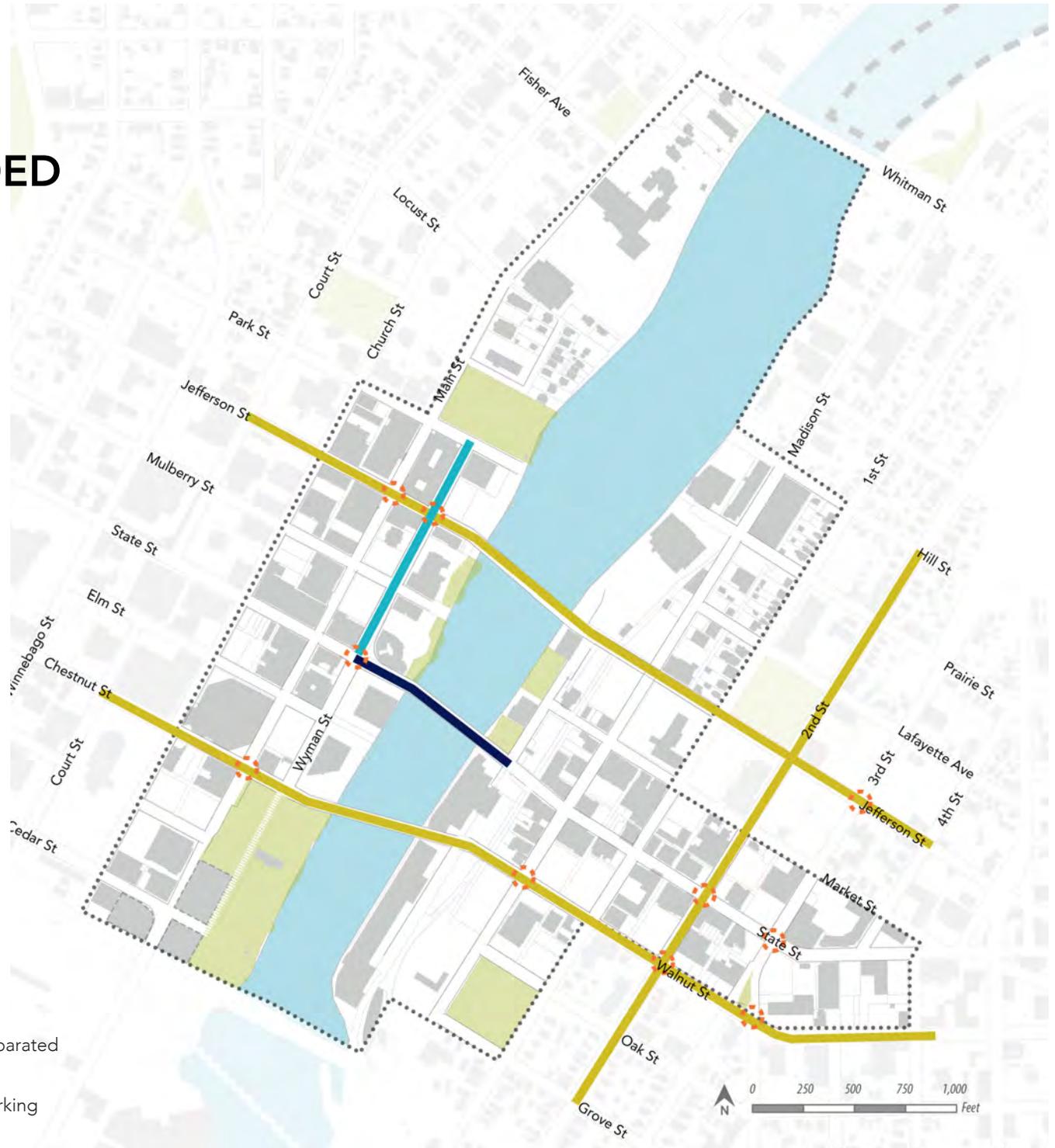
TEXT TO BE ADDED



MOBILITY IMPROVEMENTS

TEXT TO BE ADDED

-  Temporary Wayfinding
-  Reduce travel lanes
-  Reduce travel lanes and add separated bike facility and/or parking
-  Reduce travel lanes and add parking



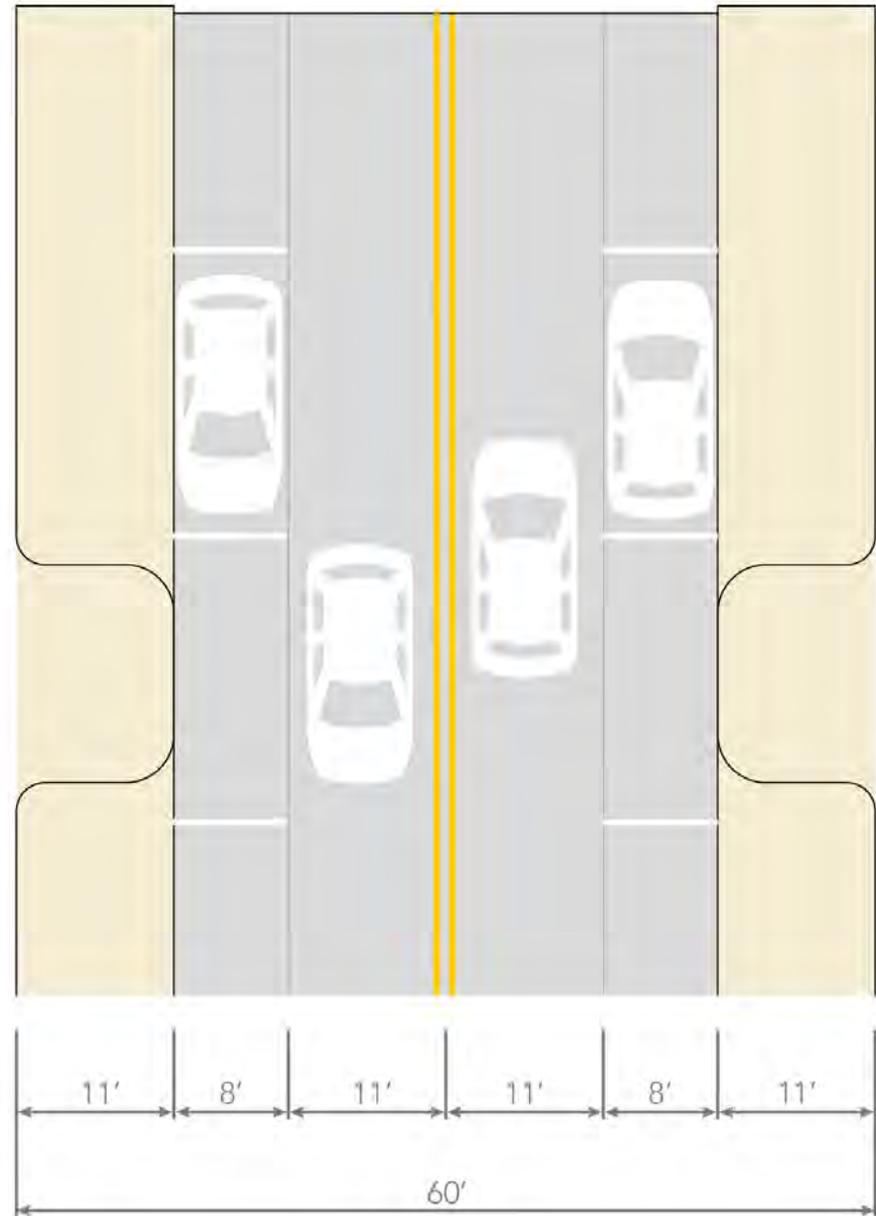
PROPOSED STATE STREET CONVERSION

It is recommended that State Street be reduced to two travel lanes (one in each direction), with parking on both sides. Recommendations for the State Street conversion include:

- Widen Sidewalk
- On-Street Parking
- Curb Extension
- 2-Lane Travel

An example of this conversion can be seen in Fox River. The Main Street (IL 64) bridge over the Fox River provides an inviting connection between the east and west sides of downtown St. Charles, IL with wide sidewalks, curb extensions, on-street parking, river lookouts, gateway features and pedestrian-oriented lighting.

PROPOSED STATE STREET IMPROVEMENTS





2

Improve mobility on Chestnut/
Walnut, and Jefferson corridors.

	STRATEGIES	LEAD AGENCY	PARTNERS	TIMELINE	FUNDING	
TACTICAL	1	Test shared-use space on Jefferson Bridge for 3 months	Public Works		Summer 2016	

LEAN	1	Continue development of an event ingress/egress plan	Public Works	River District	2016	
	2	Negotiate with IDOT to study capacity requirements for bridge/corridors further. At a minimum, modify IDOT Chestnut Bridge MUP cross sections to reduce travel lanes to 11' and widen sidewalk	Public Works	IDOT	Immediately	
	3	Conduct a traffic study to determine if Walnut and Jefferson can be reduced to (2) travel lanes each. ADT indicates that they can with appropriate signal intersection improvements	Public Works	IDOT	Initiate in 2015	

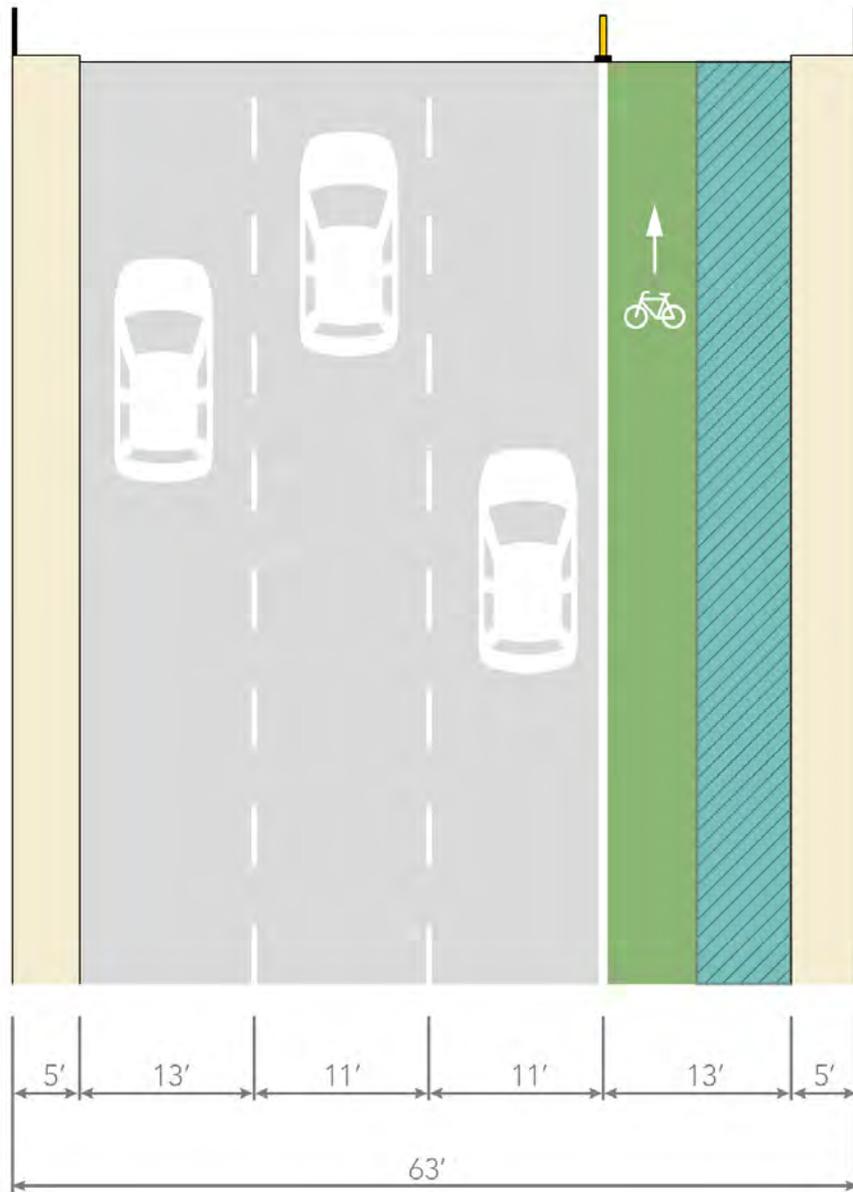
CLIMAX	1	Reduce travel lanes and add separated bike facilities and on-street parking	Public Works	IDOT	2020	
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JEFFERSON STREET BRIDGE INTERVENTION

Similar to the tactical intervention on the State Street Bridge, it is recommended that the Jefferson Street Bridge also be temporarily converted to test a shared-use space. One travel lane should be converted to a shared space with flexible bollards, rubber pads, planters, etc.



PROPOSED JEFFERSON STREET BRIDGE INTERVENTION



JEFFERSON & CHESTNUT IMPROVEMENTS

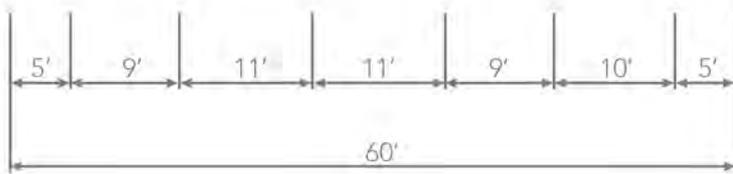
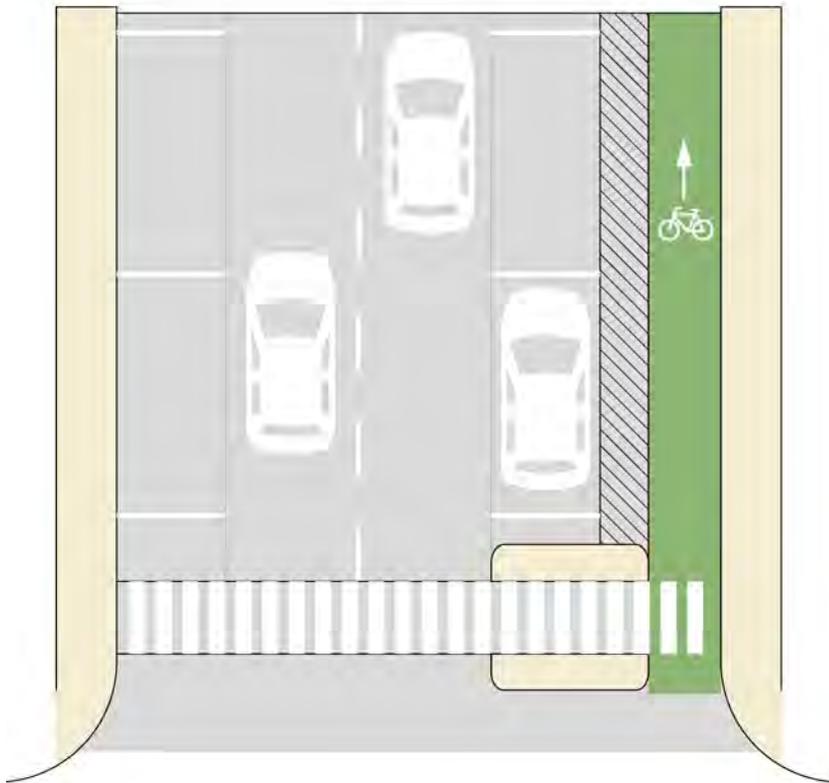
The ADT on Jefferson and Walnut is approx. 8500-9700 each. As a comparison, Neil Street/Walnut Street form a one-way pair through downtown Champaign and successfully carry 7500-9000 vehicles with two travel lanes each.

Walnut Street through downtown Champaign is one-way pair with Neil Street and successfully carries approximately 9,000 vehicles per day with two travel lanes, on-street parking and a bike lane.



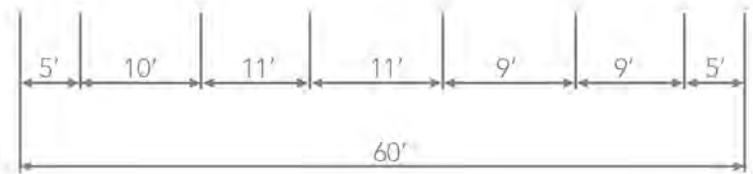
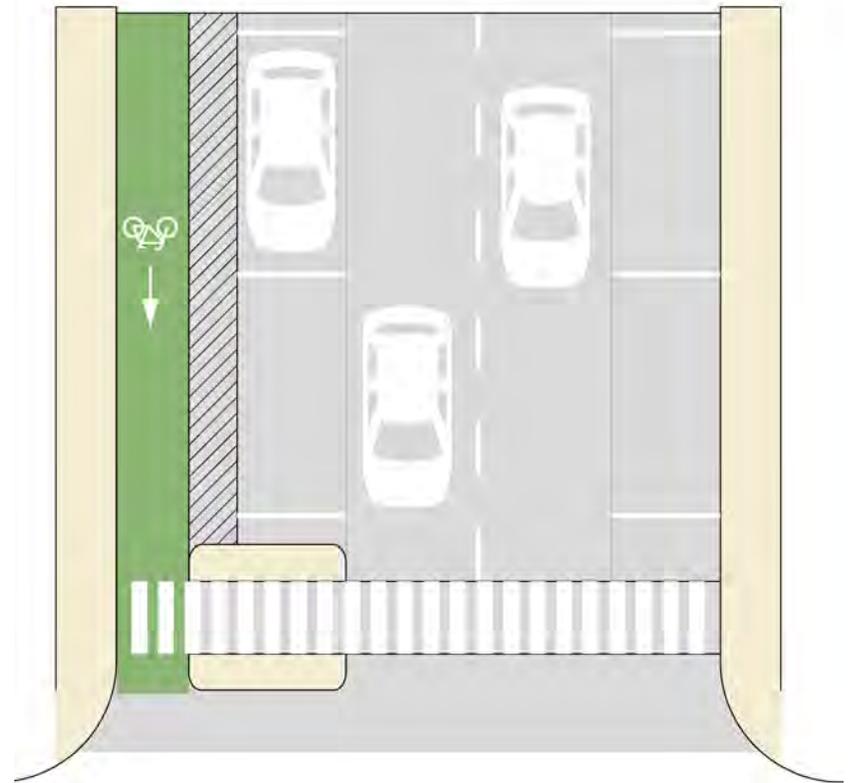
Walnut Street through Downtown Champaign

PROPOSED JEFFERSON CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS



- One-Way Traffic
- Reduce to 2 travel lanes
- Protected Bike Lane
- On-Street Parking
- Optional Median Island/Curb Extensions

PROPOSED WALNUT CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS



- One-Way Traffic
- Redice to 2 travel lanes
- Protected Bike Lane
- On-Street Parking
- Optional Median Island/Curb Extensions

3

Improve bike connections through
and to Downtown.

		STRATEGIES	LEAD AGENCY	PARTNERS	TIMELINE	FUNDING
TACTICAL	1	Continue to hold reoccurring biking events (i.e Critical Mass) centered around Downtown	COR - WB	River District Association; RMAP; RPD	Ongoing	

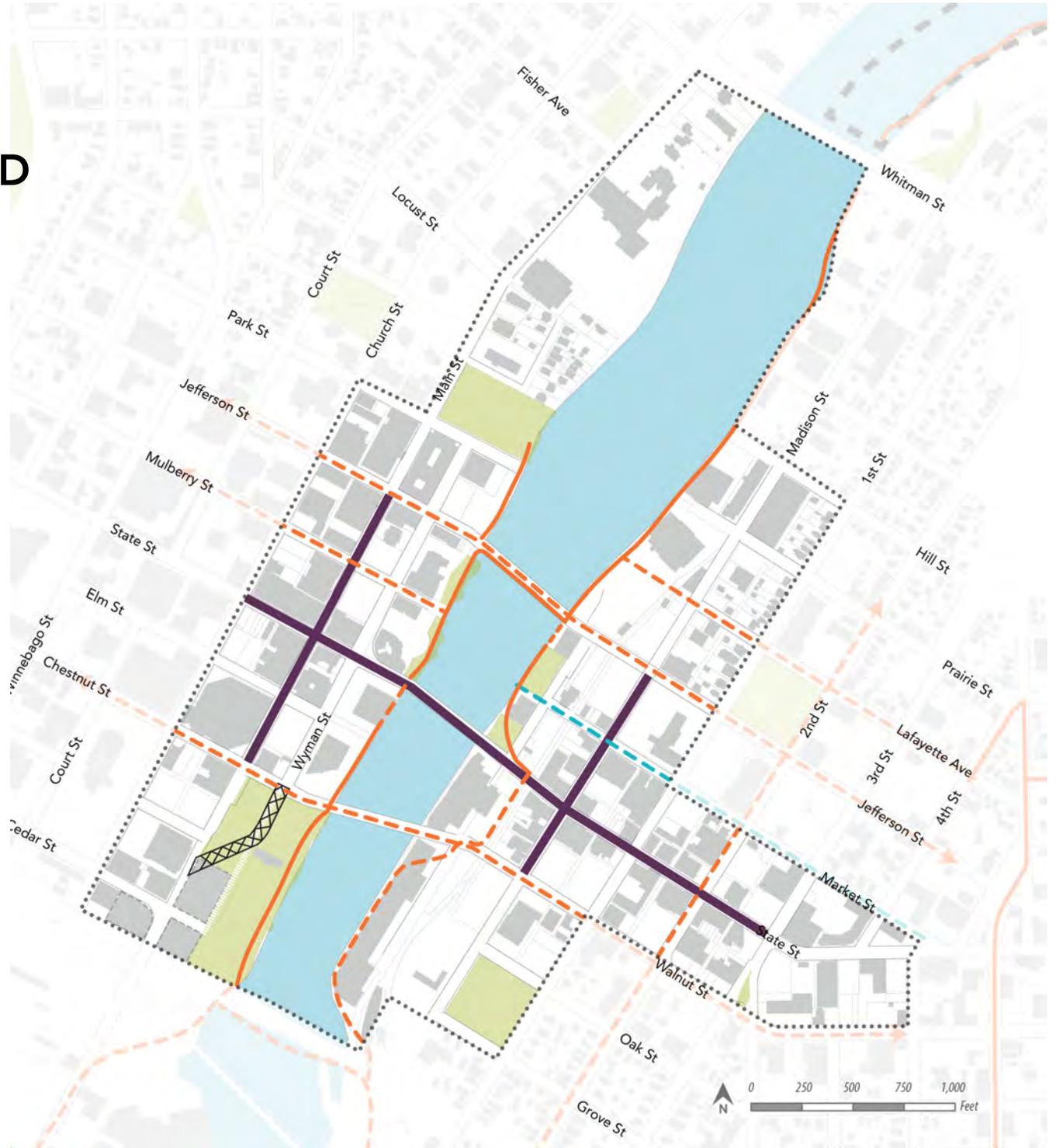
LEAN	1	Fill in on-street bike routes/ signage connecting trails to Downtown (Mulberry, Lafayette, and Market are a priority)	Public Works		2016	
	2	Develop a bike facilities master plan	Rockford Community Partners	RMAP	Initiate in 2016	
	3	Require new developments and places of employment to provide bike parking for employees and residents	COR	Develoeprs/ Employers	Inititate in 2016	
	4	Commission a feasbility study on the riverfront bike/ped connection from (South) IL Railway Bridge to the (North) Museum Campus on both sides of the river				

CLIMAX	1	Reduce travel lanes on Walnut & Jefferson and add separated bike lanes	Public Works	IDOT	2020	
	2	Ensure connection through Ingersoll/abandoned rail/ alley connection to existing riverfront trail	Public Works		2017	
	3	Study the feasibility of Downtown bike share	COR		2018	

PROPOSED BIKE PLAN

TEXT TO BE ADDED

- "A" Street
- Existing Bikeways
- - - Planned Bikeways
- · - · Priority On-Street Route



BIKE SHARE

Bike share is a point to point transit system that provides a mobility option that is flexible, fun, and affordable. In larger cities, such as New York and Chicago, bike share has changed how people get around the city and expanded the amount of destinations they can get to in a short amount of time. Bike share is essentially a pedestrian accelerator that allows people to cover a larger walkshed in a shorter amount of time.

CHALLENGES OF BIKE SHARE

The challenge that most cities have faced is building a bike share system and structure that is attractive to demographics of people that don't normally bike during the day. A successful bike share system requires building a membership that encompasses all demographics that are willing to use it to make short point to point trips. Achieving this goal requires a dense system of bike share stations as well as a membership/cost structure that does not create any barriers to entry.

BIKE FEASIBILITY STUDY

It is recommended that Rockford complete a bike share feasibility study as the next step in implementation. The study would cost \$25,000-\$40,000 and would include bike share station siting, identification of the best structure of the system and potential vendors. If the study were completed in 2016, an initial bike share system could be installed in 2017.

It is strongly recommended that the system be as dense as possible, while covering as much area. The initial startup cost of the system will likely be in the range of \$500,000 to \$1,000,000 depending on the number of stations and the type of technology used. This startup cost can be covered either through a public/private collaboration or grants. It is recommended that the system and operating structure be designed to cover annual operating costs after year two. Sponsorship should be considered for a revenue stream, but it is unlikely that it will cover the initial capital expenses.



- 4 Create more on-street parking in Downtown Rockford.

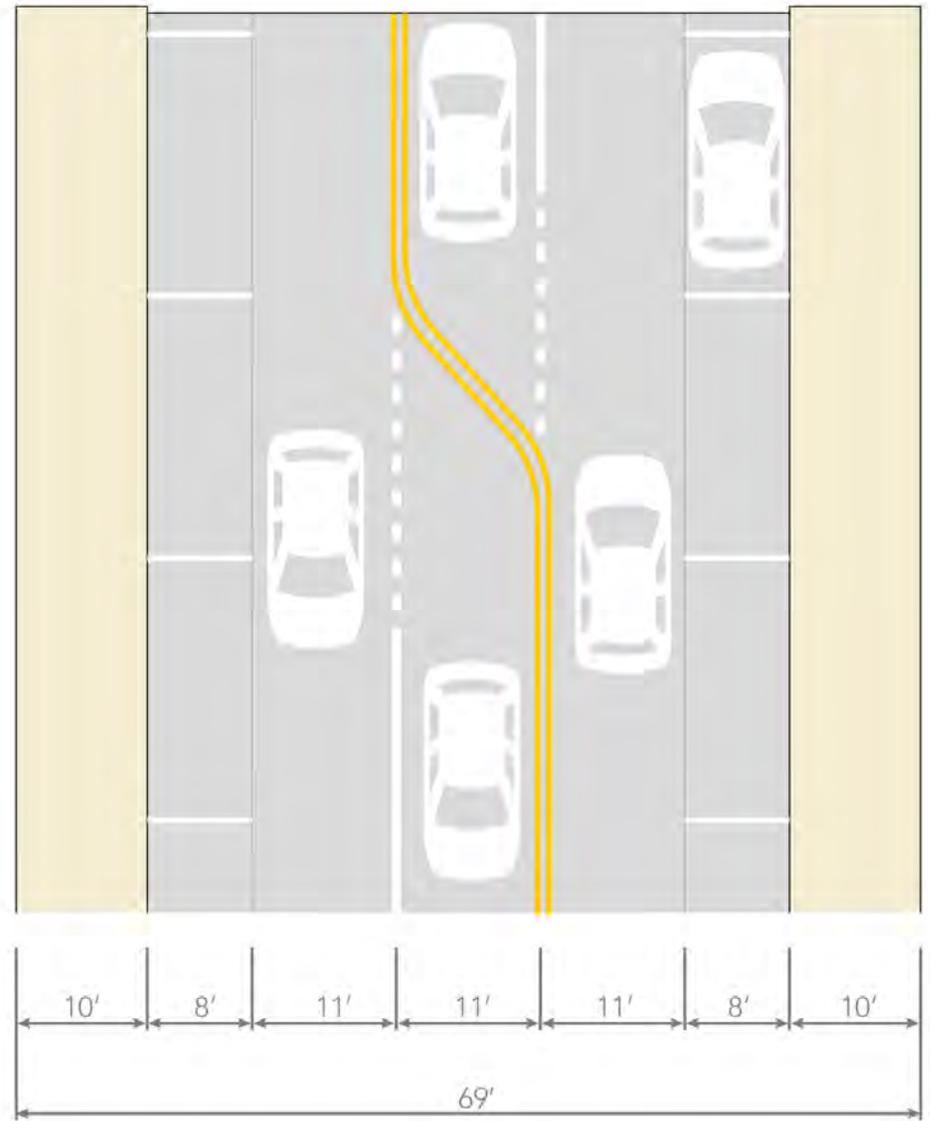
		STRATEGIES	LEAD AGENCY	PARTNERS	TIMELINE	FUNDING
LEAN	1	Continue to pursue transfer of Wyman from State of Illinois	Public Works	IDOT	2018	

CLIMAX	1	Modify cross section to include parallel parking on the northbound side of Wyman Street	Public Works	IDOT	2020	
	2	Add on-street parking in identified locations on State, Jefferson, and Walnut Streets	Public Works		2018	

ADDITION OF ON-STREET PARKING

TEXT TO BE ADDED

PROPOSED WYMAN STREET IMPROVEMENTS



- Reduce Travel Lanes
- On-Street Parking (both sides)
- Turn Lane at Intersections (needs to be studied)



Test on-street parking on the east side of Wyman Street between Jefferson and State to demonstrate the benefits.



Add on-street parking to State Street locations shown in red.



Once the JD on Wyman Street is complete, reduce travel lanes and provide on-street parking where possible as shown in the Wyman Corridor plan.



Test shared use concept on Chestnut Bridge between Water and Wyman Street to demonstrate increased bike/ped capacity. Test on-street parking in select locations on Walnut in conjunction with the shared use test on the Chestnut Bridge.

- 5 Improve parking strategy throughout Downtown to balance demand.

	STRATEGIES	LEAD AGENCY	PARTNERS	TIMELINE	FUNDING	
TACTICAL	1	Install temporary signage, and/or lights at garages on event days	COR	RACVB; City Market	Summer 2015	

LEAN	1	Encourage “park once” attitude by creating an appealing pool of public parking (wayfinding, lighting, well-maintained clean decks, and improved general mobility and from).	COR	RACVB	2016	
	2	Better enforce parking time limits	COR		2016	
	3	Work with employers to provide employee parking in decks or lots	River District		2016	
	4	Work with retailers to create incentives to shop	River District		2015	
	5	Test parking meters by installing at key locations on “A” streets	Public Works		2018	

CLIMAX	1	Develop a Downtown Parking Authority	COR		2017	
	2	Install meters with mobile app/payment options	Downtown Parking Authority	Public Works	2020	
	3	Install technology at parking garages to let people know of real-time parking availability	Downtown Parking Authority	Public Works	2020	
	4	Adjust garage pricing structure to balance demand with market-rate on-street spaces.	Downtown Parking Authority	Public Works	2020	



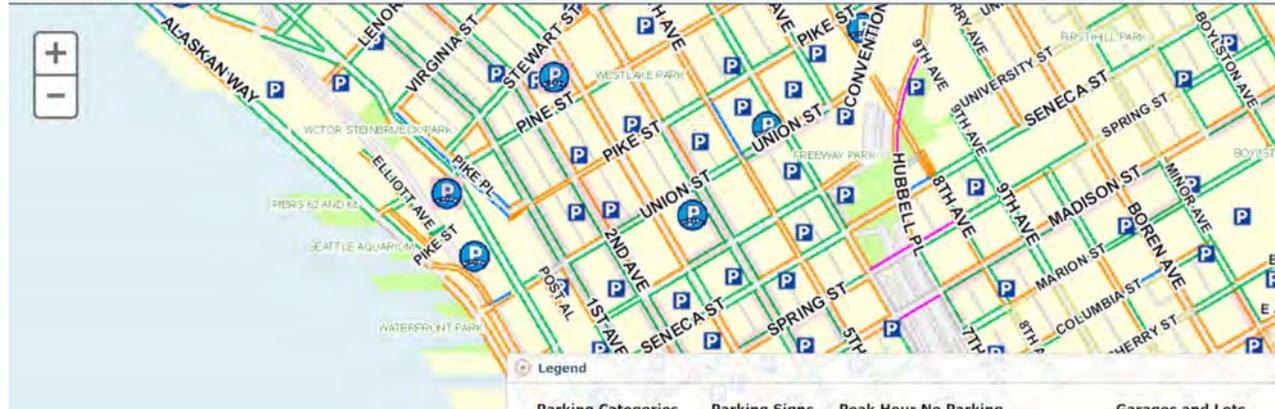
Department of Transportation

Delivering a first-rate transportation system for Seattle

Scott Kubly, Director

Seattle Parking Map

Find Address or Landmark Go Clear Downtown Commerci Street Map Aerial View Full Extent Prev Extent Get Link



General Parking Info

This map shows on- and off-street parking facilities and information with special focus on short-term parking in downtown and in neighborhood business districts, and eligibility for restricted parking zones.

- Garages and Lots
- Street Parking by Category
- Street Parking Signs
- Temporary No Parking
- Peak Hour No Parking
- Addresses Eligible for PD7 Permits

CLIMAX PARKING CONDITION

Even though there is a great parking surplus, most of the parking availability is on the West side. When the vacancy that currently exists is infilled, there is a possibility that there may be a need for additional parking decks, particularly on the East side. If residential units are added, it is assumed that many of them will self-park on-site, but there may be conditions where on-street parking and site conditions may leave a parking deficiency.

However, when taking into account the addition of on-street parking and changes in lifestyles focusing more on alternate modes of transportation, the need for additional parking decks may not be necessary after all, therefore, the need for additional parking should be strongly studied before adding. Even if parking decks are added, they should be designed to accommodate retail or offices on the ground floor.

OPTIMIZING PARKING THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

New parking meters are already equipped with technology that allows for mobile payment options. However, technology can also be added to parking decks, allowing people to see the number of available parking spaces in real-time. This information will reduce the misperceptions people may have about lack of parking and allow people to see the abundance of parking that exists.

 Potential Parking Deck locations





LARGE

REDEVELOPMENT

- 1 Redevelop the Rockford Public Library as an anchor and learning institution of the future in Downtown Rockford.
- 2 Redevelop Davis Park to become a stronger anchor in Downtown Rockford.
- 3 Redevelop the Wellness Center as a “healthy living” anchor in Downtown Rockford.
- 4 Build an Aquarium in Downtown Rockford.
- 5 Continue to pursue large scale redevelopment projects.

1

Redevelop the Rockford Public Library as an anchor and learning institution of the future in Downtown Rockford.

		STRATEGIES	LEAD AGENCY	PARTNERS	TIMELINE	FUNDING
TACTICAL	1	Use the Library as a venue for programs by joint partnerships (i.e. Rock Valley College, RMAP, EIGER Lab, etc.)	Library Board	RMAP, Rock Valley College, EIGER Lab	2016	
LEAN	1	Consider using vacant storefronts as "pop-up libraries" - this will activate vacant storefronts and create temporary satellite libraries during the redevelopment	COR	RACVB	2016	
CLIMAX	1	Continue to work with ComEd to redevelop the Library in Downtown Rockford - arrive at a vision and secure partnerships/ funding	Library Board	ComEd	2016	

THE IMPORTANCE OF LIBRARIES TO DOWNTOWNS

Public libraries of the 21st century are no longer just repositories of books and research materials, but are expanding their scope to become economic contributors and providing digital and technological services to diverse users. They operate as spaces for educational meetups, caregivers for working parents, job training centers, and more recently as the neighborhood coffee shop or co-working space.

Given this increase in function, libraries have become dynamic activity centers and are extremely beneficial for downtowns that want to attract a mix of patrons and innovation.

LIBRARIES ARE CATALYSTS FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT.

Libraries are often very highly regarded and have a great ability to attract foot traffic and provide long-term tenancy. They are also very complementary to retail and cultural destinations, making Downtown Rockford a good location for the Public Library. Great precedents for downtown library locations can be found in Des Plaines, IL and Rockville, MD, where new libraries have transformed into strong downtown anchors.

LIBRARIES CAN REVIVE VACANT STOREFRONTS.

They also have the ability to provide economic revitalization in a neighborhoods suffering from vacancy. Some libraries have opened temporary satellite locations in vacant storefronts. This brings people to a storefront normally overlooked and once the library leaves, the building is more likely to become developed now that it has attracted more attention and building conditions have been improved by the Library. Once such example of this was in Boston, where a storefront library experiment was conducted for 12 weeks. In that period, 540 library cards were issued, 1,374 books were circulated, and 110 events were held!



Downtown Public Library-
Rockville, MD



Storefront Library Experiment
Boston, MA



Palisades Storefront Library
Mesa County, CO

LIBRARY PARTNERSHIPS

MAKER SPACE

As libraries transform from managing large amounts of printed collections to more digital forms of learning, maker spaces are a great addition to newer models of hands-on learning. Maker spaces can include 3d printers, computers, electronics, printing presses, and other tools. The addition of maker spaces in libraries also expands the audience that would normally use a library.

CULINARY ARTS

While hospitality amenities have been a part of libraries for some time, some libraries are going a step further and adding kitchens for cooking demonstrations and educating users on healthy living.

Madison's Meadowbridge Library has a mission of supporting community interests so when they decided to move into a new site, a community kitchen became a part of the plan. The kitchen naturally aligns with the library's goals to educating, learning by doing, and creating a collaborative setting.

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Educational institutions and libraries are a natural fit as they coincide on their mission of educating the masses.

Downtowns are a particularly interesting location for such collaboration as many educational institutions want to situate themselves in centers of activity. Institutions such as the Savannah College of Art and Design have also taken on the goal of revitalizing old historic buildings in downtown Savannah. Their first renovated building led to 60 facilities in the downtown area.

Downtown Rockford is uniquely positioned to be the breeding ground for such a partnership as several educational institutions, such as Rock Valley College and Northern Illinois University are already intersecting with Downtown facilities.



2

Redevelop Davis Park to become a stronger anchor in Downtown Rockford.

TBD

**DAVIS PARK VISIONING
CURRENTLY IN PROGRESS**

3

Redevelop the Wellness Center as a “healthy living” anchor in Downtown Rockford.

TBD

**CONTENT CONTINGENT
ON WELLNESS
CHARRETTE & VISIONING**

4

Build an aquarium in
Downtown Rockford.

		STRATEGIES	LEAD AGENCY	PARTNERS	TIMELINE	FUNDING
TACTICAL	1	Generate excitement towards the Aquarium (i.e. Fish and Chips)	Aquarium Board	RWRD; Rockford Park District; RDA; RACVB	2015/2016	
LEAN	1	Install a pop-up aquarium in a vacant storefront or other temporary location (i.e. Museum Campus)	Aquarium Board	RWRD; Rockford Park District; RACVB; RPL; RDA	2016	
CLIMAX	1	Find investors and construct Aquarium in Downtown Rockford	Aquarium Board	RAEDC; RACVB; RPL; RPS 205; RWRD; Winnebago County; RLDC; RDA; investors	2018	

FUTURE ROCKFORD AQUARIUM

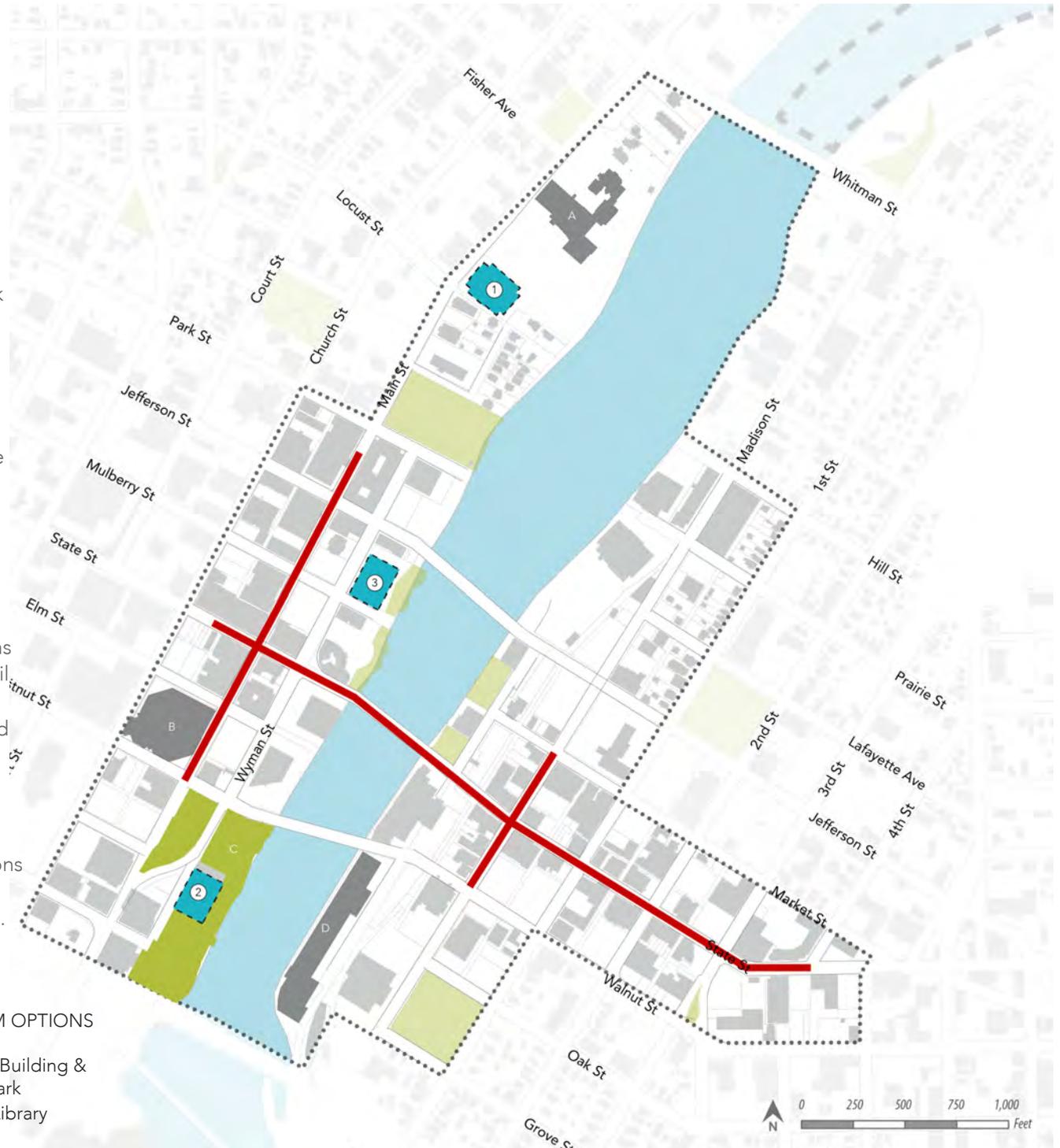
An Aquarium has been proposed for Downtown Rockford by a small group of people making up the Rockford Aquarium Board of Directors. The aim of the Aquarium is to become a catalyst for other development, while teaching people about aquatics, with a particular focus on the Rock River ecosystem.

DOWNTOWN AQUARIUM LOCATIONS

Locations have been proposed for future Aquarium, all of which are in the Downtown focus area. The proposed locations are: the Ice House, Davis Park/Lorden Building, and the current Public Library site.

Upon considering each of the locations, we recommend that the Aquarium should be located in or around the Downtown area, however, not fronting along an "A" street, as those should be primarily dedicated to retail.

The proposed locations have been modified to include: Davis Park/Lorden building, the current Public Library site (if the library is not redeveloped there), and the Armory. The Armory is considered a good location because of its proximity to existing attractions and museums. Another nearby location to consider would be the Barber Coleman site.



- | | | |
|---|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
|  | Anchor Institutions | AQUARIUM OPTIONS |
|  | Potential Aquarium Locations | 1. Armory |
|  | Retail Streets | 2. Lorden Building & Davis Park |
| | | 3. Public Library |

AQUARIUM PRECEDENTS

TENNESSEE AQUARIUM CHATTANOOGA, TN (60,000 sf)

Chattanooga built this aquarium to revitalize the City's decaying riverfront and central business district in 1992. It was funded primarily through private foundation funds.

It was acknowledged as a key component of \$2 billion downtown development that has occurred since it opened. More than 100 stores and restaurants have opened within a few blocks of the Aquarium. The Aquarium has also been credited with helping to change residents' perception of the downtown and riverfront district.

NATIONAL MISSISSIPPI RIVER MUSEUM & AQUARIUM DUBUQUE, IA (50,000 sf)

On land that was once a brownfield, the building that houses the Aquarium and museum started out as a railroad freight house and neighboring train depot. Situated adjacent to the Aquarium and Museum is a conference center, steamboat casino, and waterpark. Now the area is the largest attraction in a 150-mile radius.

The turning of a forgotten riverfront into a focal point of the city has spurred economic development and become an inspiration for other cities looking to revamp their waterfronts.



Tennessee Aquarium
Chattanooga, TN



National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium
Dubuque, IA

- 5 Continue to pursue large-scale redevelopment projects.

		STRATEGIES	LEAD AGENCY	PARTNERS	TIMELINE	FUNDING
TACTICAL	1	Continue to activate and highlight large-scale redevelopment opportunities, particularly those that are vacant and/or blighted through temporary events and installations (i.e Barber Coleman site)	COR	Fifth Ward; Museum Board; RWRD	Ongoing	
LEAN	1	Conduct feasibility studies and identify the vision for redevelopment of the Museum Campus, Barber Coleman site, and the Riverfront	COR	River District Association; Fifth Ward; Museum Board	2016	Federal grants
CLIMAX	1	Find investors and funding for redevelopment of Museum Campus, Barber Coleman site, and the Riverfront.	COR	River District Association; Fifth Ward; Museum Board investors	2016-2025	Historic Tax Credits; federal grants

**IMAGES AND TEXT TO BE
ADDED**



ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT

- 1 Make Downtown Rockford a commercial, entertainment, and cultural center that residents take pride in and consumers visit often.
- 2 Develop more residential options in an around Downtown - include greater diversity of housing types

- 1 Make Downtown Rockford a commercial, entertainment, and cultural center that residents speak of with pride and consumers within visit often.

		STRATEGIES	LEAD AGENCY	PARTNERS	TIMELINE	FUNDING
TACTICAL	1	Identify occupiable and/or underutilized storefronts that can be used for events.	River District Association		Summer/Fall 2015	
	2	Recruit interested tenants to test temporary pop-up shops	River District Association	City Market	Fall 2015	
	3	Market vacant properties through storefront stickers and banners (i.e. "I want to see _____ here")	RACVB	River District Association; Rockford Community Partners	Fall 2015	
	4	Host pop-up shops and food trucks in vacant lots during events (i.e. BMO)	RACVB	River District Association	Spring 2016	

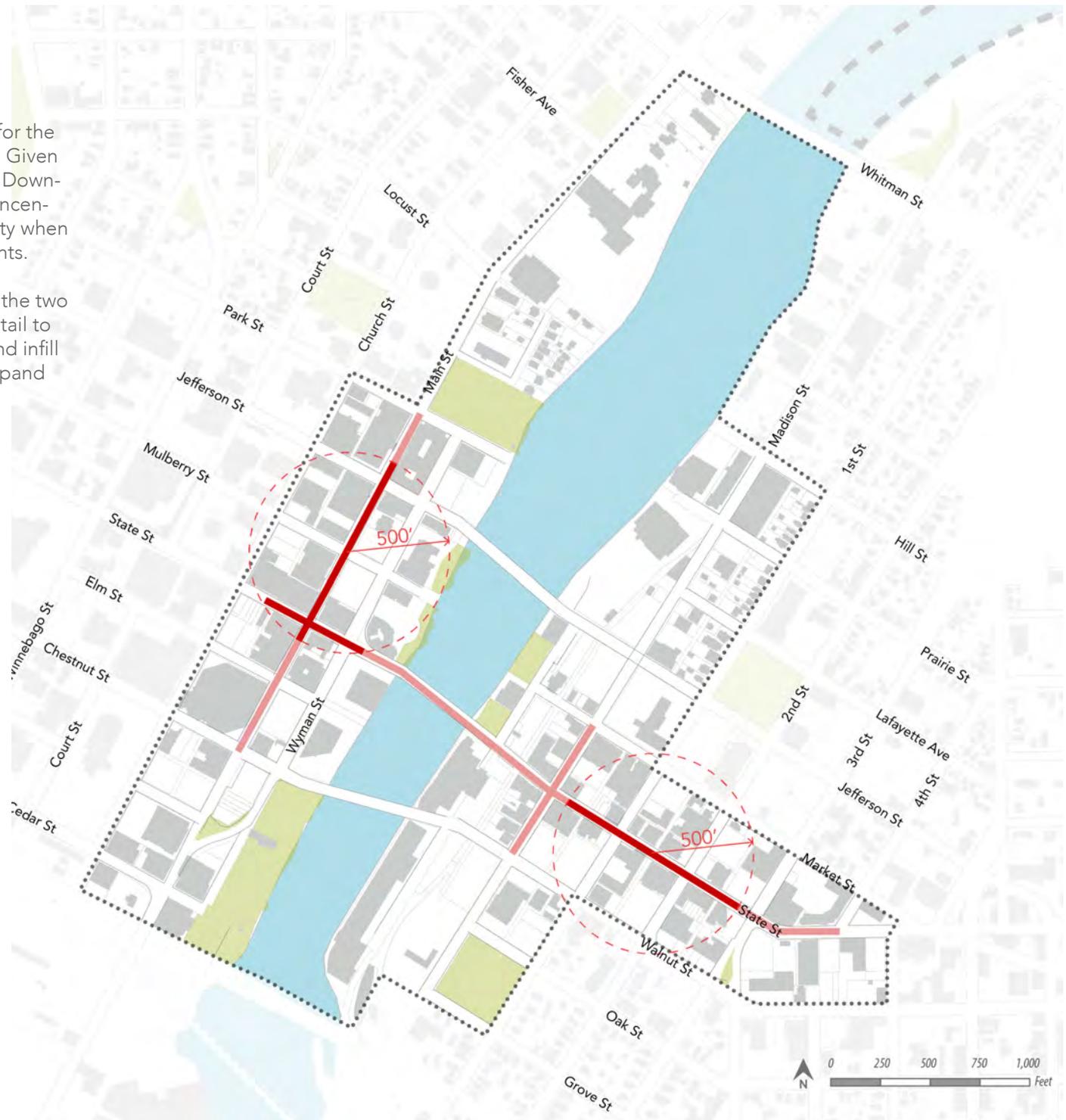
LEAN	1	Designate a Master Leaser to manage temporary businesses	River District Association	City Market	Ongoing	
	2	Create a contract for temporary occupancy	COR	Developers/ Employers	2015	
	3	Audit vacant buildings and identify up to 3 to bring up to minimum code	River District Association	Fire Dept; Building Dept; Planning Dept	Fall 2015	
	4	Create a Temporary Occupancy Permit that outlines minimum code requirements to be met	COR	River District Association	Fall 2015	
	5	Market vacant properties and vendor opportunities through social media and websites	River District Association	Rockford Community Partners	Ongoing	
	6	Install container stores on vacant parcels	COR	River District Association; Developers		

CLIMAX	1	Recruit permanent tenants for vacant storefronts	River District Association	Rockford Community Partners	Ongoing	
	2	Build out vacant storefronts	River District Association	COR	Ongoing	

FOCUS RETAIL ALONG "A" STREETS

A 500' radius is the general rule of thumb for the distance people will walk on a retail street. Given this and the fact that much of the retail on Downtown Rockford's "A" streets are already concentrated, the 500' radius should be the priority when recruiting tenants and making improvements.

The two radii were selected by identifying the two areas with the greatest concentration of retail to build upon. Once the vacant storefronts and infill lots have been addressed, retail should expand out along the rest of the "A" Streets.



GROUND FLOOR VACANCY:

Looking at vacancy rates in the core retail area, it is evident that State Street does not have a high storefront vacancy rate; rather it suffers from parcel vacancy as many key sites are currently dedicated to surface parking. On the other hand, Main Street suffers from higher storefront vacancy rates with a few vacant parcels currently devoted to parking.

Using a rule of thumb of attracting 5% of the spending within a 20-minute drive time and using the national average for sales per square foot (\$300) suggests a goal of ~375,000 sf of ground floor spaces occupied by retail. Given the current 106,800 sf of ground level occupancy:

The focus area can support 268,000 SF of retail.

Within the two 500' radii highlighted here, there are 120,600 SF of existing vacant storefront and vacant infill opportunities available for redevelopment.

1,780' (60%)
of Ground Level Occupied

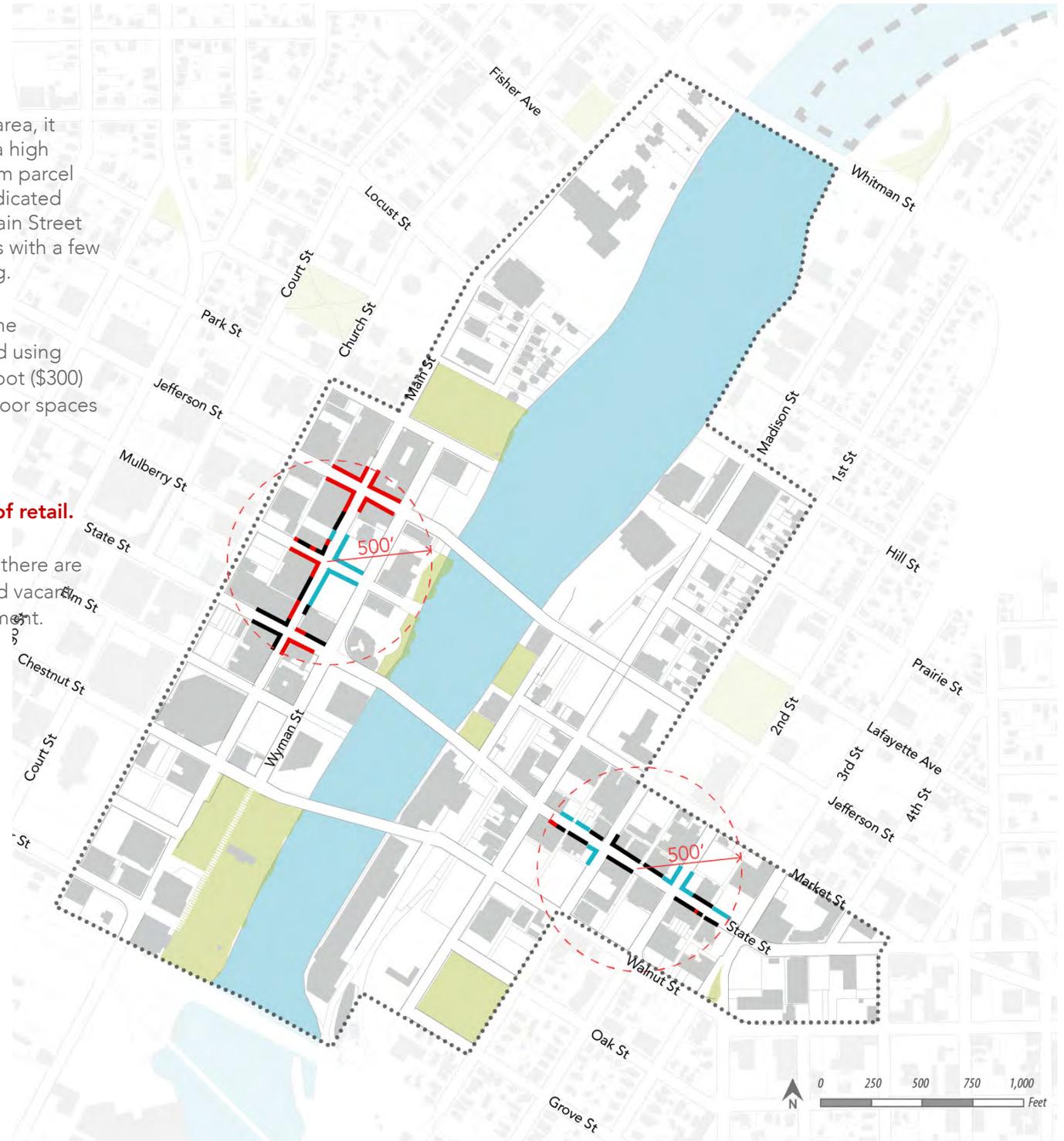
106,800 SF
of Ground Level Occupied

1,200' (40%)
of Ground Level Vacancy

72,000 SF
of Ground Level Vacancy

810'
of Parcel Vacancy

48,600 SF
of Parcel Vacancy



OPTIMIZE VENDOR OPPORTUNITIES

TEST AND MAXIMIZE VENDOR OPPORTUNITIES AT EVENTS. Events in the Downtown area bring thousands of people to Downtown Rockford throughout the year. Because people are already attending these events, it is a perfect time for vendors to test the market, setting up shops on streets and sidewalks or even temporarily occupying vacant storefronts for the event. Stroll on State is one such event where vendors can test potential business locations by setting up a pop-up shop near or in a location that they may want to occupy in the future.

Another set of events to leverage are those that take place at the BMO Harris Bank Center, where concerts and sporting events are held year-round. Placing vendors near BMO can encourage visitors to spend more time in Downtown before and after an event.

ADD VENDORS TO CAPITALIZE ON LARGE CROWDS - BMO street frontage can be an important tactical intervention today and forever because it is where there is a concentration of activity. The caveat is that the activity changes character so stores and restaurants need to change accordingly. For example, very family-oriented sports tournaments have a different crowd than the hockey games. Nonetheless, the parking lots across from the BMO are a perfect environment for temporary vendor space whether or not anything is happening in BMO.

STROLL ON STATE

ATTENDANCE



60,000 VISITORS (2014)



65 VENDORS



923 PEOPLE/VENDOR

SCREW CITY BEER FEST

ATTENDANCE



2,000 VISITORS (2014)



6 + 55 FOOD BEER VENDORS



32 PEOPLE/VENDOR

BMO HARRIS BANK CENTER

ATTENDANCE



274,094 VISITORS (2013)



0 VENDORS



0 PEOPLE/VENDOR

CREATE A MOBILE MARKET WEBSITE

Signing up to participate in a Downtown Rockford event as a vendor should be as simple and straightforward as possible. Creating a single portal and form that would allow vendors to sign up for an event, as well as, choose their preferred location can help the vendor test a future, permanent storefront location for their business.

Rockford MOBILE MARKET ABOUT EVENTS VENDORS APPLY FAQs

APPLY TO BE A 2015-2016 VENDOR!

ALL A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

Search by Event

Search by Month Search

SCREW CITY BEER FEST 53 VENDING SPOTS

OLD CHICAGO PIZZA & TAPROOM
See location on event map

ROCKFORD BREWING COMPANY
Vending at 2 other events
See location on event map

STROLL ON STATE 65 VENDING SPOTS

ANNETTE'S ITALIAN COOKIES
Vending at 2 other events
See location on event map

BALLOONS & FLOWERS BY HALEY
Vending at 1 other event
See location on event map

MARY'S MARKET
Vending at 4 other events
See location on event map

ROCKFORD BREWING COMPANY
Vending at 2 other events
See location on event map

UPCOMING EVENTS

- 27 FEB BMO Harris Bank Center: Professional Championship Bullriders and Barrel Racing 7:30 pm
- 21 MAR MeltFest 2015 10:00 am to 6:00 pm
- 4 APR Eggstravaganza! 10:00 am to 4:00 pm

FEATURED VENDOR

The Vintage Beau

ALL VENDORS >>

Vendors can view and sign up for all events at once

Vendors can view locations of other vendors and choose their preferred location

PROMOTE TEMPORARY BUSINESSES MODELS

BLANK SLATE VENUES

As the revitalization of Downtown Rockford has progressed, the gulf between the quality of improved properties and the condition of deteriorated properties has grown. When unrenovated, unoccupied properties are adjacent to attractive businesses, the business environment is undermined. The solution is establishing programs to increase occupancy and enforcing minimum maintenance standards.

HOLD POP-UP EVENTS INSIDE BUSINESSES

In a similar vein as micro-businesses, many businesses are seeing the benefit in sub-letting their spaces for pop-up events or other complementary uses, creating not just a business, but a destination for consumers. Warby Parker, in Lincoln Park, Chicago, along with selling eyewear hosts a professional photographer taking portraits of customers. Similarly, Toms in LA, has an in-store cafe and lounge. Lulu Lemon and more recently, Nike, offer in-house free group-led workouts. Events at Shinola stores include letterpress workshops and wreath decorating parties with local florists. These businesses have become created places where like-minded people can shop, but also hang out.



CREATE PROCESSES AND MECHANISMS FOR TEMPORARY OCCUPANCY

BREAKEVEN GOAL

Temporary occupancy models, require full cooperation from landlords. Landlords need to be convinced that subsidizing their rent rates could result in permanent occupancy by a tenant, in a space that would otherwise remain vacant. Building owners could agree to lower the rent to actual cost of operation, subsidize even further, or even offer the space free of rent for a limited period of time, all with the pay-off of getting permanent tenants with more certainty that their business will thrive now that it has been temporarily tested.

ESTABLISH A "MASTER LEASER"

A temporary business program needs constant communication between landlords and tenants and has many operational requirements, as well as legalities to contend with. To ease the process and manage relationships, an umbrella organization that acts as a "Master Leaser" will need to be established or designated.

Among others, the Master Leaser will have to manage the following components of temporary businesses.

- Property Owner Contracts
- Umbrella insurance contract
- Utility activation and payment
- Standard temporary lease
- Inventory management program for % leasing

POTENTIAL TENANTS

The recruitment process of potential tenants needs to be as aggressive as communication with landlords. The process of recruitment of potential tenants should include:

- Applying for a location
- Choosing a space
- Choosing hours
- Agreeing to a payment model (Base + %sales)
- Agree to give an exit interview to discuss experience

POP-UP HOOD PROGRAM OAKLAND, CA

This small business incubation program allows business owners to rent vacant storefronts for a period of 6 months at little or no cost. The aim is to limit startup costs and achieve permanent tenancy if the business flourishes.



EXPLORE TEMPORARY BUILDING OPTIONS ON VACANT LOTS

FOOD AND MOBILE RETAIL TRUCKS

Food and mobile retail trucks are a flexible and lower cost option for entrepreneurs looking to get into business. Startup and operating costs tend to be lower than those for brick and mortar stores and generally less employees are needed to manage the business. Portland State University conducted a study in 2008 that concluded that food carts have earnings of between \$30,000 and \$50,000 per year and the cost to purchase and build out a food cart can range from \$20,000 to \$60,000 which is much lower than the cost to build out a traditional restaurant.

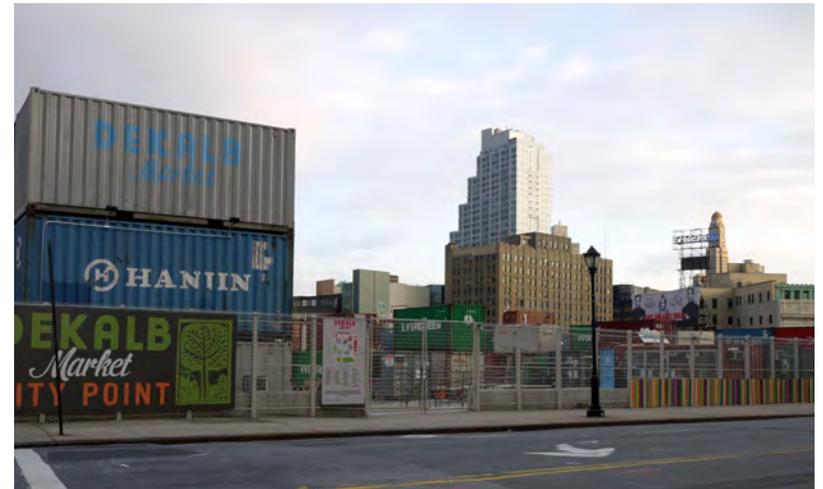
Regulatory issues for mobile businesses tend to be less stringent than those for fixed businesses. Mobile businesses also offer the possibility of testing out a variety of location before committing to one for a future brick and mortar store.

INSTALL SHIPPING CONTAINERS IN VACANT LOTS

Pop-up shops in refurbished shipping containers are becoming increasingly popular. Aside from the cache of a unique building type, shipping containers provide business owners and consumers with a host of other benefits. Shipping containers can serve as exhibition space with rotating merchandise, allowing consumers to see a wide variety of products. For a more consistent business, shipping containers are a cheaper alternative to building out a brick and mortar location. They are a good alternative to building mixed-use and retail buildings, but still create an active street wall in otherwise underutilized vacant parcels and parking lots. Mobility of these building types also mean that if a person has to vacate the property, they don't necessarily need to lose their business.

COST OF SHIPPING CONTAINERS

Most shipping containers run about \$3,000 a piece and outfitting them can run anywhere from \$30,000 to \$150,000, depending on whether it will be housing retail or a restaurant. At the Dekalb Market in Brooklyn, a complex of 60 retailers in shipping containers, retailers get a short-term lease of one-year to test their businesses. Similarly, Portland, a Mexican restaurant owner spent \$128,000 on purchasing and refurbishing a container, which is significantly lower than the \$200,000 the owner spent on the interiors of a previous restaurant.



TRANSITION FROM TEMPORARY TO LEAN BUILDINGS

BUILD ON THE CITY MARKET SUCCESS

The City Market is a big success for the City of Rockford. It holds great lessons illustrating how to move from a tactical event to a lean condition. The City Market started as a weekly event occupying a block of street/parking lot space that now attracts over 70,000 people. Given the popularity of the event, the City of Rockford has now transitioned to adding a pavilion that provides shelter to half of the vendors. Similarly the Lansing City Market was relocated to the downtown riverfront with a fully enclosed shed along the riverfront. The Market is open year-round and is now going to be seeing the Outfield, an 80-unit plus, mixed-use development, going up nearby, which will be a boost for the Market.

ENCOURAGE MICRO-BUSINESSES

Large capital costs to opening retail spaces and restaurants are a big deterrent for business owners. The micro-business revolution is taking those concerns and mitigating them by advocating for very small retail spaces and eateries. Retail spaces may only extend 20' in depth, contributing to the street wall, but not needing to pay rent on large square footages. The remainder of the space may be shared by other businesses. Likewise, micro-restaurants are focused mainly on kitchens and counter space, with limited seating, often sized from 400 sf to 600 sf. Components of a typical restaurants such as bathrooms and seating are very limited or shared by multiple businesses to reduce costs normally spent per by each business owner. This less common building typology could require code and permitting changes, especially when it comes to requirements concerning shared amenities such as restrooms, parking, and seating.



THE OCEAN DEVELOPMENT PORTLAND, OR

An automobile dealership turned into a strip of micro-restaurants sharing outdoor eating spaces in Portland, OR. Businesses that started with food trucks transitioned to these small spaces where they could test the market at a lower cost.



- 2 Develop more residential options in an around Downtown - include greater diversity of housing types.

		STRATEGIES	LEAD AGENCY	PARTNERS	TIMELINE	FUNDING
LEAN	1	Run a graphic and social media campaign in tandem with marketing available residential units	RACVB	River District	2016	
	2	Demonstrate how well Downtown works for daily living - jogging, grocery shopping, biking, and dog walking	RACVB		2016	
	3	Market adjacent residential communities within 1/2 mile of the focus area	RACVB		2016	
	4	Work with retailers to create incentives to shop	River District		2015	
	5	Recruit small infill housing developers to develop infill housing projects (townhomes, 4-plexes, and 3-flats) at identified locations	COR	Developers; RRDP; RACVB; RDA; RAEDC	2017	
	6	Revise zoning codes to allow for a variety of housing types	COR		2017	
	7	Expedite and streamline the permitting process to advance building rehabilitation	COR		2017	
CLIMAX	1	Recruit an urban developer to develop a 35-50 unit residential project that offers a unique amenity (i.e. proximity to River or a park)	COR	Developers; RAEDC; RLDC	2018	

RESIDENTIAL SITES

Rents per square foot are similar or higher than comparison suburban apartment complexes. This suggests that the market is valuing Downtown living.

MORE TEXT TO BE ADDED

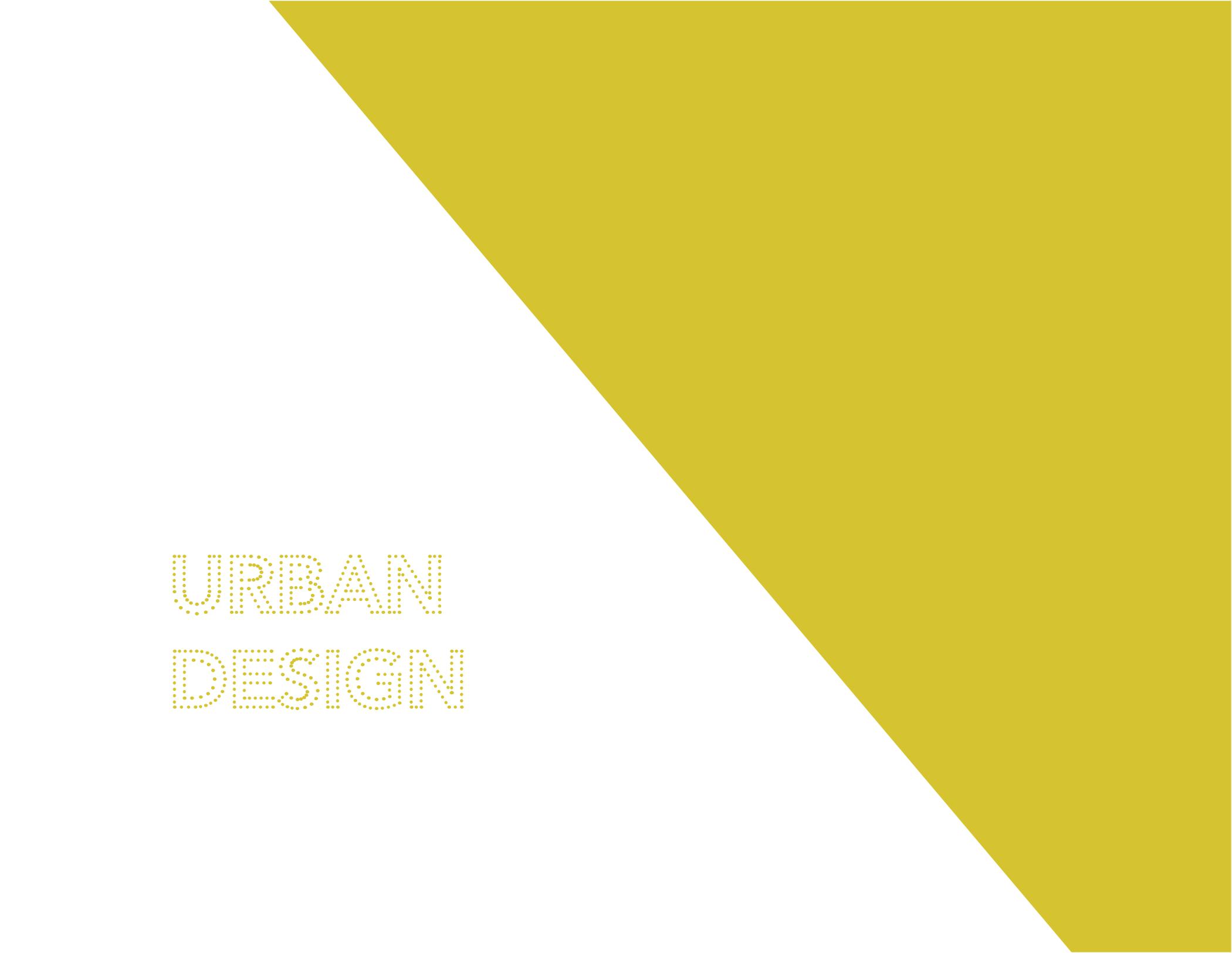
- LR**
 Lean Residential
 
- CR**
 Climax Residential
 
- LRT**
 Lean Retail
 
- CR**
 Climax Mixed-Use
 



PROPOSED BUILDING TYPOLOGY BY ZONES

BUILDING TYPOLGOIES	PARKING LOT LINER HOUSING	TOWNHOMES	DUPLEX	4-PLEX	ELEVATOR APT	WRAPPER BUILDING	IMPERMANENT (CONTAINER, MOBILE)	1-STORY RETAIL	MIXED-USE
LR Lean Residential 	●	●	●	●	●	●			
CR Climax Residential 					●	●			●
LRT Lean Retail 							◐	●	●
CR Climax Mixed-Use 							◐	◐	●

● ALLOWED ◐ TEMPORARILY ALLOWED



URBAN
DESIGN

- 1 Adopt consistent streetscape standards for Downtown Rockford.
- 2 Maintain day-to-day vibrancy in Downtown Rockford.
- 3 Create a narrative and brand identity specifically for Downtown Rockford.

- 1 Adopt consistent streetscape standards for Downtown Rockford.

		STRATEGIES	LEAD AGENCY	PARTNERS	TIMELINE	FUNDING
LEAN	1	Patch and repair critical sidewalks based on the priority list provided	River District Association	Public Works; Get it Done group; Rockford Community Partners	Immediately	
	2	Continue to install consistent banners on "A" streets and key intersections on both sides of the River as part of the Banner Program	RACVB		Ongoing	
	3	Install hanging street lights at intersections and/or tree lights on "A" and "B" streets	RACVB	Public Works	Fall 2015	
CLIMAX	1	Hire a consultant (or work internally) to create design standards for Downtown Rockford	RACVB	Environmental Design Consultant	2016	
	2	Present Design Standards to stakeholders for feedback and approval	RACVB		2016	
	3	Install and enforce streetscape standards	COR	RACVB	2017	

PRIORITIES FOR IMMEDIATE REPAIRS

It is clear based on the existing inconsistent standards throughout Downtown that there is a need for unified Urban Design Standards and streetscaping. However, that will require a significant investment from the City of Rockford and could take some time to implement.

More immediately, there is a need to make immediate repairs to improve conditions that are affecting the safety, usability and perception of Downtown. These include:

- Patch and repair crumbling sidewalks
- Add crosswalks at key intersections

The Get It Done group in Rockford has audited key streets in Downtown Rockford and developed a list of priority areas. These recommendations are consistent with our recommendation of giving priority attention to "A" streets and key intersections, followed by "B" streets.

- First Tier Priority Streetscape Improvement
- Second Tier Priority Streetscape Improvement

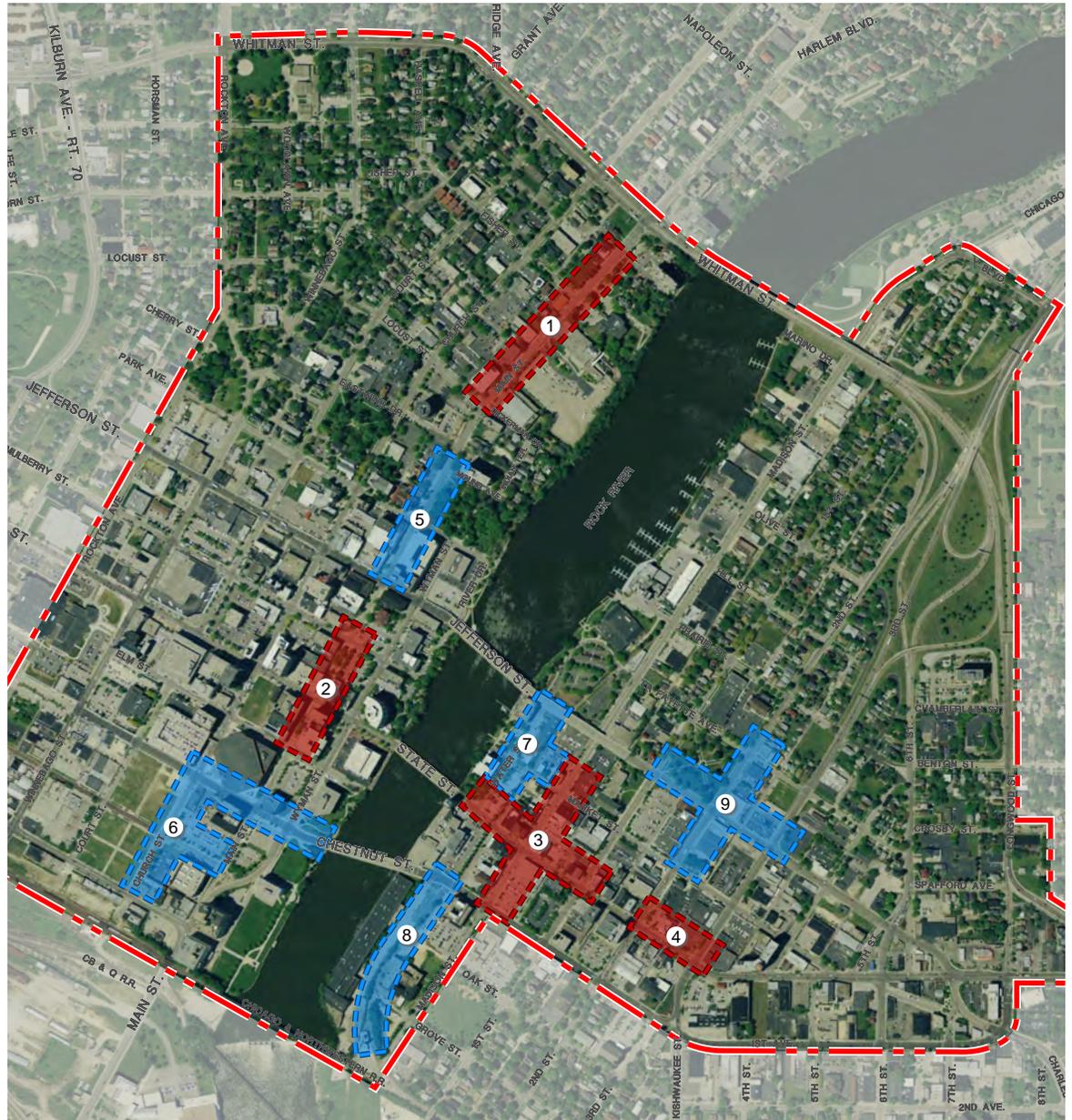
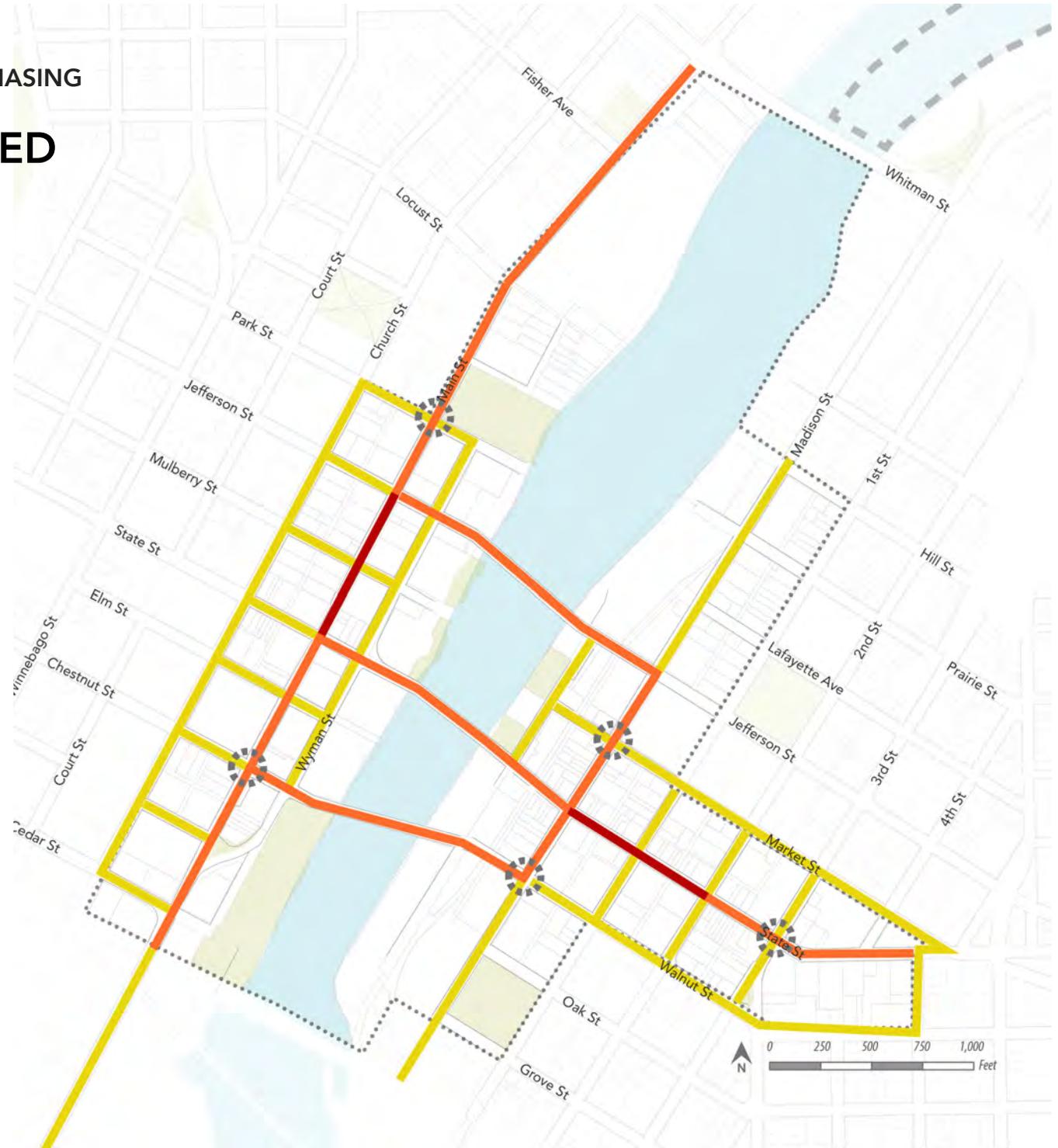


Image and analysis produced by Get It Done Group

LONG-TERM STREETScape PHASING

TEXT TO BE ADDED

-  Gateway Locations
-  A Streets Phase One
-  A Streets Phase Two
-  B Streets Phase Three



- 2 Maintain day-to-day vibrancy in Downtown Rockford.

		STRATEGIES	LEAD AGENCY	PARTNERS	TIMELINE	FUNDING
TACTICAL	1	Hold a "Sidwalk Day" where retailers and restaurants can test sidewalk spaces	COR	River District Association; RACVB	Summer/Fall 2015/Ongoing	
	3	Post artwork, lighting, and community engagement boards in vacant storefronts and on blank walls on "A" and "B" streets	RACVB	River District Association; Public Works	2015	

LEAN	1	Create "parklets" in parking spaces for outdoor dining and sitting	COR	River District Association; Public Works; RACVB	Summer/Fall 2015/Ongoing	
	2	Create a blanket permit that allows outdoor dining and seating as-of-right	COR			
	3	Consider establishing an SSA for all businesses/ landlords to be a part of to contribute to marketing, general upkeep, snow removal, and employee parking	COR	River District Association		

ACTIVATE VACANCY WHILE ENGAGING CITIZENS

TEXT TO BE ADDED



CONTINUE TO ENCOURAGE SIDEWALK ACTIVITY

TEXT TO BE ADDED



CONSIDER ESTABLISHMENT OF AN SSA

Given the varying quality of existing properties, Downtown Rockford's challenge is balancing supporting the upgraded properties and encouraging the owners of deteriorated properties to make improvements. The first step is standardizing the exterior maintenance by creating opportunities for property owners to share costs such as snow removal, façade cleaning, and landscaping. The first step is distributing information on those standards and asking every property owner to commit to meeting those standards. With absentee and underfunded landlords, voluntary participation by the neediest properties may not occur. If that condition develops, the next compliance level is creating a special service area where all property owners agree to be taxed an amount equal to the cost of the needed services. State enabling legislation governs the process of creating a special service area.

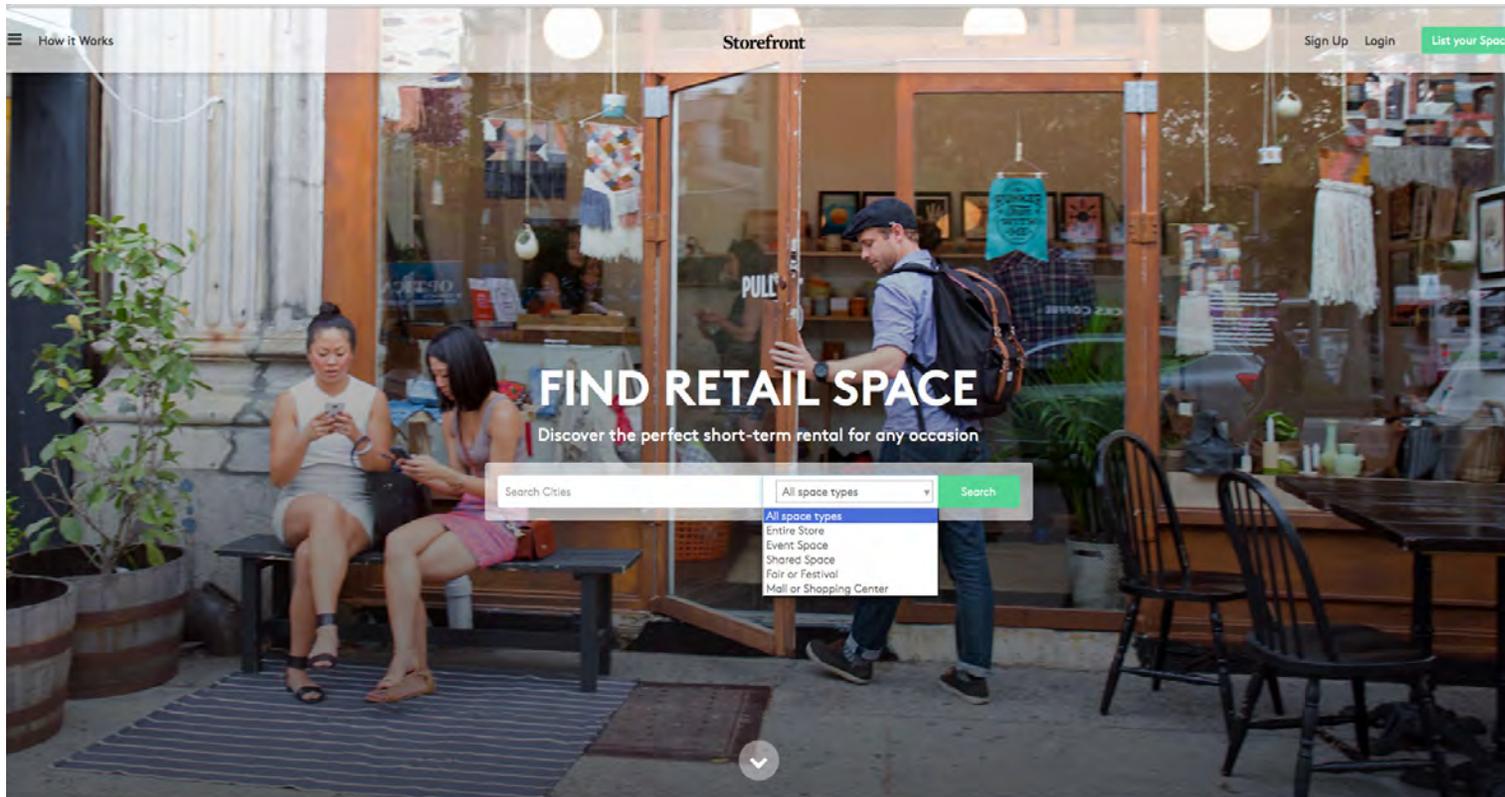


-
-
- 3 Create a narrative and brand identity specifically for Downtown Rockford.

		STRATEGIES	LEAD AGENCY	PARTNERS	TIMELINE	FUNDING
TACTICAL	1	Create an elevator speech about the identity of Downtown Rockford for all organizations and ambassadors to use	RACVB	River District Association; Rockford Community Partners; Branding Consultant	2015	
	2	Schedule community events in Downtown locations	RACVB	River District Association; Rockford Community Patners	Ongoing	
LEAN	1	Work with a Brand Consultant to develop a "brand identity" to be used by all organizations in Downtown Rockford	RACVB	River District Association; Brand Consultant	2015/2016	
CLIMAX	1	Run a national campaign that promotes the revitalized Rockford	RACVB	Brand Consultant	2017	

MAKE DOWNTOWN THE GO-TO PLACE FOR EVENTS AND ORGANIZATIONS

TEXT TO BE ADDED



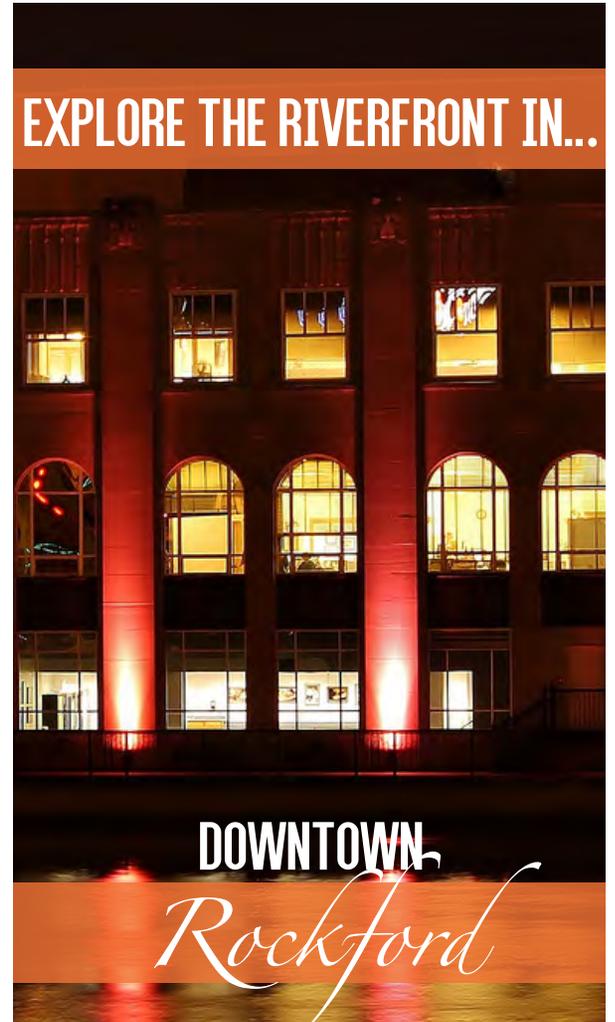
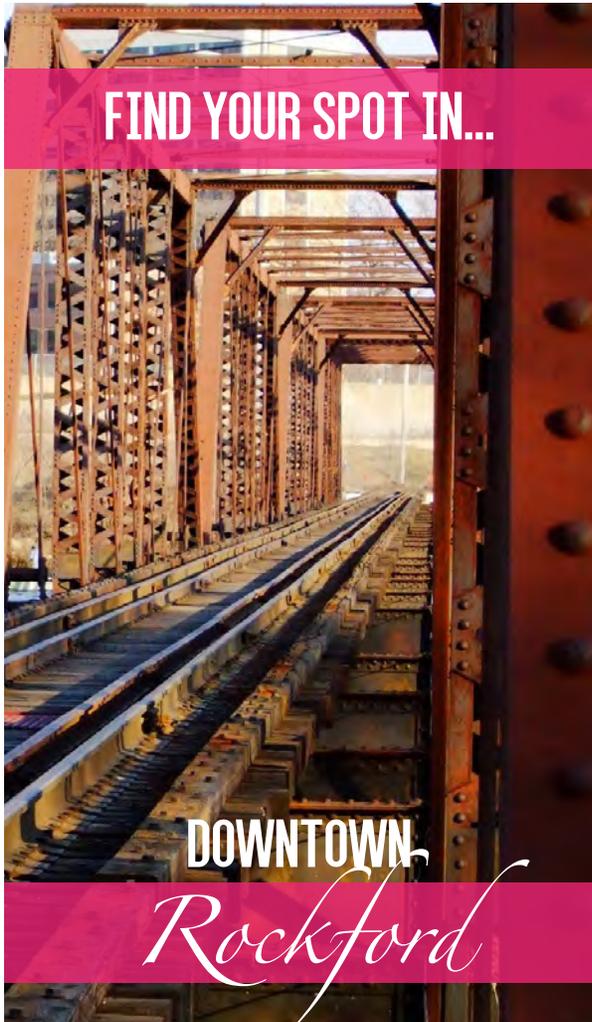
Set up shop anywhere

Access thousands of move-in ready spaces in sought-after neighborhoods

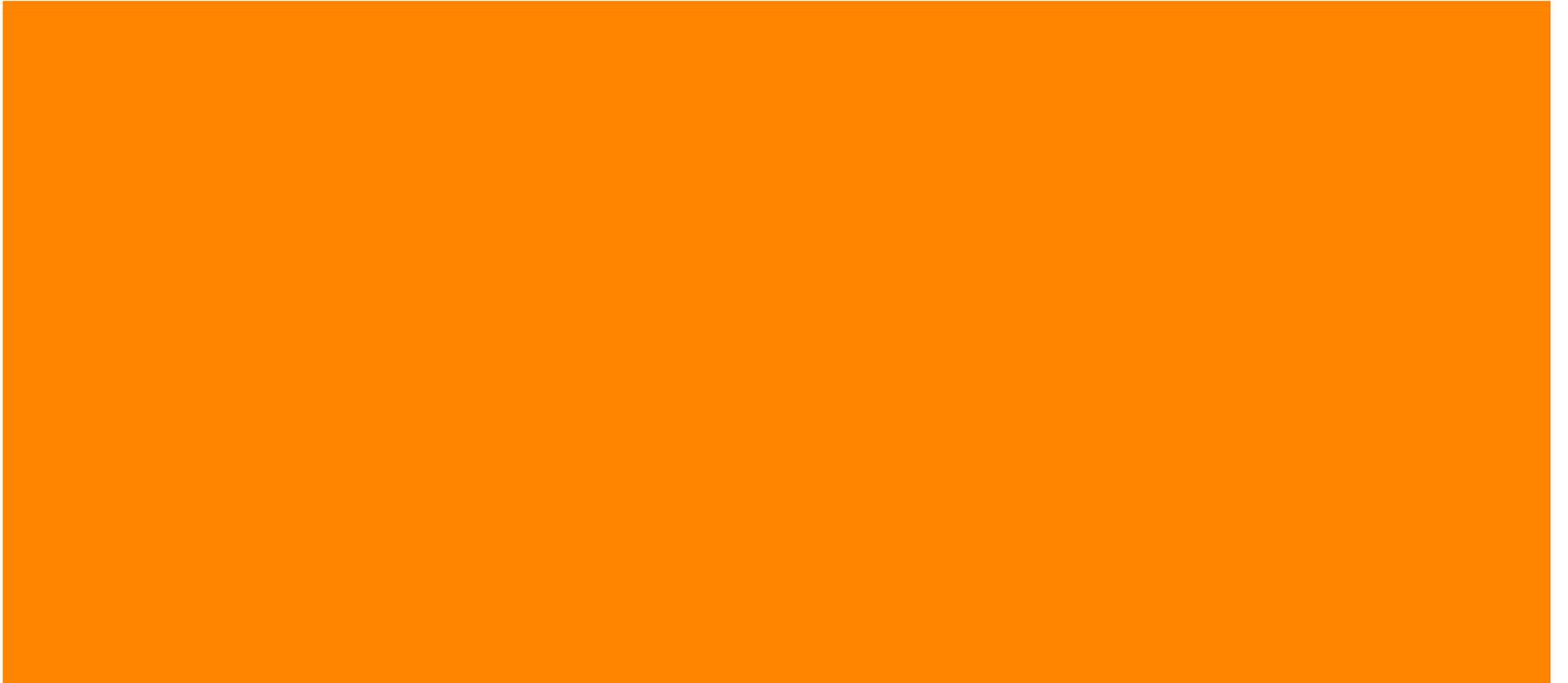
Need help? Live chat. ^ x

BRAND DOWNTOWN FOR EVERYDAY LIVING

TEXT TO BE ADDED



APPENDIX



MARKET STUDY

INTRODUCTION

Downtown Rockford has a traditional urban environment and economy based on a history of strong businesses and important government and cultural institutions. It offers recreation at the Rock River's attractive parks. Although these assets provide a foundation for revitalization and there are significant reinvestments planned, the everyday businesses and activities that connect a Downtown to markets have been slow to develop. The result is high ground floor vacancy in commercial space and a tough sale for the housing development that brings 18-hour vitality. This strategic action plan seeks to guide building stronger daily vitality by identifying key markets that must be attracted to Downtown Rockford. The plan also recommends tools and techniques to accomplish that goal.

KEY MARKETS

Because Downtown Rockford mixes residential units, financial services, recreation, stores, and restaurants, it must appeal to a variety of markets. These markets are:

- **Community Affiliated:** Downtown Rockford's success depends on its ability to be an element of the community's character. A successfully revitalized downtown is a place that, with pride, residents bring guests to dine in independent restaurants, seek special items at unique stores, and experience community events. This relationship creates an affiliation that makes community residents an important market for Downtown Rockford. There have been notable successes in attracting this market such as the Holiday Walk, XX, and XX. Building on successful events and unique downtown businesses will continue to strengthen the relationship between this market and Downtown Rockford businesses.
- **Pedestrian:** Residents and employees within a one-half mile of commercial development are particularly intense users. The frequent trips and presence of these nearby customers adds vitality even when businesses are not open and consequently this market is more important to the success of downtown than its spending power suggests. Because these residents and employees are so noticeable, their age, income, and lifestyle defines the character of Downtown.

When visitors or employees see residents jogging, pushing strollers, and walking pets, they see themselves and consider living in the area. Today's revitalized downtowns have 7,000 to 10,000 residents in their pedestrian markets and often have 10,000 to 15,000 employees. Typically those residents and employees are young and have modest incomes that they spend freely. Downtown Rockford's pedestrian markets have 3,000 to 4,500 relatively low income residents with an average age approaching 50. There are more than 9,000 employees in the combined markets. Building this market requires subsidy to the pioneers because early adopters will look to be compensated by exceptional prices or extraordinary features. The maps in Figures 1 and 2 define this walkable, character creating area for the commercial districts on each side of the Rock River.

- **Convenience (also bicycle):** If one can drive to obtain needed items within five-minutes, that location can be the routine choice to meet every-day needs. Convenience shoppers are the core market for retail clusters. This primary market should provide 60% to 85% of the spending captured by its businesses. Downtown Rockford's five-minute drive time market also identifies the homes of bicyclists who can pedal to stores and restaurants in ten-minutes or less. Increasingly, that activity adds recreational users to the convenience mix. The demographics associated with Figures 3 and 4 report significantly overlapping markets of approximately 28,000 residents. This is a substantial market that contains a population that sustains neighborhood shopping anchors such as grocery stores and drug stores in center competing with Downtown Rockford.

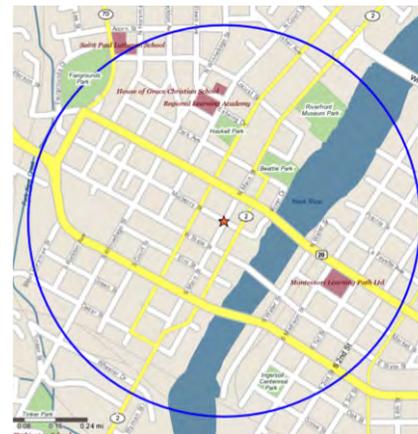


Figure 1

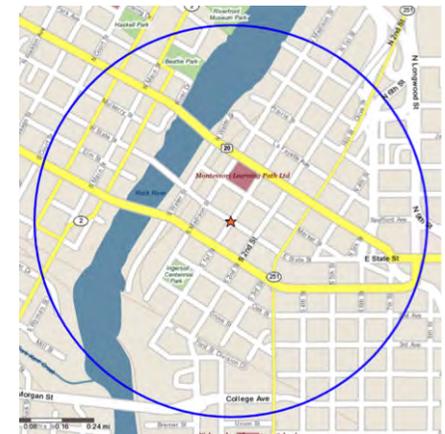


Figure 2

	Rockford	1/2 Mile East	1/2 Mile West	5 Minutes Drive East	5 Minutes Drive West	20 Minutes Drive
Total Population	150,784	2,447	3,538	27,819	28,192	241,356
Population Density per Square Mile	2,429	3,109	4,496	4,557	4,895	1,203
Total Households	59,096	1,431	1,451	11,005	10,713	95,179
Employees		7,010	6,831	17,370	16,257	
Median Age:	36.5	47.8	41.0	32.5	32.0	38.4
Average Household Income	\$57,807	\$22,612	\$22,670	\$39,620	\$38,777	\$62,610
Median Household Income	\$40,035	\$13,238	\$13,427	\$25,329	\$24,701	\$46,203
Per Capita Income	\$23,000	\$13,394	\$10,591	\$16,366	\$15,436	\$24,929
Foodservice & Drinking Places	\$141,576,512	\$1,949,636	\$1,843,252	\$20,860,613	\$19,524,384	\$248,886,766
Square feet supported at \$300 per	471,922	6,499	6,144	69,535	65,081	829,623
Total Aggregate Annual Retail Demand	\$1.3 Billion	\$21 Million	\$21 Million	\$206 Million	\$197 Million	\$2.2 Billion
Square feet supported at \$300 per	4,344,583	70,240	71,122	688,368	657,671	7,428,759
5% capture of market supported space						371,438

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Table 1

- Destination: The unique businesses and experiences of Downtown Rockford create a destination draw, as their offering attracts visitors from a large geography. Research conducted by Bright Star and the Urban Land Institute identify an approximately 20-minute drive time as the distance customers will travel for specialty items and experiences without extensive planning. Although some customers will travel the greater distance for unique events and venues, those visits are a bonus for businesses, while this 20-minute drive time represents a core market that can be an everyday opportunity. Households on this market are substantially higher than the income of household in the closer markets and therefore have more discretionary income for the purchase of unique

specialty goods, dining, and services. This market also likely captures the homes of the employees working in Downtown Rockford, and it therefore represents potential new residents who would save time by moving to the study area.

The spending power estimates demonstrate that connecting to these markets can support additional Downtown Rockford stores, restaurants, and services. Arbitrarily setting a goal of attracting 5% of the spending within the 20-minute drive time and using the national average for sales per square foot (\$300) suggests a goal approximately 375,000 square feet of ground floor spaces occupied by those businesses. Currently, occupied ground floor space in the

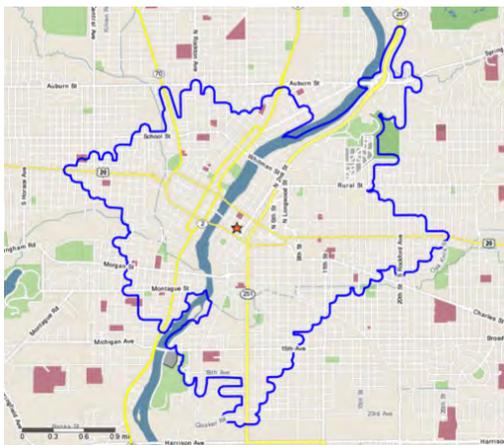


Figure 3

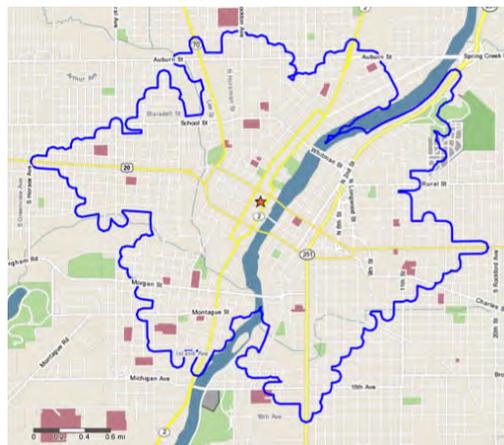


Figure 4



Figure 5

project is estimated at 175,000 square feet. That implies that meeting the 5% capture goal would add approximately 200,000 square feet of ground floor customer oriented businesses. That space would accommodate 70 to 100 businesses depending on their size.

SUMMARY

At its core revitalization depends on strong connections to the market that provide customers and residents for existing and future development. Concurrent with the exciting new developments in Downtown Rockford, efforts to strengthen the Downtown's core markets must occur. Festivals, events, and improved Rock River frontage have been effectively creating community pride and thereby attracting the Rockford market. Improving the character market within one-half mile requires a transformation effort to add housing and jobs because the current market falls so short of the markets that support vital downtowns. For the important convenience and destination markets, the challenge is bringing a message that attracts the adequate existing market. The obstacle to overcoming that challenge is the high costs and limited resources of government. Facing that impediment requires understanding the economics of market rate development that could shift the financing burden from municipal resources to private resources. An element of that approach is using relatively inexpensive concept of tactical interventions to test and improve the market. That technique reduces the risk associated with market rate development and thereby reduces the need for government financing. Sections follow that define those concepts.

REDEVELOPMENT POSSIBILITIES

Before considering specific Downtown Rockford projects and the necessary public private partnership to achieve those projects, one must understand local market rate development. The sample market rate projects estimated in Table 1 are:

- a new one-story 5,000 square foot restaurant,
- a three-story residential multi-family building that delivers 43 units on a 15,000 square foot floor plate,
- a \$50 per square foot remodeling project for a 10,000 square foot building.

These projects have costs ranging from \$500,000 to \$7 million. For these investments in the Downtown Rockford area to occur, the property owner must attract tenants or buyers willing to pay rents or prices high enough to provide a return higher or equal to alternative uses of investor funds, which is the condition known as market rate development. If investors are not confident that rents or sales prices will be competitive with other investment alternatives, a developer may choose either to find another place to invest funds or request a public/ private financial partnerships to fill the "gap" between expected returns and market rate returns. The framework for that partnership is a shared understanding of typical development costs. For this framework, these projects are not associated with specific properties. In many revitalization programs, the first partnership properties are publicly owned lots and buildings, and a primary goal is placing them back on the property tax rolls to generate revenue that can support additional revitalization efforts.

METHODOLOGY

To determine the advantages and disadvantages of development options, this development feasibility analysis calculates project financial feasibility by comparing project costs to the value of resulting development. The revenue to the City comes from property taxes and sales taxes. Table 1 explains how this information is calculated:

The key to this analysis is setting the developer's required return as determined by the risk associated with undertaking proposed development options. The least risky projects are built to suit concepts for large, national corporations and the low cost reuse of existing buildings. The riskiest projects are speculative commercial development. Each project uses a combination of investor funds and bank loans to determine the return on investment (ROI) needed to appeal to the market. With today's relatively low bank interest rates, the blended ROI, also known as a cap rate, varies from about 6.5% for the least risky projects to 9.5% for the riskier projects. When a riskier project is more desirable, the City can intervene with financial incentives that reduce costs to a level that matches other investment possibilities. The risk return used in this analysis and other assumptions are documented in Table 2.

These assumptions are based on BDI experience and interviews with developers. At this conceptual design level, values can change

Building and Parking Construction Cost	Total Value	Rent	Annual Property taxes	Annual Municipal Sales Taxes
Using a standard estimating service that continuously monitors construction costs, RSMeans, a very preliminary cost estimate for the concept's proposed uses and parking is calculated. Following detailed design, this component can change significantly.	The net operating income from a commercial development or apartments sets its value. That income is converted to a market value by determining how much the developer would invest to obtain that income. The return that developers require varies by the market demand for each use.	The rent is the net operating income required to provide the return on investment that the market expects for the risk involved in the project plus management costs. For ease of comparison it is expressed as an amount per square foot for commercial uses and a monthly rent for apartments.	This calculation uses a common realtor rule of thumb that property taxes are approximately 2% of the property value. In a TIF, these property taxes estimate the potential TIF increment.	In Illinois, each municipality receives 1% of the value of retail sales by businesses within their borders. The City of Rockford levies another 0.5% retail sales tax. This calculation assumes that new retail will achieve sales of \$300 per square foot, the national average.

Table 1

significantly, as design is refined and infrastructure conditions are better understood.

Table 3 examines investment options for the three hypothetical projects. The bold rows illustrate the rents new tenants would pay if these concepts were developed without land costs or incentives.

With current Downtown Rockford rents ranging from \$9 to \$14 per square foot, restaurant tenants would choose redevelopment only if the resulting space is likely to generate higher sales than space in existing vintage properties. Investors considering building multi-family residential must be confident that tenants will pay the premium rents now only associated with competing more suburban style properties. If a commercial property currently rents on the low end of vintage market rate costs per square foot, \$9, a \$50 per square foot remodeling could create space renting on the high end of market rate vintage rents, \$14.

SUMMARY

Although remodeling can work for properties that are currently vacant or leased at low rates, redeveloping underutilized Downtown Rockford area properties will not occur without public private partnerships or tactical interventions that improve the market.

Surface Parking per space	\$6,000
Covered Parking per space	\$13,000
Garage Parking per space	\$23,000
Apartment ROI	7.5%
Commercial ROI	9.0%
Floor Utilization	85%
Estimated Property Tax	2% of value
Taxable Sales per sqft	\$300

Table 2

STAGING WITH TACTICAL INTERVENTIONS

The model of multistory, mixed use development that replicates classic downtown environments like Downtown Rockford, can find attracting investors very difficult because these projects are very expensive to build and finding credit worthy tenants is uncertain. One way to reduce the risk is to prove the market quality through tactical interventions that test opportunities and consequently lower risk. These interventions add vitality during the time when opportunities develop. In the publication Tactical Urbanism 2, this approach is described:

“While larger scale efforts do have their place, incremental, small-scale improvements are increasingly seen as a way to stage more substantial investments. This approach allows a host of local actors to test new concepts before making substantial political and financial commitments...

While exhibiting several overlapping characteristics, “tactical urbanism,” is a deliberate approach to city-making that features the following five characteristics:

- A deliberate, phased approach to instigating change;
- An offering of local ideas for local planning challenges;
- Short-term commitment and realistic expectations;
- Low-risks, with a possibly a high reward; and
- The development of social capital between citizens, and the building of organizational capacity between public/private institutions, non-profit/Non-Government Organizations, and their constituents.”

	Rehab	Restaurant	Multi-Family
Project	\$50 per square foot improvement	Single story building with enhanced landscaping but no dedicated parking	43 units averaging 900 square feet. 3-stories and Provides 1 parking space per unit
Lot size	20,000	20,000	20,000
Space	10,000	5,000	45,000
Construction Costs	\$500,000	\$1,055,500	\$6,797,500
Covered Residential Parking			\$ 608,520
Market Driven Net Operating Income (NOI)	\$45,000	\$94,995	\$555,452
Rent per sqft that provides market driven NOI (10% added for land costs)	add \$5.29 to current rent	\$24.50	
Monthly rent (average unit per month)			\$1.61(\$1,450)
Annual Sales Tax	\$45,000	\$22,500	
Annual Property Tax	\$10,000	\$21,110	\$135,950

Table 3

Tactical Urbanism could create immediate change and potentially prove the market strength of the Downtown Rockford area. Those market improvements that could reduce the need for public incentives include:

- Park(ing) Day. The concept is testing the benefit of plazas that are the size of parking spaces. It is an international movement that is always scheduled for the third Friday in September. By participating, Downtown Rockford could garner publicity and test, adding plazas as a development amenity. This tactical intervention invites the community to identify plaza locations and can relieve business fears about the trade-off between open space and parking. The publicity and involvement of groups creating the “plazas” invites visits to Downtown. More information on this tactical intervention is available at <http://parkingday.org/participate/>
- Pop-up Retail. Temporary stores have grown from a holiday focused use into an important technique for proving that customers will travel to a developing marketplace. Downtowns’ vacant store fronts, oversized parking lots, and underutilized public spaces are increasingly being used as local incubators for a seemingly endless number of temporary to permanent commercial and community uses. These spaces can be simply finished store fronts or very modest structures that share facilities with adjacent buildings. Entrepreneurs can

lease spaces for periods ranging from weeks to few months. The location benefits from a changing uses that attract destination customers and the tenants can test concepts with a minimal upfront investment. The goal is incubating businesses that are especially well tuned to the local market and will be successful from day one.

- Food Carts / Trucks. Street food is a magnet for human activity. Food carts and trucks both stimulate entrepreneurial activity and activate a public space. Today’s food vendors are masters of social media and attract followers from other communities by creating a festival atmosphere. A good food



vendor, or groups of vendors, quickly becomes an additional destination within already successful places of congregation. City regulations prohibiting the sale of alcohol and limiting the time when food vendors are active add customers to nearby, permanent businesses.

- Site Pre-Vitalization. When temporary buildings re-activate a previously inactive or underutilized parcel of land, it can help to market the property and generate needed revenue for the land owner/developer. Site pre-vitalization uses often include public markets, art exhibitions and studios, community festivals, beer gardens, micro-retail opportunities, flea markets, and other temporary programs capable of “pre-vitalizing” a site before more permanent building is possible. By activating a site during the planning, approvals, and financing stages, a vacant site can provide low-cost community building and economic opportunities while a

more formal transition occurs, from inactive parcel of land to a fully redeveloped and programmed addition to the town or city.

- Micro-Mixing. When a business owner subleases space to a complimentary business, it is known as micro-mixing. The bookstores that include a coffee shop illustrate the concept



of micro-mixing. The two uses together, a latte and a new book, fit together naturally. Today, more mixes are emerging. Barbershops are selling clothing, jewelry stores are selling sandwiches, and a coffee shop is selling potted plants and gardening supplies. This tactic provides entrepreneurial shop owners an opportunity to mitigate the high overhead costs associated with opening a new venture. By using clever merchandising and efficient space planning, existing retail spaces can be adapted to handle multiple users or businesses. Thus, micro-mixing provides an opportunity to test new ideas. If successful, micro-mixing tenants can one day strike out on their own.

SUMMARY

When businesses have well tested concepts, the owners have the confidence to commit to the higher rents and longer-term leases necessary to support building transformational space. Tactical Urbanism tests concepts as it creates events that differentiate a downtown from shopping centers and attract customer and investor interest. The community challenge is creating a regulatory environment that allows temporary uses. As this analysis looks at specific sites, it will suggest tactical intervention that could prove the site's quality and thereby interest investors in more permanent development.

STRATEGIC TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

For Rockford to build the connections to necessary markets, leadership must focus on a strategy organized around goals and objectives designed to methodically achieve that vision. This plan then identifies the tools and techniques that must be used to move the strategy forward.

The market strategy is guided by this vision:

By 2020, Downtown Rockford will be a commercial center that residents speak of with pride and consumers within a 20-minute drive time visit often for unique experiences and products.

The changes necessary to achieve that vision are captured in these goals:

- Fill 200,000 square feet of ground floor study area space
- Exponentially grow the housing market
- Establish downtown rockford as the community's "master brand."

These goals focus on the inner ring character market of Downtown Rockford as the key to realizing the vision. Although they are aggressive, they can be broken down into planning, tactical, lean and climax objectives that illustrate a five-year plan that progresses toward attaining the goals.

Objectives: Fill 200,000 square feet of ground floor study area space

- Plan: Reach consensus on the 16 block first stage clusters on the East and West side of the Rock River and center four block immediate action centers.
- Tactical: Promote Pop-up Retail, Food Trucks, micro-businesses, and temporary office uses as tactical interventions to test concept viability in the immediate action blocks.
- Lean: Grow by five businesses in existing space on each side of the River year 1, 10 businesses year two and 20 businesses in year 3-5. (If the businesses average 1,400 this will fill more than 200,000 square feet)
- Climax: Build new space as needed but do not include consumer oriented ground floors outside of the target areas.

Objectives: Exponentially grow the housing market

- Plan: Identify and tout a 35 to 50 unit project that offers a unique amenity—probably river access.
- Plan: Identify incentives that only work for early adopter—River Edge was this but is now gone.
- Tactical: Demonstrate how well downtown works for activities of daily living—jogging, grocery shopping, biking, and dog walking.
- Lean: Remodel upper story space for 60 residential units per year.
- Climax: Identify projects outside of the study area but within the ½ mile character district that can be built/sold in chunks of 30 to 40 units.

Objectives: Establish Downtown Rockford as the community's "master brand."

- Plan: Identify Downtown places for that can host major community events
- Manage growth do not stop decline...
- Tactical: Sell Downtown as an event location to all Rockford organizations.
- Lean: Develop "brand Identity" used by all organizations promoting Downtown Rockford

CONSUMER PERCEPTION SURVEY

The consumer perception survey was a tool used to understand customers' current behaviors and opinions about the Downtown Rockford area. The survey element of the market research solicited specific data and feedback on community use and satisfaction with the existing character of Downtown Rockford. The survey presented an opportunity to understand current perceptions and create a baseline to determine progress through plan implementation.

SURVEY DESIGN

From November 24, 2014 through January 24, 2015, the web-based survey was accessible through respondents' computers and cell phones. The City of Rockford promoted the survey via e-blasts, its website, Downtown businesses, and partnering organizations.

The survey was composed of 19 questions and took approximately 10-minutes to answer. Eighteen of the questions were multiple-choice. A summary question included a field where respondents were asked to give any additional comments. The final question asked respondents to provide their name and e-mail address so they could learn the results of the survey and assist in efforts to improve the Downtown Rockford area.

1,587 surveys were completed. Figure 1 maps the location of Survey respondents.

In calculating percentages of respondents' satisfaction or inclination to spend, "I don't know" answers were removed from the totals before rankings were created. This adjustment eliminated any potential misinterpretation that might arise when an unusually high number of "I don't know" answers reduced the other response percentages.

The analysis that follows highlights survey results that inform the planning process. The survey also provides a basis for future program analysis and can support additional research (primarily involving focus groups). Focus groups that are composed of individuals who provided specific answers can be created by using

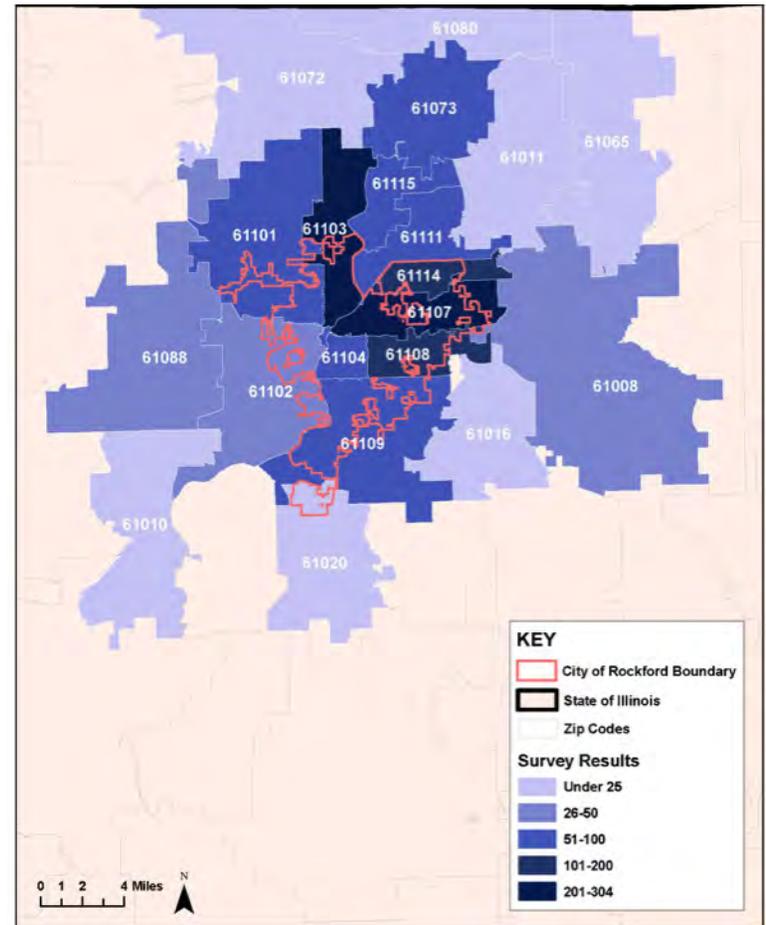


Figure 1

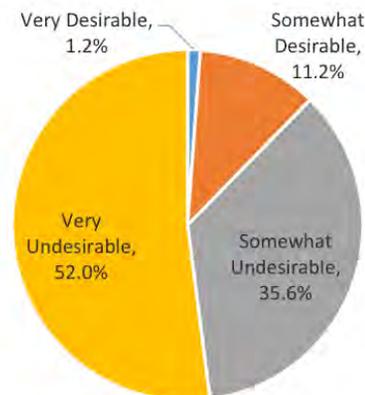


Figure 2

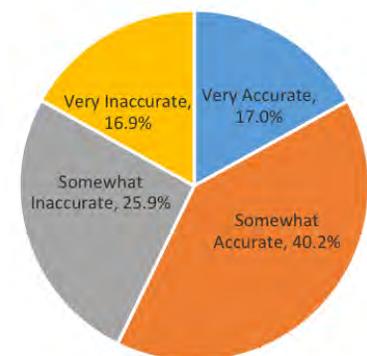


Figure 3

the respondent's e-mail addresses given as a reply to Question 19. After implementation, the City can repeat survey question to learn whether respondents saw improvement. The appendix provides the complete survey results.

CURRENT PERCEPTIONS

When Survey respondents were asked "How do outside audiences perceive Downtown Rockford as a neighborhood overall?" the response, as depicted in Figure 2, was dismal:

Interestingly, the respondents seem to feel that this perception is not necessarily correct, because only 17% answered the question "Are outside audiences' perceptions of Downtown Rockford's existing image accurate?" with "Very Accurate."

These results show the need to promote Downtown Rockford successes to increase the accuracy of perceptions. When respondents were asked "How would you describe Downtown Rockford?" and given a word list, Figure 4 depicted the results by making the most commonly chosen word the largest.

It is interesting that "Entrepreneurial" was the third most common choice because that is an element that was also important when respondents answered the question "How should Downtown Rockford be perceived to make it more appealing to business seeking a new location?"



Figure 4

Another question asked the respondents to rate elements that contribute to perceptions of Downtown Rockford. In examining perceptions of an area, one must recognize that, for characteristics such as safety and parking, being average means being equal to competing options. Since those characteristics support rather than determine the experience of visiting the area, investments to improve these characteristics increase vitality only when they bring the perception into equity with competing areas. Excellent and above average ratings for other characteristics, for example friendliness, parks, and bicycle access, can increase visits by improving the quality of the visit experience.

As Table 1 highlights, Safety and Parking perceptions in Downtown Rockford are low enough to be deterring visits. Because nearly two thirds of respondents rated parking below average, parking warrants close attention.



Figure 5

The attractions, bicycle access, sidewalk and lighting attractiveness, and pedestrian access had such low ratings that one can conclude they must impact the competitiveness of Downtown Rockford businesses. These results verify the need for Rockford's Downtown Plan to guide activities, marketing, tenancing, and access improvements because improving the perception of those characteristics will increase Downtown Rockford visits.

A bright spot in the perceptions rating was the evaluation of events. When only those who attended were analyzed, Table 3 reports the evaluation of events.

Table 1

Rate your overall satisfaction with these factors as they apply to Downtown Rockford:	
Answered at least average	
General safety	41.6%
Pedestrian safety	54.0%
Parking	37.0%

These high ratings suggest that positive experiences may change overall perceptions. The challenge is drawing customers. Table 4 reports the percentage of survey respondents who have never attended or were unfamiliar with the listed events.

NEXT STEPS

Although the current perception of Downtown Rockford presents challenges, it also identifies elements to build upon. The Downtown is recognized as an entrepreneurial center, dining is emerging as a quality use, and those who attend events enjoy the experience. City Market is emerging as a major attraction.

CURRENT UTILIZATION AND BEHAVIOR

To help identify the baseline utilization of Downtown Rockford, the survey asked respondents about recent visits to Downtown Rockford and competing shopping districts (Table 5). The answers, detailed below, reveal that the respondents--a group that probably is more interested in Downtown Rockford than is the general population, given that they took the time to complete this survey--make more frequent visits to nearby, national chain dominated shopping clusters. Because shopping frequency is driven by necessities such as groceries, the absence of that store category impacts the shopping frequency responses. The high Internet shopping occurrence confirms that Rockford consumers are following national trends.

Because dining is so important to the success of Downtowns and Rockford has an emerging dining cluster, respondents were asked, "In the past 30 days, how many times did you eat out at restaurants?" Figure 6 illustrates their response.

NEXT STEPS

Table 2

Rate your overall satisfaction with these factors as they apply to Downtown Rockford:	
Answered at least above average	
Dining	35.2%
Parks	28.7%
Community Friendliness	24.0%
Walkability	23.3%
Bicycle Routes	19.9%
Sports Facilities	15.3%
Housing	7.0%
Shopping	6.5%
Employment	6.1%

Table 3

Evaluate your experience at these Downtown Rockford events:	
Answered at least above average	
Dinner on the Dock	74.4%
Screw City Beer Festival	72.6%
City Market	71.3%
Rockford Ice Hogs	62.6%
Friday Night Flix	59.5%
Two Block Party	55.3%
R.A.V.E. Events	53.8%
500 Block Party	53.1%

Table 4

Evaluate your experience at these Downtown Rockford events:	
Answered never attended	
City Market	21.9%
Rockford Ice Hogs	26.5%
R.A.V.E. Events	35.9%
Dinner on the Dock	54.0%
Friday Night Flix	61.7%
Screw City Beer Festival	66.6%
500 Block Party	68.4%
Two Block Party	74.2%

Table 5

<i>In an average month, how often do you visit these commercial areas?</i>	
Answered at least once	
East State Street Corridor (Alpine to I-90)	90.7%
Perryville Corridor	87.4%
East Riverside Corridor (Forest Hills to I-90)	77.1%
Amazon or other online store	71.4%
East State Street Corridor (Fairview Avenue to Alpine Road)	68.4%
Downtown (River District and/or Midtown)	67.3%
West Riverside Corridor	43.2%
11th Street (Harrison to U.S. Bypass 20)	34.1%

Table 6

<i>How would the addition of these restaurants affect the amount of money you spend at businesses in Downtown Rockford?</i>	
Answered "I would spend a lot or a little more"	
Casual dining	70.7%
White table cloth restaurant	49.7%
Counter service restaurant	45.8%
Pub or Bar	41.4%
Quick service restaurant	36.4%

Table 7

<i>How would the addition of these stores affect the amount of money that you spend at businesses in Downtown Rockford?</i>	
I would spend a lot or a little more	
Fresh Produce	67.4%
Specialty Meats and Fish	64.7%
Bakery	64.4%
Apparel	55.8%
Book Store	54.4%
Fine Wine & Spirits	51.2%
Home Accessories	50.7%
Furniture	30.3%
Art Gallery	27.1%
Make-up/Cosmetics	25.6%
Bike Shop	22.4%

These utilization reports set a baseline for the success of Downtown Rockford initiatives to be documented by asking about utilization in future surveys.

ASPIRATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

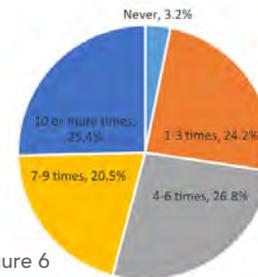


Figure 6

The survey sought to guide this planning effort and the current property owners' recruitment focus with questions about what changes were most likely to increase visits to Downtown Rockford.

Existing restaurants should be optimistic because the majority of respondents continue to indicate they would spend more in all types of restaurants except quick serve. (Table 6) The very strong response to "Casual Dining" suggests a clear recruitment focus. Note also that nearly half of the respondents are willing to spend more in the White Tablecloth, Pub, and Counter Service restaurants suggesting opportunities for those concepts too.

There was also interest in adding stores. (Table 7) With nearly two thirds of respondents requesting the stores selling items generally available in City Markets, the wisdom of Rockford's new market building is apparent. Existing businesses can best apply this survey information and improve sales by adopting desired formats and either stocking merchandise similar to what is carried by the requested stores or, if already in stock, advertising the item's availability. This response should allay fears of existing businesses that competition would cannibalize current sales levels.

Figure 7 illustrates the respondent's preferences for specific stores by increasing the size of store names based on the number of times that business was requested.



Figure 7

When respondents were asked, “What event have you attended in another community that would be a good event for Downtown Rockford to consider holding?” Figure 8 uses a word diagram to illustrate their suggestions.

NEXT STEPS

With the coming Rockford City Market, it may be useful to get more specific information about the items desired by respondent’s seeking Fresh Produce, Specialty Meats and Fish, and Bakery items. The respondents desiring these items who also offered contact information could be invited to a focus group. The information on desired businesses and in events should be shared with building owners and event organizers to inform their planning processes.



Figure 8

SURVEY SUMMARY

Surveys tell researchers what respondents think, but not the reasoning behind what they think. This survey establishes a baseline for measuring how planned changes impact Downtown Rockford utilization. A research program would repeat the survey effort in three to five years and draw conclusions on how behaviors are changing.

Based on the survey analysis, the consultants made observations about the results, but greater insight is possible if there is further communication with survey respondents. Because the survey allowed the respondents to volunteer to assist efforts to improve the Downtown Rockford area, it facilitates engaging Rockford residents. Mini-surveys can be created to seek more details from those who expressed concerns about safety or parking. Respondents also can be invited to focus groups, based on their survey answers, to provide more insight into why they responded as they did. Focus groups are a form of qualitative research in which a group of people are asked questions in an interactive group setting about their perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes towards a product, service, concept, or idea.

