

Principle 2.

Maintain a Strong Business Investment Environment for the Corridor

Kishwaukee Street has been a corridor of commerce and industry for much of Rockford's history. Rockford has historically supported industry clusters ranging from furniture-making and agricultural products during the early twentieth century to the metal-based and high-tech industrial applications that exist within the Corridor today. Industrial activity occurs at the south end of the Corridor adjacent to the Chicago Rockford International Airport in a larger-scale, campus-like setting, while smaller-scale industrial activity is interspersed with residential, commercial, and office uses through the central portion of the Corridor. As shown in Figure 2, these small commercial nodes are located within larger industrial land uses, but these businesses can be mutually supporting and the off-site impacts of commercial and industrial activity on the surrounding activity can be mitigated.

As the market has shifted the character of industry clusters over the decades, the structures standing along Kishwaukee Street have retained the identity of their initial inhabitants. These outdated historical structures are potential candidates for adaptive reuse opportunities, including:

- Multi-story warehouse facilities: artist workspace and showrooms
- Rock River School: CDC headquarters and/or workforce training center
- Counselor Scale Building site: industry incubator

The redevelopment of these under-utilized structures will allow modern industry and redevelopment to occur within the structural legacy of the Corridor's heavy manufacturing and industrial past.

Key Opportunity Areas

The three figures that follow describe key opportunities for redevelopment that will serve to reinvigorate the Corridor in three high-profile locations, serving as a catalyst for further redevelopment. These three areas were chosen because they are highly visible and represent land use issues that are prototypical throughout the Corridor: commercial uses at Broadway and Buckbee, industrial uses between Blackhawk Park and Peoples Avenues, and a mixture of industrial and commercial uses at Kishwaukee Street's intersection with Harrison Avenue.

Key Opportunity Area 1 – Broadway / Buckbee Commercial Node

Higher intensity development and redevelopment of this commercial node would increase land use and visual linkages to the established Mid Town commercial district to the east of Kishwaukee Street along Broadway. To further encourage street activity, pedestrian connections across and along Kishwaukee Street could be strengthened in order to increase the area's pedestrian orientation. Pedestrian activity is an important aspect of this commercial node; existing on-street parking on Broadway should be maintained in order to allow effective circulation patterns while supporting existing businesses. As shown in Figure 3, curb cuts along selected blocks of Kishwaukee Street and Broadway should be limited in order to enhance the pedestrian environment, improve building and landscaping appearances, and manage traffic circulation patterns.

The existing industrial uses indicated in Figure 3 should also be stabilized and enhanced. Also illustrated are multiple opportunities to provide planted medians, parkways, and intersection enhancements as well as landscaping improvements at privately-owned parking lots. These streetscape improvements will encourage pedestrian activity, reduce stormwater run-off, and encourage further private sector investment.



Key Opportunity Area 1



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Principle 2. {Continued}

Maintain a Strong Business Investment Environment for the Corridor

Key Opportunity Area 2 – Blackhawk Park / Peoples Avenues Industrial Stabilization

This node is located at the heart of the Corridor’s industrial uses. In order to stabilize the existing industrial uses and ensure that the area is suitable and accessible for industrial uses into the future, the construction of a new access road on or east of the existing railroad right-of-way parallel to Kishwaukee Street should be evaluated, as indicated in [Figure 4](#). This would improve industrial access and circulation by allowing trucks and heavy machinery to diverge from the current Kishwaukee Street route onto a roadway that is designed for their operational needs. Landscape buffering along this proposed alignment and along Kishwaukee Street would serve as a visual screen and help to mitigate the impacts of industrial activity on residential areas to the east.

In order to honor the industrial history of this section of the Corridor, a “Heart of Kishwaukee Industry” monument could be erected at the southeast corner of Kishwaukee Street and Peoples/23rd Avenue. This monument would serve as a gateway to and visual indicator of the historical basis for the current industrial character of this node. A significant portion of under-utilized industrial land that sits northwest of this proposed monument could be redeveloped as a modern industrial facility, if land assembly and environmental clean-up can be facilitated by the City. The monument could reflect the proud industrial heritage of the Corridor, while the redeveloped site would demonstrate a significant commitment to continued industrial activity within the City.

Key Opportunity Area 3 – Harrison Avenue / Kishwaukee Street Gateway Node

Currently, this node exhibits a variety of industrial, commercial, institutional and residential uses that are inefficiently organized and ineffectively buffered. As shown in [Figure 5](#), alterations to traffic circulation, including consolidated and shared access points, as well as landscaping and maintenance of existing natural features, can be used to minimize conflicts between uses. Wayfinding and identifying signage can also be installed to visually cue entry into the Corridor while accurately directing visitors to their destinations.

The southwest “triangle” created by the railroad right-of-way, Kishwaukee Street, and Harrison Avenue should be assembled and redeveloped to complement adjacent existing industrial uses, while providing perimeter landscaping and shared access points. Remnant residential uses in this triangle should be removed as redevelopment occurs. The former Rockford National Furniture Company is another ideal redevelopment opportunity: this iconic remnant of Rockford’s heyday as a furniture manufacturing powerhouse could be adapted for a number of re-uses, including space for artists or start-up business incubation. Just southwest of this opportunity area sits another “triangle” of under-utilized industrial land that could be redeveloped for modern industrial uses. Attractive buffering should be installed at the northeast block to buffer the existing church property from its industrial surroundings.



Key Opportunity Area 2



Key Opportunity Area 3



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Key Opportunity Area I: Broadway / Buckbee Commercial Node



Proposed Initiatives

- ① Stabilize and enhance existing commercial uses
- ② Adaptive re-use opportunity
- ③ New commercial development
- ④ New housing development
- ⑤ Stabilize and enhance existing industrial uses
- ⑥ Provide planted medians, parkways, and intersection enhancements
- ⑦ Provide private landscape improvements at new and existing parking lots
- ⑧ Consolidate curb cuts to one per block face with side street access

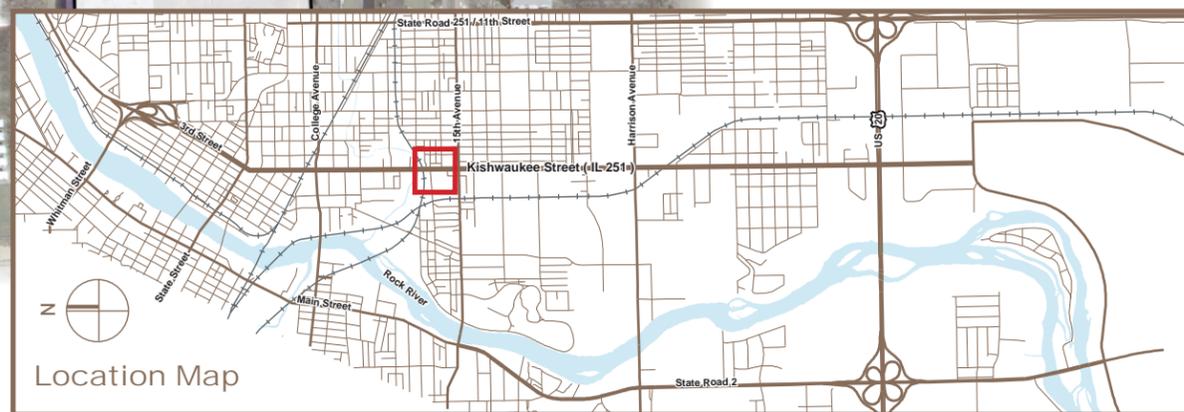


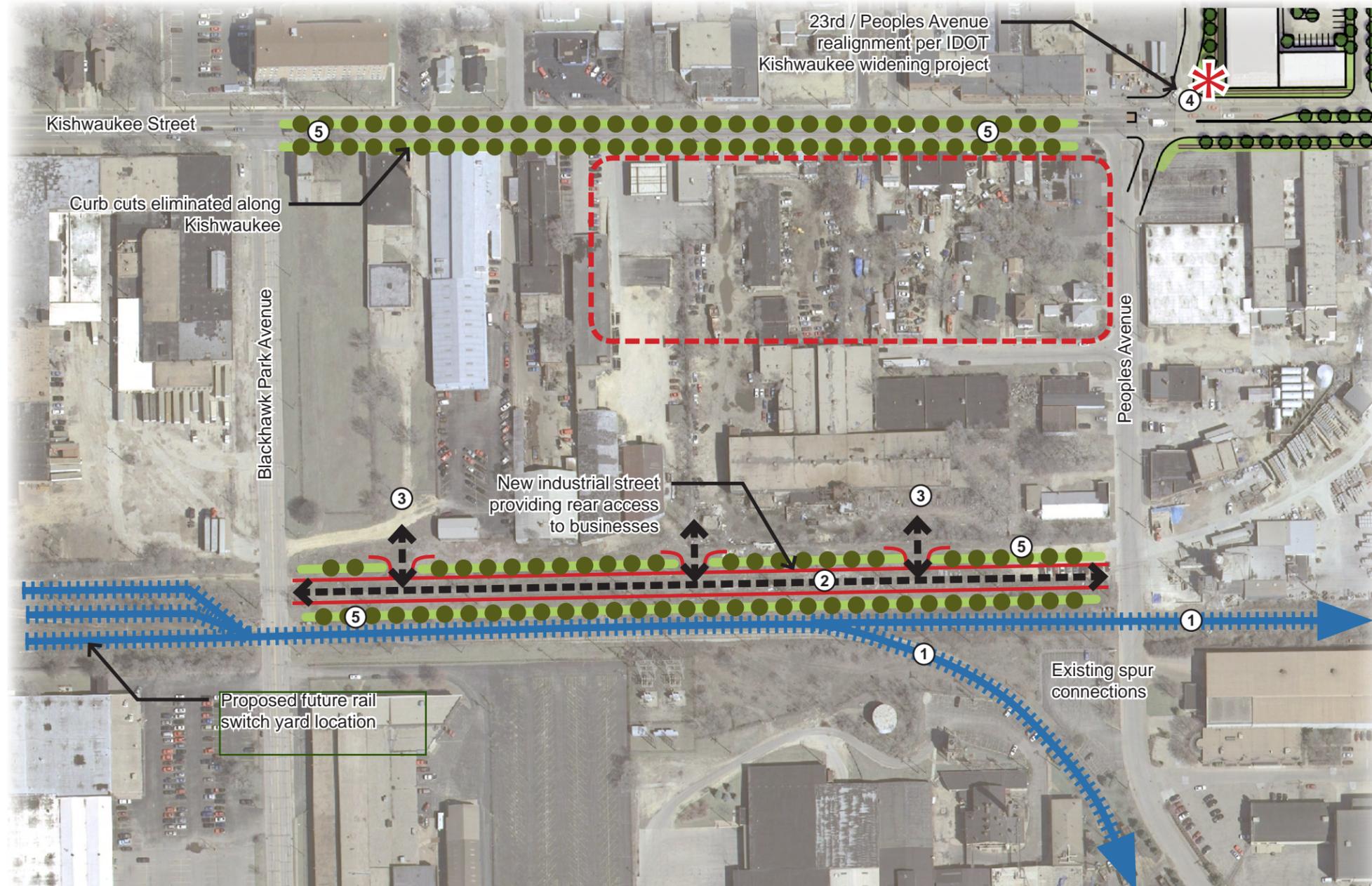
Figure 3

Scale: 1" = 200'



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Key Opportunity Area 2: Blackhawk Park / Peoples Industrial Stabilization



Proposed Initiatives

- ① Rail Lines (Generalized)
- ② Proposed New Alignment
- ③ Proposed Consolidated Industrial Access (generalized)
- ④ "Heart of Kishwaukee Industry" Monument
- ⑤ Proposed Planted Medians and Parkways (curb cuts minimized or eliminated)

--- Key industrial redevelopment opportunity

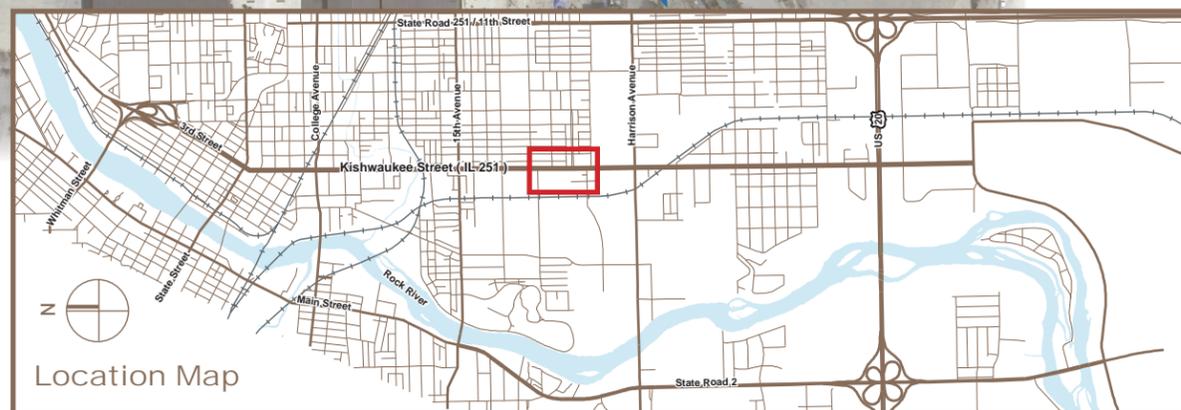
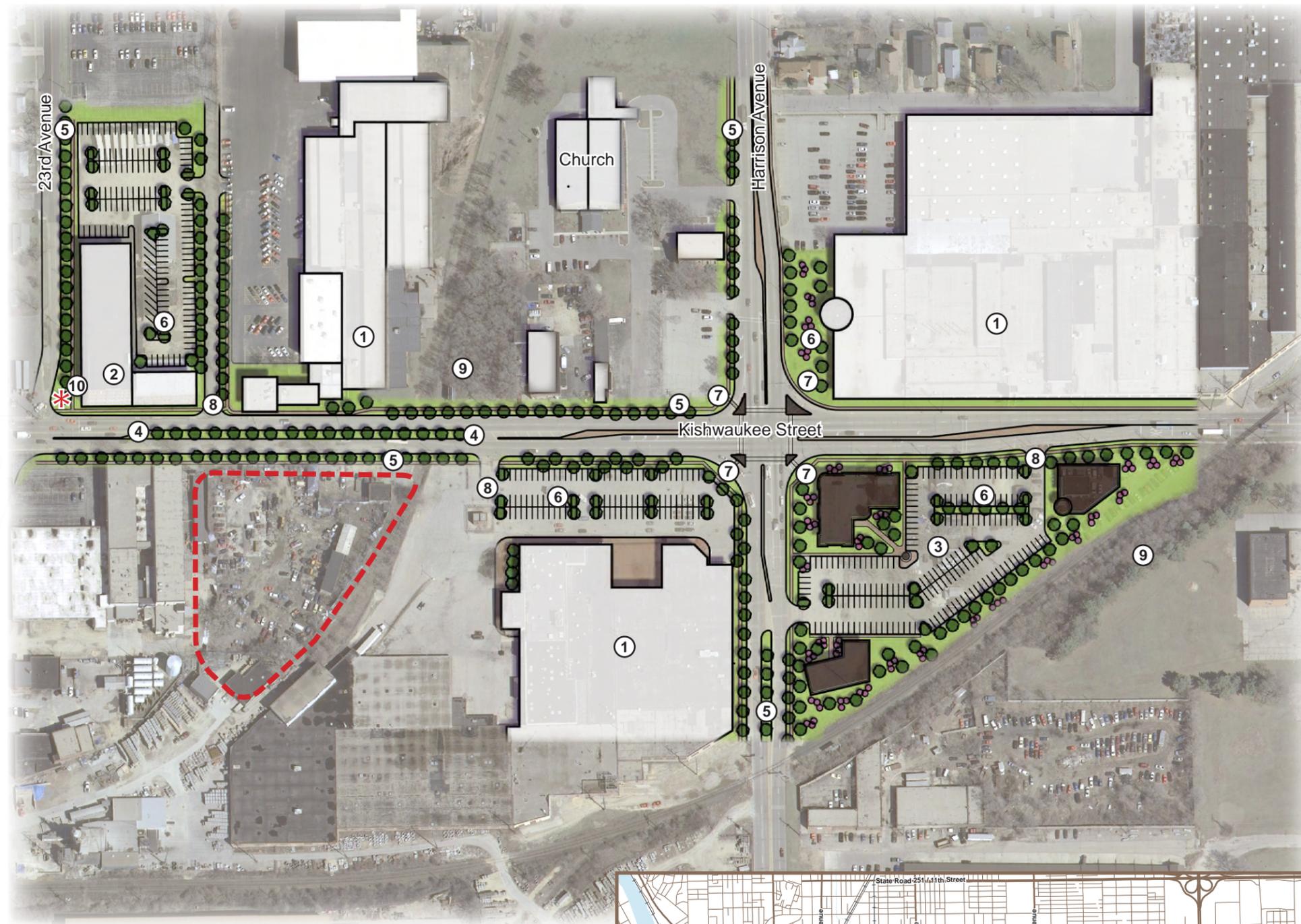


Figure 4

Scale: 1" = 200'



Key Opportunity Area 3: Harrison / Kishwaukee Gateway Node



Proposed Conditions

- ① Stabilize and enhance existing industrial uses
- ② Adaptive re-use opportunity (former Rockford National Furniture Company Building)
- ③ New commercial / office development
- ④ Provide planted median
- ⑤ Provide street trees and buffer treatments at non-industrial uses
- ⑥ Provide private landscape improvements at new and existing parking lots
- ⑦ Provide gateway identity signage
- ⑧ Consolidate and share access points
- ⑨ Protect and maintain existing natural features
- ⑩ "Heart of Kishwaukee Industry" Monument

--- Key industrial redevelopment opportunity

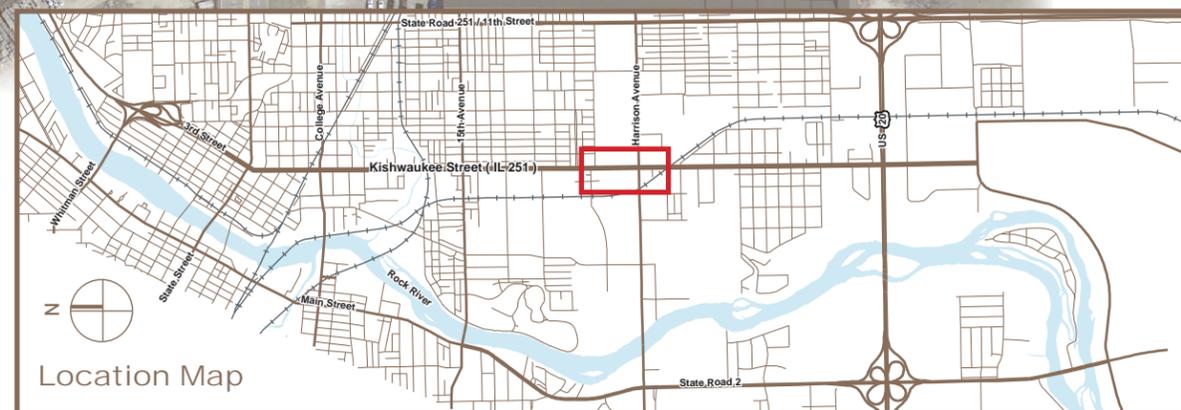


Figure 5

Scale: 1" = 200'



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