

City of Streator Downtown Strategic Plan

February 21, 2014



STREATOR 

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SECTION I: INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

City of Streator

Nestled in Illinois's Grand Prairie, the City of Streator typifies small town charm. Streator rests along the scenic Vermilion River, on the LaSalle-Livingston county line at the cross roads of IL18 and IL 23, which provide ready access in less than an hour to Bloomington and Peoria, and to Chicago, the Quad Cities and Champaign in less than two hours. With beautiful neighborhoods, popular community events, and a proud manufacturing heritage that thrives still today, it is no wonder residents and businesses alike are proud to call Streator home.



Once known as the “Glass Manufacturing Capital of the World”, Streator experienced an economic and population boom in the 1880s, which continued for much of the early 20th century.

However, the 1950s saw the closing of the few remaining coal mines and after peaking in the 60s, the population started to decline. The outward flow of jobs and investment and the growth of suburban development attracted more residents and shoppers away from the City's core and shop owners struggled to keep their doors open. Today, Streator proudly boasts several stable employers that provide hundreds of jobs to the

community. A budding arts and culture scene is a sign of a city on the rebound. Nevertheless, there are several hurdles left for the City to overcome. Population decline and increasing poverty are persistent trends in the region. The downtown was hit hardest, with many of the shops remaining vacant, and several store fronts and homes in need of repair. Despite these challenges, Streator's Downtown is where this “quiet surprise on the prairie” creates a buzz. Therefore, the City staff is determined to address these trends with bold, transformative initiatives targeting downtown development. The initiatives detailed in this plan will retool the downtown and ensure Streator hums with the attributes necessary to attract new tourists, business, residents, and growth.

Plan Background

Downtown Streator touts a popular nightlife scene, family-friendly City Park, and authentic historic building stock. The downtown is the epicenter of Streator community and culture, attracting hundreds of residents and local farmers to the weekly farmer's market. Strengthening and revitalizing the downtown is a key step in the City's future successes, and with no past plans adopted, the downtown district is in need of both definition and future direction.

In conjunction with an update to the community's Comprehensive Plan, the City of Streator engaged Vandewalle & Associates to assist in preparing a Downtown Plan that sets a vision for the downtown and plots a course for the initiation of key catalytic projects that will further the district's growth and sustained development. The vision statement, project initiatives, and implementation matrix in this Plan set forward-looking goals for what Streator should be, and chart a path for how it can get there.

The scope of the goals may seem grand, but the Plan elements are rooted in the realities of Streator and highly informed by community input gathered throughout the planning process.

Planning Process

Streator's greatest asset is the commitment and passion of residents for their community. With this recognition, Vandewalle & Associates sought to engage residents at several points throughout the process. This planning process consisted of the following components:

- **Data Collection and Analysis**—Demographic and economic data was collected on the local and regional scale to determine the strengths, challenges, and emerging trends that may impact the downtown. Detailed in the Comprehensive Plan, this data included a community tapestry profile that uses market data to assess the lifestyle and spending priorities of the community.
- **Stakeholder Interviews and Business Roundtables**—To better assess the downtown's specific concerns, Vandewalle & Associates met with civic, business, and neighborhood leaders during focus groups and one-on-one interviews. These groups included:
 - Downtown business owners
 - Large employers
 - Chamber of commerce employees
 - Educators
 - Realtors
 - Non-profit organizations, health and social service organizations
- **Community Open House**—The Vandewalle & Associates team in collaboration with the City, welcomed the public to City Park to view and react to the initial Downtown Plan Vision Framework. Participants were encouraged to provide feedback and prioritize initiatives, assets, and issues.



SECTION II: MULTI-REGIONAL ANALYSIS

Vandewalle & Associates began the Comprehensive and Downtown Plan development processes by assessing the larger regional influences of the state and county. An understanding of these influences and trends is crucial to developing a downtown that is rooted in the existing and evolving realities of place and economics.

Regional & State Influences

With the Chicago Mega City to the northeast, Bloomington and Peoria to the south, and the Quad Cities to the northwest, Streator has developed on the edge of several of Illinois's economic powerhouses whose industries fuel the City's economy. This Illinois Valley region is a destination for energy production with wind farms spanning Illinois' central counties. A study by the Midwest IP Institute identified a Great River Innovation and Applied Technology spine that stretches from Waterloo, IA to Decatur, IL spreading high-tech jobs on either side of the Mississippi River (see Fig. II.1). Mobile machinery, agricultural production, and food processing are powerful regional economies that Streator's own major businesses contribute to greatly.

LaSalle County Influences

LaSalle County, in addition to being well connected to the Chicago area global trade center, serves as a crossroads for intercontinental transshipment. This includes a network of multiple rail lines as well as the intersection of Interstates 39 and 80 (see Fig. II.2). The Illinois River, a principal tributary of the Mississippi River, winds through the County's midsection and is a powerful regional asset for transportation and shipping. As a major energy producer, LaSalle sits in the heart of Illinois's wind production regime and hosts a nuclear power plant as well as the largest solar array in the state located just north of Streator. The County boasts many other natural wonders as home to Starved Rock State Park, which attracts visitors interested in its history and beauty, as well as the Vermilion River, which travels through Streator as it flows gently northward to its confluence with the Illinois River.

Citywide Influences

As mentioned in the previous section, the City of Streator is a small Midwest community with major assets and influences. As shown in Figure II.3, Streator has grown along the Vermilion River and cradles the intersection of two state highways in its downtown. These highways have spurred the development of another major commercial corridor, North Bloomington, which grows along IL 23. Several unincorporated developments like South Streator, Otter Creek Township, and Bruce Township border parts of Streator's southern, eastern, and western edges; encouraging future suburban style development. Even as growth takes place outside the city, Streator has maintained several major employers and quality schools, both of which are a source of pride for the community. Another source of pride is the City's manufacturing legacy and communal culture which are evident in the City's many industrial employment hubs, quality parks, and events that bring the community together year-round.

Key Regional Opportunities

Midwest Intellectual Property Management Institute

Lake Huron

Northern Forests

The System

1. Great River Innovation and Applied Technology Spine

Economies

2. Mobile Machinery Epicenter
3. Expand Ag Production, Diversification, and Food Processing
4. Grow Biobased Production
5. Ag Production Sustainability

Enablers

6. Make Exporting Easier
7. Build Vibrant People Places
8. Connect to Chicago

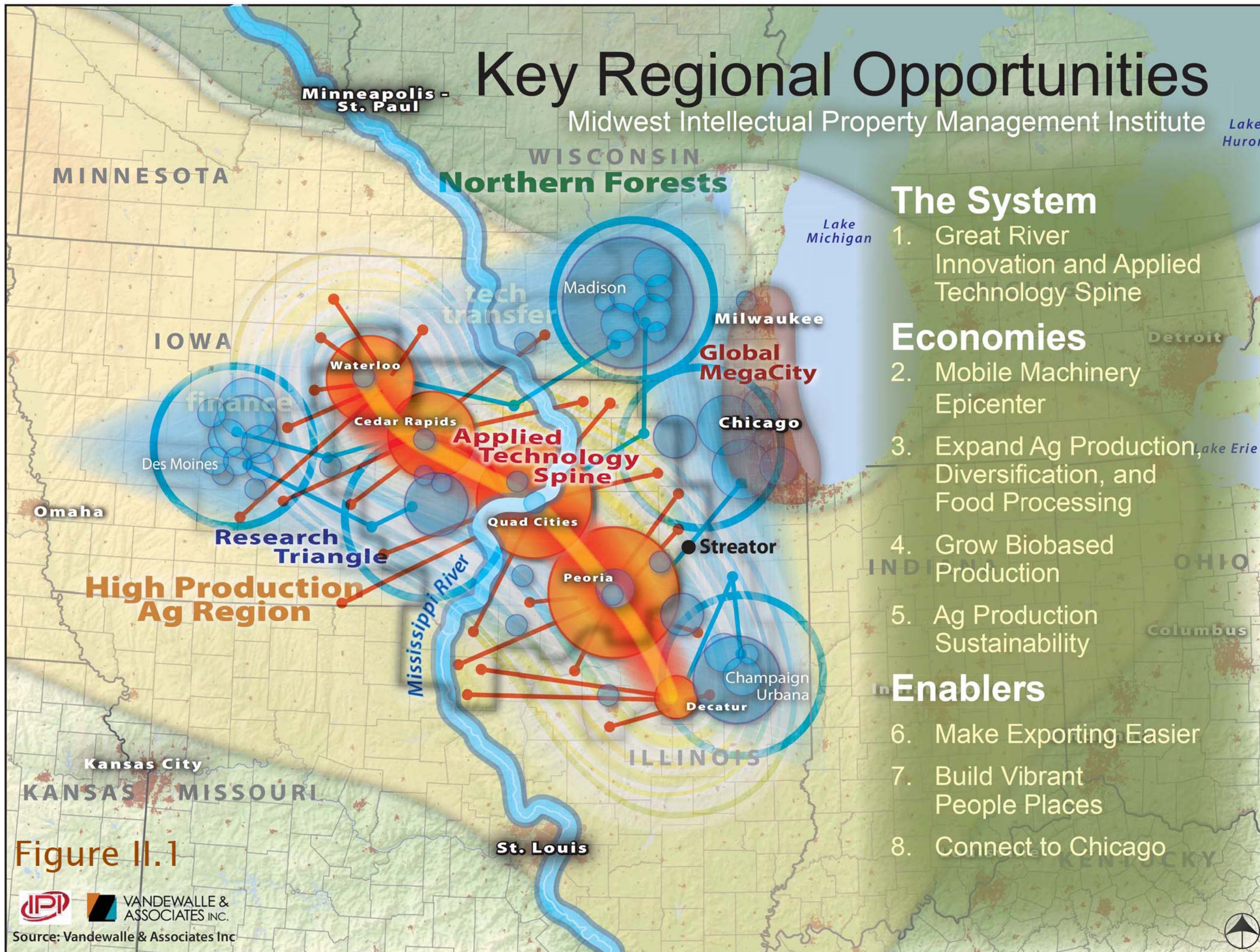


Figure II.1

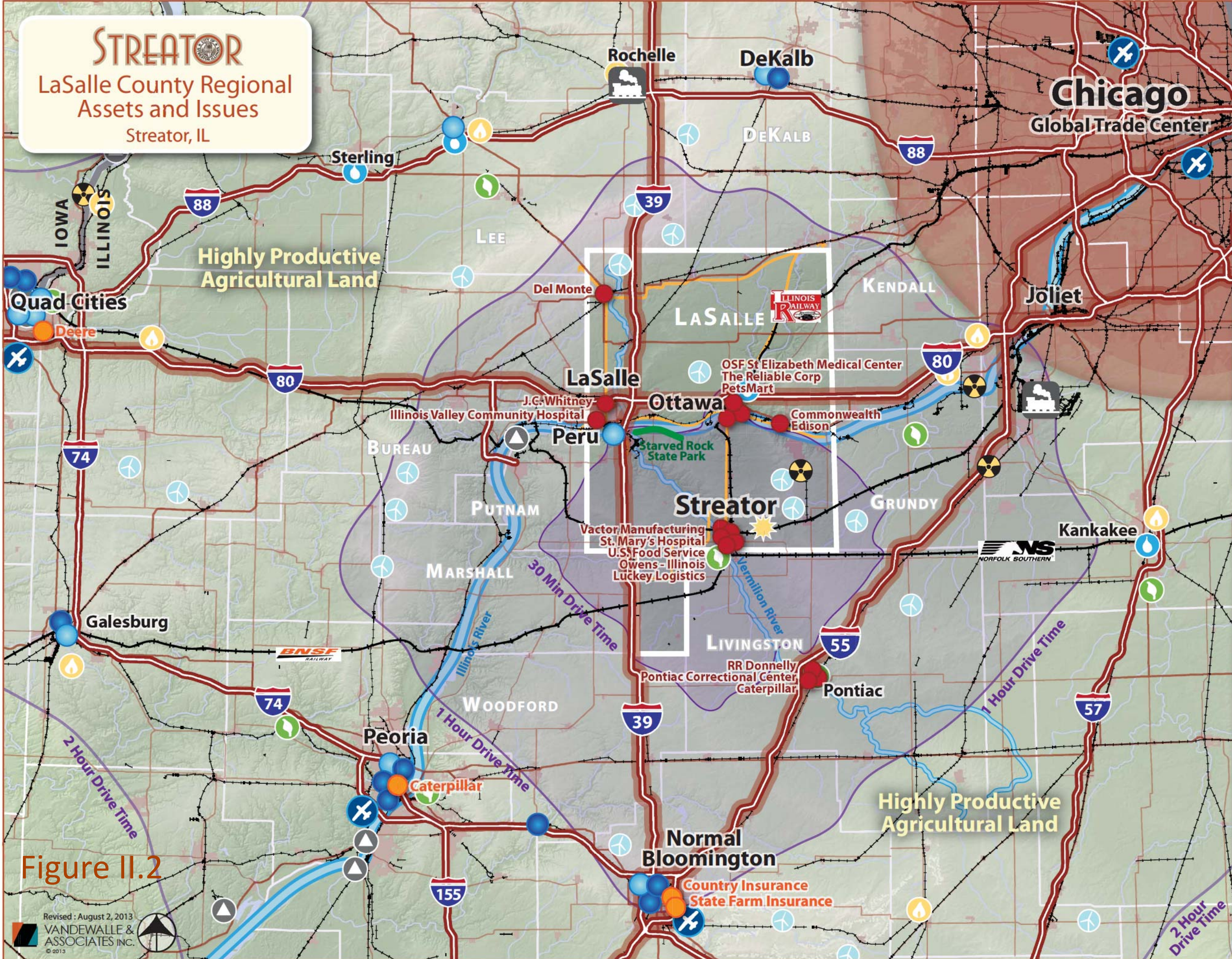


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Source: Vandewalle & Associates Inc



STREATOR
 LaSalle County Regional
 Assets and Issues
 Streator, IL

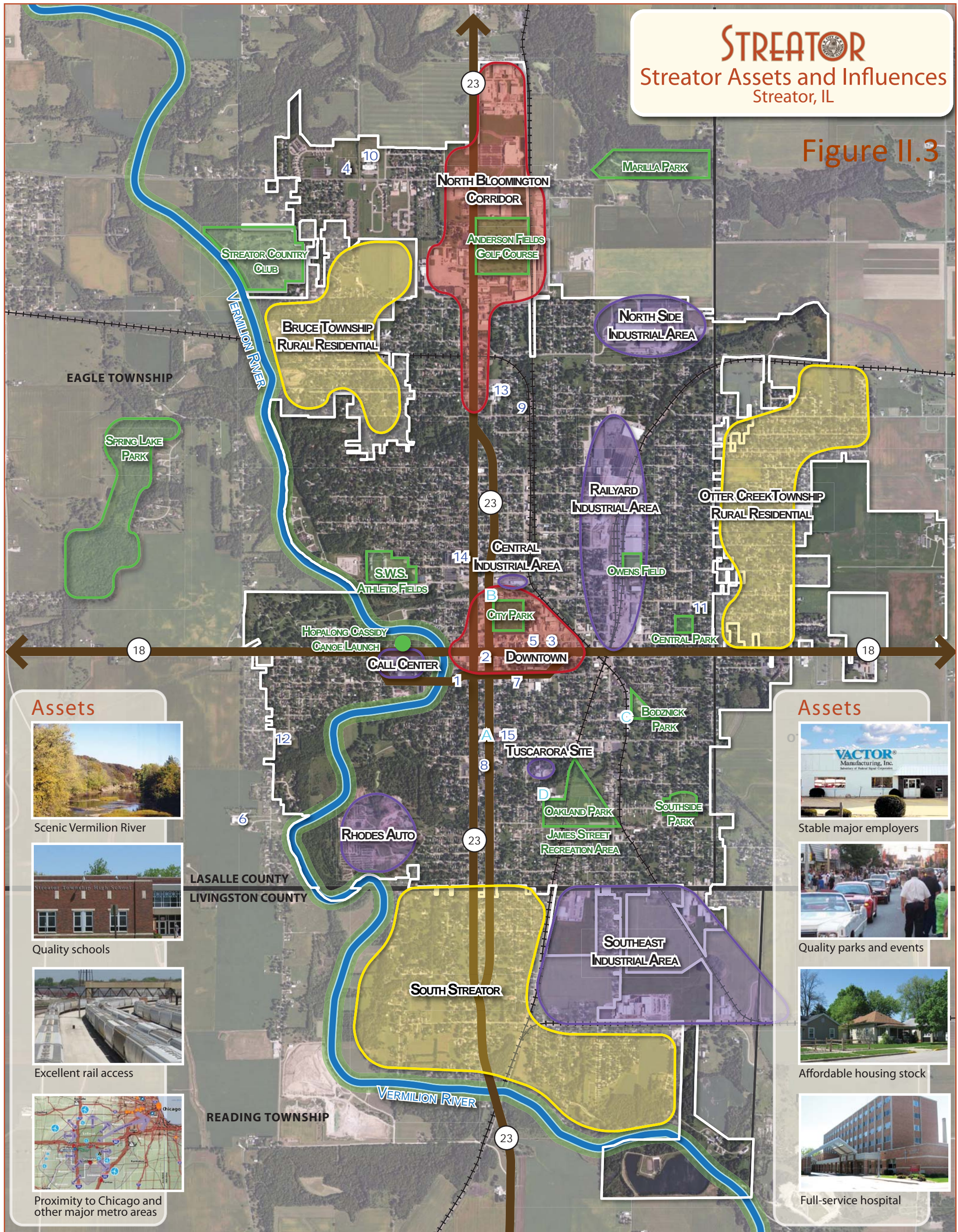


- Key Assets**
- Close and well-connected to Chicago global trade center
 - Crossroads of intercontinental transshipment corridors
 - Served by multiple rail providers and nearby major multi-modal hubs
 - Multiple ports on Illinois River connecting Great Lakes to the Mississippi
 - State of the art broadband infrastructure
 - Stabilizing employment base
 - Starved Rock State Park
 - Highly productive soils
 - In the heart of the Illinois wind regime
- Key Issues**
- Need to increase cooperative regional economic development efforts
 - Lack of a four-year university
 - State finances and politics
 - Community health and substance abuse concerns
 - Matching available workforce with future employment needs

- Legend**
- Fortune 1000 Companies
 - Major Area Employers
 - Four Year Colleges
 - Two Year Colleges
 - 🚚 Multi-modal Stations
 - ✈️ Commercial Airports
 - 🕒 Drive Times from Streator
 - ☀️ Solar Array
 - ☢️ Nuclear Plant
 - 🌬️ Wind Projects & Resources
 - 🌱 Biomass Power Plant
 - 🔥 Natural Gas Power Plant
 - 💧 Hydroelectric Power Plant
 - ⚡ Coal Power Plant
 - i-fiber Lines (LaSalle County)

Figure II.2

Figure II.3



Assets



Scenic Vermilion River



Quality schools



Excellent rail access



Proximity to Chicago and other major metro areas

Assets



Stable major employers



Quality parks and events



Affordable housing stock



Full-service hospital

Special Places

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| 1 CITY HALL/POLICE DEPARTMENT | 9 WEBER HOUSE & GARDEN |
| 2 LIBRARY | 10 CENTENNIAL ELEMENTARY |
| 3 FIRE STATION | 11 SHERMAN ELEMENTARY |
| 4 YMCA | 12 KIMES ELEMENTARY |
| 5 THE MAJESTIC THEATRE | 13 NORTHLAWN JUNIOR HIGH |
| 6 ENGLE LANE THEATRE | 14 STREATOR TOWNSHIP HIGH |
| 7 COMMUNITY CENTER | 15 ST. MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL PARISH SCHOOL |
| 8 ST. MARY'S HOSPITAL | |

Closed Facilities

- A ST. ANTHONY'S CHURCH
- B IMMACULATE CONCEPTION CHURCH
- C ST. CASIMIR'S CHURCH
- D OAKLAND PARK ELEMENTARY

Legend

- RIVER
- COMMERCIAL AREAS
- EMPLOYMENT/INDUSTRIAL AREAS
- UNINCORPORATED DEVELOPMENT
- PARKS AND RECREATION

SECTION III: DOWNTOWN'S OPPORTUNITY ANALYSIS

Boundaries and Land Use Pattern

As shown in Figure III.1, for the purposes of this Plan the "downtown" is bordered by the rail corridor to the east and the Vermilion River to the west. The northern border extends about one block north of City Park and the southern boundary follows Bridge St. grabbing properties on either side of the street. One of the initial challenges in the downtown planning process was identifying a common understanding of the exact area that constitutes the downtown. Certainly, the four-block area along Main Street from Wasson to Park Street comprises the core of the downtown, but City Park and the businesses along Hickory Street south of the Park also are clearly part of the downtown, as are the churches along Bridge Street and the businesses between Park and Bloomington, and Bridge and Kent Street. After seeking input from the Plan Commission, central area property and business owners and City staff, the boundaries shown in Figure III.1 were arrived at for the downtown. This does not mean that those areas not included are not important or worthy of further planning, simply that the analysis and recommendations in this Plan will focus primarily on the specific geography chosen for this planning effort. Importantly, anything that helps the attractiveness and stability of the identified downtown area also will be beneficial to the areas located just outside of it.

One of the difficulties in determining the boundaries of the downtown are the variety of land uses and building patterns in the area. As is also shown in Figure III.1, within the identified downtown boundary are at least five sub-areas with distinct uses and forms of development.

Historic Core: Located in the center, this sub-area has a traditional character that includes several historic buildings abutting the sidewalk and a variety of stores and restaurants accessed by pedestrians with ease. Parking is provided primarily on-street.

Service/Institutions: Along the southern edge of the downtown, the majority of uses shift to services and institutions. Much of this is driven by the one-way traffic on Bridge Street, which has caused most of the buildings along it to face the side streets, often with parking lots between the buildings and the street. Included in the sub-area are a number of churches, banks, auto repair shops and other uses that tend to be singular destinations as opposed to those that encourage visitors to window shop or make multiple stops within the area.

Auto-Oriented Commercial: Located along Bloomington and Park Streets, this sub-area also is heavily influenced by the one-way traffic on each of these streets, as well as the volume of traffic on both streets that have resulted in most businesses needing to provide sizable off-street parking lots. Although the uses in the sub-area include retail and restaurants like the Historic Core, the form of development is more typical of commercial corridors with building setbacks and entries more oriented to the parking lots than to the sidewalks.

Heavy Commercial: On the northeast side of the downtown is a sub-area characterized by storage, assembly, repair, and similar uses that are more employment-oriented than customer-oriented. Many of these uses are no doubt located here because the buildings and sites are affordable, but these uses would be better served being located in more intensive commercial or industrial districts. There are



some interesting historic buildings in this sub-area that could be renovated with uses that are more similar to and compatible with the Historic Core.

Residential: Flanking City Park to the north and east are multifamily and single family residential uses. These areas “frame” the Park and contribute to its overall character and sense of place. While most are in good shape, it is important to ensure these properties are adequately maintained given their location and visibility.

Inventory and Analysis

While Figure III.1 depicts generalized land uses in the downtown, Figure III.2 provides a more fine-grained analysis of buildings and sites. In addition to showing the land uses of some specific properties and historic buildings, it also provides an analysis of the following potential redevelopment opportunities:

Short-Term Redevelopment Opportunity: These are sizeable sites that are mostly vacant (e.g. parking lots) or currently for sale that could be assembled without having to relocate an existing business. If the City were to begin purchasing sites for future development, or directing prospective developers interested in the downtown, these sites should be given serious consideration. While most of these are under single ownership, some consist of two or more owners. As a result, the opportunity to assemble them to the full extent of what is shown on Figure III.2 may not exist in the future if each property owner decides to do something different with their respective property.

Long-Term Redevelopment Opportunities: These are sizeable sites that are generally under one ownership where the use is not ideal for a downtown location. Accordingly, site assembly would involve having to relocate the existing businesses and replacing them on the sites with uses more consistent with the recommendations in this Plan. The City should open a dialogue with these owners and continue to monitor the status of these sites/businesses so that when the opportunity presents itself to acquire the sites, they can determine whether and how to begin that process.

Historic Building Reuse: There are two buildings of outstanding historic character that have the potential to be converted to new uses. One is the former Streator National Bank Building at 401 East Main Street. This is one of the larger buildings in the downtown and may have potential for residential units or a boutique hotel. However, the building is purported to be in bad shape structurally and the window of time to save it may be closing. The other is the former Church at 404 North Park Street. Although no longer used



as a church, the building continues to belong to the area Diocese and is used occasionally for other functions. Discussion should be held with the Diocese about its long term plans for the building.

Figure III.2 also shows the direction of traffic flow and the general building orientation on most blocks. As noted in the Land Use Pattern discussion, the one-way pairs of Bloomington and Park Street, and Main and Bridge Street, are impacting the uses and form of development. Most of the buildings on Main Street pre-dated the one-way system, thus their physical form has not been as affected by the traffic flow as the others. However, one-way traffic in general is not as conducive to the pedestrian-friendly environment envisioned for the downtown core.



The one-way system was put in place several decades ago when there were a much larger number of workers in the industrial area to the northeast of the downtown that created high traffic volume spikes during shift changes, particularly heading east and west. Although these spikes have greatly diminished, the system has stayed in place partly due to the expense of reconfiguring the traffic signals along the routes. Accordingly, this Plan provides some short

and long-term recommendations for addressing this situation, particularly along Main Street. However, the daily traffic volumes along the Bloomington and Park pair (which together serve as IL 23) may require the maintenance of their one-way systems indefinitely given the constraints to widening either street as may be necessary to adequately carry the existing and future volumes of traffic.

Assets and Issues

Streator's Downtown is the civic, social, and commercial hub of the community and it has several assets and issues that impact the community's character. The following key assets and issues were highlighted throughout the planning process by the City Plan Commission and staff and during focus groups and open house presentations with residents, local businesses, and entrepreneurs.

Key Downtown Assets

- Anchor businesses and institutions: The Majestic Theatre, Farmer's Market, Ace Hardware, Fire Station, and Public Library have been long-standing members of the downtown community, as have numerous churches and fraternal organizations.
- Historic buildings: Streator boasts several historic buildings like the downtown Post Office and Carnegie Library whose unique architecture give downtown visitors a glimpse into the City's past.
- Vermilion River: The Vermilion River flows north into the Illinois River. Its gentle current makes it an ideal kayaking and canoeing destination.
- City Park: Located in the heart of the city and anchoring the downtown's northern boundary, City Park is 10.8 acres of family-friendly recreation and entertainment.



- Crossroads of two state highways: Streator is located on two state thoroughfares, Highway 23 and Highway 18, which connect the City to interstate highways.
- Proximity to major activity areas: Downtown is central to the community as a whole but also is proximate to several activity areas including the central employment area to the northeast, the hospital, high school, future Hardscrabble Park, and several residential neighborhoods. Each of these provides a large number of potential customers as the downtown is the closest commercial area to all of them.

Key Downtown Issues

- Define responsibilities between the City, business and various groups: Stronger coordination of efforts between key downtown stakeholders would allow the city to address issues efficiently.
- Lack of destinations for residents and non-residents: Many of the downtown's patrons are Streator residents. Local small business would benefit from a regional draw to Streator establishments.
- Increase the number of people living in the downtown: The Downtown should strike a balance between livable and commercial. Provide the upper floor housing and amenities necessary to attract downtown residents.
- Improve pedestrian amenities and safety: Increasing the Downtown's walkability would give the area a vibrant urban feel coveted by an increasing number of Americans.
- Create central point of contact for properties available for sale or lease: Ease the sale and purchase of properties by providing buyers and sellers with a central clearinghouse of available downtown properties.
- Organize parking: Create and enforce parking requirements to foster a shopper friendly downtown.
- Improve appearance of buildings: Increase Streator's aesthetic quality by rehabbing storefronts and dilapidated homes.
- Improve appearance at key gateways: Gateways are the welcome mat of any city. Improve the gateways to welcome visitors, potential residents and new businesses to the City.

Downtown Vision

Downtown Streator- Celebrating the best of life on the prairie

“Historic downtown Streator is making noise as the City’s dynamic hub for gathering, celebrating and living with a wide range of entertainment and dining choices as well as unique retail and service offerings for residents and visitors alike. If you haven’t been here lately, you’re in for a surprise.”

Streator is a small town with big heart, and that heart is located in the downtown. Much like a heart, downtown Streator has been and shall remain vital to the City’s survival. The downtown is the cultural and civic center of the community. Effecting citywide change and securing future growth must start with the advancement of the downtown. By successfully implementing the action items detailed in this plan, the City of Streator can ensure that the downtown beats with all its glory. This vision sets a goal for the future by painting a future-looking picture of Streator 10-20 years from now if assets and partnerships are leveraged effectively. This vision, although aspirational and transformative, is founded in the bedrock of Streator’s existing assets and community character to ensure that its scope is realistic.



STREATOR
Downtown Existing
Land Use Pattern
Streator, IL

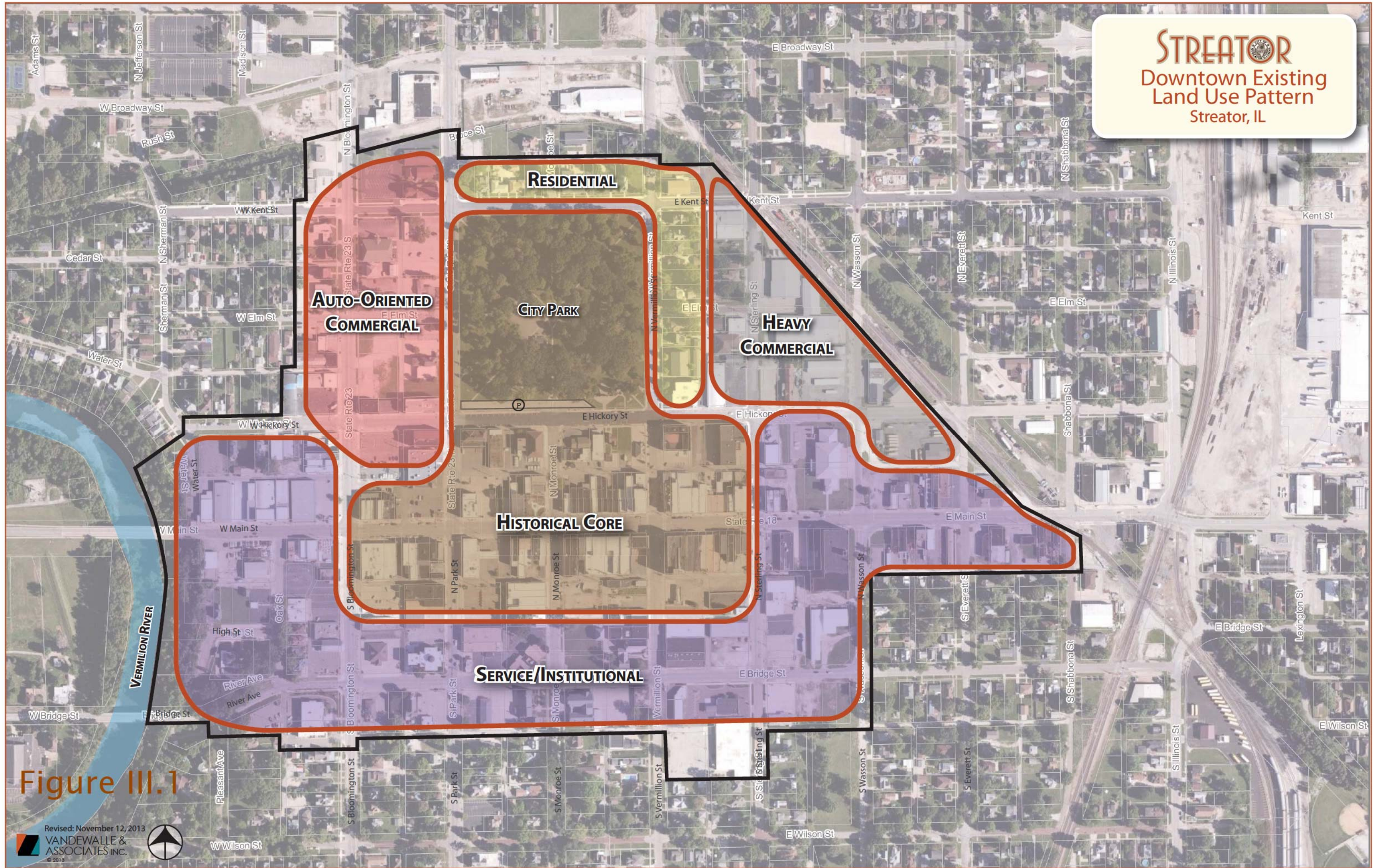


Figure III.1



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Downtown Inventory & Analysis

Streator, IL

Key Assets



Anchor businesses



Historic buildings



Vermilion River



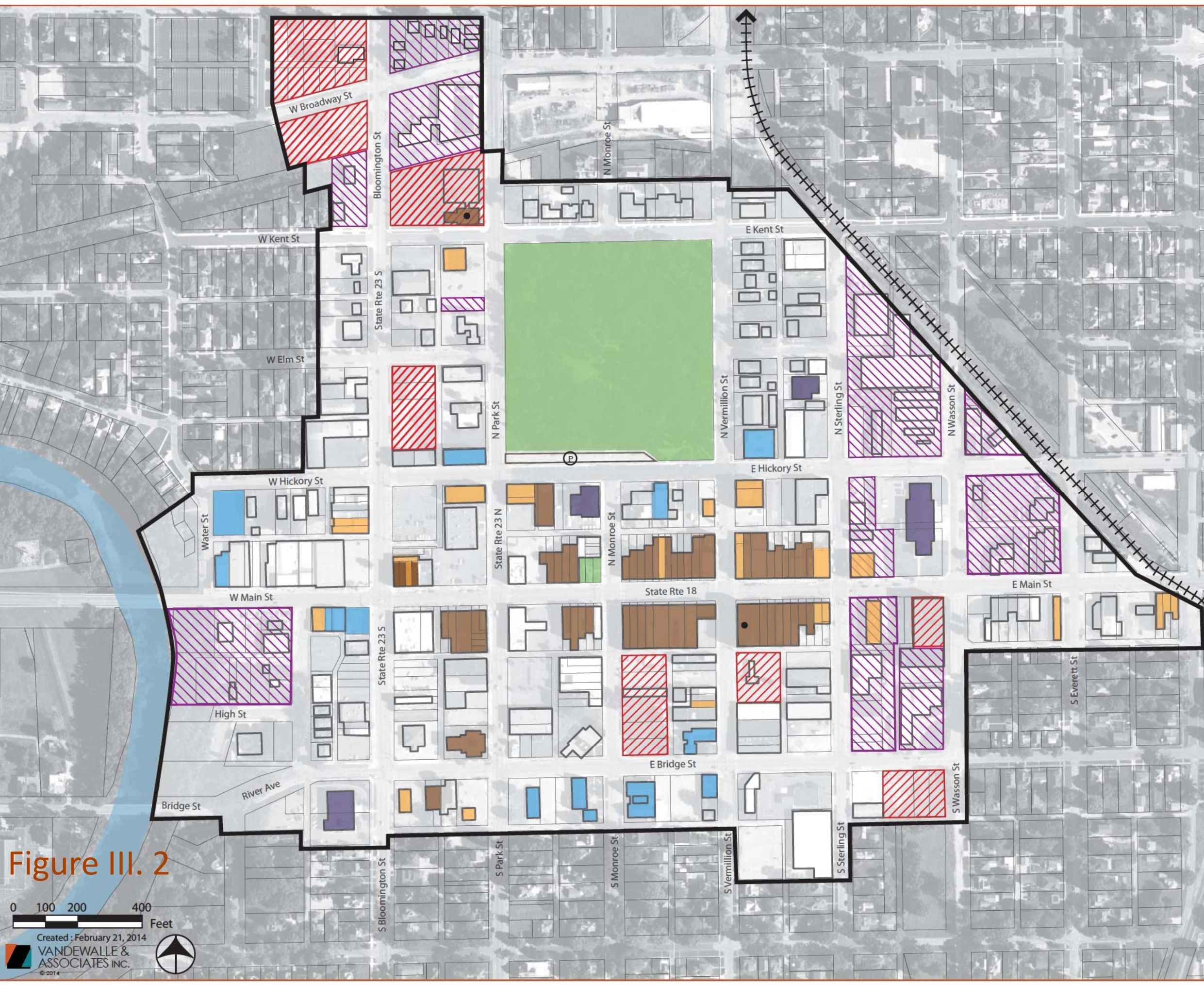
Crossroads of two state highways



City Park



Proximity to major activity areas



Legend

EXISTING BUILDING INVENTORY

- GOVERNMENT
- INSTITUTIONAL
- ENTERTAINMENT/RESTAURANT
- HISTORIC BUILDING
- PARK
- * ACTIVITY NODE

ANALYSIS

- REDEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY (SHORT-TERM)
- REDEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY (LONG-TERM)
- HISTORIC BUILDING REUSE
- TRAFFIC DIRECTION
- FACADE ORIENTATION

Figure III. 2

Key Assets



Anchor businesses



Crossroads of two state highways



City Park



Proximity to major activity areas



Historic buildings



Vermilion River



Key Issues

- Define responsibilities between the City, various groups, and business owners
- Lack of destinations for residents and non-residents
- Improve pedestrian amenities and safety
- Create central point of contact for properties available for sale or lease
- Increase the number of people living in the downtown
- Organize parking
- Improve appearance of buildings
- Improve appearance at key gateways

Improve buildings and streetscape

- Use TIF and other resources to purchase vacant and blighted properties to make them available for redevelopment
- Implement façade improvement program with TIF or wind farm funds
- Actively promote availability of TIF and Enterprise Zone programs to assist with property improvements
- Implement overall downtown streetscape program (Sec. IV)
- Implement Main Street improvement plan to calm traffic, add parking, and improve pedestrian safety (Sec. IV)
- Implement gateways improvement plan (Sec. IV)
- Increase enforcement of existing property maintenance codes
- Pass and enforce a vacant storefront ordinance
- Create a state-certified historic district

Create additional destinations for residents and visitors

- Implement Greenways Master Plan recommendations for “Hardscrabble Park” and promote active use of the River and Hopalong Cassidy Trail
- Attract additional, niche restaurants
- Create one or more additional recreational amenities in City Park to attract youth and families on an on-going basis
- Attract additional entertainment, arts, and cultural venues
- Research area history and create a walking tour
- Investigate development of a major regional attraction such as a planetarium, energy, or ag tourism center
- Investigate potential for a niche hotel
- Investigate hotel with a conference center/auditorium to be shared with the high school on Bloomington St. between the school and Kent St.

Establish a formal organizational structure for managing the downtown

- Clearly define roles and responsibilities between the City and other organizations
- Develop joint marketing initiatives, common business hours, and events
- Select a dedicated funding source
- Hire a full-time downtown manager
- Engage clubs and lodges, churches, and youth to become more involved in downtown activities and events
- Implement parking plan (Sec. IV)
- Create and maintain available sites and buildings database
- Pursue membership in Illinois Main Street program

Collaborate with local & regional partners to create an entrepreneurship program

- Work with IL Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Region 12 Workforce Investment Board, North Central Illinois Council of Governments, Illinois Valley CC and its Small Business Development Center, Streator High School, and Streator Area Chamber of Commerce & Industry to create an entrepreneur development and support program
- Focus on assisting entrepreneurs with starting new retail, restaurant, entertainment, and service businesses in the downtown
- Use TIF and other resources to make low-cost spaces available to help entrepreneurs start new businesses

Increase the development of new residential units

- Assist prospective developers in accessing a wide range of financial resources including federal historic tax credits, housing tax credits, new markets tax credits, TIF, Enterprise Zone benefits, etc.
- Use TIF and other resources to help building owners redevelop upper floors of buildings for additional residential units
- Recruit developers to build new residential apartments on key redevelopment sites
- Encourage state to approve proposed state historic tax credit legislation

Downtown Streator – Celebrating the best of life on the prairie

“Historic downtown Streator is making noise as the City’s dynamic hub for gathering, celebrating and living with a wide range of entertainment and dining choices as well as unique retail and service offerings for residents and visitors alike. If you haven’t been here lately, you’re in for a surprise!”

Figure III.3

SECTION IV: STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

The following Strategic Initiatives comprise the primary recommendations of this Plan for building from the downtown's current strengths to minimize its weaknesses and gain traction moving towards the Vision. The Initiatives are presented in order as ranked by the City Plan Commission. Within each Initiative are several action items. Priority Action Items were chosen by the Plan Commission as the near term, high-impact activities that could motivate developers, recruit partners and kick-start downtown development. The Additional Project Action Items follow through on the efforts started by the Priority Actions in order to further develop initiatives. The Implementation section of this Plan recommends a sequence of the Priority Action Items for maximum impact while also recognizing the finite resources and time the City and its redevelopment partners have to undertake these various tasks.

Improve Buildings and Streetscapes

In order to drastically change Streator's narrative, empower the citizenry, and demonstrate to the region that Streator is committed to change, the building stock and street conditions must reflect the community's investment and dedication to jump-starting the downtown. Almost every other initiative is furthered by the successful implementation of this phase. Accordingly it has been given top priority by the Plan Commission. Building improvement and streetscaping action items include:

Priority Action Items

Use TIF and other resources to purchase vacant and blighted properties to make them available for redevelopment.

Figure III.2 identifies several sites with short and long-term redevelopment potential. Historically, the City has not proactively acquired sites for redevelopment, but site control is perhaps the most important component of an active redevelopment strategy. As noted in the previous section of this Plan, some of the short-term opportunity sites include properties with more than one owner. Accordingly, the opportunity may disappear if each owner decides to do something different. That said, the acquisition of sites needs to be done very thoughtfully and carefully, being sure to identify and deal with issues like environmental contamination (e.g. asbestos within buildings), site access locations, and the likely type and timing of redevelopment. In addition, it is also important to note that there are ways the City can gain some form of control over a site short of an outright purchase, such as entering into a purchase option and/or a cooperative process with the owner to seek development proposals. Lastly, the City also should consider an approach whereby interim uses (such as parking or open space) are identified for acquired sites until market conditions are more favorable for a significant redevelopment project. Often referred to as "land banking," this approach acts to acquire sites as they become available understanding that the opportunity to pursue an ultimate use may still be several years away. In the interim, the site is put into some type of short-term productive use at a relatively low cost that addresses a more immediate need.



Implement Façade Improvement Program with TIF or wind farm funds.

A façade improvement program typically involves some type of cost sharing agreement with a property owner to improve the exterior appearance of a building. An important component of the program is ensuring the design and materials used for improvement are in keeping with the architecture of the building and the period during which it was built. For example, returning to matching gold address numbers on the doors of downtown building would concur with City ordinance and celebrate the quaint, traditional character of Streator's downtown.



Many communities have an architect or other design professional that they make available for free or at a reduced cost to work with property owners to ensure the proposals are appropriate. While this typically works best in areas where some type of historic preservation or design overlay district is in place, such districts are not a requirement as long as the City has mechanisms in place to ensure the use of quality designs and materials. Funding for the program can be provided with tax increment revenues and/or the wind farm funds the City has designated for economic development. It should be noted, though, that the cost of façade improvements rarely results in a corresponding increase in the assessed value of the building. As a result, TIF revenues from the property alone typically will not be sufficient to cover the City's contribution to the project. Nevertheless, improved buildings will help to strengthen the overall appearance and vitality of the entire downtown over time and can lead to higher values throughout the district as property is periodically reassessed.

Additional Project Action Items***Actively promote availability of TIF and Enterprise Zone programs to assist with property improvements.***

Exterior and interior improvements to historic buildings can be costly, especially for those buildings that have not been renovated for quite some time and are now required to comply with modern codes. As a result, building owners often need some form of assistance, such as grants or loans, to make projects financially feasible. Both TIF and Enterprise Zone benefits can make the difference between whether a project moves forward or not. TIF assistance can be provided in many forms, including low interest and forgivable loans, direct grants to property owners, or annual tax rebates. Enterprise Zone benefits can include waivers of permit fees and utility connection charges as well as exempting building materials from sales taxes and other state tax benefits. However, these programs are effective only if used, and they are used only when property owners are aware of them. To increase awareness, the City should work with its redevelopment partners to prepare promotional materials that explain the programs and provide regular outreach to downtown property and business owners to encourage their use.

Implement overall downtown streetscape program

As discussed in Section II of this Plan, the Downtown consists of several sub-areas, each with unique land uses and forms of development. While the whole district should have a quality appearance along all streets, how the streets are used varies between sub-areas and so too should the streetscape design in

terms of materials and amenities. Figure IV.1 provides a streetscape framework that identifies a hierarchy of three streetscape types based on the levels of pedestrian and vehicular use. Figure IV.2 then provide cross sections of each streetscape type. By and large, the proposed streetscape types build from the materials and amenities already in place throughout the downtown. However, it is expected that additional improvements will occur over time as funding becomes available, so the framework is intended to be a long term guide as additional improvement are planned.

Implement Main Street improvement plan to calm traffic, add parking, and improve pedestrian safety.

As shown in the streetscape framework and cross section, Main Street will continue to be the focal point of the downtown and should provide the greatest number of amenities to enhance the appearance of the corridor and the comfort of pedestrians. However, safety also is an important consideration. As noted previously, one-way streets generally are not as pedestrian friendly as two-way streets. Additionally, Vermillion serves as a major connector street to Main Street, Hickory Street and City Park. Therefore, Vermillion and Monroe Street are each recommended to return to two-way traffic between Hickory and Bridge Street. In the case of Main Street, the one-way designation results in very wide travel lanes, and the width of travel lanes has the effect of increasing vehicular speeds. When this is coupled with the timing of traffic signals that provide continuous green lights, the end result is very conducive to moving traffic while also making it challenging for pedestrians to cross the street. While the outer lanes on both sides of Main Street are designated for parking, the length of pavement to be crossed can be intimidating to pedestrians, particular those with limited or inhibited mobility. Accordingly, IV.3 includes a recommendation for “narrowing” the street by using stripping and planters within the parking lanes to effectively shorten the width of the street. This will result in losing one or more parking spaces in each block, but it will help to further beautify the street while also enhancing pedestrian safety and levels of comfort at each crosswalk. Over the long term, the City should look to return Main and Bridge Streets to two-way, with Bridge Street potentially serving as a truck and through-traffic by-pass and Main Street serving local traffic (see Figure IV.4). Given the expense involved with a return to two-way traffic, particularly for reconfiguring the traffic signals, this is considered a long-term goal. In the meantime, low-cost stripping and planters (which can be removed during to the winter to facilitate plowing) can be used to facilitate the safe and efficient use of Main Street by both vehicles and pedestrians.



Implement Gateways Improvement Plan.

Gateways greet Streator residents, visitors, and business and thus have the opportunity to create a positive and memorable first impression. Figure IV.1 includes locations for downtown entry signage, but the City should consider a larger wayfinding program that would include community entry signage and direct visitors to destinations throughout the City. In addition to signage, gateways should focus on the appearance of properties at these key locations.

Increase enforcement of existing property maintenance codes.

Streator has already taken steps to adopt property maintenance codes that are applicable throughout the City. Enforcing these codes in the downtown and adjacent neighborhoods is critical to improving the area's image as well as encouraging new investment. When coupled with the building improvement incentives that are part of this initiative, enforcement can be easier to implement and result in higher levels of compliance than may be achieved without these programs.

Pass and enforce a Vacant Storefront Ordinance.

Even when properties are in reasonably good condition, vacant storefronts can negatively impact the appearance and desirability of an area to an equal or greater extent than poor maintenance. Although filling the empty space with a viable use should always be a priority, there are steps that can be taken to minimize the impact of the vacancy. These can include covering the windows with attractive materials or, better yet, creating interesting displays such as historic artifacts and/or photographs, information on coming events, etc. At minimum, coverings can provide an inexpensive remedy and should be required of all vacant storefronts on Main Street and the Primary Streets identified on Figure IV.1. Further, boarded up or permanent coverings (e.g. siding or closing window openings with bricks or blocks) should be prohibited.

Create a state-certified historic district.

One of downtown Streator's strongest assets is its historic character and building stock. This heritage is a potential draw for visitors, new residents and businesses alike making the preservation of this legacy important to the downtown's prosperity. A historic district would protect significant historic properties, maintain property values, celebrate the history of the downtown, and foster an improved image for the community at large. Creating a certified historic district is a multi-step process and one the City should view as a long-term objective. The first step is having a qualified professional conduct a survey of the entire downtown to document the historic character (or lack thereof) of all buildings, followed by the creation of an ordinance and historic commission to regulate alterations and additions to buildings with historic merit. The Illinois Historic Preservation Agency can provide guidance on how to get started and how the City can obtain certification of its program once it is created. Although historic districts include additional regulations for property owners to follow, they also can help the properties within them qualify for federal historic preservation tax credits and, potentially, state credits if the legislature creates such a program (a bill to do so is currently pending). Further, having standards in place to ensure alterations are appropriate helps improve the appearance of the entire area and can increase a property owner's willingness to invest in their own buildings; knowing that neighboring buildings will be prohibited from making inappropriate and unattractive changes.



Create Additional Destinations for Residents and Visitors

Streator residents are the primary clientele of many of the downtown businesses. While this adds to Streator's small town appeal, it is not a sustainable approach to downtown development. Businesses that draw on a regional clientele will ensure that the downtown's success is not wholly dependent on the condition of Streator's market. Additionally, a regional destination generates tourism dollars for the City and introduces potential residents to the many offerings of the Streator lifestyle.

Priority Action Items

Implement Greenways Master Plan recommendations for "Hardscrabble Park: and promote active use of the River and Hopalong Cassidy Trail.



The Vermilion River is a hidden treasure that can be utilized as a regional draw to Streator. This rustic river provides fishing, canoeing, and kayaking experiences that could draw visitors from bustling cities like Chicago who desire a peaceful getaway without the time and expense of extensive travel. The City has already strategized a plan for attracting these visitors and potential residents to the Vermilion's shores.

Implementation of the Greenways Master Plan should begin with promoting the development of Hardscrabble Park and increased use of the Hopalong Cassidy Trail. Although the City has thus far been unsuccessful in obtaining state DNR grants for these improvements, those and other grants should continue to be pursued in addition to other potential funding sources. While these are primarily recreational amenities, they have significant potential to improve the economy of the downtown and entire community and thus, should be considered economic development initiatives. Accordingly, private-sector lead projects, such as kayak and canoe rentals, also should be considered.

Attract additional, niche restaurants.

As shown in Figure IV.5, Downtown Streator sits in the midst of several populated commercial and residential hubs which collectively draw thousands of people daily. Visitors and residents from these areas can be drawn to the downtown by providing an array of unique dining experiences. Family style and fine dining restaurant options could be used by spectators of high school sporting events. Residents living within walking distance of the downtown could enjoy a night out with friends. After church or a movie, visitors could grab a bite to eat in the historic district. Even workers in the City's northeastern employment center need places to grab a meal during lunch, conduct business over drinks, or have breakfast at the start of their day. Further, restaurants are a use where more offerings tend to increase the entire customer base rather than creating more competition. As a result, having more restaurants will establish downtown as a dining destination and a wider variety will bring more people in and bring them in more often.

Additional Project Action Items

Create one or more additional recreational amenities in City Park to attract youth and families on an on-going basis.

City Park anchors the northern boundary of the downtown. With the beautiful new Plumb Pavilion for events and Veteran's memorial used for patriotic observances, the Park is a cultural amenity to not only the downtown, but the City as a whole. The community can further capitalize on this space by creating additional amenities that would attract youth and families on a more regular and year-round basis. As shown in Figures IV.6-IV.9, one simple and low-cost example could be a "solar system path" that spirals through the Park providing information about the planets and celebrates the legacy of Streator's own Clyde Tombaugh, the astronomer who



discovered Pluto. Engage Streator youth in a contest to determine the final design of the solar system path and encourage families to come to City Park for "Telescope Nights" where people bring telescopes and star gaze on the green. Soup, sandwiches, and other snacks could be offered as a fundraiser. Further, a splash pad that can double as an ice skating rink in the winter could provide year-round fun for the entire family and encourage frequent return visits. The southern edge of the Park, in particular, is important to keep as active as possible as this is the side that is closest to the downtown businesses. Thus, improvements that attract visitors on an ongoing basis and special events in the Park should be programmed to encourage visitors to wander into the downtown.

Attract additional entertainment, arts, and cultural venues.

The arts and culture scene is growing in Streator and has the greatest potential for expansion in the downtown. Across the country and in Illinois are several examples where increased arts and culture venues and offerings in the downtown have helped spur new development, create a destination, and provide a draw for new residents. As noted previously, downtown Streator's historic fabric (a cultural amenity) is one of its greatest assets and offers lots of potential to be leveraged further through additional monuments and markers, walking tours, educational lectures and reenactments, additional events, and sales of historic/reproduction artifacts. Likewise, creating new venues to showcase local and regional art will help draw new visitors to the area as well as potentially attracting artists themselves. Streator's low cost of living and proximity to several large cities with active arts communities could be promoted to attract artists who typically need very affordable and flexible spaces to live and work. Further, the continued success of the Engle Lane Theater shows deep community interest and support for live entertainment that could be expanded with additional performance spaces in the downtown, such as clubs featuring live music or coffee houses that offer poetry readings and slam poetry contests. Additionally, special events like art fairs and concerts can help to draw new visitors to the downtown.

Research area history and create a walking tour.

Streator has a rich and colorful past and collection of historic buildings that could make for a very entertaining walking tour of the downtown. Whether self-guided or narrated, the tour can be used to attract new visitors and adjusted seasonally to encourage repeat participants. Further, new technologies

like smart phone applications could be developed to provide a more interactive experience and attract a more diverse audience.

Investigate development of major regional attraction such as a planetarium, energy, or agriculture tourism center

As noted previously, the downtown desperately needs to attract customers from outside the City to sustain itself. Unfortunately, the downtown and city at-large lack a recognized regional draw or noted destination, although some existing venues have the potential to expand their reach such as the



Vermilion River and Weber House. With cultural and eco tourism on the rise, the most effective and sustainable destinations are those that are authentic to the area and unique within the region. In Streator, these could include a planetarium and observatory that builds from Clyde Tombaugh's legacy as the discoverer of Pluto as well as the flat topography and dark skies that surround the City. Similarly, an energy tourism center may have potential given the extent of current and past energy production in the vicinity

including coal mining, frac sand mining, wind farms, the state's largest solar array, a nuclear power plant, and the Illinois River's only hydroelectric dam in Peru. Streator is centrally located to all of these, and most of them already involve annual/regular tours. However, a combined tour that would explain and contrast their impacts and benefits would be unique and could prove to be quite popular as America continues to grapple with the future of its energy needs. Another niche tourism market in which Streator is positioned for growth is agritourism. As discussed in the Streator Comprehensive Plan, one of the ways cities across the United States are supporting farming communities is by educating consumers about the important role American farmers play in the nation's food security. A downtown Ag Discover Center could provide tourist with an interactive look into Streator's agricultural past, present, and future. Farm tours organized by this center could offer visitors the unique opportunity to pick their own produce or observe innovative farming techniques. It is important to note that a downtown hotel would be necessary to promote and ensure the vitality of this kind of tourism.

Investigate hotel with a conference center/auditorium to be shared with the high school on Bloomington St. between the school and Kent St.

Streator currently lacks a business class hotel, which is a major impediment to creating destinations and events that draw people to the community for more than one day. In 2013, the City commissioned a hotel market analysis, which found that a modest business class hotel could be feasible in the community. Although the study focused on potential sites closer to the north end of town, the area between Kent St. and the high school along Bloomington St. presents an exciting opportunity. This area consists of a large parking lot owned by the school district on the west side of Bloomington, south of Lincoln Ave., and a large vacant parcel just south of that. It also includes the now vacant St. Mary's church on the east side of Bloomington just north of Kent. The area between Kent and the high school effectively serves as the gateway to the downtown. Consolidating property in the area, which may

include some homes, would provide an opportunity to provide a signature project that could include a hotel, restaurant and a conference center/auditorium that could also be developed or used jointly with the school to replace its aging facility. This location provides excellent access to the entire community, especially the hospital located south of the downtown and the growing industrial area in the southeast part of town, both of which generate hotel users. It also would be an excellent catalyst to draw additional customers and, therefore, businesses to the downtown.

Establish a Formal Organizational Structure for Managing the Downtown

There are several existing organizations that contribute to the betterment of the downtown, but by and large they work independent of one another. Further, no one organization or individual has the primary responsibility for improving or managing the downtown. Groups like City staff, the Streator Tourism Council, Downtown Merchants Association, and the Streator Area Chamber of Commerce & Industry, all contribute significantly to the downtown and community. However, to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of what they do, they need mechanisms to work together. This does not mean changing the core missions and responsibilities of each organization, rather it means leveraging the resources that each provides such that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

Priority Action Items

Clearly define roles and responsibilities between the City and other organizations.

The first step in creating a more effective working relationship between organizations is for each to have a clear understanding of what the others are doing. This is not about assigning responsibilities but rather letting each organization clearly define the roles it has and expects to continue to play. Once these are defined, then, as a group, the organizations can identify areas of overlap and gaps and how they might be addressed and by whom. From there, a coordinating mechanism can be established to keep the lines of communication open and to identify opportunities to work together to expand upon individual efforts for even greater impact.

Develop joint marketing initiatives, common business hours, and events.

In order to create a more cohesive downtown, area businesses must present a more united and consistent front to patrons. Joint marketing initiatives that brand the downtown and advertise restaurants and stores together would help further this goal. Common business hours and policies also would help convey to shoppers that the downtown is a unified entity and singular destination. Likewise, downtown businesses should collaborate to host joint events and attractions in order to draw new customers to the district. The downtown will never be a mall, but it can borrow many of the marketing techniques malls use to draw a steady stream of loyal customers. Given that most businesses in the downtown are small with few, if any, employees beyond the owners, the success of this effort will depend directly on the ability of the merchants, property owners, City, and organizations identified above to work together in a cohesive and constructive fashion.

Select a dedicated funding source.

Although the various organizations identified above have much to offer, effective management of the downtown and implementation of the many programs described in this Plan will require one or more

dedicated funding sources. The City has several revenue generating programs already in place including a tax increment finance district and wind farm revenues which can be directed to economic development efforts that contribute to these implementation efforts. Further, the Illinois state statutes provide additional taxing mechanisms such as Special Service Areas (property tax) and Business Development Districts (sales tax) that should be investigated. Successful downtown revitalization requires a sustained effort, which in turn requires a sustained funding mechanism.

Additional Project Action Items

Hire a full-time downtown manager.

The next step after creating a formal coordinating mechanism between organizations for managing the downtown is hiring a full-time individual to take the district to the next level. All of the organizations identified previously have a number of functions and interests that extend well beyond the downtown. As a result, no one organization or person is currently charged with improving the downtown as the sole responsibility. Obviously, the ability to hire a full-time manager will be dependent upon identifying a funding source, but done correctly, the position could more than pay for itself with the resulting increased economic activity created in the district.

Engage clubs and lodges, churches and youth to become more involved in downtown activities and events.

The downtown is host to a large number of fraternal organizations and churches that draw hundreds of people to the area on a regular basis. These groups are significantly invested in the community and have as much to gain or lose with the success or failure of the downtown as any of the businesses. However, because they don't pay property taxes they are often left out of discussions about the needs of the downtown or its future, and this needs to change. Given the nature of these organizations and their memberships, they are pre-disposed to contribute significant volunteer efforts towards causes in which they believe. As a result, making them full partners in downtown decision-making should yield significant dividends for all concerned. Likewise, community youth have the potential to make significant contributions to downtown improvement efforts, particularly those involving the creation of new venues to draw families on a more regular basis. For example, future enhancements to City Park such as a splash pad or trail should directly involve community youth in the designs to ensure success. Not only will this increase the use of these facilities (and hence, draw more people to the downtown more often) but it will also help to instill a sense of ownership among area youth and reduce the potential for vandalism.



Implement parking plan.

The downtown currently provides an extensive amount of on-street, public parking in addition to several private off-street lots. The amount of parking is more than sufficient to accommodate current needs and those of the foreseeable future, but the parking for customers could be made more convenient with some minimal management improvements. Currently, the City has no enforceable time limits on any of the on-street spaces. As shown in Figure IV.10, by simply instituting a 2-hour limit for on-street spaces in

the core of the downtown, customers would be assured of finding a space near their primary destination, while owners and employees would be able to find adequate spaces at the periphery of the district, still within close proximity to their businesses.

Create and maintain available sites and buildings database.

The downtown currently has a number of vacant storefronts and buildings that are for sale, but there is no one place a prospective business can go to see all of the buildings and properties that are available or their relative costs and conditions. Creating a clearinghouse of available buildings and sites would greatly enhance the attraction of new businesses by making it much easier for them to locate in Streator. This does not mean competing or replacing private real estate professionals, rather it would help connect potential tenants and buyers with these professionals and property owners who do not have their property listed with an agency.

Pursue membership in Illinois Main Street program.

Illinois Main Street is part of a successful national initiative developed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation to revitalize downtowns and business districts. The program works with Illinois communities to provide technical assistance, training, and resources to improve the economic, social, cultural and physical aspects of each commercial area. At the core of the program is the Main Street Four-Point Approach that includes:



- a. Organization brings the community together. Building consensus and cooperation among multiple district stakeholders is readily addressed by the local program's volunteers and by the Main Street board and committee structure representing both downtown and stakeholder interests.
- b. Promotion sells both the image and promise of the Main Street district to shoppers, investors, new businesses, and visitors. With an effective promotion strategy, the Main Street district's positive image is promoted through retail promotions, special events, and marketing campaigns implemented by the local program.
- c. Design addresses the district's physical environment. Capitalizing on the district's best assets, such as historic buildings and traditional layout, is one part of Main Street design work. Other design-related activities, such as merchandising, wayfinding, sidewalks, and landscaping, help convey a visual message about what Main Street has to offer.
- d. Economic restructuring improves the commercial district economy. By helping existing businesses expand and recruiting new business that respond to today's market, Main Street programs help convert unused space into productive properties and cultivate local and regional entrepreneurship.

Clearly, many of the recommendations in this Plan borrow from this very successful formula, so whether Streator decides to pursue formal membership in the program or not, it has much to offer to help the community move towards its downtown goals and vision.

Collaborate with Local & Regional Partners to Create an Entrepreneurship Program

Locally-owned businesses are the heart and soul of the downtown and will continue to be moving forward. Accordingly, the future of the downtown will depend on creating an inviting environment for investment in new businesses, and reinvestment in existing businesses. People who start businesses do so for a variety of reasons and bring a wide range of experiences and knowledge. Nearly all could benefit from programs of one type or another to increase their chances for success, whether it be direct aid or simply education or assistance with some aspect of their operation. Although the City does not have much experience with these types of programs, it is fortunate to have a number of other organizations that can assist.

Priority Action Items

Work with IL Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Region 12 Workforce Investment Board, North Central Illinois Council of Governments, Illinois Valley Community College and its Small Business Development Center, Streator High School, and Streator Area Chamber of Commerce & Industry to create an entrepreneur development and support programs.

Collectively, these organizations cover the full gamut of knowledge, skills, and experience necessary to help launch businesses of all types and to ensure their success over the long-term. While their individual programs are relatively easy to access, there are no formal mechanisms in place to bring them together in a comprehensive manner or to package them to meet the unique needs of individual entrepreneurs. While the City itself does not provide many direct business development programs, it can help to organize these other organizations to create a one-stop shop for entrepreneurial support and new business development.

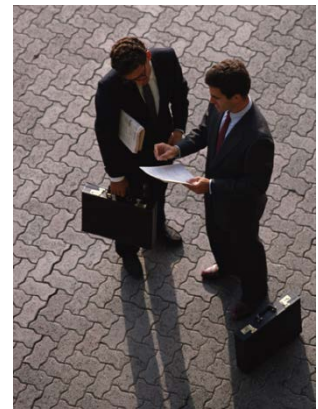
Focus on assisting entrepreneurs with starting new retail, restaurant, entertainment, and service business in the downtown.

In addition to providing general support to entrepreneurs, the City can also work with its partners to create programs that focus on developing new businesses specifically for the downtown. These should be coupled with the other programs recommended in this plan that provide assistance and incentives for efforts like building improvements and joint marketing.

Additional Project Action Items

Use TIF and other resources to make low-cost spaces available to help entrepreneurs start new businesses

One of the key challenges faced by entrepreneurs is covering significant start-up costs and sustaining their businesses until consistent cash flows are achieved. Accordingly, anything that can be done to



reduce the upfront and early term costs can go a long way toward ensuring the ultimate success of the business. Among these are reduced initial rents that would scale up over time as revenues increase. Accordingly, this would not be a “permanent” subsidy but one that would help a new business get off to a solid start.

Increase the Development of New Residential Units

Encouraging downtown living will require housing that meets the preferences of potential downtown residents. These residents, often young professionals seeking affordable loft space or retirees looking to downsize, are a growing population in cities around the country and are boosting local economies. Attracting these residents and other city dwellers to Streator will require the following actions:

Priority Action Items

Assist prospective developers in accessing a wide range of financial resources including federal historic tax credits.

Developing in a downtown area is often much more expensive than in “greenfield” sites at the perimeter of the community. Downtown development challenges can include, among others: more expensive land and difficulty/increased time assembling adequately-sized sites from multiple property owners; remediating contamination in soil and groundwater and/or asbestos and lead paint in buildings; demolition of existing buildings and improvements; renovations to older/historic buildings to bring them up to modern codes; lack of parking; and relocation of existing businesses and residents. As a result, access to financial support in the form of local incentives and state and federal tax credits can be imperative for projects to be financially viable. Section V of this Plan provides a summary of several potential sources, but many property owners often are not aware that such programs exist or what their requirements are. Assembling informational materials on these programs and promoting them to existing and prospective property owners/developers will help move potential projects from concept to reality.

Use TIF and other resources to help building owners redevelop upper floors of buildings for additional residential units.

In addition to the challenges identified above for downtown development in general, the redevelopment of upper floors for residential units can be even more complicated. Building and fire codes for residential units, especially for those located in buildings where there are also commercial uses are much more stringent than when most of the downtown buildings were constructed. As a result, even those that were designed for and initially included upper floor units can require extensive renovations and modifications. When this is coupled with relatively low market rents, the return on investment can be minimal or non-existent without some form of assistance such as TIF.

Additional Project Action Items

Recruit developers to build new residential apartments on key redevelopment sites.

As noted previously, viable downtowns require a healthy mix of residential units, which provide a built-in customer base and provide activity after typical business hours. Figure II.2 identifies a number of sites with short- and long-term redevelopment potential as well as buildings with reuse potential. Some of

these sites are suitably located and of sufficient size to accommodate anywhere from 10 to 40 residential units depending on the configuration of the project and how parking is addressed. Sites that are most favorable for residential development should be further evaluated in terms of acquisition cost and potential development form (i.e., apartments, condominiums, townhouses) and number of units along with preliminary pro forma to determine financial viability and the extent of types of assistance potentially needed. With that information in hand, potential developers should be contacted either directly or through a request for proposal to solicit interest.

Encourage state to approve proposed state historic tax credit legislation.

Historic tax credits are available at the federal level and provide significant benefits to renovation and reuse projects. Even with these, however, projects may still not be economically viable. Many states have made state tax credits available, but the state of Illinois currently provides them only to projects located in the four communities designated as River Edge Redevelopment Zones, and Streator is not one of them. However, the proposed Illinois Rehabilitation and Revitalization Tax Credit Act would offer state historic credits to properties throughout Illinois. As of fall 2013, the legislation had passed the state Senate and been forwarded to the House Revenue and Finance Committee. The Chief House Sponsor of the bill is Rep. Frank Mautino whose district includes Streator. Further, Rep. Mautino is a member of the Revenue and Finance Committee. Accordingly, Streator should contact its representative and strongly encourage that the act be passed to provide another important tool to help make redevelopment projects economically feasible.



STREATOR

Streetscape Framework

Streator, IL

- MAIN STREET (DOWNTOWN CORE)**

Description:

 - Street trees in paved terraces
 - Brick paver terraces
 - Wide sidewalks
 - Standard tall street lights
 - Amenities – benches, trash receptacles, banners
 - Primarily commercial uses (downtown urban form)

Improvements:

 - Pedestrian scale lights
 - Amenities - additional banners, movable ground planters, additional benches and trash receptacles.
- PRIMARY STREET**

Description:

 - Street trees in paved terraces
 - Varying width sidewalks
 - Standard tall street lights
 - Primarily commercial uses

Improvements:

 - Pedestrian scale street lights
 - Stamped concrete terrace
 - Amenities – banners, benches
- SECONDARY STREET**

Description:

 - Varying width terrace
 - Varying street trees
 - Standard tall street lights
 - Mix of commercial and residential uses

Improvements:

 - Pedestrian scale street lights
 - Street trees encouraged on private property
 - Amenities – banners

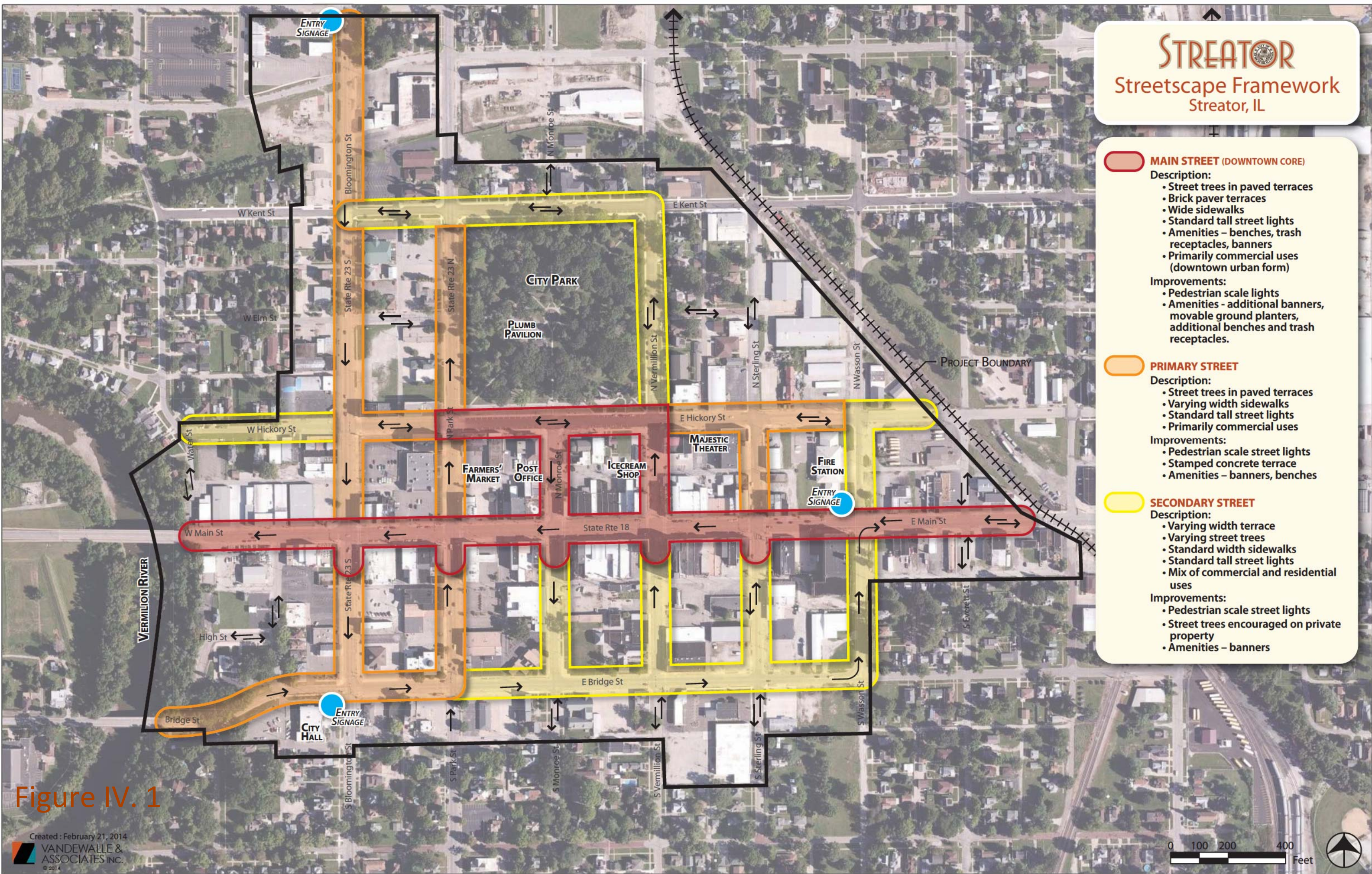
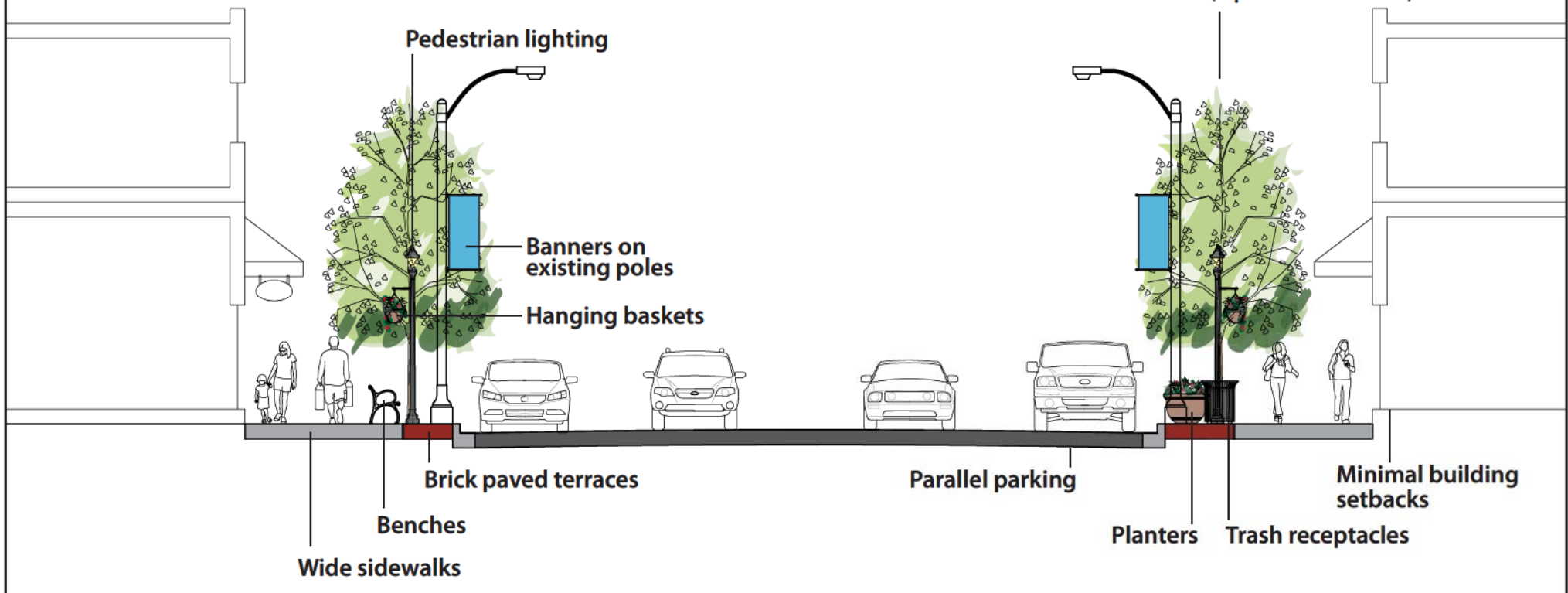


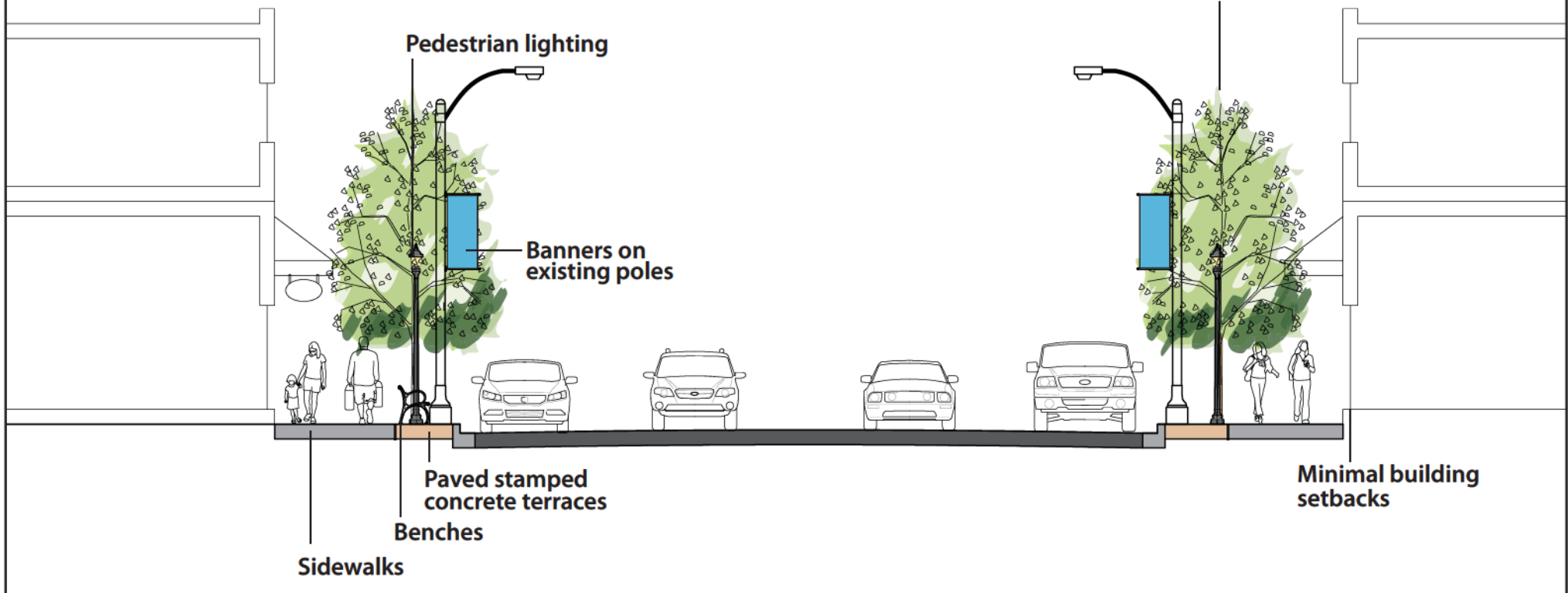
Figure IV. 1

Figure IV.2

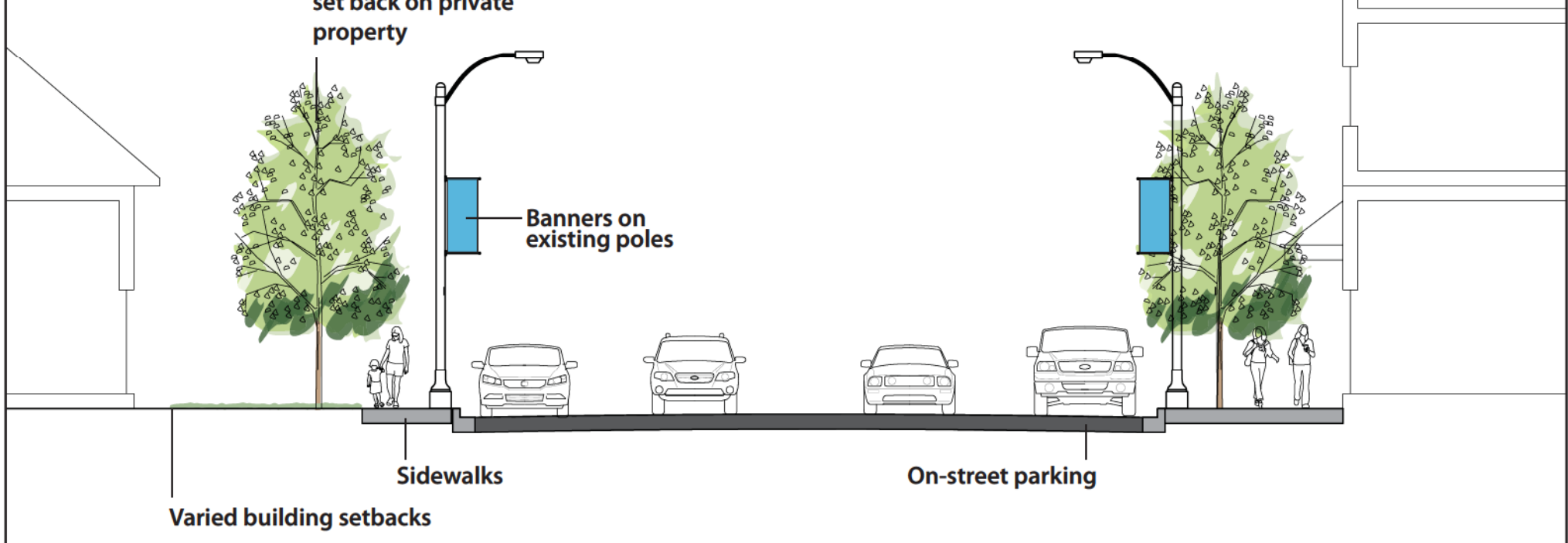
MAIN STREET (DOWNTOWN CORE)



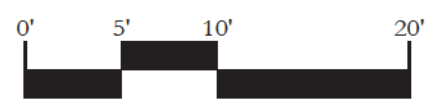
PRIMARY STREET



SECONDARY STREET



Created: October 18, 2013



STREATOR
 Main Street
 Improvements Concept
 Streator, IL

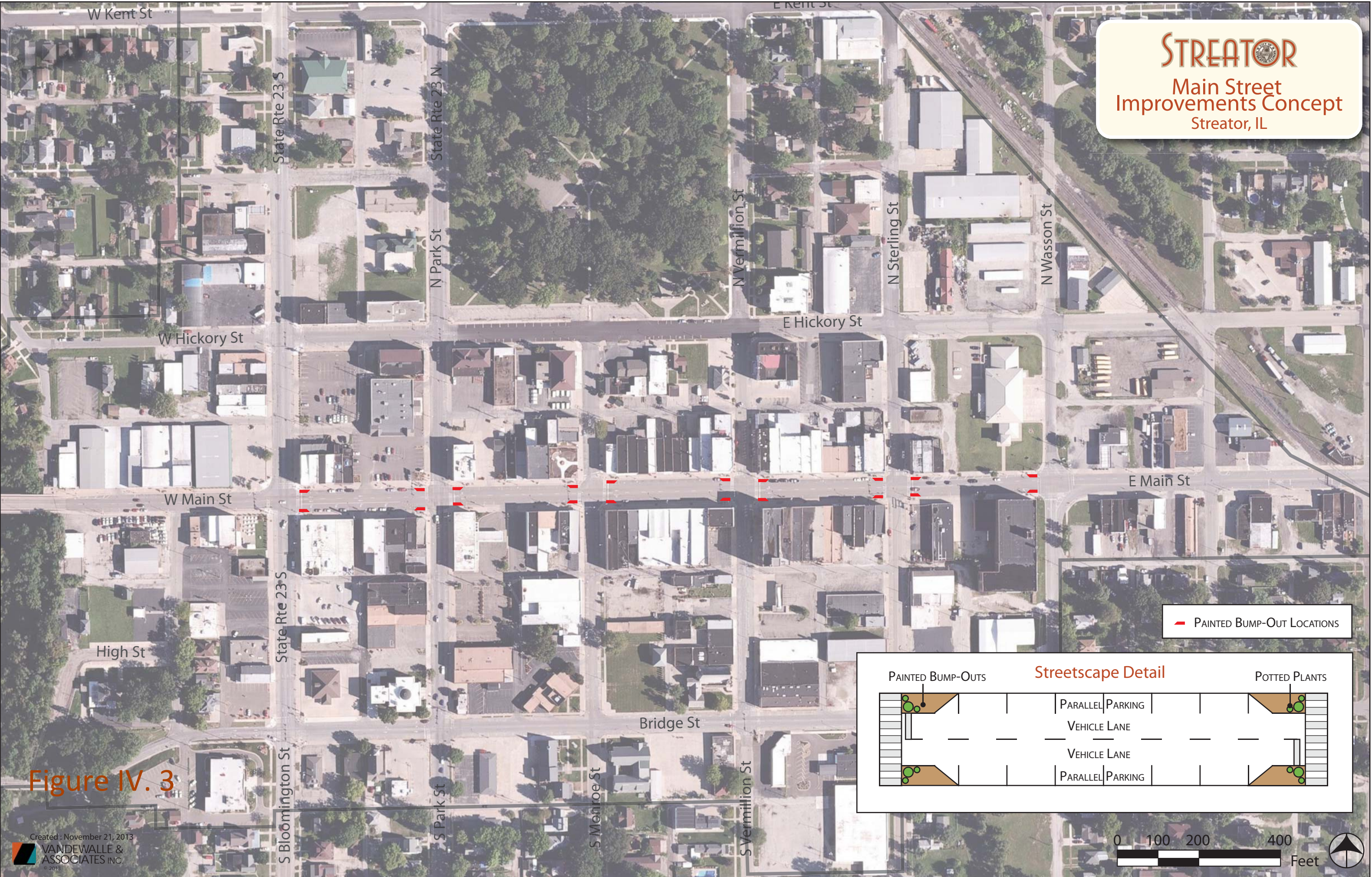


Figure IV. 3

STREATOR

Truck Bypass Plan Streator, IL

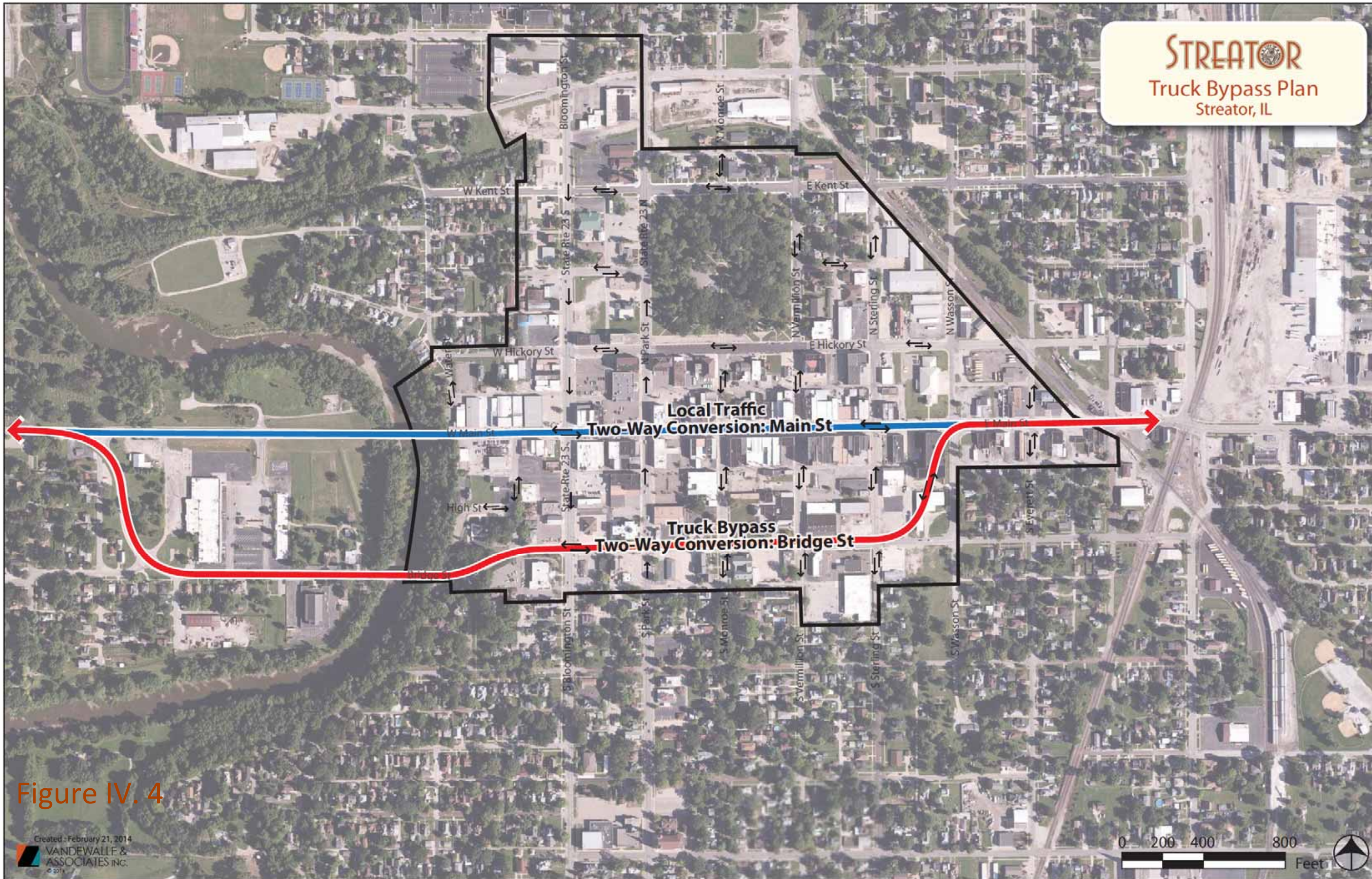


Figure IV. 4

STREATOR

Downtown Influences
& Activity Areas
Streator, IL

RESIDENTIAL

HIGH SCHOOL

CENTRAL
EMPLOYMENT

HARDSCRABBLE
PARK

CITY PARK

DOWNTOWN

VERMILION RIVER

PROJECT BOUNDARY

RESIDENTIAL

ST. MARY'S
HOSPITAL -
STREATOR

Figure IV. 5

Created November 7, 2013

City Park Additions

Streator, IL

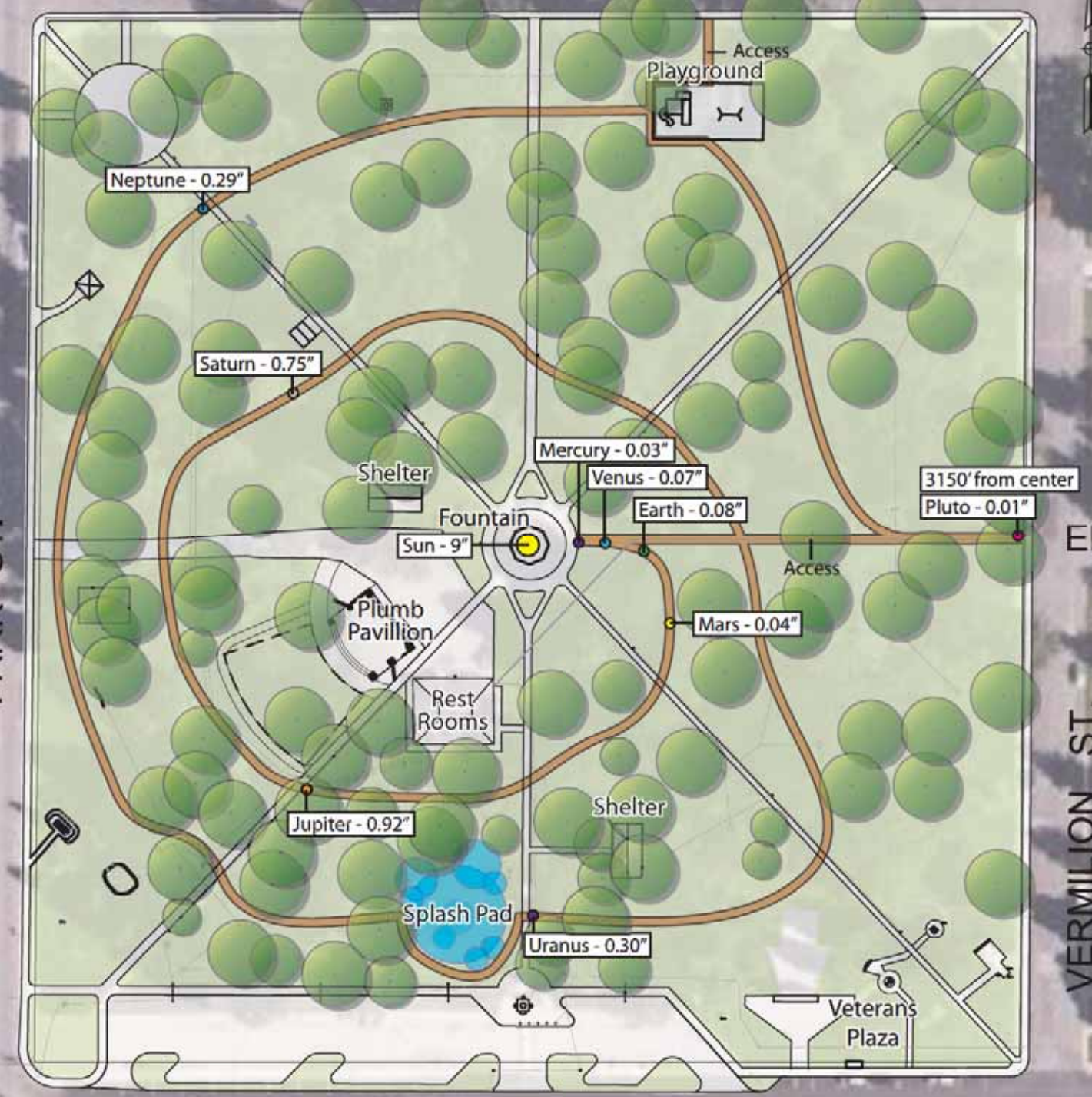


MININGTON

Figure IV. 6

City Park Additions

Streator, IL



ELM

PARK ST.

KENT ST.

ELM ST.

VERMILION ST.

HICKORY ST.

Figure IV. 7

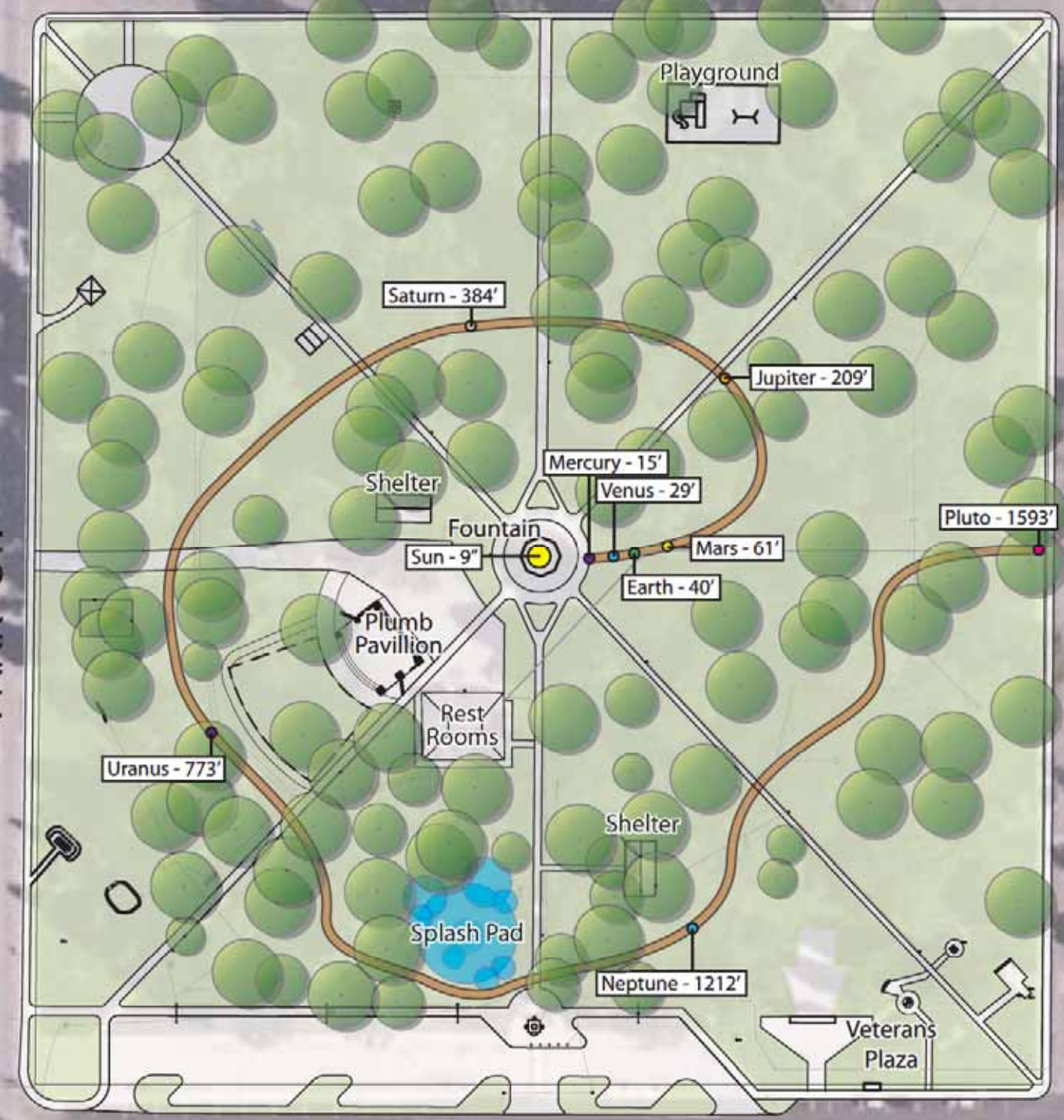
Revised 11.26.13

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MINGTON

City Park Additions

Streator, IL



KENT ST.

ELM

PARK ST.

ELM ST.

VERMILION ST.

HICKORY ST.

MINGTON

Figure IV. 8

Revised 11.26.13

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City Park Additions

Streator, IL

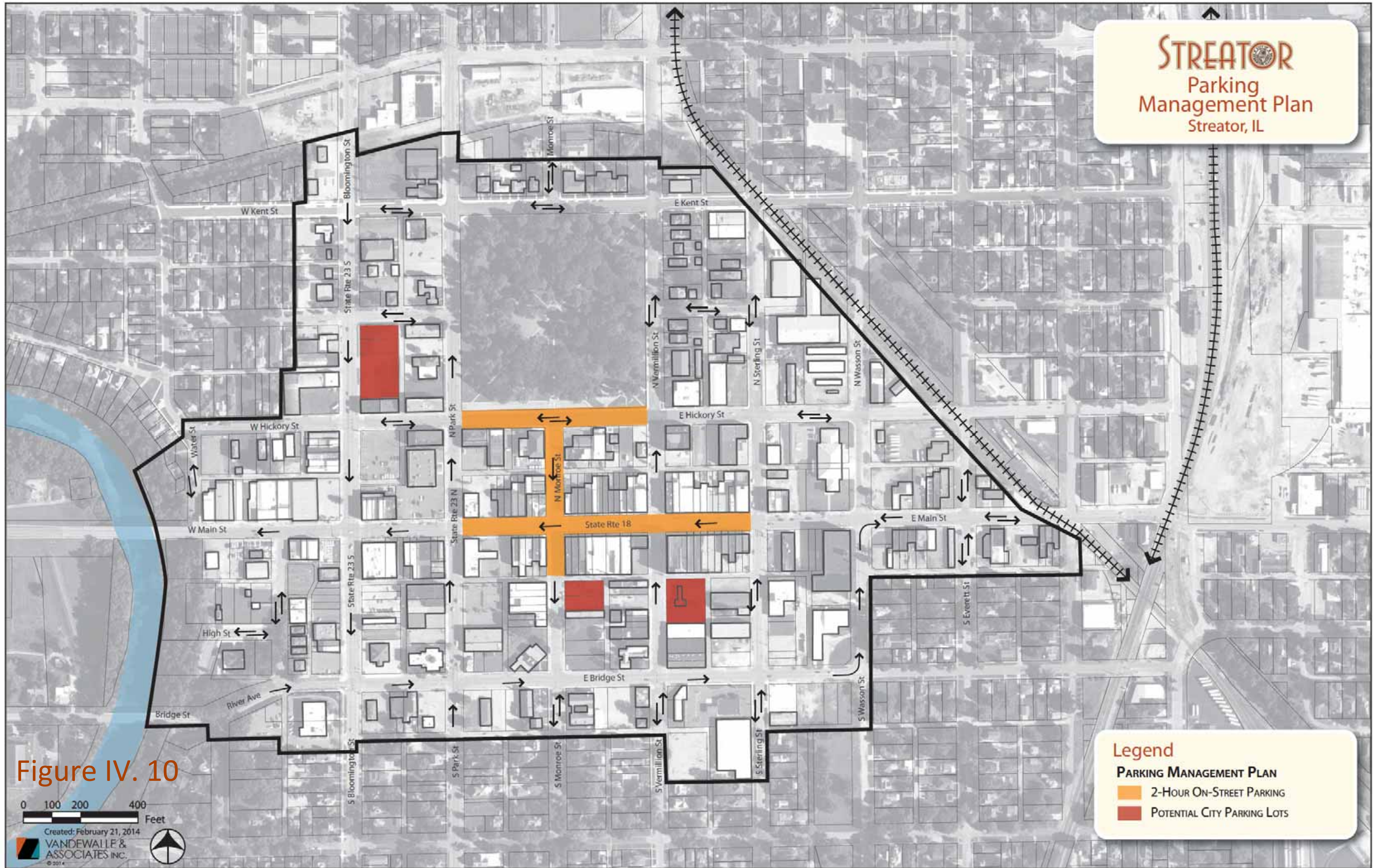


Figure IV. 9

Revised 11.26.13

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STREATOR
 Parking
 Management Plan
 Streator, IL



Legend

PARKING MANAGEMENT PLAN

- 2-HOUR ON-STREET PARKING
- POTENTIAL CITY PARKING LOTS

Figure IV. 10

SECTION V: IMPLEMENTATION ACTION PLAN

The implementation of the projects identified in this Plan requires a collaborative effort on the part of the downtown's many stakeholders. The implementation section of this plan provides a framework and targeted approach for the completion of the action items identified with each of the Strategic Initiatives described in the previous section and different funding options to be pursued.

Organization Structure and Roles

There are numerous individuals and organizations that share an interest in downtown Streator and a commitment to some aspect of its long term success. These organizations include the City of Streator itself (City), the Chamber of Commerce (Chamber), Streator Tourism (Tourism), the Downtown Merchants Association (DMA), downtown property owners, downtown businesses, banks and lenders, clubs and religious organizations, and the Streator Community Center. Though each of these organizations has a shared interest in the economic health and vitality of downtown Streator, they each have different priorities, focus areas, and other responsibilities as well. The Chamber, for example, is focused on supporting Streator businesses not only in the downtown but throughout the entire City. The DMA is specifically focused on supporting downtown businesses, but it is a small organization with no staff and limited funding. Downtown businesses, property owners, banks and civic leaders have already demonstrated their commitment through their investment in downtown Streator and its future. The City of Streator itself is similarly committed to downtown improvement but, as with the other organizations, the City has limited staff and many additional responsibilities and priorities.

The first and foremost implementation priority of the Downtown Strategic Plan should be to organize these groups behind a common mission, sort out their roles, and get stakeholders working together. Finding alignment behind a shared vision and coordinating the efforts of these groups is the critical first step to creating a brighter future for Downtown Streator. This should start by creating a permanent committee to guide all projects and initiatives in the downtown.

Streator Action and Revitalization Team-Downtown

In order to coordinate and fully-utilize the resources of the groups listed above, Streator should create the "Streator Action and Revitalization Team" (START-Downtown) to prioritize, coordinate, and manage implementation of the Plan's recommendations. START would be the spearhead for the Plan implementation process.

START's structure should not necessarily be designed to replace any existing organizations. Rather, it should create a mechanism to better coordinate the activities of existing organizations and to "get the ball rolling" on projects related to the downtown. START should be organized into several "Program Teams" corresponding to the needs of the priority projects and recommendations in this Plan. These Program Teams should focus on advancing individual projects as part of the broader downtown effort. START members should take leadership roles within the Program Teams that align with their personal or professional interests in the downtown.

START Project Teams

The Plan Commission reviewed and ranked the priority projects detailed in the previous section. After assessing the efforts necessary for achieving these initiatives, the following initial four Project Teams are recommended. These four teams should be lead by a START representative but consist largely of volunteers or professionals interested in furthering their goals.

1. **Downtown Operations & Support (OS):** This Program Team is responsible for day-to-day downtown events and management. This includes the parking management plans, common business hours as well as the planning of downtown festivals or community gatherings. They are also responsible for assisting property and business owners with the repair and maintenance of existing building façades and structure.
2. **New Business Development & Recruitment (NB):** Attracting new businesses to Streator and fostering entrepreneurship is the primary responsibility of this team. This team should focus on creating programs to support start-ups, enhancing the downtowns' business friendly environment and attracting new business to the district
3. **New Development Programs & Recruitment (ND):** This team focuses on positioning the downtown for significant new development and redevelopment projects. Primary responsibilities include interfacing with realtors and developers, identifying redevelopment sites in the downtown, recruiting developers and spearheading new development projects.
4. **Capital Improvements (CI):** This team is responsible for public improvements in the downtown. These may include streetscaping, gateway and signage improvements, and City Park and Hardscrabble Park enhancements.

Implementation Matrix and Structure

Figure V.1 lists all 31 recommended Action Items for each Strategic Initiative and assigns them to the appropriate Program Team based on their responsibilities. The Priority Action Items identified for each initiative by the Plan Commission should be the initial focus of each team. Figure V.2 summarized the recommended implementation structure detailed above.

Potential funding opportunities

The Downtown Opportunity Analysis & Vision includes a wide range of potential projects and strategies to revitalize the downtown district. Many of these ideas will require a funding strategy and a long term commitment by the City and its partners. Several of the recommended projects are well-aligned for grant opportunities.

The following is a list of potential grant or funding sources that Streator should consider pursuing to implement the strategies, recommendations, and catalytic projects identified in the Plan. Additional research into these opportunities, meetings with representatives from these agencies, and further thought and refinement of the ideas in the Plan will be needed to pursue any of these opportunities.

Economic Development Administration—The EDA is committed to increasing the competitiveness and innovative spirit in American communities. There are several funding opportunities allocated each fiscal year. These programs target economic development or provide technical assistance to cities investing in their infrastructure. EDA’s investment priorities are projects that foster or improve:

- Collaborative Regional Innovation
- Public/Private Partnerships
- National Strategic Priorities
- Global Competitiveness
- Environmentally-Sustainable Development
- Economically distressed and Underserved communities

USDA Rural Development-- The United States Department of Agriculture’s Rural Development division provides funding for community and economic development initiatives in rural areas. Streator may be eligible for Rural Development funds that could support targeted efforts to strengthen businesses or provide needed infrastructure in the Downtown. The City should contact the USDA Rural Development “Area Director” to discuss possible opportunities to utilize Rural Development Funding.

US Environmental Protection Agency—The US EPA is dedicated to protecting human health and the environment. The EPA has a competitive brownfields program that provides grants and other funding for brownfield site assessment and cleanup. They also provide trainings and educational resources to communities impacted by brownfield sites. A brownfield is property which may be contaminated by hazardous substances, pollutants or other contaminants. Former industrial sites that are ideal for redevelopment or reuse but are suspected of contamination may be eligible for EPA brownfield funding.

Illinois Environmental Protection Agency—The Illinois EPA safeguards the environmental quality and health of water, property and quality of life according to the regulations and standards set by the state. Much like the USEPA, Illinois EPA has a Brownfield Assistance program offered through the Office of Brownfield Assistance which provides grants, loans and technical support to communities in the state. The Municipal Brownfields Redevelopment Grant Program specifically focuses on providing Illinois cities with the resources necessary for investigating and remediating brownfield sites.

Federal Tax Credits—Tax credits are a dollar-for-dollar decrease in ones tax liability and the percent depends on the amount of funding allocated that year and the project type. For example, Historic preservation tax credits are offered at 20% or 10% by the National Park Service. The 20% income tax credit is used to rehabilitate structures that are income producing and certified as historic by the National Park Service. By contrast, the 10% tax credit is offered to non-historic buildings that were in service prior to 1936. These tax credits have proven to be highly effective in encouraging development of older dilapidated sites that hold historic or architectural significance for the community.

Dept. of Commerce and Economic Opportunity—DCEO works with businesses and communities in Illinois to help them realize success. Their mission is to grow Illinois’s business culture and create a global destination for innovation and investment. DCEO accomplishes this through the administration of

state and federal grant programs, small business capital mobilization and business retention and recruitment.

Illinois Department of Transportation—IDOT is in charge of managing state-maintained public roadways in Illinois. With Illinois Route 23 and Route 18 intersecting in Streator, IDOT will prove an important partner when it comes to identifying funding opportunities for these streets

Dept. of Natural Resources—The Illinois Department of Natural Resources supports state agriculture, tourisms, mining and many other activities that contribute to economic development throughout the state. Additionally DNR maintains state owned parks, forests, trail and recreational sites. The DNR provides funding to cities and other entities who wish to enhance natural areas and recreational sites.

Illinois Housing Development Authority—IHDA works with governments and community groups to promote affordable housing development in the state. As a lender with a community driven mission to provide quality housing, IHDA uses \$2billion in assets to generate affordable housing opportunities.

TIF leveraging—Tax Increment Financing is a tool commonly used by municipalities to generate capital for projects within the TIF boundary. By earmarking revenue generated in excess of the original assessed value of the property. TIF funded projects range in scope but may include road repairs, property acquisition or new development. Much like tax credits, TIF funds can also be leveraged to attain additional funding from partners or attract developers to a project.

Business Development Districts—A BDD is a defined area where an additional sales tax is collected to fund streetscaping, infrastructure improvements, events and other efforts to promote the district. BDDs may also provide services like street cleaning and security. BDDs boards and programs are determined by the local governing body but can include an advisory committee of property owners and businesses in the district.

Wind Farm Revenues—In addition to their power generation capabilities and environmental benefits, wind farms can generate substantial revenues for communities. For example, the Streator Cayuga Ridge South Wind Farm near Odell is expected to generate about \$3.3 million per year in tax revenue for Livingston County.

**Figure V.1: City of Streator Downtown Strategic Plan
Implementation Matrix**

<i>Strategic Initiatives</i>	<i>Action Items</i>	<i>Top Priorities</i>	<i>Program Teams</i>
1) Improve Buildings and streetscape	1.1) Use TIF and other resources to purchase vacant and blighted properties to make them available for redevelopment	✓	ND
	1.2) Implement façade improvement program with TIF or wind farm funds	✓	OS
	1.3) Actively promote availability of TIF and Enterprise Zone programs to assist with property improvements		OS
	1.4) Implement gateways improvement plan		CI
	1.5) Implement Main Street improvement plan to calm traffic, add parking, and improve pedestrian safety		CI
	1.6) Implement overall downtown streetscape program		CI
	1.7) Increase enforcement of existing property maintenance codes		CITY/OS
	1.8) Pass and enforce a vacant storefront ordinance		CITY/OS
	1.9) Create a state-certified historic district		START
2) Create Additional Destinations for residents and visitors	2.1) Implement Greenways Master Plan recommendations for "Power Park" and promote active use of the River and Hopalong Cassidy Trail	✓	CI
	2.2) Attract additional, niche restaurants	✓	NB
	2.3) Create one or more additional recreational amenities in City Park to attract youth and families on a year-round basis		CI
	2.4) Attract additional entertainment, arts and cultural venues		NB
	2.5) Research area history and create a walking tour		OS
	2.6) Investigate potential for a niche hotel		ND
	2.7) Investigate development of a major regional attraction such as a planetarium, energy or ag tourism center		ND
	2.8) Investigate hotel with a conference center/auditorium to be shared with the high school on Bloomington St. between the school and Kent St.		
3) Establish a formal organizational structure for managing the downtown	3.1) Clearly define roles and responsibilities between the City and other organizations	✓	START
	3.2) Develop joint marketing initiatives, common business hours, and events	✓	OS
	3.3) Select a dedicated funding source	✓	START
	3.4) Engage clubs and lodges, churches, and youth to become more involved in downtown activities and events		OS
	3.5) Hire a full-time downtown manager		OS
	3.6) Implement parking plan		OS/CI
	3.7) Create and maintain available sites and buildings database		NB
	3.8) Pursue membership in Illinois Main Street program		START
4) Collaborate with local & regional partners to create an entrepreneurship program	4.1) Work with IL Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Region 12 Workforce Investment Board, North Central Illinois Council of Governments, Illinois Valley CC and its Small Business Development Center, Streator High School, and Streator Area Chamber of Commerce & Industry to create an entrepreneur development and support program	✓	NB
	4.2) Focus on assisting entrepreneurs with starting new retail, restaurant, entertainment, and service business in the downtown	✓	NB
	4.3) Use TIF and other resources to make low-cost spaces available to help entrepreneurs start new businesses		NB
5) Increase the development of new residential units	5.1) Assist prospective developers in accessing a wide range of financial resources including federal historic tax credits, housing tax credits, new markets tax credits, TIF, Enterprise Zone benefits, etc.	✓	ND
	5.2) Use TIF and other resources to help building owners redevelop upper floors of buildings for additional residential units	✓	ND
	5.3) Recruit developers to build new residential apartments on key redevelopment sites		ND
	5.4) Encourage state to approve proposed state historic tax credit legislation		START

Downtown Streator Strategic Plan

Implementation Structure and Priorities

As part of the implementation process, the Plan recommends the creation of the “Streator Action and Revitalization Team” (START). START should then organize and guide four “Program Teams” corresponding to the needs of the Priority Action Items discussed under the Strategic Initiatives. These Program Teams should focus on advancing individual projects as part of the broader downtown effort, and should carefully review the sections of the Plan most relevant to their focus area.

START Downtown

Program Teams

Priority Action Items

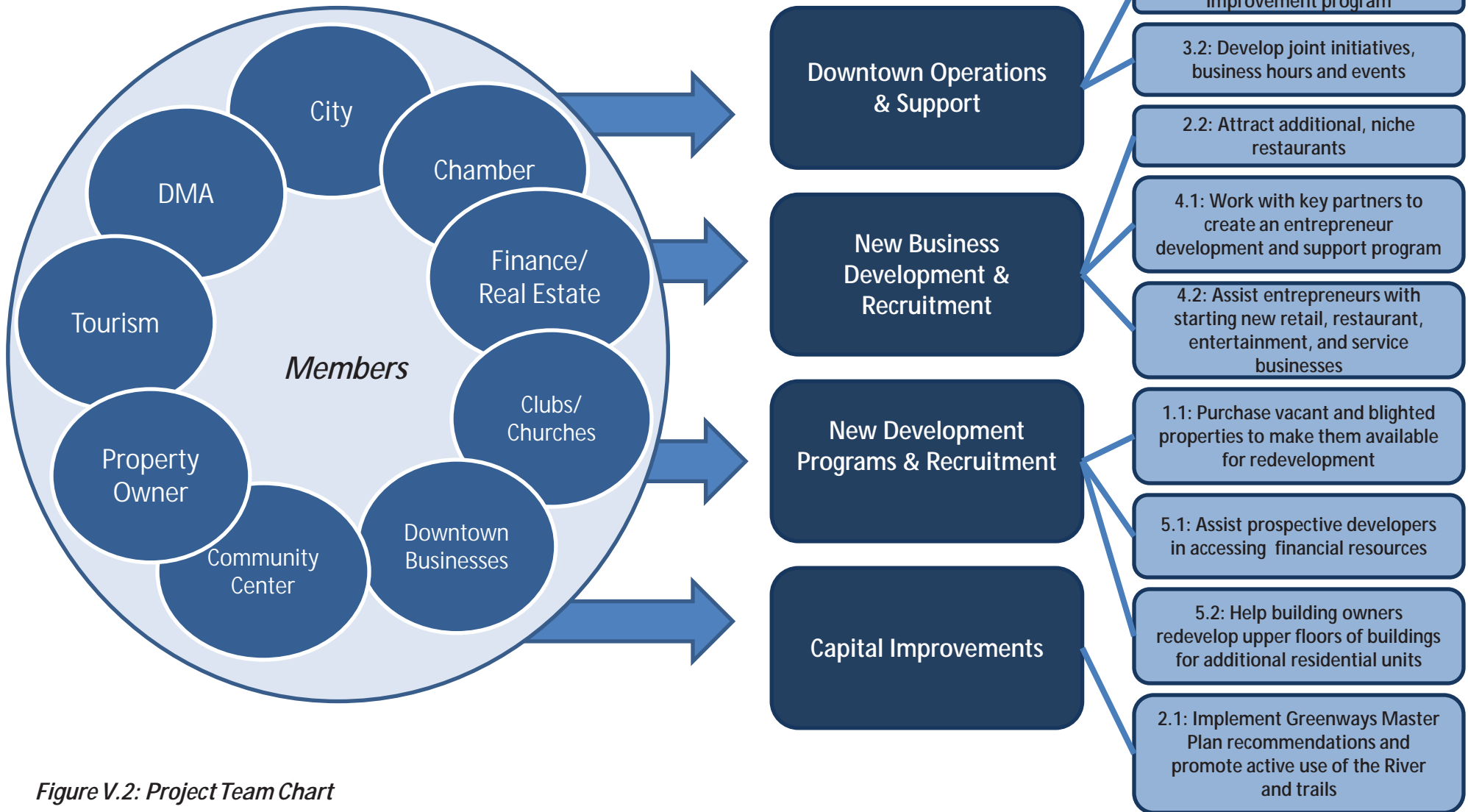


Figure V.2: Project Team Chart