

City of Sterling
Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan
REVISED DRAFT May 31, 2011



prepared by Houseal Lavigne Associates
technical assistance provided by Gewalt Hamilton Associates
& Gary R. Weber Associates



Lawrence Brothers Property October 2010

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The City of Sterling has undertaken the development of a Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan to address current issues, challenges and opportunities confronting the Rock River Riverfront. The Plan provides a conceptual redevelopment plan for six functionally obsolete industrial sites, collectively referred to as the “Riverfront Redevelopment Sites.”

History & Regional Context

The City of Sterling is located along the Rock River in Whiteside County, Illinois, approximately 100 miles west of Chicago. Prior to settlement, the territory was occupied by the Fox and Sauk Indian tribes. The territory became attractive to settlers after the Black Hawk War in the early 1800s due to the area’s abundant natural features such as the Rock River, Elkhorn and Sugar Creeks, and a combination of woodlands and prairie. In 1834, Hezekiah Brink was the first person to build a cabin in the area. He was soon joined by other settlers.

In 1836, the community of Harrisburg was created when a steamer pilot by the name of Captain D.S. Harris delivered a load of supplies to the area via the Rock River. In turn, Harris received a half-interest in the community and it was named in his honor. Around the same time, William Kirkpatrick laid claim to property located near Harrisburg that came to be known as the settlement of Chatham. The residents of Harrisburg and Chatham became rivals as they competed for possession of rented office space and a post office called the Rock River Rapids. It was not until 1838 that Harrisburg and Chatham made their peace and merged in hopes of becoming the county seat. The two settlements united under the new name of Sterling in honor of Major James Sterling from the Black Hawk War; however, the county seat was moved to Morrison, Illinois and remains there today.

Original settlers’ hoped to utilize the Rock River as a navigational route. This plan never came to fruition because the river had too many rapids. Instead, the settlers harnessed the river’s power to run saw and grist mills. Since navigating the Rock River was not an option, the state authorized construction of a canal to run along the south side of the river and bypass the shallow waters. Financial problems caused this project to be abandoned as well. While Brink was somewhat successful in running a ferry service on the Rock River to attract travelers, other means for crossing the river were unsuccessful.

The first train arrived in Sterling in July 1855 and was the cause for great celebration for the town. With the power from the river and the transportation provided by the railroads, Sterling’s business and industry began to grow. One of the first factories built was the Mitten Factory owned by A.P. Smith, the founder of Rock Falls. Shortly after, Northwestern Steel & Wire Co., Lawrence Brothers Inc., National Manufacturing Co., the Wahl Clipper Corporation and others were founded along the Rock River shoreline.

In 1856, attempts to construct the first bridge across the Rock River were undertaken. The bridge was never completed and eventually washed away before it could be used. Other bridges were built and destroyed by the elements, including a toll bridge in 1863 and another later in 1904. The bridge built in 1904 was expected to last forever, but fell to ruins in 1906.

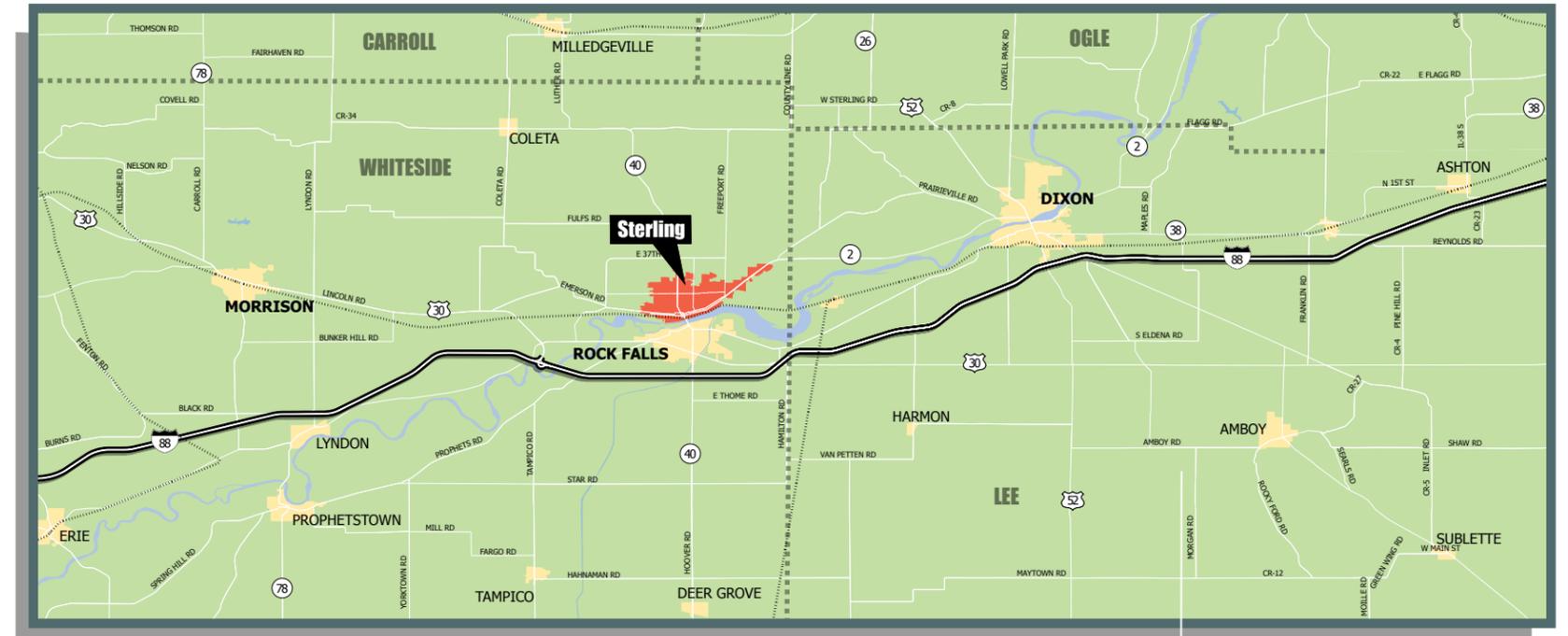
Sterling was incorporated as a city in 1857, when it received a special charter from the General Assembly. An election of officers was held and Lorenzo Hapgood was chosen to be the first mayor. In 1869, the charter was revised and Sterling was governed under amended provisions until it was incorporated under State law.

In July 1889, the installation of a system to light the City with electricity and the construction of an electric railway progressed simultaneously. However, the electric transportation project was complicated and was dormant for 10 years. One of the few electric lines to be successfully implemented was the Sterling, Dixon and Eastern Electric Railway (SD & EER). The SD & EER ran a trolley service between Sterling and Dixon from 1904 to 1925.

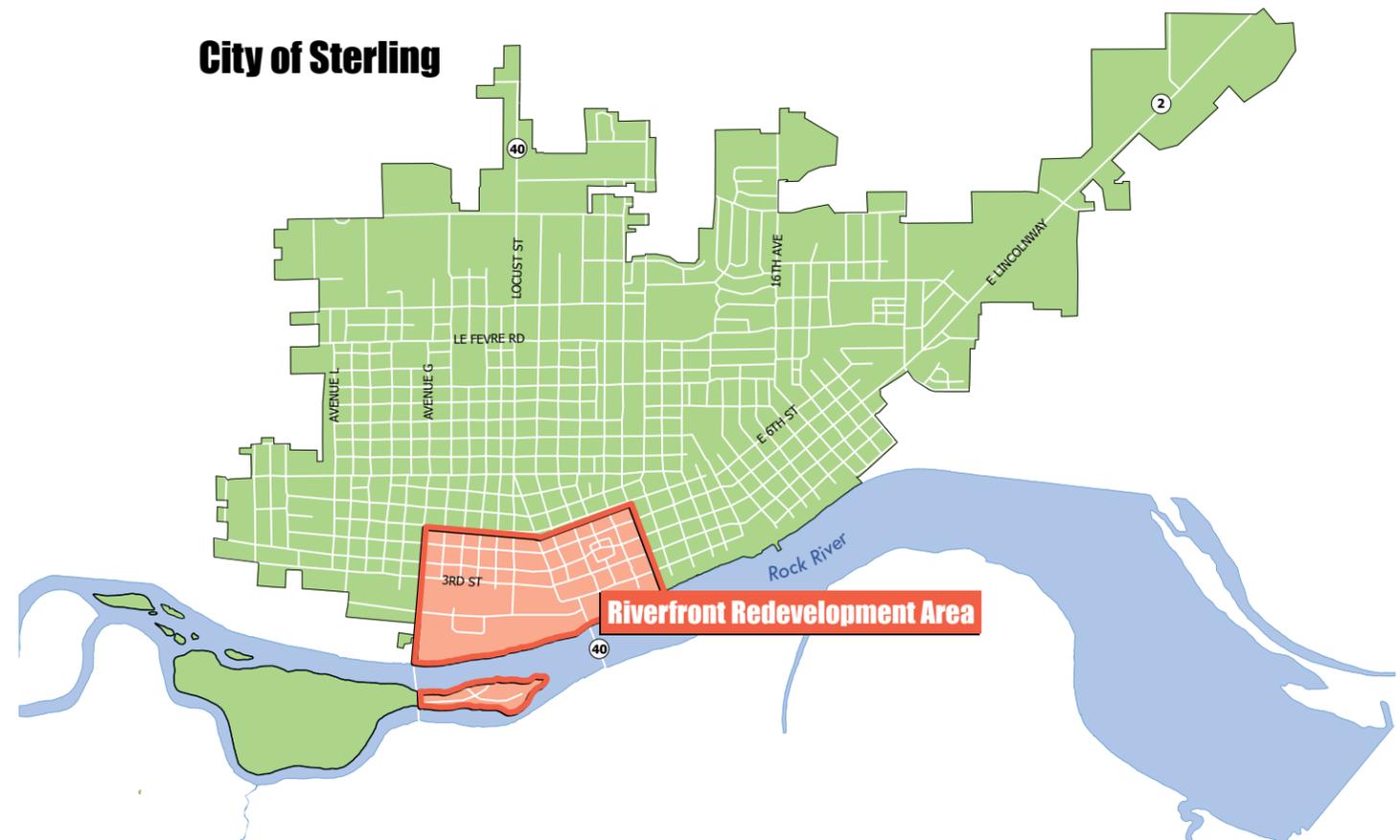
Regional Setting

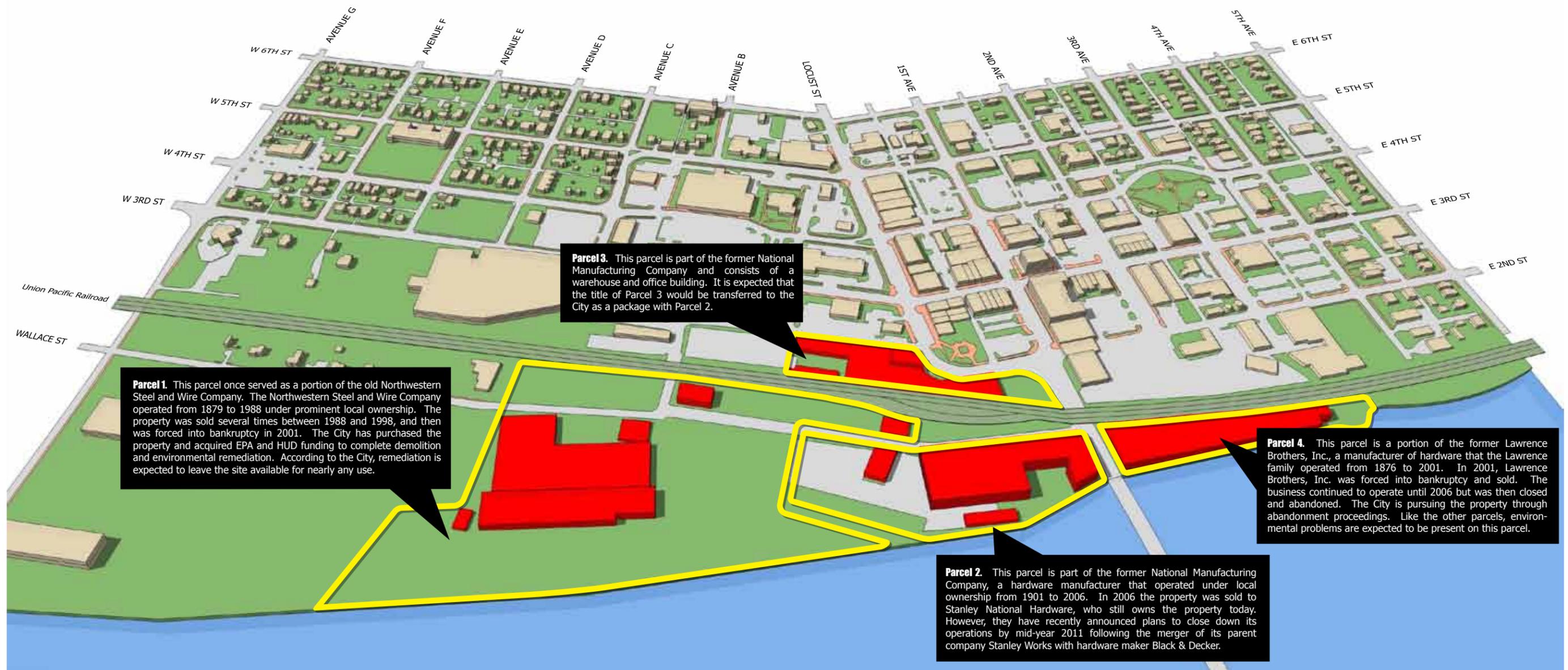


ILLINOIS



City of Sterling





Purpose of the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan

To address current issues, challenges and opportunities confronting the Riverfront, the City undertook the development of a Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan. The City is at a unique point due to a culmination of events including the decline of industry in the area and the displacement of Downtown businesses as development transpires on the City's periphery. To respond to these altering events, an inventive and implementable plan must be put into place. It is important that the Plan be grounded in market realities and incorporates the three pillars of sustainability: economic, environmental and cultural.

Sterling's Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan provides a conceptual redevelopment plan for several parcels of functionally obsolete industrial sites along the Rock River; and, potentially, adjoining areas. The area addressed could total more than 35 acres and cover nearly one mile of shoreline. The sites are characterized by aging, vacant structures and a gritty appearance. The Riverfront Redevelopment Plan provides an opportunity to address these issues in addition to future redevelopment along the Rock River.

The Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan presents a "blueprint" to guide the City and other stakeholders in their efforts to reinvent and reclaim the Riverfront. A fundamental goal will be to establish the Riverfront as an amenity and destination rooted in the City's historic past, while providing opportunities for the future.

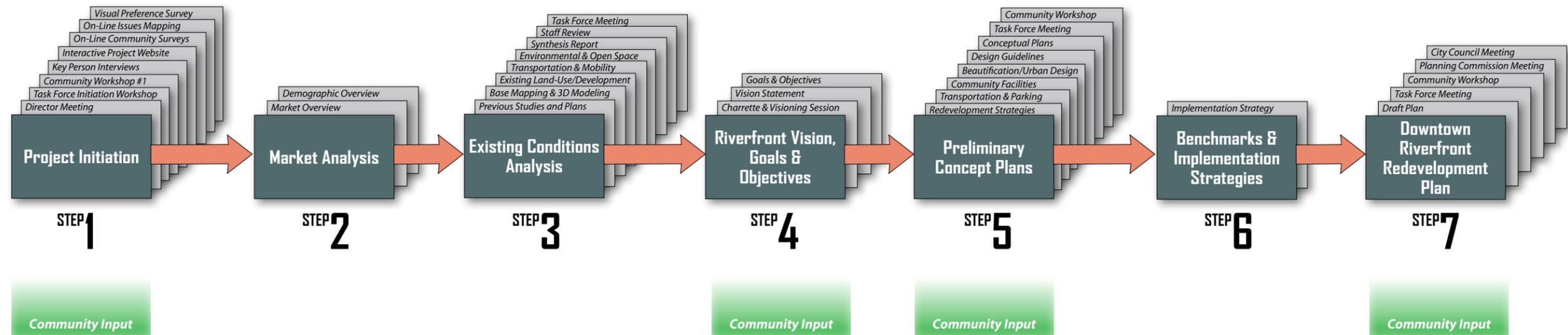
As an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan, this Plan is the official, adopted policy guide for future development/redevelopment and design improvements along the Rock River riverfront. It sets forth goals, analyzes existing conditions and trends, and illustrates a long-range vision for the physical, social and economic characteristics of Sterling's Riverfront.

The Riverfront Redevelopment Sites

The Riverfront Redevelopment Sites consist of four parcels along the Rock River riverfront. The sites were previously used for industrial purposes but have fallen into disuse after businesses have closed. Details of each parcel are highlighted above.

Additional parcels to the east or west may be looked at or pursued in the future should conditions permit.

Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan Planning Process



The Planning Process

The Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan is the product of a multi-step, community-driven planning process. The planning process engaged the Sterling community, analyzed existing conditions, identified opportunities and constraints, and established a community vision, goals and objectives for the Riverfront area.

Riverfront Redevelopment Task Force

A Riverfront Redevelopment Task Force was established to work with the Consultant Team throughout the course of the study. The Task Force was appointed by the Mayor and consists of City staff, elected and appointed officials, and volunteers who are willing to shepherd the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan on a day-to-day basis.

Organization of the Report

The Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan is divided into ten sections:

Section One: Community Outreach

Section Two: Market Analysis

Section Three: Existing Conditions

- ◇ Past Plans and Studies
- ◇ Land Use & Development Patterns
- ◇ Downtown Streetscape Design Elements
- ◇ Parks, Open Space and Environmental Features
- ◇ Transportation

Section Four: Vision, Goals & Objectives

Section Five: Land Use & Development Plan

Section Six: Transportation & Parking Plan

Section Seven: Community Facilities & Infrastructure Plan

Section Eight: Beautification & Urban Design

Section Nine: Design & Development Guidelines

Section Ten: Implementation



Central Memorial Park • Downtown Sterling

Section 1

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

The information and recommendations contained within the Plan are based upon research, analysis and extensive community outreach. The Plan was made possible through the support and assistance of City Staff and the Riverfront Redevelopment Task Force as well as input from other groups, organizations, residents, and the business community. The planning process included numerous community outreach exercises, providing the public with opportunities to provide valuable local insight regarding the issues and concerns facing the redevelopment of the Riverfront area. The following are the community outreach activities that were completed as a part of the planning process:

- ◇ Project Website
- ◇ Project Initiation Workshop
- ◇ Community Workshop
- ◇ Key Person Interviews

The following section summarizes the results of these community outreach activities.

Project Website

To assist in community outreach, and overall communication of the planning process, a project website has been created that is linked to the City's website. The project website provides visitors information on how to stay involved, a calendar of dates and times for future meetings, and posted copies of all documents that are produced for public review and comment. The Project website will remain active throughout the entire planning process.

Project Initiation Workshop

On Friday, June 18, 2010, a project initiation meeting was held with the Riverfront Redevelopment Task Force at City Hall, to set the foundation for the planning program and review and discuss the overall direction and policy issues facing Sterling's Downtown and Riverfront area. The meeting reviewed overall project objectives and concluded with a Project Initiation Workshop. The workshop solicited the views of the Task Force regarding their concerns and aspirations for the downtown riverfront redevelopment area and served as the "kick-off" meeting for the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan.

Workshop Questionnaire

The project initiation meeting concluded with a four-question workshop that focused on issues and concerns in the City's downtown/riverfront area, as well as community strengths and assets. The following is a summary of the thoughts, comments and opinions recorded and voiced verbally during workshop dialogue.

1. Identify five (5) issues or concerns confronting Sterling's Downtown & Riverfront Area.

A number of issues and concerns, covering a wide range of topics, were identified by the Task Force at the Project Initiation Workshop. The list of identified issues can be consolidated into the following categories: (a) Redevelopment of the Downtown Riverfront Area; (b) Clean-up Environmental Issues/Contamination; (c) Connectivity Concerns; (d) Economic Development & Viability of the Area; (e) Preserving the History of the Area; (f) Diversity of Uses; and, (g) Funding. A summary of all issues and concerns identified and discussed is provided for each specific category below.

- a. **Redevelopment of the Downtown Riverfront Area.** The Task Force agreed that redevelopment of Sterling's Downtown and Riverfront area was the primary concern and focus of the project. The underlying priority identified was replacing vacant and deteriorating structures with new uses that attract residents from the Sterling community and the greater region.

- b. **Clean-up Environmental Issues/Contamination.** The Task Force identified cleaning up environmental contamination on redevelopment sites as a priority to be addressed before redevelopment can occur in the Downtown and Riverfront areas.
- c. **Connectivity Concerns.** The Task Force identified the lack of connectivity between the Downtown and Riverfront as a key issue to be addressed in the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan. Much of this disconnect was attributed to the Union Pacific railroad that divides the Downtown and Riverfront areas; however, they acknowledged a lack of pedestrian connections as well. The Task Force indicated that a general priority of the Plan should be to improve overall access and circulation in the study area; and, specifically, that public access should be provided to and along the Rock River. The Task Force also expressed concern regarding boat connectivity and accessibility on the Rock River due to the two dams in the area that prohibit movement upstream and downstream.



Sterling Hydraulic Company Mural (corner of 2nd Avenue & E. 3rd Street)

d. **Economic Development & Viability of the Area.** The Task Force expressed concern over the number of jobs that have been lost in the area as industrial businesses have closed or relocated, and many stressed the importance of bringing businesses back to the Downtown/Riverfront. The Task Force also discussed the importance of economic viability studies to determine what the market capacity of the project study area is.

e. **Preserving the History of the Area.** The Task Force discussed the rich industrial history of the Downtown Riverfront area and cited it as a primary strength of the City. Preserving this history and any unique, salvageable architectural features was identified as a concern. The Task Force proposed incorporating a museum(s) in the Plan and maintaining structurally intact historic structures (such as the original limestone block from Northwestern Steel and Wire) as a way to preserve the area's history.

f. **Diversity of Uses.** The Task Force expressed concern over the future mix of uses in the project study area and indicated a desire for a diverse mix of public and private spaces. Restaurants, retail and mixed-use buildings were identified as most desirable in combination with green space and public gathering places.

g. **Funding.** Several issues and concerns voiced at the workshop dealt with the City's limited funding sources and the need to identify new resources available. The Task Force identified state and federal grant money as potential future funding sources.

2. List, in order of importance, the three (3) most important issues discussed thus far.

While a diverse list of issues and concerns was generated in response to question one, a general consensus indicated three specific items were considered most important (in no particular order):

a. **Increase Public Support & Cooperation with Rock Falls.** Public apathy and a lack of community involvement was a concern amongst the Task Force. Through community outreach, maintaining the momentum of the project and coming up with a visionary and feasible redevelopment plan, the Task Force believed that stewardship for the Plan could be fostered and public support increased. Additionally, the Task Force identified that better communication and coordination with Rock Falls needs to occur to ensure the success of the Plan.

b. **Identify Alternative Funding Strategies.** As previously mentioned, several concerns identified at the workshop related to the availability of funding. The Task Force believed that alternative funding sources such as state and federal grants would be essential to realize the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan and that a priority throughout the planning process should be to identify potential funding sources.

c. **Improve Public Access to the Riverfront.** Public access to, and along, the Rock River was believed to be one of the most important issues pertaining to the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan. The Task Force felt that continuous trail connections, clearly marked pedestrian crossings and pedestrian amenities should be a key component of the Plan.

3. Identify three (3) specific projects or actions you would like to see undertaken within the Riverfront redevelopment area/surrounding Downtown area.

When asked to indicate specific projects or actions they would like to see undertaken within the Village, the Task Force generated a list of ideas. These ideas have been consolidated into the following list of projects and actions:

- ◇ Clean redevelopment sites and make them "development ready";
- ◇ Incorporate a museum(s) as a way to preserve the area's historic past;
- ◇ Promote adaptive reuse of historical buildings;
- ◇ Provide parks and open space with multi-use trails along the riverfront;
- ◇ Generate additional revenue/sales tax dollars for the City;
- ◇ Eliminate blight/unattractive appearance;
- ◇ Create attractive gateways/entryways;
- ◇ Improve collaboration and coordination with Rock Falls;
- ◇ Capitalize the potential of Lawrence Park;
- ◇ Incorporate recreational amenities such as a splash pad or kayaking; and
- ◇ Create a destination.

4. What are the primary strengths and assets of the City of Sterling and its Downtown & Riverfront?

Although most of the workshop discussion dealt with issues and concerns that should be addressed in the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan, the last question focused on the strengths and assets of the City. The following strengths and assets of Sterling were mentioned by the Task Force:

- ◇ Rich industrial history of the City;
- ◇ Momentum gained from Downtown beautification efforts;
- ◇ Union Pacific Railroad;
- ◇ Sterling murals;
- ◇ Lawrence Park and its proximity to the Downtown Riverfront area;
- ◇ Abundance of old building materials (bricks in particular);
- ◇ Relatively strong retail and Downtown;
- ◇ Involved government leadership and proactive leaders;
- ◇ Geographical location of the area and its proximity to major metropolitan areas; and,
- ◇ People and community pride.

Next Steps

The next step in the planning process will be a community workshop. This workshop will be the first of many face-to-face community outreach events scheduled throughout the planning process. The purpose of this first workshop is to allow residents to share their ideas and opinions before plans and recommendations are made. The workshop will: (1) review the purpose of the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan, the planning process to be undertaken, and the schedule for the study; (2) secure local views on problems, issues and potentials within the redevelopment area; and, (3) conduct a visual preference survey. Additionally, key person interviews will be conducted and community surveys and issues mapping will be made available for residents and businesses.

Community Workshop

The first Community Workshop for the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan took place on August 10, 2010 at City Hall. To promote the workshop, three different forms of media were used for publicity including local newspapers, cable television and radio. Approximately seventy (70) residents participated in the workshop.

The workshop is the first of many face-to-face community outreach events scheduled throughout the Riverfront Redevelopment planning process. The purpose of this event was to: (1) review the purpose of the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan and the planning process to be undertaken; (2) secure local views on problems, issues and potentials within the redevelopment area; and, (3) conduct a visual preference survey to solicit community feedback on potential development and land use related components.

Workshop Questionnaire

The interactive part of the workshop began with a questionnaire that solicited participants input regarding issues and concerns in the City's downtown/riverfront area, as well as community strengths and assets. The following is a summary of the thoughts, comments and opinions obtained during the workshop.

1. Identify five (5) issues or concerns confronting Sterling's Downtown & Riverfront Area.

Several issues and concerns were generated by the group, covering a wide range of topics. The list of identified issues can be grouped into the following broad categories: (a) Appearance and Improved Sense of Place; (b) Union Pacific Railroad; (c) Mix of Uses and Family Friendly Atmosphere; (d) Preserving Local Character and History; (e) Public Accessibility and Trail Systems; and, (f) Economic Viability and Funding.

A summary of all issues and concerns identified and discussed is provided for each specific category below.

- a. **Appearance and Improved Sense of Place.** A number of issues cited related to the riverfront's appearance and sense of place. Specific comments for improving the area's appearance and sense of place ranged from specific to all encompassing, including (but not limited to): burying power lines; incorporating an attractive focal point; creating a unique identity; connecting with the area's manufacturing heritage; ensuring appropriate maintenance take place; and, improving right-of-way maintenance in the area.
- b. **Union Pacific Railroad.** Issues and concerns pertaining to the Union Pacific Railroad were identified. Specifically, attendees commented on the noise the railroad generates and how it forms a barrier between the Downtown and Riverfront areas.
- c. **Mix of Uses and Family-Friendly Atmosphere.** Attendees would like to see a healthy mix of uses and a family friendly atmosphere created along the riverfront. A desire for a diverse mix of public and private spaces was expressed, with specific interest in the following: outdoor amphitheaters/event space; a publicly accessible riverfront; cafes and restaurants; and, cultural icons or museums. A number of workshop participants cited bringing businesses and employers back to the Downtown and Riverfront areas as a key objective. Additionally, participants indicated that the riverfront should incorporate uses for children, teens and adults, and be enhanced with a variety of public amenities such as public restrooms.

d. Preserving Local Character and History.

Workshop participants made reference to or discussed the importance of preserving the City's local history as redevelopment occurs along the Riverfront. Many felt that incorporating a museum into the redevelopment would preserve the area's identity and heritage. People believed that preserving the local character could be complemented through the use of preservation guidelines. Additionally, some workshop participants suggested incorporating historic themes into educational/academic facilities.

e. Public Accessibility and Trail Systems.

In general, workshop participants indicated that a general priority of the Plan should be to improve overall access and circulation in the area; and, specifically, that public access should be provided to and along the Rock River. Issues and concerns related to both physical and visual accessibility along the Rock River riverfront. Participants desired continuous multi-use trails along the riverfront, maximized views of the river; and, public gathering areas or places to "hang out" along the riverfront. Participants also desired that the riverfront be enhanced with public amenities such as restrooms and connections to Lawrence Park and the Dillon Home.

- f. **Economic Viability and Funding.** Several issues voiced at the workshop related to the high cost of redevelopment and its long term viability. Concerns with the City's limited funding sources and the need to identify new resources available were discussed, and many participants emphasized that appropriate use of incentives should occur but not in excess. Redevelopment/development should be financially sound and economically sustainable.

2. List, in order of importance, the three (3) most important issues discussed thus far.

While a diverse list of issues and concerns was generated in response to Question 1, a general consensus indicated four general categories were most important by workshop participants. These categories included the following:

- a. **Cost and Funding.** As outlined in response to Question 1, concerns with the City's limited funding sources and the need to identify new resources available were expressed. Participants acknowledged that a substantial amount of money and funding will be necessary to implement the Riverfront Redevelopment Plan.
- b. **Long-term Sustainability.** This category includes the three pillars of sustainability: economic sustainability, environmental sustainability and cultural sustainability. Workshop participants emphasized that any redevelopment that occurs needs to consider all three pillars in the long-term. They stressed that the City should not surrender too much to attract new development and that quality development with a variety of uses is necessary. Workshop participants desired redevelopment that includes green technologies, complements Rock Falls (rather than competes with Rock Falls), and incorporates a healthy mix of uses.
- c. **Union Pacific Railroad.** Workshop participants indicated that the Union Pacific Railroad was one of the most important issues facing the redevelopment of the riverfront. The prominent location of the railroad and the negative connotations associated with it were envisioned to be priorities.
- d. **Appearance.** According to participants, several of the issues and concerns generated pertained to the riverfront's appearance. The Riverfront area serves as a prominent gateway into Sterling and workshop participants desired an attractive appearance to reflect the City's desired character.



“Sterling Secret Six” Illinois State Troopers in the 1930’s

3. Identify three (3) specific projects or actions you would like to see undertaken within the Riverfront Redevelopment area/surrounding Downtown area.

Workshop participants identified a number of specific projects and actions they would like to see undertaken in the project study area. Desired projects and actions included, but are not limited to, the following:

- ◇ Incorporation of dining establishments and outdoor seating areas;
- ◇ Installation of a tram that would travel from Sterling’s riverfront, to Lawrence Park, to Rock Fall’s riverfront;
- ◇ Planting of native plant species;
- ◇ Incorporation of an “event area” or amphitheater;
- ◇ Construction of a community focal point/unique attraction and public gathering place;
- ◇ Development of a year-round recreational facility with a water park and ice rink;
- ◇ Combining resources with Rock Falls;
- ◇ Development of condominiums near the riverfront;
- ◇ Connecting the riverfront with Lawrence Park and other community amenities with bike/multi-use trails;
- ◇ Incorporation of an educational facility and/or museum;
- ◇ Decreasing railroad traffic and noise;
- ◇ Utilization of the river for recreational activities;
- ◇ Utilization of the river for energy; and,
- ◇ Incorporation of a hotel/lodging facility.

4. What are the primary strengths and assets of the City of Sterling and its Downtown & Riverfront?

Although most of the workshop dealt with issues and concerns to be addressed in the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan, the fourth and final question focused on the strengths and assets of the City. Workshop attendees recorded what they believed to be strengths and assets of the City, its Downtown and Riverfront. The following strengths and assets were noted:

- a. **Location.** Workshop participants believed the location of Sterling to be one of its greatest strengths as the City is situated along the Rock River, adjacent to the Union Pacific Railroad and in close proximity to I-88. Furthermore, Sterling is situated in close proximity to several surrounding communities that would provide potential visitors and shoppers for riverfront amenities and for businesses.
- b. **Rich history and culture of the City.** Sterling’s rich industrial history was noted as an asset that should be preserved and enhanced as redevelopment occurs along the riverfront. Attendees expressed a desire for museums and cultural icons to be included to preserve this history and distinguish the area from others within the region.
- c. **Progressive City government.** Attendees noted the City’s strong and progressive governmental leadership as a strength of the community. The City government will likely play a key role in guiding the long-term improvement of the riverfront area. Attendees also noted that the local government would play an important role in promoting stewardship and working towards the long-term success of the Plan.
- d. **The Rock River.** Attendees described the Rock River as a unique and beautiful amenity with significant potential. Workshop participants noted that redevelopment along the riverfront should capitalize on the river and feature recreational amenities and a healthy mix of uses that will attract residents and visitors from the surrounding region.
- e. **Residents.** The residents of Sterling were described as involved citizens, good volunteers and skilled workers by workshop participants. Attendees identified the City’s multi-cultural base and strong sense of community as an asset.
- f. **Large, consolidated area to redevelop.** Participants identified the size of the riverfront redevelopment area as a strength because it offers a large “blank slate.” Attendees noted that possibilities for riverfront redevelopment are endless once the area has been cleaned up. The importance of developing a Riverfront Redevelopment Plan was noted to ensure that the aspirations of the community are met as redevelopment occurs.
- g. **The existing Downtown.** Workshop participants noted that the Downtown has an established character that the riverfront can build upon for success. The historic buildings and small town feel of the Downtown were identified as community strengths.

Key Person Interviews

As a part of the Community Outreach phase of the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan's planning process, confidential interviews were conducted with individuals to discuss conditions and potentials within the Downtown and Riverfront areas. Individuals who possess various interests and insights into the Sterling community as well as the Downtown and Riverfront areas were selected. Persons interviewed included local business owners, medical professionals, realtors and residents.

Interviews were conducted on September 29, 2010 and lasted approximately 45 minutes each. Each interviewee was asked a series of questions regarding the community. Overall responses to each question are summarized below.

How would you define/describe the character of Sterling's Downtown and Riverfront areas?

Each interviewee seemed to have a firm idea of how to best describe the character of Sterling's Downtown and Riverfront areas. While individual responses varied, several underlying themes could be identified and have been summarized in the following statements:

- ◇ Recent streetscaping efforts have made the area more pedestrian friendly, but the Downtown appears to lack a desirable mix of active uses needed to make the area a more vibrant district.
- ◇ While the potential for improvement exists, the vacant industrial sites that currently occupy the Riverfront do not create a favorable gateway into Sterling from the south.
- ◇ There are opportunities to improve both the Downtown and Riverfront and enhance the area's ability to attract new businesses.

The following statements represent a more detailed summary of responses:

- ◇ The Riverfront is industrial and representative of past practices including river/water power and multi-level factories.
- ◇ Industrial uses are no longer appropriate for the Riverfront and there is a desire by the community to move forward.
- ◇ Industrial buildings (such as the Lawrence building) along the Riverfront are in poor condition and some portion of the industrial sites may be contaminated.
- ◇ The Downtown and Riverfront areas currently lack a "critical mass" of retailers, restaurants and entertainment uses found in more vibrant downtown areas and some businesses and amenities in the Downtown seem "hidden."
- ◇ Sterling is a blue-collar community.
- ◇ Redevelopment efforts could create a more attractive gateway to the Downtown and Riverfront from the 1st Avenue bridge.
- ◇ The demolition of aging industrial buildings has improved the appearance of the Riverfront and provided physical signs of progress on behalf of the City.
- ◇ Opportunities for redevelopment/development exist within the Downtown and along the Riverfront.
- ◇ The Downtown streetscaping initiative has been beneficial and made the Downtown more pedestrian friendly.
- ◇ Downtown Sterling currently has a number of vacant storefronts and the area appears to have difficulty attracting new businesses.

What do you believe are the primary assets and advantages of the Downtown and Riverfront?

Few question the manufacturing legacy of Sterling's Riverfront and its importance to the City's history; however, it is acknowledged that the Riverfront is not likely to regain its reputation as an industrial hub. The future success of the City's Downtown and Riverfront areas will be more influenced by the area's existing assets and advantages, than its industrial past. To identify favorable characteristics which the Plan could utilize and build upon, interviewees were asked to identify the primary assets and advantages of the Downtown and Riverfront.

The asset most cited was the Rock River riverfront itself and the recreational opportunities it provides. Interviewees identified views of the river, its proximity to Lawrence Park, and seasonal boating and fishing as advantages that attract residents and visitors. The potential for additional tourism and recreational amenities was also mentioned as an advantage.

Some observed that the availability of land and the large size of parcels along the Rock River function as an asset on which to capitalize. Several interviewees believed that the vacant or available land along the riverfront holds significant redevelopment potential and could be desirable for a variety of users.

In general, interviewees believed that the hospital and numerous medical clinics/facilities were an asset to the Downtown and Riverfront as well. Some mentioned that these types of facilities have the potential to attract more medical professionals and their families to the community, increasing overall demand for commercial uses such as restaurants and retail.

A summary of assets and advantages identified includes:

- ◇ Fairly sizable hospital.
- ◇ Summertime boating and fishing.
- ◇ "Anonymous" donors in the area.
- ◇ Small town, friendly feel of the community.
- ◇ Local schools – their manageable size and opportunities to get involved.
- ◇ Low crime rate.
- ◇ Lack of congestion.
- ◇ Proximity to Rock Falls.
- ◇ Location – convenient access to the interstate system and larger metropolitan areas such as Chicago, Rockford and the Quad Cities.
- ◇ The National Manufacturing Co. building and possible opportunities for adaptive reuse.
- ◇ Recent clean-up efforts.
- ◇ Nearby jobs along Interstate 88.
- ◇ Large areas available for redevelopment.
- ◇ Views of the Rock River.
- ◇ The Twin City Farmers' Market.
- ◇ The Union Pacific Railroad contributes to the area's character.
- ◇ Retail development and theater on the east side of the City is indicative of the Sterling area's potential.



What do you believe are the primary weaknesses and disadvantages of the Downtown and Riverfront?

While interviewees indicated that potential exists for significant improvements to Sterling’s Downtown and Riverfront areas, they also acknowledged that there are a number of issues that must be addressed if the area is to be successfully redeveloped and revitalized.

Job loss and unemployment concerns were cited by the majority of interviewees as a primary weakness of the Downtown and Riverfront. Interviewees also indicated that Sterling currently lacks desirable amenities such as restaurants and diverse retail options and this lack of amenities is making it increasingly difficult to recruit “white collar” professionals such as doctors and engineers. Some believe that middle class families are leaving the area and commercial businesses can no longer be sustained as a result.

Several interviewees identified the weak and sometime negative relationship between Sterling and Rock Falls as a potential disadvantage. The Rock River was identified as a dividing line by some and it was also noted that competition between the two communities, for things such as state funding or retail customers, was detrimental to either’s success. Some felt that merging the school districts or municipal services could unite and merge the two communities and help foster a mutually beneficial relationship.

The location of the Union Pacific Railroad in relation to the Downtown and Riverfront areas was also identified as an issue. With 66 trains traveling through each day, interviewees stated that access to the Riverfront Redevelopment Sites is limited and that the Riverfront is disconnected from the Downtown. Safety issues pertaining to the railroad were cited as a disadvantage as well.

Lawrence Brothers Smoke Stack

A summary of all weaknesses and disadvantages discussed includes:

- ◇ Lack of vibrancy in the existing Downtown.
- ◇ Environmental contamination and the cost of clean-up.
- ◇ Competition between Sterling and Rock Falls.
- ◇ Lack of new job opportunities in the area.
- ◇ Lack of direct access to I-88.
- ◇ The Union Pacific Railroad – Potential to add character, but creates safety and access issues.
- ◇ Disconnect between the visions and realities of Sterling’s potential.
- ◇ Perception of increased crime activity.
- ◇ Schools are underfunded which deters young families from moving to the area.
- ◇ Industrial job loss and an economically depressed area.
- ◇ Communication barriers with aging medical professionals.
- ◇ The pool closing at Lawrence Park due to maintenance issues.
- ◇ Rumors of low-income housing coming to Sterling and Rock Falls.
- ◇ Money and cost of improvements.
- ◇ Population may be too small to support a “great” development.
- ◇ The Lawrence building is deteriorating.
- ◇ A new “Executive Director of Development” is needed to promote the area.
- ◇ Downtown has undergone a lot of change – many buildings were torn down; the streetwall is gone or discontinuous in many parts; and, there is a lack of retail/destinations.
- ◇ Competition with commercial development on the east side of the City.

What do you consider to be the single most important issue confronting the Downtown and Riverfront today?

As a follow up to the previous question, interviewees were asked to narrow their focus and convey their opinion of the single biggest issue confronting the Downtown and Riverfront areas. While interviewees had difficulty identifying a single issue, this exercise helped interviewees highlight the issues they believed to be the most significant.

With the exception of job loss, there was little consensus among interviewees regarding the single most important issue confronting the Downtown and Riverfront areas. Most interviewees believed job loss and its associated repercussions are important issues that need to be addressed throughout the planning process. Some interviewees stated that the closing of Northwestern Steel & Wire specifically was detrimental to the community, and the majority felt that the lack of jobs within the area made it difficult to attract new people and businesses to Sterling. A few interviewees provided some follow-up, sharing the belief that new Walmart distribution center was a saving grace and that additional development will occur once more employers locate in the area. Others simply stated that something needs to be done to improve overall quality of life in the community.

A summary list of all responses includes:

- ◇ Something is needed to excite people in the community – nightlife, restaurants or a compelling area.
- ◇ Eyesores along the Rock River need to be eliminated.
- ◇ The Union Pacific Railroad presents a problem with access and circulation in the area.
- ◇ Loss of jobs and lack of employment opportunities.
- ◇ Walmart distribution center locating in Sterling.
- ◇ Additional industrial/manufacturing jobs are needed.
- ◇ The community needs something it can feel proud of – National Manufacturing and Northwestern Steel & Wire were sources of pride.
- ◇ The culture of the area needs to be changed.
- ◇ The Riverfront area needs to be cleaned up.
- ◇ More retailers are needed.
- ◇ The demand for space and its sustainability.
- ◇ Developing incentives for businesses to locate in the Downtown or along the Riverfront.
- ◇ Lack of cash-flow and disposable income in the community.
- ◇ Competition between Sterling and Rock Falls.
- ◇ The cost and how to fund the clean-up and redevelopment of the Riverfront.



Purington Paver bricks reused at Martin's Landing and the Sinissippi Dam Walkway

- ◇ What to do with all of the vacant and deteriorating buildings currently situated along the Rock River.
- ◇ Raising money will be a priority/necessary – receiving grant money or federal funds will be difficult.
- ◇ Poor property maintenance of some residences and businesses.
- ◇ Moving forward will be the biggest challenge – it is nice to remember the past, but need to move on and not focus on what once was.
- ◇ Need to remove blight from the area – removing rubble is not enough.
- ◇ Sterling is not a center of technical or “knowledge” workers.
- ◇ There is a need to “paint” a vision and create a plan for the area.
- ◇ There are no weaknesses in the area – just potential.

If you had the power to undertake one project or improvement within the Downtown and Riverfront, what would it be?

Interviewees were asked what specific project or improvement they would like to undertake within the Downtown or Riverfront areas if financial limitations and other barriers to implementation were non-factors. A wide range of projects and improvements were mentioned with no discernable common theme.

A more comprehensive list of suggested projects or improvements includes:

- ◇ A high-end marina complex with a mix of restaurants and retail.
- ◇ Attract outside investors to improve the area.
- ◇ Relocate existing restaurants in the city to the Riverfront Redevelopment Sites.
- ◇ Bike trails.

- ◇ Something other than condos or high-density housing.
- ◇ Attractive, usable green space combined with a streetscaping project similar to the Downtown's.
- ◇ Attracting and locating ten medium-sized manufacturing companies in other parts of the community (not along the river), so that a hotel and restaurants can locate along the riverfront or downtown.
- ◇ Entertainment venues and/or an outdoor amphitheater for concerts/shows.
- ◇ Implement incentives such as TIF Districts; or, freeze property taxes based on the number of jobs created by an employer.
- ◇ Clean the riverfront and make it useful – remove boarded up homes on Wallace Street, incorporate green space and pavilions for festivals.

- ◇ Provide a continuous trail along the river to the dam and work with Sterling Steel to get an easement along its property frontage.
- ◇ Construct a power generating plant near the lower dam.
- ◇ Incorporate a park into something that generates sales tax revenue for the City such as restaurants and bars – place less of an emphasis on street furniture.
- ◇ Demolish the existing buildings along the Riverfront to create a clean slate and inspire new development in the area.
- ◇ Work with Sauk Valley College to retrain and educate the local workforce.
- ◇ Encourage five companies to relocate their businesses to Sterling, with an emphasis on a hotel, a VA clinic and a retirement home.

- ◇ Convert the National Manufacturing Co. building into an interactive museum similar to the City Museum in St. Louis.
- ◇ Create more housing options within walking distance of businesses.
- ◇ Create a mixed-use development with the National Manufacturing Co. building – retail on the first floor and condos on upper floors.
- ◇ Additional park and recreation facilities that accommodate kayaks, rowboats and a fishing pier.
- ◇ A community pool along the Rock River riverfront.
- ◇ Construct a senior housing/assisted living facility.
- ◇ A casino complemented by restaurants, hotels and other tourist attractions to create a destination that raises money for the City.

What are your primary concerns regarding future development of the area?

Lastly, interviewees were asked to identify their primary concerns regarding future development of the Riverfront area. In general, interviewees seemed to have difficulty pinpointing a single primary concern, and oftentimes tied responses to previous comments regarding the weaknesses and disadvantages of the area.

A summary list of primary concerns identified as they pertain to future development of the area includes:

- ◇ The duplication of municipal services in Sterling and Rock Falls.
- ◇ The Riverfront redeveloping as its own separate district, disconnected from the Downtown.
- ◇ Sterling lacks an attractive gateway/entrance from the south and a favorable gateway needs to be created.
- ◇ The constant competition between Sterling and Rock Falls with regards to attracting development.
- ◇ Removing blight from the Downtown and Riverfront areas.

- ◇ The City going into debt for something that does not make sense in the long-term.
- ◇ Cannot rely on the City's heritage for the future or place too much emphasis on preservation.
- ◇ Improving the schools and the school system is the first step towards attracting young families to Sterling.
- ◇ Sustainability.
- ◇ Encouraging traditional architecture that complements the existing buildings Downtown.
- ◇ Create a phasing plan to attract new jobs and development.
- ◇ A lack of technology.
- ◇ The Union Pacific Railroad creates access problems and potential safety concerns.

Do you have any other comments or suggestions regarding our work on the Riverfront Redevelopment Plan?

Once questions were completed, interviewees were given the opportunity to provide any additional input into the plan. Additional feedback received is summarized below:

- ◇ It is important to have an appreciation for history and heritage, but these should not be the most important issues considered.
- ◇ A waterpark will attract new people to the area and can be accommodated on the Riverfront Redevelopment Sites.
- ◇ Sterling residents frequently visit restaurants in Dixon.
- ◇ There needs to be something to do along the riverfront – a park/open space is not enough to create a destination.
- ◇ A larger population to support additional/new businesses is necessary and business cannot likely be sustained if there are not more people in the area.
- ◇ Undesirable people are coming into the Sterling community because of the Dixon prison; and, as a result, the school system is suffering.
- ◇ Safety and lighting should be important components of any redevelopment plan.

- ◇ Large industrial users have trouble finding people to do line work and manual labor.
- ◇ The Rock Falls and Sterling Chamber of Commerce work well with one another and try to improve relationships between the two communities.
- ◇ The Rock River is shallow and may limit boating/recreation potential.
- ◇ Clinton (Iowa) and Dixon have implemented successful and desirable riverfront plans.
- ◇ A casino will attract a number of people to the area and provide revenue to the City for future beautification and redevelopment efforts.
- ◇ Key selling points of Sterling include: low crime rate; no traffic congestion; recreational opportunities; availability and price of land.
- ◇ There is a need for additional assisted living facilities and nursing homes.
- ◇ A stronger work force is needed to attract large employers.
- ◇ Attracting "weekenders" or seasonal users would be a positive for the community and add a sense of vibrancy in the Downtown and Riverfront areas.
- ◇ To improve connections between the Downtown and Riverfront areas, opportunities for a shuttle or bus should be investigated.
- ◇ The hospital has a difficult time recruiting doctors.
- ◇ The Riverfront should achieve a healthy balance between recreational amenities and job opportunities.

- ◇ Sterling's proximity to Chicago is an asset.
- ◇ A phasing plan or development cycles should be considered as an important component of the plan.
- ◇ A riverboat casino is not a desirable use.
- ◇ Sterling may have the potential to attract a regional medical facility.
- ◇ The school districts in Sterling and Rock Falls should merge, followed by municipal services – the communities will be more successful if they join forces.
- ◇ The three pillars of sustainability will be important in any redevelopment plan that comes forward.
- ◇ The high school and the coliseum can host concerts, and Rock Falls is planning for an amphitheater – Sterling's Riverfront Redevelopment Plan should not duplicate Rock Falls or compete with existing facilities.
- ◇ Promotional efforts need to be enhanced in the City.
- ◇ Opportunities for recreational tourism should be explored such as canoeing, kayaking, fishing and weekend trips.
- ◇ The Sterling community is sufficient and comparable to other communities with the same demographics.
- ◇ The Veteran's Park in Dixon is a desirable amenity.
- ◇ Sustainable development is desired along the Riverfront regardless of the type of use.
- ◇

Visioning Workshop

A visioning workshop was held with the Sterling community on January 11, 2011 at the Woodlawn Arts Academy. Approximately 30 people were in attendance and participated in the workshop.

The structure of the visioning workshop allowed for residents, business owners, elected and appointed officials and others to work together in creating a vision for the future of Sterling's Downtown and Riverfront areas. Attendees were divided into eight (8) breakout groups to create their visions. Each group was given a base map of the project study area, along with materials to help focus their discussions. The exercise encouraged groups to envision what could occur along the Riverfront and Downtown. Using the worksheets and suggested topic areas as guides, each group worked together to create their vision for what Sterling's Riverfront could become in the next 10-15 years. Each group's vision is summarized on the following pages.

Group 1

Group 1 envisioned the riverfront to have a diverse mix of uses. Utilizing each of the materials provided at the workshop, the group identified park space, trails, residential, restaurants, public facilities and professional office space as desirable types of development with a two (2) story height limit. Heavy industrial uses and flea markets were identified as undesirable land uses.

On the former Lawrence Brothers, Inc. site, Group 1 imagined multi-family residential with a trail along the Rock River. The trail was envisioned to continue east beyond the project study area, and west to the western edge of the Riverfront Redevelopment Sites. At this western edge, the group envisioned a bridge that would connect the trail to Lawrence Park. The group envisioned a second bridge to connect the park to Rock Falls on the south side of the river.

On Parcel 3, rebuilding the former train station was recommended in combination with constructing a new pedestrian bridge over the Union Pacific Railroad. Parking for the train station would be provided south of the tracks, requiring riders to utilize the new bridge if they parked in the designated lot.

On Parcel 2, Group 1 envisioned preserving a portion of the National Manufacturing building and incorporating it into a mixed-use development with office space, restaurants, retail shops, condos and a brewery oriented towards both the riverfront and the 1st Avenue Bridge. These uses would be complemented with outdoor dining and a riverwalk.

Parcel 1 incorporated a variety of public uses including recreational amenities such as park space, a canoe/kayak launch and a boardwalk with fishing piers. Public parking areas and a public stadium for sporting events and concerts were envisioned to occupy the majority of the site.

With regard to built form, Group 1 appeared to desire a continuous building streetwall oriented towards the river, with attractive streetscaping and pedestrian amenities to enhance the character of the area.

Key improvements envisioned adjacent to the Riverfront Redevelopment Sites included converting Lawrence Park to a nature preserve, relocating the railroad facility to the west end of the redevelopment sites, and improving the back of Masonic Row. The intersections of 1st Avenue and Wallace Street, and Avenue B and the Union Pacific Railroad were identified for intersection improvements.

Group 2

Group 2 envisioned the future of Sterling's riverfront to be geared towards dining and entertainment. A casino, niche restaurants and a microbrewery were identified as desirable types of development, while tattoo parlors were identified as an undesirable use along the river.

Parcel 1 was identified for substantial redevelopment that involved removing all existing structures and building multi-story, mixed-use buildings with condos on upper floors and retail at the ground level. New development would maintain a continuous streetwall and be oriented towards the Rock River. Boat slips and or facilities for crew/rowing were recommended to further enhance the riverfront. In addition, a new pedestrian bridge connecting the site to Lawrence Park was identified. Furthermore, Group 2 desired a new east-west road that would connect the site to Avenue G, as well as improvements to Avenue B where it crosses the railroad tracks.

Group 2 anticipated redevelopment on Parcel 2 to accommodate a microbrewery and a casino fronting the Rock River. Both uses would be visible from the 1st Avenue Bridge and the Rock River. In front of these uses and immediately adjacent to the river, the group envisioned a built-up riverwalk and retaining wall with landscaping and other streetscape amenities to create a pedestrian-oriented atmosphere.

The group identified parking as the predominant use for Parcel 3, and proposed replacing the Lawrence Brothers building on Parcel 4 with a riverwalk and park space.

Group 2 identified the intersections of 1st Avenue and Wallace Street, and 1st Avenue and Locust Street as priority locations for intersection improvements. Additionally, the group envisioned a new intersection on Avenue G just north of the shoreline. The group expressed interest in including additional pedestrian and bicycle amenities on the 1st Avenue Bridge as well.

Group 3

Group 3 expressed a desire for "white table cloth" restaurants, entertainment facilities, a festival area, and a Veterans Memorial on the Riverfront Redevelopment Sites. A continuous bike trail and lighted riverwalk were envisioned to extend along the length of riverfront as well.

Specifically, Group 3 identified Parcel 1 as a desirable location for usable park space. This park space would provide a venue for community festivals and a Veterans Memorial or statue garden. On the northern portion of the site, adjacent to the Union Pacific Railroad, the group expressed an interest in an office/business park with a campus-like setting.

Parcel 2 was planned to redevelop with multiple restaurants and bars with outdoor dining and a ferry that would bring riverfront patrons from these businesses to Lawrence Park and back again. The group identified a railroad and industry museum to be located on Parcel 3, and condos for young professionals on Parcel 4.

Priority intersections to be improved included 1st Avenue and Wallace Street, 1st Avenue and Locust Street, and Avenue B and the Union Pacific Railroad.

Lastly, Group 3 expressed a desire for a boutique hotel to be constructed on Lawrence Park, with an improved trail system around its perimeter.

Group 4

Group 4 identified a variety of uses believed to be desirable on Sterling's riverfront, including: sandwich/ice cream shops; small hotel with meeting rooms; something to recognize the City's industrial past, the significance of water power and the Union Pacific Railroad; adaptive reuse of existing buildings; and, a continuous multi-use trail system. The group identified fast food restaurants, manufacturing and athletic fields as undesirable uses.

Using the materials provided, Group 4 outlined a vision for multi-family residential with an urban character on Parcel 2 and mixed-use development on Parcel 1. These developments would be complemented by a continuous riverwalk with pedestrian amenities and decorative landscaping extending westward from the 1st Avenue Bridge to the western border of the Riverfront Redevelopment Sites. A pedestrian bridge was identified to connect the riverwalk to Lawrence Park as well. In close proximity to the bridge, the group envisioned an improved canoe/kayak/paddle boat launch.

Group 4 identified the intersection of IL Route 40 and Wallace Street, and Avenue B as priority locations for infrastructure improvements. Additionally, a desire to preserve a portion of the National building where it fronts the Rock River was expressed.

Group 5

Group 5 identified the following uses as desirable riverfront developments: boutique hotel with a conference area; mixed-use buildings with residential units above commercial businesses, or dining establishments above commercial businesses; year-round park space with water amenities in the summer and an ice rink in the winter; a botanical/community garden; and, a central plaza surrounded by a museum "green" manufacturing to the west, residential and commercial to the east, and an open trail along the river. Group 5 indicated that an amphitheater and national retailers would be undesirable on the redevelopment sites.

In terms of transportation and infrastructure improvements, the group envisioned the installation of a new pedestrian bridge connecting the north shore of the Rock River to Lawrence Park, and a grade-separated pedestrian crossing across the railroad tracks at Avenue A. Improvements to the intersection of 1st Avenue and Wallace Street were recommended, in addition to improved access to Parcel 4.

In Group 5's vision, a part of the Lawrence Brothers, Inc. building and a part of the National Manufacturing building were envisioned to remain, as well as the farmer's market building on Parcel 3. A botanical/community garden was envisioned to take up the remaining available land on Parcel 3 to be in close proximity to Sterling's Farmers Market.

Group 5 identified multiple underlying "themes" to be kept in mind as redevelopment occurs on the Riverfront Redevelopment Sites. Notable themes include: tying in old manufacturing buildings with new, unique boutiques; creating a "family-friendly" atmosphere with activities for people of all ages; incorporating water activities and recreation into the development; and, creating a "day or night" destination with jobs, public gathering places, outdoor dining, pedestrian amenities and an interactive museum. Specific elements from Group 5's vision included using the National Manufacturing building and Lawrence Brothers building for upscale condos or event space, reserving space between new development and the Rock River for pedestrians (i.e. no parking lots fronting the river), and incorporating a boutique hotel into redevelopment on the National Manufacturing site.

Group 6

Group 6 developed a list of desirable development within Sterling's Riverfront and Downtown areas, including: entertainment venues; fine arts facilities; destination retail; educational facilities; sit-down restaurants with riverfront dining; senior housing; and, mixed-use buildings. Fast food restaurants and high-tension power lines were identified as undesirable uses in the area. One of Group 6's long-range recommendations was the construction of a passenger terminal at the southwest corner of Locust Street and 1st Avenue where Chicago Northwestern used to stop. In the interim, the site was envisioned to be maintained as park space.

Group 6 envisioned preserving both the Lawrence building and the National Manufacturing building, and converting them to mixed-use developments through adaptive reuse. Civic and educational facilities with complementary retail were recommended for the first and second floors, with condos or apartments located on upper floors.

Group 6 believed that a key component of Riverfront redevelopment should be improving vehicular and pedestrian circulation in the area by converting one-way streets to two-way streets. The group also desired improving north-south movement on Avenue B so that the Riverfront Redevelopment Sites are more easily accessible to vehicles. They envisioned Wallace Street as a "complete street" that is pedestrian, bicycle and vehicle friendly, and a grade-separated pedestrian crossing at Avenue B. Additionally, Group 6 envisioned widening the 1st Avenue underpass as it travels below the Union Pacific Railroad.

Group 6 proposed a continuous multi-use trail to connect the Riverfront Redevelopment Sites to the Sennissippi Dam on the east, and extend westward to Avenue G. The group recommended preserving the Lawrence Brothers building and tunneling the trail through the building to create an enclosed pedestrian arcade.

Key recommendations adjacent to the Riverfront Redevelopment Sites included constructing a high rise, age-restricted condo building on the northeast corner of West 2nd Street and Avenue B, and constructing a parking structure at the southwest corner of 2nd Avenue and 2nd Street. Grade-separated pedestrian crossings were recommended adjacent to each of these developments to allow pedestrians to cross the Union Pacific Railroad safely.

Group 7

Group 7 developed a list of desirable development within Sterling's Riverfront and Downtown areas that included: walkways and bike paths; multi-family residential; parks and open space; recreational amenities; amphitheater; children's museum/learning center; organic grocery store; butcher shop; coffee shop; and, specialty restaurants. The group felt the following types of development would be inappropriate on the riverfront: manufacturing; big box retail; large parking ramps; high-rise buildings; and, fast food restaurants.

Group 7 envisioned redevelopment of Parcel 4 to include a children's museum, restaurant and townhomes, and redevelopment of Parcel 3 to include a specialty grocer. The Farmer's Market building that currently exists on Parcel 3 is envisioned to remain. On Parcel 2, the group imagined a splash pad, coffee shops and historical museum with an area designated for boat rides and water activities. Parcel 1 is recommended to undergo substantial redevelopment as well, to allow for the construction of an outdoor amphitheater with open space around it, multiple restaurants and a nature center.

With regard to transportation and circulation, Group 7 recommended the improvement of several intersections, and extending three Downtown streets into the Riverfront area. Intersections to be improved included: Wallace Street and 1st Avenue; 2nd Street and 1st Avenue; 3rd Street and Locust Street; 4th Street and Locust Street; and, 5th Street and Locust Street. Avenue C, Avenue A and 2nd Avenue were identified as new streets that should extend south over the Union Pacific Railroad, providing direct access to the Riverfront Redevelopment Sites.

Group 7 also envisioned a continuous multi-use trail and retaining wall along the entire length of the Rock River riverfront with a bridge connecting the redevelopment sites to Lawrence Park.

Group 8

Group 8 identified the following land uses as desirable on the Riverfront Redevelopment Sites: sports or recreation complex; museum; hotel; boardwalk with small shops; and, various public gathering places. Outdoor dining, entertainment uses, parking, pedestrian amenities and civic gathering/open space areas were all cited as desirable Riverfront amenities. The group felt that a redevelopment plan incorporating a casino or consisting only of park space would be undesirable.

Group 8 believed that an appropriate building height and size would depend on the type of development being proposed in the future; however, they felt that the character of proposed developments should be compatible with the existing architectural styles.

Group 8 envisioned the majority of Parcel 1 to be converted to open space for recreational purposes with a riverwalk, and Parcel 2 to be redeveloped with a hotel and a museum. The group envisioned preserving part of the National Manufacturing building and enhancing its periphery with desirable amenities. No specific plans were identified for Parcel 3, and Parcel 4 is envisioned to redevelop as multi-family residential (condos or apartments).

In Group 8's vision, all existing one-way streets were converted to two-way streets, and truck traffic on Locust Street was rerouted to 1st Avenue south of 5th Street. Furthermore, the group recommended closing Locust Street south of 3rd Street to improve traffic circulation in the area. Walkways were planned to extend Avenues A and B south towards the Rock River.

Key improvements affecting both the Riverfront and adjacent areas included extending the Downtown streetscape so that there is a seamless transition between the Downtown and Riverfront, and extending business hours to be more accommodating and attract more people to the area.



Downtown Sterling June 2010

Section 2 MARKET ANALYSIS

The market analysis that assesses potential for residential, retail, restaurant, entertainment and office uses in the riverfront redevelopment area. The assessment includes a comprehensive inventory of existing and planned development within the defined market area for each respective use as well as a detailed analysis of demographic data and projections.

Analysis includes the identification of land availability and examination of trends in vacancy rates, land prices, rents, and price points. Market observations and findings have been supplemented with input from local real estate brokers and other members of the development community to evaluate the potential future mix of uses within the redevelopment area.

The market analysis concludes with a discussion of the suitability of uses by type and location that assesses compatible uses and demand projections based on a stabilized economy. This analysis will be used to inform development concepts and riverfront redevelopment plans. The market analysis will also be used to develop implementation strategies that identify tools and incentives designed to facilitate development.

Market Areas

Markets behave differently dependent upon use so separate market areas have been defined and analyzed with regard to residential and commercial uses. The market analysis utilizes data from several geographies including the city of Sterling, surrounding communities, and areas within a 5 to 15 minute drive of Sterling's riverfront area.

Demographic Data & Retail Market Area

Changes in population, households and demographic composition will influence the potential development of a range of uses within the riverfront area. Demographic data has been collected for two areas, a primary market area and a secondary market area. The Primary Market Area (PMA) represents the local area from which the majority of the population would be likely to utilize the riverfront on a regular basis, thus serving as the greatest source of market support for redevelopment. The Secondary Market Area (SMA) is the larger area from which riverfront redevelopment could draw additional market support.

For the purposes of this analysis, the PMA is defined as the area within a 5 minute drive of the intersection of 1st Avenue (IL Route 40) and 2nd Street. The SMA is defined as the area within a 15 minute drive of this same intersection. The boundaries of the PMA are similar in extent to the city limits of Sterling and Rock Falls. In addition to demographic data, retail demand estimates and the attributes of competing commercial development within the PMA and SMA have also been examined to assess the potential for commercial development including office uses, retail, restaurants and entertainment.

Figure 3 illustrates the boundaries of the primary and secondary market areas. As shown in Figure 3, Downtown Dixon and Morrison are both approximately 25 to 30 minutes from the Riverfront area. This further supports the use of a 15 minute drive time to represent the SMA as there is little overlap with the similar sized market areas of these neighboring commercial districts.

Residential Market Area

Where possible, data from the PMA and SMA have been used to characterize and document trends in residential development. However, due to the availability of data sources, data regarding housing stock characteristics has been collected for the City of Sterling and the City of Rock Falls, and data related to home sales has been collected from ZIP codes.

Demographic Overview

Demographic data has been assessed to document any anticipated growth or change within the primary and secondary market area populations. This overview examines anticipated population and household growth, shifts in age and changes in the number of households by age and income.

Data has been provided regarding current estimates for the year 2010 (the most recent year for which data is available) as well as five year projections. Projections have not been made beyond this time frame as the degree of accuracy in which market potential can be assessed would be reduced. Potential implications regarding demand for residential and commercial development have also been assessed using this data.

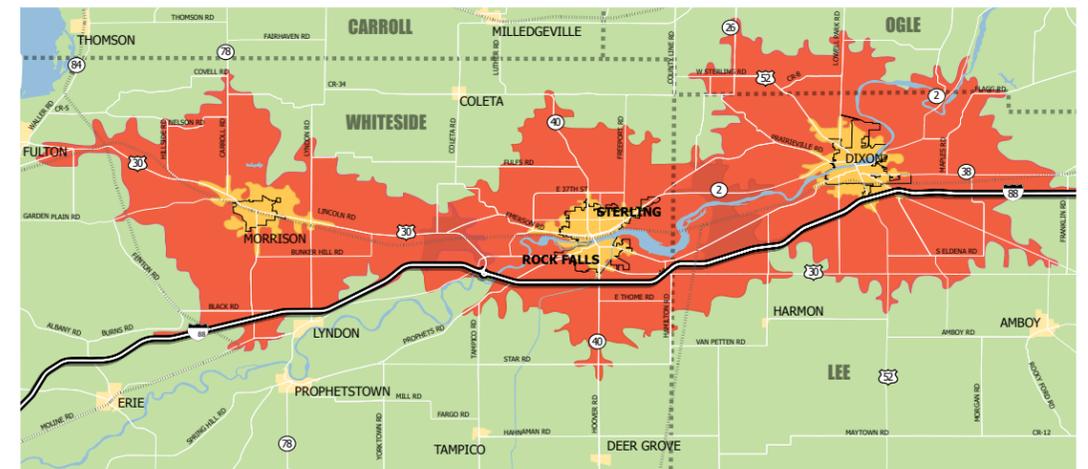
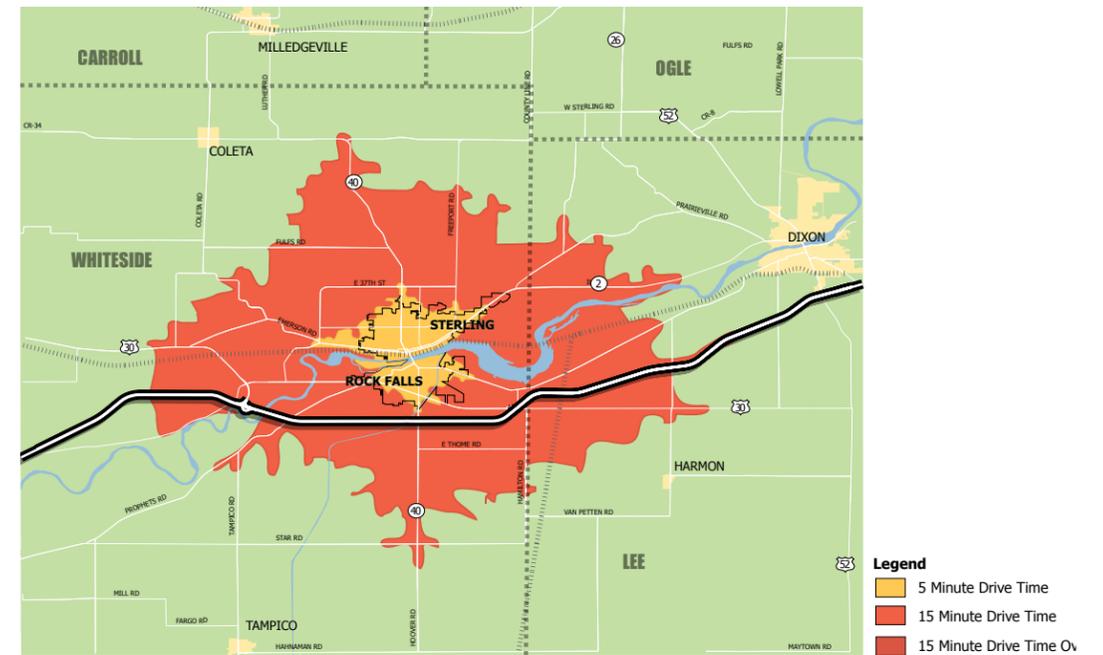
Market data for this analysis were obtained from ESRI Business Analyst, a nationally recognized provider of market and demographic data.

Population & Household Growth

Table 1 summarizes projected changes in population, number of households, and income within the primary and secondary market areas over the five year period between 2010 and 2015. Data indicate that both market areas will experience a moderate decrease in population accompanied by an increase in household and per capita incomes.

- ◇ The population within the PMA is projected to decrease by 392 individuals (a 1.8% decrease) to 21,277 in 2015.
- ◇ The SMA population is projected to decrease by 501 (a 1.4% decrease) over the same period to 34,616 in 2015.
- ◇ Between 2010 and 2015, the number of households in the PMA is projected to decrease by 136, or -1.5%, to a total of 8,749.
- ◇ It is anticipated that the number of households within the SMA will decrease by 146, a decrease of 1.0%, to 13,977 households in 2015.
- ◇ Median household income is projected to increase by 14.9% to \$54,518 in 2015 among PMA households. SMA median household income is projected to increase by 15.6% to \$57,490 over the same five year period.

Figure 3. Retail Market Areas



	2010		2015		Total Change 2010 - 2015	
	Primary Market Area	Secondary Market Area	Primary Market Area	Secondary Market Area	Primary Market Area	Secondary Market Area
Population	21,669	35,117	21,277	34,616	-392 (-1.8%)	-501 (-1.4%)
Households	8,885	14,123	8,749	13,977	-136 (-1.5%)	-146 (-1.0%)
Median Age	36.8	39.3	37.2	39.7	0.4 (1.1%)	0.4 (1.0%)
Median Household Income	\$47,428	\$49,726	\$54,518	\$57,490	\$7,090 (14.9%)	\$7,764 (15.6%)
Average Household Income	\$55,502	\$58,971	\$63,276	\$67,652	\$7,774 (14.0%)	\$8,681 (14.7%)
Per Capita Income	\$23,005	\$23,931	\$26,302	\$27,557	\$3,297 (14.3%)	\$3,626 (15.2%)

Source: ESRI Business Analyst; Houseal Lavigne Associates

Population Age Profile

Charts 1 and 2 illustrate projected population change by age cohort within the PMA and SMA populations. The PMA and SMA populations are experiencing similar age profile shifts. Between 2010 and 2015, in general, projections indicate that both areas will experience moderate decreases in most age cohorts. The population aged 44 and under is projected to decrease slightly while it is anticipated that the population aged 45 to 54 will experience a more significant decrease. Significant growth projected to occur among those aged 55 and older is expected to offset the majority of population loss in younger cohorts.

- ◇ Within both the PMA and SMA, no age cohort below the age of 45 is projected to decrease by more than 7.1%. The PMA population under the age of 45 is projected to decrease by 307, or 2.7%, between 2010 and 2015. The SMA population under the age of 45 is projected to decrease by 2.4% over the same period.
- ◇ The largest decrease in both the PMA and SMA is anticipated to occur among those aged 45 to 54. This age cohort is projected to decrease by 451, or 13.9% within the PMA and by 700, a 14% decrease, within the SMA.
- ◇ Between 2010 and 2015, significant increases are projected to occur among those aged 55 to 64 and 65 to 74. Within the PMA, these two age cohorts are projected to grow by 542, an increase of 12%. The SMA population between 55 and 74 is projected to increase by 790, or 10.8%, over the same period.

Chart 1. Change in Population by Age
Primary Market Area, 2010 - 2015

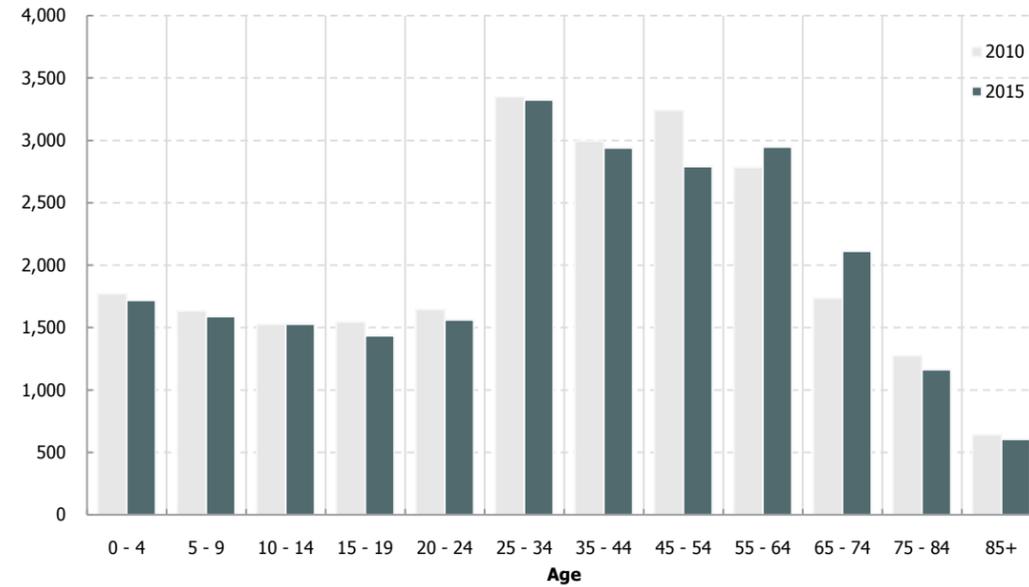
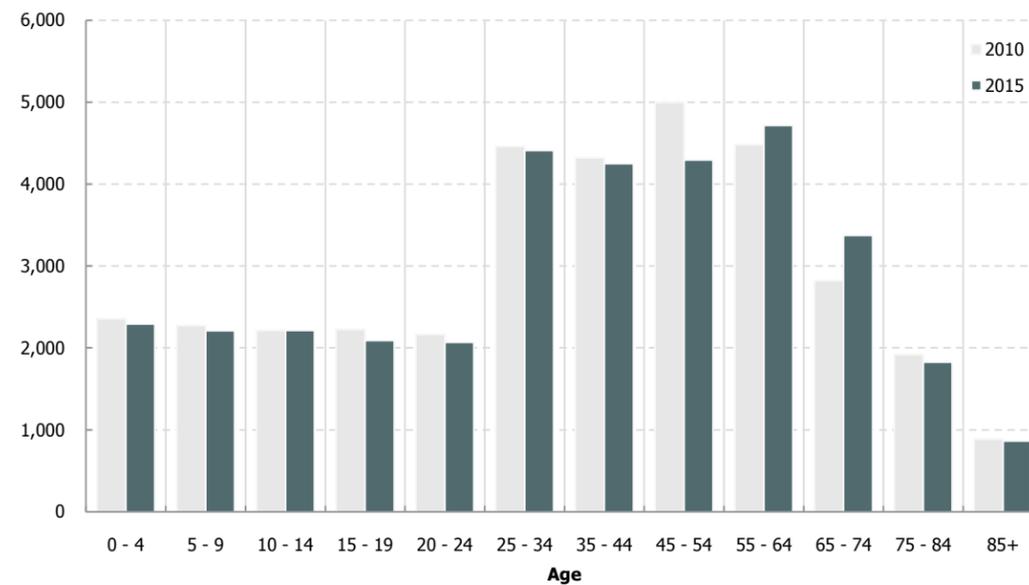


Chart 2. Change in Population by Age
Secondary Market Area, 2010 - 2015



Statue at Central Memorial Park





Household Income

Charts 3 and 4 illustrate projected change in the number households by income group within the primary and secondary market areas. Within both the PMA and SMA, it is projected that lower income households will decrease in number while the number of middle and upper income households is expected to increase. Despite an anticipated overall decrease in the number of households within the PMA and SMA, it is anticipated that the buying power of both areas will increase over the next five years.

- ◇ The number of PMA households earning less than \$50,000 per year is projected to decrease by 830, or -17.6%, between 2010 and 2015. The SMA is projected to lose 1,325 households (an 18.7% decrease) within this income group over the same period.
- ◇ Over the next five years, it is anticipated that the PMA will gain 694 households (a 16.6% increase) earning more than \$50,000 per year. The SMA is projected to gain 1,178 households (a 16.8% increase) in this income group over the same period.
- ◇ Between 2010 and 2015, based on average household income and total number of households, the total income generated by households within the PMA and SMA is projected to increase by 12.3% and 13.5% respectively.

Sterling Theater, Downtown Sterling • June 2010

Chart 3. Change in Households by Income
Primary Market Area, 2010-2015

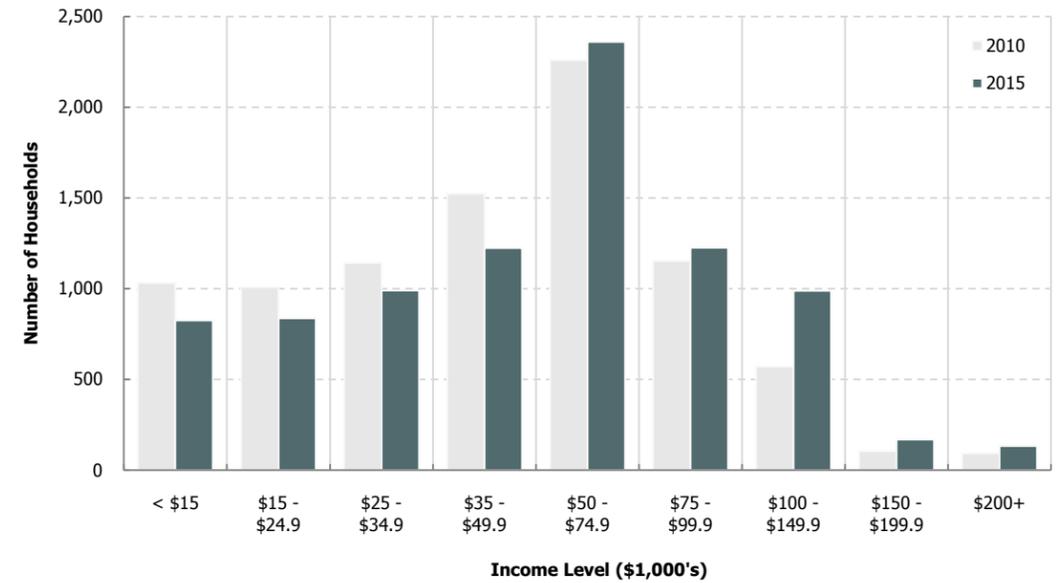


Chart 4. Change in Households by Income
Secondary Market Area, 2010-2015

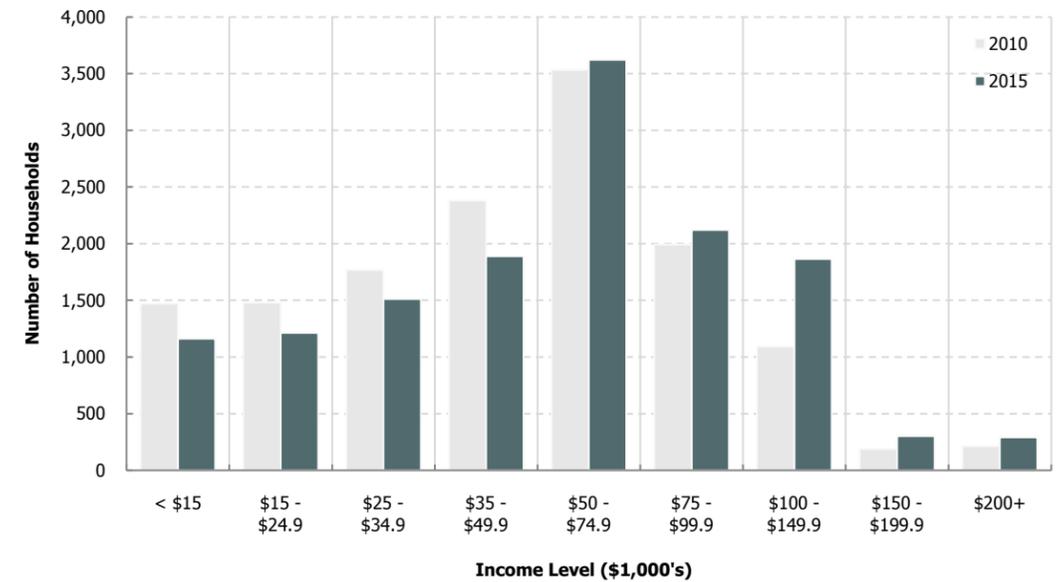


Chart 5. Households by Age and Income Level
Primary Market Area, 2010 - 2015

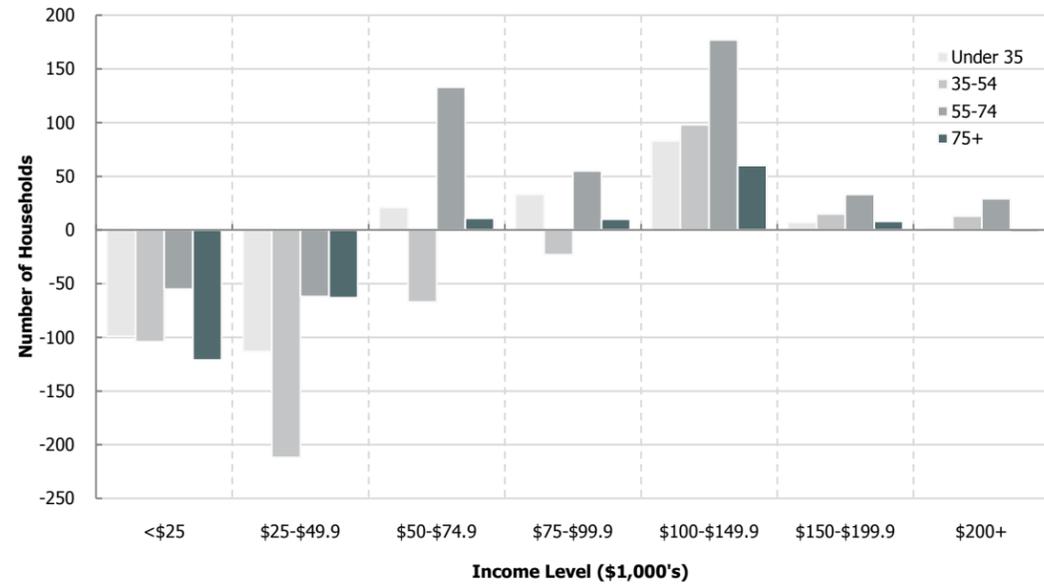
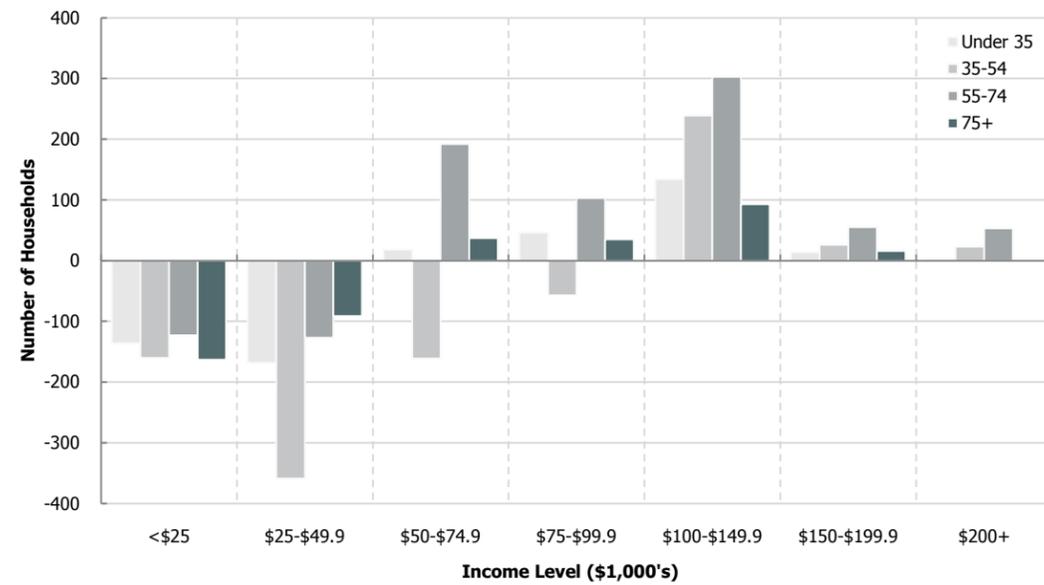


Chart 6. Households by Age and Income Level
Secondary Market Area, 2010 - 2015



Age by Income

Charts 5 and 6 illustrate the projected change in number of households according to the age of the head of household and household income. Changes projected to occur between 2010 and 2015 are shown as they pertain to each respective household age cohort within both the PMA and SMA. For example, the dark blue columns indicate change within the market area householder population over the age of 75. A bar for this age group is shown in each income bracket. A dark blue bar located above the zero line of the graph indicates growth, while a dark blue bar below the zero line indicates decline.

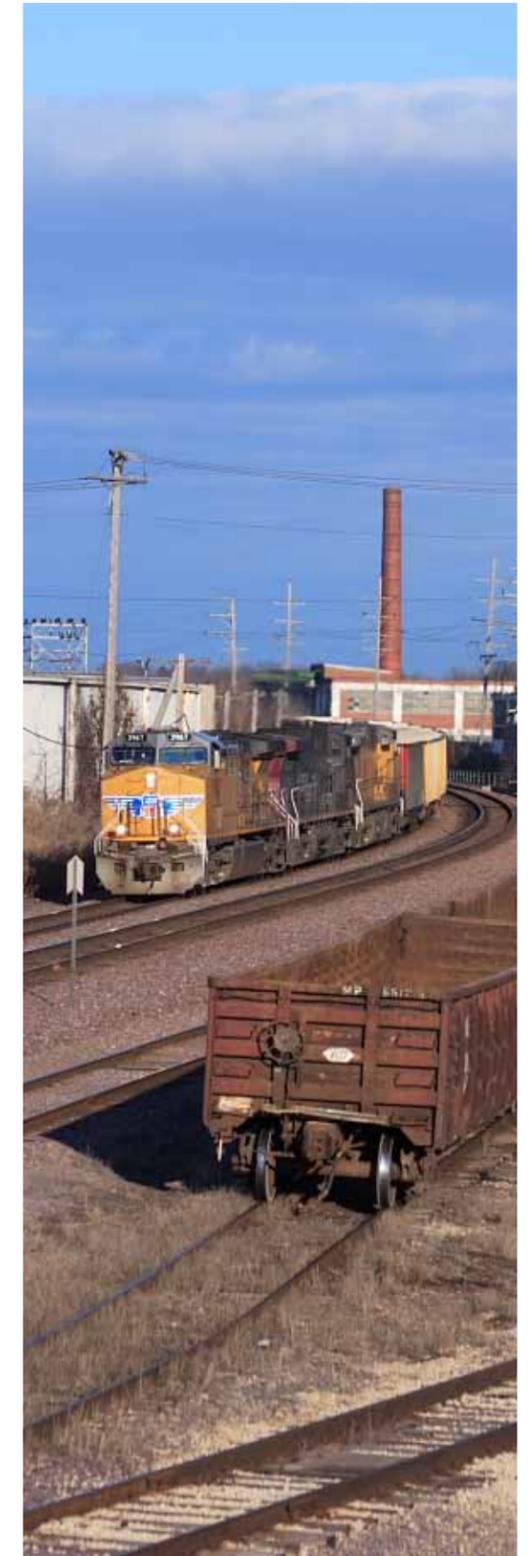
Overall, both market areas are experiencing significant decline among lower income households with significant increases among upper income households. Shifts in household income are projected to occur uniformly across all age cohorts with no single age group deviating significantly from the larger pattern of growth or decline. As a result, market area populations are becoming more affluent on average with limited change in overall age composition.

◇ For both market areas, the number of households earning less than \$50,000 is projected to decrease across all age cohorts. Projected decreases in these lower income households are relatively uniform, ranging from -10% and -30% in any given age cohort.

- ◇ Changes among middle income households earning between \$50,000 and \$100,000 will be moderate among age cohorts in both market areas, ranging between a decrease of -10% and an increase of 24%.
- ◇ Within both the PMA and SMA, the number of households earning more than \$100,000 is projected to increase across all age cohorts. Projected increases in upper income households are most significant among householders aged 55 to 74, which are expected to increase by 84.8% within the PMA and 86.9% within the SMA.

Implications of Demographic Trends

Demographic projections indicate that the population and number of households within both the primary and secondary market areas will experience moderate decline between 2010 and 2015. In general, similar changes in population are occurring across all age cohorts, but patterns differ significantly between lower, middle income households, and upper income households. Despite a net decrease in population, the purchasing power of the PMA and SMA is expected to increase. Increases among upper income, 'empty nester' households may also be indicative of increased demand for multi-family residential development.



Union Pacific Railroad adjacent to Riverfront Redevelopment Sites

Labor & Employment

Employment by Industry

As shown in Table 2, it is estimated that over 6,800 people are employed within the City of Sterling. Employment estimates indicate that the City of Sterling has a diverse economic base and employment is spread throughout several industries. This diversity is also reflected in the variety of major employers highlighted in Table 3. The largest employers within the City of Sterling represent a range of industries including warehousing and distribution, health services, advertising services, and a variety of manufacturing businesses.

- ◊ Despite an overall decline in manufacturing throughout the nation and region, the Manufacturing sector businesses employ nearly 23% of the civilian employment base in Sterling. Wahl Clipper employs approximately 700 at its Sterling facility, representing nearly half of all manufacturing employment in the city.
- ◊ The Health Care and Social Assistance sector employs approximately over 1,300 (19% of total employment). Nearly all of these jobs are located at the CGH Medical Center and Sterling-Rock Falls Clinic.
- ◊ An estimated 12% of Sterling jobs are in the Retail Trade industry. Major employers in this industry include retailers such as Walmart, K-Mart, Menards and businesses at Northland Mall Shopping Center.

Employment Projections

While detailed employment projections are not available for the City of Sterling, data at the regional scale has been assessed to identify general trends in employment growth. Table 4 provides 2006 estimates and 2016 projections (the most current data available) for employment by industry within the Sauk Valley Community College District. This area comprises the majority of Whiteside and Lee Counties, the southern portion of Carroll and Ogle Counties, and the northern portion of Bureau County.

- ◊ Total employment within the region is projected to grow by nearly 1,200 jobs, or 3.0%, during the ten year period from 2006 to 2016.
- ◊ It is estimated that the Health and Social Assistance industry will have experienced the most growth over this period, gaining 741 jobs, a 13.0% increase. Given the significance of this sector in Sterling, a large proportion of this growth may occur locally.
- ◊ Employment within Administrative & Waste Management Services is projected to grow by 15.0% (256 jobs) between 2006 and 2016. Establishments in this sector specialize in performing routine support activities for the day-to-day operations of other organizations. Activities performed by these businesses include office administration, hiring and placing of personnel, document preparation and similar clerical services, solicitation, collection, security and surveillance services, cleaning, or waste disposal services.
- ◊ It is anticipated that the Educational Services sector and the Accommodation and Food Services sector will both grow by approximately 12%, gaining 339 jobs and 269 jobs respectively.
- ◊ Manufacturing is projected to lose 957 jobs, a decrease of 14.1%, between 2006 and 2016.

**Table 2. Employment by Industry
(Employed Civilians, Age 16+)
City of Sterling, 2010**

Total	6,861	100.0%
Manufacturing	1,544	22.5%
Health Care/Social Assistance	1,310	19.1%
Retail Trade	830	12.1%
Accommodation/Food Services	542	7.9%
Educational Services	467	6.8%
Other Services	412	6.0%
Construction	274	4.0%
Finance/Insurance	268	3.9%
Public Administration	213	3.1%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Svcs	199	2.9%
Admin., Support, and Waste Mgmt. Svcs.	178	2.6%
Transportation/Warehousing	151	2.2%
Wholesale Trade	117	1.7%
Information	103	1.5%
Real Estate/Rental/Leasing	103	1.5%
Arts/Entertainment/Recreation	62	0.9%
Utilities	55	0.8%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	41	0.6%
Management of Companies/Enterprises	0	0.0%
Mining	0	0.0%

Source: ESRI Business Analyst

**Table 3. Major Employers
City of Sterling, 2010**

Business	Employees
Wal-Mart Distribution Center	1000+
CGH Medical Center	900
Wahl Clipper Corporation	700
Stanley National Hardware	500
Sterling - Rock Falls Clinic	391
Self Help Enterprises	310
Sterling Steel Corporation	300
Lee Wayne / Halo Corporation	150
Frantz Manufacturing Company	125
Astec Mobile Screens	80

Source: Illinois Department of Commerce; Greater Sterling Development Corporation

**Table 4. Employment Projections by Industry
Sauk Valley Community College District, 2006 & 2016**

Industry (NAICS Code)	2006		2016		Change		
	Jobs	Percent	Jobs	Percent	Jobs	Percent	CAGR
TOTAL, ALL INDUSTRIES	39,983	100.0%	41,169	100.0%	1,186	3.0%	0.29%
Self Employed and Unpaid Family Workers (10)	2,089	5.2%	2,210	5.4%	121	5.8%	0.56%
Agricultural Production (11)	1,871	4.7%	1,734	4.2%	-137	-7.3%	-0.76%
Natural Resources and Mining (21)	77	0.2%	75	0.2%	-2	-2.6%	-0.26%
Construction (23)	1,161	2.9%	1,251	3.0%	90	7.8%	0.75%
Manufacturing, Total (31-33)	6,808	17.0%	5,851	14.2%	-957	-14.1%	-1.50%
Food Manufacturing (31)	433	1.1%	422	1.0%	-11	-2.5%	-0.26%
Leather and Allied Products (31)	31	0.1%	18	0.0%	-13	-41.9%	-5.29%
Wood Product Manufacturing (32)	48	0.1%	47	0.1%	-1	-2.1%	-0.21%
Paper Manufacturing (32)		0.0%		0.0%	0	-	-
Printing & Related Support Activities (32)		0.0%		-	0	-	-
Petroleum and Coal Products Mfg. (32)		0.0%		0.0%	0	-	-
Chemical Manufacturing (32)		0.0%		-	0	-	-
Plastics and Rubber Products Mfg. (32)	46	0.1%	44	0.1%	-2	-4.3%	-0.44%
Nonmetallic Mineral Product Mfg. (32)	167	0.4%	157	0.4%	-10	-6.0%	-0.62%
Primary Metal Mfg. (33)	328	0.8%	147	0.4%	-181	-55.2%	-7.71%
Fabricated Metal Product Mfg. (33)	2,747	6.9%	2,435	5.9%	-312	-11.4%	-1.20%
Machinery Mfg. (33)	761	1.9%	627	1.5%	-134	-17.6%	-1.92%
Computer and Electronic Product Mfg. (33)	284	0.7%	234	-	-50	-17.6%	-1.92%
Electrical Equip, Appliance & Comp. Mfg. (33)	914	2.3%	772	1.9%	-142	-15.5%	-1.67%
Transportation Equipment Mfg. (33)	517	1.3%	496	1.2%	-21	-4.1%	-0.41%
Furniture and Related Product Mfg. (33)	12	0.0%	10	0.0%	-2	-16.7%	-1.81%
Misc. Manufacturing (33)	33	0.1%	28	0.1%	-5	-15.2%	-1.63%
Wholesale Trade (42)	2,269	5.7%	2,329	5.7%	60	2.6%	0.26%
Retail Trade (44)	4,728	11.8%	4,888	11.9%	160	3.4%	0.33%
Transportation & Warehousing & Utilities (46)	1,150	2.9%	1,203	2.9%	53	4.6%	0.45%
Information (51)	345	0.9%	300	0.7%	-45	-13.0%	-1.39%
Finance and Insurance, Total (52)	873	2.2%	909	2.2%	36	4.1%	0.40%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing (53)	213	0.5%	220	0.5%	7	3.3%	0.32%
Professional, Scientific & Tech. Services (54)	740	1.9%	770	1.9%	30	4.1%	0.40%
Management of Companies and Enterprises (55)	56	0.1%	59	0.1%	3	5.4%	0.52%
Administrative & Waste Mngmnt. Services (56)	1,705	4.3%	1,961	4.8%	256	15.0%	1.41%
Educational Services, Private & Public (61)	2,751	6.9%	3,090	7.5%	339	12.3%	1.17%
Health Care & Social Assistance (62)	5,720	14.3%	6,461	15.7%	741	13.0%	1.23%
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation (71)	353	0.9%	409	1.0%	56	15.9%	1.48%
Accommodation and Food Services (72)	2,296	5.7%	2,565	6.2%	269	11.7%	1.11%
Personal & Other Services (81)	1,676	4.2%	1,840	4.5%	164	9.8%	0.94%
Federal Government, exc. US Post Office (91)	65	0.2%	54	0.1%	-11	-16.9%	-1.84%
State Government, exc. Educ. & Hosp. (92)	1,456	3.6%	1,374	3.3%	-82	-5.6%	-0.58%
Local Government, exc. Educ. & Hosp. (93)	1,580	4.0%	1,617	3.9%	37	2.3%	0.23%

Source: Illinois Department of Employment Security; Houseal Lavigne Associates

Stanley National Hardware

Stanley National Hardware is a significant manufacturing employer in the Sterling-Rock Falls area. Stanley National recently announced plans to close down its operations by mid-year 2011 following the merger of its parent company Stanley Works' with hardware maker Black & Decker in the spring. Approximately 250 jobs will be lost in the region as they are relocated to other Black & Decker plants throughout the US.

Prior to announcing a merger and the closure of facilities, Stanley National had indicated intentions to relocate its Sterling operations to a more modern facility in Rock Falls. So, while the relocation of Stanley National jobs will have an impact on the local labor force and economy, it also has implications for the riverfront area. Stanley National Hardware owns a large, centrally located component of Sterling's riverfront and plans for comprehensive redevelopment of the riverfront will rely heavily on redevelopment of these properties.

Labor & Commute Shed

Figure 4 depicts where people who work in the City of Sterling live within the region as measured by the number of jobs per square mile (See 'Labor Shed'). The labor shed data discussed here is from 2008 which is the most recent year for which data is available. The City's labor shed is relatively concentrated within the Sterling-Rock Falls area and in nearby Dixon. In 2008, nearly 26% of the City's estimated 7,245 primary jobs were performed by workers who also live within Sterling. It is estimated that 10.9% of jobs in Sterling, in 2008, were performed by residents of nearby Rock Falls and another 5.6% of local jobs were performed by residents who live in Dixon. No other communities within the region have a significant proportion (2% or greater) of residents who work in Sterling. The majority of Sterling workers lived within Whiteside County while another 10.6% resides in Lee County to the east.

Figure 4 also highlights where residents of the City of Sterling work within the region as measured by the number of jobs per square mile (See 'Commute Shed'). The commute shed data discussed here is from 2008 and is the most recent year for which this data is available. As with the labor shed, the City's commute shed is concentrated in the Sterling-Rock Falls and Dixon areas. In 2008, an estimated 6,017 Sterling residents held a primary job in the region. Over 31% of these people worked within the City while another 9.3% were employed in the City of Dixon. In 2008, Rock Falls businesses employed 5.4% of Sterling's labor force. No other location has a significant proportion (2% or greater) of Sterling's labor force working within its boundaries. It is estimated that approximately 52.2% of the City's labor force had jobs located within Whiteside County and another 14.0% were employed in Lee County.

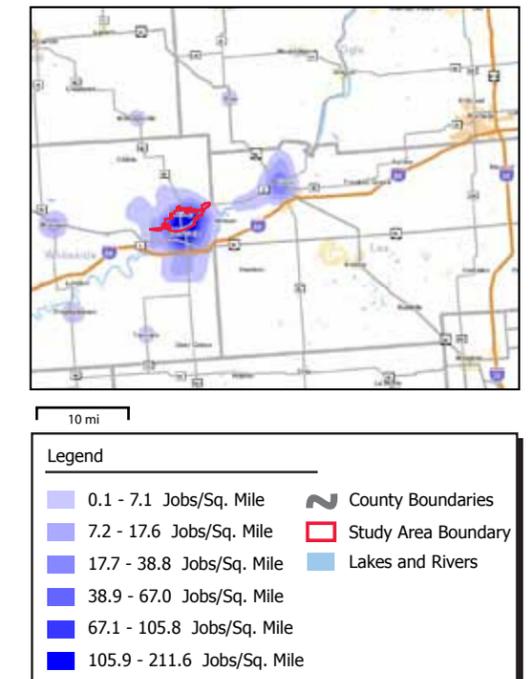
Market Implications

While the overall regional labor force is stable and growing, employment projections indicate that manufacturing employment will continue to decline through the year 2016. This trend is evidenced by the pending closure of Stanley National operations in Sterling and Rock Falls. Despite a decline in manufacturing, the City of Sterling has maintained a diverse economic base with significant employers in several industries. Moreover, both the labor and commute shed data highlight the City of Sterling's significance within the region as an employment center and economic engine.

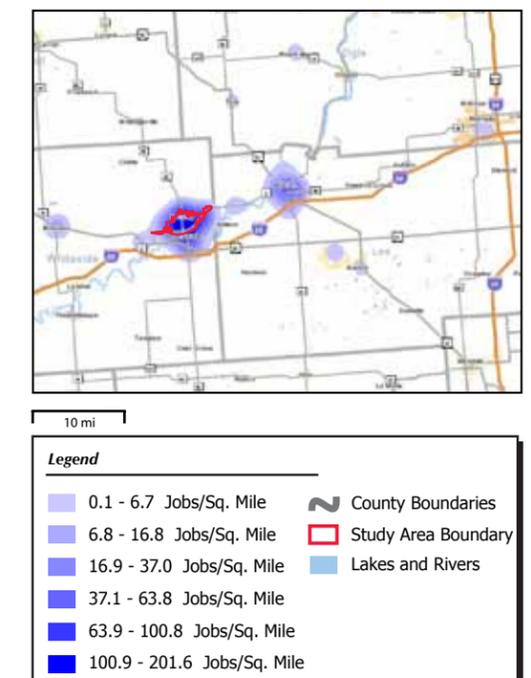
The economic shifts occurring within the local economy, and the closure of Stanley Nation facilities, will facilitate redevelopment of Sterling's riverfront area. While the riverfront was previously a hub of industrial activity, given the City's prominence in the region, the riverfront area may now have the potential to serve as a new type of destination for retail, dining and entertainment.

Figure 4. Labor Shed & Commute Shed City of Sterling (2008)

Labor Shed



Commute Shed





Residential Market

Housing Characteristics

Table 5 summarizes select housing characteristics for the combined housing stock of the cities of Sterling and Rock Falls. As discussed previously, the boundaries of these two communities are very similar to that of the primary market area. Data is from the 2000 Census and is the most current information available regarding the local housing stock. Information on building permit activity (discussed later in this section) indicate that new construction has been minimal in Sterling and Rock Falls since the 2000 Census and that this data still largely reflects the existing housing stock in these two communities.

Overall, the most prominent type of housing in the PMA communities of Sterling and Rock Falls is an owner-occupied, single family home with two to three bedrooms. Rental units comprise a sizable portion of the local housing stock and are typically in multi-family structures.

- ◇ Approximately two-thirds of all housing units in the PMA are owner occupied.
- ◇ An estimated 98% of all owner occupied housing units were single family detached homes.
- ◇ Approximately 32% of rental units are in single family detached homes while another 49% are in multi-family structures.
- ◇ Over 51% of owner occupied units have three bedrooms while rental units typically have one bedroom (33%) or two bedrooms (38%).
- ◇ Units in multi-family structures make up approximately 18% of all housing units the market area.

Paul W. Dillon Home near Downtown Sterling

Housing Age

As indicated in Table 6 and Chart 7, the housing stock within the PMA is composed of structures whose construction dates to periods throughout the last century. A diverse age range within the local housing stock is typically indicative of a wider range of home prices and affordability.

- ◇ Over one-quarter of all housing structures in Sterling and Rock Falls were constructed prior to 1939.
- ◇ Between 14% and 19% of the local housing stock was constructed each decade between 1940 and 1979.
- ◇ Less than 10% of housing structures in Sterling and Rock Falls were constructed between 1980 and 2000.
- ◇ New construction permits issued between 2000 and 2009 (the most recent data available), indicate that approximately 277 units were permitted in the PMA. If it is assumed that all of these units have been constructed, then approximately 2.7% of the local housing stock was built over the last decade.

Table 5. Housing by Tenure, Type & Number of Bedrooms
Cities Sterling and Rock Falls, Illinois, 2000

Occupied Housing Units			Number of Bedrooms by Tenure		
Owner Occupied	6,400	63.2%	Owner Occupied		
Renter Occupied	3,731	36.8%	Studio	0	0.0%
			One Bedroom	174	2.7%
			Two Bedrooms	1,713	26.8%
			Three Bedrooms	3,274	51.2%
			Four Bedrooms	1,059	16.5%
			Five+ Bedrooms	180	2.8%
			Renter Occupied		
			Studio	167	4.5%
			One Bedroom	1,219	32.7%
			Two Bedrooms	1,406	37.7%
			Three Bedrooms	772	20.7%
			Four Bedrooms	108	2.9%
			Five+ Bedrooms	59	1.6%

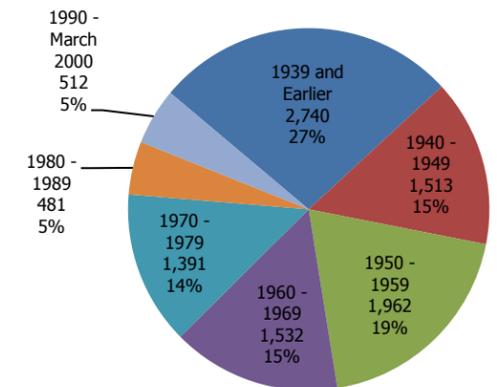
Source: 2000 US Census; Houseal Lavigne Associates

Table 6. Age of Housing Structure
Cities of Sterling and Rock Falls, Illinois, 2000

Year Built	Number	Percent
1939 and Earlier	2,740	27.0%
1940 - 1949	1,513	14.9%
1950 - 1959	1,962	19.4%
1960 - 1969	1,532	15.1%
1970 - 1979	1,391	13.7%
1980 - 1989	481	4.7%
1990 - March 2000	512	5.1%
Total	10,131	100%

Source: US Census 2000

Chart 7. Age of Housing Structure
Cities of Sterling and Rock Falls, 2000



Source: US Census 2000



The Coliseum

Building Activity

Data for new construction permits for residential units were gathered for the PMA communities of Sterling and Rock Falls. Data was also collected for nearby communities within a 15 mile radius of the riverfront area, referred to as SMA communities, which include Dixon, Lyndon, Milledgeville, Morrison, Polo, and Prophetstown. Table 7 compares permitting activity for both single family detached and multi-family (including single family attached) units in the PMA and SMA communities.

As shown in Chart 8, while permitting activity for single family homes has fluctuated over the last five years, overall activity has experienced a negative trend between 2005 and 2009 (the most recent time for which data is available). Permitting activity for multi-family units, which make up approximately 30% of all units permitted, has experienced a similar trend, but makes up a small portion.

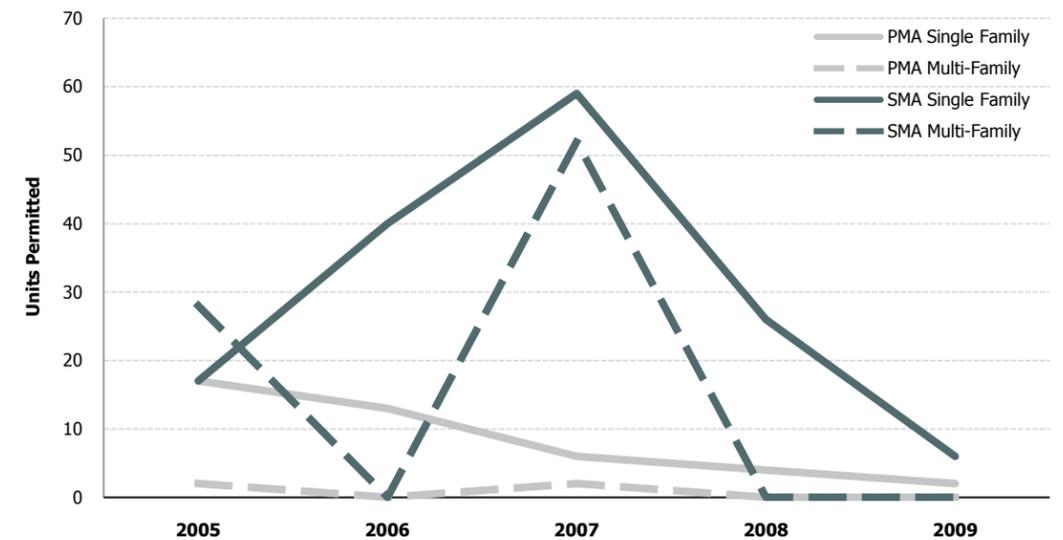
PMA Communities

- ◇ Permitting activity within Sterling and Rock Falls has fallen 89% from 19 units in 2005 to 2 units in 2009.
- ◇ Permitting activity slowed significantly between 2006 and 2007, declining by 53.8% to 6 units in 2007.
- ◇ Multi-family permitting within Sterling and Rock Falls has been minimal with a total of four units permitted between 2005 and 2009.

SMA Communities

- ◇ The total number of permits issued among SMA communities has declined by 87% from 45 in 2005 to 6 in 2009.
- ◇ Permitting activity increased by almost 178% between 2006 and 2007. In addition to a five year high of 59 single family homes, 2007 also experienced the period's highest number of multi-family permits (52).

Chart 8. New Construction Building Permits
PMA & SMA Communities, 2005 - 2009



Source: US Census; Houseal Lavigne Associates

Home Sales

In a healthy, stable market the characteristics of new development such as size, unit mix, and pricing serve as the best gauge for assessing housing affordability and demand within the local market. As demonstrated by permitting activity, new residential development has been very limited in both PMA and SMA communities. Currently, there are a large number of homes available in the market and the gap between the sales prices of new homes and existing homes has decreased significantly. Given the current downturn in the housing market, the resale of existing homes provides a basis for understanding housing costs and near term demand for residential development in the riverfront area.

Whiteside and Lee Counties

While long term home sales data for the PMA and SMA are not available, data on home sales within surrounding Whiteside and Lee Counties can provide context to recent trends in the PMA and SMA housing market. Table 8 and Chart 9 illustrate change in home sales over the six year period between the 2004 and 2009. Sales information for the second quarter 2010 (the most recent date for which data is available) has also been provided. While both single family home and condominium sales are included in the data, condominiums made up less than 3% of all sales on average in any given year within either county.

- ◇ Between 2004 and 2009, the number of home sales increased by 13% and 45% in Whiteside and Lee Counties respectively.
- ◇ Since 2004, the median home sale price in Whiteside County increased 6.7% to \$79,950 in 2009. Over the same period, the median sales price has decreased 3.9% to \$86,000 in Lee County.
- ◇ The most significant decrease in year-over-year sales in either Whiteside or Lee Counties occurred between 2007 and 2008 when sales dropped by 24% and 20% respectively.
- ◇ The most significant increase in year-over-year sales in either Whiteside or Lee Counties occurred between 2008 and 2009 when sales rose by 39% and 43% respectively.
- ◇ Since 2004, median sales prices in either county have not experienced year-over-year increases or decreases greater than 8%.

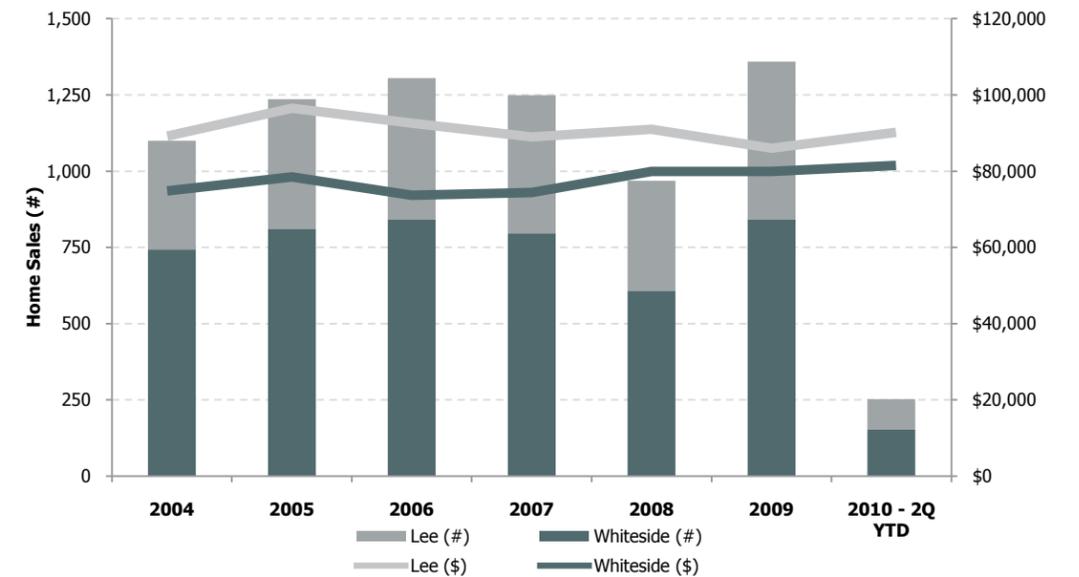
Overall, the Sterling market can be characterized as stable with no sustained upswings or downswings over the last several years. Homes sales data over the last six years indicate that the housing market within Sterling and the surrounding region has been relatively insulated from the downturn that has occurred at the national level. Within Whiteside and Lee Counties, sales volume has increased since 2004 and sales prices have remained relatively stable. It is not clear why sales volume increased so significantly in 2009 over the previous year, but information from local real estate professionals indicate that no significant projects have come on line in the past two years.

Table 8. Condominiums Sales Statistics
Primary & Secondary Market Area Communities, 2008 - 2010

	Homes Sales		Average Sale Price		Median Sale Price	
	Whiteside County	Lee County	Whiteside County	Lee County	Whiteside County	Lee County
2004	743	357	\$84,487	\$107,015	\$74,958	\$89,500
2005	811	425	\$93,086	\$114,098	\$78,500	\$96,500
2006	842	463	\$85,611	\$111,707	\$73,689	\$92,555
2007	796	453	\$89,082	\$109,100	\$74,375	\$89,000
2008	608	361	\$92,008	\$111,490	\$79,950	\$91,000
2009	842	517	\$135,911	\$104,176	\$79,950	\$86,000
2010 - 2Q YTD	152	100	\$100,912	\$99,389	\$81,450	\$90,000

Source: OnBoard Informatics; Houseal Lavigne Associates

Chart 9. Single Family Home Sales Information
Whiteside & Lee Counties, 2004 - 2Q 2010



Sterling-Rock Falls-Dixon Area

Data for home sales within market area communities have also been analyzed to assess whether the local housing market is reflecting patterns in the larger housing market. Table 9 and Chart 10 illustrate change in home sales over the two year period between the 2008 and first quarter 2010 (the most recent date for which data is available) in the City of Sterling and the surrounding market area communities of Rock Falls and Dixon. Due to the structure of available data sources, ZIP codes have been used to approximate community boundaries.

The local housing market appears to be reflecting the trends of the larger markets in Whiteside and Lee Counties. Over the past two years, the housing market in the Sterling-Rock Falls-Dixon area has been relatively stable with moderate decreases in home sales and moderate increases in sales prices.

◇ In Sterling, year-to-date sales in second quarter 2010 are 53% lower than at the same point in time in 2008 and 50% lower than in 2009. Compared to 2009, year-to-date sales within Rock Falls and Dixon are approximately 55% and 68% lower respectively.

◇ Given the low number of sales in the first quarter of 2010, the year-end average sales price for 2009 is likely the most reflective of current market conditions. Within Sterling, the 2009 average sales price of \$95,386 was 6% more than the 2008 average.

◇ The 2009 average sales price in Rock Falls was 13% greater than the year before, while the 2009 average sales price in Dixon was 10% lower than in 2008.

◇ The number of homes sales within Sterling was approximately 6% higher in 2009 than in 2008. Sales in Rock Falls and Dixon, conversely, were down 7% and 6% respectively.

NOTE: No multi-family home sales, including single family attached, were reported for these communities between 2008 and first quarter 2010.

Riverfront Development

While median home prices provide a general gauge for market activity and pricing, home buyers typically pay a higher price for new construction. Furthermore, residential developments along waterfront also typically command a premium over comparable inland properties. Given that home prices are very affordable within the Sterling-Rock Falls area, it is likely that new residential development within the riverfront area would consist of a higher-end product at above average market prices.

Although markets differ, recently built projects along riverfronts in other communities offer a means of estimating the relative price premium home buyers could reasonably be expected to pay for new development in the riverfront area. While redevelopment and new construction has been limited throughout the Rock River corridor, communities in the Fox River corridor to the east have experienced significant redevelopment in recent years. Developments in Elgin, St. Charles and Batavia, Illinois have all completed residential riverfront projects within the last two years. Current home prices at these projects range between 35% and 60% higher than the average home price for the ZIP code within which they are located.

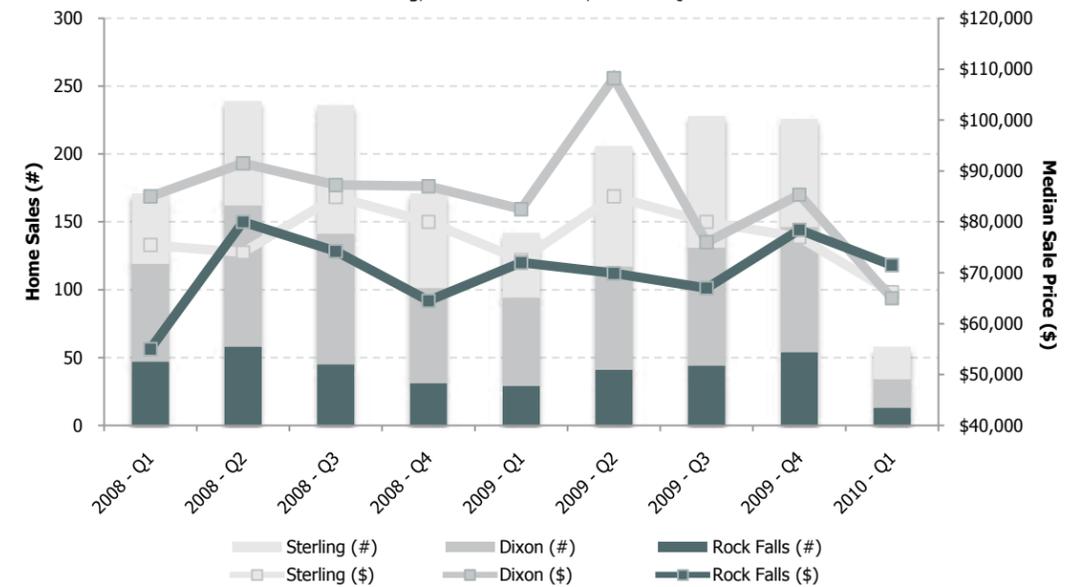
A price premium on the higher end of this range is used in estimating sale prices for new construction redevelopment within Sterling's riverfront area. A higher sales price estimate avoids overstating market demand by limiting the estimated number of households that can afford to purchase a unit.

Table 9. Home Sales Statistics
Primary & Secondary Market Area Communities, 2008 - 2010

	Homes Sales			Average Sale Price			Median Sale Price		
	Sterling (61081)	Rock Falls (61071)	Dixon (61021)	Sterling (61081)	Rock Falls (61071)	Dixon (61021)	Sterling (61081)	Rock Falls (61071)	Dixon (61021)
2008 Total	294	181	342	\$90,069	\$73,749	\$110,607	\$78,950	\$68,000	\$87,250
Q1	52	47	72	\$81,084	\$66,181	\$107,283	\$75,450	\$55,000	\$85,000
Q2	77	58	104	\$86,015	\$91,294	\$125,840	\$74,000	\$80,000	\$91,500
Q3	95	45	96	\$93,888	\$79,083	\$98,856	\$84,900	\$74,225	\$87,250
Q4	70	31	70	\$96,021	\$71,284	\$107,509	\$80,000	\$64,500	\$87,000
2009 Total	314	168	320	\$95,386	\$83,238	\$99,874	\$79,150	\$70,000	\$85,000
Q1	48	29	65	\$89,129	\$84,686	\$95,368	\$72,500	\$72,000	\$82,500
Q2	89	41	76	\$100,091	\$78,228	\$118,870	\$85,000	\$69,900	\$108,250
Q3	97	44	87	\$98,204	\$81,038	\$91,598	\$80,000	\$67,000	\$76,000
Q4	80	54	92	\$90,488	\$88,058	\$95,193	\$77,000	\$78,439	\$85,333
2010 Q1	24	13	21	\$83,840	\$73,749	\$110,761	\$66,150	\$71,500	\$65,000

Source: OnBoard Informatics; Houseal Lavigne Associates

Chart 10. Home Sales Information
Sterling, Rock Falls & Dixon, 2008 - 1Q



Residential Demand

The next step in analysis of the residential market is assessing the number of households that would be “eligible” to purchase or rent units in the riverfront area based on household income and age of householder. Put simply, the demand for housing will be determined by lease rates or sales price of residential units and the types of product offered. Traditionally, young professionals (under 35) and empty nester (age 55 and over) households are the predominant occupants of multi-family units while families (age 35 to 54) are the predominant buyer of single family homes. By examining how many householders fall into various age and income cohorts, the demand for units of a given type of housing can be estimated.

Home Pricing & Minimum Income Requirements

Condominiums

Within the Sterling market, the average home sales price reached a recent high of \$100,000 in 2009. Applying a new construction, riverfront premium of 60% to this price results in a base price of \$160,000 for condominium units in the riverfront area. As shown in Table 10, it is estimated that a home price of \$160,000 requires a minimum household income of approximately \$60,000 to afford a market supportable condominium unit.

Minimum income requirements consider the ability to put at least 15% down toward the purchase of a home, various housing expenses in addition to a mortgage payment, and acceptable benchmarks of percentage of income allocated toward housing (30%). As well as minimum income requirements, a maximum income threshold of \$250,000 was also used so as not to overstate the market. Those households earning greater than \$250,000 may still be attracted to a unit located in the riverfront area, but most will likely seek the opportunity to purchase a single family home or more expensive unit elsewhere.

Apartments

Table 10 also estimates minimum income requirements for households who rent their homes. Typical rent for a two bedroom unit is near \$500 per month within Sterling and Rock Falls. Assuming an annual rent increase of 3%, typical rents in 2015 would be near \$580. Adding the 60% premium for new construction, riverfront development results in a base rent of approximately \$925. Affording this rent would require a minimum household income of approximately \$40,000.

Market Area Demand

Age Cohort

This “pool” of potential buyers and renters is further refined to exclude those households that do not meet the probable age cohort of someone seeking a condominium or apartment unit in the defined market area. Multi-family units in downtown locations are typically purchased by a combination of first-time home buyers looking for a more affordable means of building equity, empty nester households looking to downsize and those individuals who want to own their own home without the maintenance responsibilities. These buyers are typically aged between 25 to 34 and 55 and older respectively.

Mobility Index

After establishing a base line of those households able to afford and likely to purchase or rent a unit, a “mobility index” is then used to ascertain the percentage of households moving each year within given age cohorts. This index is derived and further refined from historic patterns recorded by the US Census. It identifies the propensity for a household in a given age bracket to move from their current residence. For the purposes of this analysis, it was determined that 16.4% of young (under 25) households would be likely to move while 20.5% of households aged 25 to 34 would be likely to move. Lastly, it is estimated that only 3% to 4% of those households aged 55 and over would be likely to move in any given year.

Home Ownership Rates

The next step of the analysis is to determine what proportion of households, of those deemed eligible, are homeowners or renters. In other words, of those meeting age and minimum income requirements who are moving, which households are in the financial position to obtain a mortgage and finance a home? According to 2009 census data for the Midwest, approximately 45% of 25 to 34 year old cohort, 80% of the 55 to 64 year old cohort, and 82% of the 65 to 74 age cohort have the propensity to purchase a home. Regardless of reported home ownership rates, it is also assumed that no households over the age of 74 who are moving will choose to purchase a new home.

To establish rental demand, the proportion of renters was estimated using the inverse of the home ownership rate. So, for example, since 45% of households between the age 25 and 34 are home owners it is estimated that 55% of those households are renters. The home ownership and rental rates are used to further refine the market and potential buyers and renters of units in each respective market area.

Sterling Market Share

It is assumed that approximately 69% of the eligible households in the PMA and 43% of the SMA will purchase or rent a home in the City of Sterling. These market share estimates are based on the proportion of households in Sterling compared to the number of households in the larger primary and secondary market areas. This percentage is applied to the pool of potential qualifying home buyers and renters to estimate the annual demand for similarly priced housing in the City of Sterling as a whole. Given this market share, it is estimated that there is potential annual demand for between 79 and 82 rental unit transactions per year and 36 to 53 condominium transactions per year.

Capture Rate

While there is raw demand for housing, a project in the riverfront area would have to compete for potential buyers with the significant number of existing homes currently for sale as well as any new homes being offered elsewhere in Sterling. The ability for a project to compete for potential occupants is typically described as a capture rate. A capture rates represents the likelihood of a qualifying household to buy or rent a unit at a new project within a given market area. Tables 11 and 12 show a range of potential capture rates and resulting estimates of annual demand for for-sale or rental units in the riverfront area.

Census estimates indicate that fewer than 100 owner-occupied duplex and multi-family units exist within the Cities of Sterling and Rock Falls combined, representing less than 2% of the local housing stock. As such, there is not an established precedent for this type of product or a previous capture rate for a condominium project within the PMA and SMA. While new housing in a downtown environment may be attractive to potential buyers, given that for-sale multi-family housing is rare within the market, a capture rate greater than 10% would be unlikely. Table 11 estimates annual demand for condominiums based on capture rates of 3%, 5% and 10%.

Duplex and multi-family apartments make up approximately 25% of the local housing stock in Sterling and Rock Falls. Given the significance of the rental market within the local housing stock, higher capture rates approaching 15% are considered reasonable. Table 12 estimates annual demand for new upscale rental units based on capture rates of 5%, 10% and 15%.

Table 10. New Home Pricing
Housing Demand Income Requirements

Condominium Pricing

Asking Price	\$160,000
Downpayment	15%
Interest Rate	7.00%
Monthly Mortgage Payment	\$905
Annual Mortgage Payment	\$10,858
Annual PMI	\$517
Annual Assessments	\$2,400
Annual Property Taxes	\$4,500
Housing Costs as % of Income	30%
Minimum Income Required	\$60,915

Apartment Pricing

Monthly Rent	\$925
Annual Rent	\$11,100
Housing Costs as % of Income	30%
Minimum Income Required	\$40,083

Source: ESRI Business Analysts; Houseal Lavigne Associates

Preliminary Feasibility

Based on the capture rates, household projections and the methodology described above, the potential buyer pool for condominiums in the combined PMA and SMA is between 1 and 6 units per year. This amounts to a total of 5 and 30 condominium transactions over the next five years (2010-2015). For apartment units in the PMA and SMA, the annual occupant pool is 4 and 13 which could amount to between 20 and 65 rental unit leases over a five-year period.

Table 11. Household Demand & Affordability - Condominiums
Primary & Secondary Residential Market Areas, 2010 - 2015

Primary Market Area - Condominium Demand								
Age Cohort	< 25	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+	TOTAL
2010 Income Qualifying Households	-	243	-	-	352	169	-	764
2015 Income Qualifying Households	-	342	-	-	491	308	-	1,141
Mobility Index = Income Qualifiers x	16.4%	20.5%	11.1%	7.1%	3.9%	3.0%	4.0%	
2010 Movers	-	50	-	-	14	5	-	69
2015 Movers	-	70	-	-	19	9	-	99
Ownership Rate = Movers x	21.8%	44.7%	66.8%	74.5%	79.9%	82.2%	78.5%	
2010 Home Buyers	-	22	-	-	11	4	-	37
2015 Home Buyers	-	31	-	-	15	8	-	54
Sterling Market Share = Buyers x	68.7%							
	-	15	-	-	8	3	-	26
	-	22	-	-	11	5	-	37
Secondary Market Area - Condominium Demand								
Age Cohort	< 25	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+	TOTAL
2010 Income Qualifying Households	-	134	-	-	313	95	-	542
2015 Income Qualifying Households	-	199	-	-	424	188	-	811
Mobility Index = Income Qualifiers x	16.4%	20.5%	11.1%	7.1%	3.9%	3.0%	4.0%	
2010 Movers	-	28	-	-	12	3	-	43
2015 Movers	-	41	-	-	17	6	-	63
Ownership Rate = Movers x	21.8%	44.7%	66.8%	74.5%	79.9%	82.2%	78.5%	
2010 Home Buyers	-	12	-	-	10	2	-	24
2015 Home Buyers	-	18	-	-	13	5	-	36
Sterling Market Share = Buyers x	43.2%							
	-	5	-	-	4	1	-	11
	-	8	-	-	6	2	-	16
Condominium Capture Rate								
Income & Age Qualifying Households			3%	5%	10%			
Primary Market Area Demand	26	- 37	1 - 1	1 - 2	3 - 4			
Secondary Market Area Demand	11	- 16	0 - 0	1 - 1	1 - 2			

Source: ESRI Business Analysts; Houseal Lavigne Associates

Table 12. Household Demand & Affordability - Apartments
Primary & Secondary Residential Market Areas, 2010 - 2015

Primary Market Area - Rental Demand								
Age Cohort	< 25	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+	TOTAL
2010 Income Qualifying Households	-	719	-	-	640	364	469	2,192
2015 Income Qualifying Households	-	690	-	-	665	422	533	2,310
Mobility Index = Income Qualifiers x	16.4%	20.5%	11.1%	7.1%	3.9%	3.0%	4.0%	
2010 Movers	-	148	-	-	25	11	19	202
2015 Movers	-	142	-	-	26	13	21	202
Rental Rate = Movers x	78.2%	55.3%	33.2%	25.5%	20.1%	17.8%	21.5%	
2010 Renters	-	82	-	-	5	2	4	93
2015 Renters	-	78	-	-	5	2	5	90
Sterling Market Share = Renters x	68.7%							
	-	56	-	-	3	1	3	64
	-	54	-	-	4	2	3	62
Secondary Market Area - Rental Demand								
Age Cohort	< 25	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+	TOTAL
2010 Income Qualifying Households	-	293	-	-	426	331	354	1,404
2015 Income Qualifying Households	-	268	-	-	411	370	430	1,479
Mobility Index = Income Qualifiers x	16.4%	20.5%	11.1%	7.1%	3.9%	3.0%	4.0%	
2010 Movers	-	60	-	-	17	10	14	101
2015 Movers	-	55	-	-	16	11	17	99
Rental Rate = Movers x	78.2%	55.3%	33.2%	25.5%	20.1%	17.8%	21.5%	
2010 Renters	-	33	-	-	3	2	3	41
2015 Renters	-	30	-	-	3	2	4	39
Sterling Market Share = Renters x	43.2%							
	-	14	-	-	1	1	1	18
	-	13	-	-	1	1	2	17
Apartment Capture Rate								
Income & Age Qualifying Households			5%	10%	15%			
Primary Market Area Demand	62	- 64	3 - 3	6 - 6	9 - 10			
Secondary Market Area Demand	17	- 18	1 - 1	2 - 2	3 - 3			

Source: ESRI Business Analysts; Houseal Lavigne Associates



Existing commercial retail uses in Downtown Sterling

Retail Market

Downtown Sterling

As shown in Chart 11, a total of 49 retail businesses were inventoried within Downtown Sterling. Nearly half (49%) of these businesses are retailers, 22% are service providers, and 29% are restaurants. Given the size of the Downtown Sterling area, the total number of businesses is comparatively low to similar sized communities. The number of businesses in Downtown Sterling is much smaller than that of Downtown Dixon to the east which has an estimated 83 businesses in total. Even when considering the 22 businesses in Downtown Rock Falls as a component of the downtown area surrounding the Sterling riverfront, the combined total of 71 businesses is still 14.4% smaller in an area of nearly twice the size.

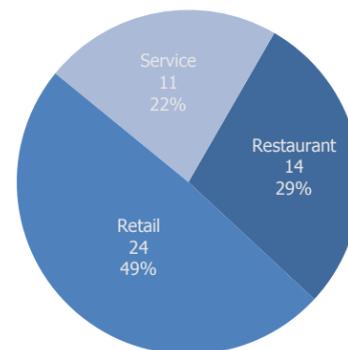
Despite having a proportionately smaller number of businesses, the mix of service providers, retailers, and restaurants is similar to other nearby downtowns. Downtown Dixon has a slightly larger proportion of restaurants (33%), with similar shares of retailers and service providers.

Available Properties in Downtown Sterling

There are several commercial properties currently being marketed within Downtown Sterling and nearby Downtown Rockford. The majority of properties inventoried (see Table 13) are for sale with only four properties for lease.

- ◇ Rental properties range in size from 910 to 3,200 square feet with net asking rents ranging from \$0.66 to \$1.09 per-square-foot.
- ◇ There are 15 properties for sale in Downtown Sterling and Downtown Rock Falls. The typical for sale, commercial property is 5,000 and 13,000 square feet in size with a 3,500 to 6,000 square foot, single story commercial building.
- ◇ The median asking price is \$19.70 per-square-foot and the majority of properties are asking between \$14.30 and \$23.80 per-square-foot.
- ◇ A 93,000 square foot former industrial property located at 112 3rd Avenue is the largest commercial property for sale within Downtown Sterling. The \$500,000 asking price for the parcel equates to a per-square-foot asking price of \$5.39.

Chart 11. Business Inventory
Downtown Sterling, 2010



Source: ESRI Business Analyst; Houseal Lavigne Associates

Table 13. Available Commercial Properties
Downtown Sterling, August 2010

For Lease				
Property	Location	Size (sf)	Net Asking Rent (per mo.)	Net Asking Rent PSF
205 E 2nd St	Sterling	910	\$600	\$0.66
410 Locust St	Sterling	1,104	\$825	\$0.75
300 1st Ave	Rock Falls	1,131	\$1,131	\$1.00
412 Locust St	Sterling	3,201	\$3,500	\$1.09

For Sale						
Property	Location	Estimated Lot Size (sf)	Building Size (sf)	Asking Price	Asking Price Building PSF	Asking Price Lot PSF
112 3rd Ave	Sterling	92,829	43,513	\$500,000	\$11.49	\$5.39
608 W 4th St	Sterling	33,496	13,052	\$249,900	\$19.15	\$7.46
205 E 2nd St	Sterling	26,708	6,000	\$200,000	\$33.33	\$7.49
203 E 2nd St	Sterling	6,722	1,200	\$96,000	\$80.00	\$14.28
502 E 2nd St	Sterling	5,709	1,250	\$83,000	\$66.40	\$14.54
202 4th Ave	Sterling	14,003	8,272	\$235,000	\$28.41	\$16.78
312 E 4th St	Sterling	13,655	6,000	\$249,900	\$41.65	\$18.30
611 E 3rd St	Sterling	7,625	3,900	\$165,000	\$42.31	\$21.64
110 2nd Ave	Sterling	6,831	6,700	\$159,000	\$23.73	\$23.28
416 Locust St	Sterling	1,050	1,050	\$36,000	\$34.29	\$34.29
611 1st Ave	Rock Falls	7,100	3,100	\$99,000	\$31.94	\$13.94
804 1st Ave	Rock Falls	10,650	6,600	\$225,000	\$34.09	\$21.13
221 1st Ave	Rock Falls	2,500	1,125	\$59,900	\$53.24	\$23.96
209-211 1st Ave*	Rock Falls	5,000	9,250	\$225,000	\$24.32	\$45.00
102 W 2nd St*	Rock Falls	5,000	10,000	\$178,000	\$17.80	\$35.60

* Two-story, mixed-use building with residential/office above ground floor commercial

Source: Loopnet; Re/Max Sauk Valley; Houseal Lavigne Associates

Retail Competition

The majority of potential customers for retailers located in the riverfront area will come from within the surrounding communities of Sterling and Rock Falls.

In addition to the businesses located within Downtown Sterling, the primary retail concentrations in the market area consist of the businesses and shopping centers located to the east along IL Route 2 and to the south in Downtown Rock Falls and along IL Route 40.

IL Route 2

Businesses in Downtown Sterling have experienced growing competition from retail centers located on the periphery of the community along IL Route 2 to the northeast (Northland Mall, Walmart, Kmart, Menards), and, to some extent, from retailers in Rock Falls to the south.

- ◇ A 202,000 square foot **Walmart Supercenter** located at 43rd Avenue and Lincolnway (IL Route 2) is the largest single retailer in the both the primary and secondary market areas.
- ◇ **Pine Tree Plaza** is the 56,209 square foot shopping center located adjacent to the Walmart Supercenter. The center is anchored by Staples and other tenants include Fashion Bug, Radio Shack, Cost Cutters, Payless Shoe, and Sally Beauty Supply. Outlot tenants include Fast Stop and Murphy Oil with two outlots currently for sale.

- ◇ **Sterling Plaza** is a 140,000 square foot center whose tenants include Menards and Applebee's. Sterling Plaza is located southwest of the Sterling Walmart at the southwest corner of Polo Road and IL Route 2.
- ◇ **Northland Mall**, located at 2900 E Lincolnway, is the only enclosed shopping center within a 50 mile radius of the Sterling riverfront area. The 304,000 square foot center, which was renovated in 1999, is anchored by Bergner's and JC Penney. Other significant tenants include Pet Supplies Plus, Bath & Body Works, Christopher & Banks, and Maurices. A 33,300 square foot anchor space is currently available for lease.
- ◇ **Kmart Plaza** is located across the street from Northland Mall. The center is 105,000 square feet and anchored by Kmart. Other tenants include Rent-A-Center, Shark's Cove, Affinity Credit Services, and Kidder Music. Approximately 14,600 square feet of space in a free standing building is currently available for lease at \$8 per square foot.

Rock Falls

Commercial activity in Rock Falls is concentrated along IL Route 40 with the largest retailers located to the south near Rock Falls Road (US Highway 30).

- ◇ **Rock Falls Plaza** is a 62,000 square foot center near 10th Street in Rock Falls. It is anchored by Sav-A-Lot. Another neighborhood strip center is located immediately to the south at **1100 – 1118 1st Avenue**. Anchor tenants at this center include Grummert's Hardware and Color of Country Antique Mall.
- ◇ Another **Walmart** is also located south of US 30 in Rock Falls approximately 1.5 miles southeast of the riverfront area.
- ◇ There are some small retail spaces currently for sale or lease near **Downtown Rock Falls**. These properties are being offered for lease at \$12 per square foot and for sale at \$55 per square foot.

Traffic Counts

National retailers outline a very specific set of standards when evaluating a potential site. One determining factor is a location's minimum Average Daily Traffic (ADT). The ADT figure measures the average amount of traffic on a street on any given day. Larger retailers typically look for an ADT count of between 20,000 and 30,000 when deciding if a particular site is well suited for future development. In a neighborhood retail setting, lower thresholds near 15,000 ADT can also be considered. Given these criteria, key intersections and corridors with significant traffic counts are also the current location of major retail centers throughout the market primary and secondary market areas.

- ◇ **IL Route 40 (1st Avenue/Locust Street)**, which is the primary through street in Downtown Sterling and would likely serve as the primary source of traffic for riverfront retailers, has an ADT of approximately 24,300 as it enters Sterling. The bridge of the Rock River forms a natural bottle neck for all traffic entering and leaving Downtown Sterling from the south. This is the most highly travelled segment of roadway in both the PMA and SMA. Travelling north to Lefevre Road, IL Route 40 maintains traffic volumes of between 8,800 and 10,300 ADT.
- ◇ **IL Route 2 (3rd Street/Lincolnway)** is the primary east-west route through Downtown Sterling and the second most travelled roadway in the PMA and SMA. Daily traffic counts in Downtown Sterling range between 9,400 and 11,400 and increase to 19,800 and 20,500 ADT near 23rd Street.
- ◇ **US Highway 30 (Rock Falls Road)** forms a commercial corridor in Rock Falls and is a primary point of entry into the community from the east. ADT along US 30 approach 15,000 as it intersects with IL Route 40.

Hotel Development

Hotels near the study area tend to be economy or budget properties within relatively close proximity to the interstate. The riverfront does not have direct access or proximity to interstate traffic or a large activity generator to support a flagship hotel. Longer term, the opportunity for a boutique hotel with good exposure and accessibility may be feasible if integrated into a riverfront destination environment. The term "boutique" is used because these tend to be properties that do not carry the chain flagship names and are often retrofitted within older existing structures. They tend to be smaller and offer more personal accommodations. A hotel would need to be positioned to capitalize on destination components such as dining, entertainment and ecotourism as well as existing development (such as Westwood Sports Complex and various businesses) that may not currently create enough demand to support a property on their own.

While a separate feasibility analysis would be needed to identify actual number of rooms, room rates, amenities and other issues, boutique hotels in similar environments typically do not compete directly with the type of hotels currently in the market. An additional benefit could be provided if the hotel were to be positioned to accommodate receptions with outdoor space overlooking the river.

As with other options, a hotel will not succeed without the riverfront first establishing an identity as a destination environment. Simply retrofitting an existing structure or building a standalone hotel property will not be sufficient to generate and capture demand. It must complement and be part of a synergistic riverfront environment.

Retail Gap Analysis

The following analysis uses a comparison of projected spending by market area households to the existing supply of retail space to assess the potential for retail development in the riverfront redevelopment area and the primary and secondary market areas. This 'gap' analysis provides an indication of "surplus" or "leakage" within a given retail category. The presence of a surplus within a given retail category suggests that there is at least enough retail space to accommodate demand for the range of goods and services provided by stores in that category. Conversely, leakage indicates that demand exceeds supply and consumers are spending dollars outside of the market area.

This leakage could potentially be recaptured and may represent a commercial opportunity within the market area. It is important, however, to distinguish between support in the market and development potential of a specific site or location. As outlined previously, retail competition is significant within both the primary and secondary market areas. Access, visibility, traffic counts, competition, specifications of particular retailers, and related issues dictate whether market potential can be successfully translated to development potential at the site.

Primary Market Area

As shown in Table 14, in analyzing existing retail supply and demand within a 5 minute drive time (the primary market area), it is estimated that there is currently a surplus of retail space totaling approximately \$18.7 million. The primary market area has an estimated 8,885 households in 2010. With an estimated retail demand of \$191.5 million, this equates to a potential expenditure per household of \$21,553, with a current supply of only \$23,652 per household. This figure includes all retail, eating and drinking establishments.

Secondary Market Area

In analyzing existing retail supply and demand within a 15 minute drive time (the secondary market area), there is currently a surplus of retail space totaling approximately \$8.5 million. Within the secondary market area, there are approximately 14,123 households contributing to a current retail demand of \$326.3 million. This demand equates to a potential expenditure per household of \$23,107, with a current supply of \$23,708 per household. This figure also includes all retail, eating, and drinking establishments.

Development Potential

Annual sales-per-square-foot can be utilized to equate consumer expenditures to a preliminary indication of development potential. While sales-per-square-foot revenues vary by individual retailer and industry sources, including the Urban Land Institute (ULI) and Costar, general assumptions of supportable square footage can be made by using a benchmark average. A generally accepted range for national retailers is \$200 to \$400 per-square-foot. The use of a per-square-foot amount on the higher end of this range allows for a more conservative approach so as not to overstate retail potential. As shown in Table 14, when a per-square-foot amount of \$400 is applied, demand is effectively translated to a potential number of square feet that could be supported within both the primary and secondary market areas.

The typical market area for each retail tenant type is also indicated in Table 14. The customer base for the majority of store types within these retail categories is composed of the population within a 15 minute drive of their location. There are some store types, mostly convenience oriented, that will serve residents located within a shorter drive time of near 5 minutes. Retail uses with a smaller market area, including restaurants, are the most likely targets for retail space within the riverfront area or elsewhere in surrounding Downtown Sterling.

Table 14. Retail Gap Analysis Profile
Primary & Secondary Market Areas, 2010

	5 Minute Drive	15 Minute Drive			
Summary Demographics					
2010 Population	21,669	35,117			
2010 Households	8,885	14,123			
2010 Median Disposable Income	\$37,582	\$39,029			
2010 Per Capita Income	\$23,005	\$23,931			
Retail Gap by Market Area (\$M)					
	5 Minute Drive (PMA)		15 Minute Drive (SMA)		
Summary					
Total Retail Trade and Food & Drink	(\$18.7)		(\$8.5)		
Total Retail Trade	(\$25.9)		(\$22.6)		
Total Food & Drink	\$7.3		\$14.1		
	5 Minute Drive (PMA)		15 Minute Drive (SMA)		Typical Market Area
Industry Group	Retail Gap (\$M)	Potential¹	Retail Gap (\$M)	Potential¹	
Motor Vehicle & Parts Dealers	\$18.9	47,302	\$17.6	44,008	
Furniture & Home Furnishings Stores	\$1.7	4,259	\$4.5	11,358	SMA
Furniture Stores	\$1.1	2,695	\$2.8	7,057	
Home Furnishings Stores	\$0.6	1,565	\$1.7	4,301	
Electronics & Appliance Stores	(\$0.3)	(819)	\$0.8	1,891	SMA
Bldg Materials, Garden Equip. & Supply Stores	\$4.5	11,312	\$3.2	7,887	
Building Material and Supplies Dealers	\$3.6	8,943	\$1.4	3,528	
Lawn and Garden Equipment and Supplies Stores	\$0.9	2,369	\$1.7	4,359	
Food & Beverage Stores	\$10.1	25,180	\$23.4	58,473	PMA-SMA
Grocery Stores	\$10.5	26,269	\$22.8	57,069	SMA
Specialty Food Stores	\$0.6	1,507	\$1.2	2,976	SMA
Beer, Wine, and Liquor Stores	(\$1.0)	(2,596)	(\$0.6)	(1,572)	PMA
Health & Personal Care Stores	(\$0.1)	(311)	\$0.4	893	PMA
Gasoline Stations	\$3.6	8,909	\$14.7	36,655	
Clothing and Clothing Accessories Stores	\$1.5	3,754	(\$26.3)	(65,761)	PMA-SMA
Clothing Stores	\$1.2	2,978	(\$27.1)	(67,733)	PMA-SMA
Shoe Stores	(\$0.0)	(108)	\$0.1	155	PMA-SMA
Jewelry, Luggage, and Leather Goods Stores	\$0.4	884	\$0.7	1,817	PMA-SMA
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book, and Music Stores	\$0.2	569	\$0.7	1,646	PMA-SMA
Sporting Goods/Hobby/Musical Instrument Stores	(\$0.1)	(296)	(\$0.0)	(94)	SMA
Book, Periodical, and Music Stores	\$0.3	865	\$0.7	1,740	PMA
General Merchandise Stores	\$17.4	43,538	\$16.3	40,858	SMA
Department Stores Excluding Leased Depts.	\$5.2	13,045	(\$4.4)	(11,012)	SMA
Other General Merchandise Stores	\$12.2	30,493	\$20.7	51,870	PMA-SMA
Miscellaneous Store Retailers	(\$0.5)	(1,311)	(\$0.4)	(1,053)	PMA
Florists	(\$0.3)	(821)	(\$0.4)	(961)	PMA
Office Supplies, Stationery, and Gift Stores	(\$0.1)	(297)	(\$0.3)	(626)	PMA
Used Merchandise Stores	(\$0.5)	(1,163)	(\$0.3)	(672)	PMA
Other Miscellaneous Store Retailers	\$0.4	970	\$0.5	1,205	PMA
Nonstore Retailers	(\$82.9)	(207,218)	(\$77.4)	(193,379)	
Food Services & Drinking Places	\$7.3	18,207	\$14.1	35,288	PMA-SMA
Full-Service Restaurants	\$2.1	5,239	\$4.8	12,042	PMA-SMA
Limited-Service Eating Places	\$4.3	10,657	\$6.9	17,338	PMA
Special Food Services	\$0.8	1,932	\$1.5	3,856	SMA
Drinking Places - Alcoholic Beverages	\$0.2	378	\$0.8	2,052	PMA

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

Source: ESRI Business Analyst ; ULI; and Houseal Lavigne Associates

Unmet Demand

Data indicate that both the primary and secondary market areas are relatively saturated. As highlighted in Table 14, there are a few categories that demonstrate potential market support for additional retail development within the PMA and SMA. While leakage is marginal in most retail categories, there are two retail categories that exhibit potentially significant unmet demand: Food and Beverage Stores and Full- and Limited-Service Restaurants.

The ability to capture unmet demand depends on the needs of individual retailers, such as minimum traffic counts and minimum frontage requirements, and the availability of suitable retail space. While there is potential for destination retailers and fine dining restaurants in the market, tenants must be identified within each retail category that would consider locating to the riverfront area.

Food & Beverage Stores

This retail category comprises three groups of retailers: Grocery Stores, Specialty Food Stores, and Beer, Wine & Liquor Stores. Grocery stores are the only retail type with significant leakage, with an estimated gap of between \$11 and \$23 million. This translates to an unmet demand for between approximately 26,000 and 57,000 square feet of retail space. Among national chains, the typical grocery store ranges in size from 43,000 to 58,500 square feet. Given this typical size, there may be sufficient market support for one additional grocery store within the SMA. Regardless of raw retail demand, potential tenants would be sensitive to the riverfront area's proximity to competition located nearby in Downtown Sterling such as La Laguna Market and County Market.

Full-Service Restaurants

The retail gap analysis indicates potential for full-service restaurants in both the primary and secondary market areas. Full-service restaurants have a typical footprint of between 3,000 and 5,000 square feet and require frontage along main thoroughfares and prominent end cap locations within retail centers. Given these two requirements, a highly visible location near IL Route 40 (1st Avenue and Locust Street) would be most desirable for this use. With a retail gap of between \$2 and \$5 million, there is currently market support for one or two full-service restaurants within the PMA and SMA.

Limited-Service Restaurants

Potential has also been indicated for limited-service eating places in both the primary and secondary market areas. Limited service restaurants include a wide variety of eateries such as deli and sandwich shops, cafes, pizza parlors, and fast food restaurants. These eateries have a typical size of between 1,500 and 3,000 square feet. Leakage in this category is estimated at between \$4 and \$7 million within the PMA and SMA. This is indicative of market support for between two and five limited-service eateries.

Niche and Specialty Retailers

Niche and specialty retailers are those that do not typically fall into a specific retail category or can be easily measured in terms of supply and demand. Most often, they are independently owned and operated by a sole proprietor or family run businesses. These retail types are typically a component of a larger retail program in destination environments such as a riverfront district or downtown. They do not, in and of themselves, support an area but tend to "fill in" smaller store fronts and less prominent locations. They are, however, an important component of a visitor's experience. Examples include boutique clothing, small gift stores, jewelry, antiques and related formats.

Development Program

Residential Demand

The costs of quality new construction in an urban environment such as Downtown Sterling would likely require home prices and lease rates at the top of the market. Given the affordability of the local housing stock and the differing buying habits of age cohorts, target households for condominium or rental units in the riverfront area would be young-professional and empty nester households in the upper income brackets. As such, the success of a condominium or apartment project in the riverfront area will likely require marketing the units as luxury homes with a unique location and amenities that are not typically found in the local housing stock.

Condominiums

Data regarding local housing stock characteristics and a lack of market activity indicate that condominiums are a relatively untested market within the Sterling-Rock Falls area. Success of the residential component will ultimately be dependent on marketing and attracting buyers from a larger market area than that of the conventional housing market for Sterling. The unique nature of the residential units in and of themselves will not be sufficient to create demand. The housing units must be part of a more synergistic environment that incorporates the riverfront, recreation, shops, restaurants and entertainment.

Rental Units

Multi-family rental units are common within the Sterling-Rock Falls area and there appears to be some level of support for additional rental product within the market area. Achieving higher end rents, however, may be challenging initially. Although demand exists, it may not be sufficient to support large scale development in the near term.

While the current level of demand cannot support a standalone project with a large number of units, it may be sufficient enough to support a smaller scale, phased development in multiple structures or a mixed use environment with residential above retail/restaurants. As with for sale condominium product, demand for rental housing in the riverfront area will be linked to successful, non-residential redevelopment efforts.

While mixed-use development should be encouraged in the riverfront area, residential components of such projects should be secondary to their commercial counterparts. Condominiums and apartments should be seen as means of enhancing commercial development at the site, not as vital to their success.

Commercial Demand

Businesses in Downtown Sterling have experienced growing competition from retail centers located on the periphery of the community on Route 2 (Northland Mall, Walmart, Kmart, Menards), and, to some extent, from retailers along Route 40 in Rock Falls to the south. The riverfront area is well positioned to take advantage of high traffic volumes passing through Downtown Sterling along IL Route 40 and IL Route 2 and redevelopment could serve to complement revitalization efforts in the larger downtown area. The influx of new residents, visitors and workers to the Riverfront area would not only provide support for new businesses and development, but also provide a base from which the downtown can draw.

Retail development that has occurred and continues to expand along IL Route 2 may provide competition for future retail development, but opportunities appear to exist for the riverfront area. Although the retail market is fairly saturated, there appears to be sufficient demand to support additional establishments within the Food & Beverage Stores and Limited- and Full-Service Restaurant retail categories. The riverfront area may also be able to capitalize and expand upon the base of niche retailers within Downtown Sterling. Regardless of this raw market potential, development cannot occur within the riverfront area if downtown visitors and passing vehicles cannot easily view and access the site. Issues regarding visibility, access and circulation in the riverfront area will need to be addressed to better connect future development to the existing downtown and facilitate commercial development.



EXISTING CONDITIONS ANALYSIS

To establish the basis for the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan, existing conditions were inventoried within Sterling's Downtown and Riverfront areas. The existing conditions analysis is the product of community outreach and data collected and analyzed by the Consultant.

Community outreach is the involvement of the community at-large in the creation and management of their surroundings. The planning process for the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan involved community residents, business owners and elected/appointed officials in planning and decision making, promoting a sense of community and an avenue by which information about local conditions, needs and attitudes can be channeled. Allowing the community to participate in the formation of a plan can help foster a sense of stewardship by allowing people to feel their ideas have influenced the final decisions.

Data collection and analysis focused on current conditions and influencing factors within the project study area. The Consultant Team reviewed past plans and studies, inventoried existing land use and development patterns, and evaluated existing transportation features to determine their impact on the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan.

The Existing Conditions Analysis establishes the "foundation" or "starting point" of understanding, to better facilitate the development of the vision, goals, objectives, and planning recommendations in the upcoming steps of the riverfront redevelopment process. Existing conditions detailed in this report include:

- ◇ Past Plans and Studies
- ◇ Existing Land Use and Development Patterns
- ◇ Parks, Open Space and Environmental Features
- ◇ Transportation: Access, Circulation and Infrastructure



Past Plans & Studies

An assessment of past plans and studies was conducted to gain a better understanding of initiatives, assessments and objectives previously undertaken by the City of Sterling and other entities. Understanding the intentions and results of these documents provides insight into the Sterling community and is important in identifying the potential of the City's Downtown and Riverfront areas. As conditions change over time, the relevance of some of these documents is lessened, while components of other documents continue to provide direction and remain representative of community aspirations.

Past plans and studies were assessed to determine their relevance to, and consideration for, the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan. Key recommendations of the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan are influenced by this assessment and are designed to address any shortcomings identified in previous plans and studies. A brief summary of relevant past plans and studies is presented below, and includes the following:

- ◇ City of Sterling Comprehensive Strategic Plan;
- ◇ City of Sterling Design Guidelines;
- ◇ Whiteside County Greenways & Trails Plan;
- ◇ Sterling Downtown Master Plan & Streetscape Design;
- ◇ Rock Falls – Redevelopment Opportunity Analysis;
- ◇ Rock Falls – Reliant Redevelopment Plan;
- ◇ Sterling Mural Society;
- ◇ National Register of Historic Places;
- ◇ IDOT Rock River Bridge Replacement Project/Plans; and,
- ◇ City of Sterling Zoning Ordinance.

Comprehensive Strategic Plan

The City of Sterling's Comprehensive Strategic Plan was adopted in August of 2006 and provides specific recommendations for the City's land development over the next 20 years and beyond. One of the recommendations identified in the Comprehensive Strategic Plan is the creation of a Downtown/Riverfront Neighborhood. This Neighborhood consists of Downtown, the former Northwestern Steel and Wire lands, and other industrial properties along the Rock River extending from the Upper Dam downstream to the oxbow. Within the Downtown/Riverfront Neighborhood, the Plan recognizes that the Rock River is not a celebrated or well-used feature of the community and that greater attention must be given to the riverfront area by the City and other economic development entities.

Specific strategies identified to rehabilitate the Rock River and adjacent lands include the following:

- ◇ Relocating existing industrial uses along the riverfront to other industrial/business park areas in the City to encourage/allow for the development of active space along the river.
- ◇ Developing mixed-use opportunities along the river where retail, office, entertainment and residential uses are integrated seamlessly with one another.
- ◇ Creating a continuous riverwalk that encourages pedestrian and bicycle use and connects to a larger, regional trail system.

Remarks

- ◇ The Comprehensive Strategic Plan recommended the creation of a Downtown/riverfront-specific redevelopment plan to provide a framework outlining issues, opportunities, physical improvements, policies and advocacy for the River and its environs.
- ◇ The Comprehensive Strategic Plan conceptualizes mixed-use redevelopment with cultural/public spaces, a riverwalk, artisan guild, hotel/waterpark, history center and "dockominiums" along the Rock River riverfront.
- ◇ A shortcoming of the Comprehensive Strategic Plan is the identification of "dockominiums" in an area where boating is inhibited by two nearby dams.

City of Sterling Design Guidelines

The purpose of the City's Design Guidelines is to promote the "public health, safety, and welfare" by aiding in the planning, design and re-design of the built environment of the City. The Design Guidelines aim to enhance and unify the City's visual character while avoiding monotony and repetition. The document provides Site Design Standards and Architectural Guidelines to be used by the Community Services Department and Plan Commission as they evaluate development proposals.

Remarks

- ◇ The Design Guidelines are intended to be applicable city-wide, thus redevelopment along the Rock River would be required to comply with the regulations set forth in this document.

Whiteside County Greenway & Trails Plan

The Whiteside County Greenway and Trails Plan was completed by a coalition of local and county-wide agency representatives with involvement from select State agencies. The primary goals of the Greenway and Trails Plan are to increase/enhance greenway and recreational trail connections throughout Whiteside County; and, ultimately, link Whiteside County trails to the Grand Illinois Trail. This would be achieved by providing a continuous path stretching from the Hennepin Feeder Canal, traveling cross-county to the Mississippi River and the Great River Trail to the west. The Plan identifies local priorities for each municipality in Whiteside County. At the time the Plan was adopted, the following priorities were identified for the City of Sterling:

- ◇ Riverfront trail from upper dam to Oppold Marina
- ◇ Lynn Boulevard Trail from Lincoln Highway to Locust Street
- ◇ Lynn Boulevard Trail from Locust Street to Westwood
- ◇ Marking, striping, and bicycle safe storm sewer grates of shared use routes

Remarks

- ◇ Two shared use routes are recommended within the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Area project study area boundaries. These are planned along 4th Street and 1st Avenue. The Plan defines shared use trails as low-volume streets or rural roads to be shared by existing vehicular traffic and bicycle and other non-motorized uses.
- ◇ The recommended riverfront trail is located east of the Riverfront Redevelopment Area.



Downtown Sterling has an established streetscape composed of recycled red brick, green metal benches and litter receptacles, rockfaced limestone and more.

Sterling Downtown Master Plan and Streetscape Design

The City's Downtown Master Plan and Streetscape Design was prepared in 2001 to provide recommendations for physical improvements to the City's downtown core in an effort to restore the charm and character of the area. The Downtown Master Plan and Streetscape Design included perspective sketches, building façade overlays and schematic streetscape plans. The streetscape plans were complemented by proposed concrete paving areas, brick accent paving, light fixtures, street trees, understory plantings, seating, informational markers and gateway signs.

The Streetscape Project was divided into nine phases that unfolded over the course of eight years. Details for each phase are presented in the table above.

Remarks

- ◇ Elements from the Plan may be carried over into the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Area to establish a visual connection between the Downtown and Riverfront, as well as to bridge the gap that occurs along the Union Pacific Railroad.
- ◇ The Downtown's proximity to the Riverfront Redevelopment Area provides opportunities to extend the streetscape design towards the riverfront.

Rock Falls – Redevelopment Opportunity Analysis

The City of Rock Falls adopted the Redevelopment Opportunity Analysis in September of 2006. This document examined opportunities for redevelopment on two key riverfront sites in the City of Rock Falls: the former Reliant Fastener site and the former Northwestern Steel and Wire property. The Analysis developed "big picture" ideas inspired by community assets and by unrealized potentials. Key opportunities and assets identified for Rock Falls include:

- ◇ Transportation and regional location;
- ◇ Accessibility;
- ◇ Technology and logistics;
- ◇ Manufacturing; and,
- ◇ River recreation.

The document promotes a mix of retail, residential and hospitality uses along the riverfront as redevelopment occurs.

Remarks

- ◇ Community input indicated a general concern that the development/redevelopment in Rock Falls will compete with development/redevelopment in Sterling, or that Sterling's Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan will include too many duplications.

Rock Falls – Reliant Redevelopment Plan

The Reliant Redevelopment Plan is a preliminary master plan for the former Reliant Fastener site located south of the Rock River and east of 1st Avenue in the City of Rock Falls. The Plan identifies over 180,000 square feet of retail, hospitality, residential and mixed-use buildings oriented towards the Rock River. An amphitheater is planned adjacent to the river, and continuous bike trails are envisioned along the shoreline.

Remarks

- ◇ Community input indicated a general concern that the development/redevelopment in Rock Falls will compete with development/redevelopment in Sterling, or that Sterling's Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan will include too many duplications.

Sterling Streetscape Phasing

Phase	Boundaries	Completed	Cost
I	First Avenue: Viaduct to Fifth St.	2002	\$805,000
II	Locust Street: Third St. to Fourth St. Fourth Street: Locust St. to First Ave.	2003	\$341,000
III	Locust Street: Fourth St. to Fifth St. Fifth Street: Locust St. to First Ave. SE & SW Corners: Locust St. & Third St.	2004	\$410,000
IV	Locust Street: Second St. to Third St. Second Street: Locust St. to First St. North side of Third Street: Third Ave. to Fourth Ave.	2005	\$394,000
V	Third Street: First Ave. to Third Ave.	2006	\$496,000
VI	Second Avenue: Second St. to Fourth St.	2007	\$381,897
VII	Locust Street: Fifth St. to Seventh St.	2008	\$198,000
VIII	Second Street: First Ave. to Third Ave. Third Avenue: Second St. to Brinks Cr.	2009	N/A
IX	Light Street Alley	2010 (current)	N/A



Rock Falls - Reliant Redevelopment Plan



Mural: the first Pioneer steam engine pulling into Sterling on July 17, 1856

Rock River Redevelopment Area/Rock River TIF

The Rock River Redevelopment Area consists primarily of privately owned properties available for redevelopment along the Rock River. Historically, this area was used for industrial purposes; however, the City has plans for future redevelopment of the area to include a riverfront park, steel mill museum, shopping areas and community-use areas. Infrastructure improvements and site wide cleanup are two priorities that will need to be addressed prior to redevelopment occurring. Currently, private funding and Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) grants are assisting with environmental investigations and cleanup in the area.

To help the City achieve its ultimate redevelopment goals for the Rock River Redevelopment Area, the Rock River Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District was created. The TIF is a public/private partnership between the City and a number of private businesses including Sterling Steel and its parent company Leggett-Platt. Much of the Rock River TIF spending is focused on remediating environmental concerns left behind after industry was displaced.

TIF districts are financing tools that can be employed by municipalities in hopes of reviving blighted areas like Sterling's Riverfront. Once a TIF district is created, assessed property values within its boundaries are essentially frozen for the life of the district. As the area begins to redevelop and assessed values rise, any additional property tax revenue is placed in a special fund for public improvements, land assemblage or to help finance private investment in the district. The maximum life of a TIF district in the State of Illinois is 23 years although it can be extended via approval from the State legislature.

Remarks

- ◇ A sizable portion of the Riverfront Redevelopment Sites is located within the Rock River TIF District boundaries, which will allow the sites to benefit from TIF funds.
- ◇ Environmental investigations and cleanup continues throughout the Rock River Redevelopment Area and on the Riverfront Redevelopment Sites.
- ◇ Rock River TIF funds may be used for public improvements, land assembly or to help finance private investment on the Riverfront Redevelopment Sites.

Sterling Murals

The Sterling Mural Society is a non-profit organization dedicated to documenting the heritage of the Sterling area by promoting the painting of murals on buildings. The society works in conjunction with the Sterling Mural Commission, which is appointed by the Mayor and approved by the City Council. Sterling currently has eighteen murals located within the City.

Remarks

- ◇ Seventeen out of the eighteen murals that currently exist within the City are located within the Downtown and Riverfront areas.
- ◇ Opportunities or locations for additional murals may be created in key gateway areas as redevelopment occurs or the Sterling Mural Society promotes the painting of new ones in the Riverfront area.

National Register of Historic Places

There are five sites within the City of Sterling that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, two of which are located within the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan's study area boundaries. These two sites include the First Congregational Church of Sterling located at 311 Second Avenue, and the Sterling Masonic Temple located at 111-113 West 3rd Street. Both are significant in terms of architecture and engineering and were added to the Register in the 1990s.

Remarks

- ◇ These two sites connect area residents and visitors to the City's historic past and enhance its sense of place.
- ◇ These two sites will need to be preserved and could potentially be enhanced as a part of the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan.

IDOT Rock River Bridge Replacement Project/Plans

The purpose of this project is to replace the IL 40 (1st Avenue) bridge over the Rock River for structural reasons. Project limits are 2nd Street in Rock Falls on the south to 2nd Avenue in Sterling to the north. The new bridge design features two travel lanes in each direction and a 10 foot wide bike/walkway on each side. Additionally, the bridge design incorporates four scenic outlook points overlooking the Rock River. Partial removal of the Lawrence Hardware building will be required. An underlying goal of the project is to lower the bridge profile so that the crest is reduced before 1st Avenue travels under the Union Pacific Railroad, and to improve sight distance for northbound traffic into Sterling.

Remarks

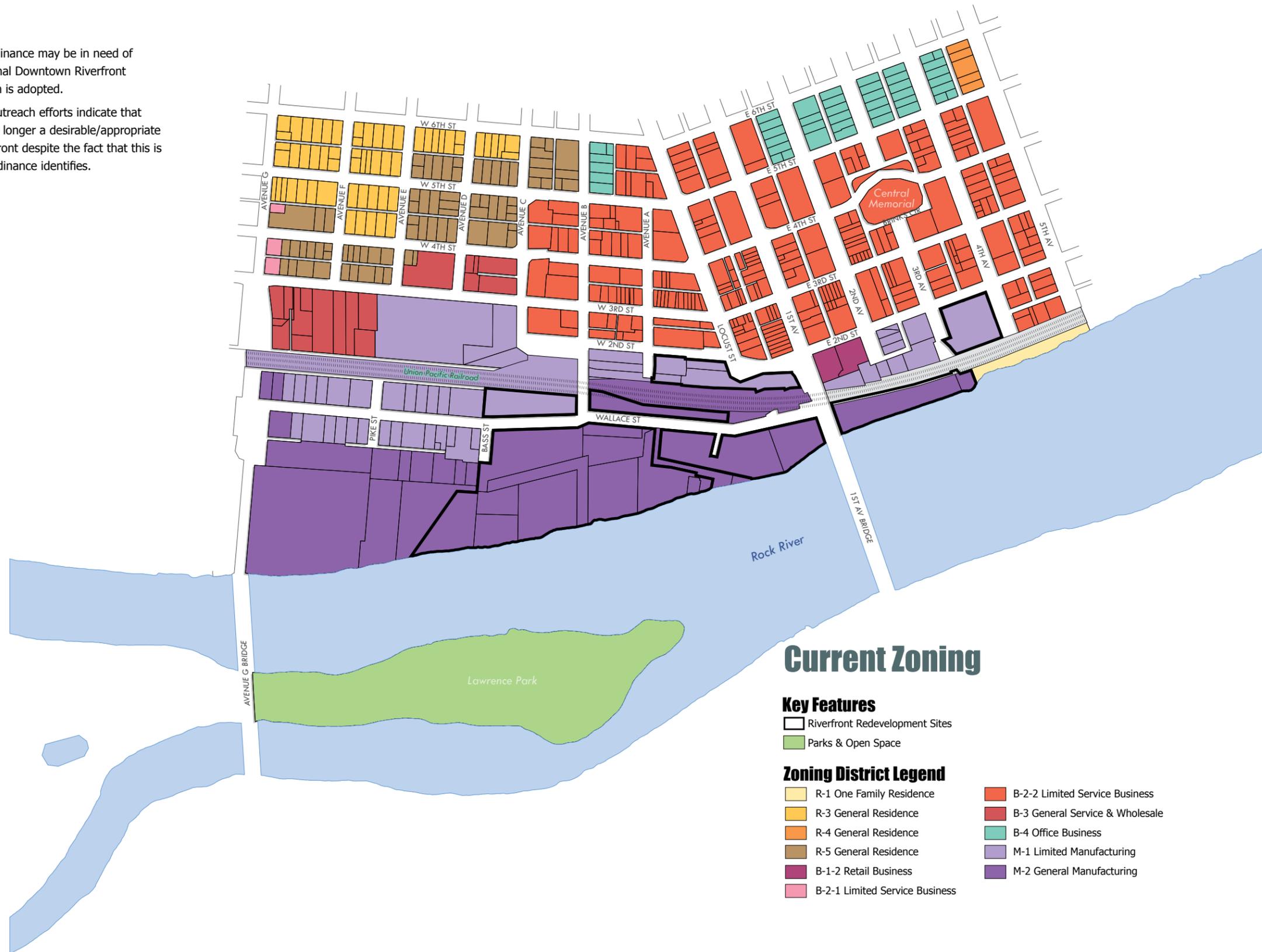
- ◇ The bridge functions, and will continue to function, as the main gateway/entrance into the City, Downtown and Riverfront areas.
- ◇ The Rock River Bridge Replacement Project requires demolition of a small garage attached to the Lawrence Brothers building; however, the original building is not affected by the Project.

City Zoning Ordinance

The City's Zoning Ordinance was adopted in May of 1995, and has been updated periodically since then to respond to changing community concerns and priorities. Within the project study area, land is predominantly zoned B-2-2 Limited Service Business District, M-2 General Manufacturing District or M-1 Limited Manufacturing District. Upon initial review, the B-2-2 zoning district appears to be appropriate for the Downtown based upon existing land uses and development intensity. It promotes denser development with up to 100% lot coverage and floor area ratios (FAR) of 3.0 or higher. However, the M-1 and M-2 districts no longer appear to be relevant along the riverfront and may prohibit the desired future land uses and redevelopment.

Remarks

- ◇ The City Zoning Ordinance may be in need of updates once the final Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan is adopted.
- ◇ Initial community outreach efforts indicate that manufacturing is no longer a desirable/appropriate use along the riverfront despite the fact that this is what the Zoning Ordinance identifies.





Existing Land Use & Development Patterns

Existing land uses and development patterns within Sterling's Downtown and Riverfront areas collectively distinguish the areas from the rest of the City and play an important role in the creation of the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan. The current character of these two areas differs greatly as the areas along the river consist of vacant industrial buildings and the Downtown is the more intensely developed with a diverse array of land uses. Previously, the riverfront functioned as the industrial core and employment center of the City; however, the decline of local industry and inadequate property maintenance evokes a sense of blight and underutilization. The Downtown continues to function as the City's central business district and the "heart" of the community.

Masonic Temple • June 2010

Within the Downtown, development is pedestrian-oriented, but this quickly transitions to auto-oriented businesses as you move away from the core. The Riverfront Redevelopment Sites themselves are not easily classified as pedestrian-oriented or auto-oriented; rather, the sites lack orientation and are disconnected and separated from Downtown by the Union Pacific Railroad, and they lack both a consistent street grid and pedestrian amenities.

This section of the Plan includes an inventory of the existing land uses and development patterns within the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan's project study area. The inventory is based upon reconnaissance undertaken in the summer of 2010 and includes each parcel within the project study area.

Existing Land Use

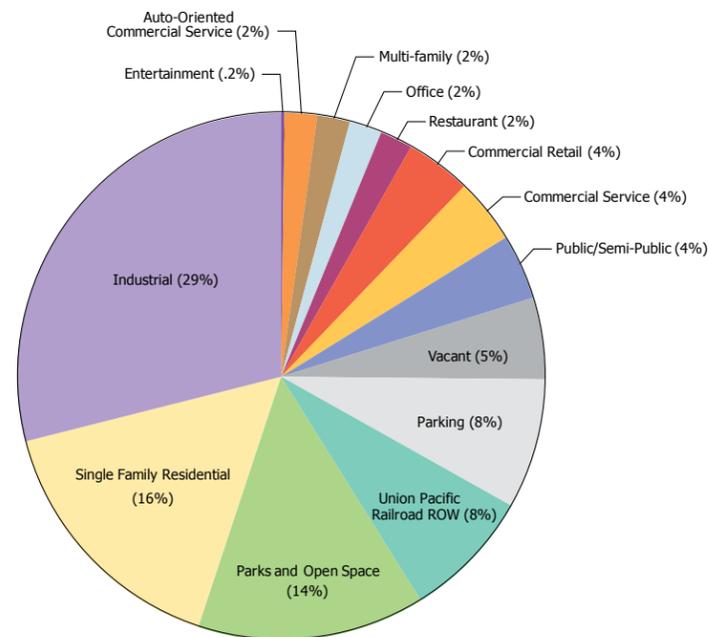
Within the project study area, the majority of land uses consist of commercial businesses, restaurants, professional offices and public/semi public uses. Industrial and manufacturing uses are primarily located adjacent to the Rock River and several vacant parcels comprise the Riverfront Redevelopment Sites.

Achieving an appropriate mix of land uses is key to ensuring the long-term sustainability of the Riverfront Redevelopment Sites. A successful riverfront area typically includes several coexisting uses that provide a sense of urban vitality and activity at the water's edge.

The table above highlights the land uses currently present within the Downtown and Riverfront areas, as well as their square footage.

Existing Land Use Breakdown

Land Use	Total Square Footage	Percentage of Project Study Area
Auto-Oriented Commercial Service	136,487	2%
Commercial Retail	358,887	4%
Commercial Service	328,402	4%
Entertainment	13,429	0.2%
Industrial	2,547,854	29%
Multi-Family Residential	155,534	2%
Office	196,952	2%
Parking	685,257	8%
Parks and Open Space	1,205,681	14%
Public/Semi-Public	387,674	4%
Restaurant	139,283	2%
Single Family Residential	1,411,483	16%
Union Pacific Railroad Right-of-way	684,755	8%
Vacant	504,183	5%
Total	8,755,861	100.00%



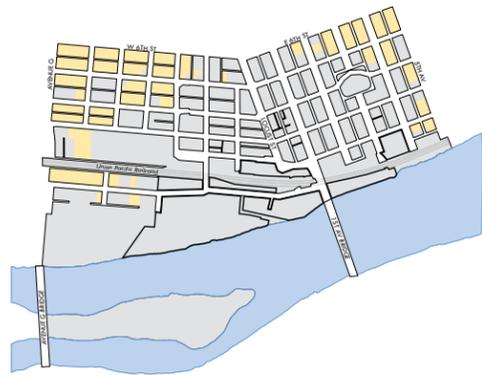
Existing Land Use

Key Features

■ Riverfront Redevelopment Sites

Land Use Legend

- Parks & Open Space
- Entertainment
- Single Family Residential
- Office
- Multi-family Residential
- Public & Semi-Public
- Commercial Retail
- Industrial/Manufacturing
- Commercial Service
- Parking
- Auto-oriented Service
- Union Pacific Railroad
- Restaurant
- Vacant

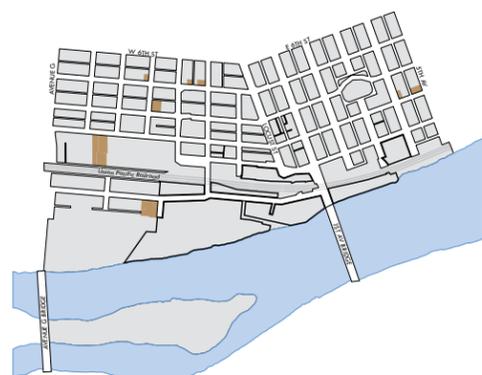


Single Family Residential

Established single family neighborhoods occupy the fringe of the Downtown and Riverfront study area and are not anticipated to undergo significant redevelopment in the future. The majority of homes in these areas are older and their condition and architectural styles vary. Single family neighborhoods within the project study area were developed with a traditional grid and alley system which provides a uniform layout due to standard street and lot dimensions. The average single family residential property is approximately 140 feet deep and the typical home size is approximately 1,500 square feet. Single family areas are generally walkable with sidewalks present on both sides of the street. Some residential structures may be significant to Sterling's local history.

Potential Influences & Implications

- ◇ The single family land use itself will have minimal influence on the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan; however, the concerns of the residents in these neighborhoods should be incorporated during the planning process.
- ◇ As the Downtown and Riverfront are revitalized and redeveloped, single family homes in the project study area may experience additional development pressure in consideration of their age and proximity to the redevelopment sites.



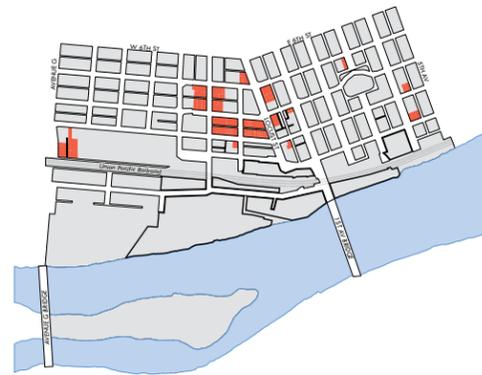
Multi-Family Residential

Approximately two percent of the project study area is currently developed with multi-family residential housing. Fragmented multi-family units are interspersed throughout the Downtown and include attached single-family homes, apartment buildings, condominiums and barrack-style townhomes. There are also a few instances in which multi-family apartments are located on the upper floors of mixed-use buildings.

A key component of many successful, vibrant downtowns and riverfront areas is multi-family residential as it provides a consistent customer base to patronize nearby businesses. The small amount of multi-family housing does not appear to provide a desirable residential density in the Downtown or Riverfront area.

Potential Influences & Implications

- ◇ Existing multi-family residential land uses will have moderate influence on the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan because it is scattered and secondary to commercial uses within Downtown.
- ◇ Multi-family residential may be desirable along the Riverfront as standalone buildings or as elements of multi-story, mixed-use buildings to create a healthy mix of uses and housing options within the community.



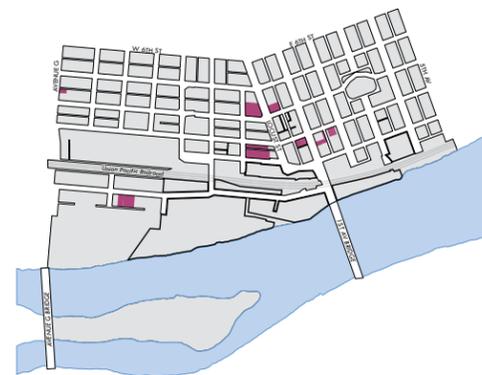
Commercial Retail

Commercial retail uses are businesses that sell goods to consumers such as groceries, clothing and other household items. Approximately four percent of the project study area consists of commercial retail, making the area one of the largest retail concentrations in the City. Retail uses generally range from small to large scale independent businesses-national retailers are typically located outside of the project study area along Illinois Route 2. The Country Market is the largest commercial retailer within the Downtown area.

During the community outreach process, a desire for a healthy mix of uses and a pedestrian-friendly atmosphere was expressed. Attracting new retail businesses was cited as a key objective of the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan

Potential Influences & Implications

- ◇ Existing commercial retail uses will have an influence on the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan as it anchors the Downtown area and has the potential to help attract additional retail businesses.
- ◇ The Riverfront Redevelopment Sites have the potential to attract pedestrian-oriented retail, which could draw new customers and visitors to the Riverfront area.
- ◇ The Sterling community desires retail in combination with public gathering spaces along the Rock River riverfront.
- ◇ The community's desires for retail along the water may create competition for Downtown.



Restaurants/Entertainment Uses/Taverns

Though there are a number of restaurants/entertainment uses/taverns within the Downtown and Riverfront study area, they only make up 2.2% of the total land area. These uses include a mixture of national chains like Taco Bell and independent businesses such as Kelly's, Maria's Pizza, Sterling Theater, Bullseye and more. These businesses reinforce the project study area as a destination point for community residents and visitors, and are active during the day and night.

Potential Influences & Implications

- ◇ Restaurants and entertainment uses will have significant influence on the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan because they are active during the day and night.
- ◇ Restaurants/entertainment uses/taverns can offer opportunities to enhance the streetscape of the Riverfront area by providing outdoor seating and gathering areas.
- ◇ Promoting restaurants and entertainment uses along the Riverfront could help create a destination for nearby residents and employees attract visitors to the area.

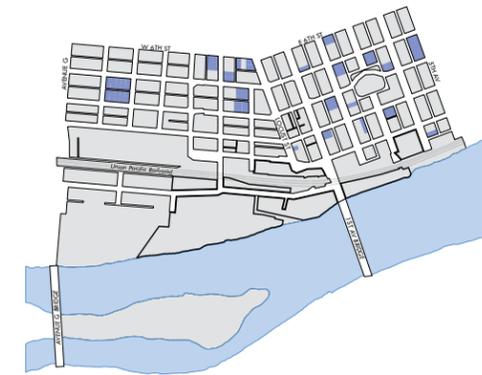
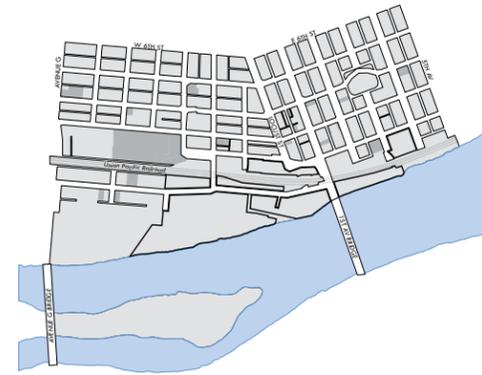
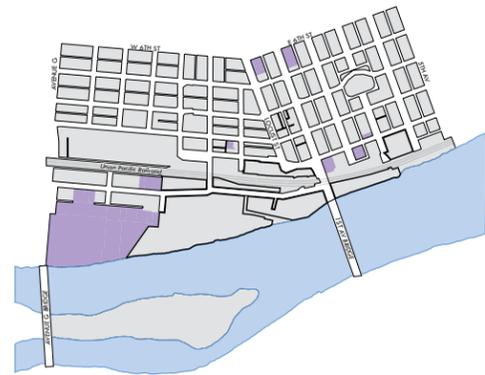
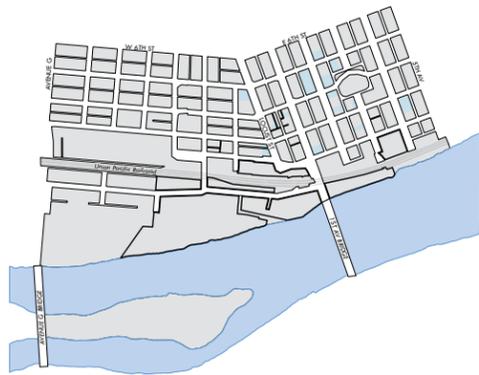


Commercial Service

Commercial service uses are businesses that provide services to consumers such as consultations, personal assistance or repairs. Four percent of the project study area is currently composed of commercial service uses, ranging from auto repair shops to hair studios. Commercial service uses do not typically attract people to an area.

Potential Influences & Implications

- ◇ Commercial service uses are important to sustain nearby residential development, thus these types of uses will have moderate influence on the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan.
- ◇ If residential development occurs in the Riverfront area, the demand for commercial services will increase.
- ◇ The community's desires for commercial along the river may create competition for Downtown.



Office

Two percent of the project study area is composed of office land uses including accounting and financial offices, medical offices and law offices. These types of offices do not generate a high amount of pedestrian activity though they are important components of a traditional downtown fabric. In general, office space works best in an urban environment when combined with other commercial uses. This allows the population of office buildings to patronize nearby businesses. Offices are desirable on the upper floors of mixed use buildings rather than on the ground floor where pedestrian generators are more appropriate and conducive to an active public realm.

Potential Influences & Implications

- ◇ Existing office uses will have minimal influence on the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan, though it may be appropriate to encourage their relocation to upper floors of mixed use buildings.
- ◇ Most office uses do not generate a high amount of pedestrian activity, thus are not desirable on the ground floors of buildings in the Riverfront area; however, they are desirable in a downtown as they bring visitors and employees to the area.
- ◇ Office uses could be promoted on the upper floors of mixed-use buildings along the Riverfront, which would allow pedestrian-generating uses to locate on the ground floors.

Industrial/Manufacturing

This land use category includes industrial properties, manufacturing, storage, and warehouse/distribution facilities within the project study area. Historically, much of the land along the Rock River riverfront was used for industrial purposes; however, changes in industrial processes and market conditions beyond the City's control have caused many of these businesses to close or relocate, vacating sites and buildings with little concern for their reuse or condition. The majority of vacant industrial/manufacturing buildings make up the Riverfront Redevelopment Sites.

In addition to the vacant industrial properties, small-scale industrial businesses continue to operate along 2nd Street. It may be appropriate to encourage relocation of these businesses to other sites in the City, or to incorporate these businesses into a comprehensive redevelopment scenario.

Potential Influences & Implications

- ◇ The industrial/manufacturing land use designation itself will have minimal influence on the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan; however, the sites and buildings these uses are located in will have significant influence as they make up the Riverfront Redevelopment Sites and are the focus of redevelopment efforts by the City.
- ◇ Adaptive reuse and preservation of historic structures and elements may strengthen connections with the history of the area; however, adaptive reuse of industrial buildings is challenging.

Vacant

The vacant parcels within Downtown and Riverfront areas generally make up the Riverfront Redevelopment sites thus hold substantial significance towards the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan. The majority of these sites contain aging, deteriorating buildings, thus removal and/or rehabilitation will need to occur prior to redevelopment. Adaptive reuse or preservation of historic buildings or features that are in good condition might also be appropriate, provided it can be done without compromising the viability of redevelopment.

Potential Influences & Implications

- ◇ Vacant sites and buildings will have significant influence on the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan because they generally make up the Riverfront Redevelopment Sites which are the Plan's primary focus.
- ◇ Though there are many negative connotations associated with vacant sites and buildings, vacancies present significant opportunities for the surrounding community because they offer locations for new businesses to locate in and opportunities for redevelopment. Vacant parcels provide easier targets for redevelopment since there is not usually a reluctant property owner to negotiate with.
- ◇ Environmental contamination was cited as a concern on vacant properties throughout the community outreach process and will need to be addressed prior to redevelopment.

Public/Semi-Public

Four percent of the project study area is comprised of a mixture of public/semi-public buildings including City offices, Township offices, churches and educational facilities. These types of land uses can help attract private investment and serve as important anchors, promoting a sense of place within a community. Public and semi-public facilities include institutions such as the Sterling Public Library, City Hall, First Congregational Church of Sterling and Sterling Masonic Temple, both of which are on the National Register of Historic Places. (insert photos of these uses)

Currently, no public/semi-public facilities exist in the Riverfront area though residents and property owners have expressed a desire for new public facilities to be developed on the Riverfront Redevelopment Sites.

Potential Influences & Implications

- ◇ Though important components of a traditional downtown or riverfront, existing public/semi-public buildings will have minimal influence on the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan because they are established and positioned in the Downtown. Existing facilities are not envisioned to relocate to the Riverfront area.
- ◇ The community has expressed an interest in developing new public/semi-public facilities in the Riverfront area including a museum, higher-education facility, recreational facility and/or a public amphitheater.

Parks and Open Space

Parks and open space are important components of an area and provide numerous functions and benefits. They offer residents and visitors a place to play and relax while enhancing the quality of life for surrounding neighborhoods. During the community outreach process, a desire for a continuous trail system and recreational amenities was expressed by residents and stakeholders.

Currently, the project study area currently has three park sites including Central Memorial Park in the Downtown, Lawrence Park on the Rock River, and a small pocket park at the northeast corner of 2nd Street and Locust Street. No public parks or open space exist on the north bank of the Rock River.

The Rock River is a unique natural feature that helps define the character of the Riverfront area. Incorporating additional park and open space can help reinforce the distinctiveness of the area and attract additional visitors. Additional discussion on parks and environmental features can be found on page X.

Potential Influences & Implications

- ◇ The Sterling community has expressed a desire for a publicly accessible riverfront that is complemented by gathering places and recreational opportunities.
- ◇ Opportunities for continuous public access or multi-use trails could exist along the Riverfront.
- ◇ Lawrence Park provides scenic vistas of the entire Riverfront Redevelopment Area and has many amenities including: fishing; boat launching; grills; horseshoe courts; picnic areas; playground equipment; open play areas; and, shelters.

County Market is an example of an auto-oriented use in the project study area as it caters predominantly to users arriving by automobile; however, the photo on the right illustrates a pedestrian-oriented street in the Downtown.



Existing Development Patterns

Development patterns can be influenced by both land use and the surrounding road network. Downtown Sterling's road network is generally characterized by a traditional grid pattern that is highly walkable, but this road network terminates before reaching the Riverfront area. The large parcels and "super-block" structure that exists within the Riverfront area does not make way for an organized road network and impacts the area's walkability.

As previously outlined, there is strong pedestrian orientation within the Downtown where the traditional grid system is in place; however, as one transitions beyond the Downtown's limits, development patterns become increasingly auto-oriented or disconnected. The Riverfront Redevelopment Sites themselves are disconnected and separated from Downtown by the Union Pacific Railroad. Wallace Street serves as the main east-west roadway in the Riverfront area, but does not promote efficient circulation between the Riverfront Redevelopment Sites or along the riverfront.

Pedestrian-Oriented Development

The Downtown is characterized by a pedestrian friendly environment and dense development that has been shaped by the existing street grid pattern. Pedestrian-oriented development is conducive to walking between destinations. It may include sidewalks, buffers, street trees, benches, fountains, transit stops, pedestrian-oriented signs and lighting, public art, and buildings that are visually interesting at the street level. Pedestrian-oriented businesses benefit from "walk-by traffic," and typically generate additional pedestrian movement. Examples of these types of businesses include cafes, markets and retail shops.

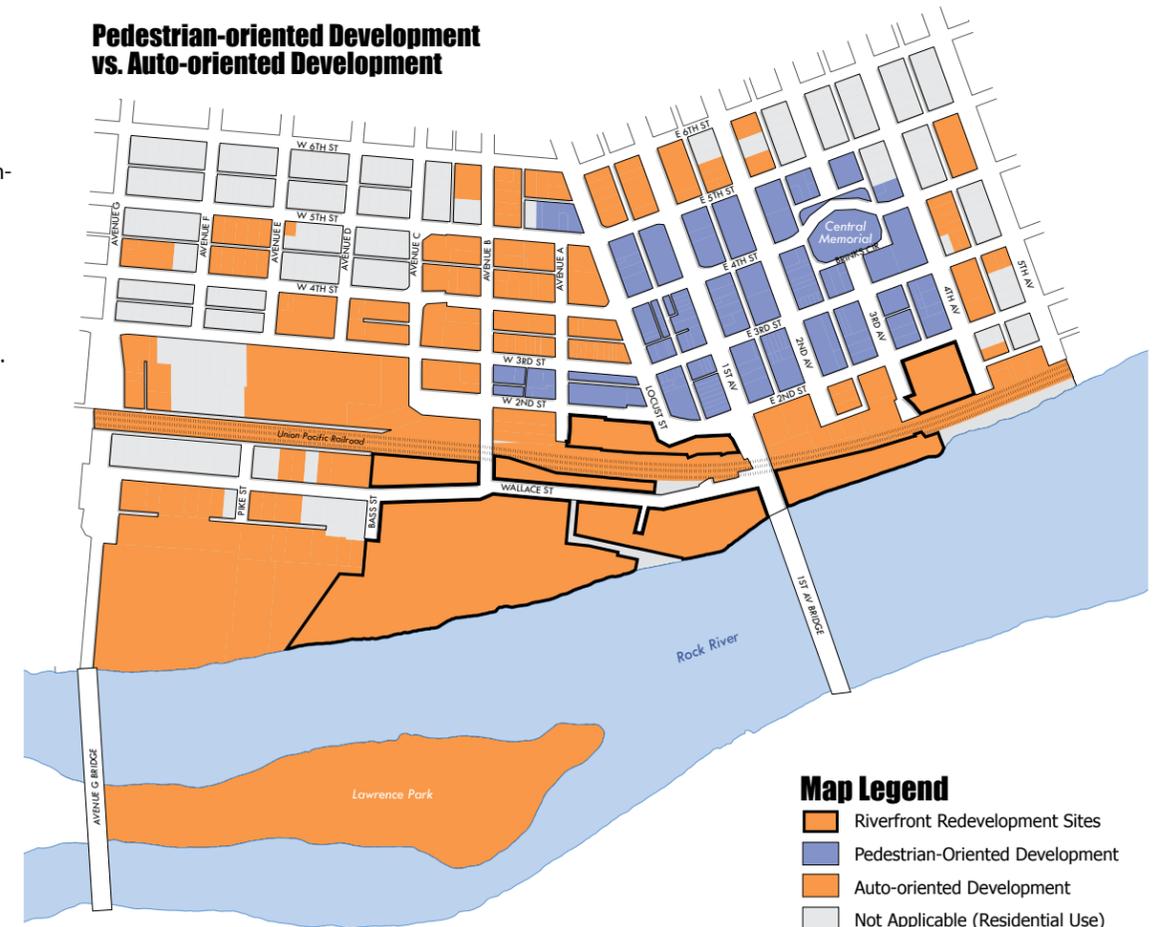
Auto-oriented Development

Auto-oriented development caters to users arriving by automobile. This type of development generally neglects the pedestrian and does not contribute to a traditional downtown atmosphere. Unlike pedestrian-oriented development, auto-oriented development generally functions as a destination for consumers and does not typically benefit from "walk-by traffic." Examples of auto-oriented businesses include large grocers, discount stores, home building stores and other big boxes, and banking or financial institutions.

Potential Influence on the Riverfront Redevelopment Sites

- ◇ Opportunities to extend the Downtown's block structure or grid system into the Riverfront area should be explored.

Pedestrian-oriented Development vs. Auto-oriented Development





A traditional streetwall is maintained throughout much of Sterling's historic downtown.

Streetwall

"Streetwall" is the term used to describe a continuous row of buildings, side-by-side, with little or no front setback so they are positioned adjacent to the sidewalk. The success of a pedestrian-oriented corridor can be undermined by a discontinuous streetwall with large gaps between buildings, buildings setback substantially from the sidewalk, or parking areas adjacent to sidewalks without perimeter landscaping, fencing, or screening. A more inviting pedestrian environment and denser development patterns are achieved when a continuous streetwall is maintained.

An attractive streetwall creates a "Main Street" type atmosphere that is more appealing and creates a better pedestrian atmosphere. Pedestrian amenities in combination with a streetwall, are a powerful tool in dictating the character and development pattern of an area. An attractive and effective streetwall is typically enhanced with the following features to promote a pedestrian-oriented atmosphere:

- ◇ Windows on the ground floor.
- ◇ High quality materials and architecture.
- ◇ Attractive lighting fixtures at a pedestrian scale.
- ◇ Attractive, high quality signage.
- ◇ Crosswalks with clear demarcation.
- ◇ Landscaping/Streetscaping elements.

Streetwall Locations

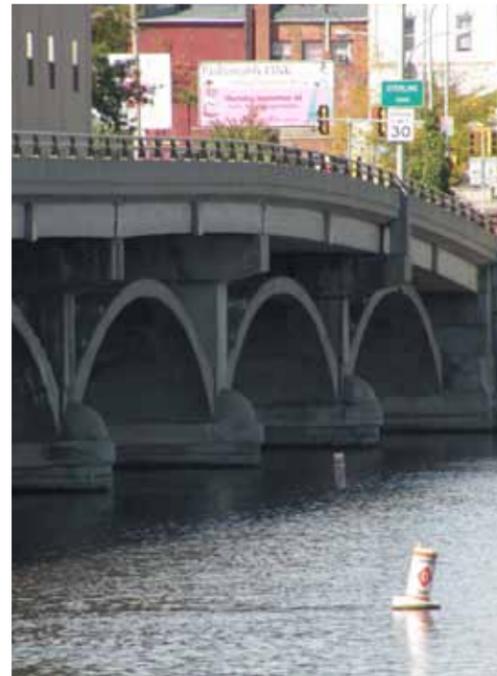




Riverwalk Opportunities



Concrete Retaining Walls



1st Avenue Bridge Improvements



Rockfaced Limestone



Recycled Red Brick

Existing Downtown Streetscape Design Elements

The City implemented a Downtown Master Plan and Streetscape Design to physically improve the downtown core and restore the area's charm. This section of the Plan includes an overview of existing streetscape design elements within the project study area. The inventory is based upon reconnaissance undertaken in the summer of 2010.

Rockfaced Limestone

Rockfaced limestone has been used extensively for planting bed borders. This is a good use of an indigenous material and recalls the historic details of limestone in both buildings and in site grade transitions. As used, the material is a little out of scale. Larger and thicker stones would make better impact. Concrete footings and more refined cap stone would improve the longevity of this material.

Concrete Retaining Walls

Concrete retaining walls are frequently used in front of shops having grade transitions due to streets sloping toward the river or for parking lots and the gateway sign on 1st Avenue. The walls are poured-in-place and unfinished. Capstones are rockfaced limestone, typically with smooth tops, but sometimes not. It is a unique industrial look, but a bit harsh for a pedestrian environment.

Recycled Red Brick

Recycled red brick has been used typically at sidewalk corners, and in street median locations. This is an excellent example of reuse of an available material. In some areas the brick may be too rough for elderly, women in heels or baby strollers.

Concrete Sidewalks

Large expanses of concrete sidewalks lack texture, color and plant material relief.

Street Light Standards

The acorn style street light standards have a turn-of-the-century look and are compatible with the downtown architecture.

Benches and Litter Receptacles

Green metal benches and litter receptacles are an attractive contrast to the light stone and concrete materials.

Crosswalks

Pedestrian crosswalks and traffic calming are lacking.

Signage

The existing gateway sign on 1st Avenue is understated. Coordinated street and wayfinding signage is needed.

Other Comments

Riverwalk

Continuation of the riverwalk east from the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment to the Sinnissippi Park will either be a pathway between residences and the railroad or a low-flow style pathway at the river edge.

Lawrence Park

The character of Lawrence Park is very open, park-like with mature trees. This is similar to workshop #1 Highest Ranked Riverfront character.

1st Avenue Bridge Improvements

1st Avenue bridge improvements included a Jersey Barrier for pedestrian protection. This would be a brutal looking detail for the primary gateway to the city.



Lawrence Park • June 2010

Parks & Environmental Features

The parks, open space and environmental features in a community contribute to the community's overall quality of life, image, character and aesthetics. They provide places for residents and visitors to play, relax and enjoy nature. This section highlights existing parks, open space and environmental features in the Downtown and riverfront areas. These features are a natural complement to the project study area's location along the northern bank of the Rock River and could serve to enhance the community's access to the river. Riverfront locations, and the environmental features they incorporate, lend themselves to both passive and active opportunities for recreation and exposure to nature.

Parks

Lawrence Park

Lawrence Park is owned and operated by the Sterling Park District. Acquired in 1925, it is considered the first park of Sterling and is situated on Avenue G Island. Amenities at the park include: fishing; boat launching; grills; horseshoe courts; picnic areas; playground equipment; open play areas; and, shelters.

At this time, there is no definite plan for the future of the site and it is possible that the park will no longer be a destination once the pool is closed.

The park is approximately 25 acres in size, almost entirely surrounded by the Rock River. It boasts picturesque views of the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Area, thus holds a significant amount of potential for the future.

Central Memorial Park

Central Memorial Park is a City-owned park facility on Brinks Circle within the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Area. It features an outdoor amphitheater named the Grandon Civic Center, picnic areas, a gazebo and pedestrian paths. The Grandon Civic Center features live music performed by Sterling Municipal Band as well as other musical groups and attracts a number of visitors each year.

Environmental Features

Rock River

The Rock River is both a local and regional amenity that exceeds 280 miles in length. It is a tributary that meanders through the states of Wisconsin and Illinois before joining the Mississippi River in Rock Island, Illinois. The River provides tremendous opportunities for parks, residences and commercial establishments along the riverfront.

Though the Rock River never became the major navigational water route as was once hoped, it does have strong historical ties to the City of Sterling. Historically, the river provided power for saw and grist mills and later provided power to the City's booming industrial base.

Today, the Rock River functions as a recreational amenity for fishermen in the area. It contains catfish up to 50 pounds in weight, and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources makes a concerted effort to maintain the River's stock of walleye and other fish. Further east, the Rock River expands into Sinnissippi Lake where people enjoy boating and other water sports; however, these recreational activities are prevented from entering to the Sterling Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Area due to two dams operating near the 1st Avenue bridge.

Rock River Dams

Two dams are also located downtown and impact navigation along the Rock River. The Sinnissippi Dam, located east of downtown is under the jurisdiction of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and was reconstructed in 2003. The structure holds back water along the river that forms Lake Sinnissippi, a recreational boating area east of Sterling. The second dam, located just west of the 1st Avenue Bridge, is an electrical generating station/dam operated by the Rock Falls Electric Department, but is under the jurisdiction of IDNR. The dam was built in 1988 and provides approximately 10% of Rock Fall's annual usage needs. Both dams are in excellent condition and will serve the area well into the foreseeable future.

Lawrence Park Boat Ramp

The existing boat ramp at Lawrence Park is one of twenty six locations in the State of Illinois that can accommodate trailered power boats along the Rock River, though boating is inhibited by the two dams in the Riverfront area. Oppold Marina and Hennepin Canal Lock 29 Access are the closest locations that also offer boat ramps that can accommodate trailered power boats.

Wetlands

Wetlands exist within environmental corridors and in other isolated locations. They are defined by vegetation, hydric soils, and surface and ground water conditions which can make it difficult, and oftentimes not permissible, to develop on them.

There are wetlands identified within the project study area's boundaries, predominantly on the east side of the 1st Avenue bridge. Redevelopment in this area will need to be mindful of wetland boundaries.



Retaining walls exist along much of the shoreline, reducing the flood zone.

Flood Zones

A flood zone is an area near a water course that has a history of flooding or has been identified as an area that is prone to flooding. Oftentimes, flood zones are identified as 100-year or 500-year. A 100-year flood zone indicates that the level of flood water is expected to be equaled or exceeded every 100 years on average, meaning there is a 1% chance of a 100-year flood occurring in any single year. A 500-year flood has a 0.2% chance of occurring in any single year.

In the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Area, much of the land immediately adjacent to the Rock River is found to be prone to flooding. The flood zones are most intense at the western portion of the study area, downstream from the dams. Generally, parks and open space areas are considered suitable uses within a flood zone, while development is oftentimes limited or prohibited. It is not recommended that a permanent structure be built in a flood zone; however, it may be desirable that the flood zone be reduced rather than preserved. Upon redevelopment/development, the riverfront area could potentially be built up with fill and a retaining wall to accommodate an exciting, riverfront development.

Issues and Opportunities

The Rock River, adjoining Downtown Sterling flows from east to west. The Rock River is designated as a State's Public Waters under the jurisdiction of Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) and is subject to the Illinois Administration Code Part 3704 Rules titled "Regulation of Public Waters". The Departmental Standards under Section 3704.90 prohibit activities which result in an obstruction to and interference with the navigability of river or result in bank or shoreline instability. Activities that would be a public benefit maybe permitted upon Department's evaluation. Many activities permitted under this Part also require review of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency.

Additionally, portions of downtown Sterling west of Locust Street are located within the Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA) Zone AE floodplain by the Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM), Whiteside County Map Number 17195C0237E published by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). FEMA has recently completed the Flood Insurance Study (FIS) and modernization of Whiteside County's FIRM which will become effective on February 18th, 2011.

The new FIRM has established the 100-year Based Flood Elevation (BFE) along Rock River. Should any of the redevelopment along the riverfront place fill below the BFE, compensatory storage for 1.5 times the fill volume below the base flood elevation would be required by the Whiteside County Stormwater Code. New building construction within the 100-year floodplain must be elevated at least one foot above the BFE. Chapter 11 of the County's Code for Floodplain and Stormwater Regulation will govern any proposed developments within regulatory floodplain and detention requirements.

Flood Zones



WHITESIDE COUNTY GREENWAYS & TRAILS PLAN

GREENWAY AND TRAIL RESOURCES

WHITESIDE COUNTY HAS A VAST NETWORK OF OPEN SPACES AND TRAILS. THESE RESOURCES PROVIDE A VARIETY OF RECREATION AND TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS FOR RESIDENTS, VISITORS, AND COMMUTERS. THE PLAN IDENTIFIES AND DESCRIBES THESE RESOURCES AND PROVIDES RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THEM.

GREENWAY DEFINITION

A GREENWAY IS A CORRIDOR OF OPEN SPACE THAT PROVIDES A VARIETY OF RECREATION AND TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS. IT CAN BE A PATH FOR BICYCLISTS, PEDESTRIANS, HORSEBACK RIDERS, AND OTHER RECREATION USERS. GREENWAYS CAN BE CREATED BY ACQUIRING LAND OR BY ENCOURAGING PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT.

LOCAL PRIORITY SCHEDULE

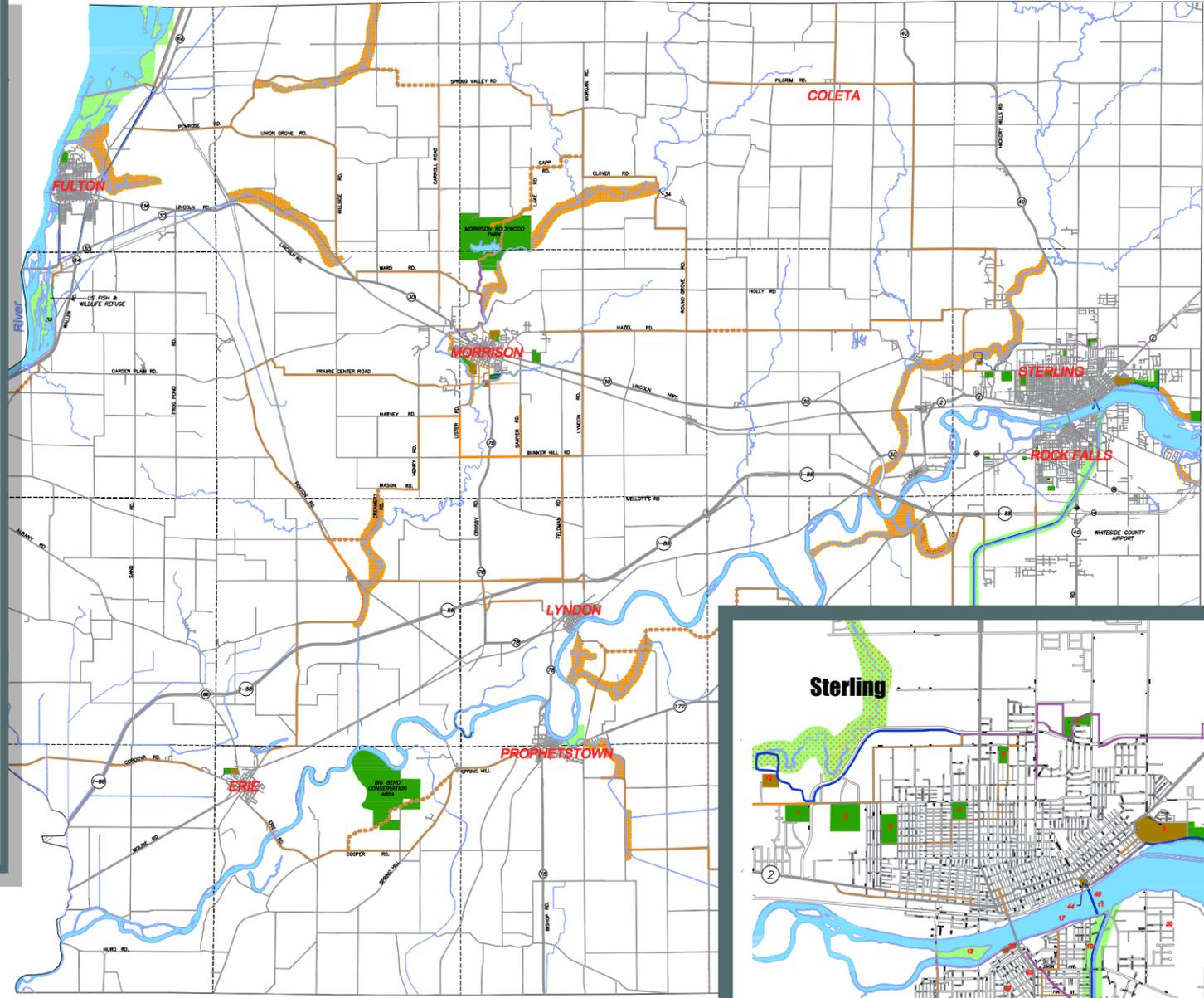
THE FOLLOWING SCHEDULE LISTS LOCAL PRIORITY GREENWAYS AND TRAILS. THESE ARE PROJECTS THAT ARE BEING PROMOTED BY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND ARE BEING FUNDED BY LOCAL SOURCES.

IMPLEMENTATION

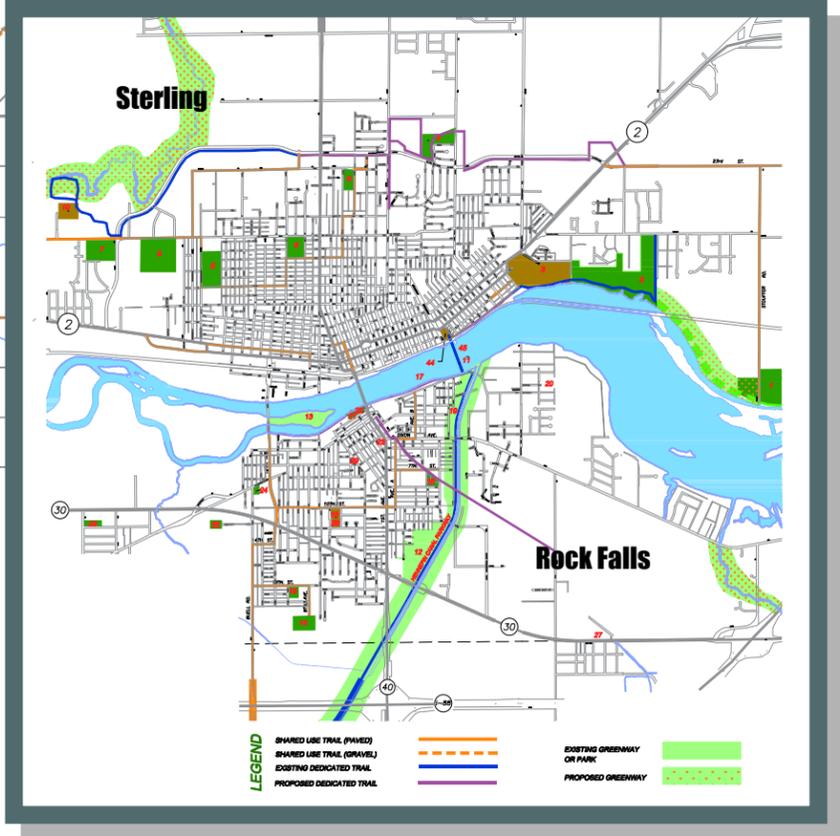
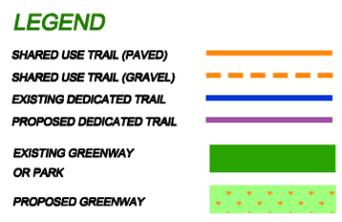
THE PLAN PROVIDES A ROADMAP FOR IMPLEMENTING THE GREENWAYS AND TRAILS PLAN. THIS INCLUDES IDENTIFYING RESPONSIBLE AGENCIES, ESTABLISHING PRIORITIES, AND OBTAINING NECESSARY RESOURCES.

SUMMARY

THE PLAN IS A GUIDE FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND RESIDENTS. IT PROVIDES INFORMATION ON THE CURRENT STATUS OF GREENWAYS AND TRAILS IN WHITESIDE COUNTY AND OFFERS RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THEM.



Whiteside County Greenways & Trails Plan



Trails

At this time, no trails or multi-use paths exist within the Downtown or Riverfront areas, and both Whiteside County and the Sterling Park District have indicated that there are no proposed trail connections in this area in the future. The City of Sterling's Comprehensive Plan recommends the creation of a river walk in the Downtown area, providing public access and open space along the river and serving as a focus for pedestrian and commercial activity. In 2008, the Hennepin Feeder Canal Trail was extended over the Rock River via the Smississippi Dam Walkway. This new trail segment terminates at Martin's Landing and the Dillon Home and Museum property via a pedestrian underpass at the railroad approximately a half east of the Riverfront area.

The Whiteside County Greenways and Trails Plan proposes a riverfront trail on the south side of the river in downtown Rock Falls, running between the Hennepin Feeder Canal Trail and the Avenue G Bridge and Lawrence Park. A trail along Sterling's Riverfront area between Lawrence Park and Martin's Landing would create the potential to establish a full circuit of dedicated trails and walkways on both side of the Rock River as it passes through Sterling and Rock Falls.



4th Street (illustrated above), is an example of a one-way street in Downtown Sterling.

Transportation

Downtown Access and Circulation Overview

Access and circulation to downtown Sterling is influenced by a grid pattern of streets that includes two-way and one-way streets, key bridges and the presence of the Union Pacific Railroad that runs along the riverfront. The existing street system includes a hierarchy of arterial, collector and local streets that provide access to downtown from the surrounding region and provide for circulation within downtown.

Traffic & Roadway Operations

Traffic operations are largely influenced by the one-way street system that accommodates local and through traffic from the surrounding area. Locust Street & First Avenue comprise a one-way couplet north-south, while Third Street and Fourth Street comprise a one-way couplet east-west. Average daily traffic (ADT) along Locust Street / First Avenue peaks at roughly 8,000 vehicles downtown while ADT along Third/Fourth Street peaks around 6,800 vehicles a day. The construction of the County Market grocery store has slightly altered traffic operations, as Fifth Street is also used as part of the one-way roadway system between First Street and Avenue C.

Other principal streets within downtown are Second Street and G Avenue, with ADT volumes of 8,100 and 10,500 respectively. The remaining roadways downtown are two-way streets, which are controlled by traffic signals at major intersections and stop signs at local roads.

Peak hour traffic volumes in downtown reflect the nature of home to work and work to home trips in the morning and evening, when peak hours represent 8-12% of the ADT on major streets. Even during peak travel times, traffic along streets within the downtown core is fairly light, which suggests that there is opportunity for downtown redevelopment to be accommodated.

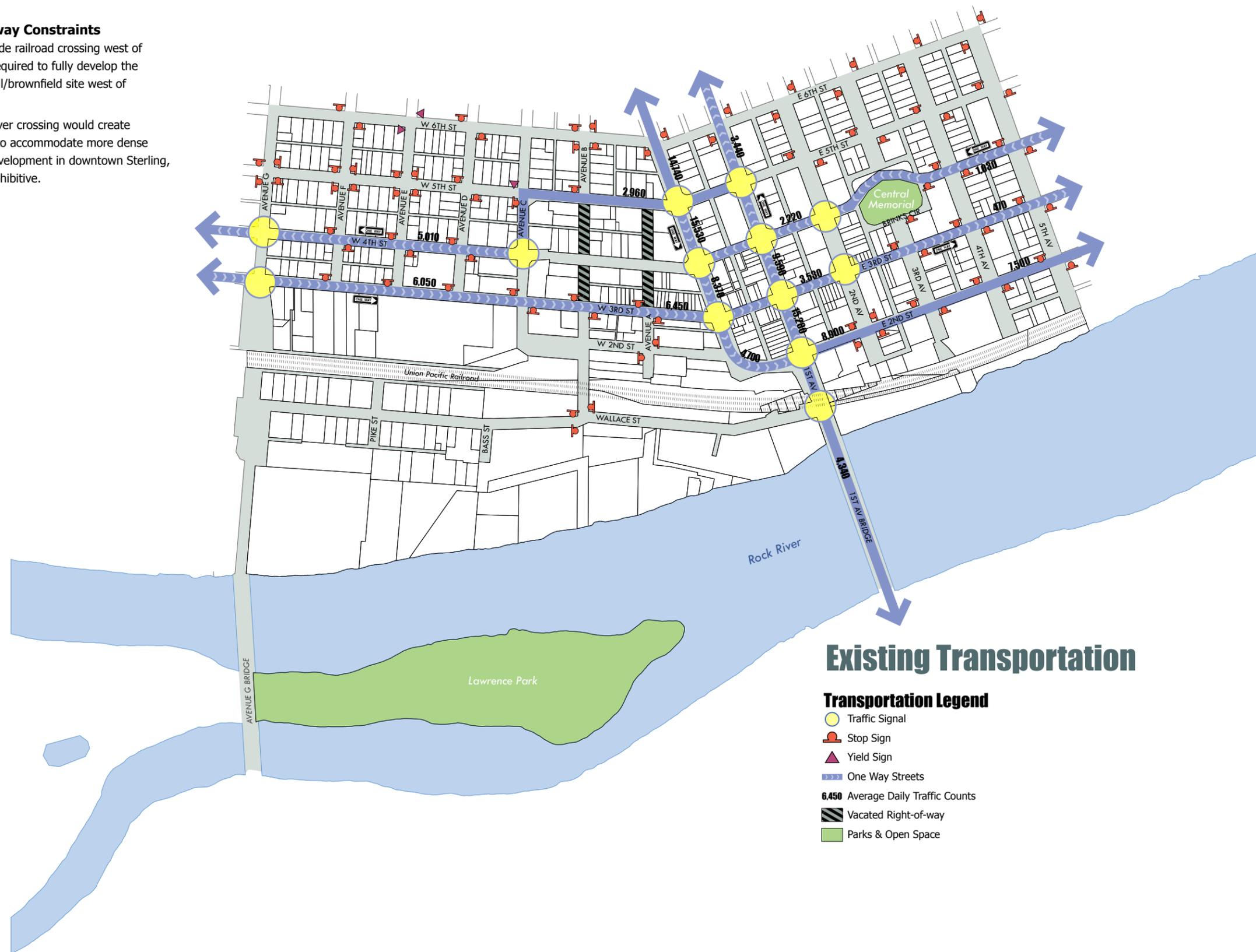
The First Avenue Bridge across the Rock River has an ADT of 21,500 vehicles. The bridge is planned to be rebuilt in 2013 and will be a significant infrastructure investment that can be capitalized upon.

Traffic and Roadway Opportunities

- ◇ Relatively low traffic volumes downtown suggest that fully or partially converting the existing one-way couplets to two-way operations may be possible to create a more pedestrian friendly environment.
- ◇ The jurisdictional transfer of Illinois Route 2 west of Locust Street from IDOT to Sterling provides an opportunity for the City to revise the existing street network to two-way operations.
- ◇ The replacement of the IL Route 40 (First Avenue) bridge should provide additional sidewalk space for pedestrians as well as scenic overlooks. The railroad viaduct will not be replaced as part of this project.

Traffic and Roadway Constraints

- ◇ An additional at-grade railroad crossing west of Avenue K may be required to fully develop the abandoned steel mill/brownfield site west of downtown.
- ◇ Although another river crossing would create additional capacity to accommodate more dense development / redevelopment in downtown Sterling, the cost may be prohibitive.



Existing Transportation

Transportation Legend

- Traffic Signal
- ⬮ Stop Sign
- ▲ Yield Sign
- ➡ One Way Streets
- 6,450 Average Daily Traffic Counts
- ▨ Vacated Right-of-way
- Parks & Open Space



Illinois Route 2 Bridge

Pedestrian Amenities

Overall, pedestrian walkability downtown is very good. The existing grid of streets and regular pattern of blocks create a highly walkable framework that could be extended to the riverfront as redevelopment occurs. Sidewalks are generally in good condition and are present on both sides of the street. Pedestrian crosswalks are located at major traffic signal installations within downtown and are mostly well delineated for the volume of downtown pedestrian traffic present.

Pedestrian Opportunities

- ◇ Potential may exist on one-way roadways to widen sidewalks if roadways are converted to two-way operation.
- ◇ Crosswalks incorporating special treatments such as brick, stamped asphalt or other methods could enhance the pedestrian crossings.

Pedestrian Constraints

- ◇ The existing sidewalks along the IL Route 40 (First Avenue) bridge over the Rock River are very narrow, creating a pedestrian disconnect between the City of Sterling and Rock Falls. However, it is our understanding that that IDOT will provide wider sidewalks when the bridge and railroad viaduct replaced in 2013. Pedestrian access to the Rock River is cut off due to the presence of the Union Pacific Railroad tracks adjacent to the river.
- ◇ The railroad creates a challenge for pedestrian access to the riverfront area. Although also costly, at least one pedestrian underpass should be considered, so as to better connect the riverfront with the rest of downtown Sterling.

Parking

Parking downtown is provided by a combination of on-street, off-street, and private parking lots. The City of Sterling owns 11 public parking lots in the downtown area for permit parking, with a total of 216 spaces provided. Lots provide a mix of permit only and hourly parking. Open spaces may be purchased on a quarterly basis, for \$15 per month. Spaces are available on a first-come, first-serve basis. Those already owning permits do receive first consideration to renew their permits.

On-street parking in the downtown is free. Our observations suggest that the downtown area has an ample supply of public and private parking options for existing uses and potential new development. Thus, a detailed inventory of parking was not conducted. Future demands will be tested in the next phase of study to ensure that adequate prime parking will be available for downtown residents and shoppers.

Zoning Ordinance Parking Requirements

The Sterling Zoning Ordinance dates back to 1971 and the City desires to update it. In terms of parking, the City will be flexible on current parking strategies, such as demand management, shared parking, and parking lot design dimensions.

Parking Opportunities

- ◇ Overall, parking availability downtown is generally good, with spot locations where parking is considered tight.

Parking Constraints

- ◇ There may be occasional parking shortages in downtown at the larger buildings, as drivers expect and anticipate to be able to always park "at the front door".

Transit

Sterling does not have local bus service. In addition, no regional transit service, such as Greyhound bus or Amtrak trains are currently available or being considered in the short or long term.



Sterling Park District Trail Crossing the Sinnissippi Dam

Bicycling and Trail Provisions

Whiteside County has completed two countywide greenways and trails plans in 1999 and 2008. Future planned bicycle route and trail extensions include a planned trail generally paralleling Lynn Boulevard north of downtown and a trail along the Rock River between the Upper Dam and Oppold Marina, paralleling the Union Pacific Railroad tracks. Current bicycle routes in downtown Sterling include portions of First Avenue, Second Street, 16th Avenue, and Fourth Street.

Bicycling and Trail Opportunities

- ◇ Sterling’s downtown has relatively low traffic volumes that could accommodate bicyclists by providing signage, shared use markings, or dedicated bike lanes.
- ◇ The currently proposed riverfront trail could be extended west along the riverfront to connect with downtown Sterling and the abandoned steel mills west of First Street.

Bicycling Constraints

- ◇ The lack of a bicycling culture downtown requires further education of motorists to create a safer environment for bicyclists downtown and around Whiteside County.
- ◇ Additional bicycle parking is needed downtown to encourage more cycling.
- ◇ The existing G Street Bridge over the Rock River to Lawrence Park is very narrow and difficult for bicyclists to traverse on the roadway or the sidewalk.

Railroad Operations

The Union Pacific railroad operates within downtown along the riverfront. The three lane track serves as a principal freight route within the Union Pacific network to Chicago. A grade separated railroad crossing is provided at First Avenue (IL Route 40).

Existing Infrastructure and Environmental Conditions

The City’s existing network of watermains, storm, and sanitary sewers are more than adequate to meet the demands of additional development. The existing utility infrastructure is oversized due to prior industrial uses. In addition, redevelopment areas along the riverfront are well above the existing floodplain, and a flood/retaining wall exists along the riverfront through much of downtown.

Infrastructure & Environmental Opportunities

- ◇ Existing industrial buildings adjacent to the river could potentially be reused if environmental remediation and rehabilitation are economically achievable.

Infrastructure & Environmental Constraints

- ◇ Several environmental contaminants, including cyanide and asbestos are known to be present at properties along the Riverfront. The costs of the environmental remediation of the properties are not known at this time, but are anticipated to be paid by the existing property owners.



View looking south down 2nd Avenue, First Congregational Church on right

Section 4

VISION, GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Vision

The Downtown Riverfront Vision consists of seven themes, each of which represents the community's desires and aspirations for the area. The Vision establishes a set of core values that will guide and inspire the City and property owners in realizing a vibrant Riverfront that is compatible with Downtown.

The Vision Statement should inspire the following to occur in the Sterling community:

- ◇ Promote reinvestment and development/ redevelopment along the riverfront;
- ◇ Establish a unique character for the Downtown and Riverfront areas;
- ◇ Provide direction to property owners, business owners and developers;
- ◇ Support economic development opportunities;
- ◇ Develop support to preserve important cultural amenities;
- ◇ Promote an enhanced pedestrian experience; and,
- ◇ Identify a strategy and timeframe for the Riverfront to redevelop.

The Vision is intended to provide an overall "snapshot" of Sterling's Riverfront in the future, by focusing on the redevelopment of key sites along the Rock River Riverfront, and the enhancement of the Downtown. It provides direction for the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan goals and objectives, and Plan recommendations and policies. The Vision incorporates ideas and themes expressed by residents, business owners and City officials throughout the planning process, and is realistic in both market and site capacity.

Vision Statement

The Vision Statement is written as a retrospective that chronicles everything that has occurred in the last twenty years, since the City adopted the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan in 2011. It recounts the accomplishments, achievements and successes of the Riverfront and Downtown areas as envisioned throughout the planning process.

In the year 2031... Sterling's Riverfront is alive and vibrant. Once a manufacturing center, Sterling's Riverfront symbolized a healthy and prosperous economy. As industry left, leaving vacant dilapidated buildings in its wake, the waterfront was a type of eyesore, and a constant reminder of how things were. Today, after its rebirth and transformation, Sterling's Riverfront is a source of civic pride, an envy to other communities, and a destination to many.

Over the past several years, great accomplishments and extensive redevelopment has occurred along the Rock River riverfront due in large part to the visionary actions of government leaders, Sterling residents and cooperative developers. The redevelopment of the heavy industrial area was not easy. Considerable work has been undertaken and the Riverfront has been reclaimed and reinvented with new developments and significant investment, transforming the area into an amenity and destination rooted in the City's manufacturing legacy with modern day attractions.

Since the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan was adopted, Sterling's Downtown and Riverfront areas have been reunited and together are the "heart" of the City. With a welcoming and family-friendly atmosphere, these areas have maintained an economic competitiveness due to the City's growing employment base, an increase in the number and types of housing opportunities, improved traffic circulation, and the City's innovative use of TIF funds, grants and other funding sources. The Downtown and Riverfront areas evoke a sense of vibrancy and provide attractive venues for special events and a source of community pride and identity.

Looking at the Riverfront today, a casual observer may be unaware of the metamorphosis that has taken place, and that it did not all happen at once. Revitalization and redevelopment along the Riverfront occurred incrementally, gaining momentum as clean up efforts were completed and old industrial structures were removed. Since the adoption of the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan, numerous positive transformations and projects have individually assisted with the incremental redevelopment, evolution, and revitalization of the area.



First Avenue Bridge mural • West 2nd Street

The new revitalized Riverfront has a distinct character and charm created by the new development which blends seamlessly with the historic buildings that have been restored and reused. Portions of the National Manufacturing building and the Lawrence Brothers building remain, contributing to the Riverfront's charm and providing ties to the City's manufacturing legacy. Taking cues from these and other historic buildings, the newer riverfront development is attractive and rich in architectural detail, and will no doubt leave a legacy of its own.

The tone of the Riverfront's character is established the moment you cross the Rock River on the 1st Avenue bridge. When you enter Sterling, you must first pass through the historic threshold of the National Manufacturing and Lawrence Brothers buildings, which have both been preserved and restored. On your approach to Sterling, views of the shoreline reveal that these restored historic treasures are complemented by an active waterfront. The new Riverwalk, including its pedestrian pavilions and scenic outlooks, restaurants with outdoor dining, and parks and civic amenities, including the new Veteran's Memorial, are visible to residents and visitors entering the City from the south.

Redevelopment along the Riverfront has capitalized and expanded the base of niche retailers from Downtown, while remaining sensitive to the proximity of nearby competitors. The Riverfront's transformation from an aging industrial center to a hub of commercial activity has been astonishing. The industrial buildings that once lined Sterling's Riverfront have been replaced by a vibrant mix of uses, including restaurants, retail shops, offices, townhomes, condos, open space and cultural amenities such as the new Veteran's Memorial and museum.

The development of new residential opportunities has been key to the success of the Riverfront and attracted new families and professionals to the community. The area provides a variety of housing options, including apartments, rowhomes, condominiums and senior housing. While there are some standalone developments, there is also a number of apartments and condominiums developed on the upper floors of mixed-use buildings, and within the restored industrial buildings that have been preserved.

The Rock River is a unique natural feature that was key to the initial settlement of Sterling. Today, the Rock River continues to define the community and its presence within the City has been strengthened through riverfront redevelopment and revitalization. Beyond the pleasing scenery, and ambient sounds of water and wildlife, the Rock River functions as a recreational amenity for area residents and visitors alike. Parks and open space areas are vital components of Sterling's Riverfront, providing numerous functions and benefits. Riverfront residents and visitors come to the area for many reasons, some to play, others to exercise and some to relax.

Creating and maintaining public accessibility to the Rock River Riverfront has been a priority of the City since the adoption of the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan. The overgrown vegetation, uneven shorelines and inconsistent retaining walls have been replaced by a continuous Riverwalk and multi-use trail that extends across the length of Sterling's riverfront. The new Riverwalk has allowed Sterling residents and visitors to use and enjoy the Rock River, and provided unique opportunities for riverfront shopping and dining. Other popular venues include scenic overlooks, fishing access and boat launches, and open play areas, all of which encourage visitors to come and stay. The Riverwalk also ties into the regional trail system, allowing bicyclists and other users to pass through the area.

In addition to the Riverwalk and the abundant array of amenities it provides, a network of paths and trails has also been completed, providing alternative routes for walkers, runners and bicyclists. The most notable enhancement is a new bridge over the Rock River, that connects the Riverwalk to Lawrence Park, a community focal point. Today, pedestrians and bicyclists enjoy convenient access to this destination as well as the greater Region, as it seems the trail network connects to just about everywhere. Not resting on its laurels, the City continues to improve pedestrian safety, as they are currently working with the Union Pacific Railroad and IDOT on the replacement of the 1st Avenue viaduct. In addition to accommodating train traffic, plans for the new viaduct will also include a multi-use trail for bicyclists and pedestrians, connecting them safely over the busy 1st Avenue.

One might have never guessed, but despite all of the reinvestment and redevelopment, circulation in the Downtown and Riverfront areas has improved. All the redevelopment provided the City with a great opportunity to evaluate parking and circulation Downtown. Two new streets extend south from the Downtown and into the Riverfront area, improving its accessibility, and many of the past one-way streets have been converted to two-way couplets. As part of the reconfiguration, the sidewalks were widened, creating a safer and a more comfortable and walkable area. An attractive streetscape clearly defines the pedestrian realm, and enhances the

character, functionality and appeal of the area. Today, both vehicles and pedestrians move around with ease, whether passing through Downtown and the Riverfront, or visiting the bustling area.

Benefiting the most from the Riverfront revitalization has been Downtown Sterling. The "shot" of investment and commitment by the City has invigorated business owners with a renewed sense of pride. Today Downtown continues to be revitalized as a vibrant, mixed-use area. The City has had tremendous success in promoting new infill development and redevelopment of key sites in Downtown. City officials have worked cooperatively with property owners, business owners and others, and the fruit of these efforts are evident in the new boutiques, shops and restaurants that have opened for business, attracting visitors from Sterling and beyond. Above the new active storefronts, offices, commercial services and apartments and condominiums provide a consistent customer base for nearby Downtown and Riverfront businesses.

Goals and Objectives

The Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan is an expression of what the Sterling community desires the Riverfront to become in the future. Through recommendations and established goals and objectives, the Plan becomes a reliable policy guide for decision-making and City action.

This section presents the Plan's goals and objectives, which provide the framework for planning recommendations, policies, future projects and actions. They are not intended to be interminable; rather, to serve as a framework for the creation of a more definite plan.

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

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

There are eight fundamental goals of the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan aimed at providing opportunities for living, shopping, business, recreation and leisure along Sterling's Riverfront. The goals and objectives presented below are based on input provided by residents within the community, investigations undertaken by the consultant and case studies of other successful riverfront developments.

Goals

An abbreviated highlight of the eight goals is provided below, followed by the complete list of goals and objectives.

1. Revitalize the Riverfront with an appropriate mixture of redevelopment, rehabilitation, adaptive reuse and public improvements.
2. Improve public accessibility to the Riverfront by enhancing the mobility, movement and safety of pedestrian, vehicular and bicycle traffic.
3. Maximize the potential of the Rock River as a recreational and economic resource.
4. Diversify and strengthen the City's tax base by attracting non-residential uses to the Riverfront.
5. Improve the overall image and character of the Riverfront, creating a distinctive district reflective of the area's unique character.
6. Create and enhance physical and emotional linkages between the Downtown and Riverfront areas.
7. Promote and maintain the Riverfront's image and desirability as a great place to live by developing a diverse housing stock and enhancing the quality, character, safety and appeal of residential areas along the Rock River.
8. Work with nearby communities, groups and agencies to implement the goals and recommendations of the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan.

1. Revitalize the Riverfront.

Revitalize the Riverfront with an appropriate mixture of redevelopment, rehabilitation, adaptive reuse and public improvements.

Objectives

1. Identify and preserve historically significant buildings or structures along the Rock River riverfront to connect residents and visitors to the City's local history and manufacturing legacy.
2. Implement Design and Development Guidelines to assist in promoting and guiding high quality redevelopment of the Riverfront Redevelopment Sites.
3. Review zoning and development codes to ensure that they encourage appropriate land uses and built form.
4. Require 360 degree architecture for all development/redevelopment projects in the Downtown and Riverfront areas to result in an attractive appearance on all visible façades.
5. Require new development in the Downtown and Riverfront areas to be constructed at, or near, the sidewalk to reinforce the traditional "streetwall" development pattern and provide a pedestrian-friendly atmosphere.
6. Implement more systematic and proactive property maintenance and code enforcement in the Downtown and adjacent areas.
7. Require Riverfront businesses to engage the water, and orient rear entrances to the Riverwalk or riverfront.

2. Improve public accessibility.

Improve public accessibility to the Riverfront by enhancing the mobility, movement and safety of pedestrian, vehicular and bicycle traffic in the area.

Objectives

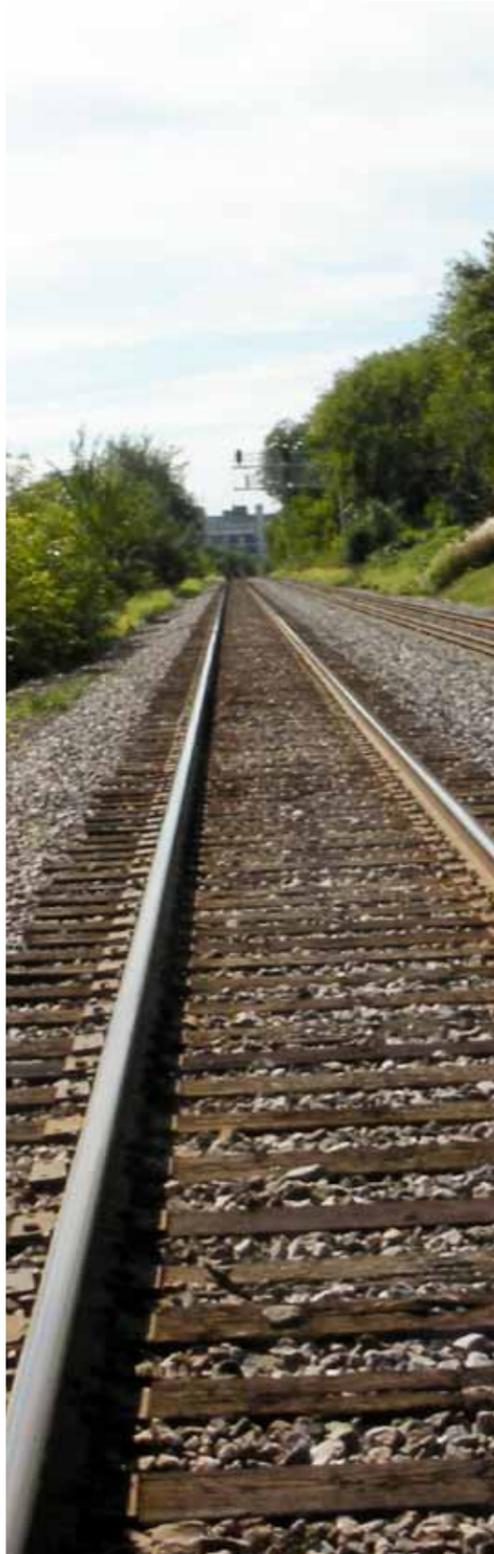
1. Create and maintain continuous public access along the Rock River Riverfront that is unobstructed by uneven shorelines, overgrown vegetation and inconsistent retaining walls.
2. Develop a Riverwalk or multi-use trail extension along the length of the Rock River riverfront, to connect to the Sinnissippi Dam Walkway and into the larger, regional trail system.
3. Convert one-way couplets in the area to two-way operations to improve vehicular circulation; and, to provide additional space for sidewalks to be widened resulting in a more pedestrian friendly environment.
4. Promote the addition of bicycle parking in redevelopment and streetscape projects Downtown and on the Riverfront Redevelopment Sites to encourage more cycling.
5. Enhance pedestrian crossings and ensure that they are clearly demarcated and distinguishable to vehicular traffic.
6. Ensure there is an adequate amount of parking available for Downtown visitors, employees and residents.
7. Reconfigure on-street parking to best utilize existing right-of-way, improve traffic flow, allow for sidewalk widening, and accommodate appropriate parking.
8. Ensure that all sidewalks are continuous within the Downtown and Riverfront areas, and connected to the larger, regional network of sidewalks and trails.
9. Continue support for and accommodate the improvement of the 1st Avenue Bridge.
10. Identify truck routes or traffic calming measures that minimize the amount of cut-through and truck traffic passing through the Downtown and Riverfront areas.

3. Utilize the Rock River.

Maximize the potential of the Rock River as a recreational and economic resource.

Objectives

1. Explore and encourage opportunities for recreational tourism on the Rock River.
2. Encourage and/or provide opportunities for non-motorized boating activities including canoeing, kayaking and paddle boating.
3. Incorporate fishing piers and scenic overlooks into redevelopment projects.
4. Work with the Sterling Park District to plan for new parks within the Riverfront area.
5. Enhance Lawrence Park as a unique community destination.
6. Promote the addition of new public gathering spaces and plazas within the redevelopment of the Riverfront Redevelopment Sites.
7. Explore the development of a Veteran's Memorial along the Rock River.
8. Protect and enhance parks, open space and environmental features in the Riverfront Redevelopment Area.
9. Require appropriate setbacks and buffering from creeks and floodways to minimize flooding concerns and property damage, and to improve water quality.
10. Where applicable, require the design of new developments to incorporate public amenities such as parks, plazas, arcades and connections to existing or proposed trails.



4. Strengthen the City's tax base.

Diversify and strengthen the City's tax base by attracting a desirable, aesthetically pleasing and functionally well-designed mix of uses to the Riverfront while complementing, not competing with Downtown.

Objectives

1. Continue to pursue and implement a variety of development strategies and incentives.
2. Continue the effective use of Rock River TIF funds to advance the goals of the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan and facilitate development and reinvestment along the Riverfront.
3. Provide periodic updates to market conditions and focus recruitment efforts on market gaps identified during the Market Analysis.
4. Encourage all retail, office, and service commercial activities to be concentrated near the 1st Avenue Bridge for maximum visibility and access, and within areas of complementary uses.
5. Where appropriate, encourage high density, compact built form to enhance the sense of place and pedestrian atmosphere.
6. Incorporate areas of multi-family housing to increase the residential density and provide a variety of housing options for Sterling residents.
7. Encourage residential uses to locate on the upper floors of mixed-use buildings so that pedestrian generators and tax generating uses can be located at the street level.
8. Establish the Riverfront area as an entertainment and dining destination, promoting activity during evening hours and weekends, as well as during the day.

9. Update the City's zoning and development controls to require and encourage the addition of new mixed-use, commercial development along the Riverfront.
10. Support and promote the efforts of the Greater Sterling Development Corporation and the Sauk Valley Area Chamber of Commerce to market and promote local businesses.
11. Ensure that new commercial development and redevelopment is designed in scale with, and complementary to, existing adjacent development.
12. Ensure that all commercial development is effectively screened and buffered from adjacent residential uses.
13. Identify funds and programs that can assist businesses and property owners with façade improvements, landscaping, parking improvements, and modernization of aging structures and facilities.
14. Implement a systematic and proactive property maintenance and code enforcement process in the Riverfront area.
15. Recognize, support and encourage the catalytic role of new offices or buildings of higher education in appropriate locations within the Riverfront area.
16. Accommodate redevelopment through a consistent, expedient and thorough permitting process.

Looking west down the Union Pacific Railroad tracks adjacent to the Riverfront Redevelopment Sites

5. Improve the image and character of the Riverfront.

Improve the overall image and character of the Riverfront, creating a distinctive district reflective of the area's unique character.

Objectives

1. Extend the Downtown's streetscape program into the Riverfront area to: improve the overall appearance, character and attractiveness of the Riverfront.
2. Create an environment more appealing to developers and business owners and to improve connections between the Downtown and Riverfront areas.
3. Enforce Design and Development Guidelines to promote high-quality design and construction for all development/redevelopment along the Riverfront with an emphasis on site design, building orientation, architecture, building materials and site improvements.
4. Support and promote community events and festivals along the Riverfront; and, work with Downtown and Riverfront businesses and residents to ensure ongoing communication regarding these events.

5. Encourage the use of public art in development projects and in public areas to promote and establish a community identity along the Rock River.
6. Maintain consistent and high-quality public rights-of-way including street surfaces, sidewalks, lights and other municipal infrastructure.
7. Work with utility companies and property owners to bury overhead utilities whenever feasible.
8. Ensure that new development along the Riverfront is designed in scale with, and complementary to, existing Downtown buildings.
9. Ensure that pedestrian amenities are incorporated in redevelopment projects along the Riverfront to support pedestrian activity.
10. Protect and enhance parks, open space and environmental features in the Riverfront Redevelopment Area.
11. Work with the Sterling Park District to plan for new parks within the Riverfront area.
12. Pursue the development of a multi-use trail extension along the length of the Rock River riverfront, to connect to the Sinnissippi Dam Walkway and into the larger, regional trail system.

6. Improve linkages between the Downtown and Riverfront areas.

Create and enhance physical and emotional linkages between the Downtown and Riverfront areas.

Objectives

1. Extend the Downtown's streetscape program into the Riverfront area to: improve the overall appearance, character and attractiveness of the Riverfront; create an environment more appealing to developers and business owners; and, improve connections between the Downtown and Riverfront areas.
2. Extend the Downtown's traditional street grid into the Riverfront area to improve north-south movement between the Downtown and Riverfront areas.
3. To alleviate the perceived physical and mental barrier the railroad tracks provide, work with the Union Pacific Railroad to identify areas appropriate for additional at-grade and grade-separated crossings for vehicles and pedestrians.
4. Implement a consistent, attractive gateway and wayfinding signage system that connects the Downtown and Riverfront areas.
5. Work with the Sterling Mural Society and explore opportunities for new murals in the Riverfront area to enhance the area's sense of place and strengthen connections between the Riverfront and Downtown.
6. Promote and encourage special events and festivals that celebrate the unique assets of the Downtown and Riverfront areas together to unify the area.

7. Promote the Riverfront.

Promote and maintain the Riverfront's image and desirability as a great place to live by developing a diverse housing stock and enhancing the quality, character, safety and appeal of residential areas along the Rock River.

Objectives

1. Promote redevelopment of a variety of housing and dwelling unit types and densities.
2. Ensure the Zoning Ordinance and other regulatory tools are updated appropriately to foster the desired development within the Downtown.
3. Accommodate residential redevelopment on the Riverfront through a consistent, expedient and thorough permitting process.
4. Consistently administer and enforce residential development regulations, including compliance with design and development guidelines, landscaping, bulk, density and other development regulations.
5. Enforce buffering, landscaping, screening and lighting requirements of adjacent commercial areas to minimize the negative impacts of commercial development on residential uses.
6. Promote the economic importance, and support the provision of, a variety of housing types and choices within the Riverfront area including apartments, rowhomes, condominiums, senior housing and others.
7. Incorporate areas of multi-family housing along the Riverfront to increase density and promote pedestrian activity.

8. Work with other agencies.

Work with nearby communities, groups and agencies to implement the goals and recommendations of the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan.

Objectives

1. Continue to seek grants, loans and other funding sources to benefit the long-term redevelopment of the Riverfront.
2. Coordinate with the City of Rock Falls and Whiteside County to identify mutual concerns and objectives.
3. Communicate regularly with the City of Rock Falls regarding plans for the Downtown and Riverfront to minimize duplicative efforts and consolidate services and resources where feasible.
4. Maintain a positive channel of communication with agencies such as the Union Pacific Railroad, Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), Army Corps of Engineers, Sterling Park District and others for better coordination regarding projects on their properties or within their jurisdiction.
5. Coordinate the review and input of redevelopment proposals with all affected public agencies and departments such as the Fire Department, School Districts and Park District.



United Way of Whiteside County



WELCOME TO STERLING

Existing welcome sign near the 1st Avenue bridge

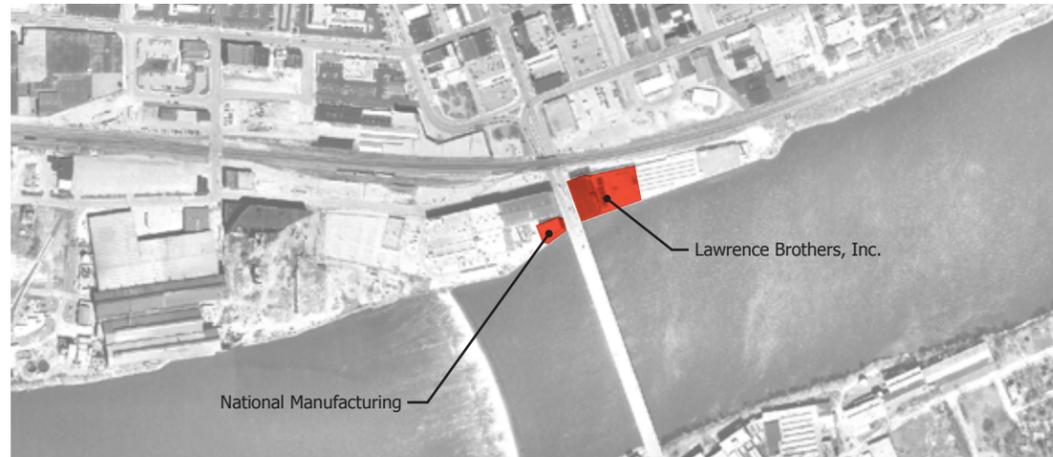
Section 5

LAND USE & DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The Riverfront Redevelopment Sites are envisioned to redevelop as a vibrant, walkable, mixed-use area. Achieving an appropriate mix of land uses is vital to ensure the long-term sustainability of the Riverfront. The area will be a lively destination, with integrated land uses and a sense of vitality and activity at the river's edge. Redevelopment should be interconnected to create a unique synergy not present in other areas of the City.

Sterling's Riverfront should be woven into the rest of the City by connecting to Downtown and adjacent neighborhoods, and not functioning as an isolated destination. Though the edges of the Riverfront area have been defined by the boundaries of the Riverfront Redevelopment Sites, it will remain important that the Riverfront area connect physically and emotionally with the surrounding vicinity. Redevelopment should also accommodate a variety of transportation modes while considering aesthetics and high quality design.

This section of the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan presents the Land Use and Development Plan for Sterling's Downtown and Riverfront areas, with an emphasis on the Riverfront Redevelopment Sites. The Plan is based on local desires, the market study contained in Section 2 of this Plan, and the proficient expertise of the Consultant team.



Buildings along the Riverfront recommended to be preserved.



A Veteran's Memorial is an example of a cultural amenity.



Mixed use development in a traditional downtown setting.

Guiding Principles

To achieve an appropriate mix of land uses and realize a vibrant destination along the Rock River Riverfront, various principles are identified and recommended to guide the City, property owners and developers through redevelopment and revitalization. Identified below are principles that have been established and guided the planning efforts to realize a riverfront that the Sterling community desires.

Preservation of Historic Structures

Preserving the history of the area was cited as a key goal of the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan; specifically, preserving unique, salvageable architectural features. Two buildings were identified for preservation on the Riverfront Redevelopment Sites. They are the westernmost portion of the Lawrence Brothers, Inc. building, and the easternmost portion of the National Manufacturing building. Preserving these structures will provide ties to the City's historic past and manufacturing legacy, while contributing to the Riverfront's unique character and charm. Their strong presence abutting the Rock River and anchoring the 1st Avenue Bridge create a physical and emotional landmark for residents and visitors, and a "threshold" for Sterling.

Cultural Facilities and Amenities

Cultural facilities and amenities are often the most important components of an area. They include the buildings, spaces, people and ideas that have made significant contributions to the cultural identity of a community. Cultural facilities and amenities contribute to an area's "sense of place" by functioning as an attraction for residents and visitors and connecting them to the area's history. Another benefit of cultural facilities and amenities is their ability to help leverage private investment.

A guiding principle in the creation of the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan is the inclusion of a new Veteran's Memorial and Riverfront Plaza, accompanied by a museum. These cultural facilities and amenities would provide Riverfront residents and visitors opportunities for learning, enjoyment and inspiration, telling the story of Sterling's rich history while at the same time enhancing the area's sense of place, identity and vitality.

Mixed-Use Development & Compact Built Form

Mixed-use developments integrate the function and physical components of buildings into one building that consists of a combination of two or more uses. They allow residents, business owners and patrons to coexist in harmony in one distinct setting, while promoting a vibrant, pedestrian-oriented environment with compact built form.

To create and maintain the Riverfront as a vibrant, walkable area, the promotion of mixed-use development and compact built form is identified as a guiding principle. Compact, mixed-use developments are successful in creating an intimate pedestrian atmosphere and active street environment for residents and visitors.



An example of a riverwalk trail with pedestrian amenities and attractive landscaping.

Creation of a Riverwalk

To maintain public accessibility to the Riverfront, the creation of a pedestrian-oriented Riverwalk should be a key consideration in all redevelopment proposals. The Riverwalk should be complemented by public plazas and scenic overlooks, street furniture, decorative lighting and other streetscaping amenities. Visually interesting details including landscaping, water features, wayfinding/informational signage, public art, and active street-level uses fronting the Riverwalk should also be promoted.



Outdoor dining is one way to enhance the vitality of the Rock River Riverfront.

Outdoor Activities

Outdoor activities will play an important role in the vitality of Sterling’s Riverfront. Restaurants and cafes with outdoor dining will provide diners with picturesque views of the Rock River and a charming atmosphere, and the Riverwalk will encourage recreational activities such as fishing, jogging and biking. Additional outdoor activities such as Sterling’s Farmers Market, live music performances, art fairs and more will attract people to the riverfront and continually promote the area on a local and regional level.



An example of a strong streetwall oriented towards the water.

Orientation Towards the Rock River

The success and character of Sterling’s Riverfront area can be undermined by development that is not oriented towards the Rock River. To create a truly unique atmosphere that capitalizes on the riverfront, all development that occurs on the Riverfront Redevelopment Sites should have a strong orientation to the Rock River. Development fronting the river should contain active, pedestrian-oriented uses, with visually interesting details at the ground level. Buildings should have main entrances fronting the river and large windows that provide clear views of merchandise and activity within them. A continuous thread of shops and restaurants should be maintained. Outdoor dining areas and pedestrian plazas should also be oriented towards the river to ensure that area activity remains at the river’s edge. Achieving an active river edge will define the Riverfront’s sense of place and distinguish it from the rest of the City and surrounding areas.



A naturalized Riverfront with a trail promotes environmental sustainability.

Promote Sustainability

The three pillars of sustainability should be considered as a guiding principle in all redevelopment proposals for Sterling’s Riverfront. Sustainable development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. To achieve this, it is generally accepted that environmental, social and economic demands must be reconciled and not addressed exclusively from one another. Sterling’s Riverfront has the opportunity to be truly sustainable. The incorporation of a City Museum would be an opportunity for cultural sustainability; the Rock River and Riverfront gardens would provide an opportunity for environmental sustainability; and, development that is consistent with the recommendations of the market study offers opportunities for economic sustainability.



An example of an active pedestrian realm with wide sidewalks and outdoor dining areas.

Maintain a Vibrant Street Fabric with Appropriate Right-of-way

A key contributing factor to a vibrant pedestrian street is the composition of the public right-of-way. The right-of-way should be designed to accommodate pedestrian traffic before vehicular traffic. It should be no larger than is necessary to accommodate one vehicular travel lane in each direction, on-street parallel parking, and wide sidewalks with attractive streetscaping amenities. Wide sidewalks would contribute to the comfort of a street and provide ample space for pedestrian amenities and outdoor dining areas. The redevelopment concept for the Rock River Riverfront incorporates a right-of-way to cultivate a lively pedestrian realm and vibrant street fabric.



Land Use and Development Plan

The Land Use and Development Plan designates specific land uses and underlying urban design and development aspects for each portion of the Downtown and Riverfront areas. These designations indicate the preferred form and type of development that should be incorporated as the Riverfront is revitalized and undergoes new development and redevelopment.

The Land Use and Development Plan seeks to create an attractive, desirable place to visit, work and live. Land use designations do not reflect the existing land use; rather, they indicate the preferred land use for the future as the area is revitalized.

The Land Use and Development Plan does not identify a preference for national businesses or local businesses; instead, it promotes consideration of built form. Development/redevelopment in the Downtown and Riverfront areas must be consistent with a traditional downtown form and cater to the pedestrian in favor of the automobile.

One of the Sterling Mural Society's murals in Downtown Sterling.

Land Use Categories

Mixed-Use

Mixed-use development should become the dominating land use as the Riverfront undergoes redevelopment and revitalization. This form of development will have an appropriate combination of uses located within the same principle structure, where a variety of daily needs and functions are accessible to area residents, businesses and visitors. Mixed-use buildings are envisioned to incorporate active uses on the ground floor such as retail, restaurant or entertainment uses, with office and service uses or residential units on upper floors.

Ideally, both the National Manufacturing building and Lawrence Brothers, Inc. building will be preserved and restored as mixed-use buildings with active, pedestrian-oriented uses oriented towards the water and Riverwalk. These buildings have been identified for preservation because of their ties to the City's rich manufacturing legacy, attractive design, quality construction and structural soundness. Preservation of these buildings is also consistent with the desires of the Sterling community. Together, the National Manufacturing building and Lawrence Brothers, Inc. building function as impressive anchors on opposing sides of the 1st Avenue Bridge, creating a distinctive gateway into the City of Sterling for people entering the City from the south.

Downtown Commercial

Areas designated for Downtown Commercial development are intended to accommodate commercial and retail businesses that are of a different type and scale than other commercial areas in the City, the Illinois Route 2 Corridor in particular. Downtown Commercial uses should include pedestrian-oriented retail, restaurants and entertainment uses. These types of uses are a key component of Riverfront redevelopment because they are active uses that attract casual shoppers, capitalize on walk-by traffic, and contribute significantly to the appeal and activity of an area. Achieving an appropriate mix of Downtown Commercial uses creates synergies and demand for other commercial uses in the area, and promote the Downtown and Riverfront as a destination.

Office

The Land Use and Development Plan recommends that existing offices remain in Downtown Sterling, including financial offices, real estate offices and medical offices. Existing offices help provide a consistent customer base for nearby commercial establishments during or after work hours. No new, standalone offices are recommended along the Riverfront since they do not typically generate pedestrian activity and do not benefit from walk-in customers; however, offices are appropriate on the upper floors of mixed-use buildings.

Single Family Residential

There are no new single family residential areas proposed in the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan; however, existing single-family homes on the north side of the Union Pacific Railroad should remain. Existing single-family homes on the south side of the railroad are envisioned to redevelop as Wallace Street is realigned and revitalization along the Riverfront occurs.

Multi Family Residential

Existing multi-family land uses in Downtown Sterling are envisioned to remain as revitalization occurs along the Riverfront; however, multi-family development along the Riverfront must be linked to successful, non-residential redevelopment. Multi-family residential land uses should be secondary to their commercial counterparts. Multi-family is recommended as components of mixed-use developments on the interior of the Riverfront Redevelopment Sites. Ideally, the number of multi-family units should increase as redevelopment and revitalization occurs in the Downtown and Riverfront areas. Increasing the residential density of the area will expand housing options and provide a larger customer base within walking distance of area businesses.

Senior Housing

The Land Use and Development Plan identifies an area designated for senior housing to meet the demands of a growing elderly population in the City and to diversify the City's housing options. Senior housing is recommended to take the form of multi-family, multi-story buildings oriented towards the Rock River on the western edge of the Riverfront Redevelopment Sites. It is envisioned to overlook formal gardens and naturalized detention areas with picnic shelters and other amenities to maintain a high quality of life and provide picturesque settings for residents and visitors.

Parks and Open Space

Areas designated as Parks and Open Space reflect existing and proposed parks and open space in the study area. Riverfront open space would capitalize on the river as a unique natural feature, promote public accessibility to the Riverfront, and provide unique recreational and civic amenities. Lawrence Park is envisioned to remain a community focal point and gathering place, and should be strengthened by stronger connections to Downtown.

Public/Semi-Public

Areas designated for public and semi-public uses reflect existing buildings owned by public agencies, schools and religious institutions in Downtown Sterling such as City Hall, the U.S. Post Office and the Sterling Public Library. These uses are envisioned to remain in their current locations as they serve as important anchors that strengthen Downtown as a community focal point. A City Museum is the only new public/semi-public use proposed within the Riverfront area; however, should additional opportunities arise in the future, they could be appropriate and should be considered on a case by case basis.

Land Use Plan



Illustrative Development Concept

The Illustrative Development Concept is based on careful consideration of the Riverfront Redevelopment Sites' characteristics, market realities and community desires. The concept illustrated below recommends a conceptual, innovative layout for the Riverfront Redevelopment Sites.

The following redevelopment strategies should be promoted as new development and redevelopment occurs:

Redevelopment Strategies

1. Create a Riverfront focal point;
2. Improve public accessibility to and along the Rock River;
3. Create an attractive, safe, and walkable pedestrian realm;
4. Capitalize on the unique aspects of the riverfront; and,
5. Create a distinctive gateway and identity for the City.

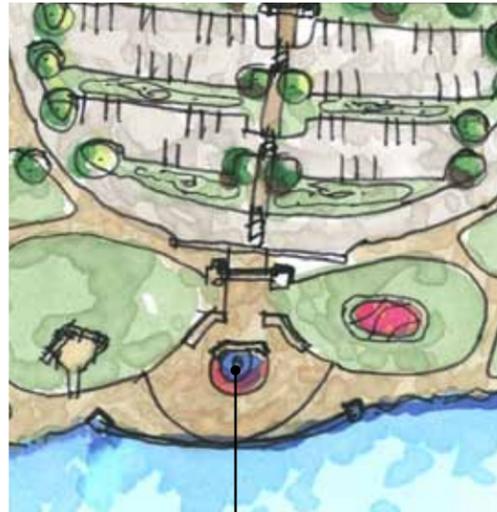


Alternative East-End Concept

In the event that the Lawrence Brothers, Inc. building not be salvagable or suitable for adaptive reuse and renovation, the concept below is recommended for the site. Due to the site's accessibility constraints, shallow lot depth and existing floodplain, redevelopment of the site would prove exceedingly difficult; thus, attractive park space with a monumental gateway feature is proposed.



Redevelopment Strategies



The Riverfront Plaza functions as a key focal point



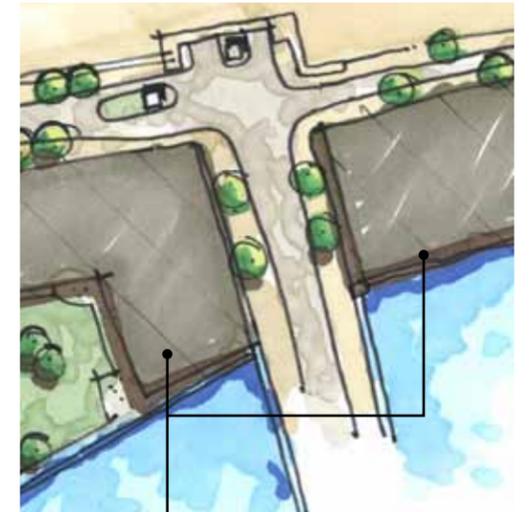
A continuous Riverwalk and connecting pathways improve public accessibility



Clearly demarcated crosswalks and traffic calming features enhance the pedestrian atmosphere



A canoe/kayak launch and fishing piers should be incorporated in Riverfront Redevelopment



The National Manufacturing building and Lawrence Brothers, Inc. building provide a distinctive gateway

Create a Riverfront focal point.

The new park and Veteran's Memorial will connect Riverfront development to the Rock River by functioning as a centralized public space, and acting as a focal point for residents and visitors entering the City across the 1st Avenue Bridge from the south. It will also function as the main "interchange", or destination point, for transportation routes within the Riverfront area.

Improve public accessibility to and along the Rock River.

The illustrative development concept achieves the Sterling community's desire to improve public accessibility to and along the Rock River by incorporating the new Riverwalk and additional north-south connections over the Union Pacific Railroad. Additionally, the recommended concept enhances public views from and towards the river shoreline. New road and pedestrian connections are based off of the existing Downtown street grid to promote maximum integration with the area's surrounding context.

Create an attractive, safe, and walkable pedestrian realm.

In this illustrative development concept, the Riverwalk functions as the primary pedestrian corridor connecting all of the Riverfront Redevelopment Sites; however, it ties into a network of local sidewalks and pedestrian paths, along with regional trails. Pedestrian connections will provide links to and from public spaces, the river shoreline, residential properties, Riverfront businesses and Downtown Sterling. Throughout the Riverfront and Downtown areas, the pedestrian realm will be enhanced with attractive streetscaping and amenities that clearly define and beautify the area.

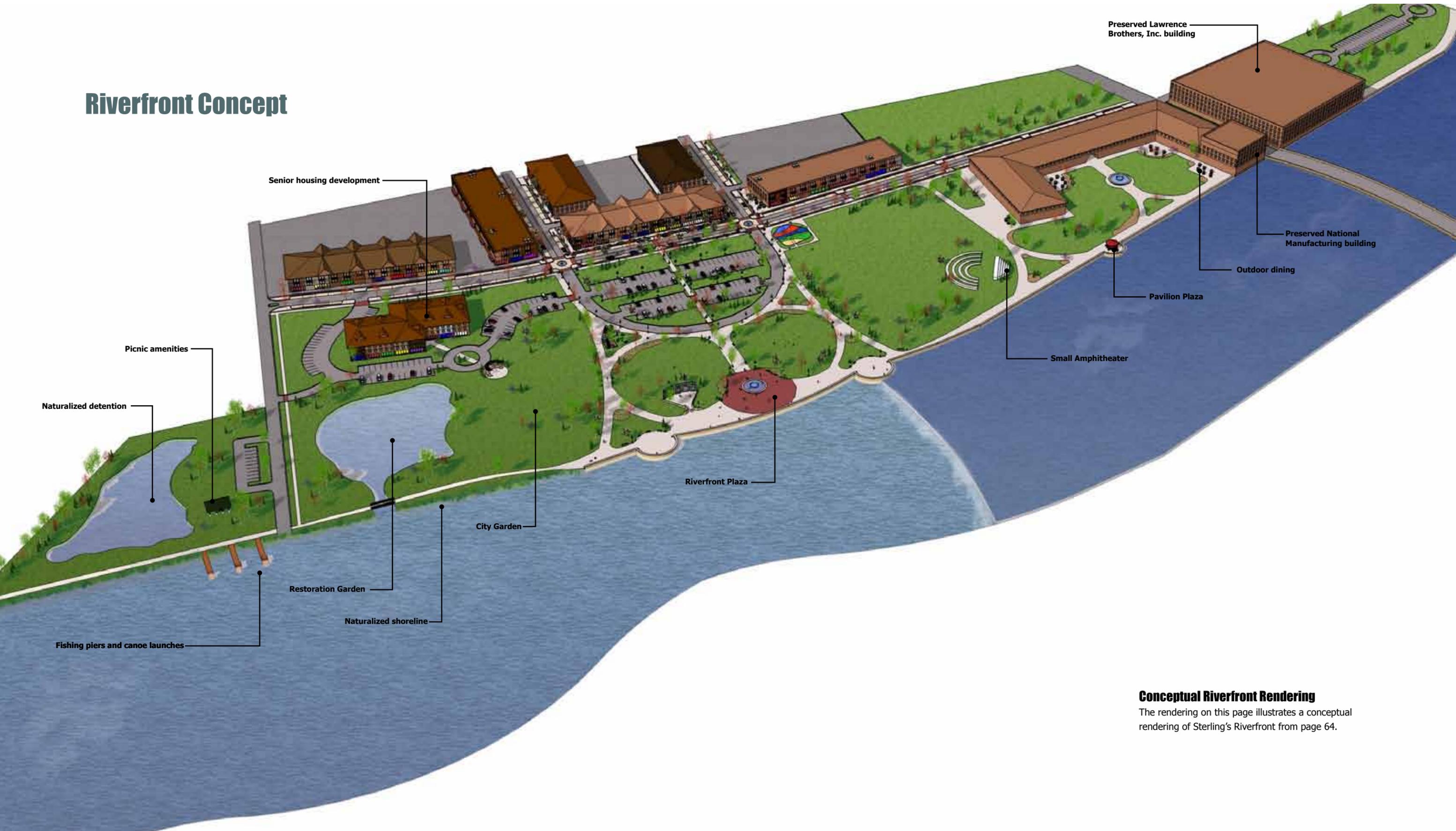
Capitalize on the unique aspects of the Riverfront.

The Rock River is the defining characteristic of the City of Sterling. Redevelopment should capitalize on the picturesque views and recreation potential of the Rock River, to create a distinctive destination and contribute to the vitality of the Region. Buildings should have a strong orientation towards the River, and the Riverwalk should function as an active, public realm on the river shoreline. Opportunities for recreational tourism should consistently be pursued as well.

Create a distinctive gateway and identity for the City.

The restoration of the National Manufacturing and Lawrence Brothers, Inc. buildings creates an impressive gateway into the City for visitors entering from the south on the 1st Avenue Bridge. These two historic buildings connect residents and visitors to the City's past, but their renovation would bring them to life with active, modern-day uses. The buildings are complemented by attractive gateway and wayfinding signage with similar architectural features, attractive landscaping and decorative hardscape elements.

Riverfront Concept



Conceptual Riverfront Rendering

The rendering on this page illustrates a conceptual rendering of Sterling's Riverfront from page 64.

Riverfront Plaza



Riverfront Plaza Rendering

The rendering on this page illustrates the conceptual Riverfront Plaza from the Illustrative Development Concept on page 64. The Riverfront Plaza is envisioned to be the focal point of Riverfront Redevelopment efforts.

The Riverfront Plaza area presents opportunities for a Children's Garden, a Veterans Memorial, scenic overlooks, bike trails, harvested rainwater features, and a "green" parking lot. Redevelopment that occurs should have a strong orientation towards the Rock River and Riverwalk.

Streetscape Concept



Veteran's Memorial Concept



Splash Pad Concept





Former industrial building along the Rock River.

TRANSPORTATION & PARKING PLAN

This section presents the Transportation Plan for Sterling's Downtown and Riverfront areas, with an emphasis on access and circulation recommendations. The plan is based on input expressed by the Sterling community throughout the planning process, and the projected traffic generated from the planned riverfront redevelopment.

Framework/Guiding Principles

The following transportation planning principles and best practices associated with mixed use downtowns informed the Plan for the Riverfront.

Extend Sterling's existing roadway network to the Riverfront

Downtown Sterling's street network should be continued to the riverfront to provide adequate access and circulation into, and out of, the redevelopment area. New railroad crossings, roadway penetrations, and directional wayfinding signage into the Riverfront area will help to mitigate the perception that the area is cut off from the rest of Downtown.

Promote Complete Streets

Complete Streets are streets that meet the needs of all users of a roadway. Where roadways penetrate the riverfront area, they should provide space for motorists, bicyclists, pedestrians. Incorporating complete streets into the riverfront area will help cast new perceptions of the area, and establish a framework for other uses that will develop along the Riverfront in the years to come.

Limit an oversupply of Parking

While Sterling has historically been an auto-oriented community, an oversupply of parking is not recommended along the riverfront. Development along the Riverfront should be coordinated to ensure that shared parking opportunities can be capitalized upon to reduce the footprint of parking required. Additionally, the City should revisit and evaluate its existing parking standards and amend them so that they are appropriate for desired Riverfront development.

Circulation & Access Plan

The Circulation and Access Plan specifies proposed traffic improvements through downtown and the riverfront development area. Sufficient access and circulation to the riverfront is essential to ensure the area can successfully accommodate additional vehicular trips that will eventually be generated from the area.

Viaduct Beautification and Replacement

The City should coordinate with the Union Pacific to pursue improvements to the Viaduct across 1st Avenue (IL 40) to improve the safety and appearance of the viaduct, potentially including:

- ◇ Installing new LED lighting underneath the bridge to improve pedestrian visibility.
- ◇ Aesthetic enhancements such as repainting the steel bridge structure, adding brick and stone veneer to the abutment walls.
- ◇ Lighting the bridge to serve as a focal point and gateway into the community.
- ◇ Grant funding, through the Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program (ITEP) has been used as a funding source for similar viaduct improvements in other Illinois communities.

Longer term, the City would like to see the viaduct replaced with a new structure that would open up views to the river and widen turning lanes and pedestrian sidewalks underneath the bridge to further integrate the riverfront with downtown Sterling.



Existing on-street parking configuration in Downtown Sterling

Riverfront Area Roadway Operations

For vehicles, the primary access to the Riverfront is proposed to be provided along a realigned Wallace Street, with access provided from Avenue K on the west and First Avenue on the east. The roadway is envisioned as a local urban street, with a single travel lane in each direction and parallel parking provided along either side of the Street. Secondary access to the area will be provided by Avenue B, which provides an at-grade crossing of the railroad tracks. North of the tracks, a boulevard cross section with a planted median is proposed to serve as a gateway feature into the riverfront area. South of the railroad tracks, a standard two lane urban street with parallel parking is proposed.

A second at-grade crossing of the Union Pacific is recommended as a long term goal along Avenue A as development grows in the area to fully integrate the Riverfront with the rest of the existing downtown street network.

Recommendations

- ◇ Primary access should be provided from First Avenue.
- ◇ Secondary access should be from Avenue B & Avenue K, with a future access at Avenue A.
- ◇ All streets within the Riverfront area should be two-way.
- ◇ An all way stop control should be implemented at Wallace Street and Avenue B.
- ◇ Long term, Sterling should initiate discussions with the Union Pacific Railroad for an additional at-grade crossing at Avenue A and a crossing or pedestrian underpass along the alignment of 3rd Avenue toward the riverfront.

Riverfront Area Trip Generation and Street Capacity Discussion

Projected Peak Hour and Average Daily Traffic (ADT) generations were developed based upon the proposed build-out of the Riverfront area and are summarized in Table 1. As can be seen from Table 1, the anticipated riverfront land uses could have about 35% of its traffic reduced by the proposed complimentary uses.

The Highway Capacity Manual provides methodologies for testing the traffic impacts of any development. Operations are by ranked by Level of Service (LOS) using the letters "A" for unencumbered flow to "F" for the most congested flow. LOS C is usually considered the "design" guideline used by IDOT, Counties, and municipalities. LOS D is considered the lower threshold of providing reasonable travel.

Traffic data was collected all throughout the study area and the existing traffic conditions were previously presented. Reviewing the existing traffic volumes and "layering" the potential riverfront redevelopment traffic indicates that there is sufficient reserve street capacity available. Operations on most streets in the study area would generally be within the "design" classification LOS C. This means that there are opportunities to uncouple the lengthy one-way pairs in downtown Sterling, so as to provide more visibility for existing and future businesses.

Riverfront Area Improvements

Most of the projected traffic from the Riverfront area is expected to exit the site at the intersection of Wallace Street and First Avenue at the existing traffic signal. Wallace Street terminates at First Avenue, and provides dedicated right and left turn lanes at the intersection. In addition, a striped left turn/thru lane on First Avenue provides for northbound traffic accessing the riverfront from Rock Falls.

Recommendations

- ◇ The traffic signal at First and Wallace Street should be improved with new LED signal heads and re-optimized as traffic increases due to redevelopment.
- ◇ Consideration should be given to adding a fourth leg of the intersection by removing portions of the Lawrence Hardware building to accommodate access to the proposed riverfront trail head. A pedestrian crossing of First Avenue is required to accommodate pedestrian and bicycle mobility along the proposed Riverfront Trail.
- ◇ A new traffic signal should be installed at 3rd Street & Avenue B when warranted by increased traffic from the Riverfront area. This will also provide a safe pedestrian crossing between the Riverfront area and County Market.
- ◇ A new traffic signal at 3rd Street and Avenue A should be installed when warranted and if a new railroad crossing is constructed.

Table 1

Potential Uses & Densities	ITE Category	Morning Peak Hour	Evening Peak Hour	Daily	
		Sum = In+Out	Sum = In+Out	Sum = In+Out	
Park / Museum	30 acres	#417	20	40	250
Commercial - Retail	100,000 SF	#814	100	270	4430
Commercial - Office	150,000 SF	#732	230	225	1650
Residential - Senior	130 units	#253	10	20	260
Residential	250 units	#230	110	130	1450
		Subtotal =	470	685	8040
		Less Land-use interaction @ 35% =	-165	-240	-2810
		Totals =	305	445	5230

Downtown Traffic Operational Changes

The one-way street couplets within downtown Sterling could be reconfigured to two-way operations. This change would provide the double benefit of improved circulation to the riverfront area and would also provide downtown businesses with potential new patrons with additional traffic that would be "passing by" during all hours of the day.

Per the available GIS mapping data, the downtown streets can support (at the minimum) one travel lane in each direction and parallel on at least one side. And based on a review of the traffic volumes and estimated future traffic generations, this pavement cross section should readily accommodate the anticipated traffic volumes.

The next page illustrates the recommended operational changes and notes where parking modifications should be considered.

Observations and Recommendations

- ◇ Locust Street is wide enough to accommodate one through travel lane in each direction and a center turn lane throughout downtown. Converting the areas of angle parking to parallel parking would provide additional sidewalk width that could be used to enhance pedestrian mobility and provide business owners with opportunities for outdoor dining and merchandise displays.
- ◇ Both directions of the IL 40 route designation would follow Locust Street at 2nd Street. 1st Avenue north of 2nd Street would become a local street that would provide another two-way gateway into downtown via the traffic signal at Locust Street and 2nd Street.
- ◇ Consider realigning Avenue A south of 3rd Street to intersect with the boulevard style entrance to County Market. This would allow the placement of a traffic signal and additional pedestrian crossings, as well as continue the boulevard roadway cross section south of 3rd Street.

Transportation Recommendations

- ◇ Converting the downtown streets from one-way to two-way, in both the north-south and east-west directions, will afford enhanced mobility for County Market patrons without attracting non-wanted through traffic along the main east-west aisle (formerly 4th Street) in front of the market.
- ◇ Converting the downtown streets from one-way to way, in both the north-south and east-west directions, will create a true grid system of streets and four-way intersections. The forced turning movements at some intersections would be eliminated, maximizing accessibility and route selection flexibility. For example, eastbound and westbound traffic on 2nd Street / Locust Street would be allowed to cross 1st Avenue.
- ◇ Initially, the 1st Avenue / 2nd Street / Locust Street intersection would operate as a traditional signalized location. Ultimately, a roundabout could be constructed, which would provide a gateway “statement” for downtown Sterling. Many transportation agencies, including IDOT, are including roundabouts in their “toolbox” of Complete Streets and Context Sensitive Solutions analyses.
- ◇ Converting the downtown streets to two-way will allow the elimination of large turning radii and channeling islands, such as on northbound 1st Avenue at 5th Street, westbound 4th Street at 1st Avenue, and on westbound 5th Street at Avenue C. These changes will shorten intersection crossing distances, an important tool for enhancing pedestrian mobility.



Transportation Legend

- Existing Traffic Signals
- Modify Existing Traffic Signal Operations
- New Traffic Signals with Pedestrian Crossings
- Pedestrian Improvements to Railroad Crossing
- New Railroad Crossing
- ↔ Wallace Street Realignment
- ↔ One-way Streets Converted to Two-way Couplets
- New North-South Roadway
- Improved North-South Connection
- Right-of-Way Reconfiguration
- On-Street Angled Parking Converted to Parallel
- Prohibit On-Street Parking
- Pedestrian Bridge
- Vacated Right-of-way
- ▲ Remove Island
- Parks & Open Space

Pedestrian & Bicycle Circulation & Access Plan

Pedestrian and bicycle circulation along the riverfront is a key element in the development of a revitalized, active riverfront. Extension of the existing riverfront trail, coupled with mixed use, pedestrian-oriented blocks and streets can integrate the area with the rest of downtown to create a cohesive, walkable environment for downtown residents, workers and recreational users of the area.

Recommendations

- ◇ Sidewalks should be provided along all streets along the riverfront area.
- ◇ Pedestrian crossings of the railroad tracks at Avenue B should be improved with dedicated sidewalks and pedestrian crossing gates.
- ◇ Pedestrian accessibility should be improved at the intersection at Wallace Avenue & First Avenue. Portions of the National Manufacturing & Lawrence Hardware buildings likely are required be removed to accommodate a crossing across First Avenue.
- ◇ Guidance signage should be provided along Wallace Street to guide pedestrians and bicyclists to the proposed river path.
- ◇ Ample bike parking should be provided along the riverfront, and distributed throughout downtown to encourage cyclists to venture into downtown from the Riverfront Path.
- ◇ Long term, Sterling should initiate discussions with the Union Pacific railroad for an additional crossing along Avenue A, and/or an at-grade crossing/ pedestrian underpass along the alignment of 3rd Avenue.

Potential Bike Path / Bridge Structure along the Rock River

Immediate improvements toward improving the bicycle friendliness of Sterling are currently underway. The City is installing its first bicycle lanes along 2nd Street, from Broadway Avenue to 1st Avenue. This will provide a dedicated bikeway to downtown from the trail across the Upper Dam near Martin's Landing.

Longer term, Sterling should work with the Union Pacific Railroad on a bike/pedestrian trail extension along the Riverfront. Such a trail would complete a continuous trail along the downtown Sterling frontage of the Rock River.

A major planning and engineering issue that requires additional study is the alignment of the trail in the vicinity of the First Avenue Bridge. Due to the direct abutment of the Lawrence Hardware Building, the First Avenue Bridge, and the National Manufacturing Building to the Rock river, a cantilevered bridge structure off of the buildings and suspended from the bridge is an option to create a riverfront connection.

Construction of the segment will require extensive coordination with IDOT to confirm that the newly reconstructed bridge and abutments could structurally support a suspended bridge structure. In addition, engineering analysis of the adjacent buildings will be required to determine the feasibility of supporting a structure from each of the buildings.

Coordination with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources should be included in the planning efforts, due to the potential trail's location above the Rock River.

Potential pedestrian underpass at 2nd or 3rd Avenues and Riverfront Trail System

To connect the redeveloped parcels north of the railroad tracks and east of 1st Avenue to the riverfront, potential exists for the construction of a pedestrian underpass aligned with either 2nd Street or 3rd Avenue. The underpass would be similar in size and design to the pedestrian tunnel located at 2nd Street and Broadway Avenue near Riverside Cemetery. This connection would facilitate cyclists using the new bike lanes along 2nd Street and serve as a connection to the envisioned riverfront trail.

The image below shows the potential for an interim trail running along 2nd Street and 1st Avenue, as well as a future trail directly adjacent to the riverfront. As mentioned previously, the plan for the trail along the riverfront will require significant engineering and construction expense to be constructed.

Parking Plan

The parking plan envisioned for the Riverfront area is designed to reduce the overall number of spaces required and manage parking demand through the use of shared lots for non-residential land uses. The mixed use nature of new development within the Riverfront area will reduce overall parking demand by allowing motorist to park once and walk to several destinations. Additional parking required for specific uses should be developed on a site by site basis as specific land uses are established and parking requirements identified.

Owner-occupied, multi-family residential uses within the Riverfront area will likely require on-site, enclosed parking spaces to be marketable. The parking ratios for this type of use should be consistent with the standard 1.5 to 2 parking spaces per unit.

Recommendations

- ◇ Coordinate parking between uses in the Riverfront area and actively develop shared parking agreements to reduce the amount of parking required by potential development. This will increase the density of development as well as reduce the cost of constructing parking spaces.
- ◇ Develop a plan to accommodate on-site, covered parking for multi-family units that are developed as a component of mixed-use developments.
- ◇ Required parking ratios for individual uses should be lower within the riverfront area. For locations that must have their own dedicated parking, the following guidelines are proposed for key uses.
- ◇ All developments should be analyzed for shared parking opportunities. This will help ensure that unneeded and unsightly asphalt spaces are minimized that would detract from the riverfront vistas.
- ◇ Encourage the use of environmentally friendly parking areas along the riverfront, incorporating permeable pavement, filtration strips and other best management practices to reduce stormwater run-off. If environmental remediation requirements prevent the use of permeable pavement, utilize alternate best management practices to reduce run-off to the extent feasible.

- ◇ Consider the development of a parking signage and wayfinding plan to brand public parking lots similarly within downtown and the Riverfront. Managing parking as a system throughout downtown with well placed directional signage can improve the perception that adequate parking is available.

Transit and Train Service

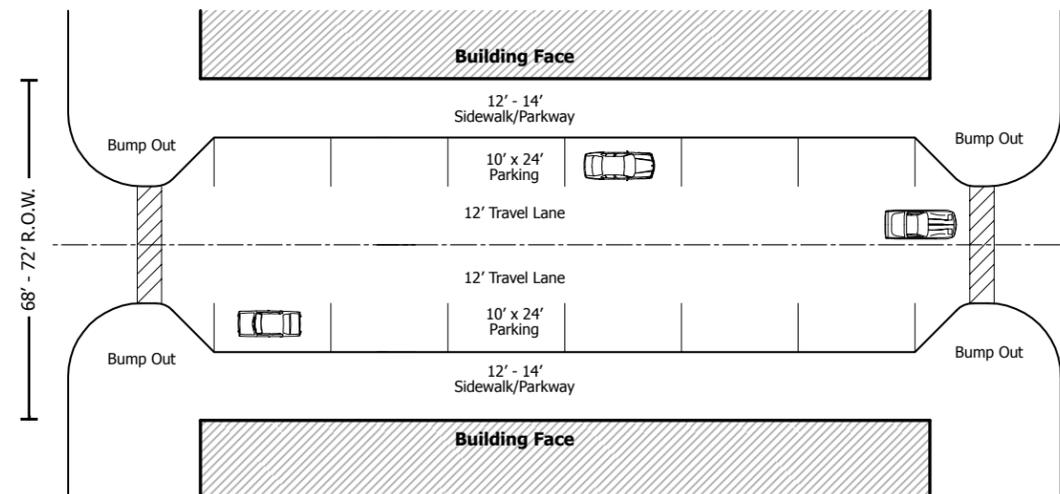
Fixed route transit service is not currently provided within downtown Sterling or Whiteside County. However, the development principles used within the riverfront area are designed to support future transit opportunities should Whiteside County and Sterling wish to implement transit service as development occurs. The mixed use buildings located along the Riverfront will provide easy access to potential transit service along Wallace Street or 3rd Street. A transit stop along Wallace can be installed through the elimination of handful of parking spaces.

Passenger rail service is not currently provided along the Union Pacific Railroad through Sterling, nor is it envisioned to be provided as part of any future Amtrak expansions. Current plans for Amtrak Service from Chicago to Iowa City are proposed to be initiated along the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad in Henry County, south of Sterling. The nearest station currently proposed for this route would be constructed in Geneseo, 35 miles southwest of Sterling. Service is projected to begin along the route in 2014. Several major hurdles remain, including major engineering work such as the construction of a connection spur in Wyanet and funding for passenger cars have not yet be finalized.

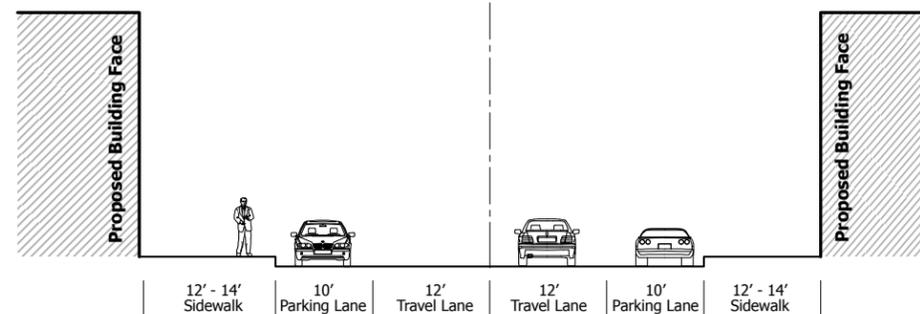
Riverfront Right-of-Way Design

As identified in the Land Use and Development Plan, a key contributing factor to a vibrant pedestrian street is the composition of the public right-of-way. The renderings on this page illustrate the recommended right-of-way composition for Sterling's Riverfront Area. Totalling 68 to 72 feet in width, the right-of-way should accommodate wide sidewalks, one travel lane in each direction, and parallel parking on both sides of the street.

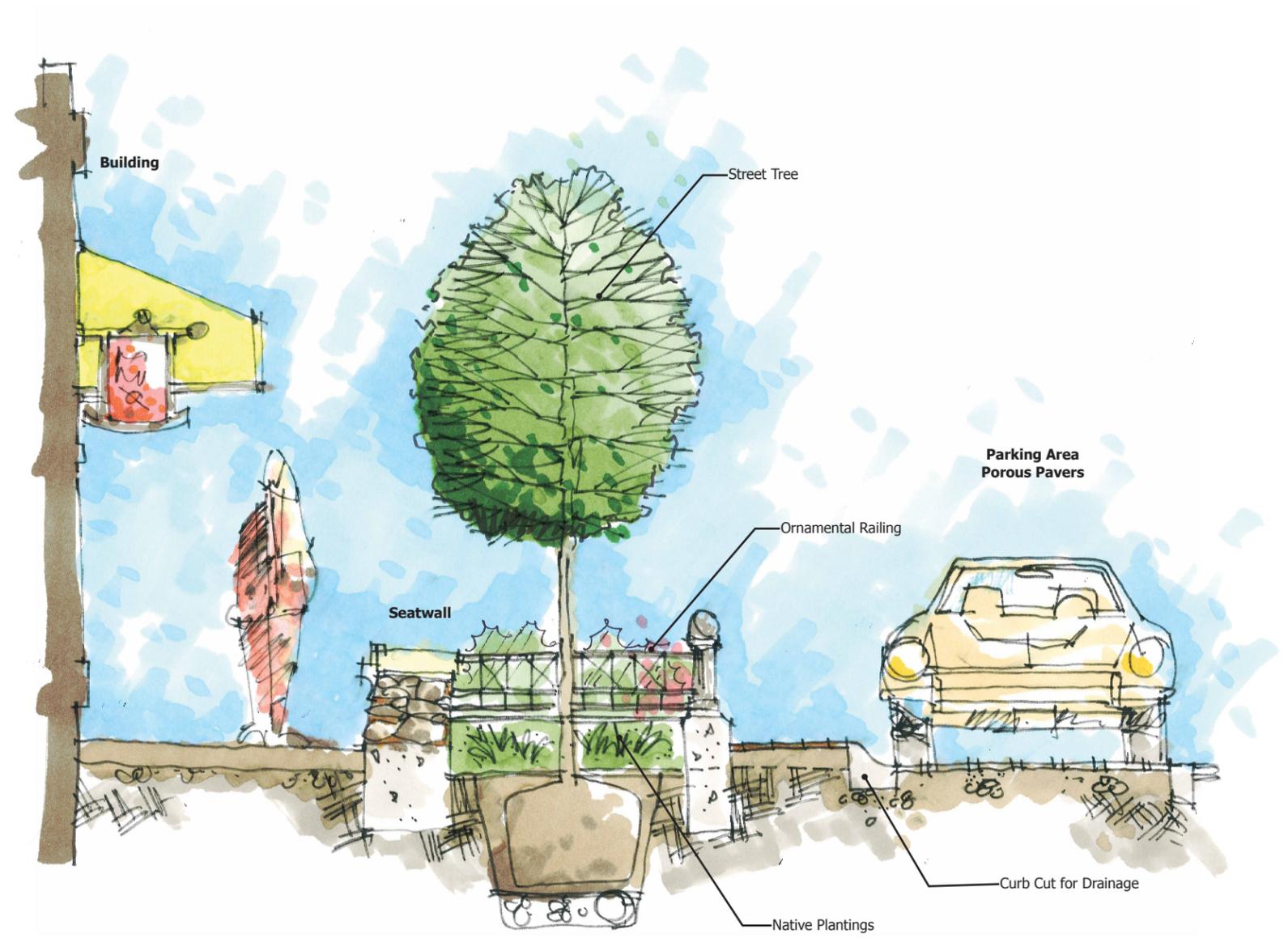
Recommended Right-of-way Dimensions



Recommended Cross Section Dimensions



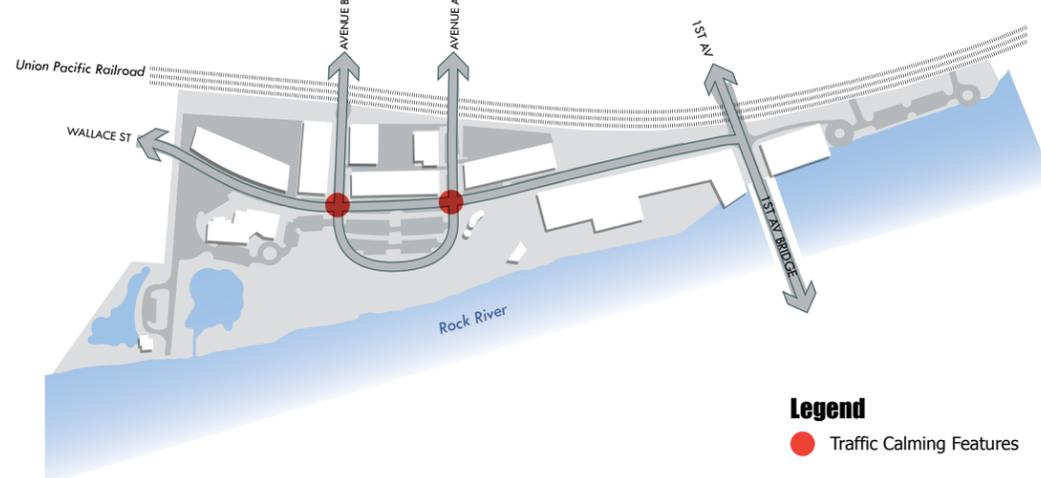
Recommended Cross Section Design



Traffic Calming Recommendations

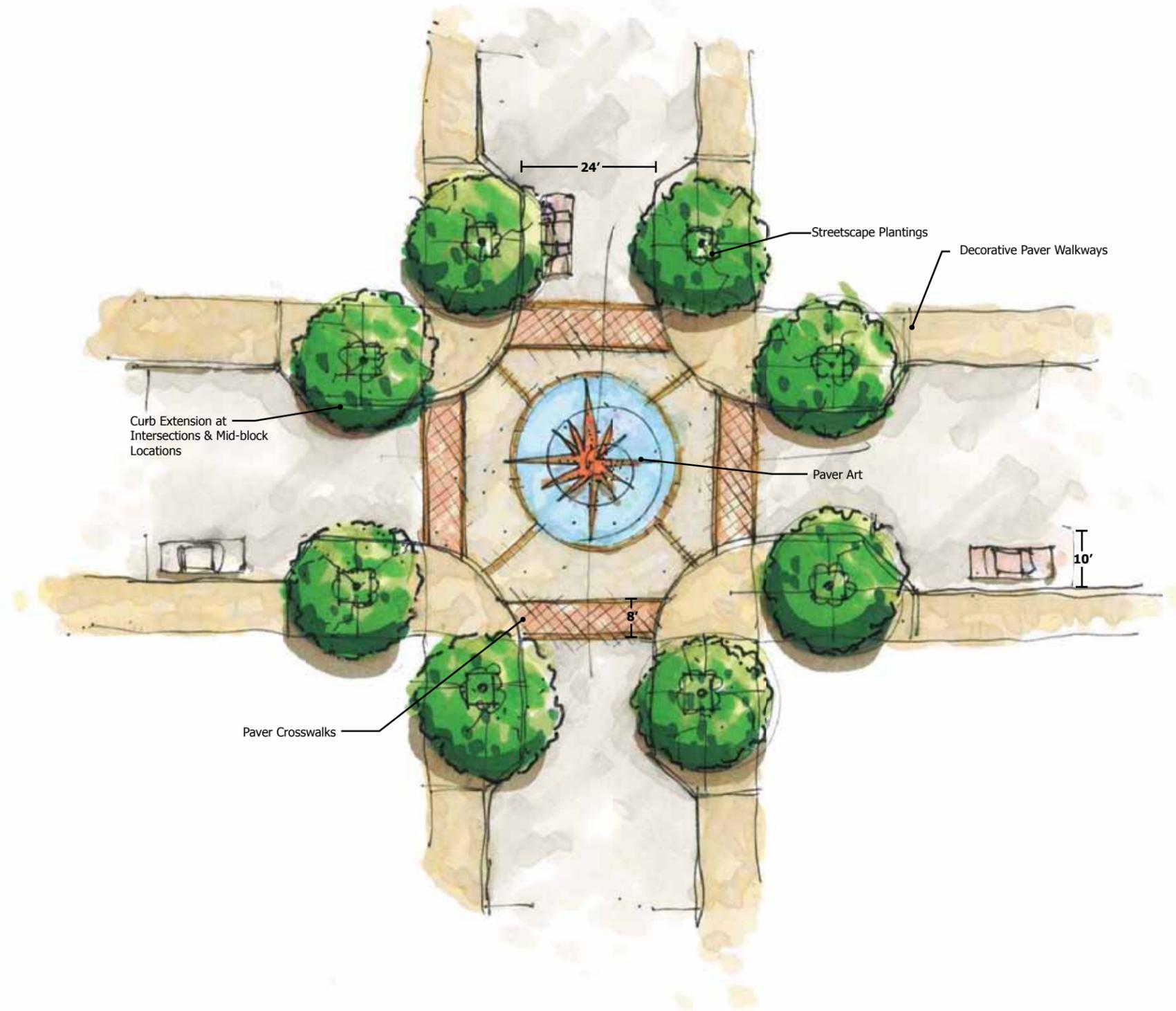
Wide sidewalks, clearly demarcated crossings and traffic calming features should be promoted throughout Sterling's Riverfront area to enhance the pedestrian experience and encourage people to walk around and engage in their surroundings. The rendering on this page illustrates a distinctive traffic calming feature that is recommended at two key intersections along Wallace Street to draw attention to high-traffic pedestrian areas and reinforce the Riverfront area's distinctive character. Special raised pavement treatments featuring Sterling's logo and changes in pavement color and texture are recommended to dramatically enhance the Riverfront's streetscape, promote a pedestrian-oriented atmosphere and calm traffic.

Traffic Calming Feature Locations



Legend
● Traffic Calming Features

Traffic Calming Intersection Design



Environmental Parking Lot Schematic

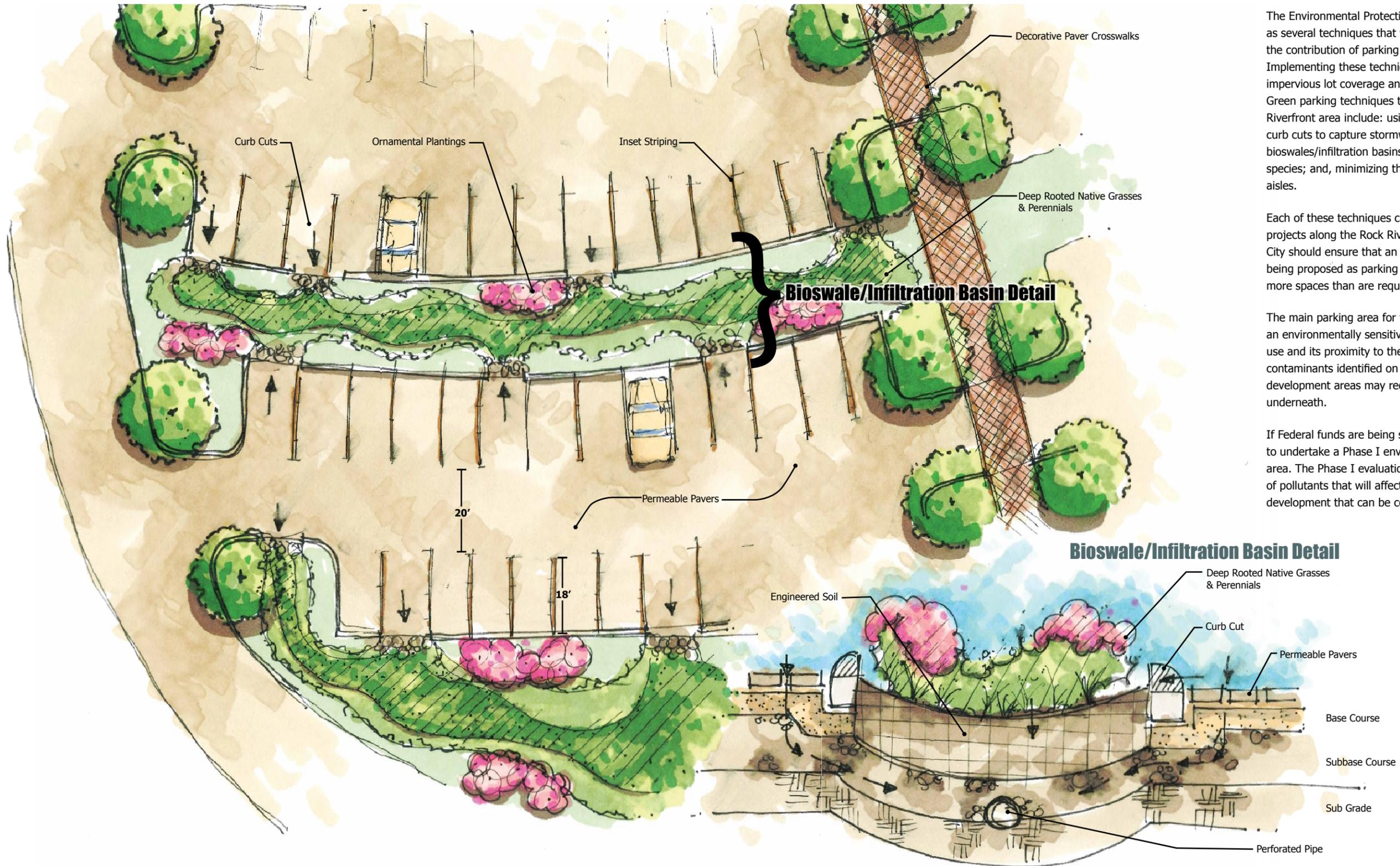
“Green” Parking

The Environmental Protection Agency defines “green” parking as several techniques that when applied together reduce the contribution of parking lots to total impervious cover. Implementing these techniques can dramatically reduce impervious lot coverage and the amount of stormwater runoff. Green parking techniques that should be promoted in the Riverfront area include: using permeable pavement; utilizing curb cuts to capture stormwater runoff and filter water into bioswales/infiltration basins; planting deep-rooted native plant species; and, minimizing the dimensions of parking lot drive aisles.

Each of these techniques can be applied in redevelopment projects along the Rock River. As parking is implemented, the City should ensure that an overabundance of parking is not being proposed as parking lot designs frequently result in far more spaces than are required.

The main parking area for the riverfront area is located on an environmentally sensitive site, due to its former industrial use and its proximity to the Rock River. Depending on the contaminants identified on the site, various parking and development areas may require a clay cap to be installed underneath.

If Federal funds are being sought or used, it will be necessary to undertake a Phase I environmental study of the riverfront area. The Phase I evaluation will determine the extent of pollutants that will affect the type of parking lots and development that can be constructed along the riverfront.





Sinnissippi Dam

Section 7

COMMUNITY FACILITIES, AMENITIES, & INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN

The City of Sterling has a number of community facilities and amenities available to residents and visitors; however, the majority of these facilities are established and located in other parts of the community. The Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan does not propose the addition of new community facilities such as a relocated City Hall or Library; rather, it concentrates on the addition of new community amenities including enhanced open space areas and cultural icons to attract residents and visitors to the Rock River Riverfront. The Plan also recommends utilizing and potentially expanding existing public infrastructure to serve new community amenities and surrounding developments.

Framework/Guiding Principles

The following principles are recommended to strengthen the presence of community amenities and destinations along the Rock River Riverfront.

Capitalize on the Rock River as a community asset and a source of civic pride

The Rock River is the defining asset of Sterling and should remain a source of pride in the community. Improving public access to the Rock River and incorporating civic and cultural amenities along the Riverfront will help strengthen the notion that the River is a community asset. Redevelopment should capitalize on the picturesque views and recreation potential of the Rock River to create a distinctive destination and contribute to the vitality of the region.

Incorporate cultural icons that reflect the City's manufacturing legacy and heritage

Cultural icons are elements that are readily recognized and generally represent concepts with cultural significance, being particular of a group of people, a place, or a period in history. Icons incorporated along the Riverfront should represent businesses, activities or people that will reconnect people to the City's rich manufacturing legacy. This could include preserving significant buildings such as the National Manufacturing building and Lawrence Brothers, Inc. building and creating a Veterans Memorial to distinguish local veterans.

Integrate public art where appropriate

Public art will significantly contribute to the aesthetics and visual interest of Sterling's Downtown and Riverfront areas. The benefits of public art include: enhancing an area's sense of place; stimulating social interaction; expanding learning and awareness; and, making lateral connections between various people and agencies responsible for the public art. Public art should be considered throughout the public realm along the Rock River Riverfront to improve the area's appearance, vitality and interest. It could include sculptures in plazas, street furniture in areas where pedestrians congregate, or murals on buildings with long, blank facades.



Scenic overlook on the Fox River



Example of a pier that could be used for fishing



Example of a canoe launch

Community Facilities

Public Parks & Open Space Amenities

Public parks and open space are important community facilities that contribute to the overall quality of life, image, character, desirability and aesthetics of the Downtown and Riverfront areas. They are ecological assets and active and passive recreational amenities for the community. A primary goal of the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan is to enhance parks and open space areas as community facilities and to improve the amenities within them.

Existing parks in the project study area (Downtown Sterling) are not planned to undergo significant change through the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan; however, new park space is envisioned to incorporate amenities that promote recreation and leisure along the riverfront and use of the Rock River. Amenities that will contribute to Riverfront revitalization include:

Restoration Garden

The restoration garden should be comprised of a native riparian habitat to promote environmental sustainability and provide natural stormwater management along the Riverfront. If maintained correctly, the garden could potentially serve a local or regional educational purpose for schools and environmental organizations by providing a venue where native wildlife and plant habitats could be studied. The garden should include upland mesic and wet mesic prairie, sedge meadows, and emergent vegetation.

Amphitheater

This facility would provide an outdoor stage and seating for various performances for community festivities and local events. When not in use, the area becomes a passive area to sit and view the river.

Scenic Overlooks

Scenic overlooks are desirable both on the 1st Avenue Bridge and along the Riverwalk to provide a place where people can linger and view the scenic Rock River safely and with no obstructions. They will encourage people to casually stop and relax or talk, ultimately persuading them to stay in the area for longer periods of time. Scenic overlooks should incorporate Riverfront streetscape amenities to enhance the appearance and character of the Riverfront.

Fishing Access

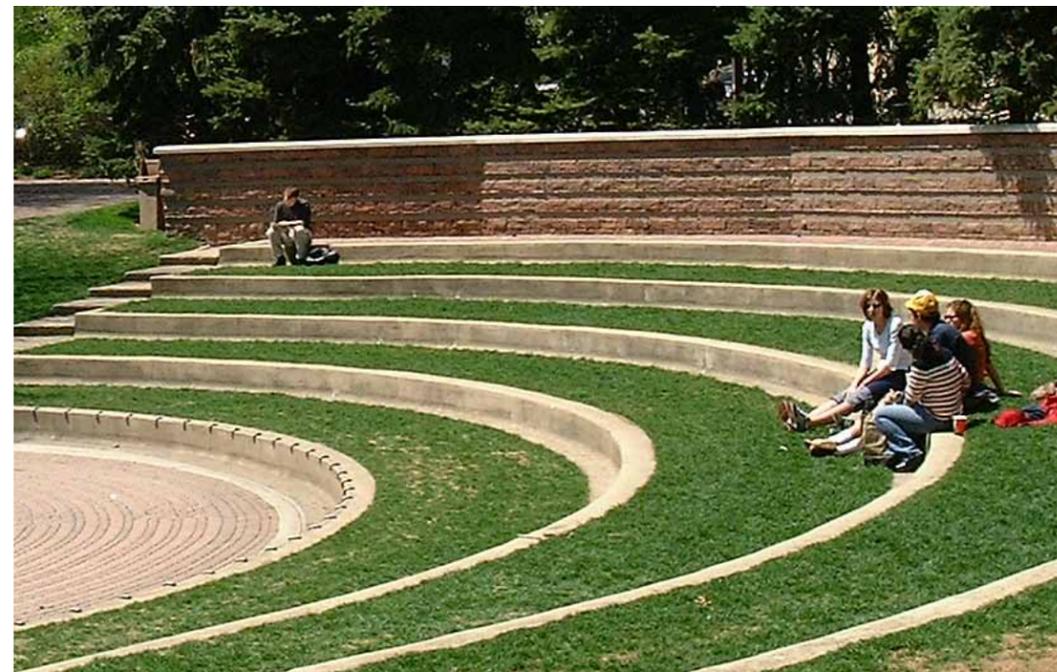
Fishing can attract people from a greater area than a more common recreational amenity because it is limited to areas with bodies of water. Formal fishing facilities such as piers and non-motorized boat launches should be incorporated at the westernmost portion of the Riverfront where fishermen can access the River safely and away from the dams, without disrupting local businesses or residences.

Boat Launches

Non-motorized boat launches and kayak access are recommended at the western edge of the Riverfront Redevelopment Sites. This location is ideal because it is located far away from the dam and high traffic areas where Riverfront patrons are present.



Students exploring a restoration garden



Tiered amphitheater seating

Civic & Cultural Amenities

Civic and cultural amenities assist in revealing and enhancing the identity of an area. This identity is then reflected through the area's character or sense of place. The following civic and cultural amenities should be articulated in the Riverfront area:

City Garden

This formal garden would provide passive relaxation with a focus on the use of sustainable plant material with soothing colors, pleasing fragrance and views and vistas to the River. Historic elements could include vibrant murals and sculptures depicting past railroad and industrial influences.

Children's Garden

A children's garden would attract families to the riverfront. It would provide a relaxing area for adults to sit while children explore. It should be adventurous but safe, and may include historical early settlement elements such as climbing structures, rope bridges, a miniature cabin, fences, rich colorful plants and a vegetable garden. As a goal, this garden should contribute to a child's love for the outdoors.

Riverfront Plaza

This area will become a community gathering space and include the following:

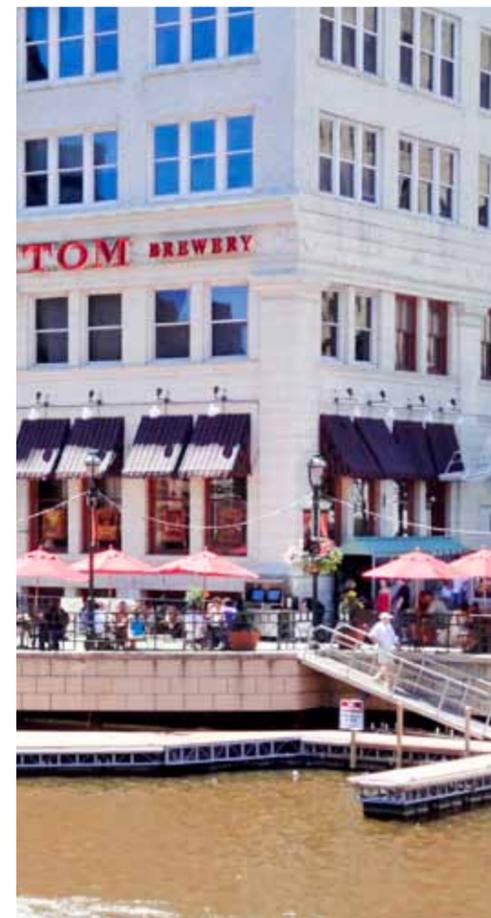
- ◇ Large expansive open lawn
- ◇ Pedestrian gateway leading in from development area
- ◇ A central water feature utilizing harvested rainwater
- ◇ Seating, lush landscaping and extensive site amenities
- ◇ Focus on views to the river

City Museum

Museums are known to provide numerous social, cultural, economic and political benefits; therefore, consistent with desires expressed during community outreach activities, a City museum should be considered on the eastern portion of the Riverfront Redevelopment Sites to connect Sterling residents and visitors to the City's historic manufacturing legacy. While the specific type of museum is not identified in this Plan, the museum is envisioned to exhibit a collection of culturally or historically significant artifacts for social benefits including supporting cultural diversity and identity, and providing safe and educational public spaces. Ideally, the City Museum would locate in a historic building such as the National Manufacturing building to further strengthen historical connections.



The Children's Garden at Morton Arboretum • Lisle, Illinois



Examples of Riverfront Plazas with varying intensities

Adaptive Reuse

Adaptive reuse is a technique of reinventing existing buildings for new uses. Warehouses, factories, schools and churches are among the types of buildings that have been given a new life through adaptive reuse. This provides environmental as well as economic benefits. In many cases, retrofitting a building is less expensive than the combined cost of demolition and new construction. Keeping materials out of the landfill means less waste and is more sustainable. Using existing structures preserves the character and integrity unique to individual communities.



Tate Modern

The Tate Modern is one of the world's most recognized examples of adaptive reuse. The art museum was created from the shell of an old, unsightly power station on the Thames River in London.



Before



After

In the above "before and after" sequence, adaptive reuse of a historic streetcar building in Royal Oak, Missouri is shown.

The "before" photo illustrates the building as functionally obsolete, however, the structural integrity of the building and historical significance continue to be intact. It is this integrity and historical character that make this building an attractive location for a new use.

The "after" photo illustrates the building after adaptive reuse. Modifications to the building's windows and entryways have occurred, but the historical character and unique architectural features remain. The building now houses a successful wine market for the town.



Discovery Depot

The Discovery Depot in Galesburg, Illinois is an example of adaptive reuse of an old industrial building into a Children's Museum.



Midtown Exchange

The Midtown Exchange is a large commercial building located in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Originally, the building was built in 1928 as a retail and mail-order catalog facility for Sears, which occupied it until 1994. It lay vacant until 2005, when it was transformed into multipurpose commercial space.

The building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as the Sears, Roebuck and Company Mail-Order Warehouse and Retail Store.



City Museum

The City Museum is housed in a 600,000 square-foot building that used to be the former International Shoe Company. Today, it is a mixture of a children's playground, funhouse, surrealistic pavilion, and architectural marvel made out of unique, found objects. The museum opened for visitors in 1997.



Section 8

A potential transformation of the Union Pacific viaduct into a community gateway

BEAUTIFICATION & URBAN DESIGN

While diversifying the types of land uses within the Downtown and Riverfront areas will help foster a distinct community destination, quality beautification and urban design components are necessary to achieve a united and lively atmosphere. A key goal outlined in Sterling's Riverfront Vision is to reclaim the Riverfront by fostering activity and creating a destination and source of civic pride. To achieve this, the Riverfront area should feature an attractive design that yields vibrant streets and public spaces.

Beautification and urban design involves the arrangement, appearance and functionality of public spaces, and speculates the way the public realm is experienced and used. To reinforce the Riverfront as an area with distinct character and charm, certain physical qualities are required.

This section provides beautification and urban design recommendations and policies that should be applied throughout the Downtown and Riverfront areas to improve the area's appearance and image. It includes recommendations for the following:

- ◇ Streetscape
- ◇ Rock River Edge
- ◇ Gateway & Wayfinding Signage
- ◇ Parking Lot Design
- ◇ Traffic Calming Design

Guiding Principles

Create a distinctive gateway into the City

Vacant buildings near 1st Avenue Bridge should be adaptively reused and revitalized if possible to eliminate the sense of blight they currently evoke and create a distinctive gateway into the City for visitors entering from the south. Additionally, an attractive and monumental gateway feature should be constructed to proudly announce arrival into Sterling and enhance the image and identity of the area.

Build New from Old

To promote sustainability within the community and along the Riverfront, the City should pursue public and private improvement projects that use recycled materials. Specifically, the City has an abundance of old bricks and pavers salvaged from old streets in the community. The City should seek out and promote opportunities to divert materials from the landfill and reuse them in streetscaping and enhancement projects. These bricks will contribute to the image and character of the area, similar to their impacts Downtown and in Martin's Landing.

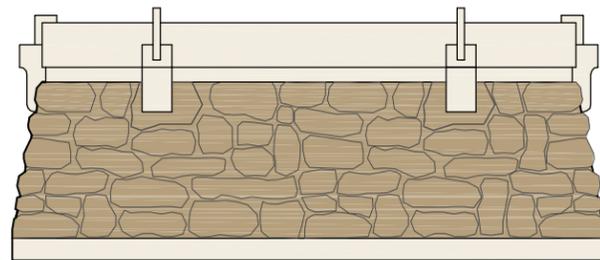
Attractive Streetscape Design

Streetscape design refers to the overall design of a street, including the road, sidewalks and pedestrian amenities, landscaping, and the character of the adjacent building facades. A memorable street is typically a street oriented towards the pedestrian experience. Attention to detail and the use of quality materials is important in achieving a successful streetscape design in the Riverfront area. As redevelopment and revitalization occur, the City should implement attractive streetscaping to enhance the public realm, maintain a pedestrian-oriented atmosphere, and ensure the safe and efficient movement of vehicles.

Streetscape Standards

The graphics illustrated on this page represent a recommended streetscape package, or “brand” for Sterling’s Riverfront Area. Taking cues from elements and themes incorporated in the Downtown’s streetscape design, a palette has been created for retaining walls (which may also function as seating areas or planter beds), wayfinding signage, Riverfront gateway signage, major gateway signage and lighting. These streetscape elements will strengthen the Riverfront’s unique character and build a more cohesive and coherent urban environment.

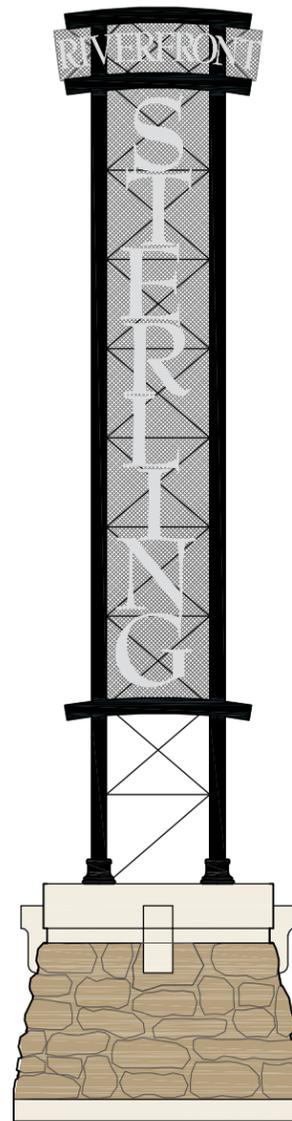
The following pages illustrate where these amenities should be incorporated as redevelopment and revitalization occurs along the Riverfront.



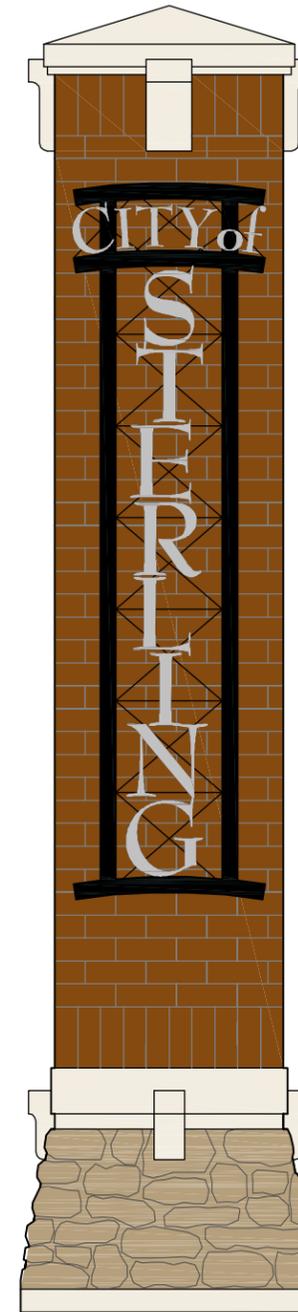
Retaining Wall Standard



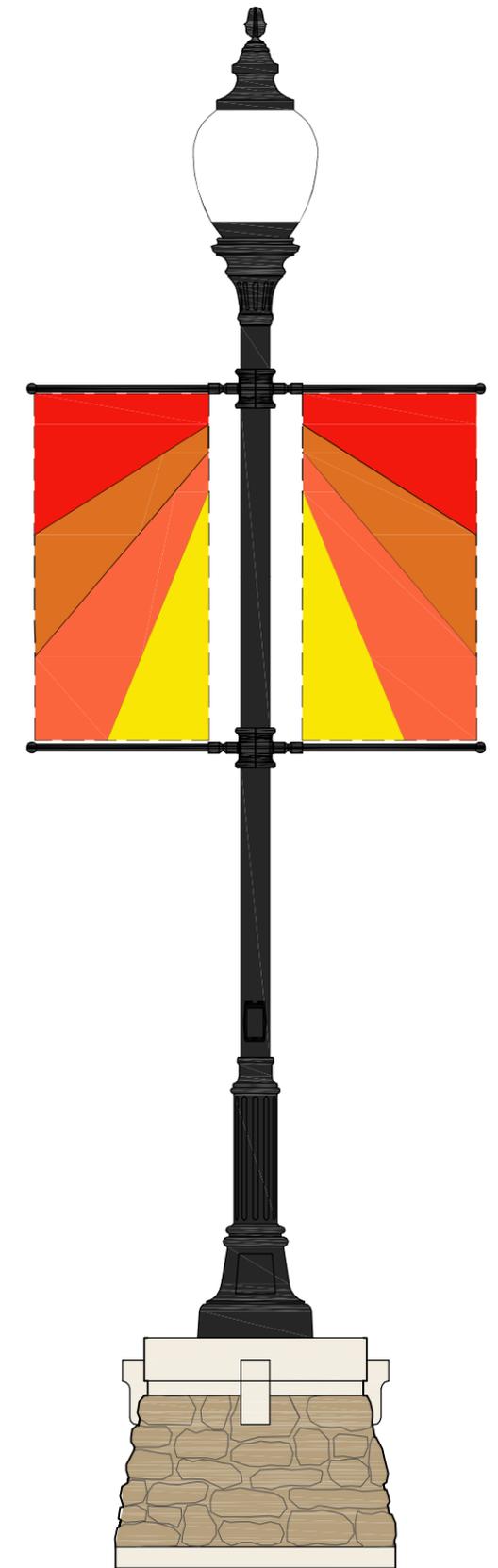
Wayfinding Signage



Riverfront Gateway Signage



Major Gateway Signage



Lighting Standard

Gateway & Wayfinding Signage Plan

Major Gateway Signage

The 1st Avenue bridge functions as a major entrance into the City of Sterling and provides an opportunity for a distinctive gateway. A Major Gateway Signage feature (illustrated on previous page), should be constructed in the public right-of-way near the base of the bridge. The City should also consider erecting a larger version of the sign on the Lawrence Brothers, Inc. site should the building be demolished and an attractive plaza and park space be put in its place.

Additionally, the City should work with the Union Pacific Railroad Company to improve the appearance of the railroad viaduct as it appears to users on 1st Avenue.

Riverfront Gateway Signage

In an effort to announce one's arrival into the Riverfront area, Riverfront Gateway Signage should be employed in key locations. Attractive landscaping and lighting should be implemented to complement the signage.

Wayfinding Signage

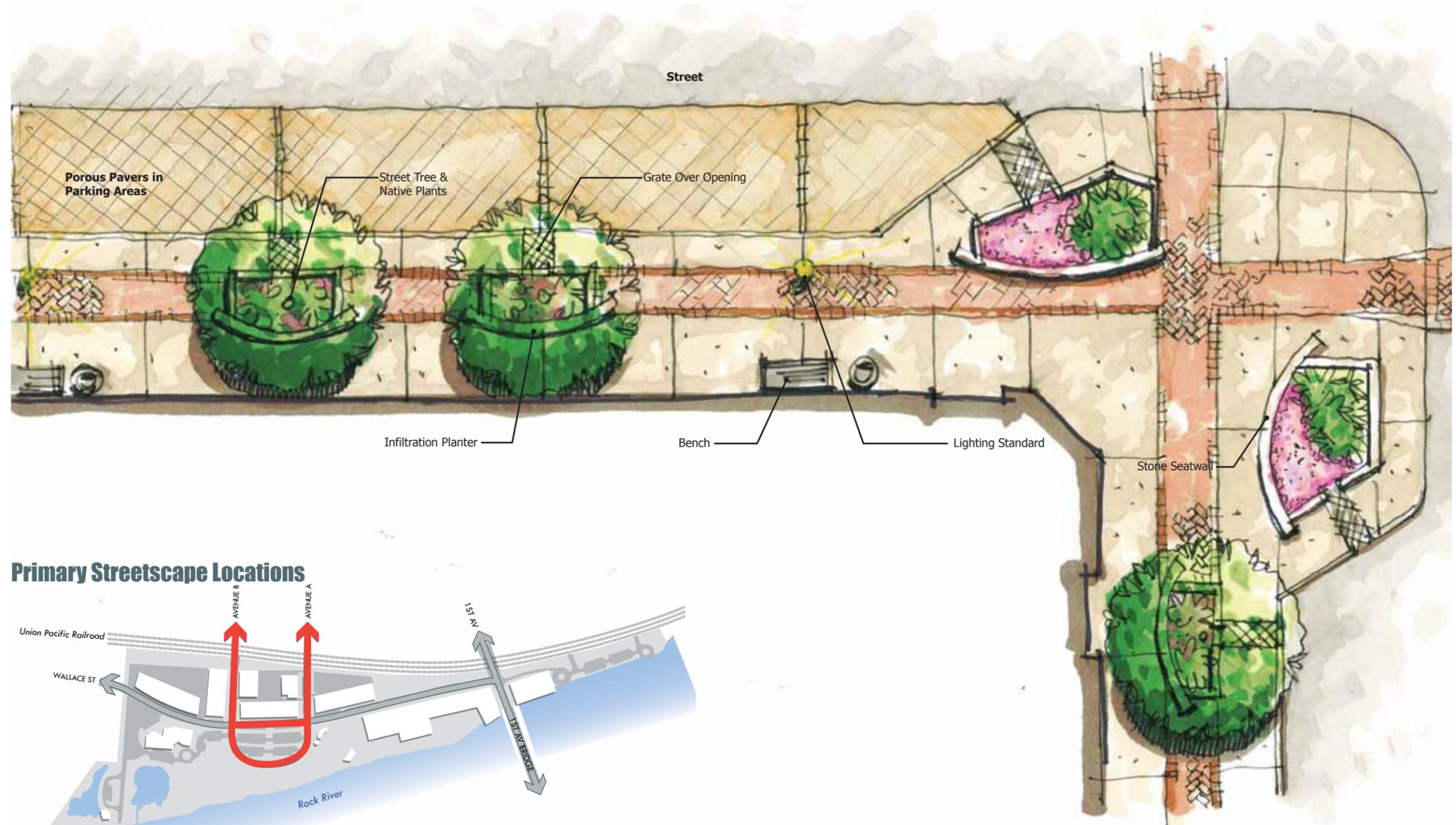
Wayfinding signage assists people in finding important community landmarks, while enhancing the streetscape and "sense of place" of an area. Similar to gateway signage, wayfinding signage should consist of signage complemented by landscaping and lighting. Wayfinding signage should be erected at key locations to direct people to destinations in the Riverfront area such as the Riverwalk, Veterans Memorial and City Museum.



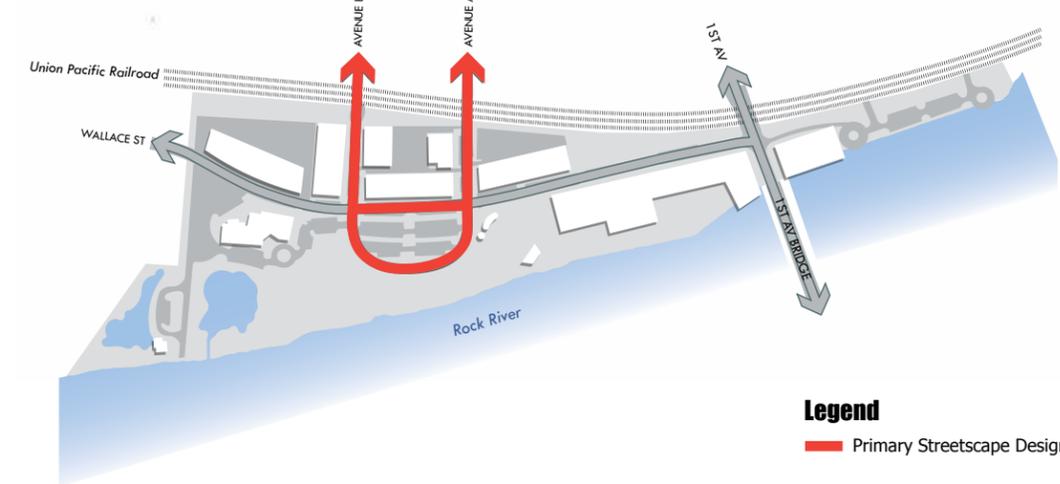
Primary Streetscape Design

A primary streetscape design has been created for Avenue A and Avenue B as these roads are the main entrances into the Riverfront area and connect the Riverfront to Downtown. This design is also recommended along Wallace Street in between Avenue A and Avenue B because this area is the focal point of Riverfront redevelopment and will likely have the most pedestrian traffic.

Areas served by the primary streetscape design should feature wide sidewalks with pedestrian amenities, large landscaping beds with seasonal flowers, an attractive mix of paving materials and clearly demarcated parking areas.



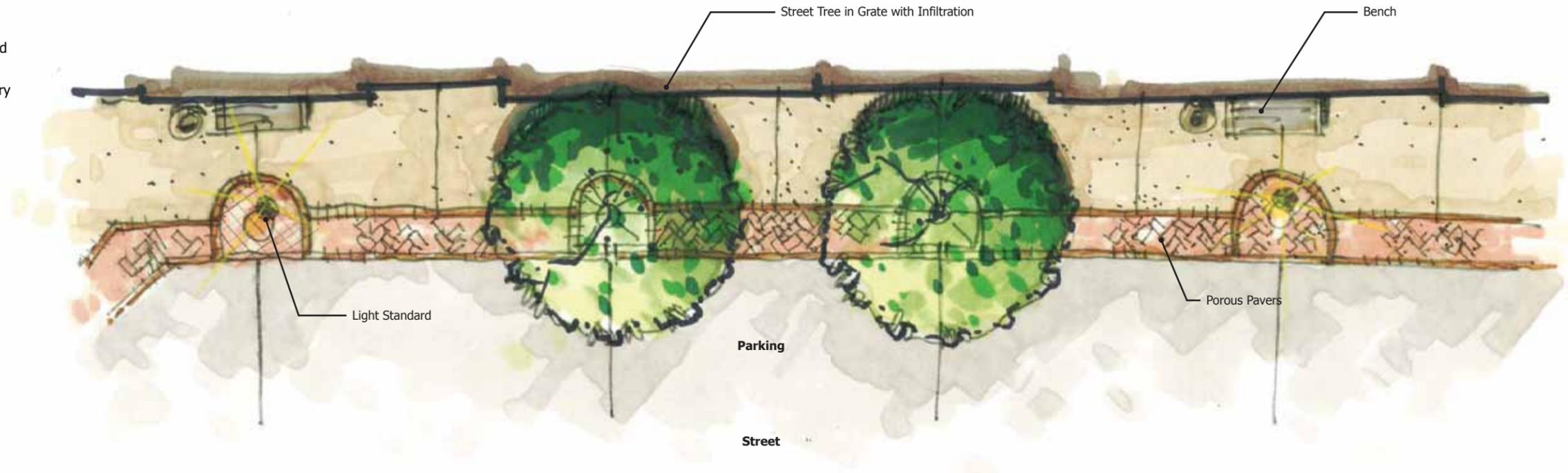
Primary Streetscape Locations



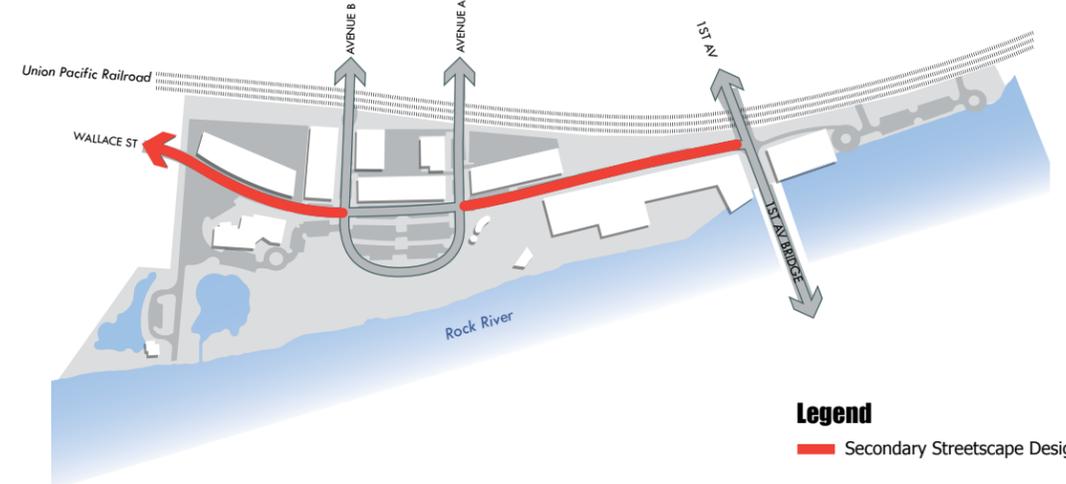
Legend
█ Primary Streetscape Design

Secondary Streetscape Design

A secondary streetscape design has been created for Wallace Street as it extends west of Avenue B and east of Avenue A. While the secondary design incorporates many of the same elements and amenities as the primary streetscape design, it generally features more narrow sidewalks, standard parking spaces without pavement differentiation, and smaller landscape beds. The secondary streetscape design is recommended for streets that are subsidiary to the Riverfront's main streets.



Secondary Streetscape Locations



Detailed Streetscape Concept

The adjacent rendering depicts a portion of Wallace Street that has been treated with the Primary Streetscape Design. The rendering has been created with the recommended right-of-way design and dimensions, and also incorporates details such as the actual Victor Stanley components recommended in **Section 9: Design and Development Guidelines**.



River Edge Treatments

The following pages illustrate recommended River Edge treatments. The character of the Riverfront and Riverwalk is envisioned to vary along the shoreline, from an urban area with a formalized shoreline near the 1st Avenue bridge, to a naturalized shoreline near the western boundary. River edge treatment should vary based upon intended activities, intensity of use, use of adjacent areas, and the existing physical characteristics of the location. Details of the River Edge Treatments can be found on the following four pages.

Cross Section A
page 92



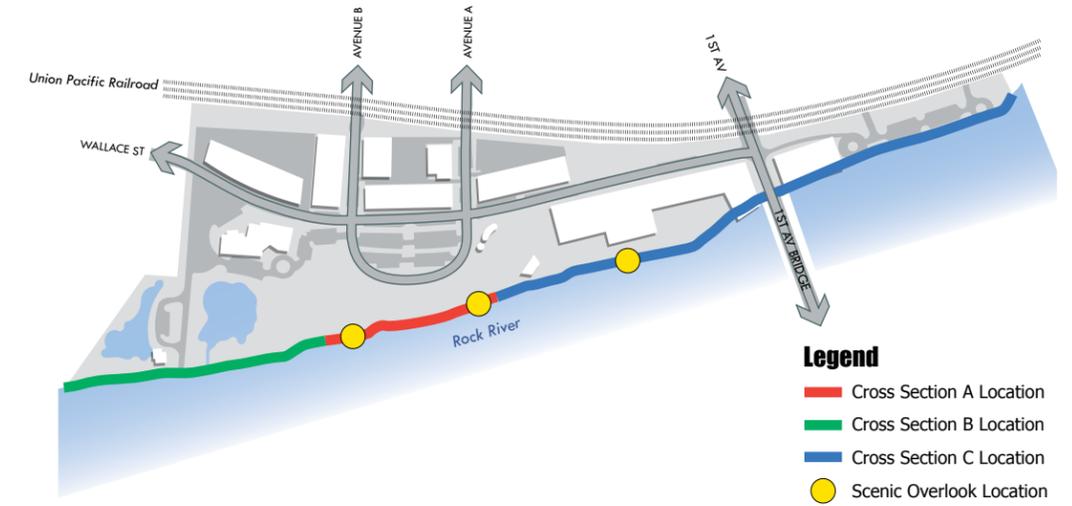
Cross Section B
page 93



Cross Section C
page 94



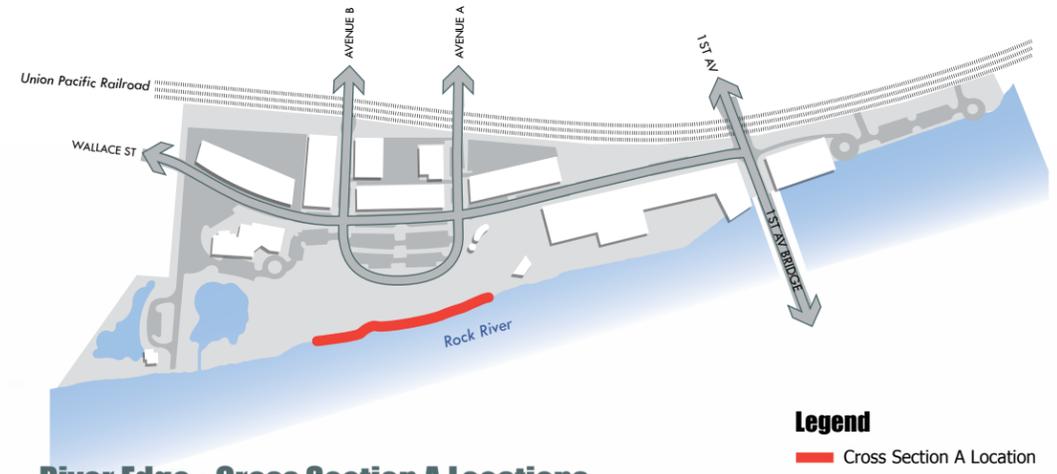
River Edge Treatment Key



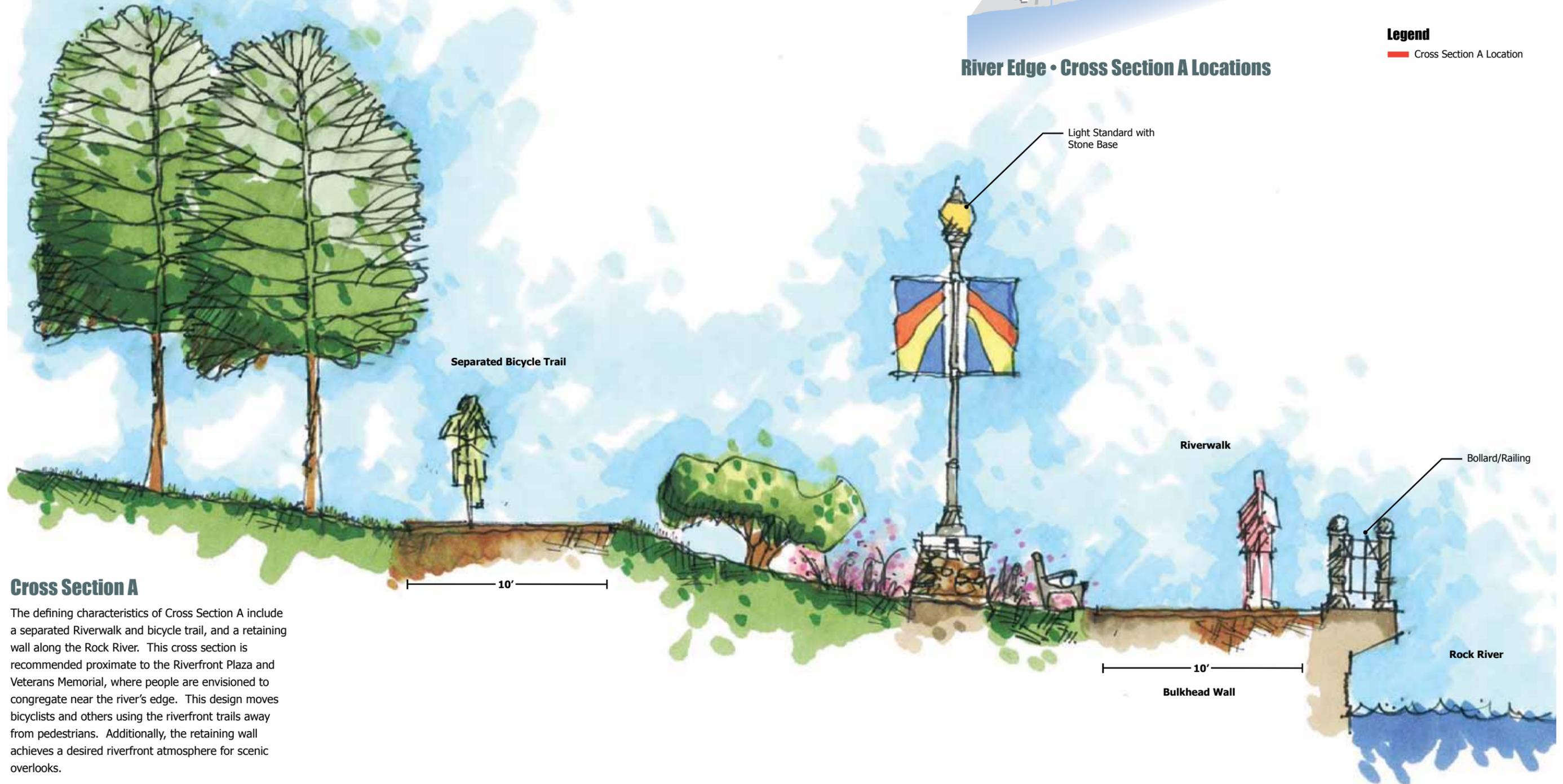
Scenic Overlook
page 95



River Edge • Cross Section A



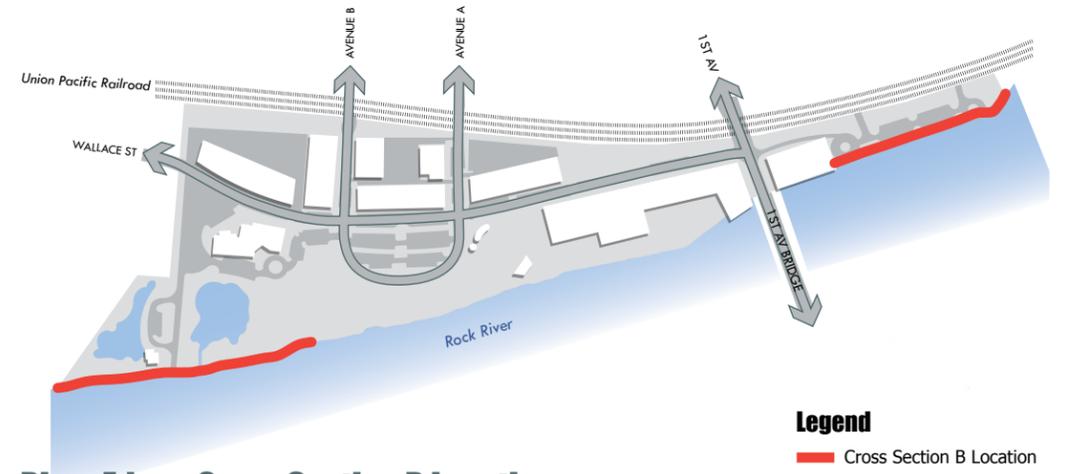
River Edge • Cross Section A Locations



Cross Section A

The defining characteristics of Cross Section A include a separated Riverwalk and bicycle trail, and a retaining wall along the Rock River. This cross section is recommended proximate to the Riverfront Plaza and Veterans Memorial, where people are envisioned to congregate near the river's edge. This design moves bicyclists and others using the riverfront trails away from pedestrians. Additionally, the retaining wall achieves a desired riverfront atmosphere for scenic overlooks.

River Edge • Cross Section B



River Edge • Cross Section B Locations

Legend
█ Cross Section B Location

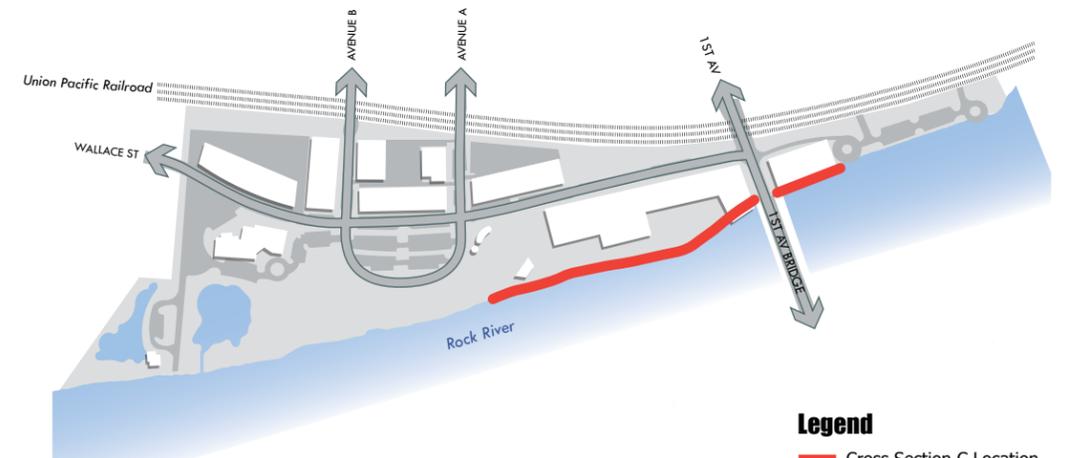


Cross Section B

Cross Section B features a naturalized shoreline that allows Riverfront patrons to directly access the water. This cross section design combines the Riverwalk and bicycle trail since areas with this river edge treatment are envisioned to have less traffic than commercial and civic portions of the Riverfront.

River Edge • Cross Section C

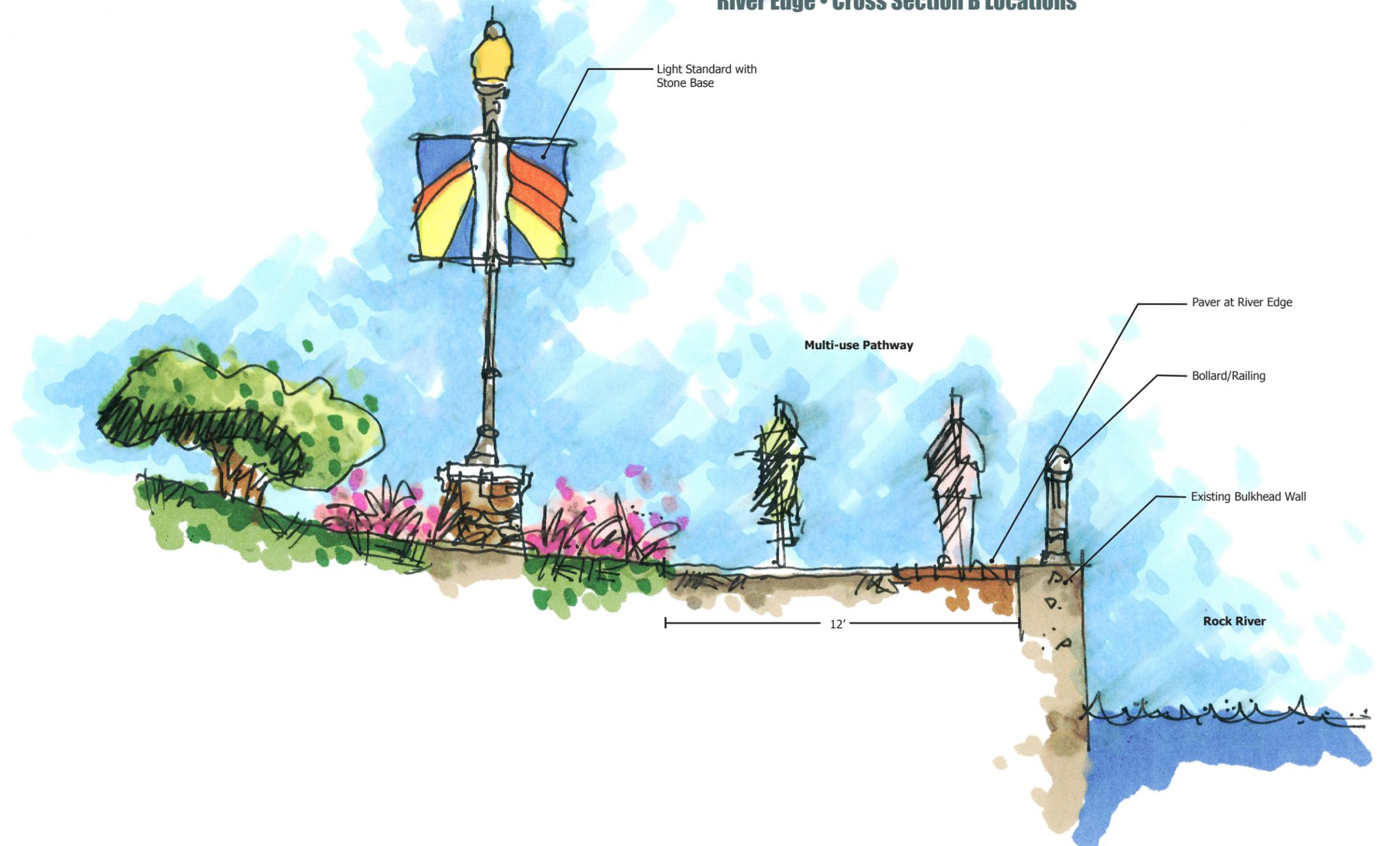
Cross Section C is recommended for areas along the Riverfront where adaptive reuse of existing structures and revitalization will take place. These areas will feature buildings with a smaller setback from the Rock River, and an active streetwall oriented towards the River and Riverwalk. In this concept, the Riverwalk trail and bicycle trail are combined, but feature different paving materials to create a perceived separation. Like Cross Section A, Cross Section C features a formal retaining wall that can be enhanced with decorative railings and scenic overlooks.



River Edge • Cross Section B Locations

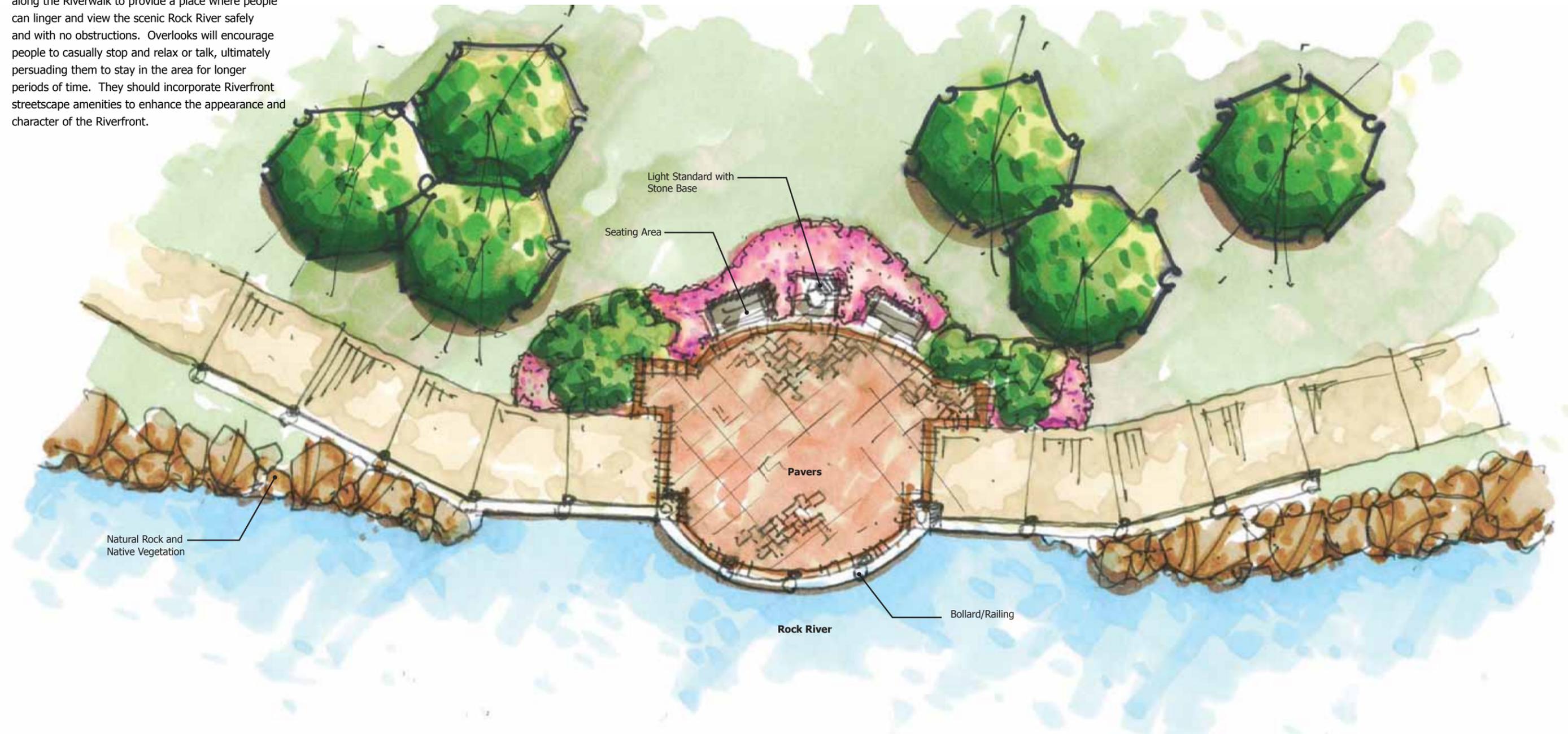
Legend

— Cross Section C Location



Scenic Overlook Design

Scenic overlooks should be incorporated periodically along the Riverwalk to provide a place where people can linger and view the scenic Rock River safely and with no obstructions. Overlooks will encourage people to casually stop and relax or talk, ultimately persuading them to stay in the area for longer periods of time. They should incorporate Riverfront streetscape amenities to enhance the appearance and character of the Riverfront.





Architectural features on the Lawrence Brothers, Inc. Building

Section 9

DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT GUIDELINES

Public improvements and private development will have a significant impact on the atmosphere of Sterling's Riverfront. Since individual parcels are oftentimes viewed as separate development projects, it can be difficult to create a consistent, attractive development pattern if appropriate guidelines are not put into place.

The Riverfront Design and Development Guidelines present basic principles to improve the quality, appearance and overall character of private development, the riverfront, public rights-of-way, and other public areas. Historic themes complementing downtown design elements and materials have been utilized to guide the development of riverfront character.

Riverwalk Shoreline Treatments



The above photo illustrates the Riverfront's existing shoreline with a continuous retaining wall near the dam.



The above photo illustrates an example of an area more typical to an urban form where plazas and scenic overlooks can be incorporated.

Public Improvement Guidelines

Riverwalk Shoreline Treatments

Shoreline treatment should vary based upon intended activities, intensity of use, use of adjacent areas, and the existing physical characteristics of the location. Core civic areas include uses more typical to an urban riverfront, such as pedestrian plazas and overlooks. For areas where proximity to the water's edge is important, bulkhead walls enable the riverwalk to be located at the river's edge. For less intense areas, a more natural approach is recommended using a combination of stone and native vegetation. Erosion control blankets, soil bags, cuttings and plugs may also be used to stabilize the shoreline.

These different shoreline treatments are intended to provide physical access to the river edge and provide permanent stabilization, while creating an attractive environment and overall riverfront character.

Streetscape Development

Streetscapes within the riverfront development will provide safe and effective vehicular and pedestrian access to shops, restaurants and various uses while providing an inviting atmosphere. Designs will vary by intensity of pedestrian activity. New development areas will include a full range of site amenities including wayfinding signage, street trees, seating areas, special pavements and more while open space frontage may include lighting, walkways and street trees, focusing on open views to the river.

- ◇ Site furnishings including benches, litter receptacles, bike racks and bollards should take visual cues from existing streetscape amenities in the Downtown.
- ◇ Traffic calming at intersections and mid-block locations should include curb extensions, raised paver crosswalks and creative paver patterns within street vehicle lanes.

The Victor Stanley amenities illustrated adjacent and below are recommended styles for streetscape furniture in the Riverfront area.



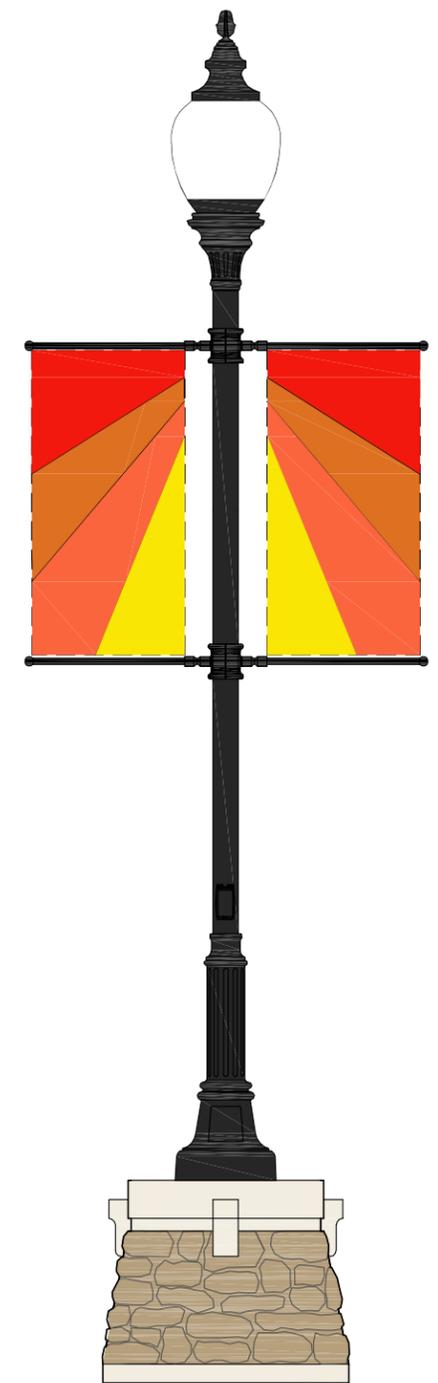
Lighting

Existing streetscape lighting in the downtown is an acorn style, turn of the century fixture with a precast concrete pole. This style should be continued in the riverfront with the following modifications.

- ◇ Consideration should be given to utilize LED lighting. There is an initial higher cost, but the operational life of an LED lamp is substantially greater virtually eliminating the need for routine bulb replacement. Another key strength to LED lighting is reduced power consumption, excellent clarity and light distribution.
- ◇ The addition of a stone base to the lighting standard will tie in with signage and retaining walls. It also will keep electrical components further away from water.
- ◇ Double headed fixtures will give emphasis to focal points and landscaped medium.
- ◇ Banners added to light poles will provide seasonal interest and event information to outdoor spaces.



The adjacent photo illustrates the City's existing Downtown lighting standard.



The rendering above illustrates a recommended lighting standard for the Riverfront area that takes cues from the City's existing Downtown lighting standard.

Gateway & Wayfinding Signage

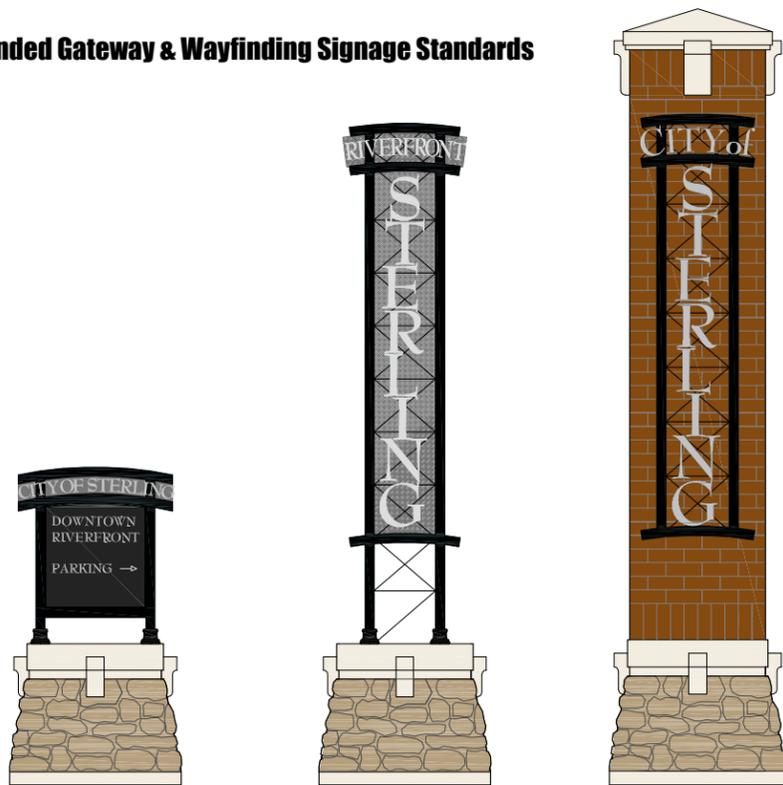
Clear and effective signage is a key element to the Sterling Redevelopment Plan. Creating a sense of arrival and guiding an individual to a particular location is very important given the complexity of vehicular bridges and railroad proximity to the riverfront.

Although signage will vary in size and function, design, style and materials will remain constant creating a theme unique to the City of Sterling. It will reflect historic architecture and bridge design elements utilizing a combination of brick stone and steel, potentially recycled from demolished structures.

Signage types include the following:

- ◇ Major gateway signs
- ◇ Riverfront gateway signs
- ◇ Wayfinding and directional signage

Recommended Gateway & Wayfinding Signage Standards



Major Gateway Signs

Major gateway signs are proposed at two locations, one north of 1st Avenue Bridge and the other north of Avenue G Bridge. Both locations are highly visible entrances into the City. The vertical form creates a focal point contrasting the horizontality of the bridge and river.

Riverfront Gateway Signs

Riverfront gateway signs are proposed at four roadway entrances to the riverfront. They are open steel frame, emphasizing views to the river. It is envisioned that they are placed in landscape meridians at all entranced locations.

Wayfinding and Directional Signs

These signs provide mapping and information identifying key locations, features, public facilities and business locations. Design and materials will match all other signs.

Private Development Guidelines

Building Height, Bulk & Proportion

Vibrant developments are successful in creating an intimate pedestrian atmosphere, or an outdoor "room" for visitors and shoppers. Much of this atmosphere can be attributed to the bulk and proportion of buildings as they relate to the street and one another. Development within the Riverfront Area should be comprised of primarily of two- and three-story buildings. Buildings of this height contribute to a sense of enclosure and an intimate and pedestrian scale.

- ◇ Riverfront Area commercial buildings should have a strong orientation towards the Rock River, and incorporate 360 degree architecture.
- ◇ Redevelopment/development within the Riverfront Area boundaries should avoid extreme differences in building height. Consideration should be given to the height of adjacent buildings.
- ◇ Buildings taller than three stories could be acceptable in select locations, provided they are in character with the surrounding area. An example of an acceptable location would be on the west side of the development where senior housing is envisioned, or adjacent to the 1st Avenue Bridge where the National Manufacturing Building and Lawrence Brothers building are envisioned to be preserved. Vertical architectural elements should be incorporated where appropriate and could include clock towers, spires or bell towers. These elements should be considered design "highlights" at key locations.
- ◇ Where present, the third and/or fourth stories of buildings within the Riverfront Area should be setback to soften the bulk and visual scale of the building.

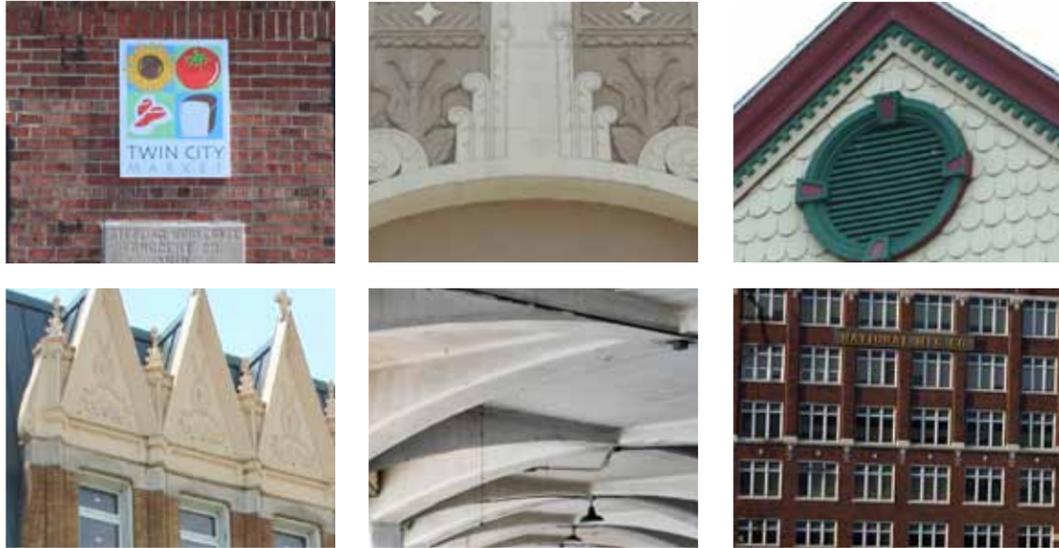
Building Placement and Orientation

Typical riverfront developments are characterized by buildings with a strong orientation towards the riverfront. Outdoor dining, pedestrian arcades and plazas should complement the buildings, and also be oriented towards the river. This development pattern creates a distinctive "streetwall" effect that adds visual interest, enhances the pedestrian environment, and establishes a "human" scale within an area. Building placement and orientation objectives strive to create this development pattern within Sterling's Riverfront Area.

- ◇ Buildings within the Riverfront Area are encouraged to be positioned at the property line closest to the river.
- ◇ New construction in the Riverfront Area is recommended to occupy the entire width of the lot to avoid gaps between buildings and discontinuities in the streetwall, except where pedestrian linkages or access to rear parking is designed and planned for.
- ◇ Where maintaining a continuous streetwall is not possible or desirable, the streetwall should be maintained through the use of landscaping, pedestrian amenities, and decorative walls or fencing.
- ◇ Buildings throughout the Riverfront Area should be double-sided, with one main entrance fronting the river, and a second entrance overlooking the parking area in the rear of the building.
- ◇ The placement of buildings at odd or irregular angles to the river should be avoided. However, corner buildings might take advantage of their prominent locations with angled, rounded or recessed corner entrances or other small setbacks.

The photos below illustrate examples of riverfront development with a strong orientation towards the water.





The photos above highlight a few of the distinguishing architectural features present in existing Downtown and Riverfront buildings.



Doors, entrances and windows should all complement one another in addition to the architectural style of the building.



Architectural Style

The creation of a new Riverfront Area provides the City of Sterling with the opportunity to establish an architectural style that can strengthen the area's character and distinguish Sterling from surrounding communities. While the City should not attempt to dictate any one specific architectural style, it can promote new construction that complements the traditional building styles evident within existing buildings in the community.

- ◇ Development within the Riverfront Area should consist of traditional architectural styles. Modern architectural styles should be discouraged.
- ◇ New buildings need not be historic replicas, but should offer high quality and compatible interpretations of the traditional styles present within historic and traditional neighborhoods and within the residential areas of Sterling.
- ◇ Regardless of style, new buildings are encouraged to use traditional masonry materials and reflect the predominant scale, height, massing, and proportions of traditional riverfront developments or downtowns.
- ◇ New buildings should incorporate decorative cornices, columns, reliefs, terra cotta tiles, and other significant façade detailing.

Building Materials

The building materials most common within traditional developments are earth-toned brick and stone. Ceramic tile and terra cotta are also used as ornamentation around doors, windows and cornices.

- ◇ New buildings should be constructed of traditional masonry building materials such as brick or stone; these materials should be used on all sides of the building. Stucco, siding of all types, and any other exterior wall covering are not recommended within the Riverfront Area.
- ◇ Recommended accent materials include stone, simulated stone, terra cotta, and wood and metal trim.
- ◇ Since parking should be promoted in the rear of the buildings, new construction within Sterling's Riverfront Area should have a "360o degree" appearance, with design and detail consideration for all visible sides.
- ◇ Rough sawed wood, aluminum panels and siding, and plastic or metal panels are strongly discouraged within the Riverfront Area.
- ◇ Exterior insulation finish systems (EIFS) or Dryvit are strongly discouraged within the Riverfront Area.

Doors & Entrances

The doors and entrances to the new buildings along the Riverfront should provide an open invitation to potential customers, be attractive and inviting to pedestrians, and add visual interest to the riverfront and adjacent streets. However, doors should be appropriately sized and in scale with a building's façade.

- ◇ The front doors of new buildings should reflect the scale, placement, and proportions of traditional downtown buildings; recessed entrances are encouraged.
- ◇ Main entrances should be at the front of the building and face the sidewalk. Buildings situated on corner lots may take advantage of their prominent locations with angled, or rounded corner entrances.
- ◇ Doors and entryways of buildings should be compatible with the style and character of the façade.

Windows

Display windows on the ground floor of commercial buildings are one of the distinguishing features of a pedestrian oriented development. They allow passersby to see merchandise and activity within a commercial building from the sidewalk. Windows on the upper floors of traditional developments are smaller and less prominent, but often have attractive detailing and decorative trim.

- ◇ Large ground-floor display windows and bays are strongly encouraged for retail and entertainment uses within the Riverfront Area.
- ◇ Windows on the upper floors of new buildings should appear to be "punched" openings within a solid wall, rather than as continuous rows of windows separated only by their frames. Curtain-wall window treatments are not appropriate within the Riverfront Area. Upper floor windows should be recessed, and not flush with the surface of the building.

- ◇ Windows should complement the architectural style of the building.
- ◇ Window glazing should be clear or slightly tinted; dark, mirrored, or reflective glass is discouraged.
- ◇ Ground floor windows can be used for displays, however business owners are encouraged to allow full and unobstructed views into their businesses. Obstructing windows from the interior of a building with shelving, display cases, signage or other objects should be discouraged.

Color

Color should be used to unite the elements of a façade and to highlight architectural features. However, the colors on individual buildings should complement and be compatible with the predominant hues of nearby buildings.

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

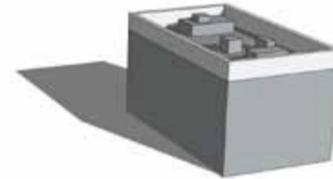
Rooflines & Parapets

The rooflines of new buildings should be similar to the rooflines of a traditional downtown area in terms of shape, alignment, and architectural detailing.

- ◇ The roofs of most commercial buildings should be flat, shallow-sloped or gabled.
- ◇ Roof parapets should be utilized to create an interesting building profile and to hide vents and other rooftop equipment.
- ◇ Cornices, and other decorative detail are encouraged along the rooflines of buildings.
- ◇ Sloped mansard style (shake or shingle) roofs are discouraged within the Riverfront Area.
- ◇ Cedar shingles are recommended within the Riverfront Area. Cedar shakes are discouraged.
- ◇ Rooflines and architectural details should complement the buildings architectural style, and contribute to the Riverfront Area's character, image and appeal.

Rooflines

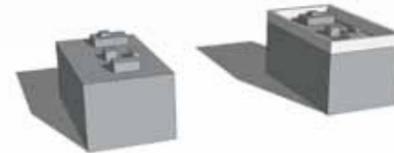
Flat Roof



Shallow-sloped Roof



Gabled Roof



Roof parapets, as illustrated on the building to the right, shield unsightly mechanical equipment from view.

Awnings & Canopies

Awnings (temporary/seasonal) and canopies (permanent) protect shoppers from the elements, add color and visual interest to the street, and contribute significantly to an area's pedestrian scale and interest.

- ◇ Awnings and canopies should be integrated into the façade of all commercial buildings within the Riverfront Area and shall be in character with the architectural style of the building.
- ◇ Awnings are encouraged above entrances and may extend over storefront windows.
- ◇ The color of awnings and canopies should complement and enhance the overall color scheme of the building façade.
- ◇ Awnings and canopies should be positioned at least eight feet above the sidewalk or other pedestrian pathways.
- ◇ Awnings should be made of a canvas or durable fabric material that can be easily cleaned. Hard plastic, or other materials that could be cracked or broken are not recommended. Awnings and canopies that become windblown or torn should be replaced immediately.
- ◇ Back lit awnings and canopies, shingle and mansard canopies, and metal and plastic awnings are not recommended within the Riverfront Area.
- ◇ Awnings and canopies should be used only when they are compatible with, or complement the architectural style of the building. Awnings should not appear out of place, "forced", or as an afterthought.

Awnings

Metal Frame



Stretched



Building Integrated



Awnings can vary in shape and size. Good designs will incorporate the awning into the theme present in the building. Awnings also present an area in which to place signage identifying individual businesses.

Building Signage

Signage not only communicates the nature of individual businesses, but also influences the overall image and character of Sterling's Riverfront Area.

- ◇ Raised, individual letters mounted directly on the building, as well as signs that use light colors for lettering and darker colors for backgrounds, are encouraged throughout the Riverfront.
- ◇ Internally illuminated signage, such as channel letters, is discouraged in the Riverfront Area; rather, signage should be illuminated externally.
- ◇ Wall-mounted signs should be designed as an integrated component of the building façade, and should not cover important architectural details.
- ◇ Exterior signs should be limited to business identification and description. Signs for special promotions, sales, products, and advertising signs are discouraged.
- ◇ The size, material, color, and shape of signs should complement the architectural style and scale of the building.
- ◇ When a building contains multiple storefronts, signage for all businesses should be compatible in design and consistent in placement.
- ◇ Pole signs and internally illuminated box signs are strongly discouraged in the Riverfront Area.
- ◇ Temporary signage, such as promotional banners is discouraged in the Riverfront Area.
- ◇ Street numbers should be prominently displayed at the main entrance to every home or business and be clearly visible from the street. Consideration should be given to a consistent style and placement of street numbers within the Riverfront Area.
- ◇ The City should establish a comprehensive wayfinding signage system that can direct visitors to, and around, the Riverfront Area. Directories and signage could also guide and direct both motorists and pedestrians to key destinations within the area, including parking lots, entertainment facilities, recreational trails, piers, canoe launches, parks, and plazas.

Building Lighting

The lighting of a building's façade can help identify stores and businesses, promote a sense of safety and security, and highlight prominent Riverfront buildings and building features.

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

Rear Yards & Rear Façades

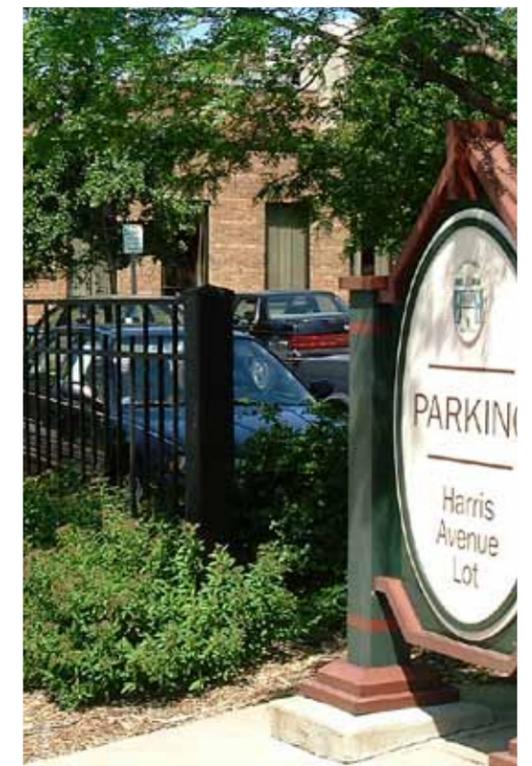
The rear portions of all properties should be clean, attractive and well maintained, particularly where these areas are visible to the public.

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

Parking Areas

Parking within the Riverfront Area is recommended to accommodate shoppers, employees and residents. Parking areas should consist of a combination of on-street parking and off-street parking lots. Off-street parking lots should be designed and located so that they are safe, efficient, and do not disrupt the pedestrian scale of the Riverfront Area. On-street parking areas should be designed to provide short-term convenient parking, which will assist in protecting the pedestrians, calming traffic and contributing to the desired character of Sterling's Riverfront.

- ◇ Parking lots shall be located behind buildings, off of Wallace Avenue. Parking lots in front of buildings are not recommended within the Riverfront Area.
- ◇ Vehicular access to parking lots should be provided from Wallace Avenue. Curb cuts and access drives are discouraged along pedestrian shopping streets.
- ◇ Pedestrian access to parking lots should be provided through planned walkways located in gaps between buildings and public plazas.
- ◇ Parking lots should have curbed perimeters; landscaped islands and clearly marked pedestrian pathways are encouraged within the interior of parking areas.
- ◇ Parking lots should be screened from view along sidewalks and roadways through the use of low masonry walls or evergreen plantings and decorative fencing.
- ◇ All parking lots should be paved, well marked, sufficiently lit, and provided with proper drainage.
- ◇ Parking lot lighting should consist of vehicular scale lighting and pedestrian scale lighting. Excessive lighting and light pollution is discouraged.
- ◇ Parking lot landscaping should include "landscape islands" at a ratio of approximately one per fifteen to twenty parking spaces. Landscape islands should consist of canopy trees (3 to 4 inches in caliper), attractive groundcover, and/or decorative bushes (2 to 3 feet in height).



The adjacent photos both highlight attractive ways to screen parking from the sidewalk or other pedestrian areas.



Example of naturalized stormwater detention

Sustainable Landscaping and Site Development

Sustainable landscaping creates an attractive environment, supports the use of the site and is in balance with climatic and light conditions. Sustainable plant materials require minimal use of fertilizers, pesticides and irrigation. Selected plant materials should be adapted or native to the local environment and placed in the appropriate light and soil conditions.

Minimizing the use of catch basins and piping, providing curb cuts to allow water to flow into rain garden, biowswales, infiltration basins and ultimately stormwater marsh basins provides for environmental benefits as well as attractive natural landscape features.

The use of native vegetation reduces the need for irrigation. Harvested rain water can be utilized for water features such as fountains or waterfalls and ultimately to irrigate open space lawns and more formal garden areas.

A comprehensive use of best management practices within the riverfront will result in community benefits of environmental quality and appropriate site character.

- ◇ Selection of products and materials using recycled materials is important to conservation of natural resources and on limiting environmental impacts.
- ◇ Leadership for Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) is the world's most well-recognized and sought-after green building rating system, created and administered by the United States Green Building Council (USGBC).

Achieving LEED certification is contingent upon earning credits, which provide guidelines for the design and construction of high performance, durable, healthful, affordable and environmentally-sound developments.

Many products and sustainable designs help earn LEED credits.

Site Landscaping

In a location where an individual lot is developed with a building or buildings, foundation landscaping shall include continuous plantings or more urban solutions, such as trees in grates or planters. The treatment should complement the architecture, provide year-round season interest, and maintain good storefront visibility.

Landscape buffers and perimeter landscaping should provide screening of objectionable views. A mixture of deciduous and evergreen material is recommended.

All refuse areas shall be screened on three sides by a solid enclosure matching the building materials on-site and gated on the fourth side. The open gated side of the enclosure should not face streets or adjacent developments. All other utilities should be appropriately screened from public view with landscaping.

The interior of parking areas shall include landscape islands with a maximum number of 20 spaces between each one. Planting islands shall be a minimum of 162 SF (9' x 18'). Parking bay green strips are also recommended. They should be a minimum of 8' wide and be provided every other bay. Best management practices, including porous pavement and bio-infiltration should be incorporated where appropriate.



Example of appropriate refuse screening



Example of porous pavers



Example of a landscape buffer

Site Landscaping

Representative Plant List

Shade Trees

- ◇ Acer freemannii 'Autumn Blaze – Autumn Blaze Maple
- ◇ Acer saccharum 'Green Mountain'– Green Mountain Sugar Maple
- ◇ Celtis occidentalis - Hackberry
- ◇ Ginkgo biloba – Ginkgo (Male trees only)
- ◇ Gleditsia triacanthos inermis 'Skyline' – Skyline Thornless Honeylocust
- ◇ Gymnocladus dioicus – Kentucky Coffeetree
- ◇ Pyrus calleryana 'Chanticleer'–Chanticleer Pear
- ◇ Quercus macrocarpa – Bur Oak
- ◇ Quercus bicolor – Swamp White Oak
- ◇ Tilia Americana 'Redmond' – Redmond American Linden
- ◇ Tilia cordata 'Greenspire' – Greenspire Littleleaf Linden
- ◇ Ulmus 'Morton Glossy' – Triumph Elm

Ornamental Trees

- ◇ Amelanchier grandiflora 'Autumn Brilliance' –Apple Serviceberry
- ◇ Betula nigra – River Birch
- ◇ Cornus mas – Cornelian Cherry Dogwood
- ◇ Crataegus crusgalli var. inermis– Thornless Cockspur Hawthorn
- ◇ Syringa reticulata – Japanese Tree Lilac
- ◇ Taxodium distichum – Bald Cypress

Groundcovers

- ◇ Euonymus fortunei 'Coloratus' – Purpleleaf Wintercreeper
- ◇ Liriope spicata – Lilyturf
- ◇ Pachysandra terminalis 'Green Carpet' – Green Carpet Japanese Spurge
- ◇ Vinca minor 'Dart's Blue' – Dart's Blue Common Periwinkle

Evergreen Trees

- ◇ Juniperus virginiana – Eastern Red Cedar
- ◇ Picea pungens 'Glauca'–Colorado Blue Spruce
- ◇ Pinus nigra – Austrian Pine
- ◇ Pinus strobus – Eastern White Pine
- ◇ Thuja occidentalis 'Techny'–Techny Arborvitae
- ◇ Thuja occidentalis 'Smaragd' – Emerald Green Arborvitae

Evergreen Shrubs

- ◇ Buxus 'Glencoe'–Chicagoland Green Boxwood
- ◇ Juniperus chinensis 'Pfitzerana Kallays Compacta' – Kallays Compact Juniper
- ◇ Juniperus chinensis 'Sea Green'
- ◇ Taxus x media 'Densiformis' – Dense Yew

Deciduous Shrubs

- ◇ Cornus sericea – Red Osier Dogwood
- ◇ Cephalanthus occidentalis – Button Bush
- ◇ Cornus racemosa – Gray Dogwood
- ◇ Euonymus alatus 'Compacta' – Dwarf Burning Bush
- ◇ Fothergilla gardenii – Dwarf Fothergilla
- ◇ Itea virginica 'Sprich' – Little Henry Sweetspire
- ◇ Potentilla fruticosa 'McKay's White' – McKay's White Cinquefoil
- ◇ Physocarpus opulifolius 'Monlo' – Diablo Ninebark
- ◇ Rhus aromatic 'GroLow' – GroLow Sumac
- ◇ Spiraea x bumalda 'Anthony Waterer' – Anthony Waterer Spirea
- ◇ Spirea alba – Meadow Sweet
- ◇ Syringa meyeri 'Palibin' – Dwarf Korean Lilac
- ◇ Syringa patula 'Miss Kim' – Miss Kim Lilac
- ◇ Viburnum dentatum – Arrowwood Viburnum
- ◇ Viburnum juddii – Judd Viburnum
- ◇ Viburnum trilobum – American Cranberry Viburnum

Perennials, Forbs and Grasses

- ◇ Achillea species – Yarrow
- ◇ Aster species – Aster
- ◇ Bouteloua curtipendula – Side Oats Grama
- ◇ Calamagrostis x acutiflora 'Karl Foerster' – Feather Reed Grass
- ◇ Carex stipata – Common Fox Sedge
- ◇ Carex lacustris – Common Lake Sedge
- ◇ Carex stricta – Tussock Sedge
- ◇ Carex vulpinoidea – Brown Fox Sedge
- ◇ Coreopsis species - Tickseed
- ◇ Echinacea purpurea – Purple Coneflower
- ◇ Eupatorium maculatum–Spotted Joe-Pye Weed
- ◇ Hemerocallis species – Daylilies
- ◇ Iris virginica shrevei – Blueflag Iris
- ◇ Juncus torreyi – Torrey's Rush
- ◇ Liatris spicata – Spike Blazing Star
- ◇ Lobelia cardinalis – Cardinal Flower
- ◇ Lobelia siphilitica – Great Blue Lobelia
- ◇ Miscanthus sinensis 'Gracillimus' –Maiden Grass
- ◇ Perovskia atriplicifolia – Russian Sage
- ◇ Rudbeckia species – Black Eyed Susan
- ◇ Salvia species - Salvia
- ◇ Schyzachyrium scoparium – Little Bluestem
- ◇ Sedum species - Stonecrop
- ◇ Sporobolus heterolepis – Prairie Dropseed
- ◇ Verbena hastata – Blue Vervain

Landscape Maintenance

All property owners and occupants shall maintain their sites in good condition at all times. Damaged or dead landscaping shall be restored to the original condition, safe, clean and neat, free of rubbish and weeds.

- ◇ Planting shall be maintained in a healthy growing condition. Fertilization, cultivation and pruning shall be carried out on a regular basis.
- ◇ All lawn areas shall be kept neat and mowed to a maximum of three (3) inches in height.
- ◇ Natural areas shall be monitored and maintained free of non-native or invasive species as necessary by mowing, hand pulling and selective herbicide application. Prescribed burning shall require state and local permits.
- ◇ Detention basins and biowswales require maintenance to ensure that they function properly both in terms of establishment of native flood control and prevention of pollutants from entering the river.
- ◇ Porous pavement areas must be kept free of sediments and debris and vacuum swept as needed.



Pathway and trail underpass near Martin's Landing

IMPLEMENTATION

This section describes specific actions required to carry out the recommendations and policies of the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan, including recommendations for priority improvement projects and redevelopment sites, and potential implementation techniques. This section also provides the detail necessary to allow the City to track the progress and effectiveness of the Plan and maximize its usefulness as a tool to achieve the community's vision.

The Implementation section is intended as a "road map" for City staff and officials to use in their efforts to realize the vision set forth in this document. It is also a reference for other stakeholders and interested parties, such as residents, business owners, community organizations, and potential developers to use as a tool to work together to support and improve Sterling's Downtown and Riverfront.

There are several requirements for effective implementation of the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan. Although specific recommendations are found throughout the Plan, basic implementation components are highlighted in this section.

1. Adopt and use the Plan on a day-to-day basis;
2. Publicize the Plan;
3. Update the Plan as required or deemed necessary;
4. Review and Update the Zoning Ordinance, and Explore Opportunities for Form Based Codes, Overlay Districts, and other Development Controls;
5. Develop and utilize a regular Capital Improvements Program (CIP);
6. Promote cooperation and participation among various agencies, organizations, community groups and individuals;
7. Annually, prepare a 5-year action plan to prioritize objectives and list accomplishments of proceeding years;
8. Explore possible funding sources, incentives and implementation techniques;



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

The Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan will serve as the City's official policy guide for improvement and development within the Downtown and riverfront areas. It is essential that the Plan be adopted by the City Council and then used on a regular basis by City staff, boards and commissions to review and evaluate all proposals for improvement and development within the Downtown and Riverfront in the years ahead. Once adopted, the Plan should be placed on the City of Sterling's website and hardcopies made available at City Hall. This will allow property owners and private developers to refer to the Plan before engaging in any activities to develop properties within the Downtown and/or Riverfront.

Publicize the Plan

In an effort to maximize exposure and knowledge of the new Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan, the City should:

1. Make copies of the Plan available for public purchase;
2. Provide assistance to the public in explaining the Plan and its relationship to private and public development projects and other proposals, as appropriate;
3. Assist the City Council, Planning Commission, and Board of Zoning Adjustments in the day-to-day administration, interpretation and application of the Plan;

Update the Plan as Required or Deemed Necessary

It is important that the new Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan not be a static document. If local attitudes change or new issues arise which are beyond the scope of the current Plan, the Plan should be revised and updated accordingly. Although a proposal to amend the Plan can be brought forth by petition at any time, the City should regularly undertake a systematic review of the Plan.

Capital Improvements Program

The Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan identifies a number of capital improvement projects that should occur in the Downtown and riverfront areas, particularly streetscape enhancements and the improvement of existing infrastructure. Sterling's financial resources will always be limited and public dollars must be spent wisely. The creation of a Capital Improvements Program (CIP) would allow the City to provide the most desirable public improvements, yet stay within budget constraints.

A CIP establishes schedules, priorities, and funding sources for all public improvement projects within a five-year period. Creating and updating the CIP would involve scheduling the implementation of a range of specific projects related to the Riverfront Redevelopment Plan, particularly the restoration and upgrading of existing utilities, infrastructure and facilities and installation of streetscape elements. Parks and open space amenities could also be included within the CIP.

As the Riverfront is redeveloped, the City should also explore opportunities to complete capital improvements through a combination of public and private investment. For example, existing infrastructure could be updated and new street elements installed in concert with the construction of mixed-use buildings in the area adjacent to a public right-of-way.

Prepare an Implementation Action Agenda

In conjunction with the Capital Improvements Program, the City should prepare an implementation "action agenda" which highlights the improvement and development projects and activities to be undertaken in the Downtown and riverfront areas during the next few years. For example, the "action agenda" might consist of:

1. A detailed description of the projects and activities to be undertaken;
2. The priority of each project or activity;
3. An indication of the public and private sector responsibilities for initiating and participating in each activity; and
4. A suggestion of the funding sources and assistance programs that might potentially be available for implementing each project or activity.

In order to remain current, the "action agenda" should be updated annually.

Land Use and Development Regulations

The Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan sets forth policies regarding the use of land within the City's riverfront area and establishes guidelines for the quality, character and intensity of new development to be promoted in the years ahead. The Plan's policies and guidelines should greatly assist the City in formulating new zoning and development code regulations that can better reflect the unique needs and aspirations of the Sterling community.

Zoning is an important tool in implementing planning policy. It establishes the types of uses to be allowed on specific properties, and prescribes the overall character and intensity of development to be permitted. Currently, the City's Zoning Ordinance does not permit the types of development desired on the Riverfront Redevelopment Sites. Adoption of the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan should be followed by a review and update of the Zoning Ordinance to ensure it is consistent with, and complementary to, the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan.

Alternatives to Conventional Zoning

In many instances, conventional zoning may not provide the City with the ability to control the built form of new development. Conventional zoning defines a building envelope for where a building could be, not must be. This is an important distinction as conventional zoning does not yield a predictable outcome. To achieve more control over the built form of new development, the City should explore opportunities to implement Form Based Codes or Overlay Districts in the Downtown and riverfront areas. This would enable the City to better regulate development and redevelopment and provide a regulatory framework that fosters outcomes in accordance with the Vision Statement and desired sense of place.

1. **Form-Based Codes (FBCs)** regulate based on building form, rather than focusing on underlying land use, and emphasize neighborhood scale, pedestrian access, and the integration of public space. This is achieved by specifying development standards that more tightly regulate the "building envelope" and prescribe a range of complementary building types that create diversity within the built environment. The focus of an FBC is on consciously shaping the public realm and creating opportunities for both social interaction and interaction between pedestrians and the natural and built environment.
2. An **Overlay District** may be implemented to promote redevelopment of the Riverfront. Building on those zoning regulations already imposed by the City's Zoning Ordinance, a Riverfront Overlay District could be used to require redevelopment to adhere to additional design guidelines. In exchange for creating new development within these more prescriptive regulations, the City could allow for potential bonuses such as increased height or building area.

Ideally, new development along the Riverfront should consist of multi-story, mixed-use buildings with a zero setback requirement. As development proposals are brought forward for consideration, the City should evaluate each development proposal as a potential opportunity to improve the vitality and sense of place of the Riverfront, consistent with the recommendations of the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan.

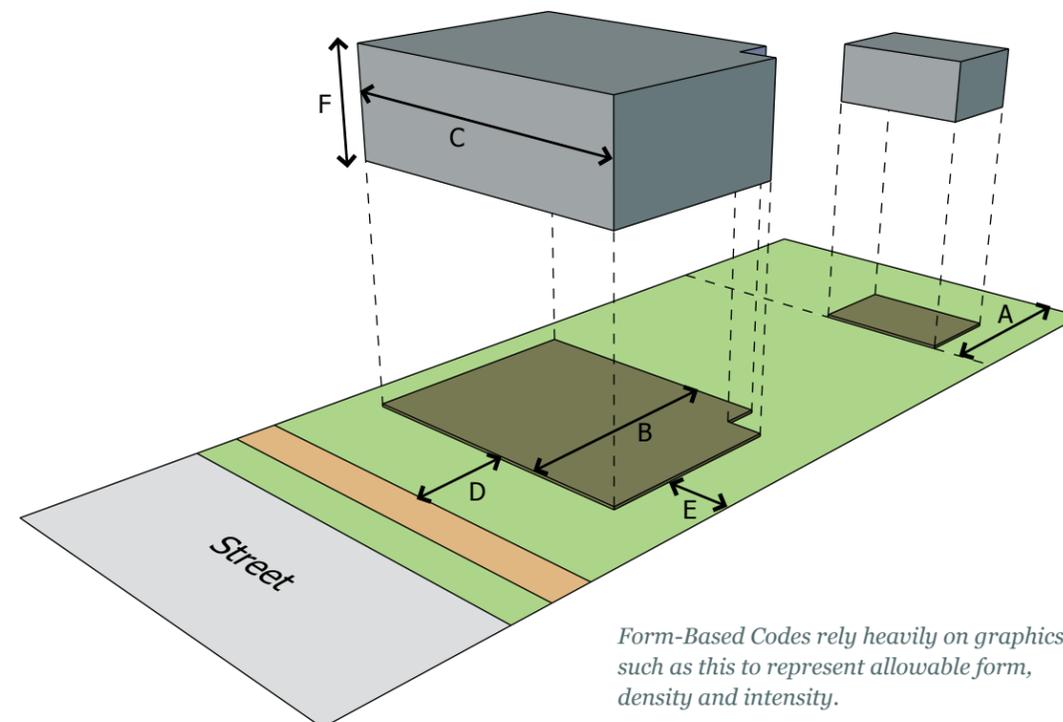
Promote Cooperation & Participation

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

However, for the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan to be successful, it must be based on a strong partnership between the City, other public agencies, the local business community, and the private sector.

The City should be the leader in promoting the cooperation and collaboration needed to implement the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan. The City's "partners" should include:

1. Other governmental and service districts, such as the fire protection district, private utility companies, the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), the Park District, etc;
2. Builders and developers, who should be encouraged to undertake improvements and new construction that conform to the Plan and enhance the overall quality and character of the Downtown and riverfront areas; and,
3. The Sterling community, since all residents and neighborhood groups should be encouraged to participate in the on-going planning process, and all should be given the opportunity to voice their opinions on improvement and development decisions within the Downtown and riverfront areas.



Form-Based Codes rely heavily on graphics such as this to represent allowable form, density and intensity.

Phasing

The Riverfront Redevelopment is contingent upon a number of factors, ranging from site condition and funding availability to changes in City policy. In addition, market conditions and trends within the private sector will dictate the timing of redevelopment and the extent to which each component of the Riverfront Redevelopment Plan comes to fruition. The following phasing strategy is based on site characteristics such as current development readiness, traffic flow, and existing and anticipated market demand. In addition to discussion related to land use and development, recommendations have also been provided regarding transportation, infrastructure and environmental improvements.

Phase I: Park Amenities & Eastern Mixed-use Area

The first phase of development in the Riverfront Redevelopment Sites should occur in the areas to the east and west of the 1st Avenue bridge. The riverfront area is well positioned to take advantage of high traffic volumes passing through Downtown Sterling along IL Route 40 and IL Route 2. Commercial uses sited near the intersection of IL Route 40 and Wallace Street would have the greatest near term potential to capitalize on unmet demand for goods and services in Downtown Sterling. Building design and orientation should address issues of access, circulation and site lines from these busy roadways to make it easier for passing motorists to view and visit the site.

The numerous parks and open space features proposed for the Riverfront should also be constructed in the early phase of redevelopment. These amenities, such as the Riverwalk, Amphitheater, Pavilion Plaza, and Riverfront Plaza, are key components in providing access the Rock River and establishing the riverfront as an asset to be enjoyed the Sterling community. Parks and open space will play a significant role in generating activity along the riverfront and enhancing the viability of future residential and commercial uses.

Phase II: Senior Housing

In general, senior housing development could be considered a market viable use over the near term. However, in the context of the riverfront area, the success of senior housing will be closely linked to the development of parks and open space amenities in the area. As such, the development of the senior housing component of the Riverfront Redevelopment Plan should only occur after, or in concert with, the development of the Riverfront Plaza, City Garden, Restoration Garden and other nearby parks and recreation components. The attractiveness of the riverfront as a place to live for seniors will be tied to their ability to visit and explore the areas along the Rock River. While not all of the parks and open space components must be created before senior housing can be developed, the areas surrounding the senior housing site should be improved with parks and open space to serve as amenities to residents.

Phase III: Central Mixed-use Area

The third phase of implementing the Riverfront Redevelopment Plan consists of the mixed-use buildings to be constructed in the area centered on Avenue B and proposed extension of Avenue A. Given this area's limited connectivity and current isolation from Downtown Sterling to the north, private sector interest in this area for residential and commercial development is likely to be limited over the near to mid-term. The creation of mixed-use development along Wallace Street to the east near 1st Avenue, addition of parks and open space amenities along the riverfront, and development of senior housing will all help generate activity within the riverfront area. Once the riverfront is further established as a destination within Sterling, development of the final mixed-use component should become more desirable to potential developers and investors. The realignment of Wallace Street and related streetscape improvements should also occur as this area as development occurs.

Phase I

	Transportation	Infrastructure & Utilities	Environmental
Short Term Actions (1-2 Years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update survey information for Riverfront redevelopment area. Initiate discussions with Union Pacific RR for future at-grade railroad crossings and improvements to existing crossings. Acquire R.O.W. for roadway realignments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update survey information for Riverfront redevelopment area. Confirm location and inspect the condition of all underground utilities. Program any required utility improvements or relocations to the extent feasible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compile an inventory of existing environmental reports and assessments of contaminated properties. Initiate environmental assessments not yet conducted. Begin remediation of environmentally challenged sites. Determine costs & financial responsibility of environmental monitoring and remediation. Apply for any available grant funding to defer the cost of remediation activities.

Phase II

	Transportation	Infrastructure & Utilities	Environmental
Medium Term Actions (3-5 Years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vacate existing Wallace Street R.O.W. Initiate design/construction work for roadway realignment. Apply for funding for transportation improvements through state and federal grant programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiate design/construction work for utility upgrades to the extent feasible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begin remediation of environmentally challenged sites.

Phase III

	Transportation	Infrastructure & Utilities	Environmental
Long Term Actions (Five + Years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begin construction work on new streets, in conjunction with utility improvements. Initiate discussions with IDOT and County for traffic signal/pedestrian improvements, including pedestrian /bike crossing at 1st Ave / Wallace Street. Begin design and construction of extended trail system to riverfront area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upgrade utilities as required to support new development. Coordinate with private utilities to supply service to new development. Bury new utilities to the extent feasible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete remediation of contaminated properties.

Developer’s Summit

The City should hold a developer’s “summit” where it can present the Riverfront Redevelopment Plan to the local investment and development community to strengthen and increase awareness of the plan and the City of Sterling, and to build interest in redevelopment. Marketing materials highlighting the key components of the Riverfront Redevelopment Plan such as the desired development program, relevant site data, and conceptual site concepts should be prepared in advance for attendees. The summit would likely include a tour of the riverfront area, a short presentation and question and answer session.

The development opportunities and initiatives identified in the Riverfront Redevelopment Plan will require both private and public investment from sources outside of the City of Sterling. To maximize those opportunities, partnerships and relationships will need to be forged with both potential funding sources and developers. In that private developers and investors will ultimately be responsible for the development that takes place in the station area, a developer’s summit will lay the ground work for a working relationship with the City and potential private-public partnerships.

City staff and officials should reach out to the local business community and leverage their contacts to invite a range of individuals and firms to the summit. In addition, the City should place an advertisement on its own website and in local industry and business publications. The feedback received from the summit will also enable the City to further refine its marketing efforts for the riverfront area.

Historic Preservation

The Riverfront’s unique, historic buildings are threatened by age, obsolescence, deferred maintenance, and deterioration. Repurposing existing buildings, whether deemed historic or not, is a sustainable measure and represents an environmentally responsible policy the City can implement to protect its past. The preservation of historic structures is desirable along the riverfront, but further study is required to determine if existing structures can be salvaged. The size, previous use, and current conditions may limit the feasibility of preserving either portions or all of the structures in their entirety.

Structural Assessment

The City should hire a professional engineer or architect to perform a structural assessment of the buildings to be preserved in the riverfront area. This assessment should identify what components of the existing buildings are structurally sound, what areas could be easily repaired to meet building code standards, and what areas are unsafe and beyond repair. The structural assessment should also include estimated costs of needed and optional repairs.

Renovation and Reuse

While the City of Sterling would not be the entity that ultimately renovates the existing structures within the Riverfront Development area, it may choose to provide incentives to offset any potential increase in development costs related to historic preservation. As such, the City should identify potential costs associated with historic preservation of desirable structures within the riverfront area. While costs will vary based on the details of proposed redevelopment, establishing a base line estimate will enable the City to make an informed decision with regard to the level financial assistance it could potentially offer in the future.

Remediation

There are several known areas of environmental contamination within the Riverfront Redevelopment area and the City has been awarded multiple grants for site cleanup. The City intends to achieve regulatory closure of sites under the Illinois Site Remediation Program (SRP) and develop Remedial Action Plans (RAP) for affected sites. In addition to these previously identified areas of contamination, the portions of the Riverfront Redevelopment area currently occupied by structures may also be in need of some form of environmental remediation. Either as a component of the structural assessment, or as an independent study, the City should hire an environmental engineer to assess the structures for potentially hazardous materials that will need to be remediated during renovation (e.g. asbestos) as well as the potential for environmental contamination beneath the structures.

Historic Preservation Funding

While TIF assistance would be a desirable incentive for historic preservation, the properties adjacent to the 1st Avenue bridge, which are targets of preservation, are located outside of the Rock River TIF district. As such, other funding sources need to be identified to facilitate historic preservation efforts along the riverfront.

The City has actively pursued grants and other funding for assessment and remediation activities on riverfront sites contaminated by hazardous substances, pollutants or other contaminants. The City should also identify and pursue grants for historic preservation to help offset additional costs associated with renovating and reusing the portions of existing structures that are to be preserved. For example, the Federal Government offers a 10% rehabilitation tax credit which is equal to 10% of the amount spent to rehabilitate a non-historic, non-residential buildings building built before 1936.

Hotel Feasibility Study

The Sterling community as well as City staff and officials have expressed a desire to attract a hotel to the Riverfront Redevelopment. A hotel can serve as a catalyst for activity throughout a larger mixed-use development, serving as a unique amenity that distinguishes the project from other commercial destinations, provides additional consumer traffic to the site, and serves as an anchor for adjacent retail and restaurant development. Successfully integrating a hotel within the larger riverfront redevelopment would require identifying the hotel tenant at the outset of the project and establishing a relationship between the hotel and project’s developer.

While the community has expressed a desire for a hotel along Sterling’s riverfront, it is unknown whether there is sufficient market demand for this type of use. The City should contract out a hotel demand analysis to quantify demand for lodging services within the Sterling-Rock Falls area, assess what type of hotel (i.e. major, mid-market, budget) and amenities would be appropriate, and identify potential chains to target.

Destination Entertainment

Destination entertainment and recreational uses are unique in terms of market dynamics and development feasibility. While factors such as market demand, competition and location are paramount to any successful development, amusement parks in particular require an even higher level of scrutiny because of their specialized nature and limited adaptability. The ability to obtain financing, particularly for private sector development, is highly dependent on a thorough business plan including a detailed market study and financial proforma.

Should a privately owned and operated amusement park be infeasible in the near term, there is precedent in the Midwest for municipally owned waterfront amusement parks. The Bay Beach Amusement Park in Green Bay, Wisconsin is an example of a successful municipal park in a waterfront environment. Regardless of whether publicly or privately owned, the City of Sterling would be well advised to conduct a market study to define potential size and development programming.



“Beyond the Riverfront” – Revitalizing the City’s Economy

Although the Riverfront redevelopment is the focus of this analysis, it is important to recognize the symbiotic relationship between the riverfront and the city as a whole. A successful thriving downtown and riverfront will serve to enhance the City as a destination for business, residents and tourism. This in turn can influence businesses in deciding to locate or expand operations in other areas within Sterling.

Equally, a strong local economy and base of employment will be important to the overall success of the Downtown and riverfront. The recent addition of the Wal-Mart distribution center is a demonstrated example of the City’s ability to offset the loss of manufacturing businesses and employment and build toward the future. The City needs to continue to aggressively market its positive attributes including; desirable location, interstate/ rail access, skilled labor force and proactive approach to business development.

Sterling should explore a citywide and/or coordinated regional economic development effort with neighboring Rock Falls or others to attract new businesses, development and reinvestment.

Midland States Bank in Downtown Sterling • June 2010

Employment Trends

Increasing employment within Sterling and the area surrounding the riverfront will help increase day time population and enhance the potential customer base for downtown businesses. The City should work with local economic development groups, such as the Greater Sterling Development Corporation, and neighboring communities to conduct an analysis that identifies industries with the potential for expansion within Sterling and the larger region.

This analysis should utilize the concept of the “industry cluster”, which can be generally defined as agglomeration of competing, complementary, or interdependent businesses within a region that do business with each other and/or have common needs for talent, technology, and infrastructure. The businesses within an industry cluster can both compete and cooperate within one another, exchange inputs and services, and/or rely on common pool of skilled labor.

A cluster analysis will assist the community in identifying and strengthening those factors that provide Sterling with a regional competitive advantage. The City can work with partner organizations to supporting these competitive industry clusters with adequately educated and trained workers, and complementary economic development programs. In addition to examining factors such as employment growth and importance within the region, industry and occupation groups to be targeted for expansion should also provide high quality jobs that pay well.

Rock Falls Partnership

Although they operate separately and have their own distinct characteristics and economies, the cities of Sterling and Rock Falls share the commonality of the Rock River. As both communities explore redevelopment of the riverfront, it is also important to understand that the municipalities are essentially part of the same geographic market area. For that reason, a potential partnership should be explored to ensure that the two sides of the river complement, rather than compete with one another. While some competition is both inevitable and healthy, uses such as hotels or larger anchor tenants are not likely to be sustainable on both sides of the river. To that end, a coordinated planning effort can help to prevent either or both cities from being saddled with long-term vacancies or incomplete projects due to the fragmentation of development.

A coordinated relationship on development issues, potential revenue sharing, marketing, business recruitment and other issues can help to create a “River District” that is an asset to both cities. This would also serve to mitigate the impact of developers and businesses attempting to create leverage in negotiating incentives by pitting the cities against one another.

The nearby communities of Rock Island, Illinois and Davenport, Iowa provide a positive example of how neighboring communities can work together toward their mutual benefit with regard to quality of life and economic prosperity. The two communities collaborated to craft an award-winning plan, entitled “RiverVision”, that highlights redevelopment opportunities in both downtown areas, provides a unified approach to creating public park space along both banks of the Mississippi River, and reinforces the two cities’ physical and visual connections to the river and one another.

Explore Funding Sources, Incentives & Implementation Techniques

While many of the projects and improvements called for in the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan can be implemented through administrative and policy decisions or can be funded through normal municipal programs, other projects may require special technical and/or financial assistance.

The City should continue to explore and consider the wide range of local, state and federal resources and programs that may be available to assist in clean up of the Riverfront Redevelopment Sites and the implementation of planning recommendations.

While the Plan generally endorses the traditional role of the City in the Riverfront redevelopment process, it is suggested that the City consider taking a more active leadership role in promoting, coordinating and “facilitating” the Riverfront redevelopment process. For example, the City might offer technical assistance and support to property owners or developers of Downtown/Riverfront projects that meet the guidelines and foster the objectives of the Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan.

Municipal Funding Mechanisms

The majority of the Riverfront Redevelopment Area falls within the Rock River TIF district, however the City has limited financial capacity and funding sources available to achieve the desired vision for the riverfront area. The City has actively pursued other funding for assessment activities on contaminated riverfront sites and has been awarded multiple grants to date. Identification of additional grants and funding sources could be beneficial in the long-term redevelopment of the riverfront area.

It is important to distinguish between those funding mechanisms that can help facilitate project startup and those that can be implemented as development takes place. Some of the initial tools including TIF and sales tax abatement will continue on even after development has stabilized. The implementation of others, however, that will serve to sustain development will need to be adopted later on. The need to consider both types of funding mechanisms at the onset of the development process is twofold: (1) planning ahead will ensure sustainability and, (2) establishing these mechanisms will demonstrate the City’s long-term commitment to prospective developers and investors.

TIF

Rock River TIF funds may be used for public improvements, land assemblage or to help finance private investment on the Riverfront Redevelopment Sites. The Rock River Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District was created to help the City achieve its ultimate redevelopment goals for the Rock River Redevelopment Area. The TIF is a public/private partnership between the City and a number of private businesses including Sterling Steel and its parent company Leggett-Platt. Much of the Rock River TIF spending is focused on remediating environmental concerns left behind after industry was displaced, but its presence provides the City with more tools and authority, and may make the area more enticing to new investment.

Special Service Area (SSA)

A Special Service Area (SSA) provides a means of funding improvements and programs within a designated area. In an SSA, a small percentage is added to the property tax of the properties within the defined service area. The revenue received from this targeted increase is channeled back into projects and programs benefiting those properties. An SSA can be rejected if 51% of the property owners and electors within a designated area object. SSA’s are particularly useful in areas with a concentration of businesses such as the proposed Riverfront Redevelopment.

An SSA can be adopted as a means of ensuring enhanced city services to the site such as extra garbage pickup, snow removal and aesthetic improvements, or as a funding mechanism for marketing and promotion. If the SSA is adopted, it will be important that future buyers are aware of the additional tax.

Hotel/Motel Tax

A hotel/motel tax could be implemented for a future hotel property. In some cases the tax is implemented on all properties within the city if it can be demonstrated that the riverfront development will increase visitation and room nights. The impact on existing properties would be the subject of a separate hotel study and could provide the justification for implementing such a tax.

As a non-home rule community, the City of Sterling must cap the hotel/motel tax at 5%. In addition, revenue from the tax could only be used to promote over-night tourism. There is no cap for home rule communities and the hotel-motel tax revenue can be used for any public purpose. Should it choose to implement a hotel/motel tax, the City of Sterling should consider pursuing home rule designation to take fuller advantage of this funding mechanism.

Food and Beverage Tax

This could be applied throughout the Downtown as a means of reinvesting in the entire area as an entertainment destination. As previously discussed, the future of the project and the Downtown as a whole will be the successful integration and connectivity of existing and new development. A food and beverage tax could be earmarked for specific improvements such as parking.

Sales Tax Rebate

A sales tax rebate is a tool typically used by municipalities to incentivize businesses to locate to a site or area. The rebate is offered as a percentage of the annual sales tax revenue generated by the establishment and is often tied to benchmarks such that as sales volume increases, so too does the proportion of the rebate. Sales tax rebate percentages can range from 1% to 100% and are dependent on the goals and objectives of the local municipality. Sales tax rebates have proven effective in attracting new businesses and encouraging redevelopment and renovation. Home rule communities have the authority to issue bonds based on sales tax revenue. The City of Sterling should consider pursuing home rule designation to take advantage of this funding mechanism as well as others.



Transportation Funding

Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program (ITEP)

This program was designed to broaden the transportation focus from Interstate and highway building to making our communities more livable and improving our overall quality of life. This funding source is administered by the Illinois Department of Transportation and is a set-aside fund from SAFETEA-LU. Among the projects that are eligible for this funding include bicycle/pedestrian facilities, streetscaping, landscaping, historic preservation and projects that control or remove outdoor advertising. Federal reimbursement is available for up to 50 percent of the cost of right-of-way and easement acquisition and 80 percent of the cost for preliminary engineering, utility relocations, construction engineering and construction costs.

Examples of eligible project types/categories include:

- ◇ Provisions of facilities for pedestrians and bicycles.
- ◇ Scenic or historic highway programs (tourist and welcome centers).
- ◇ Landscaping and other scenic beautification.
- ◇ Historic preservation.
- ◇ Rehabilitation of historic transportation buildings, structures, or facilities.
- ◇ Provisions of safety and education activities for pedestrians and bicyclists.
- ◇ Acquisition of scenic easements and scenic / historic sites.
- ◇ Preservation of abandoned railway corridors for the conversion and use of pedestrian and bicycle trails.
- ◇ Control and removal of outdoor advertising.
- ◇ Establishments of transportation museums.
- ◇ Environmental mitigation due to highway runoff and reduce vehicle caused wildlife mortality.
- ◇ Archeological planning and research.

Grade Crossing Safety Improvement Program

The Illinois Commerce Commission administers this grant which is intended to help defray the cost of installing necessary improvements and reduce accidents at railroad/highway crossings. Most projects can be reimbursed up to 85 percent of the cost with 5 percent matching required by the railroad and 10 percent from the local municipality. Bridge and grade separation project grants are provided at 60 percent of total cost with 40 percent matching.

Examples of eligible project types include the installation of railroad and highway crossing protection, grade separation structures, and the interconnection of railroad crossing signals with highway traffic.

Local Rail-Highway Crossing Safety Program

The Illinois Department of Transportation administers this grant program with the objective of improving railroad safety by reducing the number of accidents at highway/railroad grade crossings. Federal reimbursement is available for up to 80 percent of the total cost with 20 percent local matching. Examples of eligible project types include Improvements at highway / railroad crossings on state highways and local roads and streets including gates; cantilever gates and lights; crossbucks; flashing lights; and signals. Projects are selected on a need and merit basis with the highest priority given to projects that reinforce safety at crossings.

Green Infrastructure Funding

Illinois Green Infrastructure Grant Program for Storm Water Management (IGIG)

The IGIG program, administered by the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA), provides grants to local units of government and other organizations to implement green infrastructure best management practices to control stormwater runoff for water quality protection in Illinois. Projects must be located within a Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) or Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) area. Funds are limited to the implementation of projects to install best management practices (BMPs). Approximately \$5 million in IGIG grant funds are made available annually, with specific limits for each category of project.

Examples of eligible project types include:

- ◇ Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) Rehabilitation.
- ◇ Stormwater retentions and infiltration projects (wetland, prairie restoration, floodplain restoration).
- ◇ Green Infrastructure small projects (i.e. rain gardens, bioswales, permeable pavers, green roofs).

Parks and Open Space Funding

Illinois Department of Natural Resources

The City, in partnership with the Sterling Park District, should identify projects where a cooperative pursuit of parks and open space grants may be beneficial. The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) administers several grants-in-aid programs to help municipalities and other local agencies provide a number of public outdoor recreation areas and facilities. The programs operate on a cost reimbursement basis to local agencies (government or not-for-profit organization) and are awarded on an annual basis. Local governments can receive one grant per program per year, with no restrictions on the number of local governments that can be funded for a given location.

IDNR grants are organized into three major categories: Open Space Lands Acquisition and Development (OSLAD)/Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF); Boat Access Area Development (BAAD); and Illinois Trails Grant Programs. Each of these grant categories has potential applicability to the Riverfront Redevelopment Area and could assist the City in achieving its goal of enhancing the public's access to the Rock River.

OSLAD

The OSLAD program awards up to fifty percent of project costs up to a maximum of \$750,000 for acquisition and \$400,000 for development/renovation of such recreation facilities as tot lots and playgrounds, community and regional parks, outdoor nature interpretive areas, park roads and paths, and waterfront improvements.

Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)

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

The City, for example, could utilize OSLAD or LWCF funds to construct detention areas to facilitate use of the larger site for parks and open space, develop recreation facilities along the Rock River, or construct a pedestrian bridge to Lawrence Park.

Boat Access Area Development (BAAD)

The BAAD program provides financial assistance to local government agencies for the acquisition, construction, and expansion/rehabilitation of public boat and canoe access areas on Illinois' lakes and rivers. The program provides up to 100% of approved project construction costs and 90% of approved land acquisition costs. Grant awards are limited to a \$200,000 annual maximum per project.

Funds from the BAAD program could be used to create boat access facilities, including the future boat ramp and fishing piers/non-motorized boat launch and kayak access areas, along the Rock River at the western edge of the Riverfront Redevelopment Area.

Illinois Bicycle Path Grant Program

Of the four trail-related grant programs funded by the IDNR, the Illinois Bicycle Path Grant Program is most applicable to facilitating development along within the Riverfront Redevelopment Area. This program was created to financially assist eligible units of government with the acquisition, construction, and rehabilitation of public, non-motorized bicycle paths and directly related support facilities such as access roads and parking areas, shelters, lighting, benches and restrooms.

The program provides financial assistance up to 50% of approved project costs. Funding for construction projects is not to exceed \$200,000 per annual request, but there is no maximum for acquisition projects. Engineering costs cannot exceed 15.25% of the total project costs. Bicycle Path Grant funding could be used to acquire frontage along additional portions of the Rock River for the construction of an extensive riverwalk. Parking areas adjacent to trail heads as well as seating areas and lighting along the riverwalk would also be eligible costs under the program.

Recreational Trails Program (RTP)

Another program the City and Sterling Park District could utilize is the federal Recreational Trails Program (RTP). By law, 30% of each States' RTP funding must be earmarked for motorized trail projects, 30% for non-motorized trail projects and the remaining 40% for multi-use (diversified) motorized and non-motorized trails or a combination of either. The RTP program can provide up to 80% federal funding on approved projects and requires a minimum 20% non-federal funding match.

The IDNR administers RTP funds and stipulates that funds can be utilized for trail construction and rehabilitation; restoration of areas adjacent to trails damaged by unauthorized trail uses; construction of trail-related support facilities and amenities; and acquisition from willing sellers of trail corridors through easements or fee simple title. Similar to the Illinois Bicycle Grant Program, RTP funds could be used to improve access to trails along the Rock River shoreline.

