Seizing the Future:
A Master Plan for Downtown Aurora, Illinois

Our Ten-Year Plan and Long-Term Vision

Autumn 2005

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In association with:
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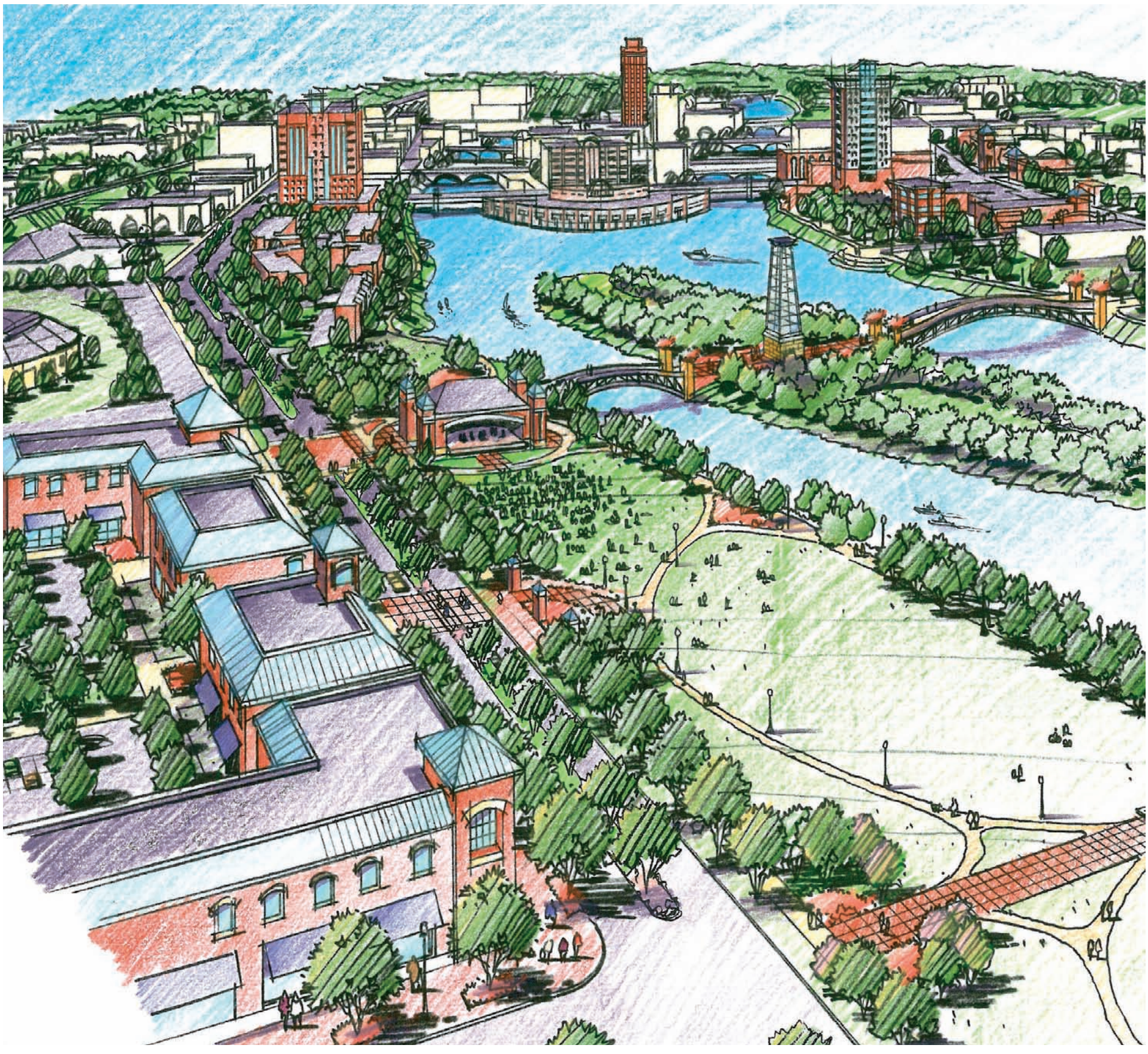

Seizing the Future:
A Master Plan for Downtown Aurora
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Acknowledgements

Our planning initiative is a grassroots effort led by members of the business community who have, in partnership with the public sector, taken a proactive leadership role in Downtown Aurora's economic development. Seize the Future (STF) investors would like to express their heartfelt thanks to the volunteers who have collectively spent thousands of hours as members of the various committees that contributed directly to the development of this plan. We would also like to express our gratitude for the support provided by 165 investor companies whose financial contributions make STF possible. Since 2000, these businesses have pledged $5 million in support of the STF campaign, payable over a five-year period. The magnitude of the time and financial resources contributed by STF supporters reflects the optimism they have regarding our growth potential and their willingness to help underwrite its development.

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Executive Summary

This Master Plan is the first major step in an ongoing revitalization process that seeks to leverage Downtown Aurora's existing core strengths with emerging development opportunities to create an amenity-rich city center worthy of our status as Illinois' Second City. The primary goal is to "make Downtown Aurora a thriving, hospitable, mixed urban, live-work-learn-shop-play centerpiece that unites and energizes our entire city." The product of a truly public/private partnership, the Master Plan summarizes the background research conducted and describes neighborhood-by-neighborhood the Long Term Vision for Downtown. In addition, the Ten-Year Plan identifies near term implementation objectives and prioritizes them on both a neighborhood-by-neighborhood and year-by-year basis.

As noted in our Opportunity Analysis, Aurora's Downtown has many vital resources already in place. There are cultural and institutional assets that include historically significant structures, highly regarded entertainment destinations, and well-attended public events. The Aurora Economic Development Commission's *Seize the Future* initiative provides an energetic public/private "institutional infrastructure" to motivate, facilitate, and underwrite revitalization planning. The process of expanding Downtown Tax Increment Finance (TIF) districts to provide the financial leverage needed to enable projects is already underway. Perhaps most importantly, national trends and local market conditions favor expanding the Downtown housing stock, especially in regards to transit-oriented development opportunities. Combined with other significant revitalization initiatives, increasing Downtown Aurora's population will attract new shopping and new business clusters that will spur additional development.

The Fox River is, of course, Downtown's most distinctive and compelling natural feature. A major component of the Master Plan focuses on creating new activities along the river's edge and new pedestrian pathways that provide future residents of Downtown neighborhoods with direct access to the river. Developing high-quality neighborhoods that attract and substantially increase the number of relatively young and affluent residents is the number one objective in support of the Master Plan's primary goal. Doing so considerably enhances our ability to successfully attain other Master Plan objectives such as increasing the Downtown workforce, creating distinctive retail shopping destinations, and adding entertainment and cultural venues.

Our analysis shows there is land available to add over 2,500 new residential units to Downtown neighborhoods and 300,000-500,000 square feet of new retail. In addition, we that anticipate that hundreds of homes and thousands of square feet of commercial space will be rehabbed. New development will include appropriate levels of parking as necessary to meet standards and market requirements. We believe revitalization efforts will bring over $700 million in private sector investment to our Downtown, generating substantial increases in annual property taxes and sales taxes.

There are, of course, significant challenges to address. Land at key sites must be assembled and cleaned. Sewer, water, and storm water management systems must be upgraded to accommodate new Downtown residents and businesses. Communications technology infrastructure must also be enhanced to meet and exceed current business demands. Business recruiting and retention efforts and Downtown marketing must be strengthened and expanded. Specific criteria to guide development must be formalized and incentives provided to reduce the risks associated with catalyst projects. These tasks are identified in the prioritized list of Master Plan Implementation Objectives.

The good news is the remarkable energy and enthusiasm of the public/private partners responsible for undertaking this Master Planning initiative. Their collective optimism is reflected in the concepts described on the following pages. We are confident these partners can successfully lead revitalization efforts to the next level and beyond. It is indeed an exciting time for Downtown Aurora and its many supporters.

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Mayor's Message

Aurora, the City of Lights, stands at the threshold of a brilliant future.

We have arrived at that threshold through a partnership between the City and our business community known as Seize the Future. This public/private partnership–through thoughtful collaboration, creative planning, and laser-like focus–has produced an exciting plan for the transformation of Aurora's Downtown.

This Master Plan for Downtown Aurora embodies our greatest hopes as well as our most practical ideas for bringing a renaissance to the center of the City of Lights. At its heart is the Fox River, one of our greatest natural resources and an amenity with almost limitless possibilities. The Plan allows the proud architectural legacy of our city to shine through as we rehabilitate historic structures and artfully blend new buildings that offer the latest advances in technology for communications and energy efficiency–all the while keeping the flavor of this unique river city intact.

Downtown Aurora is again becoming a destination. With this plan as a guide, the city we have always loved is evolving into a 21st Century Aurora of unparalleled beauty, of proud diversity, of unequalled opportunity... a center for education and the arts where minds are opened, lives are transformed, and business thrives.

I am gazing into our future and it is looking very bright, indeed.

Please join me in celebrating the possibilities facing our community, as we embark on this focused, coordinated plan to reinvent our downtown. It is an effort that will require fortitude and vision, investment and creativity, and an unwavering commitment to serious action.

Together, it is a dream we can make real. Aurora is "A City Second to None"! That is our legacy. That is our future.

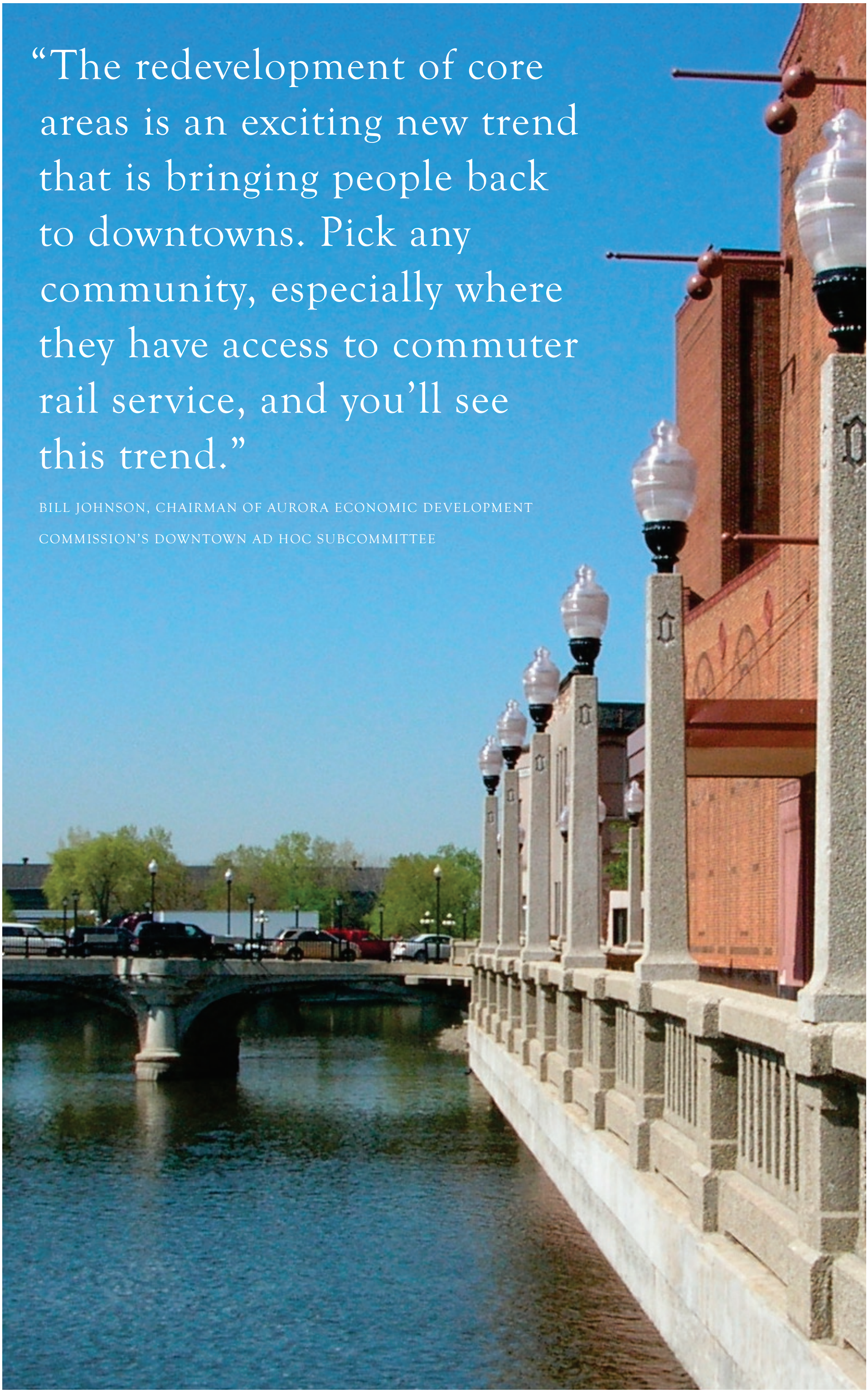
THOMAS J. WEISNER
Mayor
City of Aurora

Urban Lifestyle Advantage: What Aurora Has to Offer

The Aurora Economic Development Commission (AEDC) was established in 1981 as a partnership between the City of Aurora and the Greater Aurora Chamber of Commerce (GACC) to be the lead economic development agency for the community. To date, over 400 businesses have been attracted to and/or retained in the area, creating over 20,000 new jobs and generating an additional $750 million in capital investment. Realizing they could not just be satisfied with past success, the leaders of the AEDC began planning in 1998 to position Aurora for the next century. The result of that effort is *Seize the Future* (STF), a strategic five-year public/private partnership whose mission is to ensure the continued economic growth and development of Aurora.

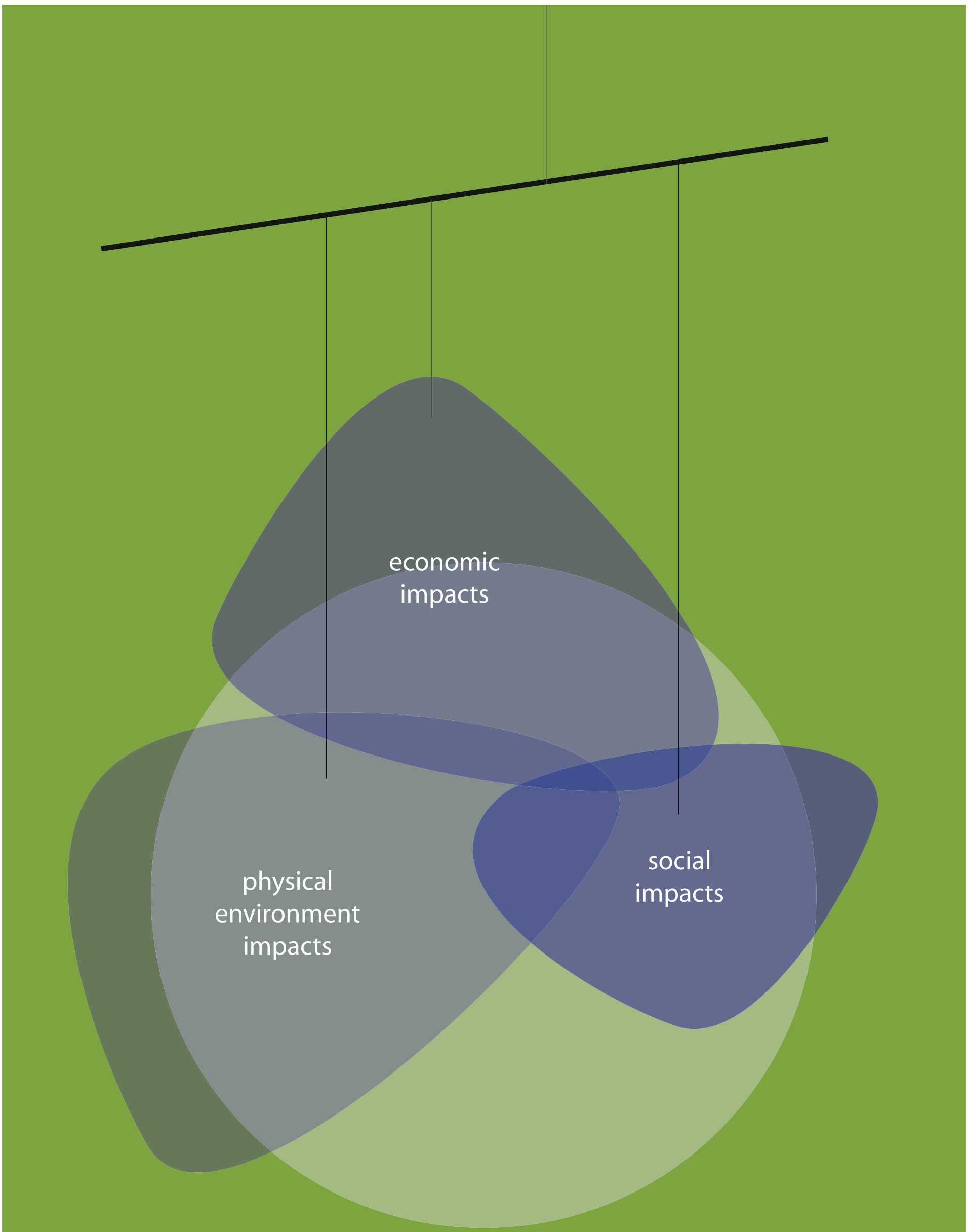
AEDC's Strategic Planning Committee of the STF initiative has taken a bold step to accelerate development in Downtown Aurora. Late in 2003, the Strategic Planning Committee established the Downtown Ad Hoc Subcommittee to devise and implement a strategy that takes Downtown Aurora to the next level of development. Bill Johnson, president of Harris N.A., agreed to chair the subcommittee and quickly involved additional STF investor companies and City of Aurora staff. "The redevelopment of core areas is an exciting new trend that is bringing people back to downtowns. Pick any community, especially where they have access to commuter rail service, and you'll see this trend," Johnson said. "We need to take advantage of the current low interest rate environment and accelerate Downtown redevelopment." Currently, nine subcommittees are actively meeting to create and sustain momentum in a number of strategic areas, including Initial Development, Land Acquisition and Finance, Permits/Zoning/Engineering, Technology and Infrastructure, Tax Increment Financing (TIF), Communications, Signs and Gateways. Open Space and Recreation, and Search.

Despite rapid growth in the balance of our community and redevelopment in other city centers along the Fox River, Downtown Aurora up to this point in time remains an under-utilized resource. Over the last 25 years, a variety of master plans have proclaimed the potential of our Downtown, but the lack of consistent implementation of plan recommendations has slowed redevelopment. There have been success stories over the past decade, however, including restorations of the Paramount Theatre, Aurora Hotel, Aurora Regional Fire Museum, the German-American Bank Building, Coulter Court Residences, the David L. Pierce Art and History Center, the Metropolitan Business College, the Thiess Building, Family Counseling Service, and the Hollywood Casino-Aurora. Event programming such as Downtown Alive!, Midwest Literary Festival, Blues on the Fox, and our Fourth of July parade have brought thousands of new visitors to our Downtown, creating greater opportunities for merchants. Yet more work remains to be done. STF has the energy, the resources and a mandate from the community to aggressively advance Downtown redevelopment over the next ten years.



"The redevelopment of core areas is an exciting new trend that is bringing people back to downtowns. Pick any community, especially where they have access to commuter rail service, and you'll see this trend."

BILL JOHNSON, CHAIRMAN OF AURORA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION'S DOWNTOWN AD HOC SUBCOMMITTEE



Successful master planning has impacts at a variety of overlapping and inter-connected levels, the most significant of which can be broadly categorized as those that affect the economic, social and physical environment realms. Similar to the structure of a mobile, changes to and movement within one realm creates movement and changes within the other realms as well. We believe our Master Plan has tremendous potential to improve the quality of life for Aurora citizens in many beneficial ways.

Having consistently heard from developers that until a master plan or strategy was formulated for the entire Downtown they would not be interested in participating in "piece meal efforts," AEDC has undertaken a series of initiatives to address this issue, including:

1) Reviewing existing reports and studies and creating a Downtown Development Strategy draft;

2) Conducting fact-finding site visits to area communities that have or are undertaking downtown redevelopment programs including Arlington Heights, Palatine, Mount Prospect and Elgin;

3) Undertaking a project to update the City's outdated sign ordinances;

4) Presenting the revised development strategy to the Mayor, each Aurora City Council member and the City of Aurora Planning Commission; based on their overwhelming support, on September 14, 2004, the City Council passed resolution number RO4-384 in support of AEDC's Downtown Redevelopment Strategy and committed to it for ten years;

5) Finally, AEDC defined a Downtown Study Area of approximately 500 acres that lies roughly between Illinois-North Avenues and Lake Street-Lincoln Avenue. The organization then contracted Hitchcock Design Group to create an up-to-date plan that concisely and proudly articulates the community's Downtown vision, near-term opportunities, and implementation strategy.

This Master Plan is the end product of a three-phase planning process. Existing conditions were analyzed for development potential and conclusions summarized in a Preliminary Opportunity Analysis summarized here (the full text of which appears in a supplementary Business Plan document). Next, based on this analysis, concepts were developed and synthesized into master plan recommendations included in this document. Concurrently, schematic redevelopment concepts and related financial pro-forma for three Priority Development Sites were completed based on availability and potential catalytic impact. This information is summarized in a report prepared by the planning consultants for STF.

While AEDC realizes a master plan addressing key physical features in our Downtown will not resolve all economic and social issues that go hand-in-hand with any redevelopment program, we fully believe the outcome of this initiative will elevate the quality of life for all members of our community in many beneficial ways.

Even though this document is the template for downtown re-development, it will interact with the City's Plan for the Fox River Corridor, the Perkins + Will FoxWalk Design Guidelines, and the Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts.

The Fox River Corridor Plan has many elements that assure that developers will address the ecosystems that exist along the Fox River. In some cases, development will need to improve upon existing conditions. The Fox River Corridor Plan will guide development for Aurora's riverfront. The Seize the Future Open Space and Recreation Subcommittee has discussed a number of sites in light of current uses and environmental contamination, looking for opportunities to improve habitat and recreation.

Upon the community's review and approval of this master plan, Downtown Aurora will begin an exciting period of dynamic growth and reinvestment. We hope that those who contribute to and support these efforts will look back in the years ahead with pride and satisfaction at the roles they played in shaping our City's future. We move forward with the confidence that we will live up to our position as Illinois' Second City... a city on the move... America's *City of Lights*.

Opportunity Analysis

Downtown Aurora is poised to become a truly exciting place to live and a distinctive regional destination for visitors. To understand the full potential for downtown, its strengths and weaknesses have been thoroughly evaluated and summarized in the Opportunity Analysis below.

Physical and Regulatory Conditions

Downtown Aurora is located along the Fox River approximately 35 miles west of Chicago's Loop. Our Downtown Study Area is roughly bounded by Illinois Avenue on the north, North Avenue on the south, Lincoln Avenue on the east, and Lake Street on the west. The Study Area comprises approximately 536 acres and forms a corridor approximately 1-1/2 miles long and 1/2 mile wide. As of July 1, 2005, the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission estimates Aurora's population to be 162,184, making it Illinois' second most populous city and among the fastest growing in the United States. There are 477,789 people living in 160,518 households within a 10-mile radius of Downtown. Sixty-nine percent have household incomes over $50,000. Located approximately 3-1/2 miles south of Interstate 88, Downtown has excellent connections to other major Chicago metropolitan roadways. Interstate highways within 20 miles of Downtown include I-55, I-80, I-90, I-94, and I-355. Aurora's Transportation Center is located about one-half mile from the center of downtown's Stolp Island and provides access to both Metra and Amtrak services.

The Fox River and Stolp Island are the two key natural features that give Downtown its unique sense of place. Stolp Island and the other Study Area neighborhoods contain a variety of land uses with the greatest mix occurring in Downtown's core neighborhoods. While most of the land within the Study Area is privately owned, many key parcels in the core Downtown districts, including a large percentage of Stolp Island, are City owned. The City owns few contiguous parcels in the neighborhoods that immediately surround the Downtown core, suggesting that property assemblage will need to be a plan implementation priority if the City chooses to play a highly active role in Downtown redevelopment.

Single and multi-family residential housing (R-2, R-3, R-4, and R-5) comprise approximately 6% of the study area. Business (B-1 Local Retail, B-2 General Retail, and B-3 Services and Wholesale) comprise approximately 24% of the Study Area. Manufacturing (M-1 Limited and M-2 General) is approximately 31% of the Study Area and Park (P) makes up approximately 16%.

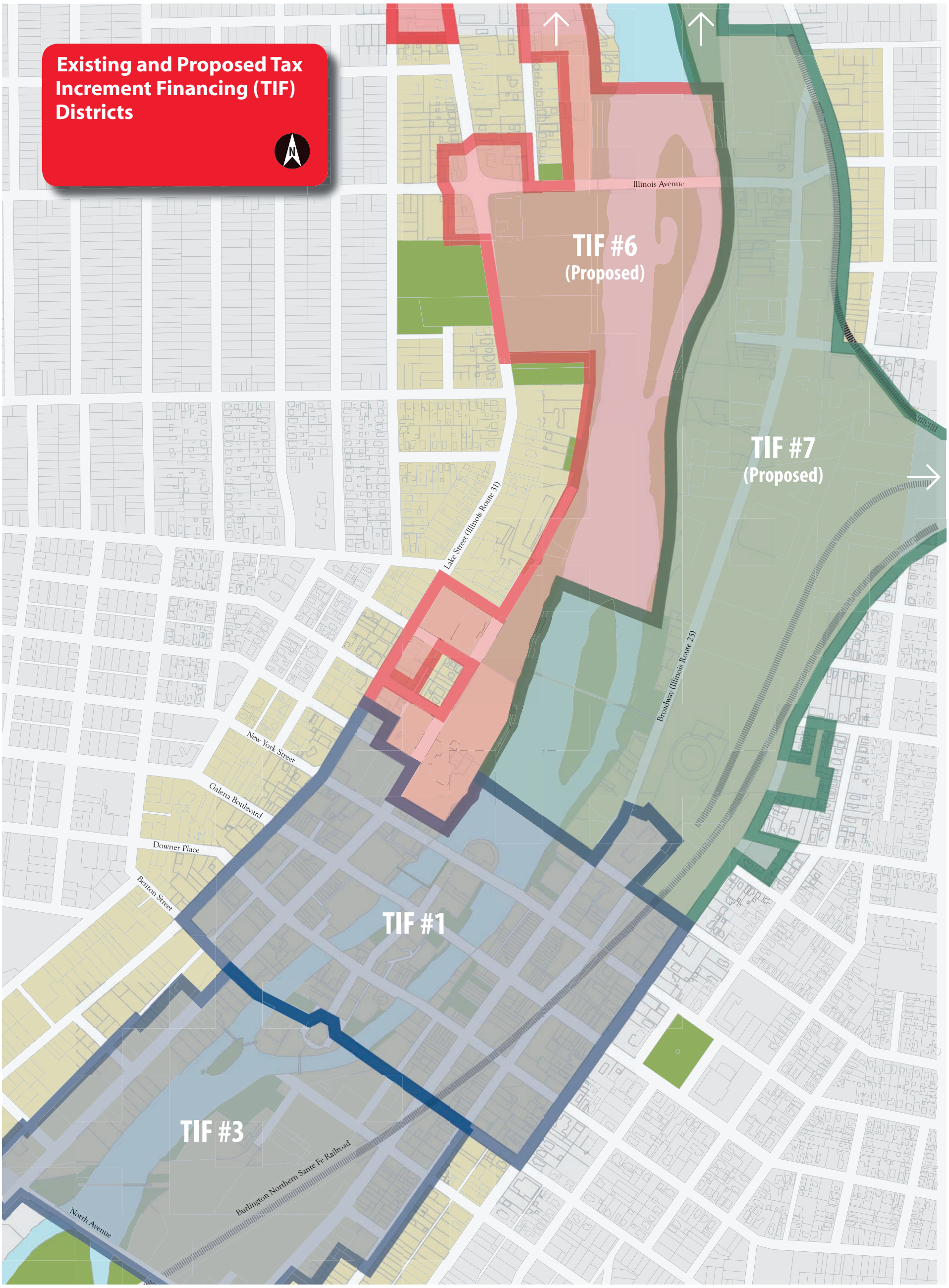
The Priority Development Sites that are the focus of this Master Plan fall under a variety of zoning classifications including Downtown Fringe District, B-3 Business-Boulevard Districts, M-1 Manufacturing District Limited, M-2 Manufacturing District General, and Park. Land uses include manufacturing, residential, commercial, open space/park, parking and vacant land or structures.

Current zoning in the Downtown Study Area does not permit residential development along the east and west banks of the Fox River outside of the existing Downtown Core and Downtown Fringe Zoning Districts. STF's Permits/Zoning/Engineering Subcommittee is recommending that a new Overlay District be created for the Study Area outside and adjacent to the existing Downtown Core and Downtown Fringe Zoning Districts, as well as Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Districts #1 and #3, plus any expansion of those districts, plus the creation of new TIF districts adjacent to the Downtown. The subcommittee believes this new zoning district will ensure higher quality development, foster development that is appropriate to the neighborhoods, and expedite the development review process. It also would facilitate coordination of permitting through local, state and federal regulatory agencies that have jurisdictions over the sites within the Study Area.

Cultural, Entertainment and Institutional Assets

"The Island" Entertainment District is home to several of the region's most distinguished museums and institutions, including the Paramount Theatre, SciTech Hands On Museum, GAR Memorial Hall, David L. Pierce Art & History Center, the Copley Theater, Riverfront Playhouse, the Aurora Regional Fire Museum, and Hollywood Casino-Aurora. Waubonsee Community College serves thousands of students per week at its current Downtown location. In 2006, the college is scheduled to break ground on a $20 million expansion on the west bank of the Fox River. Special events play an increasingly significant role in generating Downtown activity and exposure. Attendance at events like Downtown Alive!, Blues on the Fox, Party in the Plaza, the Midwest Literary

Study Area Neighborhoods
Please note these neighborhoods have been organized and named specifically for this Master Plan and are not officially designated City of Aurora neighborhoods
N
McCullough Park Neighborhood
Illinois Avenue
West Aurora Cemetery
McCullough Park
Veterans Island
Island View Neighborhood
FOX RIVER
Roundhouse Neighborhood
Lake Street (Illinois Route 31)
Wilder Park
Blues Island
Broadway (Illinois Route 25)
Wilder Park Neighborhood
Lake Street Neighborhood
Casino
New York Street
Waubonsee Neighborhood
Galena Boulevard
Stolp Island Neighborhood
Benton Street
Agnes Mundy Park
SciTech
Downer Place
South River Street Neighborhood
McCarty Park
Mercado Neighborhood
Burlington Northern Sante Fe Railroad
South Broadway Neighborhood
North Avenue
Hurds Island


Existing and Proposed Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Districts
N
Illinois Avenue
TIF #6
(Proposed)
TIF #7
(Proposed)
Lake Street (Illinois Route 31)
Broadway (Illinois Route 25)
New York Street
Galena Boulevard
Downer Place
Benton Street
TIF #1
TIF #3
Burlington Northern Sante Fe Railroad
North Avenue

Festival, and the 4th of July fireworks have grown at about 20% annually. Our Downtown Study Area includes three parks. Veterans Island, McCullough Park, and Wilder Park are part of a series of Fox River Valley islands and parks that extend to the North Aurora city limits and south to the Montgomery city limits. Neighborhood public spaces include Tivoli Plaza, Rotary Park, Millennium Plaza, Agnes Mundy Park, Swimming Stones Park, and the FoxWalk, an urban walkway that encircles parts of Stolp Island.

Market Review

Within the question, "Why has Aurora been passed by in the wave of successful downtown revitalizations?" is an unspoken understanding that the basic structure for a vital live, work, play environment is present. There is a river. The five-minute drive time market has a spending power in excess of $600 million. Attractive historic buildings offer unique opportunities for both commercial and residential uses. Over 6,000 people attend each well organized special event on Downtown Aurora streets. Over 1,600 commuters begin their daily travels in Downtown Aurora. These are the elements of successful revitalization that cannot be easily created by new development. They comprise a strong foundation for the efforts of a city seeking to create a public/private partnership that will be the catalyst for realizing Aurora's vision for its Downtown.

National and regional trends suggest that new construction in our Downtown will focus on the currently strong residential market and the few sites that could accommodate 5,000-10,000 square foot new retail/restaurant concepts. In addition, Master Plan development recommendations for the long term recognize that demand for office uses is expected to recover. Consequently, our recommendations make provisions for new office space to assure we remain competitively positioned within the regional market in the years ahead.

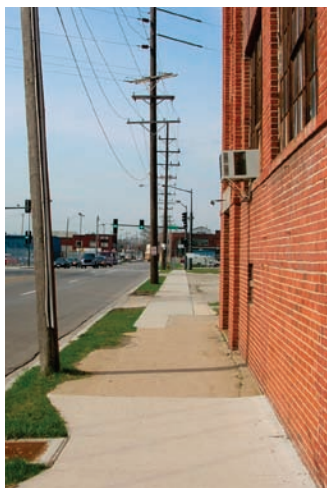
Comparison communities and residential models suggest that Aurora presents an especially good opportunity for transit-oriented development and housing products targeted to young professionals. To attract retailers and restaurants, the challenge is to create a physical environment that offers two-way streets with better visibility and access to businesses for our increasing Downtown population base. It is also important to add more business clusters where people with similar shopping interests and lifestyles can visit multiple stores within easy walking distance of each other.

Financial Resources

There are a variety of financial tools that can be utilized to facilitate development. These include federal, state, and local grants and appropriations for brownfield clean up, sewer improvements, flood plain mitigation, and the implementation of technology upgrades. Other resources include expanding our Downtown Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts and revenues from Special Service Area (SSA) programs. Our casino revenues may be a future source of dedicated redevelopment funds for specific use in Downtown neighborhoods. Finally, AEDC offers a number of special assistance services for new and existing businesses.

Challenges

Downtown revitalization efforts face a number of compelling challenges. Environmental issues related to site clean up will have to be addressed in a timely manner in order to maintain revitalization momentum, particularly in regards to projects that include new residences. A growing Downtown population and commercial infill redevelopment will also increase demands on sewers and other utilities. In addition, new development will need to comply with county storm water management practices.



Technology is a critical life support function for retaining existing businesses and residents, and attracting new ones. There are significant information technology system challenges that must be successfully addressed at organizational and infrastructural levels if Downtown hopes to increase the number of knowledge workers who both live and work there.

Near term successes are critical and essential if we are to overcome some of the "circular" problems that have stymied previous Downtown redevelopment initiatives. These successes will depend on civic leadership, broad public support, and the systematic application of public resources to attract private reinvestment. Successful urban redevelopment is ultimately a public/private endeavor driven by participants who have reached a general consensus on the opportunities the community has to make improvements. City officials, too, will have to reach consensus among themselves on key topics such as the criteria used to evaluate and select developers. Also important will be determining what role the City wants to play in providing incentives to attract private market development. That said, we believe there are a number of near term opportunities to advance the efforts we've already begun and to start meeting the objectives defined in this Master Plan. We are confident that we have the talent and capabilities to effectively address the challenges we meet. We do so with an understanding that revitalization will require patience and the consistent application of resources over time. We believe, though, the benefits that future generations of Aurora citizens receive from these initiatives will be well worth the efforts we make today.

Primary Goal

Based on our analysis of current conditions and the opportunities that exist, we have established the following long-term goal for our Downtown:

Our long term vision is to make Downtown Aurora a thriving, hospitable, mixed urban, live-work-learn-shop-play centerpiece that unites and energizes our entire city.

Specific objectives of our goal include:

1 Live

Substantially increase the number of relatively young, affluent residents living Downtown.

2 Work

Substantially increase the Downtown workforce.

3 Learn

Leverage Waubonsee Community College's reinvestment in Downtown, target student population.

4 Shop

Create distinctive retail destinations that serve residents, attracts visitors, and increase our tax base.

5 Play

Create a variety of permanent and event-oriented entertainment venues that attract residents and visitors; complete the FoxWalk, a compelling, barrier-free cultural amenity along the Fox River.

6 Enjoy

Invigorate public pride by creating public spaces that are utilized and appreciated by all and reflect Aurora's diversity and economic vitality.

Long-Term Vision

"The issues in urban design are never black and white. They are not about extreme choices. They are about balance. It is possible to have a high quality, attractive physical environment and good accessibility. It is possible to have a lively, human scale central area and commercial prosperity."

JAMES HOWARD KUNSTLER, *THE CITY IN MIND: NOTES ON THE URBAN CONDITION*

If one had but a single word to summarize what the Downtown Plan was all about, that one word would be "connectivity."

From a strategic standpoint, the Master Plan connects to and is a physical manifestation of the Goals and Objectives defined on the previous pages—which in turn are built on the Opportunity Analysis undertaken of our Downtown's current physical and regulatory conditions, cultural assets, public safety issues, development market climate, and available financial resources.

In a geographic sense, the Master Plan is about strengthening the physical connections between existing Downtown neighborhoods, the Fox River, and the neighborhoods and regions outside of our Downtown. This is a key component in our mission to make Downtown a user-friendly place to access and within which to navigate.

Finally, our Master Plan is about creating a quality public realm that allows Aurora's citizens and visitors to make and maintain meaningful social connections. Civic design is in many ways the art of creating the spaces and places in which citizens can productively interact on both professional and personal levels. Beloved cities have great public places. If we want to attract new residents and workers to our Downtown—and entice visitors to return—we will have to provide the kinds of amenities that invite affectionate responses.

Imagine Downtown Aurora as a convenient, attractive, and stimulating place to live, work, learn, shop, and play. Whether you are a resident, office worker, student, tourist, shopper, or business owner, our Downtown has a reputation for being a "user-friendly" place that offers world-class amenities and quality of life. We successfully mix business, entertainment, and government services with a variety of housing types in a number of distinctive neighborhoods located on or a few short steps from the Fox River.

We have excellent regional connections facilitated by an attractive grid of well-maintained two-way streets. A variety and abundance of convenient parking options are offered in each neighborhood, including on-street spaces and parking garages with inviting street level retail. Circulation and orientation are enhanced by an attractive wayfinding signage system and other streetscape amenities that make pedestrians feel safe and welcome. Our Transportation Center serves thousands of daily commuters who have access to two beautifully maintained commuter rail stations just a short walk or drive from other Downtown neighborhoods.

The Fox River provides a variety of recreational activities. The enormously popular Fox River Trail funnels thousands of cyclists to our Downtown annually. FoxWalk, an amenity- rich riverfront promenade, is the best way to enjoy the soothing ambiance of the Fox River after dinner or on the way to or from the commuter rail stations. And, as those commuters arrive or depart for their destinations, they enjoy the latest wireless technologies that allow them to keep in real time communications with their businesses, families, or maybe even email their reservation requests for dinner along the Fox River.

Our Downtown includes a number of distinctive mixed use neighborhoods, each of which has its own special character and identity. The Stolp Island Neighborhood is the cultural and spiritual heart of our Downtown, the "greenest" densely urbanized district in the region – quite literally a "city in a park." Stolp Island is the home of nationally recognized entertainment and dining venues that are just steps away from a variety of government services and commercial businesses located in beautifully restored historic buildings and cutting edge new facilities.

The Mercado Neighborhood has vibrant streets featuring a diverse mix of specialty retail/restaurant destinations with offices and residences on the floors above. Broadway is one of the area's most renowned destinations for stylish multi-cultural shops, restaurants, and entertainment venues. Art galleries, design studios, high fashion boutiques, and sidewalk cafés in restored historic buildings give the Downtown Artists Row a laid back, funky charm.

The South Broadway Neighborhood is a classy, transit-oriented neighborhood featuring a recommissioned commuter rail station/parking facility with new and renovated housing just steps from the Fox River and other Downtown amenities.

The Roundhouse Neighborhood residents enjoy easy access to a first class commuter facility and the exciting live performances at the new festival park along the Fox River, both just steps from their homes in the landmark condominium tower or adjacent townhomes.

The Waubonsee Neighborhood has a trendy, upscale college-town atmosphere featuring coffee shops, boutiques, sidewalk cafes, and an active nightlife scene along the River Street "boulevard" near Waubonsee Community College's new campus.

The South River Street Neighborhood is a residential neighborhood with a distinctive urban edge. New townhouse and condominium construction centered around one of Downtown's beautiful new public parks complement nearby renovated loft buildings. Residents are just a short walk from the Fox River and Downtown shopping, dining and entertainment amenities.

The corner of Lake and New York Streets in the Lake Street Neighborhood intersection is one of Downtown's busiest places. Employees at new mid- and high-rise office buildings pour out onto the streets at lunchtime and after work to head for nearby dining and entertainment destinations. Further north, renovated homes and offices have stimulated a wave of reinvestment in the adjacent neighborhoods, drawing new residents who like the idea of being able to walk to work.

Anchored by a first-class hotel/conference center and steps from the Fox River and the amenities of Stolp Island, the Wilder Park Neighborhood has become Aurora's premier business and residential address.

The Illinois Avenue bridge connects the two neighborhoods that form the northern gateways to our core Downtown neighborhoods. The North Lake Street Neighborhood is a regional shopping destination, also noted for the distinctive architectural design of the office buildings that overlook the Fox River.

On the east bank of the Fox, Island View Neighborhood's relaxed, resort-style character is defined by activities centered on its public marina. Heading to the riverfront drive or pedestrian promenade to take in the sunset over the Fox River has become one of the Aurora's most endearing daily rituals.

Long-Term Vision

McCullough Park
High quality commercial and retail redevelopment around the Lake Street/Illinois Avenue intersection includes showcase architecture along river's edge

Wilder Park
Urbane, upscale new development with great views of river include some of the most highly sought business and residential street addresses in Aurora

Lake Street
New York/Lake Street gateway intersection is highly urban, highly sought location for businesses seeking new office space in Downtown Aurora

Waubonsee
Trendy, upscale college town atmosphere with new River Street "boulevard" featuring coffee shops, boutiques, sidewalk cafes, and active nightlife

Re-establish Two-Way Streets
Provides easier circulation options for motorists, a more pedestrian-friendly walking experience for visitors, and higher visibility for businesses

New Pedestrian Friendly Circulation Connections
New pedestrian bridges, riverside paths, and enhanced streetscapes link Downtown amenities and bring more people to the banks of the Fox River

Island View
Mixed use neighborhood with resort-like atmosphere centers on new public marina, beautiful riverside drive, and elegant pedestrian promenade

Roundhouse
Transit oriented, mixed use retail/residential neighborhood includes upgraded, first-class transportation facility and new festival park along Fox River

Stolp Island
Attractive, lively, green "city in a park," Aurora's cultural heart, the place where everyone heads for food and fun when the sun starts to set

Mercado
Artsy with historic charm, one of the Midwest's most renowned destinations for multi-cultural shops, restaurants, and entertainment venues

South River
Residential neighborhood with new construction and converted loft buildings retains gritty, industrial era urban edge

Green Connections
New parks extend laterally into neighborhoods, providing pedestrian-friendly access to riverside paths

South Broadway
Classy, transit-oriented neighborhood with new and renovated housing just steps from Fox River and Downtown amenities

Aurora was originally built on the river and years from now the river will continue to be the resource that is always associated with our Downtown's successful renaissance.

Long-Term Vision
Stolp Island
Neighborhood
Significant New Development
Existing Uses
Redevelop Existing Structures
New Residential Development
Existing Civic Facility
New Civic Facility
Parking
Existing Green Space
New Green Space
Streetscape Enhancements
Two-way Streets
Pedestrian Paths
Scale: 1" = 300 feet
0
100'
200'
300'
N
Wilder Park
Blues Island
FOX RIVER
New York Street
Galena Boulevard
Reintroduce Two-Way Traffic to All Downtown Streets
Redevelop As Mixed Office/ Retail/Restaurant/ Office/Residential
Casino
Existing FoxWalk
North Island Center
Reuse Existing Buildings
Millennium Park
Stolp Avenue
Lake Street (Illinois Route 31)
Downer Place
River Street
Benton Street
Create Premium Street and Streetscape
Expanded Paramount Theatre
Complete FoxWalk
Agnes Mundy Park
Broadway Street (Illinois Route 25)
Infill Commercial/ Residential)
Enhance Lighting and Paving on Bridges
Pedestrian Bridges
Civic Campus
LaSalle Street
Lincoln Avenue
Clark Street
Washington Street

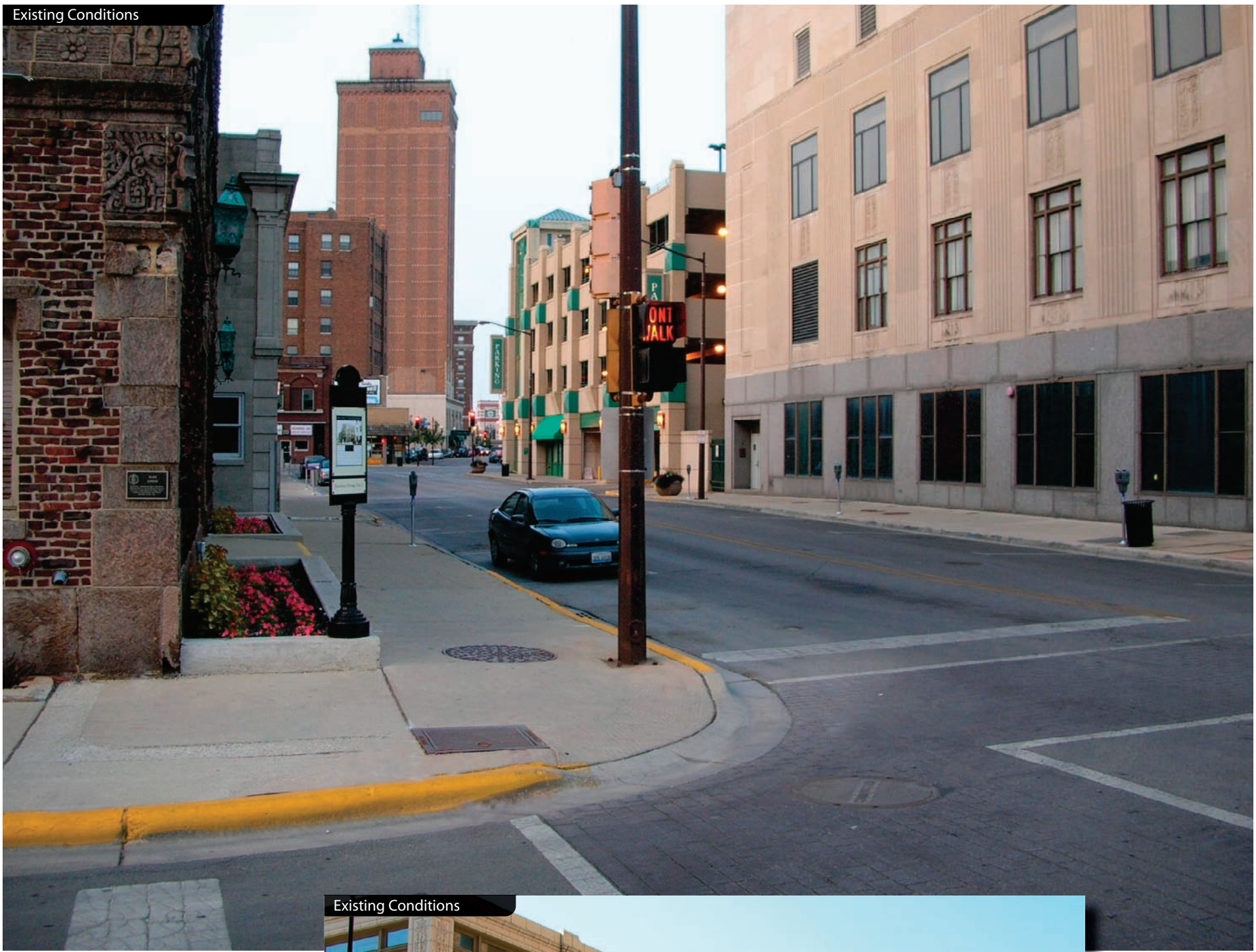
Stolp Island Neighborhood

Stolp Island's natural setting and historic character provide a compelling backdrop for the Fox River Valley's most exciting entertainment and dining destination.

While Stolp Island enjoys a regional reputation as the place to head when the sun starts to set, the mix of government offices, commercial businesses, quality shops, and long standing entertainment destinations such as the Hollywood Casino-Aurora , the Paramount Theatre, the SciTech Hands On Museum, the David L. Pierce Art & History Center, and the Copley Theater ensures that the Island is a highly active neighborhood throughout daylight hours as well. Stolp Avenue is home to a variety of data-dependent businesses with professional employees who occupy open, loft style offices located on the upper floors of restored historic buildings or selective new infill development. After hours, these workers meet friends for drinks at one of the Island's stylish pubs or have dinner under the trees at a sidewalk bistro. Afterwards, diners take a relaxing stroll along the Fox River or perhaps take the short walk over to the Mercado Neighborhood or River Street Neighborhood for dessert and coffee.

On weekends, visitors flock to one of the outdoor events held on Stolp Avenue, head for the casino, or dance until the early morning hours at one of the Island's clubs. Or, perhaps they prefer to sit on a bench along the FoxWalk, the City's best public spot for people watching, and simply let the world pass them by.

Stolp Island Neighborhood



(Above)
Stolp Island today is for the most part a starkly urban environment.

(Right)
Stolp Island's historic character should be complemented by context sensitive infill development.

Recommended Approach

Recommended Approach

Premium streetscape upgrades make the island the "greenest" densely urban neighborhood in the region.

Recommended Approach

Stolp Island is known for its vibrant public spaces where people watching is an active pastime .

Recommended Approach

New restaurants, clubs and entertainment attractions make Stolp Island one of the region's premier entertainment destinations, the place to head when the sun sets.

Mercado Neighborhood

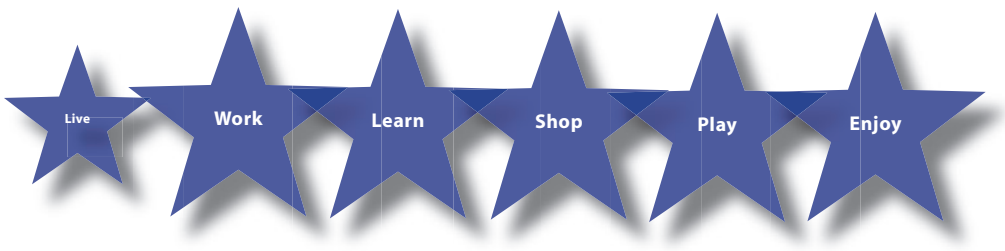
Divided by the Burlington Northern viaduct, Mercado has two distinct districts, each with its own unique character.

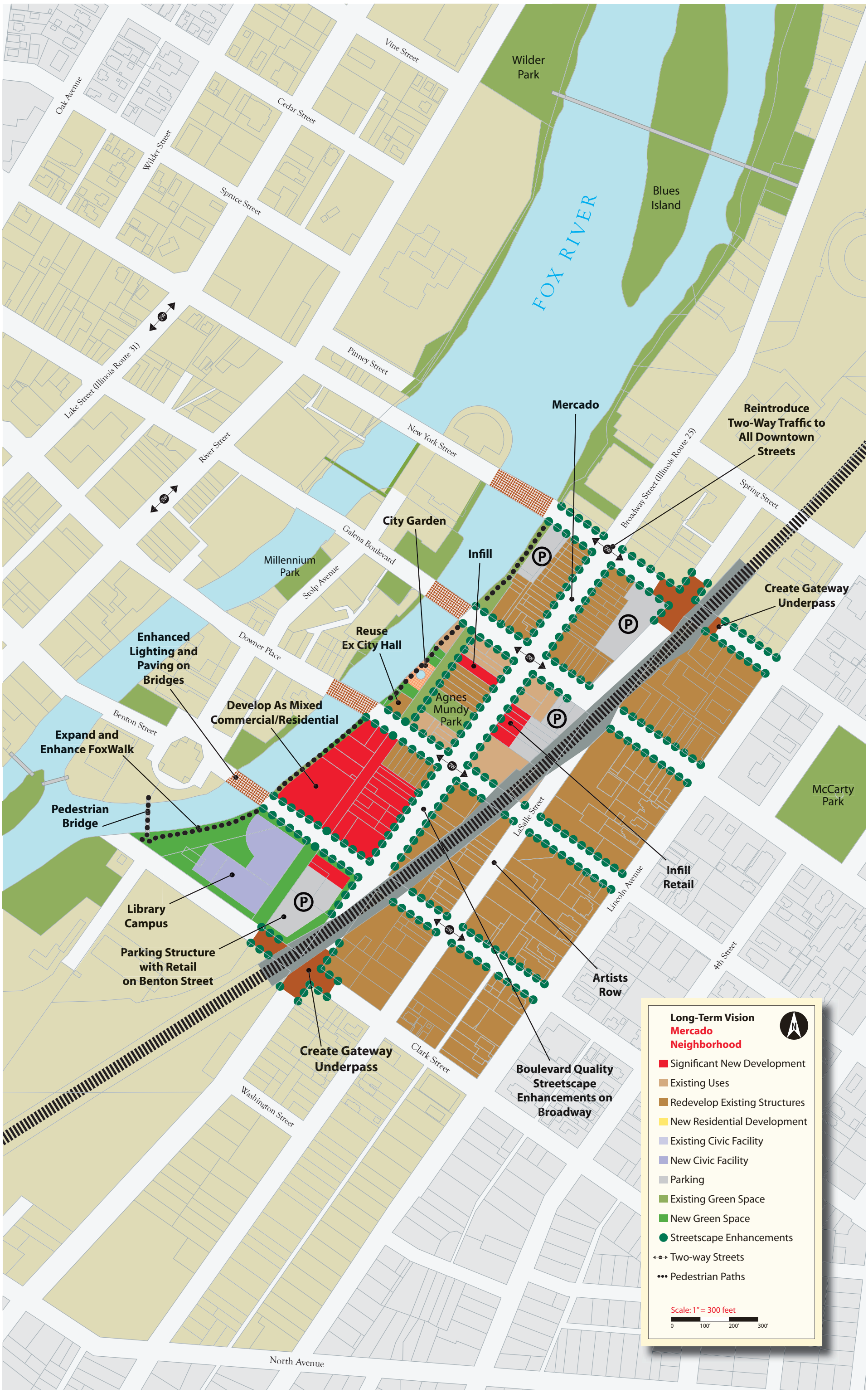
East of the Burlington Northern Sante Fe (BNSF) train tracks, visitors entering the neighborhood on New York Street are welcomed at the railroad viaduct, re-created as a formal Downtown gateway. The gateway's distinctive nighttime lighting treatment is especially memorable and makes the viaduct a true work of civic art. Appropriately, the viaduct also serves as a gateway to our Downtown Artists Row, a collection of galleries, design studios, fashionable boutiques and sidewalk cafes concentrated in restored and rehabilitated buildings along LaSalle Street.

West of the BNSF viaduct, Broadway is the center of activity. Broadway is one of the region's most renowned destinations for multi-cultural shopping, dining, and entertainment venues. An international "main street" that bustles night and day, Broadway offers visitors and nearby residents the opportunity to take a "world tour" without leaving our city limits. Small shops in beautifully restored historic buildings offer a wide variety of imported goods not available from chain retailers. Walking along Broadway, one will find attractions that appeal to every human sense.

Activity along the river is enhanced by the library campus in the southwest corner of the neighborhood opposite Stolp Island. Connected to Stolp via pedestrian bridges and an expanded FoxWalk, the library's riverside plaza is a favorite place to have a brown bag lunch or relax and people watch. Receptions and special events held at the library draw crowds to the riverfront on a regular basis. The sense of activity along Broadway is heightened by two-way traffic along the four major east-west thoroughfares leading to Stolp Island that cross Broadway.

New residents attracted to Artists Row lofts and new mixed use residential along the river insure that Broadway Mercado's streets are busy late into the evening. The diverse collection of shops, restaurants, clubs, tourists, and local residents makes Mercado one our most active and intriguing Downtown neighborhoods.




Wilder Park
Blues Island
FOX RIVER
Vine Street
Oak Avenue
Cedar Street
Wilder Street
Spruce Street
Pinney Street
Lake Street (Illinois Route 31)
River Street
New York Street
Broadway Street (Illinois Route 25)
Spring Street
Galena Boulevard
Millennium Park
Stolp Avenue
Downer Place
Benton Street
Agnes Mundy Park
LaSalle Street
Lincoln Avenue
4th Street
McCarty Park
Clark Street
Washington Street
North Avenue
Mercado
Reintroduce Two-Way Traffic to All Downtown Streets
City Garden
Infill
Create Gateway Underpass
Reuse Ex City Hall
Enhanced Lighting and Paving on Bridges
Develop As Mixed Commercial/Residential
Expand and Enhance FoxWalk
Pedestrian Bridge
Library Campus
Parking Structure with Retail on Benton Street
Infill Retail
Artists Row
Create Gateway Underpass
Boulevard Quality Streetscape Enhancements on Broadway
Long-Term Vision
Mercado Neighborhood
Significant New Development
Existing Uses
Redevelop Existing Structures
New Residential Development
Existing Civic Facility
New Civic Facility
Parking
Existing Green Space
New Green Space
Streetscape Enhancements
Two-way Streets
Pedestrian Paths
Scale: 1" = 300 feet
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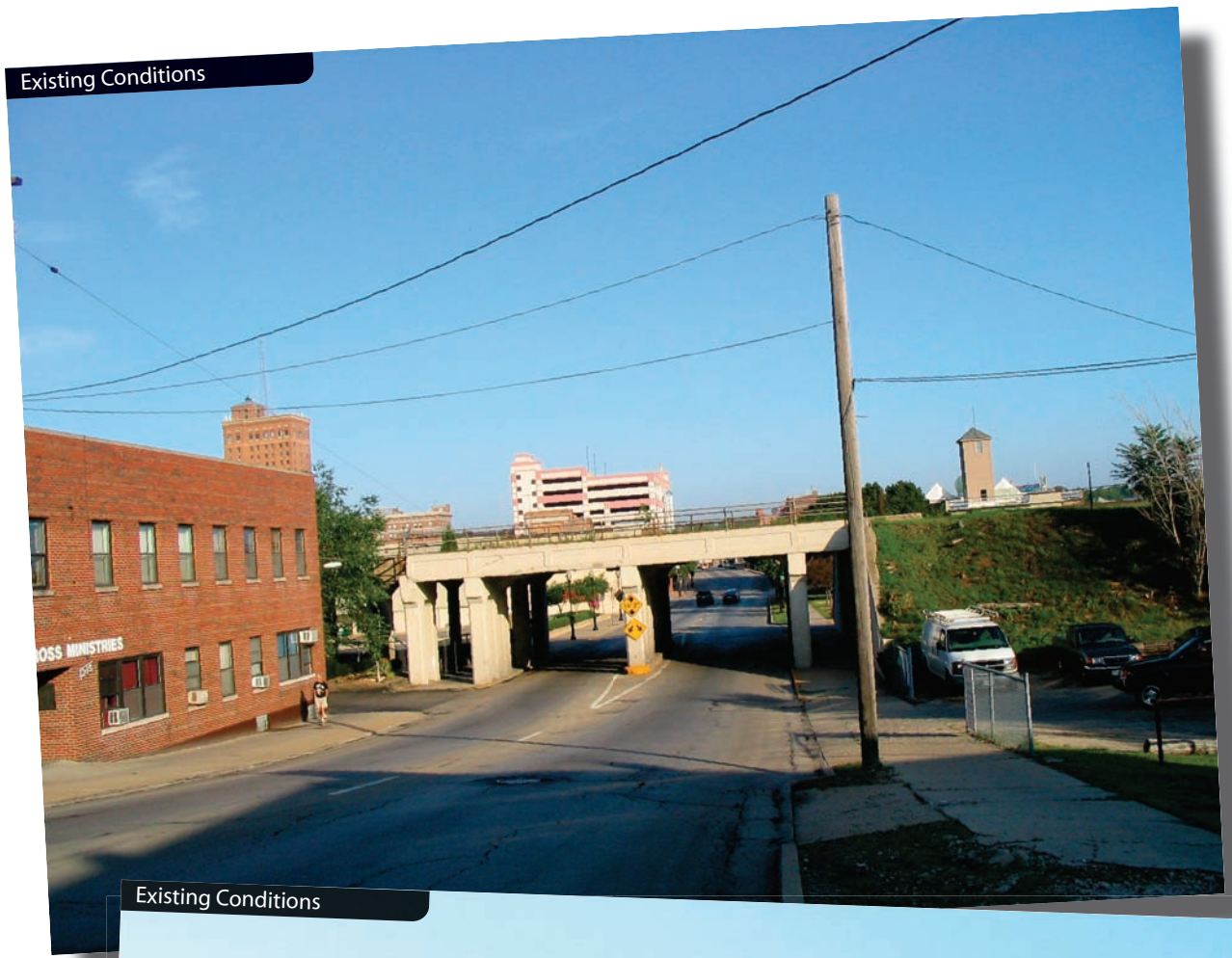
100'
200'
300'

Mercado Neighborhood

(Looking southwest at the Broadway/New York Street intersection) The Mercado Neighborhood has features that appeal to every human sense, offering visitors the opportunity to take a "world tour" without leaving our City limits.

Mercado Neighborhood

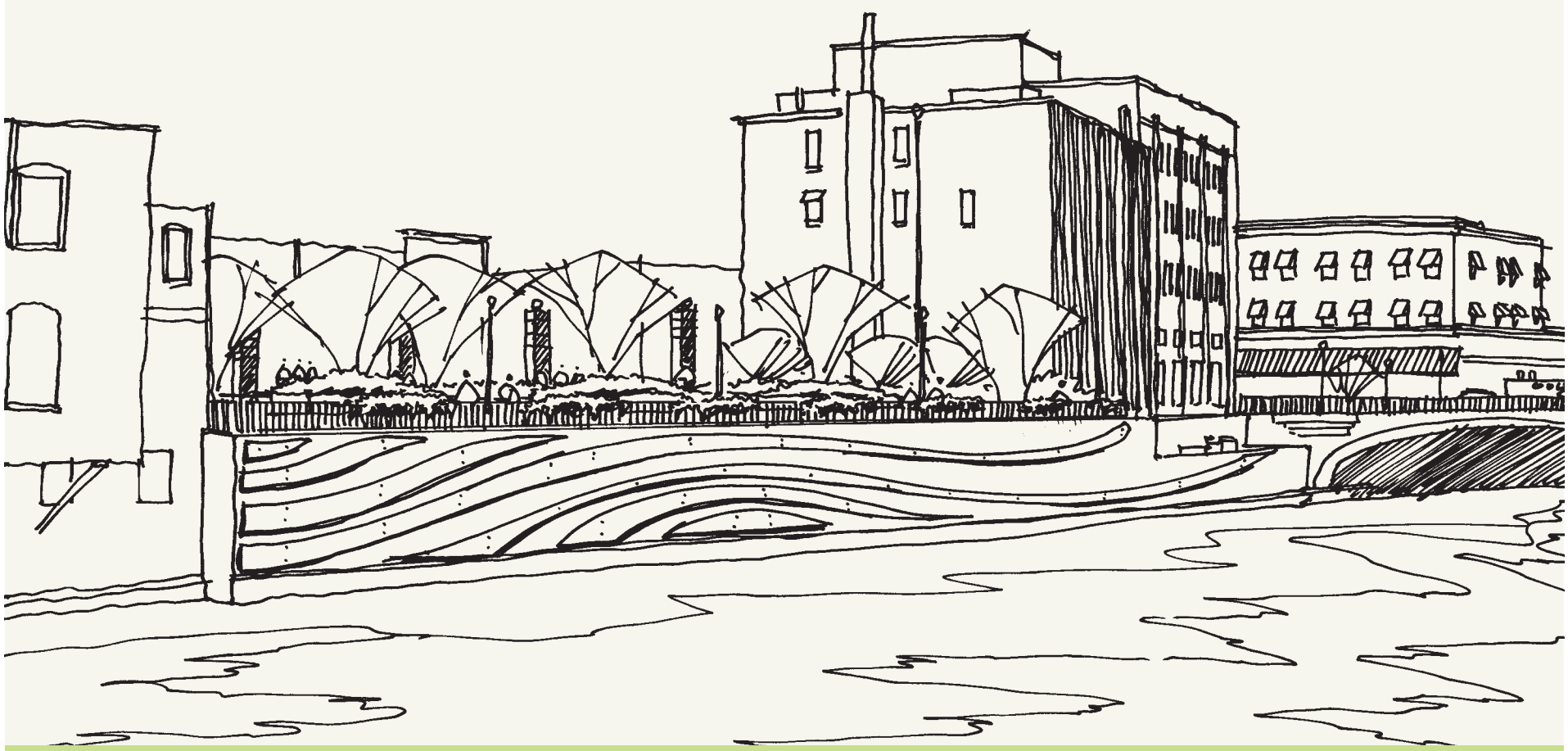


(Above) The New York Street viaduct, a highly traveled Downtown gateway, is currently an unattractive physical barrier. (Below) Existing under-utilized riverfront sites present opportunities to create new public spaces that offer direct pedestrian access to the Fox River.

Recommended Approach

(Above) Transforming the New York Street viaduct into a work of civic art that welcomes visitors is a highly visible sign that Downtown rejuvenation is underway. (Below) A city garden along the banks of the Fox River creates a visual link to the river from Broadway.

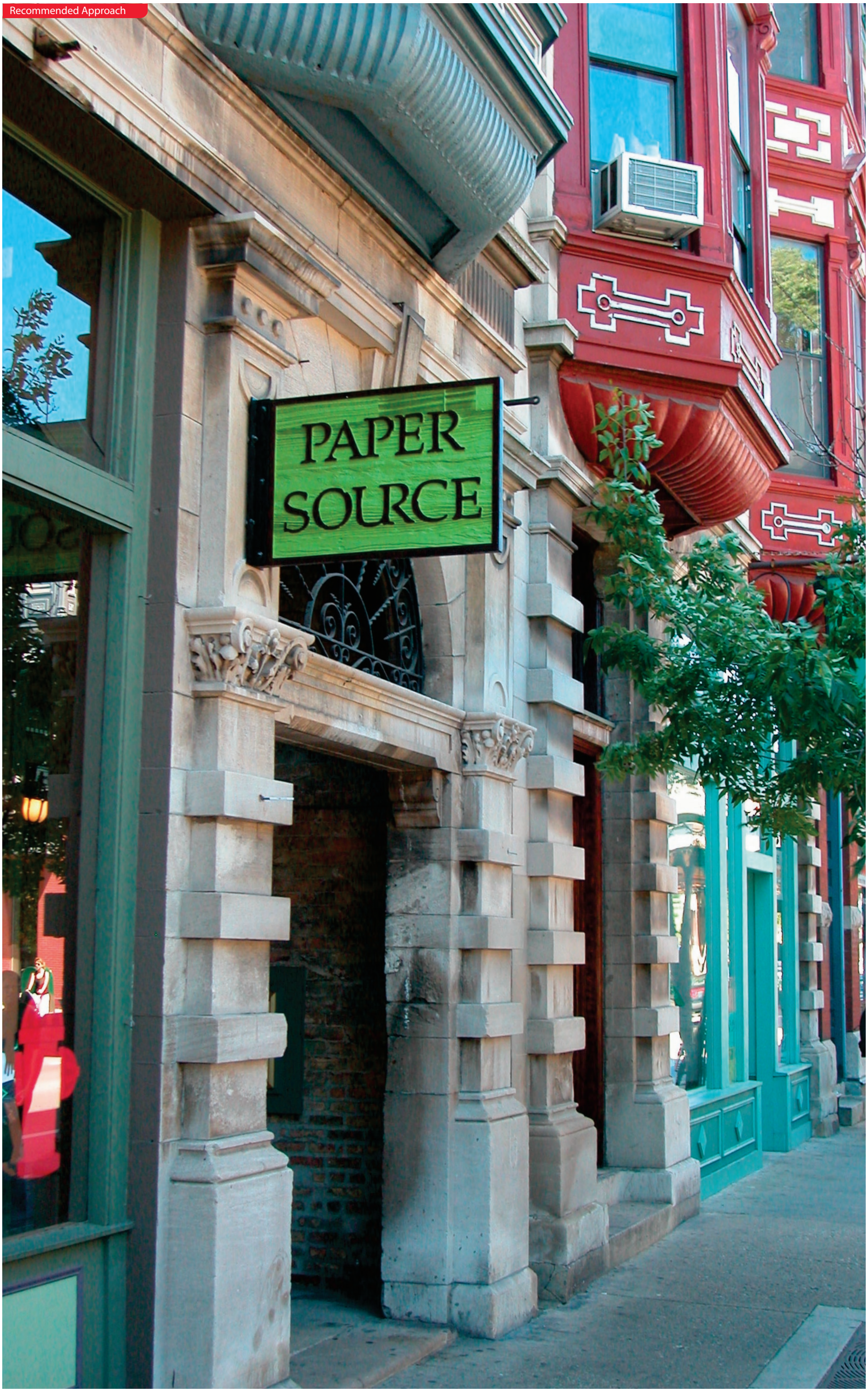
Recommended Approach

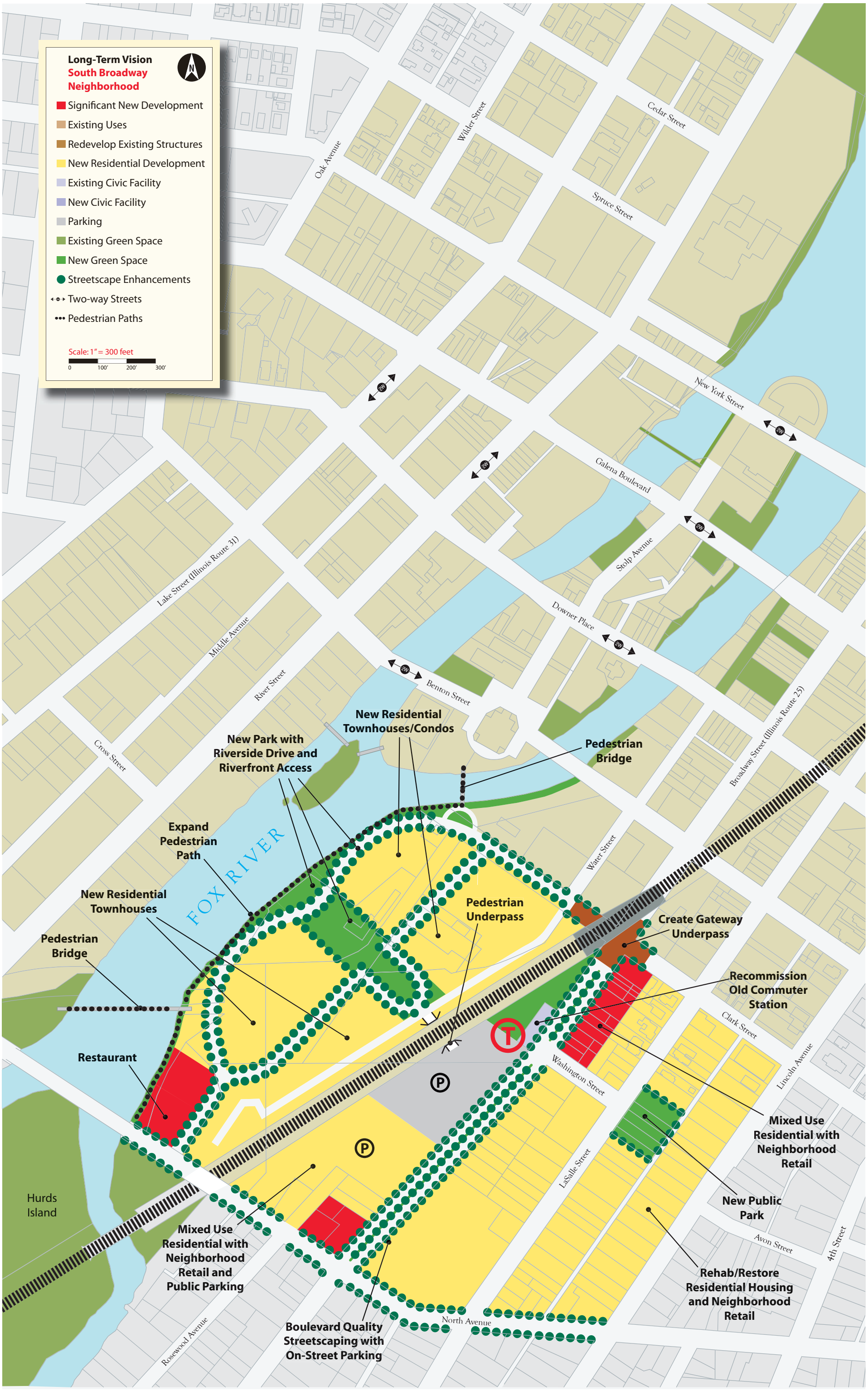


Mercado Neighborhood

The Artists Row is characterized by galleries, design studios, fashionable boutiques, and sidewalk cafés concentrated in restored and rehabilitated buildings along LaSalle Street.

Recommended Approach




Long-Term Vision
South Broadway Neighborhood
N
Significant New Development
Existing Uses
Redevelop Existing Structures
New Residential Development
Existing Civic Facility
New Civic Facility
Parking
Existing Green Space
New Green Space
Streetscape Enhancements
Two-way Streets
Pedestrian Paths
Scale: 1" = 300 feet
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100'
200'
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Oak Avenue
Wilder Street
Cedar Street
Spruce Street
New York Street
Galena Boulevard
Stolp Avenue
Downer Place
Benton Street
Lake Street (Illinois Route 31)
Middle Avenue
River Street
Cross Street
Broadway Street (Illinois Route 25)
Water Street
Washington Street
Clark Street
Lincoln Avenue
LaSalle Street
Avon Street
4th Street
North Avenue
Rosewood Avenue
FOX RIVER
Hurds Island
New Residential Townhouses/Condos
New Park with Riverside Drive and Riverfront Access
Pedestrian Bridge
Expand Pedestrian Path
New Residential Townhouses
Pedestrian Bridge
Pedestrian Underpass
Create Gateway Underpass
Recommission Old Commuter Station
Restaurant
Mixed Use Residential with Neighborhood Retail
New Public Park
Mixed Use Residential with Neighborhood Retail and Public Parking
Rehab/Restore Residential Housing and Neighborhood Retail
Boulevard Quality Streetscaping with On-Street Parking

South Broadway Neighborhood

New and revitalized housing and businesses within easy walking distance of the recommissioned commuter station, access to the Fox River, and proximity of unique amenities in adjacent neighborhoods makes South Broadway a highly desirable place to live, work, and play.

South Broadway residents enjoy a number of attractive lifestyle options.

They can live in a new townhouse, a mid-rise condominium with a view overlooking the Fox River and Stolp Island, or in a new or restored single family house with a backyard garden.

They can hop on the Metra at the recommissioned commuter station to get to their Loop office or take a ten-minute walk to their job in the prestigious Wilder Park Neighborhood if they want to work closer to home.

Residents can shop at neighborhood oriented stores in South Broadway or select from the more diverse options they have at Broadway Mercado retailers a short distance away.

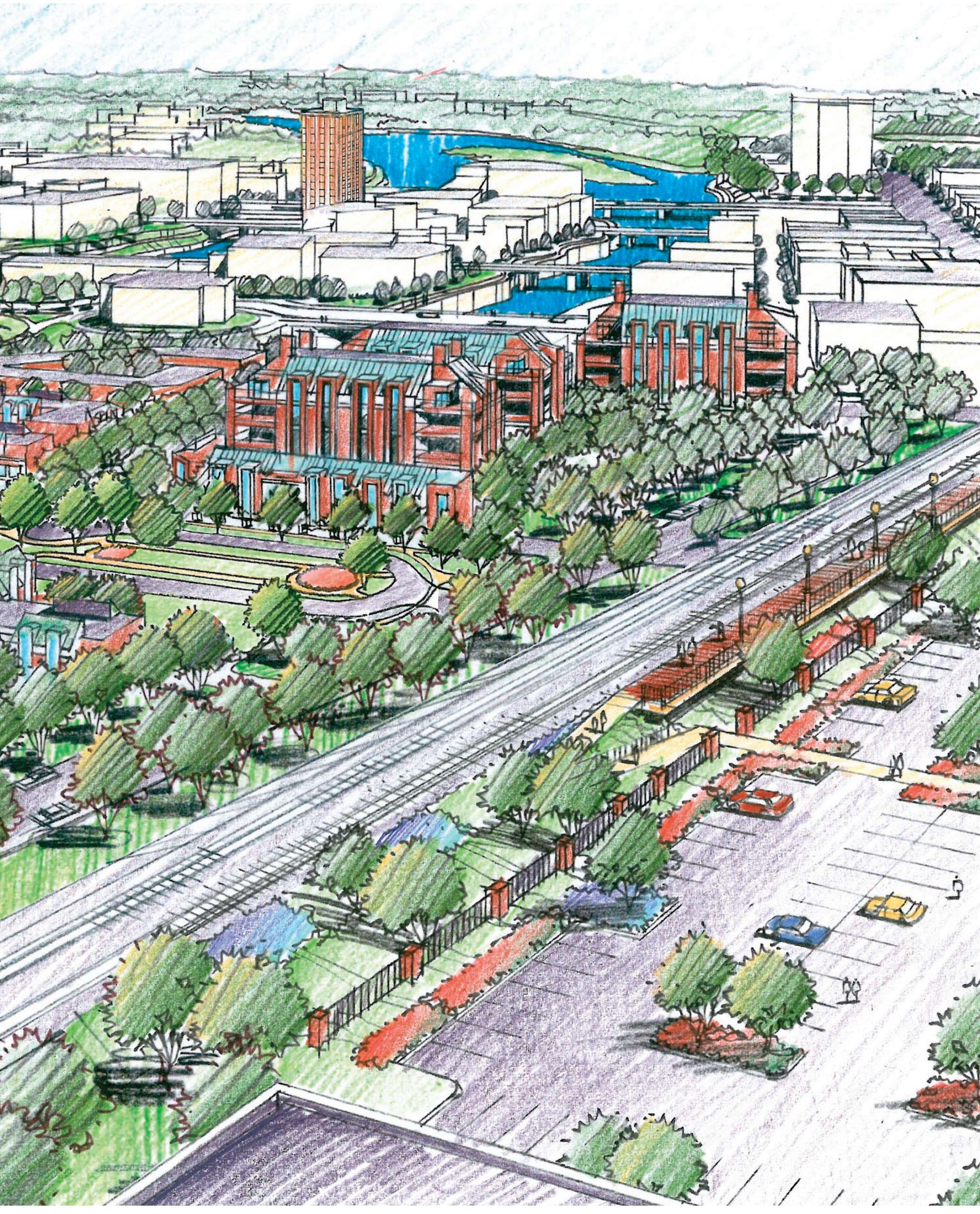
They can have dinner at a nearby South Broadway restaurant, eat under the trees on Stolp Avenue, or head for an Artists Row sidewalk café on LaSalle Street. Afterwards, they can enjoy some music at a Stolp Island club or perhaps something with a little more international flavor in Broadway Mercado. There are also food and music choices over on River Street in the Waubonsee Neighborhood, but that might be a minute or two farther walk.

Walking the dog involves choices as well. Does one head for a new neighborhood park, take in the views from the pedestrian path along the Fox River, or enjoy the boulevard-like ambiance of Broadway south of the BNSF viaduct?

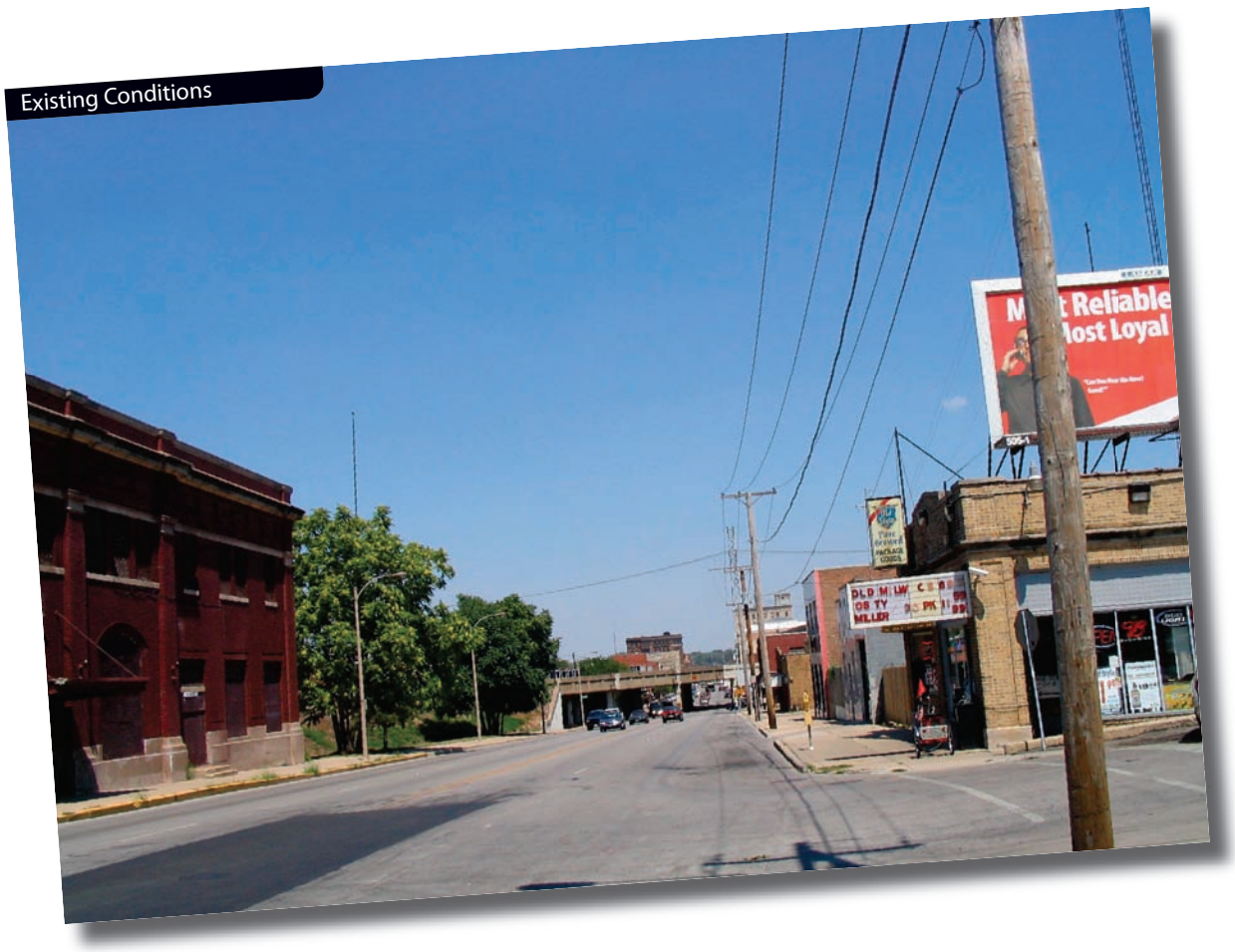
Living in South Broadway means having the chance to enjoy a healthy, big-city lifestyle without the drawbacks normally associated with urban living such as long-distance automobile commutes. Easy access to the Fox River, one of the region's most compelling natural features, adds to the allure.

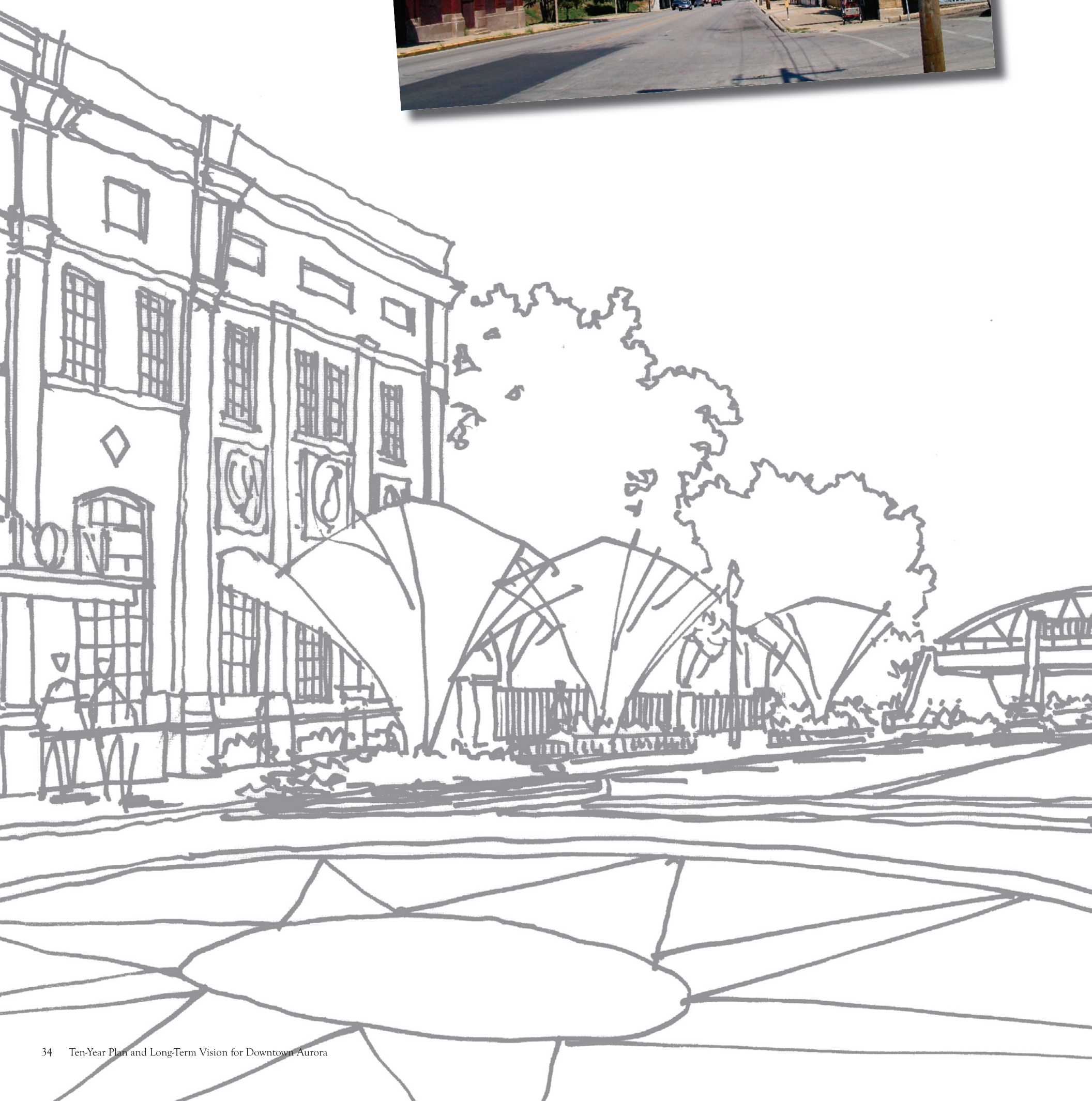
South Broadway Neighborhood

(Looking northwest towards Stolp Island) The western portion of the South Broadway Neighborhood includes new residential along the Fox River just a short walk away from Downtown attractions.



South Broadway Neighborhood





(Looking north from the Broadway/Washington Street intersection) Upgrading viaduct underpasses to serve as neighborhood gateways and creating premium streetscapes makes Broadway a much friendlier environment for pedestrians walking to and from the recommissioned commuter rail station (below left).

South Broadway Neighborhood

Existing Conditions

(Above) A major focus of neighborhood plans is to create additional riverfront green space that is accessible to the public. (Right) Some treatments like this plaza have a distinctively urban quality. Others take a "softer," more natural approach.

Recommended Approach

South Broadway Neighborhood

Existing Conditions

(Above) The South Broadway Neighborhood is a Master Plan Priority Development Site. (Right) A park extending laterally from the river provides an attractive public amenity for residents of the surrounding residential developments.

Recommended Approach

Recommended Approach

Residents of South Broadway enjoy a variety of housing options.

Recommended Approach

A new public park provides much needed green space just steps away from new riverfront housing.

Recommended Approach

The boulevard-like ambiance of South Broadway will provide pedestrians with a comfortable walking environment.

Roundhouse Neighborhood

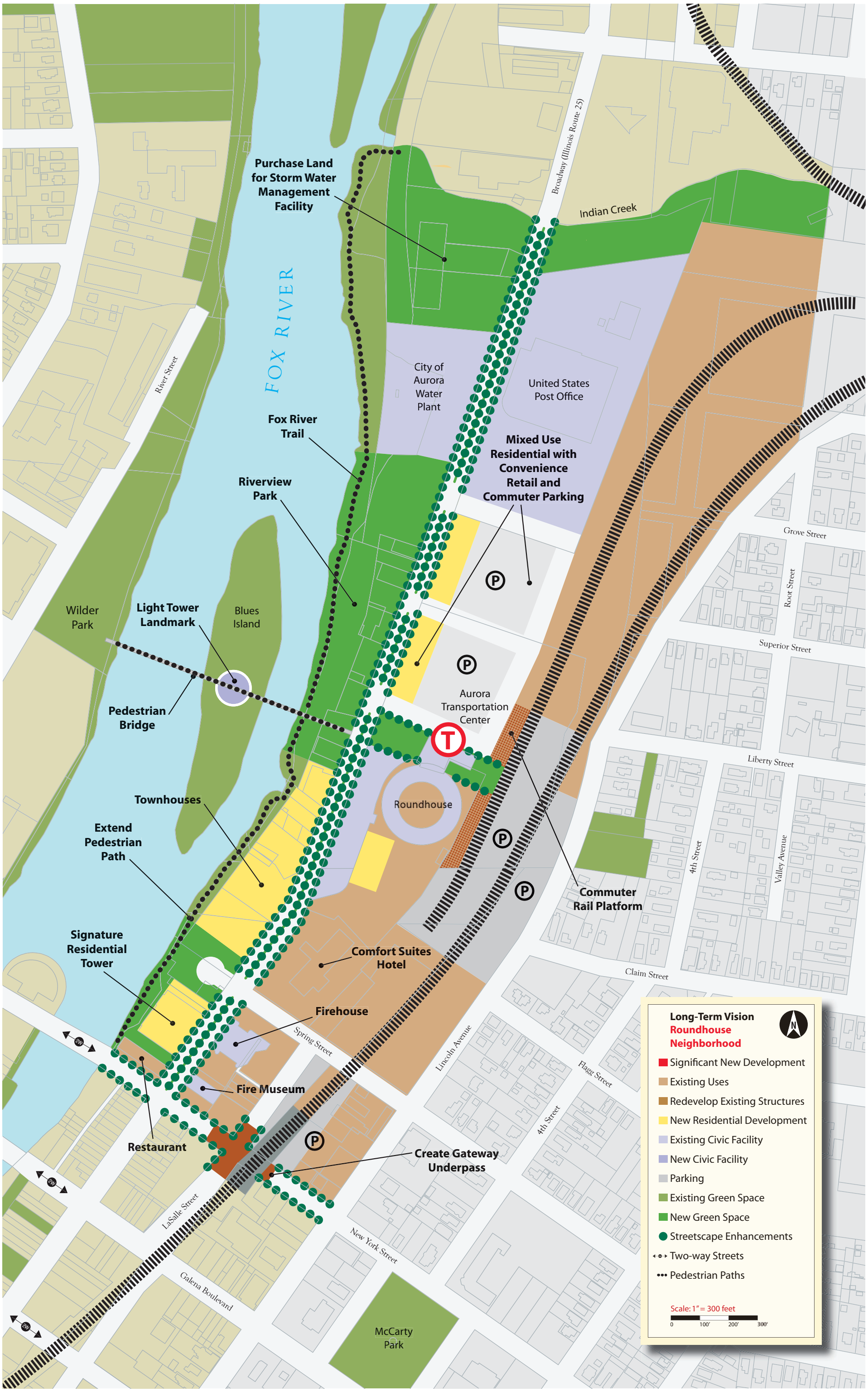
The Roundhouse Neighborhood includes transit-oriented, mixed use retail/residential development adjacent to an enhanced commuter facility and the new Riverview Park, home to a variety of entertainment events.

Commuters, park visitors, trail users, and local residents make Roundhouse streets and sidewalks some of our Downtown's most active.

Two centers of activity define the neighborhood. The first is the upgraded Aurora Transportation Center adjacent to the Roundhouse facility. Each day, over 1,600 commuters pass through the Transportation Center, each of whom is a potential Downtown retail or business customer. Adding to this daily activity are the residents of the mixed use housing just north of the Transportation Center.

The second center of activity is Riverview Park between Broadway and the Fox River just west of the Transportation Center. Programs and events at the park draw thousands of annual visitors from around the region who enjoy the post-rush hour convenience of the Transportation Center's structured parking facilities. Those using the Fox River Trail and the pedestrian bridge over Blues Island enliven the park and riverfront all year round.

The trail also draws recreational users from the riverside residential housing just south of the park. The architecturally striking condominium tower near the corner of Broadway and New York is one of the neighborhood's most distinctive landmarks and a highly identifiable gateway to core Downtown neighborhoods. The Blues Island light tower is another identifying landmark that draws attention to and celebrates our Downtown's connection to the Fox River.


Purchase Land for Storm Water Management Facility
Broadway (Illinois Route 25)
Indian Creek
FOX RIVER
River Street
City of Aurora Water Plant
United States Post Office
Fox River Trail
Mixed Use Residential with Convenience Retail and Commuter Parking
Riverview Park
Grove Street
Root Street
Superior Street
Wilder Park
Light Tower Landmark
Blues Island
Pedestrian Bridge
Aurora Transportation Center
Liberty Street
Townhouses
Roundhouse
Extend Pedestrian Path
4th Street
Valley Avenue
Commuter Rail Platform
Signature Residential Tower
Comfort Suites Hotel
Claim Street
Firehouse
Spring Street
Lincoln Avenue
Flagg Street
Fire Museum
Restaurant
Create Gateway Underpass
LaSalle Street
New York Street
Galena Boulevard
McCarty Park
Long-Term Vision
Roundhouse Neighborhood
Significant New Development
Existing Uses
Redevelop Existing Structures
New Residential Development
Existing Civic Facility
New Civic Facility
Parking
Existing Green Space
New Green Space
Streetscape Enhancements
Two-way Streets
Pedestrian Paths
Scale: 1" = 300 feet
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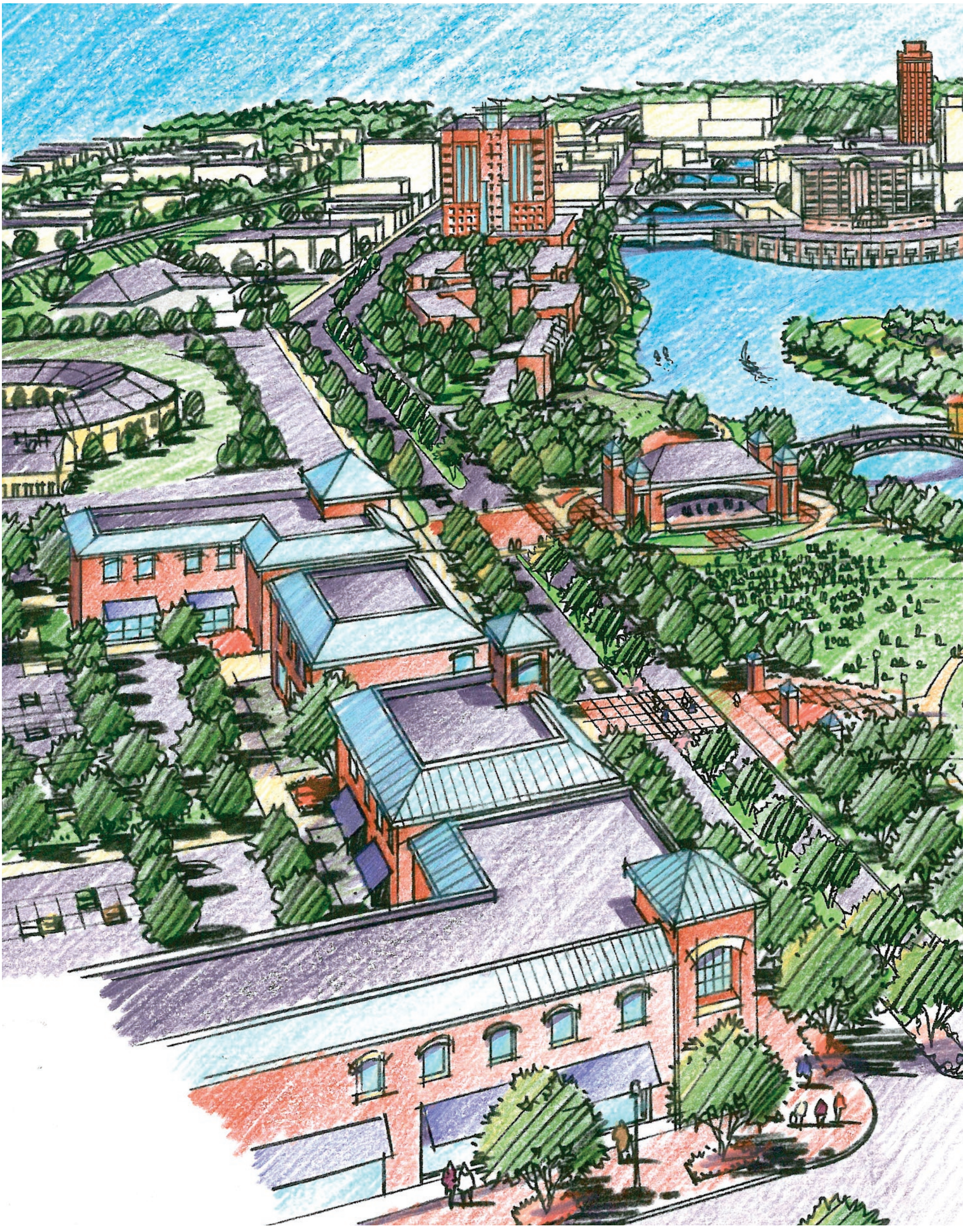
100'
200'
300'

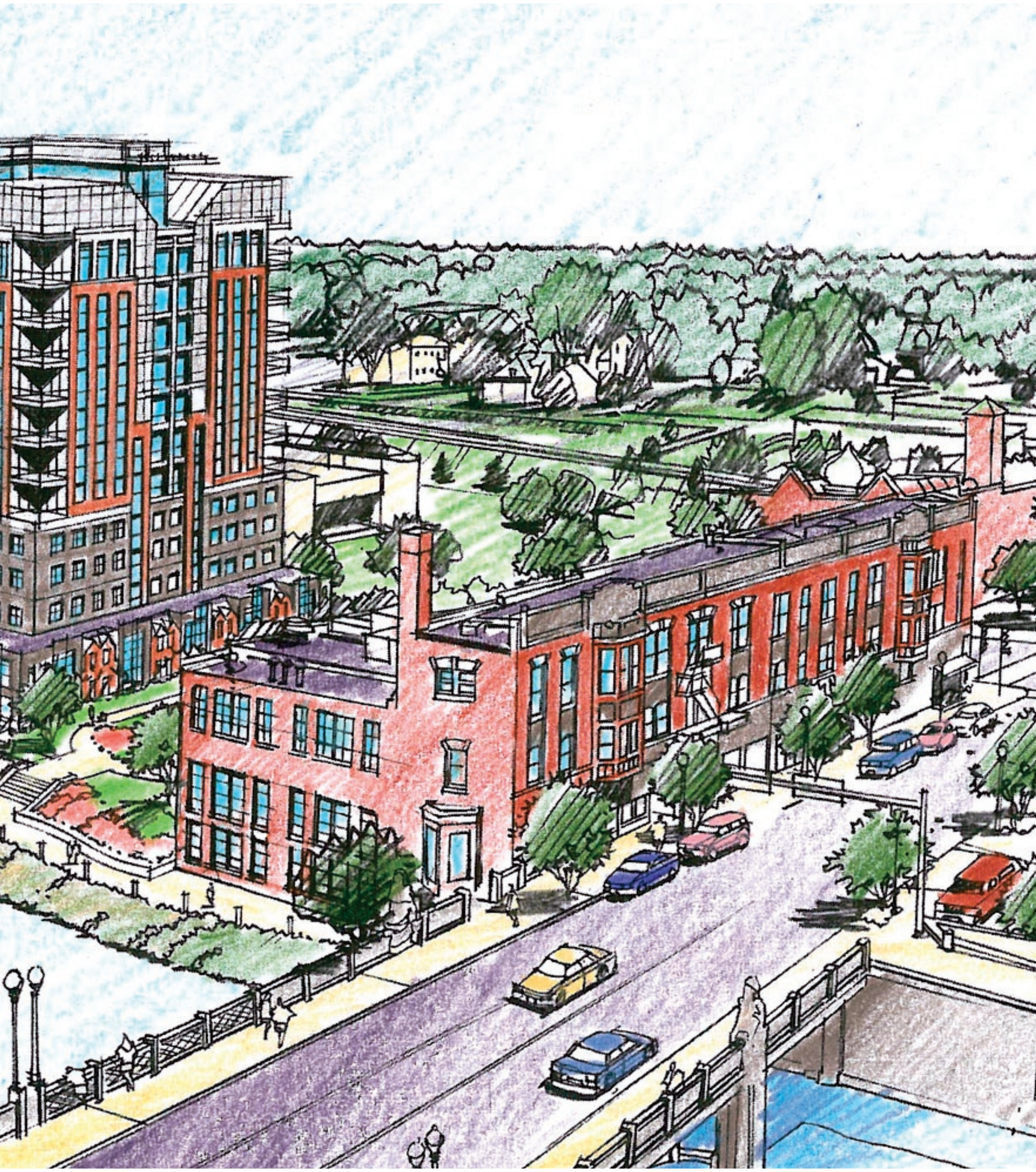
Roundhouse Neighborhood



(Looking southwest from Post Office towards Stolp Island) Events and activities at Riverview Park across from the Aurora Transportation Center will bring residents and visitors to the riverfront, increasing Stolp Island visibility and exposure.

Roundhouse Neighborhood

(Looking northeast from the New York Street bridge) Roundhouse is a walkable, transit-oriented neighborhood with easy access to Aurora's public transportation facilities, Riverview Park, and the amenities in other core Downtown neighborhoods.



Roundhouse Neighborhood

Existing Conditions

Existing Conditions

(This page) Today, Broadway north of Downtown and the Metra commuter station lacks visual appeal and pedestrian friendly features. (Opposite page) Transit-oriented development requires streetscaping treatments that ensure pedestrian safety and comfort.

Recommended Approach

Roundhouse Neighborhood

(Above) Residences at the townhouses at the "Well Site," one of our Master Plan's Priority Development Sites, are steps away from Riverview Park amenities. (Right) Transit-oriented development adjacent to the Transportation Center is mixed use with street level convenience retail. (Opposite page) Well Site development features a variety of housing products including a signature condominium tower that serves as a landmark gateway to core Downtown neighborhoods.

Waubonsee Neighborhood

Waubonsee has a trendy, "college town" atmosphere where coffee shops, boutiques, sidewalk cafés, and an active nightlife mix comfortably with Waubonsee Community College along the neighborhood's elegant River Street "boulevard."

Waubonsee Community College (WCC), with thousands of students, is the catalyst for a great deal of pedestrian activity along River Street that also emanates out onto the parts of FoxWalk connecting the school's vibrant riverfront plaza to the rest of Downtown. However, office workers from redeveloped mixed use properties adjacent to and across the street from WCC are also a key part of the street level dynamic during and after working hours. Adding to vitality is the heightened sense of activity generated by two-way traffic on River Street, Lake Street, and the streets leading to and from Stolp Island.

Further west, auto oriented (but still pedestrian friendly) new development along Lake Street provides commercial and retail space that meets contemporary market needs and adds tax increment that helps to fund Downtown revitalization. However, large scale commercial development at the southeast corner of Lake and New York is decidedly "downtown" in scale and siting. This intersection, one of the key gateways to Stolp Island and other core Downtown neighborhoods, is a special place with signage and streetscape enhancements that clearly communicate to visitors that they've arrived in the heart of our Downtown.

Plum Street
Vine Street
West Park Avenue
Wilder Park
Locust Street
Grand Avenue
Cedar Street
Spruce Street
Lake Street (Illinois Route 31)
Premium Streetscape Enhancements to Key Gateway Intersection
Oak Avenue
Retail/Entertainment Reuse
Large Scale Commercial Redevelopment with Parking
Locust Street
Galena Boulevard
Auto Oriented Commercial/ Retail
Pinney Street
Enhanced Lighting and Paving on Bridges
Downer Place
Bank
New York Street
Woodlawn Avenue
Benton Street
Public Parking Structure with Grade Level Office
Reintroduce Two-Way Traffic to All Downtown Streets
Mixed Use Redevelopment with Parking
Extend and Enhance FoxWalk
Stolp Avenue
Waubonsee Community College
Middle Avenue
Broadway (Illinois Route 25)
River Street
LaSalle Street
FOX RIVER
Baje Industrial Drive
Clark Street
Water Street
North Avenue
Long-Term Vision
Waubonsee Neighborhood
Significant New Development
Existing Uses
Redevelop Existing Structures
New Residential Development
Existing Civic Facility
New Civic Facility
Parking
Existing Green Space
New Green Space
Streetscape Enhancements
Two-way Streets
Pedestrian Paths
Scale: 1" = 300 feet
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100'
200'
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Waubonsee Neighborhood

Great places have great public spaces. A light-filled riverfront plaza at Waubonsee Community College is a neighborhood landmark that attracts users year round.

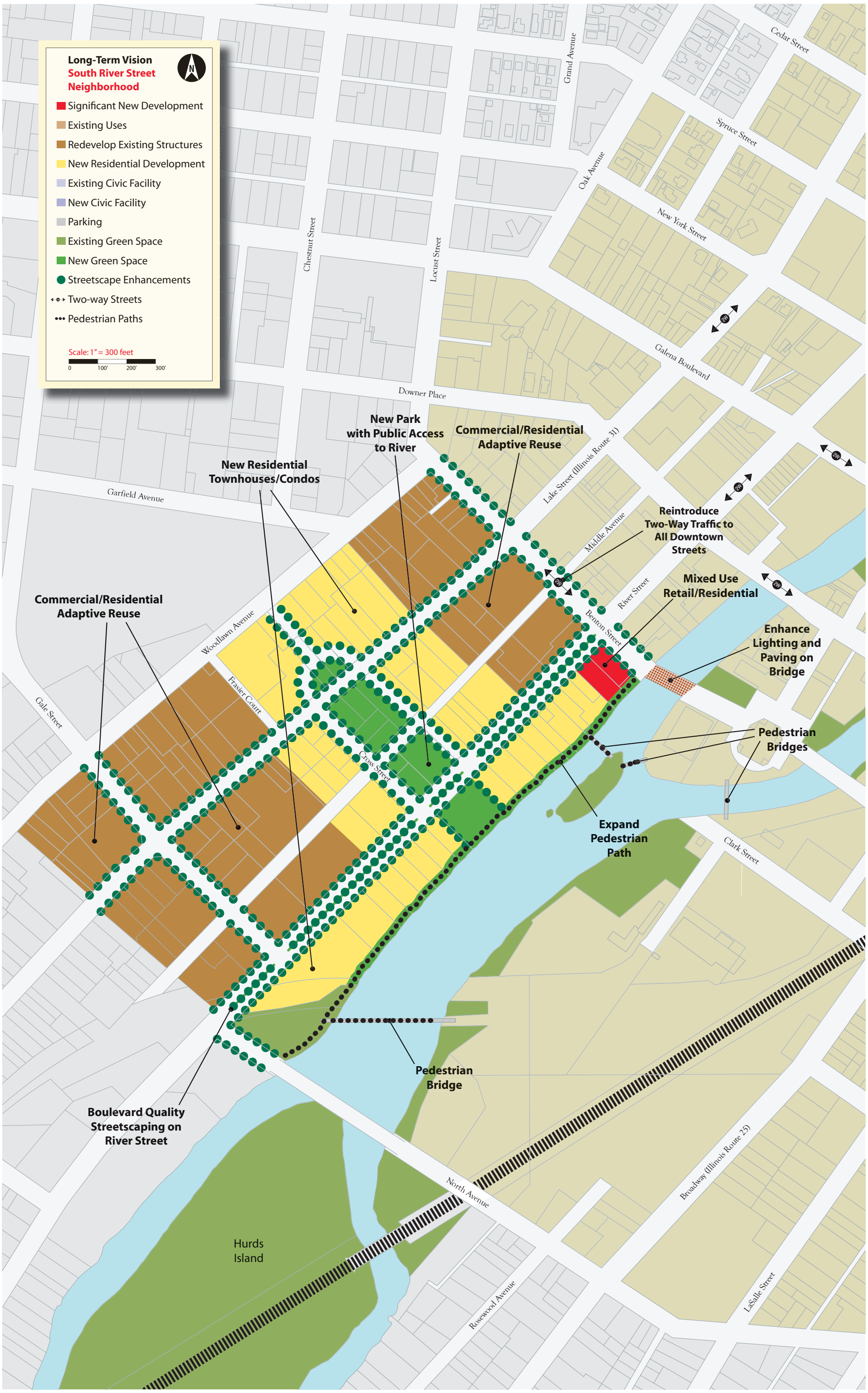
Waubonsee Neighborhood

Existing Conditions

River Street today, with two lanes of one-way traffic and poor quality sidewalks, is not a pedestrian-friendly environment.

(Top)
Waubonsee Community College's riverside plaza is a favorite gathering place year round.

(Middle and Bottom)
A trendy, college-town atmosphere characterizes the streets around Waubonsee Community College.


Long-Term Vision
South River Street Neighborhood
N
Significant New Development
Existing Uses
Redevelop Existing Structures
New Residential Development
Existing Civic Facility
New Civic Facility
Parking
Existing Green Space
New Green Space
Streetscape Enhancements
Two-way Streets
Pedestrian Paths
Scale: 1" = 300 feet
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Grand Avenue
Cedar Street
Spruce Street
Oak Avenue
New York Street
Chestnut Street
Locust Street
Galena Boulevard
Downer Place
Garfield Avenue
Lake Street (Illinois Route 31)
Middle Avenue
River Street
Benton Street
Woodlawn Avenue
Frasier Court
Gale Street
Cross Street
Clark Street
North Avenue
Broadway (Illinois Route 25)
Rosewood Avenue
LaSalle Street
New Park with Public Access to River
Commercial/Residential Adaptive Reuse
New Residential Townhouses/Condos
Reintroduce Two-Way Traffic to All Downtown Streets
Mixed Use Retail/Residential
Enhance Lighting and Paving on Bridge
Commercial/Residential Adaptive Reuse
Pedestrian Bridges
Expand Pedestrian Path
Pedestrian Bridge
Boulevard Quality Streetscaping on River Street
Hurds Island

South River Street Neighborhood

While new construction provides residents with state-of-the-art living amenities, rehabbed industrial era buildings help South River retain some the gritty urban edge that differentiates the neighborhood from others in our Downtown.

The catalyst for South River redevelopment is hundreds of new homes in the heart of the neighborhood built around a new "central park" that extends laterally from the Fox River. A number of the units overlook the Fox River and have direct access to the riverside pedestrian path and bridges that link South River to Stolp Island and other Downtown neighborhoods.

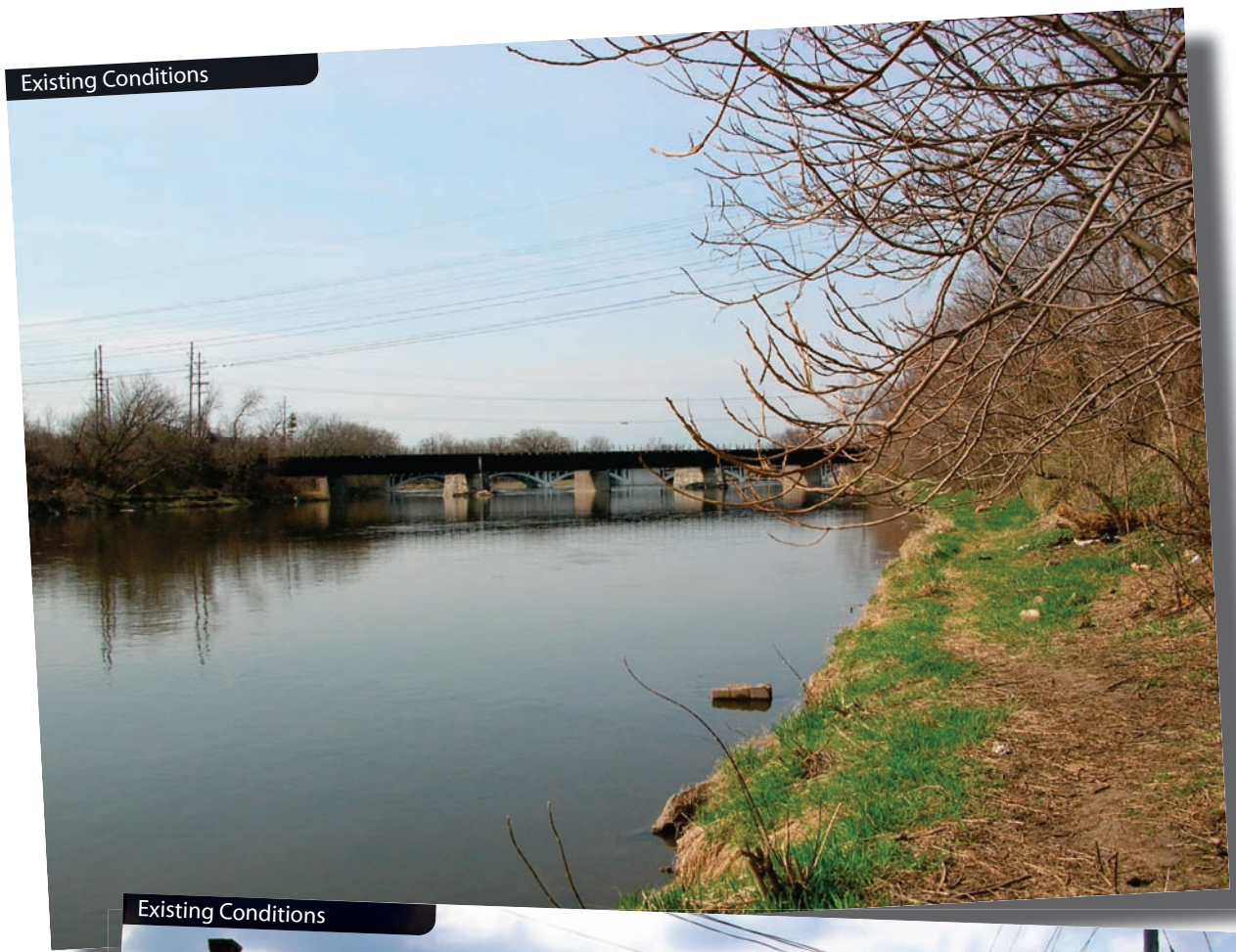
The central park development includes a variety of townhouses and condos targeting singles and young couples who enjoy an urban lifestyle. South River also attracts empty nesters who like the convenience of having shopping, dining, and entertainment options just a short walk away. The riverfront and the central park are especially active places during the daytime, attracting partners, child care workers, and workers who telecommute or have home offices.

In the blocks surrounding the central park residential development, industrial era buildings converted to residential lofts or rehabbed for commercial businesses help South River retain some of its gritty industrial era edge. The adaptive reuse of this historic fabric is what makes South River a special place and differentiates the neighborhood from others in our Downtown–and from other regional cities as well.

South River Street Neighborhood

(Looking southwest from southern tip of Stolp Island) South River Street Neighborhood residents will be a short walk away from the Stolp Island amenities via an expanded riverfront pedestrian path.

South River Street Neighborhood



The photos of the existing conditions in South River reveal its potential–direct access to the Fox River and industrial era structures that differentiate the neighborhood from others in our Downtown.

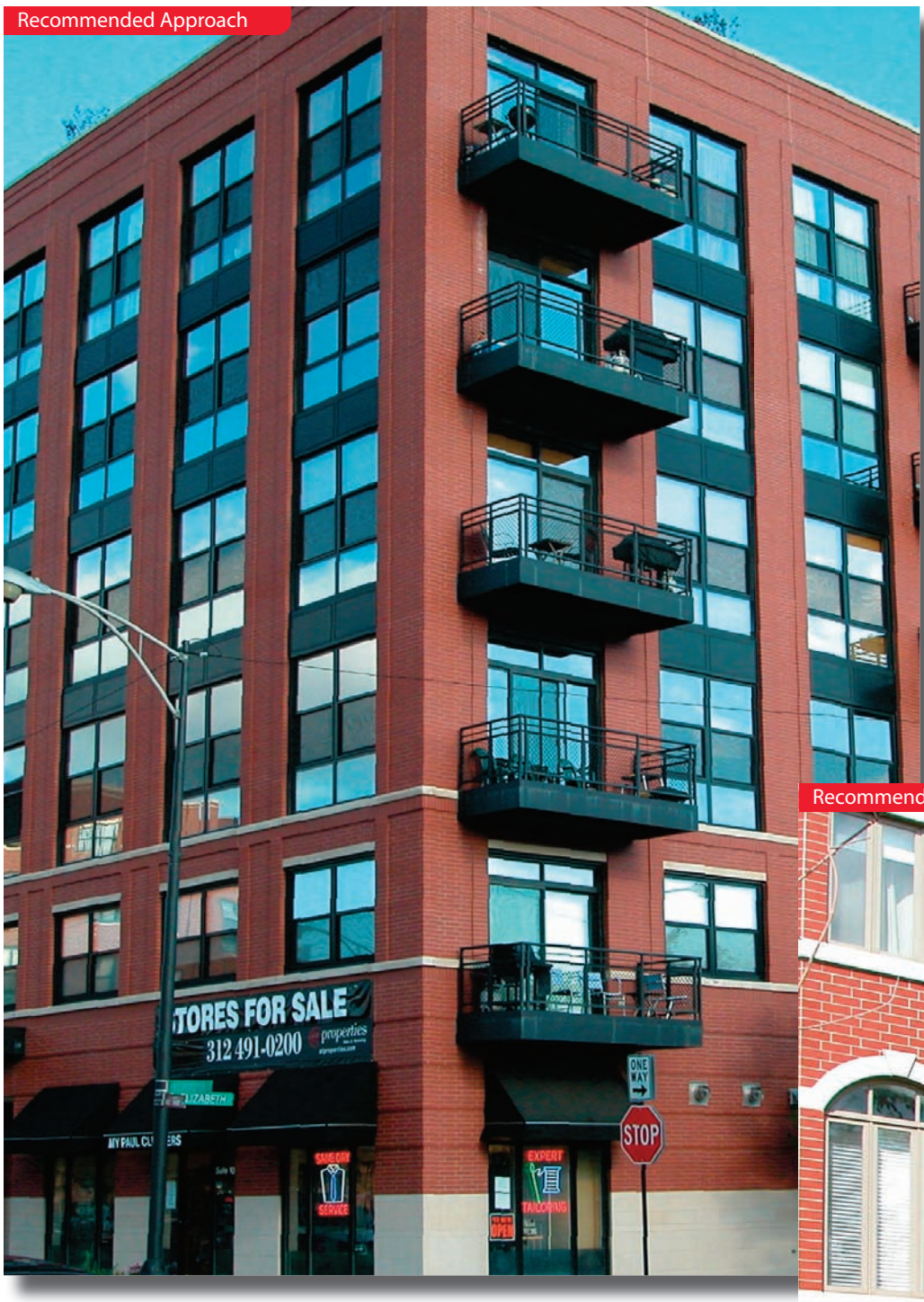
Recommended Approach

(Above) Residents of South River access Stolp Island and other Downtown neighborhoods via the new Fox River pedestrian path and bridges. (Below) The housing options in the 16-acre residential development surrounding our new South River "central park" appeal to both young people just starting out and empty nesters who enjoy the convenience of urban living.

Recommended Approach

South River Street Neighborhood

Recommended Approach



Recommended Approach

South River includes newly constructed townhomes /condos, rehabbed industrial era structures, and new loft-style construction that mixes seamlessly with the gritty urban character that differentiates the neighborhoods from others in our Downtown.

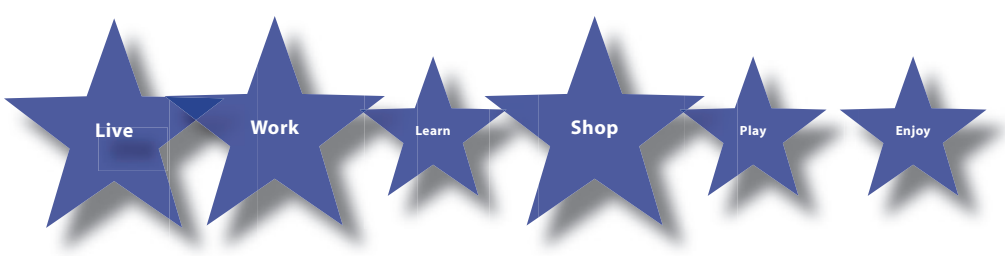
Recommended Approach

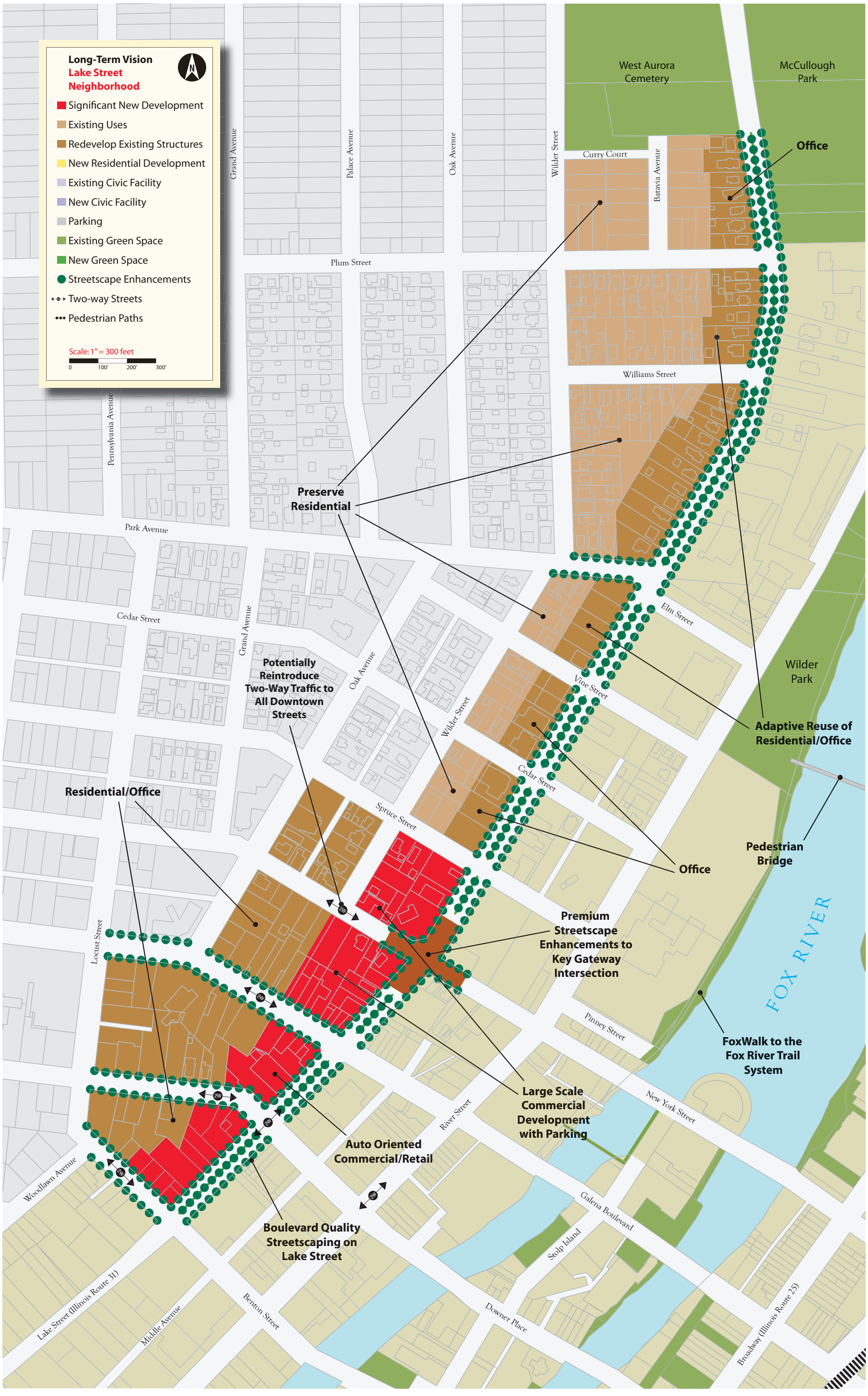
Recommended Approach

Lake Street Neighborhood

The Lake Street/New York Street intersection is a highly visible, highly sought location for businesses desiring new retail and office space in our Downtown.

This intersection–our Downtown's most dynamic commercial hub–features large-scale, state-of-the-art mixed use office buildings that include ground level destination retail and structured parking. During the day, the blocks around the intersection bustle with rush-hour commuters and workers stepping out for lunch. After hours, many of these same office workers walk over to the Waubonsee or Stolp Island Neighborhoods for drinks and dinner before heading home to their townhome in South Broadway or condo in Wilder Park. Or, they enjoy the boulevard-like ambiance of Lake Street while shopping for the dinner they will prepare later that evening in their South River loft. The shops along Lake also attract neighbors from the residential neighborhoods adjacent to Lake, residents from around the city, and shoppers from other neighboring communities.




Long-Term Vision
Lake Street
Neighborhood
Significant New Development
Existing Uses
Redevelop Existing Structures
New Residential Development
Existing Civic Facility
New Civic Facility
Parking
Existing Green Space
New Green Space
Streetscape Enhancements
Two-way Streets
Pedestrian Paths
Scale: 1" = 300 feet
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100'
200'
300'
West Aurora Cemetery
McCullough Park
Office
Curry Court
Batavia Avenue
Wilder Street
Oak Avenue
Palace Avenue
Grand Avenue
Plum Street
Williams Street
Pennsylvania Avenue
Preserve Residential
Park Avenue
Cedar Street
Elm Street
Vine Street
Wilder Park
Potentially Reintroduce Two-Way Traffic to All Downtown Streets
Adaptive Reuse of Residential/Office
Residential/Office
Spruce Street
Pedestrian Bridge
Office
Premium Streetscape Enhancements to Key Gateway Intersection
Locust Street
FOX RIVER
Pinney Street
FoxWalk to the Fox River Trail System
Large Scale Commercial Development with Parking
New York Street
River Street
Auto Oriented Commercial/Retail
Woodlawn Avenue
Galena Boulevard
Boulevard Quality Streetscaping on Lake Street
Stolp Island
Lake Street (Illinois Route 31)
Middle Avenue
Benton Street
Downer Place
Broadway (Illinois Route 25)

Lake Street Neighborhood

(This page) Auto-oriented retail along the Lake Street "boulevard" is also very pedestrian friendly. (Opposite) The Lake Street/New York Street intersection is our Downtown's most dynamic business hub and features large scale, mixed use development with street level retail and structured parking.

W NORTH AV
1600 N
NORTH AVENUE COLLEGE
519 7725
619-TNU

Long-Term Vision
Wilder Park Neighborhood
Significant New Development
Existing Uses
Redevelop Existing Structures
New Residential Development
Existing Civic Facility
New Civic Facility
Parking
Existing Green Space
New Green Space
Streetscape Enhancements
Two-way Streets
Pedestrian Paths
Scale: 1" = 300 feet
0 100' 200' 300'
West Aurora Cemetery
McCullough Park
Veterans Island
Curry Court
Batavia Avenue
Plum Street
Williams Street
Fox River Trail
Boulevard Quality Streetscaping on Lake Street and River Street
FOX RIVER
Residential Redevelopment
West Park Avenue
Residential Development
Park
Elm Street
Vine Street
Wilder Park
Large Scale Commercial Development with Parking
Cedar Street
Spruce Street
Blues Island
Pedestrian Bridge
Premium Streetscape Enhancements to Key Gateway Intersection
Hotel / Conference Center
City of Aurora Transportation Center
Reintroduce Two-Way Traffic to All Downtown Streets
Lake Street (Illinois Route 31)
Casino
New York Street
Enhance Lighting and Paving on Bridge
Middle Avenue
River Street
Galena Boulevard
Stolp Island
Downer Place
Benton Street
Broadway (Illinois Route 25)
Grand Avenue
Oak Avenue
Wilder Street
Palace Street

Wilder Park Neighborhood

Residential and commercial development in Wilder Park is urbane and upscale with great views of the Fox River. Its riverside location and close proximity to the amenities in surrounding Downtown neighborhoods make it one of Aurora's most highly sought business and residential addresses.

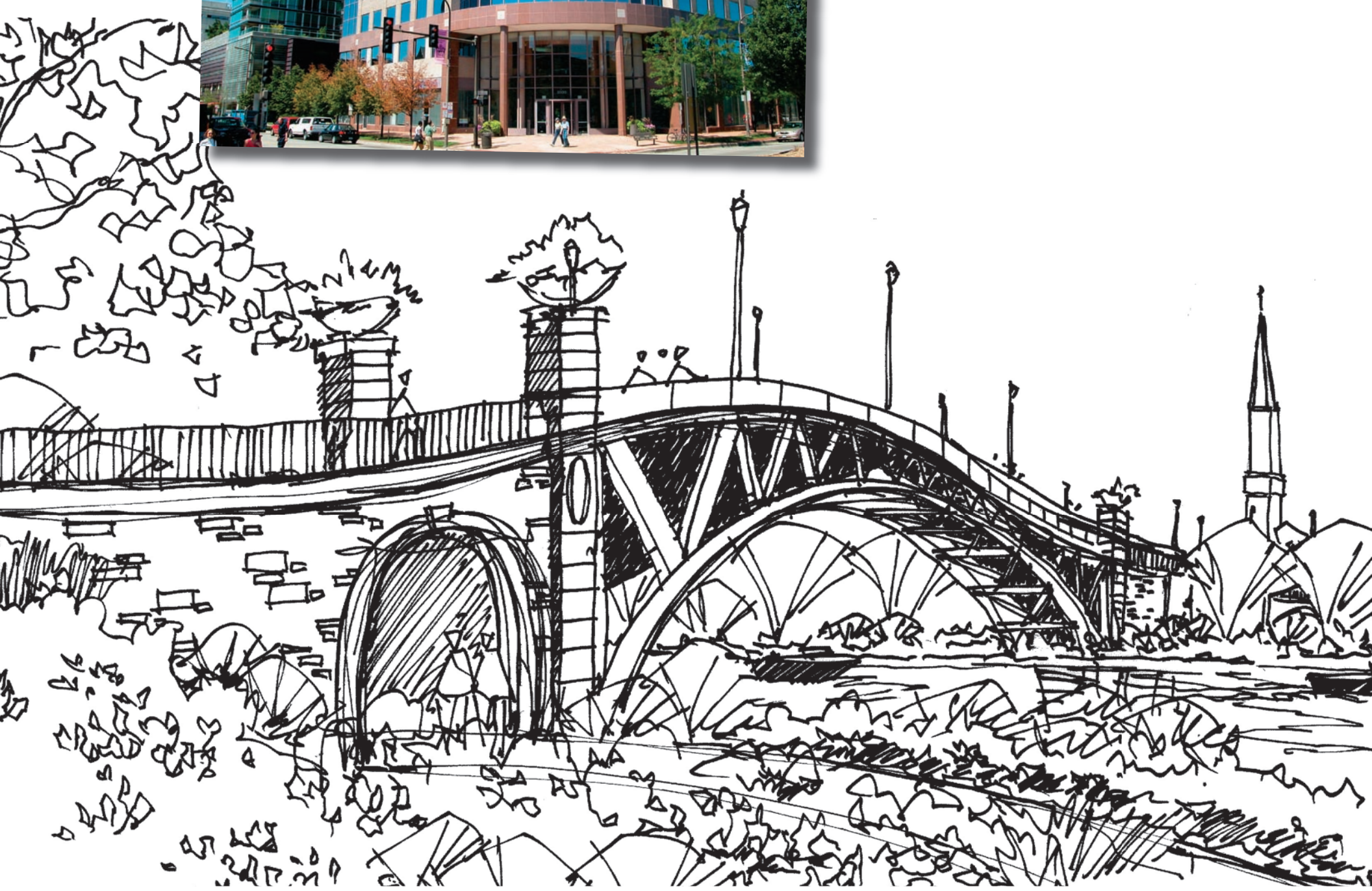
Many Wilder Park residents enjoy the luxury of being a five-minute walk from their office just a block or two away. Loop office workers appreciate the direct link they have to the Aurora Transportation Center via the Blues Island pedestrian bridge. Lake Street provides automobile commuters with easy access to I-88, saving time that can be better spent taking a run on the Fox River Trail just steps from their condo. Those who want to live in Wilder Park can choose to live amidst the hustle and bustle of the mixed use office/retail district in the south part of the neighborhood or in the quieter redeveloped residential area between Lake Street and the river further north.

After hours and on weekends, residents and visitors staying at the riverfront hotel/conference center enjoy the many dining entertainment attractions in the surrounding Downtown neighborhoods. Whether taking in an outdoor concert in Roundhouse's festival park, having Thai food in a Broadway Mercado restaurant after a LaSalle Street gallery opening, or sharing a picnic dinner with family and friends by the river in McCullough Park, Wilder Park residents enjoy a wide choice of entertainment and cultural amenities within a very short walking distance of their home.

Residents and visitors also enjoy the benefits of destination shopping along Lake Street just a short walk from their homes or hotel rooms. The bustling New York Street/Lake Street intersection is a favorite place to begin an afternoon shopping trip that includes stores representing our country's most highly regarded brands.

Wilder Park Neighborhood

Wilder Park is one of Aurora's most prestigious office and residential addresses. The southern portion of the neighborhood around the New York Street/Lake Street intersection is distinctively urban with high quality, large scale construction. Wilder Park residents enjoy direct access to the Aurora Transportation Center via the Blues Island pedestrian bridge across the Fox River.



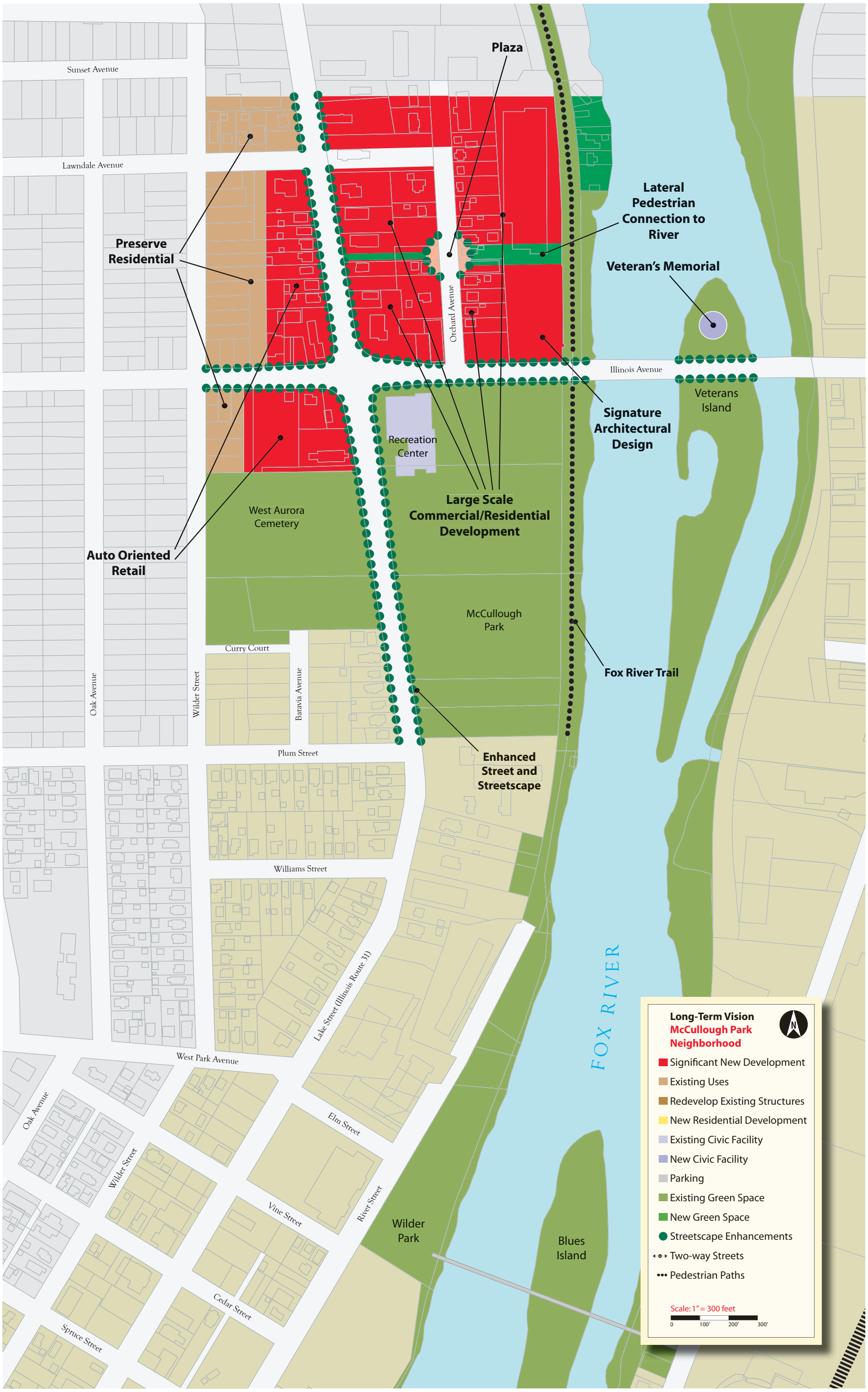
CINE AV
1200 W

McCullough Park Neighborhood

McCullough Park features high quality mixed use development that is easy to access for motorists but also a pleasurable place to be for shoppers and office workers.

Large scale office buildings with distinctive architectural styling overlook the Fox River and serve as highly visible landmarks for this gateway neighborhood. Closer to Lake Street, commuters enjoy easy access to the neighborhood's quality destination retailers in mixed use development that includes offices above stores. Shoppers and office workers appreciate the neighborhood's pedestrian-friendly features such as the beautifully landscaped store-lined plaza connecting Lake Street to the riverfront.

Automobiles are not the only means of access, however. Cyclists and pedestrians using the Fox River Trail can easily get to McCullough Park shops and work sites. Quality streets and streetscaping ensure that pedestrians from nearby residential neighborhoods have safe and comfortable access to shops, offices, and riverfront amenities.


Plaza
Sunset Avenue
Lawndale Avenue
Lateral Pedestrian Connection to River
Preserve Residential
Veteran's Memorial
Orchard Avenue
Illinois Avenue
Veterans Island
Signature Architectural Design
Recreation Center
Large Scale Commercial/Residential Development
West Aurora Cemetery
Auto Oriented Retail
McCullough Park
Curry Court
Fox River Trail
Oak Avenue
Wilder Street
Batavia Avenue
Plum Street
Enhanced Street and Streetscape
Williams Street
Lake Street (Illinois Route 31)
FOX RIVER
West Park Avenue
Oak Avenue
Elm Street
Wilder Street
River Street
Vine Street
Wilder Park
Blues Island
Cedar Street
Spruce Street
Long-Term Vision
McCullough Park Neighborhood
Significant New Development
Existing Uses
Redevelop Existing Structures
New Residential Development
Existing Civic Facility
New Civic Facility
Parking
Existing Green Space
New Green Space
Streetscape Enhancements
Two-way Streets
Pedestrian Paths
Scale: 1" = 300 feet
0
100'
200'
300'
N

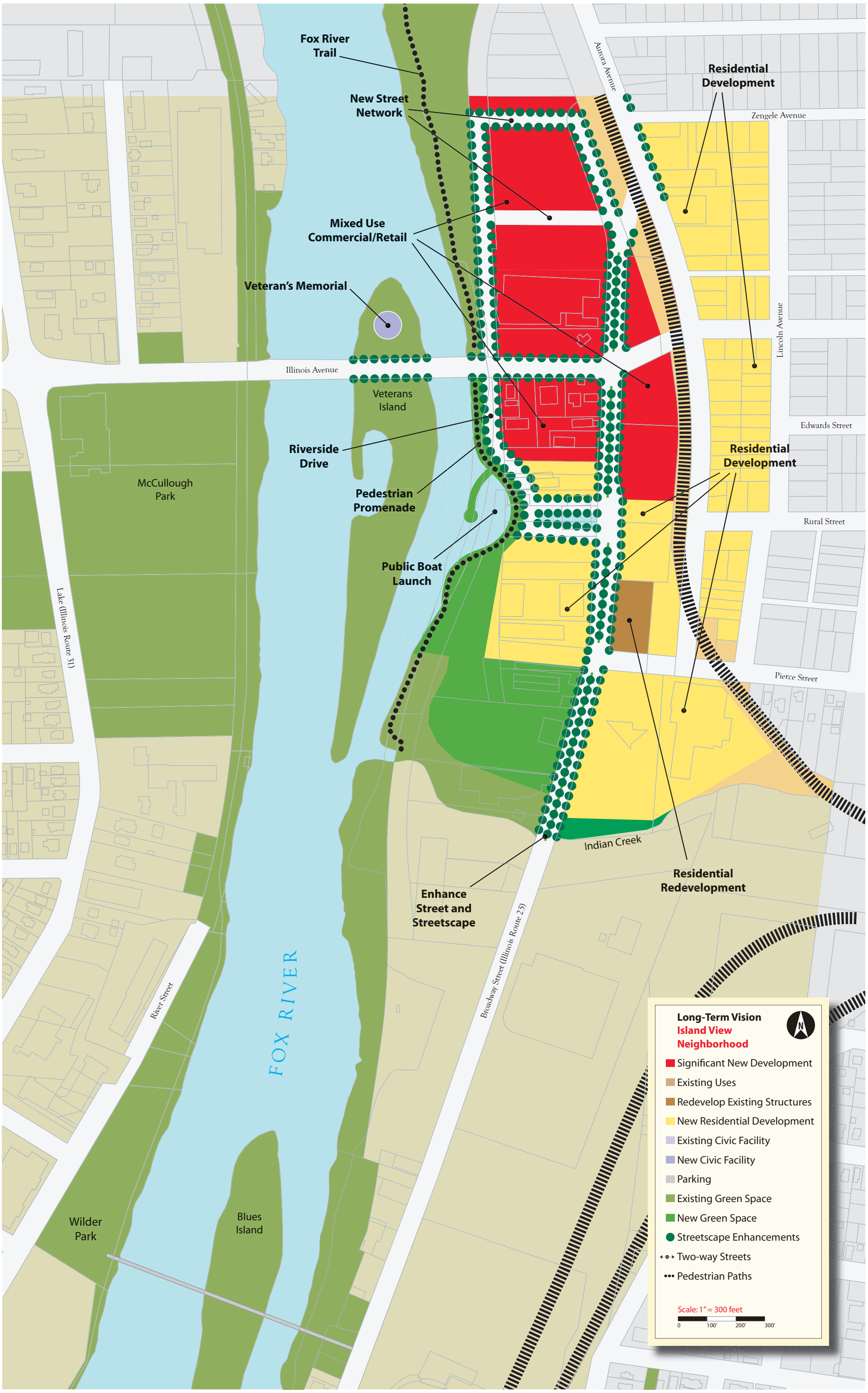
McCullough Park Neighborhood

(Above and opposite page) Redevelopment at the Lake Street/Illinois Avenue intersection includes destination retailers whose exposure and space needs cannot be met in the core Downtown neighborhoods or who require more convenient automobile access.

Recommended Approach

Recommended Approach

Recommended Approach


Fox River Trail
New Street Network
Mixed Use Commercial/Retail
Veteran's Memorial
Residential Development
Aurora Avenue
Zengele Avenue
Lincoln Avenue
Illinois Avenue
Veterans Island
Edwards Street
Riverside Drive
Residential Development
McCullough Park
Pedestrian Promenade
Rural Street
Public Boat Launch
Lake (Illinois Route 31)
Pierce Street
Indian Creek
Residential Redevelopment
Enhance Street and Streetscape
Broadway Street (Illinois Route 25)
FOX RIVER
River Street
Wilder Park
Blues Island
Long-Term Vision
Island View Neighborhood
N
Significant New Development
Existing Uses
Redevelop Existing Structures
New Residential Development
Existing Civic Facility
New Civic Facility
Parking
Existing Green Space
New Green Space
Streetscape Enhancements
Two-way Streets
Pedestrian Paths
Scale: 1" = 300 feet
0
100'
200'
300'

Island View Neighborhood

Island View is a mixed use neighborhood that includes a strong residential component. Residents and shoppers enjoy a resort-like atmosphere centering on a new public boat launch. Taking in sunsets over the Fox River from the elegant riverside drive and pedestrian promenade has become one of Aurora's most endearing daily rituals.

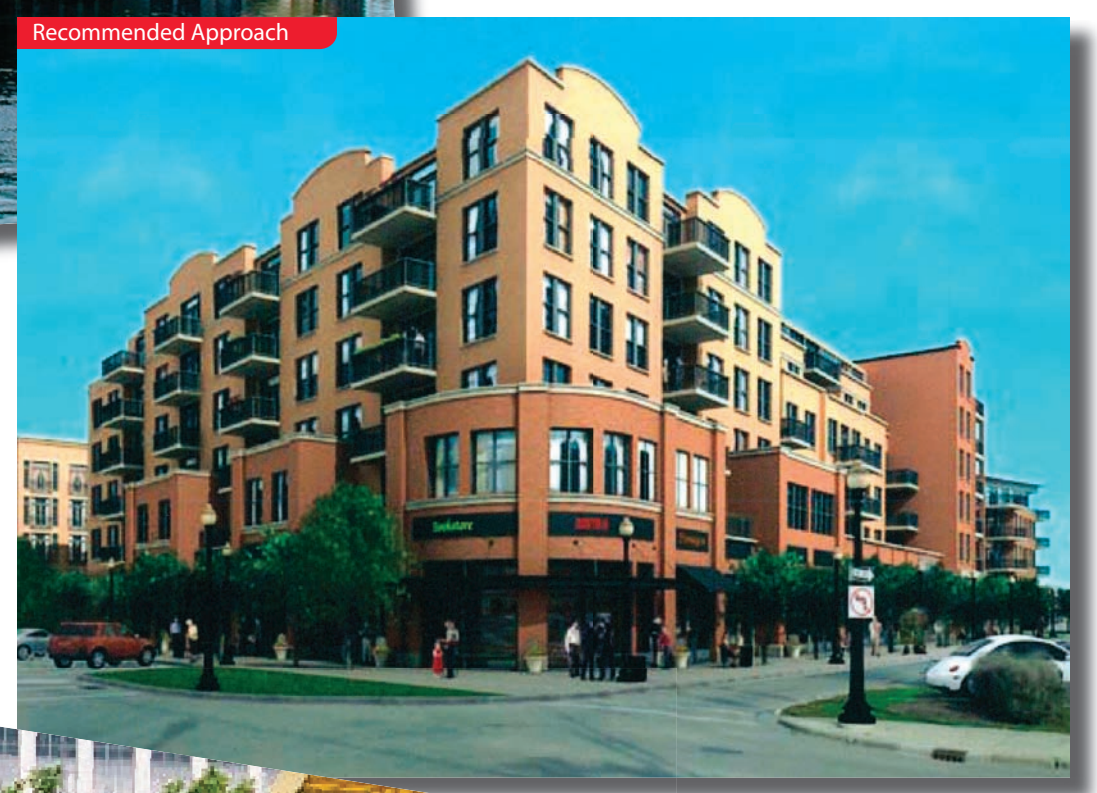
Island View offers much more than a lifestyle center-type shopping ambiance. High quality amenities like the public boat launch, a stunning riverside drive, and an elegant pedestrian promenade complement the shopping options and serve regional shoppers as well as neighborhood residents. The casual, laid-back waterfront atmosphere invites all to slow down and linger as they enjoy a cocktail at a waterfront pub, dine at a sidewalk café, or browse at book stalls along the promenade.

Residents who commute by car enjoy easy access to the I-88 interchange, while those taking Metra are only a short walk from our Transportation Center. Or, perhaps they simply walk across the Illinois Avenue bridge to their office jobs in McCullough Park. Even those working in Wilder Park have only to take a pleasant 15-20 minute walk down the riverside trail and over the Blues Island pedestrian bridge to reach their offices. This same trail provides easy access for those who want to enjoy programs or events at the Riverview Park in the Roundhouse Neighborhood.

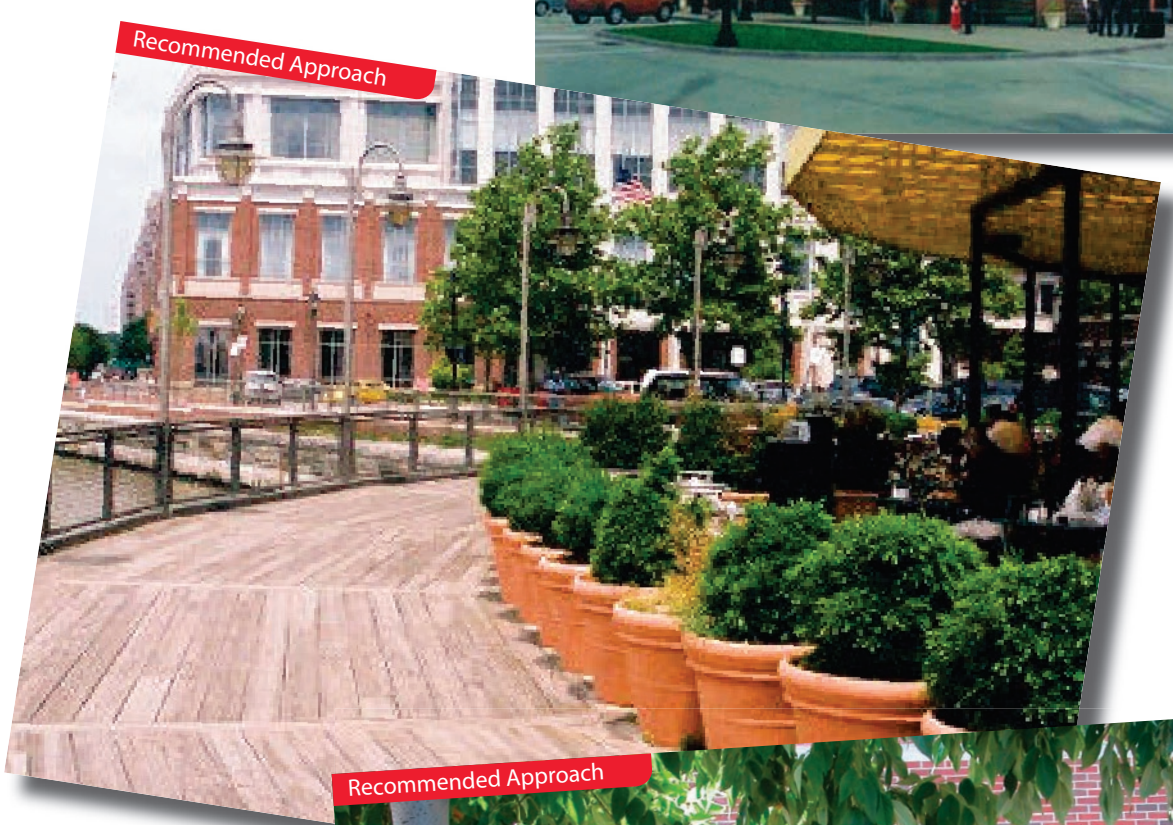
Island View Neighborhood

(Looking east across the Fox River) Island View's unique identity is derived from the public boat launch that is a focal point and center of activity for residents, shoppers, and recreational enthusiasts.

Island View Neighborhood



(This page and opposite) Island View residents and shoppers enjoy a casual, laid back waterfront atmosphere. Watching the sun set over the Fox River from the riverside drive and pedestrian promenade has become one Aurora's most endearing new rituals.



"The image of a city is its downtown..."

BUD MEYER

Our Ten-Year Plan

Implementation priorities for the next ten years range from those that relate very broadly to our Study Area to those that are neighborhood specific.

Several important implementation priorities apply to all Study Area neighborhoods. A number of these projects involve improving automobile and pedestrian connections, the most important of which are to reintroduce two-way traffic on all Downtown streets and complete/expand the FoxWalk so that it links seamlessly across all riverfront neighborhoods and to the Fox River Trail.

Other critical priorities common to most neighborhoods include systematically analyzing and identifying contaminated sites and initiating appropriate environmental remediation, undertaking technology infrastructure upgrades to meet or lead current market expectations, strengthening public security programs, and aggressively marketing and promoting Downtown events and venues. Water and sewer systems also require upgrades to accommodate the increases in service demands created by new residential and commercial redevelopment. Recruiting developers and new businesses for sites as they become available is another overall priority that will require systematic programming. Finally, streetscape enhancements (including upgraded wayfinding and signage programs) to the key high-traffic streets identified in our Master Plan should begin as soon as budgets are allocated and more detailed site plans are approved.

Our analysis shows that developing the priority sites indicated at left could add over 800 new residential units and between 100,000-200,000 square feet of new retail along with appropriate levels of new parking. We believe these revitalization efforts will bring nearly $250,000,000 in private sector investment to our Downtown.

Shown on the map at left are the top priorities for the Ten-Year Plan. More detail is provided on the following two pages.

Prioritized Implementation Objectives
Neighborhood-by-Neighborhood

Projects listed have been prioritized in order of neighborhood importance and by importance within each neighborhood.

All Downtown Neighborhoods (Pages 4-17)
> Adopt the Master Plan
> Initiate appropriate code review and updates to entitle and facilitate Master Plan
> Maintain/broaden STF team as necessary to spearhead implementation
> Actively promote Master Plan to general public, neighborhoods, public officials
> Refine/adapt a financial plan that advances Master Plan and synchronizes with other city-wide capital projects
> Begin organizing and collectively promoting existing businesses on a neighborhood basis
> Aggressively recruit developers and targeted businesses to rehab vintage buildings
> Begin to assemble/clean up strategic land parcels; mitigate flood plain where appropriate
> Confirm, prioritize, design, engineer, and permit major capital project
> Construct selected capital projects (in close coordination with other City capital projects) that leverage private sector Downtown investment, including:
  – reintroducing two-way traffic to all Downtown streets
  – upgrading sewer and water services
> Update Master Plan and Business Plan; continue detailing planning on neighborhood basis

Stolp Island Neighborhood (Pages 18-21)
> Complete Paramount Theater expansion now in progress
> Finalize plans for Library and SciTech expansion and/or relocation sites
> Reserve land parcels and finalize plans for future use of existing library site
> Recruit office, entertainment, and residential (re)developers; neighborhood's entire riverfront is an important priority.
> Plan, engineer, and begin bridge and streetscape improvements that strengthen Island's unique style and character
> Plan, engineer, and complete FoxWalk upgrades, new pedestrian bridges to east/west banks, and other landscaping upgrades that intensify Island's "green" character

Mercado Neighborhood (Pages 22-29)
> Finalize plans for Library and SciTech expansion and/or relocation sites (see Stolp Island list)
> Plan, design, and construct New York Street/Broadway and South Broadway gateways
> Upgrade Broadway streetscape and wayfinding graphics
> Create neighborhood branding program
> Aggressively recruit developers and targeted businesses to rehab vintage buildings
> Coordinate owner and merchant activities with public safety officials to reinforce neighborhood safety and security
> Plan, design, and construct new 600+ space parking deck for Library, SciTech and Broadway Mercado shopping
> Complete related FoxWalk segments as riverfront properties develop

South Broadway Neighborhood (Pages 30-39)
> Recruit developer(s) for Baje Steere and railroad properties
> Acquire land and construct riverside trail, lateral park, and pedestrian access on abandoned railroad bridge
> Design, engineer, and construct Broadway streetscape enhancements
> Begin planning for recommissioning the abandoned commuter station on South Broadway

Roundhouse Neighborhood (Pages 40-49)
> Assemble and clean up land for development and Riverview Park
> Design, engineer, and construct Riverview Park, pedestrian paths along river, Blues Island landmark, and pedestrian bridge
> Recruit developer(s) for riverfront properties
> Design, engineer, and construct Broadway streetscape enhancements
> Design, engineer, and construct commuter platform enhancements

Waubonsee Neighborhood (Pages 50-55)
> Carefully coordinate design and construction of new Waubonsee Community College
> Aggressively recruit developers and targeted businesses to rehab vintage buildings
> Assemble and clean up land around New York Street/Lake Street intersection for future commercial development
> Acquire land, design, and construct Waubonsee Community College and related FoxWalk segment
> Design and construct River Street and related lateral streetscapes with upgraded wayfinding graphics

South River Street Neighborhood (Pages 56-63)
> Assemble and clean up land for development and lateral river connector
> Recruit developer(s) for assembled properties
> Acquire land, design and construct riverside trail and lateral park
> Design, engineer, and construct South River Street streetscape

Lake Street Neighborhood (Pages 64-67)
> Assemble and clean up land for future commercial development
> Define and preserve residential edge, prohibit commercial encroachment west into existing residential neighborhood

Wilder Park Neighborhood (Pages 68-71)
> Plan for redevelopment of police station or relocation outside of Downtown
> Assemble and clean up land for future commercial development
> Design and construct enhancements to Fox River Trail

McCullough Park Neighborhood (Pages 72-75)
> Assemble and clean up land for future commercial development
> Design and construct enhancements for existing McCullough Park and riverside trail

Island View Neighborhood (Pages 76-81)
> Assemble and clean up land for future commercial development
> Plan and acquire land for additional open space, Fox River Trail, and small marina

Prioritized Implementation Objectives
Year-by-Year (First Five Years)

2005

All Downtown Neighborhoods
> Adopt the Master Plan
> Initiate appropriate code review and updates to entitle and facilitate Master Plan
> Maintain/broaden STF team as necessary to spearhead implementation
> Actively promote Master Plan to general public, neighborhoods, public officials
> Refine/adapt a financial plan that advances Master Plan and synchronizes with other city-wide capital projects
> Begin organizing and collectively promoting existing businesses on a neighborhood basis
> Aggressively recruit developers and targeted businesses to rehab vintage buildings
> Confirm, prioritize, design, engineer, and permit major capital projects
> Update Master Plan and Business Plan, continue detailing planning on neighborhood basis

Stolp Island Neighborhood
> Complete Paramount Theatre expansion now in progress
> Finalize plans for Library and SciTech expansion and/or relocation sites
> Reserve land parcels and finalize plans for future use of existing library site
> Recruit office, entertainment, and residential (re)developers

Mercado Neighborhood
> Finalize plans for Library and SciTech expansion and/or relocation sites (see Stolp Island list)

Waubonsee Neighborhood
> Carefully coordinate design and construction of new Waubonsee Community College (2005–2008)

South Broadway Neighborhood
> Begin planning for recommissioning the abandoned commuter station on South Broadway

Wilder Park Neighborhood
> Plan for redevelopment of police station or relocation
> Assemble and clean up land for future commercial development

McCullough Park Neighborhood
> Assemble and clean up land for future commercial development

Island View Neighborhood
> Assemble and clean up land for future commercial development

Lake Street Neighborhood
> Assemble and clean up land for future commercial development

2006

All Downtown Neighborhoods
> Begin to assemble/clean up strategic land parcels; mitigate flood plain where appropriate (2006–2010)
> Construct selected capital projects (in close coordination with other City capital projects) that leverage private sector Downtown investment, including:
– reintroducing two-way traffic to all Downtown streets (2006–2008)

Stolp Island Neighborhood
> Plan, engineer, and begin bridge and streetscape improvements that strengthen Island's unique style and character (2006–2008)

Mercado Neighborhood
> Plan, design, and construct New York Street/Broadway and South Broadway gateways (2006–2008)
> Upgrade Broadway streetscape and wayfinding graphics (2006–2008)
> Create neighborhood branding program (2006–2015)
> Aggressively recruit developers and targeted businesses to rehab vintage buildings
> Coordinate owner and merchant activities with public safety officials to reinforce neighborhood safety and security (2006–ongoing)

Waubonsee Neighborhood
> Aggressively recruit developers and targeted businesses to rehab vintage buildings (2006–2008)

South Broadway Neighborhood
> Recruit developer(s) for Baje Steere site and railroad properties (2006–2010)

South River Street Neighborhood
> Assemble and clean up land for development and lateral river connector (2006–2010)
> Recruit developer(s) for assembled properties (2006–2010)

Roundhouse Neighborhood
> Assemble and clean up land for development and Riverview Park (2006–2008)
> Design, engineer, and construct Riverview Park, pedestrian paths along river, Blues Island landmark, and pedestrian bridge (2006–2008)
> Recruit developer(s) for riverfront properties (2006–2010)
> Design, engineer, and construct Broadway streetscape enhancements (2006–2010)
> Design, engineer, and construct commuter platform enhancements (2006–2010)

2007

All Downtown Neighborhoods
> Construct selected capital projects (in close coordination with other City capital projects) that leverages private sector Downtown investment, including:
– upgrading sewer and water services (2007–2015)

Stolp Island Neighborhood
> Plan, engineer, and complete FoxWalk upgrades, new pedestrian bridges to east/west banks, and other landscaping upgrades that intensify Island's "green" character (2007–2010)

Mercado Neighborhood
> Plan, design, and construct new 600+ space parking deck for Library, SciTech and Broadway Mercado shopping (2007–2010)
> Complete related FoxWalk segments as riverfront properties develop

Waubonsee Neighborhood
> Assemble and clean up land around New York Street/Lake Street intersection for future commercial development

Lake Street Neighborhood
> Define and preserve residential edge, prohibit commercial encroachment west into existing residential neighborhood

2008

Roundhouse Neighborhood
> Riverview Park opens May 1

Waubonsee Neighborhood
> Acquire land, design, and construct Waubonsee Community College and related FoxWalk segment (2008–2010)
> Design and construct River Street and related lateral streetscapes with upgraded wayfinding graphics (2008–2010)

South Broadway Neighborhood
> Design, engineer, and construct Broadway streetscape enhancements (2008–2010)

Wilder Park Neighborhood
> Hotel / Conference Center opens

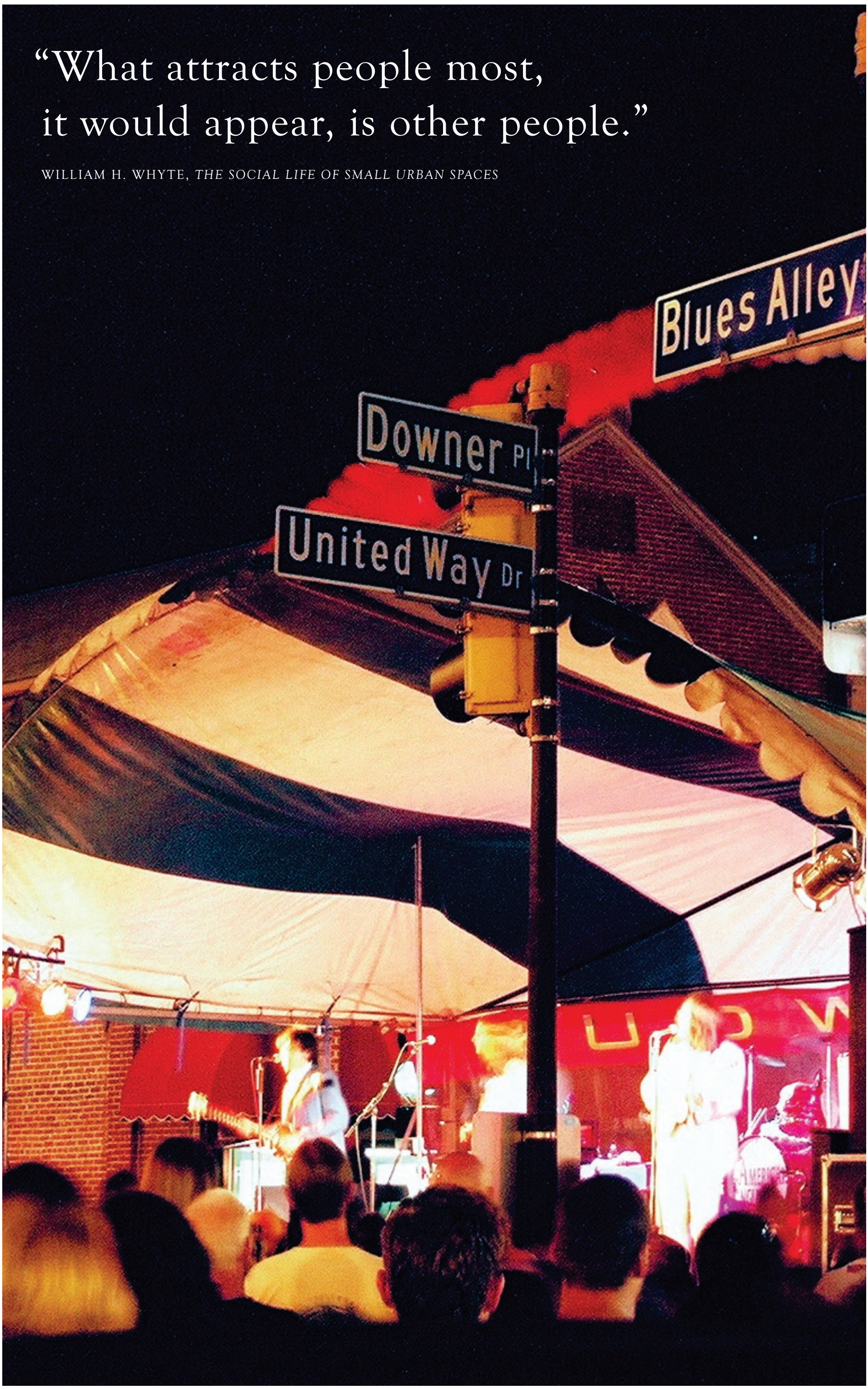
2010

South Broadway Neighborhood
> Acquire land and construct riverside trail, lateral park, and pedestrian access on abandoned railroad bridge (2010–2015)

South River Street Neighborhood
> Acquire land, design and construct Fox River Trail and lateral park (2010–2015)
> Design, engineer, and begin to construct South River Street streetscape

"What attracts people most,
it would appear, is other people."

WILLIAM H. WHYTE, *THE SOCIAL LIFE OF SMALL URBAN SPACES*



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Midwest Management Inc.
Comfort Suites, Hampton Inn & Suites**Land**

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School District #129

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BARB WILCOX
Aurora University

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Pigeon Hill Paddlers

Seize the Future Investor Honor Roll

Platinum Division

Beacon-News
Cabot Microelectronics Corporation
Caterpillar, Inc.
Chelsea Property Group, Inc.
City of Aurora
Concord Homes
Crown Community Development
Fifth Third Bank
First Bank
Harris N.A.
Hollywood Casino-Aurora
Meijer, Inc.
Old Second National Bank
Westfield Shoppingtown Fox Valley

Gold Division

Comcast
Duke Weeks/Meridian Business Campus
DuPage Properties Venture
Engineering Systems, Inc.
Excel Container
Fox Valley Forge
Kendall County Concrete
Lakewood Homes
National City Bank
Painter District Council No. 30
Provena Mercy Medical Center
Pulte Home Corporation
R.C. Wegman Construction Company
Rush-Copley Medical Center
SBC
Sikich Group, LLC
Weyerhaeuser Company

Silver Division

Alarm Detection Systems, Inc.
Arnold Lies Company
Aurora Air Products
Aurora Burlington Credit Union
Aurora Earthmover's Credit Union
Aurora Metals Division, LLC
Aurora Tri-State
Aurora University
Aztech Locknut Company
Biris Real Estate Services, Inc.
Cambridge Homes
Cano Container
CEMCON, Ltd.
ComEd
Compass Surveying Ltd.
Dolan & Murphy
Dommermuth, Brestal, Cobine & West
Dreyer Medical Clinic
Dykema,Gossett, Rooks, Pitts
Engineering Enterprises, Inc.
Farmers Insurance Group
Fluid Air
Freedom Imaging Systems, Inc.
Geneva Construction
Indian Prairie School District #204
JW Reproductions, Inc.
Kazanova Management dba McDonald's
Kelmscott Press, Inc.
Lane Allen Architects
Mercury Homes
Midwest Management (Comfort Suites)
Mooney & Thomas, PC
Olsson Roofing
OSI Industries
Prisco Fine Foods
Processed Plastic Company
Ridge Realty Group
River Street Press
Robert Morris College
Shetland Properties of Aurora, LLC
Shorr Packaging Corporation
Stern Brothers & Company
Team Temco
The Bigelow Group
The Jaffe Companies
The Landmark Group
Toyota Motor Sales, USA, Inc.
Twin Oaks Music & Vending
Unilock Chicago, Inc.
V3 Consultants
Video Impressions
Wal-mart Stores, Inc.
Walter E. Deuchler Assoc., Inc.
Weldstar Company
Wiseman Hughes Enterprises
Waubonsee Community College

Bronze Division

Alliance Health Plans
Alpha Graphics
Alschuler, Simantz & Hem, LLC
Anderson Associates
ASK Products, Inc.
Aspen Marketing Corporation
Associated Optical
Aurora Bearing
Bakers Identities
Balderas Real Estate
Banbury-Davis & Erschen
Baum Property Services, Ltd.
Black Office Interiors
Bohr Roofing
Buddy, Paul L. Plumbing & Heating
Budget Finance Corporation
Cable Plus, Inc.
Carson Pirie Scott
CB Richard Ellis, Inc.
Chicago Title Insurance Company
Cipher, Ltd.
Clipper Packaging Company
Courtin Law Offices
Creative Graphics Solutions
Demming's Hallmark
Design Promotions, Inc.
Dickson & Hasenbalg
Downer Place Lofts
Edward Fauth & Associates
Elyse Kennard & Associates
Erdmann Advertising, Inc.
Fox Valley Park District
Hallmark Services
ILLCO, Inc.
Interstate Partners
James Funeral Service
Kopy Kat Copier, Inc.
La Chiquita
Lakeside Management
Leonard Dreas & Associates, Inc.
Long Island Sound Banquets
Lowe & Steinmetz
Lucretia Design Group
MJ Furnishings
Meyers Business Interiors
Mickey, Wilson, Weiler & Renzi
Money Mailer of Kane & Kendall Counties
Nickels, Beilman & Co., PC
Oak Brook Bank
Paul A. Lewis, Attorney
Play USA
Prudential Doss Real Estate
Robert H. Anderson & Associates, Inc.
Ruddy & Varga
Sachen Realty Company
Safety Solutions, Inc.
Small Bus. Acct/Income Tax Service
State Farm Insurance
Superior Beverage Company
Swanson, Bert Plumbing & Heating
T & L Manufacturing
Targeted Marketing, LLC
The Foundry, LLC
The Growing Place
The Label Printers
Thelin, Calvin & Helen
Thomas J. Guzzardi, DDS, PC
Todd Surveying
Truax Associates
Truemper, Hollingsworth & Titiner
Tyler & Hughes
UniStaff, Inc.
Valley Honda
Van's Lock & Key Service, Inc.
Volkman Insurance Agency, Inc.
W.E. Mundy Landscaping & Garden
Welsh Packaging, Inc.
Westaff
Wheatland Athletic Association
XO Communications