

# CITY OF ROCK ISLAND DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PLAN

ADOPTED MAY 2015 • PREPARED BY HOUSEAL LAVIGNE ASSOCIATES

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

Downtown Rock Island is the historic, symbolic, and cultural heart of the community. It hosts some of the region's best architecture and most prominent employers, and offers an extremely walkable and unique environment with a riverfront access and a variety of entertainment options. However, over the past decades, Downtown has lost some of its luster. The Downtown Revitalization Plan turns the page on past challenges and establishes a new 21st century vision and agenda for Downtown Rock Island.

## **PURPOSE OF THE DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PLAN**

What should Downtown Rock Island look like in 15 years? The Downtown Revitalization Plan answers this question and acts as a blueprint to direct growth, investment, and development in the Downtown area over the next decade. Some of the core issues that the Plan tackles are:

★ **URBAN CHARACTER.** A defining characteristic of most downtowns is its urban form and character. Downtowns are often described as gritty, funky, weird, artsy, hip and cool – all terms that are rarely used to define a suburban commercial corridor. Downtown Rock Island is no different – as the City's original shopping and business district,

it is rich in history and character and provides an experience unique only to Downtown. The Plan recommends that Downtown Rock Island embraces this character, and does not try to pretend to be something it is not.

★ **DEFINITION & BOUNDARY.** Historically, the boundaries of Downtown have not been well defined, and there has been little consensus of where Downtown begins and ends. This has made strategic investment, branding, and establishing a "critical mass" difficult. The Downtown Revitalization Plan establishes a definitive boundary for the Downtown area as well as functional sub-areas.

★ **REPUTATION.** Some feel there is a type of stigma associated with the Downtown and that name is synonymous with an area with bars and an undesired element. The Downtown Revitalization Plan aims to re-establish Downtown as a vibrant mixed-use environment with a variety of professional, residential, and family-friendly uses.

★ **COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP.** Downtown Rock Island is a unique space for the community and acts as a gathering space and focal point, containing important civic and institutional functions. As such, everyone in the community should feel a sense of ownership and work to help create a better place to live, work, and play.

# REGIONAL SETTING



★ **INNOVATION.** As it relates to revitalizing its historic core, Rock Island was an innovator, leading the way in the Quad Cities with ideas and efforts to improve Downtown such as public plazas and street art. Now, some believe Rock Island has been surpassed by Moline and Davenport. This Plan demonstrates a re-commitment and the beginning of an effort to help the community realize its vision for Downtown, and an environment that fosters creativity and originality.

## HISTORIC SETTING

The City of Rock Island is located in Rock Island County, in northwestern Illinois, situated between the Mississippi and Rock Rivers. The City is located approximately 175 miles west of Chicago and 175 miles east of Des Moines. Along with the communities of Moline and East Moline, Illinois, and Davenport and Bettendorf, Iowa, the City of Rock Island is part of the Davenport - Rock Island - Moline Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) commonly referred to as the Quad Cities.

The City of Rock Island is a historic river town with a population of about 40,000 residents. Originally home to the Sauk Tribe led by Black Hawk, the area was secured by the U.S. Army for a trading post and military installation in the 1830s. Following construction of Fort Armstrong, a small

town began to form around the base, becoming Rock Island. The first plat was filed in 1835 and the local economy began to boom in the 1850s with the completion of the Chicago and Rock Island Railroad, the first rail line to cross the Mississippi.

Transportation access brought a variety of new industries including manufacturing, lumbering, and pottery, and established Rock Island as an important destination. Augustana College moved to Rock Island in 1875, and new prosperity led to the establishment of key civic infrastructure. The area saw increased activity during the World Wars, when Arsenal Island became a hub for war effort manufacturing. Manufacturing continued to be an important industry in the immediate post-war years. After the 1965 flood that left parts of the city underwater for a month, a levee was constructed that protected the City from rising waters.

The City's population peaked in 1960 at 51,863 residents, after which urban blight, suburbanization, loss of manufacturing jobs, and an aging housing stock led to disinvestment and population decline, especially in the Downtown area. By 1990, the City's population was only 40,522. In the 1990s, "The District" was established, which began reinventing the Downtown area. Today, the Downtown contains several thousand jobs

and a growing residential population, and is considered the preeminent entertainment hub within the Quad Cities.

## PLANNING PROCESS

The Downtown Revitalization Plan is the product of a multi-phased, community driven process that kicked-off in September 2014 and ended in March 2015. The process included:

- ★ Continuous **community outreach** over the course of six months, including three public workshops, twenty-two stakeholder interviews, one community open house, and web-based tools such as questionnaires, sMap, and MindMixer.
- ★ A **survey and analysis of existing conditions**, culminating in the delivery of a Synthesis of Existing Conditions Report in December 2014, which included an overview of key issues voiced by the community, a summary of past planning and local issues, market and demographic data, key observations made by the consultant during field work, and a preliminary plan framework.
- ★ Several **community visioning** exercises, both in person and on-line, to identify the desired future and long-term goals of Downtown Rock Island.

★ Development of plan **goals and objectives** that describe aims or actions that can help enact the community's vision.

★ **Creation of a draft** Downtown Revitalization Plan, based off of the community's input and including framework plans for land use and development, transportation, image and identity.

★ The **public review** of the draft Downtown Revitalization Plan at a workshop and public hearing.

★ The **formal adoption** of the Downtown Revitalization Plan as the City's official policy document for Downtown by the City Council.

## DOWNTOWN PLANNING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

A Downtown Planning Advisory Committee (DPAC) was established to work with the Consultant Team throughout the course of the Plan and provide resident representation and community input. The DPAC was appointed by the Mayor and consists of City staff, downtown business owners and concerned residents.





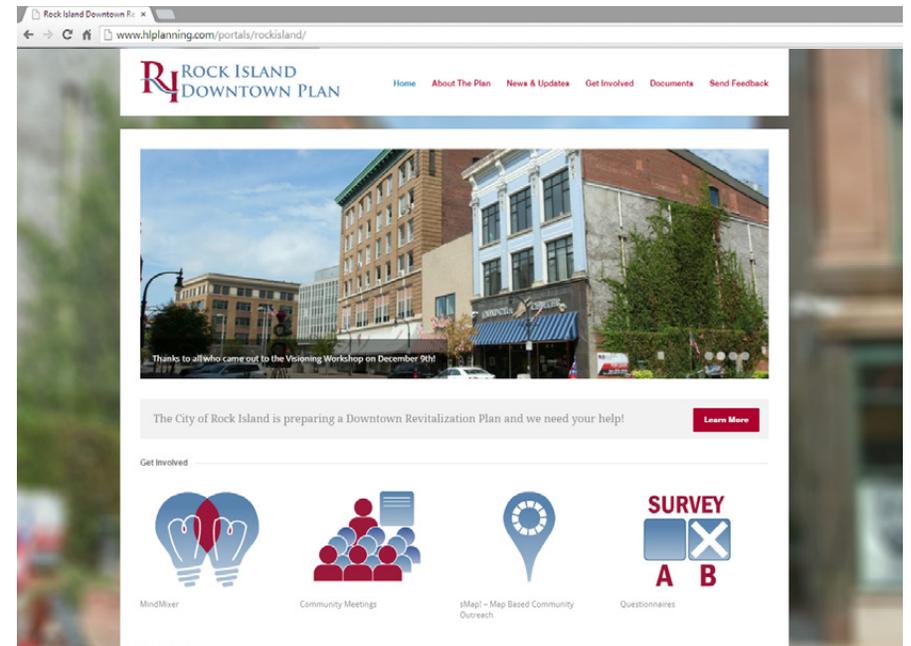
## 2. COMMUNITY OUTREACH

The Downtown Revitalization Plan is the product of a planning process that has actively sought input from a variety of stakeholders, including residents, business owners, developers, service providers, elected and appointed officials, and City staff. A variety of ongoing outreach efforts, both in-person and on-line, have been used to gather the concerns, ideas, and aspirations of residents. Ultimately, outreach promotes a sense of local stewardship for the plan and ensures that each resident has had an opportunity to help shape the future of his or her community.

This section summarizes the community outreach efforts that have been completed thus far in the planning process. Feedback has been critical in identifying the key community issues and priorities and crowd-

sourcing ideas and solutions. The following activities have been conducted thus far:

- \* Regular Downtown Plan Advisory Committee (DPAC) Meetings
- \* Community Workshop
- \* Business Workshop
- \* Key Person Interviews
- \* Community Visioning Workshop
- \* Community Open House
- \* Project Website
- \* Online Surveys
- \* sMap Online Mapping Tool
- \* MindMixer



## DPAC MEETINGS

The Downtown Plan Advisory Committee (DPAC) is a select committee of individuals who represent the community and act as a sounding board for the City and consulting team throughout the planning process. By reviewing all documents and recommendations, they ensure that the Downtown Revitalization Plan reflects the vision and aspirations of all residents and stakeholders.

On September 4, 2014 a kick-off workshop was held with the DPAC at City Hall to discuss issues and opportunities within Downtown Rock Island. The workshop centered around three key questions:

- \* What are five issues or concerns facing Downtown Rock Island?
- \* What are three specific projects or actions you would like to see undertaken within Downtown Rock Island?
- \* What are the primary strengths and assets of Downtown Rock Island?

The following is a summary of the comments and opinions recorded in response to these three questions. It is important to note that the items identified in this workshop summary are not recommendations or observations of the consultant, but rather feedback and comments received from those who participated in the workshop.

## Top Issues

The discussion began by asking DPAC members to write down and then voice five issues or concerns that they believe are confronting Downtown Rock Island. While this question brought forth a wide variety of topics, many of these issues were interrelated and in agreement with the responses of other participants. Accordingly, the responses are organized below into several common themes.

### Need for Mixture of Commercial Uses

Downtown is known primarily for its bars and nightlife, and DPAC members noted that the Downtown should instead contain a more diverse variety of businesses that can appeal to a wider audience. Of particular importance to the group was the recruitment of a grocery store, but other desired uses include boutique shopping, quality office space, and family-friendly stores.

### Limited Parking

Committee members discussed the challenges of parking within the Downtown. Members believe that parking is often difficult to find, particularly during special events and peak times of the week. The group also stated that parking enforcement can be excessive, with parking tickets discouraging patronage of the Downtown area.

## Blight & Vacancy

Significant levels of vacancy were seen by the group as decreasing the attractiveness of investment and sending a negative message to residents and visitors. Committee members also emphasized that many Downtown buildings, including those currently occupied, are often not well-maintained.

## Transportation & Mobility

Community members noted poor traffic circulation within Downtown for automobiles as well as a lack of infrastructure supporting walking or biking. Members showed a desire for smoother traffic flow, greater walkability and bikeability, and stronger transit connections between Rock Island and Davenport.

## Reputation

Committee members felt that the Downtown is perceived as unsafe and lacking the vibrancy associated with other Downtowns. It was suggested that promoting a greater theater identity or introducing new evening activities could help bring interest and life to the Downtown.

## Additional Issues

The following are other issues and concerns raised by committee participants that do not fit within the identified themes:

- \* Homelessness
- \* Need for greater residential population within the Downtown
- \* Need for an "anchor" or "centerpiece attraction"
- \* Unclean streets and lack of trash cans



## Top Project or Actions

Steering Committee members suggested a wide range of action items to improve Downtown Rock Island, but several ideas came up frequently. Some of the more popular responses included: rebranding the public face of the area; making targeted infrastructural improvements; facilitating the growth of local businesses; enforcing City ordinances to reduce blight; and creating a more efficient street network.

Specific projects and actions provided by DPAC members are listed below:

- \* Start a public relations campaign and rebrand Downtown
- \* Coordinate local businesses and hours of operation
- \* Support small business while simultaneously pursuing new businesses
- \* Recruit an anchor store
- \* Recruit a brand-name grocery store
- \* Improve the sidewalk network

- \* Implement streetscaping
- \* Improve the attractiveness of alleyways
- \* Re-evaluate/re-write City codes
- \* Strictly enforce codes
- \* Provide additional parking
- \* Change all "two hour" parking limits to free parking
- \* Identify creative ways to occupy vacant spaces
- \* Develop parklets
- \* Improve connections between the Mississippi River, Downtown, and Schwiebert Park
- \* Attract artists and other "creative class" residents to the area

## Primary Strengths & Assets

Finally, Steering Committee members were asked to identify Rock Island's major strengths and assets. Popular responses focused on the City's historic past, strong relations between the public and private sectors, riverfront access, and accessibility between Downtown Rock Island and the greater Quad City-region. A full list of responses is provided below:

- \* History
- \* Historic buildings that are prime for adaptive re-use
- \* Independent and civic-minded businesses
- \* Good cooperation between private business, City staff, and public officials
- \* Position as the County seat
- \* Riverfront access
- \* Schwiebert Park
- \* 2nd Avenue redevelopment

- \* Bike trails
- \* Affordability
- \* Active organizations and civic groups
- \* Theaters and galleries
- \* Festivals and events
- \* Two bridges that cross the Mississippi River
- \* Bike and pedestrian accessibility
- \* Opportunity for Downtown living
- \* Existing Downtown population
- \* Outside-the-box thinkers
- \* Hidden gems



**ROCK ISLAND  
DOWNTOWN PLAN**

The City of Rock Island is in the process of developing a Downtown Revitalization Plan. Business owners and managers are invited to attend a Business Workshop to discuss issues and challenges related to growing a business in Downtown Rock Island.

## BUSINESS WORKSHOP

**WHEN**  
October 14, 2014 at 8:30am

**WHERE**  
Girl Scouts Program Center  
2011 2nd Avenue  
Rock Island, IL 61201

**MORE INFORMATION**  
Web: visit [www.rigov.org](http://www.rigov.org) and click on the Downtown Revitalization Plan link under "City Clicks"

Contact: Brandy Howe, City of Rock Island, (309)-732-2903 or [howe.brandy@rigov.org](mailto:howe.brandy@rigov.org)



**ROCK ISLAND  
DOWNTOWN PLAN**

The City of Rock Island is in the process of developing a Downtown Revitalization Plan. Residents are invited to attend a Community Workshop to share their concerns and ideas about improving our Downtown!

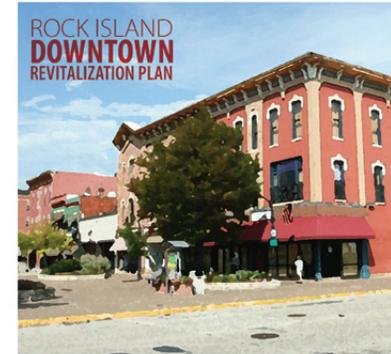
## COMMUNITY WORKSHOP

**WHEN**  
October 14, 2014 at 7:00pm

**WHERE**  
The Establishment Theatre  
220 19th Street  
Rock Island, IL 61201

**MORE INFORMATION**  
Web: visit [www.rigov.org](http://www.rigov.org) and click on the Downtown Revitalization Plan link under "City Clicks"

Contact: Brandy Howe, City of Rock Island, (309)-732-2903 or [howe.brandy@rigov.org](mailto:howe.brandy@rigov.org)



The City of Rock Island is in the process of developing a Downtown Revitalization Plan. This is your opportunity to help shape the future of our Downtown!

For information on how to get involved, please visit [www.rigov.org](http://www.rigov.org) and click on the Downtown Revitalization Plan link under "City Clicks."

**ROCK ISLAND  
DOWNTOWN PLAN**

## COMMUNITY WORKSHOP

On October 14, 2014, a Community Workshop was held from 7:00pm to 8:30pm at the Establishment Theatre in Downtown Rock Island. The purpose of the event was to allow residents the opportunity to communicate their issues, aspirations, and priorities regarding Downtown Rock Island. The workshop centered around four key questions:

- \* What are five issues or concerns facing Downtown Rock Island?
- \* What are the three most important issues facing Downtown Rock Island?
- \* What are three specific projects or actions you would like to see undertaken within Downtown Rock Island?
- \* What are the primary strengths and assets of Downtown Rock Island?

The following is a summary of the thoughts, comments, and opinions received in response to these four questions. Some comments were shared with the entire group, while others were recorded privately on worksheets. It is important to note that the items identified in this summary are not recommendations or observations of the consultant, but rather feedback and comments received from those who participated in the workshop.

## Top Five Issues

The discussion began by asking participants to write down and then voice five issues or concerns that they believe are confronting Downtown Rock Island. While this question brought forth a wide variety of topics, many of the issues were interrelated and in agreement with the responses of other participants. Accordingly, the responses were grouped into common themes.

### Negative Reputation

Workshop participants consistently mentioned the negative regional reputation of Downtown Rock Island. Generally, the crowd felt that some aspects of the bad reputation are accurate, but many others are untrue and only perceived. The poor public image of the Downtown area is seen as inhibiting new residential and commercial investment and preventing Downtown workers from staying in the area after work.

### Public Safety

Closely linked to the Downtown's poor reputation, public safety was also a top concern for participants. Residents generally felt that safety is improving, mostly due to the closure of several problem bars. However, many community members continue to feel that the Downtown is unsafe.

### Blight & Vacancy

Participants emphasized the prevalence of vacancies in the Downtown, noting the high number of underutilized commercial spaces, empty store fronts, and for sale signs. Vacancies are perceived as gaps in the Downtown fabric, preventing any sort of "cohesive" feeling or identity.

### Decaying Infrastructure

Community stakeholders highlighted the sizable amount of decaying or outdated infrastructure within the Downtown. This includes street lights, sidewalks, road conditions, benches, trash cans, plaza area, and more. Concerns were also raised about the ability of the City to financially support infrastructure replacements and improvements.

### Need for Variety of Businesses

Participants noted that the Downtown is primarily known for bars and entertainment, and there are few options for dining, shopping, and "day-to-day" errands. Several participants stated that the development of a grocery store would significantly help Downtown's attractiveness.

### Other Issues

The following are other issues and concerns raised by committee participants that do not fit within the identified themes:

- \* Perceived lack of parking
- \* Poor land use
- \* Costliness of maintaining old buildings
- \* Lack of residential population
- \* Lack of housing
- \* Lack of market-rate residential options
- \* Lack of connectivity
- \* Poor aesthetics
- \* The need for defined borders
- \* The need for a clear Downtown vision
- \* The lack of a Downtown community

## Three Most Important Issues

After all concerns and issues had been voiced, participants were asked to take all comments into consideration (including those that were not their own) and decide what three issues were the most important. The top three issues or concerns of the participants were as follows:

- \* Negative reputation
- \* Prevalence of blight and vacancy
- \* Decaying infrastructure

## Top Project or Actions

Workshop participants suggested a wide range of action items to improve Downtown Rock Island. Some of the more popular responses included: creating new parking spaces, building a grocery store, using business incentives to reduce vacancies, and making basic infrastructural improvements.

Specific projects and actions provided by workshop participants are listed below, in their own words:

- \* Construct a parking garage
- \* Provide new parking options
- \* Consolidate parking
- \* Increase non-vehicular options

- \* Extend the pedestrian system
- \* Recruit a grocery store
- \* Recruit new restaurants
- \* Construct a shopping plaza
- \* Encourage infill development
- \* Provide financing for Downtown development
- \* Provide branding for the Downtown
- \* Conduct an assessment of vacant properties
- \* Better utilize the Downtown's proximity to the library
- \* Build a new county courthouse
- \* Build a new library
- \* Build a community center
- \* Build a new bridge
- \* Remove the Downtown plaza
- \* Develop a common façade program
- \* Improve the Centennial Bridge gateway
- \* Inventory current infrastructural elements
- \* Fix damaged roads
- \* Increase lighting in the Downtown
- \* Develop a "clean and safe" program
- \* Remove older buildings to make way for new developments
- \* Preserve historic buildings
- \* Remove blighted property
- \* Increase Downtown green space

- \* Introduce new housing options
- \* Increase the number of events and festivals in the Downtown
- \* Increase the number of family-friendly events and festivals
- \* Build a destination attraction

## Primary Strengths & Assets

Lastly, participants were asked to identify Rock Island's major strengths and assets. Popular responses focused on Mississippi River access, Schwiebert Park, local history, and a rich culture of arts and entertainment.

Specific strengths and assets listed by workshop participants are listed below, in their own words:

- \* Proximity to the Mississippi River
- \* Riverfront open spaces
- \* Schwiebert Park
- \* Riverfront bikepaths and trails
- \* Regional location
- \* History
- \* Historical buildings
- \* Architecture
- \* Historical architecture
- \* Urban feel
- \* Small town charm
- \* Small businesses

- \* Legacy businesses
- \* Employment base
- \* Commerce
- \* Modern Woodmen
- \* Arts
- \* Entertainment
- \* Nightlife
- \* Young population
- \* Arsenal Museum
- \* Manuscript Museum
- \* Augustana College
- \* Library
- \* Food
- \* Pedestrian friendliness
- \* Walkability
- \* Compact layout
- \* Community
- \* Diversity
- \* Events and festivals
- \* City outreach
- \* Fire department
- \* Bus system
- \* Plaza
- \* Government center



## BUSINESS WORKSHOP

On October 14, 2014, a Business Workshop was held from 8:30am to 10:00am at the Girl Scouts Program Center in Downtown Rock Island. The purpose of the workshop was to discuss issues and challenges related to establishing, operating, and growing a business in Downtown Rock Island, and the discussion centered around four key questions:

- \* What are five issues or concerns facing businesses in Downtown Rock Island?
- \* What are the three most important issues facing businesses in Downtown Rock Island?
- \* What are three specific projects or actions you would like to see undertaken within Downtown Rock Island?
- \* What are the primary strengths and assets of Downtown Rock Island?

The following is a summary of the thoughts, comments, and opinions recorded in response to these questions. It is important to

note that the items identified in this workshop summary are not recommendations or observations of the consultant, but rather feedback and comments received from those who participated in the workshop.

### Top Five Issues

The discussion began by asking the business leaders to write down and then voice five issues or concerns that they believe are confronting Downtown Rock Island. While this question brought forth a wide variety of topics, many of these issues were interrelated and in agreement with the responses of other participants. Accordingly, the responses are organized below into several common themes.

#### Image

Business leaders expressed concern over the Downtown's current reputation, often noting that the area is perceived as being unsafe and blighted. Some also feel that the Downtown's identity relies too heavily

on the bar scene. Overall, participants highlighted the need to correct or rebalance the image or perception of the Downtown to represent a more family-friendly destination.

#### Small Business Recruitment

Participants voiced a strong need for the City and its partners to recruit new small businesses in the Downtown. The lack of small business, in conjunction with the numerous vacancies of commercial spaces, was noted as a key concern. Workshop members also noted a lack of necessary amenities, and in some cases residential density, to support certain small businesses.

#### Blight & Vacancy

High vacancy was a top concern for the business community. This includes both vacant commercial spaces and store fronts, as well as empty lots. Many vacant structures are also in disrepair, communicating a negative and unwelcoming image of the Downtown to visitors.

#### Parking

Business leaders view Downtown parking as challenging. Parking enforcement is seen as overzealous, and the low volume of parking spots is perceived as not being able to adequately service night and weekend populations. The creation of more parking was seen as important to securing a regular customer base, as well as providing easy mobility for employees.

#### Need for Variety of Businesses

Participants pointed out the lack of a variety of different business types in the Downtown, highlighting the need for increased retail options such as restaurants and shops. Members noted that a greater diversity of businesses would attract more residents and help enliven the Downtown area.

### Additional Issues

The following are other issues and concerns raised by committee participants that do not fit within the identified themes:

- \* Need for proper signage
- \* Lack of communication regarding Downtown events
- \* Need to attract residents to the Downtown
- \* Need for increased tourism marketing
- \* Need for new and updated outdoor spaces
- \* Need for street repair and maintenance
- \* Presence of dumpsters and trash
- \* Need for a grocery store

### Three Most Important Issues

After all concerns and issues had been voiced, business leaders were asked to take all comments into consideration (including those that were not their own) and decide what three issues were the three most important. The top three issues or concerns of the participants were as follows:

- \* Downtown's image
- \* Small business recruitment
- \* Blight and vacancy

### Top Project or Actions

Participants suggested a wide range of action items to improve Downtown Rock Island, but a several ideas came up often. Some of the more popular responses included: incentivizing or recruiting new retail uses, marketing or branding Downtown, and making improvements to the Downtown built environment.

Specific projects and actions provided by workshop participants are listed below, in their own words:

- \* Incentivize new retail
- \* Incentivize private business and housing development
- \* Provide business startup incentives
- \* Develop list of specific target business categories
- \* Hire a business lead generator
- \* Hire a Downtown manager
- \* Provide marketing for small business
- \* Recruit outside investment
- \* Recruit a large employer
- \* Recruit a new boutique hotel
- \* Recruit a grocery store or outlet
- \* Provide marketing for small businesses
- \* Market the Downtown and Rock Island community as a destination

- \* Market and develop the Downtown as a theater district
- \* Beautify streets
- \* Make improvements to the plaza
- \* Clean buildings and streets
- \* Fix street lights
- \* Replace and improve streetscaping elements
- \* Hire a Downtown aesthetic manager
- \* Encourage reuse of historical buildings with new uses
- \* Fill vacant buildings and commercial spaces
- \* Remove parking meters
- \* Allow longer parking at parking meters
- \* Publicize the history of Rock Island

### Primary Strengths & Assets

Lastly, the business community was asked to identify the Downtown's strengths and assets. Popular responses focused on local history, the strong business community, the rich arts scene, and the potential for new business development

A full list of responses is provided below:

- \* City history
- \* Architecture
- \* Historical buildings prime for adaptive reuse
- \* Potential for new developments
- \* Potential for new businesses
- \* Potential for new investment
- \* Talent and resources of locals
- \* Strong business community
- \* Strong core businesses
- \* Vicinity to county courts
- \* Local charm
- \* Municipal support
- \* Arts
- \* Pedestrian mobility
- \* Compact downtown layout
- \* Schwiebert Park
- \* Waterfront
- \* Bikepaths



## KEY PERSON INTERVIEWS

In order to more accurately assess existing conditions and community potentials, the consultant team conducted confidential one-on-one interviews with 22 individuals in October and November 2014. Those interviewed possessed diverse backgrounds and perspectives, and included small and large business owners and operators, elected officials, community leaders, residents, and key service providers. While these stakeholders were often very candid about the challenges facing Downtown, each displayed a clear desire and passion to make Downtown Rock Island a better place.

Each interviewee was asked a series of questions about the community, with interviews typically lasting between 30 minutes and 1 hour. Their responses have been synthesized and organized into key themes and issues that came up frequently. It is important to note that these comments are not official recommendations, but candid ideas, opinions, and concerns shared with the consultant team by local stakeholders.

## Identity

Downtown was most commonly described as "in transition" and "turning a corner."

Generally, participants believed that Downtown is moving in the right direction, however, some participants were more pessimistic. Positive momentum was attributed to an increase in residential construction (e.g. The Locks, Star Block Lofts, and Riverview Lofts), construction of Schwiebert Park, and the closing of several "problem" bars. One interviewee said that "the fields have been cleared and plowed, and now it is time for harvest."

That said, while Downtown is seen as trending in a positive direction, most felt that it has fallen behind its peer cities of Moline and Davenport and that it has its work cut out in trying to reverse commercial decline and negative stereotypes. When asked to describe Downtown Rock Island, almost every participant noted the heavy presence of bars and entertainment. Whether that was considered an asset or weakness depended on the background of the participant.

Participants stated that Downtown Rock Island has somewhat of a negative reputation, mainly among non-residents. Words commonly used by participants describe it included "tired," "blighted," and "unsafe." In some cases, participants thought the reputation was unfortunate but deserved. In others, however, they felt that the reputation was not reflective of the on the ground realities and was based on either inaccurate or outdated information. Several problem bars, since closed, were routinely cited as being the biggest influencers of the negative perception in recent years.

Participants were asked what they felt the Downtown's role was in the Quad Cities, both at present and in the future. Responses could be grouped into three general categories: (a) no role, (b) to serve as a quaint, dense mixed-use environment compared to Davenport and Moline, which were cited as being more "spread out" and new, and (c) a regional entertainment and arts destination.

No consensus was reached on Downtown's geographic boundary. Generally, most agreed that the area roughly bounded by 1st and 3rd Avenues and 15th and 19th Streets was the heart of the community, but little consensus was reached on what constituted the broader Downtown area. Some viewed the Downtown as only "The District," while others believed it spanned as far south as 9th or 10th Avenue. This confusion about what area "is Downtown" and what area "isn't Downtown" is reinforced by a lack of consistency within existing City planning and regulation. For example, the Downtown TIF, Downtown Design Guidelines area, zoning districts, future land use plan, Arsenal Gateway Plan, and more all have different boundaries for the Downtown.



## Economic Development

Economic development was the most discussed topic in most interviews. Participants noted several challenges in attracting, retaining, and growing employment in the Downtown. The challenges tend to be interrelated, and in some cases, reflect the "chicken-and-the-egg" dilemma of whether one caused the other. Common challenges shared with the consultant team include:

★ **Appearance & safety.** Overall, while historic character was often cited as a key asset, business leaders feel that Downtown has an outdated feel. A lack of maintenance and upkeep has led to blighted facades, no quality office space, inefficient parking, and a "tired" streetscape. Similarly, concerns about public safety and littering were often brought up, and one interviewee stated that s/he "couldn't walk through Downtown with a client." Business owners cited this as being a challenge in attracting customers to their restaurants/stores or recruiting/retaining new firms with well-paying jobs.

★ **Vacancy.** Commercial vacancy was estimated at between 20% and 35% by participants active in the development community. Vacancy destabilizes blocks and contributes to blight. One business owner stated, "how can you build something when you don't know who your neighbor will be in 6 months?"

★ **Davenport and Moline.** Downtown Rock Island was once the preeminent destination in the Quad Cities and considered a leader in a variety of amenities and programming. However, over the past decade, Downtown Moline and Davenport have both seen significant public and private investment, and are perceived as safer, and more attractive destinations to live, play, and work. They are also seen as more convenient to access given better roadway access. It was also mentioned that Davenport, Iowa benefits from lower property taxes and better incentives.

★ **White collar jobs.** Interviewees noted that for a city of its size, Downtown Rock Island has a sizable number white-collar employers, especially in the insurance, law, and banking industries. That said, white collar jobs were reported to be on the decline, and the closure of several law firms was cited as an example. Some white collar employers reported difficulty in finding quality restaurants and lodging for clients and staff, and this discouraged them in their long-term plans. The reduction in white collar jobs was reported as also threatening local restaurants, who now have fewer consumers to attract to their places of business during lunchtime or happy hours.

★ **Residential density.** The residential population in Downtown is growing, but developers and business owners report that existing density isn't significant enough at present to support many of the amenities that residents desire. That said, a smaller grocer or pharmacy chain were reported as possible.

★ **Business diversity.** "The District" brand was generally seen positively by interviewees, noting that Renaissance Rock Island has played a strong role in keeping Downtown Rock Island vibrant. However, the Downtown is seen as somewhat over-reliant on bars and entertainment for activity, identity, and revenue. The lack of fine dining, ethnic restaurants, retail options, family-friendly shops, and other day-to-day uses was cited as a detriment to working, investing, and living in Downtown, especially among larger businesses that need to entertain clients and investors. However, it seems that the issue is not that the Downtown has too many bars, but merely too little of everything else.

★ **Parking.** Opinions on parking were varied. Generally, parking was seen as difficult in certain locations and at certain times, making it difficult to attract customers used to a more suburban shopping or dining experience. More detailed information on parking is listed in the subsequent section on transportation.



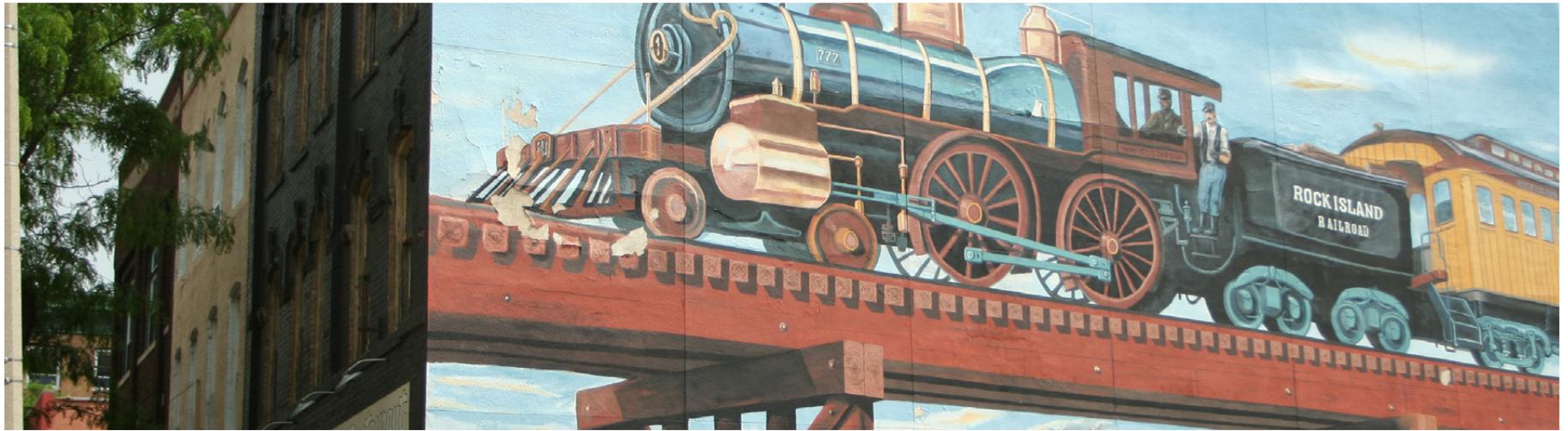
Overall, the economic challenges facing Rock Island are not seen as being a result of City policies or regulations, or inactivity on behalf of City staff and officials. Most interviewees had positive things to say about the City of Rock Island, and a common comment was that the staff had a “can do” attitude and that staff was extremely accessible.

Development regulations were mostly seen as fair and easy to follow. However, a small number of interviewees did not agree and stated they see Rock Island as being less business friendly than other Quad Cities, with “more hurdles.” One nuanced interviewee stated, “The City is business friendly...but we’re still getting beat by everyone else.” Some suggestions offered included: streamlining the liquor approval process, better allocating TIF funds in a more timely manner, hiring a “hunter” that can actively recruit and lobby new business to Rock Island, avoiding focusing too much on residential development over commercial, and regularly consulting with some of the larger employers, which some stakeholders said were taken for granted. For example, one participant noted how the City had no idea that Bituminous Insurance was leaving because officials weren’t “plugged in.”

Downtown Rock Island is close to both Augustana College and Rock Island Arsenal, both major institutions employing a combined several thousand workers. Participants spoke about those institutions as being drivers for future economic growth, capitalizing on the federal HUBZone program. The Arsenal was referred to as an “untapped resource.”

## Housing

Interviewees believed the Downtown is becoming an increasingly attractive place to live. New developments such as the Star Block Lofts, the Locks, and Riverview Lofts are considered reflective of this positive momentum, and interviewees who live in the Downtown report enjoying access to the waterfront and walkability to work. However, Downtown still lacks retail stores that can provide for day-to-day needs (e.g. pharmacy, grocery store, dry cleaner etc.) and the area was also reported as being “quieter” than younger professionals and young families would like, noting there are few options for socializing and entertainment outside of bars. Several participants also recommended transitioning Spencer Towers from affordable rate to market rate.



## Public Safety

The issue of public safety was a concern of many interviewees. Generally, participants were in consensus that the Downtown is relatively safe but noted that most perceive it to be otherwise, often due to bars, littering, and homelessness. Several problem bars with incidences of violence have since been closed down, but "perception lasts longer than reality," according to one interviewee.

Interviewees supported the efforts of Rock Island's Downtown Patrol Unit (DPU) on foot and bike, but expressed frustration with the State Police's DUI checkpoints and patrol cars that sit in the Downtown area and pull-over vehicles leaving the area. For example, one interviewee stated he had been pulled over 3 or 4 times in the past few years. This is perceived as discouraging people from having dinner and drinks in the Downtown.

## Transportation

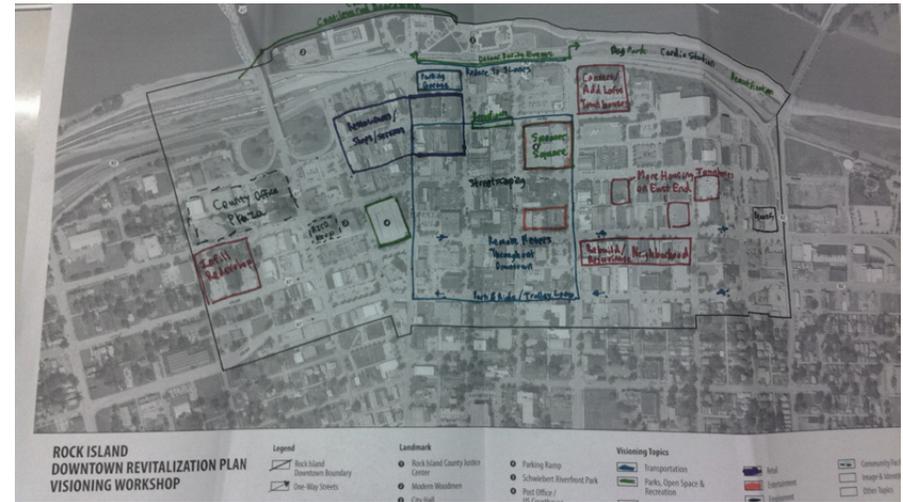
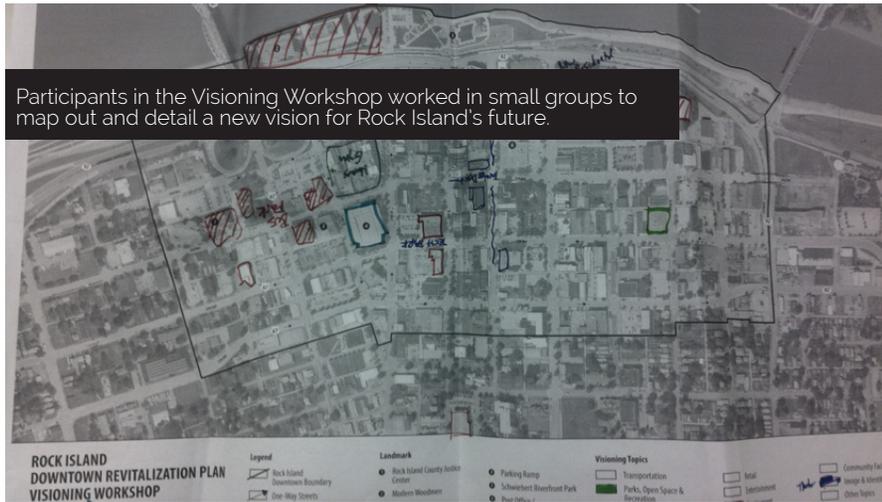
Parking was the only transportation issue routinely brought up by participants. More than a quantity issue, parking challenges appear to be rooted in convenience, efficiency, and cost. Many visitors and customers just do not want to walk more than a block to access a bar, office, or restaurant, however, it was suggested that if the environment appeared safer and more attractive, folks might be more willing to walk a block or two. Other comments included that the City's parking lots are scattered and not well-marked, and that on-street parking was confusing, with different streets having different posted times and costs. The two hour time limit was also considered too low by retail and entertainment operators, and enforcement of it was described as "overzealous."

## New Projects & Ideas

Interviewees were asked, "if you had the power to undertake one project or improvement within Downtown Rock Island, what would it be?" The projects and improvements cited as most important are as follows:

- \* Create a beer garden and open-container area on the plaza;
- \* Re-route IL 92 and transform 1st Avenue into a two-lane, two-way street that is pedestrian friendly;
- \* Establish a farmer's market or public market;
- \* Better utilize the stage at Schwiebert Park to host jazz on the lawn concerts and other community events;
- \* Modernize and upgrade the Spencer Towers;
- \* Attract a niche, destination retailer such as Lululemon or Apple;
- \* Construct a cab stand or party bus shelter near the plaza;
- \* Rebuild and relocate the county courthouse to within the heart of Downtown;
- \* Build a "bridge to nowhere" on the waterfront that looks out onto the water and the other Quad Cities;
- \* Enforce existing codes and cleanup the Downtown, e.g. remove posters, tear down old signs, ensure facades meet compliance;
- \* Establish a central database of all usable commercial and residential space in the Downtown; and
- \* Invest more in commercial properties as opposed to focusing too much on residential construction.

Participants in the Visioning Workshop worked in small groups to map out and detail a new vision for Rock Island's future.



## VISIONING WORKSHOP

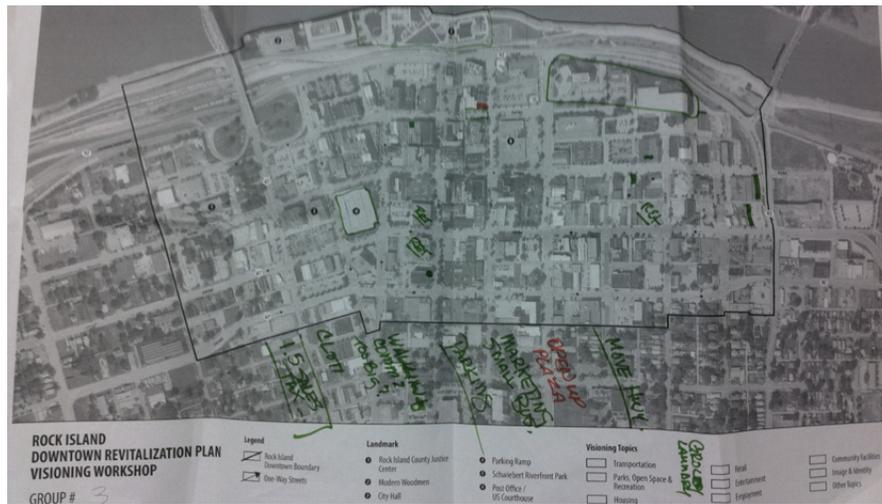
The City of Rock Island held a Visioning Workshop from 7:00pm to 8:30pm on Tuesday, December 9th, 2014 at the Establishment Theatre in Downtown Rock Island. Participants were assigned to one of eight "breakout" groups and provided with markers and a large map of Downtown. Over the course of an hour, each group was charged to work as a team and draw their "vision" for Downtown Rock Island on the map. Suggested topics included: transportation; parks, open space, & recreation; housing; retail; entertainment; employment; community facilities; and image & identity. In addition to marking up the map, each group also recorded their recommendations in an accompanying workbook. At the end of the hour, the groups shared their findings with the entire audience.

Generally, participants felt strongly about increasing mobility and traffic flow within Downtown, providing better parking options, developing a new use for the Spencer Towers property, creating greater access to the riverfront and Schwiebert Park, utilizing vacant or underutilized parcels for new development, repurposing the Great River Plaza into a "woonerf," and adding new uses to make the downtown more livable, especially a grocery store.

The following is a list of the ideas, suggestions, and concepts that were either drawn on the maps or written in the workbook, organized by topic. Photos of each of the eight maps is provided at the end of this report for reference. It is important to note that the items identified in this workshop summary are not recommendations of the consultant, but rather feedback and comments received from those who participated in the workshop.

## Transportation

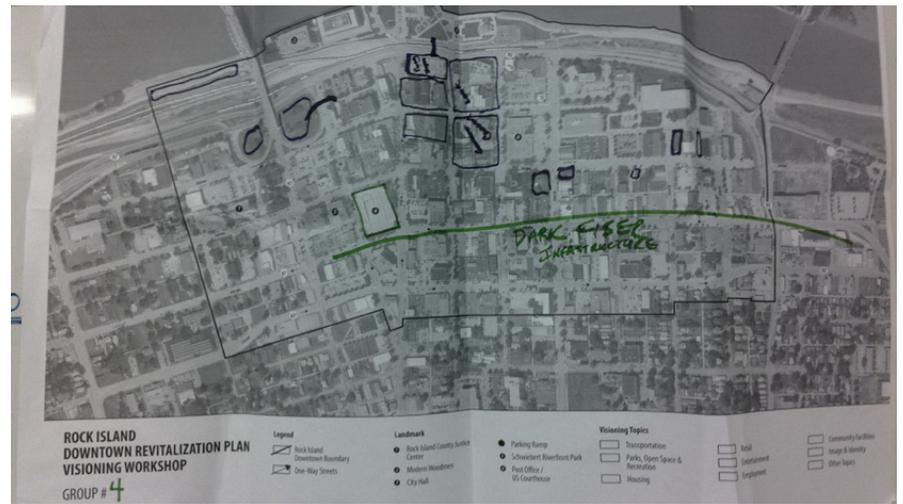
- \* Change 4th and 5th Avenue to allow 2-way traffic
- \* Reroute IL Route 92 away from the Downtown
- \* Increase 1st Avenue to 3 lanes
- \* Construct a pedestrian overpass across IL Route 92 to Schwiebert Park
- \* Introduce a park & ride or trolley loop within the Downtown
- \* Introduce a parking lot off of 2nd Avenue across from the Modern Woodman building
- \* Move City parking out of the parking garage to open it for public parking
- \* Allow overnight parking
- \* Reduce the number of open, flat parking lots
- \* Open the Great River Plaza to through traffic, only closing the plaza for events or concerts
- \* Turn the Great River Plaza into a woonerf—a space that allows shared use by different transportation modes, such as pedestrian and auto uses sharing a specifically designed space
- \* Add a woonerf along 18th St from 1st Avenue to 2nd Avenue
- \* Modify the intersection of 7th Avenue and 15th Street for greater mobility and safety
- \* Add more bike lanes
- \* Introduce more timed stop lights, cross walks, and pedestrian signals
- \* Make streets more pedestrian friendly, especially 1st Avenue
- \* Remove all parking meters
- \* Condense all Downtown uses, such as entertainment, retail, restaurants, and business, to allow for development of a single parking lot that serves a Downtown core



### Parks, Open Space, & Recreation

- \* Convert the parking lots at 22nd Street and 4th Avenue (located behind Rooster's Bar) into a park
- \* Convert Spencer Square into a park
- \* Convert empty parcels around 3rd Avenue and 21st Street into green space
- \* Remove Great River Plaza to use as a park
- \* Develop a small beach area just west of the centennial bridge
- \* Improve accessibility to Schwiebert Park
- \* Utilize Schwiebert Park for sports leagues
- \* Detour the Great River Trail around Schwiebert Park during specific events and concerts

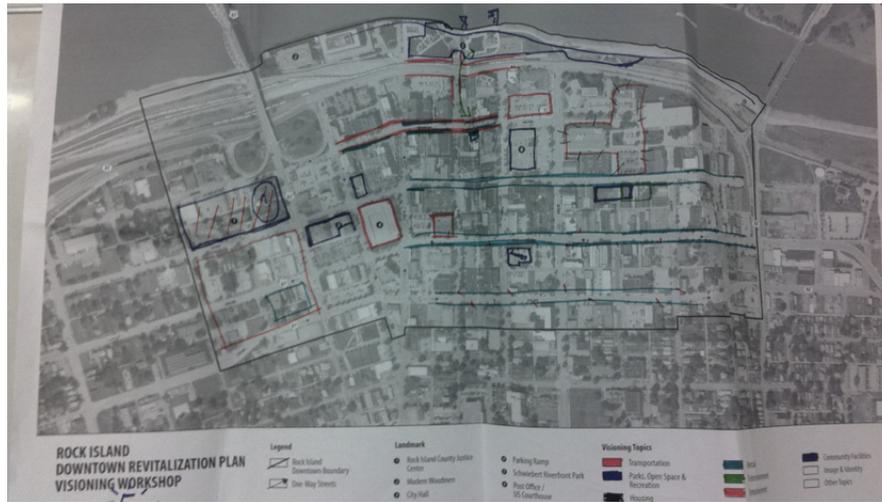
- \* Cantilever the Great River Trail to bring the path closer to the water
- \* Reconfigure the Great River Plaza to allow outdoor seating for restaurants and business storefronts
- \* Introduce a dog park, perhaps located along the riverfront
- \* Beautify the city with landscaping wherever possible
- \* Encourage rooftop green space via tax incentives
- \* Introduce more bike trails
- \* Add a water-taxi stop on the riverfront
- \* Add volleyball courts at the site of the old Cabana's



### Housing

- \* Develop new housing in the heart of the Downtown, converting upper floors of existing buildings to housing
- \* Encourage more family-friendly housing options
- \* Develop market-rate housing, with options for both rental and purchasing as well as affordable rents, though not income restricted
- \* Utilize Spencer Towers to introduce new housing options, potentially including lofts, townhouses, and amenities such as a pool and gym
- \* Remove Spencer Towers
- \* Introduce townhomes along 3rd Avenue on the east side of Downtown

- \* Add more housing options on the west end
- \* Infill parcels south of the County buildings with housing
- \* Rejuvenate neighborhoods on the east side of Downtown
- \* Create incentives for landowners to update older housing
- \* Build high rise apartments or condos along the east end riverfront, placing these buildings behind or on top of floodwalls.
- \* Include parking options with new housing to allow greater Downtown living and walkability

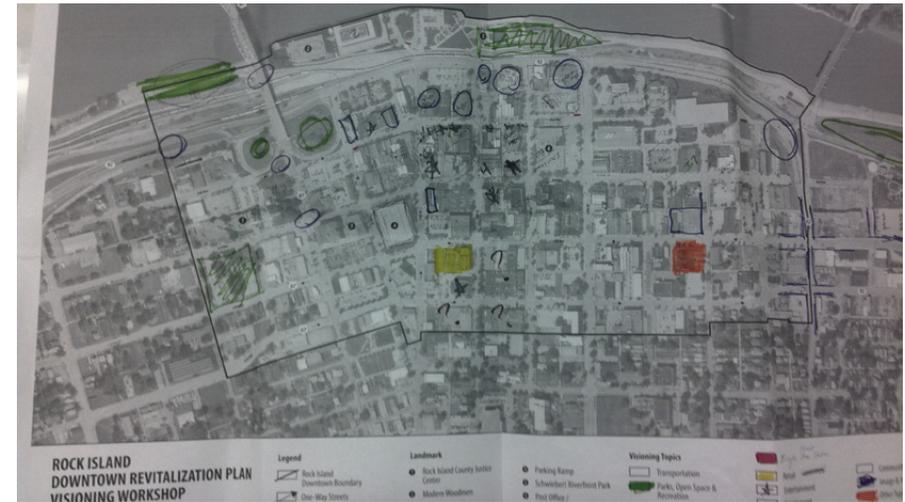
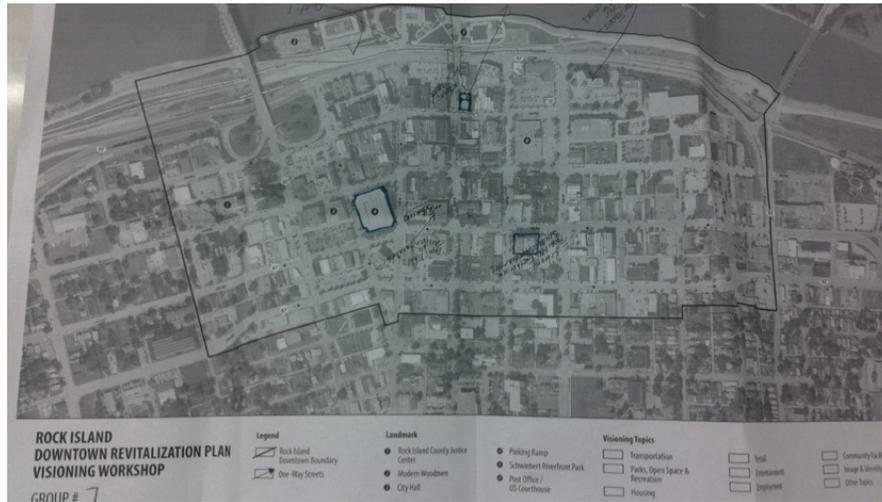


## Entertainment

- \* Create a designated "theater district" along 19th Street from 5th to 1st Avenue
- \* Further develop local entertainment and arts, building off existing theaters and fine arts
- \* Create a "Taste of Rock Island" festival
- \* Host a BBQ festival at Schwiebert Park
- \* Encourage restaurants to locate in a small, walkable area radiating outward from the Great River Plaza
- \* Open a luxury or novelty movie theater
- \* Open a bowling alley
- \* Open an art gallery
- \* Open new hotels to create the capacity for more visitors
- \* Introduce higher end bars and restaurants
- \* Introduce more family friendly restaurants
- \* Bring in chain or signature restaurants with known popularity
- \* Encourage entertainment and events within restaurants
- \* Better utilize the stage at Schwiebert Park
- \* Host family friendly festivals that are more cost effective
- \* Expand the hours of entertainment uses beyond the Thursday through Saturday 8pm to 3am period

## Employment

- \* Place more focus on business growth
- \* Increase the number of small businesses
- \* Encourage some major retailers to move into the area, while maintaining small businesses
- \* Establish a core business district from 16th to 14th street and 4th to 1st Avenue
- \* Develop a technology incubator
- \* Develop a business incubator
- \* Lobby for state historical tax credits
- \* Build a range of Class A office spaces and high tech, professional buildings
- \* Encourage small companies, startups, and tech companies
- \* Install dark fiber with easy, affordable access for startup companies
- \* Provide incentives for startup companies
- \* Find a local employment niche, such as banking, technology, or insurance
- \* Establish a technology center geared toward technology startups
- \* Provide a laboratory space with equipment available for rental or through membership
- \* Coordinate with local schools to connect with employers and retain local talent
- \* Develop office spaces on 15th Street
- \* Work to bring more employers and employees working in the Downtown



## Retail

- \* Encourage more small businesses and startups
- \* Develop a technology incubator
- \* Develop a business incubator
- \* Introduce a grocery store, preferably a food market with experience in other urban city centers
- \* Introduce a variety of new uses, including restaurants, clothing stores, shoe stores, laundromats, a pharmacy, medical uses, bakeries, butchers, a deli, specialty stores, and boutique shops
- \* Introduce new uses along 2nd Avenue
- \* Introduce higher end retail chains and restaurants, such as an Anthropologie
- \* Create a farmer's market
- \* Partner with the Quad Cities Food Hub to bring a local food location to the Downtown
- \* Encourage more office buildings and spaces
- \* Work with businesses to beautify storefronts
- \* Redevelop vacant or condemned buildings

## Community Facilities

- \* Utilize Lot F as a plaza space, hosting events there instead of at the Great River Plaza
- \* Utilize Schwiebert Park as a plaza space, hosting events there instead of at the Great River Plaza
- \* Coordinate with the YWCA to make better use of their services
- \* Make improvements to the City Hall
- \* Make improvements to the Rock Island Public Library
- \* Redevelop the library's facility as a destination or campus for locals, with a variety of uses and amenities available, such as public meetings spaces, a coffee shop, or green space
- \* Maintain and make improvements to the County's office buildings
- \* Introduce a cardio or workout area along the riverfront
- \* Provide more spaces for public meetings
- \* Repurpose the church near Centennial Bridge as a space for community meetings

## Image & Identity

- \* Improve Downtown branding, signage, and wayfinding
- \* Improve the appearance of the Downtown
- \* Widen sidewalks throughout the Downtown
- \* Upgrade street lights
- \* Introduce or improve trash cans, awnings, benches, and planters
- \* Incentivize and work with owners to upgrade buildings as necessary
- \* Instate a common façade type, with some variation, to unify the image of the Downtown
- \* Regain the historic appearance of classic brick buildings
- \* Improve the Centennial Bridge gateway's appearance as an important entrance to the community
- \* Create incentives for a live-work-play community in the Downtown

- \* Develop a program to beautify storefronts, including placing art in empty storefronts
- \* Rebrand the Downtown to counter poor perception, especially the image of the area as unsafe
- \* Ensure that improvements are made to the Downtown prior to rebranding, so that branding efforts can capture upgrades and changes
- \* Work to establish the Downtown not as an area, but as a neighborhood
- \* Establish a stronger sense of community and unity within the Downtown
- \* Light the WHBE Tower at night to create a clear Downtown icon or image
- \* Prepare a "grand development" event to have multiple small businesses open at once, acting as a catalyst for Downtown redevelopment



The Establishment Theatre, one of the five theatres within Downtown Rock Island, hosted many of the Plan's community events.

### **COMMUNITY OPEN HOUSE**

A Community Open House was held on February 24, 2015 from 5:00 to 8:00pm at the Establishment Theatre. More than 80 residents and stakeholders participated in the event. Participants had the opportunity to read through the draft plan, view poster boards of key maps and recommendations, ask questions of City staff and the consulting team, and submit written comments.

### **PROJECT WEBSITE**

A project website was created in order to provide a single source for all information related to the Downtown Revitalization Plan process. The website contains project information and updates, meeting notices, and downloadable copies of draft documents for the duration of the planning process. In order to provide convenient and comprehensive information, the project website is accessed through a link on the City's home page.

The project website also contains links to on-line questionnaires for residents and business owners, the sMap mapping tool, and MindMixer.

### **RESIDENT QUESTIONNAIRE**

An on-line questionnaire for Rock Island residents was posted on the project website. It was designed to supplement in-person outreach activities conducted throughout the community, and is not intended to be a scientific survey instrument. The questionnaire remained open from August 2014 to April 2015.

As of the drafting of this Existing Conditions Report, 258 residents submitted answers to the questionnaire. A summary of their responses to key questions are provided below.

### **Primary Reason**

Participants were asked why they patronize Downtown. Selection of more than one answer was permitted. Entertainment (47%), dining (40%), and bars (31%) were the overwhelming selections. Only 2% stated it was for shopping.



## Favorite Things

The questionnaire asked participants to list their three favorite things about Downtown. The following is a representative sample of answers selected from over three hundred provided:

- \* MetroLink bus station
- \* Mississippi River
- \* Summertime activities
- \* Schwiebert Park
- \* Rock Island Public Library
- \* Close proximity of businesses
- \* Entertainment venues such as Circa 21 and the Establishment Theatre
- \* Restaurants/bars such as Huckleberry's, Le Figaro, Mama Compton's, Bennigan's, El Patron, Blue Cat Brew Pub, RIBCO, Rozz Tox, Steve's Old Time Tap, Bent River Brewery, Daiquiri Factory, Jim's Rib Haven, Erawan,
- \* Holiday Inn
- \* Small-town feel

- \* Urban living
- \* The arts scene
- \* Public art
- \* Planters and hanging baskets
- \* 2nd Avenue band shelter
- \* Everything is close by – it's convenient
- \* Compactness – easy to get around
- \* Great River Trail
- \* Different types of shops that you can't find elsewhere in a walkable environment
- \* Great buildings and architecture
- \* Intact historical architecture
- \* Festivals such as Gumbo Ya Ya and Ya Maka My Weekend
- \* Live music
- \* Cleanliness
- \* Open air stages for live music with space to dance and sit outside and eat
- \* Great atmosphere

## Least Favorite Things

The questionnaire asked participants to list their three least favorite things about Downtown. The following is a representative sample of answers selected from those provided:

- \* Parking
- \* Crime
- \* Bars
- \* Too much emphasis on nightlife
- \* Reputation for being a place for excessive drinking and partying
- \* "Shady" characters in the evening
- \* Not enough businesses
- \* Nothing for kids to do
- \* Lack of a grocery store
- \* Lack of retail shops
- \* Lack of cafes with places to sit outside
- \* Lack of good cab services

- \* Homelessness and panhandling
- \* Blight and vacancy
- \* No restaurants open for lunch
- \* Dumpsters in plain sight
- \* Police trying to trap people and conduct sobriety tests
- \* Shabby buildings
- \* Lack of new big buildings like Moline and Davenport
- \* Bad bike lanes on 17th Street
- \* No foot traffic
- \* Litter (e.g. cigarette butts, empty bottles)
- \* Train horns
- \* Lack of restaurants
- \* A 9-5 population...Nothing to do after 6pm



## Amenities

Participants were asked to compare the amenities of Downtown Rock Island with other downtowns in the area. 67% said Downtown Rock Island was worse, 19% the same, 8% better, and 6% not sure.

The top 5 types of commercial development that respondents would like to see more of are: retail (87%), restaurants (83%), entertainment (68%), personal services (48%), and professional offices (40%).

## Housing

A majority of respondents characterized the quality of Downtown's housing stock as either good (26%) or fair (39%), with only 12% labeling it as poor and 4% as excellent. Roughly 70% reported that the quality of housing is getting better.

Residents were asked to select the types of new residential development they would like to see in Downtown Rock Island. The responses suggest clear support for more dense housing options: apartments (48%), condominiums (39%), townhomes (38%), single family homes (18%), and senior housing (11%).

## Incentives

Respondents overwhelmingly (73%) support the use of tax incentives to attract and retain businesses, with only 8% saying they do not support and the remainder stating they are unsure.

## Public Facilities & Services

Residents were asked to rate a variety of public facilities as either "good," "fair," or "poor." Each facility is listed below in descending order based on the percentage of respondents who labeled it as "good."

- \* Fire protection (63%)
- \* Parks (60%)
- \* Police (56%)
- \* Water service (56%)
- \* Electric service (53%)
- \* Library (53%)
- \* Trees and landscaping (38%)
- \* Trash service (38%)
- \* Water drainage (37%)
- \* Sewer service (36%)
- \* Snow removal (33%)
- \* Cultural facilities and programs (33%)
- \* Recreational facilities and programs (33%)
- \* Community meeting space (22%)
- \* Data and technology infrastructure (11%)



### **Governance & Citizen Communication**

Residents were split roughly down the middle on whether they felt informed about what is going on in Downtown. The most common method of getting information about the Downtown was via the internet (62%), newspapers (48%), and word-of-mouth (44%).

More than half of residents (53%) reported that they do not think the local government is effectively dealing with local issues and concerns.

### **Quality of Life**

When asked to describe their satisfaction with the current quality of life in Downtown Rock Island, 48% reported dissatisfied, 41% satisfied, 8% very dissatisfied, and 3% very satisfied. Roughly half report that quality of life is improving, with roughly one-third believing it is getting worse. The remainder state things are staying about the same.

Residents remain optimistic about the future. A majority believe things will get better over the next 5 years.

### **Plan Priorities**

- \* The top five issues that survey participants asked the Plan to focus on are:
- \* Shopping options (51%)
- \* Business attraction and retention (49%)
- \* Entertainment options (42%)
- \* Development potential (28%)
- \* Mississippi Riverfront (26%)

## BUSINESS QUESTIONNAIRE

An on-line questionnaire for Downtown Rock Island's businesses was also posted on the project website, with the purpose of soliciting insight about the local business climate. The questionnaire remained open from August 2014 to April 2015.

As of the drafting of this Existing Conditions Report, 42 business owners and operators submitted answers to the questionnaire. A plurality of survey respondents work in "white collar" industries, with consumer service and the restaurant/entertainment business comprising most of the rest. A summary of their responses to key questions are provided below.

## Favorite Things

The questionnaire asked business owners and operators to list their three favorite things about Downtown. The following is a representative sample of answers selected from the dozens provided:

- \* Federal and County courthouses
- \* Adaptive re-use of historic buildings
- \* Community of artists
- \* Architectural character
- \* Local restaurants and bars
- \* Schwiebert Park
- \* Outdoor festivals
- \* The arts
- \* Social environment
- \* Convenience
- \* The ease of working with City management
- \* The plaza
- \* Mississippi River
- \* Potential for growth
- \* 3AM liquor licenses
- \* Friendly people

## Least Favorite Things

The questionnaire asked participants to list their three least favorite things about Downtown. The following is a representative sample of answers selected from those provided:

- \* Not enough activity
- \* Lack of cohesive vision and boundary
- \* Over-policing for DUIs
- \* Closed storefronts that give a ghost town impression
- \* Lack of parking
- \* Two hour parking limit
- \* Overzealous parking enforcement
- \* No grocery stores
- \* Homelessness and panhandling
- \* Intoxicated and impaired people walking around at night
- \* Stigma/bad reputation
- \* Outdated stage area on plaza
- \* Lack of unity – "it seems like every man for themselves"
- \* Stench from sewers
- \* Tired, outdated look

## Public Facilities & Services

Business owners and operators were asked to rate a variety of public facilities and services as either "good," "fair," or "poor." Each is listed below in descending order based on the percentage of respondents who labeled it as "good."

- \* Fire protection (79%)
- \* Parks (66%)
- \* Electric service (59%)
- \* Police (59%)
- \* Water quality (52%)
- \* Municipal permitting (39%)
- \* Cultural facilities and programming (38%)
- \* Trash service (34%)
- \* Recreational facilities and programs (31%)
- \* Trees and landscaping (24%)
- \* Sewer (24%)
- \* Community meeting space (21%)
- \* Streets (17%)
- \* Storm water drainage (14%)
- \* Snow removal (14%)
- \* Sidewalks (10%)
- \* Data and technology infrastructure (7%)

## Downtown Patrol Unit (DPU)

80% of respondents were familiar with the Rock Island Police Department's Downtown Patrol Unit (DPU), and 60% had personally interacted with DPU officers. 43% believe that the DPU is increasing the perception of public safety in Downtown, while only 11% said they were not. 46% reported they were not sure about the DPU's impact.

## Downtown Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District

Respondents were split on whether the TIF has been effective. 7% believe it has been very effective, 17% effective, 24% kind of effective, 28% not effective, and 24% do not know.

## Improvements

The survey asked business owners if they are planning on, or would like to make, a variety of improvements to their business. The five most common improvements are listed below:

- \* New façade or store front (54%)
- \* New sign (54%)
- \* Exterior painting (46%)
- \* Remodeling (43%)
- \* Improved parking (32%)

## Relocation

If given the chance, 52% of survey respondents would not move their business out of Downtown, while 48% would. Reasons for possible relocation included: parking, high taxes, too many regulations, lack of support from other business owners, poor streetscaping, lack of investment in neighboring properties.

## Incentives

Nearly all respondents (93%) support the use of tax incentives to attract and retain businesses.

## Transportation & Parking

Nearly all business owners, their employees, and their customers use the automobile as the main means of transportation. Very few (<10%) walk, bike, work at home, or take public transportation.

A slight majority (52%) consider Downtown parking difficult, with 36% labeling it average and 12% easy. Responses were split evenly on whether more parking spots were needed near their place of business.

## Business Climate

The survey asked business owners and operators to list, in their own words, ideas that can improve the business climate. Responses provided were:

- \* Define a strategy and stay focused on getting there
- \* Improve parking access
- \* Remove parking restrictions
- \* Drop the extra tax on food and drink
- \* Be more proactive and get the word out they want to work with businesses more
- \* Spruce up the Downtown aesthetic
- \* Encourage local property holdings because out-of-town owners are not invested and are often unreachable
- \* Make fiber optic available to businesses
- \* Put a new stage in the plaza
- \* Enforce code regulations and force property owners to clean up their buildings
- \* Focus efforts on 2nd Avenue from 17th-19th Street

## Governance & Citizen Communication

A majority (54%) reported feeling informed about the City's plans for the Downtown and 71% believe the City is receptive to the business community.

## Quality of Life

When asked to describe how Downtown Rock Island has changed over the past decade, 50% believe it has improved, 29% stated it has declined, and 11% reported it has stayed about the same. The remainder were not sure.

Moving forward, business leaders are optimistic. 64% believe Downtown Rock Island will be a better place in five years.

## Plan Priorities

The top five issues that survey participants asked the Plan to focus on are:

- \* Business attraction and retention (61%)
- \* Shopping options (57%)
- \* Development and growth potential (32%)
- \* Attractiveness of buildings (25%)
- \* Streetscaping (25%)

## SMAP

sMap is a social mapping application developed by Houseal Lavigne Associates that allows residents to actively participate in the planning process. Participants can create their own community maps of issues and opportunities, including comments tagged to specific locations. Residents can flag public safety concerns, undesirable uses, key transit destinations, desired developments, poor appearance, community assets, priority development sites, problematic intersections, and more.

As of the drafting of this Existing Conditions Report, 6 user maps were created with a total of 222 points. A summary of points placed on the map that are within the study area are listed below, organized by topic area.

## ★ Community Assets

- \* Mississippi River
- \* Modern Woodman
- \* Great River Trail
- \* Schwiebert Park
- \* Circa 21
- \* Rock Island County Courthouse
- \* Blackhawk mural
- \* 2nd Avenue
- \* Modern Woodman of America Bank Building
- \* WHBF Tower
- \* Several churches
- \* Rock Island City Hall

## 🌿 Priority Development Sites

- \* Riverfront area north of IL Route 92, to the west of the Centennial Bridge
- \* Centennial Bridge gateway area, near on/off ramps
- \* Bituminous Insurance Company building
- \* Zimmerman car dealership
- \* Area around Bent River and Jim's Rib Haven (possibly well-suited for a Rainey Street style-development, like in Austin, TX)
- \* Lot C
- \* Old Warehouse night club

- \* Parking lot between 17th and 18th Streets, south of 1st Avenue
- \* 2nd Avenue/pedestrian mall area

## 🚦 Problematic Intersection

- \* The area where the Great River Trail, 17th Street, 1st Avenue, and the Modern Woodman turn-in converge

## 🚦 Public Safety Concern

- \* Trees in the sidewalk along 2nd Avenue in front of the County complex
- \* The area around the intersection of 3rd Avenue and 21st Street
- \* The area along 3rd Avenue between 23rd and 24th Streets
- \* The area along 21st Street between 4th and 5th Avenues

## 🚫 Undesirable Use

- \* Abandoned buildings around the County Courthouse area
- \* Bars along 2nd Avenue
- \* Spencer Towers
- \* Schwiebert Park (should have been tax-generating)

## 🌟 Key Transit Destination

- \* Rock Island County Facilities
- \* Waterfront around the Sylvan Slough

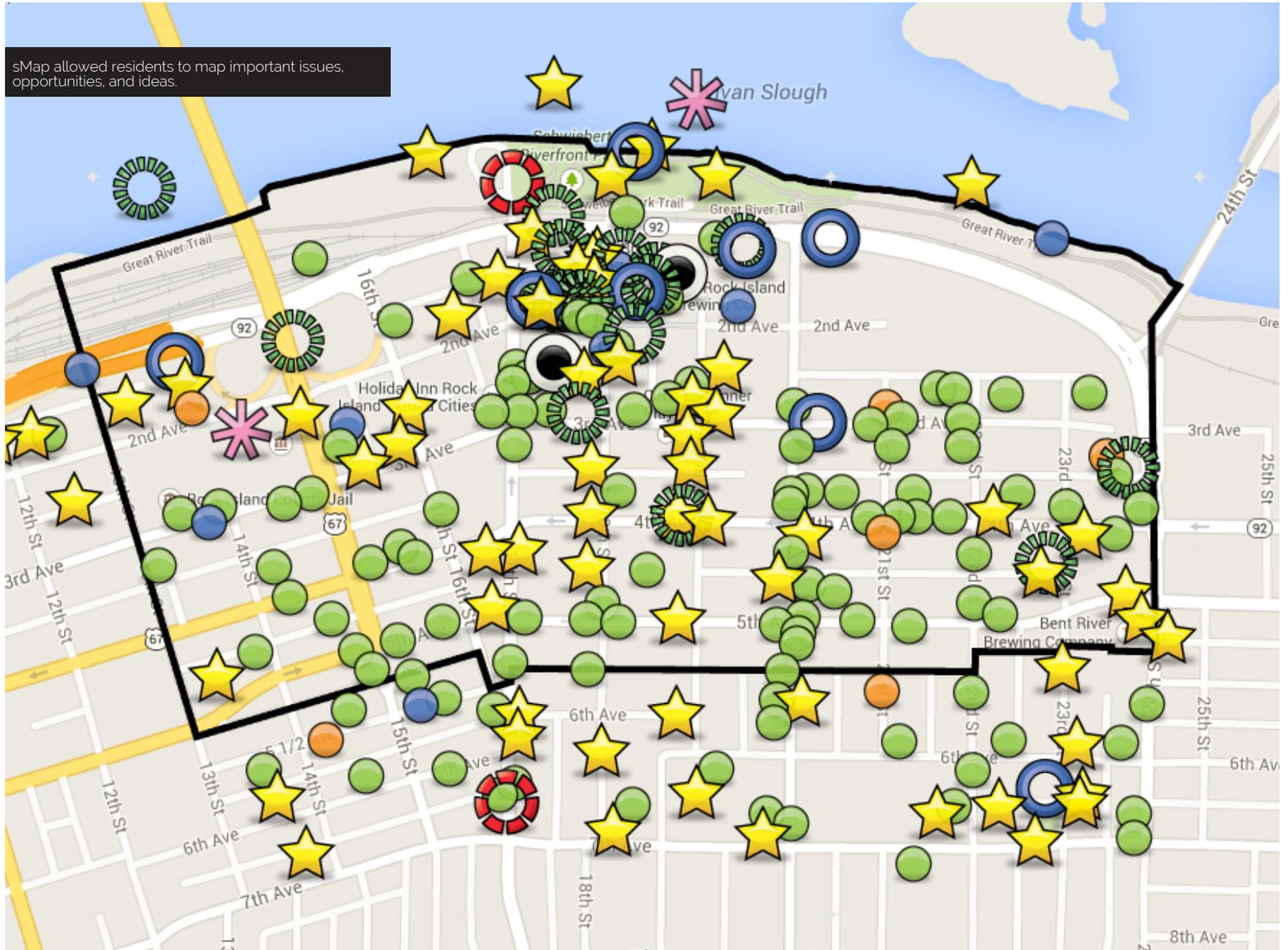
## 🟡 Poor Appearance

Mappers noted 113 buildings with poor appearance, which is too many to summarize in this report. To access all 113 points, please visit sMap, which is linked from the project website.

## 🟢 Desired Use/Development

- \* Riverfront restaurant near the Arsenal Bridge
- \* Al Klass Building
- \* Various historic buildings on 18th Street
- \* Vacant church on the corner of 3rd Avenue and 15th Street
- \* Abandoned buildings along 3rd Avenue

sMap allowed residents to map important issues, opportunities, and ideas.



## MINDMIXER

Mindmixer is an online "town hall" platform that connects Rock Island's government, the consulting team, and its citizens. It was created on the assumption that the best way to tackle challenges that affect the community is to work directly with the community and "crowd source" ideas. Each week, a new topic is posted for residents and stakeholders to comment on and post photos. Since its launch in October, the site has received a total of 100 unique visitors and 1,099 page views.

## Big Idea

MindMixer participants were asked to share their "big idea" for Downtown Rock Island. Ideas that were shared were:

- \* Create "culture scene columns," similar to those found in Munich. It is a column that allows people to post handbills, posters, and other information about community and entertainment events.
- \* Bring in the creative class by opening up vacant buildings for artist lofts, similar to the Copycat Building in Baltimore.
- \* Put in a sky bridge.
- \* Connect the Rock Island and Davenport with a ferry.
- \* Construct a mixed-use parking building across from Schwiebert Park.
- \* Develop a business recycling program and lock dumpsters in order to reduce dumpster diving.
- \* Put decorative fountains in the Mississippi River.
- \* Use solar technology to heat roads and sidewalks in winter.

## Economic Hub

MindMixer participants were asked how to make Downtown a stronger economic center for our community. Ideas shared were:

- \* Incentives to bring blighted buildings up to code and recruit new businesses to fill vacant storefronts.
- \* Build a new parking garage.
- \* Brand the city as an arts and family-friendly destination, and build an aquarium, children's museum, natural museum, amusement park, or something similar.

## Great River Plaza

MindMixer users were asked about what should be done with the Great River Plaza along 2nd Avenue: remove or improve? Several participants suggested removing the plaza, while one was torn between keeping it and implementing a "woonerf."

## Images of a Vibrant Downtown

MindMixer users uploaded photos of downtowns that they believe were vibrant and exciting, and could be used as a model for Downtown. A diverse array of photos were submitted, including some from Downtown Chattanooga, Glasgow, Cleveland, Santa Monica, and more.



## 3. DOWNTOWN PROFILE

Long-range visioning and planning is founded upon an understanding of where the community is today. This chapter includes an analysis of current conditions in Downtown Rock Island, including a summary of the existing plans and studies, demographic and market trends, current zoning and development regulations and guidelines. The chapter is organized into the following sections:

- ✦ Past City Plans & Studies
- ✦ Existing Development
- ✦ Downtown Market Snapshot

For additional and more detailed background information, please see the Synthesis of Existing Conditions Report produced in December 2014.

### PAST CITY PLANS & STUDIES

This section contains a review of past plans and studies commissioned or used by the City of Rock Island and impacting policy, planning, and development within Downtown Rock Island. The Downtown Revitalization Plan recognizes the value of past planning efforts and will build upon them where applicable as a component of the community's new vision.

### Downtown Parking Study (2003)

The City's Downtown Parking Study catalogued the number of public parking spaces and usage of spaces in the Downtown area, characterized as between 1st and 5th Avenues and 13th to 22nd Streets. The study identified 2,200 total parking spaces, of which 860 are available for customer parking. On the whole, the study displayed that the Downtown area generally contained a surplus of parking. For example, out of 1,667 permitted parking spaces, only an average of 513 spaces (31%) in 2003 and 628 spaces (38%) in 2002 were utilized on a monthly basis between May and August.

### RiverVision Plan (2004)

The RiverVision Plan was developed in partnership between the City of Rock Island, the City of Davenport, the Development Association of Rock Island (DARI), and DavenportOne. The Plan contains a framework for enhancing the Mississippi River waterfront and improving the quality of life in both cities. Because Rock Island is protected by a floodwall, the Plan encourages development up to the water's edge in the Downtown area. Specific recommendations or projects relating to Downtown Rock Island include:

- ✦ Construct a dock near 18th Street;
- ✦ Create a new riverfront park;
- ✦ Construct an urban promenade along the waterfront;



- \* Establish water taxi service between Davenport and Rock Island;
- \* Build a series of river fountains visually linking piers on both sides of the river;
- \* Develop new housing and parking just south of 1st Avenue and between 17th and 18th Streets;
- \* Create a river outlook along Arsenal Bridge
- \* Develop new housing along the waterfront north of 1st Avenue and between 20th to 24th Streets;
- \* Pursue redevelopment of several buildings, including the McKesson and U.S. Post Office buildings;
- \* Convert the Spencer Towers from affordable housing to market rate; and
- \* Implement pedestrian enhancements along 1st Avenue between 16th and 19th Street.

Over the course of the past decade, many of these recommendations have been implemented, such as the development of a riverfront park (Schwiebert Park), construction of a dock (The Landing), and re-use of the McKesson Building (Riverview Lofts). Other tasks, such as an urban promenade or river taxi service, remain incomplete. The RiverVision Coordinating Committee is currently developing a list of projects that should be implemented over the next ten years.

### **Downtown Strategic Plan (2006)**

The 2006 Downtown Strategic Plan was the official vision for Downtown from 2007-2010, updating several past strategic plans, including the Downtown 2000 Plan. Developed through a public-private partnership, the Downtown 2000 Plan was a guiding force for initiating many positive changes within Downtown Rock Island over the past decades. The 2006 Strategic Plan contained nine objectives.

- \* Increase utilization and occupancy of downtown properties;
- \* Complete a riverfront plan while integrating the downtown as a place of commerce and recreation;
- \* Continue to grow the downtown residential population;
- \* Engage the business community to understand their needs, develop solutions, and support the growth of the downtown area;

- \* Continue to enhance a pedestrian friendly downtown;
- \* Refine and promote the brand of the downtown area;
- \* Enhance the creation and performance of the arts for sale or public display;
- \* Complete evaluation of nightlife activities and make recommendations on changes to enhance the image of downtown; and
- \* Collaborate with neighboring cities.

While many objectives and their supporting strategies are still applicable, the Plan is considered out-of-date. In 2013, the City began a process of updating the Strategic Plan for 2014-2020, but ultimately decided to hire a consultant to develop a more detailed Downtown Revitalization Plan instead.

## **Downtown Rock Island ArtsPlan (2007)**

The ArtsPlan provides recommendations for enhancing the arts in Rock Island and using the arts to increase quality of life and generate new economic development. Recommendations affecting Downtown Rock Island include:

- \* Creating a loan program for artists;
- \* Supporting the Metro Arts Program (decorative benches and murals within Downtown);
- \* Supporting "The District";
- \* Supporting the Sculpture in the District program;
- \* Create a list of spaces available to artists;
- \* Review street furniture and fixture designs;
- \* Monitor state and federal arts programs;
- \* Incorporate art into the new waterfront park;

- \* Establish a waterfront performing arts venue;
- \* Develop a guide for local arts programming;
- \* Support the painting of murals;
- \* Expand the downtown banner program using designs from local artists;
- \* Create an arts incubator;
- \* Create a match-program for businesses wishing to install public art;
- \* Repurpose the Rocket Theatre property; and
- \* Develop an arts/architecture lighting program.

Many elements of the Plan have been implemented, such as repurposing of the Rocket Theatre property (Establishment Theatre) and establishment of a waterfront performing arts venue (the stage at Schwiebert Park). Other objectives remain incomplete or ongoing.

## **IL Route 92 Traffic Engineering Study (2008)**

IL Route 92 along 1st Avenue acts as a physical barrier between the Mississippi River waterfront and the Downtown area. In 2007, the City commissioned a traffic study to investigate the feasibility of relocating the state route to another roadway. Completed in 2008, the study recommends relocation of IL 92 to along 4th (westbound) and 5th Avenues (eastbound), contingent upon construction of a full diamond interchange at 11th Street and other roadway improvements. The 1st Avenue corridor would then be reduced to one lane in each direction with parallel parking at certain points. Conversion of 16th and 17th Streets from two-way traffic to one-way traffic was also evaluated, but not recommended due to numerous negative impacts on land use and traffic. The City received preliminary approval from the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) to move forward with the relocation, however, no funding has been identified. The City recently updated this study in 2014, however, as of the time of this report's drafting, it was unavailable to the Consulting Team for review.

## **Bikeways Plan (2009)**

The Bikeways Plan is the City's blueprint for developing a system of connected bike routes throughout Rock Island that can enhance quality of life, support development efforts, and promote healthy activity. The Plan recommends a network of striped bike lanes on selected major streets and separated bike trails in other locations. Recommendations pertaining to the Downtown include:

- \* Support biking programming and the installation of bike racks;
- \* Implement a striped bike lane along 20th Street;
- \* Pursue a Bike Friendly Community designation as awarded by the League of American Bicyclists.

Following adoption of the Plan, the City created a cost-sharing program for businesses looking to install bike racks. Sharrows were also painted on 20th Street, as bike lanes were considered too costly. The City's most recent bike map recommends 3rd Avenue, 17th Street, and 20th Street as the preferred routes through Downtown.

## Community Perception Survey (2009)

Renaissance Rock Island conducted a statistically reliable survey in 2009 to measure awareness and attitudes towards Rock Island. The survey sampled 800 adults: 400 from both Rock Island and 400 from other Quad Cities municipalities. Surveys were also conducted in years prior for comparison. Key findings relating to the Downtown are:

- \* Overall, respondents felt that Rock Island had the best Downtown in the Quad Cities (39%), followed by Davenport (32%) and Moline (22%);
- \* Rock Island residents patronize Downtown Rock Island at a higher frequency than non-residents. Generally, as distance from the Downtown increases, patronage decreases; The 18-24 age group frequents the Downtown more often than all other age groups. The 65+ age group is the least likely to visit Downtown;

- \* The main reasons for going Downtown were entertainment/bars and dining. The main reasons for not going Downtown were lack of interest and time; and
- \* Downtown is considered safer by residents than nonresidents. For example, 54% of residents considered Downtown "very safe" or "safe," while only 43% of nonresidents said the same. This speaks to issues of negative external perception.

Renaissance Rock Island has since stopped conducting these annual surveys, making the 2009 survey the most recent collection of attitudes and opinions about Downtown.

## Arsenal Gateway Revitalization Plan (2013)

The Arsenal Gateway Revitalization Plan looks to guide development and inspire investment in the area around the Government Bridge that links Rock Island to Arsenal Island. The western portion of this Plan's study area overlaps with the eastern portion of the Downtown Revitalization Plan's study area. Recommendations applicable to the Downtown include:

- \* Attract and retain businesses that are synergistic with Rock Island Arsenal operations;
- \* Prioritize high-visibility areas for new development and streetscaping enhancements, particularly the intersections of 24th Street with 4th and 5th Avenues;
- \* Retain older buildings with architectural character and ensure infill development is appropriate to the existing character of the area;
- \* Increase safety of walking and biking

throughout the gateway area, especially at crossings along 4th and 5th Avenues;

- \* Implement formal and informal green spaces to act as public gathering spaces; and
- \* Enhance the unique identity of the area with signage, street furniture, public art, and landscaping.

Plan implementation has yet to occur.

## Housing Needs Assessment

The Housing Needs Assessment study was conducted by the Rock Island Housing Authority to better understand and project changes that may occur in the Quad Cities housing market in the coming years. On the whole, the study estimated that the City's population would decline by 3.4% between 2012 and 2022. Wards 1 and 5, which contain the Downtown Revitalization Plan's study area, are projected to lose population as well. An analysis of a variety of market and demographic factors led to several recommendations that can strengthen the local housing market:

- \* Community collaboration;
- \* Housing education, input, and outreach;
- \* Support employment growth along with housing initiatives; and
- \* Follow successful projects and programs.

## Comprehensive Plan (2014)

The City adopted its Comprehensive Plan in April 2014 with a grant awarded by the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity. The Plan envisions Downtown Rock Island as a vibrant, mixed-use hub in a pedestrian-oriented environment with on-street parking, minimal building setbacks, and designs and scale that are in keeping with its historic character. Because the Downtown is not the geographic center of the City, the Plan notes that the City must exert substantial effort to retain and enhance vitality. The Plan contains many policies and recommendations related to the Downtown area, but the most specific include:

- \* Preserve the architectural and historic character and enforce design standards and regulations;
- \* Promote the expansion, retention, and upgrading of specialty retail, restaurants, financial services, offices, professional

services, and community uses through marketing, investment, and incentive strategies;

- \* Expand the scope of the "The District" to be an artisanal, culinary, and craftsman hub;
- \* Explore establishment of a Business Improvement District;
- \* Beautify the streetscape along key gateways such as 15th Street from the Centennial Bridge;
- \* Promote housing that meets market demands and continue to collaborate with Renaissance Rock Island and other entities to promote and develop housing in Downtown; and
- \* Develop a strategy to secure public access to the Mississippi Riverfront.

## Strategic Development Plan (2014)

The Strategic Development Plan acts as the City's economic development strategy and was created as a component to the Comprehensive Plan. The Plan focuses on two strategic goals: (1) placemaking that can help grow the tax base, and (2) repositioning the city by improving market image and reversing decline. The Plan recommends making Rock Island the international and economic hub of the Quad Cities, embracing and activating the Mississippi River, and celebrating the best of city living. Many of the more detailed recommendations are borrowed directly from the Comprehensive Plan.

## EXISTING DEVELOPMENT

### Zoning Ordinance

The City's zoning ordinance was adopted in 1976 and amended in 2002. The study area contains five zoning districts:

- ★ **Central Business District (B2)** is a high density, compact, pedestrian-oriented shopping, office, and entertainment area. This district covers the "heart" of the study area and facilitates the uses typically thought of within a Downtown.
- ★ **Central Business District (B3)** provides for a variety of retail goods and services, especially those that require access from major thoroughfares and are reliant on vehicle traffic. The fringe area surrounding the Central Business District and major roadways is classified as B3.

- ★ **One to Six Family Residence District (R4)**

is a district providing mainly for single family uses, but allowing some nonresidential uses such as churches, schools, and boarding houses. Several blocks along the western portion of the study area are zoned R4.

- ★ **Multi-Family District (R6)**

Multi-Family District (R6) facilitates a higher-density residential development, permitting single family, multiple family, senior living, and some nonresidential uses together in a blended environment. Only a few parcels within the study are zoned R6; the majority of the Downtown's multi-family units are actually in other zoning districts, such as B2 or B3.

- ★ **Light Industrial District (I1)**

provides for industrial development that can be compatible with adjacent properties. Parts of the waterfront and around IL 92 are designated as I1.

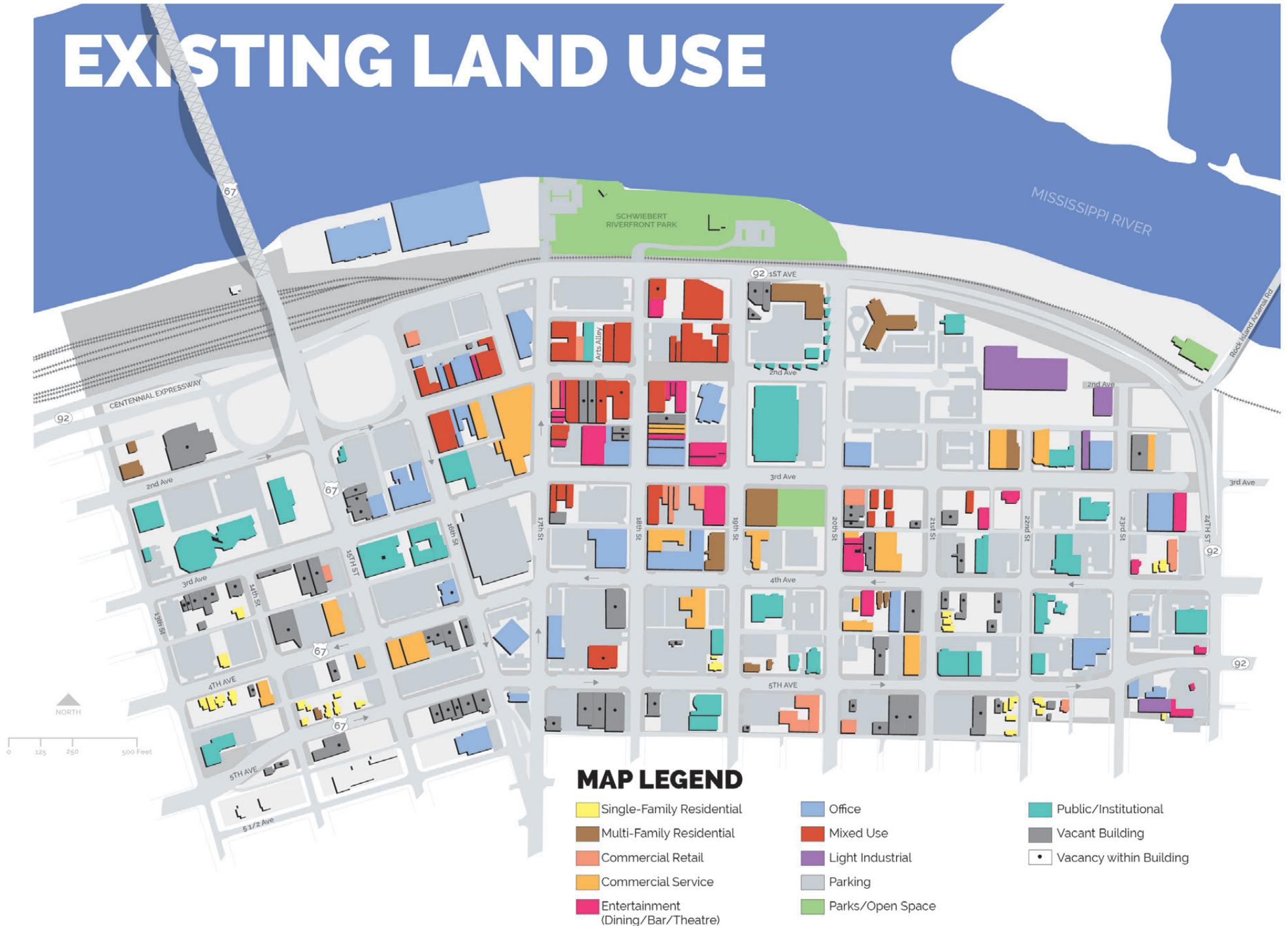
### Sign Ordinance

The sign ordinance was enacted in December 2004 to assure compatibility of signs with surrounding land usage, to conserve property values in all districts, to protect the public investment in streets and highways, to promote the safety and recreational value of public travel, and to strengthen the economy of the city.

### Downtown Design Guidelines

Downtown Design Guidelines were developed by the City and Renaissance Rock Island to assist those making investments in new or renovated buildings within Downtown. The guidelines are not binding, and were developed only to help property owners understand the importance of design considerations and to raise expectations about good design. They make recommendations regarding setbacks, frontage, streetscaping, public spaces, access, signage, and parking.

# EXISTING LAND USE



# DOWNTOWN SNAPSHOT



**ROCK ISLAND**

0.30 SQ MILES  
192 ACRES



**MOLINE**

0.67 SQ MILES  
426 ACRES



**DAVENPORT**

0.28 SQ MILES  
180 ACRES



**BETTENDORF**

0.43 SQ MILES  
275 ACRES

## PEOPLE

Residential Population	1,075	1,167	1,090	527
Daytime Population	4,289	4,271	7,163	2,292
Median Age	39.3	32.0	40.5	41.5
% of Residents Between 20-34	22.5%	25.6%	35.1%	20.1%
Median Income (*1)	\$40,705	\$48,655	\$41,142	\$71,834
% Racial Minority	53.5%	31.9%	34.9%	8.0%

## JOBS

Total Jobs	3,469	3,671	6,397	2,133
vs. 10 Years Ago (*2)	-335	-233	-54	-454
Top 3 Industries	Public Administration (1,244 jobs) Finance & Insurance (996 jobs) Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services (262 jobs)	Wholesale Trade (533 jobs) Construction (414 jobs) Accommodation & Food Services (412 jobs)	Public Administration (2,027 jobs) Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services (780 jobs) Management of Companies & Enterprises (688 jobs)	Accommodation & Food Services (831 jobs) Public Administration (273 jobs) Retail Trade (223 jobs)
Major Employers	Modern Woodman of America City of Rock Island Rock Island County Illinois Casualty Insurance	McLaughlin Body Company KONE United Healthcare City of Moline	Lee Enterprises City of Davenport MidAmerican Energy Company Scott County	City of Bettendorf Isle of Capri
% of Workforce Living Downtown	1.2%	0.8%	0.3%	0.6%

## HOUSING

Total Units	582	581	588	349
% Renter-Occupied	71.3%	66.7%	92.5%	34.3%
% Vacant	13.2%	12.1%	6.5%	9.7%
Median Value	\$135,417	\$83,784	\$147,116 (*3)	\$173,469
Recent or Ongoing Developments	The Locks; Riverview Lofts; Star Block; McKesson Lofts	Enterprise Live-Work Lofts; Old Moline High School Lofts; Mills at Riverbend Commons	5th Street Lofts; Kerker Lofts; 4th Street Lofts; Davenport Lofts	None

## RETAIL

SHOPPING, DINING, ENTERTAINMENT

Total Destinations	41	65	55	39
Bars & Restaurants	24	18	22	12
Stores	13	38	22	24
Entertainment Venues	4	9	11	3
Resident Spending in 10 Minute Market Area (\$M)	\$876	\$1,671	\$1,093	\$1,528

SOURCES: ESRI Business Analyst, U.S. Census Bureau, City of Rock Island, Houseal Lavigne Associates

(\*1) Data for the entire city was substituted for downtown because of incomplete reporting (\*2) 2011 (most recent) vs. 2002 (earliest available) (\*3) Data for the entire city was substituted for downtown because of incomplete reporting  
Demographics data is from 2014 Jobs data is from 2011 Housing data is from 2014 Retail data is from 2013 and 2014



## 4. VISION, GOALS & OBJECTIVES

What should Downtown Rock Island look like in 15 years? This section provides a clear answer to that question and establishes the context for the subsequent policy recommendations in the following chapters. The Vision, Goals, and Objectives are the result of input from workshops and online outreach conducted with local residents, business leaders, and stakeholders over the course of six months. Together, the Vision, Goals, and Objectives establish a new direction for Downtown Rock Island.

### **A VISION FOR DOWNTOWN ROCK ISLAND**

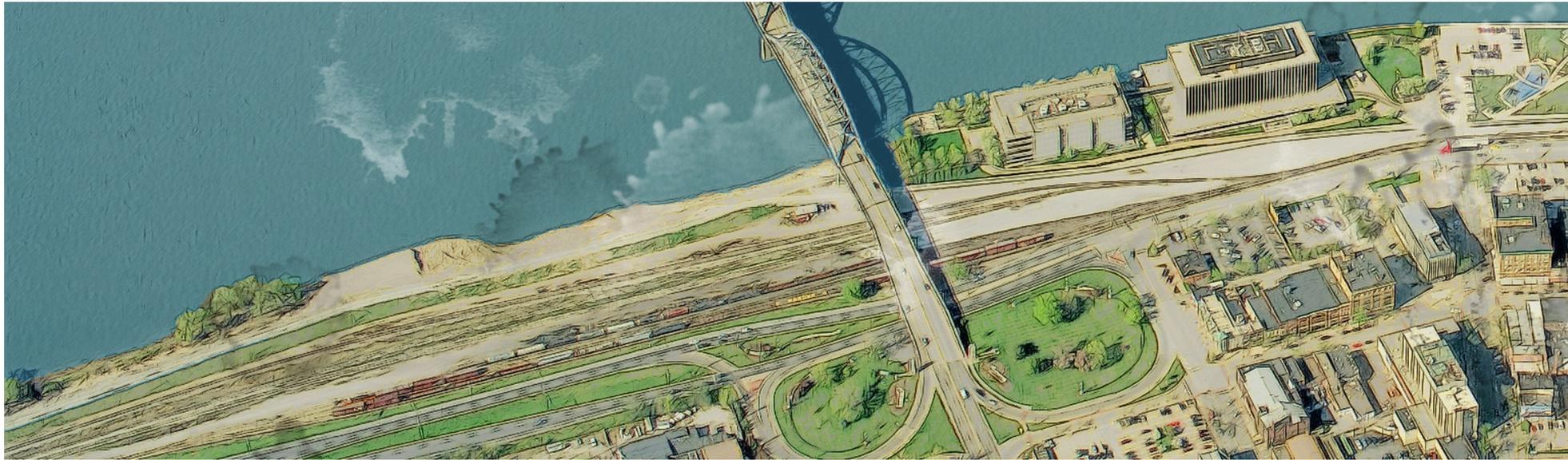
The Vision Statement paints a picture of what Downtown Rock Island will look like in the future, 15 years from the adoption of the Downtown Revitalization Plan. It is written as a retrospective, in the year 2030, detailing all of the accomplishments and achievements that have occurred since 2015. The Vision Statement incorporates the most central ideas and themes generated during the community outreach process and provides a guiding framework for other elements of the Plan.

### **In 2030...**

Downtown Rock Island is thriving and has reemerged as the heart of the community and a vital part of the Quad Cities economy. The entertainment scene has remained a big draw for Downtown, but is now complemented by a full mix of uses, including new restaurants, offices, quaint cafes, art galleries, local theatres, and niche retail shops. Not long ago, some described Downtown as a ghost town. Guided by recommendations of the 2015 Downtown Revitalization Plan, the City has established a critical mass of residential and commercial uses, and families, office workers, joggers, dog walkers, and college students can be seen on the streets at any given time.

Although it has experienced significant change, Downtown Rock Island remains a

hub for entertainment. Anyone can now find something exciting and entertaining to do in Downtown, from college students and young professionals to families and seniors. 2nd Avenue has graduated beyond the bar scene and is now complemented by quality restaurants and shops, producing a more balanced and family-friendly environment. The most significant change to the area has been the conversion of 2nd Avenue between 17th and 19th Streets into the Quad Cities' only woonerf. The woonerf, or "living street," was recommended in the Revitalization Plan to help create a unique and accessible environment on a segment of street that was once closed to traffic all together. The street is still closed occasionally, on busy days and nights in the warmer months, but typically it's a place where cars, cyclists, and pedestrians actively mix together in a shared social space.



The Theatre District, anchored by Circa 21 and the Establishment Theatre, bustles with activity in the evenings and weekends. This type of activity is bolstered by festivals and special events, such as "Rock the District" and "Ya Maka My Weekend," that year-after-year have continued to draw thousands to Downtown. Residents walk along the vibrant sidewalks to shows and film screenings, and others from throughout the Quad Cities bike or drive into Downtown to eat dinner, attend shows, and grab a drink afterwards.

Fifteen years ago, the concentration of established concert venues, theatres, and affordable vacant space converged to make Downtown Rock Island attractive to artists, musicians, and creative professionals. Music studios, graphic design firms, galleries, and live-work spaces sprouted up in an "arts corridor" along the eastern fringe of Downtown. The creative community is

still growing and is one of Downtown Rock Island's biggest champions and advocates.

Downtown's transformation can be credited to both the public and private investment that has occurred simultaneously, improving the appearance of the area. Not long ago, Downtown looked "tired" and blighted properties and vacant sites left much to be desired. Guided by the Downtown Revitalization Plan, partnerships, and incentives, almost all of the undesirable sites and buildings have been either demolished, redeveloped, or adaptively reused.

Private investment in Downtown has been complemented by a unified streetscape program, consisting of street trees, benches, public art, and pedestrian scaled lighting. Small parks and plazas are scattered throughout Downtown, providing a place to sit and rest in a recreational oasis in the midst of an urban environment. The

WHBF tower is lit at night, illuminating the Downtown skyline with changing colors based on the seasons. Gateway treatments of signage and meticulous landscaping along the Centennial Bridge corridor welcome visitors to Downtown Rock Island. These improvements to the built environment have created a more "welcoming" environment, putting more eyes on the street and increasing perceptions of public safety. Crime statistics show Downtown Rock Island to be the safest downtown in the Quad Cities.

Downtown's white collar jobs continue to drive the engine of economic growth. Major employers in the insurance, public administration, law, and finance industries are thriving, and the Downtown continues to diversify its economic base and attract new employers from a range of industries. Dated office space has been demolished or upgraded, with a renovated older stock

intermixed with new office buildings that complement the area's existing character.

Not long ago, having "work lunches" in Downtown was near impossible, with few options for dining. Senior leadership of some companies and firms were reluctant to take clients and job candidates out for lunch or dinner in Downtown. Today, however, there are a variety of attractive and quality dining options, and office workers no longer just "drive in and drive out." Some eat their lunches in Schwiebert Park, others patronize Downtown's expanded restaurant scene, and seemingly everyone attends happy hours after work.



A few years before the Downtown Revitalization Plan was created, the City started an effort to reintroduce residential units into Downtown. Working cooperatively with developers, property owners, and with groups like Renaissance Rock Island, the City has been able to attract a significant amount of residential development Downtown. Since the Plan's adoption, hundreds of new residents now call Downtown home. To them Downtown Rock Island is not just an employment or entertainment hub, it is their neighborhood.

Despite all of the new investment and excitement, Downtown Rock Island has maintained a connection with its past, and its history is cherished and celebrated through a variety of new efforts. Wayfinding signage throughout Downtown directs visitors to a number of significant destinations, including important historical buildings such as the Star Block and Holsapple's Place.

Interactive signs along the sidewalk tell the history of the sites and buildings, including Downtown's importance as a trading post and rail corridor and the influence of notorious gangster John Patrick Looney.

While Downtown can often get crowded during festivals, evenings, and weekends, the City's approach to parking has resulted in a much easier and efficient experience for drivers. On-street metered parking has increased from two hours to four hours during the business day, allowing patrons to linger longer. The formerly underutilized Parking Ramp was upgraded, with new lighting, wayfinding signage, and a digital sign on the façade letting drivers know how many free spaces are remaining. A shared parking agreement with the City and several daytime Downtown businesses has also increased the number of available spaces on nights and weekends. Thanks to a cleaner and more attractive physical en-

vironment, people are also willing to walk a few more blocks than they used to.

In 2010, the City opened Schwiebert Park. Named after former Mayor Mark Schwiebert, the park helped connect the City to the riverfront. Today, Schwiebert Park continues to be one of Downtown's greatest draws. The park's breathtaking views of the Mississippi River, Downtown Davenport, and Centennial Bridge attract visitors young and old. Children play in the fountains and families bring picnic lunches and listen to live music during the warmer months.

Fifteen years ago, accessing the park was difficult and outright scary due to the need to cross a state highway. After numerous studies conducted by the City, IL Route 92 was finally relocated away from 1st Avenue, giving the City ownership and control of the street. New crosswalks, on-street parking, bump-outs, and landscaping have made

crossing 1st Avenue easy and safe, facilitating a more seamless transition between the Downtown and Schwiebert Park.

A number of other improvements have also helped make Downtown's pedestrian realm active and friendly. The compact street grid has been preserved and the City has established a complete network of wide sidewalks on both sides of the road. Sidewalk gaps have been filled and new crosswalks installed. New bike "sharrow" pavement painting and signage can be found along Downtown roads, supporting bicyclists and facilitating easy access between Downtown and the Great River Trail.

## GOALS & OBJECTIVES

The Downtown Revitalization Plan is the City's official guide and blueprint for improving Downtown Rock Island and achieving the community's desired vision for this critical area of the community. Through clear goals and objectives, the Plan becomes a guiding framework for decision-making and collective community action. The Goals and Objectives for the Downtown Revitalization Plan consist of these two elements:

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

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

These Goals and Objectives provide direction and serve as a guide for the evaluation of development proposals and land use alternatives. The Plan's five goals are structured to respond to five fundamental questions about Downtown that were heard repeatedly during the public and stakeholder outreach process:

- \* How can a self-sustaining, critical mass of residents, employees, tourists, and visitors be established?
- \* What can be done to make Downtown's physical appearance and urban environment more unique and attractive?
- \* What is the best way to leverage existing assets and connections to nearby activity generators?
- \* How can historic character be preserved while accommodating new growth and investment?
- \* How can Downtown become friendlier for vehicles, pedestrians, and cyclists?

In addition to the Goals and Objectives presented in this section, more specific policy recommendations that support the goals and objectives are included in the Plan chapters, as well as information that can help target the goals and objectives to a timeframe and specific locations within the Downtown.

## Goal #1

Establish a self-sustaining, exciting mixed-use environment with a critical mass of activity.

1. Promote a diverse mixtures of retail, service, office, institutional, entertainment, recreational, and residential uses.
2. Encourage the development of mixed-use buildings throughout Downtown, such as retail or dining on the ground floor and office and residential uses on the upper floors.
3. Encourage a dense and compact built form to maximize use of land and enhance character and the pedestrian atmosphere.
4. Encourage the adaptive reuse of historic structures for commercial and residential development.
5. Work with property owners and developers to identify, position, and develop vacant and underutilized infill sites for new commercial and residential development.
6. Continue to support Renaissance Rock Island in their efforts to increase the residential population of the Downtown area.
7. Recruit businesses to the Downtown area that can provide daily necessities, such as a grocery store, to support "day-to-day" residential living in Downtown.
8. Partner with existing Downtown businesses and Renaissance Rock Island to encourage employees to live within Downtown.
9. Promote and encourage the development of additional high-quality office space within the Downtown.
10. Identify and target specific industries and companies for attraction to the Downtown area, based on ability to create synergies with existing businesses and capitalize on projected industry growth trends.
11. Work with local businesses, artists, and non-profits to "activate" underutilized spaces (e.g. alleys, vacant storefronts, parking lots) with pop-up events, food trucks and carts, beer gardens, art shows, and other creative uses.
12. Support and expand the hosting of street festivals, concerts, races, and other events within Downtown.
13. Support and encourage the patio seating and outdoor dining by restaurants and bars throughout Downtown.
14. Support the expansion or relocation of the Rock Island Public Library within Downtown.



## GOAL #2

Improve Downtown's appearance, unique physical character, and overall "sense of place."

1. Preserve Downtown's compact street grid.
2. Revisit and reinforce design guidelines for buildings and storefronts.
3. Work with local artists to identify opportunities to increase the amount of public art within the Downtown area.
4. Develop pedestrian-scaled signage and wayfinding that highlights Downtown Rock Island's history and provides context for important sites and structures.
5. Implement attractive gateway features at key entrances to the Downtown, such as at the foot of Centennial Bridge and along 4th and 5th Avenues.

6. Design a unique streetscape scheme that incorporates landscaping, lighting, street furniture, and materials that will foster a cohesive Downtown.
7. Partner with WHBF to evaluate options for lighting the antenna tower at night to provide a beacon for Downtown and a signature element in the Rock Island skyline.
8. Promote the development of new public spaces.
9. Establish a business improvement district to ensure regular maintenance of streetscaping infrastructure, including snow removal, and cleanliness of public spaces.

## Goal #3

Facilitate the creation of a "Theatre District" that can increase the visibility and reach of Downtown's many theatres and performing arts venues.

1. Continue to implement the Arsenal Gateway Revitalization Plan to better physically connect Arsenal Island with Downtown Rock Island.
2. Leverage Downtown Rock Island's location within a federal Historic Underutilized Business Zone (HUB ZONE) and proximity to Rock Island Arsenal to attract and retain spin-off businesses in the defense and technology industries.
3. Encourage the rehabilitation, expansion, or relocation (within Downtown) of existing civic activity generators, such as the County Courthouse Complex.
4. Facilitate the creation of a "Theatre District", comprising Downtown's existing theatres and performing arts venues.

5. Partner with Augustana College to identify opportunities to better link the Downtown and campus, including shuttle bus service, student housing, internship opportunities, and pedestrian connections.
6. Support efforts of Renaissance Rock Island's "The District" to make Downtown the premier entertainment hub of the Quad Cities.
7. Continue to implement the RiverVision Plan and promote the use of the Mississippi River for recreational activities such as kayaking, canoeing, jet skiing, boating, and more.

## GOAL #4

Achieve a balance between preservation and new development.

1. Prioritize adaptive re-use of historic structures over demolition, where appropriate.
2. Preserve the existing historic character of 2nd Avenue and the "Core Downtown" area and ensure that it remains the symbolic heart of Downtown.
3. Ensure that new development within the Downtown area matches the general scale and character of existing structures.
4. Revisit and reinforce design guidelines for buildings and storefronts.
5. Preserve and repair Downtown's streetwall by strictly enforcing zero foot setbacks for front and side yards.
6. Promote and help facilitate parcel assembly to create larger, more desirable development sites within the Downtown that are consistent with the Future Land Use Plan.

## GOAL #5

Improve the overall friendliness, efficiency, and safety of all modes of downtown transportation.

1. Partner with the Illinois Department of Transportation to ensure the safety, quality, and access of IL 92 and US 67 into Downtown Rock Island.
2. Develop wayfinding at key entrance locations that can direct visitors to important destinations, including community facilities, districts, and parking.
3. Implement roadway and pedestrian improvements along First Avenue (e.g. bump-outs, streetscaping, and a road diet, etc.) that can create a more intimate and inviting environment for pedestrians and can better link the waterfront to Downtown.
4. Evaluate opportunities to convert 4th Avenue and 5th Avenue into two-way streets.
5. Reopen 2nd Avenue between 17th and 19th Streets to traffic and repurpose the area, including the Great River Plaza, into a woonerf ("living street") that views the road as a social space shared between pedestrians, vehicles, and cyclists.
6. Work with Downtown businesses to create a more consistent, predictable, and business-friendly on-street parking approach, re-evaluating the location of metered parking, intensity of enforcement, the number of hours of parking allowed, and hours of enforcement.
7. Evaluate infrastructure upgrades to the Parking Ramp, including new lighting, signage, and wayfinding, that can increase its attractiveness for usage and reduce reliance on on-street parking.
8. Facilitate shared parking agreements between daytime and nighttime businesses that promote better utilization of land in Downtown by pooling parking spaces.
9. Enhance all pedestrian crossings so that they are clearly visible to both vehicles and pedestrians.

10. Ensure that all sidewalks are consistent and continuous within the Downtown, including filling sidewalk gaps and widening sidewalk gaps, where appropriate.
11. Improve the pedestrian friendliness of 1st Avenue and increase the safety and efficiency of accessing Schwiebert Park from Downtown.
12. Develop clearly marked, safe, and efficient bike connections between Downtown streets and the Great River Trail.
13. Promote the development of pedestrian amenities, such as benches and small plazas.



## 5. LAND USE & DEVELOPMENT

Downtown Rock Island was once the center of business and commerce for the City of Rock Island, a hub of activity where people lived, worked, and shopped. Slowly over the past several decades this activity and energy has eroded.

Following World-War II, Rock Island experienced consequences of urban blight. As the oldest of the Quad Cities, Rock Island had an aged housing stock and city core, and quickly began to experience disinvestment throughout the City. Rock Island looked to federal relief for assistance, including construction of public housing, urban renewal, and the Model Cities program.

The impact of the automobile has also been detrimental to Rock Island's urban fabric. Once a walkable, pedestrian oriented area, Downtown started to reposition itself to cater to the "driving" public. Surface parking lots began to dominate the landscape, and auto-oriented uses, including car dealerships and service stations opened in Downtown. Compounding the problem, a state highway separated Downtown from its riverfront, and U.S. Highway 67 ripped through the core.

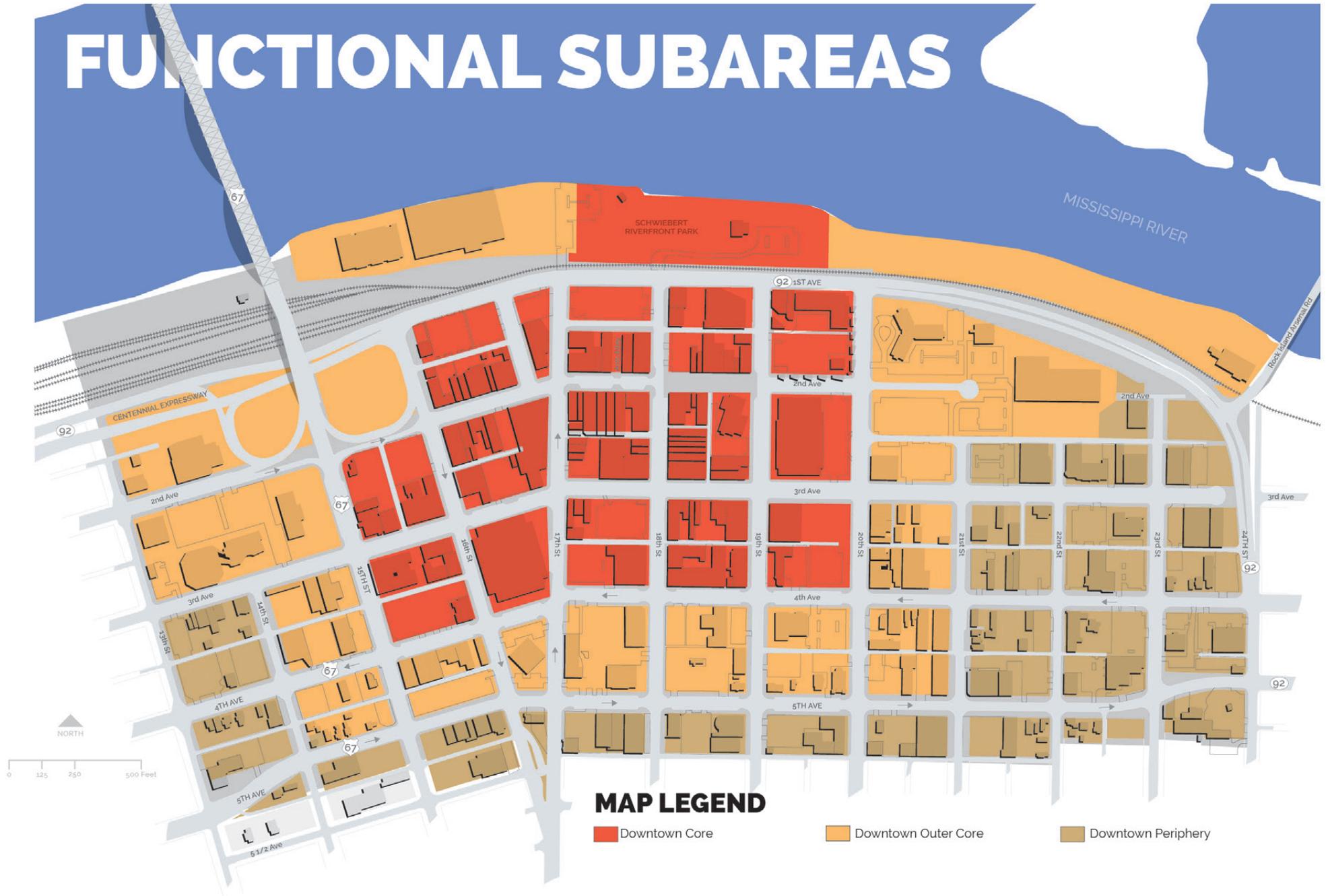
Today, retail is nearly gone. While there are office uses Downtown, workers arrive and leave by car, with no compelling reason to leave their offices for lunch or errands. Not all is bleak, however. Local theatres and "The District" have helped Rock Island establish a solid footing as an entertainment destination in the Quad Cities, residential development is resurgent, and each year tens of thousands of people converge in "The District" for numerous cultural and entertainment festivals.

This section presents recommendations for development and redevelopment within Downtown Rock Island. The recommendations are based on an assessment of existing conditions and market potential; input from residents; and, best planning practices.

The Downtown Study Area has been divided into the following Subareas for the purposes of analysis and planning recommendations:

- \* Downtown Core
- \* Outer Core
- \* Downtown Periphery

# FUNCTIONAL SUBAREAS



## **LAND USE**

A mix of appropriate land uses is essential for establishing a self-sustaining, exciting mixed-use environment with a critical mass of activity in Downtown. To that end, Downtown Rock Island should continue to be strengthened and improved as a "mixed-use" area, an area truly unique to the City. By promoting a mix of retail, service, office, institutional, entertainment, recreational, and residential uses, the City can foster the desired environment and energy in Downtown. Much of the vitality within successful downtowns is the result of a synergy that is created among the variety of uses. To become the downtown the community envisions, bolstering the mix of uses will be essential for Rock Island.

## **Residential**

Downtown Rock Island has seen a surge in residential development over the past decade. Multi-family units consist primarily of mixed-uses buildings, with living units above ground floor commercial and office uses. Opportunities exist for additional and diversified housing within the Downtown area. Multi-family housing, condominiums and townhomes, can be a suitable component of mixed-use projects with ground floor retail or as "stand alone" residential developments. Opportunities for condominium and townhouse projects also exist in the Downtown area and would help increase the density of residents which would support existing and new commercial development.

## **Retail**

The future success of Downtown Rock Island will depend on a number of variables, including establishing and maintaining a stronger retail component. Once a center of commerce for the entire City, retail in the Downtown has fled to other areas in Rock Island and the Quad Cities Region, including the John Deere Road corridor and areas around the Southpark Mall. The small amount of retail uses that have remained in the downtown consist primarily of smaller retail and specialty shops. In addition to attracting visitors to downtown, retail is critical to making the Downtown Rock Island a desirable place to live and work.

## **Entertainment & Recreation**

Watching live theatre, eating out at a restaurant, shopping at specialty stores, attending a festival, walking along the Mississippi River, cycling along the Great River Trail, are all activities that should work better to attract people to Downtown Rock Island. These activities, and others, should be developed as unique attractions of Downtown. Community input identified interest in additional evening entertainment venues, including more restaurants, leveraging and expanding the arts and theater programs, and more planned activities in the Downtown.

## **Office**

Downtown contains several thousand jobs mainly in the government administration, professional services, insurance, and finance industries. Offices are located at street-level, above ground-floor retail, in converted residential structures, and in free-standing office buildings. Office uses can be an appropriate component of mixed-use projects, and additional office development is likely as Downtown activity and service demand increases. Overall, the Downtown lacks high quality office space that would be necessary to attract established employers.

## **Service**

Commercial service uses vary in their ability to attract visitors and generate activity in a downtown. A tax accounting office for instance, generates little, if any foot traffic. However a dentist office or salon in turn attract customers to storefronts and turn them over frequently, generating visits to Downtown and activity on the sidewalk. The City needs to carefully consider commercial service uses and determine what types are best suited for which areas of Downtown. Automobile service uses are generally considered inappropriate within Downtown, however, they may be permissible in select locations within the Downtown Periphery with proper site design, buffering, and screening.

## **Institutional**

Institutional uses can play an important role in keeping Downtown Rock Island vibrant and active. Public uses, like City Hall, Rock Island Public Library, U.S. Post Office, and other public uses give people a reason to come Downtown, attract potential patrons and customers for businesses. The institutional uses present in the Downtown serve as important anchors and establish and strengthen the role of the Downtown as a community focal point.

## DOWNTOWN'S SUBAREAS

Downtown Rock Island is comprised of several distinct areas, with different form, uses, conditions, characteristics and potentials. The Downtown Plan addresses the specific needs of each "Functional Subarea" and establishes recommendations for the improvement and enhancement of each area in the future, including appropriate uses and intensities.

The following discussion is summarized in the accompanying table, "Summary: Future Land Use by Character Area." This allows easy comparison and reference for desired future land uses within each character area. Uses are given one of two classifications for each character area:

- Preferred/Appropriate**, which means that it is a desired land use within this character area.
- Secondary**, which means that it is a supported land use within the character area but may be more appropriate in other character areas, at least in the short term.

- Those that are not designated as either "preferred" or "secondary" are to be discouraged within that character area. In the short term, however, as Downtown vacancy remains high, the City should remain somewhat flexible on implementation of this table, as long as policy decisions remain within the spirit of the Plan.
- It is important to note that these designations refer to desired future land use within the character areas and do not require any current incompatible business to relocate. However, as incompatible businesses are looking to expand or identify new space for lease or purchase, and as Downtown vacancy decreases, it would be appropriate for the City to proactively partner with these businesses to identify more suitable locations within another supporting Downtown character or another location within Rock Island.

## SUMMARY: FUTURE LAND USE BY CHARACTER AREA

	CORE	OUTER CORE	PERIPHERY
<b>GROUND FLOOR OF A MIXED-USE BUILDING</b>			
Residential	--	--	--
Retail	P	S	S
Entertainment	P	S	S
Office	--	S	S
Commercial Service (frequent activity)	P	S	S
Commercial Service (office-like activity)	--	P	S
Public Use (frequent activity)	P	S	S
Public Use (office-like activity)	S	P	S
<b>UPPER FLOOR(S) OF A MIXED-USE BUILDING</b>			
Residential	P	P	S
Retail	--	--	S
Entertainment	S	S	S
Office	P	P	S
Commercial Service (frequent activity)	--	S	S
Commercial Service (office-like activity)	P	P	S
Public Use (frequent activity)	--	--	S
Public Use (office-like activity)	P	P	S
<b>SINGLE-USE BUILDING</b>			
Residential	--	P	P
Retail	--	S	P
Entertainment	P	S	S
Office	--	P	P
Commercial Service (frequent activity)	--	S	S
Commercial Service (office-like activity)	--	P	P
Public Use (frequent activity)	P	S	S
Public Use (office-like activity)	--	P	P

P = Preferred / Appropriate

S = Secondary (should be directed elsewhere, but is acceptable)

-- = Discouraged



## Downtown Core

The Downtown Core is the one area that everyone considers to be in "Downtown". It includes bars and restaurants along 2nd Avenue, the theatres, and most of the shopping and dining opportunities that exist. While the core is nearly fully developed, there are vacant buildings and parcels that provide numerous opportunities for redevelopment and land use intensification.

## Size and Boundaries

The boundaries of the Downtown Core are 15th Street on the west, 4th Avenue of the South, 20th Street on the east, and 1st Avenue on the north. The Downtown Core is approximately 55-acres in size, with potential for expansion into the adjacent areas of the Outer Core Subarea.

## Built Form

The built form of the Downtown Core should consist of larger buildings at or near the sidewalk and front property line. The City's existing zero-foot side yard setbacks should be strictly enforced to help establish and maintain a contin-

uous streetwall. Adaptive reuse of existing structures is encouraged. Parking should be provided on-street, in public lots or the Parking Ramp, or in the rear of buildings accessed by side streets and rear alleys.

## Land Uses

★ **Residential.** Residential uses should be encouraged as a component of mixed-use buildings within the Downtown Core, however, residential uses should generally be prohibited on the ground floor. That said, it may be appropriate to allow residential at the rear of the ground floor, behind commercial frontage. Residential uses should also be discouraged or prohibited along 2nd Avenue between 17th and 19th.

★ **Retail.** Retail uses should be promoted within all areas of the Downtown Core. Standalone single-story retail uses should be prohibited. Retail uses should occupy the ground floor of a taller mixed-use building. Multi-story retail is also appropriate.

★ **Entertainment.** Entertainment uses, including restaurants, bars, and theatres should be promoted within all areas of the Downtown Core. Standalone theatre buildings are appropriate, however restaurants and other entertainment uses should occupy the ground floor of a taller mixed-use building. Multi-story entertainment uses are also appropriate

★ **Office.** Office uses should be encouraged as a component of mixed-use buildings within the Downtown Core, however like residential, office uses should be discouraged from locating on the ground floor, reserving ground floor space for retail, service and entertainment.

★ **Service.** Commercial service uses that generate frequent customers and contribute to the energy/activity in Downtown and on the sidewalk should be integrated into the mix of ground floor uses in the Downtown Core. Other commercial service uses may be appropriate on the upper floors of mixed-use buildings.

★ **Public Uses.** Public uses that generate activity should be considered appropriate within the Downtown Core. Public uses consisting of primarily office functions should be directed elsewhere.



## Downtown Outer Core

The Outer Core is an area that exhibits characteristics of the Downtown Core, but currently lacks sufficient development intensity and a compact built form. Although there are some large employers and multi-family buildings, large surface parking areas and vacant sides erode this area's pedestrian friendly atmosphere. The Mississippi River and its riverfront area, one of Downtown's greatest assets, are also contained within the Outer Core.

## Size and Boundaries

The Outer Core wraps around the Downtown Core and extends to 5th Avenue on the south, 21st Street on the east, the Mississippi River to the north, and 13th Street to the west. Areas of the Outer Core adjacent to the Downtown Core should be considered potential expansion areas of the Downtown Core as opportunities arise or as opportunities in the Downtown Core are exhausted.

## Built Form

The built form of the Outer Core should consist of mix of larger buildings at or near the sidewalk and front property line and standalone buildings with yards and open spaces. The City's existing zero-foot side yard setbacks should be loosely enforced within the Outer Core. While a continuous streetwall is desirable in some areas, particularly in areas adjacent to the Core Downtown, some larger sites could develop with large yards and open spaces around buildings. Adaptive reuse of existing structures is encouraged. Parking should be provided on-street, in public lots or the Parking Ramp, or in the rear of buildings accessed by side streets and rear alleys. Surface parking lots should be discouraged, and, should they be necessary, should be screened and landscaped around the perimeter.

## Land Uses

- ✱ **Residential.** Residential uses should be encouraged as a component of mixed-use buildings within the Outer Core. Dense residential development, including multi-story residential buildings should be also be considered appropriate.
- ✱ **Retail.** Retail uses should first be directed to the Downtown Core before developing within the Outer Core. Stand alone retail uses should be discouraged within the Outer Core.
- ✱ **Service.** Commercial service uses that generate frequent customers and contribute to the energy and activity in Downtown and on the sidewalk should be directed to the Downtown Core before developing within the Outer Core. Other types of commercial service uses should be considered appropriate in the Outer Core.

- ✱ **Office.** Office uses should be encouraged as a component of mixed-use buildings within the Outer Core, however like residential, office uses on the ground floor should be permitted.
- ✱ **Public Uses.** Public uses should be considered appropriate within the Outer Core.



## Downtown Periphery

The areas outside of the Outer Core but within the Downtown Study Area comprise Downtown's periphery. The periphery consists of a mix of land uses and development intensities, but can generally be described as auto-oriented, characterized by heavy traffic, larger lots, and opportunity for development and improvement. Development intensity and uses that may be appropriate for this section of the Downtown Study Area are likely to be different than uses and development desired within the Downtown Core or Outer Core.

### Size and Boundaries

The Periphery wraps around the Outer Core and extends from 13th Street to the west, 6th Avenue to the south, and 24th Street to the east. Areas of the Periphery adjacent to the Outer Core should be considered potential expansion areas of the Outer Core opportunities arise or as opportunities in the Outer Core are exhausted.

## Built Form

The built form of the Periphery should consist of mix of large and small buildings with varying sizes and setbacks. Buildings should be encouraged to be at or near the sidewalk and front property line, however placement should be appropriate for each site and development. Adaptive reuse of existing structures is encouraged. Parking should be provided on-street, in public lots or the Parking Ramp, or in the rear of buildings accessed by side streets and rear alleys. Surface parking lots should be discouraged, and, should they be necessary, should be screened and landscaped around the perimeter.

## Land Uses

- ✦ **Residential.** Dense residential uses should be encouraged throughout the periphery as a means of expanding housing options for the community and bolstering local population to support Downtown businesses.
- ✦ **Retail.** Retail uses should be discouraged in the Periphery and instead directed to the Downtown Core and Outer Core.
- ✦ **Service.** Commercial service uses should be considered appropriate in the Outer Core. Commercial service uses should occupy the ground floor of a taller mixed-use building.
- ✦ **Office.** Office uses should first be directed to the Outer Core and Downtown Core before developing within the Periphery.
- ✦ **Public Uses.** Public uses should be considered appropriate within the Periphery.

## Surrounding Neighborhoods

Several attractive and stable residential neighborhoods surround the Downtown Study Areas. Some neighborhoods are experiencing an increase in owner reinvestment and the character of the homes adds to the charm and overall "setting" of Downtown Rock Island. Development within the Outer Core and Periphery should strive to mitigate any negative impacts associated with development, including traffic and parking. Furthermore, an improved and revitalized Downtown Rock Island would positively affect nearby neighborhoods provided they are connected and accessible to Downtown.

## CATALYST SITES

Catalyst sites are vacant and/or underutilized parcels where development, adaptive-re-use, or redevelopment would have a significant positive effect on Downtown Rock Island. Key criteria used to identify catalyst sites include:

- \* Location
- \* Visibility and access
- \* Vacancy
- \* Current use
- \* Surrounding land uses
- \* Ability to fill gaps in the street wall
- \* Ability to generate new tax revenue
- \* Ability to enhance urban character
- \* Ability to create synergies with nearby land uses

To provide focus, and with the aim of creating a "critical mass" of activity within a concentrated area, sites were only identified within the Downtown Core, with the exception of a few key properties that were just across the border of the Downtown Core. While there are many other high-visibility properties within the broader Downtown study area, it is recommended to focus efforts on revitalization first within the Downtown Core.

Many of the catalyst sites are surface parking lots, which are incompatible with the character of a walkable, intimate, and attractive Downtown environment and missed opportunities to generate tax revenue. At the same time, if these lots are developed over time and spaces are taken offline, it will be important to consider development of a new centralized parking structure that can increase parking supply.

## Site #1: 1st Avenue Parking Lots

This site is comprised of three parcels containing an antique store and two private parking lots. Surface parking lots and auto-oriented uses are not conducive to creating a unique downtown environment and are incompatible with the fabric of a downtown. The site occupies a highly prominent position and is one of the first impressions of Downtown Rock Island, visible from the Centennial Bridge when entering the area. Redevelopment of this site has the opportunity to make a statement and communicate a positive first impression, as well as leverage proximity to the waterfront and nearby white collar businesses, such as the headquarters of Modern Woodman of America. The site could accommodate a mixed-use development of retail, residential, and office uses fronting 1st Avenue and with retail caps along the east and west side of the building, fronting 16th and 16 ½th Streets. It would also be a suitable location for a new office development.

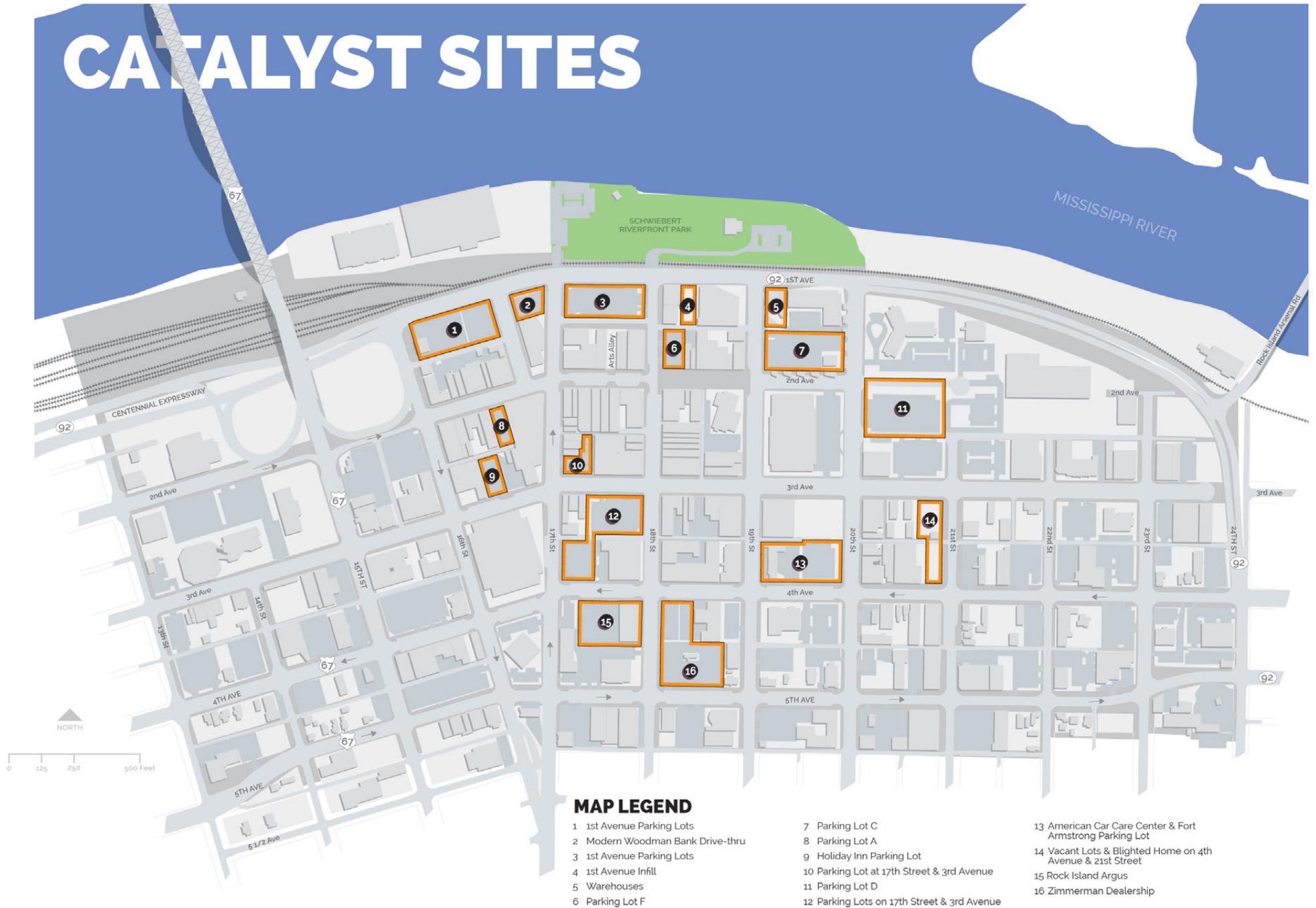
**Ideal Future Use:** Mixed-Use

## Site #2: Modern Woodman Bank Drive-thru

Online and mobile banking are decreasing the demand for drive-thru banking, and many banks across the nation are closing their drive-thrus. Additionally, auto-centric uses such as drive-thrus should be avoided in walkable, compact areas such as downtowns. If Modern Woodman Bank decided to follow this industry trend, it could free up the northern portion of their parcel for a small mixed-use development that could help establish/continue a street wall along 1st Avenue.

**Ideal Future Use:** Mixed-Use

# CATALYST SITES



### **Site #3: 1st Avenue Parking Lots**

This site is made-up of several parcels used for parking: a small private lot, a publicly owned (Lot G), and a small private lot owned by Modern Woodman of America. It is a highly visible and centrally located site, adjacent to Schwiebert Riverfront Park and less than one block to 2nd Avenue, the heart of Downtown. The emptiness of the site, outside of a smattering of cars during the day, creates a void in Downtown and fails to realize its development potential. As with Site #1, the site could be redeveloped for mixed-use fronting 1st Avenue, likely with garage parking and ground floor retail/dining that could synergize with the family-friendly nature of the park across the street. Collectively, redevelopment of Sites #1, #2, and #3 would create a continuous street edge along First Avenue, which is envisioned as being a more intimate landscape after the implementation of pedestrian and road improvements.

**Ideal Future Use:** Mixed-Use

### **Site #4: 1st Avenue Infill**

Two vacant lots between a commercial building on the corner of 18th Street and 1st Avenue and the McKesson Lofts presents a small infill opportunity.

**Ideal Future Use:** Mixed-Use

### **Site #5: Warehouses**

Two warehouse buildings on the corner of 1st Avenue and 19th Street are uniquely suited for adaptive re-use. Both structures were constructed at a slant to accommodate rail traffic that use to pass through the two buildings. While the buildings are currently vacant, their brick construction and historic structure hearkens back to Rock Island's heyday as a railroad hub, and makes them attractive candidates for re-use as small mixed-use or restaurant/brewery. The neighboring blocks have seen significant investment over the past decade, with construction of the Locks and the adaptive re-use of the McKesson Lofts.

**Ideal Future Use:** Mixed-Use (Adaptive Re-Use)

### **Site #6: Parking Lot F**

The City-owned Lot F is currently used as public parking but several spaces have been rented to a neighboring bar for usage as a patio. Lot F sits at one of Downtown's most prominent and highly-trafficked intersections, and the presence of an unattractive surface parking lot here ruins the street wall and continuity of 2nd Avenue's character. The site should be re-developed as a mixed-use structure that complements the size and scale of the historic buildings fronting 2nd Avenue. Another option would be to transition it into a small park with a stage that can be used for musical performances in warmer months.

**Ideal Future Use:** Flexible

### **Site #7: Parking Lot C**

Lot C is currently a public parking lot bordered by the Locks on the northeast and the MetroLINK bus transfer station on the east and south. As development occurs Downtown and parking demand increases, or as redevelopment displaces other parking lots, this site would be ideally suited for a new centralized parking deck.

**Ideal Future Use:** Parking Deck

### **Site #8: Parking Lot A**

After a building on this property was torn down, it was turned into a small public parking lot (Lot A) sandwiched between the Holiday Inn to the east and a two-story commercial building to the west. Redevelopment of this site in keeping with the historic character and scale of the area should be encouraged to ensure continuity of the street wall and enhance the urban experience.

**Ideal Future Use:** Flexible

### **Site #9: Holiday Inn Parking Lot**

This site is currently used by the Holiday Inn for guest parking however, like other surface parking areas, it should be considered an opportunity for infill mixed-use or commercial development. If developed, it will be important to preserve the drop-off loop for hotel guests, and that ample parking is provided off site, including the neighboring Parking Ramp.

**Ideal Future Use:** Mixed-Use

### **Site #10: Parking Lot at 17th Street & 3rd Avenue**

Currently a private parking lot, this site sits at a prominent corner across from the Holiday Inn and the historic Robinson Hardware Store building and adjacent to the Stern Center. This site presents an opportunity to develop into a multi-story mixed-use or commercial development that could anchor the corner.

**Ideal Future Use:** Mixed-Use

### **Site #11: Parking Lot D**

Parking Lot D is a surface public parking lot located between the Spencer Towers, U.S. Courthouse, and Illinois Casualty Insurance. It contains around 100 parking spots, but is relatively unused except outside of special event parking. It is well-suited for a variety of different development scenarios, including: a large multi-family or office development with frontage along 20th Street; a mixed-use structure with frontage on multiple sides; and/or a new parking garage with ground floor retail.

**Ideal Future Use:** Flexible

### **Site #12: Parking Lots on 17th Street & 3rd Avenue**

This site is comprised of two private surface parking lots serving neighboring businesses such as US Bank and Bituminous Insurance (which has announced it will relocate) and one vacant parcel along 3rd Avenue. Redevelopment of this site into a cluster of office or mixed-use office buildings could capitalize on easy access to the Holiday Inn and Parking Ramp and establish synergies with neighboring office space.

**Ideal Future Use:** Mixed-Use

### **Site #13: American Car Care Center & Fort Armstrong Parking Lot**

This site encompasses several parcels, with American Car Care Center on the western portion and a parking lot on the eastern portion serving the neighboring Fort Armstrong senior apartments building. Auto repair is a land use that is generally not conducive to a walkable, vibrant Downtown atmosphere, and such uses should be encouraged to relocate over time elsewhere within Rock Island. Parcel assembly of these uses could create a unique development opportunity fronting 4th Avenue, such as a commercial, residential, or mixed-use building in a "U" shape, with parking in the rear retained for the Fort Armstrong building.

**Ideal Future Use:** Mixed-Use

### **Site #14: Vacant Lots & Blighted Home on 4th Avenue & 21st Street**

This site is comprised of several parcels on the western side of 21st Street between 3rd and 4th Avenue. Currently, the majority of this site is vacant, outside of one blighted home abutting an alleyway and a billboard sign along 4th Avenue. As 21st Street is a less busy street and somewhat removed from the heart of Downtown, this site is well-suited for residential uses, such as a series of townhomes facing 21st Street or a multi-story multi-family building. Additionally, the brick street along this stretch of 21st Street creates an intimate, historical feel unique to the area which could be incorporated into the site design.

**Ideal Future Use:** Residential or Mixed-Use

### **Site #15: Rock Island Argus**

Site #15 contains the roughly 30,000 square foot Rock Island Argus office building, which was built in 1925 but closed in 2008. The historic structure was built in the Art Deco style and anchors the southwest corner of 18th Street & 4th Avenue. The proposed catalyst site also includes the building's large parking lot to the west of the structure, as well as the front parking lot of a neighboring commercial office building. The Argus building is well-positioned for adaptive re-use, and could be either kept as office space or transitioned into a mixed-use building, with retail or a restaurant on the ground floor and office space or residential units on the second floor. The surface parking lots to the west could support an addition to the building, in keeping with the character of the original structure, and providing additional mixed-use space fronting 4th Avenue and wrapping around the block to meet the office building on 17th Avenue.

**Ideal Future Use:** Office or Mixed-Use

## Site #16: Zimmerman Dealership

The former Zimmerman Dealership, which closed and relocated to Moline several years ago, is comprised of several major vacant properties along 5th Avenue. Automobile uses (e.g. repair shop, new car dealership) should not be permitted. Clusters of townhomes, developed perpendicular to 5th Avenue and with their entrance shielded from 5th Avenue, may be the best option, fortifying residential density on the periphery of the Downtown Core. Other options include mixed-use developments or some sort of chain retailer such as a Walgreen's or CVS, developed tastefully.

**Ideal Future Use:** Flexible

## HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Downtown Rock Island contains many historic structures built in the 19th and early/mid-20th century when Rock Island was booming as a rail and industry town. These historic structures range in style from Greek Revival to Modernist, and contribute to an attractive physical environment and special sense of place. While these buildings form the foundation of Downtown's unique character, only three are protected ("landmarked") from demolition or exterior remodeling by the City's historic preservation ordinance. Two structures are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, but this is largely an honorary designation for publicity and federal grants/tax purposes. The study area contains no federal or local historic districts. The City should evaluate each unprotected structure for coverage under the City's historic preservation ordinance.

At the same time, however, a building does not have "historic value" simply because it is old. Some commercial buildings in the Downtown are old, but may not have historic value and may be functionally obsolescent, deteriorating, and unsightly. Replacement of these buildings with new, but traditionally designed buildings, would be appropriate and desired in limited cases.

The City's official policy with regards to historic buildings should be to encourage adaptive re-use and renovation first, with demolition a last resort option only justified by extreme deterioration or structural issues. The historic character and charm of the Downtown is what creates its identity and it must be preserved, protected and enhanced.

This section details all of the Downtown buildings listed in the City's historic properties database. Some structures are currently occupied; others are vacant or underutilized. A \* denotes that the property is landmarked by the City; a + denotes that the property is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. A future use has been recommended for each property, based on the building's current use, location, infrastructure, and design.

The City was recently awarded a grant from the State of Illinois Historic Preservation Agency to conduct a city-wide historic preservation study. This study, to begin over the course of the next year, will address historic preservation issues within the Downtown in greater detail.

## HISTORIC BUILDINGS

### #1 Holsapple's Place (121 16th Street)

Built in 1880, this two-story Italianate structure with an elaborate cornice and double doorway entrance has a colorful history. It once served as a house of prostitution for a local gangster, George "Crimps" Holsapple. Holsapple later was sent to prison for the murdering the son of John Patrick Looney, the inspiration for the main character in "Road to Perdition." Since 1948, the building has been used as offices.

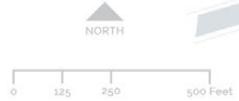
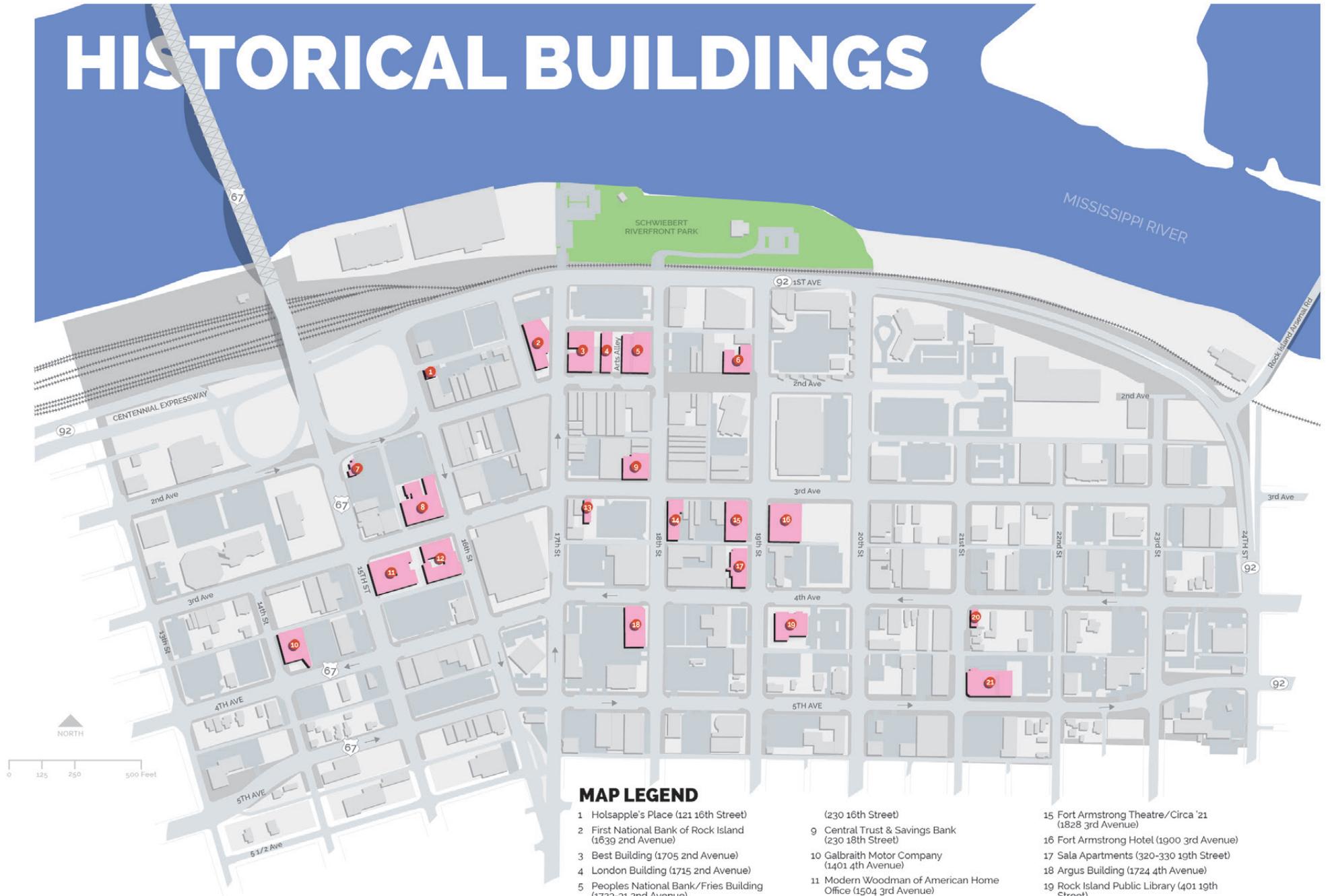
**Ideal Future Use:** Office

### #2 First National Bank of Rock Island (1639 2nd Avenue)

The four story First National Bank was constructed in 1960 and in the international modern style. The architect was heavily influenced by famed modernist Mies van der Rohe and the structure's curtain wall engineering facilitates an open floor plan and large expanses of glass. It is currently used by the Modern Woodman of America Bank.

**Ideal Future Use:** Office

# HISTORICAL BUILDINGS



## MAP LEGEND

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| 1 Holsapple's Place (121 16th Street)                       | (230 16th Street)   | 15 Fort Armstrong Theatre/Circa '21 (1828 3rd Avenue)         |
| 2 First National Bank of Rock Island (1639 2nd Avenue)      | 9 Central Trust & Savings Bank (230 18th Street)            | 16 Fort Armstrong Hotel (1900 3rd Avenue)                     |
| 3 Best Building (1705 2nd Avenue)                           | 10 Galbraith Motor Company (1401 4th Avenue)                | 17 Sala Apartments (320-330 19th Street)                      |
| 4 London Building (1715 2nd Avenue)                         | 11 Modern Woodman of American Home Office (1504 3rd Avenue) | 18 Argus Building (1724 4th Avenue)                           |
| 5 Peoples National Bank/Fries Building (1723-31 2nd Avenue) | 12 Rock Island City Hall (1528 3rd Avenue)                  | 19 Rock Island Public Library (401 19th Street)               |
| 6 Star Block (1821-29 2nd Avenue)                           | 13 Robinson Hardware Store (1706 3rd Avenue)                | 20 Murrin Brothers Saloon (2100 4th Avenue)                   |
| 7 Centennial Bridge Commission Building (201 15th Street)   | 14 Safety Building (1800 3rd Street)                        | 21 Bear School of Automotive Safety Service (2103 5th Avenue) |
| 8 Royal Neighbors of America                                |   |   |

### #3 Best Building (1705 2nd Avenue)

The Best Building was built in 1908 to house the Young & McCombs Department Store. Constructed with reinforced concrete, the six floor commercial structure contained the finest amenities of its time, including fire sprinklers, an elevator, an ice machine to cool the building down, and pneumatic tubes for cash transactions. It is currently being re-purposed into Riverview Lofts, comprised of 50 lofts and 12,000 square feet of ground floor commercial space.

**Ideal Future Use:** Mixed-Use

### #4 London Building (1715 2nd Avenue)

The London Clothing House opened in 1889 selling "gents furnishings." Its blue Beaux Arts façade makes it one of Downtown Rock Island's most recognizable buildings. Over the years, it has housed a variety of retail and office uses, including the Fidelity Loan Company and Kresge. It is currently used by the Quad City Arts and an architecture firm.

**Ideal Future Use:** Mixed-Use or Office

### #5 Peoples National Bank/Fries Building (1723-31 2nd Avenue)\*

The four-story Peoples National Bank and the neighboring three-story Fries Building were built as two separate buildings in 1876 and 1897, respectively. They were eventually connected internally on all three floors. Both contain detailed cornices and a variety of classical revival elements and ornamentation, and have served a variety of commercial and office purposes over the years.

**Ideal Future Use:** Mixed-Use or Office

### #6 Star Block (1821 29 2nd Avenue)\*

The Star Block was built in 1874 as three separate buildings unified with a common cornice and coordinated facade. The windows are embellished with decorative elements, and the building is one of the Downtown's most attractive structures. The Rock Island Economic Growth Corporation (GROWTH) purchased the building and is currently in the process of rehabilitating it for mixed-use: 1,200 square feet of commercial space on the ground floor and 6 live-work rental units on the second and third floors.

**Ideal Future Use:** Mixed-Use

### #7 Centennial Bridge Commission Building (201 15th Street)

The Centennial Bridge Commission Building was built in 1941 and originally served as an office building and toll collection facility for the Centennial Bridge. It is one of Rock Island's smallest Art Moderne buildings, and is characterized by clean, angular lines, light color, light chrome, and detailed ornament. At present, it is used as the Centennial Bridge Visitors Center.

**Ideal Future Use:** Civic

### #8 Royal Neighbors of America (230 16th Street)

This L-shaped building was constructed in the Art Deco style out of limestone. The lavish main entryway contains cherubs and female figures sculpted by Nellie Walker, a contemporary of famed sculptor Laredo Taft. The building continues to be used by the Royal Neighbors of America as an office building.

**Ideal Future Use:** Office

### #9 Central Trust & Savings Bank (230 18th Street)

The Central Trust & Savings Bank was designed in the Italian Renaissance Revival style and built in 1914. The lower portion of the exterior resembles a fortress, communicating that the wealth held inside is safe. The building is currently used by US Bank.

**Ideal Future Use:** Office

### #10 Galbraith Motor Company (1401 4th Avenue)

Built in 1940, this modern structure was a Galbraith Motor Company car dealership, complete with a display area, repair shop, and gas station. The building's sleek curvilinear design looks futuristic, and reflects the Art Moderne style. It has fallen into disrepair and is currently vacant. In many urban areas, former dealerships and gas stations such as this building have been converted into restaurants or breweries, with the garage doors opened in the summer months to connect to patio seating. Examples include Kelly's BrewPub in Albuquerque, NM (former Ford dealership) and Hoffman's Deli in Flint, MI (former Sears Roebuck car repair center). However, other unique uses that preserve its unique character should be permitted as well.

**Ideal Future Use:** Flexible

### #11 Modern Woodman of American Home Office (1504 3rd Avenue)

The Modern Woodman of America building, now used by Rock Island County, was built in 1898 in the Italian Renaissance style. It is decorated with a granite portico, hammered copper ornaments, and bracketed copper trim along the roof, and incorporates symbols of woodcraft. It is a striking structure, and welcomes travelers into Rock Island coming off of the Centennial Bridge.

**Ideal Future Use:** Mixed-Use or Office

### #12 Rock Island City Hall (1528 3rd Avenue)

City Hall is one of Rock Island's best examples of the Art Deco style. The sleek three story structure includes all the key design elements of the time: fluting, columns separating the window bays, circular moldings over the doorway, and a vestibule replete with deep green marble.

**Ideal Future Use:** Civic

### **#13 Robinson Hardware Store (1706 3rd Avenue)\***

The Robinson Hardware Store, built in 1875 and remodeled in 1926, is considered one of Rock Island's most intact early storefronts and contains patterned brick and limestone and mullioned windows. It has served a variety of commercial tenants over the years, such as retail grocers, flour and feed dealers, and hardware stores. Today, the ground floor is a boutique and hair braiding store.

**Ideal Future Use:** Mixed-Use

### **#14 Safety Building (1800 3rd Street)**

Built in 1908, the six-story Safety Building was the first reinforced concrete structure in the Quad Cities and the tallest building in Rock Island. The bracketed cornice features electric lights, which may have been a nod to the People's Power Company, which was a tenant and an electric provider. The building is now mixed-use, with commercial on the ground floor and residential units on the upper floors.

**Ideal Future Use:** Mixed-Use

### **#15 Fort Armstrong Theatre/ Circa '21 (1828 3rd Avenue)\***

The Fort Armstrong Theatre is designed in the Art Deco style and opened in 1921. Its façade contains intricate and multi-colored terracotta ornamentation depicting Native Americans, spears, arrows, birds, snakes, and corn. The main auditorium contained a 22 foot deep stage and could accommodate 1,566 people. In 1977, the property was purchased by Circa '21 Theatre for usage as a performance and dinner theatre.

**Ideal Future Use:** Entertainment

### **#16 Fort Armstrong Hotel (1900 3rd Avenue)\***

The nine-story grand Fort Armstrong Hotel opened in 1926 and for many years was the social center of Rock Island, hosting holiday parties, weddings, anniversaries, banquets and dances. The upper floors are trimmed with white terracotta and cast concrete is used to ornament the lower floors. It is currently senior housing.

**Ideal Future Use:** Mixed-Use

### **#17 Sala Apartments (320-330 19th Street)**

The Sala Apartments were constructed in two phases in 1903 and 1913. The original design provided for 25 apartments as well as a raised basement with commercial space. Masonry in construction, the building has a six-course ashlar limestone foundation above a wide watertable and below a molded stone stringcourse. The upper stories are beige pressed brick. It is considered to be one of the earliest and finest apartment dwellings in Rock Island.

**Ideal Future Use:** Mixed-Use

### **#16 Argus Building (1724 4th Avenue)**

The Argus Building was built in 1925 in the Art Deco style and until 2008, served the office of Rock Island's newspaper, The Argus. The 29,190 square foot building is currently vacant and available for lease.

**Ideal Future Use:** Mixed-Use or Office

### **#17 Rock Island Public Library (401 19th Street)\***

Designed in the classical revival style, the Rock Island Public Library is one of the City's most striking public buildings. Constructed in 1902-03, it was the first public library in Illinois and was funded by a local businessman. The building's frieze contains the name of famous writers and poets.

**Ideal Future Use:** Civic

### **#18 Murrin Brothers Saloon (2100 4th Avenue)**

The Murrin Brothers Saloon was built in 1876 and sits on the corner of 21st Street and 4th Avenue. While smaller in scale, it is reminiscent of the Star Block building. The building is currently vacant, but has been used as a tavern on-and-off for more than 100 years. The building would be suitable for mixed-use, or for usage as solely office or entertainment.

**Ideal Future Use:** Flexible

### **#19 Bear School of Automotive Safety Service (2103 5th Avenue)**

Built in the middle of the 20th century, the Bear School building is a two story structure with a sleek Art Moderne façade that wraps around the front of the building. Prior to its closure in the 1970s, the facility trained thousands of automotive mechanics for Bear Manufacturing, which manufactured auto parts and equipment. The site is now currently used for vocational training by the Rock Island Board of Education.

**Ideal Future Use:** Flexible





## 6. TRANSPORTATION

An integral part of Downtown’s revitalization is the ability to safely and efficiently move around, whether on foot, on a bike, in a car, or while riding a public bus. This section provides transportation and parking recommendations and addresses:

- ✱ Preserving the compact street grid
- ✱ Improving traffic circulation
- ✱ Increasing the efficiency of parking
- ✱ Leveraging public transportation
- ✱ Improving walkability and bikeability

At its core, Downtown should be a pedestrian-oriented environment that fosters a sense of energy and vitality on sidewalks and the street. The usage of bicycles and public transportation should be supported and encouraged within this environment. While automobiles should be accommodated, drivers should encounter a “park once” environment upon arrival, where it is easy to park in one centrally-located place and then walk on foot from location to location rather than driving between each location, as you might in a suburban strip mall.

### STREET GRID

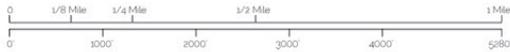
The street grid of any area impacts its function. The size and shape of the blocks in the downtown of an area affect its walkability and pedestrian-friendliness. A street grid with short blocks means an area is more walkable and accessible. This is a key component of a downtown and a planning consideration where walkability and pedestrian friendliness are primary objectives. On the whole, Downtown Rock Island is considered more walkable than its peer downtowns due to its relatively intact street grid.

There is a direct correlation between the size of blocks of an area and its use and function. Smaller blocks are more walkable and accessible and are the preferred block type in a downtown. When blocks are ‘walkable’, pedestrian comfort and friendliness are achieved. A visitor can park in one spot and make multiple stops in the downtown by walking from business to business. Other cited benefits that are attributed to pedestrian-scaled block sizes include less traffic congestion, cleaner air, enhanced social capital (face-to-face interaction) among residents, and healthier citizens.

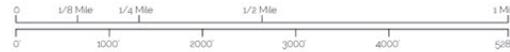
# REGIONAL GRID COMPARISON



**DOWNTOWN DAVENPORT**



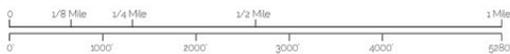
**DOWNTOWN BETTENDORF**



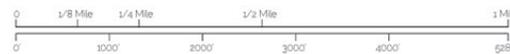
**NORTH PARK MALL**



**DOWNTOWN ROCK ISLAND**



**MOLINE**



**SOUTH PARK MALL**



Citizens that are driving less and walking more in the Downtown will also have more interaction with neighbors, shop owners, and community members. Increasing interaction among residents will in turn increase the area's social capital and help create a greater sense of community.

The predictability of a consistent street grid also aids drivers as they seek to navigate their way throughout Downtown. Permanent road closures, cul-de-sacs, and barricades prevent the efficient movement of vehicles and can create frustration among visitors. This is evident at the Great River Plaza (which closes off part of 2nd Avenue), as well as street closure at 20th Street and 1st Avenue.

The existing compact street grid should be preserved and enhanced. As redevelopment occurs, it is critical that superblocks are not created. Any future proposals that call for reducing the efficiency of the street grid should not be supported.

## **CIRCULATION**

Roadways act as arteries, moving vehicles in and out of Downtown. Primary vehicle access to Downtown is provided by two roadways – IL Route 92 and US Route 67. These two roads carry a very large volume of traffic, including truck traffic and through traffic. US 67 serves an estimated 25,500 vehicles daily and IL Route 92 an estimated 8,100 vehicles daily. Other important roadways include 4th and 5th Avenue, which are wide one-way streets that facilitate vehicle travel within Rock Island and between Rock Island and Moline.

### **1st Avenue Re-Design**

The current design of 1st Avenue is not optimal for several reasons. The wide multi-lane roadway physically divides the waterfront from Downtown businesses, offices, and residences and reduces the intimacy and walkability of the area. It also drives truck traffic (roughly 600 per day) through the heart of Downtown Rock Island and in close proximity to Schwiebert Riverfront Park and the Great River Trail, which are recreational areas used by all residents including young children. Further compounding the issues is the streetwall on the south side of the street, between 18th and 20th Streets, which can produce blind spots for vehicles looking to turn onto the roadway. 1st Avenue is also designated as IL 92, which means that the road falls under the jurisdiction of the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), limiting the ability of the City to make improvements.

The City should work with IDOT to redesign the roadway to make it a more intimate Downtown street and safer for pedestrians. The current four-lane roadway should receive a "road diet" and be reduced to a two-way street, with angled parking on both sides of the road, if width allows. Pedestrian bump-outs should be added at 17th Street and 18th Street to enhance pedestrian access to Schwiebert Park and the Mississippi Riverfront.



The River Street Woonerf in Downtown Batavia, Illinois. Image courtesy of Altamanu, project designer

## Great River Plaza & Woonerf

Vehicular circulation within the Downtown Core is hampered by the Great River Plaza pedestrian mall on the 1800-block of 2nd Avenue. The closure of only one block creates an inconsistent street grid, and reduces the volume of parking and the ability to directly access restaurants, bars, and shops. Additionally, the plaza's stage requires costly ongoing maintenance, and its current state of disrepair requires new funding to either upgrade or replace it.

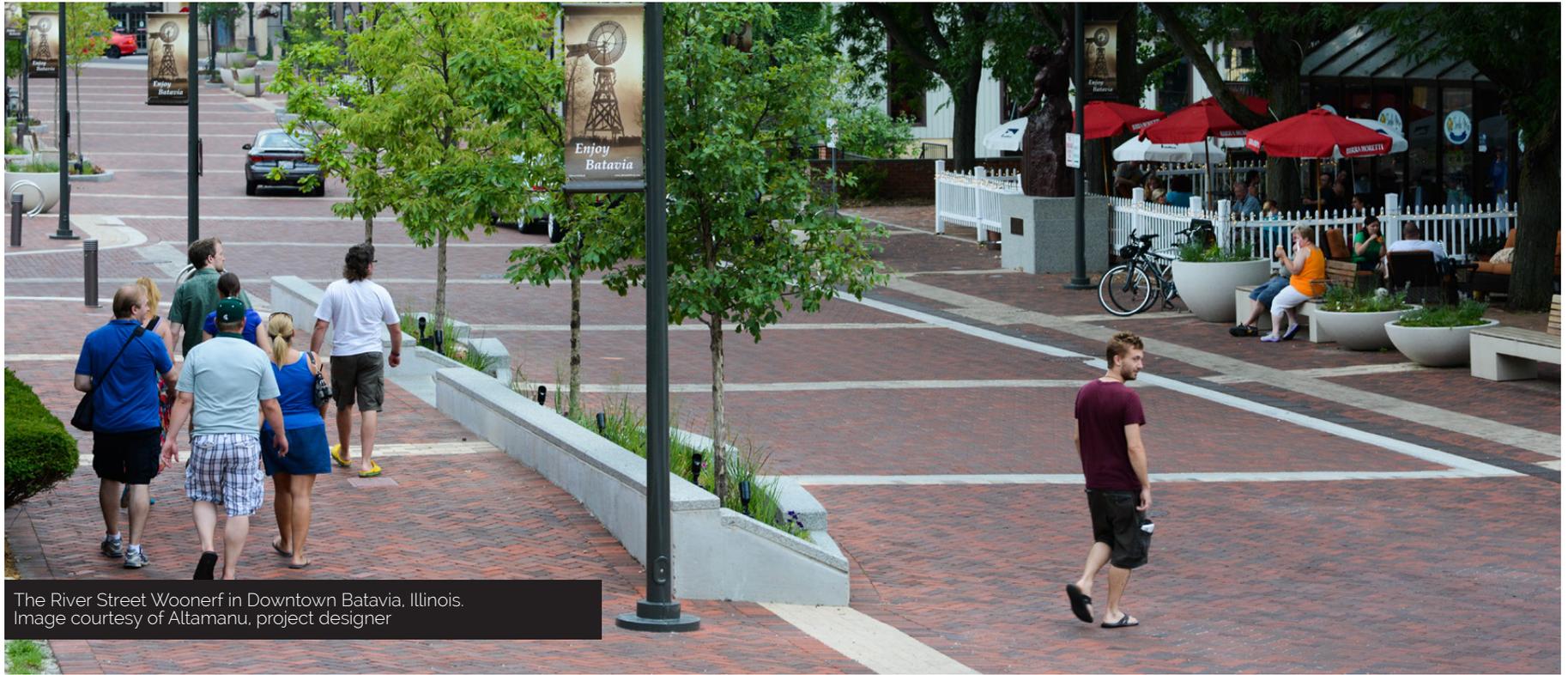
The future of the Great River Plaza (and its stage) were discussed by the community throughout the outreach process, both in-person and on-line. Throughout all mediums, removal of the plaza and stage were advocated by a majority of participants.

This Plan supports sentiment of the community, and recommends removal of the Great River Plaza and its stage. The reactivation of the block for all modes of travel will improve circulation and provide greater exposure for the businesses on the block while reducing parking delays and still maintaining an attractive pedestrian space for special events. At the same time,

the Great River Plaza is a special area and should not be treated as just any other Downtown roadway.

To reactivate the street in the most attractive, safe, and pedestrian-friendly manner possible, the Plan recommends the conversion of the Great River Plaza from a pedestrian-only facility into a woonerf (pronounced VONE-erf), which is a Dutch term for a "living street". A woonerf is a traffic calming strategy that is designed such that there are no clear divisions between the motorized and non-motorized space, giving drivers, cyclists and pedestrians equal priority. Traditionally, the space lacks

continuous curbing so the pedestrian and vehicular space is at the same level. The space also lacks pavement markings, crosswalks, and on-street parking, and incorporates decorative pavement materials, street furniture, landscaping/planter boxes, gateway treatments, and areas for social interaction. Since there is no clear definition of the vehicular travel lane, the design forces motorists to slow down and proceed with caution while still accommodating emergency service vehicles and access to off-street parking and building loading areas.



The River Street Woonerf in Downtown Batavia, Illinois. Image courtesy of Altamanu, project designer

Research in the Netherlands indicates that vehicle speeds were reduced to an average of 8-15 miles per hour where woonerfs were installed. Research also suggests that woonerfs are most effective on streets that carry less than 100 vehicles during the peak hours as these types of streets are optimal for the sharing of space between motorized and non-motorized travel modes.

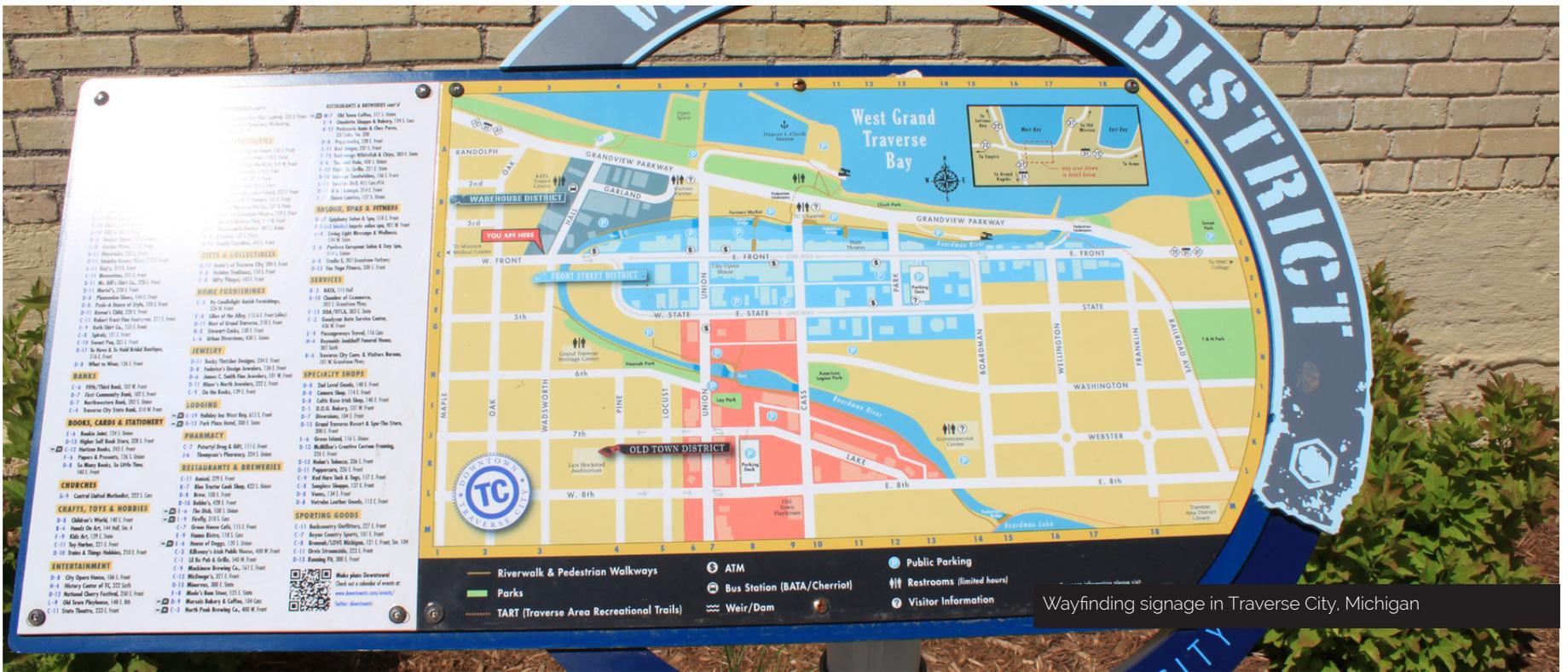
**The establishment of a woonerf is, in a sense, a compromise: the street is opened up for traffic while maintaining an intimate atmosphere unique to Downtown Rock Island.**

Woonerfs have been commonplace in Europe since the 1970s and have recently been installed in North American cities such as Seattle, Toronto, Portland (OR), Santa Monica, and San Francisco. A more local example of a woonerf was installed on a one and one-half block section of River Street in downtown Batavia, Illinois (a western Chicago suburb) in June 2013.

Vehicular entry into the woonerf can be controlled with decorative gates, similar to the gates currently located on each end of the 1700-block of 2nd Avenue. For larger events, the gates can be closed to accommodate larger pedestrian crowds within the public right-of-way.

The development of a woonerf would require the removal of the existing stage/band shelter on the Great River Plaza. In the near-term, music groups that are currently booked for the band shelter could utilize temporary staging that would be set-up on the woonerf when the gates are closed. Longer-term, when collaboration between

the City and IDOT concludes with the formal re-routing of IL Route 92 onto the 4th Avenue/5th Avenue couplet, these musical groups could potentially be relocated to a temporary stage constructed at the intersection of 18th Street and 1st Avenue, similar to what is utilized during "Rock the District." Other options include constructing a new stage within a small parkspace on the Lot F site. The City and its partners should collaborate with existing business owners to ensure 2nd Avenue remains a hub for music and to provide space for concerts.



Wayfinding signage in Traverse City, Michigan

## Wayfinding

A more effective 'wayfinding' system should be developed to assist patrons and visitors locate important destinations within Downtown. The City should:

- ✱ Develop a "gateway" signage program along key approaches to announce entry into Downtown and to notify motorists of nearby destinations.
- ✱ Provide an informational program for directing motorists to key parking facilities and activity areas.

- ✱ Provide maps and wayfinding resources to assist motorists in locating parking lots and understanding the regulations that control those facilities.
- ✱ Provide pedestrian information signs and kiosks to direct and encourage pedestrians to walk to nearby uses and activity areas.
- ✱ Develop a more prominent identification system for parking facilities, including advance-notice signs for motorists and location signs for pedestrians.

## ATMs

In a few places within Downtown, bank ATMs are located within the public right-of-way allowing motorists to conduct banking without even having to leave the street. The ATMs detract from Downtown's appearance and the goal of reinforcing Downtown as a pedestrian oriented environment. Further, they are not conducive to efficient traffic flow, may present safety issues, and consume areas of the public right-of-way that might otherwise be used for streetscape. The City should work with local banks to remove these installations and relocate them to private property.

## **PARKING**

Most residents and users of Downtown perceive parking downtown as difficult. However, Downtown contains more than 2,000 public parking spaces, as well as hundreds of private parking spaces. Many of these spots go unused throughout the week. Rather than an overall parking shortage, the parking issue is a combination of a few different issues:

- \* During the day, much of the on-street parking in the "Downtown Core" is limited at 1-2 hours. A contracted private company enforces that low limit, writing tickets and creating a negative perception of Downtown as overly restrictive and unwelcoming. Thus, while ample parking exists, it is regulated and many spaces remain unused.
- \* During the evening, hourly parking is not regulated by the City. Nighttime is when Downtown Rock Island comes alive, and theatre performances and shows draw hundreds of patrons to the area. This makes on-street parking near the desired venue often difficult to find. The issue here is a shortage of "point parking," or parking adjacent to the desired destinations. Often times, ample parking is available within a few blocks walk ("area parking"), however, patrons either do not know about it or do not feel comfortable walking this distance.

- \* During the day and evening, the City's off-street public parking system is disjointed and confusing. Parking is split between six different lots scattered throughout the Downtown, ranging from very small lots (Lots A & F) to very large lots (Lot D & the Parking Ramp). Many of these have differing regulations and requirements (e.g. permit parking, different hourly limits) and limited wayfinding signage directing vehicles to these locations from the street.

The Downtown Revitalization Plan includes a series of recommendations that are intended to address these issues by making parking more abundant and convenient, yet less restrictive and confusing. While this chapter provides an initial framework for improving parking within Downtown, a more detailed Downtown Parking Study should be conducted to provide greater detail and analysis. The end result, when combined with the recommendations in this plan, will be a perception that Downtown Rock Island is not only a desirable and attractive destination to visit and work in, but one that is easy to get in and out of, and comfortable and safe to circulate within.

## **Parking Supply**

Strategic increases in the quantity of parking in the Downtown Core near activity generators ("point parking") will provide greater convenience to Downtown patrons, reduce walking distances, and offer more flexibility in accommodating large crowds for special events. Additional parking can be developed in off-street facilities (public and private) as well as on-street along the curb. It is important to note that the Plan does not recommend the addition of surface parking lots within Downtown.

## **Parking Lot Consolidation**

The City's off-street public parking facilities are scattered in the northeast, northwest, and southwest sections of the Core Downtown, and wayfinding guidance to the facilities is not very visible. The parking ramp at the corner of 3rd Avenue and 16th Street provides a high volume of parking (432 spaces) that serves the southwest section of the core well as indicated by parking permit sales of less than 40 percent of ramp capacity. Lots C, D, F and G provide a total of approximately 265 spaces that effectively serve the northeast and northwest sections of the core that includes 2nd Avenue.

Lots A, D, F, and G were identified as priority redevelopment sites in the "Land Use & Development" chapter of this Plan. Their current functions as surface parking lots are not conducive to the desired character of Downtown as a vibrant and attractive mixed-use environment. Additionally, their scattered, de-centralized nature makes them difficult to access. Being that these parking facilities support the daily activities and special events that occur within Downtown, planning for a replacement parking facility should be initiated to insure that adequate public parking is always available.

Two locations are suitable for the "consolidation" of these smaller lots into larger garage space. This accommodates redevelopment of the smaller lots as well as centralization of parking within a few high-profile areas. Lot C offers an attractive site for a new parking ramp or parking garage. As it is already owned by the City, there will be no acquisition costs. The lot is adequately-sized to support a freestanding, two-bay, multi-level structure that could accommodate more parking than currently offered in Lots C, F and G combined. The parking facility could also incorporate MetroLink's new station at the corner of 20th Street and 2nd Avenue and would abut the 10 bus bays along the two streets. Lot D, when ultimately developed with a higher use, could potentially incorporate

a second public parking facility within the lower levels of the development, should there be additional demand for parking in Downtown.

### Shared Parking Agreements

There are many large private lots located within Downtown that could supplement the public parking system after regular business hours on weekday evenings and on weekends. The shared-use of these lots could make another approximately 635 spaces available at these times if the City can establish a shared-parking/liability policy, and if working agreements can be arranged between the City and private lot owners. These private lots could potentially include:

- \* Royal Neighbors of America lot (125 spaces) at 2nd Avenue and 16th Street
- \* U.S. Bank lot (63 spaces) at the southwest corner of 3rd Avenue and 18th Street
- \* U.S. Courthouse/Post Office lot (52 spaces) on 20th Street
- \* Illinois Casualty Company lot (85 spaces) at the northeast corner of 3rd Avenue and 20th Street
- \* The lots along 1st Avenue between 16th and 16 ½ streets (130 spaces)

- \* The former Gas & Electric Credit Union lot (60 spaces) at the northeast corner of 4th Avenue and 17th Street
- \* The office building lot at the northeast corner of 4th Avenue and 15th Street (120 spaces)

Highly visible signage would be installed within these lots displaying the shared-use policy and time periods available for public use.

### Existing Parking Lots Reconfiguration

Several private parking lots in Downtown have parking configurations that do not maximize the parking potential on the site. The parking capacity of these lots can be increased inexpensively by re-striping the paved areas with a more efficient parking configuration, thereby reducing reliance on the City's on-street and off-street spaces as overflow reserves.

### On-Street Parking Reconfiguration

On-street parking in Downtown consists of a mixture of parallel and angle parking spaces. In the southeast section, an area more reliant on the on-street parking supply due to its distance from the City's off-street parking facilities, the majority of on-street parking is oriented parallel to the street. Two of the streets that traverse the southeast section, 4th Avenue and 5th Av-

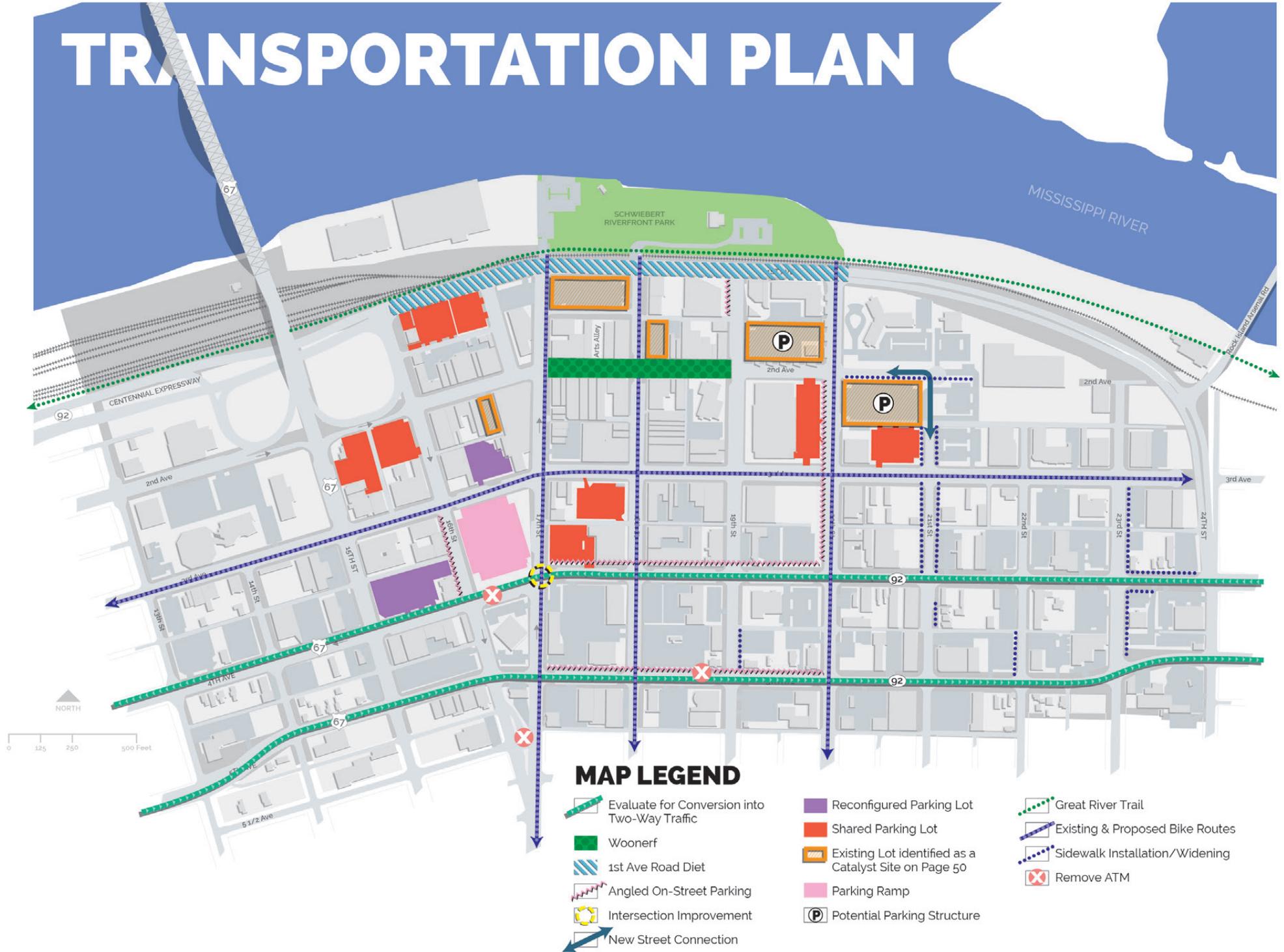
enue, are excessively wide for the volume of traffic carried (6,000-7,000 vehicles per day). Both streets in this one-way couplet have a curb-to-curb width of approximately 52 feet with three travel lanes and a parallel parking lane on both sides of the street. Even with the proposed re-routing of IL Route 92 onto the one-way couplet, these streets would operate very well with only two travel lanes. This offers the opportunity to supplement the parking supply in the southeast section by introducing angle parking along 4th Avenue and 5th Avenue, between 17th Street and 20th Street, in place of one of the travel lanes and one of the parallel parking lanes.

The primary benefit of angle parking is that the parking capacity on a block can be increased by 50 percent or more over a parallel parking configuration, depending on the degree that the parking stalls are angled. In addition, motorists find it easier and faster to enter and exit a parking stall in an angle configuration. A secondary benefit to angle parking is that the intersection corners can be extended further into the travelway to frame the angle parking lane and reduce the pedestrian crossing distances to a greater degree than with parallel parking.

Two angle parking configurations should be considered including a conventional head-in/back-out orientation and a back-in/head-out (aka. reverse angle) orientation. Both angle configurations have common dimensions and as such would yield similar increases in parking capacity over a parallel parking configuration. Back-in/head-out angle parking has been implemented in progressive cities throughout North America and is advantageous over conventional head-in/back-out parking and parallel parking for the following reasons:

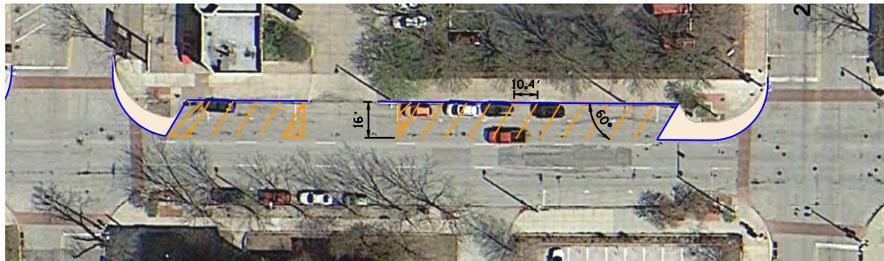
- \* Unobstructed view to oncoming traffic and bicyclists when pulling out of parking stall; drivers do not back blindly into active traffic lane.
- \* The open door of the vehicle blocks access to the travel lane and guides pedestrians to the adjacent sidewalk, a safer condition for children.
- \* Cargo loading into trunks and tailgates is from the curb not the street.
- \* Lower potential for parking accidents.
- \* Back-in parking maneuver is easier and quicker than a parallel parking maneuver; less disruptive to adjacent street traffic.

# TRANSPORTATION PLAN



## MAP LEGEND

- Evaluate for Conversion into Two-Way Traffic
- Woonerf
- 1st Ave Road Diet
- Angled On-Street Parking
- Intersection Improvement
- New Street Connection
- Reconfigured Parking Lot
- Shared Parking Lot
- Existing Lot identified as a Catalyst Site on Page 50
- Parking Ramp
- Potential Parking Structure
- Great River Trail
- Existing & Proposed Bike Routes
- Sidewalk Installation/Widening
- Remove ATM



The adjacent image illustrates a typical block of 4th Avenue reconfigured with conventional head-in/back-out angle parking. The image beneath it illustrates the same block reconfigured with back-in/head-out parking. Either option, as shown, would approximately double the number of parking spaces on the block.

Similar angle parking improvements can be created along the 300 block of 16th Street, the 100 block of 19th Street, the 200 and 300 blocks of 20th Street, and both sides of First Street (16th Street-20th Street) when IL Route 92 is re-routed onto the 4th Avenue-5th Avenue couplet. It should be noted that angled parking for either scenario would work with or without the IL Route 92 designation.

### Parking Ramp Improvements

The City's Parking Ramp, located between 3rd and 4th Avenues and 16th and 17th Streets is in need of improvement. While the ramp contains more than 400 spaces, it is relatively unused. The ramp can be improved by:

- \* Developing wayfinding that publicizes the ramp and directs travelers to the ramp
- \* Installing real-time parking count signs on the outside of the facility and approach routes into Downtown
- \* Proving a safe and inviting atmosphere by ensuring that the interior is properly lit during the evening
- \* Linking the ramp to the rest of the Downtown Core through streetscaping and pedestrian improvements
- \* Clearly delineating through color coding which spaces are available for public parking and spaces reserved for City fleet vehicles and the Holiday Inn
- \* Relocate City fleet vehicles spaces to the upper level

### Parking Regulations

Curbside parking in the Downtown Core area currently has varying regulatory time durations on weekdays between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. ranging from 5 minutes to unlimited time, with intervening limits of 30 minutes, one hour, and two hours. The two-hour regulated spaces, which comprise the vast majority of on-street parking in the core, are all enforced under one parking zone (brown zone) rather than on a block-by-block basis. The multitude of time durations and maximum two-hour limit creates confusion and does not always provide the level of convenience desired by downtown businesses and their patrons. When combined with strict enforcement, it results in a propensity for parking citations that gives Downtown Rock Island a perception of being overly restrictive and unwelcoming which can be detrimental to the business environment.

## Established Classifications

Limiting parking duration is a common method of managing parking in a downtown area. Three parking duration periods are typically prevalent in most downtown: short-term, medium-term, and long-term time limits. In general, the shorter the time duration, the more frequent the parking spaces turn over.

**Short-term parking** is typically under one hour and accommodates passenger drop-offs, deliveries, and destinations that involve quick errands such as in front of transportation terminals, schools, theatres, hotels, hospitals, post offices, convenience stores, and take-out dining. In the Downtown Core, these spaces tend to be metered with durations ranging from 5 minutes to 30 minutes. Durations less than 30 minutes, however, are difficult to enforce and can constrain quick-trip activities that need to be performed. Consolidating all short-term parking in the downtown core to a 30-minute duration would reduce confusion and violations while continuing to encourage parking turnover. Peoria and Champaign, as an example, utilize minimum durations of 30 minutes for short-term parking time limits in their downtown cores.

**Medium-term parking** typically ranges from one- to four-hours and accommodates diners, shoppers, business visitors, service trips (i.e., plumbers, electricians), and those making longer errands. In

the Downtown Core, these spaces are unmetered and range from one hour to two hours. Customers often find that one hour is inadequate for a shopping trip, meal or errand, and two hours can be inadequate for multiple trips (e.g. shopping and meal). Three- or four-hour durations are common in downtowns, such as Peoria and Dubuque, as the maximum time limit for medium-term parking, and is recommended as a replacement to the two hour parking zones in the Rock Island Downtown Core. The current brown zone parking policy utilized Downtown would continue to deter long-term parkers from using the curb spaces intended for downtown patrons and visitors, even if the medium-term parking durations were extended to three or four hours, as long-term parkers would still be unable to relocate their vehicles once or twice a day within the brown zone without incurring a citation.

**Long-term parking** typically exceeds four hours and accommodates employees, commuters, residents, and some service trips such as contractors. The long-term curb parking areas in Downtown are generally the unlimited free parking areas in the Downtown Outer Core and Periphery. It is recommended that long-term parking be directed to the Parking Ramp and future parking structures.

## Simple Two-Tiered System for Street Parking

The creation of a simple, two-tier parking duration system for on-street parking in the Downtown Core would significantly reduce confusion and parking violations while still managing parking as desired by the City, business owners, and downtown patrons. This would include:

- \* Short Term: 30 Minutes
- \* Medium Term: 4 Hours

The regulations for these parking spaces can be posted with signage rather than unsightly parking meters, which could then be removed to enhance streetscaping efforts. The signage could be color-coded for short-term 30 minute parking and for medium-term 4 hour parking to differentiate the two parking zones for easy recognition, similar to how some communities color-code their parking meters and curbs. For consistency with the Federal Highway Administration's Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Streets and Highways standards on the color-coding of parking time limits, only the colors green, red, and black should be used. Since the medium-term (2-Hour) parking signs in downtown Rock Island already consist of a red legend on a white background, the short-term parking signs should consist of a green legend on a white background. Loading zones signs can consist of a black legend on a white background.

The medium-term parking durations in the off-street public lots that offer hourly parking (i.e., Lots F, G, and Parking Ramp) should also be extended to four hours for consistency with the on-street parking durations.

The City may also want to consider discontinuing sales of downtown parking permits (i.e., rover permit) that allow unlimited time use of the on-street short-term and medium-term parking spaces. There are an adequate number of off-street parking options available for those desiring a reserved or unreserved parking space via the other downtown parking permits offered by the City.

A more detailed parking study should be performed to specify the regulatory changes in on-street parking on a block-by-block basis and evaluate site potential for future off-street facilities.

## Parking Wayfinding

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, part of the difficulty in parking downtown is not knowing where public lots are located. This causes frustration and inefficiency, and can create the perception that no parking is available. The City should implement wayfinding signage throughout Downtown that direct motorists to City lots, garages, and ramps.)

## Parking Enforcement

Enforcement of parking regulations within Downtown has been contracted out to a private company. Payment to the company for such services is not based on the number of tickets written. Ticket revenue is minimal and does not have a significant impact on local budgets.

Many businesses and residents believe that current enforcement is overzealous, with very minor infractions generating fines. The City should consider relaxing enforcement, where and when appropriate, to create a more welcoming Downtown environment. Possible strategies including giving warning tickets, leaving form letters/fliers on a windshield of a violating vehicle informing them of their infraction and how to avoid it next time, or simply granting vehicles a window of 15–30 minutes extra beyond existing limits.

## Summary of Parking Recommendations

- \* Improve wayfinding signage to public parking facilities;
- \* Install angle parking, where possible, to increase curb parking capacity in areas of high demand;
- \* Re-stripe private parking lots to maximize parking efficiency;
- \* Establish a shared-parking/liability policy and develop working agreements with private parking lot owners;
- \* Install highly visible signage at private lots available for public use after-hours;
- \* Improve the existing Parking Ramp;
- \* Construct new parking deck(s) in proximity to 2nd Avenue's entertainment destinations;
- \* Consolidate all short-term parking to 30-minute durations;
- \* Extend the medium-term, two-hour parking zones to four-hour durations;
- \* Install color-coded regulatory signage for short- and medium-term parking zones;
- \* Remove parking meters;
- \* Discontinue sales of rover parking permits;
- \* Conduct a Parking Study to provide greater detail and analysis prior to constructing any new parking garages; and
- \* Consider relaxing parking enforcement, when and where appropriate.

## PUBLIC TRANSIT

Public transit in Downtown Rock Island is provided by MetroLINK's fixed-route bus service. In January 2014, a new transfer station was opened on the corner of 20th Street and 2nd Avenue, across from Spencer Tower and the new Locks mixed-use development. Currently, Downtown is served by five different bus routes, all serviced at the new terminal: Route 10, Route 30, Route 40, Route 53, and Route 60. While there are only a handful of signed bus stops, MetroLINK policy allows riders to board at any street corner along the established route.

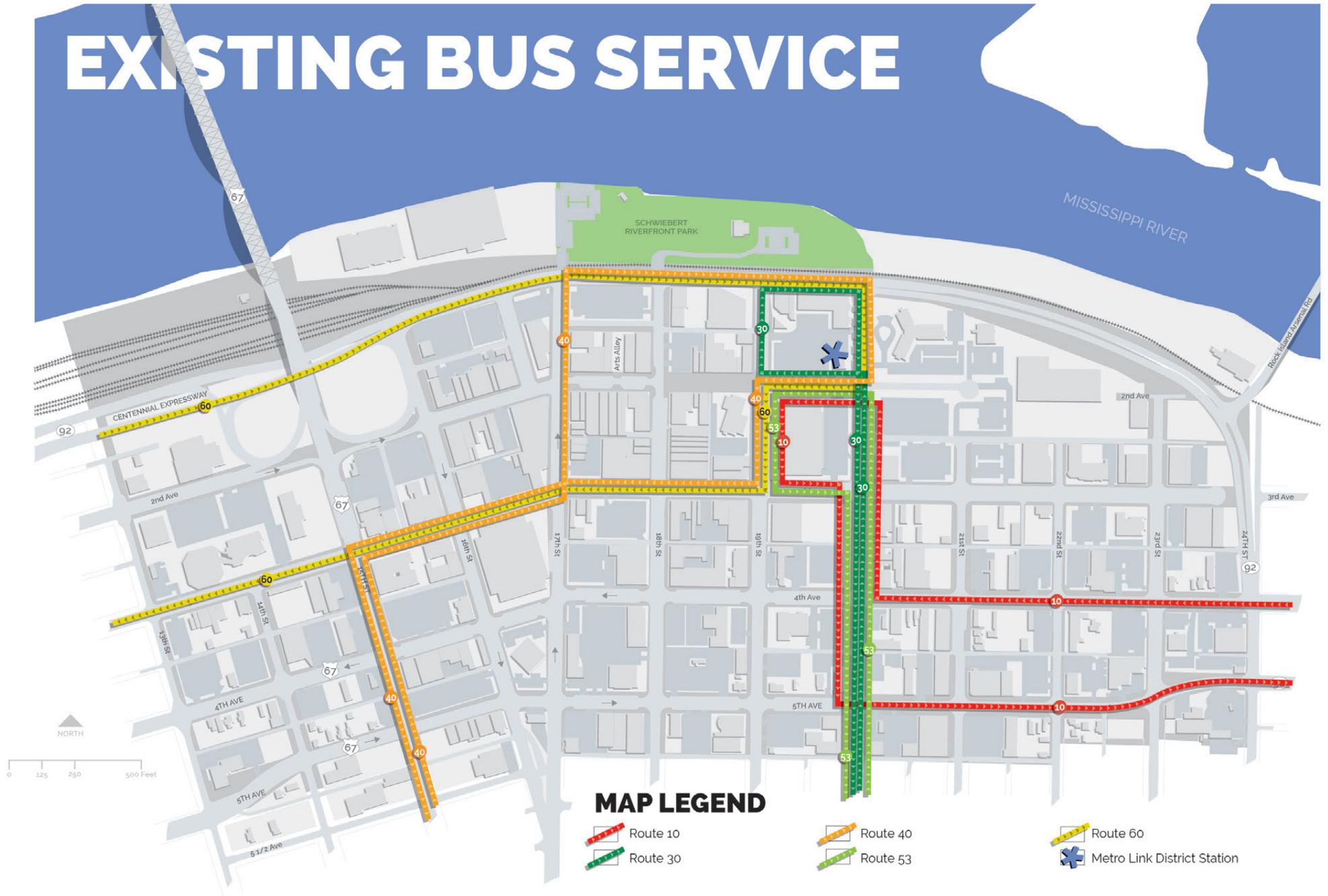
On the whole, Downtown Rock Island is well-served by MetroLINK, and connections are available to all of the nearby communities, as well as Augustana College to the east of Downtown. The following recommendations focus on promoting access to Downtown by transit patrons, identifying bus stop locations, and providing amenities for transit patrons:

- \* Partner with MetroLINK to evaluate whether additional signed/sheltered bus stops within the Downtown area are needed, such as at the County Courthouse complex or City Hall;
- \* Partner with MetroLINK to evaluate the creation of an additional bus route that would directly link Downtown Rock Island with Arsenal Island; at present,

the only public transit access point is through the eastern portion of the island via Downtown Moline;

- \* Partner with Augustana College to publicize safe and convenient access to Downtown via Route 53;
- \* Provide passenger information at the new MetroLINK transfer station that promotes Downtown businesses and provides visitor maps of the area;
- \* Communicate and promote the convenience of utilizing MetroLINK, especially in the evenings and weekends for concerts and special events; and
- \* Work with the Rock Island Police Department's Downtown Patrol Unit to promote a sense of safety and well-being around the station.

# EXISTING BUS SERVICE



## MAP LEGEND

- Route 10
- Route 30
- Route 40
- Route 53
- Route 60
- Metro Link District Station



## WALKABILITY & BIKEABILITY

At its core, Downtown should be a pedestrian-oriented environment that fosters a sense of energy and vitality on sidewalks and the street. The usage of bicycles should also be supported and accommodated, especially given access to the regional Great River Trail. Collectively, a well-integrated, safe, and efficient network of sidewalks, bike lanes, and trails can increase the number of "eyes on the street" and stimulate economic growth and healthy activity.

### Walking

On the whole, Downtown is very pedestrian friendly. The primary pedestrian routes within Downtown are the sidewalks. While most are in good condition, some require maintenance and repair. In some cases, sidewalks are narrow and should be expanded; utilities and infrastructure is placed in the middle and should be removed or the sidewalk reroute; and in others, gaps in the sidewalk network should be filled to ensure a continuous pedestrian network.

Recommendations related to pedestrian mobility are highlighted below, understanding that they may be phased in over time as re-development occurs:

- \* Ensure that all sidewalks are consistent and continuous within the Downtown, including filling sidewalk gaps and widening sidewalks, where appropriate. Some locations have been identified on the Transportation & Parking map displayed earlier in this chapter.
- \* Implement bump-outs along 1st Avenue at the intersections of 17th and 18th Streets that can better physically and socially connect the Great River Trail and Schwiebert Park to Downtown.
- \* Provide pedestrian crosswalks at all intersections with the Downtown Core and Downtown Outer Core sub-areas. Intersections needing improvements are mostly found along busier roadways, such as US 67, IL Route 92, and 4th and 5th Avenues. While many intersections communicate pedestrian crossings with the usage of stamped concrete, not all intersections commu-

nicate safe crossing. Improvements should include bollard lighting, clear striping or pavement treatments, signals with countdown timers, curb extensions and enhancements.

- \* Evaluate opportunities to better connect the Great River Trail and 1st Avenue with the Centennial Bridge.
- \* Promote the development of pedestrian amenities, such as benches and small plazas, especially within the Downtown Core and along 2nd Avenue.

### Biking

Ideally Downtown should be bikable and accessible by bike. At present, aside from the Great River Trail that passes north of Downtown, a few bike racks and painted sharrows along 20th Street, Downtown contains very little bicycle infrastructure. Recommendations related to cycling are highlighted below, understanding that they may be phased in over time as re-development occurs:

- \* Reinforce 17th Street, 18th Street, 20th Street, and 3rd Avenue as the Down-

town's primary bikeways through posted signage and painted sharrows, while also recognizing that the entirety of the Downtown Core should be bike-friendly.

- \* Develop clearly marked, safe, and efficient bike connections between Downtown streets and the Great River Trail, with clearly marked access via 1st Avenue and 18th Street.
- \* Post wayfinding signage throughout Downtown and along the Great River Trail that directs cyclists to each respective location.
- \* Evaluate opportunities for developing a "bike share" program.
- \* Support bike programming within the Downtown as well as the installation of bike parking at both public and private facilities.



## 7. URBAN DESIGN PLAN

The Urban Design Plan concerns the arrangement, appearance and function of Downtown's built form and public spaces. Specifically, it addresses the relationship between people, buildings, and public space, including sidewalks, parks, and plazas. The Urban Design Plan includes components from both the public and private realm and collectively provides recommendations and policies to foster a comfortable and attractive Downtown.

Throughout the community outreach conducted throughout the Downtown Revitalization Plan process, the need for economic development and new investment dominated the public dialogue. However, this does not mean urban design was not a community priority as many of the community's objectives require downtown to be inviting and attractive. Attractive buildings, public spaces, streets, sidewalks, and amenities alone can draw people and business to Downtown.

This section presents recommendations for the elements of downtown related to its appearance and function. The recommendations build on other elements of the Downtown Revitalization Master Plan, including the Land Use Framework and Development Plan and the Downtown's three subareas. The Urban Design Plan organizes its recommendations around these five themes:

- \* Architecture & Facades
- \* Identity & Sense of Place
- \* Public Art
- \* Pedestrians
- \* Streetscape



## ARCHITECTURE & FACADES

Rock Island's historic building stock plays an important role in establishing Downtown's "sense of place", differentiating it from other areas within the community and other downtowns in the Quad Cities. As development occurs within Downtown, the City must convey the importance of quality architecture, and encourage and challenge developers and property owners to elevate the quality of development.

Bland architecture with little or no urban character and materials of low-quality should be resisted and avoided when and where possible. A mix of quality and aesthetically-pleasing materials should also be used for any new construction taking place in downtown, including rehabilitation, new construction, or building additions. Architectural projections, trim and cornices, recesses, decorations, various styles, and other features bring substance and distinctness to the architecture of Downtown Rock Island.

Much of Downtown Rock Island is characterized by "historic"/"traditional" architectural style and building types. The "historic" character of buildings and the traditional in-line storefront layout is considered to be an asset which helps make Downtown different from all other commercial areas.

In order to maintain and enhance the existing character of the Downtown, the City has adopted basic guidelines for Downtown storefronts and buildings. These guidelines encompass building height, scale, bulk, color, materials, signage, façade treatment, etc. Currently they are used to help property owners understand the importance of design considerations and to raise expectations of good design. The guidelines apply to New Markets Tax Credit projects, but are useful for all downtown buildings undergoing rehab. To elevate Downtown architecture, the City should promote the use of Downtown Design Guidelines for all buildings within Downtown.

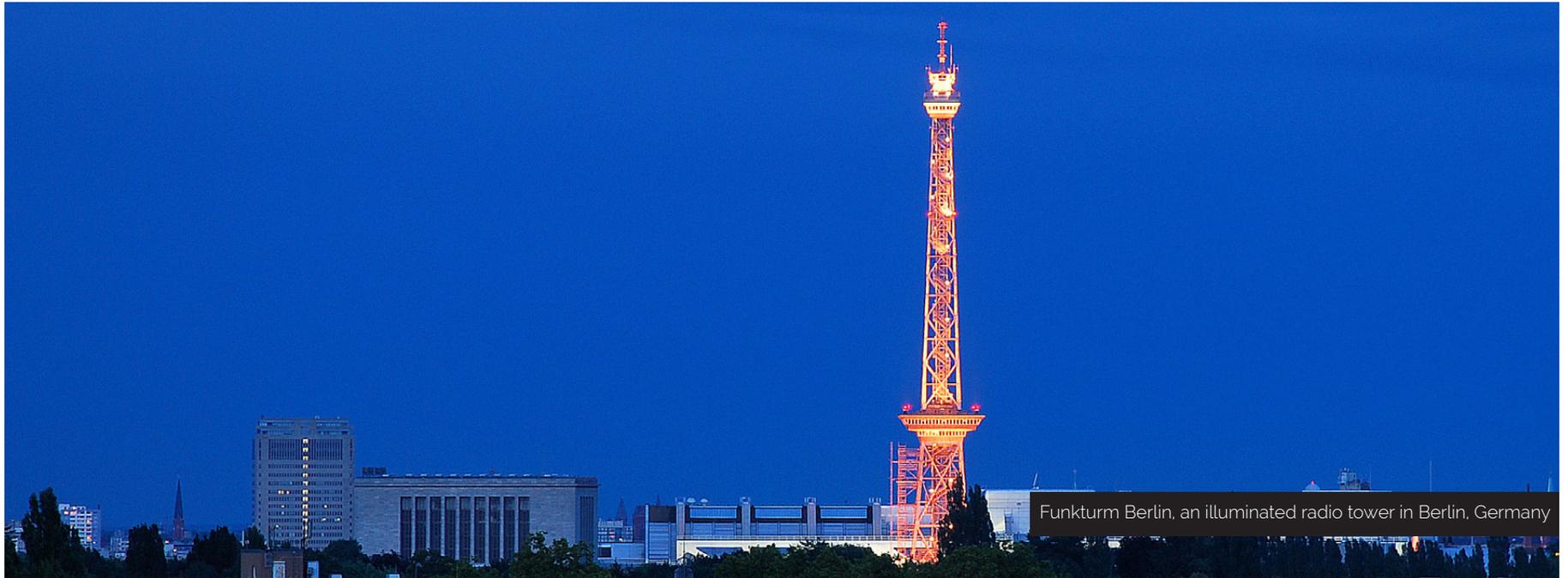
Even though many older buildings have been upgraded in recent years, others would benefit from façade, signage, and storefront improvements. Many structures are blighted. Improvement to the backsides of many commercial buildings would also be desirable, particularly where they are visible from roadways, pedestrian ways, or parking areas.

As the likelihood of future redevelopment increases, existing structures may be razed to make way for new construction. It is important that new construction be compatible with and supportive of the traditional scale, image and character of Downtown. While architectural styles need not be the same, there should be a general consistency in building height, bulk, placement, orientation, materials, color and the "rhythm" of façade articulation.

## IDENTITY & SENSE OF PLACE

The physical composition of any community can have a large impact on the impression it leaves on residents, employees and visitors. This is especially true for buildings in Downtown Rock Island. Downtown is the community's focal point – the one place that provides every resident with a sense of ownership.

Creating "sense of place" for an area means creating a place that is unique, distinguishable, and memorable. Repetitive, cookie-cutter development can threaten a community's sense of place. By allowing a developer to replicate the same development or project from another part of Downtown or from another City compromises identity. To distinguish Downtown Rock Island from its neighbors, the City must encourage the construction and maintenance of buildings with a high degree of architectural quality and unique details.



Funkturm Berlin, an illuminated radio tower in Berlin, Germany

Providing an urban environment with high-quality architecture and unique architectural details is essential to the enhancement of Downtown's "sense of place". Architecture lacking character and quality of materials should be discouraged when and where possible. Individual buildings should each have distinctive and aesthetically-pleasing architecture to them.

## Gateways

The areas where visitors enter a downtown are called "gateways." The character and appearance of these areas are important factors in determining the overall image and perception of the downtown as a whole. The Arsenal Bridge intersection (1st Avenue and 24th Street) has an attractive sign that welcomes visitors to the City of

Rock Island, but makes no mention of Downtown.

Both approach routes, IL Route 92 and US 67, also lack any distinctive features that announce entry to Downtown Rock Island. While the landing area at the base of the Centennial Bridge presents an excellent opportunity for an attractive gateway area, at present, there are also no significant improvements to announce entry into the State, City, or Downtown.

## Wayfinding

Wayfinding signage and kiosks could be significantly improved within Downtown to help strengthen identity and "sense-of-place." A color-coded wayfinding system already exists within the Quad Cities;

however, it does not direct motorists and pedestrians to, and within, Downtown. New wayfinding signage along nearby streets and highways could direct motorists to Downtown, and signage within Downtown could assist Downtown patrons locate key destinations and parking facilities.

Signage to be further explored by the City include: a) signs which demark the boundaries of Downtown; b) gateway signs to signify entrance into the Downtown area; c) wayfinding signs which direct motorists to public parking areas; d) kiosks with maps and directories to help pedestrians locate dining, theatres, stores, businesses, Schwiebert Park, and other activity areas and amenities; and, e) signage along bike routes and the Great River Trail directing cyclists to Downtown points of interest.

## WHBF Tower Lighting

An additional opportunity for enhancing Downtown's sense of place would be to work with WHBF to light their roughly 500 foot antenna tower at night. This would provide a regional beacon for Downtown and add a signature, distinctive element in the Rock Island skyline. Similar to the Empire State Building, the colors could change to highlight important holidays (e.g. red and blue for Fourth of July, green and red for Christmas) and local events (e.g. red and yellow for when Rock Island High School has a big sports game). Berlin, for example, lights a local radio tower ("Funkturm Berlin") of a similar height and it is one of the most distinctive elements of the skyline.



## PUBLIC ART

The benefits of public art are well documented. It is said that public art can develop a sense of community pride, stimulate social interaction, encourage healthier life styles, reduce vandalism and cost, promote ecology, nurture and strengthen grass roots cultures, expand learning and awareness, heal the social fabric, explore risk and make lateral connections between the various people and agencies responsible for the public art.

The economic benefits of public art are also well documented. The Chicago "Cows on Parade" was a world-renowned temporary public art project in 1999 that consisted of hundreds of "bovine works of art" scattered throughout the City. It is estimated that the public art exhibit brought an additional 2 million visitors to the city, and during the three-month exhibit, these tourists spent approximately \$500 million on hotels, food, and sightseeing. One store in Chicago reported a \$40,000 profit over

its weekly projections due to thousands of additional customers generated by the exhibit. Other retail shops, restaurants, and hotels reported a 20% increase in sales.

In 2007, the City completed the Downtown Rock Island Arts Plan. The Plan provided several recommendations to integrate public art into the streetscape and urban fabric of Downtown. Some of the recommendations have been implemented, including painting murals on some of the large blank walls throughout Downtown. In addition, some sculptures have been installed in a few locations along sidewalk Downtown, including though the Arts Alley along 2nd Avenue Street between 17th Street and 18th Street. Each of these improvements illustrate how public art can enliven an area and contribute positively to the appearance and character of Downtown, however many additional opportunities remain.

While public art can complement and enrich almost any part of Downtown Rock Island, directing public art to the Downtown Core should be a priority to improve the area's appearance, vitality, and interest. The Rock Island Arts Advisory Committee is currently updating the 2007 Arts Plan. When complete, the Committee, local artists, and other groups and agencies, the City of Rock Island should work together to implement the recommendations of the new Plan and explore recommendations for additional projects and programs that can assist in implementing public art objectives.

The City may also consider establishing a "set aside" for public art or a "percent for art" requirement for new development. The City of San Francisco for instance, mandates 2% of all construction costs be allocated for public art, including "paintings, drawing, murals in any media, stained glass, statues, bas relief or other sculptures; environmental artworks or public places

designed by Artists; monuments, fountains, arches or other structures of a permanent or temporary character intended for ornament or commemoration, integrated and functional architectural elements designed by the Artist, video and other media-based works." The City of Oakland has a 1% allocation for both public and private construction projects, and the City of Vancouver, British Columbia also requires private development to allocate money to public art (\$0.95/square foot).

## **Parking Meters**

De-commissioned parking meters painted and decorated by local artists could be placed in public parks, plazas, and other public spaces to collect coins for charities and civic organizations. This would add something unique to Downtown Rock Island while also benefiting causes important to the community, such as homelessness, college scholarships, public art, and more. Other communities that have implemented, or are implementing, a similar program include San Diego, CA; Denver, CO; St. Petersburg, FL; Pasadena, CA; Helena, MT; and San Mateo, CA. It is important that such meters are placed in off-street locations, otherwise they may create confusion for drivers.

## **PEDESTRIANS**

A distinguishing characteristic of any successful downtown is a strong pedestrian orientation. Even visitors that arrive by automobile become pedestrians the moment they park and exit their cars. Unlike suburban commercial corridors, which are primarily oriented toward the automobile, downtowns should orient toward the pedestrian. The movement of pedestrians between stores, employment areas, dwelling units, theatres, restaurants, parking areas, and the riverfront are critical considerations the Revitalization Plan must consider. A safe and attractive pedestrian environment can significantly contribute to the overall character and appeal of Downtown and help catalyze additional investment.

## **Sidewalks**

Walking should be considered a primary mode of transportation within Downtown, and as such, pedestrians should be able to expect unobstructed, complete paths. While most of the sidewalks are in good condition, some areas may require maintenance and repair. A comprehensive improvement program should be implemented in Downtown to address three key components: 1) filling in gaps where there are no sidewalks, 2) replacing surfaces that are damaged or unsafe, and 3) ensuring that all segments meet accessibility requirements related to width, level obstructions, etc. Sidewalks should be given priority over driveways by continuing sidewalk segments through curb cuts, and all development should provide direct pedestrian access from the public sidewalk to the front entry. Where possible, sidewalks should be 10' in width, or wider, to provide pedestrian comfort and opportunities for outdoor seating.

Snow removal regulations must be enforced during winter months in order to ensure access to businesses and public safety.

## **Street Crossings**

Safe pedestrian crossings should be provided throughout Downtown. Crosswalks within the Downtown Core can be improved by changing materials (i.e. pavers, stamped and painted asphalt, etc.), using bumpouts to shorten crossing distances, and installing crossing signs on the street. Any pedestrian crosswalk or crossing that is perceived as dangerous should be considered problematic in a downtown setting. Of particular note are crossings across 1st Avenue, which separates the Downtown Core from the riverfront and Schwiebert Park. Improved pedestrian crossings may also be needed across 15th Street (US Route 67), which can be busy during peak periods and traffic related to the Centennial Bridge. Crosswalks at traffic signals can be made more pedestrian friendly by installing pedestrian count-down timers and "pedestrian first" signal timings that allow pedestrians to enter and establish themselves in intersections before vehicles can move.



## Riverfront

Schwiebert Park has helped reposition the riverfront into an activated pedestrian area, however, additional potential remains for open space and the riverfront to play a more significant role in Downtown Rock Island. The City should use wayfinding signage to promote the park, and work with the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) to implement pedestrian and roadway improvements that can provide better and safer connections to the park, as well as a more intimate environment along 1st Avenue. In addition, the City should work to extend Schwiebert Park to the east on the vacant railroad property along the riverfront.

## Gathering Places

Providing opportunities for pedestrians to sit, relax, and gather are important components of a downtown. Schwiebert Park, a small plaza area adjacent to the parking ramp, the Arts Alley, the Great River Plaza, and the lawn in front of the County building are the only public spaces within Downtown. Opportunities for improving existing sites as gathering places are limited, however the City should work to promote the inclusion of plazas and open spaces as a component of all new development, with gathering and seating areas accessible to all Downtown visitors.

## Seating

Supplying pedestrians with places to sit along the sidewalk is an additional step the City can take to enrich the pedestrian fabric of Downtown. Benches, planters, and any elevated flat surfaces can serve as places for pedestrians to sit. Pedestrians enjoy having the option of sitting along the sidewalk of a downtown for various reasons.

On a nice day, a businessman may want to relax, take a seat downtown, and enjoy being outdoors, citizens may want to take a seat and watch the activity taking place downtown, or a family may want to take the ice cream they recently purchased outside to enjoy a refreshing evening breeze. Whatever the reason, the availability of seating is important to the pedestrian fabric and currently seating areas in Downtown Rock Island are limited. In addition to public seating, where sidewalk widths allow, the City should encourage cafes and restaurants to provide outdoor seating for customers.



## **STREETSCAPE**

Streetscape design refers to the overall design of a street, including the road, sidewalks and pedestrian amenities, landscaping, and the character of the adjacent building facades. A memorable street is typically a street oriented towards the pedestrian experience. Providing ample sidewalk space for pedestrians to utilize when traveling through the downtown of a community is necessary to prevent citizens from feeling cramped and congested. Wide sidewalks also provide a level of comfort and safety to all pedestrians utilizing them. Attention to detail and the use of quality materials is also important in achieving a successful streetscape design in Downtown.

Elevating the streetscape for all of Downtown would be beneficial, however streetscape improvements are costly. Tied together with a common theme, a unified streetscape should be installed throughout Downtown, with the type and intensity of improvements dictated by location within Downtown's subareas.

## **Downtown Core Streetscape**

The Primary Streetscape treatment should exist in all areas within the Downtown Core. Parking should be on-street, in parking areas located at the rear of buildings, or offsite in the Parking Ramp or future parking garages. Crosswalks within the Downtown Core should change material to emphasize pedestrian orientation of Downtown. Sidewalks should be 10' in width, or wider, to provide pedestrian comfort and opportunities for outdoor seating. Streetlights within the Downtown Core should be pedestrian scaled and adorned with banners promoting the City, Downtown, and special events. Street trees should be incorporated throughout the Downtown Core, planted in the street grates within the sidewalk, or raised planters. Planters and potted plants should be located throughout to help with beautification and add visual interest. Benches, trash receptacles and other pedestrian furnishings should be placed throughout.

## **Downtown Outer Core Streetscape**

The Outer Core Streetscape should exist in all areas of the Outer Core, prioritizing areas adjacent, or near the Downtown Core, and all major approach routes including Illinois Route 92 and US Route 67, as these streets are not visually distinctive and provide no sense of direction to Downtown. Parking within the Outer Core should be located on-street, in rear parking lots, offsite in the Parking Ramp or future parking garages when possible. Surface parking lots should be strongly discouraged. Crosswalks within the Outer Core should be striped to emphasize pedestrian orientation. Where possible, sidewalks should be 10' in width, however a standard 5' sidewalk is acceptable. Streetlights should be scaled for both pedestrians and vehicles, with banners promoting Rock Island, the Downtown, and other community events. Street trees should be located throughout the Outer Core, within the parkway or in grates in the sidewalk depending on sidewalk width. Benches and other pedestrian furnishings are appropriate and should be placed in this treatment only where space permits. Utility lines should be buried if feasible, but above grade utilities is acceptable.

## **Downtown Periphery Streetscape**

The Periphery Streetscape treatment exists on quieter, less busy streets surrounding the Outer Core. Parking can occur on street, but does not necessarily have to be demarcated. Private driveways, garages, and parking lots are also appropriate. Standard, 5' sidewalks are appropriate, and given the low volumes of traffic, crosswalks do not necessarily have to be striped or formalized. Streetlights should be scaled for vehicles, and street trees should be planted in the parkway. Ideally overhead utility lines should be buried, however this is costly and not necessarily a priority.





## 8. IMPLEMENTATION

The planning process for Downtown Rock Island has just begun. In many ways, formal adoption of the Downtown Revitalization Plan is only the first step, not the last. Without continuing action to implement and update the Plan, City efforts up to this point will have minimal lasting impact.

The Downtown Revitalization Plan sets forth an agreed-upon "road map" for the next ten to fifteen years. It is the product of considerable effort on the part of the Downtown partners. City staff, business leaders, and residents. The final Plan represents the consensus of all involved.

There are several requirements for effective implementation of the Downtown Plan. Basic implementation components include:

- ★ **Administrative Actions:** The City should be guided by a suggested agenda of administrative actions which will help establish a policy framework aligned with the recommendations of the Downtown Revitalization Plan.
- ★ **Regulatory Actions:** The City should review and revise its regulatory measures, primarily the zoning ordinance, which can enforce the Plan's policies and recommendations.
- ★ **Daily Use:** It is essential that the Plan be utilized by City staff, boards, and commissions on a daily basis to review and evaluate all proposals for improvement and development within the study area.

- ★ **Regular Review & Update:** The Plan itself should be subjected to a monitoring process and be updated periodically to continually reflect local aspirations and opportunities.
- ★ **Partnerships:** The City of Rock Island should assume the leadership role in taking action on the Plan. For the Plan to be successful, however, it must be based on a strong partnership between the City, other public agencies, the local business community, and the private sector.

- ★ **Resource Prioritization:** The City has limited resources. Major improvements, where necessary, should be phased in over time and prioritized by location. All initial investment should occur mostly within the Downtown Core, followed by the Downtown Outer Core, then the Downtown Periphery. It is imperative to focus initial efforts in the Downtown Core and establish a critical mass of activity there.
- ★ **Funding:** The City should utilize project scheduling devices, such as the Capital Improvements Program, which allow implementation of the most important public improvements on a priority system, while staying within budgetary constraints. Federal, state, and foundation grants and public-private partnerships are also an option.

## ADMINISTRATIVE & REGULATORY ACTIONS

These are all high-priority, early-action projects which largely represent public policy or administrative decisions. They do not require a significant new allocation of funds, and they should all be undertaken within a relatively short time frame. These actions relate to revising and updating local codes and ordinances, follow-up studies and related administrative actions.

## Economic Development & Image

- \* Regularly meet with the Downtown business community, both large and small, to ensure constant two-way communication and identify opportunities for partnerships.
- \* Work cooperatively with commercial realtors to access, show, and market Downtown buildings, ensuring an open dialogue and sharing of information.
- \* Work with local business organizations to identify target industries and businesses to attract Downtown. As opposed to just "casting a wide net" and hoping for the best, a strategic approach should be identified that can focus limited resources, recruit desired growth industries, and capitalize on Downtown's unique assets and existing major employers.
- \* Work with local business organizations to develop a comprehensive and up-to-date inventory/database of available commercial properties in the Downtown area.

- \* Create a "Future Development Framework" for the catalyst sites identified in the Land Use & Development Framework Plan. This would include researching property ownership, site constraints, ease of assembling parcels, willingness of the property owner to sell/redevelop, as well as assessing total economic impact. The sites could then be ranked based on both desirability and feasibility. Ultimately, the City would proactively market the most feasible and high profile properties to developers, in partnership with the property owner(s).
- \* Form a strong organizational framework for undertaking the recommendations of the Plan. This should include the identification of an appropriate business organization with which the City could closely work.
- \* Make a high priority of working with the development community, business, and land owners to realize economic change and physical improvement.
- \* Publicize the City's Façade Improvement Program, Sales Tax Rebate, Commercial Revolving Loan Fund, and Enterprise Zone designation to current and prospective Downtown businesses.

## Housing Areas

- \* Closely monitor building conditions in all areas of the Downtown and strictly enforce all zoning, building, fire safety, and occupancy codes as they apply to all structures.
- \* Utilize the Land Use and Development Framework to guide the location, type, and amount of condominium, multi-family and townhouse development.
- \* Evaluate each unprotected historic structure (detailed in the Land Use and Development Framework) for coverage under the City's historic preservation ordinance.
- \* Re-evaluate existing zoning regulations to ensure the protection of sound existing development, to reduce adverse influences, and to establish setback, height, and density requirements for new residential development.

## Commercial Areas

- \* Utilize the Land Use Plan to establish basic functional roles for the Downtown's various commercial areas.
- \* Update the City's zoning map to reflect new commercial area designations.
- \* Encourage Downtown properties to conform to the "Downtown Design Guidelines."
- \* Continue to participate in economic development programs aimed at attracting attention to business and development opportunities within Rock Island.
- \* Hold regular meetings with the business, real estate, and development communities to apprise them of active changes and improvements being undertaken in the Downtown and the part they can play to help stimulate positive change.

## Transportation

- \* Conduct a Downtown Parking Study that will more thoroughly evaluate and implement the recommendations itemized in the parking section of the plan
- \* Continue to work with MetroLink to identify improvements to routes and connections to Downtown as new development occurs throughout the City.
- \* Develop a detailed framework and schedule to begin removal of the Great River Plaza and implement a woonerf. This may include engineering and design studies, as well as cost estimates.

## Character

- \* Encourage Downtown properties to conform to the "Downtown Design Guidelines."
- \* Identify one point person, either at City Hall or through a Downtown advocacy group, to be the Downtown Aesthetics Manager. The Manager would take ownership for how the Downtown looks on a day-to-day basis and would implement/oversee streetscaping, work with the Inspections Department to enforce code violations, and proactively partner with businesses to improve their façade.
- \* Publicize the City's Façade Improvement Program to local businesses.
- \* Match local property owners with local artists to develop new public art.
- \* Work with local theatre owners to establish a "Theatre District."
- \* Work with local artists, musicians, and creative entrepreneurs to establish an "Arts Corridor" or "Arts District."

## DAILY USE

The Downtown Plan should become the City's official policy guide for land use, development, and community improvement in the Downtown area. It is essential that the Plan be utilized by City staff, boards, and commissions to review and evaluate all proposals for improvement and development within the study area.

To ensure daily usage and to further educate the community about the Plan, the City should:

- \* Make available copies of the Plan document available online.
- \* Provide assistance to the public in explaining the Plan and its relationship to private and public development projects and other proposals, as appropriate.
- \* Assist the City Council and various boards and commissions in the day-to-day administration, interpretation and application of the Plan.
- \* Maintain a list of current possible amendments, issues or needs which may be a subject of change, addition or deletion from the Downtown Plan.
- \* Coordinate with, and assist the City Council in the Plan amendment process.

## REGULAR REVIEW & UPDATE

The Downtown Plan is not a static document: the planning process must be continuous. The Plan should be monitored and updated on a regular basis. The need for Plan amendments are the result of many community influences. Most frequently these are brought about by changes in attitudes or emerging needs not foreseen at the time of Plan adoption.

Although a proposal to amend the Plan can be brought forth by petition at any time, the City should regularly undertake a systematic review of the Plan. Although an annual review is desirable, the City should initiate review of the Plan at least every two to three years. Ideally, this review should coincide with the preparation of the annual budget and capital improvement program. In this manner, recommendations or changes relating to capital improvements or other programs can be considered as part of the upcoming commitments for the fiscal year. Routine examination of the Plan will help ensure that the planning program remains relevant to community needs and aspirations.

## PARTNERSHIPS

The City of Rock Island should assume the leadership role in taking action on the Plan. For the Plan to be successful, however, it must be based on a strong partnership between the City, other public agencies, the local business community, and the private sector. The City's partners should include:

- \* Other governmental and service districts depending on site or issue (i.e. IDOT);
- \* Local economic development and advocacy organizations such as Renaissance Rock Island and the Quad Cities Chamber of Commerce;
- \* Builders and developers, who should be encouraged to undertake improvements and new construction that conform to the Plan and enhance the overall quality and character of the Downtown;
- \* Property owners and businesses should be encouraged to improve or redevelop their property in accordance with the Plan; and
- \* The First U.S. Army and Rock Island Arsenal.

## RESOURCE PRIORITIZATION

The City has limited financial and staff resources. The Downtown Revitalization Plan establishes three character areas: Downtown Core, Downtown Outer Core, and Downtown Periphery. Moving forward, it is important to establish a critical mass in the Downtown Core first, and let that energy propel outward over time. This is not to say that investment should not occur outside of the Downtown Core, or that in some cases economies of scale may be achieved by implementing infrastructure or programming within the full study area. In some cases, investment in the other character areas may be necessary to strengthen the Downtown Core; for example, wayfinding signage along 5th Avenue (Downtown Outer Core/Downtown Periphery) would strengthen the Downtown Core by directing traffic there. However, generally speaking, public and private investment should be directed at the Downtown Core first, followed by the other two character areas.

- \* Downtown Core - Priority 1
- \* Downtown Outer Core - Priority 2
- \* Downtown Periphery - Priority 3

## FUNDING

A description of potential funding sources currently available to the City and its partners for implementation is summarized below. As the following funding sources and streams are subject to change over time, it is important to continue to research and monitor grants, funding agencies, and programs to identify new opportunities as they become available.

## Capital Improvements Program

One tool for implementing the Downtown Plan is within the City's existing Capital Improvements Program. It establishes schedules and priorities for all public improvement projects within a five-year period. The City first prepares a list of all public improvements that will be required in the next five years. Then all projects are reviewed, priorities assigned, cost estimates prepared, and potential funding sources identified.

The Capital Improvements Program typically schedules the implementation of a range of specific projects related to the Downtown Plan, particularly the restoration, upgrading, and expansion of existing utilities and infrastructure facilities, including the water system, sanitary sewers, storm water facilities, and the street system.

Rock Island's financial resources will always be limited and public dollars must be spent wisely. The Capital Improvements Program would allow the City to provide the most desirable public improvements, yet stay within budget constraints.

## Tax Increment Financing (TIF)

The purpose of TIF funding is to incentivize and attract desired development within key commercial areas. TIF dollars can typically be used for infrastructure, streetscaping, public improvements, land assemblage, and offsetting the cost of development.

TIF utilizes future property tax revenues generated within a designated area or district, to pay for improvements and further incentivize continued reinvestment. As the Equalized Assessed Value (EAV) of properties within a TIF District increases, the incremental growth in property tax over the base year that the TIF was established, is reinvested in that area. Local officials may then issue bonds or undertake other financial obligation based on the growth in new revenue. The maximum life of a TIF district in the State of Illinois is 23 years, although a district can be extended beyond that horizon to 35 years through authorization from the State Legislature.

The majority of the study area is situated within one of two established TIF Districts: the Downtown TIF and the Locks TIF. Only a handful of properties along the southern side of 5th Avenue do not fall within either district. The Downtown TIF is set to expire in 2020 (1985 establishment + 35 years) and the Locks TIF in 2037 (2014 + 23 years).

The City needs to be judicious in how funds are allocated to ensure that catalyst projects receive priority. Each request for funding should be carefully evaluated to ensure that it is in keeping with the vision of the Downtown.

## Business Assistance Program

A business assistance grant program can be utilized to attract targeted retail businesses and assist existing businesses located within a particular area. As with a façade improvement program, business assistance funds are typically offered in the form of a matching grant that pays for a defined percentage of eligible expenditures. The expenditures are typically limited to build-out costs, signage, moving expenses, and physical improvements to a property necessary to accommodate a new business or the expansion of an existing business.

Priority can be given to businesses that complement the City's vision for Downtown Rock Island. The size of the grant available can also be tied to the overall impact the proposed project could have on the area. For example, the grant could be varied based on the anticipated sales tax to be generated by the project.

Grant monies could be used to lessen the cost burden of relocating or expanding in Rock Island. A business assistance program would likely have the most influence in attracting small and medium-sized retail tenants and restaurants.

## Special Service Area (SSA)

SSAs can be used to fund improvements and programs within a designated service area. An SSA is essentially added to the property tax of the properties within the identified service area and the revenue received is channeled back into projects and programs benefiting those properties. An SSA can be rejected if 51% of the property owners and electors within a designated area object. SSA funds can be used for such things as streetscape improvements, snow removal, extra trash pickup, district marketing, and special events. This tool could also be helpful in supporting improvements to the subareas identified in the plan.

## Incentives

This section provides an overview of incentives offered by the City of Rock Island to stimulate new growth and development.

### Enterprise Zone

An Enterprise Zone is a specific area designated by the State of Illinois to receive tax incentives and other benefits to stimulate economic growth and revitalization in economically depressed areas. The Rock Island Enterprise Zone was originally certified in 1984. Outside of a single block along 5th Avenue, the entire study area also falls within a state-designated Enterprise Zone. Special incentives include property tax abatement and sales tax exemption for building materials.

### Sales Tax Rebate

New or existing retail sales tax payers within the City of Rock Island may be eligible for a rebate of the City's portion of retail sales tax. To participate in the program, retailers must increase taxable retail sales by \$500,000 or more during a 12-month period. The rebate is capped at \$30,000. Participating retailers are eligible for only one 12-month rebate.

## Façade Improvement Program

The Façade Improvement Program provides a financial incentive to commercial property owners or tenants who are planning to renovate the exterior of a property. The program is designed as a rebate program with funds disbursed after all of the authorized work has been completed. Types of rebates available include:

- \* A rebate of 25% is available to office-based, service, or non-retail businesses;
- \* A rebate of 50% is available if the commercial building contains a retail business; and
- \* Green Rebate - A rebate of 75% is available for sustainable or energy-efficient improvements.

## Commercial/Industrial Revolving Loan Fund

The Commercial / Industrial Revolving Loan Fund (CIRLF) loan program provides gap financing for business start-ups or for expansion projects. The program offers low-interest loans to industrial, commercial, light manufacturing, retail, and service industries. Funds can be used toward the purchase of fixed assets (land, building, and equipment) and for working capital purposes.

## Business Districts

As authorized by Division 74.3 of the Municipal Code of the State of Illinois, a municipality may designate, after public hearings, an area as a Business Development District (BDD). A BDD would allow the City to levy up to an additional 1% retailers occupation tax, 1% hotel tax, and 1% sales tax within a designated district. Similar to a TIF district, a BDD has a maximum life of 23 years. BDD legislation also permits municipalities to utilize tax revenue growth that has been generated by BDD properties to fund improvements in the district.

Business district designation empowers a municipality to carry out a business district development or redevelopment plan through the following actions:

- \* Acquire all development and redevelopment proposals
- \* Acquire, manage, convey, or otherwise dispose of real and personal property acquired pursuant to the provisions of a development or redevelopment plan
- \* Apply for and accept capital grants and loans from the federal government and the State of Illinois for business district development and redevelopment

- \* Borrow funds as it may be deemed necessary for the purpose of business district development and redevelopment, and in this connection, issue such obligation or revenue bonds as it shall be deemed necessary, subject to applicable statutory limitations
- \* Enter into contracts with any public or private agency or person
- \* Sell, lease, trade, or improve such real property as may be acquired in connection with business district development and redevelopment plans
- \* Expend such public funds as may be necessary for the planning, execution, and implementation of the business district plans
- \* Create a Business District Development and Redevelopment Commission to act as an agent for the municipality for the purposes of business district development and redevelopment

BDD funds can be used for infrastructure improvements, public improvements, site acquisition, and land assemblage and could be applicable in the identified subareas, or in emerging business and industrial parks in the community. Given the limited amount of funds that a BDD is capable of generating, compared to a TIF district, BDD is best suited for funding small scale improvements and property maintenance programs.

## Incubators

Business incubators provide low-cost space and specialized support to small companies. Such services might include administrative consulting, access to office equipment and training, and assisting in accessing credit. Incubators are typically owned by public entities such as municipalities or economic development agencies who subsidize rents and services with grants. In addition to job creation and generating activity, the goal is to have startup businesses grow and relocate to larger spaces within Downtown Rock Island. Currently, the Shoppes on Second incubates retail shops; the City should work with its partners to evaluate opportunities for further incubation.

The City's 2014 Strategic Development Plan identified the establishment of an International Business Development Center as a top priority. The proposed Center would help establish Rock Island as the premier regional destination for businesses engaged in international commerce. It would advise local businesses, recruit and retain businesses, connect small businesses with multinational corporations, provide technical resources, offer a forum for collaboration, advise businesses, and more. Downtown Rock Island would be a suitable location for such an endeavor.

## Federal Historic Preservation Tax Credits

The Federal Historic Preservation Tax Credit program is administered by the National Park Service (NPS) and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) in partnership with the State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs). The amount of credit available under this program equals 20% of the qualifying expenses of a rehabilitation. Key criteria to obtain the credit include:

- \* The tax credit is only available to properties that will be used for a business or other income-producing purpose, and a "substantial" amount must be spent rehabilitating the historic building;
- \* The building needs to be certified as a historic structure by the National Park Service; and
- \* Rehabilitation work has to meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, as determined by the National Park Service.

Only two structures within Downtown Rock Island are currently certified as a historic structure by the National Park Service: the Peoples National Bank/Fries Building (1723-31 2nd Avenue) and the Fort Armstrong Hotel (1900 3rd Avenue). For other historic Downtown buildings to qualify, they would need to be certified as such.

## Foundation & Specialized Grants

The successful implementation of the Plan requires realization of projects that range in scale and scope. One type of funding source that becomes increasingly significant when issue-specific projects or programs (tourism, performing arts, historic preservation, small business assistance, etc.) are considered is the foundation grant. The City should dedicate resources to monitoring and exploring foundation grants as a funding tool.

## Transportation Funding

In 2012 the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) program, a transportation reauthorization bill was established. MAP-21 replaces the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), which expired in September 2009 and was extended nine times. The goal of MAP-21 is to modernize and reform the current transportation system to help create jobs and accelerate economic recovery.

MAP-21 continues funding for numerous programs previously funded through SAFETEA-LU. Given the relative recent passage of MAP-21, it is still uncertain how changes in Federal policy will ultimately impact existing funding programs. The City should continue to keep informed as to the status of these programs and any new funding sources that may be introduced in the near future as a result of MAP-21. Currently, MAP-21 is scheduled to expire on May 31, 2015. Congress is currently evaluating new transportation legislation for beyond that date.

The following discussion summarizes grant programs covered under MAP-21 that could be utilized by the City to make enhancements to local transportation infrastructure.

### Illinois Transportation Enhancement Program (ITEP)

The Illinois Department of Transportation administers the ITEP and has funded projects including bicycle and pedestrian facilities, streetscaping, landscaping, historic preservation, and projects that control or remove outdoor advertising. In the past, federal reimbursement has been available for up to 50% of the costs of right-of-way and easement acquisition and 80% of the cost for preliminary engineering, utility relocations, construction engineering, and construction costs.

### Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)

As part of the MAP-21 program, Congress created the Transportation Alternative Program (TAP), which provides funding for non-motorized transportation projects. Projects range from on-street bike facilities to multi-use paths and sidewalk infill programs to Safe Routes to School projects.

### Surface Transportation Program (STP)

In the past, these funds have been allocated to coordinating regional councils to be used for roadway and roadway related items. Projects in this funding category have required a local sponsor and have been selected based on a ranking scale that takes into account the regional benefits provided by the project among other factors. STP funds have been used for a variety of project types including roadway rehabilitation, reconstruction, and restoration; widening and adding lanes; intersection improvements; traffic signal improvements; and green infrastructure funding.

### Illinois Bicycle Path Program

The Illinois Bicycle Path Program is a grants program administered by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources that provides funding assistance up to 50% to acquire and develop land for public bicycle path purposes. Funded by a percentage of vehicle title fees, maximum grant awards are limited to \$200,000.

### Recreational Trails Program (RTP)

The Recreational Trails Program is a federally funded grant program for trail-related land acquisition, development, or restoration. The grants are awarded based on the results of a competitive scoring process and the application's suitability under MAP-21. A minimum 20% match is required by the applicant. Grants are to be used for motorized or non-motorized trail development, renovation, and/or preservation. All projects must be maintained for 25 years. Eligible applicants include municipalities, counties, schools, non-profits, and for-profit businesses.

## KEY PROJECTS

The Downtown Revitalization Plan establishes a new comprehensive vision for Downtown Rock Island and provides a set of policies and recommendations to achieve that vision. These policies and recommendations are described throughout the Plan's chapters and also summarized within an Implementation Matrix. Many recommendations are short-term administrative actions or low cost projects, however some are more capital intensive and more realistically attainable in the longer term. Each action item identified will have a positive impact on the Downtown, incrementally moving the City toward its desired vision, however some actions carry greater weight and offer greater impact than others.

This section presents the projects that should be considered a priority for Downtown Rock Island. Each of the projects identified would have the greatest impact on Downtown Rock Island, and should be evaluated for implementation as soon as possible, recognizing that budgetary restraints may limit the phasing of each project as well as the number of projects that can be implemented simultaneously. While there are many other worthwhile projects included in the Downtown Revitalization Plan, the projects identified below deserve priority and immediate attention given their ability to help foster additional projects and investment within Downtown.

Estimated costs for each project are provided, based on similar projects completed in other communities, estimates provided by City engineering staff, and general industry multipliers/estimates. It is important to note these costs are preliminary estimates generated by the City of Rock Island, as costs can vary widely depending on the project's design and quality, as well as fluctuating market prices for materials and labor. These cost estimates should only be used to frame the general discussion, and each should require a more detailed analysis by engineering, construction, or landscape architecture professionals.

## KEY PROJECTS

### SECOND AVENUE WOONERF

Removal of the Great River Plaza and construction of a woonerf ("living street") along 2nd Avenue between 17th and 19th Streets will improve traffic circulation, enhance the Downtown aesthetic, and create a more welcoming and accessible environment for all users. This project includes removal of the existing stage, which is necessary to open up the street. It is not recommended at this time that the stage be rebuilt, due to proximity to the Schwiebert Park stage and the option to use portable stages for events. For more detailed information, please see the "Transportation & Mobility Plan"

**Estimated Cost to City: \$750,000 – \$1,000,000\***

The lower amount includes removal of stage and opening up of the street, while the higher amount includes planters/streetscape features and pavement other than concrete.

### PARKING IMPROVEMENTS

While Downtown Rock Island contains more than 2,000 public parking spaces, a confusing on-street parking system combined with scattered and poorly advertised off-street parking lots creates an unpredictable and inefficient parking dynamic. This limits patronage of Downtown businesses as many people in the community feel as though there is "no parking downtown". The "Transportation & Mobility Plan" details fourteen recommendations that can increase the friendliness and efficiency of parking in Downtown Rock Island. All of these recommendations, minus those relating to the construction of a new parking garage(s), should be evaluated for immediate implementation.

**Estimated Cost to City: \$10,000 - \$100,000\***

The lower cost estimate includes simply removing meters and the lost annual revenue from the meters, while the higher option includes all major parking recommendations outside of implementing wayfinding signage and conducting a parking study.

### STREETSCAPING

A well-designed and attractive public realm communicates a message of valued investment and pride. Downtown Rock Island's current streetscape is tired and in need of improvement. Unified streetscaping improvements (e.g. pedestrian benches, sidewalks, decorative planters, attractive and pedestrian scaled street lighting, street trees, benches, bike racks, quality trash receptacles, and bannerings) should be installed throughout the Downtown, with the type and intensity of improvements dictated by location within the appropriate character area. Streetscaping efforts should be paired with a façade improvement strategy that engages existing property owners. For more detailed information, please see the "Transportation and Mobility Plan" and "Urban Design Plan."

**Estimated Cost to City: \$25,000 - \$500,000\***

The lower cost estimate represents the bare minimum in a very limited area within Downtown, while the higher cost estimate represents the cost of a Downtown-wide streetscaping program.

### FIRST AVENUE / IL 92 REMODELING

The current configuration of First Avenue / IL 92 and its designation as a State route physically divides the riverfront and Schwiebert Park from the greater Downtown area. First Avenue should be reduced to a two-way street with angled parking on both sides of the road, if width allows. Pedestrian bump-outs should be added at 17th and 18th Street to enhance pedestrian access. A slower, more intimate environment along First Avenue will better knit together Schwiebert Park and the Downtown Core, and stimulate new investment along the southern frontage of the road. For more information, please see the "Land Use & Development Plan," "Transportation & Mobility Plan," and "Urban Design Plan."

**Estimated Cost to City: \$1,000,000 - \$2,500,000\***

The lower cost amount includes quiet zone improvements, bump-outs, and basic striping, while the higher option includes complete roadway reconstruction with a new curb.

### MULTI-FAMILY DEVELOPMENT

Adding more residents and rooftops within Downtown Rock Island will help establish critical mass of people and activity, and support new retail, restaurant, and entertainment businesses. The City should proactively work with private and non-profit partners, developers, the real estate community, and other partners to position sites for new multi-family development acting as enthusiastic champions for Rock Island, providing proper incentives where necessary. For more information, please see the "Land Use & Development Plan" as well as the earlier portion of the "Implementation Plan."

**Estimated Cost to City: \$20,000 - \$30,000 gap per residential unit**

## IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

The Downtown Revitalization Plan includes many recommended policies, projects, and strategies. The following matrix summarizes the key actions that can be undertaken by the City in order to achieve the community vision. It also establishes the anticipated time frame, partnerships, and general cost of each action.

The City should use this matrix to assign tasks to various departments, explore strategic partnerships, and identify funding sources relevant to each action. As actions are completed and the Plan is updated, the matrix should be revised to prioritize the remaining actions and add new ones as needed.

Each strategy has been assigned a general time frame for estimated completion:

- \* Short = 0-2 years
- \* Medium = 2-5 years
- \* Long = 5 years+

Each strategy has been assigned a cost estimate:

- \* \$ = Lower cost, typically an administrative or staff action
- \* \$\$ = Medium cost, likely paid for from grants, special revenues (e.g. TIF), or the annual budget process; in some cases, part of capital improvements programming
- \* \$\$\$ = Higher cost, likely paid for from a variety of sources, including grants, special revenues (e.g. TIF), annual budget items, or part of a capital improvements programming

Each strategy also includes potential partnerships. This list is not exclusive, other partners may be identified and involved.

## KEY ACTION RECOMMENDATIONS: IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

TOPIC	ACTION	TIME FRAME	COST TO CITY	POTENTIAL PARTNERS
Align the City's development regulations with the recommendations and vision of the Downtown Revitalization Plan.	Re-evaluate, updating where necessary, the Downtown Design Guidelines, and expand their use for sites and buildings Downtown.	Short	\$	-
	Re-evaluate, updating, where necessary, the City's zoning code to reflect the land use and development recommendations of the Downtown Revitalization Plan.	Short	\$	-
	Re-evaluate, updating where necessary, ordinances and policies pertaining to historic preservation to align with the recommendations and policies of the Downtown Revitalization Plan.	Short	\$	-
	Re-evaluate, updating, where necessary, the ordinances, policies, and procedures regulating outdoor patios to align with the Downtown Revitalization Plan.	Short	\$	-
	Align investment and incentive policies to reflect the respective priorities and Functional Subareas presented in the Downtown Revitalization Plan.	Short	\$	-
	Develop and adopt a policy that encourages and prioritizes the adaptive re-use of historic structures over demolition.	Short	\$	-
	Preserve and repair Downtown's streetwall by strictly enforcing zero foot setbacks for front and side yards.	Short	\$	-
	Continue to implement both the RiverVision Plan and Arsenal Gateway Revitalization Plan.	Long	\$/\$\$/\$\$\$	Those specified previously in those plans
	Re-evaluate existing development regulations to promote the inclusion of plazas and public spaces as a component of new development.	Short	\$	-
Promote the awareness of the Downtown Revitalization Plan and ensure it is accessible.	Make a digital version of the Plan accessible to the public on the City's website.	Short	\$	-
	Provide assistance to the public in explaining the Plan and its relationship to development.	Short	\$	-
Promote development, redevelopment and increased private investment within Downtown.	Develop a marketing campaign that encourages people, including Downtown employees, to live Downtown.	Short	\$/\$\$	Renaissance Rock Island, The District
	Develop a 'target list' of specific types of businesses and industries that should be solicited/attracted/retained Downtown.	Short	\$	Renaissance Rock Island; Local businesses; Quad Cities Regional Chamber; The District
	Utilize the Land Use and Development Framework to guide the location, type, and amount of condominium, multi-family, and townhouse development.	Ongoing	\$	-
	Work with willing property owners to publicize and market sites identified as 'catalyst' sites within the Future Land Use Plan.	Short/Medium	\$	Renaissance Rock Island; Local businesses; The District; private property owners
	Market Downtown Rock Island's location within the federally designated HUBZONE to attract businesses within the defense and technology industries.	Short	\$	Renaissance Rock Island; Rock Island Arsenal/ First U.S. Army
	Establish an SSA or business improvement district to ensure regular maintenance of infrastructure, such as snow removal and cleanliness of public spaces.	Medium	\$	Local businesses
	Work with local business organizations to develop a comprehensive and up-to-date inventory of available properties within Downtown.	Short	\$	Renaissance Rock Island; Local businesses; private property owners; realtors; developers
	Partner with Augustana College to identify opportunities to better link Downtown and campus, including shuttle bus service, student housing, internship opportunities, and pedestrian connections.	Short/Medium	\$/\$\$/\$\$\$	Augustana College; The District
	Create a 'Future Development Framework' for the catalyst sites identified in the Land Use & Development Framework Plan.	Short	\$	Renaissance Rock Island; Local businesses; private property owners; realtors; developers
	Regularly meet with the Downtown business community to ensure constant two-way communication and identify opportunities for partnerships.	Short	\$	Local businesses
	Publicize the City's Façade Improvement Program, Commercial Revolving Loan Fund, and Enterprise Zone designation.	Short	\$	-

## KEY ACTION RECOMMENDATIONS: IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

TOPIC	ACTION	TIME FRAME	COST TO CITY	POTENTIAL PARTNERS
Improve Downtown's appearance and 'sense of place.'	Work with local businesses, artists, and non-profits to identify and 'activate' underutilized spaces.	Short/Medium	\$	Local businesses; local artists
	Work with local artists to identify opportunities to increase the amount of public art within the Downtown area.	Short	\$	Local businesses; local artists
	Develop pedestrian-scaled signage and wayfinding that highlights Downtown Rock Island's history and provides context for important sites and structures.	Medium	\$\$	
	Implement attractive gateway features at key entrances to the Downtown, such as at the foot of Centennial Bridge and along 4th and 5th Avenues.	Medium	\$\$	-
	Design and implement an attractive, cohesive, and unique streetscaping scheme that incorporates landscaping, lighting, street furniture, and materials.	Medium	\$\$\$	Renaissance Rock Island; The District
	Partner with WHBF to evaluate options for lighting the antennae tower at night to provide a beacon for Downtown and a signature element in the Rock Island skyline.	Medium	\$\$	-
	Facilitate the creation of a "Theatre District," including branding and wayfinding signage, that would comprise Downtown's theatres and existing performing arts venues.	Medium	\$\$	Theatre owners; local businesses; Quad Cities Regional Chamber
	Evaluate establishing a 'set aside' for public art or 'a percent for art' requirement for new development.	Medium	\$	-
	Evaluate each unprotected structure identified in the Land Use and Development Framework for coverage under the City's historic preservation ordinance.	Short	\$	-
	Identify one point person to be the Downtown Aesthetics Manager, overseeing all beautification and maintenance efforts.	Short	\$	Renaissance Rock Island; The District
Improve the overall friendliness, efficiency, and safety of all modes of transportation.	Closely monitor building maintenance conditions in all areas of Downtown and strictly enforce all zoning, building, fire safety, and occupancy codes.	Short	\$	-
	Enhance all pedestrian crossings so that they are clearly visible to both vehicles and pedestrians.	Short/Medium	\$\$/\$\$\$	-
	Identify and fill sidewalk gaps.	Short/Medium	\$\$/\$\$\$	-
	Work with the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) to implement bump-outs along 1st Avenue at 17th and 18th Streets that can better connect Downtown to Schwiebert Park.	Medium/Long	\$\$	-
	Develop clearly marked, safe, and efficient bike connections between Downtown and the Great River Trail.	Medium	\$\$	-
	Use regulations and incentives to promote the implementation of pedestrian and bike amenities within existing and new development.	Short	\$	-
	Reinforce 17th Street, 18th Street, 20th Street, and 3rd Avenue as Downtown's primary bikeways.	Short	\$\$	-
	Develop wayfinding signage at key entrance locations that can direct visitors to important destinations.	Medium	\$\$	-
	Work with the Illinois Department of Transportation to implement a road diet along 1st Avenue that can increase pedestrian and traffic safety and provide for better pedestrian connections and on-street parking.	Medium/Long	\$\$\$	IDOT
	Re-open 2nd Avenue to traffic and repurpose 2nd Avenue between 17th and 19th Streets as a woonerf that views the road as a shared social space.	Short/Medium	\$\$\$	Quad Cities Convention & Visitor's Bureau; The District; Renaissance Rock Island
	Partner with MetroLINK to evaluate whether additional signed/sheltered bus stops within the Downtown area are needed.	Short/Medium	\$	MetroLINK
	Partner with MetroLINK to evaluate the creation of an additional bus route that would directly link the Rock Island Arsenal with Downtown.	Short/Medium	\$	MetroLINK
	Provide passenger information at the new MetroLINK transfer station that promotes Downtown businesses and provides visitor maps of Downtown.	Short	\$\$	MetroLINK
	Work with the Rock Island Police Department's DPU to promote a sense of safety and well-being around the station.	Short	\$	-

### KEY ACTION RECOMMENDATIONS: IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

TOPIC	ACTION	TIME FRAME	COST TO CITY	POTENTIAL PARTNERS
Improve the parking conditions, availability, supply, and locations within Downtown.	Improve wayfinding signage to public parking facilities.	Short	\$\$	Quad Cities Convention & Visitor's Bureau
	Install angle parking, where possible, to increase curb parking capacity in areas of higher demand.	Short	\$	-
	Re-stripe parking lots to maximize parking efficiency.	Short	\$	Business owners
	Establish a shared parking/liability policy and develop working agreements with private parking lot owners.	Short	\$	Business owners
	Install highly visible signage at private lots available for public-use after-hours.	Short	\$\$	Business owners
	Improve the existing parking ramp with new signage, lighting, and color coded parking spots.	Short/Medium	\$\$/\$\$\$	-
	As redevelopment occurs, construct new parking deck(s) in proximity to 2nd Avenue's entertainment destinations.	Long	\$\$\$	Business owners; developers; Renaissance Rock Island; other business advocacy organizations
	Consolidate all short-term parking to 30 minute parking.	Short	\$	-
	Extend the medium-term, two-hour parking zones to four-hour durations.	Short	\$	-
	Install color-coded regulatory signage for short- and medium-term parking zones.	Short	\$	-
	Remove parking meters.	Short	\$	-
	Discontinue sales of rover parking permits.	Short	\$	-
	Conduct a parking study to provide greater detail and analysis prior to constructing any new parking garages.	Medium	\$\$	Consultant
	Consider relaxing parking enforcement, where necessary.	Short	\$	-