

STRATEGY *Plan*

2000

DOWNTOWN St. Charles



for The Great American Downtown

DOWNTOWN *St. Charles* STRATEGY *Plan*

St. Charles ILLINOIS

A joint project of
City of St. Charles



and
Downtown St. Charles Partnership, Inc.



St. Charles, Illinois, USA

Prepared by
Downtown Professionals Network
Batavia, Illinois, USA

On the cover...

St. Charles Municipal Center & one of four bronze foxes representing the *Legend of the Four Sons of Charlemagne*.

Photo courtesy of the St. Charles Convention & Visitors Bureau

Legend of the Four Sons of Charlemagne

It was autumn – the year 1833. The sun in the west was lending its last full rays to add greater resplendence to the autumnal livery of the trees and bushes lining the banks of the meandering river coursing its way through the wilderness.

All was peaceful and serene, the silence being broken only by the sounds of the wildlife making their way through the bushes homeward at dusk, or the fish at play in the fast-moving river. Occasionally, the sound of a musket could be heard in the distant prairies to the east.

Four foxes stretched lazily on the banks of the river at the foot of the trail leading to their den, awaiting the return of their father, Charlemagne. He had left in early morning to listen in at an emergency session of the Indian chiefs, whose tribal lands were being threatened by the white men, now coming to settle in this area.

As the sun dipped below the horizon, Charlemagne came into view, trotting slowly to join his family. Immediately the four foxes fell in line as Charlemagne led them up the trail to their den. It was readily apparent that their father was in a troubled mood and sad. They awaited his report on the council of the Indian chiefs. After resting a few minutes, Charlemagne started to talk and, with a voice choked with emotion, addressed his sons.

“My sons, my report to you is sad. The Black Hawk War has ended. The white men are now coming to settle along the banks of this river, taking these lands which have been the happy hunting grounds of the Sacs, the Fox and the Pottawatomies. I tremble today as I heard Chief Waubonsie of the Pottawatomies relate his experiences with the white men.

continued page 4

DOWNTOWN *St. Charles* STRATEGY *Plan*

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	4
Introduction.....	6-9
Great American Main Street Award.....	6
“Streets” and “Avenues”.....	8
Downtown St. Charles Today.....	10-18
The Retail Spending Report.....	14
Issue, Trends and Projects... ..	15
Tourism Impacts.....	16
The Community’s Vision for Downtown St. Charles.....	19
Guiding Principles for Downtown St. Charles Design & Development.....	20-21
Downtown St. Charles Development Goals.....	22
Future Development Patterns.....	24-34
General Development Patterns in Downtown St. Charles.....	25
Specific Patterns of Development.....	34-45
Range of Factors Useful in this Analysis.....	34
Business Development Strategies.....	46-51
“The Great American Shopping Route”.....	52
Business Retention & Recruitment Strategies & Techniques.....	53-56
CRM Programs... ..	53
Recruitment Prospects General Characteristics.....	54
Examples of Appropriate Businesses & Product Lines.....	55
Business Development Marketing Strategies.....	57
Investor Marketing Position Statement.....	57
Downtown St. Charles Consumer Marketing Strategies.....	58
Consumer Marketing Position Statement.....	58
Downtown St. Charles Strategy Plan Implementation Strategy.....	59-66
Community Resources.....	67

Legend of the Four Sons of Charlemagne (continued)

This has been our happy home. It is important that the settlement which arises on the banks of this river will develop a character unique among other communities to be settled by the white man. I would like you, my four sons, to be the guardians of this growing community in which men can live, can work, can be educated, can worship and can play.

“You, my firstborn, are to be the guardian of the civic, the business, the industrial life of this community.

“Education will become important, and you, my second son, are to be the guardian of this educational and cultural expression.

“Soon, men will band together to worship, and you, my third son, are to be entrusted with the guardianship of this religious expression.

“Amid this beautiful setting, it is only natural that recreation will flourish, and you, my last born, shall be the guardian of this natural recreation expression of man living in these surroundings.”

Finishing his talk, Charlemagne bade farewell to his sons and walked into the night and westward.

These four sons of Charlemagne are now represented on the Main Street Bridge, monumental guardians of this community.

Today, St. Charles is a truly great community – The Pride of the Fox – located in the “Beauty Spot” of the Fox River Valley. It is a community where men can live, work, worship, play and be educated.

***Written in 1970 by C.V. Amenoff,
Mayor of St. Charles, 1969-1973***

Introduction

Downtown St. Charles has seen substantial renewal and redevelopment in recent years. The public and private sectors are working together to bring about the most desirable future for the downtown area. From 1995 to 2000, more than \$35 million was invested in downtown infrastructure, public and private improvements.

In 2000, St. Charles was named a winner of the Great American Main Street Award, sponsored by the National Trust for Historic Preservation's National Main Street Center. The award serves to recognize the strong public-private partnership and exceptional volunteer efforts that have defined each evolutionary phase of the community's downtown revitalization initiative.

Encouraged by the progress made to date, our community's leaders and downtown advocates remain convinced that well-defined community based strategies are needed to manage future growth and development, both public and private.

Unlike the challenges faced by most communities considering various downtown redevelopment strategies, "survival" is not the issue. Rather, the key to Downtown St. Charles' future lies in the adoption and effective application of community-based growth management strategies, market-driven development policies and marketing tactics that:

- Capitalize on downtown St. Charles revitalization program's momentum.
- Promote quality design and construction that respect the community's values and complement the historic district's integrity.
- Maximize public-sector resources devoted to redevelopment efforts.
- Stimulate private-sector investment and entrepreneurial ventures.
- Capture a market share adequate to support a quality mix of businesses.

The Community's Vision for Downtown St. Charles

Residents, business people and civic leaders all played an active role in creating this plan. This plan is the synthesis of our community's ideas and creativity, as reflected in the community's vision for downtown St. Charles.

The future downtown St. Charles will be a place treasured by those who live, work, shop, and play there. It will have maintained its architectural and historical integrity, small town qualities, and pleasing, safe environment. At the same time, it will be a place of vitality where people go to engage in cultural, social, recreational, entertainment and commercial activities.

St. Charles



Voted America's Best!

In 2000, St. Charles was honored for its downtown revitalization efforts by being named a winner of the Great American Main Street Award, sponsored by the National Trust for Historic Preservation's National Main Street Center. The award serves to recognize the strong public-private partnership and exceptional volunteer efforts that have defined each evolutionary phase of the community's downtown revitalization initiative.

Downtown will host a diversity of indoor and outdoor opportunities for shopping, entertainment, dining, recreation, and culture for area families of all types and income levels. Investors, developers and entrepreneurs will capitalize on redevelopment opportunities for attaining this diversity. Redevelopment will be focused on under-utilized parcels, corridors and riverfront areas.

The physical environment and the social and commercial activities in downtown St. Charles will reflect a refined community character and values. People will live, work, recreate and shop downtown.

Downtown St. Charles will be a vibrant retail and dining district. Shoppers will enjoy walking and wandering in mercantile sectors featuring a flow of vibrant, diverse and distinctive shops. A quality mix of restaurants and delicatessens will offer shoppers and workers a delightful break. Downtown St. Charles will have a lively nighttime personality. People from throughout the region will be attracted to the downtown's quality mix of dining and entertainment experiences.

People will enjoy the downtown's recreational qualities centered on the riverfront and parks. Residents and visitors will be seen enjoying a variety of recreational activities, including sightseeing, walking, jogging, biking, picnicking, fishing, canoeing and kayaking.

Main Street will be an artery for vehicular traffic and a pedestrian-oriented stream of economic vitality crossing the natural beauty of the Fox River. Accommodation of vehicular modes of travel will be convenient and functional as well as aesthetically designed.

St. Charles residents, as a whole, will continue to participate in the planning and decision making processes that determine the success and future of the downtown.

Guiding Principles for Downtown St. Charles Design and Development

- Promote developments and improvements that provide for the public's enjoyment of continuous waterfront activities.
- Preserve architectural and historical integrity.
- Promote a pedestrian-friendly, aesthetically pleasing, interesting and safe environment.
- Preserve small-town character.
- Solidify and maintain a vibrant and diverse retail base that promotes a quality shopping experience.
- Prioritize underutilized parcels and corridors for redevelopment.
- Promote a 24-hour environment featuring a variety of land uses.
- Offer family oriented experiences and activities for all ages and incomes.



The popular Concerts in the Park summer music series held downtown in Lincoln Park helps to preserve the feeling of the "small-town" character of St. Charles.

Photo courtesy of the St. Charles Convention & Visitors Bureau

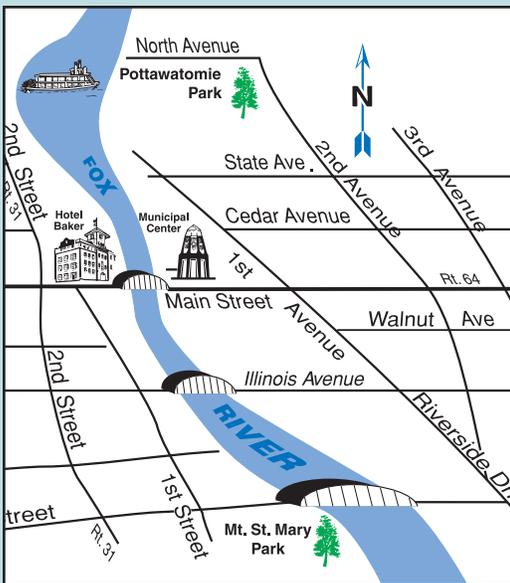
A Framework for Creating the Future Downtown

Ultimately, the goal for downtown St. Charles development is to create attractive patterns of development that support our community’s vision and result in the highest and best use of the limited land resources in downtown. Fundamental to prominent goals and redevelopment strategies advanced in this plan are:

“Streets” and “Avenues”

The Fox River marks the heart of St. Charles. Main Street and the Fox River are “zero” points for addresses with “Avenues” on the east side and “Streets” on the west side of the river.

For example, 110 N. Third Street is west of the Fox River and north of Main Street. 106 S. First Avenue is east of the river and south of Main Street.



- The recognition of development corridors based on a “susceptibility to change” analysis that begins to frame the potential for new development or redevelopment within the downtown.
- The understanding that while some changes will have immediacy, the goal is to allow downtown St. Charles to continue its evolution in an incremental manner.
- The sense of a walkable district and logical perceptual boundaries are considered first in defining the downtown’s boundaries; development of “downtown uses” should always remain within these bounds.
- A high priority placed on the development of a continuous riverfront loop.
- The promotion of new development and redevelopment projects adjacent to the riverfront in the downtown that make strong connections, with public access to the river being a primary goal.
- A goal to create an unbroken downtown streetscape focused on pedestrian activity along the primary streets of each downtown development corridor.
- An approach that advances patterns of development that more directly support the community’s vision of a mixed use and an easily walkable downtown district.
- An understanding that the diversity of the experience – and the chance that the experience will be different during every visit – will create memories for people in downtown St. Charles.
- A strategy to expand on the downtown’s character as a vibrant downtown on the river by adding public art and creating public and private gardens throughout.
- The promotion of downtown St. Charles’ continued evolution as a mixed-use environment, striving for both horizontal and vertical mixing of uses.
- New development in the downtown should have a sense of permanence: the ability to insert a variety of uses into the same basic structure during its lifetime is the goal; flexibility is the key.
- The understanding that land in downtown St. Charles is precious; the community must make the best use of every square foot available in the core commercial areas.

- The advancement of guidelines that recognize the importance of the design character of downtown buildings.
- An approach to parking management that continues to locate parking structures in strategic locations and maximizes parking through shared uses.
- The ultimate elimination or relocation of surface parking areas – particularly those along Main Street and the riverfront – as parking structures are implemented to meet parking demands.
- An approach to traffic management that accommodates vehicles without compromising the safety and comfort of downtown pedestrians.
- An approach to business development that does not advocate moving or eliminating existing businesses, but rather focuses on specific types of retail that might be introduced or expanded to enhance the quality and variety of the downtown business mix.
- An active recruitment strategy focused on small, independently owned retailers that will complement the existing downtown business mix.
- A passive recruitment strategy with regard to small and mid-sized national retailers, with a focus on directing these types of developments and businesses to an appropriate location.
- The application of appropriate Centralized Retail Management program functions and techniques that provide a method to achieve business development strategies.
- A consumer marketing strategy that moves beyond a segmented approach to promote and celebrate “The Great American Downtown” experience.
- The understanding that a visionary plan cannot be implemented overnight: the timeframe for implementing this plan reflects its visionary nature and looking out over a period of 20 years seems appropriate to the kind of change outlined in the plan.



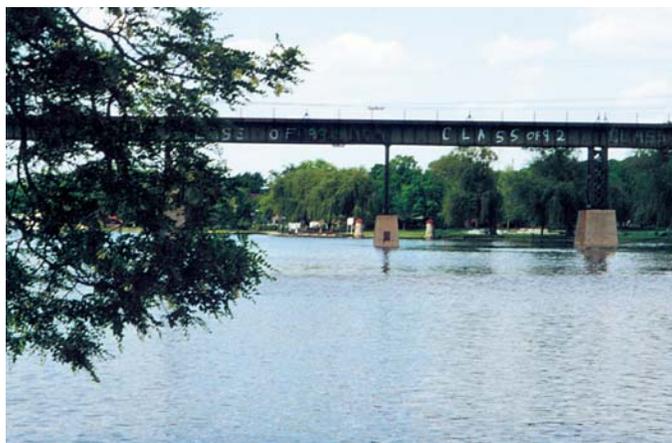
The Freedom Trail on the east bank of the Fox River draws pedestrians into the heart of the city, downtown St. Charles, Illinois – Pride of the Fox.

Downtown St. Charles Today

These are some of the features and qualities that distinguish downtown St. Charles today.

Riverfront and Parks:

Trails and public space development highlight St. Charles' connection to the Fox River. Paths in the Fox River Valley bring a large number of bicyclists to St. Charles during the biking season.



A pedestrian and bike bridge to be attached to the railroad trestle at the north edge of the downtown district will enhance opportunities to create a continuous riverfront experience.

Pieces of a delightfully interesting and continuous riverfront experience are already in place. Hotel Baker immediately abuts the river, Harris Bank provides a walkway along the river, and restaurants offer outdoor seating near the river or indoor seating that takes advantage of river views. A more complete pedestrian promenade has been developed at the river's edge at City Hall and other municipal facilities.

In addition to the riverfront, four parks embrace the downtown. Lincoln and Baker Parks provide "traditional" style open space at the west and east edges of downtown. Pottawatomie Park houses a community center and other recreation facilities. To the south, Mount St. Mary Park sits on the edge of an area undergoing significant redevelopment.

Traffic:

Traffic is another defining element for downtown St. Charles. With Main Street being a state highway, and with no other reasonable, regional alternative for crossing the river, traffic volumes in the downtown are not likely to decrease.



Main Street is a state highway (Rt. 64) and regional river crossing, accounting for the high volume of traffic that travels through downtown St. Charles.

The vast majority of other downtown streets are relatively calm. Traffic tends to be very local in nature, moving at appropriate speeds and reasonably accommodating for pedestrians.

Most intersections in downtown St. Charles are difficult for large trucks to maneuver. The physical environment in the downtown is limiting for large vehicles. While easing turning radii to accommodate these vehicles might be possible, the degradation of the physical environment needed to accommodate more reasonable turning movements is not desired or encouraged.

Parking:

The development of a sound parking strategy for downtown St. Charles requires a thorough assessment of actual parking demands. The varied uses and users result in peak parking demands that are considered in relation to the location of parking areas and structures. The ability to share parking is central; the creation of an environment that encourages people to park once and shop twice is vital.

Parking – either surface or deck – is a necessity in a downtown; businesses have to have it, and everybody wants it at their doorstep, but it can rip the fabric of a downtown apart in ways that are almost impossible to mend. In downtown St. Charles, parking is available – there are municipal and private parking areas dispersed throughout downtown. As development occurs, it is possible that some of these parking areas might disappear. And as the community considers appropriate uses for the riverfront, it is possible that even more parking areas will be eliminated.

The City of St. Charles has already initiated the development of structured parking facilities in downtown. The program may be accelerated if significant development or redevelopment occurs.

Streetscape:

The sense of a cohesive downtown is enhanced by the presence of a continuous “street wall” – an edge formed by street-facing facades directly meeting the public sidewalk. In downtown St. Charles, the street wall is enhanced by renovated storefronts. Additional enhancements have been made to the public spaces of Main Street in the form of streetscape improvements. Enhancements to other streets will extend character throughout the downtown.

Pedestrian movement:

Downtown St. Charles offers a very walkable environment. Development is compact, the river provides a wonderful focus and almost all buildings address the street in ways that create interest for pedestrians. In a few areas that are lined with parking lots, non-retail uses and uses that are auto-dominated, redevelopment or reinforcement of street edges will help enhance the pedestrian environment.

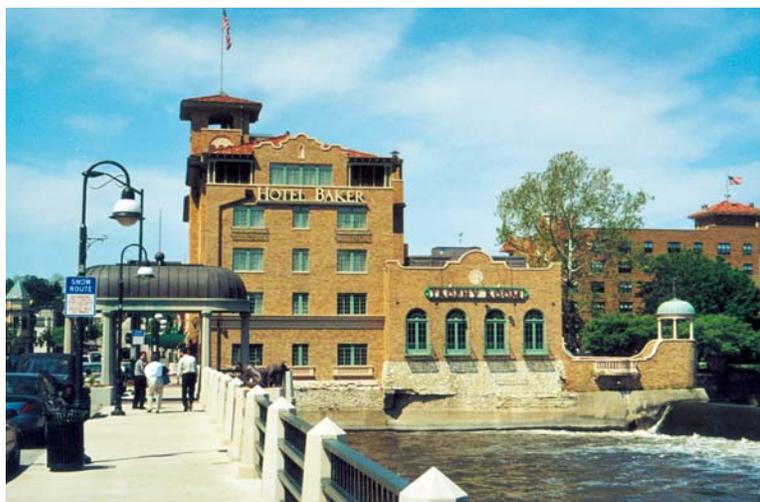
Main Street pedestrian crossings are not unsafe, but they could be made more accommodating through improvements to the timing of traffic signals. Such improvements will also aid efforts to integrate a pattern of development that moves pedestrians throughout the downtown area.

Downtown St. Charles Today

- St. Charles is linked to other nearby communities by the Fox River – a natural resource, focus and recreation amenity for the region. St. Charles has found the Fox River to be a natural focal point and is beginning to capitalize on it as a recreational and scenic resource.
- St. Charles is also linked to other Fox River Valley communities by transportation infrastructure that generally follows the river. Highway 64 – St. Charles’ Main Street – is one of the few main-route river crossings in the region, a fact that results in high traffic counts along downtown’s primary commercial arterial.
- Residential development outside of the downtown area also continues, with freshly turned earth indicating that the expansion of residential uses will continue in and near St. Charles. These new neighborhoods tend to target middle, upper-middle and higher-income families.
- Downtown St. Charles is centrally located within the community. Along Highway 64, beyond the bounds of downtown, are outlying commercial areas that are continuing to develop as the community grows.



St. Charles is fortunate to have buildings with a landmark quality, such as the Municipal Center (above) and Hotel Baker (below), both listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



Built environment:

Downtown St. Charles is composed of a mix of uses one would hope to find in a downtown environment: retail of varying scales; entertainment and lodging; professional and personal services; offices; and municipal services. Housing uses are intensifying as redevelopment occurs.

Downtown zoning categories include B2 (Community Business), B2C (Central Business), B2T (Transitional Business), and B3 (Service Business). The City of St. Charles Comprehensive Plan guides the downtown toward a mixture of uses, with small-scale land use boundaries remaining flexible.

The character of development varies as widely as uses in the downtown district. There are landmark buildings – the Municipal Center, Hotel Baker and the Arcada Theatre, for example – and renovated structures; buildings with historic character, buildings of a more contemporary style and buildings that are sympathetic to their historic neighbors.

Building height is generally two or three stories; building widths are narrower along Main Street, with more expansive single facades along side streets. Where variations occur (for example, where buildings are taller or wider than their neighbors), the community has been fortunate – the aberrations are the buildings with a landmark quality, such as the Municipal Center and Hotel Baker.

Retail and service uses in houses at the fringe of the downtown form transitions to surrounding neighborhoods. Century Corners and the hillside west of the river are expanding with these kinds of uses.

The underlying pattern of development is the grid of the streets. Of interest, blocks on the east side of the river are approximately 200 feet square, while those on the west side are generally 264 feet square. While the difference may appear insignificant, the capacity of these blocks to support development is critical. East of the river, blocks contain an area of about one acre; on the west side, the land area in each block nearly doubles. The difference in block sizes dictate patterns of development that are different on each side of the river to preserve the underlying character of the downtown.

Terminations of the street grid are also important points of consideration as citizens and community leaders envision future development possibilities. For example, street and land terminations at the river tend to be underdeveloped. These terminations provide opportunities for redevelopment that “celebrates” the downtown’s relationship to the riverfront.

Special features:

Landmark buildings have been noted, along with the Fox River as a focal point. Each has a way of creating a unique identity for St. Charles.

An interesting element of the riverfront is the way development reaches to the river. The ways that public spaces have been developed along the river varies from one area to another, such as a pedestrian promenade along the Municipal Center building; private spaces next to Carroll Towers on the west bank; and a green edge alongside Blue Goose Super Market. However, it is the variety of built connections that sets the character of the riverfront. A small overlook near the Police Station is very simple; “Fisherman’s Plaza” is more elaborate. The boathouse and the overlook at Hotel Baker provide interesting structures. Even the canopies on the Main Street bridge offer a point along the riverfront that varies from other connections. This pattern of idiosyncratic connections to the river adds interest and marks the rhythm of the riverfront.

Efforts are underway to introduce public art as a means of reinforcing the strongly oriented pedestrian downtown experience and enhancing other necessary components of the downtown environment.



The canopies on the Main Street bridge (above) offer a point along the riverfront that varies from other connections.



“Fisherman’s Plaza” and the stairway access (left) to the river were part of the original 1940 design of the Municipal Center on the east bank.

The Retail Spending Report

The retail spending report for the St. Charles' trade area, furnished by CACI, provides expenditure data (SPI) derived from the Consumer Expenditure Interview Survey, Bureau of Labor Statistics and purchase potential data (PPI) derived from Simmons Market Research Bureau, Inc. surveys. It is a comparison with national averages of the anticipated demand and actual spending by those that have a propensity to purchase certain goods and services.

Information within The Retail Spending Report for the St. Charles trade area also demonstrates the robust performance and potential of the downtown St. Charles consumer market:

- St. Charles' primary trade area consumers have a potential – and actually do – spend at significantly higher levels than the national average in all categories, except for groceries and audio equipment.
- The secondary trade area PPI and SPI are also at above-average levels, but are much more closely aligned with national averages in all categories except the subsets of entertainment and health insurance.
- Overall, consumers in the total trade area are spending at or above their anticipated demand. Goods and services of exception are the subsets of entertainment, financial services and its subsets, infant apparel, lawn and garden, home services, audio and video equipment, luggage, and travel and its subsets.

The Marketplace

A growing consumer market primarily composed of affluent households fuels the downtown St. Charles' economy. The downtown St. Charles market is highly appealing to investors, developers and entrepreneurs.

Trade Area Information:

CACI Marketing Systems maintains an extensive data library that includes census data; business data; forecasts and consumer surveys with information on population, age, sex, race, income, net worth, disposable income, housing; employment by industry; and consumer expenditures. Market profile reports obtained from CACI Marketing Systems for the downtown St. Charles primary and secondary trade areas demonstrate the enviable qualities of the consumer market.

Primary Trade Area:

The primary trade area has an estimated 2000 population of 149,010 people and an estimated 50,303 households. Median household income is estimated at \$68,150 and average household income is estimated at \$94,528. The primary trade area includes the communities of Batavia, Elburn, LaFox, Geneva, St. Charles, South Elgin, Wasco, Wayne and West Chicago. (Source: CACI Site*Facts Report – June 2000)

Secondary Trade Area:

The secondary trade area has an estimated 2000 population of 271,225 people and an estimated 93,014 households. Median household income is estimated at \$54,328 and average household income is estimated at \$68,076. The secondary trade area includes the communities of Aurora, Big Rock, Burlington, Elgin, Hampshire, Kaneville, Maple Park, North Aurora, Pingree Grove, Plato Center, Sugar Grove and Virgil. (Source: CACI Site*Facts Report – June 2000)



In addition to shoppers from around the area, St. Charles market is highly appealing to investors, developers and entrepreneurs.

Photo courtesy of the St. Charles Convention & Visitors Bureau

Stakeholder Perspectives

Downtown stakeholders provided valuable insight to business development and consumer marketing strategies as part of this plan. Representatives from the private and public sectors contributed to this assessment, including property owners and business owners & managers operating businesses both within and outside the central business district, along with city staff members and elected officials.

The following is a summary of prevailing ideas, thoughts and suggestions as expressed and collected during the preliminary stages of this plan.

Desired Improvements and Changes:

Riverfront improvements, including a complete circular pathway, are overwhelmingly popular changes desired for downtown St. Charles. Other ideas and suggestions include: a unified marketing program for the downtown that has widespread participation from downtown businesses; improvements to underutilized and underdeveloped properties; the development of more moderate and upper-income housing; and an enhanced diversity of merchandise and new destination points for shoppers in the downtown area.

Features and Characteristics of Downtown St. Charles that Should Always be Maintained:

- The preservation of the downtown's architectural diversity, integrity and historic character were resoundingly cited as features and characteristics that must be maintained.
- Hotel Baker was singled out repeatedly as a landmark that must maintain both its significant streetscape presence and its use as a commercial operating property.
- The downtown's variety of uses, including its quality mix of restaurants and "After 5" vitality, the presence of the municipal government complex as a downtown anchor, and residential neighborhoods adjacent to the downtown area, are viewed as value-added downtown features.
- A strong desire for continued efforts to increase retail sale per square foot and continued cooperation among businesses, civic organizations and the municipality were voiced repeatedly.
- The high value the community places on St. Charles' heritage as a river town and its small-town atmosphere of "Americana" that are captured in the core of the downtown district were referred to frequently.

Issues, Trends and Projects That Will Have a Significant Impact on Downtown St. Charles Within the Next Three Years, according to Stakeholders...

- Stakeholders pointed to the Brownstone housing development on the former Piano Factory Outlet Mall site as an impact project.
- Downtown St. Charles' future will also be positively impacted by the long-term success of Hotel Baker and continued growth in the restaurant sector.
- Construction of the Walnut Street parking deck, redevelopment of surface parking lots as public gathering spaces and public art projects were cited as desirable improvements that could realistically be completed within

Tourism Impacts

The St. Charles Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB) commissioned a 1999 University of Illinois Tourism Survey to measure the effectiveness of its advertising and promotional efforts. Roughly 1,012 people who visited St. Charles during the previous 12 months were randomly selected from the CVB database and a three-wave mailing resulted in a 51.4% return rate. The study's results provide insight as to the potential impact of "visiting consumers" (those who reside outside of the St. Charles-Geneva-Batavia Tri-cities area) and tourist's dollars in downtown St. Charles.

Results of the survey indicated the following:

- 50% stayed 2 to 3 days.
- The average travel group consisted of 4.7 persons.
- Visited most in the St. Charles Area: 78.3% - dining; 53.5% - historic (downtown St. Charles antiques) shopping; 64.3% - shops, galleries and boutiques.
- 23.6% most liked shopping; 22.3% restaurants; and 11.2% antiques shops.
- Respondents would most like to visit shops, see antiques and attend festivals.

Respondent profile:

- Female, married with older and grown children.
- Age 36 - 49+ with a \$50,000+ income level.
- High school and some college education.
- 70.1% of the 80.8 % overnight visitors stayed at Pheasant Run Resort; 2.7% at Hotel Baker.

The Most Important and Desirable Uses for Downtown St. Charles:

- Small, specialty retail establishments were overwhelmingly selected as the most important and desirable use for downtown, with respondents citing the unique and distinguishable nature that such retail establishments collectively lend to downtown's image.
- Dining, entertainment and hospitality-oriented businesses were a popular second choice. Housing, recreation and office were also acknowledged as being important, but not necessarily as a priority within the context of future business development and retention efforts.

Reaction was mixed to the idea of locating large, brand-name retail and franchise operations within the downtown area. Most respondents indicated they were not necessarily opposed to locating such businesses within the downtown area. Some expressed concern about the potential diminishment of the downtown's distinguishable small-town qualities and character that could result from locating large, brand-name retailers and franchises within the district. The "placement" of these businesses within the downtown area was cited as a key element, with some suggesting that the presence of these retailers would create the perception that there is a greater variety of shopping opportunities in the downtown district.

Selling Points for Downtown St. Charles:

Stakeholders were asked to put the "recruiter's hat on" and identify selling points for prospective downtown St. Charles' investors and entrepreneurs.

- The growing consumer market and its increasing potential to support new businesses was noted prominently. Downtown St. Charles is viewed as "affordable," and businesses in downtown St. Charles that are well planned and properly capitalized can be profitable.
- Participants offered that the community image is excellent and the public-private partnership driving historic preservation and downtown revitalization efforts offers a "new" versus "stale" downtown environment.
- Downtown's location – at the crossroads of State Routes 64, 31 and 25 and along the banks of the Fox River – is seen as highly desirable.
- A variety of businesses drawing different market segments is seen as an asset. It was also noted that the fine collection of restaurants provides opportunity for "After 5" business – both in the possible expansion of the dining and entertainment sector as well as opportunities to extend retail trade into the evening hours.

Community Forums & Public Input

Residents, business people and civic leaders all play an active role in planning for downtown St. Charles' future. A series of town meetings, workshops, focus groups and an Internet-based comments forum helped participants build consensus on a list of questions developed to define the economic nature of downtown St. Charles in the future.

There is strong community support for downtown marketing and business development strategies that incorporate the following ideas and ideals:

- The retail sector can be enhanced with the addition of more smaller, specialty retail businesses.
- Consumers will spend more time browsing where items offered are unique.
- Consumers will respond favorably to businesses that place a high priority on providing friendly, responsive service from well-trained retail sales people.
- The effective implementation of business development strategies aimed at filling gaps between retail outlets – vacant storefronts, underutilized storefronts & spaces, and non-pedestrian oriented businesses – would enhance the downtown shopping experience.

Retail business types, concepts and product lines the community would like to see introduced or expanded in the downtown district include:

- Ladies' boutiques
- Men's clothing
- Shoe store
- Unique clothing and accessories
- Art
- Decorative items
- Linens, housewares and home necessities
- Infant's & children's wear
- Toys
- Music store – records, tapes & CDs
- Bakery & pastry shop with a small seating area
- Fabric / notions & craft store
- Brand-name stores and franchises

Downtown, as a dining and entertainment destination, would be enhanced with these suggested additions or expansions:

- Another daytime dining experience, such as a tea shop.
- A larger variety of live, non-amplified music, such as jazz, blues, bluegrass or swing and dancing for patrons.
- “Cheap family eats” – popcorn, frozen custard, etc.
- \$1.50 movies – at least one night per week and/or Saturday afternoons.
- A highly visible visitor center that can provide shopping and dining information, brochures and tourist information, and have 24-hour public washrooms.
- Family and group games center.
- Bicycle, in-line skate and boat & canoe rentals.

Related comments included:

- New development or redevelopment of buildings with sufficient square footage for dining and entertainment establishments will be key to this sector’s growth.
- Business development strategies should be aimed at attracting market segments that mirror the population of the primary St. Charles trade area.

Downtown St. Charles will benefit by appealing to market segments that appear to be under-represented among downtown’s current user groups such as:

- 14 to 30 year old and 55+ age groups
- 30 to 40 year old “high tech” couples and singles
- Families

The features that distinguish downtown St. Charles now and in the future include:

- The Fox River and the natural beauty of the valley’s topography.
- A walking path on the west bank of the river from the Manor Restaurant to Mount St. Mary Park.
- A public art exhibit along the west riverfront path.
- The downtown’s preserved, historic architecture such as that of Hotel Baker and the Arcada Theatre.
- Bookend parks and green spaces planted with more landscaping and flowers, benches, etc.
- Mount St. Mary Park, better utilized as a gateway to the downtown’s south end.

The Community's Vision for Downtown St. Charles

The future downtown St. Charles will be a place treasured by those who live, work, shop and play here. It will have maintained its architectural and historical integrity, small-town qualities and pleasing, safe environment. At the same time, it will be a place of vitality where people go to engage in cultural, social, recreational, entertainment and commercial activities.

The downtown will host a diversity of indoor and outdoor opportunities for shopping, entertainment, dining, recreation and culture for area families and visitors of all types and income levels. Investors, developers and entrepreneurs will capitalize on redevelopment opportunities to attain this diversity. Redevelopment will be focused on under-utilized parcels, corridors and riverfront areas.

The physical environment and the social and commercial activities in the downtown will reflect a refined community character and values. People will live, work, recreate and shop downtown.

Downtown St. Charles will be a vibrant retail and dining district. Shoppers will enjoy walking and wandering in mercantile sectors featuring a flow of vibrant, diverse and distinctive shops. A quality mix of restaurants and delicatessens will offer shoppers and workers a delightful break.

Downtown St. Charles will have a lively nighttime personality. People from throughout the region will be attracted to the downtown's quality mix of dining and entertainment experiences.

People will enjoy the downtown's recreational qualities centered on the riverfront and parks. Residents and visitors will be seen enjoying a variety of recreational activities, including sightseeing, walking, jogging, biking, picnicking, fishing, canoeing and kayaking.

Main Street will be an artery for vehicular traffic and a pedestrian-oriented stream of economic vitality crossing the natural beauty of the Fox River. Accommodations for vehicles will be convenient and functional as well as aesthetically designed.

St. Charles residents, as a whole, will continue to participate in the planning and decision-making processes that determine the success and future of the downtown.

The Importance of Vision:

“If you don't much care where you're going, it doesn't matter which way you go. You're sure to get somewhere if you keep at it long enough.”

– *The Cheshire Cat in Alice's Adventure in Wonderland* –
by Lewis Carroll

Guiding Principles for Downtown St. Charles Design and Development

These guiding principles provide the basis for strategies presented in this plan and a framework for assessing the appropriateness of downtown development projects that might be proposed in the future.

■ **1. Promote developments and improvements that provide for the public's enjoyment of continuous waterfront activities.**

The Fox River should always be the primary focal point for the downtown area – it should feel like its centerpiece. Downtown development should embrace and celebrate the community's history as a river town by making optimum use of river views and reinforcing links between the river and development corridors, downtown districts and even the neighborhoods at the edges. A continuous waterfront experience – complete with walking paths, public art and restaurants – should be encouraged and pursued in earnest.

■ **2. Preserve architectural and historical integrity.**

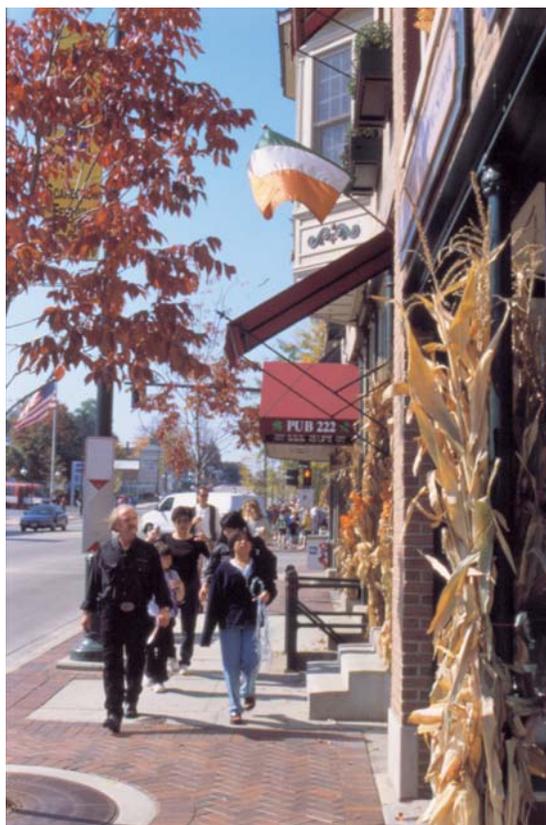
Downtown's unique history and architecture should be held as community treasures that are irreplaceable. Preserving its past should enhance the distinguishable character of downtown St. Charles. New development, redevelopment and in-fill construction should be appropriate to the historic qualities of the downtown's built environment.

■ **3. Promote a pedestrian-friendly, aesthetically pleasing, interesting and safe environment.**

Downtown St. Charles should continue to be known as a safe, walkable place where all can feel comfortable and secure, whether walking, driving, bicycling or relaxing. Streetscape elements that extend the character of Main Street should be incorporated throughout the downtown district. Public spaces and amenities should be constructed and maintained so as to complement, rather than detract from, the aesthetic qualities of the downtown's historic structures and natural beauty. Public art should be placed strategically to provide links to the riverfront and to serve as interpretive displays that tell a story and “reward” pedestrians as they explore the various areas of the downtown district.

■ **4. Preserve small town character.**

The scale of development should respect the downtown's landmarks and its qualities as a small town nestled in a river valley. Parks, the hillside and neighborhoods define the boundaries of downtown. Development of “downtown uses” should always remain within these bounds.



Streetscape elements that extend the character of Main Street should be incorporated throughout the downtown district. With the reconstruction of the Main Street Bridge, brickwork was incorporated into Main Street sidewalks that enhance the streetscape.

Photo courtesy of the St. Charles Convention & Visitors Bureau

■ **5. Solidify and maintain a vibrant and diverse retail base that promotes a quality shopping experience.**

A prevailing sense of activity and intensity of development should draw people throughout all of the downtown. Goods and services offered by downtown retailers should appeal to the life-styles and demands of the growing consumer market. Businesses that promote a quality image of the downtown district that is distinguishable from competing shopping areas should be retained and recruited.

Downtown St. Charles' position in the market will be strengthened through the cultivation of quality retail businesses.

■ **6. Prioritize underutilized parcels and corridors for redevelopment.**

Businesses and non-conforming land uses that undermine the character of downtown should be targeted for redevelopment.

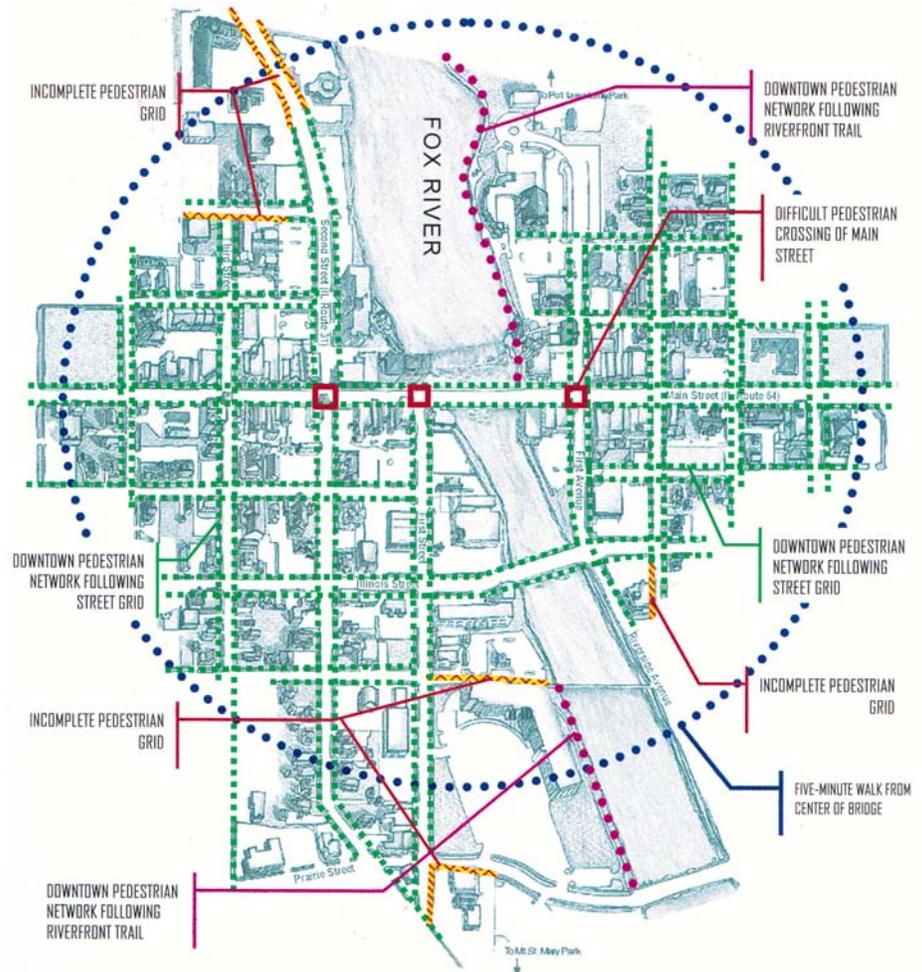
However, they should not be disturbed until more intense, higher-use development is imminent. A pro-active approach for redevelopment should be planned and executed to prevent the transition to, or an exchange of, marginal uses once land becomes vacant or available for sale.

■ **7. Promote a 24-hour environment featuring a variety of land uses.**

Downtown land use should be mixed so the downtown will grow and flourish as a city center that accommodates a variety of activities. Commercial, office, residential and recreational uses are all desirable features that enhance downtown's vitality.

■ **8. Offer family oriented experiences and activities for all ages and incomes.**

Downtown St. Charles must provide attractions that cater to the life-styles of residents. Arts, special events, entertainment and recreation strengthen the downtown's appeal as an effervescent city center.



Pedestrian Movement along the Riverfront

Connecting downtown and the riverfront is a major goal of this plan, and these links form the highlights of the pedestrian experience. The development of gardens with strong focal termini celebrates the relationship between an urban experience in downtown and a natural one along the Fox River.

Downtown St. Charles Development Goals

Ultimately, the goal for development in downtown St. Charles is to create attractive patterns of development that support our community's vision and result in the highest and best use of the limited land resources.

Riverfront:

- Create a continuous pedestrian loop along the Fox River from Prairie Street to the railroad bridge; utilize street connections at the Main Street bridge.
- Develop pedestrian connections between First Street South and the river that invite pedestrians to the river.
- Enhance views to the river from major streets (Route 31 north of Main Street, in particular).

Pedestrians:

- Create pedestrian experiences on downtown streets and in the downtown's public spaces that complement Main Street and the river.
- Keep pedestrian crossings of Main Street at street level unless a truly compelling origin-to-destination relationship can be defined.
- Maintain existing street parking in the downtown as a buffer between pedestrians and motorists.

Use:

- Allow development corridors to evolve with a mix of uses, with primarily retail and office uses at street level and residential or office above; at selected locations, development may be all office or all residential as long as the corridor remains largely mixed in use.
- Develop buildings that will accommodate a range of uses during their lifetime; build to last 50 to 100 years or longer.
- Build at least two stories at all downtown buildings (regardless of use) and no greater than four stories.
- Expand opportunities for housing with projects that are more urban in their scale and density.

Special Features:

- Use works of art at key "urban intersections," at gateways and along the riverfront.
- Employ public art as a way of telling the story of St. Charles and to offer opportunities for discovery and delight for pedestrians in the downtown and on the riverfront.

Traffic:

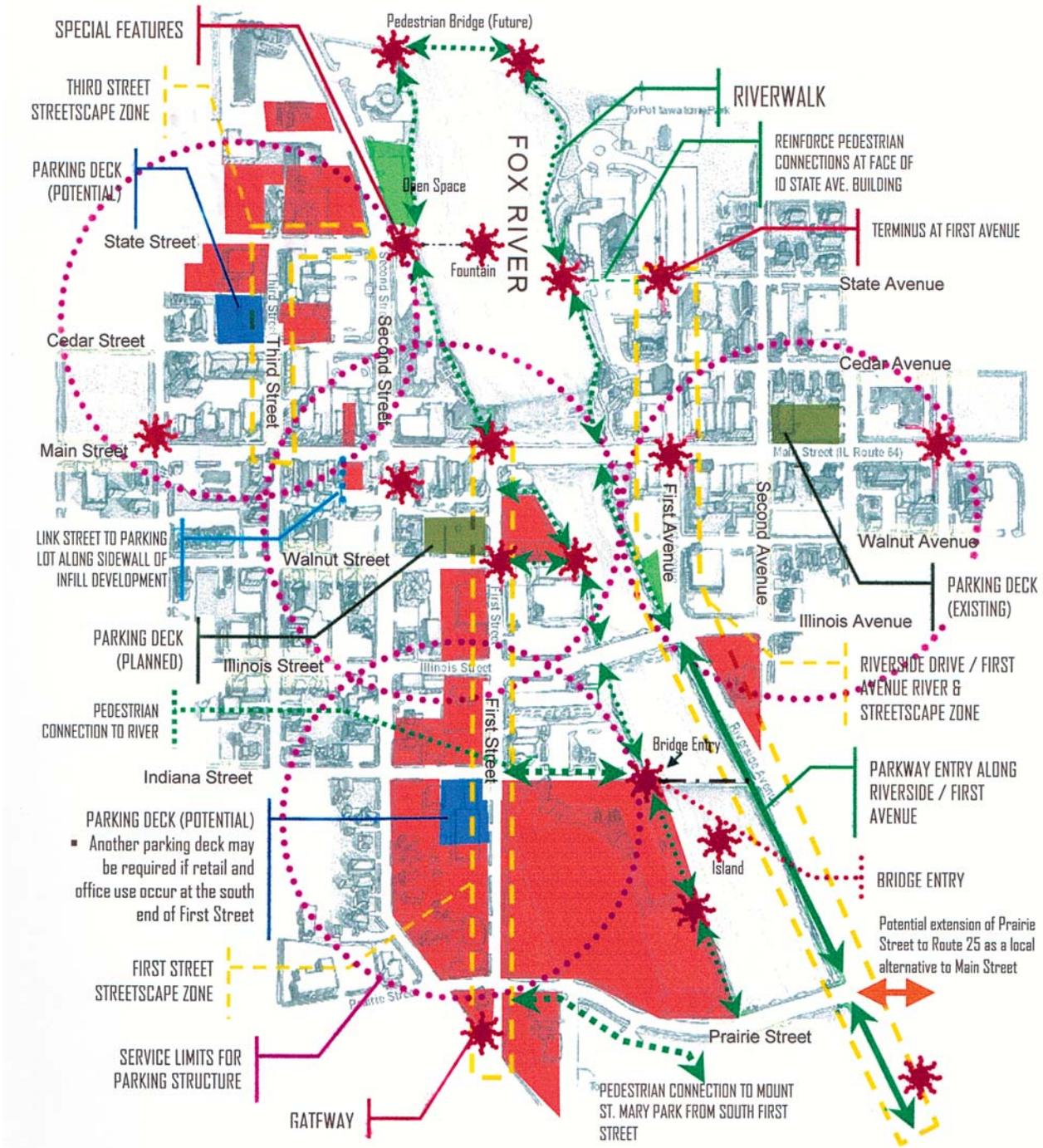
- Develop alternatives to Route 64 – Main Street – for local traffic in downtown.
- Pursue alternatives to reduce truck traffic in downtown.

Parking:

- Refine parking management and enforcement programs for optimum utilization of available parking.
- Maintain existing street parking in downtown and pursue opportunities to create additional on-street parking.
- Replace parking on or near the riverfront with pedestrian and riverfront amenities.
- Create intensity of development by placing parking structures at key downtown locations.



Downtown St. Charles is fortunate to have preserved much of its unique riverfront access. This plan calls for continued efforts to create a pedestrian loop along the Fox River in the downtown.



Key Development Strategies

Development follows corridors that intersect Main Street and captures opportunities for creating greater intensity by looking to redevelop sites that might be susceptible to short- or long-term change. Connections to the river and the provisions of public parking structures are also key elements of the plan.

Future Development Patterns

Downtowns are evolutionary in nature. Downtown St. Charles, for all that it has changed in the last five or 10 years, has been around since 1834. It's unrealistic to think that changes needed or desired could be implemented in just a few years. The development patterns proposed in this plan should be considered for implementation through a much longer period – 10, 15 or 20 years. While some changes will have immediacy, the goal is to allow downtown St. Charles to continue its evolution in an incremental manner.

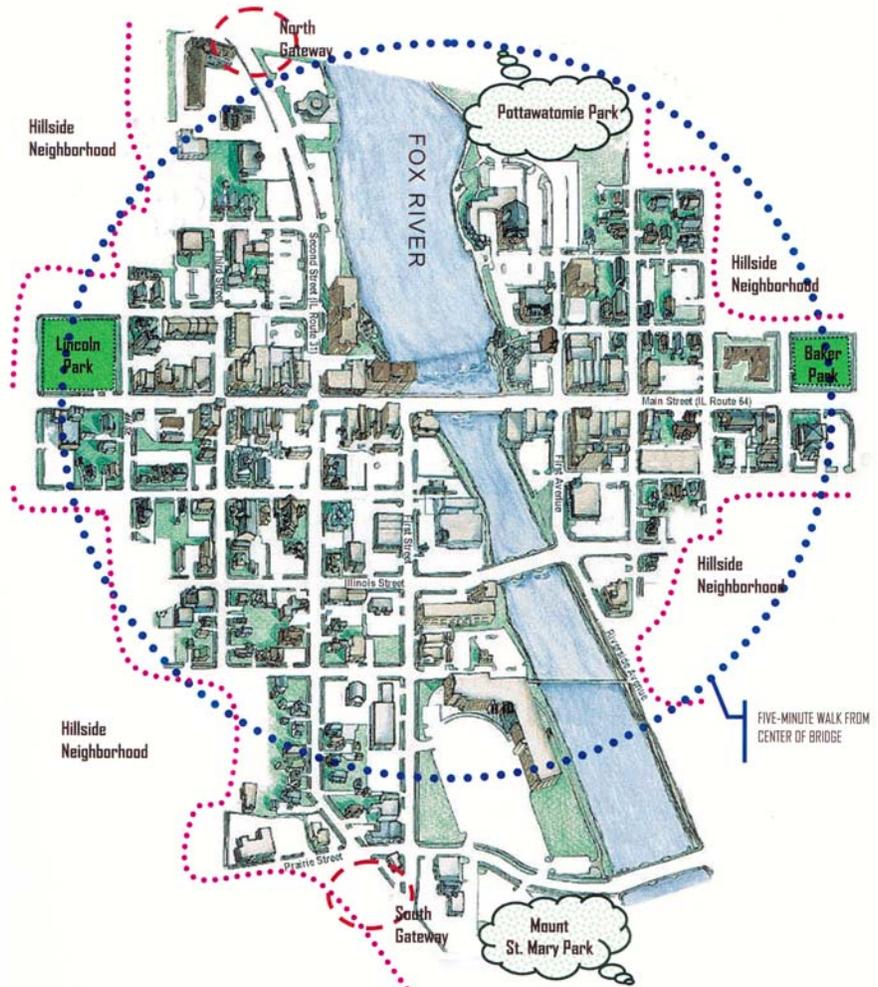
Downtown Boundaries:

The downtown's strengths include its proximity to the river and its compact quality. Parks, the hillsides and neighborhoods define its boundaries and the river becomes the natural focus. Development of “downtown uses” should always remain within these bounds.

Nearly all of downtown St. Charles is within a one-quarter mile radius of the Main Street bridge – a five-minute walk. Establishing a boundary that is based on a pedestrian scale makes sense and it coincides with other features that naturally define the downtown.

Downtown Boundaries

Logical boundaries for downtown St. Charles can be framed from the natural patterns of the river valley, the location of significant community features (such as parks), the presence of neighborhoods and the focus of the Fox River. Corridors for development and redevelopment activity generally fall within the bounds of a five-minute walk.



Once boundaries are recognized and established, marking the entrances to the downtown with “gateways” becomes important. Points along Route 31 should be reinforced as gateways; entries to the downtown district along Main Street are essentially marked by buildings, parks and streetscape elements, making gateway statements less critical, but still desirable.

The topographic qualities of the downtown reinforce its “river town” feel, and the river should always be the primary focal point. As much as the edges of downtown need to be defined to maintain its compact qualities, the Fox River needs to be its centerpiece. That the river is geographically central is not enough; links between development corridors, downtown districts and the neighborhoods at the edges should be reinforced. Even as the river itself is developed with additional pedestrian amenities, the ways in which those features reach out through downtown must be considered.

Quadrants:

There is only one downtown. Without question, Main Street and the Fox River pose challenges to integrating “quadrants” formed by the intersection of Main Street and the river, but given the compactness and development potential of the downtown, it is more important to focus on creating corridors that link the edges of the downtown to Main Street.

The strategy for integration is two-fold:

- Extend the basic streetscape character of Main Street along the length of development corridors; and
- Create activity and intensity of development within each corridor.

The streetscape patterns will vary with the underlying patterns of each corridor, but basic elements should be employed; and, while businesses in each area are unique, the effective implementation of a two-fold strategy will create a sense of activity that will draw people throughout all of the downtown.

Riverfront:

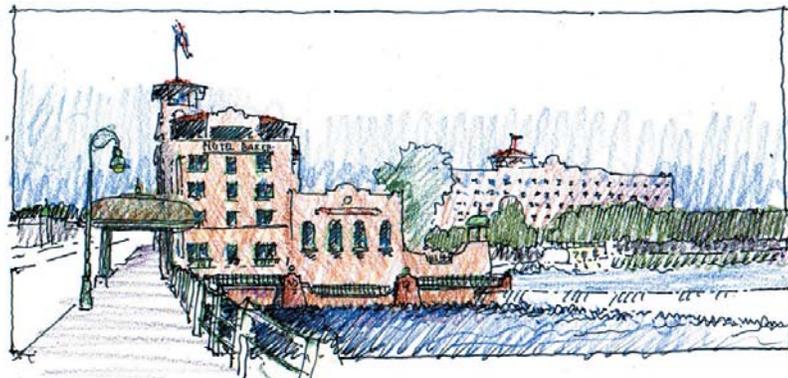
The primary goal for the riverfront is simple: develop a continuous pedestrian loop from the railroad bridge to Mount St. Mary Park. The loop should be designed so the riverfront expresses a different character along its length, recognizing the subtle or dramatic differences in the river environment as a part of the pedestrian experience. Opportunities to create interesting and unique – even idiosyncratic – points of intersection between the river and the pedestrian loop will be capitalized upon so that no part of the loop seems to repeat itself.

General Development Patterns in Downtown St. Charles:

There are general patterns that are logical, appropriate and necessary to keep downtown St. Charles vital and maintain its character.

- Within each of the downtown’s corridors or districts, the patterns can be shaped to respond to its more specific character and opportunities.
- Continuity will be created by the consistent use of elements through all the corridors and districts and the overall focus on a pedestrian experience.

Difficulties in creating a continuous riverfront pedestrian experience occur at several locations. A connection around the base of Hotel Baker might reflect the architecture of this historic structure and provide an important link between Main Street and the riverfront north of the hotel.



Creating this loop and enhancing the river as the focal point of the downtown calls for strategies and efforts to:

- Enhance the riverfront for pedestrians by creating connections between downtown and the riverfront and links that invite people to move easily between the two.
- Eliminate or relocate parking lots along the riverfront as new parking areas and structures are developed at more suitable locations.
- Redevelop parcels and non-pedestrian oriented facilities that do not take full advantage of riverfront views or amenities.
- Eliminate long expanses of blank or inactive walls.

The most significant challenge to creating a continuous riverfront pedestrian loop is how to make the connection across Main Street. Realistically, there may simply be too many obstacles in too limited a zone to make a Main Street connection feasible. But, if the pedestrian network along downtown streets is recognized and enhanced, the notion of integration of the riverfront and downtown pedestrian systems and experiences is logical and even desirable. Attention must then be directed to street crossings, such that they do not become limiting to either system.

Pedestrian Movement:

The pedestrian experience is nurtured by keeping the downtown focused on an area that is compact and walkable – this plan recognizes the five-minute walk from the center as a logical boundary. It also places great emphasis on improving the experience for pedestrians in downtown by:

- Eliminating or, at least, intensely landscaping surface parking lots;
- Creating active buildings along pedestrian corridors; and
- Eliminating or relocating auto-oriented uses.

The development of streetscape improvements along corridors and then along side streets within the corridors will expand and further enhance the attractiveness of downtown St. Charles as a place for pedestrians.

The attraction of the riverfront as a pedestrian experience cannot be overlooked. While it might be possible to experience downtown architecture from an automobile, the riverfront demands a pedestrian perspective. As areas along development corridors evolve, every opportunity for creating links to the riverfront must be seized. And, as noted, the community's vision for downtown St. Charles dictates that completion of a riverfront loop be given high priority.

While both streets and the riverfront offer pedestrian experiences, this plan recognizes that the riverfront provides a system of movement for pedestrians that is separate from the grid of the streets. The quality of the riverfront experience should be different – more restful and leisurely, more of a stroll, more opportunities for encountering public art or finding a quiet spot. The street experience is more lively, social, more active, more engaging. At times, the two systems will overlap, creating yet a third kind of experience: one that draws from the designed qualities of the street and the natural qualities of the river. But it is the diversity of the experience – and the chance that the experience will be different during every visit – that will create memories for all who experience downtown St. Charles.



Special Features:

Memories of downtown St. Charles will result from the elements that are more unique – those that recall our community's history or begin to tell a story about the people and the place. Focus should be directed to the creation of more thought-provoking, more sensual or more delightful features. Adding public art and creating public and private gardens throughout the downtown will expand on its vibrant character.

Features that highlight the historic qualities of downtown St. Charles should also be emphasized. While the buildings and the context of the downtown suggest history, identifying the age and evolution of our community's structures will further emphasize downtown as a place of historic treasures.

When these kinds of features are added to downtown St. Charles, the experience will become one of discovery and renewal. People will be intrigued as new pieces are revealed to them, and they will be enlightened as they form the connections between an art piece and the story it tells of the place. With works that are permanent and temporary, people will find new reasons to visit and explore downtown. With gardens that invite, people will return to experience the transition of the downtown through the seasons and through time.

The riverfront provides a system of movement for pedestrians that is separate from the grid of the streets. The quality of the riverfront experience should be different – more restful and leisurely, more of a stroll, more opportunities for encountering public art or finding a quiet spot.

Photo courtesy of the St. Charles Convention & Visitors Bureau

Streetscape:

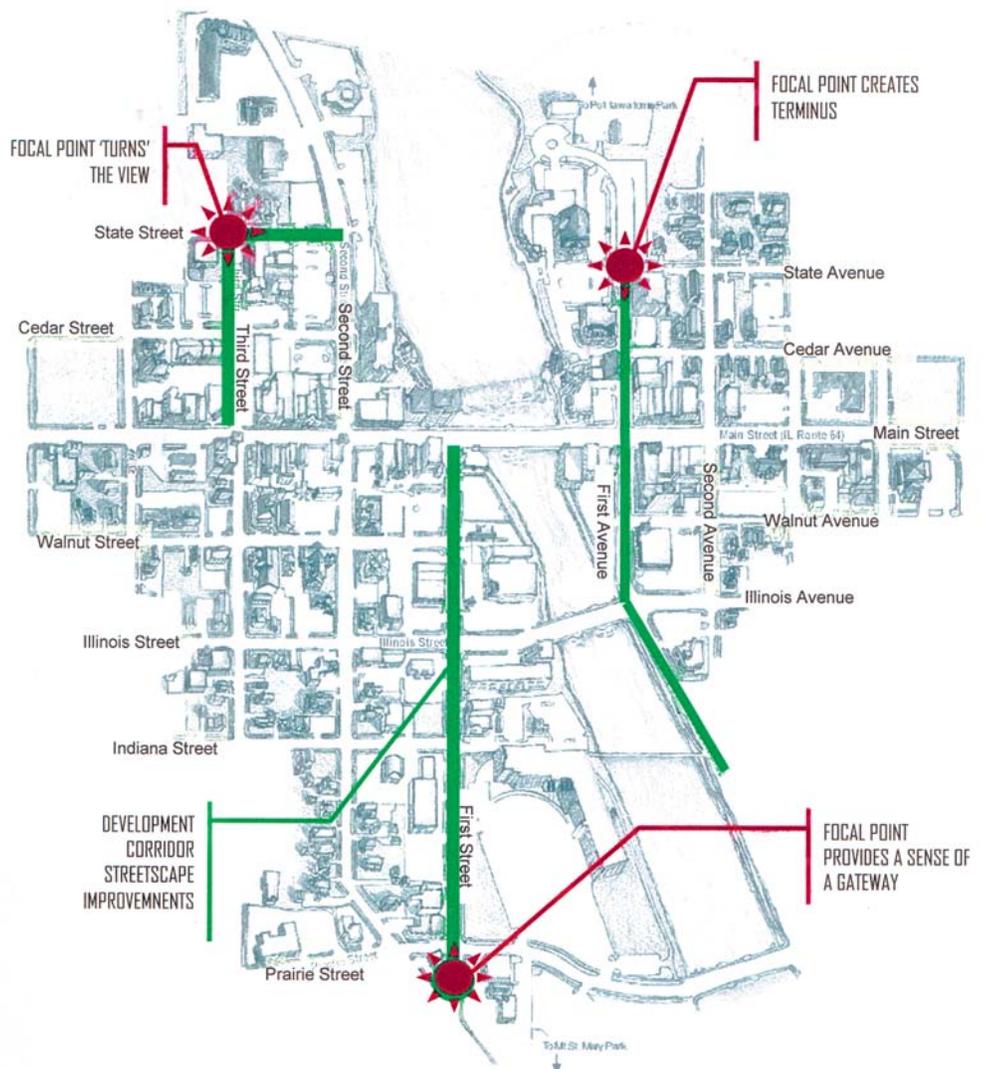
The idea of “streetscape” goes beyond the commonly held notion of trees, pedestrian-scaled lights and benches. It has to do with the creation of a continuous experience formed by consistent application of urban design elements and the creation of attractive spaces for people.

The streetscape of downtown St. Charles should consider the entire space from façade to façade – including the façade and the building itself. The goal is the creation of an unbroken downtown streetscape focused on pedestrian activity along the primary streets of each downtown development corridor.

Beginning with the use of Main Street elements as the primary vocabulary of the streetscape, other streets should be developed in ways that reflect the individual character of each development corridor – their spatial qualities, their form of development and their orientation and proximity to the river. This strategy allows both the Century Corners district and First Street south, for example, to develop a streetscape that integrates these districts into the downtown, but most definitely provides for each to have a different feel.

Streetscape Enhancements

Streetscape enhancements occur within each corridor, forming strong links to the enhancements already accomplished along Main Street. Focal points within each corridor provide a sense of a gateway (at First Street South), a terminus (at First Avenue), or an opportunity to “turn” the view (Third Street North).



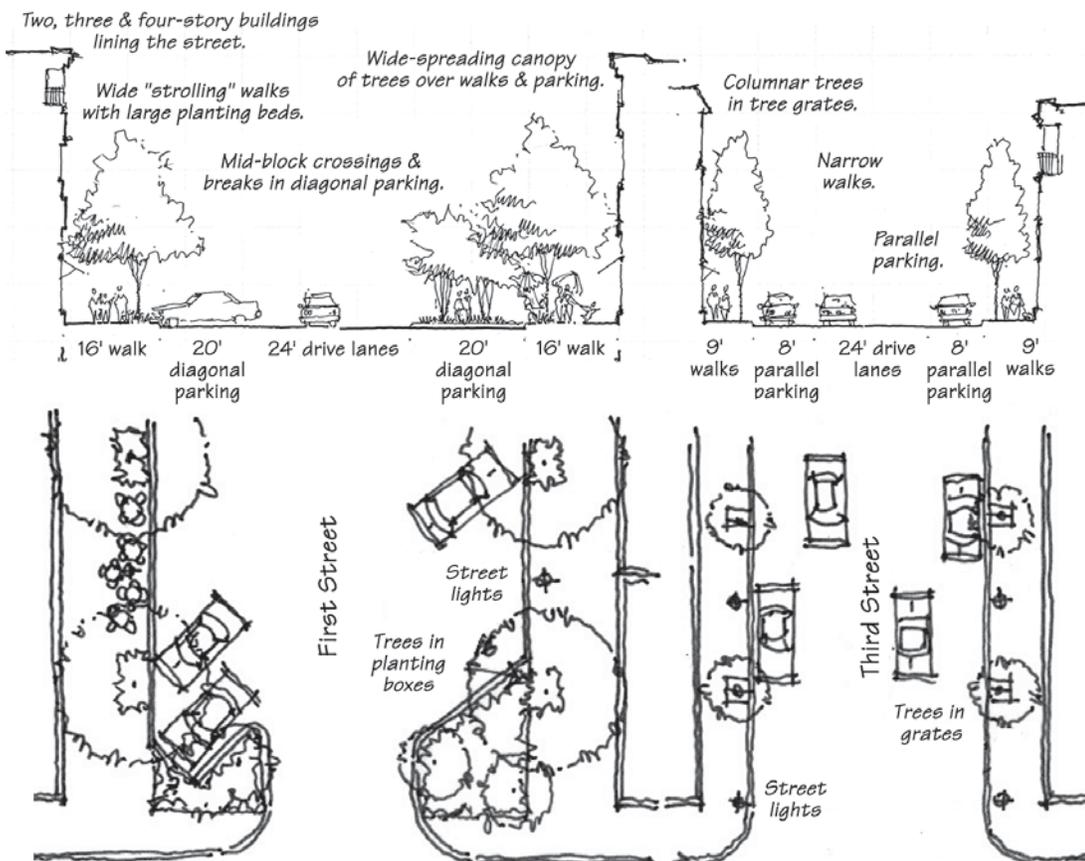
Built Environment:

This plan advocates the continued evolution of the downtown as a mixed-use environment, striving for a mix of horizontal and vertical uses:

- The scale of development should respect the downtown’s landmarks and its qualities of a small town nestled in a river valley.
- The character of development should place great emphasis on the detail of buildings – those elements that would be particularly appreciated by pedestrians.

The design character of downtown buildings is important as well:

- New buildings should not mimic downtown’s landmarks and should not be fashioned with historic facades; buildings should reveal the downtown’s history and continued evolution.
- Old buildings that remain a part of the downtown’s fabric should maintain their historic architectural integrity.
- New buildings should be designed with a sense of the traditions of buildings typical of a small-town downtown (in terms of scale, height, bulk, fenestration, placement and detail), but with materials and design influences that reflect contemporary development.



The patterns of the streetscape vary in downtown St. Charles, but are consistent in the application of the element. Parking should be incorporated on streets to the greatest degree possible, even introducing diagonal parking at points along First Street where the width of the right-of-way and the patterns of development allow.

New buildings should be designed with the understanding that the community wants to make lasting improvements. Many of downtown's buildings have been a part of the community for a century and some for more than a century. New development should have the same degree of permanence. The ability to insert a variety of uses into the same basic structure during its lifetime is the goal; flexibility is the key.

The extent of non-building space in downtown St. Charles may have the greatest impact on the image and the quality of the pedestrian environment. Spaces that are not used for buildings and not dedicated to parking or service requirements should not be considered "leftovers." These areas – and even those spaces that are used for parking or service – should be developed in ways that are attractive and inviting.

All new buildings should be at least two stories and three-story buildings could be encouraged. Structures that are four stories may be allowed in some circumstances, depending on the height relative to nearby buildings and their ability to mitigate the heights with stepped-back facades. Four-story buildings should be considered individually, under the provisions of a special use, where the city can exercise greater control over the building's design.

The footprint of a building and its placement on a site is equal in importance to its height. While the city respects the needs of contemporary development, an overly expansive building can destroy the fabric and experience as easily as a large surface parking lot. Building footprints should respect the scale of their neighbors, and larger buildings should respect the rhythm of "bays" in nearby buildings.

In most cases, buildings should be set at the edge of the sidewalk, but there will be exceptions. What becomes critical in these cases is what is developed in the space between the public sidewalk and the building. Parking lots in front of buildings should be avoided at all costs. With buildings that are slightly set back from the sidewalk, this space should be an attraction for pedestrians, and to simply "landscape it" will not suffice. Such space is better developed as an extension of a use within the building: an outdoor dining area for a restaurant, a display area for a flower shop, or even a space developed as a garden.

It is possible that a future development proposal will request a change in the pattern of blocks in downtown, or suggest that streets be closed or changed to one-way traffic. The underlying structure of the downtown is small blocks and a consistent street grid. To change these basic patterns is to suggest that a single development project is more important than the fabric of the community. The most appropriate development proposals will respect the foundations of development in the downtown, and work to make them tightly connected to the qualities of existing development.



Looking west along Main Street, showing how the street edge at the convenience store could be reclaimed with ornamental fencing, brick entry columns and an appropriate "monumental" sign.

The public realm must also be considered in the patterns of the built environment. The continuity is largely expressed in the patterns of the streetscape, but the ways in which streets themselves terminate or form connections should be respected. Ultimately, the transition should appear seamless:

- Streets should not terminate in a sea of parking, but rather an object of interest.
- Buildings situated at the ends of streets should focus on highlights of the buildings.
- Streets that reach toward the river should be addressed as gateways to the river, rather than “dead ends.”

Traffic:

Traffic in downtown districts has always been the proverbial “two-edged sword” – without traffic, downtown businesses suffer; with too much traffic, the pedestrian experience is diminished. Downtown St. Charles traffic management strategies advanced in this plan are aimed at accommodating vehicles and a calm traffic flow without compromising the safety and comfort of downtown pedestrians.

- Alternatives to the use of Main Street as a “through route” and creating alternative routes for trucks should continue to be considered.
- Focus should be directed to alternatives for local traffic – creating routes that might be preferred by people who are simply moving about the community.
- Continued monitoring of traffic speeds and management of the traffic that exists in downtown should be priorities.
- Exploring ways to minimize pedestrian/vehicle conflicts and the number of turning movements at Second Street and Main Street should be a priority.
- An appeal should be made to, and the community should work cooperatively with, the Illinois Department of Transportation, to consider changes in signal timing that give higher priority to modes of transportation other than cars – bikes and pedestrians included.
- Pedestrian crossing indicators should be revisited. Residents have stated that the crossing activation buttons do not appear to respond when actuated, and that it is difficult to discern the buttons that control the crossing indicators.
- More radical approaches to pedestrian safety, such as concurrent stop intersections, should be considered.
- Directional signage improvements to guide motorists to parking, shopping opportunities and public facilities should be considered as a means of reducing the number of turning movements that impede traffic flow and threaten the safety of pedestrians.
- The focus of traffic management on primary streets in the various development corridors must be on the pedestrian experience, and the car must take the “back seat.”



Indiana Street, looking east toward the river, could be enhanced with a more sculptural entrance to the pedestrian bridge and provide a strolling experience focused on a series of gardens and the historic Beith House.



Downtown Main Street traffic.

Parking:

The ability to facilitate parking in downtown will be one key to its future. A comprehensive parking study will be needed to develop a sound parking strategy.

The strategy employed to date has included managing existing parking resources, maintaining on-street parking, and creating off-street parking lots and structures where greater parking demand exists. This plan generally supports and expands this strategy, but calls for one significant change: Creation of off-street surface parking should be discouraged in favor of the other approaches.

Parking management and enforcement strategies should continue to provide for the variety of downtown's users. Computerized tracking and escalating fines to address frequent violators should be considered as a means of improving turnover of parking spaces intended for downtown shoppers and visitors.

In any development scenario for downtown, retaining on-street parking must be a priority. Cars parked on the street lend a sense of activity and life to the downtown and make efficient use of the space that is already used for cars.

In some cases, such as the First Street South development corridor, the development of diagonal parking should be considered as a way of increasing the quantity of on-street parking; in other areas where existing development would preclude a street wide enough for diagonal parking (for example, the Third Street North corridor), maintaining on-street parallel parking should be considered mandatory.

Land is one of the most precious of resources in downtown St. Charles, and parking is one of the most consumptive uses of available land. As significant redevelopment occurs and the downtown's land uses are intensified, the number of parking spaces needed to meet parking demands will increase. A strategy that contemplates the implementation of parking structures to meet the growing demand prompted by redevelopment is a logical approach.

New development projects should anticipate the need for new parking structures and phase development projects in ways that maximize development as parking structures are implemented.

As parking structures are proposed, the community should continue to stress the design of the structure and the integration of active spaces along important pedestrian routes, essentially creating storefronts at street level.

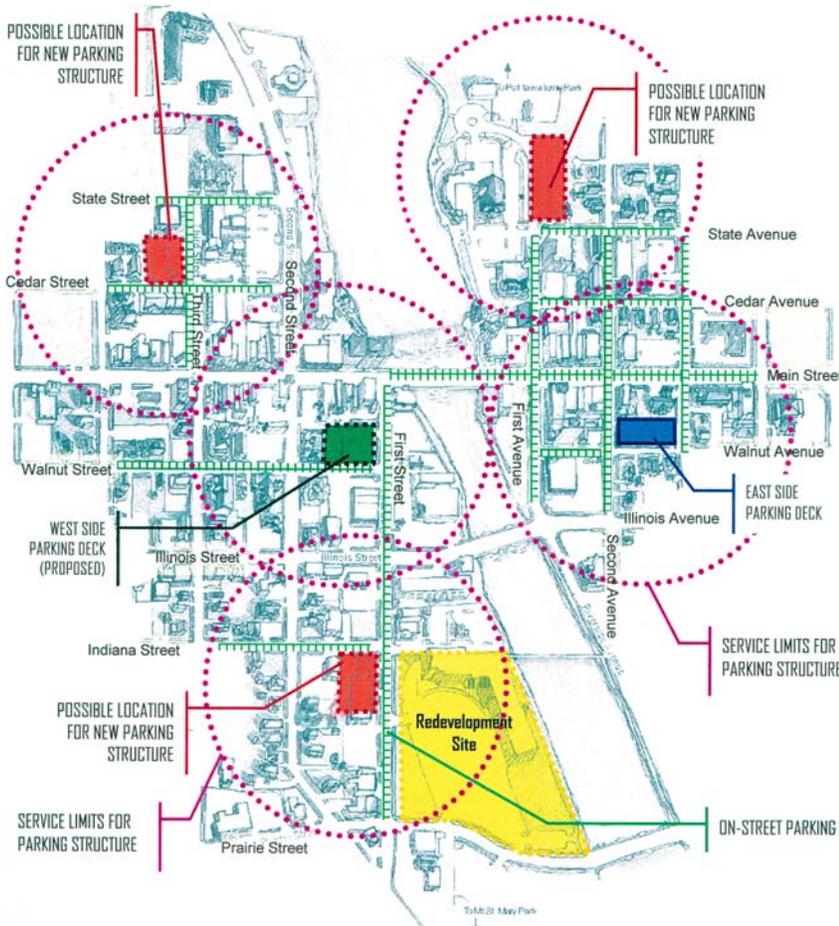
This plan supports the replacement of public and private surface parking lots, particularly lots along Main Street and the riverfront, as viable parking alternatives are developed and implemented. Redevelopment of surface lots should occur with the most intense use of the land possible consistent with the vision and guidelines of this plan.

The City should maintain its “urban” approach to parking that promotes public parking to meet aggregated parking demands, as opposed to “suburban” parking policies that require developers to provide on-site parking to meet the needs of individual developments. On-site parking, where needed to serve a specific use, should be kept to the minimum possible, and the developer should be encouraged to provide a plan for the use of these areas if parking is ever eliminated.

Developments and businesses that offer offsetting peak parking demands should be encouraged to make the best use of each parking space available in downtown.

One of the more insightful positions that a community can take relative to parking is to look beyond parking structures as the sole strategy for providing parking in downtown – essentially, creating new models for addressing parking.

Although it is likely that most people who come downtown will travel by car, alternatives should be pursued. Expanding transportation alternatives including public transit and bicycles can decrease the need for parking spaces. Providing supporting facilities such as bus shelters and bicycle storage can make these alternatives more attractive.



Parking Structure Locations

The implementation of parking structures is a fundamental approach to intensifying development. In order to maximize development in each site and provide the best opportunities for a great pedestrian experience, public parking structures should ultimately be located in each corridor. The 500-foot service radius for these facilities is important in their location. While there might be overlap, they must be strategically positioned to facilitate parking.

A range of factors is useful in this analysis:

- Regulatory factors consider land use and conflicts with existing zoning or land use guides; or opportunities where tax capacity is not maximized (implying that current use may not be the highest and best use of the parcel).
- Site and/or building factors consider vacant or underutilized parcels or buildings; obsolete buildings (buildings which may no longer be able to serve a contemporary use); or buildings that might require significant repair or renovation.
- Market factors consider uses (regardless of the structure that houses them) that are obsolete; or that an attractive alternative to the current use might be possible.
- Ownership factors consider transitions in the current business; land and/or buildings that are for sale; or, simply, that the owner is interested in making a change to the land or building.
- Community factors consider that a use is not consistent or supportive of the vision for the downtown; or that the aesthetics are detracting from the downtown's image.

Specific Patterns of Development

As the conditions of downtown St. Charles are understood, the ability to review opportunities for change must also be considered. A “susceptibility to change” analysis begins to frame the potential for new development or redevelopment.

Downtown parcels were assessed given these factors and general criteria. Parcels with higher susceptibility to change are those where redevelopment should be actively pursued and where the priority for change might call for city involvement to catalyze and direct development.

Parcels with lower susceptibility to change are those where the change is largely dependent on the owner's interest in making the change. Certain assumptions and interpretations have been made in defining susceptibility in downtown St. Charles, and an indication of susceptibility does not mean that a parcel must change.

Similarly, a low susceptibility does not necessarily mean that a parcel should not change, or that change will not occur in the near future. The more important direction gained from this analysis is found in larger patterns that are seen as individual parcels are considered together.

In the Diagram of Susceptibility, the definition of development activity corridors offers insights about where the public sector might take an active role to catalyze and direct development. The resulting “zones” reflect potential development activity based on aggregations of susceptible parcels.

Beyond the identification of likely development activity zones based on susceptibility to change, there are other goals that support development activity along three corridors in downtown:

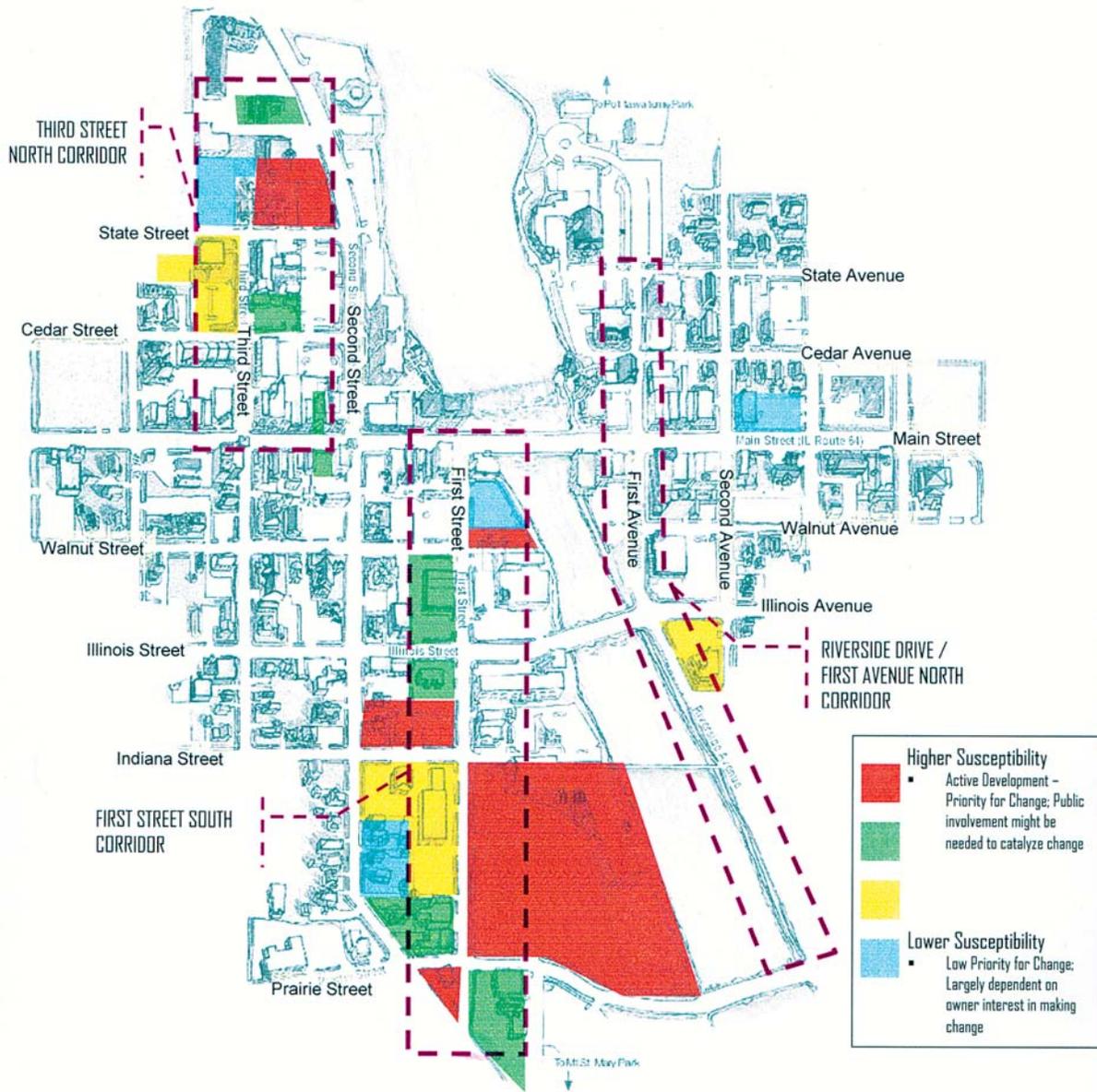
- First Street South
- Third Street North
- Riverside Drive and First Avenue North

All three corridors offer opportunities for development activity as well as public and private initiatives that support the community's goals of engaging the river and enhancing/expanding the downtown experience. In addition, the Century Corners district would benefit from certain enhancements that would increase its coherence, accessibility and identity.

The patterns of susceptibility to change indicate that development and redevelopment activities will likely occur in several distinct areas referred to and described as:

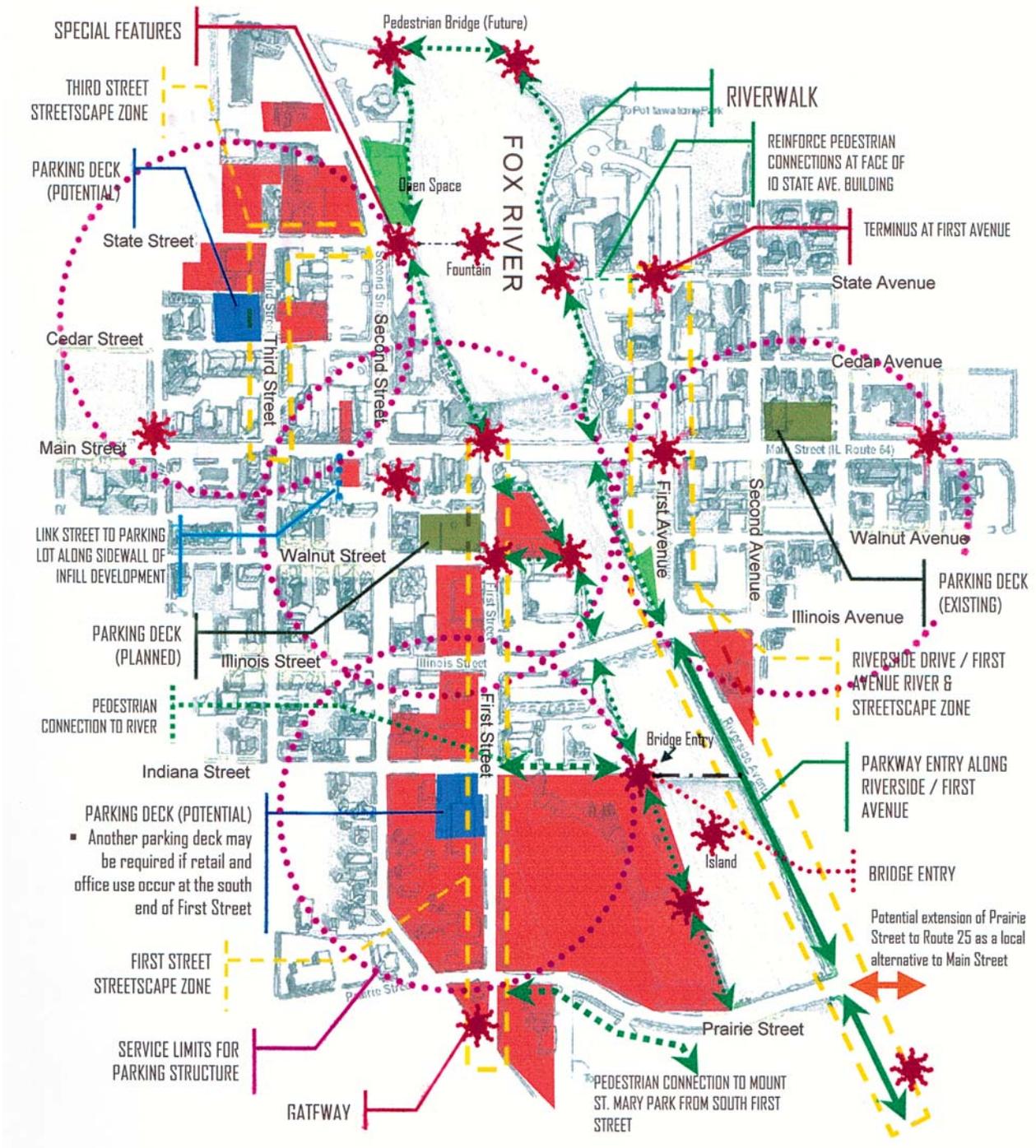
- First Street South
- Third Street North
- West Hillside
- Riverside Drive/First Avenue
- Century Corners

Each has underlying features that suggest different character results from development and redevelopment activities and that the market focus will vary for each.



Susceptibility to Change

Patterns of change in the downtown might be attributed to the degree of susceptibility to change. The patterns reveal areas where the potential for change will likely result in concentrations of development and redevelopment activity. Darker red shaded areas appear to be more highly susceptible to change.



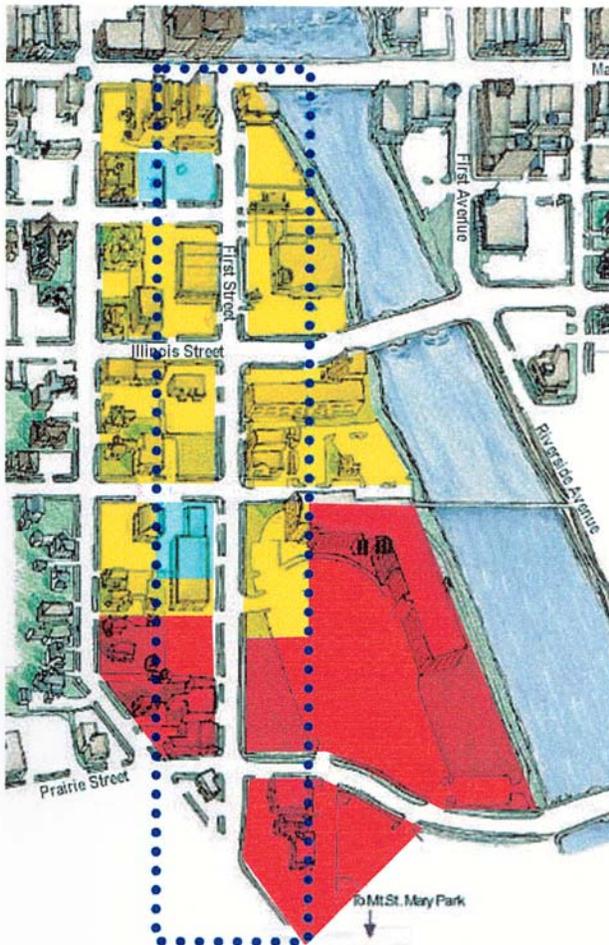
Key Development Strategies

Development follows corridors that intersect Main Street and captures opportunities for creating greater intensity by looking to redevelop sites that might be susceptible to short- or long-term change. Connections to the river and the provisions of public parking structures are also key elements of the plan.

The patterns of future development in each area are summarized as follows:

First Street South

- **Use:** Strongly commercial near Main Street (street level retail and restaurants, limited office and service at street level; upper levels office or residential); strongly residential at south end (limited retail, office or service at street level; residential at street level or partially elevated above street level; upper levels residential).
- **Development Focus:** Mid-sized national retailers; “urban” housing.
- **Character:** Mid-scale development as a result of potentially larger site; two- and three-story buildings with four stories as a conditional use; varied setback from the sidewalk, with spaces between development for active uses; strong links to the Fox River following extensions of street rights-of-way; on-street diagonal parking where right-of-way permits, with public parking structure(s) accommodating the bulk of parking needs.
- **Movement:** Integration of public parking structure(s) resulting in a strong pedestrian environment.
- **Features:** Gateway to downtown at First Street and Route 31; garden links to the Fox River; highly active, “playful” spaces along the street resulting from varying building setbacks.



Development along First Street South focuses on street-level retail and upper-level office or residential uses at its north end. To the south, a new downtown gateway is formed with residential uses of a more “urban” nature framing the gateway.





New development along First Street should have highly active spaces along the sidewalk, even if the building is set back slightly. Two-story buildings (at a minimum) and the addition of streetscape enhancements will result in a pedestrian environment not found along First Street today.

First Street South is the largest development corridor proposed in this plan and with the most opportunity for change. As a very long street, it should form a gateway to downtown at its south end as it parallels and abuts the river. Existing development along its length is varied, with some re-use projects already in place and some redevelopment projects in the works. In total, it presents great opportunities for expanding the downtown experience and introducing new uses.

Opportunities and Strategies

- Ultimately, the triangle of land between First Street, Route 31 and Prairie Street should be developed as a gateway feature. This point forms the first impression of downtown St. Charles and its redevelopment would be a great stride forward in terms of community image.
- Redevelopment that creates residential uses at the south end of First Street is encouraged. The goal for residential in this area should be intensity and the formation of a downtown neighborhood with strongly urban characteristics. While some retail or service uses might occupy portions of ground floors, residential uses should predominate.
- The automobile dealership on the west side of First Street is not the best use of that land. In the long term, the opportunity for re-use of that site should be pursued. Its redevelopment should also be directed toward greater intensity of use and the elimination of large expanses of asphalt. As redevelopment moves toward the core, three-story buildings that begin to focus more on retail and service uses at street level are anticipated.
- The south end of the corridor is outside of the service limits for the west side parking facility to be located at First Street and Walnut Street. A new parking deck in the area of the auto dealership will be required to maximize intensity of use.
- Some properties in this development corridor will not change; in particular, this plan encourages the continued existence of the Blue Goose Super Market in downtown.

A link to the Fox River from First Street occurs at the south side of the Manor Restaurant. The idea of a “garden link” is introduced, and the parking lot next to the garden is conceived as a “courtyard” rather than a parking lot.



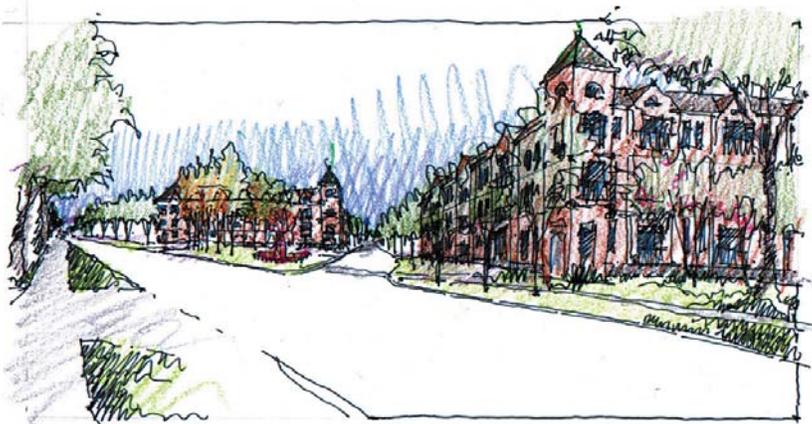
- At the north end of the corridor, the parking lot south of the Manor Restaurant and the Harris Bank drive-through are auto-oriented uses that occupy prime riverfront space. Cars will never appreciate this location as much as people will, and the eventual redevelopment of this area to provide a stronger link between the street and the river is a goal of this plan.
- Every link to the river along First Street South should be reconsidered as the development corridor evolves. For example, Indiana Street terminates in a twisted-end guard rail – with the pedestrian bridge crossing of the river just beyond. The pedestrian bridge might also be re-visited; an artful entrance to the bridge at the end of a garden-like Indiana Street could dramatically change the terminus of the street and actually invite people to use the bridge.
- The development potential in the First Street South corridor is significant. An estimate of potential development (in terms of new development or redevelopment, not including the Brownstone project at the former Piano Factory Outlet Mall site) includes:
 - Street-level retail and office: 70,000 square feet
 - Upper-level office & residential: 70,000 to 140,000 square feet
 - Residential: 40,000 to 60,000 square feet

Parking for retail and office uses (based on 1 space per 250 gross square feet) dictates the need for 560 to 840 new spaces. In addition, the replacement of any public surface parking lots should be considered as well. Parking for residential-only development should occur largely on the development site (with understructure parking encouraged), although visitor parking could occur on streets and some resident parking might even be accommodated in a nearby public parking structure.

At the end of Walnut Street, the Harris Bank site could be redeveloped with a use that takes greater advantage of its position on the river. An integral part of this project should be the creation of another link to the river that follows the “extension” of Walnut Street to the riverfront.



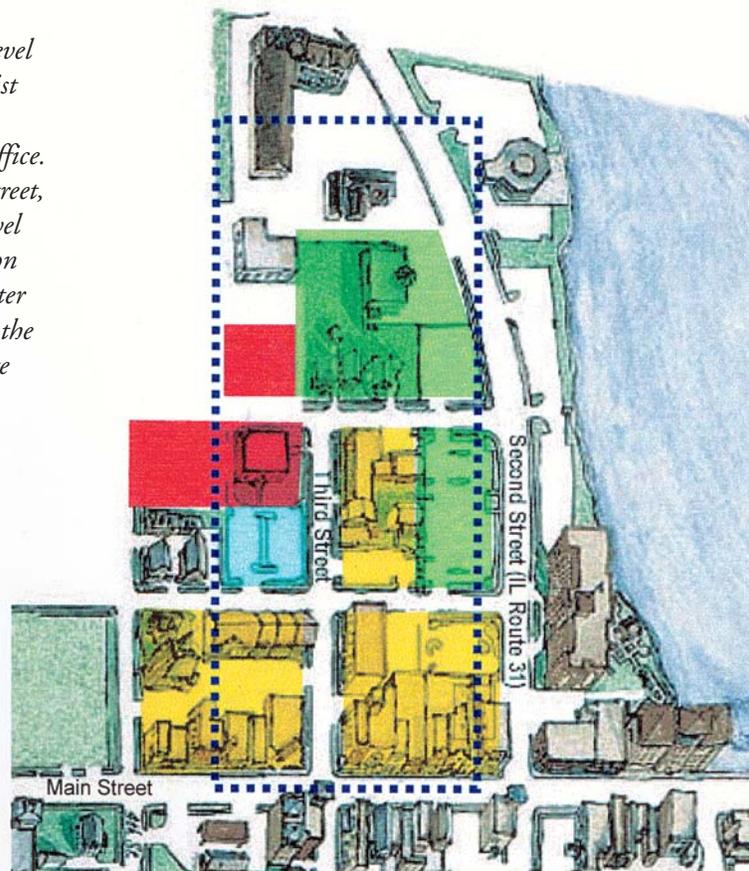
New “urban” residential uses frame a gateway to downtown at the intersection of First Street and Route 31. The gateway itself might be signage, sculpture or landscape – or a combination of these elements that forms an appropriate image for downtown.



Third Street North

- **Use:** Strongly commercial near Main Street (basically following uses that currently exist); commercial near State Street toward the river (street-level retail, restaurant or office; upper-level office); residential near State Street to the west (street-level office or residential; upper level residential).
- **Development Focus:** “Arts and antiques” near Main Street; office near State Street.
- **Character:** Small and mid-scale development; two- and three-story buildings with four stories as a conditional use; uniform setback of buildings from public walks; strong focal points at Third Street and State Street to encourage movement from Main Street and to attract attention from the river and Route 31; on-street parallel parking with public parking structure accommodating the bulk of parking needs.
- **Movement:** Integration of public parking structure(s) resulting in a strong pedestrian environment.
- **Features:** Mix of routes along streets for pedestrians and interior walkways; termination of Third Street with a feature that directs attention to the river; State Street terminated at the river with a significant focal point.

Along Third Street North, street level retail uses similar to those that exist are encouraged near Main Street, with upper-level uses focused on office. Along State Street east of Third Street, uses would accommodate street-level retail but might be more focused on street-level office – creating a greater population of daytime workers in the downtown. To the west along State Street, street-level residential uses would form the transition to the existing neighborhood.



THIRD STREET NORTH
DEVELOPMENT CORRIDOR

PRIMARY STREET LEVEL USES

- RETAIL
- OFFICE
- RESIDENTIAL
- PARKING STRUCTURE

While Third Street North does not present the magnitude of development opportunities that First Street South offers, the potential for more immediate change may be far greater. A single property owner controls large areas of land and has expressed an interest in making a change. As a result, this corridor may be the focus for public investment or city incentives to make certain that development and character opportunities are maximized.

As in other areas of the downtown where redevelopment is anticipated, parking will be the key to creating intensity of use, and structured parking will be required. Redevelopment activities may be largely focused on the blocks north of Cedar Street and extending to the Charleston Center strip mall. Uses would be directed toward retail and office east of Third Street and transitioning to residential to the west of Third Street.

Opportunities and Strategies

- While the direct connection to the river is not available here, views to the river from the first tier of development could be spectacular. Development should be oriented to maximize those views with taller buildings along Second Street, and lower scale buildings along Third Street. Residential buildings, which often provide much greater detail than commercial buildings, should be taller along Third Street, but no taller than four stories.
- A parking structure will facilitate redevelopment to higher intensities in the Third Street North Corridor. A location at the existing parking lot at the corner of Third Street and Cedar Street is central to the corridor and would also continue to serve the needs of the church and mitigate the impacts of parking on the residential neighborhood for events at Lincoln Park.



Redevelopment of the public parking lot along Route 31 (provided a new public parking structure is developed), offers the opportunity to highlight the public walkway that exists with buildings and interesting pedestrian spaces, rather than parked cars.



The termination of State Street at the Fox River should be a highlight of this corridor. Development should frame views to this focal point and give the sense that the street extends to the river. The character of development along the street is important; it does not merely frame the view – it creates a feeling of vitality.

- Focal points are needed in this corridor to create a sense of attraction and to terminate the corridor in a more appropriate manner. The intersection of Third Street and State Street provides an opportunity for a unique urban design statement – one that captures peoples’ interest but also “turns” them toward the river or Main Street. Such a focal point could be another work of public art, or a more unique intersection – a small traffic circle, for example – or some combination of the two.
- The extension of State Street to the river provides another opportunity for a focal point. Here, the focal point terminates State Street, but also provides a signal of the Third Street development corridor for people traveling on Route 31. Ultimately, it may also separate parking from park uses along the riverfront, if parking along the riverfront is reclaimed for pedestrian use. Whatever this focal point may eventually be, it is a chance to celebrate the intersection of downtown and the river; the feature should be powerful and unique, and be a real attraction for people.
- As a parking facility is implemented, the need for other surface lots may be greatly reduced. The city parking lot along Route 31 could be redeveloped with buildings at either end and a more intensely developed “garden” parking lot between. The pedestrian way through the center of this block would be enhanced as redevelopment of the parking lot proceeds. This piece of the Third Street corridor should stretch to the north and become a focal point for redevelopment north of State Street.
- The character of residential development should reflect the nearby neighborhoods. While single-family homes would not result, the flavor of a building that relies on residential scale and details is appropriate.
- The development potential in the Third Street North corridor might be characterized as follows:
 - Street level retail and office: 50,000 square feet.
 - Upper level office & residential: 50,000 to 110,000 square feet.
 - Residential: 30,000 to 34,000 square feet.

Parking for retail and office uses (based on 1 space per 250 gross square feet) dictates the need for 400 to 840 new spaces. As noted for the First Street South corridor, the replacement of any public surface parking lots should be considered. Parking for residential-only development should occur on the development site (with understructure parking encouraged), although visitor parking could occur on streets and some resident parking might even be accommodated in nearby public parking structure.

Riverside Drive / First Avenue Corridor

- **Use:** Mixed commercial near Main Street; civic along river north of Main Street; residential at south end.
- **Development Focus:** “Urban” residential at south end.
- **Character:** Mixed development with a strong orientation to the Fox River; the experience of driving should feel like a parkway entry to downtown; residential at south end feels like an extension of existing residential area to the river; uniform building setbacks from public walks; strong links to the river created at the civic portion of the street; on-street parking and public parking structures; existing surface lots enhanced as “garden parking lots.”
- **Movement:** Vehicles and pedestrians balanced.
- **Features:** A scenic drive along the river leading to downtown.

Opportunities for redevelopment in the Riverside Drive / First Avenue corridor are limited. Emphasis should be directed to the enhancement of Riverside Avenue as a river experience and gateway from the south and to creating stronger connections to the river from Century Corners where parking lots for the Municipal Center are set at the riverfront’s edge.

Opportunities and Strategies

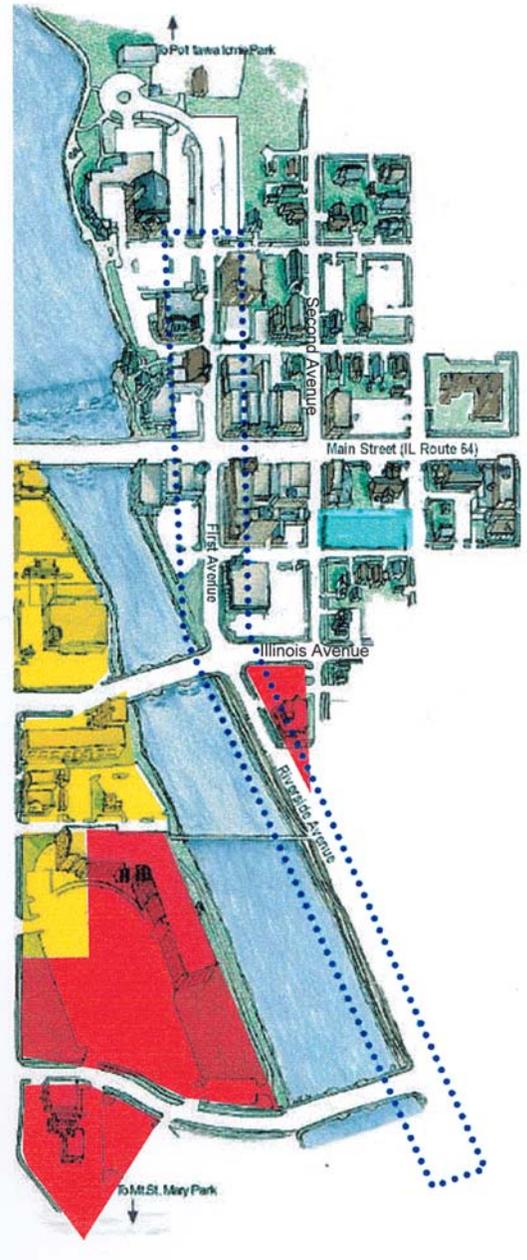
- Simply re-naming Riverside Avenue to “Riverside Drive” could give it prominence as a scenic corridor and relative to other downtown roads that are named “street” or “avenue.”
- The southeasterly corner of Riverside Drive and Illinois Avenue may offer an opportunity to extend residential use closer to the river, and to extend the neighborhood itself to the river.
- Attention should be directed to reinforcing the link between First Avenue and the river, particularly along the extension of State Street. As changes to reinforce the link to the river are pursued, the development of an appropriate terminus to First Avenue must be considered. This street should not end in a parking lot; a traffic circle and public art would create an object of interest at this important viewpoint.

The focus of “Riverside Drive” (First Avenue) is the creation of a scenic drive along the Fox River. While uses will not change as dramatically as in other parts of the downtown, new residential uses could extend the sense of the neighborhood to the Fox River.

RIVERSIDE DRIVE / FIRST AVENUE DEVELOPMENT CORRIDOR

PRIMARY STREET LEVEL USES

- RETAIL
- OFFICE
- RESIDENTIAL
- PARKING STRUCTURE



Century Corners

- **Use:** Small-scale commercial and residential.
- **Development Focus:** Evolution of residential uses to small shops in residential structures.
- **Character:** A “historic residential shopping” district where shops in homes blend with houses that still accommodate residential uses; small-scale, traditional “homes” with landscaped yards and gardens at their front doors; small-scale, high-quality signage; street parking for customers; and limited off-street parking for employees.
- **Movement:** Pedestrian movement between destinations encouraged by interesting landscape related to specific uses.
- **Features:** Unique shops in restored/renovated historic homes, with highly developed sites as the “streetscape”; preservation of the Century Corners as a downtown neighborhood. The character of Century Corners is different than any of the development zones; it is a commercial area that has grown from a neighborhood, it is on the hillside and its basic identity remains in its neighborhood aesthetic. It is likely that this area will continue to evolve in this pattern, and it should be encouraged to do so.

The appropriate character for public and private spaces in Century Corners is found in the garden landscapes of a residential neighborhood. These spaces should bring beauty, life and a sense of comfort to Century Corners, not simply a functional solution to a problem in the neighborhoods fabric.

Opportunities and Strategies

- The aggregation of parcels for redevelopment purposes should not be allowed here, as this would destroy the fabric of the district as a neighborhood scaled to a unique shopping and living environment.
- Enhancements that might benefit the neighborhood would be those that create consistency in the public realm. For example:
 - Without becoming overly elaborate, sidewalks could be enhanced; accents of brick would create highlights that fit the district’s character.
 - Lighting improvements should be used to unite the district, both day and night; lighting does not have to be bright, but it should be consistent and it should reflect the historic residential character of the neighborhood.
 - The points of transition between the public and private realm should become a focus. For example, walks to the front doors could be accented with plantings at the beginning of the walk in ways that draw the landscape of the house/shop out to the street.



Care must be taken as improvements are made to make certain that the Century Corners area’s intrinsic character is not lost or diminished. For example, a steep slope that was difficult to maintain was paved in concrete. The function concern was addressed, but in a way that was detrimental to the qualities of the neighborhood. It was not a “residential” type of solution; change, here, should be rooted in the ways that feel connected to a residential landscape.

West Hillside

- **Use:** Small-scale commercial and residential.
- **Development Focus:** Evolution of residential uses to small-scale commercial uses, with some in residential structures.
- **Character:** Transitional commercial uses much like Century Corners, although development character is not limited to residential structures; sites developed with character that suggests residential landscape qualities (as opposed to commercial site treatments with large expanses of parking); combination of street parking and limited off-street parking.
- **Movement:** Vehicle movement with strong accommodation of pedestrians.
- **Features:** Preservation of the neighborhood at the west edge of downtown.

The hillside west of the Fox River and south of Main Street is evolving, in many ways, like Century Corners. Several considerations afforded the Century Corners area could be applied here. Commercial uses are creeping up the hill from the river, and homes have begun to evolve from residential to commercial use.

There are ways the transition can be made acceptable, and Century Corners serves as a good example. One difference is that Prairie Street is a more connected route than any of the streets in Century Corners; as a result, commercial uses have started to emerge along it.

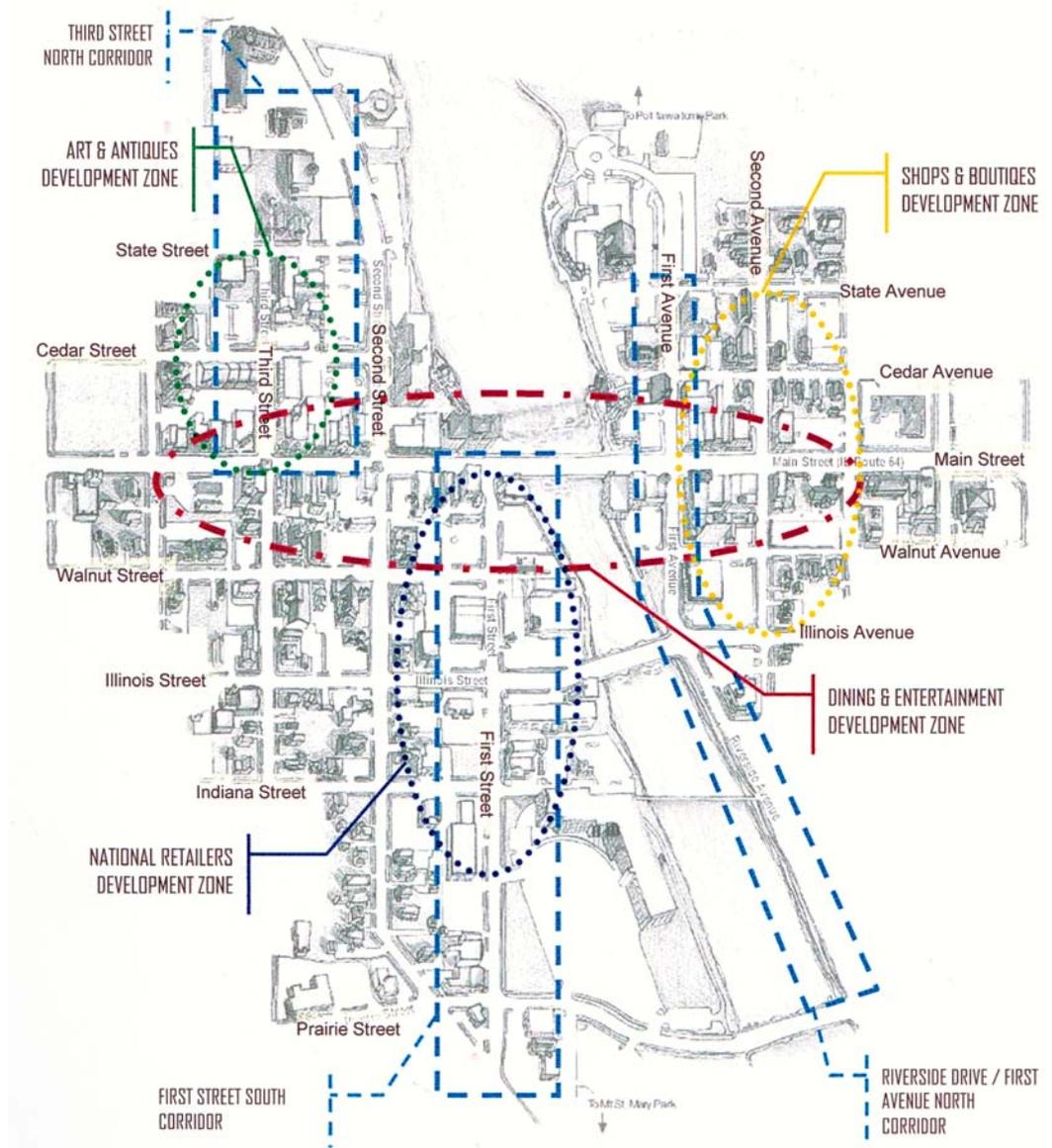
Protection of the neighborhood dictates that further expansion of commercial uses be prohibited or severely limited, and that those that exist be required to respond to their context with appropriately scaled and patterned plans for site development or improvement.

Here and in Century Corners, the sites are yards; they need to be developed with this as the basic pattern. Eventually, a proposal for redevelopment will emerge for an area of Century Corners or the West Hillside. If the site and building plans cannot be imagined as a house with a yard (both respecting the scale, materials and details, and placement of its neighbors), it would be wise to direct that development to other parts of the community.

Business Development Strategies

Downtown St. Charles boasts a diverse, quality business mix. This plan focuses on specific types of retail that could be introduced or expanded to enhance the quality and variety of the downtown business mix.

Business development strategies proposed in this plan represent a modified version of business clustering concepts that, effectively implemented, reinforce the proposed “Great American Shopping Route.” Business development strategies should not be interpreted to suggest that land uses should be strictly regulated in terms of specific types of commercial activity. In fact, mixed uses in the development corridors and throughout the downtown reinforce its organic nature and promote shopper and pedestrian circulation throughout the entire downtown district. Development corridors and districts identified in this plan have underlying features that suggest a distinct focus in terms of business development strategies.



Downtown Business Development Zones

National Retailers Development Zone:

This zone includes the northern end of the First Street Development Corridor and provides an appropriate location for mid-sized national retailers, similar to Crate & Barrel, Restoration Hardware or Banana Republic. Downtown stakeholders and St. Charles residents have offered these as examples of the types of businesses that could enhance the downtown St. Charles retail experience.

This plan recommends a “passive recruitment” approach to mid-sized, national retailers. As opposed to active recruitment strategies that are solicitation and sales oriented, a passive recruitment approach is described and applied by assuming a “ready and waiting” posture – with an emphasis on “ready.” The key to effective implementation of passive recruitment rests in the community’s ability to direct development to a location that will enhance the business mix without compromising the downtown’s small-town character. If the community chooses to encourage the development of mid-sized, national retailers in the downtown, the retailer or developer should be directed to focus on opportunities in the First Street South Corridor, primarily spanning the west side of First Street from Walnut Street to Indiana Street.

Office, service and residential uses in the National Retailers Zone should be accommodated through vertical mixed-use strategies. High-density residential development would be most appropriately directed to the south end of the First Street development corridor, south of Indiana Street.

Under any redevelopment proposal, the Blue Goose Super Market should be retained. Retention efforts might require consideration of opportunities for the market’s expansion, particularly if an expansion becomes necessary in order for it to remain competitive and serve the needs of a growing downtown residential population.

Arts & Antiques Development Zone:

Business development opportunities in this zone and the surrounding area take cues from the current dominance of antiques. Gifts and home furnishings are also well represented in this zone. The addition of complementary retail activities, such as art galleries, music stores and design studios – and other cultural-oriented businesses – stand to strengthen this area’s economic performance.

As the north end of this zone extends into the Charleston Center area, it tends to take on a vehicular orientation that is different from the pedestrian environment at the south end of the zone. Therefore, the north end lends itself to convenience retail and service businesses that cater to the more basic, everyday needs of local consumers.



Business development opportunities in this zone and the surrounding area take cues from the current dominance of antiques, art galleries, such as The Proud Fox. Gifts, specialty shops, such as those found in The Market, and home furnishings are also well represented in the Arts & Antiques Development Zone.

Photo courtesy of the St. Charles Convention & Visitors Bureau

Office and retail development north of Cedar Street and east of Third Street should result in improvements to existing pedestrian passageways along Third Street and in the mid-block between Second and Third Streets. Commercially oriented extensions of either or both of these passageways north of State Street toward Charleston Center would serve to minimize the contrast between the pedestrian and vehicular environments at the zone's north and south ends, respectively.

Group marketing by antiques dealers is and will remain beneficial to the area. This zone would also benefit from efforts to increase the number of shoppers circulating throughout downtown. Unified downtown marketing efforts that include the Arts & Antiques Development Zone, as a prominent feature of the downtown shopping experience, will capitalize upon and promote the larger downtown retail offering.

The south end of the Arts & Antiques Development Zone has been marketed as “Old St. Charles.” However, several of the dominant buildings within the zone do not reflect the larger downtown’s historical character. For this reason, the term “Old St. Charles” does not appear to be useful or appropriate for marketing purposes and, in fact, it may have a detrimental effect in giving consumers the perception of a fragmented downtown area. A change in the branding of the specialty district’s identity might be in order.

Office, service, studio and residential uses in this zone should be accommodated through vertical mixed-use strategies. Noting the pedestrian-oriented nature of the zone’s south end, and the vehicular-oriented environment at its north end, the effective implementation of these strategies will be greatly dependent on the location and characteristics of each individual parcel involved.

Looking east toward the Fox River along State Street, and interesting link to the riverfront could be created with a focal point at the street’s terminus and new development framing the street.



Shops & Boutiques Development Zone:

Retailers in the Century Corners district largely share the same view regarding the potential for development in the zone: development needs in the Century Corners area should be addressed incrementally.

This view holds that expansion of the retail district should occur through a process of locating more shops and boutiques on a parcel-by-parcel basis extending northward on Cedar Avenue. This should be accomplished as residential properties become more appealing to entrepreneurs for commercial use rather than through changes in zoning.

Opportunities to expand Century Corners southward along Second Avenue, across Main Street, should also be considered and pursued. The effective implementation of this strategy will serve to enhance the continuous “looping” nature of the Great American Shopping Route and will also aid efforts to preserve the historic residential character of the South Second Avenue hillside neighborhood.

Century Corners’ existing merchants would benefit from more shops, increased customer foot traffic and additional automobile parking. However, merchants generally agree that these goals should be pursued without making broad sweeping physical changes to their surroundings.

The shops in this area tend to have a distinctive, life-style oriented offering. The style of merchandising practiced by retailers has given Century Corners a quality identity and reinforced a consistent image. This distinctive, life-style oriented merchandising should continue as the underlying theme for this unique downtown sector.

Missing merchandise categories (see “Merchandise Inventory” in this section) should be actively recruited to match appropriate space as it becomes available. The historic, residential qualities of the physical environment are major contributors to the unique nature of Century Corners’ shops and boutiques. “More” will not necessarily be better unless this unique character is maintained.

The Century Corners district, like the Arts & Antiques retail area, would also benefit from efforts to increase the number of shoppers circulating throughout downtown. Century Corners merchants have an exceptional opportunity to capitalize on the strength of “The Great American Downtown” through marketing a shopping experience that is unique, distinctive and quaint.

Small-scale landscape and streetscape improvements, targeted marketing and the introduction of new merchants who meet the demands of fashion- and style-oriented, affluent, female consumers are the keys to smart growth and development in Century Corners.



Town House Books & Café is one of the anchors in the historic Century Corners retail district.

Photo courtesy of the St. Charles Convention & Visitors Bureau

Dining & Entertainment Zone:

The Dining & Entertainment Zone, with public parks marking its east and west gateways, has a special entertainment value by day and night. Businesses, people and automobiles contribute to the dynamics of this street.

This zone, extending along Main Street and within one block north and south of Main Street, features a series of landmarks and activities that provide a picture of downtown vitality. The Arcada Theatre, Hotel Baker, and a wide variety of eating and drinking establishments – cafes, grills, delis, pizzerias, coffee houses, pubs, and clubs with live music – reinforce an image of the downtown as a lively dining and entertainment district. During the summer, outdoor concerts and special events – and even fishing opportunities near the Main Street bridge and dam – provide downtown experiences people of all ages and incomes can enjoy.



Pub 222 and other restaurants on west Main Street extend the Dining & Entertainment Zone across the Fox River from east to west.

Photos courtesy of the St. Charles Convention & Visitors Bureau.

During the day, Main Street dining and entertainment activities are interspersed with retail, service, office, cultural and government uses. In the evening and into the nighttime, the district takes on a special vitality – alive with lights, pedestrians and vehicular movement.

Business development strategies for the Dining & Entertainment Zone should include active recruitment and expansion of businesses that augment the district’s evolving dining and entertainment venues. A tea shop, establishments with live, non-amplified music and dancing, and a “Family Fun” place with billiards, snooker and pool tables are examples of businesses that residents listed as desirable and that would expand the downtown’s dining and entertainment offerings.

Today’s market conditions indicate that the Arcada Theatre now has an attractive alternative use. While currently successful as a movie theater, large single-screen movie houses are becoming increasingly rare as the industry continues to move toward multiplex cinemas. Film industry rules regarding releases and required run times make it increasingly difficult for large single-screen theaters to compete with multi-screen theaters. Due to movie contract restrictions, it is nearly impossible for a movie theater to split its use between films and live performances. It maybe, however, possible for a “live,” performing arts theater to show movies occasionally.

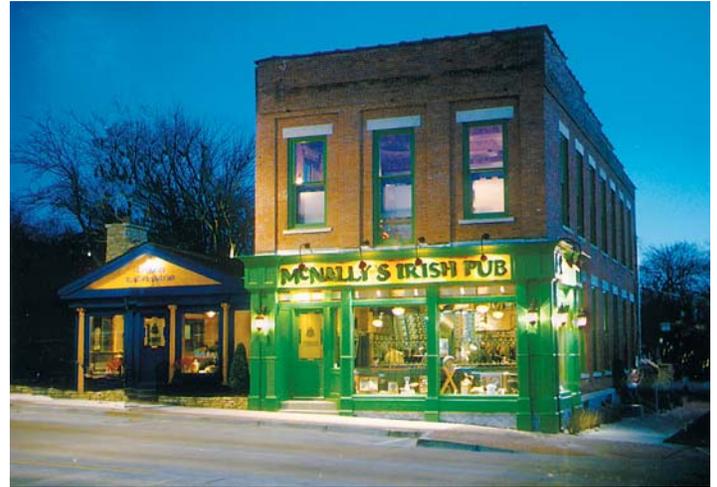
If the Arcada Theatre should ever cease to operate as a movie theater, its adaptive redevelopment for a use that will continue to anchor downtown nighttime activities should be a high priority. Possibilities include the theater’s reuse as a facility for the performing arts including live musical and drama performances. The success of the St. Charles Arts and Music Festival, certain special events and the current evening activity in the downtown are indicators that the community will support downtown live theater. A variety of professional and amateur productions could be accommodated – from community theater groups to national touring productions, seminars and noted speakers.

As Main Street continues to evolve as an evening and nighttime venue, specialty retail businesses that include an art or entertainment component should become viable. Businesses with “working display windows” in which staff or artists create products in view of pedestrians – such as a salt water taffy or fudge shop, a costume or sketch artist portrait studio, a custom hand-crafted jewelry shop, and a stained or blown glass art studio – are examples of businesses that would provide an avenue for retail trade to extend into the evening hours and embellish the nighttime pedestrian experience.

Businesses recruited for this zone should be pedestrian oriented, but not necessarily pedestrian reliant. Retail businesses that benefit from foot traffic and are complementary to the distinctive life-style merchandising of Century Corners retailers will be most effectively located on the zone’s east side. Retail businesses that complement and benefit from foot traffic generated by antiques, gifts and home furnishings businesses will be most effectively located on the zone’s west side.

Main Street is a walking and driving showcase for the community. All businesses recruited for the Dining & Entertainment Zone should reflect the small-town character and values that St. Charles residents desire to maintain for future generations to enjoy.

Upper level uses in buildings within this zone, including residential and office uses, should be compatible with street level commerce. This could be best managed as part of a Centralized Retail Management strategy.



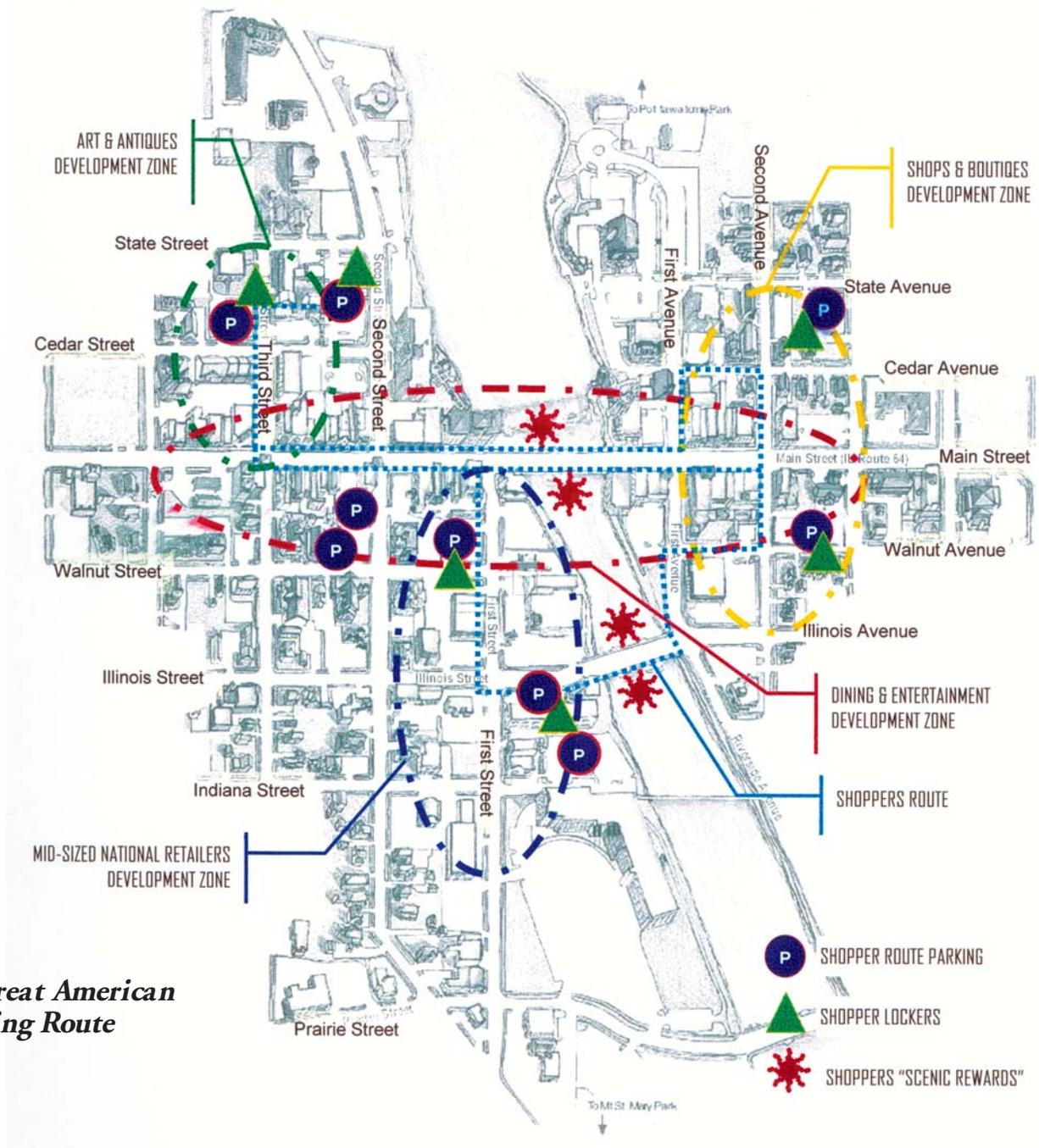
Restaurants, like McNally’s, the Arcada Theatre and clubs with live music – reinforce an image of the downtown as a lively dining and entertainment district.

Photos courtesy of the St. Charles Convention & Visitors Bureau.

“The Great American Shopping Route”

“The Great American Shopping Route” is recommended as a downtown St. Charles business development and marketing strategy.

Business development strategies advanced in this plan are a modified version of business clustering concepts that, effectively implemented, will reinforce The Great American Shopping Route. Effective marketing of the route will promote a variety-packed downtown experience and increase pedestrian circulation throughout the downtown area.



The Great American Shopping Route

Business Retention & Recruitment Strategies & Techniques

Centralized Retail Management:

Centralized Retail Management (CRM) offers one of the best methodologies for achieving downtown recruitment and retention goals and maintaining a quality retail business mix. Certain CRM program functions and techniques would provide a method for achieving business development goals in downtown St. Charles.

Various versions of CRM programs can be found in communities across the United States. CRM programs are developed through a group consensus-building process to determine the desired commercial character for a business district. The program is typically implemented and managed by paid staff.

As a method, CRM is best adopted and implemented in principal versus technical detail. CRM is an evolving concept that should only be established in a way that applies to the unique characteristics and specific goals and challenges of a given downtown.

The principle theory underlying CRM is that the best collective character of the downtown will ultimately generate the best rents to individual property owners. On that premise, building and land values will increase.

The principle theory is often not enough to motivate property and business owners to participate. Those communities that have achieved the best results through CRM package and offer a series of incentives to existing business and property owners.

Examples of incentives that might be offered include:

- Credits toward joint advertising for complying with a uniform store hours schedule.
- A “finders fee” for referring a prospective business with solid potential.
- Six-month rent subsidies to a building owner to maintain the agreed upon mix.

CRM should have an element of flexibility that allows for periodic review of the desired mix to meet the changing consumer needs. The greatest hurdle for CRM is voluntary equitable funding by all downtown property owners. Therefore, CRM programs and techniques tend to be funded through the establishment of a business improvement or special assessment district.

CRM programs often incorporate a number of business development strategies and management functions that include, but are not limited to:

- Business recruitment.
- Business locating and clustering.
- Vertical mixed use (Example: encouraging retail-only street level uses).
- Rent structures.
- Physical maintenance - common areas expenses such as parks, malls, greenways, directional signs, security and solid waste management & recycling.
- Special events, cooperative advertising and marketing.
- Parking.
- Improvement of business practices (Examples: coordinated business hours and changing window display scheduling).
- Property management.

In general, the best downtown St. Charles recruitment prospects will likely possess one or more of the following characteristics:

- Have two to five business locations, with at least one operating within a 50-mile radius of St. Charles.
- Have at least one location that has been in operation for at least three years in a traditional downtown setting.
- The business is well capitalized and the owner has at least five years' retail ownership or management experience.
- The ownership takes an active management role in business operations and purchasing.
- The business typically occupies 800 to 2,000 square feet.

Merchandise Inventory:

Downtown St. Charles Partnership Economic Restructuring Committee members suggest that, "Downtown probably has all the merchandise that most department stores carry, but it is just spread out into smaller stores."

A Merchandise Inventory should be undertaken as a means of identifying recruitment opportunities. The inventory should be conducted to catalog and categorize the breadth and depth of merchandise available in the downtown area.

1. Contact all retailers in the district to categorize their goods by price point and typical departments – women's and men's clothing, shoes, jewelry, cosmetics, housewares, gifts, furniture, etc.
2. When merchandise deficiencies are ascertained, action should be taken to:
 - a. Solicit an existing downtown merchant carrying similar or compatible product lines to expand and/or introduce new product lines to fill the void; or
 - b. Recruit a retailer that can fill the merchandise inventory void and direct the retailer to an appropriate location when an appropriate space becomes available.

This inventory of goods also serves as an effective marketing tool – particularly in targeting primary trade area consumers. Product lines offered by downtown St. Charles businesses, collectively, could be advertised to promote an expansive image of variety. Consumers stand to be impressed with the exceptional variety of products offered along the "Great American Shopping Route."

Business Recruitment Prospecting Approach:

Retail business prospects for downtown St. Charles should be identified and actively pursued to:

- Expand, complement or reinforce existing business clusters; and/or
- Fill gaps in the downtown merchandise inventory.

This plan advocates the active recruitment and placement of primarily small, independently owned businesses to reinforce the "Great American Shopping Route" concept. Small-scale regional chain stores should also be considered for active recruitment provided they fit within the context of the downtown's distinctive character. Specific business types and product lines for recruitment should be identified upon completion of the downtown merchandise inventory.

The City of St. Charles and the Downtown St. Charles Partnership staff should work cooperatively with building owners, landlords, developers, Realtors and volunteers to identify appropriate business prospects for available spaces.

Professional staff should:

- Pursue leads.
- Handle initial contacts with prospects.
- Respond to prospect inquiries and requests for information.
- Maintain database listings of available properties.
- Refer prospects to owners and agents with available spaces that meet the prospect's criteria.
- Promote incentives available to business prospects and building owners.
- Encourage prospects to locate within appropriate development zones to reinforcing the "Great American Shopping Route."

Potential Prospects for Recruitment:

Existing and emerging business clusters in development zones that comprise "The Great American Shopping Route" lend insight to potential business types that should be prioritized for active recruitment. As noted, the downtown merchandise inventory should be used as a tool to identify specific business types and product lines for recruitment.

Shops & Boutiques Development Zone:

The shops & boutiques development zone includes the Century Corners district and the east hillside neighborhood. Stores that appeal to fashion- and style-oriented, affluent, female consumers should be identified, actively recruited and located in this zone. Ideal prospects will complement the distinctive life-style oriented merchandise of Century Corners.

Art & Antiques Development Zone:

The art & antiques development zone encompasses the Third Street North corridor. The zone already features a cluster of antiques, gifts and home furnishings businesses. Businesses that appeal to moderate- to high-income consumers, collectors and tourists should be recruited and located in this zone as appropriate spaces become available. The addition of complimentary product lines and other cultural-oriented businesses stand to strengthen the zone's retail performance.

Dining & Entertainment Development Zone:

The dining & entertainment development zone encompasses the Main Street corridor. The zone already features a wide variety of eating and drinking establishments. Businesses that capitalize upon and expand the current offerings should be actively recruited and placed in this corridor as appropriate spaces become available.

Examples of appropriate businesses/product lines for the Shops & Boutiques Development Zone include:

- Imported gifts and home furnishings.
- Infant's and children's wear.
- Linens.
- Perfumes.
- Tea shop.
- Toys.
- Women's accessories and shoes.
- Women's custom and tailored apparel.

Examples of appropriate businesses are the Art & Antique Development Zone include:

- Art galleries.
- Collectibles.
- Design studios.
- Floor and Window coverings.
- High-tech equipment, gadgets, computers and software.
- Music CDs.
- Photo equipment and accessories.

Examples of appropriate businesses for the Dining & Entertainment Development Zone include:

- Bakery and pastry shop.
- Clubs with live, non-amplified music and dancing.
- Ethnic restaurants.
- "Family Fun" establishment with billiards, snooker & pool tables, pinball, skee-ball, foosball, air hockey.
- Snacks shop with inexpensive treats – popcorn, caramel apples, cotton candy, salt water taffy, etc.
- Tea shop.

National Retailers Development Zone:

The national retailers development zone includes the First Street South corridor and surrounding area. This zone is the least developed in intensity and the type of retail uses ultimately envisioned for this segment of “The Great American Shopping Route.” It also holds the greatest potential for change and redevelopment based on the under-utilization of various parcels and the development of the Brownstone housing project that is underway at the zone’s south edge.

This zone provides the most appropriate location for small to mid-sized regional and national retailers. However, active recruitment of these retailers would be ineffective until a developer and an imminent proposal for buildings that meet national retailers’ criteria are brought forward.

This plan recommends a passive recruitment approach to mid-sized regional and national retailers. In many instances, it is the private sector development entity itself that brings both the redevelopment proposal and prospective tenants to the table. These developments often require the participation of the public sector to assist in financing pre-development activities and improvements to surrounding infrastructure.

A more active recruitment strategy focused on pre-development activities should be considered for this zone if the community desires to catalyze development. Examples of pre-development activities to be considered include public acquisition and aggregation of parcels as they become available for sale and the creation of a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district in anticipation of infrastructure improvements that will be necessary to entice and accommodate redevelopment of the quality and scale ultimately envisioned for this zone.

Business Development Marketing Strategies

Investor Trade Area: National

Investor Marketing Goal: To attract additional high-quality retailers, investors and developers

Investor Marketing Objectives:

- Demonstrate an affluent, growing consumer base. Utilize and maintain current market data and consumer demographic and CACI information and present information to make a compelling case for the viability of downtown St. Charles business ventures.
- Maintain a current database listing of available sites and their characteristics. Provide information to investors and entrepreneurs in a professional, visually appealing and easy-access format.
- Demonstrate current downtown assets. Make prospects aware of completed and imminent improvements, such as streetscape upgrades, parking structures and downtown employee counts, which enhance the viability of downtown St. Charles' development/business opportunities.
- Demonstrate an enthusiastic, progressive city government and financial community. Highlight the City of St. Charles' and financial institutions' investments and active roles played in downtown redevelopment efforts.
- Demonstrate a cooperative regulatory environment. Clearly explain the processes, regulations, restrictions and guidelines to investing and doing business. Provide quality customer service to assist prospects and simplify application, review and permitting processes.
- Demonstrate an active revitalization effort in place. Highlight accomplishments and capitalize upon the award-winning prestige of the downtown St. Charles revitalization effort. Emphasize partnerships and the cooperation of the City of St. Charles, Downtown St. Charles Partnership, Greater St. Charles Area Chamber of Commerce, St. Charles Convention and Visitors Bureau, St. Charles Park District and other community partners playing an active role in downtown revitalization efforts.
- Demonstrate an effective promotional program in place. Highlight special events, retail activities, cooperative business marketing and image development efforts that attract people to, and focus positive attention on, downtown St. Charles. Provide examples of downtown marketing materials.
- Indicate available development incentives. Provide information on programs available to downtown investors, developers and businesses, such as the City of St. Charles Façade Improvement Grant Program and the Façade Improvement Low Interest Loan Program available through a consortium of St. Charles financial institutions.

Investor Marketing Position Statement:

Downtown St Charles is a diverse city center with high-quality specialty and convenience shopping, professional and municipal services, lodging, dining, entertainment, cultural and residential elements. The scenic Fox River is an outstanding amenity – flowing through a district that has both historical and contemporary components. The central business district serves a primary and secondary trade area with an estimated 2000 population of 420,235 people. St. Charles is a regional Chicagoland visitors market and lodging center. The market segments for St. Charles are among the most affluent in the nation. Annual growth rate for the primary trade area from 1995 to 2000 was 2.9%. The district enjoys an uncommon loyalty - termed “devotion” by local leaders – from community residents. Downtown St. Charles is one of the greatest downtowns that America has to offer.

Consumer Marketing Position Statement:

Downtown St. Charles is a diverse city center with high quality specialty and convenience shopping, services, professionals, hospitality, dining, entertainment, cultural and living opportunities. Threading through its commercial enterprises is the natural beauty of the Fox River and its scenic environs. By day it offers the consumer common and unique items in a variety of merchandising settings. By night it is known for a variety of dining and beverage establishments enhanced by live music and the historic Arcada Theatre. The city's art deco Municipal Center and the restored Hotel Baker, which are linked by a beautiful river crossing, are among its most outstanding features. Downtown St. Charles is one of the best downtowns America has to offer.

Downtown St. Charles Consumer Marketing Strategies

Consumer Marketing Goal: To enhance the position of Downtown St. Charles in the minds of trade area and visiting consumers.

Consumer Marketing Objectives: Consumer marketing objectives are not intended to exclude any market segment; the future downtown St. Charles should offer something for all ages and incomes. The following, targeted objectives are offered as the best potential for downtown St. Charles to improve retail performance and increase its market share.

- Promote an integrated, unified central business district. The successful marketing of “The Great American Downtown” and “The Great American Shopping Route” will increase shopper circulation throughout the downtown and benefit retail businesses in all areas of the downtown.
- Promote a safe and fun family environment. Highlight downtown’s small-town character and diversity. The distinct character of downtown St. Charles provides for a safe and fun family environment where people of all ages and incomes enjoy shopping, entertainment, dining, recreation, and culture.
- Attract more high-end, affluent, female consumers, particularly from the local market area. Emphasize the distinct features and offerings found in downtown St. Charles that appeal to the sophisticated styles and discriminating tastes of female consumers in the primary trade area.
- Demonstrate the daytime and nighttime personalities of the downtown district. Highlight how downtown’s different personalities serve to broaden its appeal – primarily catering to shoppers and workers during the daytime and entertaining during the nighttime.
- Attract more 2- and 3-day visitors to the downtown area. Work cooperatively with the St. Charles Convention and Visitors Bureau to market downtown as an appealing destination for visitors to enjoy shopping, dining, lodging, history, outdoor recreation and sightseeing.

Downtown St. Charles Strategy Plan Implementation Strategy

The time frame for this plan’s vision and implementation is twenty years. Because downtown is such a dynamic environment, no set of specific implementation steps can remain valid for such a long time. Even in the short run, economic or other conditions may dictate a different sequence of events. Some projects may be implemented earlier if the right set of opportunities present themselves, or the community may determine that a project should be delayed if others take priority. Because of these limitations, an implementation strategy can only be a general guide for implementing key aspects of the plan.

While many of the actions identified here relate directly to projects or improvements to be accomplished by the City, they also offer direction to potential developers about where and how they can seek to create projects that enhance the community’s vision.

I. On-going Actions

Action:	Description:	Responsible parties:	Anticipated public costs:	Outcome:
A. Establish control over key sites as they become available to catalyze appropriate redevelopment.	Creating or guiding change in pursuit of the community’s vision for downtown St. Charles may sometimes require the City to establish control over sites where change is imminent.	City of St. Charles	Costs for establishing control over sites vary greatly; some costs may be recovered upon transfer to a developer.	Establishment of the city in a leadership role in partnerships with developers to effect desired change in downtown.

II. Early Actions – Immediate to Three Years

Action:	Description:	Responsible parties:	Anticipated public costs:	Outcome:
A. Strengthen programs for introducing public art and recognizing historic buildings.	Expanding the current efforts toward public art and building recognition will highlight the special qualities of downtown and enhance the pedestrian experience.	City of St. Charles & DSCP	Funding for such programs is typically generated in the private sector, but costs might be shared with the public sector to enhance public spaces, pedestrian routes and links.	Features that tell the story of downtown and the St. Charles community.

II. Early Actions – Immediate to Three Years (continued)

Action:	Description:	Responsible parties:	Anticipated public costs:	Outcome:
B. Complete a design plan for the Fox River “riverwalk” and river links.	A coordinated, coherent design for the riverwalk & links to the rest of the downtown pedestrian network is critical. Some improvements may be implemented by the private sector so cooperation is key.	City of St. Charles & DSCP	Engagement of an architect / designer to establish a specific design plan that takes into account the multitude of existing riverfront conditions and creatively addresses the vision of this plan.	A framework and design for enhancing the banks of the Fox River as the highlight of downtown.
C. Begin to implement the “riverwalk” and river links in accordance with a riverwalk design plan.	A plan for implementing the riverwalk and links design should be established; the plan should enlist interested people and organizations to participate, thereby strengthening the sense of community in addition to creating a physical amenity.	City of St. Charles, DSCP, St. Charles Park District, private sector property owners & developers.	Funding partnerships will be key to implementation, with the City taking a leadership role.	A riverwalk and links to the riverfront that become valued spaces in downtown and focal points in the pedestrian environment.
D. Review downtown zoning boundaries and regulations.	Limits to zoning boundaries should be established and regulations should be considered to maintain downtown’s compact nature and the residential qualities of adjoining neighborhoods.	City of St. Charles	To be reviewed as part of the City’s zoning ordinance revision planned for 2001-2002.	Preservation of downtown’s small town, pedestrian-oriented qualities.
E. Establish a design concept for streetscape enhancements for First Street South, Third Street North, and Riverside Drive/First Avenue.	This design can be a first step toward establishing the Development Corridors and should allow for actual improvements to be made concurrent with redevelopment activities.	City of St. Charles & DSCP	Design costs are likely to be 2 to 5 percent of ultimate construction costs; construction costs (on a linear foot basis) may approximate those for Main Street.	A unified streetscape as the foundation for experiencing downtown and a public project that demonstrates a high level of expectation for design in downtown.

II. Early Actions – Immediate to Three Years (continued)

Action:	Description:	Responsible parties:	Anticipated public costs:	Outcome:
<p>F. Initiate design and implementation of First Street South and Second Street North Gateways.</p>	<p>These points of entry to downtown need to reflect the qualities of downtown and should be given high priority.</p>	<p>City of St. Charles, DSCP, & property owners</p>	<p>First Street South Gateway: property acquisition and development costs. Second Street North Gateway: landscaping, signage and public art.</p>	<p>Creation of attractive entries to important corridors for development; a signal that these corridors are areas for reinvestment.</p>
<p>G. Rename Riverside Avenue as Riverside Drive and enhance the route as a river experience and gateway.</p>	<p>The name “Riverside Drive” could give the route prominence and its enhancement to create a river experience and gateway from the south could stimulate interest in redevelopment opportunities in the Riverside Drive/First Avenue corridor.</p>	<p>City of St. Charles, DSCP & St. Charles Park District</p>	<p>Costs for enhancing the route as a scenic corridor and riverfront experience could include landscaping, signage, public art and pedestrian / bicycle trail improvements.</p>	<p>An attractive, interesting and active south gateway and scenic corridor for downtown.</p>
<p>H. Encourage redevelopment in the 100 block of South First Street.</p>	<p>Parking lots in this vicinity will become redundant when the new parking facility at First Street and Walnut Street opens. These factors combined with the low intensity of existing development, properties and businesses in transition and underdeveloped riverfront parcels indicate this area could be prime for redevelopment.</p>	<p>City of St. Charles, property owners and/or potential developers</p>	<p>The costs for encouraging redevelopment should be limited due to the investments that have already been made in the parking facility. A more aggressive catalyst role could include costs for acquiring control of transitional properties and /or relocating the drive-thru banking facility.</p>	<p>A chance to capture the best opportunity for development activity in downtown in the near future; projects that set the tone for redevelopment along the First Street South corridor and riverfront.</p>
<p>I. Define alternative routes through St. Charles for local traffic.</p>	<p>Alternatives for local traffic to move into downtown and through the community should be considered to facilitate local movement patterns.</p>	<p>City of St. Charles</p>	<p>The costs for an alternative route will vary with the route chosen.</p>	<p>An alternative for movement that does not require the local community to face the traffic on Main Street.</p>

II. Early Actions – Immediate to Three Years (continued)

Action:	Description:	Responsible parties:	Anticipated public costs:	Outcome:
J. Initiate design and implementation of street termini.	Streets that terminate at a guard rail, a parking lot or a “back door” should be avoided or changed to focus on the river, a work of public art or a central feature of a building.	City of St. Charles and, possibly, private sector property & building owners	Costs for each project will vary depending on existing conditions at each terminus. Costs could include redesign of the context of the terminus, demolition of existing improvements, new construction and public art.	A complete experience for drivers and pedestrians that leaves no part of the picture to chance.
K. Install Shopper Lockers at two or three convenient drive-up locations along “The Great American Shopping Route.”	Shopper lockers will promote a shopper convenience and the “park once, shop twice” approach to parking and retail development.	City of St. Charles & DSCP	The cost of the lockers; locating lockers in publicly owned or controlled facilities will minimize costs.	Enhanced convenience for downtown shoppers.
L. Complete a comprehensive parking study.	The study should assess parking demand and supply, review the effectiveness of management and enforcement policies, and should suggest strategies to meet estimated demand in the future. The study should also examine the feasibility of building parking structures and eliminating surface parking lots to encourage intensified development.	City of St. Charles & DSCP	Costs include the engagement of a consultant specializing in urban parking management and strategies.	A parking management program that optimizes parking space usage and provides a long-term parking strategy that will encourage intense redevelopment.
M. Research Centralized Retail Management (CRM) program models for potential implementation in St. Charles.	Certain CRM techniques might be appropriate and effectively applied to reinforce street level retail activity and upper floor office and residential uses in downtown St. Charles. CRM models in other cities should be investigated for possible application in St. Charles.	DSCP	Research costs might include travel expenses. Implementation costs could vary greatly depending on the scope of a CRM program that might be developed.	A quality business mix, increased property values, and improved rents in downtown St. Charles.

II. Early Actions – Immediate to Three Years (continued)

Action:	Description:	Responsible parties:	Anticipated public costs:	Outcome:
<p>N. Complete a merchandise inventory of product lines available from existing downtown St. Charles businesses.</p>	<p>The information will be key to identifying specific business expansion and recruitment opportunities. The inventory can also be used as a marketing tool to promote the variety of goods available in the downtown.</p>	<p>DSCP</p>	<p>Costs include expenses for the inventory survey’s printing, distribution, collection and tabulation. Most work can be accomplished in-house and by staff and volunteers to minimize expenses.</p>	<p>A complete product lines inventory and a prioritized listing of business types for expansion or recruitment.</p>
<p>O. Review current business and design incentive programs to assess their effectiveness in meeting emerging issues and catalyzing quality design and redevelopment.</p>	<p>Current programs available from the City and local financial institutions are focused almost exclusively on façade improvements. New, enhanced and targeted incentives should be considered as a means of pursuing business development strategies advanced in this plan.</p>	<p>City of St. Charles, DSCP & local financial institutions</p>	<p>Costs to fund and administer incentive programs will vary depending on the type of incentives offered (loans, grants, etc.) and the nature of the activities targeted by the programs.</p>	<p>Increased levels of private sector reinvestment in downtown St. Charles.</p>
<p>P. Investigate, develop and promote new incentive programs that do not rely exclusively on municipal funding to target business prospects.</p>	<p>The low interest façade improvement loan program offered by local financial institutions is a good example. Examples for new programs include a communications technology upgrade grant funded by utilities or an entrepreneurial grant/loan program sponsored by a state agency, university or foundation.</p>	<p>DSCP should facilitate research; the City & DSCP should actively promote the incentives</p>	<p>Promotional costs to publicize programs.</p>	<p>Additional incentives that leverage private sector investments.</p>

II. Early Actions – Immediate to Three Years (continued)

Action:	Description:	Responsible parties:	Anticipated public costs:	Outcome:
Q. Actively recruit smaller, independently owned/operated retail businesses to complement offerings in the Art & Antiques, Shops & Boutiques and Dining & Entertainment development zones.	The quality of the downtown St. Charles business mix will be enhanced through the effective recruitment and placement of specific business types that advance “The Great American Shopping Route” concept.	City of St. Charles, DSCP, downtown property owners & agents and Realtors	Costs will include professional staff time, research, travel and marketing; these costs might be shared by the responsible parties.	New retail businesses and establishments that enhance the downtown shopping, dining and entertainment experiences.
R. Conduct a downtown housing study to assist in promoting residential development, particularly in appropriate areas of development zones and in the upper stories of downtown commercial buildings.	The study should assess the supply and market demand for downtown units – both owned and rented – and profile existing and potential downtown St. Charles resident groups in terms of age, income, marital status, employment, methods of transportation and recreational interests.	City of St. Charles & DSCP	Project costs will include the engagement of a consultant specializing in downtown housing market assessments and development strategies.	Accurate, up-to-date information that can be used to effectively promote housing development opportunities to building owners, investors and developers.
S. Develop and implement “The Great American [Dream, Opportunity or Investment]” investor marketing campaign.	The development of qualified leads will require a highly professional sales approach and marketing collaterals that capture the attention & interest of quality retailers, developers and investors.	DSCP, in cooperation with the City, Chamber of Commerce, Convention & Visitors Bureau, downtown property & business owners and Realtors	The costs of developing and implementing the campaign include design, printing, production, distribution and advertising.	An increased number of qualified leads and the attraction of high quality retailers, investors and developers.
T. Develop and implement “The Great American Downtown” consumer marketing campaign.	The implementation of the consumer marketing campaign will require the design and production of high-quality collaterals, advertising & events. DSCP should take a lead role, facilitating cooperation & supporting community events in the downtown.	DSCP, in cooperation with the City, Chamber of Commerce, Convention & Visitors Bureau, downtown businesses, downtown festivals and events promoters and media.	The responsible parties and participants should share costs; costs include advertising, publications and events that provide opportunities for sponsors to participate financially and in-kind.	A strong market position for downtown St. Charles and an enhanced image of downtown in the minds of trade area and visiting consumers.

III. Intermediate Actions Four to Eight Years

Action:	Description:	Responsible parties:	Anticipated public costs:	Outcome:
<p>A. Remove parking and auto-related uses from the riverfront.</p>	<p>Uses along the river that are not conducive to the pedestrian nature of downtown and the riverfront will become more out of character as surrounding sites are redeveloped; efforts should be made to remove or relocate those uses.</p>	<p>City of St. Charles & – possibly – property owners & developers</p>	<p>In most cases, the costs for removing or relocating such uses will involve acquisition of the site. Some costs may be recouped in redevelopment.</p>	<p>A riverfront that has the sense of being a seamless element of a downtown that is truly pedestrian-oriented.</p>
<p>B. Implement a public parking structure in Third Street North corridor.</p>	<p>A parking structure in this corridor will better ensure that development is maximized in an area that might otherwise evolve without a more urban character.</p>	<p>City of St. Charles</p>	<p>The costs for this public parking structure will be similar to the per car costs of the parking facility along First Street South, plus a factor for inflation.</p>	<p>Development patterns that achieve a more “urban” character; pedestrian experiences that focus on buildings and spaces created for people as opposed to parking lots created for cars.</p>
<p>C. Initiate redevelopment of the south end of First Street with urban residential development.</p>	<p>This area provides an opportunity to create a genuine urban housing project. The project should be considered an integral part of the Gateway to downtown.</p>	<p>City of St. Charles</p>	<p>Public investment might be required to catalyze housing development with the type of urban features described in this plan.</p>	<p>An ideal urban housing opportunity providing new choice for housing that takes advantage of downtown.</p>
<p>D. Relocate the auto dealership on First Street and initiate redevelopment of the site.</p>	<p>The character of the auto dealership will become more out of place as other projects evolve around it. It might also limit the investment that others would otherwise make in this area. The commitment to relocate the dealership may offer investors the assurance they need to move forward with the best possible projects.</p>	<p>City of St. Charles, property owners & developers</p>	<p>Costs will include property acquisition and business relocation.</p>	<p>Redevelopment of a site that will only become increasingly out of context with downtown.</p>

III. Intermediate Actions Four to Eight Years (continued)

Action:	Description:	Responsible parties:	Anticipated public costs:	Outcome:
<p>E. Explore and pursue appropriate ways to initiate redevelopment of the Riverside Drive/First Avenue corridor spanning from Illinois Avenue to Prairie Street.</p>	<p>This area offers opportunities for housing like that described for the south end of First Street, and /or a commercial neighborhood use, that will give the sense that the neighborhood extends to the river.</p>	<p>City of St. Charles, property owners & developers</p>	<p>Public investment might be required in this area to catalyze development with urban features that are consistent with this plan.</p>	<p>Downtown housing opportunities that take advantage of the features of downtown and the attraction of the river.</p>

IV. Long-Term Actions – Nine Years or Longer

Action:	Description:	Responsible parties:	Anticipated public costs:	Outcome:
<p>A. Implement public parking structure in First Avenue North corridor.</p>	<p>The area around the municipal complex has the potential of becoming a great civic space; parking lots currently stand in the way of realizing that potential. The spaces along the river could become more park-like, and provide limited parking, if other opportunities for parking can be created.</p>	<p>City of St. Charles</p>	<p>The costs for a public parking structure in this corridor will be similar to the per car costs of the parking facility along First Street South, plus a factor for inflation.</p>	<p>Development patterns that achieve a more “urban” character; pedestrian experiences that focus on spaces created for people – especially if parking in the municipal complex can be replaced with more park-like spaces.</p>

Community Resources

*All telephone numbers are area code 630.
All ZIP codes are 60174*

City of St. Charles

2 E. Main Street
Reception: 377-4400
Economic Development: 443-4093
Community Development: 377-4443
Building & Zoning: 377-4406
Web site: www.stcharlesil.org

Downtown St. Charles Partnership, Inc.

213 Walnut Street
513-5386
Web site: www.dtown.org

Greater St. Charles Area Chamber of Commerce

10 State Avenue
584-8384
Web site: www.stcharleschamber.com

St. Charles Park District

101 S. Second Street
584-1055
Web site: www.st-charlesparks.org

St. Charles Public Library

1 S. Sixth Avenue
584-0076
Web site: www.st-charles.lib.il.us

St. Charles Convention & Visitors Bureau

311 N. Second Street, Suite 100
377-6161 • 800-777-4373
Web site: www.visitstcharles.com

St. Charles Community Web Site

www.st-charles.il.us

St. Charles Community Information Line

Information, services and resources available via fax 24 hours a day.
443-4636