

CMAP



A Downtown Plan for the City of Wilmington

June 2018



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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION



The Wilmington Downtown Plan presents a vision for the future of the City of Wilmington's central business district. The plan serves as a guide for elected officials, municipal staff, community residents, business owners, and potential investors, providing them with a long-term framework for making informed decisions about future development and reinvestment that will affect the downtown.

The plan reflects a cohesive vision that builds on recent planning initiatives, which primarily focused on Island Park and North Water Street. It integrates the recommendations of the previous planning initiatives and addresses issues that were not covered in detail, such as street appeal and stormwater management. It recommends collaborating to redevelop properties in gateway locations, diversifying the downtown business mix, improving and adding recreational amenities, boosting the safety and connectivity of pedestrian and bicycle networks, and taking advantage of the Kankakee River's unique features to enliven the downtown.

To guide implementation of its recommendations, the plan identifies specific action items, next steps, and relevant partners both within and outside municipal government. The implementation strategies identified in this plan are not meant to be a comprehensive list of actions by the City and its partners, but provide suggested next steps that will help to bring the plan to reality.

Wilmington's Need for a Downtown Plan

Wilmington has been the subject of numerous planning initiatives that have devoted considerable time, attention, and thought to the City's position as a destination with major historical, cultural, and natural assets. While these plans provide broad goals and strategies for the community, they do not reflect the current challenges and opportunities facing the downtown. The downtown's unique shopping, dining, and Route 66 photo opportunities attract patrons from an area considerably larger than Wilmington, but the City does not have a localized strategy for leveraging tourism for economic development purposes. The economy is further impacted by a general perception that downtown lacks a variety of retailers and does not meet the needs of local residents. The presence of truck traffic and lack of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure along IL Route 53 and IL Route 102 have also affected economic activity, mobility, and the character of the community.

To answer these challenges, the City of Wilmington began a process to create the Wilmington Downtown Plan as part of the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning's (CMAP) Local Technical Assistance program. The plan provides a unified vision for the downtown study area and identifies strategies to support economic growth, increase safety and connectivity, and engage local and regional partners in implementation efforts. *Figure 1.1 Downtown Wilmington Study Area* shows the study area chosen for the planning project.

Planning Process

The planning process included multiple steps and lasted approximately 16 months. The process was crafted with guidance from municipal staff, and was designed to include input from Wilmington's residents, business owners, and other stakeholders throughout.

- **Project initiation** (December 2016)
- **Community outreach** (December 2016–March 2017)
- **Existing conditions analysis** (December 2016–July 2017)
- **Vision development** (August 2017)
- **Plan development** (August 2017–May 2018)
- **Public review and adoption** (begins June 2018)

Community Outreach Overview

One of the primary goals of the planning process was to optimize public engagement. To reach this goal, CMAP staff worked with municipal staff and a project Steering Committee comprised of residents, business owners, and other community stakeholders representing a wide variety of interests and perspectives. The group devised a community outreach strategy that would encompass a broad base of downtown stakeholders. This process helped ensure that the community's concerns and interests would be reflected in the plan. The community outreach efforts had four major goals:

1. Engage a broad representation of the community in the planning process.
2. Educate the community about the purpose of the project.
3. Garner public input on key issues and opportunities for Downtown Wilmington.
4. Clarify the community's vision for Downtown Wilmington.

To better understand the opportunities and primary issues to be addressed in Downtown Wilmington, the community outreach process included meetings with municipal officials and the Steering Committee, conducting a focus group workshop with business owners and operators, holding confidential interviews with community stakeholders, conducting a public kick-off meeting and visioning workshop, and creating an interactive online survey.

Collectively, these stakeholders brought up many needs and challenges and their input helped to frame the direction of the plan and guide areas for additional inquiry and research. For example, there was interest among participants in each outreach exercise to see the City enhance its image through consistent, branded signage, historic preservation, and beautification and streetscaping projects. Many participants stated that improving the overall appearance of downtown would create a more satisfying experience for residents and visitors. Parking was also discussed during each outreach event with many identifying parking supply and access as fundamental challenges facing Downtown Wilmington.

Organization of the Plan

The Wilmington Downtown Plan is organized into the following chapters:

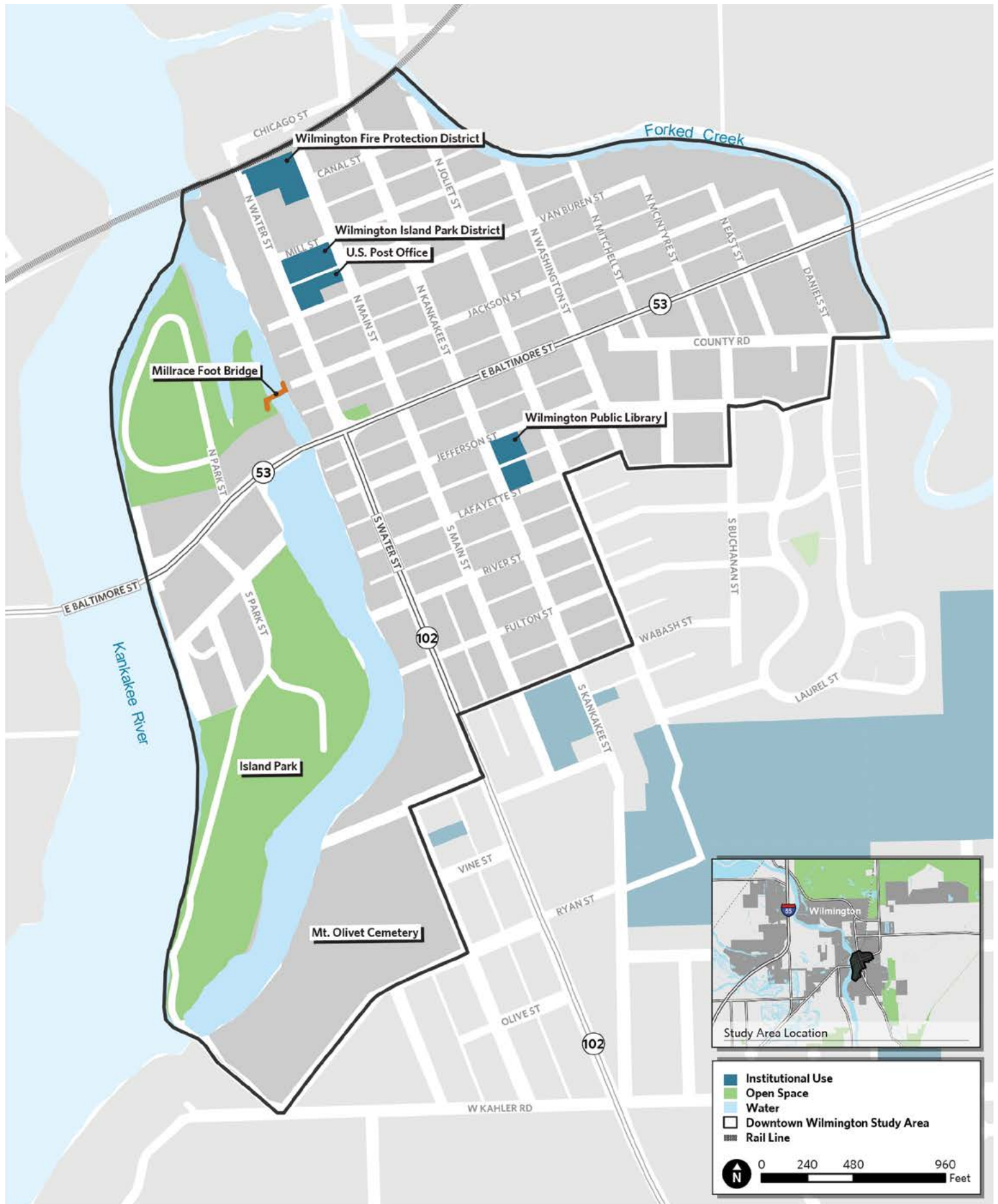
- **Chapter 1: Introduction** describes the purpose of the plan, the planning process, and the organization of the document.
- **Chapter 2: A Vision for Downtown Wilmington** establishes the community vision that guides the plan as expressed through the planning process.
- **Chapter 3: Land Use and Development** identifies future land use and desired character for key areas within Downtown Wilmington.
- **Chapter 4: Image and Streetscape** identifies strategies to improve street appeal and commercial area appearance, as well as techniques to strengthen historic preservation efforts.
- **Chapter 5: Local Economy** contains strategies to boost economic development in Downtown Wilmington, with recommendations regarding attracting, retaining, and growing businesses; supporting tourism; and listing incentives and tools available to undertake economic development actions.
- **Chapter 6: Transportation and Mobility** details roadway and non-motorized transportation strategies to increase safety, connectivity, and ease of access in Downtown Wilmington.
- **Chapter 7: Natural Resources** provides recommendations to protect and enhance Downtown Wilmington's natural areas and environmental features, including Island Park and the Kankakee River.
- **Chapter 8: Next Steps** contains a list of priority strategies that the City and its partners should focus on in the next two years to implement the plan. A short-term work plan, potential funding sources, partners, and strategy for monitoring and reporting progress are also included.

Implementation

Each topical chapter concludes with an Implementation Action table that summarizes actions to be undertaken by the City and its partners following adoption of the plan. Each action has been designated a priority level to aid with implementation of recommendations in the plan. Action priorities are broken into three levels:

- **1:** Actions that have the highest priority. Though not necessarily more important, items listed as priority 1 may have an immediate impact on the downtown, may be more easily completed, or may be necessary actions for long-term projects to begin.
- **2:** Actions that have secondary priority include longer-term projects, actions that have indirect impacts on quality of life, and actions that require other projects to be completed before they can be started.
- **Ongoing:** Actions that have begun, including projects that are currently underway. This also includes actions that represent changes in policy that are in place or actions that require continuous implementation.

Figure 1.1 Downtown Wilmington Study Area



Chapter 2

A VISION FOR DOWNTOWN WILMINGTON



During this planning process, a common vision for the future of Downtown Wilmington emerged. Based on the input of municipal staff, residents, business owners, and other local stakeholders, several guiding principles stood out that shaped the strategies outlined in this plan. Applying these guiding principles together will help Wilmington build towards a future where development along its main corridors is attractive and contributes to vibrant, walkable community spaces; where unique local businesses grow and thrive; where residents and downtown businesses take advantage of the opportunities of the Kankakee River; where walking and biking are comfortable ways to travel to and around the downtown; and where people from around the region can easily discover the many historical, cultural, and natural assets that Wilmington has to offer.

Vision Statements

The following vision statements align with the chapters of this plan and reflect the community's values and priorities as expressed through the planning process.

Vibrant commercial corridors

Downtown Wilmington's position along historic U.S. Route 66 and the Kankakee River is leveraged as both an economic asset and source of community pride and identity. The creation of a riverfront trail and public plaza, new institutional facilities, and aesthetic improvements make the downtown a desirable place to spend the day, and draw more residents and visitors to Wilmington.

Attractive and inviting destination

With a full calendar of events and activities, unique Route 66 attractions, a scenic river and expansive park, and many historic buildings, Downtown Wilmington has something for everyone. A comprehensive wayfinding system helps make the downtown area more inviting for people arriving by all modes of transportation, whether they are coming from nearby communities, Chicago, or far-away regions. A pedestrian-friendly environment also creates a downtown where people want to be.

Growing and diversifying businesses

With an all-encompassing marketing campaign, Downtown Wilmington will be promoted and recognized as a desirable destination in the region. As more and more people choose to visit downtown, new businesses are following their lead and the demand for new amenities has increased. An active economic development coordinator is working hard to build strong relationships with existing businesses and help get new small businesses off the ground.

Safe and easy to navigate

Downtown Wilmington is a comfortable and inviting environment for all modes of transportation. Truck traffic is still present in the community, but improved crossings and traffic calming techniques have made IL Route 53 less of a barrier to those walking or biking in the downtown. Parking signage is used as part of a strategy to improve utilization of municipal parking lots, along with continued analysis of parking management strategies.

Active parks and riverfront

By orienting more aspects of the downtown toward Island Park and the Kankakee River, Wilmington has achieved more riverfront activity. The City has capitalized on the river's unique place making opportunities, its connection to the history of the area, and its abundance of natural amenities. Through programming, open space protections, and water-based recreation, the river draws residents and visitors alike, helping to create an ecologically sustainable riverfront and thriving downtown business district.



Visioning Workshop

A public visioning workshop for the Wilmington Downtown Plan was held on August 9, 2017, at Wilmington Island Park District.

The workshop began with a summary of current conditions in Wilmington, synthesizing information gathered through stakeholder input, field observations, demographic data, previous studies, and other sources. Workshop attendees then divided into small groups and illustrated their future vision for the downtown and its corridors.

The event concluded with presentations of each group's illustrated map and ideas to improve streetscaping, retail and tourism, transportation and mobility, and parks and open space in the study area. More than 30 residents, business owners, and other stakeholders from the community attended.

Chapter 3

LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT



The City and its partners will work together to enhance Downtown Wilmington’s commercial corridors while better leveraging and protecting the area’s natural resources and strengthening the surrounding residential neighborhoods.

Key Findings

The following represent the major takeaways derived from the existing conditions analysis and stakeholder engagement and form the basis for the recommendations to follow.

- **Downtown Wilmington has a diverse land use mix, including residential, commercial, and industrial properties.** The main corridors are lined with a range of businesses, including retail stores, offices, restaurants, and a motel, which serve Wilmington and the surrounding communities. Those properties along and adjacent to IL Route 53 and IL Route 102 provide auto-oriented shopping and services, while North Water Street is a more pedestrian-oriented retail district.
- **Nearly 40 percent of the land area in the Downtown Wilmington study area is devoted to residential use, primarily detached single-family homes.** Single-family and multi-family housing intermixes throughout the downtown, with most multi-family development consisting of one or two-story buildings that are very similar in character to adjacent single-family homes. Mixed-use parcels with residential dwellings above ground-floor retail spaces are only permitted along North Water Street.
- **Many stakeholders expressed a desire to see new development around North Water Street.** Some suggested that the City develop a riverwalk or boardwalk along the millrace and activate the backside of the businesses along North Water Street. Others wanted to see the Wilmington Public Library District move closer to the Wilmington Island Park District, and create an institutional “hub” in the downtown core.
- **Key gateway locations currently contain vacant or underutilized buildings.** The Launching Pad Drive-In and Eagle Hotel are positioned at the entrances to Wilmington and the downtown shopping district, but do not fully capture the Route 66 traffic coming through the study area along IL Route 53.
- **Wilmington’s zoning ordinance provides development standards for these distinct areas through ten zoning districts.** However, certain zoning districts are duplicative of other districts, and some zoning districts do not include key development standards, such as minimum lot area and minimum lot width, which can help create a sense of place in each district.

Support a range of uses along main corridors

There is a strong desire among local stakeholders to see retail opportunities and mixed-use development expanded along the main corridors in Downtown Wilmington. IL Route 53 and IL Route 102 are important to the regional roadway system and should continue to serve Wilmington and surrounding communities. Similarly, North Water Street attracts patrons from an area considerably larger than the City, but the environment is unique within the study area in that it accommodates pedestrian-oriented commercial activity. Many residents are interested in seeing a greater variety of retail, restaurant, and entertainment options in these areas, particularly along North Water Street. The City should continue to support a variety of commercial and residential uses along these corridors to strengthen existing businesses and build a network of diverse destinations and attractions that bring both residents and visitors to the downtown.

Expand mixed-use development

Mixed-use areas benefit local economies by connecting residents with local businesses and services. They improve public health and the environment by increasing the viability of walking and bicycling. Steady foot traffic at different times of the day is a major advantage for local and small businesses, and can support a diversity of retail types. Well-designed mixed-use developments that capitalize on Downtown Wilmington's central location can be catalytic projects for the area, enlivening the existing commercial businesses by bringing additional customers and enhancing the streetscape. The City should focus its efforts on expanding mixed-use development in the downtown, particularly on North Water Street and IL Route 102.

The City can facilitate this vision by expanding the boundary of its B2-A Central Business District. In this zoning district, mixed-use development is permitted and commercial uses are exempt from off-street parking requirements. These development standards are distinct from other zoning districts in the downtown, as they allow more compact development styles and present more options to developers building various retail and housing types.

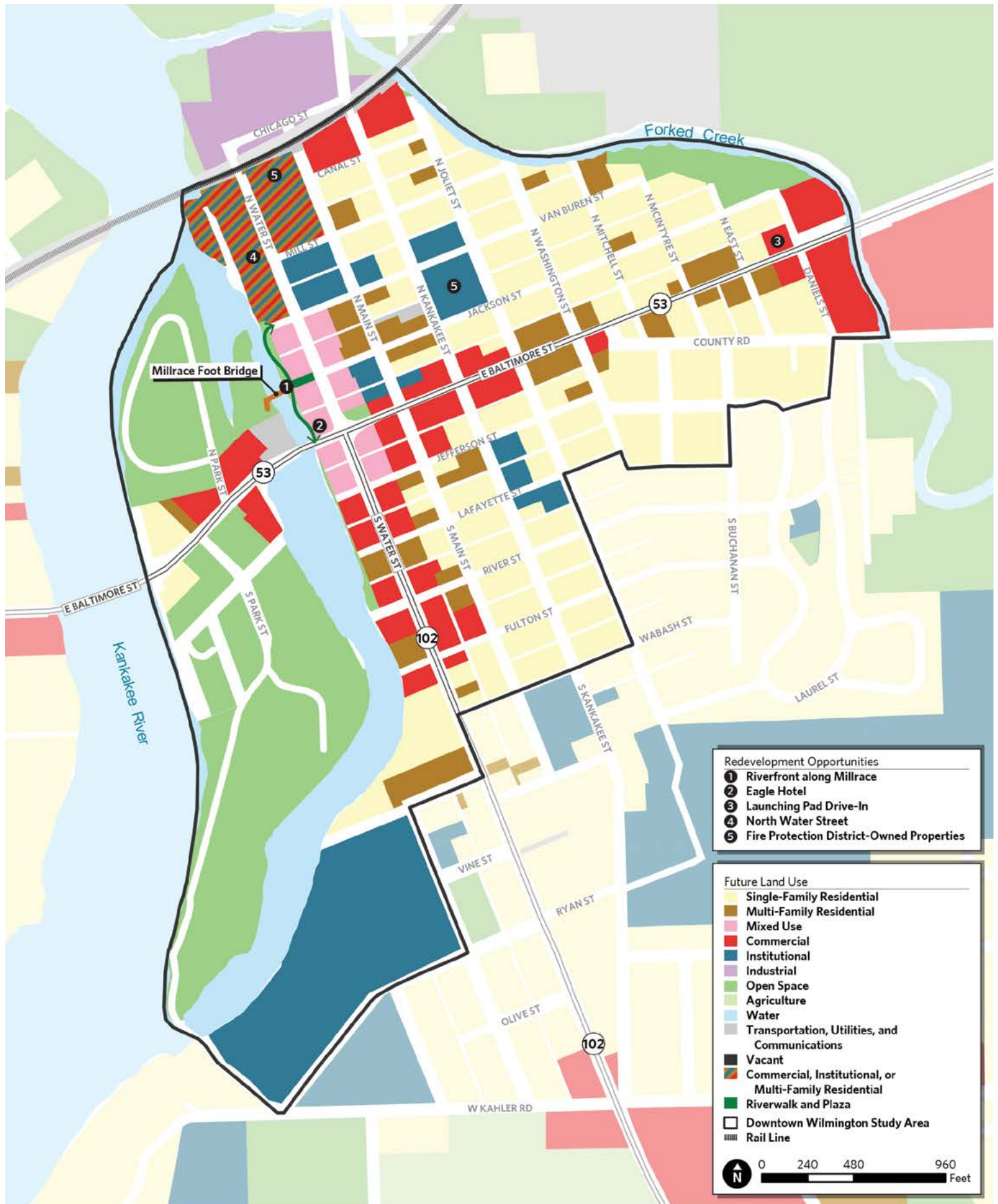
Provide for a range of housing options

In addition to mixed-use development, the City should be open to the development of high-quality townhomes and other multi-family residences that would provide convenient access to downtown shopping, civic and institutional uses, and Island Park. Downtown Wilmington is already home to a variety of housing types, including single-family homes, two-unit homes, and townhomes. These units provide valuable housing options for the community and allow people to live within close walking distance of a variety of amenities. Wilmington should continue to support a wide range of housing types in accordance with *Figure 3.1 Future Land Use*. It is recommended that the City update its zoning ordinance to permit townhomes and multi-family residences in the downtown zoning district along North Water Street. New multi-family development should be small-scale and designed in a manner consistent with the existing neighborhoods in the downtown. Smaller buildings are a good way to add density without compromising the character of the area.

Expand or relocate institutional anchors in the downtown

Institutional facilities are important anchors for the stability and vitality of Wilmington. Wilmington Island Park District and Wilmington Public Library District are significant activity-generators that draw both residents and visitors, but they are not located in close proximity to one another. The City and its partners should support future decisions to expand or relocate institutional facilities to the downtown core, particularly around North Water Street. North Water Street, as described in the Focus Redevelopment in Key Areas section of this chapter, is already a mixed-use activity area in Downtown Wilmington. Establishing new destinations will build on the existing assets and underscore its importance as a vibrant destination within the study area. Additional discussion of institutions as downtown anchors is located in *Chapter 5: Local Economy*.

Figure 3.1 Future Land Use



Evaluate the potential for a riverwalk along the millrace

The Kankakee River runs through Downtown Wilmington, providing recreational opportunities, wildlife habitat, and a distinctive, aesthetic asset to the City. Engagement efforts with the community have found a strong desire to build better connections between the riverfront and downtown. Specifically, residents and business owners have expressed interest in installing a pedestrian-only riverwalk along the millrace. The City, along with downtown business owners, should pursue the riverwalk project while addressing vehicle access, including changes to loading, service, and deliveries, as well as new pedestrian amenities, increased recreational opportunities, and environmental concerns.

The vision for the riverwalk is to establish a unique pedestrian riverfront environment that will contain a variety of spaces that accommodate both passive and active recreation. As illustrated in Figure 3.2 Riverwalk Concept Illustration and Figure 3.3 Riverwalk Concept Plan, a riverwalk is envisioned to span the eastern bank of the millrace from IL Route 53 to Van Buren Street, connecting to the central business district to the east and Island Park to the west. A continuous walkway could include a boardwalk-style path, seating areas, lighting, and landscape buffers to integrate the project with the existing built environment. The proposed public plaza at Jackson Street, as described in Chapter 4: Image and Streetscape, would anchor this development, complementing the riverwalk with additional seating areas and landscape features.





Figure 3.2 Riverwalk Concept Illustration

Provide access for everyone

The riverwalk should be universally accessible to all visitors. Pedestrian paths will extend from North Water Street at IL Route 53, Van Buren Street, and at the public plaza at Jackson Street. Removing a balustrade on IL Route 53 will enlarge the entrance and enhance pedestrian access on the south end. Adding steps at the east end of the Millrace Foot Bridge will improve alignment of the plaza with this important pedestrian connection.

A bike lane connection at Jackson Street will bring bicyclists through the public plaza to the riverfront, where they can stop to enjoy the riverwalk amenities or a bite to eat at a downtown restaurant, before comfortably crossing the Millrace Foot Bridge and continuing the ride through Island Park.

Leverage the millrace for recreation

Further integration of the Kankakee River into downtown life could be achieved through increased recreational use and access, as well as thorough management and restoration of this important ecological resource. Additional amenities, such as a fishing dock, canoe and kayak launch, and overlook areas, could help improve access to the river's recreational opportunities, attract additional users, and create a more exciting riverfront experience.

In concert with these recreational improvements, engineers should evaluate techniques for shoreline stabilization, including those presented in the 2015 millrace study, continue to study the necessity of dam, and explore alternatives including modifications and removals. Additional discussion of the Wilmington and millrace dams and development constraints within the floodplain is located in *Chapter 7: Natural Resources*.

Improve commercial functions for downtown businesses

Developing a riverwalk along the millrace would activate the backside of the businesses along North Water Street. Restaurants and other businesses would be able to use plaza space on the river, essentially creating double the frontage for commercial businesses, and increase the visibility of the shopping district overall. Future development along this corridor, including the revitalization of the Eagle Hotel, should consider uses such as event space or an outdoor cafe which would be supported by the improved outdoor amenities and riverfront access.

Implement through partnership and coordination

Construction of this riverwalk will require the cooperation of numerous private landowners to provide public space along the river. First, a significant amount of coordination will be needed to negotiate an easement with the various property owners and the rules that will govern the spaces along the river. One way to codify these requirements is to create an overlay district for the properties that are located along the riverfront. The overlay district would help define the requirements for setbacks, landscape, easements, and maintained public access, among others.

It is recommended that Wilmington coordinate with downtown business owners to discuss possible new site configurations and address potential conflicts between pedestrians and loading, parking, and service uses. For example, rear trash receptacles might need to be placed in a central location to allow for a continuous riverwalk path similar to trash collection during special events such as Catfish Days.

As part of this project, improvements should also be made across the millrace on the island, including landscaping, to enhance the views from the riverwalk.

Figure 3.3 Riverwalk Concept Plan



- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| 1. Bike lane connection | 9. New steps to Millrace Foot Bridge | 16. Removed bridge balustrade to enlarge entrance |
| 2. New bump-outs (curb extensions) with trees and plantings | 10. Native tallgrass planting as green buffer | 17. Fish and kayak dock |
| 3. New pedestrian crossing at North Water Street | 11. Boardwalk-style path | 18. Green buffer and boardwalk-style seating area |
| 4. Riverwalk gateway signage | 12. Relocated bar and improved deck to accommodate through walkway (grill to stay in place) | 19. Falls overlook deck |
| 5. Event plaza | 13. New stairs to IL Route 53 street level | 20. Shared trash receptacle area |
| 6. Parking area | 14. Potential future event space | 21. Future riffle pool system (small-scale rapids) |
| 7. Fence to screen adjacent parking area | 15. Terraced or sloped path | |
| 8. Terraced gardens with bench seating | | |

Focus redevelopment in key areas

The main access points to the downtown, as well as other large sites throughout the study area, are underutilized as assets that could support the local economy and contribute to a greater sense of place in the downtown. Moving forward, the City should work with property owners, partner organizations, and community stakeholders to focus efforts on infill development and alternative uses for vacant or underutilized properties.

Eagle Hotel

Engagement efforts with the community found a strong desire to renovate and reuse the Eagle Hotel, a significant historic asset and the oldest commercial building remaining in the Wilmington area. Located at the main intersection and in close proximity to many downtown amenities, this property is a desirable location for a bed and breakfast, banquet hall, or other special event facility. Future uses could also align with riverfront planning, such as a café with outdoor seating. Once a vision for the property is defined, the City should consider entering into a Memorandum of Understanding with the property owner to facilitate open communication about the future of this important site and to demonstrate a commitment to working collaboratively with potential investors. Work should also be done with the property owner to identify ways that future riverfront programming, accessibility, and other improvements along the millrace can support the revitalization of the hotel property.

Launching Pad Drive-In

In fall 2017, the Launching Pad Drive-In was sold to new owners who intend to re-establish the iconic Route 66 landmark as a restaurant. Their plan, which supports the community's vision for this gateway property, includes restoring the building, making site improvements, and expanding programming to sell Route 66-themed merchandise and accommodate community events. Restoring this landmark will re-activate the area around the Gemini Giant and help support tourism and the local economy. It is recommended that the City and its partners engage with the property owners and remain supportive of the redevelopment throughout the process. The ideas presented in this plan should move forward with either the current or future owners of the site.

Building renovation and site improvement projects should support the desired aesthetics and development patterns for the IL Route 53 corridor. For example, the current site does not have any defined pedestrian walkways. To ensure the safety of patrons and visitors, the redevelopment could help delineate the connections between the restaurant, Gemini Giant, parking lot, and public right-of-way. Landscape features, including parking lot landscaping, could also be installed for their screening, aesthetic, and environmental benefits. The City should coordinate with the current or future owners to identify opportunities for partnership in addressing these types of site improvements. In addition, lighting and signage could be reviewed by organizations like the Wilmington Area Historical Society and Illinois Route 66 Association to ensure the character is appropriate.

North Water Street

North Water Street is a hub of economic activity and should showcase Wilmington's unique characteristics and assets. As redevelopment opportunities arise, the properties between Van Buren Street and the Union Pacific Railroad should be considered for new uses that are more compatible with adjacent properties. Commercial and mixed-use development would be a natural extension of the downtown core.

Other uses that complement the neighboring Wilmington Island Park District should also be considered. Institutional and civic uses would generate more activity in this central location. For example, relocating the Wilmington Public Library District to North Water Street would bring more residents and visitors to the central business district. The City should engage with property owners to discuss the future of this land and, if institutional activity generators are desired for the north end of North Water Street, play a role in developing a program and conceptual plan and explore models that include private investment with public use. The potential for a public-private partnership should also be evaluated.

Fire Protection District-Owned Properties

The Wilmington Fire Protection District intends to move its headquarters from Main Street to a large, vacant block (bounded by Kankakee, Jackson, Joliet, and Van Buren Streets) in the next five to 10 years. While the headquarters facilities and parking will likely occupy a large portion of the block, the site—encompassing just over 1.6 acres—may have potential to accommodate additional uses. It is recommended that the Fire Protection District involve residents, business owners, and other stakeholders in determining desired uses for the site. A park or other community amenity would serve both residents and visitors to downtown.

Once the Fire Protection District moves its facilities, a variety of uses should be considered for infill development on the north end of the downtown study area. Residential, institutional, and civic uses would all be appropriate for this location.

Case Study: Mundelein Village Hall

In 2009, City officials in Mundelein began exploring options to move their Village Hall into a larger, more modern facility. The Village decided to pursue a public-private partnership to facilitate development of a new Village Hall on a local brownfield site. With its developer partner, the Village conducted a design charrette to ensure a shared vision for what the new facility would look like and how it would be used. The joint development project also helped to offset the project costs. The selected developer committed to relocating their offices into the new building, agreeing to a seven-year lease that would pay the Village \$250,000 annually.

Completed in 2014, the building provides the Village with 15,000 square-feet of working space, and also includes green space to host community events such as the Mundelein Craft Beer Festival and the winter Santa's Cottage event. The development has brought approximately 50 private-sector jobs into downtown Mundelein.



During the Mundelein Craft Beer Festival, the Plaza Circle on the grounds of Mundelein Village Hall hosts up to 1,800 guests, live music, and food vendors, including local restaurants and food trucks.

Source: Village of Mundelein.

Improve aesthetics and uniformity along main corridors

The appearance of commercial areas, namely IL Route 53, IL Route 102, and North Water Street, is a primary concern among Wilmington stakeholders. Improvements to building design, landscaping, signage, and public rights-of-way should be encouraged to improve the overall image of the community and create a more cohesive look along each main corridor.

Create design requirements for commercial zoning districts

There is a strong desire among local stakeholders to see design standards that improve appearances, enhance the pedestrian environment, and help create a sense of place along the main corridors in Downtown Wilmington. The City should consider updating its zoning ordinance to include design requirements for its commercial zoning districts. The requirements would provide a foundation for the design of individual properties while providing room for architectural creativity.

The vision of these downtown corridors would be greatly facilitated by installing design requirements such as minimum street frontage to be occupied by the principal building and locations of parking areas. For North Water Street and IL Route 102, design requirements could contribute to a more uniform “streetwall” and help foster a comfortable and continuous pedestrian environment. Maintaining a continuous streetwall through the use of building facades, landscaping, or pedestrian amenities adds visual interest and gives distinct character to an area.

For IL Route 53, the design of commercial properties can help to accommodate auto-oriented uses while still respecting the pedestrian realm and adjacent residential uses. The Wilmington Collision Center, for example, is slightly set back from IL Route 53, features landscaping between the building and the sidewalk, uses a garage door and internal service area rather than outdoor service area, and does not have any large curb cuts.

Applicability of these standards could be defined by zoning district or by frontage road or street type (limiting the design requirements to specific areas rather than applying them district-wide). Additional modifications to the City’s zoning districts, including updating the zoning districts and bulk and yard requirements, would also promote these distinct environments.



Building entrances and display windows are the dominant elements of the street-level environment along North Water Street. The design of storefronts and lower building facades should include high-quality materials and detailing, as well as glass to provide visibility for pedestrian interest.

Require landscaping for parking lot interiors and perimeters

Similar to street trees within a pedestrian-oriented shopping district, parking lot and perimeter landscaping can enhance the appeal of an auto-oriented commercial district and support greater economic development. The City should include landscape requirements for parking lot interiors and perimeters to improve the appearance of parking lots and advance the green infrastructure objectives outlined in this plan. Perimeter landscape yards serve to enhance the appearance of parking lots and screen their visual impact from adjacent sidewalks and streets, further enhancing the aesthetic appeal of the corridor as a whole. They are also an effective way to prevent vehicle overhangs into adjacent sidewalks, as observed along IL Route 53. Parking lot landscaping can also help mitigate the intensity of the urban heat island effect and absorb stormwater runoff, two significant issues that result from the design of traditional parking lots.

Create screening requirements

In addition to requiring parking lot landscaping, it is recommended that the City create screening provisions to buffer more intensive uses from less intensive uses and reduce the visual impact of certain types of development on the public realm.

The existing zoning ordinance should be revised to include screening requirements for dumpsters, outdoor storage areas, utilities, and off-street loading spaces. The City may wish to require fencing and planted buffers around these features, and also may want to regulate their locations to minimize their appearance from the street. In addition to their screening and aesthetic benefits, landscape features present opportunities to manage stormwater runoff and mitigate some impacts of development.



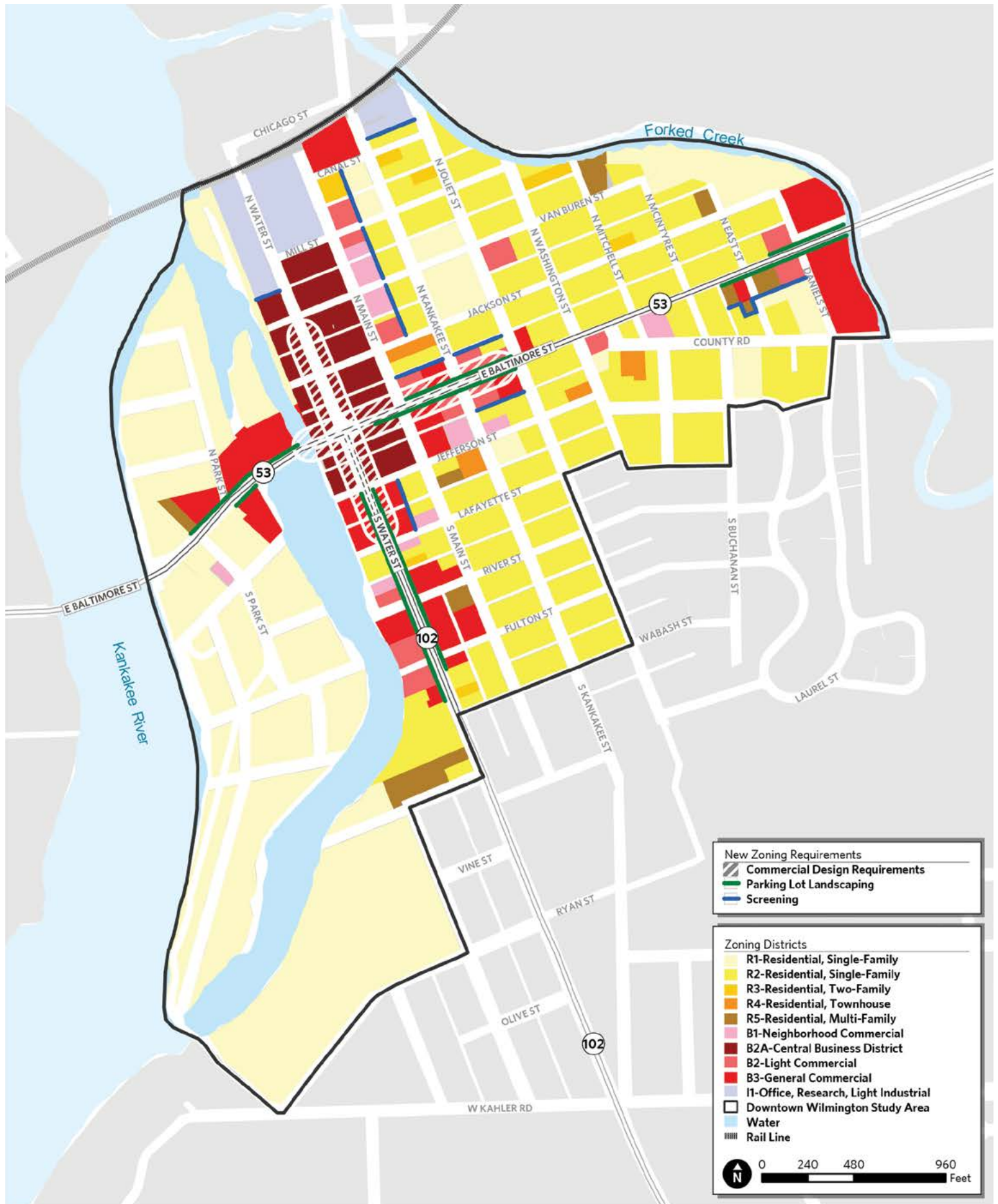
The addition of parking lot perimeter landscaping along IL Route 53 would contribute to a more comfortable pedestrian environment and enhance the overall aesthetic appeal of the corridor.



Landscaping and shade trees make parking lots more aesthetically pleasing while improving adjacent property values, enhancing air quality, and reducing stormwater runoff.

Source: RainReady: Center for Neighborhood Technology, 2017.

Figure 3.4 Existing Zoning Districts and Areas Impacted by New Zoning Requirements



Update zoning ordinance

Well-written regulations and effective enforcement will play a fundamental role in implementing the vision embodied in this plan, from the improvement of commercial areas to the preservation of natural features. A key document to implementing this vision is the zoning ordinance, which controls the permitted uses of land, lot sizes, density, yard requirements, building heights, parking, accessory uses and buildings, and other requirements. The plan calls for the City to revisit the regulations outlined in the zoning ordinance to ensure that they do not impede the construction of the desired types and densities of proposed developments. While many of the other recommendations outlined in this chapter relate to specific changes to the zoning ordinance, this recommendation focuses on the broader activities and goals of an update to the ordinance.

Update commercial and residential zoning districts

Through the adoption of this plan, Wilmington has defined a development vision for its key commercial and mixed-use areas that is not reflected in the existing development regulations. The City should update its zoning ordinance in accordance with the Future Land Use plan to ensure that it permits the type of development desired for IL Route 53, IL Route 102, and North Water Street, and supports the unique character of each corridor. Specific issues to be addressed include removing the R-B Restricted Business District, which is not shown on the zoning map, and consolidating the B-1 Neighborhood Commercial District with B2-A Central Business District as uses and use standards for these areas will not require distinct zoning districts.

The City should consider these recommendations and conduct a comprehensive review of the commercial and residential districts' permitted uses and bulk regulations in relation to the existing property inventory, business directory, and market trends. This approach will ensure that the development regulations encourage the type of development needed to maintain and enhance the areas along the major corridors.

Updating the City's zoning map will also help to define the desired character for these corridors, where it appears that properties, over time, have undergone a change in land use (for example, a single-family home converted to a business use). Particularly along IL Route 53 and IL Route 102, these converted buildings exhibit a mixture of residential and commercial development characteristics that make it difficult to identify the current use of the property. Making a clear distinction between uses is important in Downtown Wilmington, where commercial activities lead into residential neighborhoods. Moreover, the blending of various site and building characteristics make the identity of each corridor ambiguous.



Streamline content and format

A revised zoning ordinance will not only provide City officials with the tools to regulate types and quality of development; it will also make it easier for private sector developers to understand the City's needs through clear zoning requirements and streamline administrative processes. The following recommendations should be prioritized as part of the process to update the zoning ordinance.

- **Incorporate new and updated tables and illustrations.** While the existing ordinance incorporates a number of tables, the ordinance update provides an opportunity to comprehensively review this material and include new tables and illustrations that more effectively communicate information. New tables and illustrations will be particularly helpful in articles relating to uses, districts, off-street parking and loading, signs, and definitions.
- **Create a use table with a user-friendly format.** To create an easier to navigate zoning ordinance, we recommend creating a table of uses that summarizes the uses allowed in each zoning district. Use tables help to eliminate the repetitiveness and confusion created when the ordinance includes separate lists of uses that are either allowed in or prohibited from each zoning district.
- **Sync bulk and yard regulations with existing conditions.** The process to refine Wilmington's zoning district structure will involve comparing Wilmington's existing bulk regulations to actual conditions on the ground. This analysis will help determine the bulk and yard regulations for the revised ordinance, including the establishment of lot coverage regulations for the commercial districts, where none currently exists.
- **Create dedicated article for landscape standards.** Wilmington currently lacks comprehensive landscaping requirements in its zoning ordinance. The revised zoning ordinance should include a robust set of landscape standards that will provide provisions for enhancing the appearance of the downtown and mitigating the visual impact of parking lots on public rights-of-way.

Implementation

The Implementation Action table provided here should be used as a starting point for City staff to prioritize Downtown Plan recommendations and track implementation progress.

Table 3.1 Land Use and Development Implementation Action

Strategy	Priority	Lead and Partners	Resources
Support a range of uses along main corridors.			
Expand mixed-use development.	1	City of Wilmington	
Provide for a range of housing options.	1		
Expand or relocate institutional anchors in the downtown.	1		
Evaluate the potential for a riverwalk along the millrace.			
Implement through partnership and coordination.	1	City of Wilmington , Downtown Business Associations, Property Owners	Business District or Tax Increment Finance (TIF) District
Focus redevelopment in key areas.			
Eagle Hotel	1	Property Owners , City of Wilmington, Downtown Business Associations	Historic Tax Credits; Illinois Main Street Program
Launching Pad Drive-In	1		
North Water Street	2		
Fire Protection District-Owned Properties	2		
Improve aesthetics and uniformity along main corridors.			
Create design requirements for commercial zoning districts.	2	City of Wilmington , Property Owners	
Require landscaping for parking lot interiors and perimeters.	2		
Create screening requirements.	2		
Update zoning ordinance.			
Update commercial and residential zoning districts.	1	City of Wilmington , Outside Consultant	CMAP's LTA Program
Streamline content and format.	1		

Priority: 1 - Actions that have the highest priority; 2 - Actions that have secondary priority; Ongoing - Actions that have begun, including projects that are currently underway.

Chapter 4 IMAGE AND STREETScape



Downtown Wilmington will be an inviting, vibrant, and comfortable place that is utilized by both tourists and residents.

Key Findings

The following represent the major takeaways derived from the existing conditions analysis and stakeholder engagement and form the basis for the recommendations to follow.

- **North Water Street serves as the downtown core.** With a variety of specialty shops, restaurants, and historic properties, North Water Street sets the tone for the experience and character of Downtown Wilmington. It is a more pedestrian-friendly street compared to IL Route 53 and IL Route 102, although the streetscape could be improved with street trees and other public improvements.
- **Downtown Wilmington has a significant number of historic buildings and landmarks.** Eight historic buildings and sites are located within the study area, including the Eagle Hotel and Route 66. These historic sites can be maintained through various historic preservation initiatives, but the anticipated expiration of the National Park Service’s Route 66 Preservation Program could impact the City’s ability to preserve landmarks along the Route 66 corridor.
- **Downtown Wilmington’s commercial areas lack a consistent, unifying feel.** During outreach events, it was common for residents and business owners to comment on the inconsistent look of storefronts in the downtown, particularly along North Water Street. Many stakeholders felt that the downtown needs more curb appeal overall and recommended painting the building facades, regularly updating window displays in retail stores, and adding flags, flowers, and other decorations along the main corridors.
- **Gateway and wayfinding signage would help increase visibility of the downtown.** Stakeholders consistently brought up signage as essential to increase the visibility of the central business district and Wilmington overall. Many stakeholders focused on the need for gateway signage at the entrance to the City to provide visitors with a sense of arrival and to inform them of the locations of the shopping area along North Water Street and other notable stops in town.
- **The Route 66 Experience Hub marks Route 66 attractions in Wilmington and throughout Illinois.** The kiosk highlights the locations of the Gemini Giant and Eagle Hotel, but does not promote other types of visitor attractions in the area. Moreover, it is located in a parking lot on the island, and is therefore easily overlooked.
- **Pedestrian access between North Water Street and the north end of Island Park is safe and accessible via the Millrace Foot Bridge.** The recent development of the Millrace Foot Bridge connects the heart of Downtown Wilmington to parking and open space on the island. Additional improvements to the area could complement this investment and create a welcoming public space for residents and visitors.



Figure 4.1 Public Plaza Concept Illustration



Establish a public plaza along North Water Street

Many stakeholders expressed a desire to see a vibrant, public plaza in the heart of Downtown Wilmington. Installing a plaza on the west side of North Water Street, at the intersection of Jackson Street, will transform an underutilized parcel into a useful and inviting public space. Complementing the recent investment of the Millrace Foot Bridge and future pedestrian and bike facility improvements, the plaza would enhance the link between the historic shopping district and the island. Specific design features such as colored pavers, attractive landscaping, and bump-outs with painted crosswalks over North Water Street should also be considered to foster a pedestrian-friendly environment around the plaza.

Figure 4.1 Public Plaza Concept Illustration demonstrates how the desired elements identified by the community and outlined in this section of the plan could be implemented within the existing right-of-way.



Build in flexible design

Use of the proposed plaza would need to change throughout the course of the day, week, and year depending on the needs of the downtown businesses and scheduling of public events. To accommodate a range of uses, flexibility needs to be built in. The installation of temporary bollards should be evaluated to make the space adaptable for multiple uses. By making the bollards temporary, the plaza will be able to retain parking spots when it is not being used for a special event, but will still allow the space to function as a public plaza during community gatherings such as Catfish Days and the Water Street Market.

Figure 4.2 Public Plaza - Existing Parking Scenario



Figure 4.3 Public Plaza - Special Event Scenario



Provide amenities to attract a wide range of users

The design of a plaza should include a variety of smaller “places” within it to appeal to various people and draw visitors throughout the day. These can include vendor areas, where businesses can sell food or goods during the Water Street Market, as well as benches and other seating to make it comfortable for people to sit and enjoy the space on a typical day in Downtown Wilmington.

Implement through partnership and coordination

With a concept plan clearly illustrating what is possible for this site, the City and its partners can move forward and take the project to the next level. Once the City acquires the necessary public easements, the various infrastructure and design elements of the public plaza can be installed in phases. For example, pavement markings and temporary bollards could be used first to delineate the public space and allow it to function as such. Other infrastructure, like bump-outs and newly marked crosswalks as well as landscaping and street furniture, can be added later, as funding becomes available.

While large portions of the space are located in the public right of way, the City should work closely with adjacent private property owners to redevelop the area into a community asset; the establishment of a Business District should be explored as a potential funding source. Additional discussion of Business Districts is located in *Chapter 5: Local Economy*.

Enhance street appeal

The City can enhance the image and character of its downtown corridors through streetscape improvements. Aesthetic improvements along North Water Street, such as street trees, additional landscaping, art and murals, and burying overhead utilities, will be important to supporting a vibrant commercial district and encouraging people to walk and shop more.

Install street trees along commercial corridors

Street trees provide both beauty and shade, and should be installed consistently along major commercial corridors to strengthen the pedestrian-oriented environment in the downtown. There are specific areas within the downtown that lack street trees and the City should work to fill these gaps, particularly along North Water Street. *Figure 4.4 Streetscape Improvements* illustrates existing trees and where future trees should be prioritized in the downtown core. Trees should be planted every 25-30 feet, with spacing varied as needed to correspond with other pedestrian features along the sidewalk. Ideally, trees will be planted no further apart than 40 feet, with a goal of creating a continuous canopy of trees along the main downtown corridors over the long term.

An engineering study may be needed to identify the locations of underground vaults, basements, and coal chutes below the existing sidewalks in downtown. For those areas lacking the optimal depth for planting, engineered soils or other treatments should be used to promote root growth and health of newly installed street trees.

Install bump-outs at strategic locations

Curb bump-outs, also known as curb extensions, are useful tools for improving the pedestrian environment. By extending the sidewalk and curb slightly into an intersection, bump-outs help to minimize the distance required to cross streets, reduce vehicle speeds, and provide opportunities for landscaping projects. The City should coordinate with the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) to install bump-outs at strategic locations to improve conditions for pedestrians. The crossings near the proposed public plaza at the intersection of North Water Street and Jackson Street should be prioritized for bump-outs. Additionally, the northwest and southwest corners of the intersection at North Water Street and IL Route 53 should be considered for bump-outs, where the existing pavement striping effectively serves as a bump-out by precluding parking and visually narrowing the roadway.



Street trees and bump-outs, such as the example pictured above, can enhance the atmosphere of the streetscape and entice people to walk, and have been shown to produce economic benefits for properties nearby.

Source: Dan Burden, bikepedimages.org.

Enhance sidewalk landscaping and install street furniture

Landscaping improvements, such as flowerpots and hanging planter boxes on light posts, can beautify public spaces in a downtown environment. Strategies should be explored to increase landscaping in the downtown. The streetscape along North Water Street should be prioritized for landscaping, but conditions along IL Route 102 should also be enhanced. Prior to implementation, design standards for landscape improvements should be developed to ensure that a uniform character is achieved throughout the entire downtown.

Similarly, benches, lights, waste receptacles, and other types of street furniture help to establish a distinct and unifying feel, and signal to visitors and potential investors how much the community values its downtown. Though many downtown businesses currently provide benches outside of their storefronts, they are dissimilar styles and do not necessarily contribute to the identity of the downtown. Wilmington should create design guidelines for street furniture to establish a vision for the downtown's commercial areas and clearly communicate this vision to property owners. The street furniture located in Claire's Corner Park, including benches, fencing, light posts, and a drinking fountain, could be used as starting point to develop a unified design palette for North Water Street. A design competition could also be coordinated through the Wilmington Chamber of Commerce or Downtown Merchants Association.

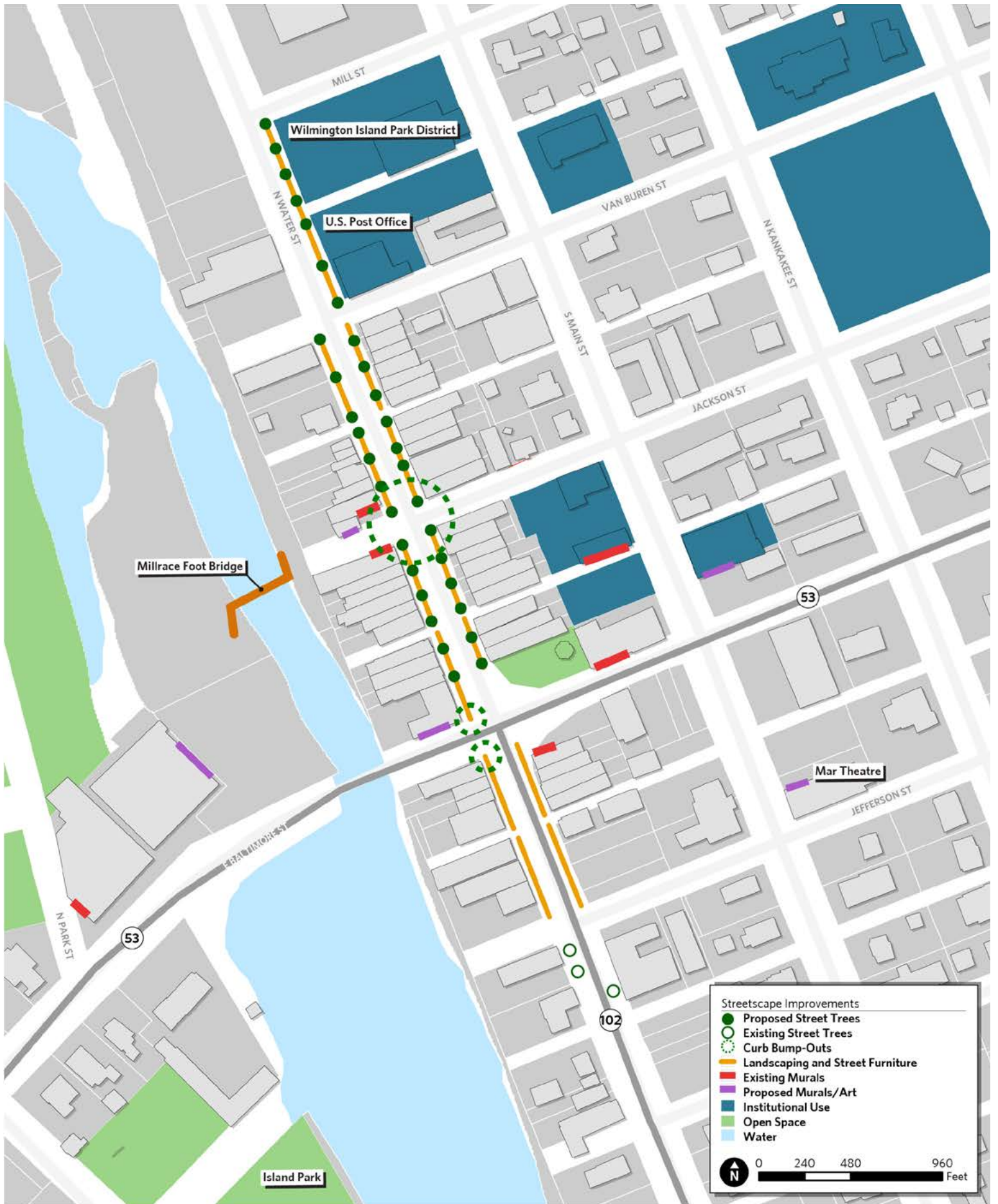
To implement this recommendation, the downtown business associations should coordinate a group purchase of landscape materials and street furniture, and develop a schedule to invest in these items over time. For example, matching waste receptacles could be purchased during the first year of plan implementation, followed by benches in the third year and planter boxes in the fifth year.

Invest in murals, sculptures, and other art pieces

With large-scale art pieces such as the Gemini Giant, Wilmington follows the hallmark trend of eye-catching art found in many Route 66 communities. Restoring murals and other art pieces will help Wilmington maintain its status as a major tourist destination with unique photo opportunities. Current conditions show existing murals are in various states of repair. Existing murals at the intersection of North Water Street and Jackson Street and along Route 53 should be prioritized for investment, as they are key areas to promote Wilmington's image and identity. The City should engage local properties owners to explore restoring these existing murals to their original condition. Local organizations active in the arts community, such as Friends of Community Public Art and Wilmington School District, will be useful partners to help determine the scope and feasibility of restoration projects.

In addition to restoring existing murals, establishing new murals and other art pieces will help activate the downtown. Murals should be developed on blank building facades that further strengthen the community's image and draw attention from residents and visitors. Highly visible locations, including the Eagle Hotel, Mar Theatre, and businesses along IL Route 53 and IL Route 102 are ideal locations for new mural projects. Private property owners will lead all mural restorations and new mural development projects.

Figure 4.4 Streetscape Improvements





Enhance commercial area appearance

Stakeholders and residents expressed a desire to increase efforts to maintain an attractive, well-kept appearance in the downtown's commercial areas. While public improvements go a long way toward this, investment is also needed from private property owners. Incentives can be an effective tool in getting commercial property owners and tenants to make site improvements that foster an attractive shopping environment and positive community identity while also increasing business profitability. The City should work with the Wilmington Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Merchants Association, and private business owners to create incentive programs that will help enhance the appearance of local businesses to attract more patrons to the downtown. Additionally, the City should consider establishing basic design guidelines to set clear expectations for property owners interested in participating in these programs.

Establish an incentive program targeted at businesses

Incentive programs are useful tools in generating aesthetic improvements to private businesses and can be designed to help business owners pay for improvements that fit within guidelines agreed upon by the City. When used in a targeted manner, such programs contribute to a well-kept, consistent image in business districts. Typically, such incentives function as reimbursement programs, wherein portions of business expenditures for predetermined projects, such as façade improvements, awnings, and build-out costs, can be recouped following installation. Reimbursements are typically made available to businesses in a specific geography or to those with certain zoning classifications.

The City has expressed interest in incentive programs in the past. In 2006, the City created a Façade Improvement Grant Program for all commercial and industrial properties in the City. Designed to control and prevent blight, dilapidation, and deterioration of structures, the grant was funded using General Revenues, and included landscaping and surfacing of parking areas. The grant program funded up to 50 percent of improvement costs with a maximum expenditure of \$5,000 from the City. Though the program did not include a sunset clause, it no longer receives funding due to a lack of use. However, during outreach efforts, many business owners expressed interest in resuming the program, commenting they were unaware grant funding was available for such improvements.

The City should revive the Façade Improvement Grant Program and consider expanding the program to include a wider variety of eligible improvements. Such a program should consider providing incentives to fund signage, landscaping, rehabilitation, accessibility, and other improvements that contribute to an attractive streetscape for the downtown. A program could also be used to attract targeted types of businesses and assist existing businesses with expansion activities. Restaurants and entertainment options are underrepresented in the downtown study area, and could be encouraged by requiring applicants to be an existing restaurant within a designated area of the downtown or a new restaurant locating in that area. Eligible improvements could include exhaust systems and other large kitchen equipment.

To ensure that incentives will be leveraged by the local business community, the City should engage in outreach efforts to make the business community aware of the available resources and consider modifications to the program that align with local needs. Prior to implementation, design guidelines should be developed to promote consistency and high-quality physical alterations to the main commercial corridors.

Case Study: Des Plaines Business Assistance Program

The City of Des Plaines offers multiple grant programs designed to help private businesses make improvements to their establishments. Each grant reimburses business owners for expenditures, and requires any improvements to remain in place for a minimum of five years following installation.

- **Awning Program:** Provides reimbursement for up to 75 percent of costs for installation of new awnings on commercial buildings, with a maximum of \$5,000 per business.
- **Façade Rehabilitation Program:** Allows businesses to be reimbursed for up to 50 percent of costs for façade improvement on commercial buildings, with a maximum of \$20,000 per business. Improvements included signage, lighting, permanent landscaping, and new storefront construction appropriately scaled with an existing building.
- **Interior Build-Out Program:** Allows businesses to be reimbursed for up to 50 percent of costs incurred to locate a business within the City of Des Plaines, with a maximum of \$15,000 per business. Improvements include hard costs for tenant build out and physical improvements to the interior of a building.
- **Outdoor Dining Areas:** Reimburses businesses for up to 50 percent of costs incurred at the installation of outdoor dining areas, with a maximum of \$10,000 per business. This includes improvements such as lighting, landscaping, fencing, pathways, and seating, among others.

Increase visibility of the downtown

Many stakeholders likened Downtown Wilmington to a “hidden gem,” stating that visitors are often unaware of all that the downtown has to offer due to a lack of signage and wayfinding within the community. The City should work with the Wilmington Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Merchants Association, and private business owners to increase the visibility of the downtown through coordinated gateway and wayfinding signage.

Expand gateway signage

Gateway signage should be expanded at the entry points of the community to welcome and engage visitors. Effective gateway signs announce arrival to a unique destination, and the design of gateway signs can convey community character. With its unique designation as “The Island City,” Wilmington has a number of opportunities to design signage that is interesting and unique to the community.

Gateway signage should be located along IL Route 53 and IL Route 102, the main thoroughfares providing access to Downtown Wilmington. A “City of Wilmington” gateway sign is currently located along IL Route 53 near Forked Creek and should be updated to reflect the desired style for new, coordinated signage. Additional signage, designed to pique the interest of passersby and encourage them to explore the City should be considered for IL Route 53 at South Park Street and IL Route 102 at Elizabeth Street.

Install wayfinding signage along major corridors

With many attractions and amenities located in close proximity, Downtown Wilmington would benefit from wayfinding signage along major corridors to direct visitors among interesting places in the downtown. Wayfinding signage can lengthen the time visitors spend in Wilmington and help local businesses and institutions benefit from one another. Priority locations for wayfinding signage include the Gemini Giant, Mar Theatre, Millrace Foot Bridge, Route 66 Experience Hub, and the main intersection at IL Route 53, IL Route 102, and North Water Street.



A comprehensive signage program incorporates vehicle and pedestrian wayfinding, directional signs for bicyclists, and area identifiers such as municipal buildings, historic districts, and parks.

Sources: McComm Group (Top and bottom left - Decatur, IL) and Drew Shipley (Bottom right - Cleveland, OH).

Install visitor kiosk at the Gemini Giant

The Gemini Giant is one of Wilmington’s most iconic tourist attractions and is frequently a first stop for visitors traveling through Wilmington along Route 66. An informational kiosk should be installed at the Gemini Giant to promote Wilmington’s other attractions, such as local retail stores and restaurants, the Water Street Market and other events, Island Park, and the locations of nearby parking lots. The goal of the kiosk will be to convince passersby to spend additional time in Wilmington, rather than continuing right away to the next Route 66 community. The owners of the Launching Pad should be engaged to help develop a vision for the kiosk and coordinate implementation efforts.



Outdoor kiosks can help visitors navigate the area and enhance their experience.

Source: <http://greencircletrail.org>.

Figure 4.5 Downtown Signage



Strengthen historic preservation

Downtown Wilmington’s unique image is due, in large part, to a long and storied past that dates back to 1834. Wilmington’s history distinguishes it from other communities and includes significant events in America’s past such as the Underground Railroad, Abraham Lincoln Funeral Train, and development of Route 66. The City should work to preserve the unique stories and places in the downtown by engaging the community and visitors and encouraging investment in the historic building stock.

Promote the Wilmington Area Historical Society

The Wilmington Area Historical Society is, and will continue to be, instrumental in preserving, promoting, and celebrating Wilmington’s unique heritage. Recently relocated to Old City Hall (which was added to the Will County Register of Historic Landmarks in 2017), the Historical Society and its members are knowledgeable about Wilmington’s history and active in developing the group’s extensive collection of artifacts. To capitalize on its prime location in the downtown and to better showcase its wide range of knowledge and physical assets, the Historical Society should strive to establish regular hours of operation and open during special events when many people are drawn to North Water Street.

The Historical Society could also develop a historic walking tour in the downtown to encourage visitors to explore and spend time in the area. Such a walking tour could highlight the architecture in downtown, as well as the stories of local businesses. Members of the Historical Society could lead the tour, but walking tour brochures or an online map would also allow for self-guided tours of the area. The City and downtown business associations should support and promote the group’s initiatives online and at community events.

Case Study: Plainfield Historic Downtown Walking Tour

To share the history of downtown Plainfield with others, the Plainfield Historic Preservation Commission created a walking tour along Lockport Street from IL Route 59 to James Street. The self-guided tour highlights unique buildings and local stories within Plainfield’s historic district. Walking tour brochures are available at Village Hall, the Plainfield Public Library, the Plainfield Area Chamber of Commerce, and numerous downtown businesses. In addition to the brochure, visitors can utilize their smartphone to scan the QR codes posted on buildings in downtown Plainfield. The QR codes link to the Village’s website, which contains detailed historical and architectural information, as well as photos of each building in the historic district.



Source: Lisa DiChiera.

Conduct a historic property survey of the downtown

To help identify opportunities to pursue landmark status for additional properties, a historic property survey should be conducted in the downtown. Will County's historic survey of Wilmington Township was completed in 2009, but focuses on unincorporated, rural areas. A new survey encompassing the downtown would identify areas of greatest historical significance, as well as greatest risk, and help to determine eligibility of individual buildings or a historic district. Moreover, a comprehensive historic survey would include data and research that can be used for future landmark nominations, such as addresses, dates of construction, the history of the original property owner, and patterns of development. A historic property survey could be partially funded by Landmarks Illinois Preservation Heritage Fund grant.



Small-Towle House is a historic residence located in Downtown Wilmington. It is listed on both the National Register for Historic Places and the Will County Register of Historic Landmarks.

Support the quality and longevity of historic buildings and sites

Currently, two properties in Downtown Wilmington are listed on the National Register for Historic Places – the Eagle Hotel and Small-Towle House. Designation on the National Register is awarded after significant research and review, and makes these sites eligible for financial incentives. For example, the Illinois State Historic Preservation Office administers a 20 percent federal rehabilitation income tax credit for rehabilitating historic, income-producing properties. The owner of the Eagle Hotel should consider this program while developing a plan for revitalizing the property.

The downtown also features six properties on the Will County Register of Historic Landmarks, meaning they are protected from alteration, construction, or demolition. The City should work with property owners to maintain these structures by promoting grants and incentive programs administered by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, Landmarks Illinois, and others. Since no incentives exist at the County level, local incentives should also be considered to encourage property owners to pursue landmark designation and help maintain the quality of these historic structures. Examples of local incentives include waiving building permit fees and establishing special façade rebate programs for landmark buildings.

Implementation

The Implementation Action table provided here should be used as a starting point for City staff to prioritize Downtown Plan recommendations and track implementation progress.

Table 4.1 Image and Streetscape Implementation Action

Strategy	Priority	Lead and Partners	Resources
Establish a public plaza along North Water Street.			
Implement through partnership and coordination.	1	Downtown Business Associations, City of Wilmington, Property Owners, Outside Consultant	CMAP's Placemaking Snapshot Report ¹ ; Transportation for America's Guide to Creative Placemaking and Transportation ²
Enhance street appeal.			
Install street trees along commercial corridors.	1	Downtown Business Associations, City of Wilmington, Property Owners, IDOT	Business District or Tax Increment Finance (TIF) District; Illinois Transportation Alternatives Program (ITEP) ³
Install bump-outs at strategic locations.	1		
Enhance sidewalk landscaping and install street furniture.	1		
Invest in murals, sculptures, and other art pieces.	1		
Enhance commercial area appearance.			
Establish an incentive program targeted at businesses.	1	City of Wilmington, Downtown Business Associations, Property Owners	City of Wilmington's Facade Improvement Grant Program
Increase the visibility of the downtown.			
Expand gateway signage.	Ongoing	Downtown Business Associations, City of Wilmington	
Install wayfinding signage along major corridors.	1		
Install a visitor kiosk at the Gemini Giant	1		
Strengthen historic preservation.			
Promote the Wilmington Area Historical Society.	Ongoing	Wilmington Area Historical Society, City of Wilmington, Will County Historic Preservation Commission, Landmarks Illinois, Property Owners	Landmarks Illinois Preservation Heritage Fund; Historic Tax Credits
Conduct a historic property survey of the downtown.	1		
Support the quality and longevity of historic buildings and sites.	1		

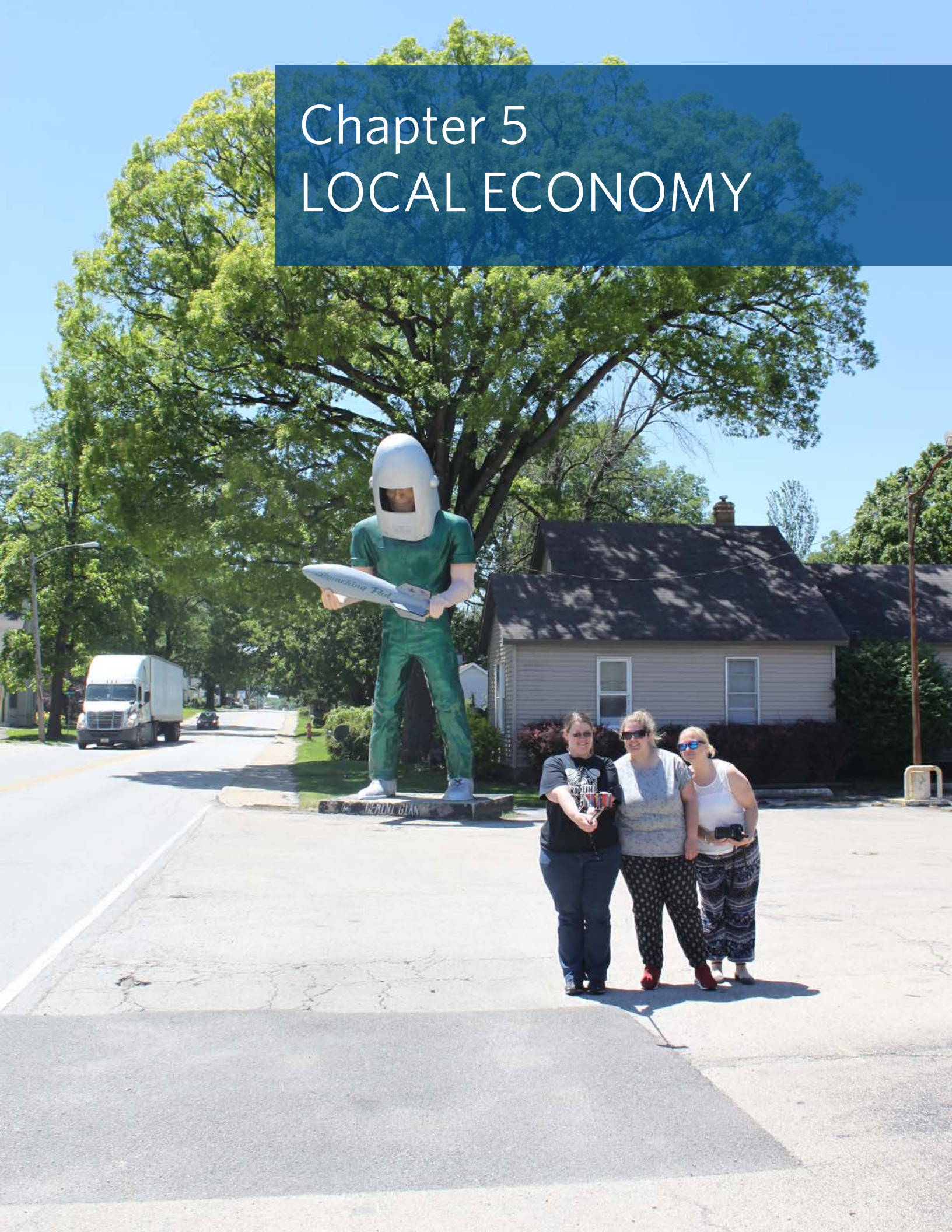
Priority: 1 - Actions that have the highest priority; 2 - Actions that have secondary priority; Ongoing - Actions that have begun, including projects that are currently underway.

¹CMAP's Placemaking Snapshot Report. <http://www.cmap.illinois.gov/documents/10180/827973/FY18-0057+PLACEMAKING+FINAL.pdf/2e5c979c-a0ee-1b51-9611-06e73a06c0ae>.

²Transportation for America's Guide to Creative Placemaking and Transportation. <http://creativeplacemaking.t4america.org/getting-started/>.

³Illinois Transportation Alternatives Program (ITEP) provides funding for community-based projects that expand travel choices and enhance the transportation experience by improving the cultural, historic, aesthetic, and environmental aspects of our transportation infrastructure. ITEP is designed to promote and develop alternative transportation options, including bike and pedestrian travel, along with streetscape beautification. The federal funds are awarded competitively, and projects must be related to surface transportation. <http://www.idot.illinois.gov/transportation-system/local-transportation-partners/county-engineers-and-local-public-agencies/funding-opportunities/ITEP>.

Chapter 5 LOCAL ECONOMY



Downtown Wilmington will provide a mix of retail, restaurants, services, and amenities, while strengthening its position as a regional destination with major historical, cultural, and natural assets.

Key Findings

The following represent the major takeaways derived from the existing conditions analysis and stakeholder engagement and form the basis for the recommendations to follow.

- **Route 66 draws domestic and international tourists to the area.** Downtown Wilmington offers Route 66 travelers unique shopping, dining, and photo opportunities. Additional recreational and historical assets, like Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie and the Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery, also draw tourists to the area. Coordination with partner organizations and improved wayfinding and directional signage along regional routes leading to Wilmington may help connect visitors to area attractions and Downtown Wilmington.
- **The business mix in Downtown Wilmington has a high concentration of antique and specialty shops, and caters more to tourists than residents.** The central business district, particularly along North Water Street, serves unique niches and attracts tourists from an area considerably larger than the region. Several anchor institutions, like the Wilmington Island Park District and Wilmington Public Library, attract residents to the study area, but those residents typically go elsewhere for day-to-day shopping.
- **Retail demand data indicate potential to capture retail dollars currently being spent outside of the market area.** Leakage in *General Merchandise Stores, Clothing & Clothing Accessory Stores, and Food Services & Drinking Places* may represent an opportunity for new or expanded commercial development in Downtown Wilmington.
- **The City of Wilmington does not have a central marketing campaign.** The City and its business associations advertise individual retail shops, restaurants, and Route 66 attractions through their websites and participate in special events, but do not produce marketing materials or engage in other promotional efforts to increase awareness of and visitation to Downtown Wilmington. Some downtown businesses receive marketing assistance from the Heritage Corridor Convention and Visitors Bureau to increase visitor attendance.

Establish a Business District

As Downtown Wilmington looks to encourage and expand business development, funding dedicated to economic development efforts will be needed to support new programs and incentives. The City should evaluate the establishment of a Business District to generate funding for development and redevelopment projects in the downtown. Compared to Tax Increment Finance (TIF) Districts, which rely on increased property taxes, Business Districts impose an increased sales or hotel tax to pay for improvements in an area. Business Districts are often quicker and simpler to establish, and offer more flexibility regarding potential uses of funds. The sales tax increases are in 0.25 percent increments up to 1 percent.

A Business District remains in place for 23 years following the designation. During that time, the sales taxes are collected by the Illinois Department of Revenue and paid to the State Treasurer, who disperses a check to the municipality. In Wilmington, the City Council would then determine how to expend the funds. Eligible costs include professional fees (legal, engineering, planning, architecture, and others), costs of public infrastructure, building rehabilitation costs, and building construction costs, including reimbursement payments to private developers. Typical uses include marketing and advertising, business retention, maintenance and beautification of public spaces, special events, and landscaping and seasonal maintenance.

While Illinois law provides that only municipalities can establish a Business District, the City should engage key stakeholders, including the Wilmington Chamber of Commerce and Downtown Merchants Association, prior to establishing any special taxing district. This stakeholder group could provide input on the proposed district and its goals and services, including the district boundary, taxation amount, and permitted uses for revenue. The Downtown Plan can be used as a foundation in this early stage to identify proposed projects in a proposed Business District.

Build capacity to support local economic development initiatives

The implementation of a Business District would provide resources with which Downtown Wilmington could support various economic development initiatives. These resources could contribute to a coordinated effort with downtown businesses to implement key recommendations detailed in the Downtown Plan. A recommended first step is to establish an Economic Development Coordinator position within the City of Wilmington. This position could be funded by the Business District and operate within a structure of governance established upon creation of the Business District. The primary responsibilities of the Economic Development Coordinator will be to manage business assistance programs, expand marketing strategies, and pursue additional resources to improve economic development in the downtown.

Diversify the business mix

Downtown Wilmington features a concentration of locally owned retail and specialty shops, many of which offer a wide variety of antiques, collectibles, and vintage items. These shopping options, particularly along North Water Street, serve unique niches and tend to attract patrons from outside of Wilmington.

Despite the presence of several anchor institutions that bring residents to the downtown, such as the Wilmington Island Park District and Wilmington Public Library District, residents must go elsewhere for day-to-day shopping. The City and its partners should work together to attract more local-serving businesses, such as restaurants and personal and professional services, to increase the level of daily activity within the downtown.



Wilmington's historic shopping district, North Water Street, is lined with specialty shops, restaurants, and bars (top). Additional antique shops are located along IL Route 102, where there is a greater variety of commercial uses and service providers such as banks, insurance agencies, and law offices (bottom).

Maintain an up-to-date inventory of parcels and commercial spaces

A critical step in attracting new businesses or expanding existing businesses in the downtown is marketing an inventory of available spaces. The City should partner with downtown business representatives, property owners, and local realtors to create and maintain an inventory of commercial properties. The lot area and existing building square footage, former uses, parking availability, and purchase price or rent costs should be included to help match properties with business investors. The property inventory could be hosted on the City’s website or that of a partner organization, and should be linked to any marketing campaigns targeting new commercial tenants.

While each community is unique, a comparison of Wilmington to peer communities with similar Route 66 and riverfront downtown locations (*Table 5.1 Business Mix Comparison*) underscores a need for a wider variety of businesses to ensure the long term health of the district. Restaurants, coffee shops, art stores, personal and professional services, and food and liquor business categories are all underrepresented in Downtown Wilmington. Targeting these categories in marketing efforts will assist Wilmington in achieving a balanced business mix.

Table 5.1 Business Mix Comparison (Number of Establishments per 1,000 Residents)

Business Type	Downtown Wilmington	LeClaire, IA	New Hope, PA	Galena, KS	Ottawa, IL	Other Corridors in Wilmington
Eating and Drinking	1.7	3.1	12.8	2.0	1.3	1.2
Restaurant	0.5	1.3	8.4	1.0	0.6	0.3
Bar	0.5	1.0	1.2	0.0	0.3	0.2
Fast Food	0.5	0.0	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.7
Coffee/Bakery/Ice Cream	0.2	0.8	2.8	0.7	0.2	0.0
Retail Shop	2.6	2.8	30.0	1.7	2.6	2.1
Antiques/Gifts	1.4	1.5	6.4	0.0	0.1	0.0
Art	0.0	0.3	4.8	0.0	0.1	0.0
Houseware/Garden/Electronics	0.3	0.3	1.2	1.0	0.4	0.7
Clothing/Shoes/Jewelry	0.3	0.3	9.6	0.0	0.5	0.2
Other	0.5	0.5	8.0	0.7	1.6	1.2
Personal Services	0.9	0.0	7.6	1.0	2.4	2.9
Professional Services	0.5	1.5	9.6	2.3	2.7	2.1
Institution	0.7	1.3	2.0	2.7	0.6	0.2
Food & Liquor	0.0	1.0	2.8	0.7	0.3	1.4
Organization/Association	0.2	0.0	0.4	0.7	0.7	0.0
Entertainment	0.2	0.0	1.2	0.0	0.2	0.0
TOTAL	6.7	9.7	66.4	11.1	10.8	9.9

Under-represented category in Downtown Wilmington

Over-represented category in Downtown Wilmington

Source: SB Friedman.

Establish an interior build-out program

Downtown partners should evaluate incentive programs that will attract private investment and expand the local tax base by attracting new businesses or helping existing businesses to expand. For example, build-out grants can be used to help business owners with start-up or expansion costs. Typically, recipients of a build-out grant must meet a minimum threshold of investment and dedicate a certain percentage toward establishing new retail space. Build-out programs reimburse business owners for eligible expenses such as capital costs, permanent improvements, and soft costs, including moving expenses and retail consulting. The City could direct funds generated from a Business District into a build-out program for downtown businesses

Locate more institutional anchors in the downtown core

Local institutions are important activity-generators in a downtown and can be leveraged for the economic growth and stability they provide. When compared to peer communities, Downtown Wilmington does not have the same diverse base of anchors. Opportunities should be explored to locate additional institutional anchors in the downtown core and build off existing anchors such as the Wilmington Island Park District, U.S. Post Office, and Wilmington Public Library District. The Wilmington Area Historical Society's new museum in Old City Hall is an example of an emerging institutional asset that could spur additional activity around North Water Street. Efforts to expand the museum's offerings and establish regular hours should be supported. Additionally, the City should work to increase visibility of the visitors center, currently located in Wilmington Island Park District, and other anchor institutions in the downtown through wayfinding and signage, as identified in *Chapter 4: Image and Streetscaping*.

Case Study: Downtown Lombard Retail Business Grant Program

In 2005, the Village of Lombard introduced the Downtown Retail Business Grant Program to attract retail businesses and assist existing business in the downtown. In order to apply for grant funding, businesses must be located in one of two eligible Tax Increment Financing districts that are used to fund the program, and must own their properties or have a lease of at least three years. Buildings must be at least 20 years old and visible from the street. Program participants are eligible for up to \$20,000 in reimbursement funds up to, but not exceeding, 50 percent of total eligible expenses.

Eligible expenses under the program include capital costs (such as floors or structural walls and roof, HVAC, and electrical repair and replacement) and soft costs (such as signage, moving expenses, visual merchandising, and retail consulting). Expansion expenses are also eligible provided that the business invests a minimum of \$10,000 and 25 percent of the total leasable floor area is dedicated to a new retail component. Businesses must remain in the location specified on their grant application for a minimum of five years to receive the full grant disbursement.

To date, the Village of Lombard has funded nearly \$500,000 in improvements to local businesses through the Retail Business Grant Program. Many applicants have sought assistance to fund façade projects such as new signage, windows, doors, tuck pointing, and ADA improvements, among other expenses. The program has helped preserve and promote Lombard's historic downtown.

Support and expand tourism

Case Study: Starved Rock State Park

Located along the Illinois River in LaSalle County, Starved Rock State Park is a major ecotourism destination and economic generator for nearby communities. In 2016, the park set attendance records with 2.75 million visitors. Outdoor enthusiasts are drawn to Starved Rock for its 18 canyons, 13 miles of trails, and park facilities, including a lodge, restaurant, and visitors center.

Through cross promotion and collaboration, awareness of the park and neighboring communities has grown. For example, Starved Rock advertises and operates 'Christmas Lights Trolley Tours' of nearby communities. The trolleys depart from the Starved Rock Lodge and take passengers on an illuminated tour of holiday lights in the LaSalle, Peru, Oglesby, and Utica area. Starved Rock also lists a number of indoor and outdoor activities on its website, directing visitors to historic properties, museum, wineries, and breweries outside of the park. Similarly, many nearby communities describe the park's campground and family-friendly activities, as well as transportation options, on their websites.



Source: starvedrocklodge.com.

Though Wilmington features a unique business mix and Route 66 attractions, the City does not have a central marketing campaign to showcase those assets. Wilmington and its business associations currently advertise individual retail shops, restaurants, and other tourist attractions through their respective websites and by participating in special events. A more centralized marketing campaign could be used to unite the individual efforts of businesses, as well as the downtown business associations.

Outside of the downtown, visitors are also drawn to the area for its recreational opportunities, including those along the Kankakee River and at nearby Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie. Open space assets should be highlighted as part of an overall marketing effort.

Evaluate the viability of ecotourism

Wilmington is well positioned to benefit from ecotourism, or tourism that centers on access to natural areas. The Kankakee River and Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie hold great ecotourism potential for the downtown, both as independent draws to the area and complements to existing tourist attractions. Examples of ecotourism initiatives that hold potential for Wilmington include:

- Recreational boating, such as kayak and canoe rentals, on the Kankakee River (once safety issues with the Wilmington dam are addressed);
- Shuttle services between Downtown Wilmington and Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie;
- Promoting local dining and lodging assets as central activity hubs for day trips to nearby natural areas; and
- Establishing new businesses adjacent to natural areas that cater to visitors and help direct traffic to the downtown.

Partnerships should be explored to evaluate the viability of expanding opportunities for ecotourism. In particular, representatives of Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie and the Northwest Indiana Paddlers Association, who manages the Kankakee River Water Trail, should be engaged to investigate strategies to promote the City of Wilmington as a key partner.

Conduct a lodging demand study

As Downtown Wilmington looks to expand tourism in the area, the lack of hotels, bed and breakfasts, and other lodging options should be addressed. Providing local lodging options will enable tourists to lengthen their visits to the community and create the potential for multi-day stays with Wilmington serving as a hub for regional tourism. With Wilmington's proximity to Chicago, Downtown Wilmington could also become a daytrip destination for Chicago tourists. Further developing opportunities for daytrip visitation to nearby attractions will help encourage and justify lodging development when marketing the City to hotel chains or bed and breakfast entrepreneurs. Additionally, tourists will be encouraged to visit additional restaurants, shops, and attractions in the downtown if they do not have to seek out lodging in another town. The City and its partners should conduct a demand study to quantify opportunities to attract lodging investors and how to best partner with property owners and investors to meet lodging needs for all travelers. Short-term rentals, like Airbnb, and designated parking for recreational vehicles can also provide overnight lodging options.

Piggyback on other outdoor festivals, street fairs, and tours in the area

Wilmington features a number of community events that draw residents and visitors to the downtown. These events, such as Catfish Days, Illinois Route 66 Red Carpet Corridor, and the Water Street Market, activate Downtown Wilmington and put local businesses in the spotlight. In addition to supporting community events within Wilmington, the City should seek out opportunities to piggyback on other events throughout the area. Events such as Summerfest in Braidwood and the New Orleans North Festival in Joliet are opportunities for Wilmington to promote its own events and build partnerships. As local partners seek to expand visibility for community events in Wilmington, connections should be made with organizers of other local events in the area to coordinate marketing efforts and share best practices. Additionally, opportunities should be explored to promote community events in Wilmington at other public gatherings throughout the region.



In the summer, Wilmington's four-day Catfish Days festival attracts many residents and visitors to Island Park and the downtown. During the annual event, Downtown Wilmington features catfish dinner specials at a number of local restaurants and activities for all ages, including carnival rides and parades.

Source: route66wilmington.com



In the spring, Wilmington and 12 other communities along the 90-mile "linear museum" sponsor the Illinois Route 66 Red Carpet Corridor Festival. The two-day festival features a variety of activities and attractions in each town. Wilmington participates by putting on a flea market, contests, food vendors, and live music, and offering a "bison shuttle" to Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie. Above, a tour group visits Midewin during the festival.

Source: enjoyillinois.com

Develop a central marketing campaign for the downtown

Though the downtown has a distinct character and feel, there is no centralized marketing campaign to increase awareness of all the central business district has to offer. Some businesses have worked with the Heritage Corridor Convention and Visitors Bureau (HCCVB) while others choose to independently market themselves, but without a dedicated marketing effort, many of the downtown businesses struggle to increase their visibility. In particular, specialty shops that rely on patronage from both tourists and residents would benefit from a broader marketing strategy.

The City should work with the business community and other partners to develop a central marketing campaign for the downtown. A recommended first step is to engage local businesses and business associations to understand how best to market the downtown as a complete district. These efforts can work in tandem with broader marketing efforts of the City of Wilmington and other local attractions. For example, the downtown and nearby natural areas could be focal points for marketing efforts conducted by the City of Wilmington in other Route 66 communities. HCCVB offers a number of marketing opportunities including social media campaigns, strategically placing marketing materials 50 miles or further from a destination, and campaigns that focus on a specific season or event, such as Catfish Days. Funding support for marketing materials and campaigns are eligible expenses for Business District funds.



McKoy House and Garden, Seneca



Stratford Museum, Utica



August Hill Winery & Illinois Sparkling Co., Utica



Starved Rock Amphitheater, Elkhart

Starved Rock

*Itinerary

STARVED ROCK AREA

Spend an afternoon shopping and discovering hidden treasures

The town of Stratford is full of unexpected surprises. Step into the fantasy world of the **Weber House and Garden**, a storybook Tudor cottage surrounded by an English garden with ponds, statues and beautiful blooming flowers. Inside, tour the rooms of the 18th century house, which are illuminated by candlelight. Visit the **Stratford Museum** and learn about some of the town's famous residents, including Burton Hawkins (of Backin'-Robbins Ice Cream) and Edward Phelan, who was the musical director for Walt Disney classics *Fantasia* and *Rambert*.

Spend some time shopping in Utica. Head to **Starved Rock Marketplace**, home of **Catralis Gift Shop**, offering six rooms of clothing, accessories, furniture and its own wine tasting room. The next-door **Chiffin on 6** is known for its homemade fudge. In downtown Utica, sample wines and pick up a few bottles to take home from **August Hill Winery & Illinois Sparkling Co.**

And be sure to stop in for a scrumptious snack from **Flutterby Gourmet Popcorn** (try the sweet banana cream pop popcorn). In historic Ottawa, enjoy a cup of tea as you browse the shelves of the English library-style **Prairie Fox Books** for a good read. Pick up fun educational toys for the little ones at **Rock Paper Scissors**. Get some new wheels at **The Bike Shop in Ottawa**, located right on the I&M Canal. Slow down and indulge in some "me" time at **SalTreeYoga**, which features a relaxing Himalayan salt cave.

While you're in town, check out the **Westlos Museum**, which tells the story of the Western Clink Company that operated in Peru for a century, and is located within a portion of the old Westlos building.

Are you up for an all-day excursion? **The Spirit of Peoria** offers a full-day river cruise aboard its authentic paddlewheeler that travels from Starved Rock State Park in Utica to Peoria (with a shuttle returning passengers to Starved Rock). You'll be treated to lunch and piano music, tales of river lore and an onboard lunch buffet.

Starved Rock

STAY and PLAY

You don't have to go far to find fun at these lodging spots



STARVED ROCK LODGE AND CONFERENCE CENTER, OGLESBY
Built in the 1930s by the Civilian Conservation Corps, the rustic Starved Rock Lodge is perched high on a wooded bluff overlooking the scenic Illinois River. Book a stay in the historic lodge or knotty pine cabins. Cozy up to the crackling fire in the massive two-sided stone fireplace in the soaring Great Hall. In the summer, enjoy live music and dining on the outdoor Veranda, with a sweeping view of the Illinois River Valley. At the Back Door Lounge, try a pint of Starved Rock Signature Ale, brewed exclusively by Lionshelger. Starved Rock Lodge is also the hub for trolley tours and guided hikes through beautiful Starved Rock State Park.



GRIZZLY JACK'S GRAND BEAR RESORT, UTICA
Located just two miles from Starved Rock State Park, Grizzly Jack's is a kid's dream getaway. The resort's Grand Bear Falls indoor water park features a wave pool, water slides and a lazy river. Putt your way along the miniature 18-hole golf course or play more than 60 different games at the Cave Arcade. Jack's Place Restaurant & Sports bar serves up pizza and burgers. Stay in a suite at the lodge, or spread out in one of the luxury cabins or villas nestled in the woods.



Union Depot Railroad Museum, Mendota

The I&M Canal flows right through the middle of the peaceful burg of Seneca. Stop by and check out the new **Seneca Area Heritage Museum**, located in a renovated former train depot. Take a walk along the canal and view the historic **M.J. Hogan Grain Elevator**, which enabled farmers to more quickly ship their grain via barge instead of by horse and wagon.

Take a side trip to Mendota, where you can learn about the rural town's rich history by visiting the **Breaking the Prairie Museum**, honoring the hard work of local farm families; the **Hume-Carnegie Museum**, with a collection dedicated to "Wild Bill" Hickok, the legendary frontier scout and lawman; and the **Union Depot Railroad Museum**, which features a model railroad and trains you can tour.



Cattaraugus State Park, Ontario

travel IBM Canal Heritage Corridor Visitors Guide

Canal towns - Route 66 - Starved Rock

ROCKCANYAL (206) 51

Members of the Heritage Corridor Convention and Visitors Bureau receive a free listing in the annual Visitors Guide as well as other specialty publications. Custom itineraries, like the Starved Rock Area itinerary pictured above, can be incorporated into event guides and distributed at the local site.

Source: "Travel," The I&M Canal Heritage Corridor Visitors Guide.

Implementation

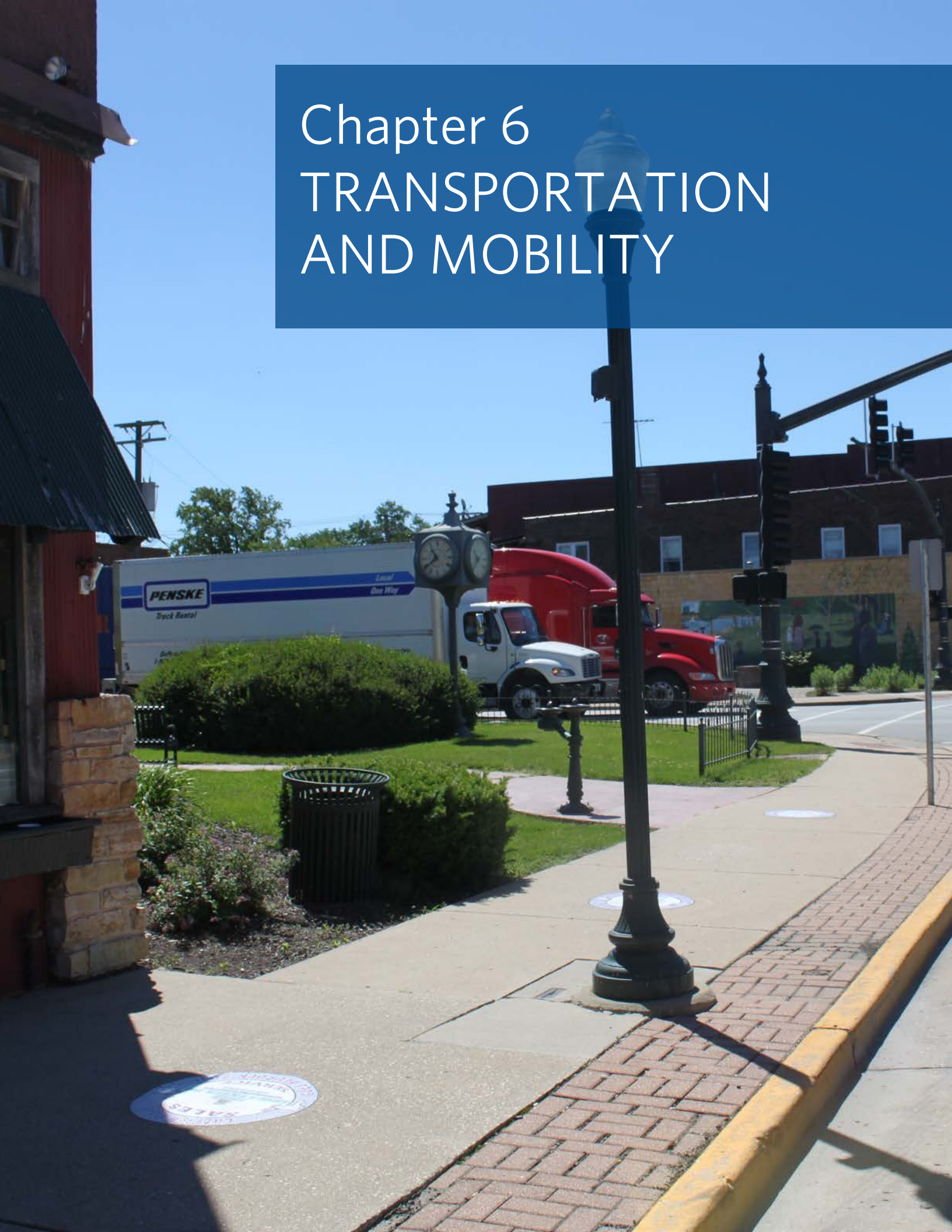
The Implementation Action table provided here should be used as a starting point for City staff to prioritize Downtown Plan recommendations and track implementation progress.

Table 5.2 Local Economy Implementation Action

Strategy	Priority	Lead and Partners	Resources
Establish a Business District.			
Build capacity to support local economic development initiatives.	1	City of Wilmington , Downtown Business Associations, Outside Consultant	Outside Consultant
Diversify the business mix.			
Maintain an up-to-date inventory of parcels and commercial spaces.	1	City of Wilmington , Downtown Business Associations	
Establish an interior build-out program.			
Evaluate incentive programs that will attract private investment.	1	City of Wilmington , Downtown Business Associations, Property Owners	Business District or Tax Increment Finance (TIF) District
Locate more institutional anchors in the downtown core.			
Explore opportunities to locate additional institutional anchors in the downtown.	2	City of Wilmington , Wilmington Public Library District, Wilmington Area Historical Society	Public-Private Partnership
Support and expand tourism.			
Evaluate the viability of ecotourism.	1	Downtown Business Associations , City of Wilmington, Will County, Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway, Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie	Route 66 Association of Illinois; Heritage Corridor Convention & Visitors Bureau
Conduct a lodging demand study.	1		
Piggyback on other outdoor festivals, street fairs, and tours in the area.	1		
Develop a comprehensive marketing campaign for the downtown.	1		

Priority: 1 - Actions that have the highest priority; 2 - Actions that have secondary priority; Ongoing - Actions that have begun, including projects that are currently underway.

Chapter 6 TRANSPORTATION AND MOBILITY



The City and its partners will work together to create a comfortable and inviting environment so that Downtown Wilmington is easy to access for pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and freight.

Key Findings

The following represent the major takeaways derived from the existing conditions analysis and stakeholder engagement and form the basis for the recommendations to follow.

- **Downtown Wilmington provides excellent access to the region’s freight network.** IL Route 53 and IL Route 102 are Class II designated truck routes that connect to interstate roadways and serve nearby intermodal facilities including CenterPoint Intermodal Center in Joliet and Elwood and RidgePort Logistics Center in Wilmington. Capitalizing on these transportation assets has allowed Will County to develop as an intermodal hub.
- **Downtown Wilmington has a high volume of truck traffic, but average daily counts of commercial vehicles have decreased in recent years.** While both IL Route 53 and IL Route 102 carry more than 500 trucks per day, numbers dropped by nearly two thirds between 2007 and 2015.
- **Downtown Wilmington has a nearly complete network of sidewalks, but poor sidewalk condition and gaps in the connections and amenities for pedestrians discourage walking.** Although sidewalks are available on both sides of most roads in the study area, frequent curb cuts, proximity to fast-moving traffic, and lack of streetscaping elements can make walking uncomfortable and unsafe, particularly along IL Route 53.
- **Downtown Wilmington generally lacks bicycle infrastructure.** The regular flow of truck traffic along primary routes, including IL Route 53 and IL Route 102, presents challenges for bicycle and pedestrian transportation in Downtown Wilmington. The north portion of Island Park includes pavement markings to help bicyclists safely navigate the roadway and increase driver awareness of bicyclists.
- **Outreach participants identified parking as a major issue in Downtown Wilmington.** On-street parking spaces are said to be limited along North Water Street and off-street parking lots are underutilized. Some outreach participants said that the municipal parking lots located on Main Street and the island are underused because they are too far from downtown businesses and restaurants, and residents and visitors don’t want to walk. Others noted the lack of signage and thought visitors to the shopping district may be unaware of the two parking lots.

Address effects of regional freight traffic on the local community.

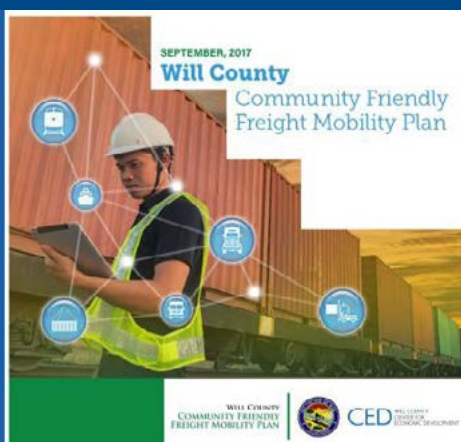
Will County is now the largest inland port in North America, connecting west coast ports by rail to the Midwest and serving a key role in Chicago's regional freight economy. While this has resulted in more jobs and a stronger economy, the unprecedented growth in the freight industry has strained local infrastructure and resources. In Wilmington, where two Class II truck routes (IL Route 53 and IL Route 102) pass through the downtown, the truck congestion generated by nearby intermodal facilities has also had a significant impact on local quality of life. It is recommended that the City and its partners support policies, programs, and projects that improve safety, reduce congestion, and coordinate land use and transportation planning. As logistics and warehousing development continues to expand, a long-term plan to identify alternative truck routes that would divert large trucks away from the downtown is desired.

Engage with Will County on regional truck flow issues

In 2017, Will County adopted the Community Friendly Freight Mobility Plan, which provides strategies and goals to guide freight policies and investments throughout Will County in a community-friendly manner. Will County is responsible for implementing the Freight Plan, but the freight industry, local governments, and community stakeholders should continue to help identify and prioritize freight-related needs. Wilmington should remain engaged with Will County to monitor implementation progress of the Freight Plan and ensure that Will County leadership has an understanding of the current freight-related issues facing the community. A number of local and sub-regional street improvements, as well as regionally significant transportation projects, should be followed.

Will County Community Friendly Freight Mobility Plan

In 2017, the Will County Board adopted the Will County Community Friendly Freight Mobility Plan. The Freight Plan, developed by Will County and the Will County Center for Economic Development, analyzes current and future freight issues and needs related to freight mobility, land-use integration, workforce development, education and training, and community livability. The planning process focused on public and stakeholder engagement, including the creation of a Freight Advisory Council, municipal and public meetings, interviews, surveys, and other outreach tools. The first of three open houses was held in Wilmington in May 2017 to solicit input related to freight and workforce programs, policies, and projects. Collectively, public feedback indicated the Freight Plan can help support communities in Will County by improving safety (local roads, highways, rail crossings, etc.), reducing congestion, and coordinating land use and transportation planning. The Freight Plan outlines goals, objectives, and performance measures, and provides a framework for prioritizing projects and programs related to Will County's freight network.

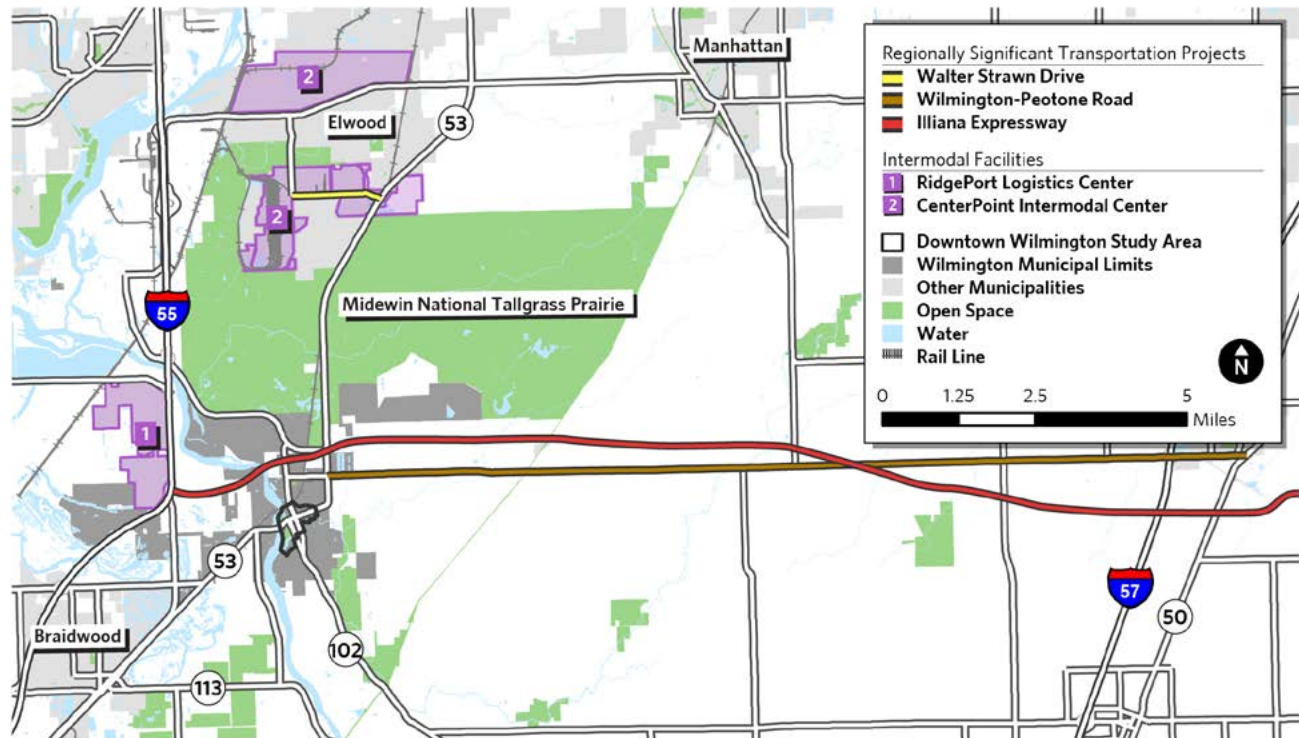


Illiana Expressway

The Illiana Expressway, a new limited-access facility running east-west through southern Will County that was proposed by IDOT, would help alleviate truck traffic on rural roads that is associated with intermodal facilities. However, the project is not currently moving forward, as the National Environmental Policy Act documentation under which the project could advance to construction was invalidated by federal court rulings in 2015 and 2016. Given the uncertainty surrounding construction of the Illiana, Will County, CMAP, and others are undertaking efforts to plan for an improve truck routing on the existing interstate and arterial network.

Improvements to Interstate 80 and Interstate 55 recommended in CMAP's new comprehensive plan for the region, the draft ON TO 2050 plan, will help address these needs while also fixing infrastructure in a state of disrepair, a focus of the plan's transportation investments. Improvements on Interstate 80 and Interstate 55 can also support the existing communities, residents, and jobs in the subregion. While the future of the Illiana is uncertain, it remains a project with regional significance that should be tracked locally.

Figure 6.1 Regionally Significant Transportation Projects



Wilmington-Peotone Road

Wilmington-Peotone Road is identified in the Freight Plan as a key freight corridor that is critical for the continued mobility of freight movement in Will County. In the absence of the Illiana, this route serves as the primary east-west connection (outside of Interstate 80) and requires upgrades to accommodate high truck volumes. Will County's Long Range Transportation Plan identifies this roadway but does not prioritize it for investment beyond intersection and spot improvements. The Freight Plan expands upon this project list to include widening the corridor to four lanes. Although the improvements to Wilmington-Peotone Road are not ranked as top-tier projects in either plan, and none are currently funded, upgrading this existing road provides a lower-cost solution than the Illiana Expressway to improve east-west connectivity across the County and to reduce truck traffic on local roads.

Walter Strawn Drive

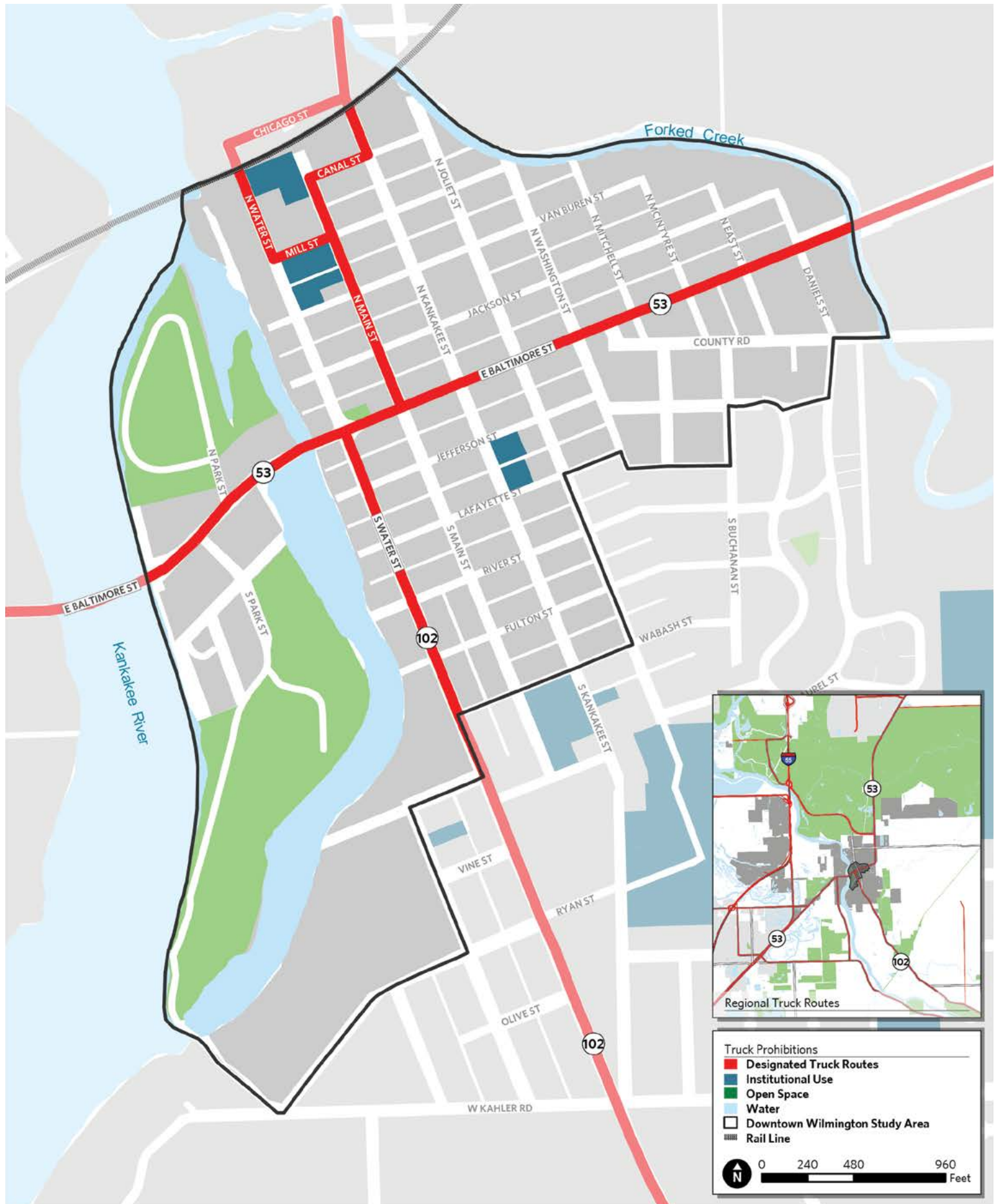
Despite the region's expanding intermodal facilities, truck volume in Downtown Wilmington has declined overall in recent years. The reduced truck volume is likely due to the closing of Walter Strawn Drive in Elwood in early 2015. Walter Strawn Drive served as the primary connector between CenterPoint's intermodal facilities and IL Route 53, and closing the rail crossing has diverted trucks to alternate routes. The Village of Elwood was the primary force seeking the closing of the crossing after railroad gates were crashed into 47 times - more than anywhere else in Illinois - in 2013. In March 2017, the Illinois Commerce Commission issued a proposed order for the permanent closing of the Walter Strawn Drive railroad crossing. The City of Wilmington should stay apprised of any potential changes to Walter Strawn Drive and communicate with IDOT to ensure that future changes do not negatively impact Wilmington.

Evaluate established truck routes and other prohibitions

Wilmington can help manage the impacts of truck traffic through its established truck routes and prohibitions. To this end, the City established vehicle weight limits, dimensions, and permits (Ordinance No. 17-08-15-02) in August 2017. The City also moved its truck permitting to an online permit application system, which allows for easy management of the entire permit process for both Wilmington and freight carriers. In the past, truck permitting was a slow process, involving phone calls and manual data entry by the City Engineer. The online permit system can be accessed through a link on the Wilmington Police Department's website.

Building on these important steps, the City should review and update its other truck-related ordinances to ensure that trucks travel safely through the downtown. The designated local truck routes listed under "Truck Prohibitions" in Chapter 70 of the City's Code of Ordinances should be evaluated as part of this effort. For example, Main Street, from IL Route 53 to Canal Street, is identified as a designated truck route in the current ordinance, but may not be sized for overweight vehicles. The City's designated truck routes should be coordinated with vehicle weight limits and dimensions to protect local roads from excessive cracks, potholes, and other damage.

Figure 6.2 Designated Truck Routes



Improve key pedestrian crossings

In Downtown Wilmington, IL Route 53 and IL Route 102 provide centrally located east-west and north-south routes through the community, but the high traffic volumes also create hazards for pedestrian connections through the downtown. Outside of the main intersection at IL Route 53, IL Route 102, and North Water Street, there are very few marked pedestrian crossings to allow pedestrians and bicyclists to travel safely across the main corridors. Improved crossings and other treatments to accommodate non-motorized travelers at intersections and crossing locations are needed to make IL Route 53 and IL Route 102 less of a barrier to pedestrians and bicyclists.



Pedestrian-activated hybrid beacons, such as the example pictured above, facilitate safe mid-block crossings and uncontrolled intersections.

Source: NACTO.org.

Install signalized crossings at Kankakee Street and North Park Street

With only one signalized intersection in Downtown Wilmington, pedestrians often attempt to cross major roadways at mid-block or other uncontrolled locations in order to avoid walking a significant distance to the main downtown intersection. Throughout this planning process, stakeholders expressed a desire to see new signalized pedestrian crossings at critical points along IL Route 53. Kankakee Street and North Park Street were identified as priority locations for their proximity to many of the City’s major destinations, including the Wilmington Public Library District, local schools, and Island Park. The City should work with IDOT to evaluate the installation of signalized intersections at these two crossing locations.

A traffic impact and signal warrant study should be conducted at both Kankakee Street and North Park Street in accordance with the Manual for Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) guidelines, to consider future traffic volumes, pedestrian and bicycle movements, and safety concerns. If new signalized crossings are approved, signal timing should be coordinated to provide for the maximum efficiency of traffic flow along IL Route 53.

If signalized crossings cannot be installed at these two locations, pedestrian hybrid beacons should be considered as an alternative. The pedestrian hybrid beacon is intended to stop vehicular traffic when a pedestrian activates the signal and intends to cross. It provides a high-intensity protected pedestrian crossing at unsignalized intersections or mid-block locations with high traffic volumes, and minimizes delay for vehicular traffic. Hybrid beacons should include accessible pedestrian signals with a locator tone to inform visually impaired pedestrians that activation of the signal is required to cross the street and to indicate onset of the WALK interval.

Implement crosswalk improvements in strategic locations

In addition to providing signalized crossings at Kankakee Street and North Park Street, the City of Wilmington should coordinate with IDOT to make crosswalk improvements at these locations, as well as other key intersections along IL Route 53 and IL Route 102. High-visibility crosswalks should be installed to make pedestrians more visible to drivers and to indicate preferred crossing locations along the main corridors in downtown. The City should follow the high-visibility crosswalk guidelines detailed in the MUTCD.

Where crosswalks currently exist, but are marked with a standard treatment (two white stripes that delineate the sides of the pedestrian walking area), continental markings (wide stripes parallel to the curb for the length of the crossing) should be added to make them high-visibility crosswalks. The side stripes may remain, since removal is costly, but the side stripes should not be maintained. The main downtown intersection should be prioritized for this new treatment.



High-visibility crosswalks typically make use of longitudinal or “continental” pavement markings, which are highly visible to approaching traffic.

Source: Dan Burden, pedbikeimages.org.

Use traffic calming techniques at the main downtown intersection

Although the main downtown intersection at IL Route 53, IL Route 102, and North Water Street features defined crosswalks and pedestrian signals, it is recommended that the City work with IDOT to make intersection improvements aimed at increasing pedestrian comfort and safety. The City should consider reducing the length of the radii defining the southeast corner of the intersection, where two of the longest crossing distances within the downtown meet. Constructing new curbs with minimized curb radii can improve pedestrian safety by reducing crossing distances and slowing turning traffic. Updating this corner could be accompanied by additional changes that make this high pedestrian traffic area more attractive, including the installation of bump-outs at the northwest and southwest corners, increased landscaping, and more pedestrian or bicycle amenities.

While a smaller curb radius expands the pedestrian area, creating a more compact intersection may adversely affect the turning movements of large vehicles. The geometry and design will need to consider trucks and buses turning right from IL Route 102 onto IL Route 53.

Strengthen local bicycle facilities

Bicycle network and infrastructure modifications can help to increase bicycling and walking both for transportation and for recreation, while helping to achieve key municipal goals related to sustainability, equity, safety, health, community character, and economic development. The City should strengthen local bicycling facilities by taking the following steps. It should be noted that all of the infrastructure recommendations presented here are planning-level and conceptual in nature and will require further engineering study in order to determine potential constraints, feasibility, design details, and full traffic impacts, as well as the costs associated with engineering, construction, and maintenance.

Install marked bike lanes along local roads

Bike mobility within the residential areas of downtown and on the island is adequate. However, travel along and across the main corridors can be problematic due to physical barriers, such as high traffic roadways and lack of bicycle infrastructure. Given the heavy truck traffic and narrow rights-of-way along IL Route 53 and IL Route 102, shared on-street lanes are not advised and neither on-street nor off-street bike lanes can be physically accommodated along these routes.

As an alternative to using IL Route 53 and IL Route 102, a downtown bikeway network should be developed on local streets. It is recommended that the City install marked bike lanes along routes that provide key bike connections to major destinations in the downtown and complement the potential future sidewalk and crosswalk improvements as identified in this chapter. In addition, the bike network should be connected, as closed loop bikeway systems encourage recreational use among residents. Key routes that should be prioritized include:

- Kankakee Street;
- Main Street;
- Jackson Street;
- Park Street;
- Barnes Drive; and
- Kahler Road.

Connect to regional bicycle routes

Residents and other stakeholders have expressed a desire to connect Wilmington to regional trails and open space, such as Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie to the north and Kankakee River State Park to the south. Previous planning efforts highlighted the benefits of developing a coordinated trail system, including increased economic development potential and recreational and transportation opportunities for residents and visitors. Wilmington should support the development a long-range, multijurisdictional plan to connect the downtown to greenway and trail corridors and neighboring municipalities.

To implement a connected bikeway network, Wilmington should prioritize the development of bicycle facilities that connect with IL Route 53 and align with future roadway improvements along this corridor. IDOT intends to establish a 10-foot-wide multi-use path from Doris Avenue in Joliet to West Mississippi Road in Elwood as part of a resurfacing project, and further improvements are being planned for IL Route 53 further south to West Arsenal Road in Wilmington. Given this investment, it is recommended that the City prioritize the installation of a bike trail or multi-use path along West Peotone Road/East Kankakee River Drive to connect its proposed local bikeway system in Downtown Wilmington to IL Route 53 and other regional bicycle routes.

Additional planning work is needed to define the overall vision for a regional bikeway, identify preferred routes and corridor alignments, analyze roadway capacity, and offer design recommendations. This effort will involve significant collaboration among local governments, state and federal agencies, and other local, regional, and state organizations. The City has already engaged many of these groups on the topic of developing a regional bikeway system. Wilmington should continue to convene this group on an ongoing basis to move the project forward, and to keep up-to-date on any new local bicycle routes, lanes, or facilities installed in the area. Additional partners should be identified based on a developing list of attractions and linkages.

Increase bicycle parking

Once bicyclists have arrived in Downtown Wilmington, the provision of adequate bicycle parking will help them visit commercial, civic, and open space amenities. Currently, Downtown Wilmington has limited bicycle parking facilities. Bike racks are located on the island at the west end of the Millrace Foot Bridge and in front of the Mar Theatre on Main Street. Additional bicycle parking should be installed at other major destinations in the downtown, such as along the North Water Street shopping district and Island Park. The Wilmington Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Merchants Association, and other organizations could distribute a survey to identify locations where bicycle parking is desired. Temporary bicycle parking could also be useful during special community events, such as the Water Street Market or Catfish Days festival. There are many techniques used for temporary bicycle parking, including bike valet systems with volunteers or portable bike racks.

In addition, the City should consider adding bicycle parking to its parking requirements for new development. The U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC), under their Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) for Neighborhood Development rating system, provides guidelines based on the number of employees, square footage of retail space, and number of multifamily units.

Encourage community walking and biking education programs and initiatives

Once well-designed pedestrian and bicycle facilities and roadway treatments are installed, communities can take additional steps to promote walking and biking as healthy and enjoyable ways to travel, recreate, and exercise. A downtown walking and biking map, including the locations of parking lots and places of interest for shopping and dining, would be a good way to introduce residents to the idea of walking or biking to local destinations and to encourage visitors to experience the community on foot or bike rather than by car. Additionally, with the planned installation of a new bikeway throughout the downtown, motorists and bicyclists will require additional education to learn to safely share the road. Opportunities for routine and repeated exposure to safety messaging should be encouraged. Special events, such as community bike rides, “ride your bike to work week,” and “walk/ride to school days,” should be promoted and, when possible, sponsored by the City and its partners, including the downtown business associations.



Students pedal to school during a recent National Bike to School Day in Wheaton, IL. Before heading off to school, the students who gathered in a nearby park watched a watermelon smashing demonstration to learn the importance of wearing a helmet while riding a bike.

Source: Daily Herald.

Figure 6.3 Pedestrian and Bicycle Network Improvements



Develop a parking management strategy

Parking was discussed during each outreach event with many identifying parking supply and access as fundamental challenges facing Downtown Wilmington. Several business owners claimed that finding parking, particularly along North Water Street, is such a hassle that the downtown has lost potential business as a result. Others noted that better signage directing visitors to nearby parking lots would resolve the issue.

Managing an adequate supply of parking is essential to attracting customers and new businesses to Downtown Wilmington. Before adding additional off-street parking spaces, the City should look into different management approaches to fully utilize the existing supply of parking. A managed approach can also reduce the costs of constructing additional parking, since parking spaces can cost between \$3,000 for a surface space to \$20,000-35,000 for a parking garage space. In addition to the cost to developers to construct the spaces, there are ‘opportunity costs’ of the land used for parking and external costs, such as environmental impacts. The following activities outline key steps in developing a managed approach to parking. CMAP’s Parking Strategies to Support Livable Communities provides further information on each of these steps.

Conduct a parking utilization study

Understanding how the existing parking is being used is an essential first step to developing a parking strategy. The City should hire a transportation consultant to conduct a parking utilization study, which can identify underutilized parking, high demand areas, and opportunities for sharing parking. A parking utilization study includes a parking survey to determine how much parking exists (public and private) and how it is used during different times (e.g. on a weekday evening and on the weekend during peak demand). The survey results should be analyzed in relation to existing and future land use in the downtown, and then used to assess the adequacy of existing parking capacity and parking management. The City should then implement any recommended management or policy changes to improve existing facilities.

Parking demand will evolve over time as new residents and visitors are attracted to Wilmington, so it is important for the City to conduct parking surveys on a regular basis. Surveys typically focus only on the number of cars at certain parking spaces throughout the day, but can also include business owner and resident input on satisfaction and ease of parking.

Promote use of existing off-street parking

Business owners expressed during the planning process that some residents and visitors may not be aware of the existing parking available to them at nearby municipal parking lots. One parking lot is located on the island, just north of IL Route 53, with direct access to Downtown Wilmington via IL Route 53 and the Millrace Foot Bridge. Another municipal parking lot is located along Main Street, one block northeast of downtown’s main intersection. The City should highlight available parking and relevant time restrictions in a number of ways, including on-line and printed maps, wayfinding signage, and signage at the given parking locations, as well as in marketing materials and tourism websites.

If it is determined additional parking is needed, other City-owned property in the study area should be considered before privately-owned properties are redeveloped as surface parking lots. The existing parking area at Old City Hall and the former Wilmington Police Department property, which are both located in close proximity to North Water Street, are ideal sites for new designated parking areas. As a long-term approach, public parking could also be included in the development of a new public institution in the downtown as part of a public-private partnership. As discussed in *Chapter 3: Land Use and Development*, any new parking facility should incorporate appropriate landscaping and could even function as a demonstration project for incorporating stormwater management into parking lot design.

Re-stripe on-street parking along North Water Street

Re-stripping is needed to better define existing on-street parking spaces throughout the study area, particularly where parallel parking and angled parking are intermixed along North Water Street. The City should prioritize this action as part of the maintenance performed by the Public Works Department.

Although this Downtown Plan recommends maintaining the current configuration of on-street parking stalls on North Water Street, the City may develop a new parking configuration in the future. In 2011, the City prepared three scenarios for new parking configurations along North Water Street between IL Route 53 and Mill Street. These scenarios aimed to increase the total number of parking stalls and address safety issues related to this corridor's narrow right-of-way. Two of the options replaced all parallel stalls with angled stalls and converted North Water Street from a two-way to a one-way street (one option showing one-way traffic heading northbound and the other southbound). The third option replaced the existing angled stalls with parallel stalls, which reduced the overall number of parking spaces from 60 to 47, but allowed for wider travel lane widths. An open house was held to present the three scenarios to the public, but the planning process was later paused due to lack of funding and no preferred scenario was identified. Given the function of the downtown, the Downtown Plan strongly supports retaining two-way traffic flow along North Water Street. Two-way traffic improves access, traffic circulation, and wayfinding for motorists.

Update parking requirements

The City should consider updating the existing parking requirements in its zoning ordinance to create standards that are more compatible with the development pattern and vision for Downtown Wilmington. For example, the zoning ordinance currently requires all parallel parking spaces to be at least 22 feet deep and 9 feet wide – a standard dimension much larger than what is required in modern ordinances (e.g., 18 feet deep and 8 feet wide for compact cars). Adopting these more modern spacing requirements will help ensure that the maximum amount of off-street parking is provided for future development in the downtown. All off-street parking dimensions, as well as the amount of parking that is required for uses in the City's commercial districts, should be assessed.

If off-street parking dimensions are updated, the City could apply those standards to on-street parking through a re-stripping project. Reduced parking space dimensions could yield an additional parking space along portions of North Water Street, where additional parking is said to be needed.

Implementation

The Implementation Action table provided here should be used as a starting point for City staff to prioritize Downtown Plan recommendations and track implementation progress.

Table 6.1 Transportation and Mobility Implementation Action

Strategy	Priority	Lead and Partners	Resources
Address effects of regional freight traffic on the local community.			
Engage with Will County on regional truck flow issues.	Ongoing	City of Wilmington , IDOT	CMAP's Regional Strategic Freight Direction ¹
Evaluate established truck routes and other prohibitions.	1		
Improve key pedestrian crossing.			
Install signalized crossings at Kankakee Street and North Park Street.	1	City of Wilmington , IDOT	Illinois Transportation Alternatives Program (ITEP) ² ; Surface Transportation Program (STP) ³
Implement crosswalk improvements in strategic locations.	1		
Use traffic calming techniques at the main downtown intersection.	1		
Strengthen local bicycle facilities.			
Install marked bike lanes along local roads.	1	City of Wilmington , Downtown Business Associations, Wilmington	Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) ⁴ ; ITEP; Statewide Planning and Research Funds ⁵ ; STP; Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) ⁶ ; Active Transportation Alliance ⁷
Connect to regional bicycle routes.	1	Island Park District, Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway, Will County,	
Increase bicycle parking.	1	Will County Governmental League, Will County Forest Preserve, IDOT, IDNR, Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie	
Encourage community walking and biking education programs and initiatives.	2		
Develop a parking management strategy.			
Conduct a parking utilization study.	1	City of Wilmington , Downtown Business Associations, Outside Consultant	CMAP's Parking Strategies to Support Livable Communities ⁸
Promote the use of existing off-street parking.	1		
Re-stripe on-street parking along North Water Street.	1		
Update parking requirements.	2		

Priority: 1 - Actions that have the highest priority; 2 - Actions that have secondary priority; Ongoing - Actions that have begun, including projects that are currently underway.

¹CMAP's Regional Strategic Freight Initiative. http://www.cmap.illinois.gov/documents/10180/826017/FINAL+Regional+Strategic+Freight+Direction+with+cover_2-6-18.pdf/88a957e1-249b-4b54-d093-f53b144ee102.

²Illinois Transportation Alternatives Program (ITEP) provides funding for community-based projects that expand travel choices and enhance the transportation experience by improving the cultural, historic, aesthetic, and environmental aspects of our transportation infrastructure. ITEP is designed to promote and develop alternative transportation options, including bike and pedestrian travel, along with streetscape beautification. The federal funds are awarded competitively, and projects must be related to surface transportation. <http://www.idot.illinois.gov/transportation-system/local-transportation-partners/county-engineers-and-local-public-agencies/funding-opportunities/ITEP>.

³Surface Transportation Program-Locally Programmed (STP) funds are allocated to coordinating regional councils to be used for roadway and roadway related items. STP funds may be used for a variety of project types including roadway rehabilitation, reconstruction and restoration, intersection improvements, traffic signage improvements, and green infrastructure funding. <http://www.cmap.illinois.gov/about/involvement/committees/advisory-committees/council-of-mayors/surface-transportation-program>.

⁴Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) funds surface transportation improvements design to improve air quality and mitigate congestion. CMAQ funds may be used for a variety of projects types including transit improvements, traffic flow improvements, bicycle facilities, alternative fuels and vehicles and cleaner emissions technologies. www.cmap.illinois.gov/mobility/strategic-investment/cmaq.

⁵Statewide Planning and Research funds are administered by IDOT and are used to support planning and research activities related to the state's Long Range Transportation Plan. <http://www.idot.illinois.gov/transportation-system/transportation-management/planning/index>.

⁶Transportation Alternatives Program. Provides funding for non-motorized transportation, specifically bicycle facilities that help complete the Regional Greenways and Trails Plan. www.cmap.illinois.gov/mobility/strategic-investment/transportation-alternatives

⁷Active Transportation Alliance's Walk Bike Every Town suburban advocacy program. <http://activetrans.org/our-work/bicycling/bike-walk-every-town>.

⁸CMAP's Parking Strategies to Support Livable Communities. <http://www.cmap.illinois.gov/documents/10180/87301/StepByStep3.pdf/39fa6452-2e19-4691-87bd-abac8b06c248>.

Chapter 7

NATURAL RESOURCES



Downtown Wilmington will leverage its access to natural amenities to become an ecotourism destination. The City and its partners will also use green infrastructure strategies to address a range of environmental challenges, including flooding, erosion, extreme heat, and climate change.

Key Findings

The following represent the major takeaways derived from the existing conditions analysis and stakeholder engagement and form the basis for the recommendations to follow.

- **The majority of open space is located within the 28-acre Island Park.** Downtown Wilmington is situated at the hub of several valuable natural assets within the region. The City directly borders Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie and is only a short drive from six forest preserves and more than 5,500 acres of land maintained by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. Island Park is the primary park in Downtown Wilmington and contains a playground, baseball fields, fishing areas, and picnic pavilions.
- **The Kankakee River provides Downtown Wilmington with drinking water, wildlife habitat, and a number of recreation activities, including fishing, canoeing, and kayaking.** The river's conservation and quality-of-life benefits are overshadowed by the presence of two dangerous, high-risk dams, which pose a significant threat to public safety. The City of Wilmington is the primary owner of both Wilmington Dam and the millrace dam, but state funding for a removal or reconstruction project is currently unavailable. The uncertain future of the dams has limited the City's ability to plan for the future of the downtown area.
- **The presence of the Kankakee River along the western edge of the central business district could be better utilized.** Engagement efforts with the community have found a strong desire to build better connections between the riverfront and downtown through improved amenities.
- **Downtown Wilmington is located at the center of a large network of high-quality open space that includes Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie and a patchwork of forest preserves and other public lands.** Promotion of these resources will not only improve the health and vitality of the downtown, it can lead to expanded ecotourism and sustainable economic development. These natural areas also provide valuable ecosystem services, including stormwater management, erosion control, water purification, and critical wildlife habitat.
- **Flooding and erosion pose serious challenges to Island Park and the millrace.** The south end of the island is particularly vulnerable to overbank flooding, which may damage important public infrastructure, including local roads and the City's emergency groundwater well.



Establish a plan for the long-term future of Wilmington Dam

Wilmington Dam poses a major public safety hazard and needs to be addressed before the City can effectively market itself as a vibrant riverfront community. Two options have been proposed to improve safety at the dam: full dam removal and dam reconstruction with the addition of a kayak-friendly bypass. The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) supports the full removal of both Wilmington Dam and the millrace dam. Many local residents have expressed a preference for reconstructing the face of Wilmington Dam to eliminate the reverse roller and modifying the millrace dam to allow for kayak and canoe passage.

Progress on this issue has stalled in recent years due to state fiscal constraints. City officials and residents should work with state agencies and elected officials to reach a decision on the dam's future. Land ownership, project funding, environmental impacts, and future recreational facilities should all be considered when determining a preferred scenario and planning next steps. Local officials should work with Wilmington's congressional representatives to identify potential federal funding sources for a dam project.

Option 1: Dam removal

The State of Illinois supports the full removal of Wilmington Dam, and legislation has been passed allowing the state to assume ownership of the structure, contingent on a prior agreement that the City will not contest a future decision to remove the structure. According to IDNR, removing the dam would improve public safety and aquatic habitat without negatively impacting flood control, navigation, or power generation at Braidwood Generating Station. Some residents have expressed concern that removing the primary dam structure may cause the millrace to run dry, though IDNR's analysis suggests this is unlikely. No comprehensive cost estimates have been conducted, but the cost of dam removal and subsequent maintenance is expected to be lower than that of dam reconstruction.

Option 2: Dam reconstruction with bypass

The City of Wilmington and its local stakeholders have expressed a preference for the reconstruction of Wilmington Dam, combined with modifications to the millrace to allow for kayak and canoe passage. This option would maintain the current water levels in both the main branch of the Kankakee River and the millrace, and convert the smaller channel into a safe, attractive recreation area. The downstream face of the reconstructed Wilmington Dam would feature several reinforced steps, rather than a single, large drop. The millrace dam would be replaced with a series of stone riffles resembling a natural rapids segment. Stone riffles are stepped pools separated by embedded rocks or boulders. Dam reconstruction, though significantly more expensive than dam removal, would maintain the primary dam while eliminating the reverse roller, allowing for some passage of aquatic wildlife and creating new recreational opportunities.

Case Study: Hofmann Dam, Villages of Riverside and Lyons, Illinois

Hofmann Dam, which spanned the Des Plaines River in the Villages of Riverside and Lyons, was removed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in the summer of 2012. Similar to Wilmington Dam, the Hofmann Dam structure posed serious public safety risks and created a hard barrier for aquatic wildlife. Removing the dam converted the upstream lake back into a natural river, allowing boaters and aquatic life to pass through the area. Within one year of removing the dam, ten previously absent fish species were recorded upstream of the former structure, including pike, rockbass, and channel catfish.

In total, the removal project cost \$7.3 million. Two thirds of the total (\$4.8 million) came from federal sources, while state and local agencies paid the remaining third (\$2.5 million).



Members of the Hofmann Dam River Rats released 126 smallmouth bass to the Des Plaines River, above and below the former dam site, in October 2012 to help jump-start the population.

Source: Riverside-Brookfield Landmark.

Case Study: Glen D. Palmer Dam, City of Yorkville, Illinois

Built in 1952, the Glen D. Palmer Dam (also known as Yorkville Dam) spans the Fox River in Yorkville, Illinois. The structure is comparable in height to both Wilmington Dam and Hofmann Dam and, similar to these structures, gradually developed a dangerous reverse roller that led to numerous deaths.

After several studies were conducted, state agencies and local stakeholders determined the best solution to address public safety, flooding, and ecosystem health was to replace the conventional dam. The dam structure was redesigned to include a stone riffle system, allowing for fish and kayak passage. A Denil fish ladder was later added to the dam's north abutment to further encourage fish passage.

Since the dam reconstruction was completed in 2011, no drownings have occurred at the structure. The bypass channel has also emerged as a key aspect of Yorkville's downtown revitalization efforts, having become a popular destination for paddlers from across the region.



The Marge Cline Whitewater Park at Bicentennial Riverfront Park is a 1,100-foot-long bypass chute, built during reconstruction of the Glen D. Palmer Dam. The Illinois Whitewater Festival is held at this location in conjunction with Yorkville's annual Ribs on the River event.

Source: Illinois Whitewater Festival.

Replace the millrace dam with stone riffles

After a major flood event in the early 1990s caused the millrace dam to fail, an emergency dam was constructed upstream. This structure, consisting of large, concrete blocks, was not intended to be permanent but remains in place today. The temporary dam regulates water flow in the millrace, but its steep elevation change blocks fish passage and creates a considerable hazard for paddlers and anglers.

It is recommended that the millrace dam be removed and replaced with a stone riffle system. Installing riffles, which resemble small-scale rapids, would improve water safety, facilitate the passage of fish and other aquatic organisms, and maintain current water levels in the millrace. In addition to their many ecological functions, riffles also allow for kayak and canoe navigation. Newly installed stone riffles could help Wilmington realize the ecotourism potential of the river's National Water Trail designation.

Both the current configuration of Wilmington Dam and a hypothetical, reconstructed dam are compatible with a stone riffle system. Additional studies should be conducted to determine the impact that a dam removal project would have on the viability of a riffle system. A previous study estimated the cost to install five riffles at \$782,000, and a riffle system and shoreline stabilization efforts, including wetland restoration, was estimated at \$1.12 million. Financing such a project would require a mix of grant funding, as well as fundraising from area donors. The City could engage corporate tenants of the nearby RidgePort Logistics Center about becoming "corporate citizens" and providing financial support to projects like this that contribute to local community development. The establishment of a Business District should also be explored as a potential funding source.

Install a boat launch and canoe portage

It is recommended that a formal boat launch and canoe portage (or bypass) be installed on the island to improve Wilmington's recreational facilities and bring more boating enthusiasts to the downtown. The Island Park Vision Plan recommends a boat launch be located along the western bank of the millrace, south of IL Route 53 and near an existing canoe livery. This location provides ideal flow conditions (more gentle than the river's main branch) and is aligned with the proposed stone riffle rapids course. However, the existing millrace dam presents a considerable hazard to boaters. Ample signage should be installed to make boaters aware of the millrace's current, as well as rock outcroppings or other barriers to safe passage.

Canoe portages are designated land routes for bypassing potentially dangerous portions of a river. Currently, there are no designated routes around either of the City's two dams, and both structures are impassible for kayaks, canoes, and other boats. Designating efficient routes with suitable exit and reentry locations would greatly improve public safety, reduce erosion, and create a more enjoyable boating experience. The open space area north of the Island Park parking lot could serve as a portage for both structures. The portage should feature convenient, accessible ramps and ample, river-facing signage for boaters in both directions.



A Climate Vulnerability Assessment for Downtown Wilmington

In partnership with the American Planning Association, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and Indiana-Illinois Sea Grant, CMAP developed a climate vulnerability assessment during the process to create the Wilmington Downtown Plan. Climate vulnerability refers to the degree to which a community is exposed to climate change, sensitive to its impacts, and able to adapt to those impacts. The assessment, included as an appendix to the Downtown Plan, explores climate-related hazards affecting Downtown Wilmington, as well as the community's projected future exposure and adaptive capacity. The findings of the assessment informed many of the recommendations included in this chapter of the Wilmington Downtown Plan.

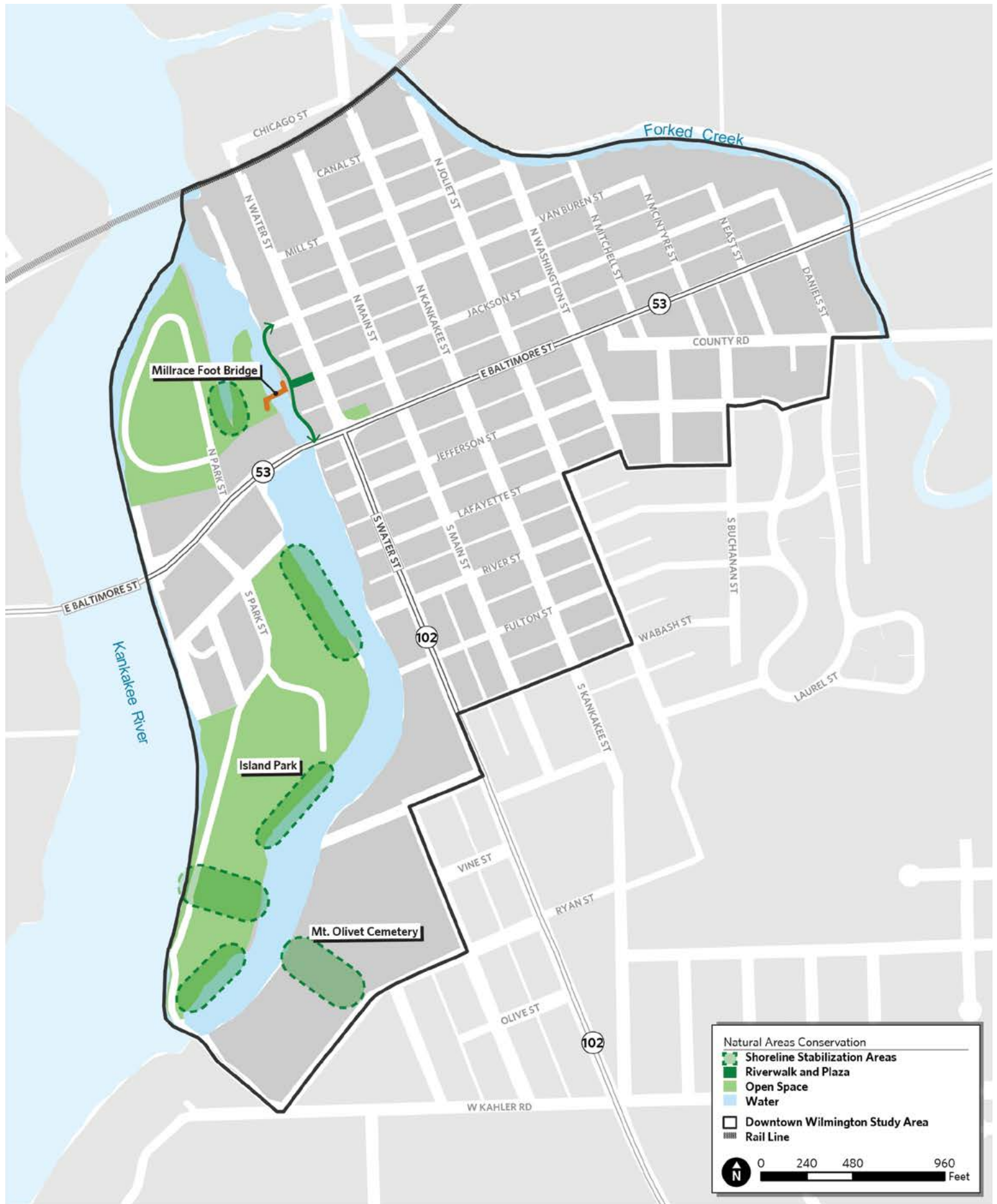


Stabilize the island's shoreline using native vegetation

Wilmington's island is highly susceptible to riverine flooding from the millrace and Kankakee River. The most severe flooding occurs in the southern portion of Island Park, just south of the baseball fields. Flooding in this location is likely due to a combination of high water levels in the millrace and discharge from a creek located in Mt. Olivet Cemetery on the eastern bank of the millrace. At times, floodwaters in this area fully cross the island, forming a channel that connects the millrace to the main branch of the Kankakee River. When this occurs, the City is forced to close the island until the water recedes, reducing park access for residents and visitors.

Frequent flooding also leads to erosion along the path of the channel, which threatens the integrity of the island and may increase maintenance costs for nearby roads and other infrastructure. To better protect the island and its shoreline from erosion, deep-rooted grasses and sedges should be planted in the areas most susceptible to flooding (Figure 7.3). Before Downtown Wilmington was developed, these plants played a critical role in protecting the island against floodwaters. Today, shallow-rooted turf grasses, which increase the likelihood of erosion, have replaced native wetland species.

Figure 7.3 Priority shoreline stabilization areas





Consolidate and formalize parking

During festivals, baseball games, and other high-volume events, a lack of identifiable parking on the south end of Island Park can lead some visitors to park in fields or other open space areas. This informal parking on the island, especially near the baseball fields and along the millrace, can increase soil compaction and exacerbate shoreline erosion. Addressing this challenge will require a combination of more formalized parking options and new signage.

A number of designated parking areas are located in and around Island Park, including parking spaces along South Park Street and a municipal parking lot located on the island, just north of IL Route 53. Signs should be posted in high-traffic areas to direct visitors to these designated parking areas. Enhancements to the crosswalk connecting the north and south ends of the island across IL Route 53 would further increase the effectiveness of the parking lot. To discourage parking in areas susceptible to erosion, the City should use parking blocks, railings, and other tools to prevent vehicles from entering.

Leverage the riverwalk project to enhance natural systems

As described in *Chapter 3: Land Use and Development*, the creation of a riverwalk along the eastern bank of the millrace emerged as a favorable project to better connect businesses along North Water Street to the river and expand waterfront activities. A future riverwalk should enhance the natural habitat and water quality along the river. Given the proximity to the water, it is also important to ensure that site improvements do not increase flooding in other areas.

To accomplish these goals, a future riverwalk should utilize native landscaping to improve riparian habitat, protect the area from erosion, and create an attractive environment for people using the trail. Additionally, pedestrian amenities, such as walkways and benches, should be designed to withstand moderate flooding.

Increase the use of green infrastructure

Green infrastructure is critical to maintaining a high quality of life for Wilmington residents and ensuring that the downtown continues to draw visitors from across the region and beyond. A suite of interventions that use natural processes, such as street trees, rain gardens, and bioswales, should be used in strategic locations throughout Downtown Wilmington to alleviate the effects of flooding, extreme heat, and air and noise pollution.

Wilmington’s tree canopy is one of the City’s most important green infrastructure assets. To maximize the benefits of Downtown Wilmington’s urban forest, the City and its partners should increase both the number and diversity of street trees along IL Route 53, IL Route 102, and North Water Street. Rain gardens can also be effective tools to reduce urban flooding and should be installed along the segment of IL Route 53 crossing the island, where a large parking lot, combined with an inadequate drainage system, contributes to periodic road ponding. Additional planning should be conducted to determine if the large, unvegetated planter located on the north side of IL Route 53 is an appropriate location for a rain garden.



The addition of parking lot perimeter landscaping along IL Route 53 would contribute to a more comfortable pedestrian environment and enhance the overall aesthetic appeal of the corridor.



A series of rain gardens helps with surface runoff from the parking lot of Holy Angels in Aurora, IL.
Source: RainReady: Center for Neighborhood Technology, 2017.

Update stream and wetland protection standards

Downtown Wilmington encompasses a wide array of natural resources, which contribute to community character and provide a number of ecosystem services, such as clean air and water, habitat and biodiversity, and flood control. One way that the City can help to protect environmentally sensitive and vulnerable areas is through its development regulations. Wilmington's zoning ordinance already provides specific standards for the City's flood prone areas under the Lowland Conservancy Overlay District. The standards in this overlay district were developed by the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission (now CMAP) in 1988 as a model stream and wetland protection ordinance, and should be assessed and updated as needed to ensure that modern best practices are used to meet the City's unique environmental needs. A revised zoning ordinance could also include site-scale development standards such as landscape and parking lot design that promote runoff infiltration to help manage stormwater.

The existing zoning ordinance defines the overlay district boundary as all lots within regulated wetlands and streams, as well as lots lying wholly or in part within areas serving as floodplain or stormwater storage areas. The Lowland Conservancy Overlay District should be mapped and included in the zoning ordinance to make it easy for users to find all of the standards that may apply to potential new development.

Move the City's emergency groundwater well to higher ground

The City of Wilmington maintains an emergency groundwater well, which can be used as an alternative source of drinking water in the event of a water-supply emergency, such as a severe drought, river contamination, or disruption of the primary water-intake. The emergency groundwater well is located in the southern portion of Island Park where the most severe flooding in Downtown Wilmington takes place. During high-water conditions, the City loses access to the well until water recedes, and during particularly severe floods, the well house may be vulnerable to damage. To avoid these disruptions in service and property damage, the City should prioritize the relocation of the well to higher ground.

Implementation

The Implementation Action table provided here should be used as a starting point for City staff to prioritize Downtown Plan recommendations and track implementation progress.

Table 7.1 Transportation and Mobility Implementation Action

Strategy	Priority	Lead and Partners	Resources
Establish a plan for the long-term future of Wilmington Dam.	1	City of Wilmington , IDNR, State of Illinois, Outside Consultant, Corporate Citizens, Property Owners, Center for Neighborhood Technology, Illinois State Water Survey (ISWS), Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA)	<i>Additional Information</i> CMAP's Integrating Green Infrastructure Strategy Paper ¹ ; IEPA's Green Infrastructure Opportunities that Arise During Municipal Operations ² ; Natural Resources Conservation Service - Illinois ³ <i>Potential Funding Sources</i> National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's (NFWF) Five Star and Urban Waters Restoration Program ⁴
Replace the millrace dam with stone riffles.	2		
Stabilize the island's shoreline using native vegetation.	1		
Install boat launch and canoe portage.	2		
Consolidate and formalize parking on the island.	2		
Leverage the riverwalk project to enhance natural systems.	2		
Increase use of green infrastructure.	1		
Update stream and wetland protection standards.	1		
Move the City's emergency groundwater well to higher ground.	Ongoing		

Priority: 1 - Actions that have the highest priority; 2 - Actions that have secondary priority; Ongoing - Actions that have begun, including projects that are currently underway.

¹CMAP's Integrating Green Infrastructure Strategy Paper. <http://www.cmap.illinois.gov/documents/10180/506370/Green+Infrastructure+Strategy+Paper/65c473f3-7153-4d60-ade1-982d32a3d65f>.

²IEPA's Green Infrastructure Opportunities that Arise During Municipal Operations. https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-09/documents/green_infrastructure_roadshow.pdf.

³Illinois Native Plan Guide. https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/il/technical/?cid=nrcs141p2_030727#strmbnkstab.

⁴The Five Star and Urban Waters Restoration program, offered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation in partnership with several federal agencies and other funders, awards approximately \$2 million in grants nationwide. The program seeks to develop community capacity to sustain natural resources by funding local partnerships that aim to improve water quality, watersheds, and wildlife habitat. Program priorities include on-the-ground restoration of wetlands and riparian areas, environmental outreach and education, community partnerships, measurable results, and sustainability. <http://www.nfwf.org/fivestar/Pages/2018rfp.aspx>.

Chapter 8 NEXT STEPS

DR. ERLANDSON'S OFFICE
New Location in New
BUILDING EAST of
LEGION HALL



The success of the Wilmington Downtown Plan is the combined responsibility of City leadership and staff, businesses, community organizations, and residents. This chapter provides a prioritized list of steps that should be undertaken within the next two years to begin implementation of the plan.

Leadership

While the Wilmington Downtown Plan depends on the actions of numerous partners, City leadership and staff remain primarily responsible for all items. The City Administrator is expected to lead implementation of the recommendations outlined in the plan and should work collaboratively with project partners, potential investors, and other government agencies to advance plan objectives. The City Administrator is the chief administrative officer, responsible for carrying out the City Council’s goals and policies, and works with all departments. The City Administrator, with support from the City Engineer, should begin implementing the short-term work plan immediately following plan adoption. CMAP is available to assist with certain activities, such as providing assistance with capacity building, grant applications, or reaching out to partner organizations.

Partners

The previous chapters have included Implementation Action tables that indicate potential public and private sector partners that should be engaged in each project or activity. Members of the project Steering Committee, many of whom are involved with the community organizations listed below, are particularly well suited to shepherd implementation activities in the downtown. These partners represent opportunities for cooperation, but do not indicate a commitment or responsibility on their behalf. This list is not exhaustive and additional partners should also be considered.

- Downtown Merchants Association
- Wilmington Area Historical Society
- Wilmington Chamber of Commerce
- Wilmington Fire Protection District
- Wilmington Island Park District
- Wilmington Lions Club
- Wilmington Public Library District

Short-term work plan

There are numerous recommendations that can be acted on relatively quickly after the Wilmington Downtown Plan is adopted. These immediate or short-term implementation items will ideally be addressed within the next two years following plan adoption. Many of these items, particularly those related to regulatory updates, are foundational steps that will help to provide the right climate for future longer-term strategies. For example, a regulatory update to expand the boundary of the B2-A Central Business District along key corridors in the downtown is a first step towards attracting desired tenants to those locations and then enhancing overall walkability in the downtown core.

Foundational strategies should be priorities in moving ahead with implementation. This section provides some additional detail on the implementation of short-term strategies to assist in their realization in the near-term future.

Regulatory revisions

If possible, it would be ideal to address all of the plan’s recommended regulatory revisions at the same time during one process to update the City’s zoning ordinance. The number of recommended code revisions (summarized below) underscores the importance of this task in achieving many of the plan’s goals. To undertake this process, the City first needs to secure grant funding; the City could also apply for further technical assistance through CMAP’s Local Technical Assistance program. After procuring funding, the City should work with a qualified consultant to update its regulations.

Table 8.1 Recommended Zoning Revisions

Plan Recommendation to be Addressed in a Revised Zoning Ordinance	Plan Chapter
Support a range of uses along main corridors.	Chapter 3: Land Use and Development
Protect and enhance the City’s natural resources.	Chapter 3: Land Use and Development
Improve aesthetics and uniformity along main corridors.	Chapter 3: Land Use and Development
Update zoning ordinance	Chapter 3: Land Use and Development
Enhance street appeal.	Chapter 4: Image and Streetscape
Strengthen local bicycle facilities by increasing bicycle parking.	Chapter 6: Transportation and Mobility
Develop a parking management strategy by updating parking requirements.	Chapter 6: Transportation and Mobility
Increase the use of green infrastructure throughout downtown.	Chapter 7: Natural Resources

Internal activities

The following recommended strategies are activities that primarily relate to internal City actions. These activities are unlikely to require additional funding and a point person within City staff should first be identified for each item's implementation.

- **Establish a plan for the long-term future of Wilmington Dam.** Before the City can lobby for a particular course of action on the future of the dam, it must determine a preferred scenario. To address this task, the City should undertake a public process to evaluate the options.
- **Focus redevelopment in key areas.** The City should engage with the owners of the Eagle Hotel and Launching Pad Drive-In to learn about their future plans for the sites and identify ways in which the City and its partners can support redevelopment efforts. The City should coordinate with these owners to identify opportunities for partnership, such as the installation of a new visitor kiosk at the Gemini Giant to advertise the downtown experience. Provided that a mutually agreed upon vision can be established for these key areas, the City should consider entering into a Memorandum of Understanding with local property owners to establish a formal partnership.
- **Maintain an up-to-date inventory of parcels and commercial spaces.** The City should compile a list of available commercial properties and post it on the City's website. The inventory should include contact information and be updated regularly.
- **Develop a central marketing campaign.** The City needs to set well-defined marketing goals that are in sync with the goals of the downtown business community. In addition to meeting with the Wilmington Chamber of Commerce and Downtown Merchants Association, it might also be fruitful to reach out to the Heritage Corridor Convention and Visitors Bureau (HCCVB) to learn about its advertising and promotional services. The City should consider becoming a HCCVB member if the available services align with the vision for a downtown marketing campaign.

Business initiatives

Creating a supportive environment for businesses is important to the downtown's future. The plan contains many strategies to boost local economic development and enrich Wilmington's image and identity, which will depend on new programs and incentives.

- **Establish a Business District.** The City should engage a consultant to evaluate Business District eligibility and to project potential revenue that can be generated in the study area. Following the presentation of key findings, the City Council will decide how to proceed with the designation of a Business District.
- **Establish a Business Assistance Program.** The City should meet with downtown business owners to start a conversation about what types of assistance is needed, and create a Business Assistance Program that best addresses those desired improvement types. The City should consider including the existing Façade Improvement Program into this new initiative. All programs should be described on the City's website and promoted to business organizations.
- **Increase visibility of the downtown.** The Downtown Merchants Association has already begun planning for new gateway signage to advertise upcoming community events. This group should work with the City and other community organizations to plan one to two additional gateway signs for other prominent locations, and develop wayfinding signage for North Water Street and Island Park.



Other priority projects and activities

- **Evaluate the potential for a riverwalk along the millrace.** A consultant should be hired to create a more detailed study of the riverwalk based on the vision outlined in the plan. The City should lead this effort, but convene the adjacent business owners and landowners in the planning process.
- **Establish a public plaza along North Water Street.** A consultant should be hired to create a more detailed study of the riverwalk based on the vision outlined in the plan. The City should lead this effort, but convene the adjacent business owners and landowners in the planning process.
- **Improve key pedestrian crossings.** To encourage more residents and visitors to travel to and within the downtown on foot and by bicycle, the City should first initiate engineering and traffic studies for the IL Route 53 intersections at Kankakee Street and North Park Street.
- **Stabilize the island's shoreline using native landscaping.** Erosion is a major concern on the island, especially in areas that lack natural vegetation, such as trees and prairie grasses. Planting wetland species along the shoreline is a low-cost strategy that will provide tangible benefits in the short and mid-term.

Monitoring and reporting

Monitoring progress on the plan’s goals and reporting back to the community is important in a variety of ways. It helps to keep the City on track, inform residents, business owners, and stakeholders about activities and resources related to investment in the downtown, and bring recognition for the hard work Wilmington has been doing.

The report should be posted on the City’s website and social media sites and announced at public events. CMAP may assist in developing the progress report over the first two years of the plan’s implementation through continued technical assistance.

To that end, the City should create a yearly progress report that includes two major components:

1. A “scorecard” that provides an at-a-glance snapshot of the City’s progress on the short-term work plan (see *Table 8.2 Scorecard Example*). The scorecard should include the list of strategies; approximate percent complete for each strategy; and the number of strategies completed and underway.
2. A brief narrative that contains further information on the previous year’s activities and the proposed activities and work plan for the coming year.

Table 8.2 Scorecard Example

Short-Term Work Plan	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Strategies Complete	0	2	6		
Strategies Underway	12	12	12		

Strategy	Lead	Status	% Complete	Quarterly Update
Regulatory Revisions				
Update zoning ordinance.	City	Underway	75%	
Internal Activities				
Establish a plan for the long-term future of Wilmington Dam.	City	Completed	100%	
Focus redevelopment in key areas.	DBA	Underway	75%	
Maintain an up-to-date inventory of commercial spaces.	City	Completed	100%	
Develop a central marketing campaign.	DBA	Completed	100%	
Business Initiatives				
Establish a Business District.	City	Underway	75%	
Establish a Business Assistance Program.	City	Underway	25%	
Increase visibility of the downtown.	DBA	Completed	100%	
Other Priority Projects and Activities				
Evaluate the potential for a riverwalk along the millrace.	City	Completed	100%	
Establish a public plaza along North Water Street.	DBA	Completed	100%	
Improve key pedestrian crossings.	City	Underway	50%	
Stabilize the island’s shoreline using native landscaping.	City	Underway	50%	

City: City of Wilmington; DBA: Downtown Business Associations



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