City of Joliet Comprehensive Plan

Draft Comprehensive Plan

October 23, 2026

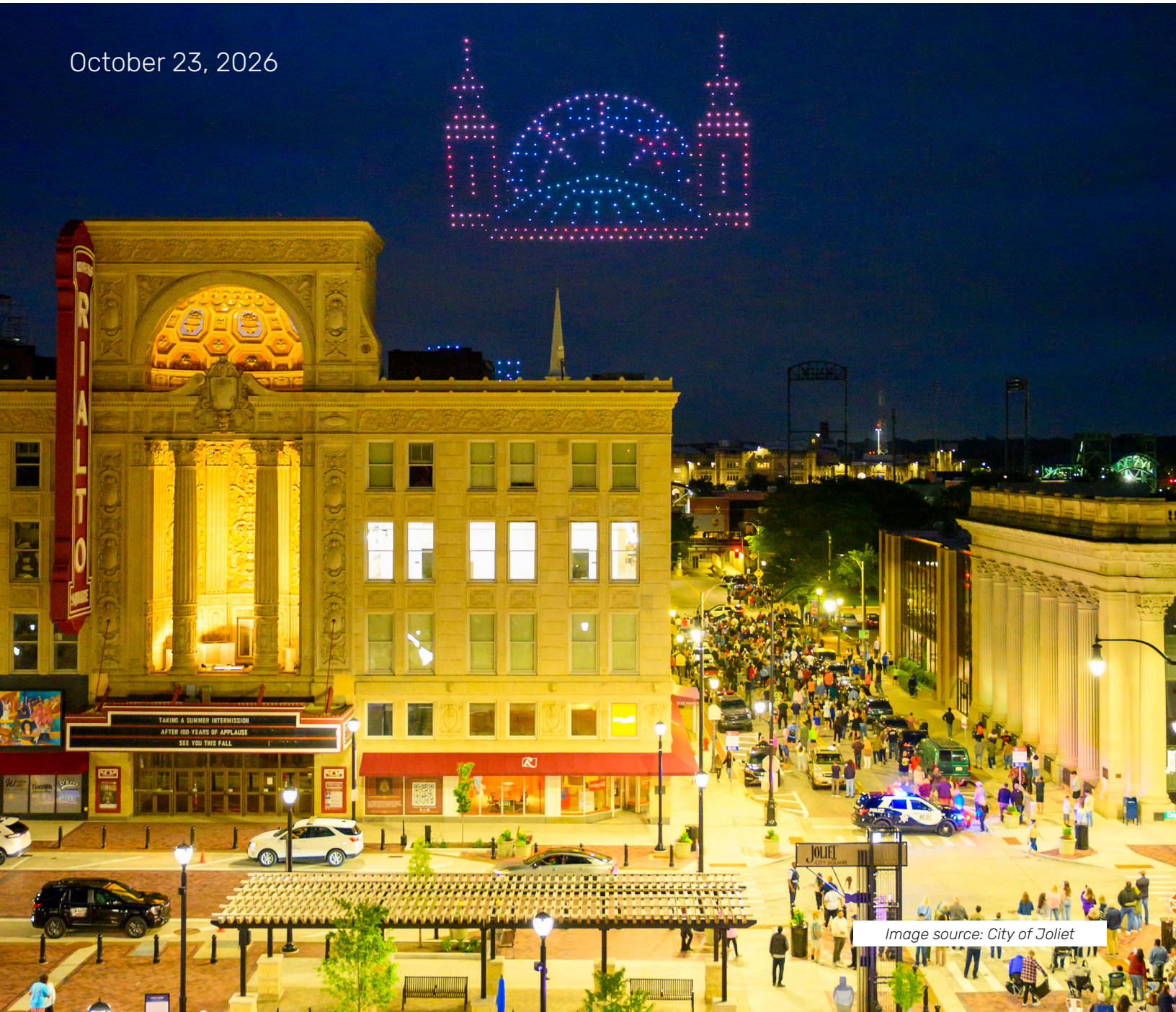


Image source: City of Joliet



Credit: John Ferak

01

Welcome to Joliet

A City shaped by connection and community.

Joliet is positioned at the intersection of major interstate highways, rail corridors, and the Des Plaines River. It has long served as one of the Midwest's most important centers for transportation, commerce, and industry. From its origins along the Illinois and Michigan Canal to its evolution as a regional hub for logistics, manufacturing, healthcare, education, and culture, Joliet has continually adapted to changing economic and social conditions while maintaining a strong identity rooted in history.

Today, Joliet is Illinois' third largest city and a community distinguished by its diverse neighborhoods, historic Downtown, and rich cultural diversity. These elements provide a strong foundation for continued growth while reinforcing the qualities that make Joliet unique. From the riverfront and Downtown to established neighborhoods and emerging development areas, each part of the City contributes to a shared identity built on resilience, opportunity, and community pride.

As Joliet continues to grow, the City has an opportunity to shape development in a way that strengthens its neighborhoods, expands economic opportunity, and improves quality of life for current and future residents.

Joliet is seeing the headwinds of change. The City's demographics are an indicator of this change. Responsive planning can effectively address these changes. Joliet's growth - both social and economic - can balance new development opportunities with preservation and stewardship of its assets. The City is well positioned to reinforce its role as a regional leader, continue to embrace innovation, and invest in its infrastructure to create livable places.

Joliet's spirit is reflected in its diverse neighborhoods, strong community pride, and openness to residents and businesses. These qualities distinguish Joliet from peer communities and will continue to attract new residents who want to be part of its future.



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Message from the Mayor

Terry D'Arcy

To be updated in the next phase



Credit: Vincent D Johnson

02
Overview and Purpose

Comprehensive Planning

Planning for a Stronger, More Connected Joliet

Joliet is at an important moment in its history. As one of Illinois' largest cities and a major regional transportation, logistics, manufacturing, and employment center, the City continues to experience change driven by economic shifts, population trends, infrastructure investments, redevelopment opportunities, and regional growth.

This Comprehensive Plan responds to those opportunities and challenges by establishing a clear vision for the future, identifying community priorities, and outlining strategies to achieve them. It is intended to guide future land use decisions, public investments, infrastructure improvements, policy initiatives, and partnerships while ensuring that growth and reinvestment contribute positively to the quality of life of all residents.

What is a Comprehensive Plan?

A comprehensive plan is a policy document that guides decision making and investment into the physical, economic, environmental, and social development of a community. It identifies where growth should occur, what community outcomes should be prioritized, and how public and private actions can work together to achieve shared goals.

It is a culmination of existing conditions analysis of the City and in depth community engagement that establishes a clear vision for the future. The planning process is intended to provide a framework for making decisions about land use, transportation, housing, economic development, infrastructure, parks and open space, environmental stewardship, and community character. This is a living document that is intended to be flexible and adaptive to changing conditions in the City. Updating the document regularly will ensure a successful future.

Why We Created this Plan

It has been over 60 years since the adoption of Joliet's current Comprehensive Plan; a period of marked change for the City. A variety of elements have created new opportunities for the city and influenced the way the City's residents and leadership have approached these pressures. The Comprehensive Plan is a lens to view the intersections of the City's key issue areas and priorities.

This Plan also establishes a unified vision that responds to social, economic, and physical opportunities and challenges while preparing Joliet for continued growth. Extensive public engagement, technical analysis, and review of existing plans and initiatives undertaken during the planning process identified the priorities, aspirations, and policies that shape this document.

The result is a plan that balances growth and preservation, addresses current needs while preparing for future demands, and provides a coordinated strategy for improving quality of life throughout the City.

Previous Plans and Studies

The Comprehensive Plan acknowledges and builds upon decades of planning initiatives already undertaken by the City. The resulting plans, studies, corridor analyses, infrastructure initiatives, economic development strategies, and neighborhood planning efforts have been instrumental in shaping City as it stands today.

Rather than replacing these efforts, this Plan brings previous plans together within a single citywide framework. Existing plans provided context and lessons learned that informed the content of the Comprehensive Plan document. They also helped identify areas where additional coordination, updated policy direction, or renewed investment may be needed. The previous plans and reports analysis summary is in the Appendix. Each plan was reviewed for its relevancy, compatibility with new policy direction, implementation success, and on-going initiatives that remained important to the City.

The new Comprehensive Plan aligns previous planning efforts with the community's current vision and goals. As future studies and plans are completed, they should continue to support and advance the broader direction established by this document.



Credit: Jim Roolf

How to Use the Comprehensive Plan

The Comprehensive Plan is intended to be a practical tool for guiding decisions over time. While the vision and goals establish where Joliet wants to go, the strategies and implementation actions identify how the City can move toward that future.

City staff and elected officials can use the plan to evaluate development proposals, prioritize infrastructure investments, update policies and regulations, pursue funding opportunities, and coordinate projects across departments. Community organizations, residents, businesses, and institutional partners can use the plan to understand community priorities and identify opportunities for collaboration.

The Comprehensive Plan is organized by key issue areas, supported by strategies and specific actions that advance the community's vision. The Implementation Plan outlines potential implementation partners, recommended timeframes, and priority levels, providing a practical roadmap for carrying the Plan forward.

The plan should also serve as a benchmark for measuring progress. By connecting recommendations to specific goals and objectives, the City can evaluate whether future actions are advancing the vision established through the planning process.

A Living Document

Most importantly, the Plan should be viewed as a living document. While the Plan provides long-term direction, implementation will occur over many years and must adapt to continually changing conditions, emerging opportunities, new partnerships, and evolving community needs. By maintaining a clear connection between vision, policy, and action, the Comprehensive Plan will help ensure that future decisions contribute to a create a City that is stronger, more connected, and able to adapt as actual conditions change.

The City should review the Comprehensive Plan annually as part of its budgeting and capital improvement processes to evaluate progress and identify changing priorities. A more formal review should occur approximately every five years, with a comprehensive update undertaken at least every ten years. Earlier amendments may be appropriate when significant demographic or economic shifts, major development proposals, infrastructure investments, regulatory changes, or unforeseen community needs alter the assumptions or priorities established by the Plan. Any amendment should include appropriate public input and remain consistent with the Plan's overall vision and goals.

Requests to amend the Future Land Use Map should follow a defined public review process similar to a rezoning request, including staff evaluation, public notice and input, review and recommendation by the Plan Commission, and final consideration by the City Council. Each request should be evaluated for consistency with the Plan's vision and goals, compatibility with surrounding land uses, infrastructure and service capacity, transportation impacts, environmental conditions, and the potential to establish a precedent for future development. Approved amendments should be documented and incorporated into the Plan to maintain a clear and current record of City policy.

Glossary

Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU)
A smaller, independent residence located on the same property as a primary home, such as an apartment above a garage or a backyard cottage.

Adaptive Reuse
The conversion of an existing building to a new use while retaining all or a substantial portion of the original structure.

Aging in Place
The ability to remain safely and independently in one's home or community as personal needs change with age.

Area Median Income (AMI)
The midpoint of household incomes within a defined region, commonly used to determine eligibility for affordable housing programs.

Attainable Housing
Housing that households at a range of income levels can reasonably afford without excessive financial burden.

Character Area
A portion of the city defined by shared physical features, land uses, development patterns, identity, or planning opportunities.

Complete Streets
Streets designed to safely accommodate people of all ages and abilities, whether walking, bicycling, using transit, driving, or moving goods.

Context-Sensitive Development
Development or infrastructure designed to respond to the surrounding neighborhood's character, land uses, environmental conditions, and community needs.

Density / Dwelling Units per Acre (du/ac)
Residential density is expressed as gross dwelling units per acre and is calculated using the entire development area, including internal streets and rights-of-way.

Equitable Transit-Oriented Development (ETOD)
Mixed-use development near transit that expands access to housing, jobs, services, and transportation while seeking to prevent displacement.

Equity
The fair distribution of resources and opportunities based on differing community needs and existing barriers.

Form-Based Code
Development regulations that focus primarily on the physical form, placement, and relationship of buildings and public spaces rather than separating land uses.

Future Land Use Map
A policy map showing the types and general patterns of development the City envisions over the life of the Comprehensive Plan.

Green Infrastructure
Natural or engineered features—such as rain gardens, bioswales, permeable pavement, and trees—that manage stormwater and provide environmental benefits.

Inclusive
Designed to welcome, serve, and provide opportunities for people of different ages, incomes, abilities, backgrounds, and identities.

Infill Development
New development on vacant or underused land within an already developed area.

Missing Middle Housing
Small- to medium-scale housing types, such as duplexes, townhomes, courtyard apartments, and small multifamily buildings, that fall between single-family homes and large apartment buildings.

Mixed-Use Development
Development that combines two or more uses, such as housing, retail, offices, services, or entertainment, within one building or area.

Mobility and Access Plan
A proposed citywide plan for improving how people travel by walking, bicycling, transit, driving, and other modes, with an emphasis on safety, accessibility, and connectivity.

Multijurisdictional Agreement
A formal arrangement between two or more public agencies or local governments to coordinate responsibilities, services, investments, or planning decisions.

Placemaking
The planning and design of public spaces to create attractive, distinctive, and welcoming places that encourage community activity.

Regional Resilience and Environmental Stewardship Addendum
A proposed supplement to the Comprehensive Plan addressing shared environmental challenges, resource conservation, climate preparedness, and coordination with neighboring jurisdictions.

Resilient
Able to prepare for, withstand, recover from, and adapt to economic, environmental, or social challenges.

River Edge Redevelopment Zone
A State of Illinois program that provides financial incentives to encourage redevelopment and environmental improvement within designated riverfront areas.

Safe System Approach
A transportation framework that anticipates human error and designs streets, vehicles, and travel systems to prevent mistakes from resulting in death or serious injury.

Service-Enriched Housing
Housing paired with supportive services that help residents live independently and maintain housing stability.

Special Service Area (SSA)
A defined area in which property owners pay an additional tax to fund services or improvements that primarily benefit that area.

Tax Increment Financing (TIF)
A redevelopment tool that uses increases in property-tax revenue within a designated district to fund eligible public improvements and development activities.

Vision Zero
A transportation safety approach that seeks to eliminate traffic deaths and serious injuries through safer street design, policies, and practices.

Workforce Housing
Housing affordable to workers whose incomes may be too high for traditional housing assistance but insufficient to afford many market-rate options.



Credit: City of Joliet

03
Vision and Goals Summary

Vision, Goals and Objectives

The Comprehensive Plan's North Star

The Vision, Goals and Objectives framework reflects what the community values today, what residents and stakeholders want to preserve, and where Joliet should be headed in the future. Developed through public engagement, focus group conversations, and analysis of existing conditions, the vision and goals establish a shared direction for the City and provides the basis for all strategies and actions contained in this plan.

An aspirational statement for each of the established key topic areas was developed. The goals translate the vision from ideas into a framework for actions and outcomes. Together, they create a clear line between community aspirations and implementation.

The construction of the vision and goals answers three fundamental questions:

- ***What kind of City does Joliet aspire to be?***
- ***What outcomes are needed to achieve that vision?***
- ***What actions should the City prioritize to move toward those outcomes?***

Throughout this Comprehensive Plan, strategies are organized around the key issue areas and develop the vision and goals into actionable and implementable strategies. Each policy, strategy, and action item is intended to advance one or more community priorities. In this way, the Vision, Goals and Objectives serves as both a statement of community values and a guide for future decision-making.

From Vision to Action

The Vision, Goals, and Objectives framework establishes the direction for the Comprehensive Plan, but its purpose extends beyond aspiration. It provides the foundation for implementation.

The strategies and actions contained in the chapters that follow are organized around the key topic areas, creating a direct connection between community priorities and future actions. Whether evaluating development proposals, prioritizing capital investments, updating regulations, pursuing partnerships, or allocating resources, the framework provides a consistent basis for decision-making.

By linking vision to policy and policy to implementation, the framework ensures that the Comprehensive Plan remains focused on outcomes that matter to the community. It is intended to guide Joliet's growth and development over time while providing the flexibility needed to respond to changing conditions and emerging opportunities.

This hierarchy creates a clear connection between Joliet's long-range vision and the decisions needed to achieve it. The complete Vision, Goals, and Objectives document, including the detailed objectives supporting each goal, is included in the Appendix.

Vision
Describes the future Joliet seeks to achieve and establishes the overarching direction for each topic area.

Goals
Identifies a broad outcome the City will work toward in support of the vision.

Objective
Provides more specific policy direction for advancing a goal.

Strategies
Defines an approach the City and its partners can use to address an issue or pursue an opportunity.

Actions
Identifies a program, project, regulation, investment, or partnership needed to implement a strategy.

Metrics
Provides an indicator that can be used to evaluate progress over time.

Key Topic Areas

Each key topic area is identified below with a summary of the intent of their respective goals.

Strong Neighborhoods and Housing Stability

The Housing and Neighborhoods goals focus on preserving and strengthening Joliet's established neighborhoods while expanding access to safe, quality, and attainable housing choices. They support reinvestment, neighborhood stability, providing options for residents at all life stages, and new development that complements the character of surrounding areas.

Economic Development and Local Investment

The Economic Development and Local Investment goals focus on creating economic opportunity throughout Joliet by supporting local businesses, expanding access to quality jobs, reinvesting in commercial corridors, and positioning existing employment areas for continued growth. They also reinforce Downtown Joliet as a vibrant center of business, entertainment, culture, and activity.

Community Connection and Belonging

The People, Places, and Belonging goals focus on strengthening community identity, celebrating Joliet's history and cultural diversity, supporting arts and culture, fostering civic engagement, creating welcoming public spaces, and building a stronger sense of belonging across all neighborhoods.

Land Use and Future Development

The Land Use and Future Development goals focus on guiding growth in a way that strengthens existing neighborhoods, preserves community character, supports economic development, encourages sustainable development patterns, and ensures that future growth contributes positively to the City.

Mobility and Access Across the City

The Multi-Modal Mobility goals focus on creating a safer, more connected transportation system that serves people traveling by car, transit, bicycle, and foot. They promote improvements that strengthen connections between neighborhoods, employment centers, schools, parks, Downtown, and other destinations while supporting a more accessible and efficient citywide network.

Environment and Natural Resources

The Environment and Natural Resources goals focus on protecting and enhancing parks, open spaces, waterways, and natural systems while expanding access to recreation, improving environmental quality, supporting public health, and increasing community resilience.

Utilities and Infrastructure

The Utilities and Infrastructure goals focus on maintaining, modernizing, and expanding critical public infrastructure systems to ensure reliable service, support future growth, improve resilience, and promote long-term sustainability and equitable access.

Topic Area Summaries

Strong Neighborhoods and Housing Stability

Strong neighborhoods provide the foundation for community stability, economic mobility, and quality of life. This chapter focuses on preserving Joliet's existing housing, expanding attainable housing choices, supporting residents and property owners, and directing context-sensitive investment to neighborhoods throughout the City.

"Joliet will encourage equitable investment in people and places that increases access to housing, jobs, and economic opportunity and celebrates community identity."

- Strengthen established residential neighborhoods through context-sensitive development, rehabilitation, and preservation of existing homes.
- Encourage new residential development that responds to changing demographics, household needs, and housing preferences.
- Expand attainable housing options for working families, first-time homeowners, older adults, people with disabilities, and residents with specialized housing needs.
- Support tenants, homeowners, and responsible landlords through financial assistance, education, property maintenance resources, and consistent code enforcement.
- Coordinate housing and neighborhood investment with improvements to infrastructure, community services, recreation, and other public amenities.

Economic Development and Local Investment

Joliet's economic future depends on supporting its established industries while creating new opportunities for businesses, workers, and entrepreneurs. This chapter emphasizes reinvestment in commercial districts, redevelopment of underutilized properties, workforce development, small-business support, and continued revitalization of Downtown Joliet.

"Joliet will encourage equitable investment in people and places that increases access to housing, jobs, and economic opportunity and celebrates community identity."

- Encourage infill development and reinvestment along key commercial corridors.
- Increase access to quality jobs that provide opportunities for career advancement and upward economic mobility.
- Support small businesses, entrepreneurs, and neighborhood-serving commercial development.
- Strengthen partnerships among employers, educational institutions, workforce organizations, and community groups.
- Bolster Downtown Joliet's position as a vibrant, walkable destination for residents, businesses, and visitors.
- Align land use, infrastructure, and public investment decisions with the City's long-term economic development priorities.

People, Places, and Belonging

Joliet's identity is shaped by its people, neighborhoods, cultural traditions, architecture, and shared history. This chapter focuses on strengthening neighborhood identity, expanding access to arts and culture, creating welcoming public spaces, increasing civic participation, and celebrating the stories that connect residents to the community.

"Joliet is a city where every resident feels a sense of belonging. Its people, cultures, and stories are visible in the public spaces, events, and neighborhoods that bring the community together. The City celebrates its diversity, honors its history, and supports creativity as a vital part of civic life, building pride and connection."

- Strengthen and celebrate the distinct identity of Joliet's neighborhoods.
- Expand access to and participation in arts, culture, and creative activities.
- Improve access to civic engagement and community leadership opportunities.
- Build upon Joliet's cultural identity and regional presence.
- Center community pride and shared prosperity in welcoming public spaces and inclusive community life.

Land Use and Future Development

Land use decisions determine how Joliet grows, where investment occurs, and how new development relates to established neighborhoods, infrastructure, natural resources, and employment areas. This chapter establishes a coordinated framework for guiding reinvestment and new growth while maintaining Joliet's character and supporting long-term fiscal and environmental sustainability.

"Joliet will grow with purpose. Development builds on the City's strong foundations—its neighborhoods, industries, and natural assets—creating places that connect people to opportunity and reflect Joliet's history, character, and spirit of progress."

- Strengthen and celebrate Joliet's distinct character areas.
- Modernize the regulatory environment to support equitable, efficient, and adaptable growth.
- Ensure equitable access to and preservation of community assets and amenities.
- Preserve the authenticity of Joliet's neighborhoods and celebrate their history and culture.
- Concentrate development within activity centers and along key corridors.
- Plan for sustainable and adaptive growth while promoting equitable land use patterns.
- Encourage innovation districts that balance workforce, economic development, housing, and community opportunities.

Mobility and Access Across the City

Joliet's transportation network connects residents to neighborhoods, employment, schools, services, and regional destinations while supporting the movement of goods. This chapter advances a safer, more connected multimodal system that improves roadway performance, expands transportation choices, addresses freight impacts, and provides reliable access for people of all ages and abilities.

"Joliet envisions a connected, accessible, and sustainable transportation network that moves people and goods safely, efficiently, and equitably. Our vision is to improve mobility to support vibrant neighborhoods, reduce environmental impact, enhance public health, and provide every resident and visitor with reliable, affordable, and seamless options."

- Enhance roadway infrastructure to improve safety, efficiency, and multimodal access.
- Improve traffic flow and connectivity throughout the City.
- Encourage public transit use and strengthen regional transportation connections.
- Enhance transit infrastructure, rider experience, and public awareness.
- Expand bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure to create a connected citywide network.
- Improve bicycle and pedestrian safety through infrastructure, education, and coordinated programs.

Environment and Natural Resources

Joliet's waterways, parks, open spaces, tree canopy, and ecological corridors are essential to public health and community quality of life. This chapter focuses on protecting natural resources, expanding equitable access to parks and recreation, managing stormwater and flood risk, and integrating environmental stewardship into public and private investment.

"Joliet envisions a connected, inclusive system of parks and open spaces that celebrates the City's industrial heritage while restoring its ecological foundations."

- Improve equitable access to safe, comfortable, and high-quality parks and open spaces.
- Support and protect waterways, wetlands, natural areas, and ecological corridors.
- Strengthen the connection among public health, green infrastructure, and open-space planning.
- Use parks, trails, waterways, and natural systems to better connect neighborhoods and regional destinations.
- Incorporate environmental stewardship, climate adaptation, and measurable sustainability outcomes into City decision-making.

Utilities and Infrastructure

Reliable infrastructure is essential to Joliet's continued growth, economic competitiveness, environmental health, and everyday quality of life. This chapter addresses the coordinated maintenance and expansion of water, wastewater, stormwater, energy, communications, and other essential systems while promoting equitable investment and responsible lifecycle planning.

"The City's infrastructure, from sewers to communication resources, will be well-maintained, equitably paid for, and anticipate the future needs of the community."

- Improve Joliet's capacity to deliver the infrastructure needed to support projected growth and development.
- Ensure long-term water security, reliability, and affordability.
- Modernize wastewater and stormwater systems.
- Prioritize infrastructure improvements in neighborhoods with aging systems, chronic flooding, service gaps, or redevelopment potential.
- Coordinate infrastructure investment with land use, housing, economic development, and environmental priorities.
- Incorporate asset management, lifecycle costs, sustainable technologies, and interdepartmental coordination into infrastructure planning and budgeting.



Credit: City of Joliet

04

The Planning Process

Developing the Comprehensive Plan

A Plan built to guide decisions

The Plan was developed as a community-driven process to understand where Joliet is today, define where the City wants to go, and identify the actions needed to move that vision forward. A comprehensive plan is not a prediction of the future. It is a guide for decision-making, investment, coordination, and implementation over time.

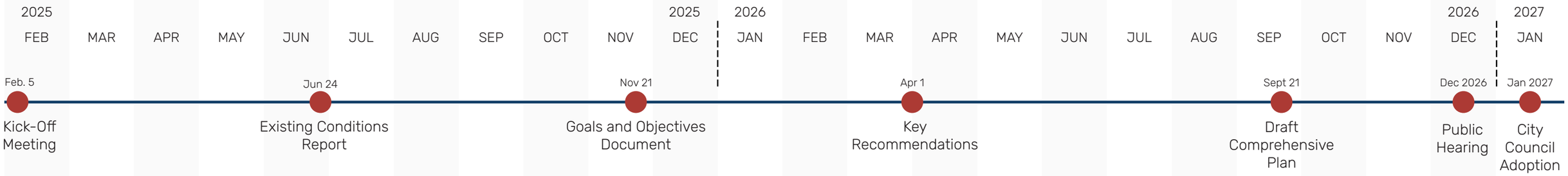
The planning process brought together technical analysis, public engagement, City leadership, stakeholder input, and review of existing plans and initiatives, beginning with an Existing Conditions Report outlining where Joliet currently is, followed by a Vision and Goals report detailing the shared vision for where Joliet would like to be. The Final Plan demonstrates how to bridge the gap between where Joliet is, where it wants to be, and how to get there. Each step in the planning process helped translate community priorities into a clear framework of vision, goals, strategies, and implementation actions.

This Plan is intended to serve as a reference point for City staff and officials, community partners, residents, businesses, and developers. It provides direction for future public investment, policy updates, and continued planning.

As conditions change, the Plan should remain a living guide. Its purpose is to keep Joliet focused on the community's long-term vision while providing flexibility to respond to new opportunities, challenges, and partnerships as they emerge.

Credit: LJC

Project Schedule

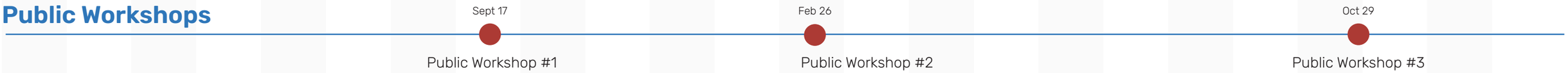


Phase 1 Evaluate	Phase 2 Investigate	Phase 3 Enhance	Phase 4 Empower	Phase 5 Final Plan
Data Collection and Analysis Market Analysis Existing Conditions Report Public Engagement Plan	Key Person Interviews Vision, Goals, and Objectives Statement Community Survey Public Workshop #1 City Council Presentation	Develop strategies and actions Key Topic Areas Definition Topic Area Workshops Community Workshop #2	Character Area Plans Draft Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee Meetings City Council Presentation	Final Comprehensive Plan Implementation Matrix Interdepartmental Training Final Revisions City Council Adoption Executive Summary
Deliverable **Existing Conditions Report**	Deliverable **Goals and Objectives Statement**	Deliverable **Strategies and Actions**	Deliverable **Draft Comprehensive Plan**	Deliverable **Final Comprehensive Plan**

Meetings

Kick-Off Meeting Advisory Committee Meetings City Council Roundtable	Advisory Committee Meetings	Advisory Committee Meetings City Council Presentation	Advisory Committee Meetings City Council Roundtables	Advisory Committee Meetings Public Hearing

Public Workshops



The Planning Process

1 Evaluate

- Collect and analyze existing demographic, economic, housing, transportation, environmental, and infrastructure data
- Conduct a market analysis to identify economic trends and development opportunities
- Review previous plans, studies, and policy documents to understand past planning efforts
- Identify existing strengths, challenges, and opportunities throughout the community
- Develop a Public Engagement Plan to guide outreach and community participation
- Prepare the Existing Conditions Report as the foundation for the Comprehensive Plan

2 Investigate

- Conduct and facilitate an online survey, public workshop and key person interviews to gather input on community priorities across neighborhoods and key topic areas
- Organize input from public engagement and technical analysis into clear planning themes outlining community needs
- Define the issues and opportunities most important to the community.
- Establish the priorities and desired outcomes that will guide the Comprehensive Plan.
- Develop the Vision, Goals, and Objectives that establish the long-term direction for the City

3 Enhance

- Translate the community vision into strategies and actions that are practical, achievable, and aligned with community priorities
- Develop goals, strategies, and action items for each key topic area
- Work with City staff and the Advisory committee to evaluate strategies to ensure they are practical, achievable, and aligned with community priorities
- Establish the Comprehensive Plan framework that will guide future growth, development, and investment decisions
- Facilitate second public workshop and refine strategies based on stakeholder, Advisory Committee and City feedback

4 Empower

- Build consensus around the plan's vision, strategies, and implementation priorities
- Develop strategies and actions including policy changes, capital investments, partnerships, grant funding or additional planning efforts that directly support the vision, goals, and objectives while responding to existing conditions and community input
- Prepare the Draft Comprehensive Plan, including a future land use map and detailed Character Area plans

5 Final Plan

- Prepare the final Comprehensive Plan, including executive summary and final plan graphics
- Develop an implementation framework that provides a roadmap for carrying the plan forward, connecting strategies and actions to partners, funding opportunities, and timeframes
- Conduct a third and final public workshop to present the Final Comprehensive Plan and gain feedback on the strategies and actions and implementation plan
- Conduct interdepartmental training to support implementation of the plan.
- Present the Comprehensive Plan for City Council adoption and begin implementation

Community Engagement Summary

Community engagement was a cornerstone of the Joliet Comprehensive Plan, ensuring that the plan reflects the priorities, experiences, and aspirations of the people who live, work, and invest in the community. Through a series of surveys, workshops, focus groups, and discussions with City leadership, the planning team gathered input from a broad cross-section of stakeholders to better understand community needs, identify key issues, and shape a shared vision for Joliet's future.

City Council Roundtable

Date: May 22, 2025
Participants: City Council
Number of participants: 8

The planning team conducted a series of roundtable discussions to gather leadership perspectives on Joliet's opportunities, challenges, and long-term priorities. Discussions focused on issues and concerns regarding infrastructure, housing, economic development, neighborhood investment, and implementation priorities. The roundtable format allowed each elected official to discuss conditions unique to their district while also identifying shared priorities across the City. A recurring theme was the need for a clear, action-oriented plan that provides clear, long-term direction, supports equitable investment, and serves as a practical decision-making framework for future City initiatives.



Feedback received from Public Workshop #1, September 2025.

Key Person Interviews

Date: July 7, 2025
Participants: Representatives from community organizations, advocacy groups, and agencies, business leaders, and technical experts
Number of participants: 50

Seven topic-specific key person interviews were held to gather input from local stakeholders and subject matter experts on Mobility and Transportation, Infrastructure, Open Space and Environment, Economic Development, Quality of Life, Future Development and Land Use, and Housing and Neighborhoods. Unlike the larger community workshops, these sessions allowed for in-depth conversations with individuals who had subject matter expertise or direct experience with each topic area, providing valuable context that helped shape the goals and strategies outlined in the Comprehensive Plan.

Community Survey

Date: July 17 - September 19, 2025
Participants: General Public
Number of participants: 2,000+

A survey available in both online and hard copy formats provided residents with an opportunity to communicate their priorities and aspirations across seven topics: Homes and Neighborhoods, Jobs and Businesses, Community and Culture, Parks and Nature, Environment and Sustainability, and Transportation and Mobility, and Quality of Life. The survey was available in five languages and was promoted through the City's website, social media, direct mail, Pace bus advertisements, City Hall, and community events to maximize participation. More than 2,000 completed surveys were received, representing an exceptionally strong level of public participation. The survey established a statistically reliable understanding of resident priorities while helping identify a broad range of community needs and investment priorities.

Public Workshop #1

Date: September 17, 2025
Participants: General Public
Number of participants: 100+

The first public workshop introduced residents to the Comprehensive Plan process and gathered input on community priorities through six interactive engagement stations. Participants shared ideas related to housing, neighborhood conditions, transportation, parks, economic development, quality of life, and community identity using maps, voting boards, and facilitated discussions. The workshop featured bilingual facilitators and materials, children's activities, visual preference exercises, mapping activities, and polling stations to encourage participation from residents of all ages. This highly interactive format complemented the community survey by allowing participants to explain the reasoning behind their priorities while identifying specific locations throughout Joliet that require future investment.

Public Workshop #2

Date: February 26, 2026
Participants: General Public
Number of participants: 100+

The second public workshop focused on four priority Character Areas identified during the planning process: the Louis Joliet Mall Area, Ridge Road Corridor, the East Side Neighborhood near Cass Street and Henderson Avenue, and the South Chicago Street/ McDonough Street Corridors. Participants placed flags representing preferred land uses and improvements directly onto maps and supplemented those selections with written comments and discussions with facilitators. Rather than collecting broad citywide priorities, this workshop concentrated on place-specific redevelopment opportunities, including housing, commercial uses, public spaces, parks, transportation improvements, and neighborhood identity. The character area format allowed residents to visualize future possibilities and provide detailed feedback that directly informed future land use recommendations and redevelopment concepts for each study area.



Mayor D'Arcy at Public Workshop #2, March 2026.

Topic Area Workshops

Date: 7 dates between December 2025 and January 2026
Participants: General Public
Number of participants: 230

Seven topic area workshops were held covering Housing and Neighborhoods, Transportation and Mobility, Utilities and Infrastructure, Open Space and Environment, Arts, Culture, and Heritage, Economic Development, and Land Use and Future Development. The workshops provided community members with an update on the comprehensive planning process, opportunities to explore each topic in greater detail, and a forum to share input on the proposed goals and objectives.



Image source: City of Joliet

05

Key Strategies and Actions

A roadmap for a stronger, more connected, and more resilient Joliet.

The Comprehensive Plan strategies and actions translate Joliet's community vision into a roadmap for growth, reinvestment, and decision-making through 2045. The 20-year planning horizon provides a long-range framework for land use, infrastructure, housing, economic development, mobility, environmental resilience, and community investment while recognizing that conditions will continue to change. The strategies and associated actions incorporate findings from previous phases of the planning process and are informed by community engagement. This chapter provides guidance for addressing challenges and advancing opportunities across the issue areas most important to Joliet's future.

- Strong neighborhoods
- Housing stability
- Economic opportunity
- Cultural identity
- Equitable investment
- Mobility
- Environmental resilience
- Reliable infrastructure

Together, these recommendations provide a roadmap for how Joliet can grow while protecting the character, history, and diversity that define the city today. These key issue areas reflect Joliet's identity as an established community with legacy neighborhoods and a regional center shaped by transportation corridors, a key hub for employment growth and redevelopment, and a best practice leader that is responsive to changing household needs.

The actions in this chapter are intended to be realistic and implementable. They connect policy direction to specific tools. They also emphasize accountability, ensuring that future investment reaches neighborhoods that have experienced disinvestment while supporting citywide prosperity and fiscal sustainability. Each issue area includes strategies that can be advanced by key partners. As Joliet continues to evolve, these strategies and actions should serve as a flexible framework for aligning day-to-day decisions with long-term goals. The strategies and actions establish a shared direction for ongoing implementation, coordination, and stewardship of the Comprehensive Plan. Implementation of these strategies can strengthen Joliet's neighborhoods, expand opportunity, celebrate its identity, and build a more connected, resilient, and inclusive future.


Image source: Google Street View

5.1: STRONG NEIGHBORHOODS AND HOUSING STABILITY

A growth strategy for the future

Joliet's neighborhoods are the foundation of the City's identity, stability, and long-term growth. From historic blocks and legacy residential areas to newer subdivisions and mixed-use corridors, the City's housing patterns reflect generations of investment and changing household preferences. Residents consistently expressed pride in their homes and neighborhoods, while also identifying visible differences in housing condition, infrastructure quality, and quantity and access to amenities.

Strong neighborhoods take a balanced approach that prioritizes community stability and holistically supports homeowners, tenants, and landlords. The City's neighborhoods can benefit from encouraging rehabilitation and context-sensitive infill, expanding attainable housing options, and coordinating housing policy with infrastructure, transportation, parks, schools, healthcare, and social services.

Housing stability is not only about the number of units available, but also about the ability of residents to remain safely, affordably, and comfortably in their communities as their needs change over time. By reinvesting in legacy neighborhoods, supporting diverse housing types, and aligning with public service and amenity needs, Joliet can create stronger, healthier, and more resilient neighborhoods.

The intent of these strategies is to:

- Provide a diverse range of housing options
- Improve property conditions
- Reduce displacement
- Support aging in place

A strong neighborhoods and housing strategy will allow Joliet to grow while preserving the neighborhood character and the sense of belonging that residents value most.

Strategy 1

Reinvest in legacy neighborhoods by supporting homeowners, tenants, and landlords with critical maintenance, home repairs, code enforcement, and public infrastructure investments.

Action 1
Launch an income-qualified Home Repair & Rehab Program to provide homeowner grants and/or low interest loans for critical repairs, accessibility upgrades, and energy retrofits. Potential sources of funding could include HOME Investment Partnerships Program (HOME), Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, and Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA) funding.

Action 2
Create a central repository of available programs to connect homeowners to the Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA) payment assistance programs and other state, county, and/or nonprofit home ownership rehabilitation programs.

Action 3
Implement aggressive code enforcement that prioritizes areas in visibile decline. Pair code enforcement efforts with coordinated improvements at the block or corridor scale, such as landscaping, beautification, signage, lighting, etc.

Action 4
Utilize tools like land banks, community development corporations, IL Abandoned Housing Rehabilitation Act, and healthy and safety receivership to support redevelopment.

Action 5
Create a tenant and landlord resources page on the City's website to connect users with financial support, technical assistance programs, and legal resources.

Action 6
Provide support and technical assistance to local partners to build capacity to successfully administer federally-funded housing rehabilitation programs.

Best Practice

Owner-Occupied Housing Rehab Program

Neighborhood Reinvestment Fund | *Woodbury, MN*

The City of Woodbury created the Neighborhood Reinvestment Fund to offer low-interest home improvement loans to buyers up to a specified income threshold. Eligible improvements include those that address health and safety issues, improve the exterior of the home (roofs, siding, etc.), improve accessibility, increase energy efficiency, and/or reduce flood risk. The maximum loan amount is $40,000, as of the 2022 program guidelines.

The program is funded through the Woodbury Housing & Redevelopment Authority which receives allocations of local municipal revenues. The loan funds are administered through a third-party entity, NeighborWorks Home Partners (NWHP). In addition to the financial assistance, program consultants from NWHP advise borrowers on proposed projects and conduct home inspections.

Strategy 2

Expand attainable housing options to meet diverse needs and prevent displacement.

Action 1
Update the City's zoning ordinance to allow missing middle housing typologies and other housing typolgies not currently contemplated as-of-right in appropriate areas.

Action 2
Identify properties where larger scale affordable and mixed-income housing may be possible. Proactively solicit proposals from developers for publicly owned parcels, and work with private owners to advance the City's housing and development goals.

Action 3
Provide targeted incentives such as fee waivers, density bonuses, and gap financing to support development of priority housing types, including missing middle, attainable, and workforce housing.

Action 4
Partner with the Joliet Housing Authority to explore acquisition and operation of moderate-cost rental units to preserve affordability and prevent displacement.

Best Practice

Housing Attainability

Availability of housing is critical to ensure existing residents have housing options that meet their diverse needs and to support economic and population expansion. However, housing construction in Joliet has slowed significantly since 2010, leading to decreasing vacancy and increasing rents and for-sale home prices, and new construction has not kept up with demand. Price increases have outpaced both inflation and wage growth, presenting challenges for first-time and/or moderate-income home buyers, working families, and seniors or others on fixed incomes. These market dynamics emphasize the need for more diverse, attainable housing types and a greater overall pace of construction focused on increasing housing supply near major activity centers with existing services and amenities.

Older residents who want to age in place in their communities may require smaller, more accessible homes (including ranches) located nearby services and amenities. There may also be increased demand for age-restricted, affordable multifamily housing as well as assisted-living and supportive housing facilities. Additionally, smaller homes like townhomes, duplexes, and triplexes can benefit first-time home buyers, young professionals, or young families with fewer children who may have more limited financial resources. Providing adequate housing at price points that are attainable for these populations is critical from a workforce and economic development perspective, as economic growth is contingent on an available local workforce.



Image source: Google Street View

Strategy 3

Encourage context-sensitive infill that reinforces neighborhood character and improves housing choice.

Action 1
Map vacant lots, tax-delinquent properties, City-owned parcels, oversized lots, and underutilized sites to identify areas where the housing market may not be functioning normally and where further investigation can determine whether preservation, stabilization, rehabilitation, or redevelopment is appropriate.

Action 2
Update the City's zoning ordinance to allow missing middle housing typologies and other housing typolgies not currently contemplated as-of-right in appropriate areas.

Action 3
Develop pre-approved design guidelines for new housing typologies that showcase desired development patterns and material palette. Templates should be tailored to Joliet neighborhood contexts and include guidance on front porches, rooflines, materials, garages, alley access, fenestration, parking placement, landscaping, and transitions to nearby homes.

Action 4
Select one or two neighborhoods with underutilized lots, existing infrastructure, and market potential to test updated zoning, pre-approved plans, design standards, and incentives. Use the pilot to demonstrate high-quality missing-middle housing, gather resident feedback, and refine the program before expanding citywide.

Strategy 4

Catalyze larger multifamily and mixed-use development near major activity centers such as downtown, major commercial nodes, and significant corridors.

Action 1
Identify and prioritize a short list of high-impact housing opportunity sites. These could include vacant, underutilized, publicly owned, and historically significant properties in Downtown Joliet, near transit, along major commercial corridors, and within aging retail nodes. For each site, identify ownership, zoning, infrastructure needs, environmental constraints, parking conditions, historic/adaptive reuse potential, and likely development scale.

Action 2
Prioritize City engagement to assist with site assembly and provide funding for infrastructure improvements.

Action 3
Use publicly available funding resources to close feasibility gaps for projects that advance City priorities such as attainable or workforce housing, adaptive reuse of historic buildings, ground-floor commercial space, structured/shared parking, public realm improvements, or redevelopment of vacant, underutilized properties.

Best Practice

Pre-Approved Housing Designs

Supporting the development of missing middle housing can help meet the housing needs of a range of residents, including older households looking to age in place and younger professionals who may not have the means or desire to purchase a larger single-family home. Missing middle housing comprises a mix of mid-density housing, including duplexes, triplexes, ADUs, and small multifamily buildings.

In 2021, the City of South Bend, IN instituted several regulatory changes aimed at promoting development of missing middle housing. One component was pre-approved infill housing plans, which can help lower costs, speed the development process, and generate community buy-in for different types of well-designed housing that fit in a variety of neighborhood contexts.



Image Source: City of South Bend

Strategy 5

Encourage residential developments that incorporate housing of different types, sizes, styles, and price points that are reflective of changing demographics and housing trends.

Action 1
Amend the zoning ordinance to allow contextually appropriate missing middle housing typologoes by-right in targeted areas, rather than requiring discretionary approvals for each project.

Action 2
Encourage new residential subdivisions seeking PUD approval, rezonings, annexation or significant deviations from base zoning to include a defined mix of housing types rather than only conventional detached single-family homes.

Action 3
During preliminary plat review, require developers to show street, sidewalk, trail, and utility connections to adjacent neighborhoods and undeveloped parcels. Avoid isolated subdivisions with single-entry access points where feasible.

Action 4
For subdivisions requiring annexation into Joliet, negotiate annexation agreement provisions that encourage a mix of housing types and require phased infrastructure construction, trail and sidewalk connections, park/open space dedication, and contributions toward off-site improvements.

Strategy 6

Align housing and social service strategies that support seniors, people with disabilities, and other residents with special housing needs.

Action 1
Support aging in place to reduce institutional demand by partnering with nonprofits to offer home modification programs including minor home repair grants and accessibility retrofits (ramps, accessibility upgrades, universal design standard updates, etc.)

Action 2
Require or incentivize service-enriched housing in new developments to provide case management, behavioral health access, and transportation coordination.

Action 3
Expand housing options such as senior and assisted living facilities, smaller and ground floor units, and ADUs.

Action 4
Update zoning ordinance to allow senior supportive, sober, group, and other housing for residents with special needs.

Action 5
Maintain proactive roles in regional housing and social service organizations.

Action 6
Work with regional partners to support homelessness prevention.

Action 7
Adopt universal design guidelines for new residential development to support accessibility.

Aging in Joliet

Aging in place refers to the ability of individuals to remain safely, independently, and comfortably in their houses and/or communities as they age, regardless of income or ability level. This includes supporting smaller, accessible housing types, improving walkability, and expanding convenient access to healthcare, transportation, and daily amenities. By planning for aging in place, the City enhances quality of life, reduces displacement, and supports multigenerational communities

Best Practice

Universal Design Standards

Universal design standards prioritize usability by all people regardless of ability status. They are guided by seven principles, including equitable use, flexibility in use, simple and intuitive use, perceptible information, tolerance for error, low physical effort, and size and space for approach and use. People who benefit from universal design may include:

- Small children and seniors
- People with temporary or permanent disabilities
- Residents who wish to age in place
- Residents and visitors with mobility problems.

City of San Antonio, TX
Universal Housing Design Ordinance

In April 2002, the City of San Antonio approved an ordinance requiring that all new single-family homes, duplexes, and triplexes that receive public assistance adhere to seven universal design principles. The design principles allow for future accessibility retrofits as well as stipulating minimum size standards for doors, entrances, and other components.



Image source: Patch

5.2: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND LOCAL INVESTMENT

A creative and prosperous community that balances social and economic capital with innovation

Joliet's economic future depends on strengthening the industries that have long shaped the City. It also requires diversifying the tax base by supporting emerging sectors, innovation, and entrepreneurship.

As a regional center of both population and jobs, Joliet is well positioned to compete for investment that creates quality jobs and expands the local tax base. At the same time, residents and businesses have emphasized the need for more neighborhood-serving services, stronger small business support, workforce pathways, and reinvestment in underutilized commercial properties.

The strategies related to this key topic area focus on balancing regional competitiveness with local benefit. They include:

- Diversify the economy by recruiting emerging sectors
- Work with current employers to bring high-quality, high-paying jobs to Joliet
- Support entrepreneurs
- Align workforce development with employer needs
- Reposition vacant and obsolete sites
- Direct incentives toward projects that deliver measurable public value

By coordinating land use, infrastructure, education, workforce training, and public-private investment, the City can build a more resilient economy that supports both established industries and future-focused sectors. These strategies are intended to position Joliet as a destination of choice for employers, workers, entrepreneurs, visitors, and residents while ensuring that economic growth contributes to a more prosperous, inclusive, and fiscally sustainable City.

Strategy 1

Diversify the local economy by supporting growth in emerging sectors such as healthcare, technology, clean energy, advanced manufacturing, education, and research.

Action 1
Ensure that incentive districts (i.e., TIFs) align with areas and land uses that can support economic growth in key and emerging sectors.

Action 2
Develop and maintain a target industry and employer recruitment strategy. Place a focus on healthcare providers, clean energy/tech firms, education/training users, research-oriented employers, and tech-enabled logistics firms.

Action 3
Align local incentives to prioritize high-quality job creation in targeted sectors. Consider including performance benchmarks related to wages, local hiring, capital investment, tax base growth, and long-term fiscal impact as a requirement for receiving financial assistance.

Action 4
Continue partnering with the Will County Center for Economic Development to market Joliet's competitive advantages (location, workforce, cost, infrastructure, multimodal access, available land/buildings, and regional connectivity) through targeted materials and outreach.

Action 5
Continue working on the business retention and expansion program. Focus on outreach to major employers to identify expansion or relocation risks. Coordinate around business assistance and workforce needs, infrastructure requirements, site constraints, and need for financial incentives.

Strategy 2

Strengthen small business ecosystems through technical assistance, micro-grants, and entrepreneurship training to support business formation, retention, and growth.

Action 1
Partner with regional organizations to deliver quarterly small business workshops and networking events, leveraging their membership base and existing programming. Partners should include the the Joliet Region Chamber of Commerce & Industry, Joliet Junior College's Entrepreneur & Business Center (EBC), the Joliet Latino Economic Development Association, and the the African American Business Association of Will County, as well as other organizations throughout the region.

Action 2
Create a small business resource hub (online and in-person) that identifies clear pathways to funding, technical assistance, permitting guidance, available storefronts, façade/buildout assistance, and support.

Action 3
Work with local partners to provide and invest in bilingual technical assistance, entrepreneurship training, and personalized coaching to support the growth and formalization of microenterprises and small businesses in Joliet's low- and moderate-income communities.

Action 4
Establish a small business advisory group to create ongoing feedback and continuity.

Action 5
Coordinate with regional economic development organizations to provide 1:1 advising, business planning support, and access to capital for Joliet entrepreneurs, with targeted outreach to minority-owned, women-owned, veteran-owned, and neighborhood-serving businesses.

Action 6
Create a small business micro-grant program in priority commercial corridors to support start-up costs, tenant improvements, code compliance, signage, façade upgrades, professional services, equipment acquisition and upgrades, and costs related to modernizing and scaling businesses.

Action 7
Adopt a policy that requires the City to: (1) seek local bids/quotes if available; (2) give preference to local vendors who are within 5% of the lowest bid/quote; and (3) require that a certain percentage of contractors are local, disadvantaged, minority, and/or women-owned businesses.

Best Practice

Small Business Assistance Programs

Joliet Junior College (JJC) Entrepreneur & Business Center (EBC)
The JJC EBC offers no-cost, 1:1 business advising plus a variety of workshops and seminars to support small businesses in a range of industries.

Joliet Region Chamber of Commerce & Industry
The regional chamber of commerce offers networking and other events focused on business development.

Joliet City Center Partnership
Businesses within the Downtown Core Area can apply for grant funding to support façade improvements, interior improvements, catalytic improvements, and general business assistance.

Joliet Latino Economic Development Association (LEDA) Small Business Assistance Program
Offers no-cost assistance to small businesses located in Joliet to support day-to-day needs as well as business growth.

Workforce Investment Board of Will County
Provides employee training grants to businesses in eligible industries, including Healthcare, Manufacturing, Professional/Financial/Information, Technology Services, and Transportation/Distribution/Logistics (TDL).

Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity (DCEO)
- *Advantage Illinois (AI) Participation Loan Program and Loan Guarantee Program.* These programs provide low-interest loans and loan guarantees to small businesses. Local participating lenders include Midland States Bank, NuMark Credit Union, Wintrust, and Old Second National.
- *INVENT Venture Capital Program (VCP).* Equity funding is available for underserved start-ups facing systemic barriers in key industries such as agriculture, energy, information technology, life sciences, manufacturing, quantum information sciences and technology, and transportation.

Lewis University Innovation Hub
Innovation hub membership for community members who are not associated with the university includes access to workspace, mentorship, and networking opportunities.



Image source: City of Joliet

Strategy 3

Prepare for the redevelopment of underutilized commercial and industrial sites to support job growth and bring services closer to residents.

Action 1
Focus resources and outreach in priority redevelopment corridors and districts, including Downtown Joliet/riverfront, Jefferson Street, Larkin Avenue, Chicago Street, Cass Street, Collins Street, the Louis Joliet Mall area, and key I-80 and I-55 interchange areas.

Action 2
Leverage TIF, RERZ, SSAs, and other local incentives to support adaptive reuse and mixed-use redevelopment, particularly for projects that bring jobs, services, and housing closer to neighborhoods. Consider creating other public financing districts in other high need areas.

Action 3
Maintain a public inventory of vacant, underutilized, and City-controlled sites, including former retail centers, obsolete industrial buildings, and brownfields, with basic redevelopment data (size, zoning, utilities, ownership, environmental conditions, infrastructure constraints, market positioning, and potential reuse concepts).

Action 4
Develop simple, corridor-specific branding and messaging (logo, signage style, tagline) that can be used consistently across marketing, wayfinding, and City communications, while reinforcing Joliet's broader economic identity.

Action 5
Promote adaptive reuse of vacant or obsolete historic buildings by encouraging the use of federal, state, and RERZ historic tax credits to enhance financial feasibility, preserve local character, and support reinvestment in established commercial areas.

Action 6
Conduct a review of the City's existing economic development toolkit (TIF, RERZ, SSAs, enterprise zones) to ensure alignment with future investment priorities (i.e., geographies, timing, eligible uses, and public return on investment).

Action 7
Continue recruiting retail that provides a service or need that is not currently available in Joliet.

Redevelopment Finance Tools

Tax Increment Financing (TIF): TIF districts leverage property value increases to provide funding for redevelopment projects that would not happen but-for the funding assistance.

River Edge Redevelopment Zone (RERZ): The City recently received an RERZ designation from the State of Illinois, which provides a combination of tax incentives to assist with redevelopment of environmentally challenged properties adjacent to the Des Plaines River.

Opportunity Zones: Private investments in federally designated, economically distressed Opportunity Zones may be eligible for preferential tax incentives, including deferred capital gains tax.

Special Service Area (SSA): An SSA is a property-taxing mechanism used to fund a range of special or additional services and/or physical improvements in a defined geographic area. Joliet currently has one SSA focused on the downtown, the eastern extent of Cass Street, and the northern extent of Collins Street. The SSA is administered by the Joliet City Center Partnership.

Enterprise Zones (EZ): Businesses in Enterprise Zones that make minimum statutory investments that create or retain a certain number of jobs can receive a variety of state tax exemptions and credits. The City is part of two Enterprise Zones: the Joliet Arsenal EZ and the Des Plaines Valley EZ.

Strategy 4

Support workforce partnerships between employers, educational institutions, and community organizations to prepare residents for high-quality careers.

Action 1
Formalize a Joliet Workforce Partnership that brings together major employers, Joliet Junior College, University of St. Francis, Lewis University, the Workforce Investment Board of Will County, other workforce agencies, and community organizations to meet quarterly and align training programs with hiring needs.

Action 2
Target financial incentives to companies that will create high-wage, high-multiplier jobs, particularly in strong and growing industries such as healthcare, logistics, advanced manufacturing, construction trades, clean energy, education, and technology-enabled services.

Action 3
Support partner organizations' efforts to expand apprenticeship, internship, and work-based learning programs, with an emphasis on connecting residents, youth, career changers, and workers without four-year degrees to employment pathways.

Action 4
Improve access to workforce programs for residents by addressing barriers such as transportation, awareness, scheduling, childcare, digital access, language access, and program affordability.

Action 5
Coordinate workforce development with housing and transportation planning to ensure residents can access employment centers and employers can attract and retain workers.

Best Practice

Workforce Programs

Joliet benefits from a strong workforce development ecosystem anchored by educational institutions, public workforce agencies, and targeted training programs. These partners provide a foundation for connecting residents to high-quality careers and helping employers address hiring and retention needs.

Joliet Junior College (JJC)
JJC offers intern hiring pipelines for employers in key industries and hosts job fairs, including ones in conjunction with the Joliet Regional Job Fair.

Workforce Center of Will County
The Workforce Center of Will County has a resource room for job seekers with access to a computer lab, resume-building software, printers, and personal assistance from staff. For businesses, the organization hosts a job board and job fairs, distributes weekly hiring flyers, and offers employee training reimbursements and subsidized youth employment programs.

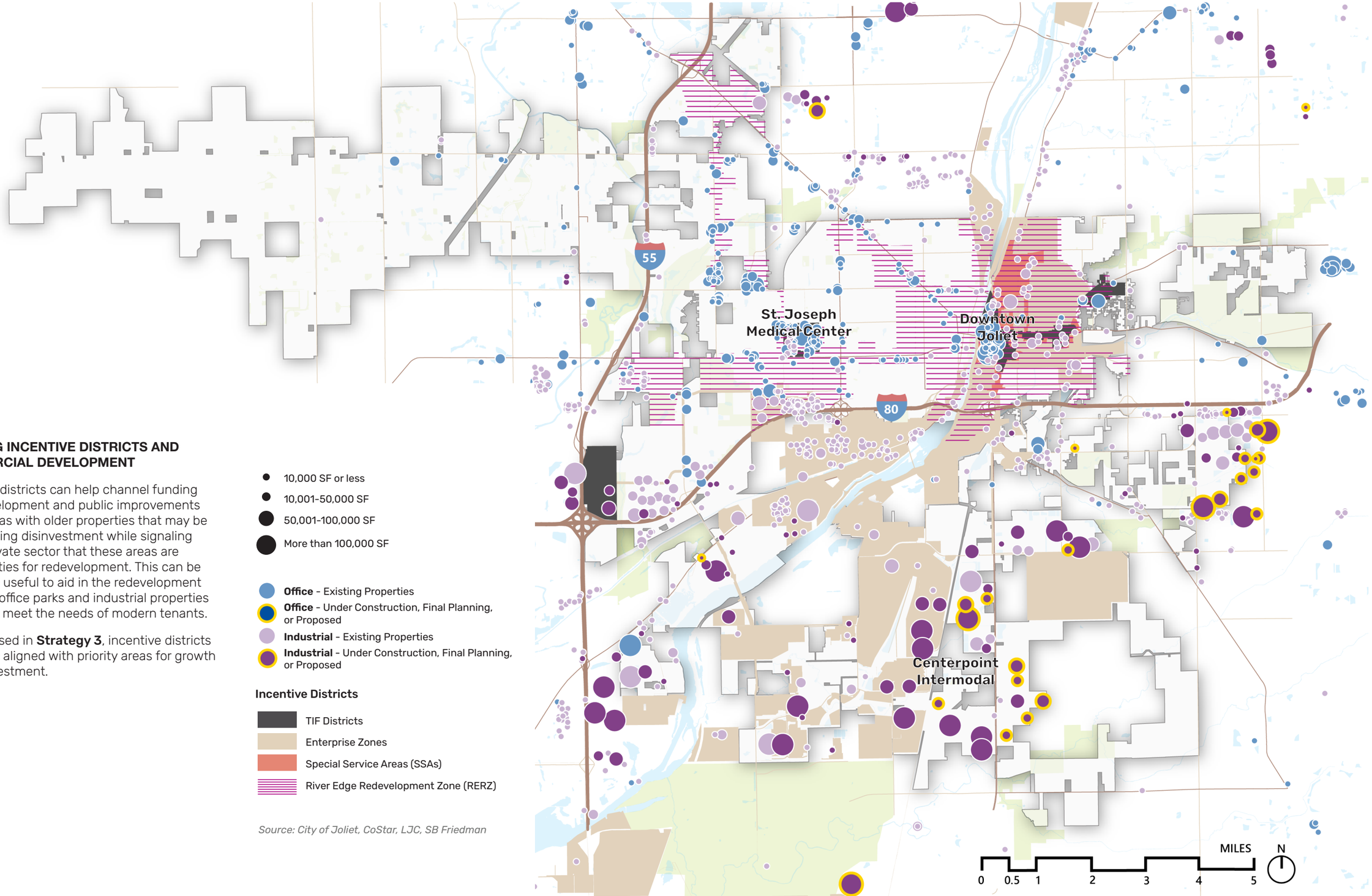
CEJA (Climate & Equitable Jobs Act) Workforce Hub
With funding from IL DCEO, Joliet Junior College functions as a Workforce Hub offering training and certifications for entry-level clean energy jobs. The program serves individuals aged 18 and above, prioritizing those from designated environmental justice communities and other underserved populations. Beyond training, the CEJA Workforce Hub also offers wraparound services for participants.

Joliet Job Corps
Joliet Job Corps provides free training and certifications across ten industries for low-income individuals aged 16-24.

EXISTING INCENTIVE DISTRICTS AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Incentive districts can help channel funding for redevelopment and public improvements to key areas with older properties that may be experiencing disinvestment while signaling to the private sector that these areas are City priorities for redevelopment. This can be especially useful to aid in the redevelopment of legacy office parks and industrial properties that don't meet the needs of modern tenants.

As discussed in **Strategy 3**, incentive districts should be aligned with priority areas for growth and reinvestment.



- 10,000 SF or less
- 10,001-50,000 SF
- 50,001-100,000 SF
- More than 100,000 SF

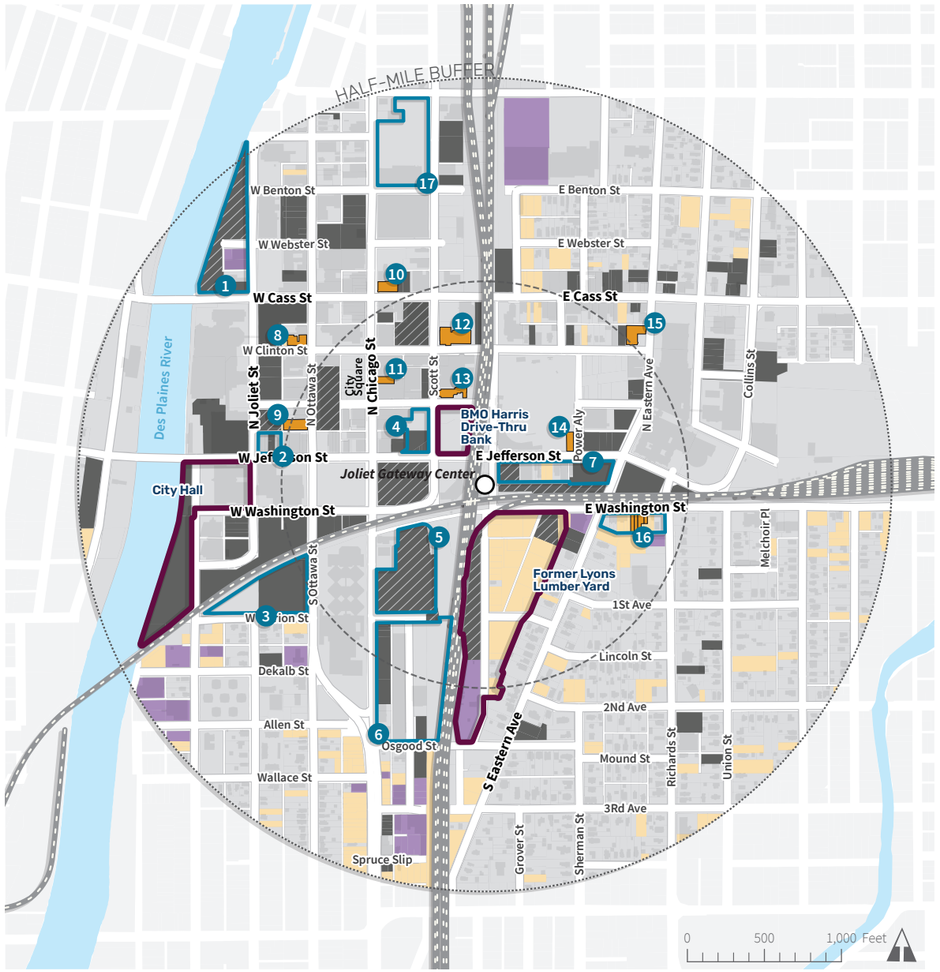
- **Office** - Existing Properties
- **Office** - Under Construction, Final Planning, or Proposed
- **Industrial** - Existing Properties
- **Industrial** - Under Construction, Final Planning, or Proposed

Incentive Districts

- TIF Districts
- Enterprise Zones
- Special Service Areas (SSAs)
- River Edge Redevelopment Zone (RERZ)

Source: City of Joliet, CoStar, LJC, SB Friedman

Downtown Joliet Equitable Transit-Oriented Development (ETOD) Plan – Catalyst Development Sites and Underutilized Parcels



- Catalyst Site
- Opportunity Site
- Joliet Gateway Center
- Public Parking Facility
- Parking Lots
- Industrial Use
- Vacant Land
- Vacant or Underutilized Buildlings

Parking Lots or Vacant Lots

1. 99-100 W Webster St, 251-301 N Joliet St
2. 71-85 W Jefferson St
3. 63 S Ottawa St
4. 22 E Jefferson St
5. 12 New St, 55 E Marion St, 40-,46-,60-,80-S Chicago St
6. 9-,13-,15-Osgood St, 126 St Louis St, 172-180 S Chicago St
7. 28-30 Mayor Art Schultz Dr, 118-142 E Jefferson St

Vacant or Underutilized Buildings

8. 59-61 W Clinton St and 151-153 N Ottawa St
9. 65 N Ottawa St
10. 1 E Cass St
11. 104 N Chicago St
12. 150 N Scott St
13. 100 N Scott St
14. 141 E Jefferson St
15. 225 E Clinton St
16. 210-250 E Washington St and 1 and 7 Richards St
17. 302 N Chicago St

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The City's ETOD Plan identifies catalyst development and opportunity sites in the downtown. The strategies and actions in the City's Comprehensive Plan aim to support redevelopment of the identified sites through public-private partnerships and incentive districts such as TIF and SSAs.

Strategy 5

Align land use and infrastructure investment with economic development goals to attract sustainable, community-oriented growth.

Action 1
Coordinate infrastructure planning with redevelopment priorities to ensure that utilities, roads, and site access are aligned with target redevelopment sites and that improvements support new private investment. Align with recommendations from the Urban3 infrastructure capacity study.

Action 2
Align land use decisions with long-term fiscal sustainability by prioritizing development that maximizes tax revenue per acre and minimizes new long-term infrastructure costs. Consider prioritizing areas that have the most productivity per acre and are designated as low-income census tracts.

Strategy 6

Continue to support Downtown Joliet as a regional destination.

Action 1
Encourage and facilitate public-private partnerships to fund and develop mixed-use projects in target locations that align with the Downtown Joliet ETOD Plan, with emphasis on catalyst sites, upper-story reuse, residential development, and ground-floor activation.

Action 2
Conduct a tourism and hotel market study to understand potential for downtown hotels.

Action 3
Coordinate with the Joliet City Center Partnership to invest in streetscape, wayfinding, and other placemaking enhancements that support extended visitor dwell times (e.g., public seating, fire pits, play areas for kids, evening lighting).

Action 4
Recruit and support restaurants, entertainment venues, experiential retail, arts/culture uses, and neighborhood-serving businesses that strengthen Downtown as a day-to-night destination. Consider resources including TIF and SSA funding.

Action 5
Prioritize adaptive reuse and upper-story activation by identifying code, financing, ownership, and building-condition barriers that limit reinvestment in existing Downtown buildings.

Action 6
Pursue designation for Downtown Joliet through Illinois Main Street and Main Street America, working with the Joliet City Center Partnership.


Image source: City of Joliet

5.3: PEOPLE, PLACES, AND BELONGING

A City of inclusion and representation

Joliet's identity is shaped by the people, places, stories, and traditions that connect residents to one another and to the City they call home. From historic landmarks and cultural institutions to neighborhood festivals, public art, schools, museums, parks, and everyday gathering spaces, Joliet's sense of belonging is built through shared experiences and visible expressions of community pride. Residents have consistently emphasized the importance of celebrating the City's diversity, preserving its history, supporting local artists, expanding cultural programming, and creating more welcoming places where people of all ages, abilities, backgrounds, and languages feel represented. The strategies and actions for this Key Topic Area recognize that community connection is created through resident's relationship to the daily environments where they meet, learn, volunteer, worship, celebrate, and participate in civic life.

The strategies and actions in this section focus on preserving and reusing historic assets, expanding opportunities for artists and cultural organizations, integrating public art and storytelling into corridors and gateways, investing in inclusive public spaces, strengthening multilingual communication, and building organizational and business partnerships that center stakeholder engagement. They also emphasize civic leadership and tourism as tools for sustaining community pride and invite others to understand Joliet's unique identity. By investing these critical place-keeping elements, the City can strengthen relationships across neighborhoods, elevate stories that have not always been visible, and create new opportunities for participation and expression. A stronger sense of belonging will help Joliet grow as a more inclusive, creative, welcoming, and connected City.

Strategy 1

Expand opportunities for local artists, cultural organizations, and creative entrepreneurs through grants, residencies, and performance venues.

Action 1
Establish a Joliet Creative Fund to provide grants and matching funds for local artists, neighborhood arts projects, cultural organizations, youth arts programming, and creative entrepreneurs. Eligible uses could include performances, exhibits, murals, temporary installations, workshops, cultural storytelling projects, artist materials, accessibility accommodations, marketing, and event production. The fund should prioritize projects in Downtown Joliet, parks, major corridors, and neighborhoods where residents have asked for more opportunities for inclusion of arts and culture programming. Funding sources could include annual City appropriations, sponsorships, philanthropic partners, state/federal arts grants, and a future percent-for-art program. This directly implements Joliet's Vision, Goals, and Objectives language calling for dedicated funding or grant programs for community-based cultural initiatives and artist-led projects, as well as exploration of a percent-for-public-art ordinance.

Action 2
Launch a Joliet Artist Residency and Creative Fellows Program that pays local artists, historians, performers, writers, designers, musicians, and culture bearers to work directly with neighborhoods, schools, City departments, faith communities, and community partners. Residencies could produce visible community outcomes such as neighborhood storytelling projects, corridor identity installations, youth workshops, temporary performances, oral-history exhibits, public art concepts, or creative engagement around planning and public works projects. Early residency locations could include City Square, Billie Limacher Bicentennial Park, the Rialto area, the Joliet Area Historical Museum, selected neighborhood schools, and long-established churches with strong community ties. Partnerships with schools and faith institutions should help expand access beyond Downtown and engage BIPOC artists, performers, historians, and culture bearers whose work reflects Joliet's Black, Latino, immigrant, and other cultural histories. Initial residencies should be developed with school districts, congregations, neighborhood organizations, and cultural partners to confirm available space, community interest, programming needs, accessibility, and long-term stewardship.

Action 3
Create a Joliet Creative Venue Network that makes it easier for local artists and cultural organizations to access performance, rehearsal, exhibit, and event spaces across the city. The network could coordinate City-owned, nonprofit, school, and private venues into a shared calendar and venue access program, with clear information on rental costs, insurance, permitting, technical equipment, accessibility, and available dates. Key anchors should include City Square, Billie Limacher Bicentennial Park and Theatre, Rialto Square Theatre, The Forge, downtown storefronts, park facilities, school auditoriums, religious institutions, cultural institutions, and future adaptive reuse spaces.

Best Practice

Adaptive Reuse

Adaptive reuse is the process of repurposing old or underused buildings for new uses while preserving their historic features and structure. It is applied by identifying viable historic structures to convert into housing, offices, restaurants, or other community spaces. Adaptive reuse encourages investment into the historic buildings that provide the City's character by reimagining their primary use to meet current community needs and helps to increase property values and strengthen the local economy. Adaptive reuse is often achieved through incentives, flexible zoning, and streamlined approval processes.

Successes in Adaptive Reuse

Elgin, Illinois utilizes both local grants and state and federal incentives to fund projects. It appoints a dedicated Heritage Commission that reviews and oversees preservation proposals. The City has four historic districts, including its downtown, to concentrate rehabilitation efforts. $200,000 in Riverboat Casino revenue funds local grants and the City's status as a River Edge Redevelopment Zone allows additional State and Regional incentives towards income-producing properties.

- Historic Architectural Rehabilitation Grants (50/50,72/25): Up to $20,000 per building to restore original architectural features on homes.
- Multi-Unit Conversion Grant: Up to $30,000 per unit to remove excess residential units in historic buildings.
- Fire Sprinkler Assistance for Residential Conversions Grant: Administrative fees waived for sprinkler installation in residential building conversions.
- Illinois Historic Tax Credit: 25% income tax credit.
- Federal Historic Tax Credit: 20% income tax credit for registered historic properties.
- Property Tax Assessment Freeze: 8 year freeze to offset increased value of property.



Image source: Historic Elgin

Elgin Historic District: A model for neighborhood-scale preservation.



Image source: Andy Ryan, Gregg Shupe

Redevelopment of a the Fitchburg Yarn factory in Fitchburg, Massachusetts into 57 residential units, of which 39 are affordable.



Image source: LJC

An old casket factory in Chicago is converted to a music school and performance space.

Strategy 2

Preserve and adaptively reuse historic buildings and structures.

Action 1
Establish separate City-funded historic rehabilitation grant programs for residential and commercial properties, supported through annual municipal appropriations. Create an Owner-Occupied Historic Residential Rehabilitation Grant for exterior restoration, structural stabilization, windows, porches, masonry, roofs, and other character-defining features in designated historic districts and landmarks. Establish a separate Historic Commercial Building Rehabilitation Grant for storefronts, façades, masonry, upper-story rehabilitation, accessibility, life-safety improvements, and adaptive reuse of older commercial buildings, particularly Downtown and along legacy commercial corridors.

Action 2
Launch a set of Historic Reuse Catalyst Projects that connect preservation with, tourism, and neighborhood reinvestment. Early candidates could include:

- Downtown upper-story and storefront reuse near the Rialto, City Square, Joliet Gateway Center, and Chicago Street
- Riverfront industrial or commercial buildings that can support cultural, civic, housing, or small-business uses.

Each catalyst project should include a interpretive signage that communicates the story of the building and how it connects to Joliet's history.

Action 3
Maintain Joliet's Certified Local Government (CLG) status and use it proactively to pursue preservation funding, technical assistance, surveys, National Register nominations, design guidance, and planning studies. Establish an annual preservation work program identifying priority CLG grant applications and matching-fund opportunities for resources such as the Old Joliet Prison, Downtown, historic neighborhoods, and culturally significant sites.

Action 4
Establish a Historic Property Stabilization and Intervention Program for vacant, deteriorated, or endangered buildings. Use proactive code enforcement to identify problems before structures reach the point where demolition becomes necessary, while connecting cooperative owners with grants and technical assistance. For persistently neglected properties, use the full range of legally available tools, including repair orders, municipal liens, land banking partnerships, community development corporations, acquisition and disposition strategies, and court-appointed health and safety receivership where appropriate. Prioritize intervention for contributing structures in historic districts, locally designated landmarks, older neighborhood commercial buildings, and properties that can support adaptive reuse.

Action 5
Adopt the International Existing Building Code (IEBC) as part of the City's next building code update and establish clear procedures for its use in rehabilitation and adaptive reuse projects. The IEBC provides a code framework specifically designed for repairs, alterations, additions, changes of occupancy, and historic buildings, allowing existing structures to achieve appropriate life-safety standards without automatically applying every requirement intended for new construction. This would be a meaningful change for Joliet because the City's current published list of adopted codes includes the 2015 International Building Code but does not list the IEBC. Pair adoption with staff training and an applicant guide explaining how the code can support reuse of Downtown buildings, older commercial structures, former industrial buildings, schools, churches, and other legacy properties.

Action 6
Pursue designation for Downtown Joliet through Illinois Main Street and Main Street America, working with the Joliet City Center

Partnership, property owners, businesses, preservation organizations, cultural institutions, and Downtown residents. Begin by completing a Main Street readiness assessment, defining a Downtown transformation strategy, establishing organizational responsibilities, preparing an annual work program and budget, and documenting reinvestment outcomes. The longer-term goal should be to achieve Main Street America Accredited status, which recognizes programs demonstrating sustained organizational capacity, preservation-based economic development, community engagement, and measurable results. This framework could connect historic preservation with storefront rehabilitation, small-business support, upper-story reuse, public-space improvements, events, and Downtown economic development.

Action 7
Hold at least two Historic Building Technical Workshops each year for homeowners, commercial property owners, contractors, real estate professionals, insurers, developers, and neighborhood organizations. Coordinate workshops through the Joliet Historic Preservation Commission and Community Development Department, with partners such as Landmarks Illinois, preservation tradespeople, lenders, insurers, and local design professionals. Topics could rotate annually and include historic windows and doors, masonry and tuckpointing, painting and siding, roofing, energy efficiency, insurance for older buildings, buying and selling historic property, rehabilitation financing, tax incentives, adaptive reuse, and navigating Certificates of Appropriateness and building permits. Build the workshops around Joliet's existing Historic Residential and Commercial Design Guidelines so participants receive practical instruction directly applicable to local buildings. Joliet already maintains separate historic design guidance for residential and commercial, institutional, and industrial properties, providing a strong foundation for this program.

Strategy 3

Integrate public art and storytelling into redevelopment, corridor improvements, and neighborhood reinvestment to strengthen local identity and sense of place.

Action 1
Adopt a Citywide Public Art Policy that establishes the rules, responsibilities, standards, and procedures for enabling public art throughout Joliet. The policy should define how public art projects are initiated, funded, reviewed, approved, installed, owned, maintained, relocated, and deaccessioned, and clarify the roles of City departments, the Joliet Arts Commission, artists, developers, property owners, neighborhood organizations, schools, and cultural partners. It should also establish requirements for artist selection, public accessibility, community engagement, maintenance agreements, and long-term stewardship.
Use the policy as the foundation for a subsequent Citywide Public Art Master Plan that identifies priority locations, project types, funding strategies, implementation timelines, and opportunities for public art, storytelling, cultural interpretation, gateways, and neighborhood identity across the City.

Action 2
Launch Public Art Everywhere pilot projects in three to five high-visibility corridors, gateways, and neighborhood centers outside Downtown, using the Public Art Master Plan to prioritize locations and funding. Early pilots could include utility-box art, murals, and community identifiers along Cass Street, Collins Street, Jefferson Street, Larkin Avenue, and Chicago/McDonough; bridge, viaduct, and underpass art near rail corridors; interpretive signage and lighting near Old Joliet Prison; and gateway markers at major entrances from I-80, I-55, Route 53, Route 52, Route 30, and Route 66. Each pilot should include a local artist call, neighborhood co-design workshop, youth or school partnership, maintenance plan, and post-installation evaluation.

Best Practice

Public Art and Placemaking

Public Art and Placemaking brings art into public spaces by working with the community to create installations that are lively, meaningful, and uniquely Joliet. This may include murals, sculptures, and gathering spaces that highlight local culture, celebrate history, and improve underused areas. A successful program sets clear goals for the type and number of installations, establishes reliable funding, and updates zoning to allow these features. It also provides a clear, simple process for implementation and maintenance, helping integrate art into streets, parks, and buildings while making Joliet more welcoming and engaging for residents and visitors.

Successes in Public Art and Placemaking

The City of Moline, Illinois adopted a Public Art and Placemaking ordinance in 2021 requiring developers to include public art in all new development projects or contribute to the City's Public Art Contribution fund, ensuring art is incorporated into development in a consistent and publicly accessible way. It establishes clear standards for approval, funding, installation, and long-term maintenance to support high-quality, lasting public art.

- Developers must provide an installation equal to at least 1% of construction cost, with a maximum of $100,000. Installations may be installed on site, or the money can be paid into a public art fund to fund projects elsewhere in the City.
- Installations must be created by an artist and placed in a publicly accessible location.
- Approval is required from the Public Art Commission and city authorities before permits will be issued.
- Property owners are responsible for maintaining and replacing the artwork over time.
- As of 2026, this program has been responsible for over $430,000 invested into public art installations within Moline.

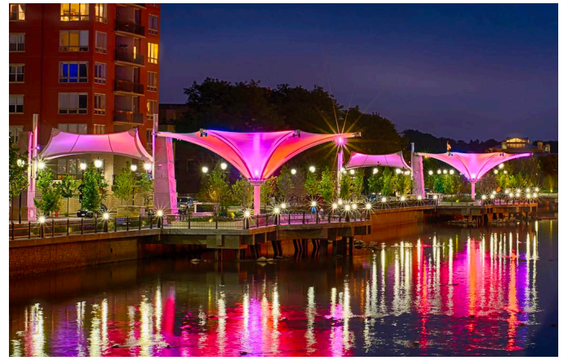


Image source: City of Elgin

Illuminated structures along the riverfront in Elgin, Illinois provide interest and a unique sense of place.



Image source: Visit Champaign

The Downtown Mural Program in Champaign, IL, partners with local arts organizations to activate blank or overlooked walls.



Image source: All Together

A temporary placemaking installation in Racine, Wisconsin.

Best Practice

Community and Culture

Community spaces are places where people gather, interact, and build connections, serving as the social and cultural foundation of a neighborhood. Strong community spaces are welcoming and inclusive of people of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds, and come to life through consistent activation, whether through planned events or everyday use. Programming should remain flexible, allowing spaces to adapt and support a variety of activities such as markets, performances, and informal gatherings. When thoughtful design, adaptable programming, and ongoing activation work together, they create vibrant public spaces that encourage connection, participation, and a shared sense of belonging.

Successes in Community and Culture

In Chicago, Illinois, Public Open Plazas (POP) spaces are community driven recreational places that transform underused areas into vibrant community hubs using flexible design and programming to foster connection, culture, and neighborhood activation.

- Design process engaged local residents, artists, and stakeholders to shape the layout, programming, and identity of each space based on neighborhood needs and culture.
- Coordinated by lead nonprofit managing design, engagement and implementation.
- Funded through grants from national nonprofit organizations, corporate sponsorships, youth foundations, and in-kind contributions.
- Municipality provides land access, site preparation, long term maintenance. Built on underutilized sites.
- Supports regular programming and casual usage.

POP projects transformed underutilized lots on Chicago's south and west sides into places for activity, gathering, and commerce.



Image source: LJC



Image source: LJC

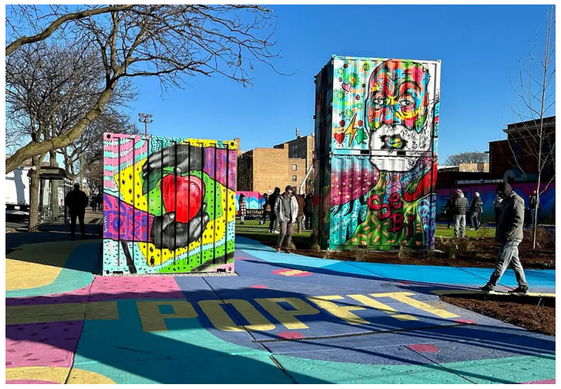


Image source: LJC

Action 3
Create a Joliet Story Bank and Cultural Interpretation Program as a part of the Public Art Master Plan to guide development of appropriate media to share the City's diverse stories. This program could guide creation of unique elements that celebrate:

- Representative public art
- Cultural and ethnic history
- Industrial and labor history
- Popular culture
- Neighborhood identity
- Resident stories

This program could also guide creation of new gateway features, culture trails or educational or interpretive signage and monuments.

Action 4
Develop a Joliet Gateway, Signage, and Community Identifier Program as an implementation component of the Public Art Master Plan. Integrate public art, storytelling, and wayfinding into redevelopment projects, corridor improvements, streetscape upgrades, parks, trails, and targeted neighborhood reinvestment areas. Establish a coordinated family of gateway elements, neighborhood markers, interpretive signs, banners, murals, pavement art, lighting, and digital story features that help residents and visitors understand where they are and what makes each place distinct. Prioritize installations through the Public Art Master Plan and develop them through local artist calls, resident storytelling sessions, youth or school partnerships, and coordination with property owners and corridor stakeholders.

Action 5
Establish a Public Art in Development framework that creates a consistent process for incorporating or funding public art through major development and redevelopment projects. As part of the Public Art Master Plan, evaluate appropriate project thresholds, geographic areas, exemptions, contribution levels, and incentives for Joliet. Qualifying projects could satisfy the requirement or incentive by commissioning publicly accessible art on-site, funding art at another priority location identified in the Public Art Master Plan, or contributing to a dedicated Public Art Acquisition and Maintenance Fund. Consider initially applying the framework to larger developments, publicly assisted projects, major redevelopment areas, and projects receiving City economic development incentives. Establish standards for artist selection, public accessibility, City review, installation, ownership, maintenance, replacement, and long-term stewardship. Periodically evaluate the program to ensure that public-art requirements remain proportionate to project scale and do not create unintended barriers to investment.

Strategy 4

Invest in inclusive public spaces that reflect the City's diversity and create welcoming places for gathering and expression.

Action 1
Create a Joliet Belonging Investment Index to identify where inclusive public-space investment is most needed and would have the greatest positive impact. Evaluate parks, plazas, trails, streetscapes, transit stops, schoolyards, civic buildings, vacant public parcels, and neighborhood gathering places using criteria such as:

- Walkability
- ADA accessibility
- Lighting
- Seating
- Shade
- Tree canopy
- Restrooms
- Drinking water
- Safety
- Transit access
- Multilingual Wayfinding
- Cultural Representation
- Maintenance condition
- Ability to host informal gathering

The index would identify annual Belonging Investment Areas and help direct capital funding, grants, and TIF, SSA, or RERZ resources where eligible. The evaluation could also identify funding gaps and opportunities for philanthropic support, partnerships, and private-development contributions that help advance improvements

in underserved neighborhoods. These findings should be used to prioritize projects, coordinate implementation across departments and partners, and track whether investments are reaching areas with the greatest need. This initiative focuses on making public-space investment measurable, transparent, and equity-based rather than driven solely by individual projects.
A strong national precedent is NYC Parks' Community Parks Initiative, which won APA recognition and used a data-driven equity approach to guide investments in high-need parks.

Action 2
Explore additional opportunities to expand shared schoolyard and civic campus partnerships, building on existing initiatives such as Joliet Public Schools District 86's Community Use of School Facilities framework, the Joliet Park District's Kids at Hart program, and the Kids 'n Nature partnership between District 86, the Joliet Park District, and University of Illinois Extension. District 86 already allows approved community organizations to use school facilities during non-school hours, while existing Park District partnerships demonstrate opportunities for shared recreation, enrichment, and outdoor programming. Identify additional schoolyards, fields, courtyards, gyms, community rooms, and other civic facilities where existing shared-use arrangements could be expanded or new partnerships established with school districts, area park districts, libraries, churches, community organizations, and nonprofit partners. Where appropriate, pair expanded access with physical improvements such as shade trees, seating, stormwater gardens, outdoor classrooms, art walls, walking loops, play areas, and gathering spaces. Prioritize neighborhoods with limited park access, high youth populations, flooding or heat concerns, and strong partners able to support programming and long-term stewardship.
Chicago's nationally recognized Space to Grow program transforms schoolyards into shared community spaces that also reduce flooding and improve neighborhood access to nature.

Strategy 5

Support events, programs, and festivals that celebrate culture, creativity, and shared experience.

Action 1
Pilot Open Joliet: Neighborhood Culture Days, a rotating open-streets program that temporarily transforms streets within Joliet's cultural neighborhoods into vibrant public spaces for music, food, art, vendors, youth activities, and cultural performances. Early pilots could include Collins Street and the Old Joliet Prison area; Cass Street and surrounding East Side neighborhoods; Chicago Street and Downtown; Jefferson Street/Route 66; the Chicago Street/McDonough Street area; and neighborhood connections near Bicentennial Park and the Des Plaines River. Each event should highlight the history, businesses, institutions, and cultural traditions of the surrounding neighborhood while testing temporary placemaking and safety improvements such as curb extensions, parklets, pavement art, enhanced crossings, lighting, and wayfinding. Lessons from each pilot should inform future streetscape, corridor, and neighborhood reinvestment projects.

Action 2
Coordinate year-round cultural, recreational, historical, and environmental programming along the riverfront and nearby heritage assets. Programming should connect Billie Limacher Bicentennial Park, the Des Plaines River, City Square, Downtown Joliet, Old Joliet Prison, Collins Street, the Route 66 corridor, and future RERZ redevelopment areas. Events could include river walks, heritage markets, outdoor performances, environmental education days, local history festivals, temporary art installations, canoe and kayak events where feasible, food truck nights, and neighborhood storytelling programs. Coordinate with watershed organizations active in the area, including Openlands and Friends of the River, to highlight the heritage, ecology, and value of the Des Plaines River watershed.

Action 3
Prioritize the Des Plaines Riverfront as a tactical urbanism demonstration area to test temporary and low-cost improvements before permanent investment. Pilot interventions could include pop-up seating, shade structures, temporary lighting, pavement art, wayfinding, overlooks, event spaces, enhanced pedestrian crossings, and improved connections between the riverfront, Downtown, City Square, Bicentennial Park, and nearby cultural destinations. Use lessons from these pilots to inform future riverfront design, streetscape improvements, public-space investments, and RERZ redevelopment projects.


Image source: City of Joliet

Strategy 6

Improve communication and transparency with residents through multilingual tools, digital information platforms, and neighborhood-based outreach networks.

Action 1
Adopt a Citywide Language Access Policy that establishes consistent standards for translation, interpretation, plain-language communication, and multilingual public engagement across City departments. Build on Joliet's existing Spanish translation practices, website translation guidance, community language data, school district information, partner input, and engagement history to determine priority languages and communication needs. The policy should require the City to plan for interpretation at all public meetings, hearings, workshops, and engagement events, with appropriate language access identified in advance rather than addressed only upon request. Apply the policy to Comprehensive Plan implementation updates, zoning modernization summaries, redevelopment notices, corridor plans, capital project updates, public hearing materials, and other high-impact communications. Provide plain-language summaries, translated materials, neighborhood-specific maps or graphics, QR codes, reusable templates, and clear information on how residents can request additional language assistance.

The Illinois' Language Equity and Access Act is a useful reference point because it requires state agencies to develop Language Access Plans and recognizes the need for free translation and interpretation services for people seeking public services.

Action 2
Establish an Online Development Portal that allows residents, applicants, and community organizations to track development proposals from application through final decision. The portal should provide access to project locations, application materials, staff reports, meeting dates, public hearing information, application status, public comments where appropriate, and final decisions. Organize information by project and location, with an interactive map and straightforward search functions so users can easily understand what is proposed in their neighborhood and where a project stands in the review process. Coordinate the portal with the City's existing website, Public Access Map, and other digital information systems to avoid duplicating information.

Strategy 7

Strengthen partnerships among schools, museums, nonprofits, and businesses to expand access to cultural and educational opportunities.

Action 1
Create a Joliet Cultural Access Partnership that coordinates schools, libraries, museums, cultural organizations, higher-education institutions, parks, and community organizations to expand access to Joliet's cultural and educational assets. Partners could include Joliet Public Schools District 86, Joliet Township High School District 204, Joliet Public Library, Joliet Area Historical Museum, Old Joliet Prison, Rialto Square Theatre, Billie Limacher Bicentennial Park and Theatre, Joliet Park District, Joliet Junior College, University of St. Francis, Spanish Community Center, and other local institutions. Establish shared programs such as free or reduced-cost admission days, coordinated school field trips, cultural passes available through schools and libraries, transportation assistance, family learning events, and neighborhood-based programming. Develop an annual schedule so residents and schools can more easily understand and access available opportunities.
Seattle's Creative Advantage is a strong model because it is a collective-impact partnership among Seattle Public Schools, the City's arts office, community arts partners, and philanthropy to expand equitable arts education access.

Action 2
Establish a Joliet Cultural Partnership Grant Program that provides small matching grants for collaborative projects involving at least two local institutions, such as a school and museum, library and cultural organization, nonprofit and business, or university and neighborhood organization. Grants could support student exhibitions, oral-history projects, neighborhood heritage programs, cultural field trips, intergenerational learning, temporary exhibits, performances, educational materials, and community workshops. Give priority to projects that serve neighborhoods or populations with limited access to existing cultural programs and that use Joliet's local history, arts, institutions, and cultural traditions as educational resources.

Strategy 8

Develop civic leadership, volunteer, and ambassador programs that empower residents to shape their community and sustain engagement and agency over time.

Action 1
Use the Joliet Civic Academy, planned to launch in 2027, as the City's flagship civic education initiative and incorporate Comprehensive Plan stewardship into the program as it develops. The annual multi-week Academy should provide residents with direct access to City departments, facilities, elected officials, and leadership while explaining how municipal services, budgeting, zoning, development review, capital projects, and other City functions support Comprehensive Plan implementation. Following the core Academy, interested participants could self-select into Comprehensive Plan topic groups focused on housing, economic development, community connection, land use, mobility, environmental resilience, or utilities and infrastructure. Graduates could form a Civic Academy alumni or stewardship network that helps communicate Plan progress, participates in annual implementation reviews, identifies neighborhood priorities, and serves as informed community ambassadors. As the City expands the Civic Academy, develop an abbreviated youth version that introduces younger residents to City government and Comprehensive Plan implementation.

Action 2
Establish a Joliet New Resident Welcome Packet that connects newcomers with City services, community resources, neighborhood amenities, and opportunities to participate in civic life. The packet should include information on municipal services, utility resources, parks and recreation, local businesses, cultural attractions, community organizations, events, neighborhood resources, and Joliet's history. Materials should be accessible to diverse populations, including multilingual households, and updated periodically to reflect current programs, services, and contact information. Provide the packet to new residents when they visit City Hall to establish utility service, with a digital version available through the City's existing website and communication channels. The program should be coordinated with the City department responsible for resident communications and utility customer service, with specific administrative responsibilities established through the Comprehensive Plan's implementation framework.
West Chicago Forward / Adelante is a strong Illinois peer example because its bilingual Action Kit was designed to raise awareness of the plan, encourage residents to participate, and give people practical ways to implement recommendations on their own block or in their social circles.

Strategy 9

Promote regional tourism through cultural trails, festivals, and branding that highlight Joliet's history, arts, and identity.

Action 1
Create a Joliet Cultural Connections Network that links Downtown, City Square, the Rialto Square Theatre, Joliet Area Historical Museum, Route 66 Welcome Center, Billie Limacher Bicentennial Park, the Des Plaines River, Union Station/Joliet Gateway Center, Old Joliet Prison, Collins Street, Route 66 corridors, and future riverfront/RERZ redevelopment areas. The network should use coordinated wayfinding, interpretive signs, public art, lighting, sidewalk and crossing improvements, digital audio tours, bike and micromobility connections, and links to restaurants, shops, hotels, parking, transit, and events. Organize the network as a connected visitor experience rather than a single walking route, allowing residents and visitors to explore Joliet's history, food, arts, architecture, riverfront, and entertainment across multiple destinations.

Action 2
Create a Joliet Tourism Brand Toolkit and Visitor Experience Standards that unifies signage, maps, digital content, public art, gateways, event promotion, itineraries, and storytelling across the city. The toolkit should define Joliet's tourism identity around themes such as Route 66, Historic and Notorious, River and Rail, Arts and Architecture, Sports and Entertainment, and Neighborhood Culture. Move from attraction marketing to citywide experience design. A visitor should encounter a consistent Joliet identity from the website to the street, from Route 66 to Downtown, from Old Joliet Prison to the riverfront.

Action 3
Create a Des Plaines River Culture and Heritage Corridor that connects tourism, ecology, recreation, public art, and redevelopment along the river. The corridor to link Bicentennial Park, Downtown, riverfront redevelopment sites, trails, bridges, public art, stormwater improvements, historic interpretation, food and music programming, and future mixed-use or adaptive reuse projects. Include riverfront walking tours, temporary art installations, heritage markers, pop-up events, kayak/canoe programming where feasible, environmental education, overlook improvements, lighting, native planting, and connections between the riverfront, City Square, the museum, Ironworks Site and I&M Canal. Over time, the corridor to become a signature civic and tourism destination that tells the story of Joliet's relationship to water, industry, transportation, ecology, and community life. Position the Des Plaines River as a cultural destination, not just an environmental or infrastructure feature.

Strategy 10

Develop a coordinated, multilingual wayfinding and signage system that connects people to Joliet's neighborhoods, destinations, and cultural identity.

Action 1
Consolidate and expand Joliet's existing Downtown, Route 66, City Square, parking, transit, and interpretive signage efforts into a coordinated Citywide Wayfinding and Community Identifier System. Establish consistent standards for vehicular, pedestrian, bicycle, transit, trail, parking, gateway, and neighborhood signs while allowing individual neighborhoods and districts to express their distinct history and identity.

Action 2
Add a multilingual digital layer to Joliet's physical wayfinding system by linking signs and community identifiers to mobile-friendly maps, accessible routes, transit and parking information, construction updates, cultural destinations, public art, local businesses, and neighborhood stories. Build from the existing Public Access Map and Visit Joliet resources rather than creating a separate platform with duplicate information.

Best Practice

Wayfinding and Signage

Wayfinding is a coordinated system of visual, physical, and informational cues that help people navigate and understand their environment. Signage is the primary tool used in a wayfinding system, providing clear direction, identification, and orientation at key decision points. Effective wayfinding improves navigation and enhances accessibility for all users, while also reinforcing a community's identity. As a placemaking tool, it can highlight destinations, connect districts, and create a cohesive experience across the city. Developing a wayfinding brand requires determining a design and messaging that reflects local character and is visible, legible, and integrated with the broader built environment

Successes in Wayfinding Systems

The I&M Canal Passage wayfinding system provides clear, consistent signage that guides users along the corridor while highlighting cultural, recreational, and environmental assets, creating a navigation system that is both engaging and cohesive.

- Serves pedestrians, cyclists, and recreational users
- Uses clear, recognizable signage elements with uniform colors, fonts and materials
- Placed at key decision points like gateways, intersections, and access points, providing directional guidance and orientation maps.
- Wayfinding system integrates the area's history by integrating historical information, maps, and illustrations to connect users to canal's heritage.



Image source: City of Laramie, Wyoming

Wayfinding and signage systems may incorporate directional and interpretive signage. Signage families provide a coordinated design for various signage types.



Image source: Canal Corridor Association

Interpretive signage on the I&M Canal Passage Trail.



Image source: Neil Street Corridor Streetscape Improvement Plan, LJC

Pedestrian directional signage on the Neil Street Corridor in Champaign, IL.


Image courtesy of RTA

5.4: MOBILITY AND ACCESS ACROSS THE CITY

A city connected to the region

Mobility shapes how Joliet residents experience daily life, access opportunities, and connect to the broader region. The City's transportation network includes regional highways, freight corridors, rail service, bus routes, trails, local streets, sidewalks, and emerging mobility options that together support residents, workers, visitors, and businesses. As Joliet continues to grow, the City must balance its role as a major regional transportation and logistics hub with the need for safer, more convenient, and more comfortable travel within neighborhoods. Residents have identified sidewalk gaps, difficult crossings, limited transit access, truck impacts, and barriers between neighborhoods as concerns that affect quality of life and access to jobs, schools, parks, healthcare, shopping, and civic destinations. This priority focuses on creating a multimodal network that gives people more reliable choices for moving across the City. The strategies in this section emphasizes Vision Zero, Complete Streets, sidewalk and trail connections, safer crossings, improved public transit, mobility hubs, corridor redesign, coordinated land use and transportation planning, freight management, parking, employer-supported transit, and emerging technologies. These recommendations recognize that transportation investments should improve safety, equity, economic access, environmental quality, and neighborhood connectivity at the same time. By coordinating with Pace, Metra, IDOT, Will County, CMAP, employers, schools, and neighboring jurisdictions, Joliet can align local improvements with regional systems and funding opportunities. A stronger mobility network will help residents reach opportunities, support downtown and corridor reinvestment, reduce conflicts between freight and neighborhoods, and create a more connected, accessible, and resilient City.

Strategy 1

Strengthen Joliet's roadway network to improve connectivity, safety, and regional access.

Action 1:
Consider a transportation roadway network plan

The city can consider a citywide transportation roadway network plan that identifies the roadway improvements, crossings, operational changes, and policy decisions needed to support Joliet's long-term growth. The plan should build on the Downtown Joliet ETOD Plan, the Will County Freight Plan, the Will County Joliet Intermodal Transportation Master Plan, IDOT studies, and prior Joliet corridor and downtown plans, rather than starting from scratch.

The plan could evaluate roadway gaps, intersection bottlenecks, bridge capacity and redundancy, east–west and north–south connectivity, emergency access, truck routes, downtown circulation, state and county jurisdictions, roadway extensions, sidewalk and trail crossings, and freight/neighborhood conflicts. It should include a prioritized project list, planning-level cost ranges, responsible agencies, funding opportunities, and near-term "quick wins" such as signal timing, wayfinding, safety improvements, and truck-route signage. The plan could incorporate recommendations from separate pedestrian/cycling plans as well as freight plans, if the city chose to develop these dedicated plans independently.

The plan could also establish roadway typologies for different contexts, such as downtown streets, industrial/freight corridors, neighborhood collectors, commercial corridors, riverfront streets, and greenfield growth areas. Each typology should define expectations for safety, truck access, pedestrian crossings, transit accommodation, bicycling, traffic calming where appropriate, stormwater, curb management, and maintenance responsibilities.

Action 2:
Advocate for new crossings including a fixed high level crossing of the Des Plaines River

Joliet should support study, funding readiness, and intergovernmental coordination for new regional Des Plaines River crossings (including a fixed high-level crossing for example, the previously studied Caton Farm-Bruce Road crossing) where they improve mobility, safety, freight routing, and neighborhood quality of life.

Work with Will County, IDOT, FHWA, neighboring municipalities, and regional partners to evaluate and advocate for additional high-level or otherwise reliable Des Plaines River crossings that improve roadway network redundancy. The existing historic low movable bridges can experience maintenance downtime, weight restrictions, and access limitations, while the I-80 bridge improvements will not by themselves resolve local cross-town constraints.

Best Practice

Using transportation investments to support redevelopment

Major corridors and state routes should support economic development, safe access, placemaking, and downtown vitality in addition to moving traffic.

The Olympic Boulevard and Houbolt Road improvements demonstrate how transportation investments can unlock redevelopment opportunities and support long-term economic growth. By improving regional connectivity and access to the Rock Run development area, the project illustrates how strategic infrastructure investments can position key growth areas for private investment and new destinations. Regionally, Milwaukee's West Wisconsin Avenue corridor revitalization illustrates how similar strategies can be extended to major corridors to catalyze broader economic development.

Image courtesy of National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO)

Best Practice

Building a project list that's ready for funding.

Maintain a prioritized pipeline of projects with planning-level costs, partner responsibilities, and identified funding opportunities to improve competitiveness for state and federal grants.

The Joliet Intermodal Transportation Master Plan and related JADA freight and mobility planning efforts provide a local model for linking project prioritization, implementation strategies, funding opportunities, and regional coordination.

Planning on a network level

Evaluate corridors, bridges, freight routes, downtown streets, and neighborhood connections as a coordinated system rather than a series of standalone projects.

For example, Grand Rapids, Michigan's Vital Streets Program is frequently cited as a model for coordinating corridor investments, land use, economic development, and neighborhood connectivity through a citywide transportation network approach.

Matching street design to context

Downtown streets, freight corridors, commercial arterials, and neighborhood collectors should be designed to reflect surrounding land use, safety needs, freight activity, and community character.

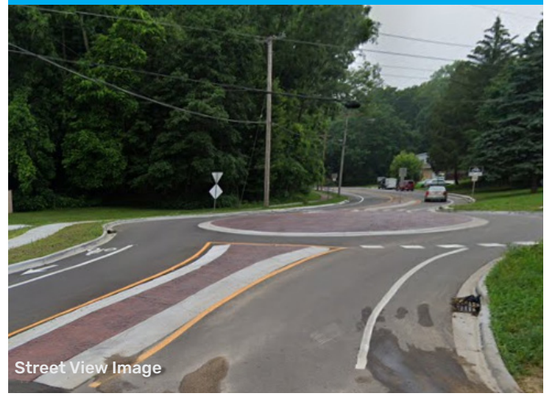
Hennepin County, Minnesota's Complete Streets Policy applies context-sensitive design standards that vary by corridor function, surrounding land use, and multimodal needs rather than relying on a one-size-fits-all roadway approach.

Hennepin County, Minnesota's Complete Streets Policy includes modal hierarchies and design guidance



Image courtesy of Hennepin County

Street redesign in Grand Rapids, Michigan.



Street View Image

Action 3:
Advocate for the redesign of bottlenecks on IL 53

Joliet can advocate for an IL 53 redesign that balances freight movement with safety, access management, pedestrian and bicycle connectivity, drainage, signal operations, and neighborhood protection. Priority concepts should include intersection redesign, truck-route wayfinding, shared-use path connections where feasible, turn lanes, median/access management, flood-resilience improvements, and coordination with the emerging regional freight-management work focused on reimagining IL 53 and improving regional connectivity.

Coordinate with IDOT, Will County, Joliet Arsenal Development Authority, Elwood, Rockdale, and freight stakeholders to advance safety, operations, and access improvements along IL 53. IDOT is engaged in Phase I preliminary engineering and environmental studies for IL 53 improvements in Joliet and Elwood, and the study was initiated to address safety and operations along the corridor.

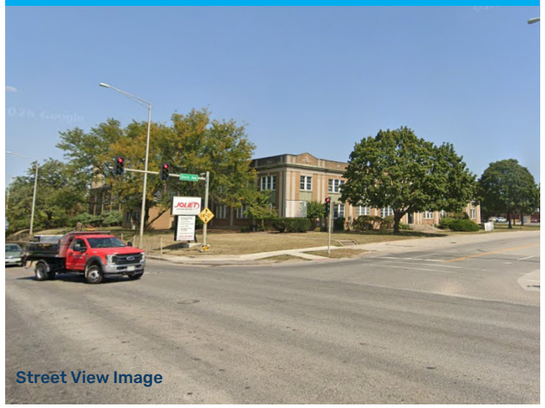
Action 4:
Explore rerouting or combining of state routes around Downtown Joliet

Evaluate, in coordination with IDOT and regional partners, whether state-route designations, through-truck movements, and downtown one-way circulation patterns should be modified to better support Downtown Joliet's redevelopment, pedestrian safety, transit access, wayfinding, and riverfront connections. It should consider downtown business access, freight reliability, emergency response, transit operations, the Joliet Gateway Center, the Des Plaines River and bridges, truck-pedestrian conflicts, wayfinding, signal timing, curb management, parking and loading, and impacts on adjacent neighborhoods.

Illinois Route 53



IL-53 at Doris Avenue



Street View Image

East-West major streets and river crossings could be a priority focus of a street network plan

Strategy 2

Create a multimodal transportation network that connects people to opportunity across the City.

Action 1:
Consider a comprehensive safety approach

The City could elevate safety as a top priority by formally adopting Vision Zero, the goal of ending traffic-related deaths and serious injuries. This initiative would include developing a local traffic safety action plan (building on the Will County Safety Action Plan) to identify a High-Injury Network of streets and intersections with the most crashes, then systematically focusing engineering, enforcement, and education efforts on those locations.

Action 2:
Consider adoption of a multimodal street design policy

Ensure that new construction and road rehabilitation projects are designed for all users, including drivers, transit riders, pedestrians, and cyclists, from the outset. A formal Complete Streets ordinance or policy could direct Joliet project managers and private developers to include sidewalks, crosswalks, and curb ramps, and consider bike facilities and transit-friendly design in all street projects by default.

The City could draft and adopt a Complete Streets policy, update design standards to reflect best practices (including IDOT and Will County guidelines as well as national standards like NACTO and AASHTO), train public works and planning staff on multimodal design, and integrate these principles into the capital planning and development review processes.

Action 3:
Leverage funding and partnerships for multimodal connectivity

Expand the City's capacity to deliver transportation projects by actively seeking diverse funding sources and collaborating with regional partners. This could allow the City of Joliet to implement pedestrian, bicycle, and transit improvements that better connect residents to jobs, schools, and other opportunities.

Pursue grants for connectivity and safety (such as ITEP, CMAQ, and TAP), maintain an updated list of "shovel-ready" projects aligned with the City's priorities, and strengthen partnerships with entities like Pace, Metra, Amtrak, Will County, and CMAP to coordinate investments (like aligning city street projects with transit service.

Best Practice

Complete Streets

- Design streets to safely accommodate pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, freight, emergency vehicles, and motorists.
- Incorporate multimodal improvements into routine maintenance and reconstruction projects whenever feasible.
- Match street design to surrounding land use, corridor function, and community character.
- Use data to evaluate outcomes and prioritize future investments.

Aurora, Naperville, and Arlington Heights have adopted Complete Streets policies, while many Chicagoland communities have incorporated Complete Streets principles into transportation planning and capital improvement programs.

Action 4:
Implement data-driven asset management for streets and sidewalks

Improve the condition of roads and walkways across Joliet's neighborhoods by using data-driven criteria to prioritize maintenance and infrastructure upgrades. This approach would consider factors like pavement condition, sidewalk gaps, crash history, citizen-reported issues, and population need (for example, areas with lower incomes or more pedestrians) when scheduling resurfacing, reconstruction, and sidewalk projects.

The City could develop a public, easily accessible pavement and sidewalk condition inventory (building on existing asset management data and the ADA Transition Plan), map disparities in street quality and sidewalk availability across council districts and allocate a significant share of annual maintenance funding to lower-condition streets in high-need areas. Coordinate with partner agencies (including IDOT and Will County) when state routes or county roads run through these neighborhoods to achieve more comprehensive improvements.

FHWA Safe System Diagram



Strategy 3

Improve sidewalks, trails, and crossings to make walking and biking safer and more convenient.

Action 1: Consider developing a citywide pedestrian and bicycle plan

While individual bicycle facilities, trails, and pedestrian improvements exist throughout Joliet, the city lacks a unified framework for prioritizing investments and building a connected active transportation network. Residents identified gaps in sidewalks, trails, crossings, and bicycle facilities that make it difficult to safely reach schools, parks, transit services, employment centers, downtown destinations, and recreational assets. A citywide pedestrian and bicycle plan would establish a long-term vision for how walking and biking can support mobility, public health, recreation, economic development, and quality of life.

The plan should identify network gaps, establish priority corridors and projects, evaluate barriers such as major roadways, rail lines, and river crossings, and create an implementation framework for future investments. Particular emphasis should be placed on developing a connected bicycle network that links neighborhoods, downtown, schools, transit facilities, employment centers, parks, and regional trails. The plan should identify low-stress routes, safe crossings, bicycle parking opportunities, and other improvements that create a comfortable and accessible network for riders of varying ages and experience levels.

The plan should include project phasing, design guidance, performance measures, and funding strategies that help guide capital planning, development review, grant pursuits, and coordination with regional partners. Recommendations should also identify opportunities to coordinate pedestrian and bicycle improvements with roadway maintenance, reconstruction projects, and future development to maximize implementation opportunities and advance network connectivity over time. This plan can help advance and develop the other actions in this strategy.

Action 2: Close gaps between existing trails and sidewalks

Many of Joliet's sidewalks and trails can feel like disconnected segments rather than a holistic network. Missing links between existing facilities can create barriers to walking and biking even where substantial infrastructure already exists. These gaps are often most apparent near major roadways, rail corridors, waterways, and developing areas where infrastructure was built incrementally over time.

Identify locations where sidewalks, trails, and shared-use paths terminate or fail to connect to adjacent destinations. Prioritize projects that create continuous and accessible routes between neighborhoods, schools, parks, transit facilities, commercial districts, and employment centers, with particular attention given to locations where relatively small investments can significantly improve connectivity.

Best Practice

Focus on Network Connectivity

Maintain a prioritized pipeline of projects with planning-level costs, partner responsibilities, and identified funding opportunities to improve competitiveness for state and federal grants.

The Joliet Intermodal Transportation Master Plan and related JADA freight and mobility planning efforts provide a local model for linking project prioritization, implementation strategies, funding opportunities, and regional coordination.



Existing waterfront path at Mayor Art Schultz Park

Action 3:
Improve bicycle and pedestrian crossings on the Des Plaines River

Several Des Plaines River bridges include sidewalks but do not provide dedicated bicycle accommodations, limiting safe and comfortable river crossings for people biking. Community feedback has consistently identified the river as a barrier to east–west connectivity.

As part of the citywide bike and ped plan, evaluate Des Plaines River bridges to identify candidates for bicycle accommodation as part of future rehabilitation or redesign projects. Priority locations should connect directly to existing trails and downtown destinations, including the Brandon Road Bridge (Illinois & Michigan Canal Trail access) and either the Jefferson Street or Cass Street bridges, taking into account recent lane reconfigurations and operating conditions. Improve safety and accessibility on approaches to bridges to clearly designate where cyclists should share the sidewalk with pedestrians and cross intersections.

Action 4:
Establish a safe and accessible citywide pedestrian network

Walking remains one of the most fundamental forms of transportation, yet gaps in sidewalks, inaccessible curb ramps, difficult crossings, and deteriorated facilities can limit mobility for residents of all ages and abilities. Community feedback and prior planning efforts identified a need for continued investment in pedestrian infrastructure, particularly in locations that connect residents to everyday destinations.

Continue implementing sidewalks, crossing, and accessibility improvements that improve safety and connectivity throughout the city. Prioritize locations that improve access to schools, parks, transit, medical facilities, commercial districts, community services, and other frequently visited destinations. Recommendations from the City's ADA Transition Plan, safety studies, and future transportation planning efforts should be integrated into capital improvement and maintenance programs whenever feasible.

Action 5:
Expand and Strengthen Joliet's Trail System

Joliet benefits from access to several important local and regional trail assets, including connections to the Illinois & Michigan Canal Corridor, Old Plank Road Trail, Wauponsee Glacial Trail, and other regional systems. These facilities provide recreational opportunities while also serving as transportation connections between communities, employment centers, parks, and natural areas. However, opportunities remain to strengthen connections between trails, neighborhoods, downtown, and riverfront destinations.

Continue expanding and improving local and regional trail connections in coordination with neighboring municipalities, the Forest Preserve District of Will County, and other regional partners. Priority investments should focus on strengthening access to downtown, improving connections between existing trail systems, overcoming major physical barriers, and ensuring that future development preserves opportunities for long-term trail expansion and connectivity.

Best Practice

Prioritize Bridges and Major Barriers

Bridges, rivers, rail corridors, and major roadways often represent the most significant barriers to walking and biking. Communities increasingly focus on improving these critical links to unlock broader network connectivity.

Chicago's Programmatic Agreement for movable bridges with the state and federal governments provides a model for integrating bicycle and pedestrian improvements into work on historic bridge infrastructure.

Multnomah County's improvements to Portland's Hawthorne Bridge demonstrate how bridge approaches, wayfinding, and dedicated bicycle space can improve connectivity without major structural modifications.



Autumn in the Forest at Pilcher Park Joliet Illinois

Best Practice

Match Facility Design to Context

Different streets require different approaches. Low-volume neighborhood streets may function effectively with wayfinding, traffic calming, and neighborhood greenway treatments, while higher-speed corridors often require separated facilities, protected crossings, and enhanced intersection treatments.

The National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) Urban Bikeway Design Guide promotes context-sensitive bicycle facility selection based on roadway characteristics, adjacent land uses, and user comfort, helping communities tailor facilities to local conditions.

Use Quick-Build Improvements to Accelerate Implementation

Many communities have successfully advanced bicycle and pedestrian networks through lower-cost projects that use pavement markings, signage, delineators, pedestrian refuge islands, and traffic calming measures before larger reconstruction projects occur.implementation strategies that combined short-term improvements with long-term capital investments.

Rockford's Bikeway Implementation Study identified phased projects and implementation strategies that combined short-term improvements with long-term capital investments.

Integrate Accessibility and Asset Management

Communities increasingly coordinate sidewalk repairs, ADA improvements, crossing upgrades, and resurfacing projects to maximize investment and improve system-wide accessibility.

Joliet's ADA Transition Plan already provides a framework for identifying sidewalk gaps, curb-ramp deficiencies, and accessibility priorities that can be integrated into future capital programs.

Best Practice

Build Trail Systems Through Partnerships

Successful trail systems are often delivered through partnerships among municipalities, park districts, counties, and regional agencies.

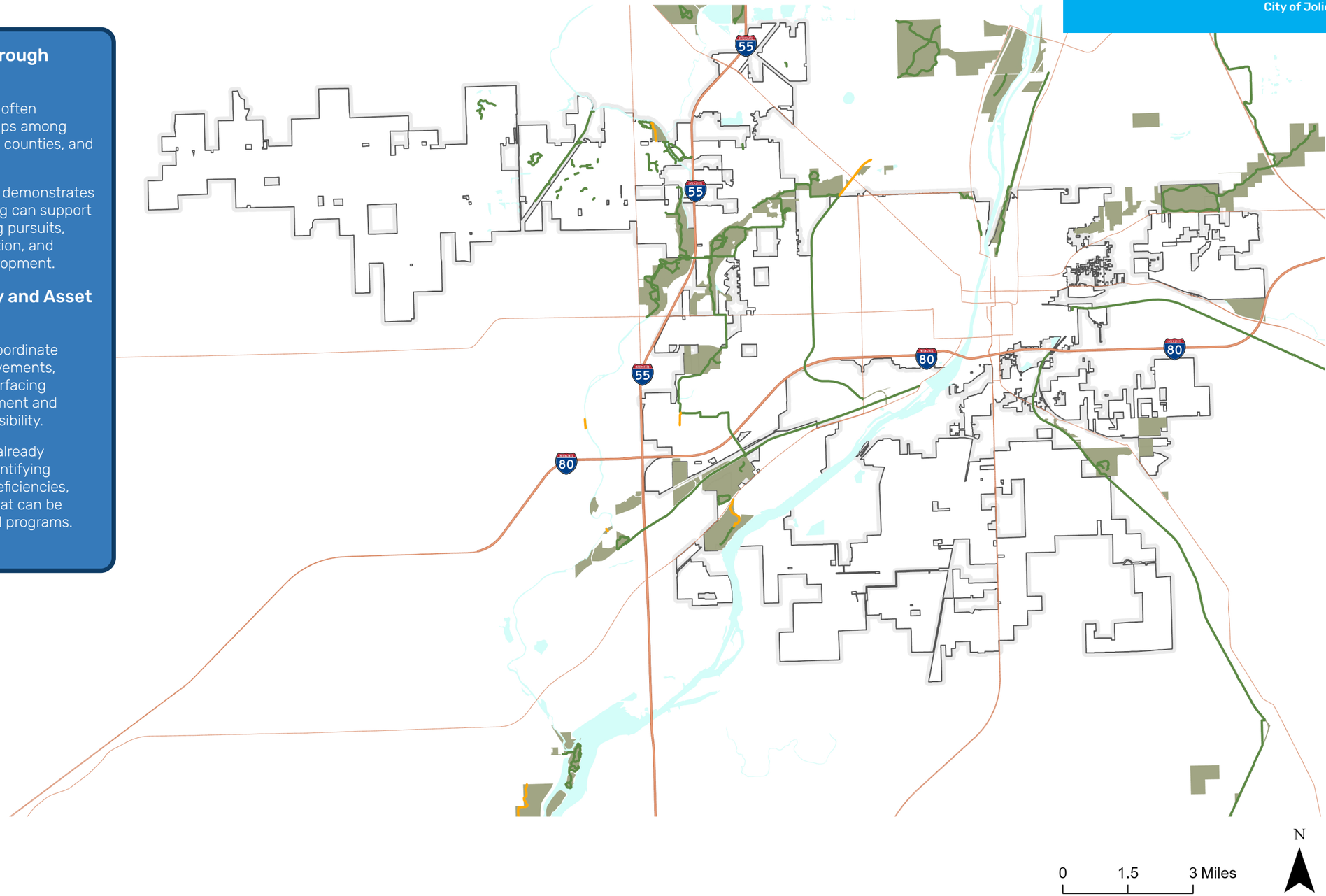
Naperville's Trail Master Plan demonstrates how long-range trail planning can support project prioritization, funding pursuits, intergovernmental coordination, and integration with future development.

Integrate Accessibility and Asset Management

Communities increasingly coordinate sidewalk repairs, ADA improvements, crossing upgrades, and resurfacing projects to maximize investment and improve system-wide accessibility.

Joliet's ADA Transition Plan already provides a framework for identifying sidewalk gaps, curb-ramp deficiencies, and accessibility priorities that can be integrated into future capital programs.

City of Joliet Trail Connections



Strategy 4

Expand public transit coverage and reliability, particularly in neighborhoods with limited access to cars.

Action 1:
Continue to invest in the Joliet Gateway Center and adjacent equitable transit-oriented development (ETOD)

Continue to implement the City's recently completed Downtown Joliet ETOD Plan, which outlines needed transportation improvements and potential development sites.

Action 2:
Improve transit and mobility offerings at key locations

Work with property owners to assess mobility needs of users and develop mobility improvements at key nodes such as the Joliet Gateway Center, the Will County Justice Center, Joliet Junior College, and potential future locations (e.g., Louis Joliet Mall and neighborhood centers). Coordinate mobility options and plan mobility hubs with shared micromobility, VanGo, Pace, and Metra services, and align investments with mixed-use development and the City's Equitable Transit-Oriented Development goals.

Action 3:
Pursue regional transit enhancements

Coordinate with the Northern Illinois Transit Authority (NITA), Pace, Metra, the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) and other regional partners to implement transit improvements to better serve the mobility needs of Joliet as the region evolves. In the near-term this can include pursuing improved off-peak and reverse-commute services, restored weekend rail service where feasible, increased bus frequency, and improved fare integration. It can also include capital improvements to station accessibility, transit signal priority, express bus corridors, existing rail lines, and other types of future transportation solutions that may be needed.

Action 4:
Continue to participate in discussions about feasibility of high-speed passenger rail to and through Joliet

Continue to engage with elected officials, the Illinois High Speed Rail Commission, Amtrak and other regional partners in conversations about High-Speed Rail. The Northern Illinois Transit Authority (NITA) also specifies that the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) will conduct a planning study on improvements needed at Joliet Gateway Center for potential extensions of passenger rail service to Peoria and other locations outside of Northeastern Illinois. Engage with IDOT in the scoping and execution of this study.

Action 5:
Expand flexible and on-demand transit services

Work with Pace to review VanGo vanpool usage in Joliet and convene discussions to ensure that ongoing funding levels, service area, and operating hours meet the needs of the community, particularly in north and east neighborhoods. Convene City-led meetings with major employers, Workforce Center of Will County, Will County Center for Economic Development and others to better meet worker transportation needs including exploring fare-free or reduced-fare trips between key job centers and transit hubs.



Pace buses at the Joliet Gateway Center

Image courtesy of Pace Suburban Bus

Best Practice

Improve First- and Last-Mile Connections

Many transit trips depend on safe and convenient connections between transit stops and final destinations. Communities increasingly use mobility hubs, micromobility services, and on-demand transportation to improve access to jobs, schools, shopping areas, and recreational destinations.

Denver Union Station serves as a nationally recognized mobility hub that integrates commuter rail, Amtrak, regional and local bus service, bicycle facilities, pedestrian connections, ride-hailing services, and surrounding transit-oriented development in a single location.

Use Micromobility to Expand Transportation Choices

Bicycles, e-bikes, scooters, and other micromobility options can provide affordable transportation for short trips and help extend the reach of transit systems. Successful programs are typically paired with safe bicycle infrastructure, clear operating rules, and connections to major destinations.

Rockford, Aurora, Fort Wayne, and Champaign-Urbana have implemented shared mobility programs that support short trips, recreation, and access to transit.

Best Practice

Support On-Demand Transit in Areas with Limited Fixed-Route Service

On-demand transportation can complement traditional bus and rail service by connecting residents to employment centers, transit hubs, and community destinations in areas where fixed-route transit may be less practical.

For example, Milwaukee's FlexRide program demonstrates how flexible transit services can improve access to jobs and support workforce mobility.

Partner with Employers to Improve Workforce Mobility

Public-private partnerships can help connect workers to employment centers that are difficult to reach by traditional transit. Employer-supported transportation programs may include fare subsidies, shuttle services, mobility hubs, or on-demand transportation partnerships.

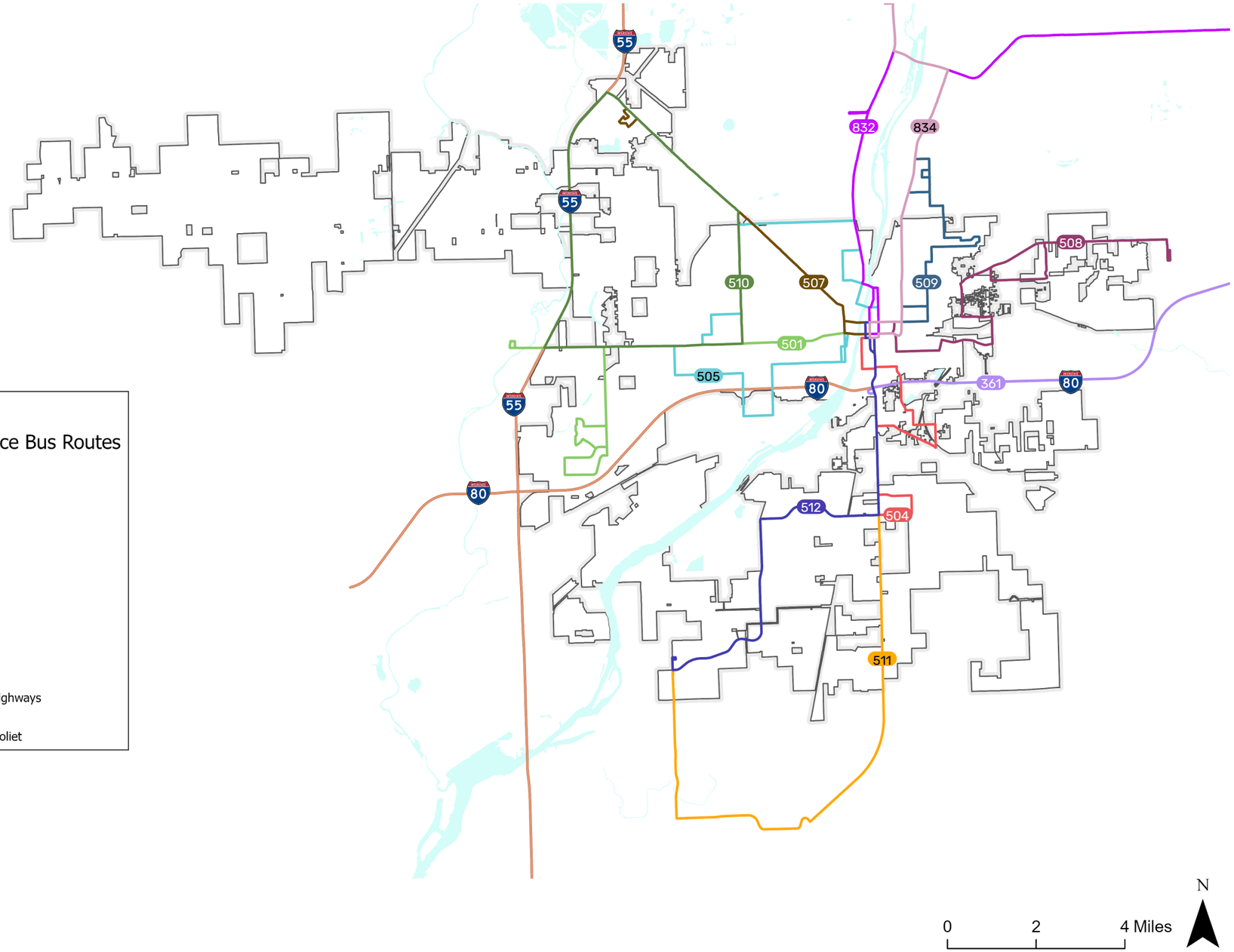
The Lake-Cook Transportation Management Association helped launch the Shuttle Bug service through partnerships between employers and transit providers.

Leverage Regional Transit Investments

Major regional transit initiatives can create opportunities for improved service, better fare integration, enhanced station access, and new funding sources for local mobility improvements.

The Northern Illinois Transit Authority framework provides opportunities for coordinated Pace and Metra service planning, improved regional connectivity, and expanded transit investment throughout northeastern Illinois.

Pace Routes in Joliet



Strategy 5

Redesign key corridors to improve safety, visibility, and comfort for pedestrians and cyclists.

Action 1:
Continue to implement and evaluate outcomes of Chicago Street corridor improvements

The Chicago Street Corridor and City Square projects represent a significant investment in pedestrian-oriented design downtown.

Monitor outcomes such as pedestrian activity, business occupancy, and safety over time to inform future corridor improvement efforts elsewhere in the city.

Action 2:
Improve sidewalk continuity along Joliet's major corridors

Promote complete and accessible sidewalk networks on major corridors. Coordinate with IDOT, Will County, Kendall County, and other transportation partners to identify and address gaps in the pedestrian network, improve accessibility, and strengthen connections between neighborhoods and key destinations. Efforts should focus on completing missing sidewalk links, enhancing crossings, addressing barriers to mobility, and ensuring facilities are accessible to users of all ages and abilities. The City should continue to advocate for these improvements during corridor studies, capital programming efforts, and roadway projects undertaken by partner agencies.

Action 3:
Streets and sidewalks in a state of good repair

Maintaining roads, sidewalks, alleys, signals, and streetlights in a state of good repair is fundamental to Joliet's safety, mobility, and equity goals. Joliet residents identified deteriorated pavement, sidewalk gaps, and curb ramp deficiencies as barriers to safe travel, particularly in older neighborhoods.

Continue to evolve capital improvement and maintenance programs toward a data driven, equity informed asset management approach.

Consider asset condition of street, sidewalk, and alley investments alongside factors such as crash history, access to community destinations, and historic patterns of disinvestment to maximize local resources as well as grant supported programs like Rebuild Illinois.

Action 4:
Integrating ADA improvements into capital projects

Joliet's Public Right-of-Way ADA Transition Plan provides clear direction for improving accessibility across the sidewalk network, including the identification of sidewalk gaps and non-compliant curb ramps.

Incorporate accessibility upgrades in roadway resurfacing and reconstruction projects wherever feasible in addition to any stand-alone initiatives.

Integrate ADA upgrades into capital work to improve efficiency, reduce long-term costs, and ensure that sidewalks and crossings function as complete, accessible facilities serving people of all abilities.

Prioritize routes connecting residents to schools, parks, transit stops, medical facilities, and other daily destinations.



Sidewalk networks can be incomplete on Joliet's major corridors, like the intersection of Jefferson Street and Essington Road

Strategy 6

Integrate land use and mobility planning to promote compact, connected, and accessible development patterns.

Action 1:
Better align freight land uses with surrounding development

Joliet's regional freight role brings economic benefits but also creates conflicts with nearby residential and mixed-use areas, including truck parking impacts.

Coordinate with stakeholders, including private operators, to designate appropriate locations for freight-related parking and driver amenities in the near term. Over time, ensure future land use plans and zoning guidance locate new freight, and logistics uses in areas with appropriate access and buffering.

Action 2:
Support downtown reinvestment through land use and parking policy updates

Evaluate zoning and parking requirements within downtown and adjacent areas to support infill development, encourage shared parking, and reduce minimum parking requirements where transit access and walkable amenities are present.

Action 3:
Incorporate active transportation in new development

Use the development review process to ensure new neighborhoods, subdivisions, commercial centers, and redevelopment projects are designed with safe, convenient connections for people walking, biking, and accessing transit. New developments should be evaluated for how they connect to surrounding streets, sidewalks, trails, fixed-route transit, parks, schools, employment areas, and nearby neighborhoods.

Update site plan, subdivision, and development review expectations so that applicants identify pedestrian routes, bicycle access, internal crossings, bicycle parking, transit access where applicable, and connections to adjacent or planned public improvements early in the review process. For larger developments, the City could require access plans that show how the site will connect to the surrounding network, limit driveway conflicts, and preserve future trail or greenway connections.

This approach would help each new project contribute incrementally to Joliet's broader mobility goals while remaining consistent with the Future Land Use Map, Character Areas, zoning modernization efforts, and subdivision design recommendations. Over time, these project-level improvements can help create more connected neighborhoods, safer commercial areas, and better access between new development and existing community destinations.

Action 4:
Explore parking policy and curbside management updates

Joliet can explore parking policy and curbside management updates that balance convenient access with broader goals for walkability, downtown reinvestment, neighborhood commercial activity, and multimodal mobility. Parking will continue to be important for residents, visitors, employees, businesses, schools, transit users, and major destinations, but parking policies can be tailored to different contexts rather than applied uniformly across the city.

In Downtown Joliet and areas near transit, the City can continue evaluating whether existing public parking supply, pricing, time limits, wayfinding, and surface and garage utilization are supporting business access, visitor convenience, and redevelopment goals. This could include improving wayfinding to public surface lots and garages, monitoring whether time limits are achieving the desired turnover, and exploring additional flexibility for private development in downtown and transit-served areas where existing regulations already recognize that parking needs differ from more auto-oriented parts of the city.

In commercial corridors, mixed-use areas, and neighborhood centers, the City can explore shared parking, off-peak parking arrangements, and parking placement standards that support a more walkable public realm. This could include allowing complementary uses with different peak parking periods to share parking, encouraging parking to be located beside or behind buildings where feasible, and evaluating how on-street parking can support business access, traffic calming, and pedestrian comfort in appropriate locations.

The City can also explore curbside management approaches that address access needs, including rideshare, delivery, short-term pickup, loading, accessible parking, bicycle parking, and pedestrian circulation. For truck parking and loading conflicts, Joliet can consider ordinance updates, clearer signage, targeted enforcement, and private-sector partnerships that create stronger incentives for appropriately located truck parking and loading areas rather than relying primarily on new public facilities.

Evaluate waiving or reducing minimum off-street parking requirements in Downtown, transit-served areas, neighborhood centers, and mixed-use corridors where existing public parking, on-street parking, shared parking, walking, bicycling, and transit can reasonably accommodate travel demand. Parking reductions should be coordinated with a citywide curbside and snow-event parking policy so that reliance on on-street parking does not interfere with snow removal or emergency access. The City should evaluate approaches such as temporary parking restrictions, alternate-side parking, designated snow routes, or other operational measures appropriate to Joliet's street network.



Consider new sidewalk and bike infrastructure, such as dedicated bike lanes

Image courtesy of LJC

Best Practice

Parking Policy

Parking policy can support reinvestment, walkability, and multimodal access when requirements and management tools are tailored to local context. Recent state policy direction also reinforces this approach. Illinois' People Over Parking Act limits minimum parking requirements near public transit, reflecting a broader shift toward allowing local context, market demand, shared parking, and multimodal access to shape parking decisions rather than relying on one-size-fits-all parking minimums.

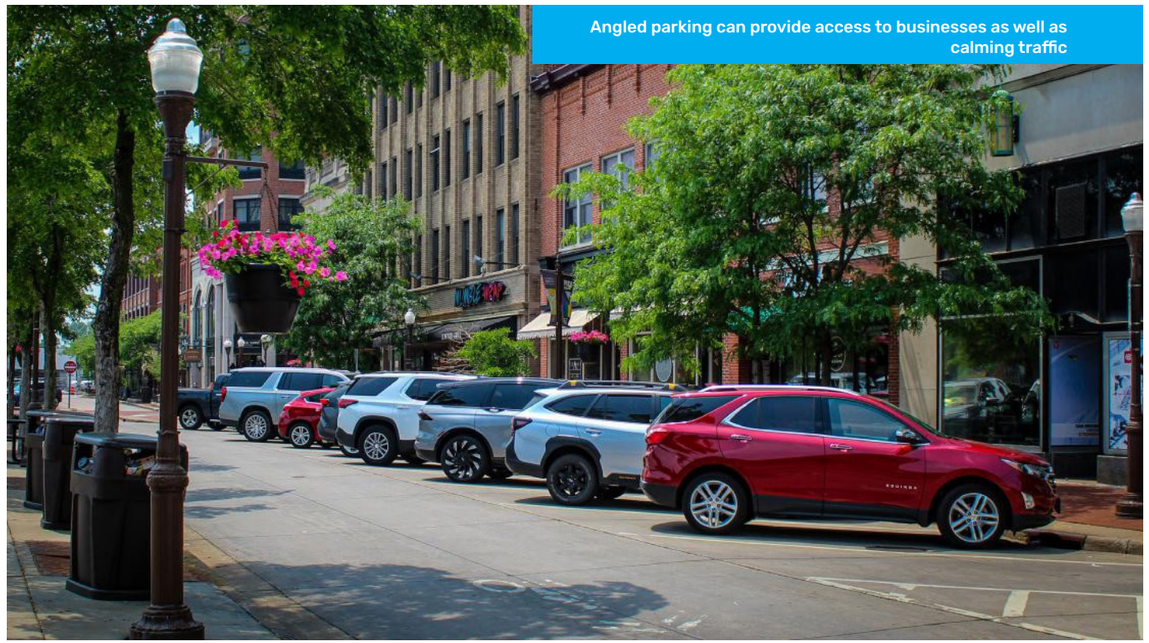
Oak Park, Illinois provides an example of a flexible parking approach in a transit-served community. The Village reduces parking requirements near transit and in downtown districts, allows administrative discretion to reduce requirements further, and permits fees in lieu of required parking that can support shared municipal parking. Its code also requires secure bicycle parking where off-street parking is provided.

Shared parking can also help communities use existing parking more efficiently. Kenosha, Wisconsin's zoning ordinance explicitly promotes consolidation and sharing of parking lots in its central business district, allowing uses with different peak parking periods to make better use of existing supply rather than requiring each use to provide separate parking.

Parking placement and curbside management can also support a safer and more comfortable public realm. Downers Grove, Illinois requires parking to be located behind buildings in its downtown overlay district, helping reduce the visual and physical impact of parking along pedestrian-oriented streets. This approach can be more widely applied in commercial districts outside of downtown where walkability and accessibility for pedestrians are key goals. In other commercial areas, angled on-street parking, where space allows, can support local business access while helping calm traffic. Similar policy tools can be paired with designated pickup, delivery, loading, and short-term parking areas to improve circulation and reduce conflicts among drivers, pedestrians, cyclists, transit riders, and businesses districts where walkability and accessibility for pedestrians are key goals. In other commercial areas, angled on-street parking, where space allows, can support local business access while helping calm traffic. Similar policy tools can be paired with designated pickup, delivery, loading, and short-term parking areas to improve circulation and reduce conflicts among drivers, pedestrians, cyclists, transit riders, and businesses.



Secure bike parking



Angled parking can provide access to businesses as well as calming traffic

Strategy 7

Incorporate freight and truck route management to reduce environmental and safety impacts on neighborhoods.



Truck Traffic on Laraway Road.

Image courtesy of CMAP

Action 1:
Advance regional freight corridor projects that reduce neighborhood impacts

Continue coordinating with IDOT, Will County, JADA, neighboring municipalities, and freight stakeholders to advance regional freight corridor projects that improve safety, reliability, and access while reducing truck impacts on residential neighborhoods, Downtown Joliet, and local streets not intended for heavy freight movement. Priority projects should include I-80 reconstruction, Laraway Road railroad overpass improvements, IL 53 corridor improvements, and other roadways, bridge, rail-crossing, and intersection projects that strengthen the regional freight network.

Freight investments should be evaluated not only for goods movement efficiency but also for their ability to reduce conflicts with neighborhoods, improve emergency access, support redevelopment goals, and protect local quality of life. Joliet should maintain a prioritized list of freight-related projects, planning-level costs, agency responsibilities, and funding opportunities so the City is prepared to compete for state, federal, and regional transportation funds.

Action 2:
Update the truck route network and freight access policies

Work with IDOT, Will County, neighboring jurisdictions, and local freight operators to update Joliet's truck route network so designated routes reflect current industrial access needs, roadway classifications, bridge and pavement conditions, safety concerns, and neighborhood impacts. This should include continued evaluation of US 6/Maple Road, IL 53, Laraway Road, I-55 and I-80 access points, and other corridors that carry significant truck volumes.

A stronger truck-route framework should clarify where through-truck traffic should be directed, where local delivery access is appropriate, and where truck movements should be discouraged or restricted to protect neighborhoods and pedestrian-oriented districts. Route updates should be paired with review of land use, zoning, industrial access, truck parking, loading, and driver amenities so freight-generating uses are supported in locations with appropriate roadway access and buffering.

Action 3:
Address downtown freight, truck-route, and pedestrian conflicts

Evaluate, in coordination with IDOT and regional partners, how state-route designations, truck movements, bridge access, one-way circulation, loading activity, and downtown street operations affect pedestrian safety, business access, transit access, riverfront connections, and redevelopment goals in Downtown Joliet. The City should identify specific locations where freight movement conflicts with walkability or excess congestion for non-commercial vehicles.

This effort should consider whether truck routing, wayfinding, signal timing, curb management, loading zones, turn restrictions, street design, enforcement, or longer-term state-route changes could reduce conflicts while maintaining necessary freight access. Recommendations should be coordinated with the Downtown Joliet ETOD Plan, City Square investments, riverfront redevelopment opportunities, and ongoing efforts to strengthen Downtown as a walkable, mixed-use destination.

Action 4:
Improve truck-route communication, enforcement, and impact mitigation

Use monitoring equipment, enforcement records, crash data, field observations, and complaint tracking to identify areas most affected by truck traffic, including locations with recurring congestion, noise, degraded air quality, safety incidents, pavement wear, illegal truck parking, idling, or routing conflicts. Review and update signage related to truck routes, weight limits, bridge restrictions, loading zones, time-of-day restrictions, and prohibited movements, and maintain a centralized truck-route and freight-signage inventory to support consistent communication and enforcement.

Convene a local freight impact working group with residents, logistics operators, planners, law enforcement, regional agencies, and other partners as needed to identify and implement mitigation strategies. Potential responses may include adjusted truck routing or delivery timing, targeted enforcement of traffic and idling regulations, clearer driver outreach, facility-specific operations changes, and surveys of truck drivers to better understand routing, loading, staging, and parking needs. Findings should inform future truck parking strategies, including potential privately operated or interstate-adjacent facilities that address local concerns while meeting driver's requirements.

Best Practice

Comprehensive Idling Enforcement with Community Engagement

New York City enforces a strict anti-idling law. In most cases, vehicles (including trucks) cannot idle for more than three minutes, or one minute when adjacent to a school. Fines range from $350 to $2,000. There is also a Citizens Air Complaint Program, whereby members of the public can report idling violations and receive a bounty if the violation is paid.

Keeping freight on freight routes

Direct truck traffic to designated freight corridors while protecting neighborhoods through route planning, industrial access management, signage, and enforcement.

Will County's Community Friendly Freight Mobility Plan is a leading example of balancing freight mobility with neighborhood livability through designated freight corridors, land-use planning, and community impact mitigation.

Strategy 8
Prepare for & Invest in the Future of Mobility

Action 1:
Evaluate emerging technologies based on their mobility outcomes

Joliet can evaluate emerging transportation technologies based on how well they support clear goals, including improved mobility, economic competitiveness, service reliability, safety, environmental performance, and efficient use of public resources. New technologies should be considered when they address a defined local need, not simply because they are new.

This approach can guide future decisions related to electric vehicles, alternative fuels, intelligent transportation systems, transit signal priority, shared mobility, connected infrastructure, automated vehicles, and other evolving technologies. Potential investments should be evaluated for cost, maintenance needs, operational feasibility, accessibility, safety, and long-term value to residents and businesses.

Action 2:
Monitor demand for electric vehicle charging and alternative fueling infrastructure

Joliet can take a gradual approach to electric vehicle charging and alternative fueling infrastructure by monitoring demand, evaluating municipal and corridor locations, and coordinating with utilities and private partners where opportunities emerge. Rather than making immediate code changes before the market is settled, the City can remain prepared by tracking trends, reviewing peer community practices, and identifying locations that may support future infrastructure.

Potential locations could include municipal parking facilities, parks, public buildings, downtown parking areas, highway-oriented commercial areas, major corridors, multifamily developments, and employment centers. The City can also continue connecting residents, businesses, property owners, and developers to utility programs, grants, and other financial resources that support infrastructure installation.

Action 3:
Explore lower- and zero-emission options for municipal operations

Joliet can continue exploring lower- and zero-emission vehicle technologies for municipal operations as market conditions, funding, and operational suitability become clearer. A phased approach centered on monitoring, pilots, and targeted infrastructure planning would allow the City to remain flexible while preparing for future clean transportation opportunities.

Future evaluations can consider duty cycle, range, reliability, fueling or charging needs, maintenance capacity, cost, and available grants. Early opportunities may be most practical for light-duty municipal vehicles, fleet replacements with predictable routes, or shared infrastructure that can support both City operations and public access.

Action 4:
Continue modernizing traffic signals and transportation systems

Joliet can continue investing in intelligent transportation systems that improve safety, reliability, and traffic operations. This could include adaptive signal timing, coordinated corridors, connected signal infrastructure, improved pedestrian signal operations, transit signal priority, and traffic monitoring systems.

Signal modernization can support reduced delays, improved freight and emergency response reliability, safer pedestrian crossings, better bus travel times, and reduced vehicle idling. In Downtown Joliet and along major corridors such as Jefferson Street, the City can explore signal timing and pedestrian signal strategies that make crossings more predictable and comfortable.

Action 5:
Plan for automated and connected vehicle technologies

Joliet can monitor automated and connected vehicle technologies and prepare local policies only as the technology, regulations, and market conditions become clearer. Near-term readiness



EV chargers installed in a private lot, Plainfield Road

could focus on clear lane markings, visible signals, safe pickup and drop-off areas, curbside management, and expectations for any future testing or deployment on City streets.

Any future framework should prioritize pedestrian and bicyclist safety, accessibility, coordination with transit, data transparency, and protection of the public right-of-way. Joliet can also distinguish between public-street applications and controlled-environment pilots, such as industrial parks, logistics facilities, campuses, or private sites.

Best Practice

Intelligent Transportation Systems

Intelligent Transportation Systems, or ITS, use connected signal hardware, detection, communications infrastructure, and centralized monitoring to manage traffic more efficiently. Once a citywide ITS rollout is substantially complete, cities can better coordinate signals, monitor corridor conditions, adjust timing, respond to incidents, and manage congestion across major corridors.

For Joliet, completing the City's ITS plan can support congestion management, emergency response, freight movement, transit priority, pedestrian safety, and reduced vehicle idling. These tools are especially useful along major corridors where freight, transit, pedestrians, and local traffic overlap.

Leading Pedestrian Intervals

Leading pedestrian intervals, or LPIs, give people walking a short head start before turning vehicles receive a green light. This makes pedestrians more visible in the crosswalk and can reduce turning conflicts at signalized intersections, often through signal timing changes rather than major intersection redesign.

LPIs are especially useful in downtown areas, near transit stations, along one-way street networks, and at intersections with frequent pedestrian activity. In Joliet, candidate locations could include Downtown Joliet, the Joliet Gateway Center area, Jefferson Street, Chicago Street, and other corridors where pedestrian activity, bus service, parking movements, and turning vehicles overlap.


Image source: Janice Rubin

5.5: ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES

A City committed to resident health and wellness

Joliet's natural systems are essential to the City's health, resilience, and quality of life. Joliet's waterways and watersheds, including the Des Plaines and DuPage Rivers and Hickory, Spring, Aux Sable, Cedar, Jackson, Sugar, and Rock Run Creeks, together with wetlands, floodplains, parks, trails, tree canopy, and open spaces, shape the City's identity while providing critical environmental, recreational, and public health benefits. As Joliet continues to grow, these resources must be integrated into decisions about land use, infrastructure, transportation, and capital investment. Residents have emphasized the need for cleaner waterways, better access to parks and trails, reduced flooding, improved air quality, more shade, and stronger protections from the impacts of freight, industrial activity, and extreme weather.

This key topic area focuses on sustainability as a core part of community well-being and long-term fiscal responsibility. The strategies in this section respond to resident priorities and encompass a comprehensive range of potential natural resource and environment improvement areas. These strategies and actions recognize that environmental resilience should be embedded into everyday City decisions, from development review and roadway design to public building improvements and neighborhood reinvestment.

Strategy 1

Protect and restore Joliet's rivers, creeks, and connected green corridors as ecological and recreational assets.

Action 1
Adopt water quality and flood-risk reduction land use and zoning policies for properties along Joliet's major waterways, including the Des Plaines and DuPage River systems; Hickory, Spring, Aux Sable, Cedar, Jackson, Sugar, and Rock Run Creeks; and associated drainage corridors. Incorporate floodplain and wetland protection, vegetated buffers, green infrastructure, reduced impervious coverage, and stormwater management standards into development and redevelopment review.

Action 2
Improve public access to the Des Plaines River in and near Downtown, focusing on riverfront redevelopment areas and connections to Downtown streets, parks, trails, and civic destinations. Identify priority locations for trail connections, overlooks, seating, wayfinding, and other low-impact public access improvements.

Action 3
Develop waterway design guidance for road, bridge, culvert, trail, and utility projects that cross or parallel the Des Plaines River, Hickory Creek, Spring Creek, and associated drainageways. Coordinate projects to maintain flood conveyance, protect water quality and habitat, and provide safe pedestrian and bicycle connections where feasible.

Action 4
Develop waterway design guidance for road, bridge, culvert, trail, and utility projects that cross or parallel Joliet's major rivers, creeks, and associated drainageways, including the Des Plaines and DuPage River systems and Hickory, Spring, Aux Sable, Cedar, Jackson, Sugar, and Rock Run Creeks. Coordinate projects to maintain flood conveyance, protect water quality and habitat, and provide safe pedestrian and bicycle connections where feasible.

Joliet's Major Rivers and Creek
Joliet is part of an interconnected network of rivers, creeks, tributaries, wetlands, and watersheds that cross municipal boundaries and require coordinated stewardship.

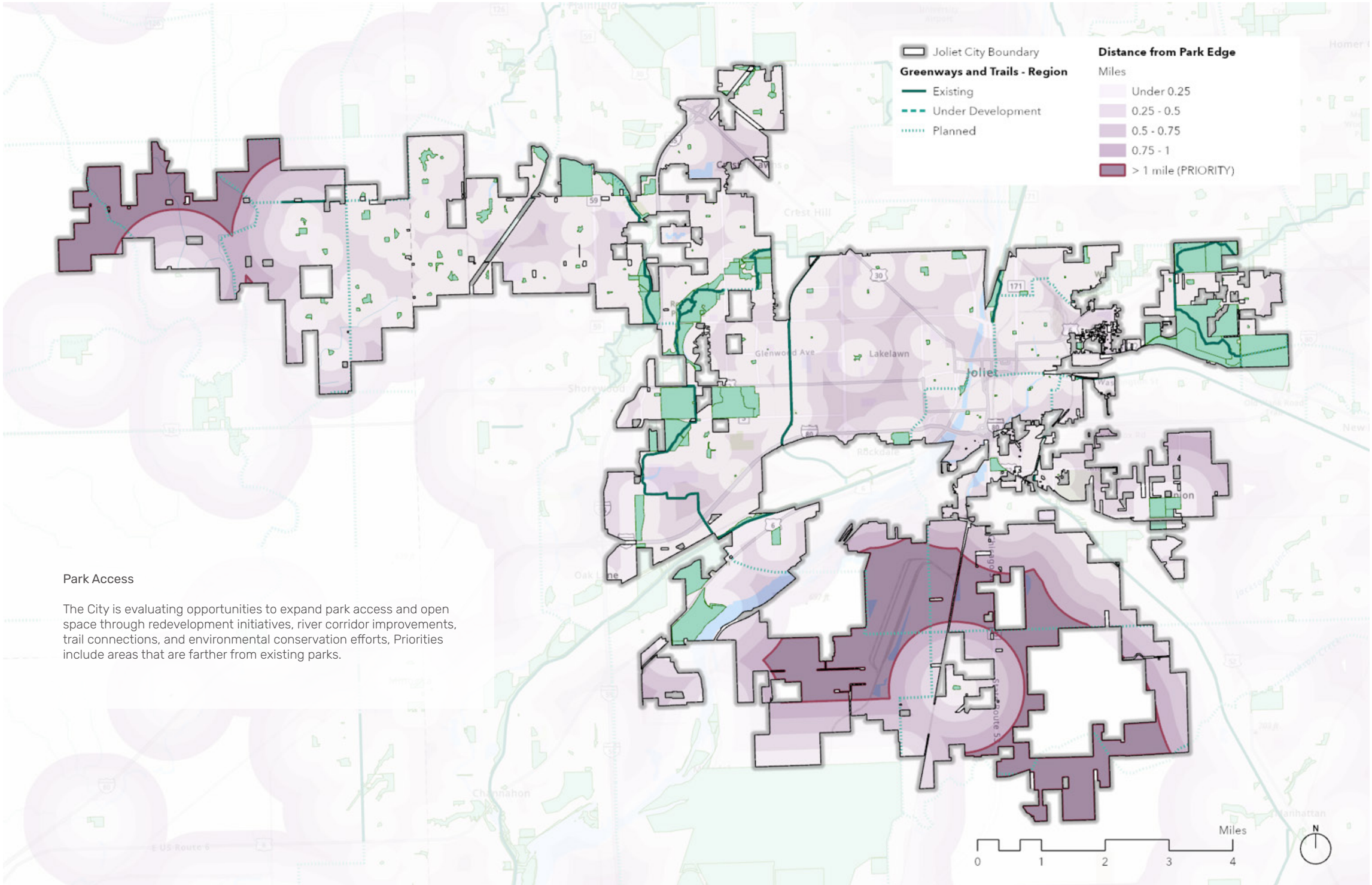
- Des Plaines River
- DuPage River
- Hickory Creek
- Spring Creek
- Aux Sable Creek
- Cedar Creek
- Jackson Creek
- Sugar Creek
- Rock Run Creek

Planning for these waterways should coordinate water quality, flood management, habitat protection, greenway connections, recreation, and development decisions across jurisdictions.

Best Practices

Waterway Corridor

- Protect floodplains, wetlands, and natural drainage ways.
- Maintain or restore vegetated riparian buffers.
- Use native vegetation and green infrastructure to reduce runoff.
- Coordinate bridges, culverts, utilities, and trails to preserve hydrology and habitat.
- Locate public access and trails where they can avoid sensitive habitat and flood-risk conflicts.
  Connect river and creek improvements to surrounding parks, neighborhoods, and trail systems.



Park Access

The City is evaluating opportunities to expand park access and open space through redevelopment initiatives, river corridor improvements, trail connections, and environmental conservation efforts, Priorities include areas that are farther from existing parks.

Strategy 2

Expand park access, trail systems, and tree canopy coverage in neighborhoods with limited open space.

Action 1
Prioritize new pocket parks, small public spaces, and shared-use recreation areas in neighborhoods identified through the Park Access Map as having limited access to existing parks. Focus first on City-owned parcels, vacant or underutilized land, redevelopment sites, and opportunities near schools, libraries, and neighborhood centers. Coordinate acquisition, programming, and long-term maintenance with the Joliet Park District and community partners.

Action 2
Implement an urban forestry initiative focused on the low-canopy areas and publicly owned sites identified in the Urban Forestry Initiative Map. Prioritize street trees, school and park planting, shade along sidewalks and transit stops, and planting in neighborhoods experiencing higher heat exposure. Establish long-term maintenance, replacement, and species-diversity standards as part of the program.

Action 3
Prepare a prioritized trail and greenway gap program that identifies missing connections between neighborhoods, parks, schools, employment areas, Downtown, and regional trail systems. Prioritize completion of gaps in the Grand Illinois Trail and connections to the I&M Canal Trail, Old Plank Road Trail, Wauponsee Glacial Trail, Des Plaines River corridor, and other regional routes.

Action 4
Coordinate with the Joliet Park District and community partners to expand year-round programming in parks and public spaces, with emphasis on locations where additional activity can increase park use and neighborhood access. Programming could include walking programs, youth activities, fitness events, cultural programming, nature education, and seasonal community events.

Action 5
Use park acquisition, conservation, trail planning, and development review to strengthen connections between existing parks, waterways, wetlands, forest preserves, and other natural areas. Coordinate with the Forest Preserve District of Will County and other regional partners to identify priority habitat and greenway connections and incorporate them into future land acquisition, easements, and redevelopment projects.

Strategy 3

Reduce air pollution and mitigate impacts from freight and truck activity through route planning and landscape buffers.

Action 1
Identify priority freight-impact areas where truck routes, industrial and logistics uses, and residential or community uses are in close proximity. Coordinate this assessment with the freight-routing recommendations in the Mobility and Access section, using truck volumes, idling and enforcement data, resident complaints, air-quality concerns, and proximity to sensitive uses to prioritize mitigation. Focus initial evaluation along IL 53, Laraway Road, US 6/Maple Road, I-55 and I-80 access areas, Downtown, and other locations with recurring freight-neighborhood conflicts.

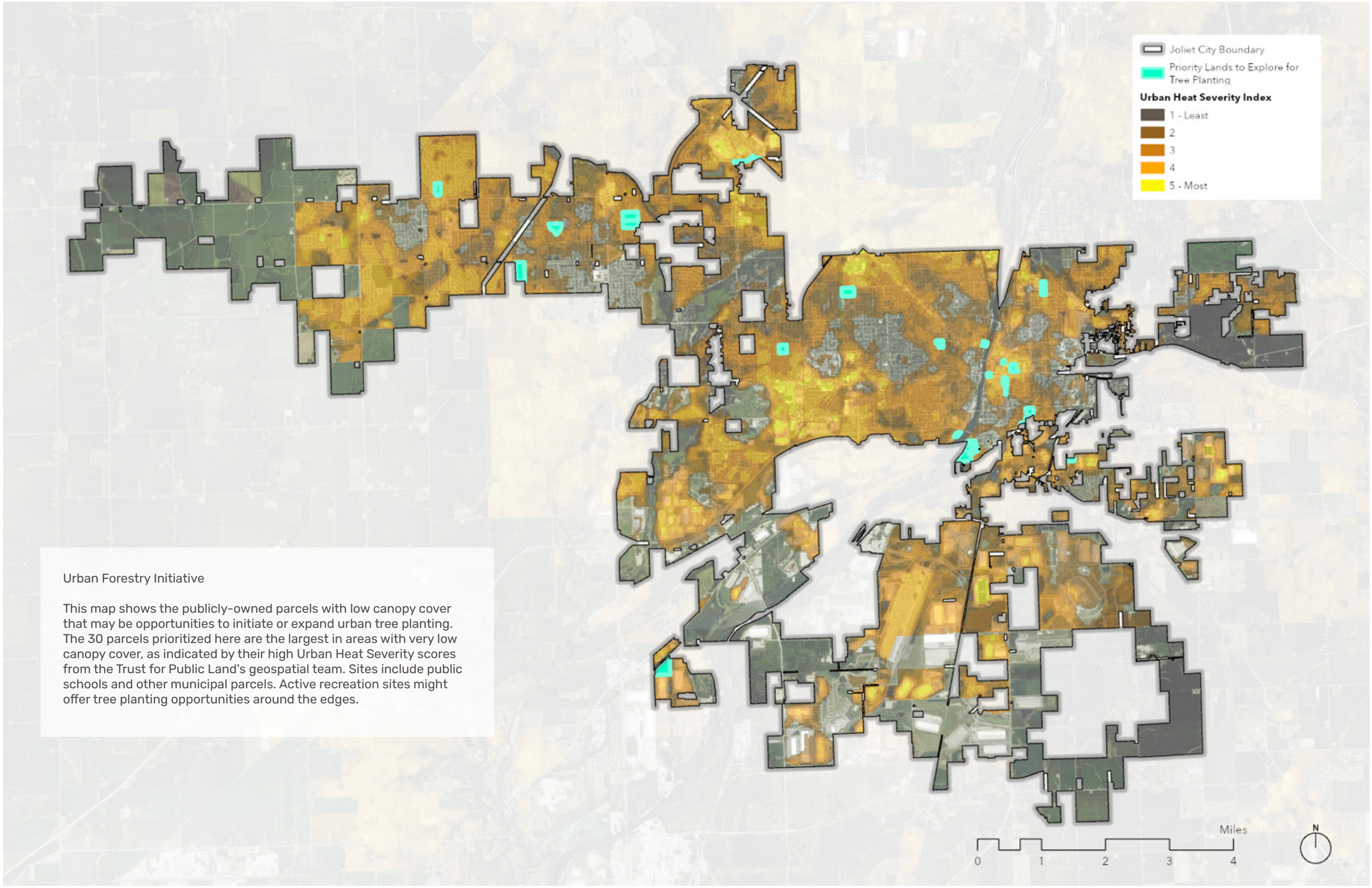
Action 2
Explore corridor design standards that require landscaped noise buffers along preferred truck routes, using a combination of vegetation, berms, and screening treatments to minimize impacts on nearby residential and community uses.

Action 3
Establish a Clean Air Community Facilities Program. Identify schools, childcare facilities, libraries, senior facilities, and other community buildings near high-volume truck routes, intermodal facilities, and industrial areas where additional exposure-reduction measures may be appropriate. Prioritize areas near IL 53, Laraway Road, US 6/Maple Road, I-55 and I-80 access corridors, and major logistics areas. Work with school districts and facility operators to evaluate high-efficiency air filtration, ventilation improvements, relocation of air intakes where feasible, no-idling zones, tree planting, and solid or vegetated barriers.

Action 4
Establish a Joliet Clean Freight Partnership and pilot a Clean Freight District in a major logistics area. Partner with Will County, JADA, IDOT, utilities, intermodal operators, warehouse operators, and trucking companies to reduce emissions associated with freight movement and logistics operations. Focus an initial pilot in the I-55/I-80/IL 53 intermodal and logistics area, where district-scale improvements could have the greatest operational benefit. Potential initiatives could include heavy-duty vehicle charging infrastructure, electric cargo-handling equipment, electric connections for refrigerated trailers, appointment systems that reduce truck queuing, anti-idling infrastructure, and participation in EPA SmartWay or similar freight-efficiency programs.



Image source: Jim Roolf



Urban Forestry Initiative

This map shows the publicly-owned parcels with low canopy cover that may be opportunities to initiate or expand urban tree planting. The 30 parcels prioritized here are the largest in areas with very low canopy cover, as indicated by their high Urban Heat Severity scores from the Trust for Public Land's geospatial team. Sites include public schools and other municipal parcels. Active recreation sites might offer tree planting opportunities around the edges.

Strategy 4

Improve building and site performance to reduce energy use, heat exposure, emissions, and long-term operating costs.

Action 1
Establish a Municipal Building Energy Benchmarking and Retrofit Program for City-owned facilities. Track energy use and operating costs, identify the highest-performing and highest-consuming facilities, and prioritize improvements such as lighting, HVAC systems, insulation, controls, building-envelope upgrades, and water-efficient equipment. Incorporate recommended improvements into the Capital Improvement Program based on lifecycle cost, energy savings, facility condition, and available grants or utility incentives.

Action 2
Create a Neighborhood Energy Retrofit Partnership to connect homeowners, landlords, multifamily property owners, and small businesses with existing utility, state, federal, and nonprofit programs for weatherization and energy-efficiency improvements. Prioritize outreach in Joliet's older housing stock and neighborhoods where high energy costs, aging buildings, and extreme heat create greater household burdens. Eligible improvements could include insulation, air sealing, efficient HVAC systems, windows, lighting, and other building-performance upgrades.

Action 3
Establish a Heat Island Reduction Program for large paved and developed sites. Prioritize public facilities, commercial centers, industrial and logistics areas, large parking lots, and neighborhoods identified through Joliet's Urban Heat Severity and tree-canopy analysis. Use shade trees, landscaped parking areas, cool or reflective roofs, cool or permeable pavement, shaded pedestrian routes, and reduced unnecessary pavement to lower surface temperatures and improve outdoor comfort.

Strategy 5

Strengthen partnerships with environmental organizations and schools to expand public education on stewardship and resilience.

Action 1
Expand partnerships with schools, park districts, environmental organizations, and other public land managers to create environmental stewardship demonstration sites and outdoor learning opportunities. Potential projects could include native planting, pollinator gardens, rain gardens, tree planting, stormwater management, habitat restoration, and outdoor classrooms. Prioritize school campuses and public properties near the Des Plaines River, Hickory Creek, Spring Creek, and neighborhoods with limited tree canopy or greater heat exposure.

Action 2
Develop coordinated, multilingual environmental education campaigns that provide residents with practical guidance on water conservation, stormwater management, recycling, energy efficiency, native landscaping, tree care, and household resilience. Integrate information into City utility communications, community events, school programming, neighborhood meetings, and digital platforms, and connect residents directly with applicable City, utility, state, and nonprofit programs.

Action 3
Establish a coordinated annual environmental stewardship and citizen science program that connects residents, schools, businesses, and community organizations with hands-on projects. Activities could include tree planting, stream and river cleanups, invasive-species removal, habitat restoration, water-quality observations, litter monitoring, and community tree inventories. Focus recurring activities along the Des Plaines River, Hickory Creek, Spring Creek, parks, trails, and other priority natural areas, and use collected information where appropriate to support City environmental planning.

Action 4
Establish a Grow Local Joliet program that supports home, school, community, and workplace food production. Review zoning and development regulations to remove unnecessary barriers to community gardens, raised beds, greenhouses, urban agriculture, and related activities at appropriate scales. Work with schools, community organizations, the Joliet Park District, University of Illinois Extension, and other partners to provide gardening education, demonstration sites, composting resources, and assistance establishing gardens in neighborhoods with limited access to fresh food.



Image source: City of Joliet

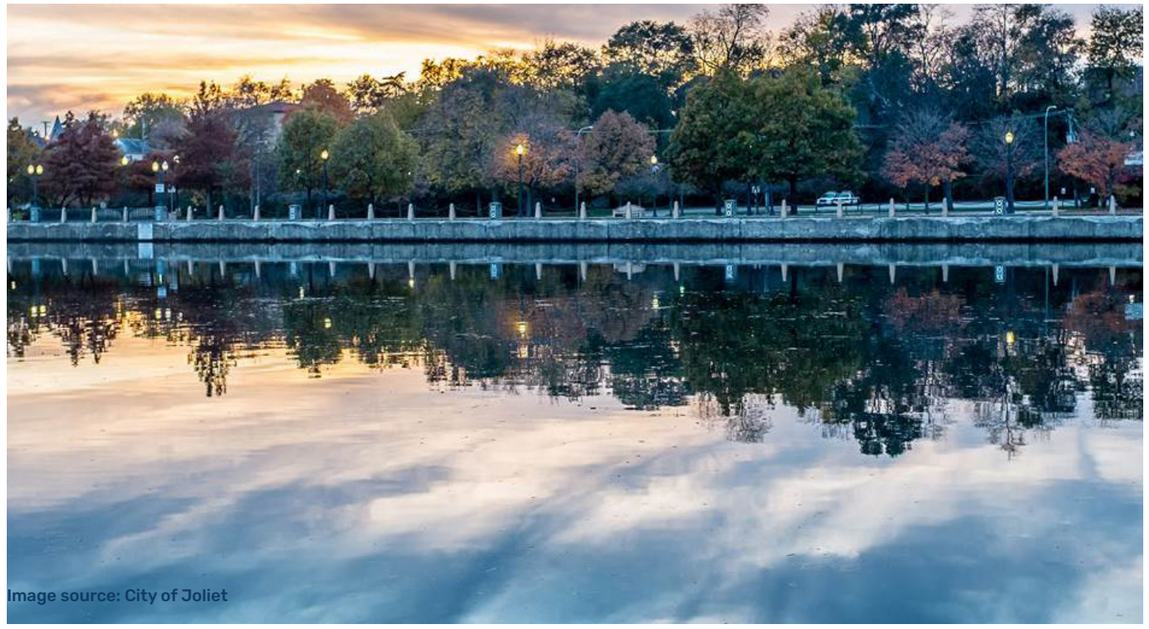


Image source: City of Joliet

5.6: UTILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

A connected City that is able to create opportunity for its residents through emerging technologies and high performing infrastructure.

Reliable infrastructure is essential to Joliet's ability to grow, compete, and provide a high quality of life for residents and businesses. As the City plans for a future population of 200,000 residents, its water, wastewater, stormwater, broadband, and communications must be maintained, modernized, and expanded in ways that support equitable growth and long-term fiscal health. Infrastructure decisions shape where development can occur, how efficiently public services are delivered, and whether neighborhoods are protected from flooding, service gaps, aging systems, and rising maintenance costs. This priority focuses on aligning infrastructure investment with the Comprehensive Plan so that public improvements continue to support the other key topic areas in the plan. The strategies and actions in this section emphasize stronger coordination among departments, regional utilities, service providers, and partner agencies; more accurate accounting of infrastructure and maintenance costs; sustainable technologies such as green streets, energy-efficient lighting, renewable energy, and smart mobility systems; and expanded broadband competition in underserved neighborhoods and commercial areas.

Strategy 1

Invest in existing infrastructure and improve support and coordination among departments and regional utilities to align infrastructure, policy, and funding decisions.

Action 1
Develop a public stormwater utility to allow proactive storm water management, flood risk reduction, and to implement a storm sewer maintenance and rehabilitation program.

Action 2
Ensure that true and accurate infrastructure and maintenance costs are embedded in planning and permitting new development and redevelopment in coordination with current estimates of infrastructure costs.

Action 3
Adequately support maintenance of drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater, energy, and communications infrastructure by ensuring adequate staff and funding for ongoing operational expenses.

Action 4
Explore the possibility of commercial reuse of waste water treatment effluent.

Strategy 2

Explore strategies to increase competition among broadband providers.

Action 1
Require conduit installation and broadband-ready infrastructure during road reconstruction, utility projects, and new development to reduce future expansion costs and minimize service gaps.

Action 2
Partner with internet service providers, utilities, and regional agencies to expand high-speed fiber and wireless infrastructure into under-served neighborhoods and commercial areas.

Action 3
Encourage open-access infrastructure and competitive market entry to improve service quality, reliability, and affordability for residents and businesses.

Strategy 3

Incorporate sustainable technologies such as green streets, energy efficient lighting, and renewable energy systems into capital projects.

Action 1
Build capacity by selecting 3-5 city-led construction projects per year that could serve as models to meet higher sustainability standards such as LEED Platinum or SITES certifications.

Action 2
Continue to advance smart mobility initiatives to modernize energy use and reduce emissions.

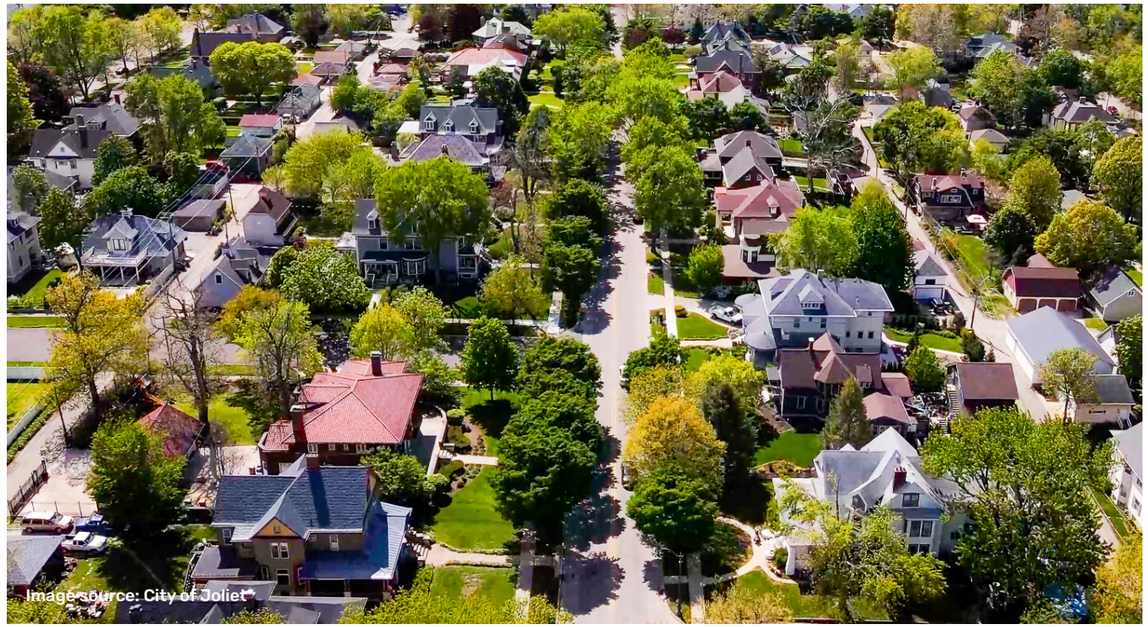
Action 3
Explore a citywide renewable energy target for public resources. Comparable municipalities set goals based on a percentage of total energy use or a compliance date, such as Chicago's 2035 goal for all electricity to be sourced from renewable energy.

Strategy 4

Integrate green infrastructure into redevelopment projects to manage stormwater, reduce flooding, and improve water quality where possible.

Action 1
Adopt a set of green infrastructure incentives for redevelopment projects, including open space and waterway considerations.

Action 2
Prioritize green infrastructure retrofits in flood-prone commercial corridors, industrial districts, and public facilities to reduce runoff volumes and improve downstream water quality.


Image source: City of Joliet

5.7: LAND USE AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

A flexible and adaptable, growth oriented City

Joliet's land use decisions will shape how the City grows, reinvests, and adapts for generations to come. As one of the region's largest and most strategically located communities, Joliet faces a wide range of development conditions: historic neighborhoods, aging commercial corridors, industrial and logistics areas, riverfront redevelopment opportunities, underutilized parcels, greenfield growth areas, and municipal edges shared with neighboring jurisdictions. Strategies and action emphasize reinvestment in the existing urban fabric, while ensuring that new growth areas are planned responsibly and supported by adequate infrastructure. The strategies in this section focus on infill development, adaptive reuse, zoning modernization, growth readiness, subdivision design, mixed-use corridors, and multi-jurisdictional coordination. Together, they help translate the Future Land Use Map and Character Areas into practical tools for decision-making, development review, capital planning, and private investment. This approach recognizes that land use policy must balance flexibility with predictability. Joliet needs the ability to respond to changing market conditions while providing clear expectations for residents, developers, partner agencies, and neighboring communities. By directing growth to the right places, improving development standards, and coordinating land use with infrastructure investment, the City can create more connected neighborhoods, stronger corridors, and a more resilient local economy.

Strategy 1

Encourage infill development and adaptive reuse of vacant or underutilized parcels within existing infrastructure networks.

Action 1
Create a citywide Infill and Adaptive Reuse Opportunity Atlas. Map vacant lots, tax-delinquent parcels, City-owned lots, oversized lots, surface parking lots, obsolete commercial centers, vacant upper floors, brownfield, former industrial buildings, and underutilized properties. For each site, identify ownership, zoning, parcel size, infrastructure capacity, environmental constraints, historic/adaptive reuse potential, access to transit. Reuse concepts or desired development program can be included as well.

Action 2
Pilot small-scale infill and reuse demonstration projects in two or three neighborhoods or corridors with existing infrastructure, visible vacancies, and strong community benefit potential. The pilot should test tools such as pre-approved building concepts, small developer technical assistance, reduced permitting barriers, fee waivers, gap financing, land write-downs for City-owned parcels, and design templates for context-sensitive infill. Potential pilots could include missing-middle housing on vacant legacy neighborhood lots, upper-story housing in Downtown buildings, neighborhood-scale mixed-use redevelopment on Cass or Collins Avenues, adaptive reuse near Chicago/McDonough Street, or reuse of under performing retail properties near the Louis Joliet Mall.

Action 3
Prepare and regularly update water and sewer master plans that are consistent with the Future Land Use Map and anticipated development patterns. Use these plans to evaluate available system capacity, projected demand, infrastructure condition, needed system improvements, and the timing and cost of future extensions. Coordinate the City's Capital Improvement Program and annual budget with these master plans so development is directed to areas where adequate water and sewer capacity exists or can be provided efficiently. Consider available Lake Michigan water supply and system capacity as part of this evaluation, along with sanitary sewer capacity, infrastructure lifecycle costs, and planned capital improvements.

Strategy 2

Modernize the zoning ordinance to align with comprehensive plan goals and promote context sensitive development.

Action 1
Complete a comprehensive zoning diagnostic and Future Land Use consistency audit. Evaluate every zoning district, use category, parking requirement, dimensional standard, overlay, PUD procedure, and zoning map designation against the Future Land Use Map, Character Areas, and Comprehensive Plan priorities. Identify conflicts that limit reinvestment in legacy neighborhoods, Downtown and ETOD areas, the Louis Joliet Mall area, Ridge Road, Cass/Henderson, Chicago/McDonough, industrial transition areas, and growth areas near I-55 and I-80. Produce a zoning modernization matrix that classifies each issue as keep, revise, consolidate, replace, or map for future amendment.

Action 2
Create a Joliet Place Type and Zoning Alignment Guide that connects the Future Land Use Map and Character Areas to appropriate zoning districts, overlays, and development standards. For each place type, the guide should define the intended uses, development intensity, building scale and form,

frontage and streetscape expectations, open space, mobility connections, and transitions to surrounding properties. Use the guide when reviewing rezonings, annexations, planned unit developments, and zoning map amendments so applicants, residents, City staff, the Plan Commission, and City Council have a consistent understanding of the development expected in Downtown, major corridors, neighborhood centers, employment and industrial districts, mall redevelopment areas, legacy neighborhoods, and greenfield growth areas. *Charlotte's Policy Map and Place Type framework provides a useful precedent for connecting place-based planning policies with zoning regulations and capital investment decisions.*

Action 3
Modernize zoning administration and development review so projects that align with the Comprehensive Plan are easier to understand and approve. Establish standardized review findings for rezonings, planned unit developments, special uses, and annexations that address Future Land Use Map and Character Area alignment, infrastructure capacity, fiscal impacts, and compatibility with surrounding neighborhoods. Create an early concept-review process and an expedited review path for proposals that meet adopted zoning, design, and infrastructure standards. Publish plain-language application guides, review checklists, expected timelines, and decision criteria for applicants and residents.

Action 4
Establish context-sensitive transition standards between residential neighborhoods and incompatible land uses. Update the Zoning Ordinance to require graduated buffers, setbacks, landscaping, screening, building orientation, lighting controls, and other transition measures where residential areas abut industrial, intermodal, intensive commercial, or other higher-impact uses. Apply these standards to existing conflict areas and future development, with particular attention to industrial and logistics areas near I-55, I-80, Route 53, Route 52, and Joliet's southern and western edges. Use the Future Land Use Map and Character Areas to identify appropriate transition conditions and prevent new development from creating incompatible adjacencies.

Action 5
Strengthen development regulations that protect Joliet's environmentally sensitive areas and natural systems. Build on the City's existing watershed protection, stormwater, floodplain, and soil erosion regulations and establish a consistent environmental review framework for development in or near floodplains, wetlands, drainageways, waterways, woodlands, and other documented sensitive areas. Use this framework to guide development away from areas where impacts cannot be appropriately mitigated and to expand or amend regulations as new environmental data become available. Priority areas should include the Des Plaines River, Hickory Creek, Spring Creek, Cedar Creek, Jackson Creek, and associated wetlands and drainageways. Joliet already administers dedicated watershed protection ordinances and consolidated stormwater, erosion, and floodplain regulations.

Action 6
Update the Zoning Ordinance and building regulations to encourage Universal Design in new and substantially renovated buildings. Identify opportunities to incorporate Universal Design principles into residential, mixed-use, civic, and commercial development through accessible entrances, adaptable floor plans, wider clearances, accessible bathrooms, visitable ground-floor units, accessible routes, and other features that improve usability for people of different ages and abilities. Coordinate zoning amendments and building-code updates with the Illinois Accessibility Code and applicable state and federal requirements so that Joliet's standards complement, rather than duplicate or conflict with, required accessibility provisions. Joliet currently enforces the Illinois Accessibility Code along with its adopted building codes.

Action 7
Update residential zoning district dimensional standards to reflect Joliet's established built form. Evaluate minimum lot area and width, setbacks, lot coverage, building height, frontage, parking, and other dimensional requirements against the actual development patterns of Joliet's established neighborhoods. Where existing standards create unnecessary nonconformities or prevent appropriately scaled infill on historically platted lots, revise them to better reflect prevailing lot sizes, building placement, and neighborhood character. Apply different standards where appropriate to Downtown-adjacent legacy neighborhoods, established East and South Side neighborhoods, newer suburban areas, and other distinct Character Areas rather than applying a single dimensional standard Citywide.

Action 8
Establish sustainable site and building standards for new commercial and industrial development. Update zoning, subdivision, and site-design requirements to encourage green infrastructure, blue infrastructure, renewable energy, and resource-efficient technologies on new commercial, industrial, logistics, and employment sites. Standards could address native landscape and tree canopy, stormwater infiltration and reuse, solar-ready or solar-integrated buildings, EV infrastructure, energy-efficient site lighting, heat-island reduction, green roofs where feasible, and reuse of treated stormwater. Prioritize application in major employment and logistics areas, including the Joliet Arsenal, intermodal areas, and industrial districts near I-55 and I-80, while coordinating requirements with the City's existing stormwater and watershed regulations. Joliet already has watershed protection and stormwater regulations that provide a foundation for expanding these standards.

Action 9
Evaluate the feasibility of a form-based code for selected greenfield growth areas. Conduct a focused study to determine whether a form-based code would provide clearer direction for streets, blocks, building placement, frontage, public spaces, connectivity, and transitions in areas planned for future urban development. The evaluation should identify appropriate greenfield locations, such as portions of Joliet's western and southern growth areas near I-55, I-80, Route 53, and Route 59, and test how a form-based framework could implement the Future Land Use Map and Character Areas while coordinating infrastructure capacity, utilities, stormwater, transportation, and fiscal considerations. If appropriate, develop a pilot code for one or more growth areas before considering broader application.

Action 10
Allow on-street parking to count toward required parking supply where appropriate. Update Joliet's parking regulations to allow legally designated on-street spaces along the frontage of a development to satisfy a portion of minimum off-street parking requirements. Establish clear criteria for eligible locations, parking-space dimensions, accessibility, shared use, and maximum credits to ensure adequate parking while reducing unnecessary surface parking. Prioritize application in Downtown, neighborhood centers, mixed-use corridors, and transit-oriented areas where development can rely more on existing street parking, walking, bicycling, and transit.

Best Practice

Successes in Zoning Modernization

Fort Wayne, Indiana updated its zoning code to differentiate industrial uses by intensity and function, add performance standards, and identify infrastructure ready areas to construct high intensity developments, allowing the city to manage emerging uses like data centers while still supporting traditional manufacturing and logistics.

- Differentiates light industrial, heavy industrial, logistics and high-intensity technology uses.
- Clearly defines data centers.
- Performance based standards address noise, buffering requirements, and coordination with utility providers for power and water demand.
- High demand uses are directed to where infrastructure can support them without straining resources.

Best Practice

Form-Based Code

A form-based code (FBC) is a land use regulation that focuses on the physical form and design of buildings and streets rather than only the separation of land uses. It works by requiring redevelopment to abide by a set of guidelines shaping what the development must look like. This can include building placement, form, materials and design standards, and treatment of the public realm; often regulating streetscape design. Its value is in creating predictable, walkable, and visually consistent places. It works best in downtown areas and commercial corridors where consistent building form and pedestrian friendly design can support economic activity and strengthen neighborhood character.

Successes in Form-Based Code

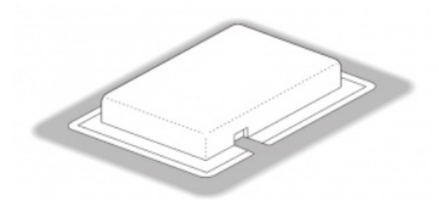
Arlington, Virginia established the Columbia Pike FBC regulating commercial and residential development along the Pike. A detailed checklist outlining design requirements is provided upfront, granting efficiency in the design process and certainty development proposals will be approved.

- *Overall Code*: regulates building setbacks, access alleys, architectural standards, and building height. Height set by location of building on street and requires height to taper down towards adjacent residential properties.
- *Commercial Subsection*: ground floor retail required for commercial development.
- *Neighborhoods Subsection*: aims to preserve affordability of existing market rate units along the Pike. 3-4x additional residential density allowed if same number of existing units are preserved as affordable (60% AMI) for 30 years. Additional density makes preservation of affordable homes viable for developers.
- *Public Spaces*: streetscape standards and dedicated public spaces are outlined in the plan.

Form-based codes prioritizes the physical characteristics of the built environment over use type and traditional zoning parameters.

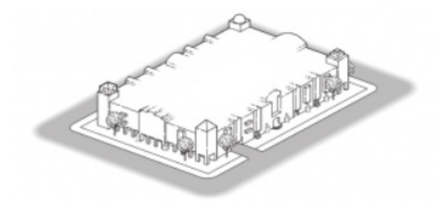
Conventional Zoning

Density use, FAR (floor area ratio), setbacks, parking requirements, maximum building heights specified



Zoning Design Guidelines

Conventional zoning requirements, plus frequency of openings and surface articulation specified



Form-Based Codes

Street and building types (or mix of types), build-to lines, number of floors, and percentage of built site frontage specified.

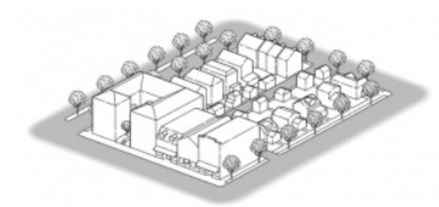


Image sources: Habitat for Humanity, LaCrosse, WI

Strategy 3

Guide new growth toward areas with adequate public services and utilities to ensure efficient and equitable investment.

Action 1
Require a Public Services, Utilities, and Fiscal Productivity Review for major rezonings, PUDs, annexations, preliminary plats, and large development proposals. Use Urban3's value-per-acre, net revenue-per-acre, annexation, and infrastructure lifecycle-cost analyses to determine whether a proposal can be served by existing or programmed water, sewer, stormwater, roads, sidewalks, transit, emergency response, schools, parks, and broadband, and whether anticipated property and sales tax revenues can support the long-term cost of City infrastructure and services. Prioritize infill, redevelopment, compact mixed-use development, and neighborhood service cores that use existing infrastructure efficiently. Where development requires extension or construction of infrastructure that may also serve future properties, evaluate recapture agreements as one potential financing tool to equitably distribute eligible improvement costs among benefiting properties. Structure recapture terms so interest rates, repayment obligations, eligible costs, and agreement duration remain reasonable and do not create unnecessary barriers to subsequent development. Include a clearly defined sunset provision in each agreement.

Action 2
Establish a Fiscal and Infrastructure Review for Greenfield and Municipal-Edge Development. Require major proposals that would extend roads, water, sewer, stormwater, or other public infrastructure into currently undeveloped areas to demonstrate how new infrastructure will be funded, maintained, and replaced over its full lifecycle. Where a proposal creates a service-capacity gap or significant long-term fiscal obligation, require appropriate measures such as more compact development, revised land-use mixes, phased construction, developer-funded improvements, recapture or cost-sharing agreements, or approval tied to available infrastructure and funding. Use Urban3's lifecycle-cost analysis as a baseline for evaluating these impacts and update the analysis periodically using current City spending and infrastructure cost data. Urban3's 2024 analysis estimated an annual infrastructure lifecycle funding gap of approximately $111 million, based on approximately $71 million in current annual spending compared with $182 million needed annually for roads, water, sewer, and stormwater. Future updates should identify the applicable dollar year and replace the 2024 estimate with current-dollar values so the benchmark remains meaningful as costs and spending change.

Action 3
Align the City's Capital Improvement Program, annual budget, and utility master plans with the Alternative Water Source Program to coordinate infrastructure investment with Joliet's planned transition from groundwater to treated Lake Michigan water in 2030. The City and the Grand Prairie Water Commission are coordinating the regional transmission, pumping, storage, and distribution infrastructure needed to deliver Lake Michigan water to Joliet and participating communities. Use the transition as an opportunity to coordinate water main replacement, distribution-system improvements, new development, and capacity planning so capital investments support both existing neighborhoods and areas identified for future growth in the Future Land Use Map.

Action 4
Strengthen development and annexation requirements for greenfield growth areas to create connected, walkable neighborhoods from the outset. Continue to use annexation agreements, development agreements, impact fees, recapture agreements, and special financing districts to ensure new development provides its fair share of required infrastructure and service improvements. Where recapture agreements are used, evaluate the interest rate, eligible infrastructure costs, repayment methodology, and agreement duration to ensure the obligation remains proportionate and does not unnecessarily inhibit future development. Establish a reasonable sunset provision

so recapture obligations do not continue indefinitely.
Require new subdivisions and employment areas near Joliet's municipal edges to install sidewalks, trail segments, and pedestrian connections that link directly to existing or planned regional trails, parks, schools, neighborhood destinations, and open space amenities. Where developments include wet basin detention areas, drainage corridors, preserved natural areas, or other open space features, require publicly accessible walking paths or trails around or through these amenities where feasible, with connections to the surrounding street and sidewalk network. Also require coordinated provisions for phased utilities, road and intersection improvements, stormwater management, emergency access, and park or open space dedication.

Action 5
Support housing development that allows employees to live closer to major employment centers and everyday services. Use the Future Land Use Map, Character Areas, zoning updates, and development incentives to encourage a broader range of housing near Downtown, hospitals and educational institutions, major commercial centers, transit, and other employment concentrations where residential uses are appropriate. Encourage workforce and mixed-income housing, missing-middle housing, multifamily development, and mixed-use development in locations that can shorten commute distances and provide safe walking, bicycling, or transit connections to jobs.

Action 6
Establish Legacy Core Infill Priority Areas to focus reinvestment in Joliet's established neighborhoods before extending infrastructure to new growth areas. Identify vacant lots, underutilized properties, City-owned parcels, obsolete commercial sites, and redevelopment opportunities within and surrounding Downtown, the East Side, South Side, and other established neighborhoods served by existing streets, utilities, schools, parks, and community facilities. Within these priority areas, coordinate zoning updates, infrastructure improvements, City-owned land disposition, rehabilitation programs, development incentives, and streamlined review to make infill development easier to undertake. Use annual capital planning and economic development programs to address infrastructure or site conditions that prevent otherwise viable infill projects from moving forward.

Action 7
Periodically evaluate growth and annexation opportunities within Joliet's 1.5-mile planning area using the Future Land Use Map as the City's long-range policy framework. The Future Land Use Map should continue to identify the intended long-term land use pattern within the existing extraterritorial jurisdiction, recognizing that a future land use designation does not commit the City to annexation, infrastructure extension, or development. Apply Urban3's annexation, value-per-acre, net revenue-per-acre, and infrastructure lifecycle-cost analyses to understand whether anticipated development revenues can reasonably support the long-term cost of roads, water, sewer, stormwater, and other City services and infrastructure. Consider the initial cost of infrastructure extensions together with ongoing operations, maintenance, and eventual replacement costs.

Action 8
Establish clear long-term ownership and maintenance responsibilities for infrastructure and open space created through new development. Use annexation agreements, development agreements, subdivision approvals, homeowners or property owners associations, special service areas, or other legally appropriate mechanisms to identify who will maintain sidewalks, trails, detention areas, landscaping, stormwater facilities, privately owned open space, and other shared improvements after construction. Require maintenance plans, responsible entities, funding mechanisms, inspection expectations, and procedures for addressing failures before final development approval. This is especially important because new infrastructure creates ongoing maintenance and replacement obligations that extend well beyond initial construction. Urban3's analysis emphasizes that long-term maintenance and eventual replacement costs should be considered as part of development decisions.


Image source: City of Joliet

Best Practice

Density

Density refers to the concentration of housing units within a defined area, typically measured as dwelling units per acre. It shapes the physical form, character, and function of a neighborhood. Lower densities, such as single family development, provide more space and separation between homes but often limit walkability and efficient use of infrastructure. Higher densities, including townhomes and multifamily buildings, support more compact development, increase housing options, strengthen demand for neighborhood-serving uses such as retail, schools, and community facilities, and support long-term neighborhood stability.

Density Parameters

Density is one measure of development intensity and is typically expressed as dwelling units per acre. The density ranges shown here are illustrative planning benchmarks associated with common housing and development types. They are not target densities, zoning entitlements, or requirements for existing Joliet neighborhoods. Appropriate density should reflect existing built form, the intended Character Area and Future Land Use designation, housing type, parcel configuration, transportation access, and the capacity of public infrastructure and services.
Illustrative development patterns include:
- Detached single-family housing: approximately 4 to 6 du/ac
- Townhomes, duplexes, and other missing-middle housing: approximately 8 to 16 du/ac
- Small and garden-style multifamily development: approximately 15 to 25 du/ac
- Mid-rise multifamily and mixed-use development: approximately 25 to 40+ du/ac, with higher densities potentially appropriate in Downtown, Mixed Use Corridors, major activity centers, and larger redevelopment areas

Before adopting zoning changes that would materially increase residential development capacity within an area, the City should evaluate available water, sanitary sewer, stormwater, transportation, and other public-service capacity and identify improvements needed to accommodate potential buildout. Density increases should be coordinated with infrastructure investment and should not be assumed solely from the illustrative ranges shown in this Plan.



Image source: www.mrsc.org

Single family homes with garages at 5.3 du/ac.



Image source: www.mrsc.org

Mixed home types at 17 du/a.

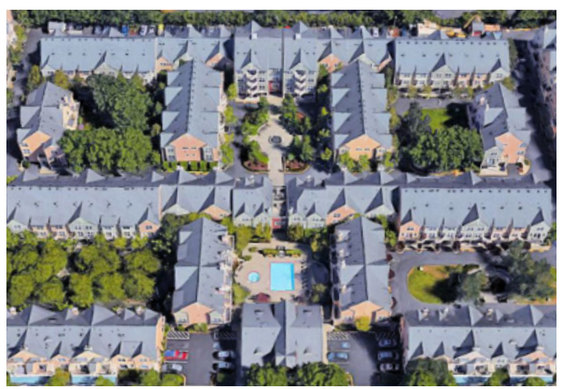


Image source: www.mrsc.org

A mixed-use development at 34 du/ac.

Strategy 4

Update subdivision ordinance and design standards to reflect best practices for walkability, connectivity, and sustainability.

Action 1
Adopt clear street connectivity and block design standards for new subdivisions and major redevelopment sites. Require connected street networks with multiple points of access, street stubs to adjacent undeveloped parcels, direct sidewalk and trail connections to nearby neighborhoods, and safe routes to parks, schools, transit stops, and neighborhood-serving commercial areas. Limit permanent cul-de-sacs and single-entry subdivisions except where environmental, rail, highway, utility, or industrial constraints make connections infeasible; where cul-de-sacs are allowed, require pedestrian and bicycle pass-throughs. Require subdivision layouts to identify and connect to existing or planned local and regional park, trail, and greenway systems and preserve future connection points where facilities have not yet been constructed.

Action 2
Require subdivision and site design standards to integrate green infrastructure where feasible, tree canopy, and open space networks as core infrastructure rather than optional amenities. Update standards to require or incentivize native landscaping, street trees, bioswales, rain gardens, permeable pavement where appropriate, naturalized detention basins, stormwater reuse, greenway connections, and preservation of wetlands, floodplains, creek corridors, and mature trees. In Joliet, this should be applied especially near the Des Plaines River, Hickory Creek, Spring Creek, existing flood-prone areas, and neighborhoods affected by heat, air-quality concerns, or limited park access. For industrial and logistics-adjacent subdivisions or redevelopment sites, require wider landscape buffers, berms, tree planting, screening, and stormwater treatment areas that reduce impacts on nearby housing.

Action 3
Prioritize usable park and open-space dedication within new residential neighborhoods and establish clearer criteria for when fee-in-lieu contributions are appropriate. For larger subdivisions, work with the applicable park district early in the development review process to identify appropriately located land that can function as a neighborhood park, recreation space, or accessible open-space amenity. Use fee-in-lieu contributions primarily where a development is too small to support a functional park, suitable land is unavailable, or investment in an existing or planned nearby park would provide greater community benefit. Establish criteria addressing park size, location, accessibility, configuration, connectivity, and long-term ownership so land dedication results in usable community amenities rather than residual open space.

Action 4
Enable and encourage alley-loaded residential development in locations where it can support compact, walkable neighborhood design. Update subdivision and residential design standards to accommodate rear-loaded garages and parking accessed from alleys for townhomes, small-lot homes, missing-middle housing, and other appropriate housing types. Establish standards for alley dimensions, utilities, drainage, emergency access, lighting, snow removal, and maintenance. Use rear-loaded parking to reduce driveway interruptions across sidewalks, limit garage-dominated street frontages, support narrower lots, and create more continuous pedestrian-oriented streetscapes.

Action 5
Evaluate and amend subdivision regulations to allow narrower street cross-sections on appropriate low-volume residential streets. Establish a narrow-street option based on traffic volumes, street function, on-street parking needs, emergency access, snow removal, utilities, waste collection, and drainage requirements. Coordinate the standards with the City's Complete Streets typologies and applicable fire and public works requirements. Where operationally appropriate, narrower streets can reduce vehicle speeds, shorten pedestrian crossing distances, lower

construction and long-term infrastructure costs, and reduce impervious surface and stormwater runoff.

Action 6
Reduce residential front-yard setback requirements where appropriate to strengthen the relationship between homes and the public realm. Update subdivision and zoning standards so new homes can be located closer to sidewalks and streets, particularly in compact neighborhoods, townhome developments, missing-middle housing areas, and neighborhood centers. Calibrate setbacks to the intended Character Area and housing type rather than applying a uniform approach across Joliet. Pair reduced setbacks with front entrances, porches, stoops, landscaping, street trees, and rear or side parking to create active and continuous residential frontages while maintaining adequate privacy and utility access.

Strategy 5

Encourage mixed-use development near major corridors and employment centers to reduce travel distances and strengthen local economies.

Action 1
Require major mixed-use projects near corridors and employment centers to include a Development Transportation and Access Plan that identifies how people will safely and conveniently reach the site by walking, bicycling, transit, shared mobility, and driving. Plans should address sidewalks, safe crossings, trail connections, bus stops, employer shuttles, bicycle parking, shared parking, wayfinding, freight separation, and connections to surrounding neighborhoods. For Downtown, the mall area, major corridors, and employment districts, coordinate development approvals with Pace, Metra, IDOT, Will County, employers, school districts, and workforce partners so residents can reach jobs, training, services, and daily needs without relying on long car trips.

Action 2
Use Joliet's economic development tools to make mixed-use projects financially feasible in priority locations while requiring clear public benefits. Align TIF, RERZ, Enterprise Zones, SSAs, Opportunity Zones, façade/ buildout assistance, infrastructure funding, land assembly, and gap financing with projects that deliver plan-supported outcomes such as upper-story housing, workforce housing, grocery or fresh-food access, local retail, childcare, healthcare access, adaptive reuse, public spaces, streetscape improvements, and small-business tenant space. Public assistance should be tied to measurable benefits such as local hiring, accessible commercial rents for small businesses, tax revenue per acre, affordable or workforce housing units, reduced vacancy, public realm improvements, and long-term maintenance commitments.

Strategy 6

Modernize multijurisdictional agreements to guide coordinated growth, infrastructure investment, environmental stewardship, and service delivery along Joliet's shared edges.

Action 1
Create a Boundary Agreement Modernization Playbook that establishes a consistent framework for updating Joliet's intergovernmental agreements with neighboring municipalities. Include standard agreement language for annexation areas, land use compatibility, infrastructure phasing, revenue sharing, environmental protection, utility extensions, road improvements, emergency services, school and park district coordination, dispute resolution, and public notification. Build on Joliet's role as a founding member of the Grand Prairie Water Commission as a model for coordinated regional infrastructure planning, particularly where water supply, utility capacity, and future growth cross municipal boundaries. Each agreement should include a shared map, term length, review schedule, amendment process, capital project coordination process, and annual staff check-in.

Action 2
Coordinate with CMAP to adopt its published fiscal impact analysis methodology, regional data, and infrastructure coordination guidance along with Joliet's Urban3 value-per-acre and infrastructure lifecycle-cost analysis, into a Regional Infrastructure Cost and Benefit Sharing Framework. Use consistent assumptions to estimate property and sales tax revenues, public service demand, available infrastructure capacity, required capital improvements, and long-term maintenance and replacement obligations associated with major development near Joliet's municipal edges.

Action 3
Incorporate shared environmental protection and resilience provisions into future boundary agreements with neighboring jurisdictions. These provisions should address shared watersheds, floodplains, wetlands, tree canopy, green corridors, stormwater management, habitat protection, air quality, freight impacts, and trail or open space connections. They should also identify coordinated responsibilities for protecting the Des Plaines River, Hickory Creek, Spring Creek, drainageways, agricultural transition areas, and green infrastructure opportunities near municipal boundaries. Coordinate development review standards, stormwater expectations, open space dedication, buffer requirements, tree preservation, floodplain protections, trail connections, and environmental mitigation across jurisdictions. This would be especially valuable where logistics, industrial development,

Best Practice

Multijurisdictional Agreements

Multijurisdictional agreements are formal, legally binding partnerships between two or more municipalities designed to coordinate planning between the entities, share resources, and manage services across boundaries. These agreements are essential in areas where overlapping boundaries and shared infrastructure systems require collaborative decision making and can address issues such as shared roadway maintenance, utility extensions, emergency services, environmental management, and coordinated development along municipal edges. They can also help establish clear expectations for annexation, prevent conflicting land uses, and ensure that growth occurs in a logical and fiscally responsible manner.

Successes in Multijurisdictional Agreements

Grand Rapids, Michigan uses multijurisdictional agreements to share utilities and align regional planning initiatives to guide growth beyond city limits. These agreements allow the city to manage suburban growth, protect their infrastructure capacity, and maintain cohesive regional development pattern without expanding city boundaries.

- Guide development in neighboring areas without annexation.
- Provide water and sewer services to neighboring jurisdictions in exchange for adherence to specified land use standards, density expectations, and environmental protections
- Coordinate long-range planning on transportation, land use, and environmental systems with neighboring jurisdictions to ensure roadway, transit, bicycle and pedestrian investments are aligned and not planned in isolation.
- Aligns local plans with broader regional strategies.
- Townships retain land use authority. Agreements ensure development is consistent with regional goals and infrastructure capacity.

highway corridors, or greenfield growth create impacts that affect more than one municipality. Invite regional environmental and planning partners to help shape these provisions, including Openlands, The Conservation Foundation, Forest Preserve District of Will County, CMAP, Will County, Kendall County, park districts, watershed organizations, and neighboring municipalities. These partners can provide technical support on habitat mapping, watershed planning, tree canopy goals, conservation easements, greenway and trail connections, grant applications, and long-term stewardship.

Action 4
Develop an **Unincorporated Enclave Strategy** for parcels and pockets of unincorporated land that are substantially or completely surrounded by Joliet. Map these areas and evaluate each based on land use, parcel size, ownership, existing City services, infrastructure condition, emergency response, development potential, tax implications, and compatibility with the Future Land Use Map. Establish criteria for where annexation would improve service efficiency, eliminate jurisdictional gaps, simplify development review, or create a more logical City boundary. Coordinate with Will County, Kendall County, property owners, fire protection districts, utilities, and other affected taxing bodies before pursuing annexation or service changes. Use Urban3's infrastructure lifecycle and fiscal productivity analysis to evaluate the long-term financial implications of incorporating each area rather than treating all enclaves the same.

Action 5
Update and expand Joliet's watershed protection geography using current hydrologic and environmental data. Establish a Hickory Creek–Spring Creek Watershed Protection Area and evaluate additional protection areas along Rock Run and Lily Cache Creek within the Lower DuPage River watershed, where development affects waterways that extend beyond municipal boundaries. Joliet currently lists specialized protection ordinances for Aux Sable Creek and Cedar, Sugar, Jackson Creek, and Jackson Branch, while the City also participates in the Hickory Creek, Lower DuPage, and Aux Sable watershed partnerships. Periodically remap the existing Aux Sable and Cedar/Sugar/Jackson protection areas using updated FEMA floodplain data, wetlands inventories, LiDAR/topography, tributary and drainageway mapping, current parcel boundaries, and watershed monitoring data. Instead of relying solely on a single mapped boundary, consider a tiered protection approach with a core stream/wetland protection area, a broader drainage and infiltration area, and development standards that become more flexible with distance from sensitive resources.

Action 6
Establish ongoing City coordination with IDNR on the remaining Hickory Creek and Spring Creek flood-control and floodway improvements. Coordinate periodically with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources Office of Water Resources, FEMA, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Will County, and affected property owners, and provide updates to the City's capital planning and development-review processes. Where improvements change modeled flood elevations or floodway boundaries, evaluate whether updated hydrologic and hydraulic studies or a Letter of Map Revision should be pursued and incorporate new information into zoning, redevelopment, infrastructure, and environmental planning.

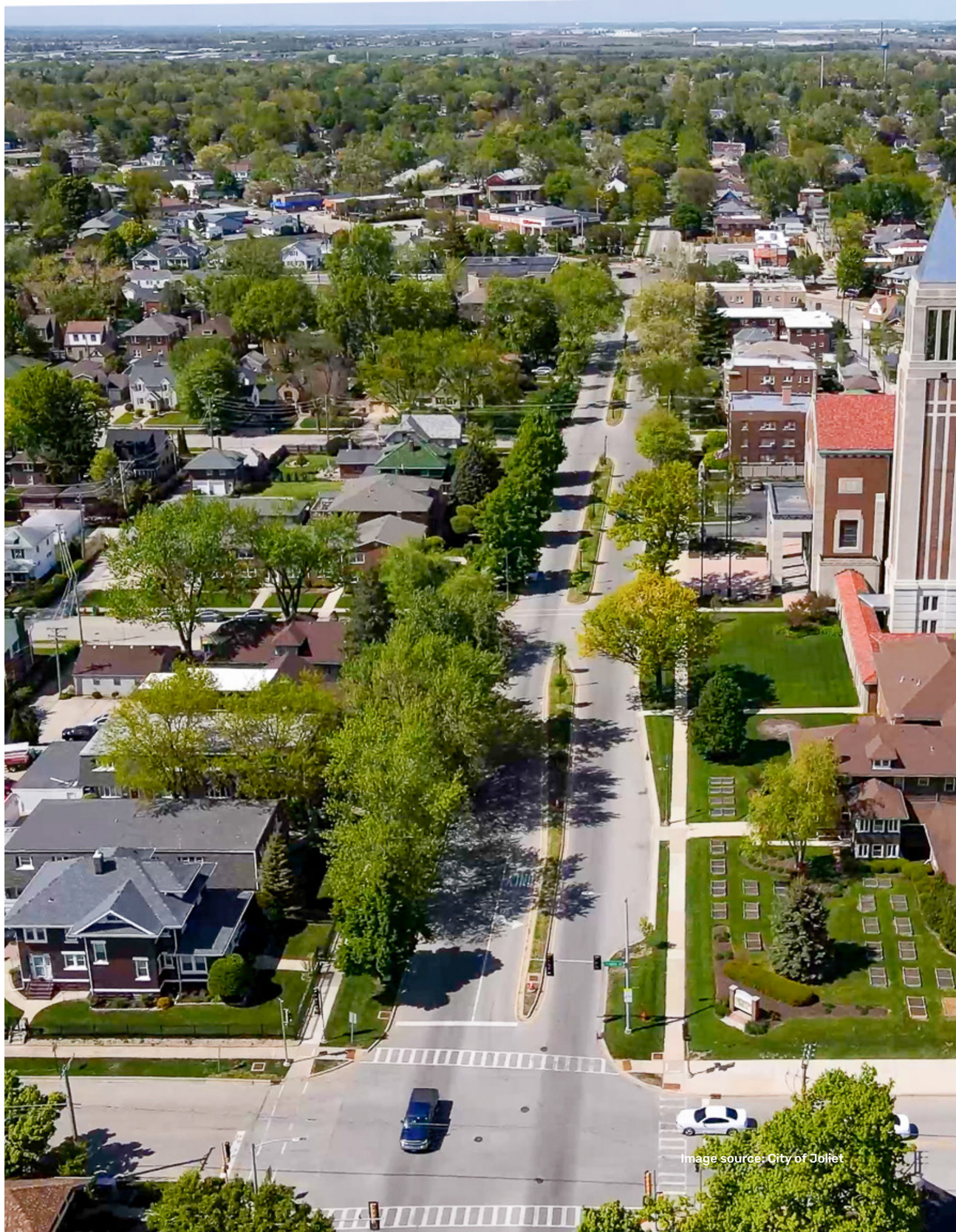


Image source: City of Joliet



Image source: City of Joliet

Future Land Use Framework

The Future Land Use Map establishes the City's long-range framework for where different types of development, redevelopment, preservation, and reinvestment should occur. It is intended to guide decisions over the life of the Comprehensive Plan as properties change ownership, infrastructure is improved, redevelopment opportunities emerge, and new areas are considered for growth.

The map does not predict exactly when change will occur. A future land use designation may reinforce an existing development pattern or identify a longer-term direction for an area that is expected to evolve. Likewise, the map does not rezone property, approve development, annex land, or establish public access. Those decisions continue to occur through the City's zoning, development review, capital planning, annexation, and other regulatory processes.

Because of Joliet's geographic size and varied development patterns, the Future Land Use framework is presented at two scales. The Citywide Future Land Use Map provides the overall land use structure for Joliet and its surrounding planning area, including the City boundary, existing extraterritorial jurisdiction, municipal boundary agreements, land use classifications, and planning overlays. The same framework is then shown through a series of zoomed-in area maps that allow land use classifications, overlay boundaries, corridors, neighborhoods, environmental features, and municipal edges to be reviewed at a more detailed scale.

The five area maps are:

- Northeast Side Land
- South of I-80 Land
- West of I-55 Land
- East of I-55 and West of Raynor Avenue
- City Core

These enlarged maps do not establish separate land use policies. They provide a closer view of the same Citywide Future Land Use framework, making it easier to understand how classifications and overlays apply to individual neighborhoods, corridors, redevelopment areas, environmental systems, and growth areas. Each area map should therefore be interpreted together with the Citywide map and the policies of this Comprehensive Plan.

The framework uses two complementary tools: land use classifications and overlays. Every mapped area is assigned a base future land use classification that describes its predominant long-term land use and development pattern. The classifications shown on the maps include Commercial, Mixed Use, Heavy Industrial, Light Industrial, Institutional, Water, Open Space, Multifamily Residential, Single-Family Residential, Transportation, Utilities, and Agriculture.

Overlays provide an additional layer of planning direction without replacing the underlying future land use classification. The maps identify Corridor Reinvestment, Strategic Opportunity, Campus Partnership, and Environmentally Sensitive Areas overlays. These overlays highlight locations where redevelopment, institutional coordination, environmental protection, infrastructure investment, or additional planning considerations should influence future decisions.

Together, the Citywide map, enlarged area maps, land use classifications, and overlays provide a consistent framework for evaluating future development while recognizing that different parts of Joliet require different approaches to growth, reinvestment, preservation, and change.

Land Use Classification

Every mapped area receives a base future land use classification. The base classification describes the predominant land use and development pattern envisioned for that location. It provides the starting point for evaluating rezonings, annexations, redevelopment proposals, infrastructure investments, and other decisions that may affect the long-term physical form of Joliet. The classifications should be interpreted as broad planning guidance rather than parcel-by-parcel zoning. Individual projects may include complementary uses where they support the intended character and function of the area.

Single-Family Residential

Primarily supports detached residential neighborhoods while recognizing that compatible housing forms may be appropriate in selected locations. Future development should reinforce neighborhood scale, street patterns, access to services, and transitions to surrounding uses. The Future Land Use Map does not itself establish which housing types are permitted by zoning.

Multifamily Residential

Identifies locations appropriate for apartments, townhomes, senior housing, and other higher-density residential forms. These areas should be considered in relation to nearby services, transit, street capacity, neighborhood transitions, and access to employment and community amenities.

Mixed Use

Supports coordinated combinations of housing, businesses, services, employment, and public space. Mixed Use is particularly important in Downtown, near the Joliet Gateway Center, around major redevelopment sites such as the Louis Joliet Mall area, and along corridors where reinvestment can create more complete activity centers.

Commercial

Identifies areas intended primarily for retail, services, restaurants, and other commercial activity. Future commercial areas should be located and sized to serve surrounding neighborhoods and the broader City while supporting safe access, pedestrian connections, transit, and coordinated redevelopment along major corridors.

Light Industrial

Identifies areas intended for warehousing, flex industrial, distribution, storage, and other lower-intensity employment uses that can operate with fewer off-site impacts than Heavy Industrial uses. Appropriate development may include warehouses, intermediate-scale

industrial and flex facilities, long-term and cold storage, and small-scale clean energy facilities. Sites should provide appropriate truck access, screening, landscaping, and transitions where located near residential or other sensitive uses.

Heavy Industrial
Identifies areas intended for intensive manufacturing, processing, extraction, and other high-impact industrial activities that typically require larger sites and direct access to freight-serving infrastructure. Appropriate uses may include active mines and mineral extraction facilities, large-scale manufacturing and processing, and other intensive industrial operations. Future development should provide adequate separation, buffering, freight access, and environmental safeguards to minimize impacts on nearby neighborhoods and sensitive uses.

Institutional
Identifies major schools, colleges, hospitals, civic facilities, and other institutional uses. Adjacent land use decisions should consider opportunities for shared services, housing, recreation, workforce activities, access, and appropriate transitions between institutional campuses and surrounding neighborhoods.

Agriculture
Recognizes areas where agricultural or rural use should remain the intended long-term condition until infrastructure, development demand, environmental conditions, and additional planning support a transition. Agriculture is therefore distinct from land identified for immediate urban development.

Open Space
Identifies areas where recreation, conservation, habitat, environmental protection, or publicly accessible open space is intended to remain the principal long-term function. The designation provides long-range planning guidance and does not by itself establish public ownership, public access, acquisition, or conservation restrictions on a property. Future open-space priorities should be refined through a Comprehensive and Regional Open Space Plan prepared in coordination with park and forest preserve districts, county and regional agencies, neighboring municipalities, property owners, environmental organizations, and other partners. Agriculture and Open Space remain separate classifications because they communicate different long-term objectives.

Overlay Framework

Overlays provide a second layer of guidance on top of the base future land use classifications. An overlay does not replace the underlying land use designation. Instead, it identifies areas where additional coordination, investment, design guidance, or further planning is needed because of conditions that extend across individual parcels or land use categories. This approach allows Joliet to maintain a clear base Future Land Use Map while recognizing areas where broader planning objectives should influence future public and private decisions.

Corridor Reinvestment Overlay
The Corridor Reinvestment Overlay identifies established corridors where coordinated redevelopment and public investment can improve access, economic activity, pedestrian conditions, transit connections, and surrounding neighborhoods. Along corridors such as Jefferson Street and other major commercial routes, the overlay should help focus attention on redevelopment nodes, coordinated access management, sidewalks, streetscape improvements, transit, vacant or underutilized properties, and opportunities to introduce a more balanced mix of uses. The overlay does not require every parcel to change use. Instead, it signals that development proposals and capital improvements should contribute to a stronger overall corridor.

Strategic Opportunity Overlay
The Strategic Opportunity Overlay identifies areas where the City anticipates significant long-term development or redevelopment potential but where the ultimate land use pattern may depend on additional planning, infrastructure investment, market conditions, annexation, or coordination with property owners and neighboring jurisdictions. These areas may include large undeveloped tracts, municipal-edge growth areas, major redevelopment sites, or locations where multiple future land uses remain possible. The underlying base classification should remain the primary land use direction until the conditions necessary for transition are demonstrated. Decisions should consider roads, water and sewer capacity, environmental conditions, compatibility with nearby uses, and implementation readiness.

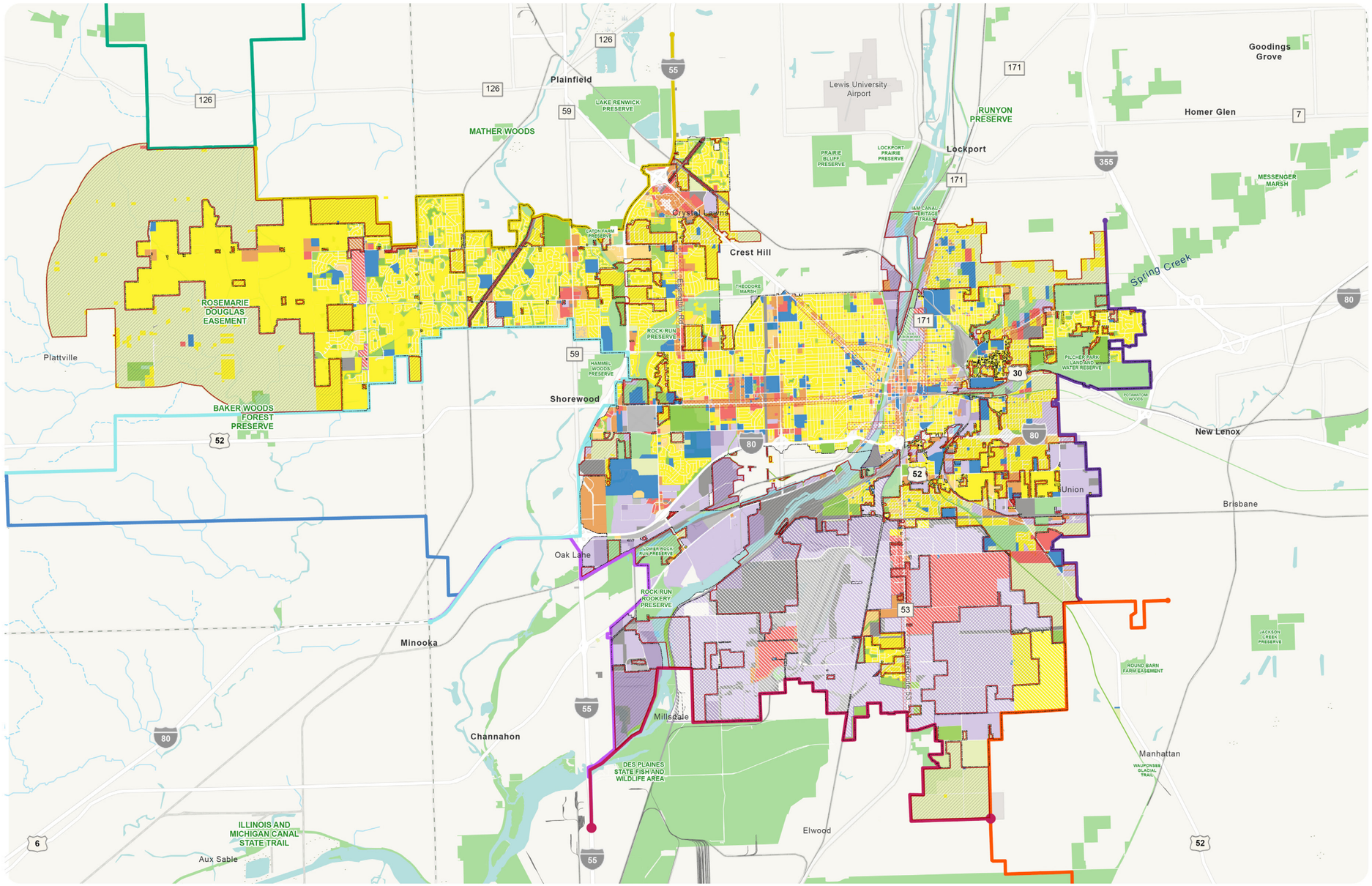
Riverfront Priority
A Riverfront Priority overlay can provide additional guidance along the Des Plaines River and other significant riverfront areas where redevelopment, habitat, recreation, public access, industry, stormwater management, and environmental restoration need to be considered together. The overlay should not imply that public access, trails, or redevelopment are guaranteed. Instead, it would identify locations where river-related conditions should receive additional consideration as development and public investment occur.

Campus Partnership
A Campus Partnership overlay can identify major institutional areas where coordinated planning between institutions, the City, and surrounding neighborhoods may create opportunities for shared recreation, housing, childcare, workforce development, transportation improvements, or other community-serving uses. The overlay would retain the underlying land use classifications while encouraging coordinated planning around institutions such as Joliet Junior College, the University of St. Francis, hospitals, schools, and other major campuses.



Image source: City of Joliet

Future Land Use Map



LEGEND

- City Boundary
- Existing Extraterritorial Jurisdiction
- Corridor Reinvestment Overlay
- Strategic Opportunity Overlay
- Campus Partnership Overlay
- Environmentally Sensitive Areas

FUTURE LAND USE

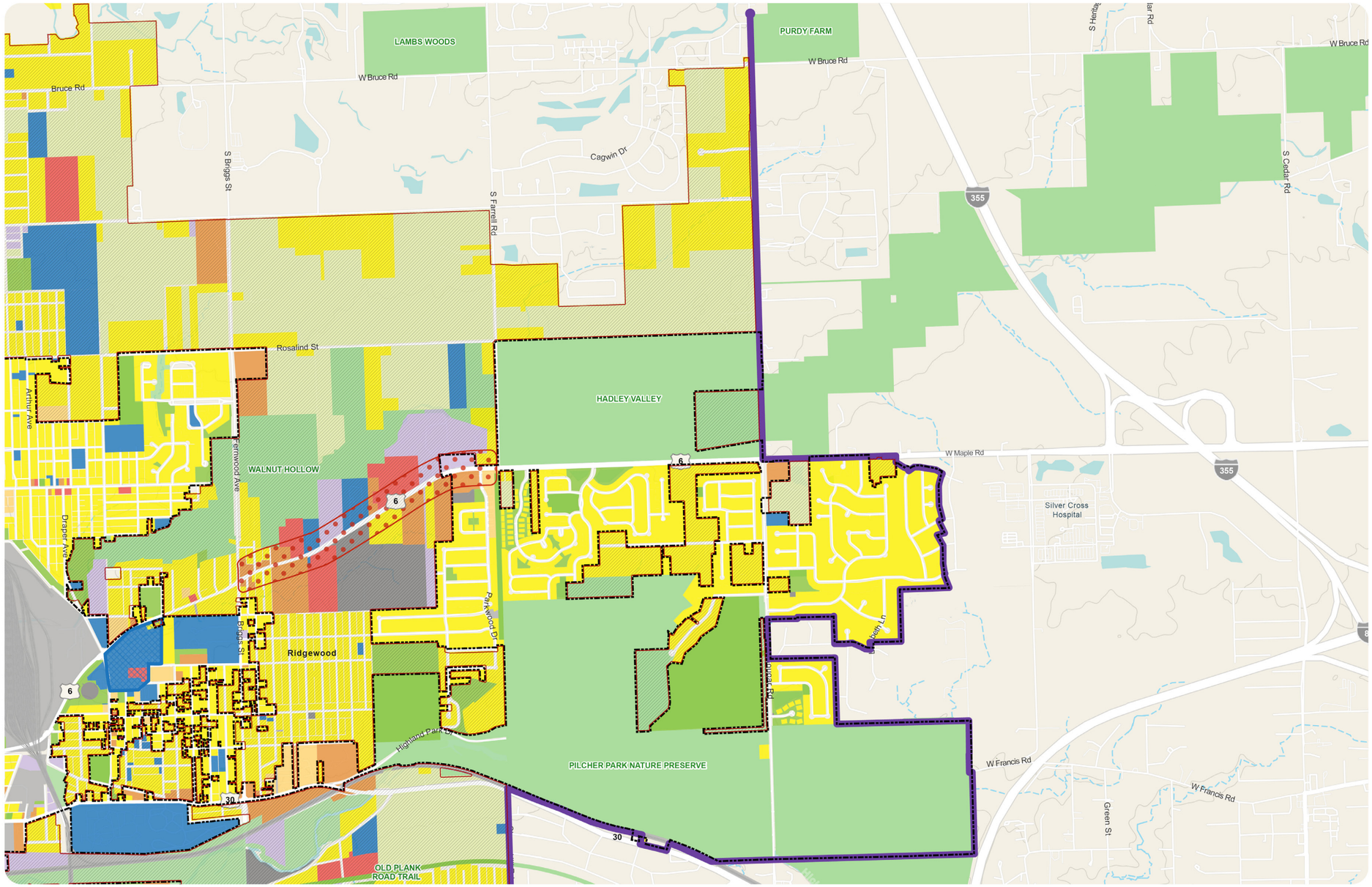
- Commercial
- Mixed Use
- Heavy Industrial
- Light Industrial
- Institutional
- Water
- Open Space
- Multi Family Residential
- Single Family Residential
- Transportation
- Utilities
- Agriculture

MUNICIPAL BOUNDARY AGREEMENTS

- Oswego
- Channahon
- Manhattan
- Minooka
- New Lenox
- Plainfield
- Shorewood
- Elwood

00 1.25 2.5 5 Miles

Northeast Side Land Use Map



LEGEND

- City Boundary
- Existing Extraterritorial Jurisdiction
- Corridor Reinvestment Overlay
- Strategic Opportunity Overlay
- Campus Partnership Overlay
- Environmentally Sensitive Areas

FUTURE LAND USE

- Commercial
- Mixed Use
- Heavy Industrial
- Light Industrial
- Institutional
- Water
- Open Space
- Multi Family Residential
- Single Family Residential
- Transportation
- Utilities
- Agriculture

MUNICIPAL BOUNDARY AGREEMENTS

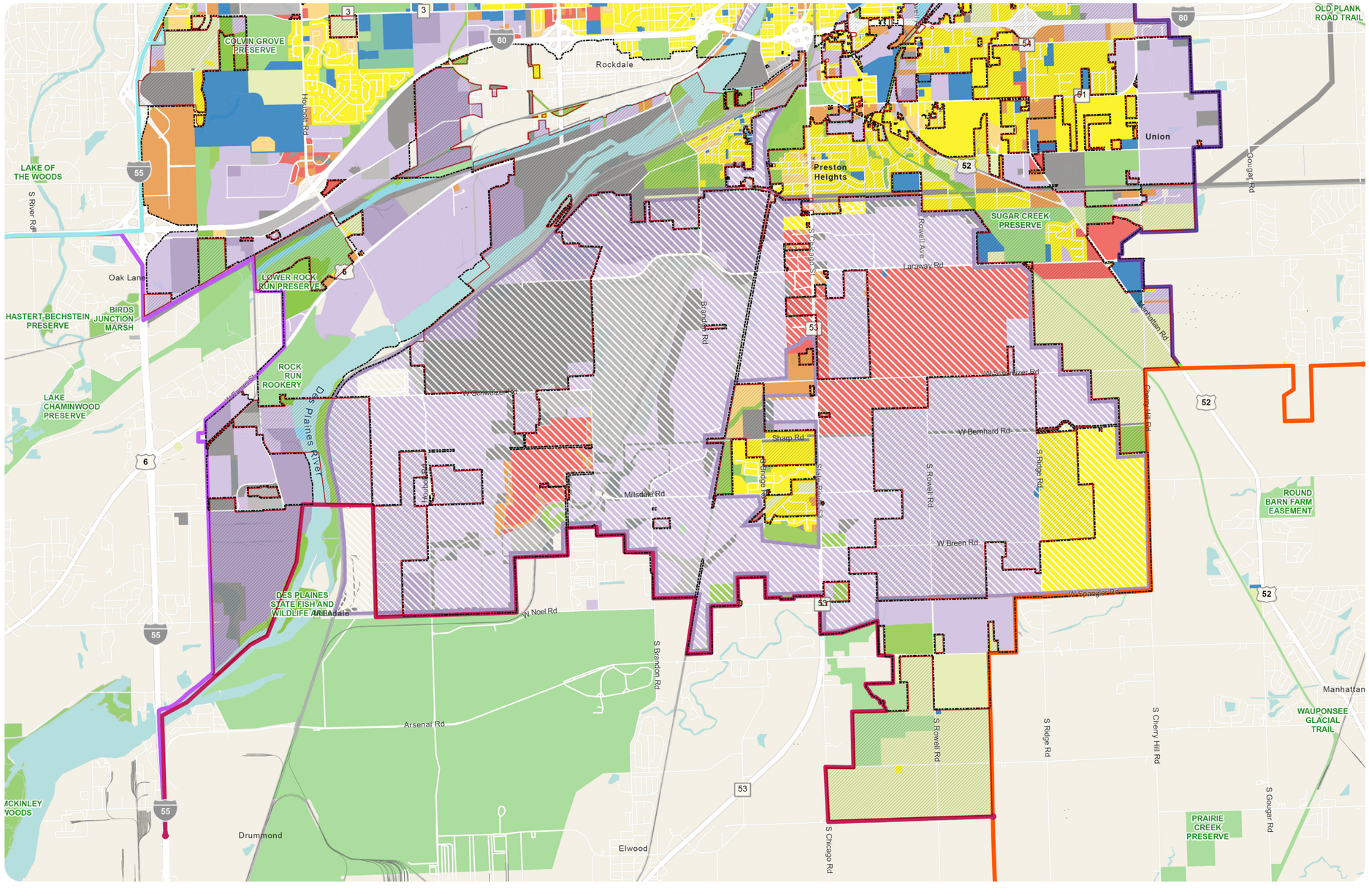
- New Lenox

KEY PLAN



00 0.25 .5 1 Miles

South of I-80 Land Use Map



LEGEND

- City Boundary
- Existing Extraterritorial Jurisdiction
- Corridor Reinvestment Overlay
- Strategic Opportunity Overlay
- Campus Partnership Overlay
- Environmentally Sensitive Areas

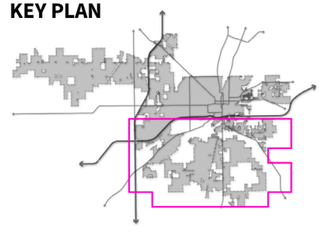
FUTURE LAND USE

- Commercial
- Mixed Use
- Heavy Industrial
- Light Industrial
- Institutional
- Water
- Open Space
- Multi Family Residential
- Single Family Residential
- Transportation
- Utilities
- Agriculture

MUNICIPAL BOUNDARY AGREEMENTS

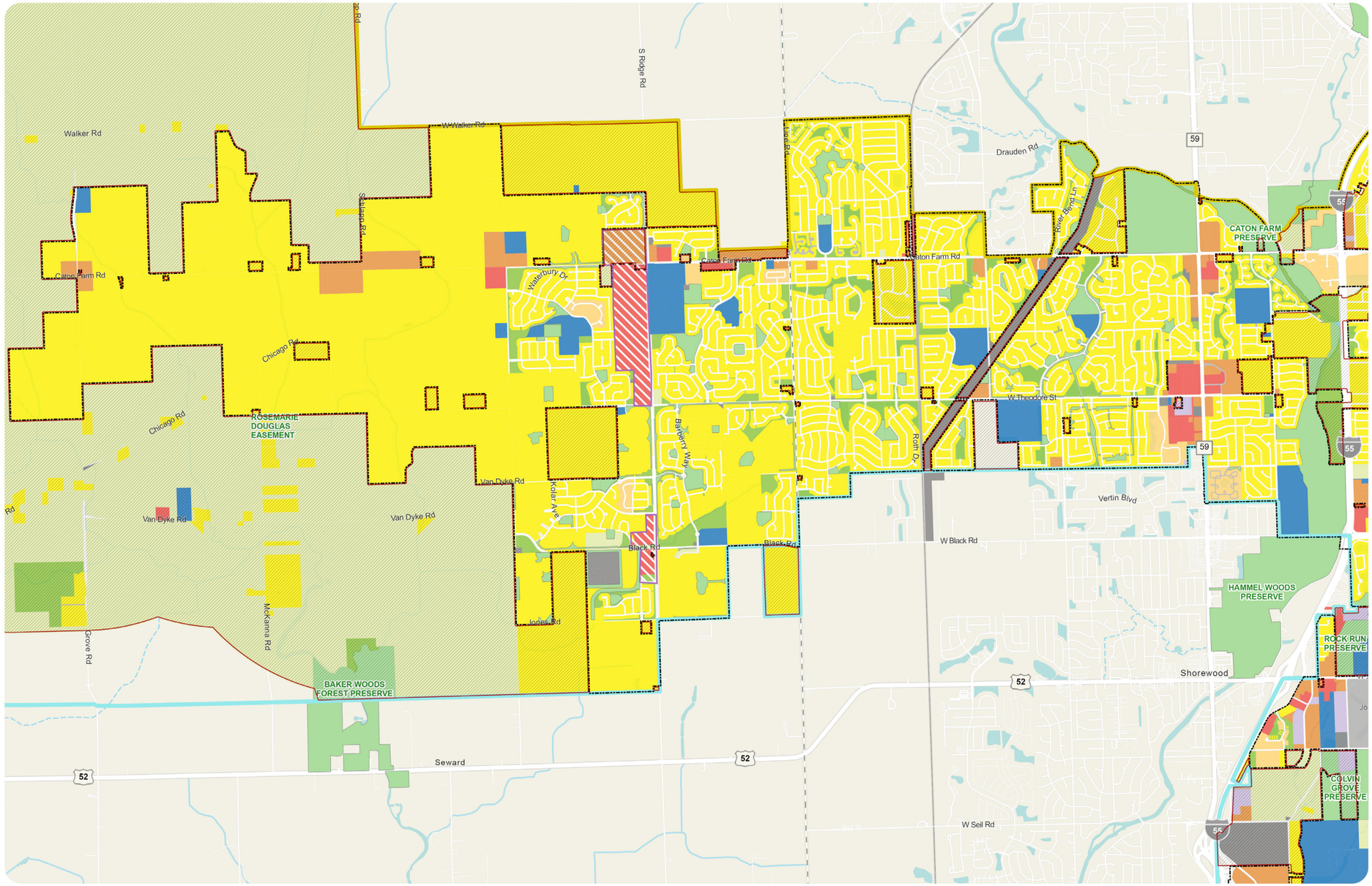
- Channahon
- Manhattan
- New Lenox
- Shorewood
- Elwood

KEY PLAN



00 0.25 .5 Miles 1

West of I-55 Land Use Map



LEGEND

- City Boundary
- Existing Extraterritorial Jurisdiction
- Corridor Reinvestment Overlay
- Strategic Opportunity Overlay
- Campus Partnership Overlay
- Environmentally Sensitive Areas

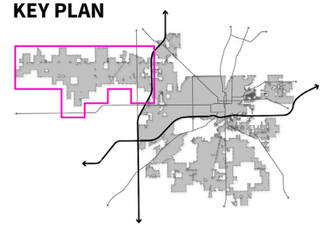
FUTURE LAND USE

- Commercial
- Mixed Use
- Heavy Industrial
- Light Industrial
- Institutional
- Water
- Open Space
- Multi Family Residential
- Single Family Residential
- Transportation
- Utilities
- Agriculture

MUNICIPAL BOUNDARY AGREEMENTS

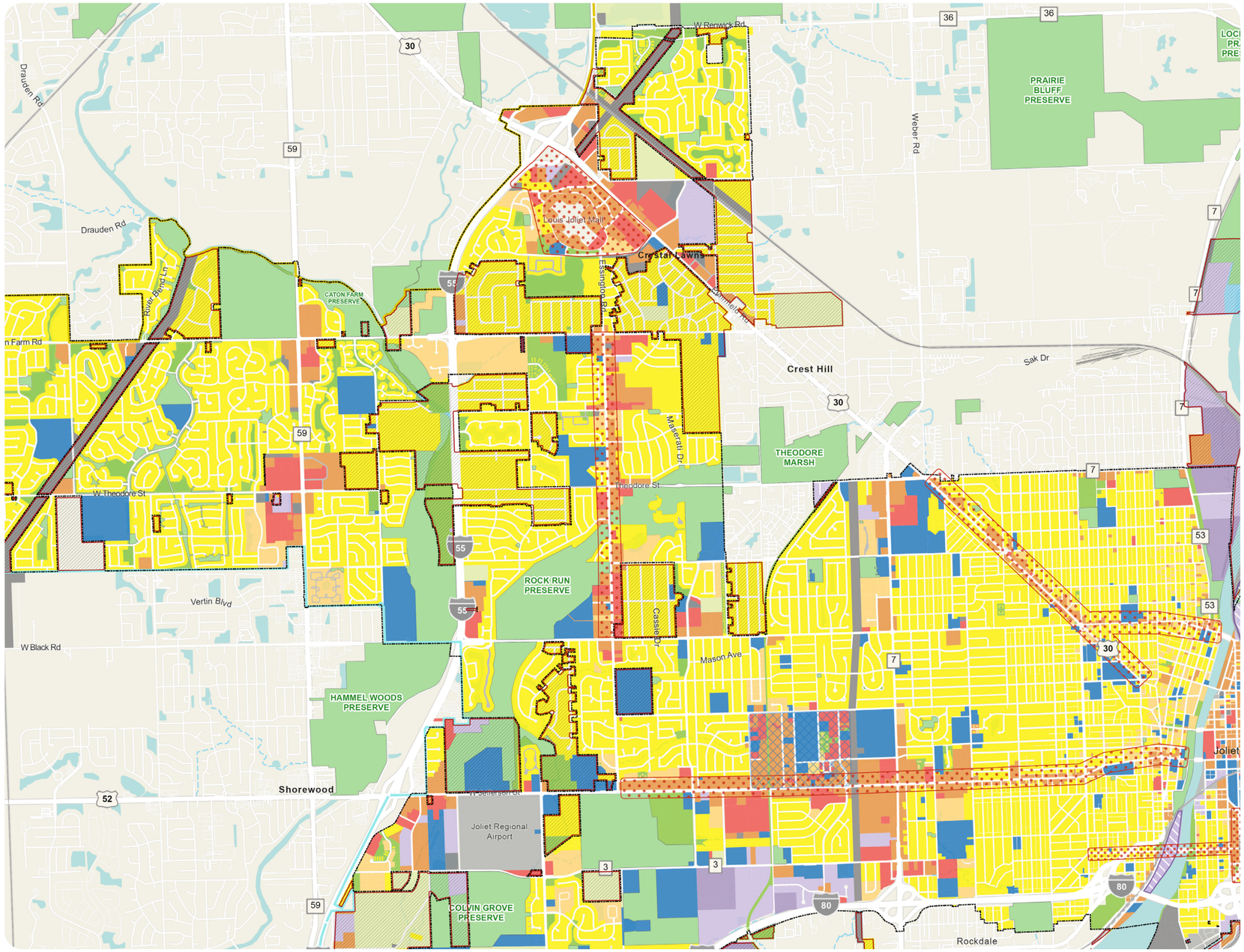
- Plainfield
- Shorewood

KEY PLAN



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East of I-55 and West of Raynor Avenue Land Use Map



LEGEND

- City Boundary
- Existing Extraterritorial Jurisdiction
- Corridor Reinvestment Overlay
- Strategic Opportunity Overlay
- Campus Partnership Overlay
- Environmentally Sensitive Areas

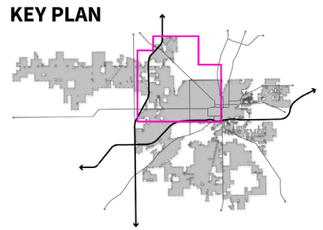
FUTURE LAND USE

- Commercial
- Mixed Use
- Heavy Industrial
- Light Industrial
- Institutional
- Water
- Open Space
- Multi Family Residential
- Single Family Residential
- Transportation
- Utilities
- Agriculture

MUNICIPAL BOUNDARY AGREEMENTS

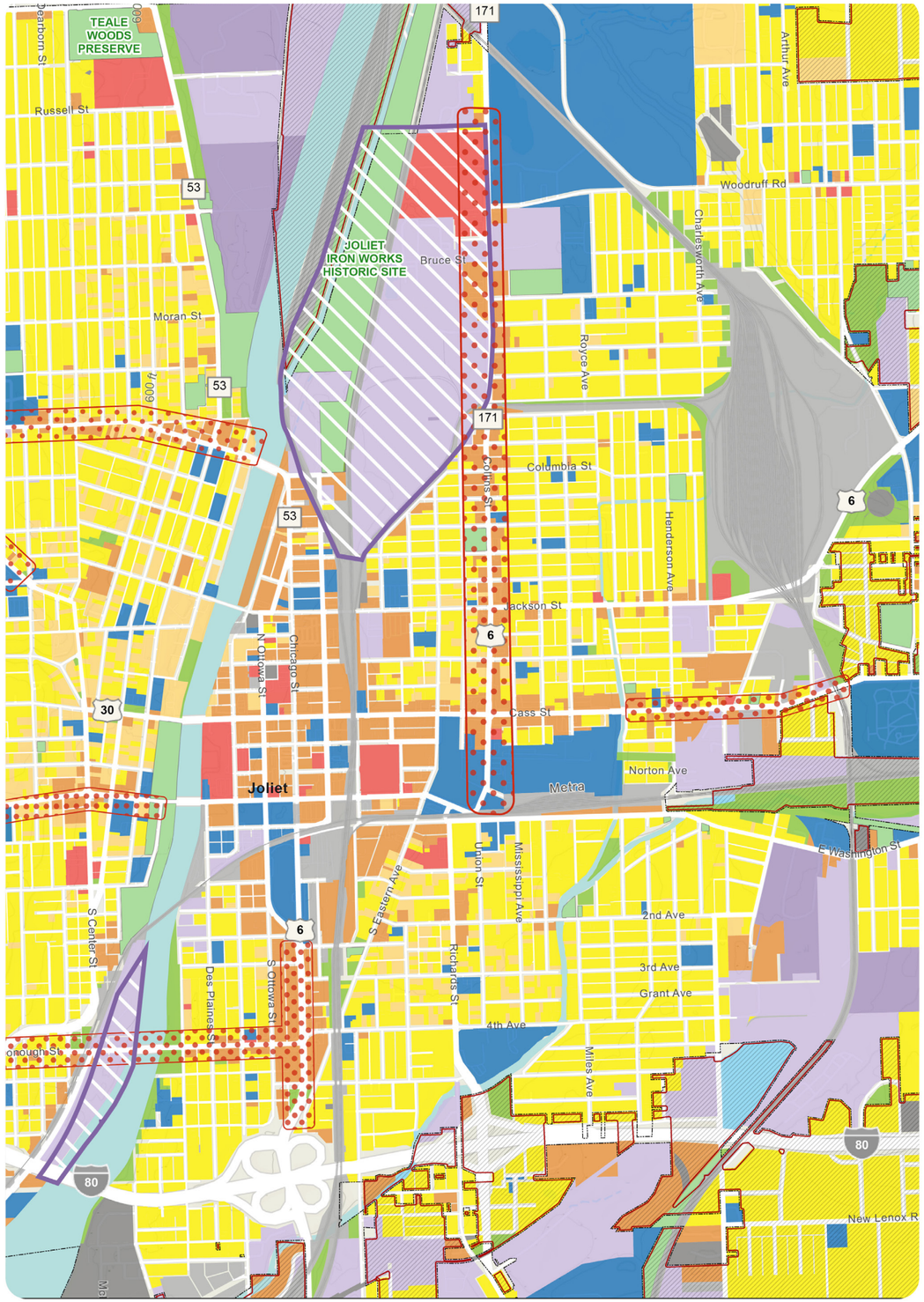
- Plainfield
- Shorewood

KEY PLAN



00 0.25 .5 1 Miles

City Core Land Use Map



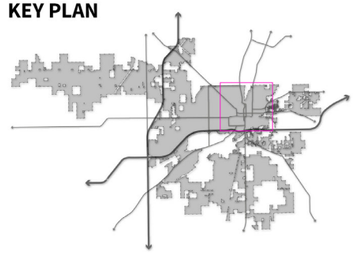
LEGEND

- City Boundary
- Existing Extraterritorial Jurisdiction
- Corridor Reinvestment Overlay
- Strategic Opportunity Overlay
- Campus Partnership Overlay
- Environmentally Sensitive Areas

FUTURE LAND USE

- Commercial
- Mixed Use
- Heavy Industrial
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- Single Family Residential
- Transportation
- Utilities
- Agriculture

KEY PLAN





00 0.25 **0.5** 1 Miles



06

Character Area Plans

Planning for Place

Place-specific strategies for catalytic development

This chapter focuses on four locations within Joliet - the Louis Joliet Mall, Ridge Road Corridor, East Side Neighborhood at Cass Street and Henderson Avenue, and South Chicago Street and McDonough Street Corridor - chosen by the community to create place-specific strategies to guide future investment and development and have the most potential to advance broader community priorities. The concepts identify proposed land use, open space, and placemaking opportunities intended to guide decisions about how each area should evolve over time.

Each plan identifies preferred locations for a variety of land use and mobility investments that are intended to enhance and complement each other. Residential development opportunities at a range of typologies and scales support expanded housing options for existing and new residents, while mixed-use and commercial development supports the City's economic development goals. Open space investments improve quality of life and environmental performance, and create opportunities for recreation within the urban fabric. Streetscape and mobility improvements strengthen connectivity and access. Gateways, public spaces, and placemaking investments reinforce community identity and create a stronger sense of place.

Together, these concepts illustrate how key catalyst sites could evolve into thriving neighborhoods that support Joliet's continued vitality and success. Future development will be refined through more detailed site planning, design, engineering, and public review.

Character Area Metrics Methodology

Character Area metrics were developed using a consistent set of planning assumptions based on representative development types, common industry benchmarks, and Joliet's local development context. Residential capacity was estimated at 4 dwelling units per acre for single-family housing, 12 for townhomes, 20 for garden-style multifamily, and 50 for mid-rise multifamily. Commercial development was modeled using a 0.25 floor area ratio. Parking assumptions included two spaces per residential unit and four spaces per 1,000 square feet of retail space, with an average residential unit size of 1,000 square feet. These assumptions were applied to each area's proposed land use mix to estimate potential housing units, building area, parking demand, and overall development intensity. The resulting metrics are planning-level benchmarks intended to support comparison and long-range decision-making; they do not represent site-specific zoning entitlements or development approvals.

Louis Joliet Mall

Creating a New Mixed-Use Destination for Joliet



Underutilized parking fields at the Louis Joliet Mall, 2026.

Changing consumer behavior and the growth of e-commerce create an opportunity to reimagine legacy shopping centers as modern districts with a more diverse mix of land uses. The Louis Joliet Mall is representative of this new place type. Its transformation presents a key opportunity for Joliet to create a mixed use development that incorporates commercial and residential land uses that result in a new neighborhood for the City.

The concept plan envisions the area as a mixed-use activity center that combines housing, retail, employment, recreation, and public gathering spaces. Existing and occupied commercial anchors remain important components of the neighborhood, preserving economic activity and tax revenue while creating opportunities for phased redevelopment over time.

The existing structure may be repositioned through renovation or complete redevelopment if market conditions warrant. Any future transformation of the mall should complement the surrounding development while introducing uses that respond to market demands. Reimagining the mall building itself can help extend the long-term viability of the district and reinforce its role as one of Joliet's premier destinations.

Residential Development

A range of residential housing types is proposed across the site, with building scale and density tailored to the surrounding context. Lower- and medium-density housing would create a gradual transition between nearby residential neighborhoods and more intensive commercial uses, accommodating growth while maintaining compatibility with adjacent areas.

Medium-density housing is proposed within existing parking lots surrounding the Mall. Mid-density housing such as garden-style multifamily housing and 5-8 story mid-rise multifamily units are proposed. Locating greater residential density near the primary Mall building would increase on-site activity, expand the customer base for existing and future businesses, and support continued economic development.

Low-density housing is proposed as an extension of the existing residential neighborhood along Hennepin Drive. In this area, lower-density housing would be located alongside existing hotel uses, creating an effective transition between established neighborhoods and nearby commercial areas while maintaining the area's residential character.

Repositioning the Mall Building

The mall building should be repositioned as a mixed-use commercial destination that responds to changing retail demand while preserving viable portions of the property. The two vacant anchor spaces should be evaluated for adaptive reuse or selective demolition based on building condition, market feasibility, and their ability to support the mall's long-term transformation. Repurposing could introduce uses such as an indoor recreation and entertainment complex, healthcare and wellness center, business incubator, or flexible event venue. If reuse is not feasible, removing one or both vacant anchors could create appropriately scaled development sites and open the remaining mall to new entrances and outdoor activity areas.

The City should work with mall ownership to prepare a phased redevelopment strategy, recruit catalytic users, and identify zoning flexibility, infrastructure improvements, and financial tools needed to support implementation. Early investment should concentrate on uses that generate consistent daily and evening activity, complement remaining retailers, and establish the mall building as a viable destination beyond traditional shopping.



Historic gateway at Lincoln Square, Chicago, IL



Lower-density housing at Des Plaines Avenue., Forest Park, IL.

Open Space

Open space design can serve as both a regional destination and a neighborhood amenity. The creation of a central civic green or entertainment plaza at the heart of the district, to accommodate seasonal festivals, concerts, farmers markets, outdoor dining, and community events will activate the development throughout the year. Smaller neighborhood parks and passive open spaces integrated throughout new residential areas provide everyday recreation and park spaces for residents to relax. Together, these open spaces create a connected network of community amenities. The incorporation of landscaping, shade and green infrastructure transforms existing parking areas into an attractive and functional public realm.

Streetscape

Streetscape improvements are proposed along Ring Road, Mall Loop Drive, Lincoln Highway and interior circulation routes to establish a consistent, high-quality streetscape supporting a safe and comfortable pedestrian experience. Design standards call for wide and continuous sidewalks, pedestrian-scaled lighting, street trees in grates, furnishings, planters and bollards to grow walkability and reduce vehicular speeds. New development along these corridors should present cohesive facades with consistent setbacks, height regulations and architectural features, supporting a successful multi-modal environment. A standard streetscape design guideline should be created to ensure consistency in streetscape treatment throughout the development.

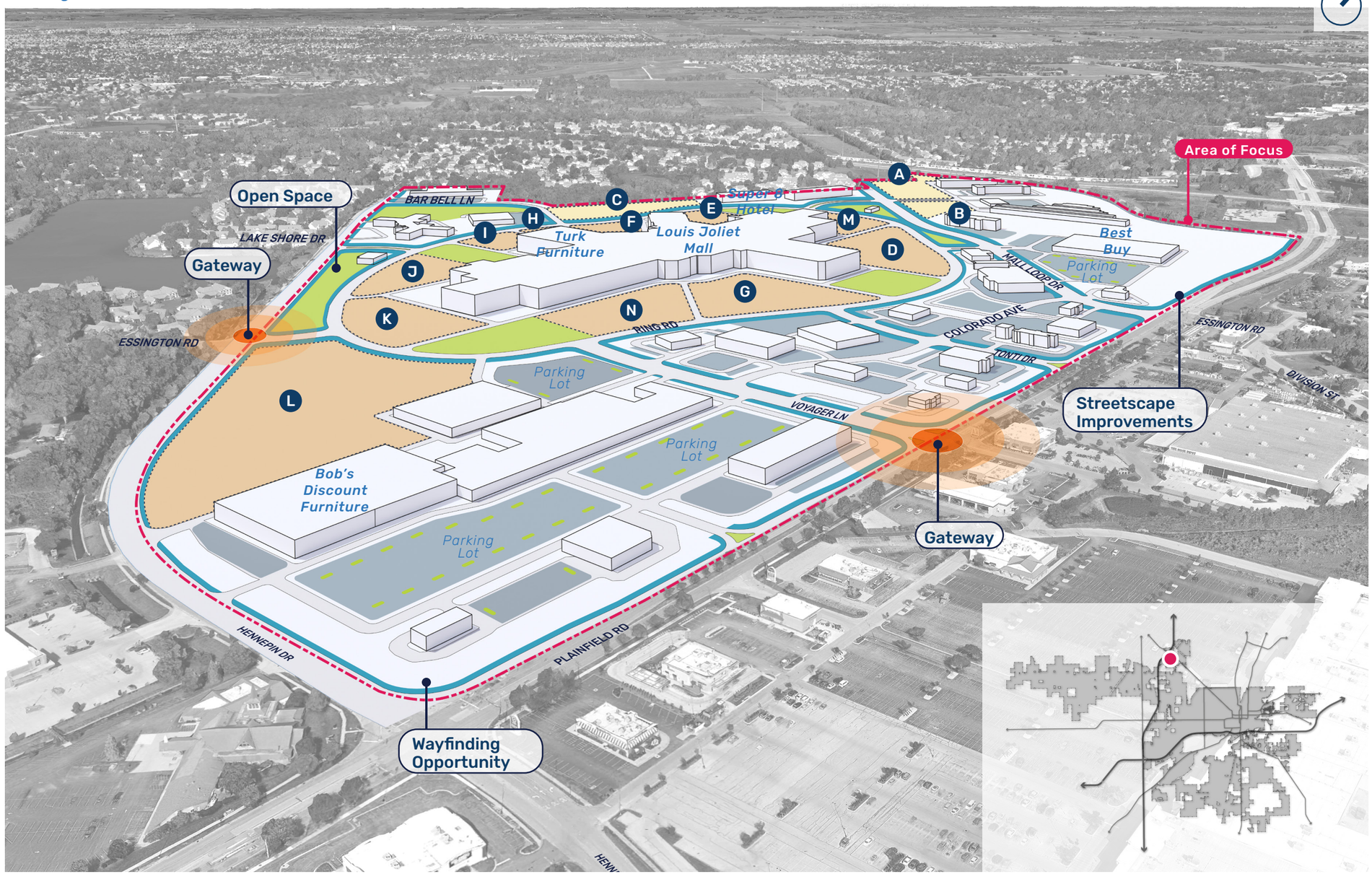
Placemaking

Gateways are proposed at existing entrance roads into the Mall. Existing entry points can be transformed into highly visible arrival experiences through monument signage, district branding, decorative lighting, enhanced landscaping, and coordinated streetscape improvements. Reinforcing these existing gateways will establish the redevelopment as a welcoming mixed-use destination and strengthen its role as a commercial, residential, and entertainment hub.

Louis Joliet Mall

Creating a New Mixed-Use Destination for Joliet

Looking Northwest



Character Area Metrics

A ***Low Density -*** *Townhomes (4.9 ac.)*
- 59 units (59,041 sf.) - 118 parking spots

B ***Low Density -*** *Townhomes (3.1 ac.)*
- 38 units (37,734 sf.) - 75 parking spots

C ***Low Density -*** *Townhomes (4.8 ac.)*
- 58 units (58,098 sf.) - 116 parking spots

D ***Medium Density -*** *Mid-rise Multifamily (5.3 ac.)*
- 159 units (159,228 sf.) - 318 parking spots

E ***Medium Density -*** *Mid-rise Multifamily (2.9 ac.)*
- 88 units (87,851 sf.) - 176 parking spots

F ***Medium Density -*** *Mid-rise Multifamily (2.5 ac.)*
- 76 units (76,159 sf.) - 152 parking spots

G ***Medium Density -*** *Mid-rise Multifamily (4.5 ac.)*
- 134 units (133,841 sf.) - 268 parking spots

H ***Medium Density -*** *Mid-rise Multifamily (0.6 ac.)*
- 19 units (19,066 sf.) - 38 parking spots

I ***Medium Density -*** *Mid-rise Multifamily (1.7 ac.)*
- 50 units (49,835 sf.) - 100 parking spots

J ***Medium Density -*** *Mid-rise Multifamily (2.1 ac.)*
- 63 units (63,098 sf.) - 126 parking spots

K ***Medium Density -*** *Mid-rise Multifamily (3.1 ac.)*
- 94 units (93,658 sf.) - 187 parking spots

L ***Medium Density -*** *Mid-rise Multifamily (11.1 ac.)*
- 333 units (332,769 sf.) - 666 parking spots

M ***Medium Density -*** *Mid-rise Multifamily (2.4 ac.)*
- 71 units (71,168 sf.) - 142 parking spots

N ***Medium Density -*** *Mid-rise Multifamily (3.3 ac.)*
- 99 units (99,103 sf.) - 188 parking spots

Ridge Road Corridor

Guiding Growth Along Joliet's Emerging Western Corridor



Aerial of the East Side Neighborhood looking northwest.

The west side of Joliet continues to experience population growth and subsequent housing demand and development pressure. The concept plan for this area provides strategies for future growth that encourages sustainable growth patterns and provides housing diversity, multimodal connectivity, and additional open space.

A land use framework composed of appropriately scaled, connected neighborhoods is proposed. Each neighborhood integrates residential, commercial, and open space land uses. The plan establishes a framework that integrates housing with accessible commercial services, recreation, and environmental assets.

Residential Development

Medium-density housing, comprised of townhomes and garden-style apartments, is concentrated along Ridge Road, which is anticipated to function as the primary commercial corridor in the area. Locating townhomes and multifamily housing in this area would expand housing choices and provide an appropriate transition between more intensive commercial uses and lower-density neighborhoods. Medium-density development may also incorporate neighborhood commercial uses like coffee shops, restaurants, florists, and personal services within buildings fronting central green spaces, especially in areas directly adjacent to buildings fronting green space. These uses can activate shared open spaces, meet residents' daily needs, and create walkable neighborhood destinations.

Low-density housing, comprised primarily of single-family detached homes, is located adjacent to existing residential neighborhoods and set back from Ridge Road to maintain compatibility with lower-density neighborhoods adjacent to the site. This allows for growth and increased housing and commercial density while preserving the character of adjacent neighborhoods.

Commercial

Commercial development is concentrated at the intersection of Caton Farm Road and Ridge Road. This area benefits from high visibility, and close proximity to existing and planned residential and commercial activity, making it well suited for more intensive retail, dining, and service uses.

The location also provides direct access to Plainfield South High School. This creates additional opportunities for entertainment, recreation, dining, and gathering spaces that can serve students, families, and the broader community. Focusing commercial and entertainment activation in this area establishes an environment that will serve as a community hub for local residents and visitors alike.

Open Space and Streets

The ***street network*** illustrated in this framework establishes the primary circulation pattern for the corridor and identifies the key connections needed to support future growth and development. As individual development sites are planned and constructed, additional local streets and access drives will be required to provide site circulation and connectivity. These future streets should be designed as complete streets that incorporate high-quality streetscape elements and a multimodal transportation framework, including accommodations for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, and motorists.

Open spaces are intentionally distributed throughout the corridor to provide equitable access to recreation, parkland, and naturalized areas while creating opportunities for trail connections, stormwater management, and environmental stewardship. Together, the transportation and open space networks establish a connected framework that balances development and preservation, enhances mobility and accessibility, and supports the creation of a cohesive and resilient community.



Van Aken Mixed Use District, Shaker Heights, OH



Lumen residential development at Fox Valley Mall, Aurora, IL



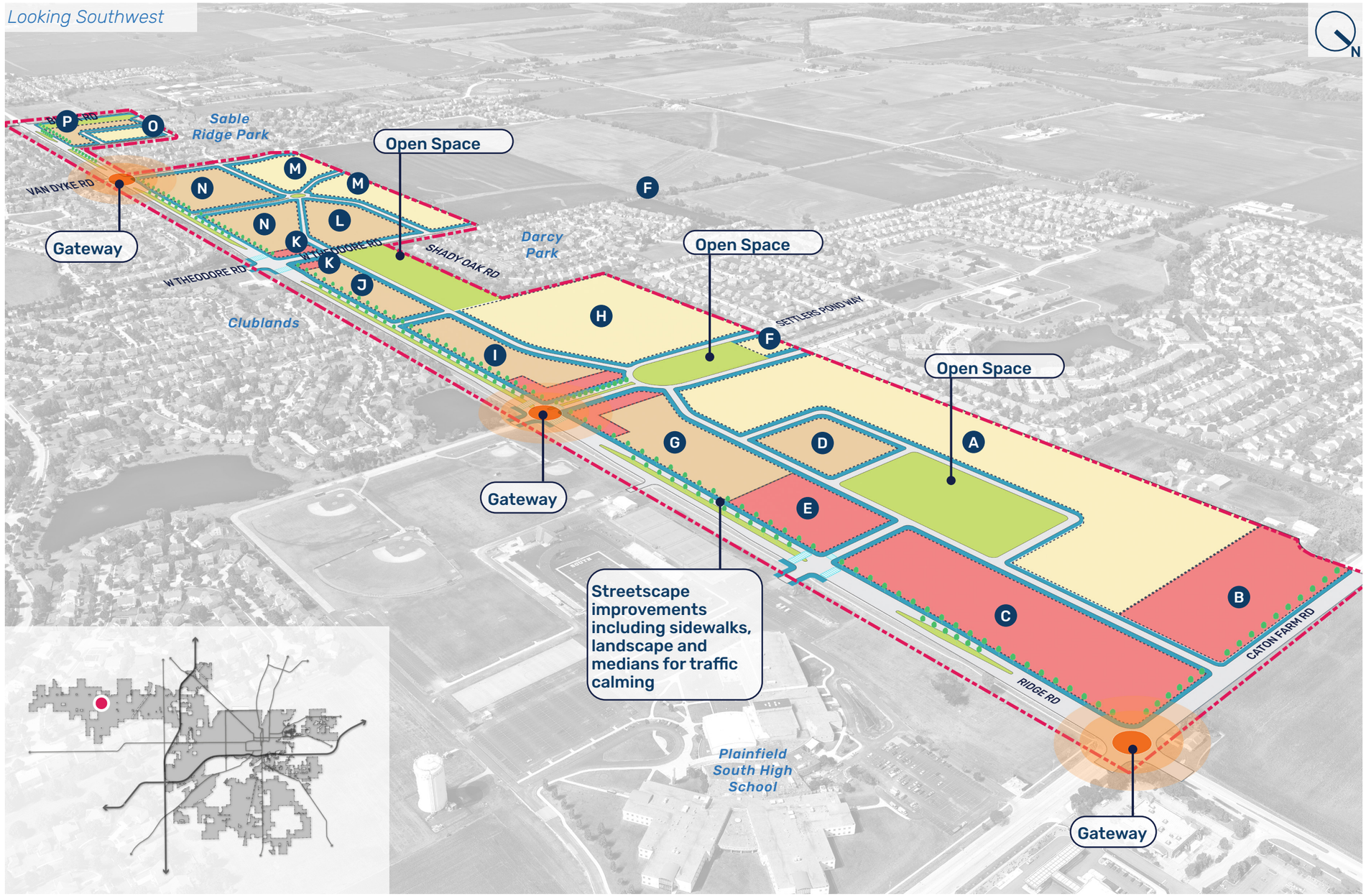
Mixed-use development at Demun Pointe, Clayton, MO.



Harmony Square Park, Tinley Park, IL

Ridge Road Corridor

Guiding Growth Along Joliet's Emerging Western Corridor



Character Area Metrics

- **A** ***Low Density -*** *Single Family (28.7 ac.)*
  - 115 units (114,969 sf.) - 230 parking spots
- **B** ***Commercial -*** *Retail (7.0 ac.)*
  - 76,024 sf. - 304 parking spots
- **C** ***Commercial -*** *Retail (9.5 ac.)*
  - 103,643 sf. - 415 parking spots
- **D** ***Medium Density -*** *Townhomes (3.9 ac.)*
  - 47 units (47,033 sf.) - 94 parking spots
- **E** ***Commercial -*** *Retail (4.8 ac.)*
  - 51,910 sf. - 208 parking spots
- **F** ***Low Density -*** *Single Family (1.3 ac.)*
  - 5 units (5,013 sf.) - 10 parking spots
- **G** ***Medium Density -*** *Garden Apartments (8.5 ac.)*
  - 170 units (170,048 sf.) - 340 parking spots
- **H** ***Low Density -*** *Single Family (23.9 ac.)*
  - 95 units (95,422 sf.) - 191 parking spots
- **I** ***Medium Density -*** *Garden Apartments (9.8 ac.)*
  - 196 units (195,719 sf.) - 391 parking spots
- **J** ***Medium Density -*** *Garden Apartments (7.8 ac.)*
  - 156 units (155,846 sf.) - 312 parking spots
- **K** ***Commercial -*** *Retail (1.6 ac.)*
  - 17,047 sf. - 68 parking spots
- **L** ***Medium Density -*** *Garden Apartments (13.1 ac.)*
  - 261 units (261,369 sf.) - 523 parking spots
- **M** ***Low Density -*** *Single Family (28.6 ac.)*
  - 115 units (114,562 sf.) - 229 parking spots
- **N** ***Medium Density -*** *Garden Apartments (31.0 ac.)*
  - 620 units (619,926 sf.) - 1,240 parking spots
- **O** ***Low Density -*** *Single Family (6.6 ac.)*
  - 27 units (26,501 sf.) - 53 parking spots
- **P** ***Medium Density -*** *Garden Apartments (12.6 ac.)*
  - 252 units (251,531 sf.) - 503 parking spots

Cass Street and Henderson Avenue

Strengthening Joliet's Neighborhoods Through Strategic Community Development



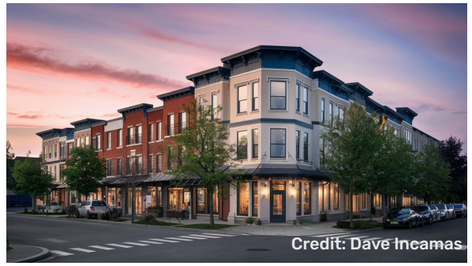
Aerial of the East Side Neighborhood looking northwest.

This legacy neighborhood presents an opportunity for neighborhood preservation and revitalization. Anchored by established residential neighborhoods, longstanding industrial buildings, and the Cass Street commercial corridor, the area possesses the physical framework to become a vibrant mixed-use district that celebrates its industrial heritage while embracing new investment.

This concept strengthens connections within the neighborhood and identifies opportunities to transform underutilized industrial properties through adaptive reuse. By building on existing neighborhood assets, this concept reinforces the neighborhood's identity while supporting reinvestment, enhanced walkability, and stronger connections between the neighborhood and Downtown Joliet.



Adaptive reuse terminal turned into laboratory, Humboldt Park, IL



Medium Density housing along a commercial corridor.



Newly constructed low density housing in a traditional building style, Indianapolis, IN

Housing

Medium-density housing is concentrated along the edges of established residential neighborhoods to create a gradual transition between lower-density housing and nearby commercial or mixed-use areas. These locations also include buildings identified as opportunities for alternative uses, where existing industrial and commercial buildings can be converted into apartments or other medium-density housing. This approach introduces additional housing and supports nearby commercial activity while maintaining compatibility with the surrounding neighborhood fabric.

Lower-density housing is located within established residential blocks to reinforce the existing neighborhood pattern and minimize disruption to surrounding homes. New infill housing should be compatible with adjacent residential scale and setbacks, while filling vacant lots, strengthening neighborhood continuity, and expanding housing options in this area of Joliet's East Side.

Development Opportunity Sites

Development opportunity sites are infill opportunities in underutilized lots concentrated near Cass Street and Maple Street/Henderson Avenue. This intersection represents the main gateway into this neighborhood, and these sites are best positioned to attract investment and serve as catalysts for neighborhood revitalization. Proposed neighborhood serving uses respond directly to community priorities related to access to services, healthy food, neighborhood amenities, and local businesses. Together they are intended to establish neighborhood activity centers that strengthen community identity, expand access to essential goods and services, and support long-term economic and community development.

Placemaking

Placemaking improvements are identified at the key gateways, commercial nodes, and community gathering spaces. Gateway features should be installed at the Henderson Avenue and Cass Street entrances to establish a clear sense of arrival experience through monument signage, district branding, public art, landscaping, and decorative lighting. Adaptive reuse of existing buildings, including the Whiteford Warehouse and surrounding industrial structures, should incorporate murals, public plazas, outdoor dining and lighting, and industrial heritage interpretation that celebrate the area's manufacturing legacy while supporting new commercial and employment uses.

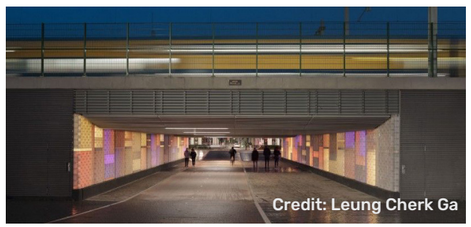
Additionally, the narrow right-of-way along Wenberg Street creates an opportunity to establish a shared street that accommodates limited vehicle access while prioritizing people walking and gathering. Distinctive paving, pedestrian scale lighting, public art, seating, and temporary programming could transform the street into an inviting central gathering space in the area. Improvements should preserve necessary property, utility, service, and emergency access while using design cues and traffic calming features to reinforce slow vehicle speeds.

Adaptive Reuse

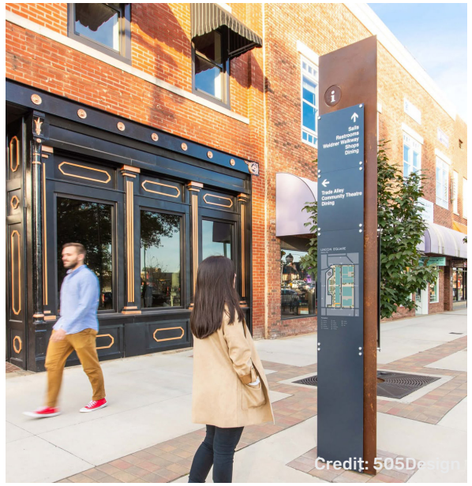
A central element of the concept is ***adaptive reuse***. Existing industrial and commercial buildings are are important assets that contribute to the neighborhood's unique identity. Adaptive reuse provides an opportunity to reimagine these structures as new businesses, community centers, or residences without requiring wholesale redevelopment.

The Whiteford and L. Surges Custom Woodwork warehouses present opportunities to preserve the East Side's industrial character while introducing new businesses, employment, and community spaces. Industrial buildings with operational businesses, like Green Earth and Barrett Industrial Supply, should be considered for adaptive reuse should the businesses relocate from these buildings. The City should work with property owners to evaluate building conditions, constraints, and potential reuse configurations, then prepare marketing materials that communicate each property's redevelopment potential. Targeted outreach should focus on users that can benefit from large, flexible industrial spaces, such as a food hall, brewery, maker space, business incubator, or community-oriented commercial use.

To support reinvestment, the City should pair private redevelopment with visible public-realm improvements and placemaking initiatives. Zoning and parking requirements should also be reviewed to accommodate adaptive reuse, including reduced or flexible parking minimums or shared parking arrangements. The City can further improve project feasibility through expedited development review, façade and building improvement assistance, historic and River Edge Redevelopment Zone tax credits where applicable, and other gap-financing tools. Together, these actions can reduce barriers to reuse and position the warehouses as anchors for broader East Side reinvestment.



Improved underpass connection through lighting, artwork, and clear sight lines.



Wayfinding signage, Hickory, NC



Placemaking archway at Kansas City Market, Kansas City, MO



Developed opportunity site with outdoor market, Edwardsville, IL

Wayfinding

A coordinated wayfinding system is proposed. This system would direct visitors to Gottshlag Park, nearby commercial districts, Downtown, and the future trucking facility. Incorporation of direction signs, pedestrian maps, and interpretive signage celebrating the area's industrial history could be created.

Pedestrian friendly streetscape improvements include wayfinding, widened sidewalks, street trees, pedestrian lighting, benches, and branded furnishings to improve walkability in the neighborhood and contribute to the area's sense of place.

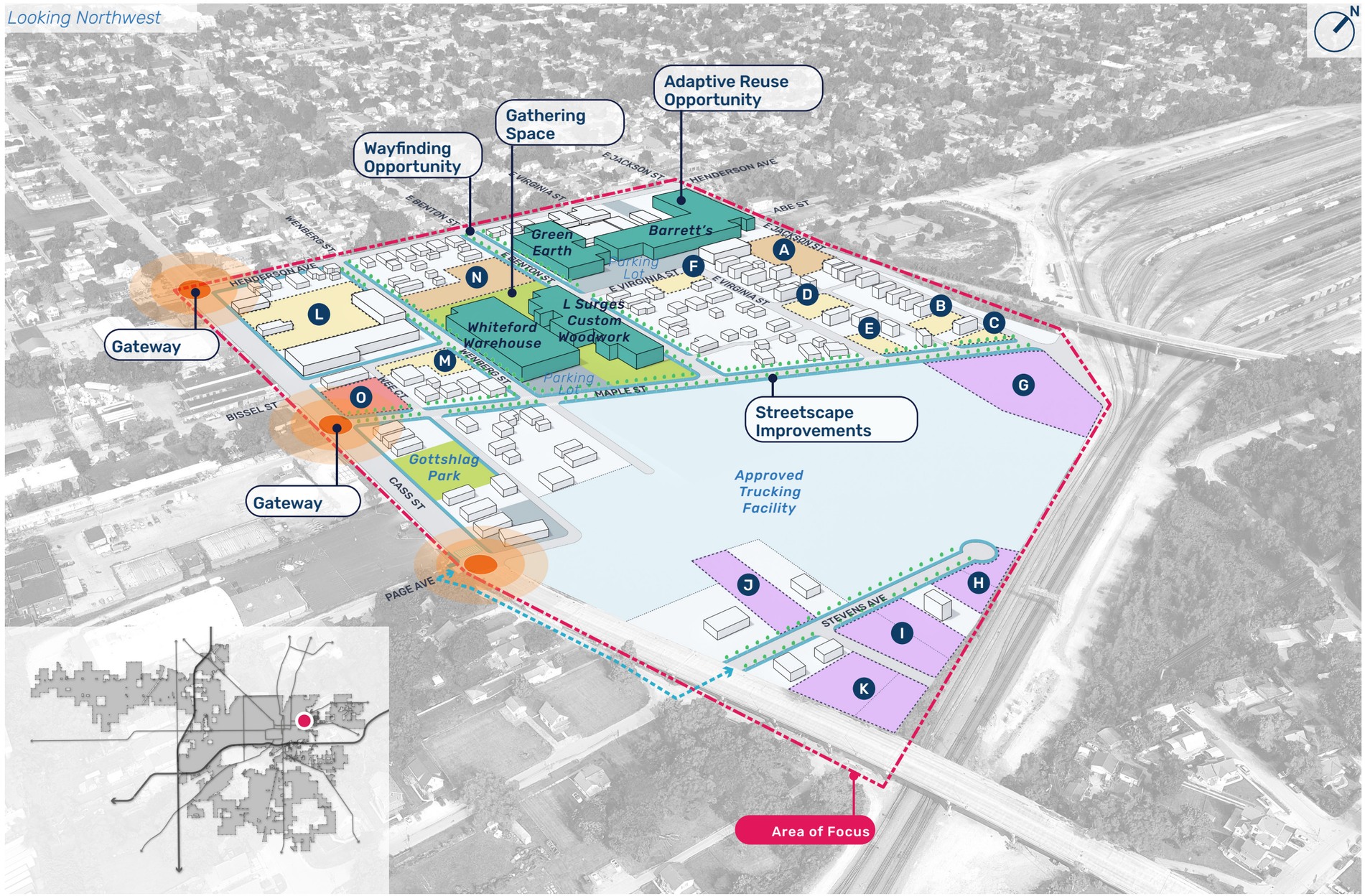
Stevens Avenue Improvements and Connectivity

Stevens Street is located within the East Side Character Area but is physically separated from the surrounding neighborhood by the future trucking facility and limited street connectivity. Access is provided by an unimproved frontage road south of Cass Street that connects to Page Avenue and passes beneath the Cass Street bridge. Improvements to this connection should include lighting, sidewalks, and other safety enhancements beneath the bridge, with a continuous pedestrian route extending along the frontage road to Page Avenue. This frontage road is located outside Joliet's municipal limits, so implementation will require coordination with the adjacent jurisdiction.

Stevens Avenue is currently developed with single-family homes, but its proximity to the future trucking facility and separation from nearby residential areas make continued residential use less appropriate over the long term. As properties become available and redevelopment opportunities emerge, the area should transition toward compatible light-industrial uses. The City should also consider coordinated redevelopment of the block and potential consolidation with the adjoining industrial property.

Cass Street and Henderson Avenue

Strengthening Joliet's Neighborhoods Through Strategic Community Development



Character Area Metrics

A ***Medium Density -*** *Garden Apartments (0.9 ac.)*
- 19 units (18,509 sf.) - 37 parking spots

B ***Low Density -*** *Single Family (0.3 ac.)*
- 1 unit (1,018 sf.) - 2 parking spots

C ***Low Density -*** *Single Family (0.2 ac.)*
- 1 unit (712 sf.) - 1 parking spot

D ***Low Density -*** *Single Family (0.4 ac.)*
- 1 unit (1,447 sf.) - 3 parking spots

E ***Low Density -*** *Single Family (0.2 ac.)*
- 1 unit (800 sf.) - 2 parking spots

F ***Low Density -*** *Single Family (0.3 ac.)*
- 1 unit (1,047 sf.) - 2 parking spots

G ***Light Industrial (1.9 ac.)***
- 0 units (0 sf.) - 0 parking spots

H ***Light Industrial (0.3 ac.)***
- 0 units (0 sf.) - 0 parking spots

I ***Light Industrial (0.4 ac.)***
- 0 units (0 sf.) - 0 parking spots

J ***Light Industrial (0.3 ac.)***
- 0 units (0 sf.) - 0 parking spots

K ***Light Industrial (0.5 ac.)***
- 0 units (0 sf.) - 0 parking spots

L ***Medium Density -*** *Townhomes (1.9 ac.)*
- 23 units (22,585 sf.) - 45 parking spots

M ***Low Density -*** *Single Family (0.4 ac.)*
- 1 unit (28,313 sf.) - 3 parking spots

N ***Medium Density -*** *Garden Apartments (1.4 ac.)*
- 28 units (28,313 sf.) - 118 parking spots

O ***Commercial -*** *Retail (0.4 ac.)*
- 4,840 sf. - 19 parking spots

S. Chicago Street and McDonough Street Corridor

Connecting Communities Through Housing, Mobility, and Placemaking



Infill opportunities along McDonough Street will help reconnect the neighborhood to the Des Plaines River.

This corridor occupies a strategic location just south of Downtown Joliet, creating a transition between Downtown, the Des Plaines River, and surrounding residential neighborhoods, and the Interstate 80 interchange. The concept focuses on transforming the S. Chicago Street corridor into a vibrant mixed-use neighborhood that extends Downtown activity southward. Infill development, placemaking opportunities, and public realm investments can strengthen S. Chicago Street as both a neighborhood destination and an important connection to the Des Plaines River, creating a more active, connected, and livable district.

Housing

Medium-density housing is concentrated along S. Chicago Street to reinforce the corridor as a gateway and support a more active, mixed-use environment south of Downtown Joliet. Introducing additional residential density along the corridor can expand the customer base for existing and future businesses, strengthen the local tax base, and support a more walkable neighborhood. Parcels closer to Downtown may accommodate mid-rise multifamily buildings that reinforce a more urban development pattern, while lower-scale garden apartments may provide an appropriate transition to established neighborhoods farther south. When integrated with commercial uses, parks, and other community amenities, this added residential density can increase activity throughout the day and contribute to a more complete neighborhood environment.

Lower-density housing is located along McDonough Street and 4th and 5th Avenues, adjacent to established residential neighborhoods. This pattern provides a gradual transition in scale and intensity, helping preserve neighborhood character while accommodating additional housing near S. Chicago Street.

Connectivity

One of the defining elements of the concept is enhancing McDonough Street as a primary connection to the Des Plaines River, linking residents to one of Joliet's most significant assets. The connection increases community access to open space and helps transform the river from a physical barrier into a community destination. The connection provides opportunity to support riverfront investment into trails and other recreational amenities, and strengthens the relationship between surrounding neighborhoods and a defining feature of Joliet's identity.

Streetscape Improvements

Streetscape improvements are proposed along S. Chicago Street to transform the corridor from a largely vehicle-oriented thoroughfare into a safer and more inviting neighborhood main street. Improvements include pedestrian infrastructure, street trees and planting, wayfinding elements and traffic calming measures. Gateway identifiers are proposed at key intersections to help establish a stronger identity for the corridor and signal the connection between Downtown Joliet and the Des Plaines River. Ensure improvements create a more cohesive public realm, support future infill and mixed-use development, improve neighborhood connectivity, and reinforce the corridor's role as a catalyst for long-term reinvestment on Joliet's south side.

Open Space

Open spaces near the Ozzy and Peggy Mitchel Center and Will County Adult Detention Facility create opportunities for accessible recreation, environmental enhancement, and community gathering spaces for users of these institutional facilities and the community beyond. These areas could accommodate walking trails, shaded seating areas, outdoor fitness equipment, playgrounds. Together, these spaces can provide opportunities for recreation, support wellness, strengthen neighborhood connections, and create a welcoming civic environment that benefits residents, employees, visitors, and facility users alike.

Infill Opportunity Sites

Several ***infill opportunity sites*** are identified throughout the corridor where vacant or underutilized commercial parcels can support future development. Rather than relying on large-scale redevelopment, the concept encourages incremental development that strengthens the corridor over time and in response to immediate demand while maintaining flexibility for future economic development opportunities.



Park space with play and rest amenities, Itasca, IL



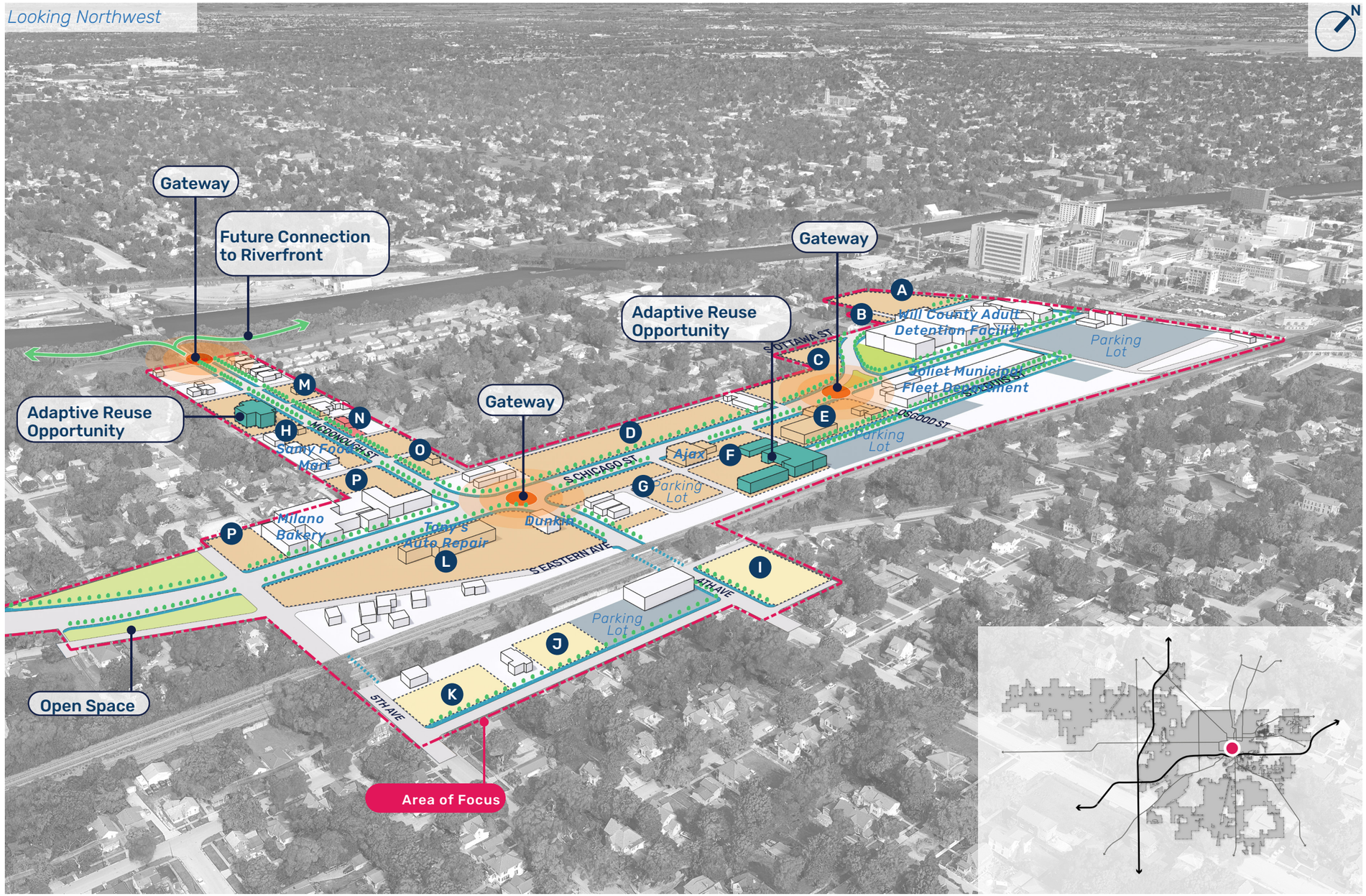
Infill site with medium-density housing, Cleveland, OH



On-street bicycle lane and pedestrian walk near park, Peoria, IL

S. Chicago Street and McDonough Street Corridor

Connecting Communities Through Housing, Mobility, and Placemaking



Character Area Metrics

A ***Medium Density-*** *Garden Apartments (2.9 ac.)*
- 58 units (57,972 sf.) - 116 parking spots

B ***Medium Density -*** *Garden Apartments (0.3 ac.)*
- 6 units (5,780 sf.) - 12 parking spots

C ***Medium Density -*** *Mid-rise Multifamily (2.2 ac.)*
- 108 units (108,101 sf.) - 216 parking spots

D ***Medium Density -*** *Garden Apartments (2.8 ac.)*
- 55 units (55,252 sf.) - 111 parking spots

E ***Medium Density-*** *Mid-rise Multifamily (1.8 ac.)*
- 90 units (90,021 sf.) - 180 parking spots

F ***Medium Density-*** *Garden Apartments (2.0 ac.)*
- 35 units (35,134 sf.) - 70 parking spots

G ***Medium Density-*** *Garden Apartments (1.5 ac.)*
- 29 units (29,371 sf.) - 59 parking spots

H ***Medium Density-*** *Garden Apartments (1.2 ac.)*
- 24 units (24,223 sf.) - 101 parking spots

I ***Low Density -*** *Single Family (0.8 ac.)*
- 3 units (3,351 sf.) - 7 parking spots

J ***Low Density -*** *Single Family (0.7 ac.)*
- 3 units (2,687 sf.) - 5 parking spots

K ***Low Density -*** *Single Family (0.4 ac.)*
- 2 units (1,710 sf.) - 3 parking spots

L ***Medium Density -*** *Garden Apartments (3.1 ac.)*
- 63 units (62,554 sf.) -125 parking spots

M ***Medium Density -*** *Garden Apartments (0.7 ac.)*
- 14 units (13,671 sf.) - 27 parking spots

N ***Commercial -*** *Retail (0.3 ac.)*
- 2,925 sf. - 12 parking spots

O ***Medium Density -*** *Garden Apartments (0.4 ac.)*
- 9 units (8,787 sf.) - 18 parking spots

P ***Medium Density -*** *Garden Apartments (0.7 ac.)*
- 15 units (14,967 sf.) - 30 parking spots

Draft Comprehensive Plan



Image source: City of Joliet