

Village of Frankfort

# Historic District Revitalization Strategies

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in association with  
Business Districts, Inc.  
Adopted July 16, 2007



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# Executive Summary

The publication of the Historic District Revitalization Strategies concludes a thoughtful and inclusive process that began in August 2006. We undertook this project to create a vision for our Downtown and to help guide our Downtown to a higher level of commerce and activity. This final report, which is a collaboration between the consultant team, Village staff, elected officials, volunteers and the Downtown business community, summarizes the research and analysis conducted for the project and identifies a series of strategies to revitalize our Downtown. We are excited about the vision the report provides and we are encouraged by recent new business and development activities in our Downtown.

As this publication goes to print, we are making significant improvements to Breidert Green. Across the street, a new restaurant has opened. Plans have been approved for a major new building on Kansas Street. The Downtown looks great and is the home of amenities such as the Old Plank Road Trail, Breidert Green, Prairie Park and historic buildings that are among the Village's most cherished features. In addition, the Frankfort community has created new festivals and new events to attract Frankfort residents and visitors from around the region to our Downtown. As suburban growth continues in and near Frankfort, our Downtown will be well positioned to maximize the benefits this growth will bring—if we act now to leverage our assets to full advantage.

While this report ends the strategic planning process, it is just the beginning of a multi-year implementation process that will require the tireless dedication and cooperation of Village officials, the business community, private investors and local residents. What our community accomplishes over the next few months will set the standards for years to come, and we are setting the bar high! First, we must adopt these revitalization strategies as policy. Then, we must create a public/private partnership to implement the strategies and to keep a continuous supply of projects ready to move forward through the implementation pipeline.

There will, no doubt, be obstacles and challenges ahead. But, imagine how satisfying it will be in 5, 10, 15 or 25 years from now to look back at our vibrant Downtown and know this Village had the vision and energy to launch this landmark initiative. Downtown is, indeed, more important to our community's image and identity than ever before.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to the Trustees, Plan Commission members, Economic Development Committee members, the Downtown merchants, the Downtown property owners and others who contributed to this process and helped to craft this distinctive community legacy.

Sincerely,

Jim Holland, Mayor  
Village of Frankfort

# Opportunity Analysis

## Approach

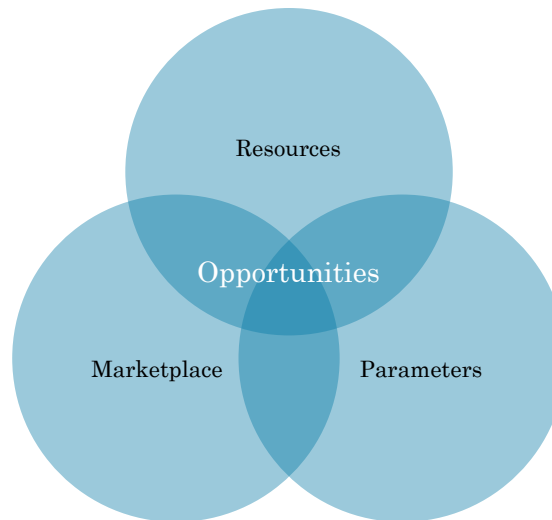
The Opportunity Analysis phase of the planning process can be likened to three overlapping circles, with each circle representing a different dimension of the analysis. For the purposes of this study, the dimensions represented are “resources,” “parameters” and “marketplace.” The strongest opportunities are those that present themselves at the place where the three dimensions overlap.

For example, if the marketplace indicates 1) nearby residents have the spending power to support a store concept, 2) a space appropriate for the store is available and 3) the zoning and land use regulations (parameters) permit the store as a use, then it is likely that the opportunity merits strong consideration as an element of a revitalization strategy.

## Study Area

The study area includes property zoned H1 as well as property specified as “Historic Commercial” on the “Future Land Use Map” in the 2004 Village of Frankfort Comprehensive Plan (page 95 of the Comprehensive Plan). The study area also includes Downtown Frankfort’s historic retail core bounded by Elwood Street on the north, White Street on the east, Nebraska Street on the south and Hickory Street on the west.

The study area also includes the lands adjacent to White Street north of Frankfort’s historic core retail district identified as “Proposed Residential (Commercial) Conversions” in the Village’s 2004 Comprehensive Plan. In addition, residential and commercial areas immediately outside the designated historic districts have been included, as has most of Prairie Park.



### Resources

- Land
- Infrastructure
- Organizations
- Culture

### Marketplace

- Demographics
- Trade areas
- Trends
- Similar communities

### Parameters

- Jurisdictional control
- Land use/zoning
- Land ownership
- Public opinion

Project Study Area

**Key**

- Study Area
- H-1 Historic District
- Proposed Residential Conversions
- Old Plank Road Trail
- Prairie Park
- P Parking Lots

**Scale: 1" = 500 feet**



# Marketplace Conditions

## Development Overview

To understand retail development possibilities, one must recognize the spending potential of consumers, appreciate their desire to visit different types of centers for different shopping needs, and identify existing conditions. For example, when grocery shopping, consumers expect to park where they can conveniently load groceries while consumers shopping for apparel expect the opportunity to visit several stores of similar type to compare their offerings, the definition of “shopping.” Consumers also expect to find goods matched to their lifestyle. These underlying shopping behaviors support shopping clusters of different sizes and characters. The future of Downtown Frankfort depends on finding a desirable niche within the regional shopping environment. Finding that niche is the result of understanding the lifestyle and character of the available shoppers and meeting the challenge of adapting Downtown Frankfort’s vintage buildings and infrastructure to modern retail site development concepts.

## Community and Market Area Demographic Data

To understand Downtown Frankfort’s potential as a commercial cluster, it is important to know the characteristics of the residents within logical markets. The table below looks at three populations at varying distances from the intersection of White and Nebraska Streets.

### Population Characteristics

	0.5 Miles	3 Miles	Frankfort
Population	2,021	40,828	16,582
Population Density per Mile	2,573	1,325	1,520
Household Average Income	\$86,867	\$106,206	\$130,648
Median Household Income	\$79,499	\$90,405	\$98,394
Total Employees	1,317	12,441	5,458
Percent Owner Occupied Units	88.8%	93.3%	91.4%

Demographic data © 2006 by Applied Geographic Solutions

The community as a whole should feel an affiliation and ownership of “their” Downtown and visit for community events, whether they arrive by car or on foot. One-half mile is approximately a ten-minute walk for pedestrians. Those living within three miles can easily drive into downtown. For marketing purposes, the area encompassed within a three-mile drive of Downtown Frankfort—an area slightly larger than the city limits—is the primary market that should generate 80% of Downtown Frankfort businesses’ sales. The balance of the sales would involve non-resident employees and visitors.

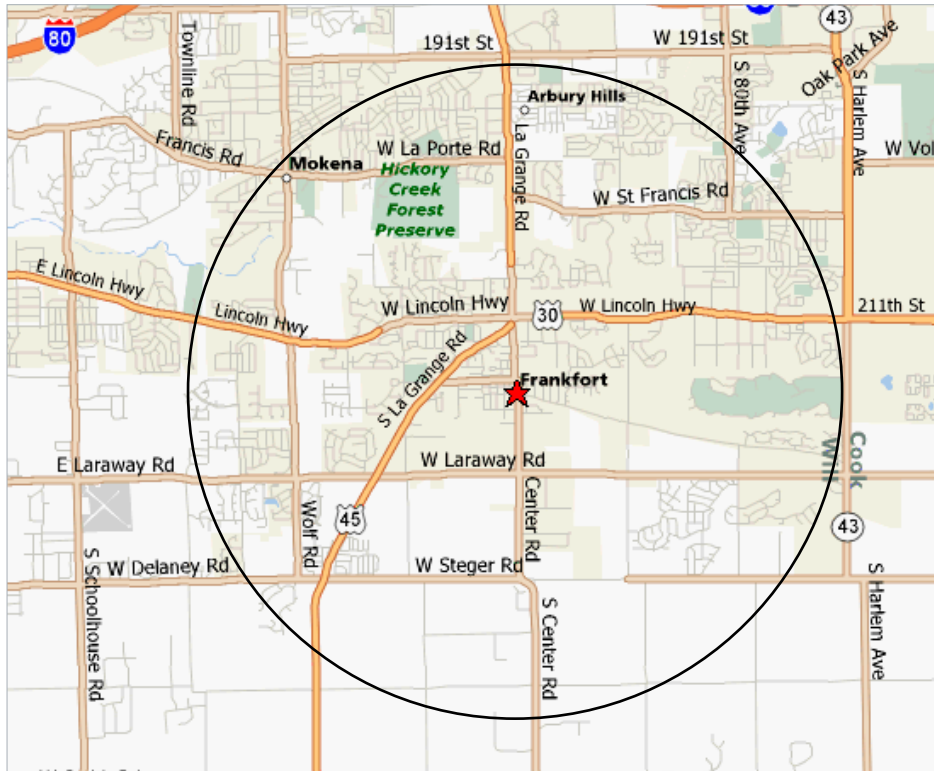
This table identifies the spending power of these markets:

### Consumer Expenditure

	0.5 Miles	3 Miles	Frankfort
Total Retail Expenditure	\$19,868,326	\$409,226,260	\$199,895,018
Full Service Restaurants	\$1,132,391	\$22,573,653	\$10,856,525
Limited Service Restaurants	\$1,127,552	\$22,468,365	\$10,763,295

Demographic data © 2006 by Applied Geographic Solutions

This map delineates the primary market.



Primary Market for Downtown Frankfort (3-mile radius)

Employees are also an important market for Downtown Frankfort. They provide the daytime sales that add significantly to the profitability of Downtown stores and restaurants. Although there is no absolute right balance between employees and residents as Downtown customers, it is important to set a reasonable target number for each. With today's two income families, the national ratio is 1.2 jobs per household. Using that national ratio as a reasonable threshold, the 3-mile radius primary market for Downtown Frankfort falls short with a ratio of only 1.0 job per household (12,441 employees). This analysis suggests that Downtown Frankfort would benefit from adding 2,400 jobs anywhere within the three-mile area. The more jobs that are added within Downtown Frankfort's primary market, the more benefit its businesses will derive. Increasing the number of jobs within ½ mile by 1,000 or more would significantly improve the daytime market. That increase, combined with retired residents and home based parents, would provide a significant daytime market.

Growth is another positive characteristic of Downtown Frankfort's primary market. From 1990 to 2000 this area experienced a 20% increase in the number of households. The future promises even more growth as Chicago's suburban edge engulfs Frankfort.

## Comparison Communities

Consultant experience and interviews associated with this project suggested that Hinsdale, Long Grove, and Tinley Park offer insights into choices for serving and developing the market available to Downtown Frankfort.

### Downtown Neighborhood

The table below compares market characteristics of those living within ½ mile of the intersection of White and Nebraska Streets and the comparison downtowns.

#### Comparison Communities (Characteristics within a 1/2-Mile Radius of Downtown)

	Frankfort	Long Grove	Hinsdale	Tinley Park
Population	2,021	491	3,706	3,928
Population Density per Mile	2,573	626	4,719	5,001
Median Age	47.4	43.3	39.1	36.3
Average Income	\$86,867	\$228,071	\$218,758	\$62,906
Median Income	\$79,499	\$158,140	\$135,132	\$55,717
Total Employees	1,317	177	3,628	1,940
Total Retail Expenditure	\$19,868,326	\$8,511,533	\$67,855,589	\$36,002,177
Percent Owner Occupied Units	88.8%	92.5%	78.9%	63.3%

Demographic data © 2006 by Experian/Applied Geographic Solutions

There is a striking difference between the population living within Downtown Frankfort and these comparison communities. Downtown Frankfort's neighborhood population greatly exceeds the extremely low population of Downtown Long Grove whose downtown is composed wholly of destination oriented businesses (as opposed to businesses that provide convenience retail for local residents). That low population also reduces the conflicts associated with high attendance at popular events. In Hinsdale and Tinley Park, the population density per mile is nearly double the density of Frankfort. Although these communities attract destination businesses, the substantial pedestrian population's ability to provide significant spending supports their downtown's vitality. The number of offices and employment also add to the vitality of the downtowns in Hinsdale and Tinley Park.

### *Downtown Frankfort's Opportunity*

*To reach the density of downtown Hinsdale, Frankfort's challenge is to add approximately 750 additional Downtown housing units and at least 1,000 employees. This challenge includes housing for empty nesters, singles and young, two income executive households. The jobs would be in small to medium sized service businesses like insurance, engineering and other white-collar occupations.*



## Downtown's Primary Market

Each of the comparison communities has geographic and competitive characteristics that define their unique primary markets. The table below uses a three-mile radius to establish a basis for comparison. As this table reveals, the market differences continue into the larger three-mile area surrounding each community:

### Comparison Communities (Characteristics within a 3-Mile Radius of Downtown)

	Frankfort	Long Grove	Hinsdale	Tinley Park
Population	<b>40,828</b>	76,359	88,669	80,333
Household Average Income	<b>\$106,206</b>	\$120,135	\$135,237	\$72,251
Median Household Income	<b>\$90,405</b>	\$89,396	\$88,020	\$69,046
Total Employees	<b>12,441</b>	24,526	57,460	27,017
Total Retail Expenditure	<b>\$409,226,260</b>	\$922,264,567	\$1,273,556,201	\$718,978,491
Percent Owner Occupied Units	<b>93.3%</b>	76.8%	76.7%	80.0%

Demographic data © 2006 by Experian/Applied Geographic Solutions; Business Districts, Inc. (BDI)

In this larger market, the comparison communities all contain nearly twice the residential population that Frankfort's market has, and from twice to nearly five times the number of employees. These significant differences in population and employment translate into lower sales potential for Frankfort.

### *Downtown Frankfort's Opportunity*

*These comparison communities are all nearing full build out while Frankfort is still a fast growing community. The short-term challenge is to preserve the character of Downtown Frankfort as it transitions from a rural commercial center into a suburban downtown. The related long-term challenge is understanding that the expected growth in Frankfort and its surrounding area means that patience will be rewarded with the desirable businesses more typical of these comparison downtowns. Raising expectations that those businesses can be attracted before the market develops will result in failure and frustration.*

## Current Site Development Principles

The key to revitalizing Downtown Frankfort is attracting the best possible retail businesses and making development choices that fit modern retail site development principles. Key concepts are outlined below.

### Retail Follows Other Markets

The significance of office space is its connection to a strong food and beverage offering. A significant concentration of offices adds a lunch seating and “cocktail hour” that can increase restaurant business by up to 1/3. Although office workers are an important market that can upgrade a marginally successful retail district into a very successful one, local residents are the backbone of a community’s commercial areas. There has to be a large enough residential population base established in and near Downtown Frankfort before the market will support additional stores and restaurants. Residents are the reason for the stores, while office workers bring increased vitality and growth through reinvestment of profits.

### *Downtown Frankfort’s Opportunity*

*Frankfort is a community of spacious lots and extensive open space. As a result, the residential population per square mile is lower than the populations associated with more densely settled communities. Current Village development policies promise to continue this low density. Consequently, Downtown Frankfort must attract from a larger market area than more densely populated communities like Tinley Park and Hinsdale. Since nearby populations are most interested in convenience goods and more distant populations are attracted by unique offerings, Frankfort’s challenge is recruiting the unique stores and events that will have a regional draw. The fashion dependent, risky nature of unique stores means that they will have shorter life cycles and, consequently there will be more business turnover. This high turnover expectation makes recruitment rather than retention the key to low vacancy since community retention programs cannot change national fashion trends.*

### Development is Tenant Driven

There must be enough similar tenants to allow consumers to comparison shop. In the abstract, it makes sense that the ideal retail development is a broad mix of businesses satisfying the needs of local residents. However, that concept defies the very term “shopping” because there could never be sufficient space to meet the volume and variety of business to meet the desires of all residents. Today’s auto oriented retailing assumes that customers will travel for selection. Consequently, while all successful shopping districts offer convenience shopping—for example a drug store—different shopping districts have evolved to satisfy varying niches for other items. Strong retailers like to cluster near competitors because they know that such an area gets a reputation as “the place to go to shop for....”

### *Downtown Frankfort’s Opportunity*

*For many years, Frankfort successfully drew customers as the place to shop for antiques. To a lesser extent, Frankfort was a specialty restaurant draw. Unfortunately, the antique market has undergone a national shift to internet sales due to the ascendancy of competitors like eBay. At the same time, Frankfort lost two Downtown destination restaurants to a fire. The resulting challenge is to re-establish Frankfort as a regional entertainment destination that features high quality festivals, events, recreational activities, restaurants and shops. In addition, high quality, mixed use retail/commercial/residential infill redevelopment will increase Downtown’s population base and add jobs that increases the daytime population within walking distance of shops, restaurants and other Downtown destinations.*

Stores must be visible to a large pedestrian and/or automobile commuter population. Although repeat customers are the lifeblood of any business, there must also be a steady flow of new customers. Those customers are much easier to attract when a large population sees the business every day. Studies by national restaurateurs and retailers indicate that about 20,000 vehicles and/or pedestrians per day pass the most vital retail businesses.

### *Downtown Frankfort's Opportunity*

*When the Illinois Department of Transportation moved the entrance to Downtown Frankfort away from the high traffic intersection of Lincoln Highway and La Grange Road, the Downtown's visibility decreased from that intersection's 49,000 cars per day to the approximately 17,000 cars that pass the new entrance at Old Frankfort Way. Signage that identifies and directs visitors to Downtown should be located along the east, west and north approaches to the La Grange Road/Lincoln Highway intersection and near the intersection of Old Frankfort Way and White Street. Retrofitting existing gateway signs (La Grange Road/Old Frankfort Way and La Grange Road/Nebraska Street) to include the word "Downtown" will help to clarify for visitors that they are indeed approaching Downtown Frankfort (see page 36). Enhancing and adding to the number of gateway pylons at the edges of Downtown's core retail area will enhance visitors' awareness of the Village's historic center (see page 37).*

*Promoting high quality infill redevelopment along key view corridors immediately outside of the existing historic core area is another strategy that will enhance Downtown's image and identity. For example, the high ground one block south of the Lincoln Highway/La Grange road intersection is a site that would be ideal for redevelopment that features signature architectural design. Infill development at the intersection of La Grange Road and Old Frankfort Way is another location that merits special attention. Other important view corridor sites are the properties on the east side of White Street that form the terminating vista for east-bound motorists on Old Frankfort Way.*

*Enhancing the ability of customers to reach Downtown is another important consideration. A new road south of and parallel to Lincoln Highway that links White Street to 93rd Avenue would provide a more direct route to Downtown for Lincoln Highway motorists arriving from the east (Note: Frankfort's 2004 Comprehensive Plan recommends extending White Street to 95th Street).*

## Operating Results Trump Development Costs

Although revitalization plans can most easily examine and affect redevelopment costs, it is important to recognize that those costs are relatively insignificant to the profitability of stores and restaurants. Unlike rents, which are the measurement of a location's cost and are typically no greater than 10% of sales, other operating costs such as salaries, the cost of goods and the actual sales volume have more impact on a store or restaurant's success. The table below illustrates how variations in sales and merchandise buying decisions have greater profit impact than rent.

### Impact of Sales Variation on Retail Operations

	Expected Sales	20% Sales Decline	20% Sales Increase	Location Change
<b>Sales</b>	<b>\$500,000</b>	<b>\$400,000</b>	<b>\$600,000</b>	<b>\$600,000</b>
Merchandise Cost	250,000	200,000	300,000	300,000
Rent	50,000	50,000	50,000	75,000
Salaries	100,000	100,000	100,000	100,000
Supplies	25,000	20,000	30,000	30,000
Reserve for Repair	12,500	12,500	12,500	12,500
Advertising	25,000	25,000	25,000	25,000
<b>Return on Investment, Taxes and Profit</b>	<b>37,500</b>	<b>-7,500</b>	<b>82,500</b>	<b>57,500</b>

A 20% decline in sales, an impact that can occur from the closing of an anchor or a bad buying decision, results in a loss. A 20% sales increase, often the result of better co-tenants joining a center or better buying decisions, causes the return to more than double. The location change column shows that if that sales increase results from relocating the business to a better district with 50% higher rent, there is a significant improvement in profitability. This analysis reveals the rationale for "moving boxes" when new development occurs. It also illustrates why it is so important for retail development to occur at superior locations.

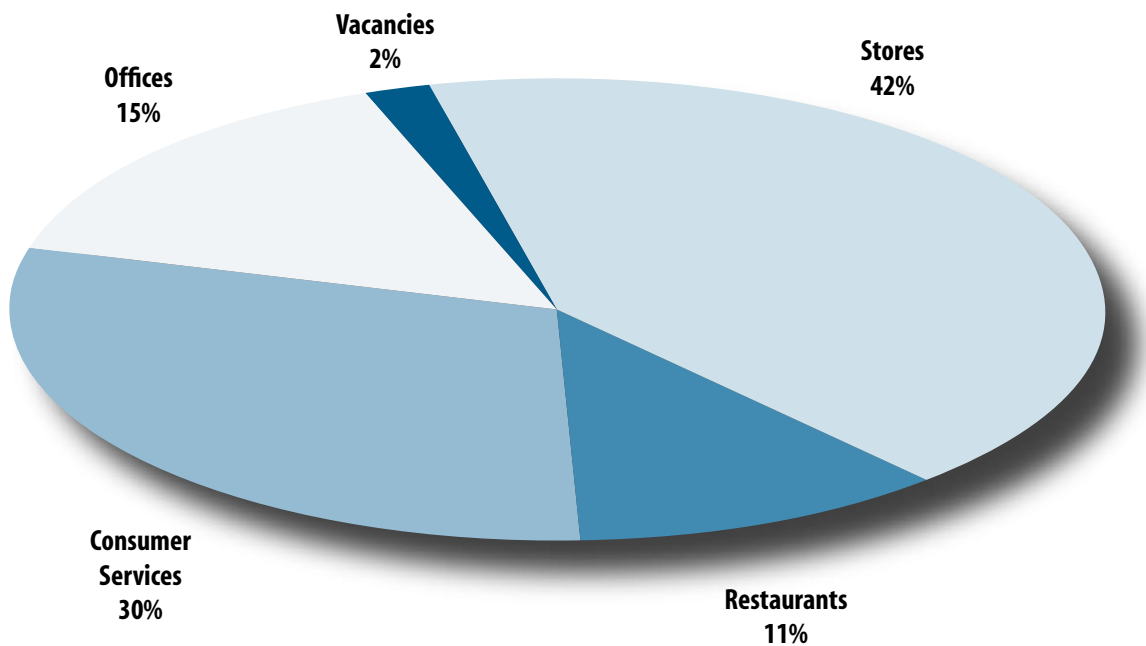
### *Downtown Frankfort's Opportunity*

*Although business owners may initially be attracted to Downtown Frankfort by relatively low rents, good businesses will move unless sales volumes are sufficient. The challenge is to find ways to increase sales despite the low traffic counts and to develop new anchors.*

## Current Business Mix

Frankfort's downtown business mix currently includes 53 businesses, representing four key sectors—retail, restaurants and bars, service, and offices.

### Business Unit Mix



## Retail Overview Summary

Although the relative mix is well balanced, Downtown Frankfort's 53 businesses are below the numbers generally expected to draw from a broad regional market. This small size is further reduced in that there are only 22 retail stores and six restaurants/bars. Specialty shopping locations like suburban downtowns, malls and lifestyle centers typically contain approximately 150 stores and restaurants. With the three-mile restaurant spending power at nearly \$45 million, there could be additional restaurants in Downtown Frankfort. The growing population would also support an expansion of the decorative accessories market and home furnishings. Recent retailing trends point to younger customers avoiding malls and actively seeking apparel in independent stores. The future challenge for Downtown Frankfort is retaining its existing strong businesses while adding additional stores and restaurants that expand Downtown's market share.

## Physical and Regulatory Conditions

### Land Ownership

The Village of Frankfort is the single largest property owner within the study area. Their properties include Prairie Park, Heritage Hall, Breidert Green and the building occupied by the Chamber of Commerce on the north side of Kansas Street. The Village also owns three public parking lots in the core retail area. In addition, the Village owns and manages the portions of the Old Plank Road Trail that lie within the study area.



View West Along Kansas Street

Kansas Street features a variety of retail and commercial businesses in a traditional main street setting.



View North from the Intersection of White and Elwood Streets

The Village's 2004 Comprehensive Plan recommends homes along White Street north of the historic core retail area be allowed to convert to commercial uses.

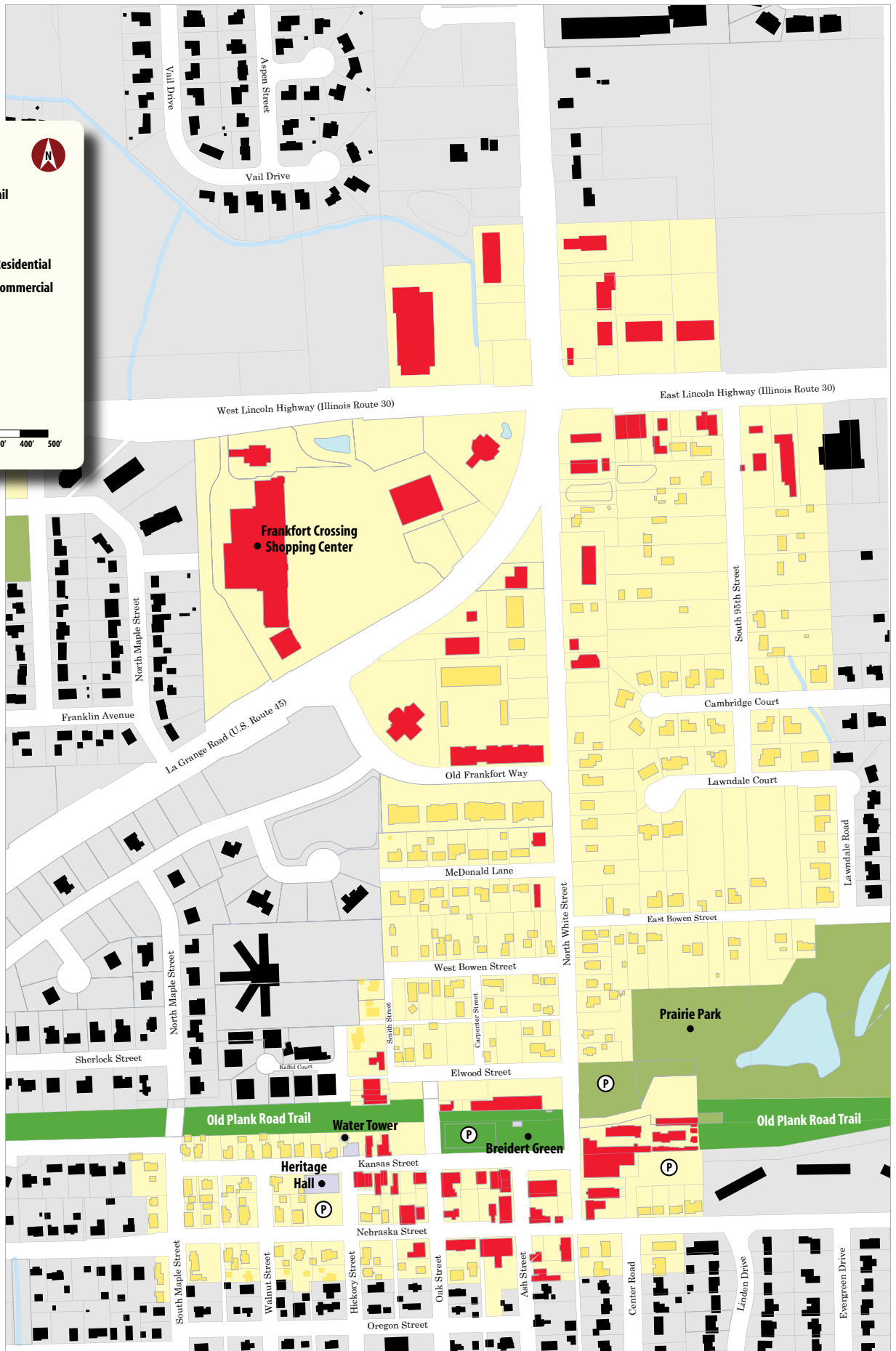


# Land Ownership

**Key**

- Study Area
- Old Plank Road Trail
- Prairie Park
- P Parking
- Privately-owned Residential
- Privately-owned Commercial
- Institutional

**Scale: 1" = 500 feet**



## Existing Land Use and Zoning

The zoning and land use of the properties within the study area is relatively evenly distributed between residential and commercial (which includes properties zoned for businesses and the retail businesses within the H-1 Historic Downtown District).



View Southwest Along Kansas Street

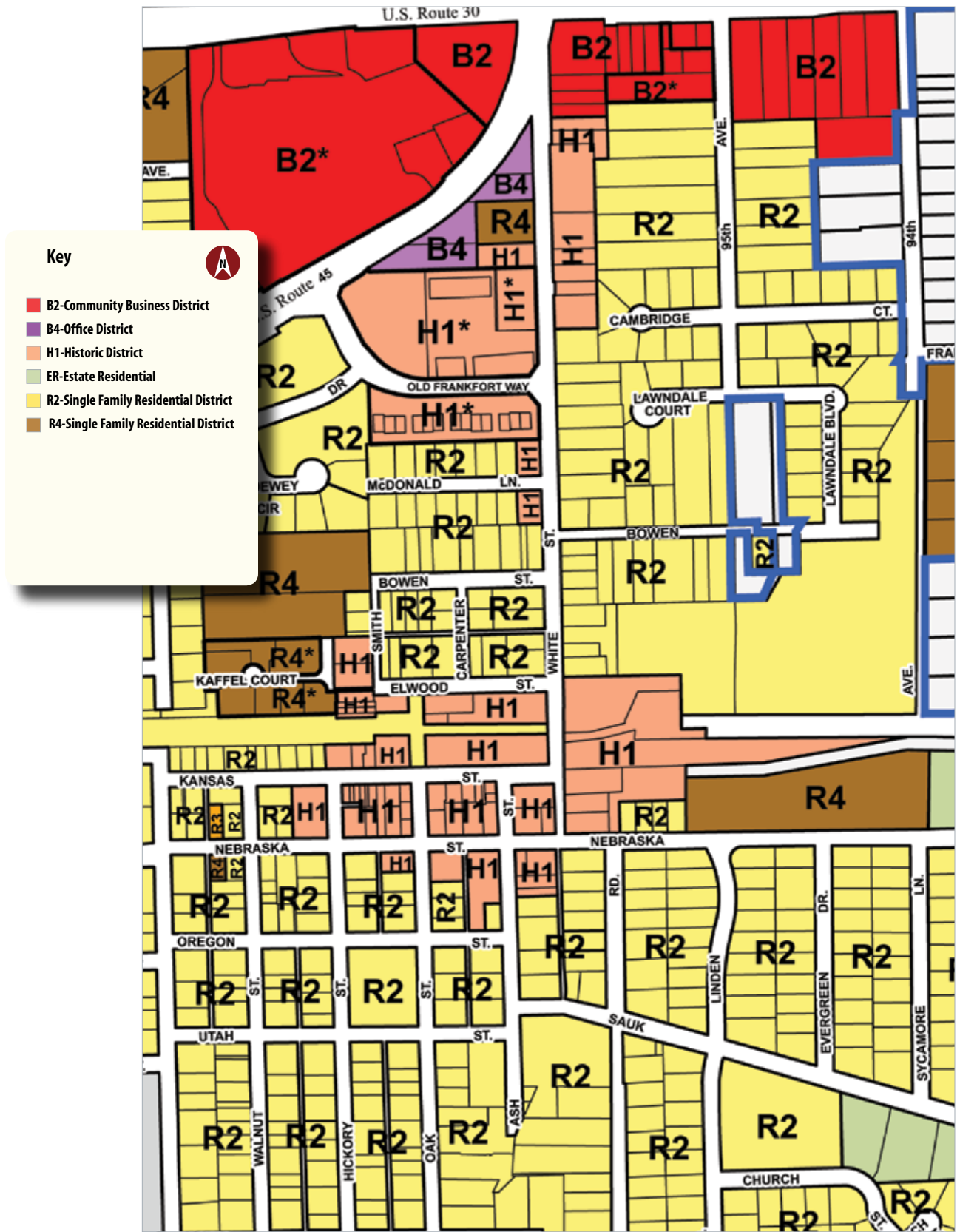
The H1-Historic District includes newer structures that maintain the scale and character of the surrounding historic urban fabric.



View Along Kansas Street West of Downtown

The H-1 Historic District is surrounded by R2-Single Family Residential Districts.





## Access, Circulation and Wayfinding

Illinois Route 30 and U.S. Route 45 are the most heavily traveled roadways within the study area. The commercial businesses in the northern portion of the study area are easily accessible and highly visible to commuters on these major arteries. In 2007, the Illinois Department of Transportation counts over 30,000 Average Daily Trips (ADT) on Route 45 north of Route 30. Route 30 has nearly 20,000 ADT east and west of the Route 45 intersection.

In contrast, the historic core retail area has only indirect access from the major arteries via a relatively small number of local roadways that include White Street, Nebraska Street and Center Road, and others to the south such as Sauk Trail and Laraway Road. Traffic volumes within the historic core retail area are relatively light. The 2007 ADT on White Street north of Nebraska Street is only 7,200, and 4,200 on Center Road south of Nebraska. Sauk Trail immediately east of Center Road has 2,500 ADT, and there are only 3,600 ADT on Nebraska Street east of the Route 45 intersection near Village Hall.

Although the Village's water tower and the Grainery are visible from the major arteries, the historic core retail area itself has no direct exposure from Routes 30 and 45. Wayfinding therefore should play an especially important role in helping visitors locate Downtown. Currently, there is no directional signage along the major arteries (La Grange Road and Lincoln Highway) to guide visitors. Existing gateway signs (La Grange Road/Old Frankfort Way and La Grange Road/Nebraska Street) include the phrase "Historic Frankfort," but not the word "downtown," which could confuse visitors about the exact location of Downtown. There are attractive gateway pylons at the edges of the historic core, but their small scale makes it difficult for passing motorists to see them.

View corridors can also play an important role by providing visual cues that visitors are entering or are in close proximity to Downtown. Most of the important view corridors leading to Downtown (see the map on the opposite page) include single family residences and/or small scale commercial buildings, which do not provide visual prompts that visitors are approaching a business district. The newer commercial development at La Grange Road/Old Frankfort Way does suggest the presence of a business district. However, the Old Frankfort Way's terminating vista at White Street features single family residential, so the visual continuity between the new commercial and Downtown is broken.

Old Plank Road Trail passes through the middle of the historic core retail district and is a dedicated, multi-purpose pathway enjoyed by many local residents and visitors. While there are no dedicated bicycle pathways connecting to the trail within the study area, the trail and Prairie Park can be easily accessed via Downtown's local streets and sidewalks that connect to the residential neighborhoods immediately adjacent to the historic core.








Frankfort's historic core has a network of relatively short square blocks with sidewalks that are in excellent condition, an urban form that generally favors pedestrian and commuter access and circulation. However, north-south automobile circulation within the historic core is restricted by the limited number of streets that traverse the Old Plank Road Trail.

### Existing Parking Supply

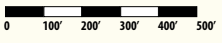
Parking in the historic core retail district is relatively evenly distributed between on-street public parking, off-street public parking and private off-street parking. There are approximately 250 parking spaces available in each category (approximately 750 total parking spaces). This provides approximately 2.5 parking spaces per thousand square feet of existing ground level and upper story commercial space in the historic core retail district. Observations made on several weekdays indicated the public parking lots are currently underutilized during daytime hours. Reports in interviews conducted for this study indicate, however, that parking of all sorts is at a premium during Village events that take place in and around Breidert Green in the warmer months of the year.

Access,  
Circulation  
and  
Wayfinding

**Key**

-  Major Arterials
-  Minor Arterials
-  Local Roadway
-  Bike/Pathway
-  Parking
-  Important View Corridor
-  Existing Downtown Gateway Features

Scale: 1" = 500 feet




## Open Space and Natural Features

Observations and interviews indicate that Old Plank Road Trail is a highly-valued amenity utilized by people from all walks of life throughout the year in a variety of ways. Cyclists, joggers, walkers—both avid and casual—along with shoppers, nature-lovers, restaurant patrons and other Downtown visitors appreciate and enjoy using the trail on a regular basis.

Breidert Green, the other landmark amenity in the historic core retail area, is in many ways the Village’s civic heart. Breidert Green is used throughout the year for regularly scheduled festivals and special events such as the local farmers market, Winter on the Green and Concerts on the Green.

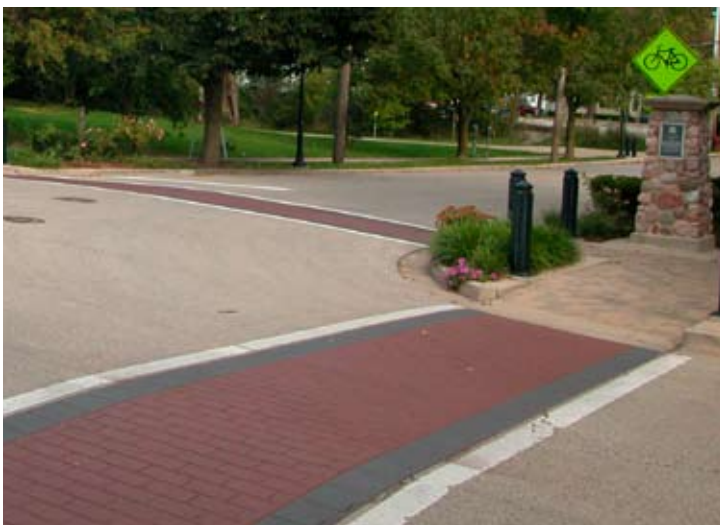
While Breidert Green’s location in the center of the historic commercial core gives the space a somewhat formal character, Prairie Park east of White Street provides a more natural setting for active and passive recreational uses.

Downtown’s natural qualities are reinforced by a parkway system that features a relatively dense tree canopy, and by the well-landscaped yards of private homeowners in and around the historic core. In addition, privately-held properties that remain as open space in and near Downtown contribute to the small town character of the historic core.

While the terrain within the study area is for the most part level, the higher ground immediately south of the intersection of Routes 45 and 30 at the intersection of Route 45 and White Street provides a highly visible site for a future landmark gateway or signature architectural feature that announces the beginning of the core retail area and enhances the image and identity of Downtown Frankfort.

## Stakeholders

Over fifty individuals have been interviewed to date, including public officials, merchants, land owners, home owners and private citizens. The Village maintains a project web page with information about the project, which includes an e-mail link through which project stakeholders can provide or solicit feedback. In addition, the web site provides a link to a downtown market survey that will provide guidance regarding existing consumer preferences and shopping behaviors.



View Northwest from the Corner of Kansas and Oak Streets  
The comfort and safety of pedestrians accessing Breidert Green is enhanced by streetscape features such as special paving and wayfinding signage.



View South from the Illinois Route 30 / U.S. Route 45 Intersection  
The higher traffic volumes on U.S. Route 30 and Illinois Route 45 make this intersection an especially important gateway area.

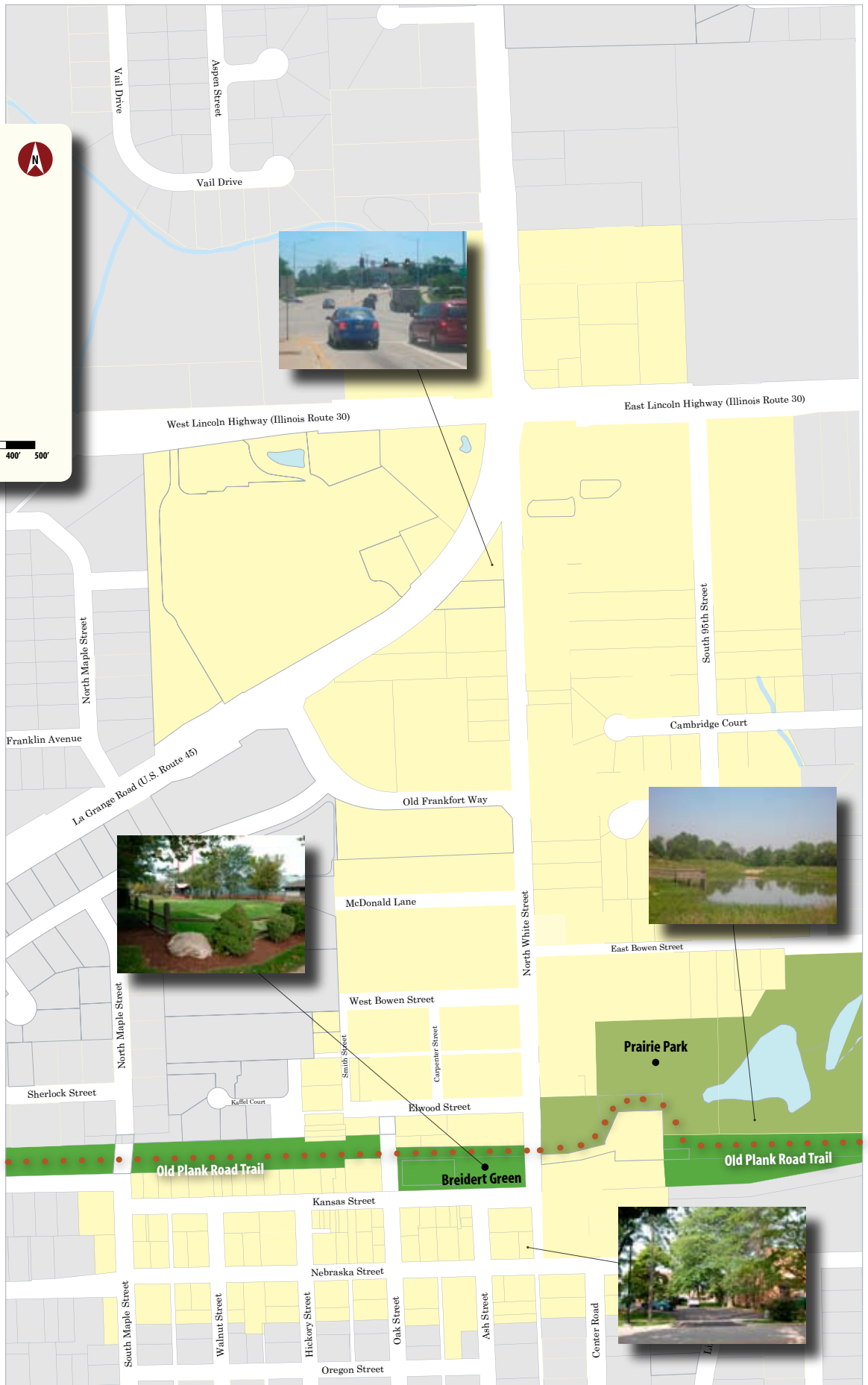


# Open Space and Natural Features

**Key**

- Study Area
- Old Plank Road Trail
- Prairie Park
- Old Plank Road Trail

**Scale: 1" = 500 feet**





Breidert Green

Breidert Green is Frankfort's civic heart, the site of festival events and other programs throughout the year.



Other Open Space

Privately owned open spaces contribute to the Downtown's quiet, small town scale and charm.





#### Prairie Park

Prairie Park's natural features attract visitors year round.



#### Parkways and Private Landscaping

Trees on Frankfort's parkways and on private properties enhance the Downtown's overall attractiveness. In addition, pedestrians benefit from the shade they provide during the summer's warmest months. By shortening vistas to places within the Downtown, trees and other landscape features also help to create the unique sense of place one experiences when visiting Downtown.





# *Revitalization Strategies*

# Revitalization Strategies

## Overview

As described in the Opportunity Analysis, Downtown Frankfort has the physical elements, attractive buildings, strong demographics and government interest that promise a bright future. However, with key vacancies and some marginal businesses, Downtown Frankfort's current performance falls short of community expectations. The Revitalization Strategies detailed on the following pages recognize that immediate problems must be addressed to lay the foundation for future development.

A Festival Marketplace Strategy that builds on Downtown's existing special amenities—Breidert Green, Old Plank Road Trail, Prairie Park and the existing program of festivals and events—is well suited to serve as a bridge between the present situation and a more economically vital future. Throughout the Chicago region, residents recall visits to Frankfort's Fall Festival, summer concerts, farmer's market and trips to unique restaurants and stores in a positive manner. Based on those favorable responses, additional events will likely be well received, provide more reasons to visit Downtown and reinforce Frankfort's positive regional image.

Promoting high quality, mixed use retail/commercial/residential infill redevelopment is another strategy that will increase the Downtown population base and add new jobs within walking distance of shops, restaurants and other Downtown destinations. As real estate professionals interviewed for this project reported, this positive regional image—in combination with excellent schools—makes Frankfort a very desirable market. Attractive events with strong event retailers will allay the fears that a declining Downtown will undermine this image, and potential tenants will gain confidence in the market's strength from the high attendance at these events. The same amenities that attract event participants—good restaurants, attractive, spacious landscaping, peak parking and unique businesses—will also attract new retailers, offices and residents.

The following Revitalization Strategies outline specific tasks that must be completed to successfully implement the Festival Marketplace Strategy. Its primary focus is the next three years. As with all plans, it is expected that this strategy will be reviewed and revised as conditions change. The one constant is the need for public/private partnerships. These partnerships must focus on the relationship between the long-term investors, private property owners and public property owners. Tenants are important but they cannot succeed unless the property owners are investing in building improvements and recruiting good co-tenants.

There is little cost but much hard work outlined in the Revitalization Strategies that follow. In the short-term, improving the communication and relationships with stakeholders are far more important than funding. Time invested in setting building appearance guidelines, tenant quality and business operation standards will improve the Downtown Frankfort "product." Marketing to both investors and consumer is far easier with a top quality product.

## Organization and Finance Strategy Overview

- Depend on quality events led by community organizations and, to a lesser extent, the Village, rather than property owners.
- Identify realistic funding sources for the community organizations.

## Business Development Strategy Overview

- Create an exciting image as the place to go for festivals and special family events that increases visit frequency, retail sales, and Downtown Frankfort's regional drawing power.
- Build flexible, durable public spaces that can host festivals and/or temporary vendors.
- Promote and strengthen Downtown recreational destinations such as Old Plank Road Trail and Prairie Park.

## Consumer Marketing Strategy Overview

- Provide directional signage, improved gateway signs, attractive landscaping, an easily recognized logo and enhanced festival spaces.
- Promote high quality redevelopment along highly visible view corridors that enhances Downtown's image as a distinctive destination and extends the Downtown to the major arteries outside of the historic retail core.

## Investor Marketing Strategy Overview

- Support businesses that attract visitors, enhance the entertainment theme, support active recreational uses such as hiking and cycling and provide supporting services. Tenant examples include:
  - Neighborhood bistros.
  - Unique businesses that sell 50% or less "out of front door."
  - Office uses that seek Downtown amenities and provide weekday, daytime customers.
- Recruit and support developers who specialize in high quality, mixed use retail/commercial/residential infill development.

## Organization and Finance Strategy

Downtowns compete with shopping centers that are actively managed by their owners for both customers and tenants. To compete, the owners of downtowns—the municipalities that own the streets, parks and parking and private property owners—must forge partnerships that accomplish the key functions of shopping center management, tenant recruitment, effective public area maintenance and marketing. The initial challenge to every downtown is developing an organizational framework for this partnership that uniquely suits the talents of its property owners, business owners and government officials. The Revitalization Strategies below and on the following pages seek to involve stakeholders in designing the partnership that will guide the revitalization of Downtown Frankfort. It is expected that this partnership will choose from the elements identified in the table below:

	Chamber of Commerce	Main Street	Business Improvement District	Merchant Organization	Municipal Employee
<b>Examples</b>	Lake Forest Hinsdale	Libertyville St. Charles	Elmhurst	Chicago/Dempster, Evanston	Geneva
<b>Legal Framework</b>	National membership organization	Grass roots 501-C3; part of state and national network	Legislatively enabled by state; establish by local ordinance	Highly variable	Annual budget and staffing decision
<b>Dominant Stakeholder</b>	Business owners	Representative Group-Merchants; citizens, property owners, employers and municipal government	Property owners and municipal government	Business owners	Municipal government
<b>Board Composition</b>	Major employers	Balance of above	Tax payers	Business owners	None
<b>Staff</b>	Executive director	Executive director or manager	Executive director	None or volunteer	Municipal employee
<b>Mission</b>	Serve membership	Historic preservation and downtown advocacy	Growing investment	Business promotion	Delivering government service
<b>Short-term Projects</b>	Networking and advertising	Capacity building	Maintenance and beautification	Sales generation	Coordinating efforts
<b>Long-term Projects</b>	Unusual	Historic preservation and business development	Appreciation in values through investment	Unusual	Capital improvements
<b>Advocacy Role</b>	Key	Key	Low	Low	Low
<b>Budget: Public</b>	Special circumstances	1/3 of budget	100%	Project driven	100%
<b>Budget: Private</b>	Dues	Memberships, sponsorships, fund raising	Reimbursement for services, Sponsorships	Dues; project-driven cost sharing	Organized partnerships
<b>Strengths</b>	Independence Business focus Cooperative nature Advocacy Communication	Proven methodology Volunteer driven Feel good emphasis Comprehensive approach	Payment connected to benefit Reliable funding Consensus focus Defined services	Limited focus	Political consensus Reliable funding
<b>Weaknesses</b>	Membership limited Funding issues Larger members dominate Competitive conflict	Potential stakeholder conflict Funding Preservation “cause” Volunteers	Difficult process to establish	“Trees rather than forest” Funding Competing membership Different customer	Distrust of government

Once the organization is established, the first challenge is to identify a realistic funding program. Again, there is no one model for success. Although fund raising and fees for services can be part of that program, it is critical that there be a significant, reliable fund base. Often it is necessary for the government to provide “seed” money that is gradually replaced by private investment. After property owners embrace the programming, one way private investment can be structured is to establish a special service assessment that is collected as a property tax within the Downtown.

**1) Develop an organization that creates an effective public/private partnership for Downtown Frankfort**

Start Complete Assigned Cost

a) Create a subcommittee of Downtown stakeholders to review the organization options and recommendations outlined in the Downtown Frankfort Revitalization Plan. The subcommittee should include:

- Village Staff representative
- Village elected officials
- 4 property owners
- 2 merchants
- 2 event representatives
- Chamber of Commerce representative

b) Make a subcommittee recommendation on the organization, including:

- Board composition
- Membership criteria
- Permanent funding
- Program responsibility
- Organization form
- Legal structure
- Property ownership

c) Establish a public private partnership organization

d) Create a 5-year budget that matches the permanent funding plan

**2) Create a sustainable funding plan for Downtown Frankfort programming**

a) Seek an annual Village commitment

b) Establish fees for services associated with Downtown events

c) Set membership fees

d) Establish an advertising cost sharing policy

## Business Development Strategy

The underlying goal of all business development efforts is increasing sales. This involves adding businesses and expanding sales in existing businesses. Business development provides more reasons for customers to visit by improving the quality of existing businesses and adding new stores and restaurants.

The initial action steps focus on improving the current businesses, and represent initiatives that Village staff can undertake. As the Downtown management organization becomes established, it can assume business development functions; however, it is important not to delay efforts until that organization has the capacity to undertake this function. The need is now and the action steps must begin immediately.

Note that Downtown Frankfort's business development charge is largely a communication and facilitation assignment. There is little cost other than time, and that time commitment is manageable if regularly scheduled. For example, the recruitment program involves seeking business recommendations from anyone who comments on desirable additions, on making an initial interest phone call, on hosting visits for those who express interest and following-up with property owners and the interested recruitment targets on a regular basis. Since a typical interested business list might include five screened targets, it would be reasonable to budget five hours per month for this effort. Success depends not on a large dollar or time investment but rather on building relationships with the key stakeholders, property owners and recruitment targets.

Over the longer term, sales increases will flow from giving residents reasons to make Downtown Frankfort a regular activity stop and enticing them to make purchases. The immediate opportunity is improving the connection between the Old Plank Road Trail and Downtown merchants. Over the longer term, the Village should consider placing civic uses Downtown and adding community focused events.

<b>1) Build capacity of existing businesses to enhance their viability</b>	<b>Start</b>	<b>Complete</b>	<b>Assigned</b>	<b>Cost</b>
a) Hold monthly best practice meetings				
b) Meet one-on-one with all businesses to explain available business incentives				
c) Create business by business best practices plan (voluntary)				
d) Identify merchant leader				
<b>2) Fill vacancies with businesses that enhance Downtown's long-term viability</b>				
a) Use <i>Business Prospect Tracking Form</i> to create a list of interested business owners				
b) Meet with Downtown Frankfort property owners whose buildings are susceptible to vacancies				
c) Call businesses identified by business tracking system bi-monthly, except November, December and January				
d) E-mail building owners and leasing agents, bi-monthly, a current list of business owners interested in opening in Downtown				
e) Meet with developers and monitor trends by attending the local International Council of Shopping Centers deal making events				
<b>3) Improve Frankfort residents' visit frequency and connection to Downtown Frankfort</b>				
a) Seek opportunities to locate Village services Downtown				
b) Schedule 3 Village-oriented major events				
c) Add creative signage announcing Downtown events to travelers on Illinois Route 30 and U.S. Routes 45				
d) Conduct familiarization tours for businesses and homeowner groups				
e) Provide optimal space for local organizations' events				
<b>4) Attract Old Plank Road Trail users as customers of Downtown Frankfort</b>				
a) Enable new construction that embraces trail				
b) Monitor and publicize utilization of Old Plank Road Trail				
c) Add a kiosk to direct cyclists to Downtown businesses				
d) Use focus group of local cyclists to determine marketing opportunities				
e) Intercept interview trail users to learn what amenities would enhance their experience				
f) Hold workshop for Downtown businesses on the needs of cyclists and products to carry				
g) Develop plan for temporary retail on peak cycling days				
h) Connect employment centers to trail				

## Consumer Marketing Strategy

Effective marketing depends on a quality product. Improving the Downtown Frankfort “product” is the focus of this revitalization strategy. With stores, restaurants and events likely to change significantly over the next three years, it is important that marketing materials and media choices be modified frequently to reflect the improving Downtown Frankfort product. Therefore, this Consumer Marketing Revitalization Strategy recommends a six-month horizon for marketing. Directories and event calendars will be more reliable if printed every six months rather than annually. Planning meetings for those efforts should occur in February and September to provide lead-time for spring/summer and fall/winter marketing efforts.

The framework for this marketing effort is a business mix goal, an easily recognized brand/graphic image, a well understood target market and identified bonus market opportunities. This framework will inform new businesses of opportunities to participate in joint marketing. It will also assist them in identifying likely customers. It is anticipated that perceptive businesses will use the Downtown Frankfort logo to build brand equity that, over time, reinforces the overall image of Downtown as a high-quality destination.



**1) Establish a short-term marketing plan**

Start Complete Assigned Cost

a) Invite all potential beneficiaries to a stakeholder meeting, including:

- Merchants
- Event sponsors
- Other business owners

b) Develop a 6-month media plan promoting the “Festival Marketplace” concept, including:

- Public relations
- Directory
- Event calendars
- Homeowner group presentation
- Gateway signage
- Building signage
- Peak newspaper advertising

c) Implement the 6-month media plan

d) Evaluate the results and repeat the process

**2) Establish marketing framework**

a) Determine the product mix of Downtown Frankfort

- Festivals and special events
- Restaurants
- Stores
- Services
- Offices
- Homes

b) Develop a logo that supports a desirable but reality-based image

c) Attract residents within a 5-minute drive (Primary Market)

- Match demographics to best media
- Create a target business list that matches the spending patterns of this market
- Establish opt in E-mail program

d) Identify bonus customers by:

- Old Plank Road Trail users
- Employees
- Others

## Investor Marketing Strategy

Unlike centrally managed shopping centers, downtowns face the challenge of complicated ownership with varying business goals for the numerous commercial properties. In implementing a revitalization plan, it is important not to underestimate the importance of having property owners align with and support downtown planning goals and objectives. Vintage properties need constant attention to meet maintenance standards while obsolete sized spaces limit rents. Owners must have the opportunity to achieve a reasonable return from their tenants. Each individual building is unique and, therefore, strategies to attract investors must be tailored to match the unique circumstances of each building. This Investor Marketing Strategy recommends specific tasks that provide Village support for involved property owners.

<b>1) Promote market growth plan most likely to enhance Downtown's viability</b>	<b>Start</b>	<b>Complete</b>	<b>Assigned</b>	<b>Cost</b>
a) Identify parcels most susceptible to redevelopment				
b) For each parcel, determine the reuse or redevelopment strategy that supports a vital Downtown				
c) Meet individually with owners of parcels susceptible to long-term redevelopment to determine their plans				
d) For each parcel, determine the Village approach likely to encourage owner's interest in pursuing optimal reuse or redevelopment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highly motivated today, just needs smooth Village process</li> <li>• Motivated with incentives</li> <li>• No interest</li> </ul>				
<b>2) Build capacity of property owners to implement the market growth plan</b>				
a) Set standards for public and private property maintenance				
b) Communicate at least monthly on plan progress (E-mail)				
c) Hold seminars for investors who are interested in owning property in Downtown Frankfort and implementing the plan				
d) Conduct Tax Free Property Exchange seminar for long-time Downtown property owners				
<b>3) Keep the plan current with market changes</b>				
a) Schedule an annual presentation to the Downtown management organization on retail trends				
b) Revise the property development plan as needed				

# Short-term Land Use Strategies: 1-3 Years

The land use plan shown at right highlights potential short-term (1-3 years) changes to existing Downtown land uses based on projects that have been approved (the Sangmeister project on Kansas Street), that may occur as the result of responses to a Village request for proposals (Heritage Hall at Kansas and Hickory) or that were discussed in informal interviews with property owners and other Downtown stakeholders.

## Historic Core Retail Area

Support the rehab/revitalization of historic properties and new development on vacant properties within the historic core retail area. Projects that feature ground level retail are strongly preferred. However, commercial office uses are also acceptable until the market demand for Downtown retail improves. New developments that includes first floor offices should be designed with features such as taller ceiling heights and storefront façades that will allow for their eventual conversion retail.

Promote high quality mixed use retail/commercial/residential redevelopment of properties at the northwest corner of Nebraska and Oak Streets.

Support the expansion of the bowling alley building that creates new retail/commercial space on Kansas Street.

Promote southern access for the existing businesses in the Grainery to the Old Plank Road Trail. Support uses that provide outdoor dining along the trail and/or uses that will be attractive to those who use the trail.

Create a new public parking lot on the property owned by the Chamber of Commerce at the southeast intersection of Elwood and Oak Streets. Ensure the parking lot design is amenable for use as festival space during Downtown events.

Create diagonal parking along Kansas Street adjacent to Breidert Green and along the south side of Elwood east of Oak Street to increase the amount of on-street parking.

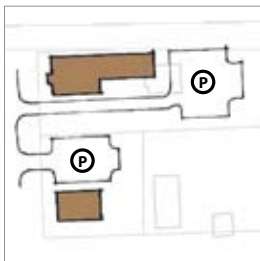
Investigate the possibility of adding diagonal parking to the east side of Hickory Street immediately north of the Nebraska Street intersection.

Retrofit the existing gateway signs (La Grange Road/Old Frankfort Way and La Grange Road/Nebraska Street) to include the word “Downtown” and to provide the space for temporary signs that promote Downtown events (see page 36). Enhance the scale and increase the number of existing gateway pylons located at the edges of the historic retail core (see page 37).

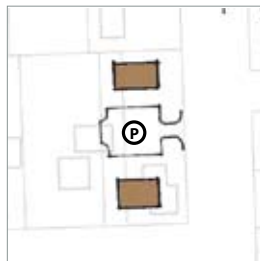
## White Street Corridor

Support the conversion of existing residential along White Street north of Downtown’s historic core to transitional uses. Commercial office uses such as professional services should be encouraged to increase the size of the daytime population base within walking distance of shops, restaurants and other Downtown destinations.

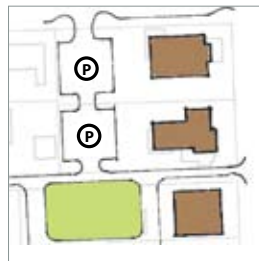
## Transitional Uses



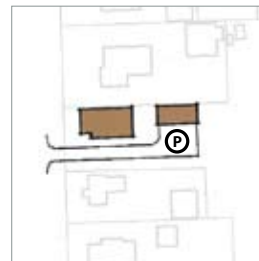
Redevelopment along White Street north of Downtown’s historic core may take a number of different forms. In the example above, a new structure replaces an existing residence (top) with parking located behind. Below, a new structure is located on a formerly vacant parcel with parking located on the side of the building.



The example above illustrates two contiguous parcels that have been assembled. One new structure replaces an existing residence while another new structure is built on a vacant parcel. The two buildings share a parking space that is located between the buildings.

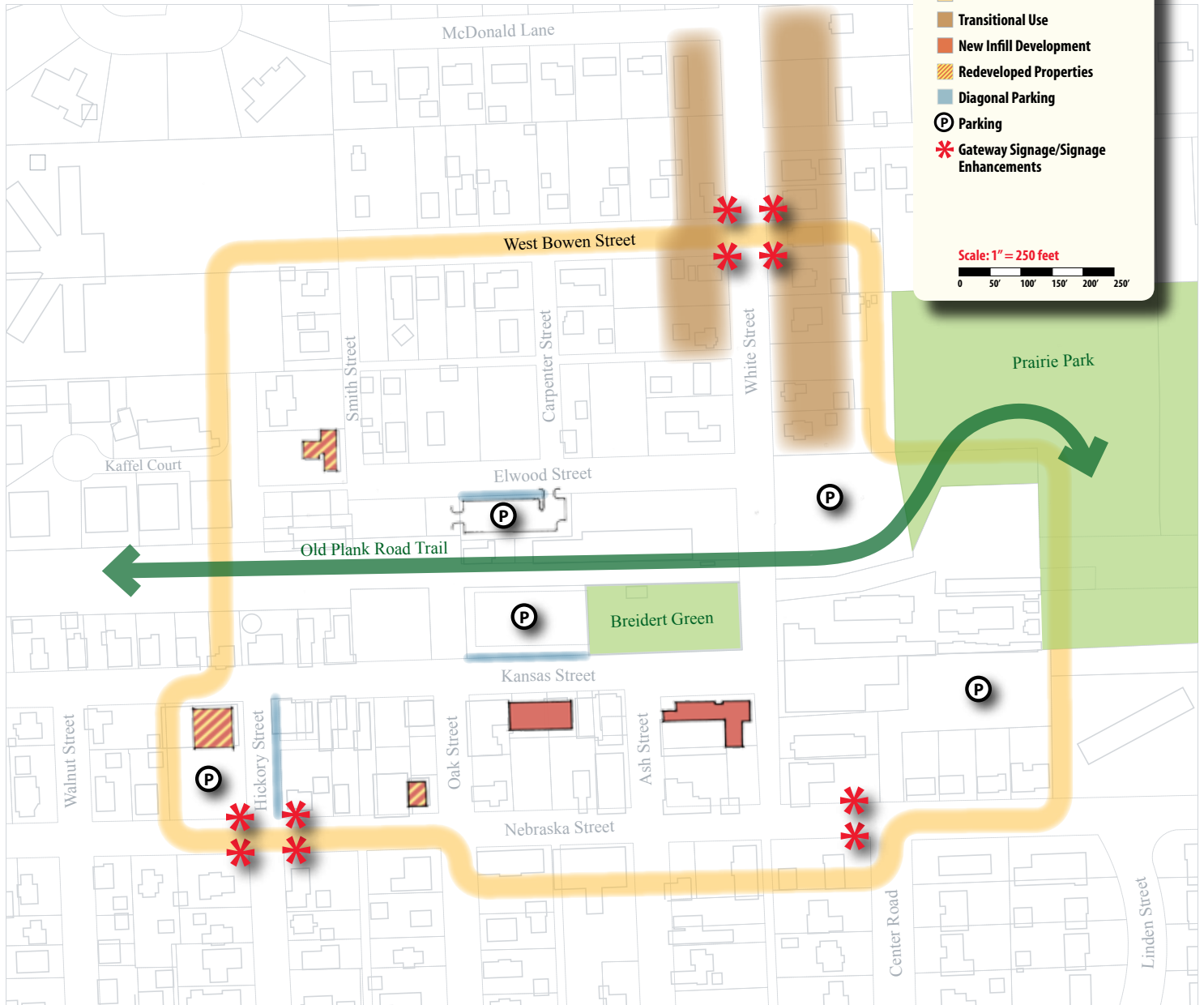


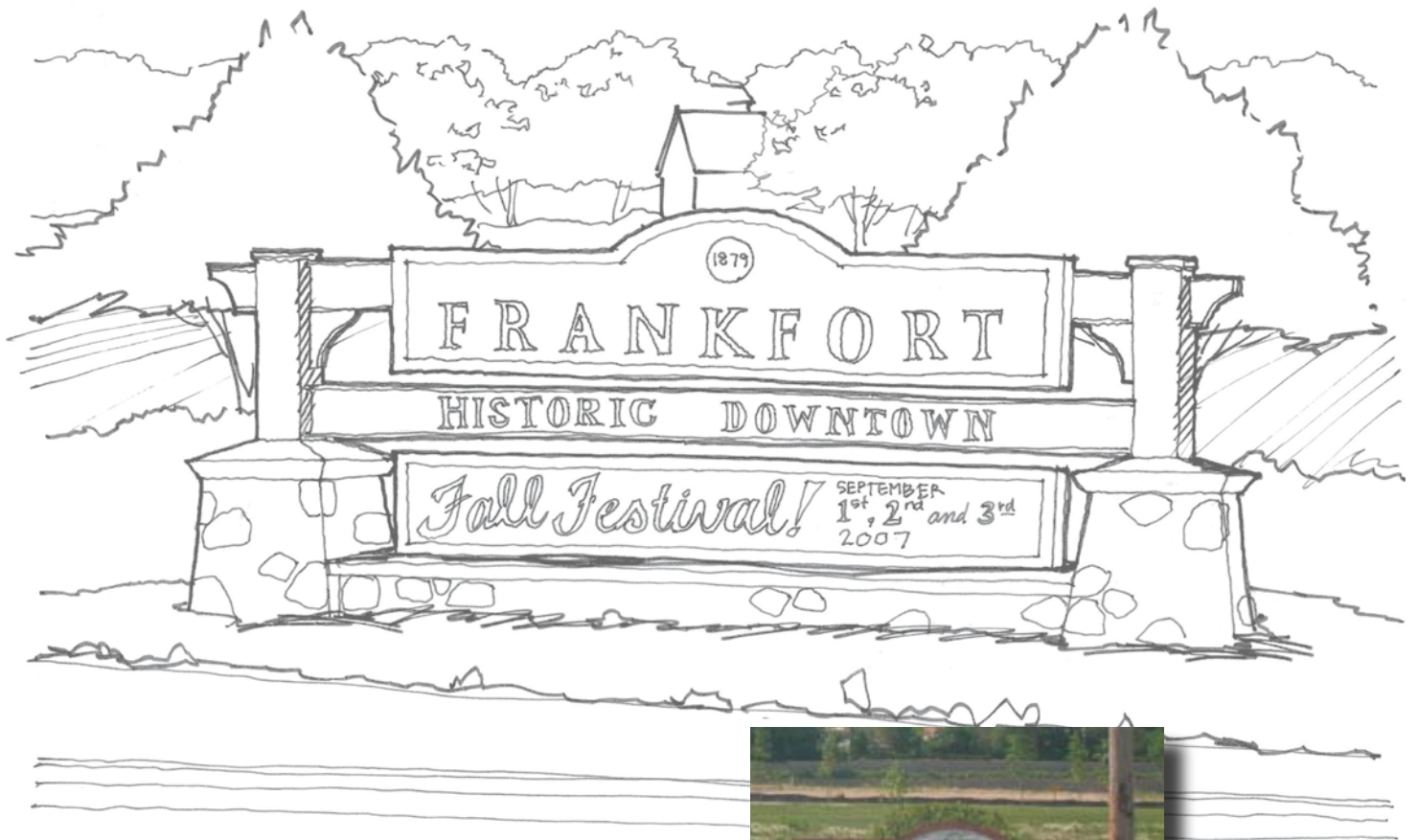
This example shows another parking option. Connecting the two individual parking lots enhances access and circulation by providing motorists with two different ways to enter and leave the parking lots.



The example above illustrates an infill development that is in scale with the surrounding neighborhood and located on its parcel to be compatible with its surrounding context.

Short-term Land Use Strategies: 1-3 Years

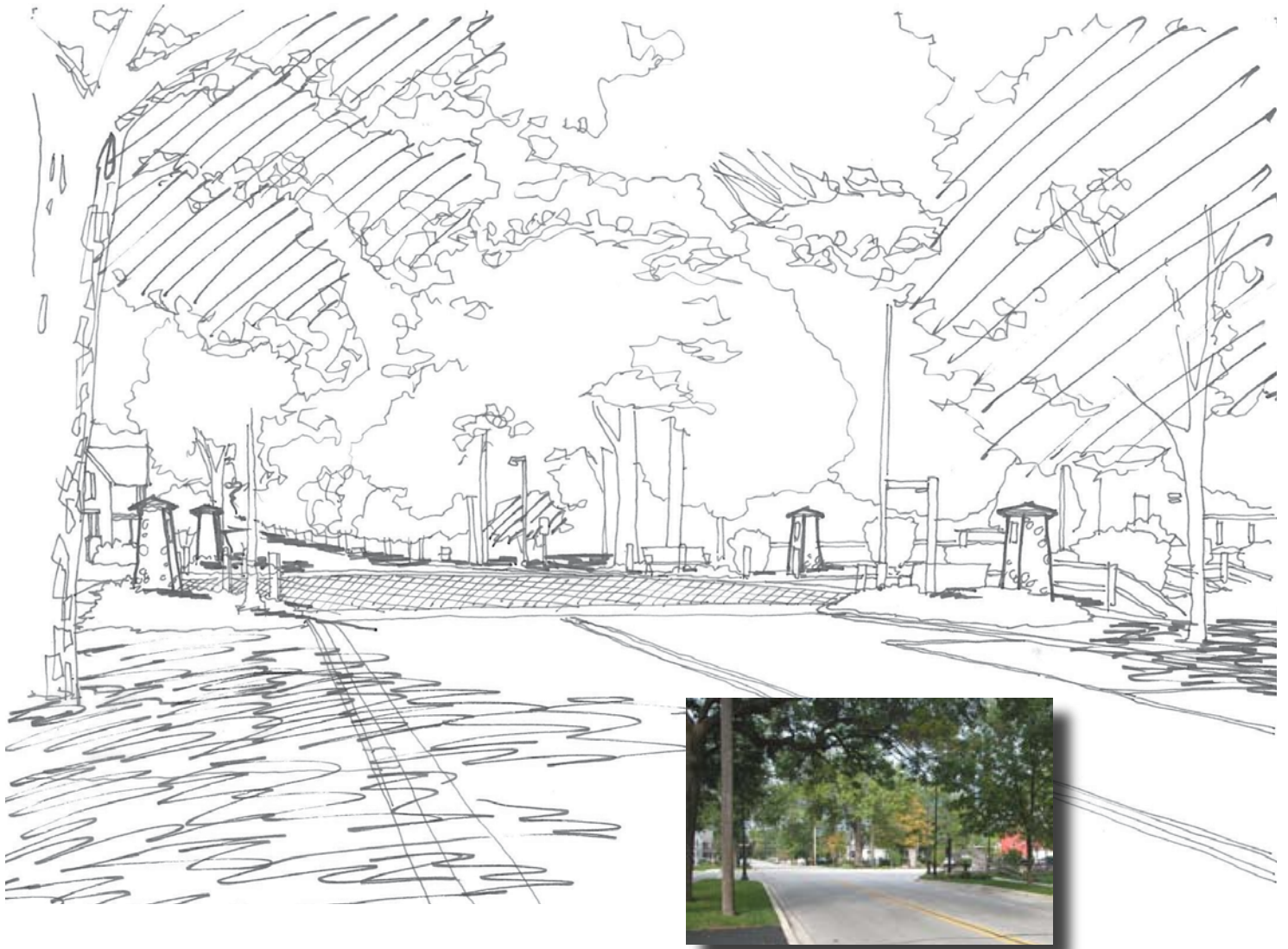




### Gateway Identity Signage

Frankfort's historic business district is not visible from the Village's high volume traffic arteries. Therefore, effective gateway signage at key locations is needed to clearly identify Downtown's location. The rendering above illustrates how the existing gateway signs might be retrofitted to enhance their presence. Note the word "Downtown" has been added to ensure that visitors know they are entering the Village's historic core. In addition, space has been provided below the permanent portion of the sign for temporary signs promoting Downtown festivals and events.





### Gateway Identity Signage

Strengthening the delineation of the historic business district's edges is another way to increase awareness of Downtown. The image above illustrates how the existing gateway features at Nebraska and Hickory Street can be enhanced by placing additional gateway pylons on the south side of the intersection and by using special street pavers in the middle of the intersection.



### Information Kiosk

Information regarding Downtown businesses and Village events should be highly visible and easily accessible. The overall level of activity in and around Breidert Green make it one of several locations that would be ideal for a business directory. Illustrated above is a potential location adjacent to Old Plank Road Trail just west of White Street. Note the deck with canopy in the background. Opening the south side of the Frankfort Grainery to the trail is one of the recommended short-term strategies for Downtown.





### Strategic Infill

Infill development at key sites within the historic business district that adds new commercial and increases street level activity is a recommended short-term strategy. The rendering above of the southwest corner of Kansas and White Streets illustrates how storefronts could be added to the north side of the bowling alley building to increase the amount of ground level commercial space on Kansas.

# Land Use Strategies: Vision

Based on the findings from the Opportunity Analysis, input from the project Task Force and interviews conducted with the owners of key Downtown properties and other stakeholders, strategies were developed to guide long-term (3-15+ years) Downtown land uses. Highlights of these strategies include:

## Historic Core Retail Area

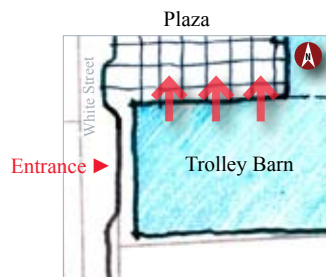
Support the rehab/revitalization of historic properties and new development on vacant properties within the historic core retail area. Projects that feature ground level retail are strongly preferred. However, commercial office uses are also acceptable until the market demand for Downtown retail improves. New developments that includes first floor offices should be designed with features such as taller ceiling heights and storefront façades that will allow for their eventual conversion retail.

Promote high quality, mixed use retail/commercial/residential redevelopment of the Grainery property. Support uses that have ground level retail facing White and Elwood Streets. Support uses that have exposure and direct access to the Old Plank Road Trail, and that will be attractive to those who use the trail.

Promote high quality, mixed use retail/commercial residential infill and/or live-work redevelopment of the properties north of the Grainery between White and Carpenter Streets. Support uses that include shops and restaurants at the intersection of White and Elwood Streets to create, along with the redeveloped Grainery property, two-sided retail on Elwood.

Promote high quality, mixed use retail/commercial/residential development of the vacant parcels at the Kansas Street/Oak Street intersection and the western portion of the Breidert Green parking lot to create a “100% corner.” Support uses that have exposure and direct access to Old Plank Road Trail, and that will be attractive to those who use the trail.

Promote high quality infill redevelopment of the Fra-Milco Cabinet Company site at the southwest corner of Oak and Elwood Streets. Encourage uses that will benefit from the site’s location on the Old Plank Road Trail.



Creating a pocket park or small public plaza on the north side of the Trolley Barn will give businesses inside the building exposure to traffic on White Street.

Promote high quality, mixed use retail/commercial/residential redevelopment of the Fox Lumber site. Support uses that include public open space along White Street that creates exposure to the northern façade of The Trolley Barn.

Expand the “Chamber of Commerce” parking lot (southeast intersection of Elwood and Oak) eastward to increase the supply of off-street parking. Expand diagonal parking on the south side of Elwood Street between Oak and White Streets eastward towards White.

Investigate the possibility of adding diagonal parking to Oak Street between Nebraska Street and the trail.

## White Street Corridor

Continue to promote redevelopment of existing residential and commercial uses along White Street that include high quality, mixed use commercial/office or live-work units.

Promote high quality, medium density (8-12 units per acre) residential (townhomes/condos/live-work) redevelopment of non-historic properties in the neighborhoods adjacent to or within close proximity of the White Street corridor.

Promote high quality development/redevelopment of highly visible properties at Downtown gateways and along the view corridors leading into Downtown.

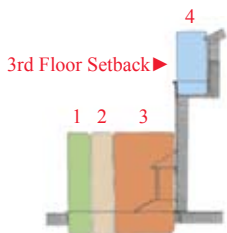
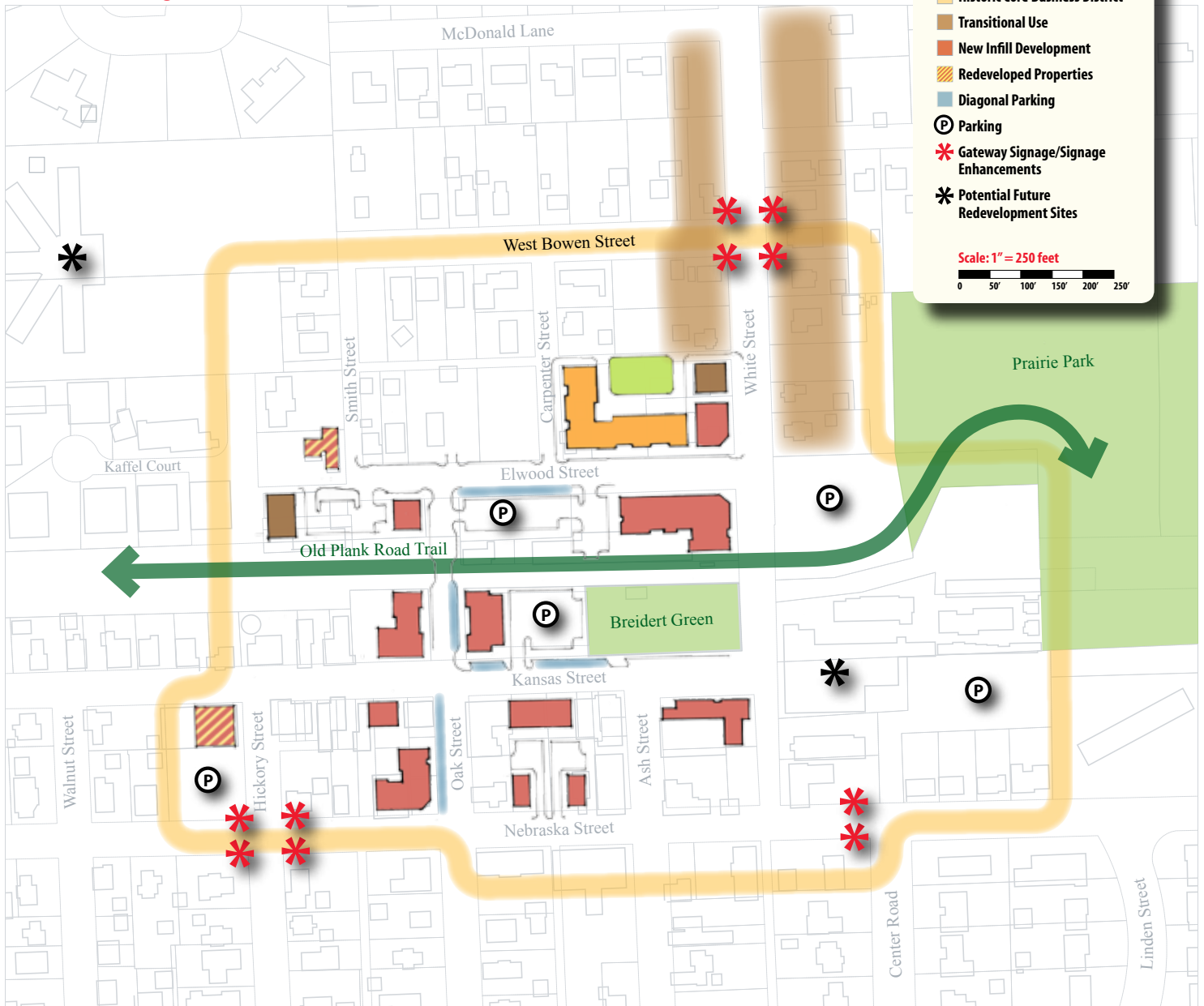
## Nebraska Street Corridor

Promote high quality, mixed use retail/commercial/residential redevelopment of properties that are not historically significant between Center Road and Hickory Street.

Promote high quality, medium density residential (townhomes/condos/live-work) residential redevelopment of non-historic properties east of Center Road.

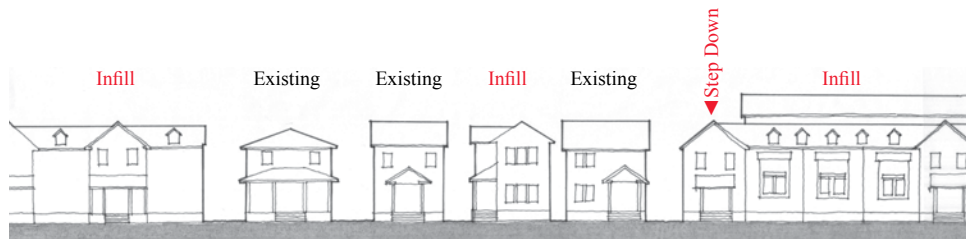
Promote high quality, medium density residential redevelopment of non-historic properties in the neighborhoods adjacent to or within close proximity of the Nebraska Street corridor.

## Land Use Strategies: Vision



**Setbacks in Transitional Areas**  
The image above illustrates features that are recommended for mixed use and/or residential infill in transitional areas:

- 1) Parkway (7' minimum)
- 2) Sidewalk (5' minimum)
- 3) Setback (match surrounding context, 10' minimum)
- 4) 3rd floor setback (5' minimum)



**Building Form in Transitional Areas**  
The preferred form of redevelopment in transitional areas is 2-3 stories, mixed use and in a traditional architectural style that respects the existing Downtown context.

Buildings taller than 35' should feature "step downs" (see the illustration immediately above) that provide a gradual transition to adjacent structures that are lower in height.

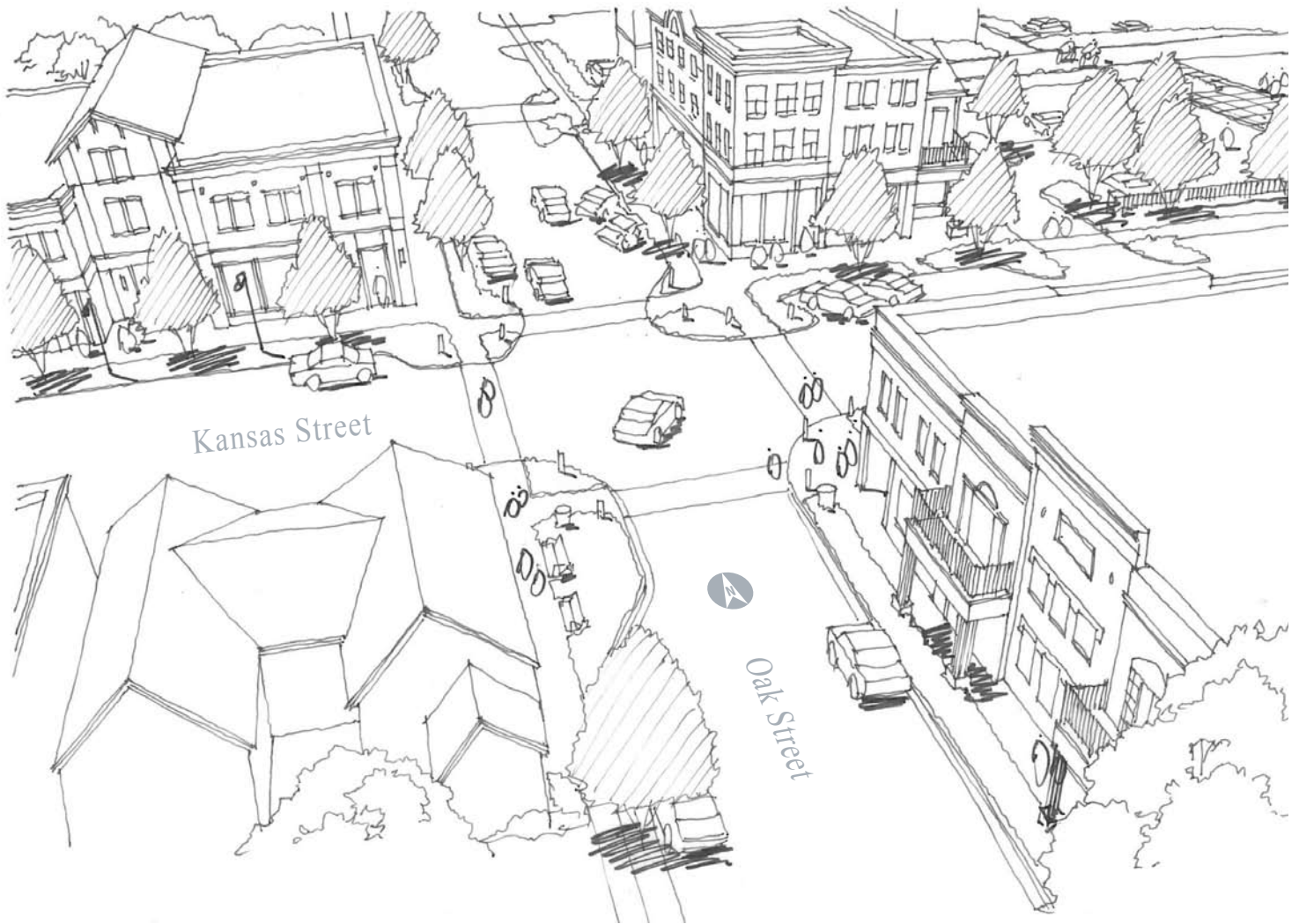
Street corners are the preferred location for taller "signature" gateway buildings that accentuate the street intersection. Lower buildings are located in the middle of blocks.



### Infill Redevelopment

The Village should promote redevelopment of key Downtown sites over the next 3-15 years as favorable market conditions emerge. The rendering above of the White / Elwood Street intersection shows mixed use retail/office fronting White Street with high quality townhomes on the north side of Elwood west of the mixed use structure on the corner.





### **Infill Redevelopment**

The long-term redevelopment of the parcels on the northeast and northwest corners of the Kansas Street / Oak Street intersection would create a “100%” corner with two sided retail on both Kansas and Oak. Diagonal parking on the east side of Oak Street and the north side of Kansas Street would help to compensate for parking spaces lost in the Breidert Green lot. Creating a new off-street parking lot on the now vacant parcel at the southeast intersection of Oak and Elwood could also provide replacement parking.

