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INTRODUCTION

This plan establishes a vision and an implementation plan for the East Lincoln Highway corridor - an area that stretches from Peace Road to 7th Street. It addresses multiple community development factors including: land use, economic development, public safety, housing, public services and neighborhood beautification. The plan speaks equally to local neighborhood needs and regional economic opportunities and places them in a shared context. The planning area is shown on the following page.

A major premise of the plan is that the conventional “one-two punch” of community development, zoning and selected public improvements, alone will not be enough to revitalize the corridor and that a larger public role will be necessary - a role that seeks to fundamentally change the dynamics affecting the investment ‘climate’ on the City’s east-side and along the East Lincoln Highway. This understanding is reflected in a proactive and aggressive implementation plan that spells out the specific public actions needed to take the plan from paper to reality.

In identifying areas for new employment growth, new housing, and neighborhood commercial services, the plan attempts to balance the larger regional role of the corridor with that of “main street” for much of the east side. It seeks to create safer, more walkable, and more functional urban neighborhoods that are self-contained yet well connected to the rest of the City and region. It also strives to replace and increase the supply of affordable housing that has historically existed on the east side, and place them in reach of area job centers. Finally, the plan attempts to create a more attractive gateway to the City and more beautiful neighborhoods that residents and property owners will take pride in and will work to further improve.
PLAN OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of the plan can be summarized as follows:

- Identify a strategy for economic restructuring
- Provide a balance of land uses
- Set a course for realistic plan implementation
- Create conditions favorable for private reinvestment
- Provide strategies to spur private development
- Create a vision for the corridor that will serve as a model for future development
- Give shape, definition, and identity to the corridor and adjacent neighborhoods
- Create strong transitions between individual segments of the corridor
- Define an eastern gateway and economic connection to the I-88 corridor
- Identify the type and timing of public improvements
- Clarify the public role in private development

PLAN ORGANIZATION

The plan is organized in three main parts. It begins with an analysis of regional economic opportunities in Part I, followed by the main section on physical planning and design in Part II. The final section, Part III, contains a detailed implementation strategy and roadmap for future action.
HISTORY OF THE EAST LINCOLN HIGHWAY

The East Lincoln Highway traces its history to the very earliest days of the automobile era. It was part of the first transcontinental highway in the U.S. linking New York to San Francisco, and was instrumental in helping to instill within the public’s imagination, a sense of romance and adventure for the open road.

It was promoted heavily, in its heyday, by motoring clubs, automobile manufacturers, civic boosters, local chambers of commerce, and various government agencies as a major historical milestone and engineering feat. The famous American landscape architect Jens Jensen, contributed some of early thematic ideas for the highway including designs for the original highway markers many of which still survive.

The period of extensive road building between the wars, and later, the advent of the interstate system, served to diminish the stature of the highway in the public’s mind. Today, only remnant elements of the original highway survive. In Illinois, these have been meticulously documented in the Illinois Lincoln Highway Interpretive Master Plan commissioned by the Illinois Lincoln Highway Coalition.
DeKalb has historically been recognized as a rural community on the fringes of metropolitan Chicago, but changes in the regional economy and the continued westward expansion of the Chicago Metro area, compel the City to reevaluate its economy and how this economy actually “plays out” on the land.

The City of DeKalb, home to Northern Illinois University (NIU), has an integrated and multimodal transportation network, and is the center of a much larger regional trade area knitted together by two interstate highways and several important County and State highways including the East Lincoln Highway. Trends suggest that in coming years, the City will be in the path of investment for companies and households seeking an alternative to the congestion and high costs of the Chicago Metropolitan area. The City has the opportunity to harness this economic momentum to revitalize and redevelop the City’s gateways, historic neighborhoods, and main corridors including the East Lincoln Highway.

Otherwise known as the Historic Route 38, the East Lincoln Highway is the City’s major east/west transportation spine connecting the City’s east side, downtown, and University campus areas. Currently, these three areas are essentially cut off from each other by railroad crossings, areas of blight, and congested streets and intersections. Revitalizing the East Lincoln Highway, and uniting it with the rest of the City, will require much more than cosmetic improvements and selective public investments in new infrastructure. Instead, the plan must put forth strategies to relate regional economic trends to specific land uses along the corridor, and to organize these uses such that their economic and community development potential can be maximized. The plan must also respond to the physical and economic impacts brought by the Park 88 development.

This project offers new opportunities for new support services and housing in the neighborhoods lining the corridor.

The East Lincoln Highway Revitalization Plan must present a unified vision for the corridor that addresses such factors as: economic development, recreation, housing, circulation, aesthetics, and community facilities. A critical factor relates to how the City “presents” itself from the east. The corridor must be planned and designed to both attract investment and beckon people downtown. It must also continue to serve as the “main street” for the east side neighborhoods that straddle it.

Meshing all of these considerations is the main challenge of this project. It requires attention to the organization of, and relationships between, different land uses; the functional aspects of the corridor in terms of movement and access control, and various levels of urban design. The latter includes everything from streetscape, signage, and gateway features, to overall community identity and urban form. By attracting investment, the East Lincoln Highway can become a memorable gateway to the City and a catalyst for future change.
REGIONAL CONTEXT

Access and Transportation

Situated near the major crossroads of Interstates 88 and 39, DeKalb County marks the location where the extreme outward edge of the Chicago region meets the rural interior of the state. Interstate 88, running between Chicago’s western suburbs and the Quad Cities, provides easy and convenient access to DeKalb’s east side neighborhoods, the downtown, and the NIU campus. The City’s proximity to I-39 also provides convenient access to Wisconsin and central Illinois.

The interstates, coupled with the recently-expanded airport, and major rail lines, positions DeKalb (and particularly the Route 38 corridor) as one of the most accessible and transportation-integrated locations in the region. The planned development of Park 8B, funded in part by the grants from the State as well as local tax abatements, is testament to the City’s emerging status as an intermodal hub.

Railroads have traditionally defined the region’s identity. With a main line of the Union Pacific (UP) railroad literally bisecting the City, DeKalb residents hear the train whistle no fewer than 80 times each day. Currently, this rail traffic is predominantly freight, but as the Chicago metropolitan area continues to expand westward, the opportunity may exist to create a Metra commuter rail stop at some point in the future.

Regional Economic Crossroads: The I-88 Technology Corridor and I-39 Logistics Corridor

DeKalb’s economic identity as the center of a county-wide trade area is reflected in the City’s strong market for specialized goods and services such as health care, education, and consumer goods. The City’s identity and economics are also fueled by Northern Illinois University (NIU). Faculty, staff, and recent graduates of NIU contribute to DeKalb’s large and highly educated labor pool. By tapping into this brain power, in addition to implementing strategies to retain more NIU graduates, DeKalb can employ economic development strategies that capitalize on innovative research and business development.

In particular, marketing the City’s large, educated labor force, lower housing costs, and historic neighborhoods, can be a critical factor in retaining and attracting new “creative class” professionals and the industries that employ them.

The Spreading “Third Coast”

The increasing number of research facilities and technology-based industries in the Chicago Metro area have contributed to the region’s identity as a technology hub on par with coastal Silicon Valley and Metro Boston. Much of this activity has occurred on or near the eastern end of the I-88 corridor and may exert an increasing influence over DeKalb’s economy in coming years.

I-88, the Illinois Technology Corridor that links Fermi National Accelerator, Argonne National Laboratory, several universities including NIU, and the high tech firms of Chicago’s western suburbs, is pushing economic momentum westward in search of open land, highly trained workers, and a superior quality of life. Projects such as NIU’s proposed fiber loop connecting its flagship campus in DeKalb to its satellite campuses in Rockford and Aurora/Naperville, may accelerate this trend and place the City in line for the next wave of technology development rippling out from the metropolitan fringes.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that many Chicago area residents (including those employed in the technology related industries that have coalesced in the eastern part of the corridor), will continue to look...
westward to purchase affordable homes in proximity to both their jobs and the promise of a quasi-rural lifestyle. With its potent combination of affordable housing, major university, small town ambiance, historic neighborhoods, educated labor force, and proximity to Chicago; DeKalb offers the complete package to knowledge-based industries contemplating a new location.

**Logistics and Value-Added Production**

The confluence of I-88 and I-39 combined with the multiple rail lines that cross the region, have created a tremendous draw for companies involved in shipping and warehousing. This is evidenced by much of the recent and proposed development along Fairview Road in DeKalb (including Park 88) as well as the major facilities in Rochelle including Global III Intermodal.

Given its own intermodal facilities which, besides rail include interstate highways and a sizable airport, DeKalb has the opportunity to create its own intermodal center (perhaps one more geared to air freight) and potentially even vie for Foreign Trade Zone (FTZ) status.

**NICHE STRATEGIES: TRADE, TECHNOLOGY, TOURISM, AND TRANSPORT**

Broad structural changes in the regional economy combined with DeKalb’s existing strengths, provide the opportunity to economically reposition DeKalb and the East Lincoln Highway corridor. These include the opportunity to capitalize on global trends in biotechnology, life sciences, logistics and distribution, and regional tourism. Moreover, with NIU as a major community asset, “training” can be listed alongside the other “T’s” noted above.

**Education and Life Sciences**

The “branding” of I-88 as a “technology corridor” places DeKalb in the path of knowledge-based industries seeking proximity to: a major university, a world class city (Chicago), and a high quality of life in a semi-rural setting. For many such companies, high quality of life factors, and an educated labor pool, weigh far more in their site selection decisions than generous public incentives. Transforming DeKalb into a fully functioning “tech-node” however, will require a more entrepreneurial posture on the part of NIU and a greater focus on its science-related programs. Graduate retention will also be key. Preserving the City’s high quality of life, (including its historic neighborhoods), celebrating cultural diversity, and providing visible outlets for the City’s underground art scene, will be a critical factor in achieving this vision.

Although NIU currently has plans to build a research park west of campus for early-stage technology-transfer, the region will ultimately need places for these companies to expand once they have matured. A secondary business or research park geared toward advanced commercialization would help broaden NIU’s economic impact and presence in the community. The potential to locate such a park near the intersection of Peace Road and East Lincoln Highway provides a longer term economic positioning strategy for the corridor and City. Here, it would make a very strong and visible statement about the City’s transformation from an agricultural and manufacturing based economy to one more oriented to the “new economy”. It could also take full advantage of the proximity to the interstate and airport.

**College Town**

DeKalb has a unique charm characterized by its walkable downtown, historic architecture, and collegiate atmosphere. It also has a subdued art “scene” fueled by the university influence. All of these amenities can provide an additional draw to the existing tourist activities centered on historic Route 38, and railroad history. Additionally, the recreation amenities of the Kishwaukee River can draw the “outdoors crowd” as well as classic car and motorcycle clubs that already pass through the City.

Finally, the City can exploit the history of the East Lincoln Highway itself as a segment of the nation’s first transcontinental highway - a segment which also happens to link some of the most attractive and interesting places in northeastern Illinois, and has connections to the lives of two of the nation’s most revered presidents, Lincoln and Reagan.

Through more aggressive promotion of DeKalb as a multi-dimensional community of commerce, culture, education, and history; new residents, businesses, and even tourists will come to discover the City’s unique “city-in-the-country” setting and business advantages.
As the ‘front door’ of the community, The East Lincoln Highway must not only present the community in the best possible light, it must also offer a stage on which many of the abovementioned opportunities can unfold.

Community Branding
The economic development community in DeKalb has actively promoted the City’s connection to NIU as well as other assets including: regional access, quality of life, and affordability. This image could be enhanced by promoting several of DeKalb’s special offerings including its well educated workforce and college town stature.

Additionally, the City can also play up its agrarian and industrial history by tying these elements into corridor and downtown theming. For example, a certain amount of post-industrial grit is often a key feature of emerging art enclaves. (So much so that industrial artifacts and imagery are even designed into newer buildings.) Much of the City’s older industrial buildings are concentrated on the east side where they imbue surrounding neighborhoods with a sense of history. These buildings along with the coal elevator and water towers could become symbols of the east-side’s identity.

Recognizing that Route 38 serves as an alternate to interstate travel for those heading east/west, a “Route 66” style theming could be implemented. This would likely require coordination with communities along the historic highway. Attracting motor tourists along Route 38 would emphasis DeKalb’s position as the gateway from metro-Chicago to rural Illinois. Included in this city/country image should be the City’s roots in agriculture and its signature company, DeKalb Seed. The DeKalb seed logo could also be modified to serve as a new City logo.

Branding the neighborhoods along Lincoln Highway can also create a special image for the corridor. Examples of districts and names include: the Depot District, The Eastern Yards, City Crossing, Little Bohemia, Eastown, The East End, The Gateway, etc.

Foreign Trade Zone
As mentioned above, DeKalb can capitalize on its considerable transportation infrastructure to create an ‘AirHarbor’ or ‘Railport’ zone with links to value-added producers. For example, non-containerized products being shipped via rail could be off-loaded in DeKalb for further production or processing by local companies. In addition, the City has a relatively large airport that could potentially handle large volumes of air freight.

Foreign Trade Zone status for the area around the airport, would create a magnet for manufacturing and other value-added businesses and those that serve them such as freight-forwarders and customs brokers.

Foreign Trade Zone
An Foreign Trade Zone is a specially designated tariff-free zone typically located near a seaport, airport, or other major transportation facility. The purpose of the zone is to allow the tariff-free importation, of materials ultimately destined for re-export to other foreign countries or other areas within the U.S. Importers within the zone are generally not charged any duties or tariffs unless and until the products leave the zone for other markets within the country. Products destined for re-export outside the U.S. usually pay no duty at all.

The purpose of the zone is to promote value-added manufacturing, processing, or refining within the district. Since local manufactures only pay a duty on the weight and volume of the finished product when it leaves the district, import duties can be significantly reduced through the removal of waste materials. Also, the delayed assessment of import duties reduces the costs of carrying large materials inventories. Finally, the waiver of duties on re-exported goods allow U.S. manufactures within the zone to complete more effectively with other countries that have more favorable duties/tariffs.
The East Lincoln Highway Corridor Vision Forum, held on the evening of August 18th, was conducted to identify the common perceptions and concerns along the corridor. Over 80 people attended the forum located at the Knights of Columbus Hall. The community at-large, property owners, business owners, and key community leaders were invited. The forum addressed quality of life issues in the general project area by identifying individual “strengths and weaknesses” and group “opportunities and issues”.

A group mapping exercise concentrated on identifying preservation sites, revitalization sites, redevelopment sites, traffic “hot spots”, and public amenities. Finally, participants were asked to complete a questionnaire. The sections below summarize each activity. The forum agenda and detailed summaries for each activity are attached to this report.

**Individual Strengths and Issues**
Participants were asked to record their perceptions of the corridor’s strengths and issues. Common responses for strengths included access to the expressway, gateway to the community, neighborhood parks, historical homes, mature trees, and good restaurants. Common responses for issues included unkempt homes, lack of a grocery store, drainage problems, lack of police patrol, speeding drivers, and lack of code enforcement.

**Group Opportunities and Issues**
The participants were divided into groups and asked to discuss and record their perceptions of opportunities and issues for corridor redevelopment. All of the responses from the groups were noted and then consolidated into one master list in order to eliminate duplicate responses. From this master list, each participant was asked to vote for their three greatest issues and opportunities. The three greatest opportunities were home rehabilitation and reinvestment, gateway to the City and proximity to downtown, Peace Road and the tollway.

The three greatest issues were property maintenance, unattractive entry into town, and storm drainage.

**Mapping Exercise**
The groups were each given a large map of the corridor and asked to place different color dots on preservation sites, revitalization sites, redevelopment sites, traffic “hot spots”, and public amenities. Common preservation sites included the Peace and Lincoln intersection, the coal chute, and the parcels of land on the northeast and southeast corner of Peace and Lincoln. Common revitalization sites included the Brody Coats Building, the Fargo Building, and the old train depot. Common redevelopment sites included the intersection of Peace and Lincoln, the Fargo Building and the areas close to 7th and Lincoln. Common traffic hot spots included the rail road crossings on Lincoln, 10th Avenue and Lincoln and Peace and Lincoln. Common public amenities included Rotary Park, the intersection of Peace and Lincoln, and the bike path.

**Individual Questionnaires**
The individual questionnaires asked participants to identify trends that are affecting the city and the corridor, community goals that need to be advanced, appropriate mix of land uses in the corridor, and the scale of retail development that is needed in the corridor. Trends affecting the corridor included a lack of home maintenance, a need for small businesses, traffic, and influx of new residents. Suggestions for the primary focus of the plan were improving corridor aesthetics, improving the functionality of the corridor, and improving the residential areas adjoining the corridor. Community-wide goals to be advanced through the plan were suggested to be blight elimination, historic preservation, and quality urban design.
THE CORRIDOR TODAY

Stretching from downtown to the extreme eastern edge of the City, the East Lincoln Highway represents multiple epochs in DeKalb’s history. The corridor breaks down into two main parts: That portion of the corridor west of the rail spur crossing is largely a product of pre-war development with many surviving examples of Midwest vernacular architecture circa 1900-1930 compactly arranged on smaller lots. The area east of the rail spur, on the other hand, reflects mostly post-war development with larger lots, a more random placement of buildings and uses, and several good examples of mid-century roadside architecture.

In terms of overall building conditions along the corridor, the south side appears to be in somewhat better shape than the north side. This could be due to the very active rail right-of-way, and preponderance of industrial land uses that enfold much of the north side. Parts of the Dodge Addition neighborhood, and the mixed area between roughly 7th and 10th Streets exhibit signs of incipient blight and deferred property maintenance. The entire length of the corridor displays numerous land use conflicts where general commercial uses have encroached upon historically residential sections resulting in an awkward mish-mash of land uses and building types. In part, these conditions are the legacy of pyramidal zoning whereby lower intensity uses are allowed to coexist with industrial and heavier commercial uses.

Several larger industrial and commercial uses along the southern edge of the corridor, east of the rail crossing, give the area a somewhat forlorn appearance. The corridor also contains numerous curb openings and a dearth of landscaping. Finally, several of the streets on the north and south sides of the corridor do not align with one another.
PLANNING, YESTERDAY AND TODAY

The East Lincoln Highway has been the focus of many previous planning efforts.

1996 Comprehensive Plan Update

This plan specifically mentions the need for overlay zoning and design guidelines for the East Lincoln Highway and calls for a full interchange at Peace Road and I-88. It also describes special opportunities for office-research development along the I-88 corridor. The plan does not contemplate major changes in land use along East Lincoln Highway. The corridor currently experiences around 12,000 automobile trips per day.

TIF Districts 1&2

There are two active TIF districts in place along East Lincoln Highway. TIF 1 was initially established in 1985 and amended in 1994. Portions of this district capture both property and sales tax while others (principally several blocks on the west end of the study area) capture only property tax. The district is scheduled to be retired in 2010.

A second TIF district (TIF District 2) was created in 1994. It captures only property tax and has been subsidized heavily by TIF District 1. It is not currently generating substantial amounts of tax increment.

Stormwater Management Plan

This document includes a special section on the North 10th Watershed - an area that includes most of the East Lincoln Highway corridor. The plan calls for a number of new stormwater facilities in the eastern section of the corridor including a large detention pond south and east of the intersection of Industrial Drive and East Lincoln Highway, and another one east of Cotton Avenue immediately south of the Union Pacific right-of-way. These ponds are designed to capture overland flows currently emptying into the Dodge neighborhood.

New storm sewers are proposed along the existing drainage easement that runs northwest to southeast through the intersection of Industrial Drive and East Lincoln Highway, and immediately south of the railroad bed.

Illinois Lincoln Highway Interpretive Master Plan

Prepared in 2004, this plan documents all of the historic and cultural resources along the Illinois segment of the Lincoln Highway as a way to promote regional heritage tourism. The plan recommends a DeKalb Lincoln Highway “experience hub” where the highway intersects Peace Road. Recommendations for this hub include a scale replica of the original DeKalb arch along with a kiosk with historical interpretive exhibits.

A pedestrian underpass under the rail right-of-way (perhaps combined with a stormwater swale) would connect the Dodge Addition Neighborhood to nearby recreation and employment areas.
ORGANIZING THE CORRIDOR

Like many urban highways, the East Lincoln Highway currently contains a diverse mix of uses and activities with no particular area serving as a distinctive focal point or activity center. Enhancing the corridor must go beyond superficial cosmetic changes to improve the overall travel experience. With regard to “big picture” planning, this involves segmenting the corridor into a series of distinctive functional areas as a way to create a hierarchy of use, and a sense of anticipation of what lies down the road. Strong transitions between these segments must also be emphasized. In addition, the theming of the corridor should emphasize the history of the city and highway and the special people, places, and events connected to them.

PRIMARY INVESTMENT STRATEGY

Revitalization of the corridor will involve a combination of new infill development, and restoration of what presently exists. Reinvestment should initially be concentrated at both the extreme eastern and western ends of the corridor to “bracket” the corridor and drive investment in the areas in between. Secondary phases of redevelopment should focus on revitalized infill, and streetscaping in the middle sections of the corridor.
1. THE GATEWAY

The area around the Peace Road and East Lincoln Highway intersection contains a mixture of undeveloped and lightly developed lands that present an opportunity to set an entirely new economic and aesthetic tone for the community. This area is only one of two areas in the City that has direct access to I-88. Also with convenient access to the airport, and the County seat at Sycamore, it is positioned for high profile development. New professional business or office park development (ideally with some connection to NIU) would be the “highest and best use” for the general area including the Peace Road frontage on either side of the intersection.

The immediate “four corners” area should be developed into a modern, but historically themed, roadside oasis that serves as a service center for surrounding commercial office users and travelers on the Lincoln Highway and I-88. New development should be compact in overall form to protect the strong contrast between the City and the surrounding countryside.
Four Corners: Townscape Elements

Visitor Rest Area
Entry Archway Recreation

Downtown Entry Marker  Lincoln Highway Marker  Community Marker

Visitor Rest Area
Shelter / Exhibit
The planning and design of new commercial development in the Four Corners area should emphasize the transition from rural to urban landscape and be of the type that has historically thrived on edge-of-town locations (e.g. produce markets, country restaurants, inns etc). Stylized roadside architecture celebrating the history of the highway, may be an appropriate theme for the Gateway area. Specific uses may include: an antique center, hotel/motel, roadhouse-themed restaurant, a modern diner or drive-through, motorcycle/racing shop, visitor center, and an indoor-outdoor vegetable market to complement the existing greenhouses.

The Harley Davidson dealer and museum, currently located on Peace Road, is a current example of the commercial ‘flavor’ sought for this area. This type of use could help anchor the East Lincoln Highway and attract other ‘kindred’ businesses. A transportation-related museum would also be a good fit for this end of the corridor.

Shown below, is a mixed-use design concept for the interchange area.

General Design Guidelines:

New commercial development in the Gateway area should be master planned and adhere to the general standards shown:
2. PEACE ROAD CORRIDOR

As the primary connector between the County Seat at Sycamore, major new retail development along Sycamore Road, and I-88, Peace Road represents one of the most important economic growth corridors in the entire County. The value of this important economic asset as an employment generator and catalyst for new development must be reflected in the revitalization plan for the East Lincoln Highway.

Additional employment-based development may be created on Peace Road, between the I-88 frontage road and Sycamore Road, that will build offfrom momentum from the four corners development and Park 88.

A future role for this corridor may center on new professional office development for knowledge-based industries and supporting retail. Both Peace Road and the East Lincoln Highway should be “wired” with broadband fiber optic to accommodate the information processing needs of knowledge-based industries.

A major new stormwater retention pond must be mapped in the southwestern quadrant of the Peace Road, East Lincoln Highway area to intercept overland flows otherwise destined for the Dodge Addition neighborhood. A second pond in the extreme northwest quadrant will help mitigate the periodic flooding that occurs in the Dodge neighborhood.

Both of these ponds should be conceived as amenity features for new development. They should be designed and landscaped to appear as natural land forms and incorporate trails and walking paths.
General Design Guidelines: Peace Road Corridor

1. Hypothetical Business Park - Key Design Elements

2. Office Business Park - Design Elements

3. Production Business Park - Design Elements

4. Manufacturing with Front Office

5. Indoor Retail, Service, and Institutional (Large Scale)
3. DODGE ADDITION

This neighborhood includes a mixture of post war housing much of it showing signs of dilapidation. A number of factors including: the age and quality of the housing stock, the need in some cases for major repairs that will not drastically improve market value, and the ongoing stormwater and sanitary sewer problems facing the neighborhood, all suggest that this neighborhood should undergo a gradual process of selective rehabilitation and redevelopment including major infrastructural improvements.

The City should initiate a long range voluntary buy-out and land banking program for this neighborhood whereby properties are acquired and demolished through attrition (as they come on the market) rather than through forcible condemnation and relocation. Over time, the land could be reparcelled for affordable, mixed residential development that is master-planned and organized around stormwater management improvements, public open space, and perhaps a modified street grid.

New housing should contain a mix of affordable and market rate units including single-family detached dwellings and small walk-up apartment buildings of fewer than 12 units each. Apartments should also be encouraged over new corner retail development.

The property acquisition program could possibly be funded through TIF or CDBG funds. The land assembly process could begin by acquiring rights of first refusal on individual properties.

As stated earlier, the development of a joint stormwater/pedestrian tunnel under the UP right-of-way may help mitigate the stormwater problem and provide a critical link to area recreation facilities and the regional trail system. Per the City’s stormwater management plan, a new stormwater retention pond should be officially mapped just west of League of Women Voters Park and incorporated as an amenity feature in new development.
General Design Guidelines: Dodge Addition

1. Multi-Family Parcel
- Porches, bays, and balconies
- Ten-to-twenty foot setback
- Articulated building facade
- Landscaped front yards
- Rear parking
- Play area
- Sidewalk
- Service area
- On-street parking
- Street trees and pedestrian lighting
- Balconies, bays, and porches
- Street doors oriented to street
- Facade rhythm reflecting adjacent single-family
- On-street parking
- Street trees and pedestrian lighting
- Parking set back one-car length
- Minimum one-third of front must contain porch
- Potential detached auxiliary housing unit above garage

2. Neighborhood Lot and Block Pattern
- Street trees and pedestrian lighting
- Minimized building setbacks
- Pedestrian-scaled features
- Landscaped front yards
- Balconies, bays, and porches
- Front door oriented to street
- Minimum one-third of front must contain porch
- Potential detached auxiliary housing unit above garage
- Parking set back one-car length
- Minimum one-third of front must contain porch
- Potential detached auxiliary housing unit above garage

3. Single-Family Parcel
- Front door oriented to street
- Ten-to-twenty foot setback
- Articulated building facade
- Landscaped front yards
- Sidewalk
- Service area
- On-street parking
- Street trees and pedestrian lighting
- Garage set back one-car length
- Minimum one-third of front must contain porch
- Potential detached auxiliary housing unit above garage
- On-street and rear parking
- Multi-use parking
- Retail serves immediate neighborhood
- Street level retail
- Landscaped front yards
- Sidewalk
- Terrace area
- On-street parking
- Street trees and pedestrian lighting
- Front door oriented to street
- Ten-to-twenty foot setback
- Articulated building facade
- Landscaped front yards
- Sidewalk
- Terrace area
- On-street parking
- Street trees and pedestrian lighting
- Front doors oriented to street
- Facade rhythm reflecting adjacent single-family

4. Corner Retail Lot
- On-street and rear parking
- Multi-use parking
- Garage set back one-car length
- Minimum one-third of front must contain porch
- Potential detached auxiliary housing unit above garage
- Retail serves immediate neighborhood
- Street level retail
4. CITY CROSSING

This area is the mid-point of the study area where the spur track crosses the highway. It also marks the threshold of "urban DeKalb" and is a transitional area between the "near" east side and far eastern edge of the City. It is an area with considerable redevelopment potential where a handful of surviving 1950s-era buildings can set the tone, scale, and character of new development. It is also an important connecting "seam" between two neighborhoods that are currently separated by highway traffic, demographics, and the track itself. Redeveloping this area as a more fully developed neighborhood service center would create a point of interface between these two neighborhoods and help ‘set-up’ the approach to downtown.

Mutually supporting neighborhood commercial uses such as a small grocery, thrift shop, shoe repair, or daycare center would create the nucleus of an identifiable east side-neighborhood commercial node, and distinct point of interest at this location. A unique cultural association, and name for this center may also draw patronage from other parts of the City. The landlocked triangle of land formed by the railroad intersection may be used as a neighborhood open space; perhaps incorporating some outdoor recreation facilities. If future commuter rail service is brought to DeKalb, this triangle may also be used as a potential station stop or intermodal transfer point (west of this point, the tracks narrow from four to only two).

Most redevelopment activity in the central part of the corridor should focus on aesthetic improvements and/or eventual redevelopment of the cement plant. Short term improvements may include improved landscaping and screening of the existing structures and possibly new commercial infill development along the highway frontage. Over the longer term, this property should be redeveloped with better connections to the adjacent industrial area to the east, and the consolidation of curb openings along East Lincoln Highway. This site should also be eventually reapedcored with sites to the south and east. Discussions with the current owner on future relocation options should be initiated sooner rather than later so that additional capital improvements that will either delay, or make more expensive, the relocation process can be avoided.
Mid Corridor: City Crossing Streetscape Concept

Lincoln Highway Corridor Cross Section
(Evans Avenue - 11th Street)
General Design Guidelines: City Crossing

1. Typical Commercial Lot
- Drive-up facilities at side or rear
- Screened roof-top mechanical
- Screened service at rear
- On-site storm water infiltration
- Prominent building profile
- "Forest and Rivers" theme
- Articulated building facades
- Transparent facades
- Integrated signage

2. Multi-Family Parcel
- Porches, bays, and balconies
- Ten-to-twenty foot setback
- Articulated building facade
- Landscaped front yards
- Rear parking
- Play area
- Sidewalks
- Terrace area
- On-street parking
- Street trees and pedestrian lighting
- Front doors oriented to street
- Facade rhythm reflecting adjacent single family
5. INDUSTRIAL DRIVE

A revitalized corridor along with Park 88 provides the impetus to improve and expand the loosely knit industrial area bisected by Industrial Drive. New road extensions through this area would provide for better internal circulation, open interior lands for new development, and provide a direct connection to Park 88 and Fairview Road. It would also provide another opportunity to consolidate curb openings and reduce traffic loading onto the East Lincoln Highway.

New light industrial development in this area should be held to more exacting design standards with respect to landscaping and building design. (The example set by Ideal Industries is truly the “ideal” here.) Efforts should be stepped up to remove and redevelop conflicting land uses and obsolete structures. Roads should be improved with full curb, gutter, and sidewalks. Commercial service uses should be permitted to remain or expand on parcels fronting East Lincoln Highway provided that they can be accessed via side streets.

OPEN INTERIOR LANDS
EXPAND INDUSTRIAL AREA
REDEVELOP CONFLICTING LAND USES

General Design Guidelines: Industrial Drive

1. Single Site Manufacturing

- Building face to street
- Horizontally roof lines
- Multiple exterior surfaces
- Landscaped screening
- Rear/side parking
- Enclosed loading bays, storage areas
- Modulated massing
- Mixed materials

Examples of single-site manufacturing include:

- Building face to street
- Horizontally roof lines
- Multiple exterior surfaces
- Landscaped screening
- Rear/side parking
- Enclosed loading bays, storage areas
- Modulated massing
- Mixed materials
2. On Site Stormwater Infiltration

- **Swales**
  - Collect overland runoff into pervious swale systems.
  - Locate swales along roadways or for minor watershed collection points.
  - Collect curb and gutter runoff for further filtration and transport.

- **Curb & Gutter**
  - Utilize curb and gutter systems in higher density areas, steep topography and areas of high volume runoff to transport stormwater to off-site swale systems.

- **Bio-Infiltration Swales**
  - Collect small areas of overland flow into swales planted with native species for filtration, transport and infiltration.
  - Insert biofiltration into swale systems to slow the flow of the stormwater and filter suspended solids from the runoff.

- **Transfer/Filtration**
  - Construct on-site infiltration/treatment basins.
  - Include Bio-Infiltration swales in parking lots.
  - Direct downsputs to French drain systems or pervious surfaces.
  - Include Bio-Infiltration swales in parking lots.
  - Direct runoff into an infiltration/filtration system prior to release.

- **Office/Business**
  - Grade impervious surfaces to drain into swales systems for infiltration and conveyance.
  - Direct downsputs to French drain systems or pervious surfaces.

- **Commercial**
  - Grade parking lots to drain into swale/pipe systems for infiltration and conveyance.
  - Direct downsputs to French drain systems or pervious surfaces.

- **On-Site Stormwater Infiltration & Management**

- **Pond Detention Basins**
  - Connect wetland/pond detention basins to further filter and settle pollutants from the runoff.
  - Design the ponds to collect and treat a majority of all storm runoff prior to release.

- **Wetland Detention Basins**
  - Collect all remaining stormwater runoff into combination wetland/pond detention basins to further filter and settle pollutants from the runoff.

- **Release**
  - Release stormwater runoff to natural drainage systems only during high volume storm and flood conditions.

- **Dekalb, Illinois**
  - January 31, 2005

- **Handewalt & Associates**

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**EAST LINCOLN HIGHWAY CORRIDOR PLAN, DEKALB, ILLINOIS, MARCH 2005**
Mid Corridor: 8th to 11th Streets Concept

Lincoln Highway Corridor
Cross Section
(Evans Avenue - 11th Street)
6. EASTOWN

That portion of the East Lincoln highway between 4th and 10th Streets represents an important transition between the east side neighborhoods and the heart of downtown. This neighborhood should allow for a rich variety of uses and activities including live-work environments for neighborhood artists, artisans, and craftsmen. It should also be identified with a special name or logo to identify it as something more than a mere appendage to downtown.

Arts-supporting activities in this area could serve as a springboard for new development in the neighborhood. For instance, an arts incubator providing gallery space, recording and dance studios, and performance space could serve as a strong anchor and catalyst for a local arts enclave on the east side. Additionally, the creation of a “Wi-Fi” zone may help spark interest and investment in the neighborhood. Other uses may include live-work units for small home-based businesses.

This area also needs to be distinguished from the eastern portions of the study area with a somewhat denser development pattern and a more pedestrian-friendly environment. An opportunity presents itself here to undertake redevelopment on something more than a single-site basis.

The southeast corner of East Lincoln Highway and 7th Street should be redeveloped with a two-story, mixed-use building that ‘ brackets ‘ the intersection and extends the downtown pattern. This building should come out to the corner and parking should be placed to the rear or sides.

On the north side of the street residential infill development consisting of attached row houses or townhouses could be developed fronting on the highway or oriented to 8th, 9th, and 10th Streets. These could consist of a combination of affordable and market-rate units infilled among and between the existing industrial buildings on the interior blocks. Many of these units could be used as live-work space for home occupation businesses with the proprietors living on premises. Several of the existing industrial buildings remain in good shape and house ongoing businesses and support services for nearby industries. These buildings should remain.

Rail Depot

The historic Union Pacific Depot is one of the most important architectural landmarks in the City and could play a key role in the revitalization of downtown’s east end. The City should take a proactive role in either acquiring this property before it is allowed to deteriorate further, or facilitate its acquisition by private investors. Union Pacific officials have said they would cooperate in relocating their depot operations provided that they not incur any costs.

The City should work immediately to find an alternative site for UP’s storage facility - perhaps on the vacant city-owned land on the north side of the tracts, east of 7th Street. City officials should attempt to leverage Union Pacific’s proposed closure of 6th Street in its negotiations for the depot property.
Given that the Nehring Electric may remain a permanent fixture in the neighborhood (and continue to affect the area with its staging activities), non-residential uses should also be considered for the area. Instead of (or in addition to) infill housing, new uses could take the form of new small-shop production facilities that are carefully woven into the neighborhood fabric. Such buildings should be high-quality (mostly two-story brick construction, with modular massing, clerestories, parapets, pilasters, and street-facing windows); present an attractive ‘face’ to the East Lincoln Highway and side streets by orienting the front office space to these streets; and be convertible to residential loft units or walk-up apartments in the future. Under any scenario, safety, circulation, and the buffering of potentially conflicting land uses issues must be paramount in any redevelopment plan.

As discussed more fully in the implementation section to follow, the main effort in this section of the corridor will be a City-led program of land assembly for redevelopment. This is a task that must fall to the City since the private market will be unwilling to assume the time and risk associated with multiple property acquisitions, questionable environmental conditions, and market uncertainties in an untested part of the City. Land assembly will likely involve protracted negotiations with individual property owners and extensive environmental review, and possibly, site remediation. To attract the right developer, the City may ultimately need to discount the land costs, provide environmental insurance, and agree to substantial public improvements including new streets, sidewalks and decorative lighting. In consideration, the developer should be held to high standards of design and possibly be required to set aside a percentage of the new units for people of low to moderate income.

Neighborhood beautification and public amenities could consist of a repetition of NIU’s monument style consisting of limestone podiums and wrought iron at the intersection of 7th and East Lincoln Highway, with additional monuments placed at the point of the “wedge” (near 4th Street). Additionally, this area may eventually require a grade separation of the rail right-of-way in order to ‘bridge’ (in both the literal and figurative sense) the East Lincoln Highway to downtown and NIU. The City may wish to commission an engineering study of potential grade separation options prior to redevelopment.

**Historic Restoration**

Infill development on the blocks between 7th and 10th streets will be greatly assisted by the concurrent renovation of the Fargo Block and the Union Pacific Depot. The City should work with the new owners of the Fargo Block to restore this building and to help maximize tenancy. This may involve the demolition of the badly deteriorated auditorium portion of the building to provide “back of house” parking. The renovation should include new rear-door façade treatments to establish an inner court between the backside of the Fargo building and the Union Pacific Depot. Alternatively, the auditorium portion could be fashioned into a general purpose arts incubator space with parking located across 7th Street on City-owned land. The cobblestone street between the depot and the theater should also be restored. Finally, if the rail crossing at 6th Street is closed, the vacated portion of street should be used for extra public parking, a pedestrian court, or an outdoor performance space.
Eastown: Streetscape Concept

Lincoln Highway Corridor Cross Section
(5th Street - 6th Street)

Eastown: Streetscape Concept
The Point: Townscape Concept
The City should also work with Union Pacific Railroad to acquire and restore the depot property. This building is clearly eligible for, and should be listed on, the National Register of Historic Places thus making it eligible for historic preservation tax credits. Having title to this property pass through the City will facilitate the building being listed, and preservation easements attached, before transferring title to the private parties who will carry out the restoration. It would also provide an opportunity for the City to market the property to a niche user (probably an outside investor/developer) familiar with historic rehabs who can leverage the tax credits for equity capital.

Besides serving as a potential future commuter depot, this building could be adapted to a myriad of uses including a restaurant, micro-brewery or visitor center. The successful restoration of this landmark quality building will provide critical momentum for new infill development east of 7th Street.
7. SPACES IN-BETWEEN

The Maplewood Neighborhood

This neighborhood represents the most cohesive segment of the entire corridor and no major changes in land use are contemplated here. Improvements should focus on new streetscape, improved lighting, and improving the pedestrian environment of the neighborhood; especially along the East Lincoln Highway. The rehabilitation of existing homes should be encouraged, and the neighborhood should be zoned exclusively for residential use.

Infill Development

The infill sites toward the middle sections of the corridor include residential reinvestment in the Dodge neighborhood and commercial redevelopment adjacent to the roadway. Through revolving loan funds and other City incentives, funds for home rehabilitation may be made available to residents in this neighborhood. New “street-corner” commercial redevelopment along this segment of the corridor should be encouraged through assembly and redevelopment. Redevelopment of mid-block areas should consist primarily of new infill housing.

To the south of the corridor, Park 88 will bring new jobs and investment that will change the economics of the corridor. This will create new reinvestment sites south of the corridor. Better interior street connections to and between the industrial parks on either side of the corridor will improve traffic circulation and open these areas to future reinvestment. An immediate redevelopment project in the industrial area north of the corridor is the GE site. Here, redevelopment will provide a more attractive interface with the airport and Peace Road.

General Design Guidelines: Spaces In-Between

1. Single-Family Parcel

- Entrance oriented to street
- Ten to twenty foot setback
- Articulated building facade
- Landscaped front yards
- Sidewalk
- Terrace area
- On-street parking
- Street trees and pedestrian lighting
- Garage set back one car length
- Minimum one-third of front must contain porch
- Potential detached ancillary housing unit above garage

2. Typical Commercial Lot

- Drive-up facilities at side or rear
- Served roof-top mechanical
- Payment building profile
- “Forest and Rivers” theme
- Screened service at rear
- Sidewalk
- Storm water infiltration
- Articulated building facade
- Transparent facades
- Integrated signage
THE PUBLIC SETTING

Townscaping
A program of overall corridor beautification including the screening of industrial uses and enhanced landscaping and lighting, should take place concurrently with infill development. This may involve a program of City-funded improvements on privately held highway frontage.

The design of the public right-of-way should be organized into a series of individual sub-districts but unified with common design elements. At a minimum, these districts include the Gateway District, Dodge-Crossing, and Eastown. Each of these districts should stand out from other sections of the corridor in terms of intensity of development and streetscape accents. Throughout each of these districts, careful attention should be paid to traffic-calming, driveway access consolidation, pedestrian features, land use mix, and elements that communicate neighborhood identity.

The streetscape motif should be established at the Gateway District and carried throughout the corridor. Referencing the collegiate motif created at the main entrance to the NIU campus, could help reinforce DeKalb's identity as a college town. Alternatively, an industrial arts theme reflecting the imagery of the coal elevator, water towers, and railroad accouterments, could capture the more muscular character of the City's east side. Other references may include the historic mile markers and logo that were a part of the original highway design.

Along the corridor, the existing area landmarks should be preserved, accented, and in some cases, referenced in new buildings and signs. These include the strong neighborhood landmarks, such as the coal elevator, train depot, and theaters. As historic icons, these landmarks should be celebrated and held up as permanent symbols of the community's rich history and identity.

Recreation & Open Space
The neighborhoods surrounding the East Lincoln Highway Corridor present various opportunities for new recreational facilities and recreational connectors including vacated sections of railroad right-of-way, and drainage and electrical easements that could be used for bike path/trail extensions. Connecting the corridor neighborhoods to the existing bike path network can tie together the now isolated recreational nodes and link the corridor to other recreational facilities in the community. These facilities include Rotary Park and Dodge Pond as well as scattered pocket parks and schools.

New stormwater installations for the Dodge Addition neighborhood and areas south of the highway, can also be designed for the purpose of providing amenity features to new planned developments. For instance, if a new culvert is needed to divert stormwater from the Dodge neighborhood to the Dodge Pond, this improvement should be combined with a new pedestrian tunnel to provide access to the recreational facilities and bike trail north of the tracks. Similarly, a new stormwater retention pond east of League of Women Voters Park may be a naturalized feature that could serve as an organizing element for new development.

The land-locked rail triangle provides a unique opportunity (and setting) for a multi-use ballfield ("The Yards"). Finally, a recreation trail can direct users to the City attractions, including the new visitor center and potentially a train observation area.
This section provides general instructions for the implementation of the corridor plan. Implementation will require a comprehensive, coordinated strategy that includes detailed planning, financing, and project coordination.

**STRATEGY OVERVIEW**

The City of DeKalb has laid the groundwork for the corridor vision through the identification of opportunities and primary investment zones. Partnerships and local commitment are paramount to making this vision a reality. Identifying a project champion to take a leadership role in plan implementation will be key to the success of the plan.

A framework to attract and facilitate development through tax increment financing and regulatory changes and enforcement is necessary to make the plan a reality. Key action items include changes to local codes and ordinances, the application of design standards, parking enforcement, and the identification of parcel acquisition priorities. A detailed development plan, including a definition of public improvements and investments, should be completed for the larger priority investment zones.

Public funding programs should be explored with state and federal agencies and departments. Partners for urban redevelopment include local, state, and federal legislators, City staff, the Economic Development Commission, the Chamber of Commerce, the DeKalb County Economic Development Corporation, NIU, Main Street DeKalb Inc., the City’s Planning Commission and City Council and local property owners and neighborhood groups. Local sources of revenue may include: tax increment financing (TIF), special service areas (SSA), and business improvement districts (BID). Other sources may include annexation fees.

The immediate steps to create the framework for redevelopment include:

- Create a strategy for using tax increment financing
- Create a regulatory framework for infill and new development
- Create a detailed master development plan for the intersection of Peace Road and the East Lincoln Highway
- Refine design for public improvements: streetscape, signage, stormwater management, and recreation
- Pursue funding sources
IMPLEMENTATION TRACKS

The City will need to use all the available redevelopment "tools" in order to make this vision a reality. These tools fall within three implementation tracks: public actions, infrastructure improvements, and redevelopment facilitation. The graphic to the right identifies the activities in each track and the relationships between them. The priority activities for the East Lincoln Highway are described below.

Public Actions

The City will need to create a regulatory framework for development. Regulatory changes specific to the East Lincoln Highway include:

- Create a strategy to use TIF
- Conduct a TIF analysis to determine increment available from planned development
- Review and revise existing zoning ordinance (including stormwater management and official mapping requirements) and building codes to facilitate development
- Adopt design guidelines for new development
- Continue to expedite permitting

Infrastructure Improvements

The City will need to make initial capital investments to attract development and additional investments as development continues. These investments include:

- Concentration of resources and investment in critical nodes
- Capital improvements programming - lighting, utilities, sidewalk, landscaping, burying overhead wires, Wi-Fi etc.
- Coordination of development with capital improvements
- Wayfinding and signage program
- Stormwater management
- Recreation plan
- Access management (driveway consolidation)
- Wideband or broadband service

Redevelopment Facilitation

Projects that will involve complex development agreements may require the professional assistance of a redevelopment consultant or site selection specialist.

- Property acquisition strategies
- Business relocation
- Developer recruitment
- Marketing materials
- Development agreements
The successful implementation of the East Lincoln Highway Corridor Plan will rely heavily on the use of TIF funds to finance public improvements, assemble land, and recruit developers in the primary investment zones. Three TIF districts are currently in place in DeKalb, two of which include portions of the East Lincoln Highway.

In 1985, the City created (and amended in 1994) the Central Area TIF District, TIF-1, which covers nearly the entire north side of the corridor study area. Most of this TIF captures both property and taxes, but the segment between 7th Street and 1st Street captures property tax only. This TIF will retire in 2010. TIF District 2, created in 1994, covers the areas south of the East Lincoln Highway, and has been subsidized by TIF-1.

Prior to any development or negotiations with potential developers, the City needs to either extend the boundaries and the duration of the existing TIF district(s) or retire them and start anew.

Amending the existing TIFs
Together TIF-1 and TIF-2 capture nearly all of the primary investment zones and could capture the majority of the new increment. As the districts touch each other, the increment could be shared between the districts to repay prior commitments and fund additional improvements. The life of TIF-1 would need to be extended in order to capture enough increment to fund necessary improvements. One or both of the TIFs could possibly be expanded to include parts of intersection of Peace Road and Lincoln Highway (including the land potentially to be annexed).

Create a new TIF
Retiring the existing TIFs in the corridor and creating a new TIF will allow the City to capture the increment from the planned development for a full 23 years. The proposed boundary for this new TIF district is depicted in the map on the following page. The boundaries of this proposed district have been created to include the Peace and Lincoln intersection, areas identified for stormwater management. If the City were to create a new TIF, the property at Peace Road and Lincoln Highway should first be annexed.

Unlike the existing TIFs, the new TIF district must be directly cross-referenced, and adhere to, the specific projects identified in this plan. It shouldn’t be used to fund marginally related projects.
CORRIDOR-WIDE IMPLEMENTATION

As outlined in the Physical Planning and Design section of this plan, a number of public improvements are needed. The implementation steps for each are described below.

Streetscape

Streetscape improvements should be an initial action item for the City as a strong, coordinated streetscape will create a setting for private investment. Developing a schematic design and a detailed design concept is the first step in streetscape implementation. To the extent possible, streetscape improvements should be coordinated and timed with new development to lessen the physical disruption of the road, and to secure a debt-service revenue stream.

Funding for streetscape improvements may be procured from TIF, funding from Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO), federal transportation enhancement funds, or other local sources. With a detailed design concept in hand and approvals from the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), securing funding for construction will be more easily accomplished.

IDOT was consulted during the preparation of this plan regarding proposed medians and planting strips. Although their practice is generally to withhold all approvals pending detailed design plans, they have allowed raised, planted medians on state highways in other communities provided that all safety issues are addressed and local maintenance agreed to.

The specific next steps are:
1. Identify a project leadership entity
2. Develop schematic design
3. Program into capital improvements plan
4. Work out inter-departmental logistics, timing, coordination
5. Obtain IDOT pre-approval
6. Prepare detailed design
7. Final IDOT approval
8. Obtain Cost estimates
9. Secure funding
10. Coordinate construction of individual segments with private development and other public improvements

Wayfinding and Signage

Directing visitors to DeKalb’s most frequented destinations (NIU, Visitor’s Center, City Hall, downtown DeKalb, etc.) will require a more effective wayfinding and signage program for the entire city. This process must begin with a comprehensive examination of existing signage programs in the City and a pathways analysis to determine the most appropriate locations for signs, signposts, and orienting landmarks. The pathways analysis should include input from those responsible for the operation of special destinations in DeKalb.
Official Mapping

Although IDOT does not currently have any plans to widen the East Lincoln Highway, the prospect of redeveloping large sections of frontage creates an opportunity to acquire additional right-of-way width for streetscape and sidewalk improvements, bike lanes etc. This may especially be the case east of the rail crossing where the development pattern is more patchy, setbacks are generally deeper, and where large-scale redevelopment may occur.

While it may take several years and numerous individual redevelopment projects to attain continuous easements, new right-of-way dimensions to accommodate new streetscape elements should be mapped before individual development projects proceed.

Re-zoning

Similar to what the City has already implemented for the Anne Glidden corridor, design overlay zones should apply to the East Lincoln Highway and Peace Road frontages. The standards should emphasize access management measures, cross-easements, minimum landscaping requirements, minimum/maximum lot coverage (FAR) ratios, sign controls placement, size, materials, lighting, rear/side lot parking, build-to lines, and high quality architecture. The latter might include requirements for traditional building materials (wood, masonry) minimum/maximum building heights, articulated exterior or structural elements, and minimum ratios of openings to solid surfaces.

Other sections of the corridor will also require changes to the underlying (use) zoning. These include the 4-corner “Gateway” area, Eastown, and smaller redevelopment areas in the middle sections of the corridor. In general, any corridor frontage areas that are currently zoned for industrial uses should be downzoned for more neighborhood compatible uses - primarily mixed-use. Outdoor storage and pole signs should also be phased out. The Eastown area in particular should allow home-based businesses as a conditional use. (see proposed zoning map on opposite page)

Stormwater Management

For certain areas within the corridor, specifically the Dodge neighborhood, stormwater management is an ongoing concern. Solutions to the stormwater problem, as described in the Physical Planning and Design section, may involve constructing large retention basins at the southeast end of the study area and east of the Dodge neighborhood to intercept overload flows heading to the Dodge neighborhood.

The City’s official map should be amended to include these stormwater basins. The timing for design and construction should be coordinated with new development, and the basins should be dedicated and designed (in a naturalized way) as a condition of site-plan approval. The new basins should be incorporated as amenity features for new development.

Recreation

Planning for recreation and open space in the corridor will accomplish three objectives: open space for corridor residents, stormwater management, and the development of multimodal transportation routes. A detailed recreation plan should be completed that addresses each of these concerns, as well as potential funding sources. Funding for bike trails and open space may be available through the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, the IDOT, or local sources.
Burying Overhead Power Lines
Replacing existing overhead wires with underground systems, and coordinating this work with other public works projects, should be attempted wherever possible. Depending on the specific needs and preferences of local service providers these should be relocated at the same time that other public improvements are programmed for the right-of-way (i.e. major roadway improvements, new sidewalks, water mains, sewer systems, fiber-optic etc.)

Code Enforcement
All redevelopment activities and public improvements programming should take place concurrently with targeted enforcement campaign of all property and maintenance codes. The City should consider the adoption of the International Building Code.

Capital Improvements Programming
The public infrastructure improvements shown in the plan should be programmed concurrently with the highlighted project phases.

Business Development Incentives
Besides TIF, the City should consider a full range of development incentives for the corridor including:

• A revolving loan fund for new business start-ups
• Historic preservation, affordable housing, and new markets tax credits
• Tax abatements/rebates
• Business improvement loans
• Business improvement districts
• Special service areas
PROJECT PRIORITIZATION

The Gateway, Eastown, and City Crossing areas are the primary targets for new investment within the corridor. Achieving the desired land uses and character for these zones will require a coordinated effort by the City. The initial targets for implementation should be the zones on either end of the corridor: Eastown, an area that includes the Fargo Block and Union Pacific Depot, and the Gateway intersection of East Lincoln Highway and Peace Road.

Redevelopment of these areas will help ignite redevelopment in the middle sections of the corridor. Each of the investment zones will require slightly different redevelopment strategies. Universal measures that can be pursued more or less simultaneously include:

1. Engage/enlist property owners, the real estate community
2. Annex property as opportunities allow
3. Extend life, boundary of TIF
4. Rezone land for uses prescribed in the plan
5. Continue to expedite site planning, entitlements
6. Seek environmental assessment/remediation funds
7. Assist developers with land acquisition and assembly
8. Create a revolving loan fund for rehabilitation
9. Enforce clear design standards
10. Concentrate the use of the City’s façade improvement funds
11. Prepare marketing materials and incentives package (public improvements, land write-down, tax credits)
12. Prepare list of qualified developers and solicit interest
13. Publish RFQs
14. Select developers
15. Execute bilateral development agreements

Eastown

The western edge of the study area, Eastown, has immediate potential for revitalization and should be an initial target of the City. Public improvements necessary to attract private investment should be concentrated in Eastown and include new public parking and streetscape enhancements. Many of these activities can be funded with TIF increment and warrant extending the life of TIF-1 or creating a new TIF.

Private investment in the restoration of historic structures and infill development should be encouraged. The Development of arts incubator as catalyst for further neighborhood investment should also be encouraged in this area as a way to establish a unique character and role for the neighborhood.

Beyond the steps outlined above, the City can encourage reinvestment by:

- Facilitating the purchase and restoration of the Union Pacific Depot
- Providing public parking on existing City-owned land; particularly, encumbered parcels
These efforts may be assisted by a larger strategy to designate large portions of downtown for national-register listing; thereby making private restoration efforts eligible for historic preservation tax credits.

Within Eastown two development opportunities have immediate potential for private reinvestment and redevelopment: the Fargo Block/Depot complex and various blighted properties interspersed between 7th and 10th Streets on the north side of the highway. These include the Virgil Cook buildings and multiple frame dwellings that are in generally poor condition and those that are wedged between conflicting land uses. The City should initially concentrate their efforts on these two areas as a springboard to further corridor revitalization.

**Fargo Block & Depot**

The former Fargo Theater building has recently changed ownership. The new owners have aggressive plans for the property and have sought City assistance in rehabilitating it for mixed use. Combined with a restored Depot, the successful restoration of this property would create a critical mass that would provide impetus for redevelopment on the opposite side of 7th Street and further east along the corridor.

The City should work with private investors to restore the Fargo Block. Historic preservation easements should be attached to exterior improvements; and the current owners should be required to fully divulge their financial statements, project pro-forma and/or business plan prior to the contribution of any City funds. Performance bonding should also be required as a condition of any expenditure of City funds.

The Union Pacific Depot is one of the most remarkable historic landmarks in the City. City officials should enter serious discussions with the railroad to donate or swap this building in exchange for a new, publicly funded storage facility on the north side of the tracks. Upon acquiring title to the property, the City should publish, and regionally distribute, a request for proposals to restore the building and adapt it to a restaurant or shops. Preservation easements should also be attached to the property as a condition of sale. Alternatively, the City and/or the Chamber of Commerce may choose to retain the property for public use as offices, a visitor center, or museum.

If City engineering staff determines that 6th Street can/should be closed (as sought by UP), the City should seek the donation of the depot in consideration.

**Residential Infill Development (7th to 10th Streets)**

Successful infill development of the area bordered by 7th, 10th, East Locust Street, and East Lincoln Highway would be greatly assisted by the momentum created by Fargo Block restoration. Due to the fragmented property ownership and the need for relocation assistance, development will require the City’s involvement with site assembly, environmental remediation, developer recruitment, and political support.

The City should begin work to option properties within the target area and solicit developer interest. Alternatively, a consortium of local investors and contractors could be recruited to form a project development team. This could be potentially be organized as a single-project LLC that leverages affordable housing tax credits to raise equity. The chosen team will then enter into negotiations with the City to agree on an incentive package and create a development agreement.
Area-specific implementation steps include:

1. Rezone the land for live/work mixed-use allowing for small home-based businesses
2. Conduct environmental reviews
3. Seek site remediation funds
4. Pursue environmental indemnification from responsible parties
5. Option/purchase selected properties (with hold harmless clauses)
6. Relocate residents and clear sites
7. Coordinate public improvements and streetscape with site development

**Gateway**

With its larger tracts of open land, excellent access and visibility, and high traffic counts; the Gateway represents a prime development opportunity. The following implementation steps suggest that developer interest in this area could be quite high. Prior to discussions with developers, the City should attempt to annex the parcels that are currently outside of the City boundary.

In order to gauge the level and type of development interest, discussions with existing property owners and representatives in the local real estate community are suggested. With a firm understanding of market forces and local vision, a detailed site master plan for the area should be created. The plan would follow the basic concepts presented in this plan but with more precise detail regarding the location and dimensions of streets and public improvements, the placement of buildings and major landscape features, and public services.

With a strong plan to guide land use and design, the City can better direct development decisions and negotiations with the real estate community. The plan should be amended to the existing comprehensive plan and serve as the basis for PUD zoning.

In the absence of an immediate and positive market response, the City should work directly to assemble the property and identify local and regional developers to send an RFQ. The chosen team will then enter into negotiations with the City to create a development agreement. Alternatively, the City may assist land owners in reaching a private agreement with a development team.

1. Annex property
2. Create a detailed site master plan
3. Install public improvements
4. Assemble lands (City assistance may be required)

**The Middle Corridor**

Developer interest in the middle segments of the East Lincoln Highway corridor may be raised after some initial redevelopment success and streetscape enhancements at the ends. Concurrently with redevelopment elsewhere, the City should focus its attention toward the middle segments of the corridor with particular emphasis on either relocating or at least screening some of the more obtrusive uses.

As discussed earlier, initial City-led activity in this part of the corridor should focus on corridor beautification and urban infill along the corridor frontage. First steps should involve discussions with the current owners of the cement plant on infill and screening of their property. These discussions should eventually turn to the long term relocation of the plant and potential re-purposing with sites to the South and East.

**Dodge Addition**

As suggested earlier, the City should initiate a long range voluntary buy-out and land-banking program for this neighborhood whereby properties are acquired and demolished through attrition. When sizeable tracts have been assembled, the neighborhood should be upzoned to allow for future mixed-residential uses that could include a combination of single-family, duplex, and apartments dwellings with an emphasis on the replacement of affordable housing. The City should then work to solicit a master developer in much the same manner specified for the Eastown and Gateway districts.
FUNDING

Implementation will require coordinated and creative use of both public (local, state, and federal) and private (developers, foundations, and community donations) funding. In particular, public funding and investment in capital projects should be used to leverage private funding and investment in redevelopment.

A number of state and federal grants and loans are available to assist with redevelopment and economic development efforts, particularly where substantial job creation is involved. The following is a quick summary of just some, but certainly not all, of the more significant programs for which the City may be eligible.

**Federal**

*U.S. Housing and Urban Development Economic Development Incentive Grant*

This program is funded out of HUD but results from a specific earmark placed in the authorization bill as approved by the U.S. Senate. The potential to secure a grant is dependent upon the year in which the appropriations bill is passed (they typically cover multiple years) and having the prior support of at least one Senator from Illinois.

*U.S. Environmental Protection Agencies*

USEPA has grants for Brownfield assessments and clean-up. Brownfields are existing or former industrial sites that have been contaminated. Eligibility for funding typically depends on the local government or a non-profit redevelopment organization having some form of site control. The program is funded in the annual federal budget. Some of the grants have fixed application deadlines, while others can be applied for at any time.

**State**

*Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity*

DCEO has various grant programs to fund public improvements as needed to encourage new businesses and business expansions, particularly those that pay "living wages". These grants are funded in the state’s annual budget. As a result, the application deadlines, qualifications and amounts available change frequently.

*Illinois Department of Natural Resources*

IDNR administer the Open Space Land Acquisition and Development program, among others, that provides funding for land purchases and improvements for public recreation. Funding comes from a state trust fund, but the amount available varies year to year. Most of these programs have fixed annual deadlines that vary based on the type of funding being sought (e.g., land acquisition, park improvements, etc.). The City should work with the Parks District to target expenditures within the corridor.
Illinois Department of Transportation

IDOT has grant programs for transportation improvements that facilitate economic development and business and job growth. These grants are funded as part of the state’s annual budget and also can vary year to year.

IDOT also administers federal transportation enhancement funds, which are available for streetscape, sidewalk, bike path, and similar improvements, other than road extensions and widening. The next round of federal funding is expected to be appropriated within the next year, and IDOT will likely seek applications shortly after that.

Illinois Environmental Protection Agency

Similarly to USEPA, the IEPA has grants for Brownfield assessments and clean-up. The program is funded in the annual state budget. Some of the grants have fixed application deadlines, while others can be applied for at any time.

The IEPA also has water and sewer grants and low interest loans for communities needing to make system upgrades to comply with federal and state water quality standards.

Local

Tax Increment Finance District

The general idea behind a TIF is to accelerate the growth in development and tax values and to provide a funding mechanism for the public improvements needed to accommodate the new development. Under Illinois law, it is the best and most efficient way to have “growth pay for itself”, as all of the funds come only from taxes paid by the redeveloped properties, not the community at-large. All of the taxing districts continue to receive a base amount of tax, but they do not realize the growth until the TIF expires. As a result, TIF creation often causes some consternation on the part of the taxing districts. When the TIF is created, however, the local government can arrange to share some of the TIF revenues with all of the taxing districts on a prorated basis. Further, state law also requires that the impact of TIF development on school enrollment be evaluated and that the school districts be compensated if the TIF draws new students into the district. In addition, the state TIF law was recently amended to require an evaluation on the impacts to library districts.

When used correctly, TIF districts result in property values that grow much faster and to greater heights than if the TIF were not created. Accordingly, all taxing districts benefit. The real issue is, when? The potential growth in property values and taxes within the redevelopment areas identified in this report is significant. Thus, there may very well be surplus increment to share with the taxing districts during the life of the TIF, in addition to the other forms of compensation already provide for in state statutes and what will likely be vastly enhanced property values at the expiration of the district. Accordingly, the creation of a TIF could have meaningful benefits to all of the taxing districts, which should be fully explored in a cooperative process including all of the affected taxing bodies.

Special Service Areas

A special service area (SSA) is a taxing district established by the City. A majority of the property owners within the district can stop the establishment of the special service area by signing a petition objecting to its creation (35 ILCS 200/27-55). Taxes collected within an SSA can fund a wide variety of municipal facilities and services provided within the SSA including; roads, water and sewer lines, parks and park improvements, garbage collection, and street maintenance,
among several others. In addition, the manner in which taxes are allocated can vary from a flat rate per lot, to a more traditional assessment based on the taxable value of each property within the district. Further, the City can issue bonds on behalf of the SSA but is not responsible for repayment of the bonds in the event of a default.

An SSA could have wide applicability in funding water, sewer, stormwater, and road infrastructure upgrades, streetscape and parking improvements, and other public facilities, such as parks. A typical scenario would be one where the property owner/developer petitions the City to create an SSA prior to building the project. The City holds the required hearings, creates the SSA, and then issues bonds to cover the costs of the infrastructure needs of the new development. The bonds are paid back by levying a special tax against the new development as needed to cover the bond payments. This option is particularly effective for new development on previously undeveloped sites.

In so doing, all of the costs to provide facilities to the new development are paid directly by the developer and/or new home owners. The City has minimal risk, and all administrative costs in establishing and administering the SSA can be charged to the SSA. The primary downside of creating an SSA is that residential unit owners and business owners in the new development are required to pay an additional tax, which could make buying into the development less attractive.

**BID District**

Similar to an SSA, a Business Improvement District (BID) allows property owners to self impose an additional assessment for targeted public improvements above those provided by the City. They are particularly effective in helping to pay for the ongoing maintenance of public improvements although they can also be used to fund those improvements. Generally, a majority of property owners within the district must agree to the additional assessment, and provisions must be made for the administration of the district.

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| U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) | • Low-to-moderate income housing  
• Housing stock improvements  
• Brownfields assessment and cleanup  
• Community facilities |
| U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) | • Brownfields assessment and cleanup through a series of grants and loans |
| Economic Development Administration | • Potential infrastructure funding |
| **STATE** | |
| Illinois Department of Community and Economic Development (DCEO) | • Infrastructure  
• Housing  
• Community Development  
• Economic Development |
| Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) | • Open space and park land acquisition and improvements |
| Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) | • Bicycle trails  
• Street improvements |
| Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) | • Brownfields assessments and cleanup through a series of grants and loans |
| **LOCAL** | |
| Tax Increment Financing | • Land acquisition  
• Business relocation  
• Economic development  
• Infrastructure improvements  
• Blight elimination |
| Special Service District | • Construction and maintenance of downtown parking structures |
Appendix: Public Forum Results

DEKALB LINCOLN HIGHWAY CORRIDOR VISION FORUM
August 18, 2004

The East Lincoln Highway Corridor Vision Forum, held on the evening of August 18th, was conducted to identify the common perceptions and concerns along the corridor. Over 80 people attended the forum located at the Knights of Columbus Hall. The community-at-large, property owners, business owners, and key community leaders were invited. The forum addressed quality of life issues in the general project area by identifying individual “strengths and weaknesses” and group “opportunities and issues”. A group mapping exercise concentrated on identifying preservation sites, revitalization sites, redevelopment sites, traffic “hot spots”, and public amenities. Finally, participants were asked to complete a questionnaire. The sections below summarize each activity. The forum agenda and detailed summaries for each activity are attached to this report.

Individual Strengths and Issues
Participants were asked to record their perceptions of the corridor’s strengths and issues. Common responses for strengths included access to the expressway, gateway to the community, neighborhood parks, historical homes, mature trees, and good restaurants. Common responses for issues included unkempt homes, lack of a grocery store, drainage problems, lack of police patrol, speeding drivers, and lack of code enforcement.

Group Opportunities and Issues
The participants were divided into groups and asked to discuss and record their perceptions of opportunities and issues for corridor redevelopment. All of the responses from the groups were noted and then consolidated into one master list in order to eliminate duplicate responses. From this master list, each participant was asked to vote for their three greatest issues and opportunities. The three greatest opportunities were home rehabilitation and reinvestment, gateway to the City and proximity to downtown, Peace Road and the tollway.

The three greatest issues were property maintenance, unattractive entry into town, and storm drainage.

Mapping Exercise
The groups were each given a large map of the corridor and asked to place different color dots on preservation sites, revitalization sites, redevelopment sites, traffic “hot spots”, and public amenities. Common preservation sites included the Peace and Lincoln intersection, the grain elevator, and the parcels of land on the northeast and southeast corner of Peace and Lincoln. Common revitalization sites included the Broody Burlington Coat Building, the Dodge Building, and the old train depot. Common redevelopment sites included the intersection of Peace and Lincoln, the Dodge Building and the areas close to 7th and Lincoln. Common traffic hot spots included the rail road crossings on Lincoln, 10th Avenue and Lincoln and Peace and Lincoln. Common public amenities included Rotary Park, the intersection of Peace and Lincoln, and the bike path.

Individual Questionnaires
The individual questionnaires asked participants to identify trends that are affecting the city and the corridor, suggestions for the plan focus, community goals that need to be advanced, appropriate mix of land uses in the corridor, and the scale of retail development that is needed in the corridor. Trends affecting the corridor included a lack of home maintenance, a need for small businesses, traffic, and influx of new residents. Suggestions for the primary focus of the plan were improving corridor aesthetics, improving the functionality of the corridor, and improving the residential areas adjoining the corridor. Community-wide goals to be advanced through the plan were suggested to be blight elimination, historic preservation, and quality urban design.