

## DOWNTOWN

*Capitalize on existing successful areas of the downtown and its historic qualities to expedite revitalization of surrounding neighborhoods and create an around the clock, vibrant, mixed-use district.*



# 6a



On-Going/  
Immediate

## Improve Riverwalk/Riverfront connectivity with the downtown.

### Summary

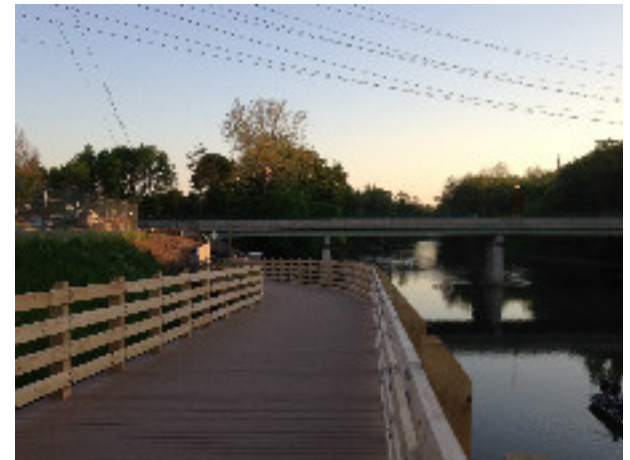
Phase 2 of the Downtown Riverwalk was recently completed to connect the underpass at Conner Street to the pedestrian bridge spanning the White River ultimately leading to Forest Park and connecting into the White River Greenway which culminates at Potters Bridge Park. Future plans call for extending the Riverwalk south, past Conner Street and connecting to the Midland Trace Trail.

### Action Steps

1. Coordinate with Hamilton County Government to complete the construction of Phase III of the Riverwalk.
2. Continue to develop a plan for the west bank of the river that would improve attractions and draw on both banks of the river to improve pedestrian and vehicular connectivity with the existing downtown.
3. Focus on flexibilities within the Unified Development Ordinance that would encourage more development opportunities that are compatible with mixed-use development and higher density growth synonymous with an expanded downtown.

### Resources

- Planning Department
- Economic Development Department
- Parks & Recreation Department
- Common Council
- Engineering Department
- Hamilton County Government
- Indiana Department of Transportation



Completed section of the Downtown Riverwalk



The conceptual West End Park site design includes a new pedestrian bridge to better connect downtown and riverfront recreation areas in the West Gateway.



Improve communication channels to better inform the public and applicable organizations on downtown development.



Short Range

### Summary

Downtowns with successful retail operate very similarly to shopping malls in that they have an agglomerative effect by having a variety of stores and merchandise that attract shoppers to one place. This creates a larger customer base for all of the individual stores than what each store could attract alone. The major difference with a shopping mall is that in a mall there is typically more coordination between individual retailers in terms of communications and marketing. Additionally, typical lease arrangements with mall operators include common advertising. Successful downtowns work to foster better communications and identify ways downtown businesses can work together to increase their agglomerative effect and hence grow their collective customer base.

A good downtown marketing and communications strategy should start with a communications plan. This will help businesses get on the same page in regards to advertising, marketing and identify ways that each can work together. The communications plan can address creating a common theme, shared advertising and marketing opportunities and even coordinating sales and other business events. In addition to the plan, on-going communications is important. Facilitated events such as business luncheons can help provide an informal atmosphere for coordinating and sharing ideas.

Oftentimes local retail can benefit from the local tourism economy. Shopping and food expenditures often can be upwards of 50 percent of a tourist spending. Better cross-promotional

activities can tap into that market and also enhance the overall tourist draw of the area. This increases the size of the overall customer base and expands a retailer's market area. Local retailers can work collectively with local tourism officials to better understand the makeup of the tourism market and identify opportunities to target this demographic.

### Case Study

The small town of Trego, Wisconsin has capitalized being a stop on the Wisconsin Great Northern Railroad, a scenic excursion tour. As the train passengers are captive audiences, marketing materials were aimed at the passengers to entice them to local restaurants and shops after their tour. Extending the tourists stay helped capture additional customers and dollars in the local economy. Local businesses incorporated the railroad theme into their marketing and products to capitalize on this ready market.

<http://www.washburncounty.org/news/communities/187>

### Action Steps

1. Develop a communications plan that would include physical meetings, newsletters, website content and use of media outlets.
2. Continue to develop cross-promotional ties with citywide tourist events and venues.
3. Ensure City representation on relevant boards and retreat agendas in order to communicate.



## Resources

- Economic Development Department
- Noblesville Main Street
- Downtown Merchants
- Noblesville Preservation Alliance
- Public Relations Department
- Hamilton County Convention and Visitors Bureau



*Example of a common promotional item for a downtown event that can be posted throughout the community.*



Short Range

Conduct a retail market assessment to identify what is currently missing, based upon market demand, in the downtown landscape to help encourage more retail diversity, promote business development, and share with local businesses to assist with securing additional financial capital.

**Summary**

Retail competition from large retailers and regional shopping centers has put an increasing pressure on downtowns like Noblesville’s to compete. Some larger shopping retailers have created situations where retailers can no longer compete in entire merchandise categories. A retail market analysis can provide market intelligence to the small retailer to determine market size, demographics, and merchandise preferences. This can better equip the retailer in terms of pricing, targeted advertising, market reach, and merchandise to carry. It can also help smaller retailers with additional supporting information that may be necessary to secure financing for business expansions.

The market analysis also can help the City and Noblesville Main Street to target tenant attraction efforts on retail businesses that are better supported by the market and more likely to survive long-term in the downtown location. This helps create a more stable retail market and more predictability for customers. It also helps fill vacancies and create a vibrant street presence, which is necessary for a successful functioning retail main street.

A retail market analysis should contain the following components:

- Definition of the downtown retail trade area (the primary area where downtown businesses pull their customers from);
- Demographic profile of the trade area customers;

- Identification of overall consumer expenditures, sales and retail sales gaps in the marketplace;
- Understanding of issues that are facing the retail market through customer focus groups or consumer preference surveys.

**Case Study**

The City of Iowa City, Iowa conducted a market investigation that combined retail market analysis with real estate market analysis and extensive consumer opinion research. The analysis identified market niches which the downtown could capitalize on to expand and strengthen retail. The study not only outlined the potential for additional retail growth in the downtown, but also factored in office and residential demand to better understand mixed-use potential.

<http://www.icgov.org/site/CMSv2/file/planning/econDev/marketSurvey.pdf>

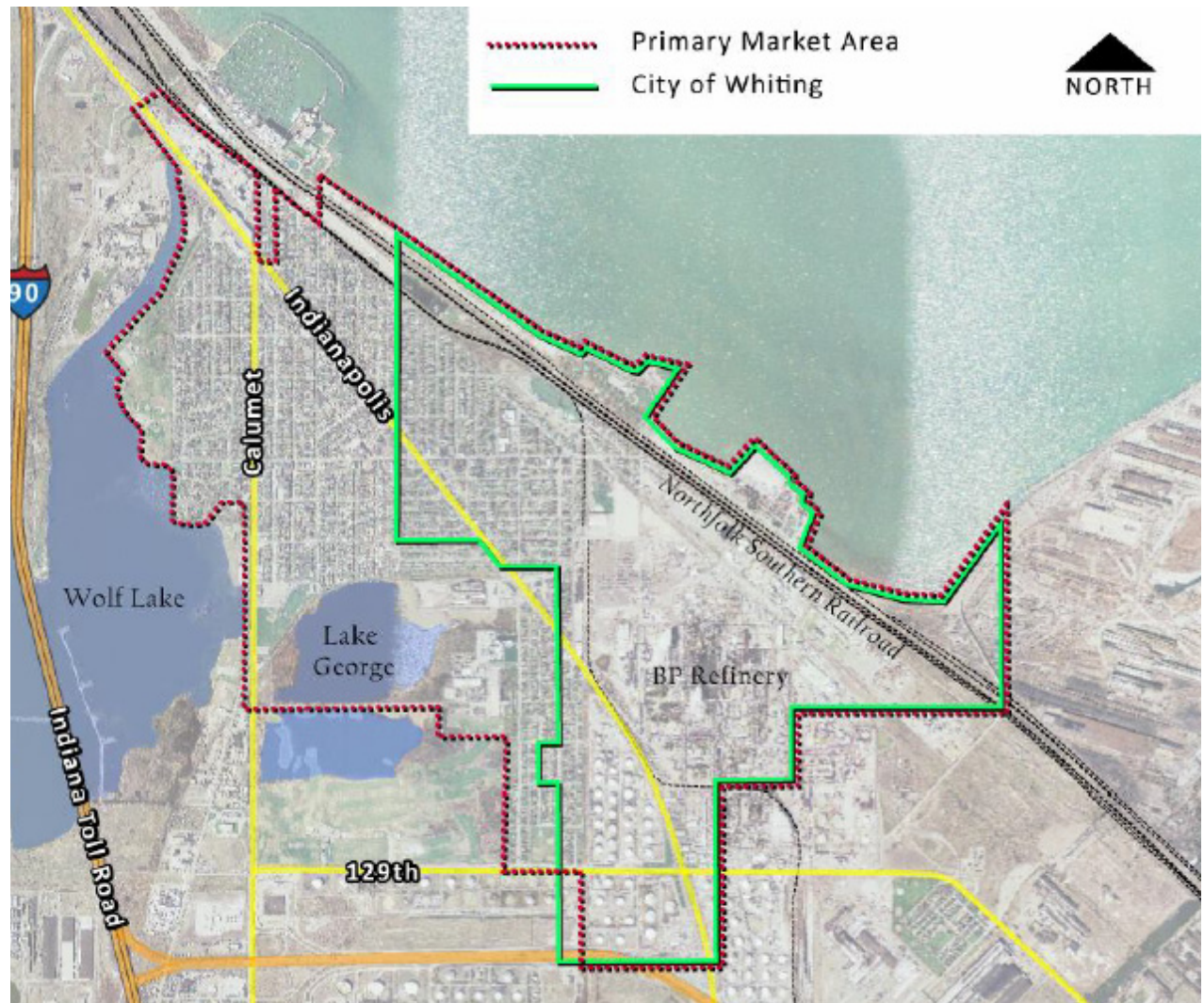


## Action Steps

1. Coordinate stakeholders to help provide guidance on study development and methodology.
2. Identify study objectives.
3. Develop a consumer preference/business survey to understand consumer sentiment and demand.
4. Determine the downtown trade area.
5. Conduct a retail market analysis using established secondary data sources to determine demand for retail based upon retail type and merchandise type.
6. Identify overall issues and supply/demand gaps.
7. Share overall analysis with downtown businesses and the public.

## Resources

- Downtown Merchants
- Noblesville Main Street
- Economic Development Department
- Planning Department
- Indiana Small Business Development Center



Primary trade area delineation for downtown Whiting, Indiana conducted by Gruen, Gruen & Associates and American Structurepoint.

# 6d



Short Range

Create a downtown streetscape plan for Conner Street and 8th, 9th and 10th streets between Maple Avenue and Logan Street.

## Summary

The term streetscape refers to the overall design, architecture and art that creates the public right-of-way of a street. This includes not only the road pavement, but the sidewalks, common areas, open space, and amenities like signs, art, and furniture. A well thought-out and designed streetscape contributes to creating a sense of place and improves the economic vitality of an area by making it more inviting and set as a destination in the eyes of customers and investors. Also, streetscapes that are designed for all-modes of transportation including automobiles, bicycles, transit and pedestrians create activity in front of stores and businesses which leads to increased sales for retail, higher property values, and improved safety and security.

## Case Study

The Town of Speedway, IN focused on rejuvenating their historic Main Street, located just south of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway. Main Street consisted of wide travel lanes, narrow and unkempt sidewalks, and little retail or business activity. A number of buildings sat vacant or underutilized. The redevelopment commission enacted a plan that included a new streetscape for Main Street which included expanded pedestrian areas, space for benches and sidewalk cafes, public art, bicycle parking, a dedicated bicycle lane, traffic calming to improve pedestrian safety, and increased parking. After construction, the Town has seen renewed interest in businesses locating on Main Street. This has included a new health pavilion for Community Health Systems, Sara

Fisher Hartman Racing’s headquarters, and the new North American headquarters for the IndyCar chassis maker Dallara.

<http://www.speedwayindiana.com/>

## Action Steps

1. Determine overall project scope and objectives.
1. Create a committee of stakeholders to help guide the overall shape and design of the plan.
1. Conduct a quality-based selections search to find a consultant that specializes in streetscape design and planning.
1. Begin development of the plan which will include public engagement throughout the planning process.
1. Adopt the final plan.

## Resources

- Planning Department
- Plan Commission
- Common Council
- Noblesville Main street
- Economic Development Department
- Engineering Department
- Street Department





Plan view of Main Street streetscaping project in Speedway, IN which included, pedestrian, bicycle and automobile facilities including raised intersections to slow traffic. (American Structurepoint)



Artist's rendering of Main Street Speedway after full build out. (American Structurepoint)



# 6e

Create by ordinance, a Riverfront Redevelopment District in downtown Noblesville to improve entertainment choices.



Short Range

## Summary

The Riverfront District designation is an economic incentive tool allowed for in Indiana Code to increase retail and tourism activities. Typically Indiana communities are limited on the number of alcoholic beverage licenses that can be active based upon population. Those licenses are also bought and sold on the open market which drastically increases the cost. This discourages many new restaurants from opening as they depend upon alcohol sales as an important component of their revenue stream to maintain economic viability. The district designation allows communities the ability to issue an unlimited number of licenses sold at the state designated purchase rate as opposed to the private market rate. This improves the opportunity for new business startups and increases the number of restaurants and nightlife that can be located within a community. These districts can only be designated within 1500 feet of a river or stream and must be part of an overall economic development strategy. As a part of the district designation, the City is required to adopt rules regarding eligibility for the licenses.

## Case Study

In 2012 the City of South Bend, Indiana developed the Municipal Riverfront Development District which decreased the cost of three-way liquor licenses from \$40,000-50,000 to \$1,000 as a way to spur restaurant development near the St. Joseph River. Eligibility requirements were enacted to include a focus on dining, entertainment and cultural experiences rather than the consumption of alcohol, how items can or cannot be served, and the consumption and sale of food.

<http://southbendin.gov/government/content/downtown-south-bend-municipal-riverfront-development-district-liquor-license>



Boundaries of Lafayette, IN Wabash Riverfront district which includes an ordinance establishing a Riverfront District to spur additional retail and restaurant development.





## Action Steps

1. Establish either an economic development/redevelopment or urban renewal area under IC 36-7-14 et seq., an economic development project district under IC 36-7-15.2 or IC 36-7-26, or a community revitalization enhancement district under IC 36-7-13-12.1.
2. Determine overall boundaries of the riverfront district in compliance with IC 7.1-3-20-16.1.
3. Adopt an ordinance establishing the designation, boundaries, and local and state funding that will be used within the district.
4. Draft regulations that will be required by the local alcoholic beverage board to grant licenses within the riverfront district.

## Resources

- Planning Department
- Economic Development Department
- Common Council
- Indiana Alcohol and Tobacco Commission
- Municipal Attorney
- Local alcoholic beverage board

*Potential area of Downtown Noblesville that could be eligible to be included within a Riverfront Redevelopment District based upon distance regulations set out in Indiana Code.*



On-Going/  
Immediate

Create a stronger connection between downtown and the west side of the river through increased pedestrian, bicycle amenities and a wayfinding and beautification program.

### Summary

Kevin Lynch, a sociologist and urban designer, surmised through observation that there were a number of basic urban elements that humans instinctively use to help guide their navigation and visually associate a geographic area with a “place.”

Wayfinding, distilled to its root, is the function on how we move and find our way through the built environment. More functionally this includes signage, pavement markings and more subtle elements like change in pavement color or sidewalk design that helps guide us from place to place.

In the urban environment there are primarily five types of wayfinding elements:

- Paths - the area where we move and circulate whether on foot or by vehicle.
- Markers - these are items that are mental landmarks and can include monuments, arches, kiosks, banners, or memorable public art.
- Nodes - these are the destinations or stops that people would make on a path such as a major intersection, a park, shopping center or a plaza.
- Edges - these are linear elements that act as physical or perceived boundaries or transition points, this may include infrastructure elements like an interstate or geographic features like rivers and lakes.
- Districts - these are places with a similar character such as Downtown Noblesville, Broad Ripple or Fountain Square in

Indianapolis. They have an identifiable meaning and place associated with them.

In order to better unify a community, better define edges and districts, and help visitors and residents find attractions and nodes, communities have established wayfinding programs to coordinate wayfinding elements like signage. This helps assure identifiable and predictable markers in key locations to make navigating the community easier.

A good wayfinding program for Noblesville could:

- Develop a vehicular and pedestrian wayfinding system for destinations throughout the City with a focus on the core of the City;
- Develop a wayfinding system that will create an overall identity for the City, that is compatible with its character, and that will also help to differentiate existing and emerging districts;
- Provide signage that will direct visitors to parking lots and garages;
- Reduce visual clutter and increase consistency of City signage;
- Promote walking and bicycling;
- Create common interpretive signage in the City’s parks, trails and cultural areas;
- Address ADA guidelines and considerations in the design of the program.



## Case Study

The City of Baton Rouge, LA developed a wayfinding project that incorporated the rich culture, diversity and history of the City into the overall signage and design. It not only includes directional signage but interpretive/informational stations. It is praised for its effectiveness in aiding navigation and local businesses have even incorporated some of the wayfinding designs into their own promotional pieces.

<http://www.downtownbatonrouge.org/aroundWayfinding.asp>

## Action Steps

1. Continue to implement the West Gateway Plan.
2. Ensure that wayfinding is incorporated into an overall citywide wayfinding program.
3. Develop designs that serve to create paths and linkages that extend the downtown theme across the river, but also embrace existing neighborhoods.

## Resources

- Planning Department
- Engineering Department
- Economic Development Department
- Parks & Recreation Department



Left: Example of a downtown Baton Rouge pedestrian information kiosk (Sasaki Associates)

Right: Monument welcome sign for Bedford, Indiana paying homage to Bedford's limestone quarries



Left: Automobile scale directional sign in Charlotte, North Carolina

Middle: Pedestrian scale directional sign in Charlotte, North Carolina

Right: Interpretive signage at Raccoon River Valley Trail, IA

# 6g



Medium Range

Develop a historic district plan for the area surrounding the historic Hamilton County Courthouse and courthouse square.

## Summary

Indiana Code provides the ability for local communities to set up historic landmark and historic district designations to help protect the character and structures of neighborhoods and commercial districts of historic or cultural value.

### Local Historic District

This is a geographic area that can vary in size in which historic buildings are protected. The district's rules and protection are governed by a local historic preservation commission. These districts must be established through local ordinance. The ordinance will also provide for the rules and guidelines that will be enforced within the district. Once the district is created, property owners that want to construct, modify or demolish structures within the district must apply to the local historic preservation commission for approval.

### Design Guidelines

The local historic preservation commission enforces and follows the enabling ordinance and the rules and guidelines that are included within it. Design guidelines provide a clear road map for property owners to understand what is allowed or not allowed within the district. This provides a good basis for the commission's decision-making and more predictability for the property owner. Oftentimes these guidelines will address:

- Architectural character
- Building scale and massing
- Orientation of structures
- Demolition

- Signage
- New construction standards
- Landscaping

### Grassroots Involvement

Noblesville should be supportive of neighborhoods that want to attain a historic status or form a historic district. While the City should be supportive, it ultimately takes the will and organization of local residents and/or business owners to develop the political support and structure of the district. This helps ensure buy-in from property owners and does not place additional restrictions on property that are not the consensus of the community. Noblesville's planning staff can provide technical assistance and guidance for these efforts.



*Cole-Evans House, built circa 1830s is a historic home featuring Greek Revival architecture*



## Case Study

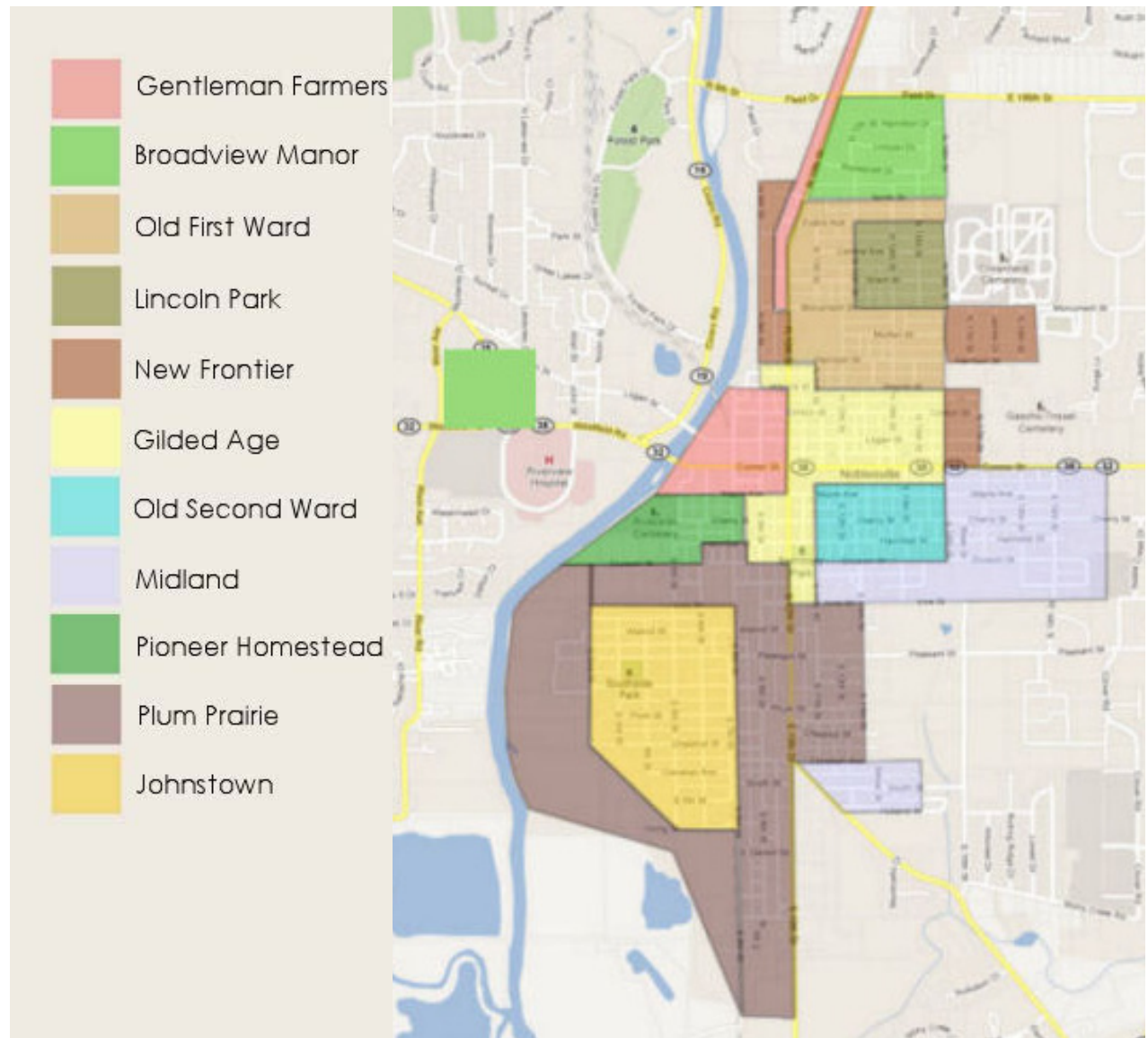
In Roswell, New Mexico the Historic Preservation Committee, a 501(c)3 organization of residents was formed to protect the historic center of the community. The committee prepared a report and inventory of historic features and worked with the City to establish an official historic district with development regulations. Contact: Historic Preservation Committee, Historical Center of SE NM (200 North Lea Avenue Roswell, NM 88201).

## Action Steps

1. City will disseminate roadmap document on creating a local historic district to interested parties.
2. City planning will provide support to local grassroots organizations that intend to create a historic district.
3. City will assist with technical language and creation of the necessary ordinance to establish a historic district.

## Resources

- Planning Department
- Noblesville Preservation Alliance
- Economic Development Department
- Common Council
- Noblesville Main Street
- Indiana Landmarks, Inc.



*Zones of Historic Significance. These areas could be good candidates for historic districts if there is grassroots support.*



Short Range

## Review and amend the Downtown District standards to allow for increased residential uses away from the Courthouse Square.

### Summary

Since post-World War II, modern zoning has neatly carved the city up into various districts of residential, commercial and industrial use. Each of these uses is organized and isolated from the other. Although this seemed like a good idea at the time, it has led to cities that are no longer walkable and require quite a bit of travel to move from home to work to play.

The makeup of the traditional family and household has changed considerably over the past 20 years. Traditional two-parent with kids households have decreased and singles are estimated to soon be the largest share of households. Also, the baby-boomer generation is now entering retirement years which means increased demands for walkability. The AARP has found that over 71 percent of older households want to be within walking distance of amenities.

Mixed-use development reverses this trend of isolationism and operates on the premise that a place is more attractive when complementary uses can coexist in a single area. This development blends residential, commercial, cultural, institutional, and in some circumstances industrial uses into one area. When you think of many successful areas of Central Indiana today, most of these are examples of mixed-use development. Mixed-use development:

- Allows for greater housing variety and density;
- Reduces distances between housing, workplaces, retail businesses, and other

destinations;

- Encourages more compact development;
- Strengthens neighborhood character;
- Promotes pedestrian and bicycle friendly environments.

### What Does Mixed-Use Include?

Projects can be mixed horizontally or vertically. Horizontal mixing includes most older downtowns where all kinds of land uses occur within close proximity. A vertical mix includes residential above retail or office uses.

### Downtown

Downtown Noblesville is an ideal location for more mixed-use development. Historically many



Top: Mixed-use building in Downtown Noblesville





of the original buildings were designed with that in mind, often mixing commercial and residential uses. Revitalization of upper floors for housing and the creation of additional residential units in the downtown area will increase the round-the-clock customer base and target development in areas with infrastructure already in place. It will be important that development takes into account the historical character of the area and also considers the future of mass transit, which enhances the value and effectiveness of mixed-use development.

### The Fiscal Implications of Mixed-Use

It has been the conventional wisdom that separated uses protect property values. This has been debunked through many studies of the economic and fiscal impacts of these types of developments. It turns out that complementary uses are seen as a higher benefit to customers and users. This is considered a location agglomerative effect in economics lingo. Mixed-use developments, on average, generate more property and sales taxes per acre of development when compared to a conventional strip mall, and also generate more jobs. Furthermore mixed-use development is often cheaper to serve from a city services standpoint. It is often more compact, using less land, and requires less infrastructure than development that is more spread out.

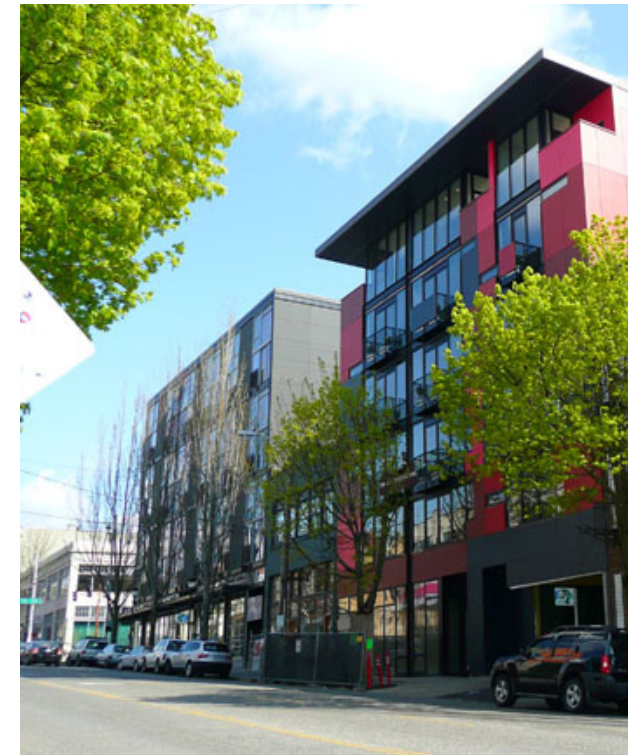
### Case Study

A study by Smart Growth America of “the Gulch” neighborhood of downtown Nashville, Tennessee provided evidence that mixed-use



*Vertical Mixed Use - Housing on top of ground floor retail*

walkable developments heavily impacted the city’s fiscal bottom line. Compared to other suburban development in the Nashville region, a 76 acre project that included 4,500 housing units and 6 million square feet of office space in the neighborhood was estimated to cost the city approximately \$1,400 per unit per year in infrastructure maintenance, policing, fire, and general fund obligations. At the same time it was estimated that the city received a total of \$3,370 per unit per year in the same development. The



*Horizontal Mixed Use - Loft style apartments next to retail and office buildings*

comparison suburban development actually produced \$1,620 per unit per year in revenue and approximately \$1,600 per unit per year in costs.

<http://dc.streetsblog.org/2013/05/08/nashville-study-walkable-infill-development-provides-the-most-revenue/>

## Action Steps

1. Consider recommendations of the Unified Development Ordinance Audit on increasing densities and uses in the downtown area.
2. Examine the existing transect of the downtown and adjacent neighborhoods and provide for a transition of density and uses away from the downtown area.
3. Determine station locations and provide for higher density mixed-use transit-oriented-development in station area locations.
4. Engage downtown businesses and citizens on the character of the downtown and surrounding neighborhoods.
5. Identify overall objectives and issues to address.
6. Develop text and map amendments to the Unified Development Ordinance for comment and consideration.
7. Adopt changes to the Unified Development Ordinance.



Top and Bottom: Easton Town Center in Columbus, OH

## Resources

- Planning Department
- Plan Commission
- Common Council
- Noblesville Main Street

