



CENTERS

Centers are the hubs of activity that, along with neighborhoods, give a community its shape and identity. Centers come in a variety of forms, sizes, and stages of evolution.



Generally speaking, while neighborhoods tend to be quiet, peaceful, and centered on residential development, with potential for complementary commercial uses, centers are generally busy areas with dense concentrations of commercial, educational, recreational, and institutional activity, with potential for complementary residential uses.

Normal's centers, even more than its neighborhoods, are emblematic of the sprawling development patterns of the past several decades. Many are only accessible via arterial roads, and most are almost purely auto-oriented and are single-use. Along Veterans Parkway, perhaps the classic example of this theme, there are several miles of strip malls lining either side of the road, with as much space devoted to parking lots as to the destinations they serve. While many of these developments have been commercially successful, most fall short on all three of the Complete/Connected/Compact criteria. They are commercial spaces, not vibrant places.

Even the commercial success that has sustained this type of development should not be expected to continue indefinitely. Strip malls around the country have struggled in recent years with the onset of e-commerce, which will likely continue to replace brick-and-mortar stores. This is already happening in Bloomington-Normal. As this trend continues, the Town's population growth slows (which is expected after decades of very fast growth), and the focus shifts more and more toward infill development over sprawl, the challenge will be to reshape the centers to be more complete, connected, and compact.



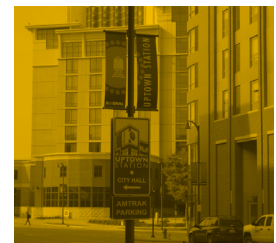
Neighborhood Centers **F2.4**



Local Centers **F2.8**



Regional Centers **F2.14**



Town Center **F2.18**

This will not, for the most part, entail wholesale replacement, which would be neither possible nor desirable in most cases. Rather, the Town should focus on “sprawl repair”—working with property owners and developers to repurpose existing spaces to make them denser, more accessible, and offering a vibrant mix of uses. This may include regulatory changes, incentives and collaboration, and, in spaces where significant evolution is expected, dedicated sub-area plans. If and when commercial centers fail, the Town should consider adapting them for public use, taking the opportunity to create desirable public places.

This section evaluates centers in three different dimensions: scale, development/redevelopment potential, and use.

DEFINITIONS

By Scale

Neighborhood Center: small-scale centers, primarily serving a few neighborhoods (or even just one) at a time.

Local Center: mid-sized centers that serve the entire BN community, but generally do not attract many external visitors.

Regional Center: large-scale centers that have an impact reaching beyond the BN metro area—retail centers that attract shoppers from other Central Illinois metros, regional employers, major educational institutions, hospitals, etc.

Town Center: mixed use, commercial, institutional, and cultural center at the heart of the Town.

By Development/Redevelopment Potential

Emerging: Centers that have significant amounts of undeveloped or under-developed land.

Evolving: Centers that are commercially successful today but have room for improvement.

Established: Centers where not much change is expected or are under the control of a large institution.

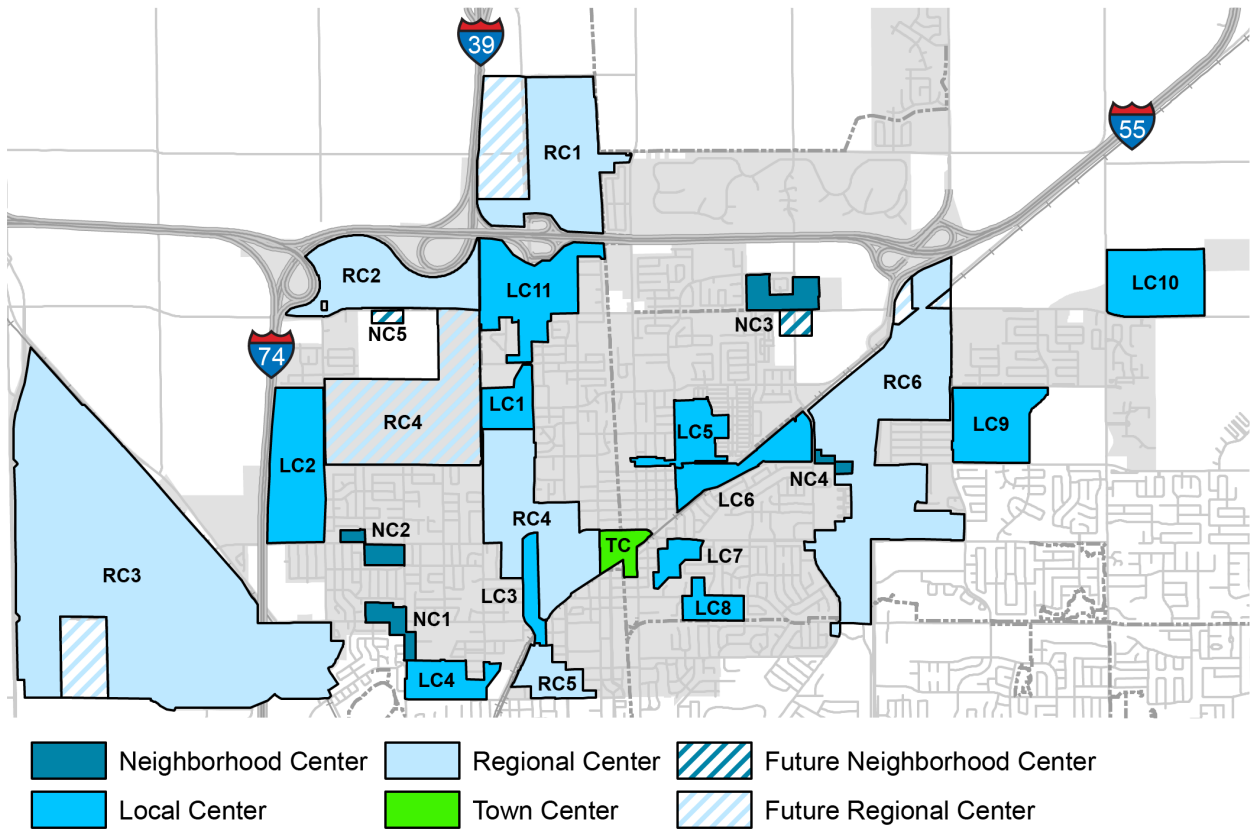
Special: Centers that have historical, cultural or other unique characteristics.

LEGEND

RC	Regional Centers
LC	Local Centers
NC	Neighborhood Centers
TC	Town Center

SPECIAL	ESTABLISHED
<div>TC</div> <div>LC5</div>	<div>RC2 RC4 RC5</div> <div>LC2 LC4 LC7</div> <div>LC8 LC10</div>
EMERGING	EVOLVING
<div>RC3</div> <div>LC9 LC11</div> <div>NC5</div>	<div>RC1 RC6</div> <div>LC1 LC3 LC6</div> <div>NC1 NC2 NC3 NC4</div>

MAP FACT: Centers



Neighborhood Centers

- NC1 Cottage/Hovey
- NC2 Parkside/College
- NC3 Towanda/Raab
- NC4 Towanda/Fort Jesse
- NC5 Heartland Area [Future]

Local Centers

- LC1 Fairview Park Area-Civic/Commercial
- LC2 Parkside-Civic
- LC3 ISU Oriented Retail/Mixed-Use Center
- LC4 Public Works Area
- LC5 One Normal Plaza/Route 66-Cultural
- LC6 Railroad-Commercial/Industrial
- LC7 Anderson Park/Chiddix School Area-Civic
- LC8 Colene Hoose/Community Cancer Center-Civic
- LC9 Fort Jesse Area/Hershey Area-Office/Civic/Commercial/Residential
- LC10 Normal Community High School (NCHS) Area-Civic
- LC11 Main Street/I55-Commercial/Gateway

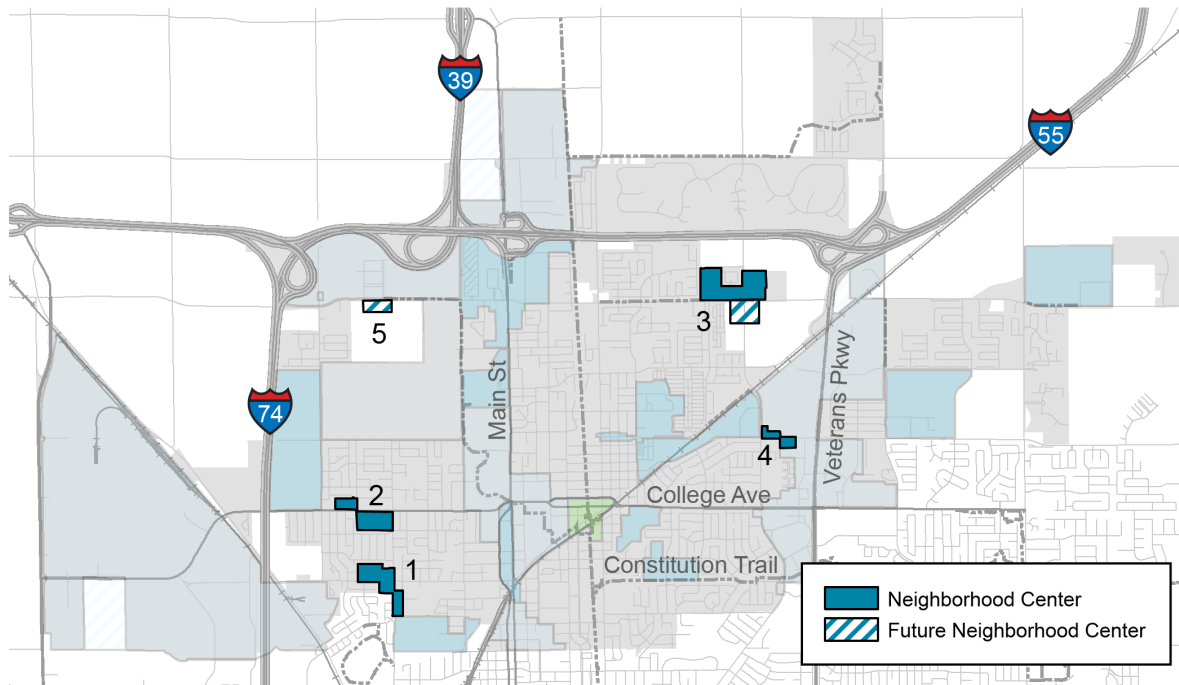
Regional Centers

- RC1 Main Street/I55 Industrial/Gateway
- RC2 Heartland & CornCrib-Civic/Institutional
- RC3 Mitsubishi/Rivian Area-Industrial
- RC4 Illinois State University-Institutional
- RC5 Advocate BroMenn Area-Institutional
- RC6 Veterans Parkway-Commercial

Town Center: Uptown

NEIGHBORHOOD CENTERS

MAP FAC2: NEIGHBORHOOD CENTERS



Neighborhood Centers may include small shops, grocery stores, restaurants, cafes, ice cream parlors, and common green spaces, all within easy walking distance for a significant number of residents. By providing convenient access to goods and services, gathering spaces, and even, in some cases, cultural amenities, these places become key components of complete and connected neighborhoods.

In Normal, such neighborhood hubs are uncommon. Neighborhood retail has been on the decline for more than five decades, both in Normal and in other communities, as sprawl and auto-centric, single-use urban design have made neighborhoods less walkable and made it difficult to sustain the kind of density and accessibility on which neighborhood centers thrive. It could be argued that Normal actually has no real neighborhood centers at present—only a few local centers that are intended to serve the broader community, but which happen to be located in the midst of residential areas and have adequate multimodal access.

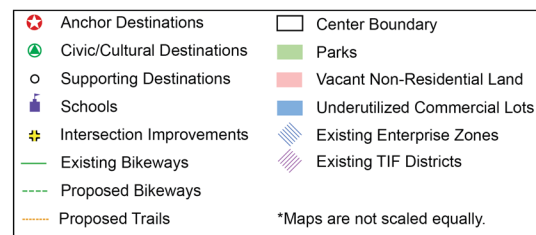
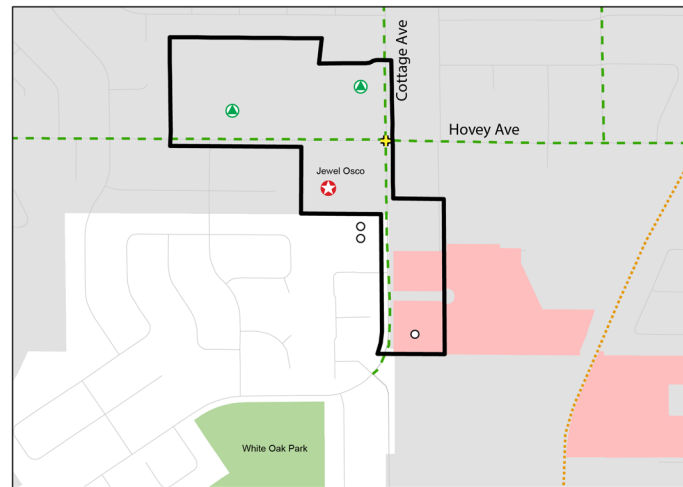
The six neighborhood centers identified here were chosen not so much because they are already strong neighborhood centers, but because they are the centers most likely to become strong neighborhood centers over the planning horizon. All six are located within walking distance of a substantial number of residents, and all but one are classified as emerging or evolving, meaning that they are expected to change significantly and have the potential to do so in a way that make them more positive assets for the surrounding neighborhoods.

1. Cottage/Hovey

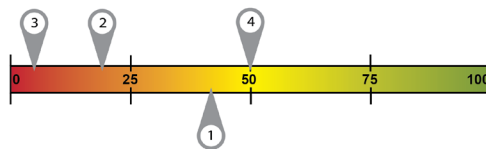
This Center includes a horizontal mix of residential, commercial, and institutional uses. Anchored by a grocery on the southwest corner of Cottage and Hovey, this center also supports two smaller chain establishments (connected by a parking lot located in Bloomington), a home goods establishment (Dollar General), and a couple of churches. This center also includes an apartment complex that is home to low to moderate income senior households.

Multimodal access is not outstanding, with a Walk Score of 42 and Transit Score of 34 (though there is, at time of writing, a bus route that runs between Walmart in West Bloomington and Uptown Normal, both major destinations).

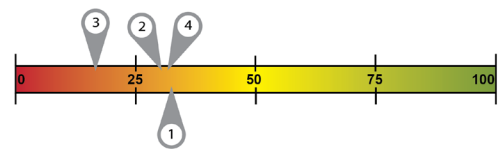
The surrounding area is primarily residential, with a mix of more apartments, townhouses, and single-family detached homes. Some of these neighborhoods are well-connected to the center itself, while others are near by but cut off by insular suburban-style design.



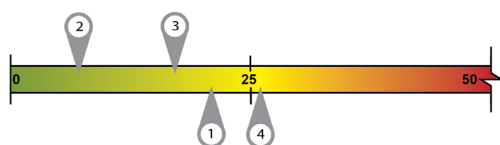
Walk Score



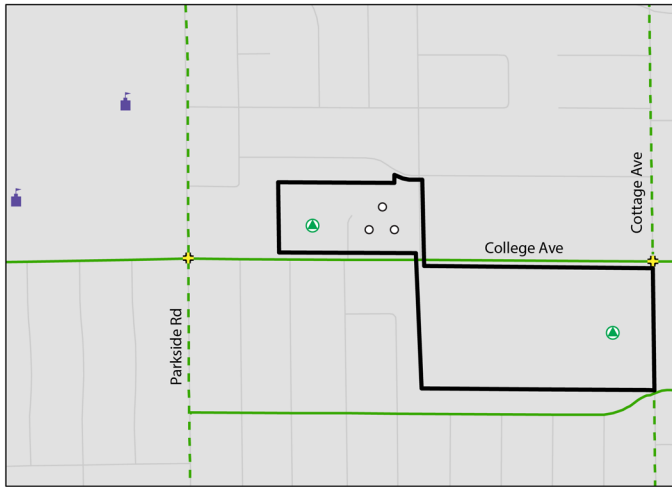
Transit Score



% Area (Acres) as Parking Lots



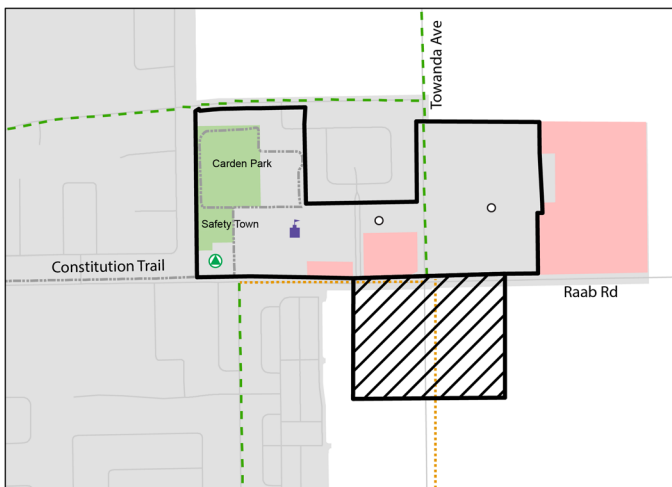
2. Parkside/College



Spanning an area on either side of W. College Avenue between Parkside and Cottage, this center also includes a horizontal mix of uses. To the northwest lies a small shopping center (University Park Plaza), including a local institution—Carl’s Ice Cream. In the southeast is the Holy Cross cemetery and vacant land owned by the church. This area is included in the Center to show traffic patterns.

The surrounding area is primarily low-density residential, mostly affordable single-family detached homes. University Park Plaza shows the most potential for evolution. A denser and more walkable layout, centered on the ice cream shop, would make this a more desirable neighborhood destination and community hub.

3. Towanda/Raab

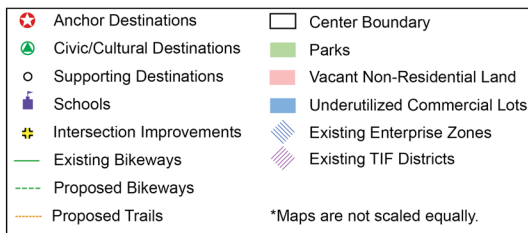
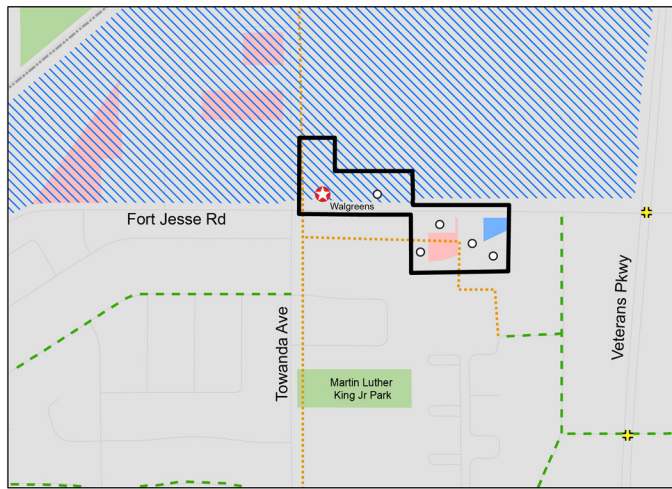


The western half of this center is structured around community facilities, including (from north to south) Carden Park, Prairieland Elementary School, and Fire Station #3. Taking advantage of the presence of all three facilities, Carden Park includes Safety Town, an educational play area that includes mock roads, street signs, and railroad tracks, which children can navigate on provided tricycles.

An assisted living facility and a private early childhood education facility can be found on the west side of Towanda Avenue. Across Towanda to the east is a Methodist Church and a vacant parcel owned by the church.

Surrounding uses include low-density suburban-style housing, plus vacant fields south of Raab on either side of Towanda. The amount of vacant land and the impending fire station relocation presents opportunities to utilize existing assets and create a vibrant, mixed-use neighborhood center.

4. Towanda/Fort Jesse



Located at the intersection of two busy four-lane roads, this area includes a pharmacy and a bank to the northwest (north side of Fort Jesse), plus a small collection of businesses to the southeast (south side of Fort Jesse, between Towanda and Landmark), including Fort Jesse Cafe—a coffee shop and breakfast place treasured by the locals.



Jewel-Osco at Cottage and Hovey NC1



Italian Ice at Towanda and Fort Jesse NC4



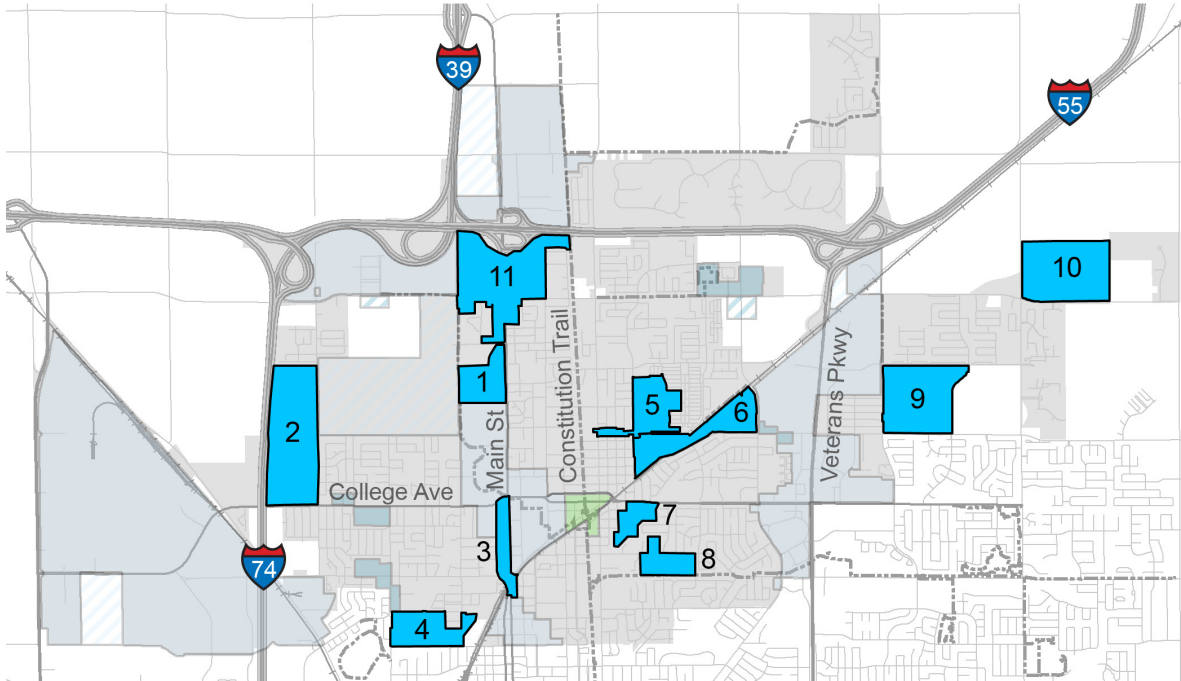
Safety Town in Carden Park next to Prairieland School in NC3



Carl's Ice Cream at Parkside and College NC2

LOCAL CENTERS

MAP FAC3: LOCAL CENTERS



Normal's eleven Local Centers support a mix of retail, office, civic/institutional uses, and even light industrial uses. They include five established centers, four evolving centers, one emerging center, and, in the One Normal Plaza/Rt. 66 area (LC5), a unique "special center" that is likely to be a major focus of planning over the lifetime of this plan.

Eight of the Local Centers are under at least some degree of institutional control, whether by the Town or by other public or private institutions (primarily Unit 5). The three non-institutional centers (LC6, LC9, and LC11) have more typical auto-oriented design with separated uses—mostly industrial with some complementary commercial uses in LC6, offices in LC9, and a shopping complex anchored by a grocery store and cinema in LC11.

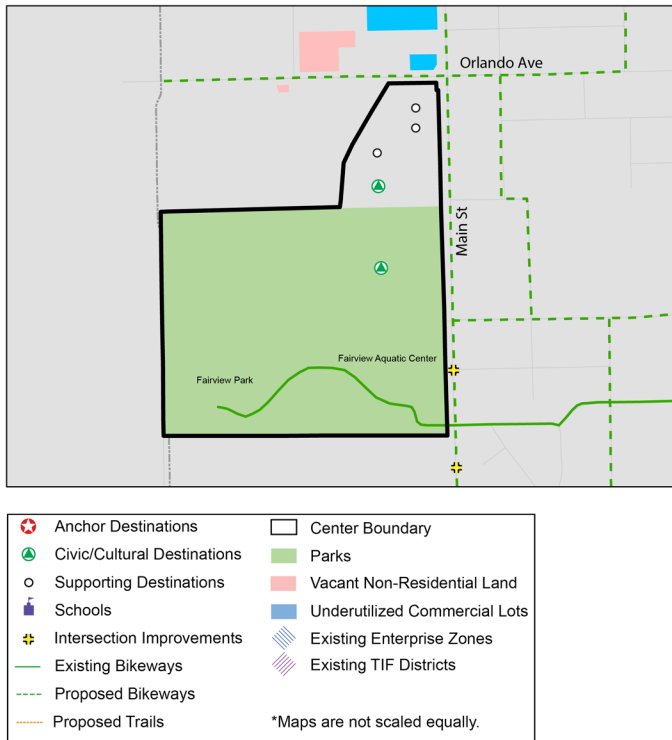
Like most parts of the community, the local centers are predominantly auto-oriented with excessive parking. Multimodal accessibility is generally limited. While Local Centers, by their nature, serve a larger geographic area than neighborhood centers, and must therefore be more accommodating to cars, they should still have good multimodal access and be reasonably well connected to surrounding neighborhoods and centers. This is especially imperative for critical community facilities like parks and schools, which are common in the local centers. Only three of the eleven centers have Walk Scores greater than 50, and none have Transit Scores greater than 50 [See Metrics in the Introduction for explanations of Walk Score and Transit Score].

Unlike the Neighborhood and Regional Centers, only a few of the Local Centers have

significant amounts of vacant land and under-utilized commercial land, but for the evolving and emerging areas, and areas controlled directly by the Town, there are still opportunities to shape development in a positive direction. Centers that may benefit from such targeted efforts include LC1, LC3, LC5, LC6, and LC9. These centers are outlined in greater detail in the following pages.



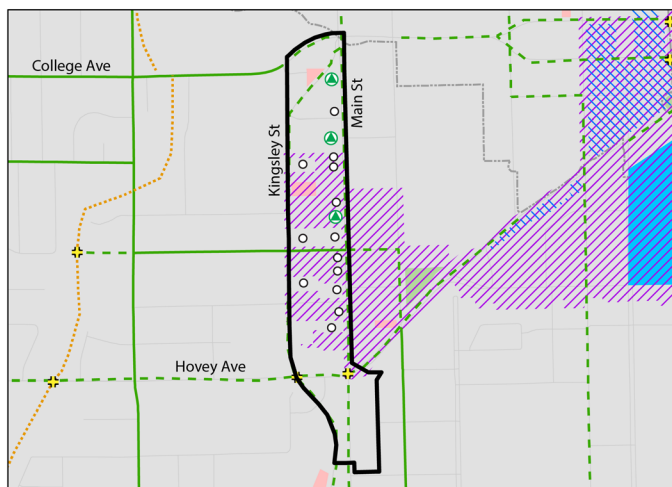
1. Fairview Park Area



This area includes Fairview Park, the McLean County Nursing Home, and a strip mall. This area has many community destinations. However, there are some under-utilized properties that offer immediate opportunities for the Town. For example, the old Regional Office of Education building, which is owned by the County, is currently vacant. Given this public ownership and the surrounding land uses such as assisted living, recreational and retail, supportive housing options should be explored.

There are also under-utilized spaces in the strip mall on the north end of this Center.

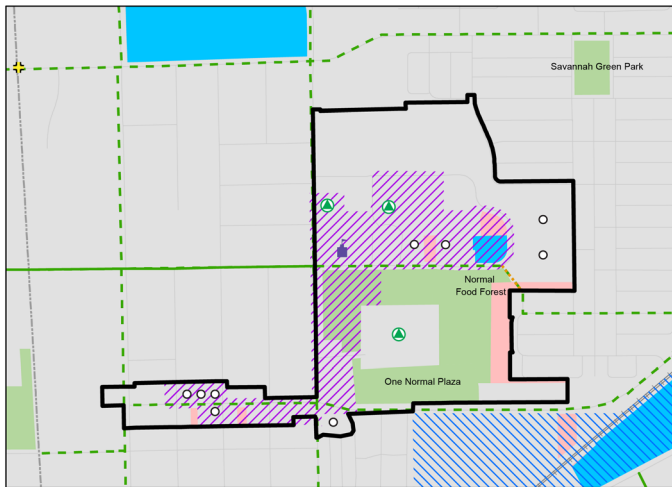
3. ISU-Oriented Retail & Mixed-Use



LC3—ISU-Oriented Retail and Mixed-Use Center: The Town has used a form-based code overlay zone to foster mixed-use development in this area, with some success. While the entire Main Street corridor has long been a target for planning efforts (most notably the Main Street Transportation Improvement Feasibility Study), the Main Street right-of-way is controlled by the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), making

wholesale redevelopment more challenging. *[See Transportation section in the Corridors Chapter for more information.]* The Town should continue to use the Main Street Transportation Improvement Feasibility Study to transform the area.

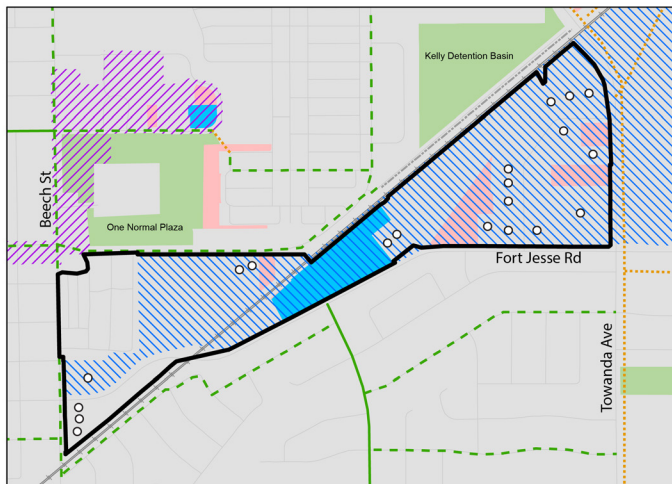
5. One Normal Plaza/Route 66



This area houses a unique mix of institutional, recreational, commercial, and residential uses in a serene setting. As the former home of the Illinois Soldiers and Sailors Children's School (ISSCS), this area holds historic and cultural value. Its proximity to Uptown and the ISU campus and its location along Route 66 and other transportation corridors can be logged as assets for this area. Despite the fact that this site has

been identified in many plans as needing revitalization, starting with the 2015 Vision Report adopted in 1990, and has been part of a TIF district since 2009, none of those plans have come to fruition. Given the eclectic mix of uses and its incredible potential to become a destination, this area could greatly benefit from a sub-area plan. It is also important to note that Normandy Village, encircled by the one Normal Plaza area, has new owners who have expressed a great deal of interest in making it an environmentally sustainable campus and want to be part of the planning process. This area also holds great potential to become a food innovation district. *[See Economic Vitality Element for more discussion on this.]*

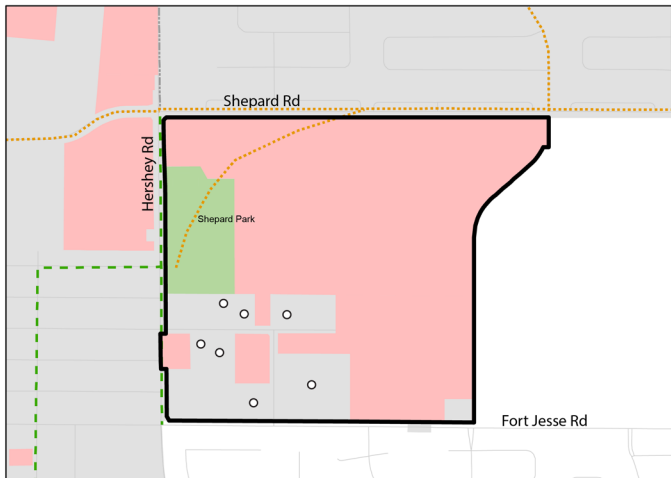
6. Railroad—Commercial/Industrial



This area is predominantly zoned for manufacturing. Concrete plants, particularly along the railroad, and auto shops are the predominant uses in this area. Some of these manufacturing uses are remnants of the past and can be characterized as undesirable, given the surrounding land uses today. This center has some vacant and under-utilized areas.

While this area cannot (and should not, given the presence of established businesses) be transformed all at once, over time opportunities should be taken to facilitate development that is complementary to the surrounding land uses. The Town should also consider the south portion of this Center during the sub-area planning of LC5 (the One Normal Plaza and Route 66 area).

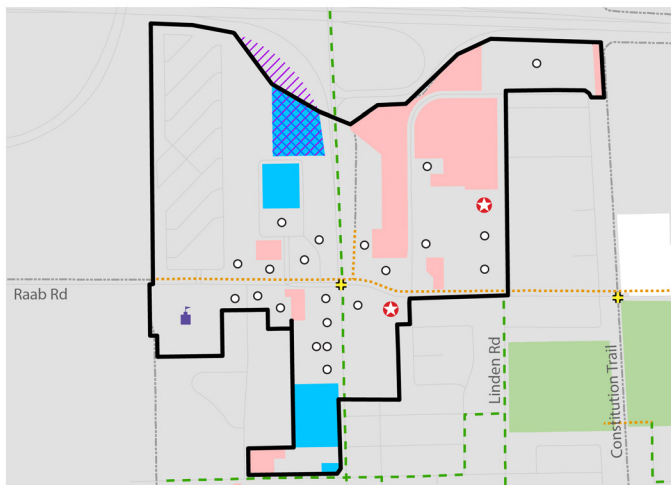
9. Fort Jesse/Hershey Area



This area, covering a total of 320 acres, is under an annexation agreement approved in February 2000. According to the agreement, approximately 167 acres have been annexed and zoned for office uses to the east (area outline in black). The remainder is earmarked for a mix of residential development at various densities and some commercial uses. While some of the annexed area has already been developed as office space, the vast majority is vacant land

remaining to be developed. The current annexation agreement for this area is set to expire in 2020. That expiration presents a great opportunity for the Town to work with the developer to create a sub-area plan that not only benefits this site but has the potential to convert a collection of surrounding sprawling subdivisions into complete, connected, and compact neighborhoods.

11. Main/Raab (Gateway Area)

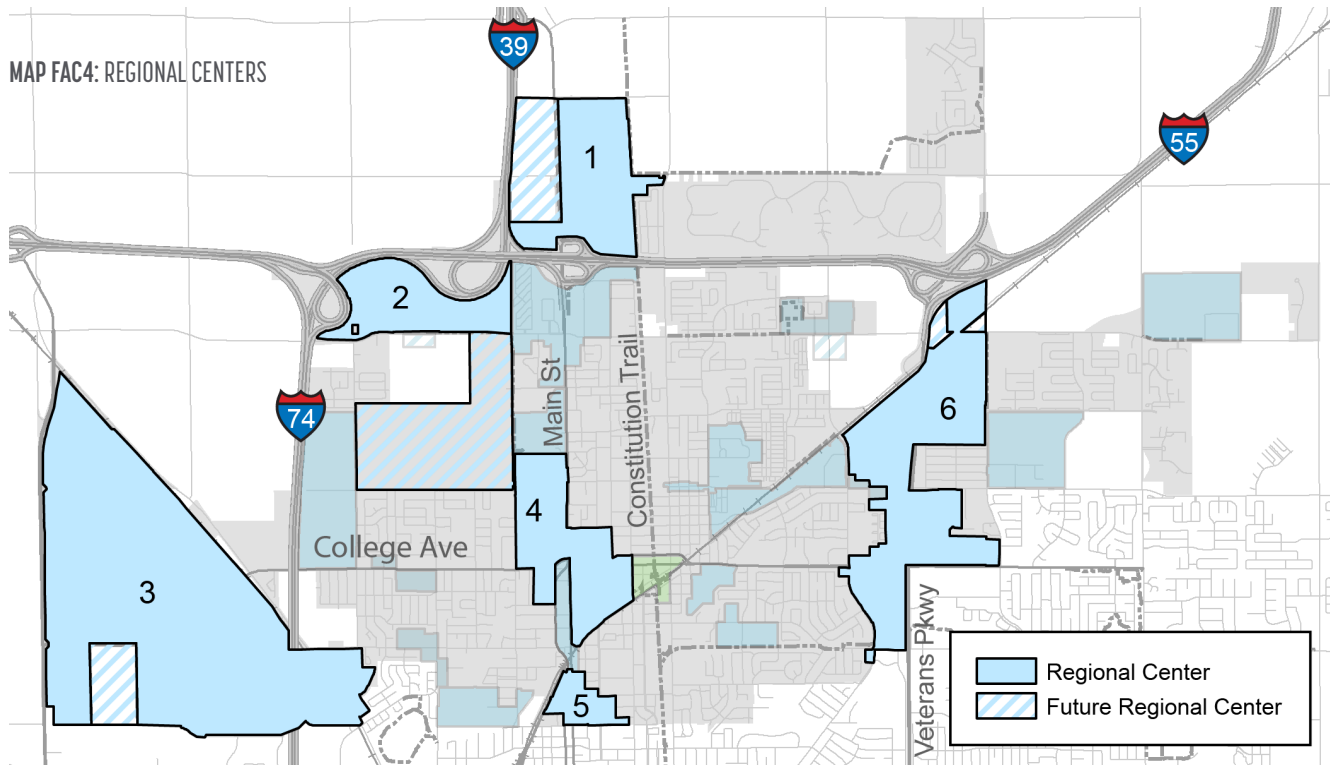


Also known as the Constitution Trail Centre, this large shopping center includes a Schnucks grocery store and a mix of other restaurants and retail establishments. A 14-screen cinema to the northeast is also part of the same complex, but it is disconnected from the main portion by a large, undeveloped parcel. The developed area is currently dominated by excessive parking and a good deal of vacant land.

It is adjacent to a large number of high density residential units. A pair of apartment complexes and a number of townhomes are located immediately to the east across School Street (the Rockingham-School area, or NS5), with a lower-density neighborhood (the Bunker Hill area, or ES1) to the south. Because of the surrounding residential density, this center has the potential to evolve into a destination that better serves the surrounding neighborhoods. The west half of this center serves both the Interstate users and the local community with destinations like gas stations, fast food restaurants, hotels, coffee shops, and Lincoln College. Given the range of uses and its geographic location as a gateway, the Town should prioritize 1) improving the aesthetics of the entire Center through the use of architectural and landscape design standards, and 2) improving multimodal transportation access. The vacant sites within this area can also be used to test Mixed-Use Zoning districts. *[See recommendation 1.]*



REGIONAL CENTERS

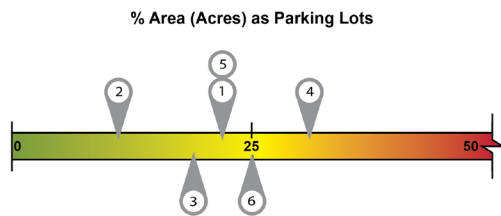
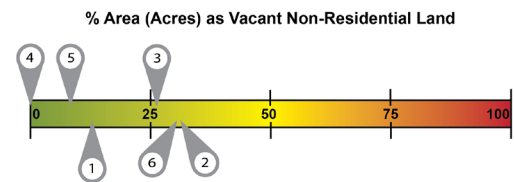
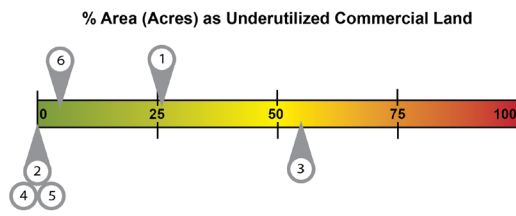


The Town's six Regional Centers include three that are primarily controlled by third-party institutions: RC2 (Heartland Community College), RC4 (Illinois State University), and RC5 (Advocate BroMenn Medical Center). These three institutions serve a significant proportion of the Town's population and are major employment centers. All three are established centers.

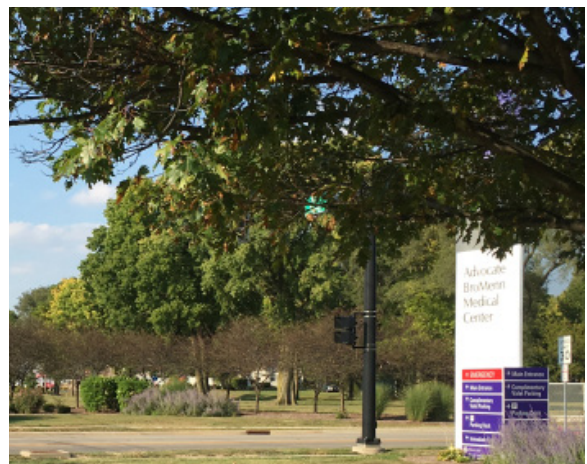
The other three Regional Centers include a major community gateway with office, freight, and industrial uses (RC1, Main/51 area); a major industrial area and emerging job center (RC3, Mitsubishi/Rivian); and the primary commercial corridor in Bloomington-Normal (RC6, Veterans Parkway). Of this trio, RC1 and RC6 are classified as evolving, and RC3 is emerging. These regional centers are located on the edges of Town, distant from the Town center, accessible mainly by major thoroughfares. They are discussed more thoroughly in the following pages.

ISU and Advocate BroMenn are the exceptions, both being centrally located (the former with respect to Normal, the latter with respect to Bloomington-Normal as a whole). Because of the importance of these centers, most have at least some degree of transit and trail access, but access by foot and bicycle is still generally more difficult than by car. As elsewhere, low densities and auto-oriented design, including excessive parking, are impediments to accessibility of these Centers.

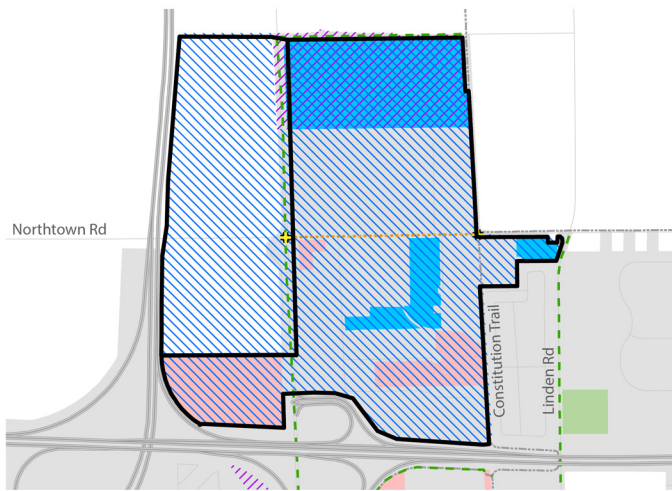
[See Recommendations for more information on sub-area planning and “sprawl repair” opportunities for these centers.]



	Walk Score	Transit Score
RC1	7	0
RC2	3–62	27–33
RC3	0–7	0–27
RC4	40–69	44–50
RC5	62	41
RC6	37–61	19–37



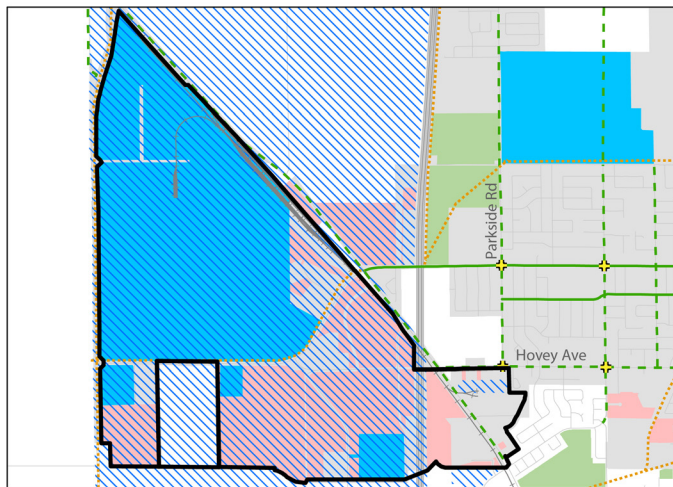
1. Main Street/I55 Gateway Area



This area is uniquely located at the intersection of I-39, I-55 and I-74. RC1 is predominantly zoned for manufacturing. While this area is performing moderately well, there are opportunities for improvement, including underutilized warehouses and vacant lots. There is a statewide initiative promoting the I-39 corridor for transportation and logistics uses. Given the current concentration of uses and available incentives such as the enterprise zone and the statewide emphasis on

this corridor, this area should continue to evolve as a transportation and logistics center for the community. This Center is also a prominent gateway. However, it is currently surrounded by farmland and is also in close proximity to Nicor Gas operations. Future expansion should take into account the sustainability goals of this plan, along with the fact that it is a prominent community gateway. The landscaping in this area should aim to improve the aesthetics and shield huge blank walls typical of the industrial structures.

3. West Side Industrial Area

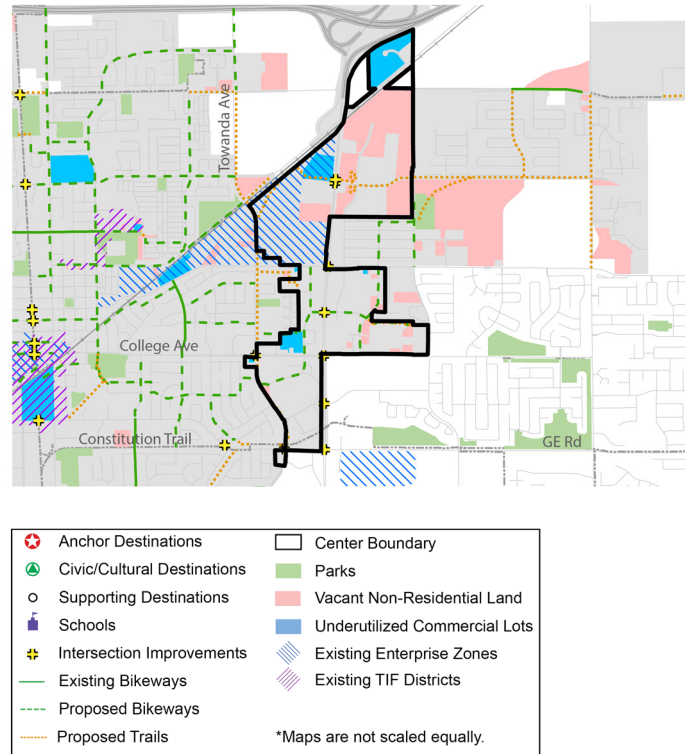


As the lone emerging center in this group, RC3 has the greatest opportunity for dynamic change. Most of the area, formerly the site of the former Mitsubishi Motors plant, is either vacant or underutilized and is zoned for manufacturing. It enjoys excellent road and rail transportation connections and is suitable for businesses in the Transportation and Logistics and Agribusiness target sectors identified in the BN Advantage strategy. It

is also part of the Enterprise Zone, which affords incentives for businesses located in the area. The Mitsubishi property was purchased by Rivian Automotive, a startup focused on electric and autonomous vehicles. Rivian has expressed interest in establishing partnerships to bring additional opportunities to their facility and to the general area. While some infrastructure systems may need to be improved, depending on the type and intensity of growth that occurs, this center holds strong potential as a major employment center drawing workers from within Bloomington-Normal and the broader Central Illinois area.

6. Veterans Parkway Commercial Area

RC6 is a commercially successful corridor, but it is also a textbook example of sprawling commercial development, arrayed along either side of a multi-lane highway with strip shopping centers, big-box stores, office parks, and other auto-oriented commercial. Unfortunately, the recent shift toward online shopping is uprooting many big-box retailers, leaving their host communities with large empty buildings, parking lots, and other infrastructure around them to be repurposed and overhauled. While this is not a major problem in Normal today, the experiences of surrounding communities suggest that such problems may be imminent.



[See the Sprawl Repair Example in the callout box.]



TOWN CENTER



Proposed Updates to Uptown

Source Uptown Normal Illustrative Master Plan Update 2015

The Town's most consequential planning effort continues to be the redevelopment of Uptown Normal. The complex process of planning and executing the redevelopment of Uptown began more than fifteen years ago when the Downtown Renewal Plan was adopted in 2000.

While the plan is a continuous work in progress, many core improvements are in place. Uptown has become a major urban design success. Uptown Circle was certified under the pilot version of the LEED (4.38) Neighborhood Development Program in 2009. It set the standard for what smaller communities could accomplish and brought national recognition to Normal as a leader in multimodal transportation and sustainability. This sustainable, mixed-use, dense, urban, pedestrian-oriented district has become a major community destination.

In 2016, the Town hired the same firm that created the original plan, Farr Associates, to create a plan to redevelop the south side of the railroad tracks ("Uptown South"). The new plan, called the Uptown Normal Master Plan update, is also based on the New Urbanism model and proposes development with goals more robust than the original plan. These include:

- 1. Take advantage of current market opportunities:** The plan points to strong retail demand (70,000 sq. ft.) and housing demand (over 900 units) and proposes that the new redevelopment program address both to the extent possible. It suggests gearing the housing toward non-students, especially young professionals and empty-nesters looking for a more urban lifestyle.
- 2. Improve mobility for all users:** The plan provides specific guidance to make the streets immediately surrounding Uptown more pedestrian- and bike-friendly.
- 3. Connect Uptown across the tracks:** Uptown Station needs a grade-separated crossing. After exploring three separate options, the plan proposes a well-designed underpass that reinforces the sense of place and increases property value south of the tracks.
- 4. Increase development capacity on the remaining Uptown North sites:** Pointing to the scarcity of available sites in Uptown, the study suggests increasing development densities and limiting the remaining developable property to non-student housing and office space with retail on the lower levels.
- 5. Redevelop Uptown South:** The large parcel remaining is the eight-acre site on which the old City Hall and Police Station are currently located. The plan proposes a high-density development with a mix of uses, including a relocated library, office space, a grocery store, higher-density residential, and green space.
- 6. Intensify development in the neighborhoods:** Even with the Uptown North and Uptown South fully developed, there will still be an unmet potential market for urban-style housing. To provide a place for these residents and to bring more people within walking distance to Uptown, the surrounding neighborhoods and primary approach routes should be rezoned to promote higher densities.
- 7. Raise the bar for sustainability by participating in the Living Communities Challenge:**
The International Living Futures Institute sets the highest standards for sustainable communities. Projects that meet their challenge go beyond the goal of simply minimizing harm and aim for self-sufficiency and substantial contributions to the health of the environment.

This comprehensive plan incorporates the Uptown Plan by reference and strongly supports its continued implementation. The Uptown Plan can be accessed through the Town of Normal website.



Recommendations

1. Increase density, intensity, and a mix of residential and non-residential land uses in the Centers (and along corridors). Utilize regulation and incentives to enable this type of development.

- 1a. Encourage higher densities in activity centers. Identify areas within or immediately adjacent to Centers that are zoned for low-density residential uses. Encourage rezoning those properties to higher densities.
- 1b. Enable mixed-use developments, both horizontal and vertical mixed uses. The Town currently encourages mixed-use developments in Uptown and along the Main Street corridor, as outlined in their respective area plans. The Town uses a form-based code overlay district to facilitate mixed-use developments in these areas.

In addition, the majority of the Town's Business Districts (C-1, B-1 and B-2) permit, by right, dwelling units located above the first floor. Unfortunately, these provisions alone have not resulted in much mixed-use development. This could be due to a variety of factors, including market conditions; a lack of interest from the development community; conflicting regulations regarding parking, landscaping and other requirements; or a lack of incentive for such developments. This issue needs to be further investigated.

Alternatively, the Town should investigate developing mixed-use zoning district designations, both for horizontal and for vertical mixes of uses. Such designations would allow the Town to better articulate their purpose and formulate appropriate regulations and incentives to facilitate multimodal, mixed-use developments of high quality.

Centers with high access to transit service, vacant land, or redevelopment opportunities, such as LC 11 (Main and Rabb) can be used as pilot sites for such a zone. This area has been identified in the Regional Housing Study as one with the potential to house a mix of affordable housing, assisted living, and supportive housing that can benefit from and support the existing retail in that area.

- 1c. Identify and address transition area issues creatively. Transition areas are areas where commercial uses are located next to residential uses. The Town should consider using architectural, open space, design, and technological solutions to facilitate transitions that minimize conflict, rather than focusing on separating those uses.
- 1d. Reduce parking minimums in Centers with good access to transit, walking, and biking.

[See HS 1.1e in the Health & Sustainability Element for more discussion on the need to rethink parking regulations.]

Center Design Expectations

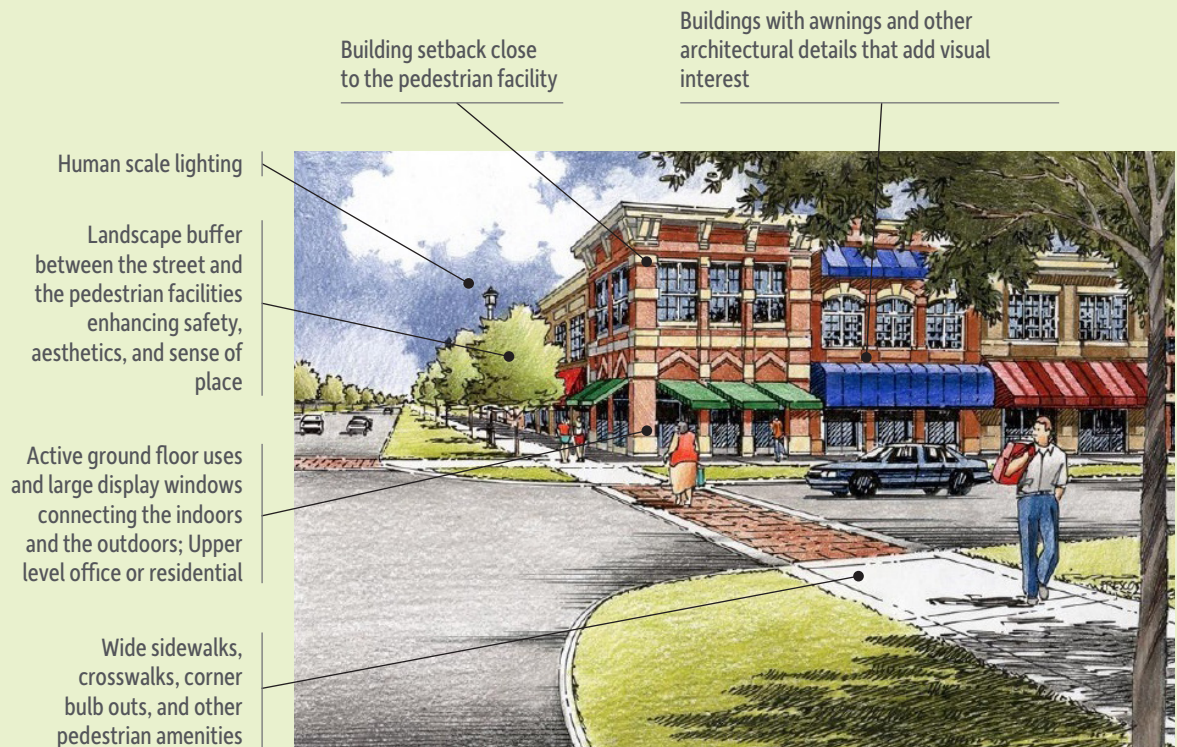


Illustration source: Huntington, VT; Text: MCRPC

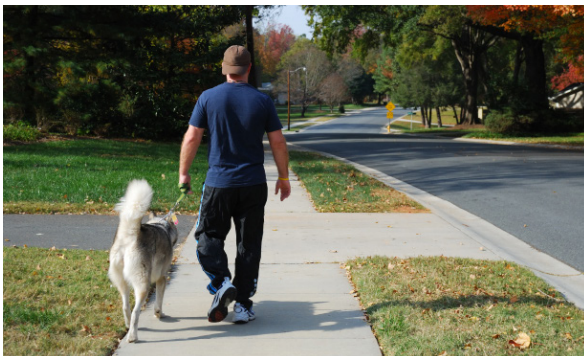
2. Improve multimodal access to the Centers.

- 2a. Revise the Town's Design Standards to promote human-scale developments and enhance bicycle and pedestrian connectivity in all commercial developments. *[See the Center Design Expectations call out box.]*

3. Reinvigorate Neighborhood Centers.

Centers that provide convenient access to essential goods are crucial to creating complete and connected neighborhoods. However, neighborhood retail has been on a decline for more than five decades. In communities like Normal, market conditions that caused neighborhood commercial to decline are still in place. It takes an aggressive commitment by the public sector in partnership with private stakeholders to address negative influences before neighborhood retail can become sustainable in these areas. This plan fully recognizes that rebuilding Neighborhood Centers will be a difficult, lengthy, and complicated process, but it also recognizes that now is the time to focus on those efforts. As the Town reduces sprawl and enhances the attractiveness of its existing neighborhoods, the Neighborhood Centers will become more viable.

- 3a. Aim to establish more than ten places in each Neighborhood Center. Such Centers, with at least one anchor, can continue to thrive as vibrant neighborhood destinations. *[See the Project for Public Places initiative titled "The Power of 10+" for a more in depth analysis of this topic.]*
- 3b. Create opportunities for local and independent retail to thrive. "Mom and pop" shops tend to have more stake in ensuring the success of these centers. *[See Strategy EV 1.1 in the Economic Vitality Element for additional information on supporting small and local businesses.]*
- 3c. Make improvements that prioritize pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders along with promoting pedestrian-scale developments in Neighborhood Centers. Such place-based improvements are incentives to help sustain existing and attract new commercial to the area.



4. Develop area plans for emerging and special centers.

As identified in the *Community Snapshot and Outreach Report*, the Town currently has over 1,000 acres of vacant land zoned for commercial, office, or manufacturing uses. This does not include several unutilized or underutilized commercial, office, or manufacturing facilities, or vacant land under institutional ownership. Given the current population and employment projections, there is likely to be sufficient land for commercial development during the horizon period of this plan. Centers that house much of that vacant land and under-utilized properties are classified as Emerging Centers. These Centers hold great potential to contribute to a Complete, Connected, and Compact community but need additional planning efforts. The following Emerging Centers would greatly benefit from sub-area plans that take into account the nature and character of each, along with their assets and challenges. Centers that could greatly benefit from sub-area planning include:

- 4a. RC3—Mitsubishi/Rivian Area
- 4b. LC9—Fort Jesse/Hershey Area
- 4c. LC5—One Normal Plaza/Route 66

5. Facilitate development in the evolving Centers to transition from the current auto-oriented development model to one that supports a complete, connected, and compact community.

Evolving Centers are those with existing developments that are performing well but have room for improvement. New development or redevelopment here will be incremental, and the Town should be prepared to capitalize on those incremental developments in the following centers.

- 5a. RC1—I55 & I74 Gateway Center
- 5b. RC6—Veterans Parkway Regional Commercial Center
- 5c. LC1—Fairview Park Area
- 5d. LC3—ISU Oriented Retail and Mixed-Use Center
- 5e. LC6—Industrial/Commercial Area along the Railroad
- 5f. LC11—Main and Raab (Gateway Area)

Sprawl Repair Example

“Sprawl repair transforms failing or potentially failing, single-use, and car-dominated developments into complete communities that have better economic, social, and environmental performance.”

—Sprawl repair defined by Galena Tachieva in her book *Sprawl Repair Manual*



Left: Commercial Sprawl, Right: Complete Community; Source: *Sprawl Repair Manual*

When commercial spaces become vacant, the most cost-effective solution is generally to find new commercial occupants that can use them. However, the increase of online sales and other technology advancements are making such smooth transitions difficult. Many communities are thus left to deal with large vacant buildings.

McAllen, Texas provides one example of how to deal with these issues through adaptive reuse. McAllen repurposed a large open building vacated by Walmart into a public library. The new \$25.7 million McAllen Public Library occupies 123,000 square feet on one floor, making it the largest one-story library in the country. *Big Box Reuse*, authored by Julia Christensen, includes this and other examples that show how many communities have addressed this problem, turning vacated “big boxes” into something else: a church, a library, a school, a medical center, a courthouse, a recreation center, a museum, or other more civic-minded structures.



1. Vacated Walmart, 2. & 3. New McAllen Public Library; Source: Alucobond, www.Alucobondusa.com