

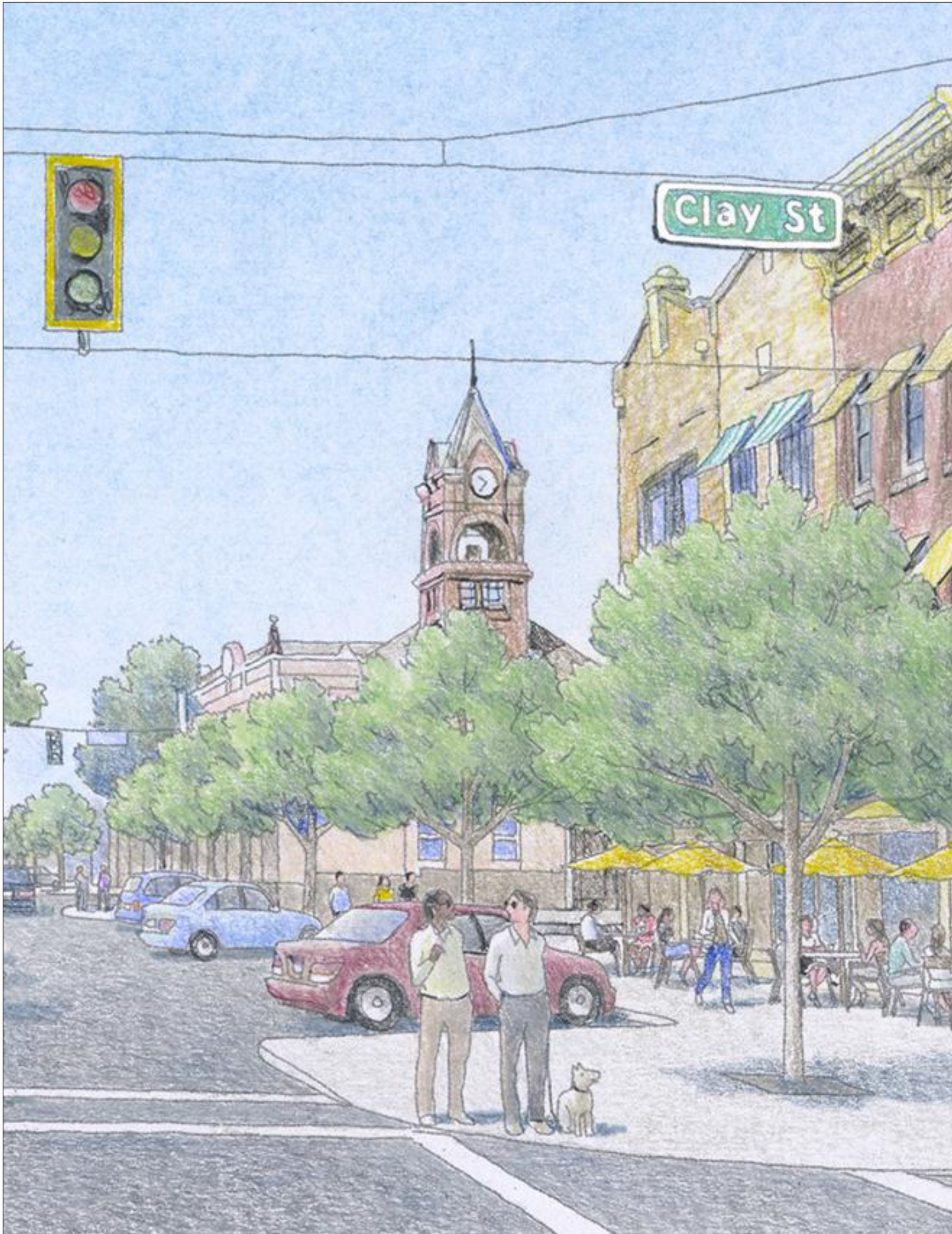
DEAN'S CHARRETTE #5

La Porte, Indiana

A Study for Downtown Regeneration & Housing Strategies

Final Report

APRIL 2024



PREPARED BY

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School of Architecture
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...the residents of La Porte and the community stakeholders who participated in listening sessions and public presentations.

The study was supported by the Health Foundation of La Porte.

The University of Notre Dame School of Architecture's Housing and Community Regeneration Initiative is a "Think-and-Do Tank" that provides assistance to municipalities and nonprofit organizations to improve economic development by reimagining the built environment. Our work targets immediate local impact as well as national and global influence through three interrelated activities: actionable projects, research, and education. Faculty, students, and collaborating professional teams carry out these activities under the leadership of the school's dean, Stefanos Polyzoides, and the initiative's director, Marianne Cusato.

The work undertaken within the Housing and Community Regeneration Initiative is based on the principles of New Urbanism and a belief that as stewards of our built environment we can facilitate a strong social infrastructure and leave a better world for future generations by developing and promoting human-scale, walkable communities.



Walsh Family Hall of Architecture, University of Notre Dame.

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PART 1: INTRODUCTION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
PROCESS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

La Porte, Indiana, is a rare jewel of a city. Over the course of the last 60 years, while most cities in the post-industrial Midwest were methodically converting historic downtowns into surface parking lots, the City of La Porte eschewed urban destruction to maintain an identity of place that is truly unique. And yet, while the historic structures remain, many have vacant upper floors and struggling storefronts due to the heavy volume of trucks that travel through downtown daily on state highways. This truck traffic has led to urban decline in downtown La Porte and the residential neighborhoods directly adjacent to the historic core of the city.

The decline is felt most acutely in the near downtown neighborhood. This neighborhood is defined by homes owned by absentee landlords that have fallen into blighted conditions, the highest number of police calls in the city, the highest poverty rates in the county, and lower life expectancy than neighborhoods only a few blocks away.

In 2022 the Health Foundation of La Porte (HFL), recognizing housing as a health issue, commissioned a study to assess the unmet housing needs of the City of La Porte with a focus on the housing conditions in Census Tract 423, specifically the near downtown neighborhood. This study brought to light the scope of the issue, with over 60 percent of the structures in the near downtown neighborhood containing moderate or significant exterior deterioration and an overall shortage of 1,650–1,850 housing units, at a range of price points, throughout the city. HFL identified several needs within their study, including protections for vulnerable residents whose only current housing option are blighted rentals, as well as affordable market-rate housing to attract young adults to return to La Porte after college.

The Health Foundation’s goal is to promote a healthy environment for all La Porte residents; stabilizing housing conditions for residents in the near downtown neighborhood is a central focus. At the same time, the City of La Porte aims to increase population from 22,000 to 30,000 people by 2030. HFL’s goal and the City of La Porte’s aim both start with the regeneration of downtown La Porte and a reversal of urban decline.

About This Study

The HFL and the City of La Porte contacted the University of Notre Dame School of Architecture’s Housing and Community Regeneration Initiative with the question, “Where do we start, and what are the steps

of the process?” This study is the first step. The goal of this study is to provide a vision for the regeneration of downtown La Porte, as well as an action plan for the execution of this vision. The work builds on HFL’s “City of La Porte Housing Strategy” as well as the “Heart of La Porte” plan issued by the city in 2020. The scope of this study is focused on the historic downtown, the former hospital site, and surrounding neighborhoods. We recognize the need to further study the connection of downtown La Porte to adjacent neighborhoods, especially to the north across the railroad to the future development sites near the lakes.

A Vision for La Porte

This report is divided into *four areas* of focus:

1. Downtown Regeneration starts with strategies for rerouting truck traffic away from downtown and activating the core by making it more pedestrian-friendly. This portion of the study also includes strategies for re-integrating the former hospital site into the historic block and street structure of downtown — a once-in-a-generation opportunity to restore 12 blocks of downtown to provide much needed housing and commercial spaces to serve current residents and attract future community members. **2. Historic Preservation** offers commonsense preservation methods that balance protection of heritage structures with economic realities, so buildings that give La Porte its unique identity can more easily be restored and enjoyed with less friction and more financial support. **3. Neighborhood Housing** offers a toolkit for developing a comprehensive housing plan without displacement. And finally, section **4. Open Space and Urban Landscape** provides vision and specifications for integrating nature throughout the city.

Elements of the vision and action plan presented in this report can be implemented individually over time or adopted as a complete body of work all at once. The vision and action plan are both provided with the goal of celebrating and expanding upon the many strengths of La Porte. The ideas presented consider existing patterns of building use, density, pedestrian movement, car movement, truck traffic, and green space to recommend both short- and long-term milestones. These milestones will reinforce momentum in the city and preserve the rich character of its historic fabric, making La Porte a more vibrant city where current and future residents can thrive.



FIGURE 1: Aerial View of the Overall Study Area

Aerial view of the overall study area: Downtown La Porte including the former hospital site, current hospital site and the surrounding neighborhoods.



HOUSING PRODUCTION

City of La Porte should target production of **1,650 to 1,850** new units for a variety of income levels & household types

In addition to prioritizing housing rehabilitation efforts

Production targets address unmet housing needs for existing residents & expand the overall housing supply

RENTAL UNIT TARGET

450-550

New market-rate rental units, targeted to households over 80% AMI

300+

New rent-restricted affordable housing (<50% AMI) units

OWNER UNIT TARGET

900-1,000

New market-rate for-sale units, targeted to moderate- & higher-income households

35-50%

Share of new market-rate for-sale units that should be targeted to active seniors (i.e., ranch duplexes)

PROJECT CATALYST — HFL STUDY

WHAT'S NEXT, WHERE DO WE START, & WHAT ARE THE STEPS OF THE PROCESS?

FIGURE 2: SB Friedman Study, Commissioned by HFL



**PROJECT GOAL
DOWNTOWN REGENERATION WITHOUT DISPLACEMENT**



Charrette team photo at St. Peter Catholic Church, La Porte, Indiana

PROCESS

The results of this study were developed using the charrette process. A charrette is a method of design collaboration developed by New Urbanist practitioners over several decades. At the heart of the process is the idea that complex design questions are best answered by assembling an interdisciplinary team of experts and stakeholders to participate in an intense workshop setting that generates a continuous loop of design collaboration and immediate feedback.

The charrette for this study was held on-site in La Porte, Indiana, from May 22–25, 2023. The interdisciplinary team included faculty and students from the University of Notre Dame School of Architecture, College of Engineering, and Fitzgerald Institute of Real Estate, as well as leading industry professionals, representatives of the professional staff of the City of La Porte, the Health Foundation of La Porte (HFL), and numerous visiting guests and local stakeholders.

Dean’s Charrettes are educational charrettes — a unique variation of the typical process. While the work and findings are professionally led, we employ the forum to educate the students who are working side-by-side with faculty and visiting industry guests, as colleagues. Throughout the

process, students experience the dynamics of a real-world project, employ skills learned in the classroom, and have one-on-one tutorials with practicing experts in the field. This study started with a site analysis and community listening sessions, which led to a four-day intensive charrette followed by the production of the final report. During the four days of design, the team explored the city, discussed overall strategies and goals in collaboration with city staff, and engaged in smaller-team design sessions. To conclude the week, the team presented its work to the mayor, city staff, elected and appointed city officials, HFL board and administration, and La Porte citizens and professionals at St. Peter Catholic Church in downtown La Porte. A detailed description of this sequence is outlined in the timeline below.

The goal of the charrette is to offer concrete recommendations that can be implemented while remaining general enough to stay relevant as local conditions shift over time; it also aims to strike a balance between short-term and long-term goals. While the holistic strategies presented through this process represent a general recommendation for how to move forward strategically, many of the specific concepts proposed are only the beginning of a long and evolving process.



PREP MEETINGS & LISTENING SESSIONS

In preparation for the charrette, members of the design team met frequently with the mayor, city staff, and HFL representatives to identify the needs of the city and create a detailed scope of work. Prep work culminated in two stakeholder listening sessions and preparation of several analytical diagrams.



PRE-CHARRETTE



SITE TOUR AND INITIAL CONCEPTS

Day One began with a bus tour of La Porte that focused on downtown and residential areas of the near downtown neighborhood. In the afternoon, the design team returned to the studio to start the design process. The team divided into smaller groups to focus on several target areas, such as housing, traffic, preservation, and downtown regeneration. Day One concluded with a public presentation to share initial findings.



DAY ONE



DEVELOP CONCEPTS

Day Two started with meetings involving building professionals and INDOT, as well as continued meetings with city staff and the HFL. The assistant city manager of Kalamazoo, Michigan, Rebekah Kik, visited for the day to share regeneration insights. The day wrapped up with another public presentation of the project, now with detailed proposals.



DAY TWO



THE CHARRETTE PROCESS

Site & Program Assessment

Work with city staff to clearly understand the issues the design seeks to solve.

Tour and Analyze the Site

Know the context for the project at a much deeper level by fostering a connection between team members and the area of study. This was accomplished through multiple general and specific site visits as well as producing analytical drawings, thus establishing a tangible approach to design questions.

Iterations & Collaborations

Work as a team to generate design concepts and ideas, then continually revise these concepts in response to feedback.

Community Engagement

Present work to city officials and local stakeholders to share concepts and get feedback.

Continuous Feedback Loops

Meet frequently, both internally with the design team and externally with stakeholders, to garner feedback regarding the designs.

Short & Intense Timeline

Maximize work product by using the short timeline and continuous feedback loop to produce a large volume of high-quality work in only a few days.

Education & Experiential Learning

Create a forum for students to engage with faculty and industry experts in a professional setting. This “teach by doing” method exposes students to experiences not possible in a classroom setting.

Professional Collaborations

Engage with industry experts and professionals to provide expertise in a range of disciplines, including architectural design, urban planning, traffic engineering, architectural illustration, and finance.



PRODUCTION & COORDINATION DAY

On Day Three the team continued developing the design concepts. After additional coordination the team began production of final presentation drawings.



DAY THREE

FINAL PRESENTATION

The fourth and final day of the charrette involved finalizing drawings, scanning, organizing, printing, and otherwise preparing for the final presentation. The team presented work to a large audience, including the mayor, city staff, representatives of the HFL, local business owners, homeowners, and a range of local stakeholders.



DAY FOUR

ISSUE REPORT & FOLLOW-UP

The final steps of the process are the production of this final report, as well as follow-up with staff from the city and the HFL to discuss the vision and next steps for implementation.



POST-CHARRETTE





PART 2: CONTEXT

HISTORIC CONTEXT

HFL HOUSING STUDY

**CURRENT PLANNING
INITIATIVES**

HISTORIC CONTEXT

La Porte, Indiana, is located on land initially owned by the Pokagon Band of the Potawatomi Nation. French explorers arrived in the 1670s, and over time their settlement became known by fur traders and other settlers as a passageway, or door, for those traveling to the west. Thus, the origin of the name *La Porte*, which is “the door” in French. The City of La Porte was formally established in 1832. One year later, the Potawatomi Nation ceded the land to the United States in the 1833 Treaty of Chicago.

La Porte is located approximately an hour east of Chicago and 30 minutes west of South Bend, Indiana. Its positioning in the Central Time Zone makes the connection to Chicago feel stronger than the connection to neighbors to the east.

A defining feature of the city is the network of lakes located to the north of downtown, which inspires the city’s tagline “Livin’ the Lake Life.” The city grew largely to the south of the railroad tracks, separated from the lakes. The gridded blocks of downtown and Census Tract 423 turn on an angle to align with the tracks, which bend to move around the lakes. The typical north-south block structure resumes on the edges of the city.

The city boasts a beautifully renovated Carnegie library, still in use, as well as several buildings of architectural significance, including the county courthouse and historic post office, now the city hall. These “hero” buildings are complemented with fabric buildings that create a strong sense of place; downtown and the adjacent neighborhoods are largely intact. In addition to the treasure of historic structures, the city is rich in natural amenities, such as a new trail system around lakes.



FIGURE 3: La Porte County Courthouse, Built in 1892
Designed by architect Brentwood S. Tolan.

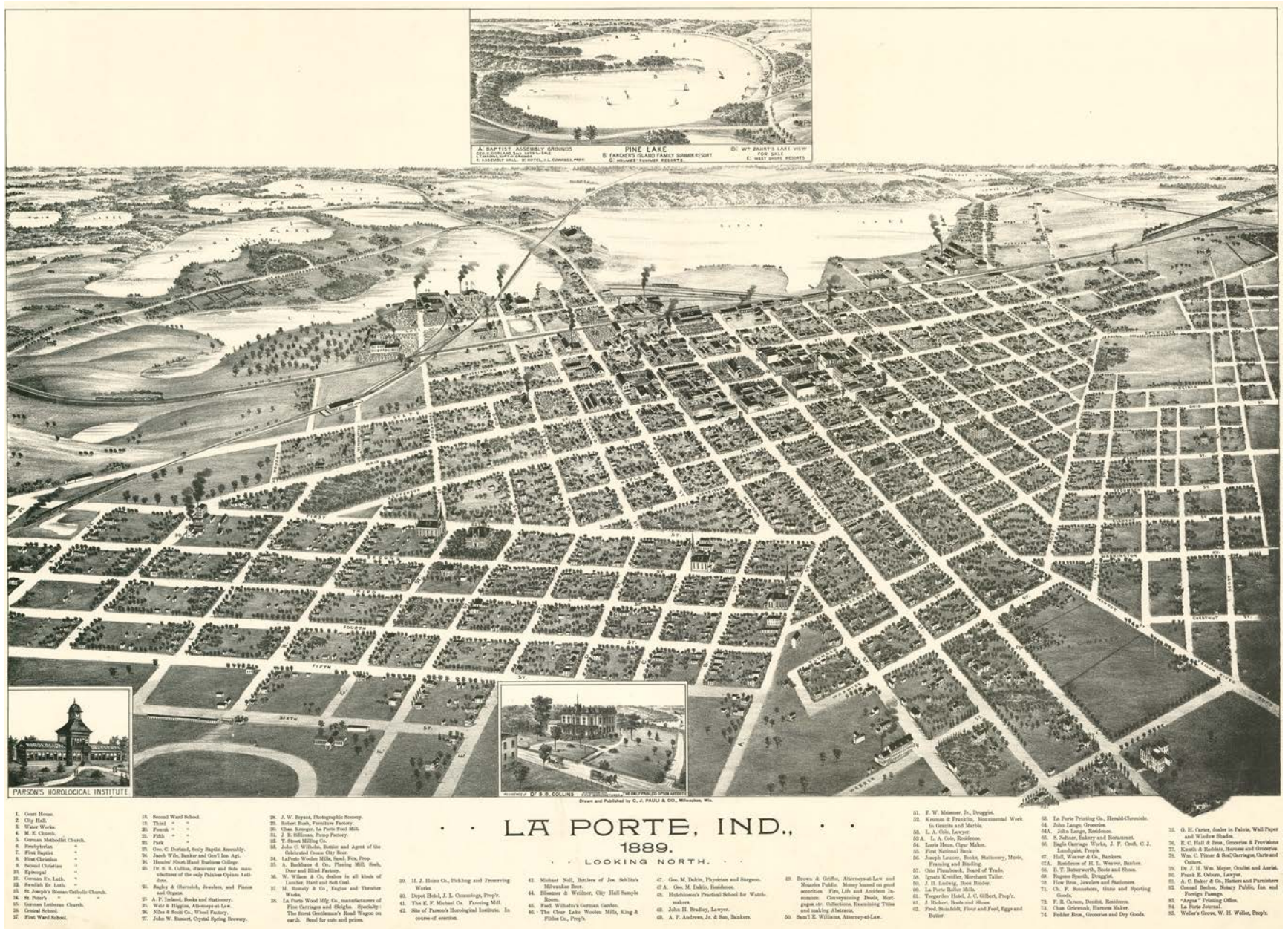


FIGURE 4: Aerial View of La Porte, Indiana, in 1889

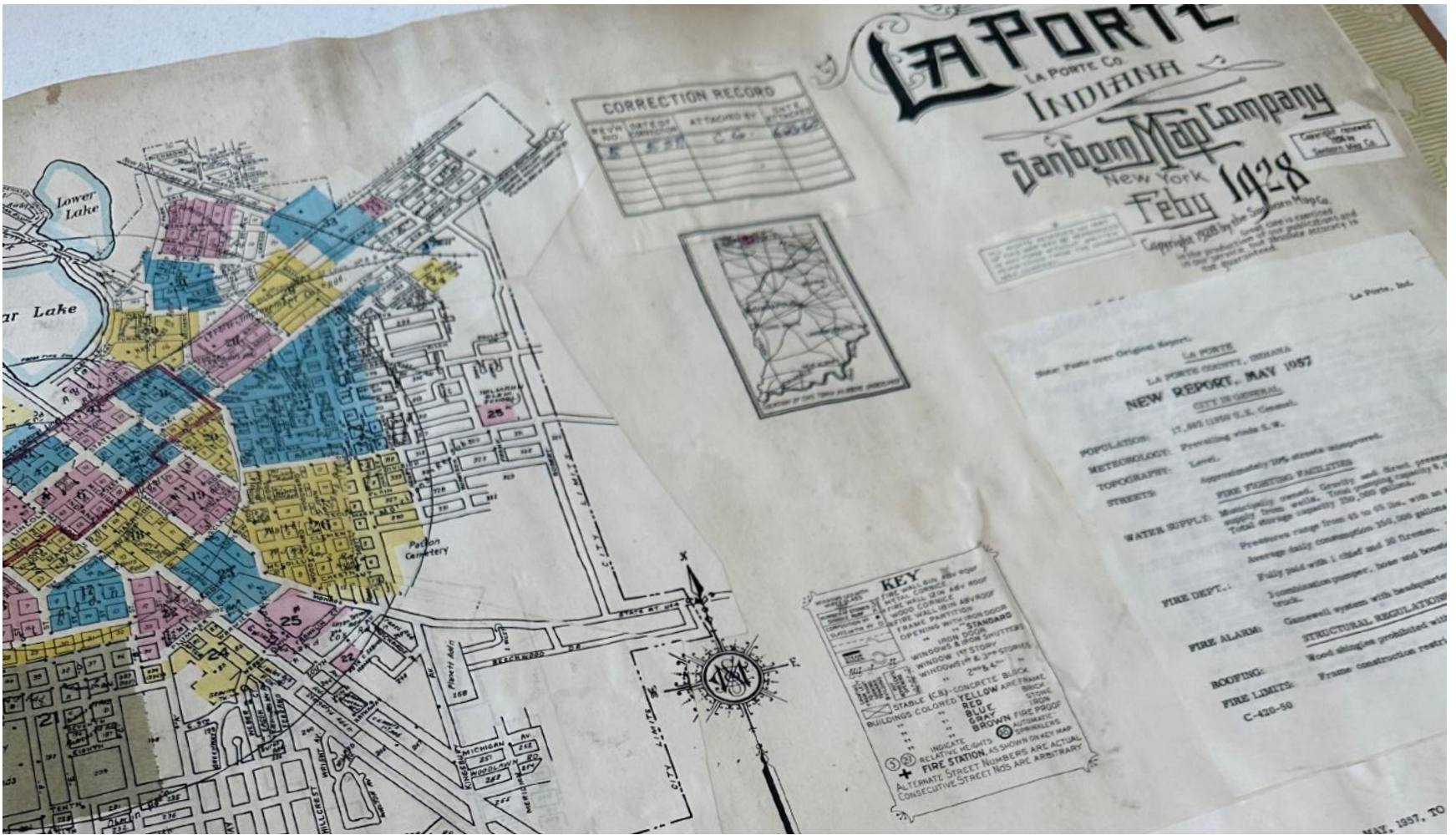


FIGURE 5: Cover Page of the 1928 Sanborn Fire Map of La Porte, Indiana



FIGURE 6: 1928 Sanborn Fire Map Showing Downtown La Porte

Historic map showing building footprints and block structure of downtown La Porte. Red indicates brick exterior, blue indicated stone exterior, and yellow indicates wood exterior finishes.

HFL HOUSING STUDY

The City of La Porte Housing Study,¹ commissioned to SB Friedman in 2022 by the Health Foundation of La Porte, provides a snapshot of existing conditions and unmet needs throughout the city, with a focus on the near downtown neighborhood. The housing study involved reviewing existing plans, conducting stakeholder interviews, and performing quantitative analysis to identify needs and opportunities.

The study found that the City of La Porte faces a range of pressing housing challenges, including a limited supply of homes for sale, insufficient production of new housing, a shortage of workforce and rent-restricted options, and a lack of accessible homes.

Stakeholder feedback highlights the favorable tax climate and the influence of COVID-19 in attracting residents to La Porte. Despite rising housing costs, La Porte remains comparatively affordable. Stakeholders also emphasize the significance of recreational amenities, easy access to major cities, and the potential identified by regional developers. Challenges include the high cost of housing relative to many residents' ability to pay, limited availability, and the impact of investors on local homebuyers.

Housing is considered affordable if it costs less than 30 percent of the resident's gross income. Currently, 23 percent of owners and 45 percent of renters in the city of La Porte are burdened by housing costs. Maintenance of the city's existing housing stock is a concern, with investor-owned properties often experiencing deferred maintenance and deterioration. Apartments tend to be in better condition than single-family homes. Lower-income homeowners often reside in older housing and struggle to keep up with maintenance costs. The challenges developers face include a lack of acquisition opportunities, competition from buyers with conventional access to capital, and difficulty finding potential buyers. Non-local developers also encounter obstacles due to limited networks of home builders.

To meet existing unmet needs, this study recommends the production of 1,650–1,850 new housing units designed for a variety of incomes and household types. This will significantly contribute to the county-wide demand for 5,700 units by 2030, which was identified in the 2021 La Porte County Indiana Housing Analysis & Action Agenda.² This is *before* production of units to serve the population growth goals of 30,000 residents by 2030.

Recommendations for next steps include:

1. Designating a program manager to focus on housing-related projects,
2. Establishing resources to aid vulnerable populations,
3. Developing a site acquisition strategy,
4. Supporting existing and new affordable housing providers,
5. Making efforts to support and engage local developers while expanding housing rehabilitation initiatives.

Endnotes

1. <https://www.hflaporte.org/post/healthcare-foundation-of-la-porte-city-of-la-porte-housing-initiative-study-results>
2. <https://vibrantlpcounty.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Greenstreet-LaPorteCo-Hsg-Full-Slide-Deck-2021.pdf>

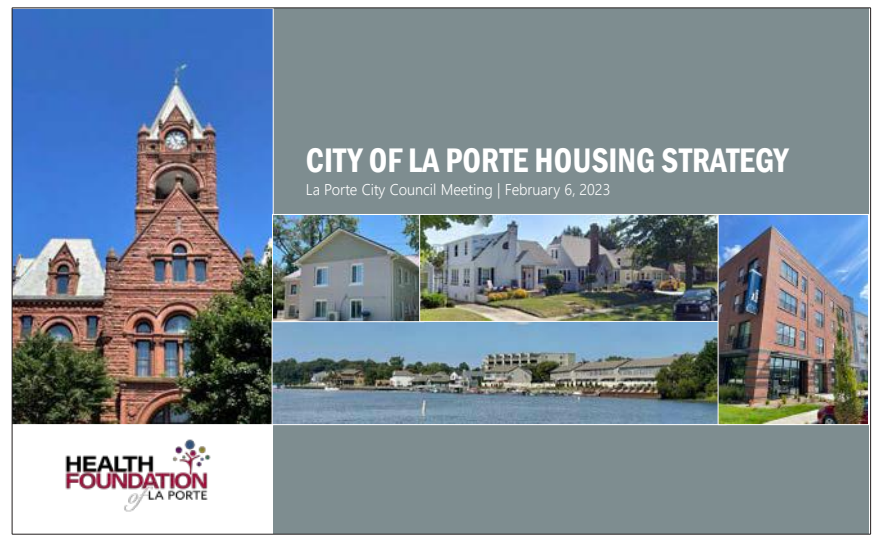


FIGURE 7: Cover of the City of La Porte Housing Study Conducted by the Health Foundation of La Porte



FIGURE 8: HFL Housing Study Key Findings

Based on the opportunity sites identified, the study recommends a goal of 1,650 to 1,850 new housing units to serve residents across varying income levels.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

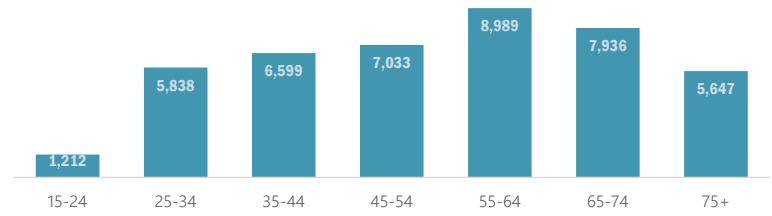
In 2020, there were **9,183 households** in the City of La Porte.

The median household income was **\$42,000**.

La Porte County's population is expected to remain stable over the next five years.

The number of households headed by people 75 and over will increase by **1,000** in the County.

LA PORTE COUNTY HOUSEHOLDERS BY AGE, 2021



PROJECTED CHANGE IN LA PORTE COUNTY HOUSEHOLDERS BY AGE, 2021-2026

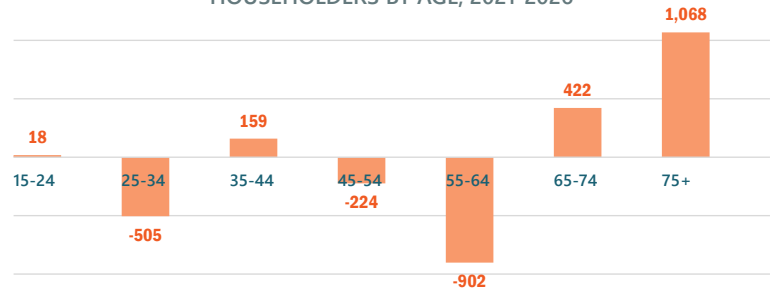


FIGURE 9: Existing Conditions Data

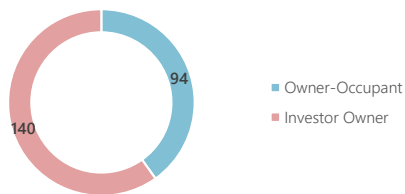
Although the City of La Porte's population is expected to remain stable, new housing units will be needed to serve residents with different needs.

BUILDING TENURE

Near downtown neighborhood parcels are majority investor-owned

- 60% of properties are investor-owned
- 40% are owner-occupied
- 234 residential properties estimated to include approximately 540 units

BUILDING OWNERSHIP STATUS



Source: Esri, Health Foundation of La Porte, City of La Porte, La Porte County, SB Friedman
SB Friedman Development Advisors

PARCELS BY BUILDING OWNERSHIP STATUS, 2021



4

FIGURE 10: Building Tenure Analysis

"In the last decade, investor-owners purchased many current or former single-family homes in the City of La Porte's central neighborhoods, often through portfolio sheriff sales." — HFL Housing Study, p. 20.

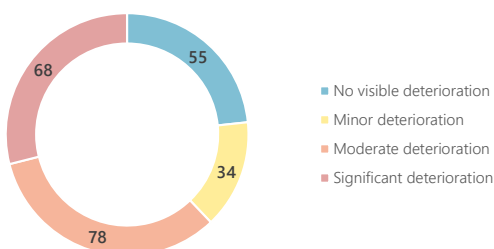
EXTERIOR BUILDING DETERIORATION

Indicators of property distress are found throughout the study area

- Building components observed: Porch, siding, windows, doors, roof, foundation

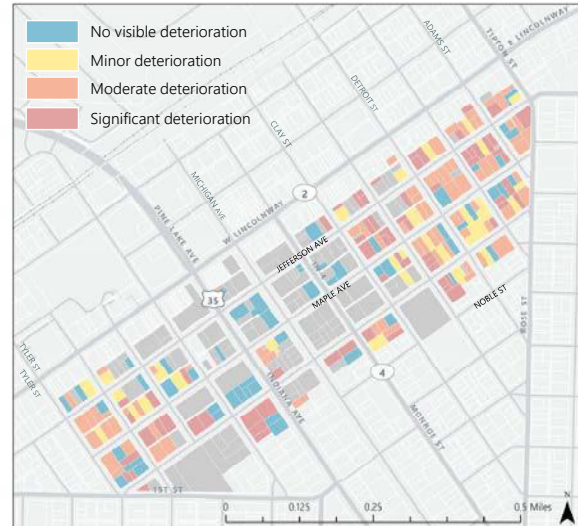
SBF categorized buildings into four condition categories:

- No deterioration
- Minor: observed 1 deteriorated component
- Moderate: observed 2-3 deteriorated components
- Significant: observed 4+ deteriorated components or observed "significant" deterioration



Source: Esri, Health Foundation of La Porte, City of La Porte, La Porte County, SB Friedman
SB Friedman Development Advisors

EXTENT OF EXTERIOR DETERIORATION, JULY 2022



12

FIGURE 11: Exterior Building Deterioration Survey

More than three-quarters of the properties in the near downtown neighborhood have some degree of deterioration.

CURRENT PLANNING INITIATIVES

In addition to the HFL Housing Study summarized on pages 12–13, this report builds on the extensive work underway by the City of La Porte. Figure 12 through Figure 17 highlight a few of the current planning initiatives helping to shape downtown La Porte.

FIGURE 12: City of La Porte Comprehensive & Transportation Plan

A city masterplan with a 20-year horizon. This plan serves as the city's overall blueprint for future development, redevelopment/infill, growth management, and economic development and includes a strong emphasis on transportation network enhancements to further improve the overall quality of life for the City of La Porte and surrounding areas.

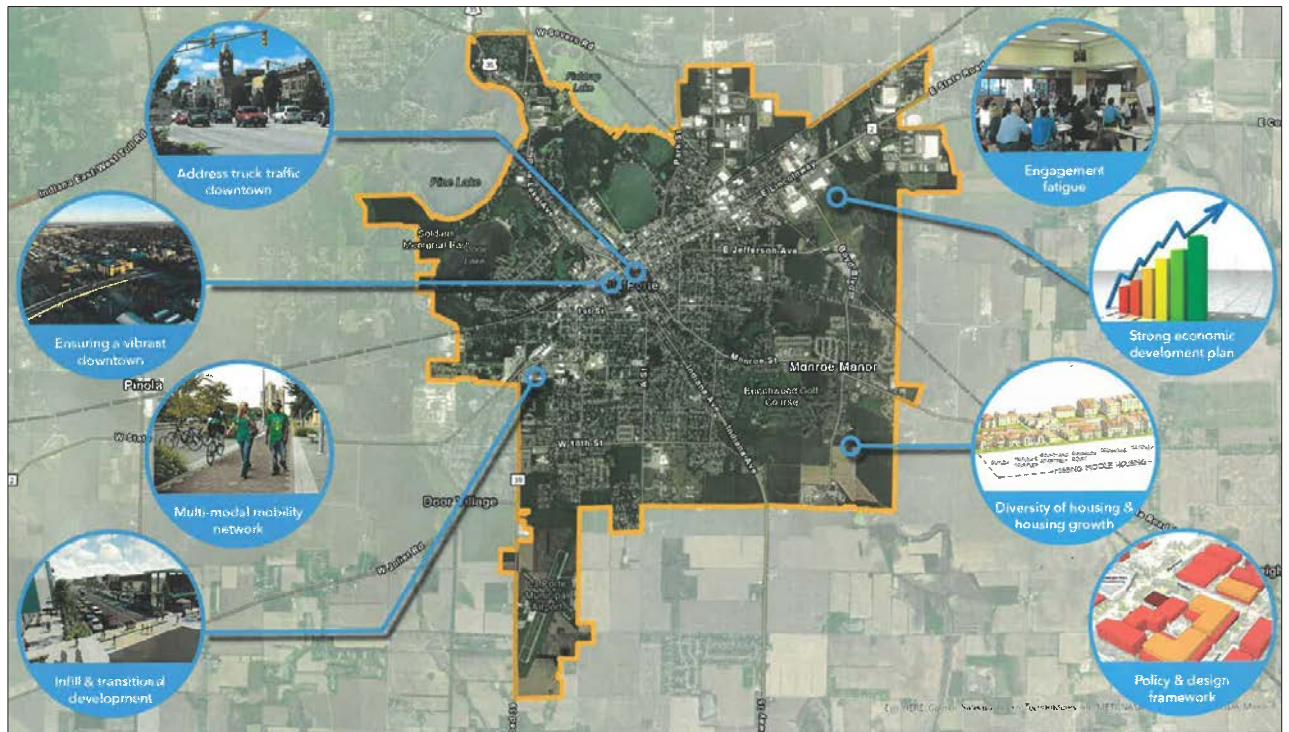


FIGURE 13: Heart of La Porte Plan

A special area plan developed in conjunction with the Health Foundation of La Porte that focuses on the development, redevelopment, and enhancement of quality-of-life throughout the city. The plan provides a vision for Monroe Landing/The Stitch downtown plaza, NewPorte Landing, NewPorte Landing North, and Fox Park Expansion and enhancement. Image source: ASLA Wisconsin | Image credit: SmithGroup



FIGURE 14: La Porte Branding Masterplan

Branding masterplan based on the Livin' the Lake Life brand. Includes branding strategy, brand elements, identity of city neighborhoods as well as implementation methods and action plan.

BRAND POSITIONING




Livin' the Lake Life[™]

LA PORTE, INDIANA

La Porte, surrounded by lakes and a walkable historic downtown, is the best-kept secret in Indiana. The City of La Porte is a community dedicated to outdoor recreation while fostering a vibrant downtown for businesses and remote workers. La Porte is the walkable city of the future. La Porte's master plan includes connecting

Downtown, Newporte Landing, and all neighborhoods to a beautiful trail system that traverses lakes and parks. The vision for La Porte's healthy recreation initiatives, innovative business development, and year-round, bucket-list events continue to grow for the benefit of our growing community and visitors.

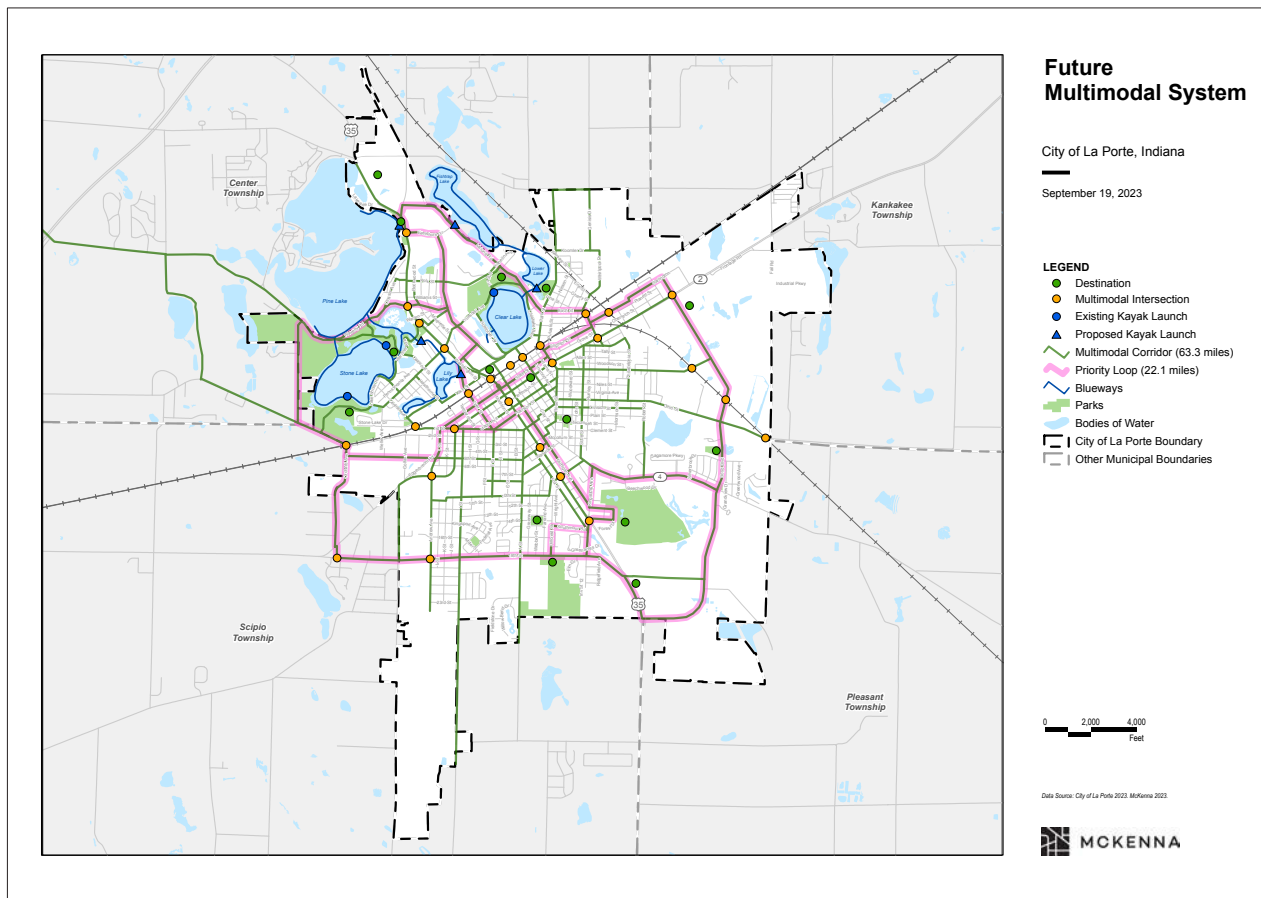


FIGURE 15: City of La Porte Trails, Greenways, and Blueways Plan

A plan for the ongoing development of and investment in the City's trails, pathways, and water corridors/blueways for the future with a focus on all non-motorized modes of transportation including, walking, biking, canoeing, kayaking, and boating. This plan was developed through the lens of using the City's trails, greenways, pathways, and blueways to serve as enhancements to the city's quality of life and as a tool for future economic development.

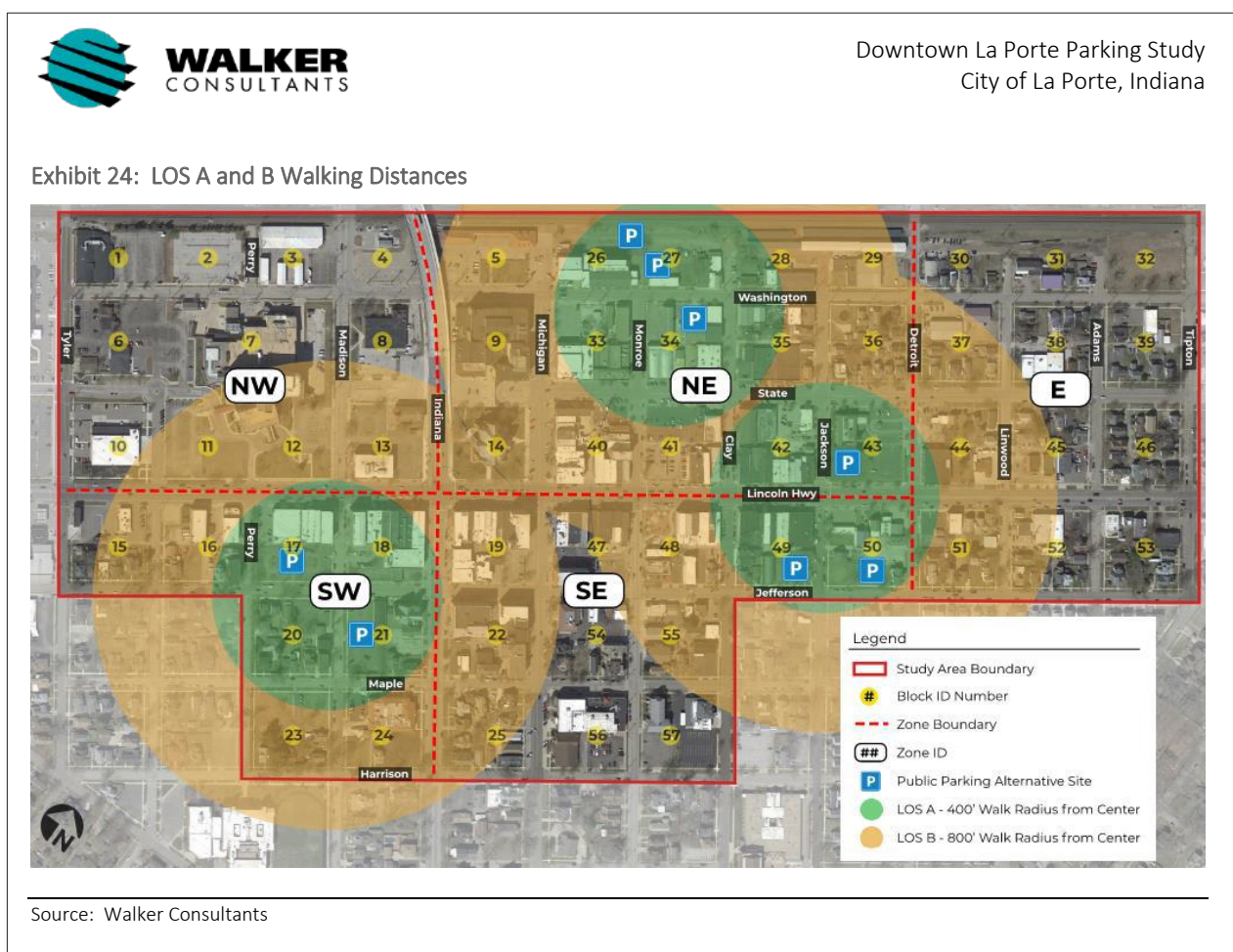


FIGURE 16: Downtown La Porte Parking Study

A comprehensive study of existing conditions and needs that provides a guide for a future parking system and management of parking in downtown La Porte. This study identifies locations for additional city parking lots, shared parking opportunities, potential parking structure locations, and recommendations related to overall parking management. Image credit: Walker Consultants

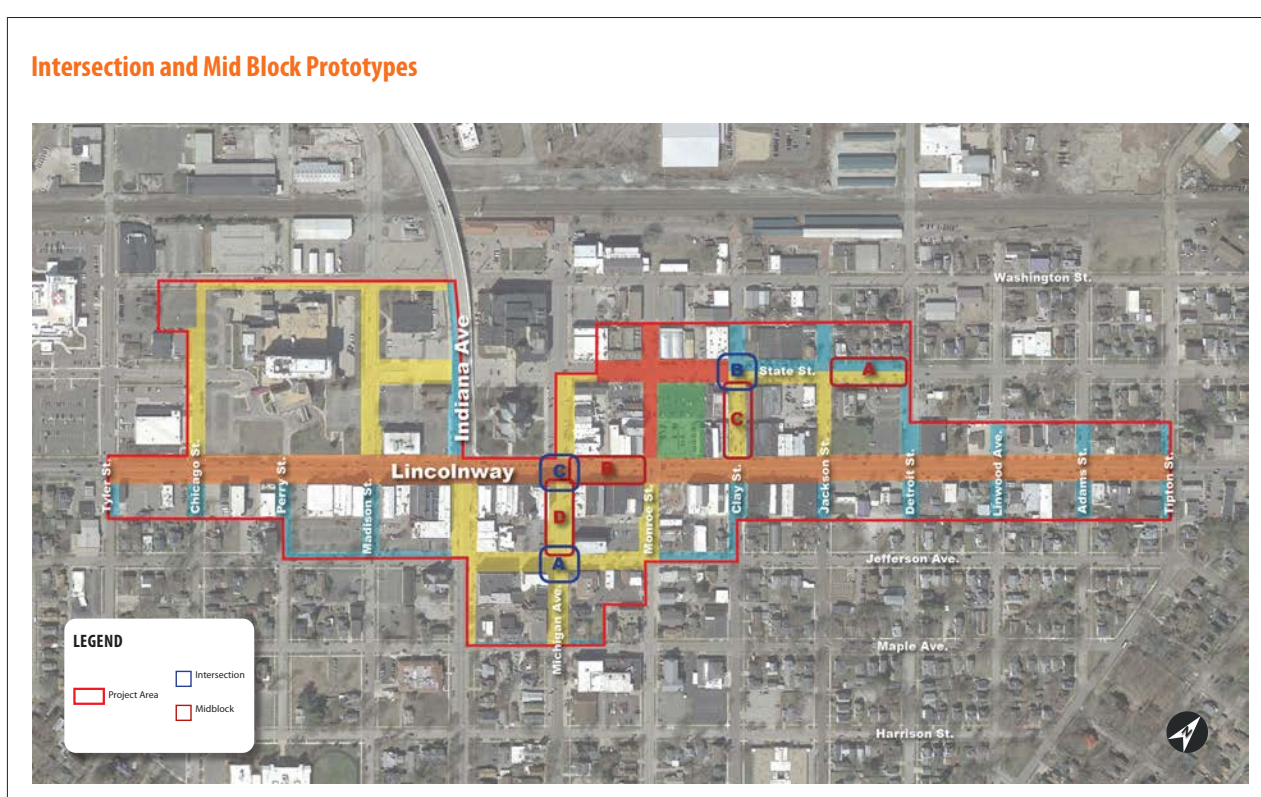
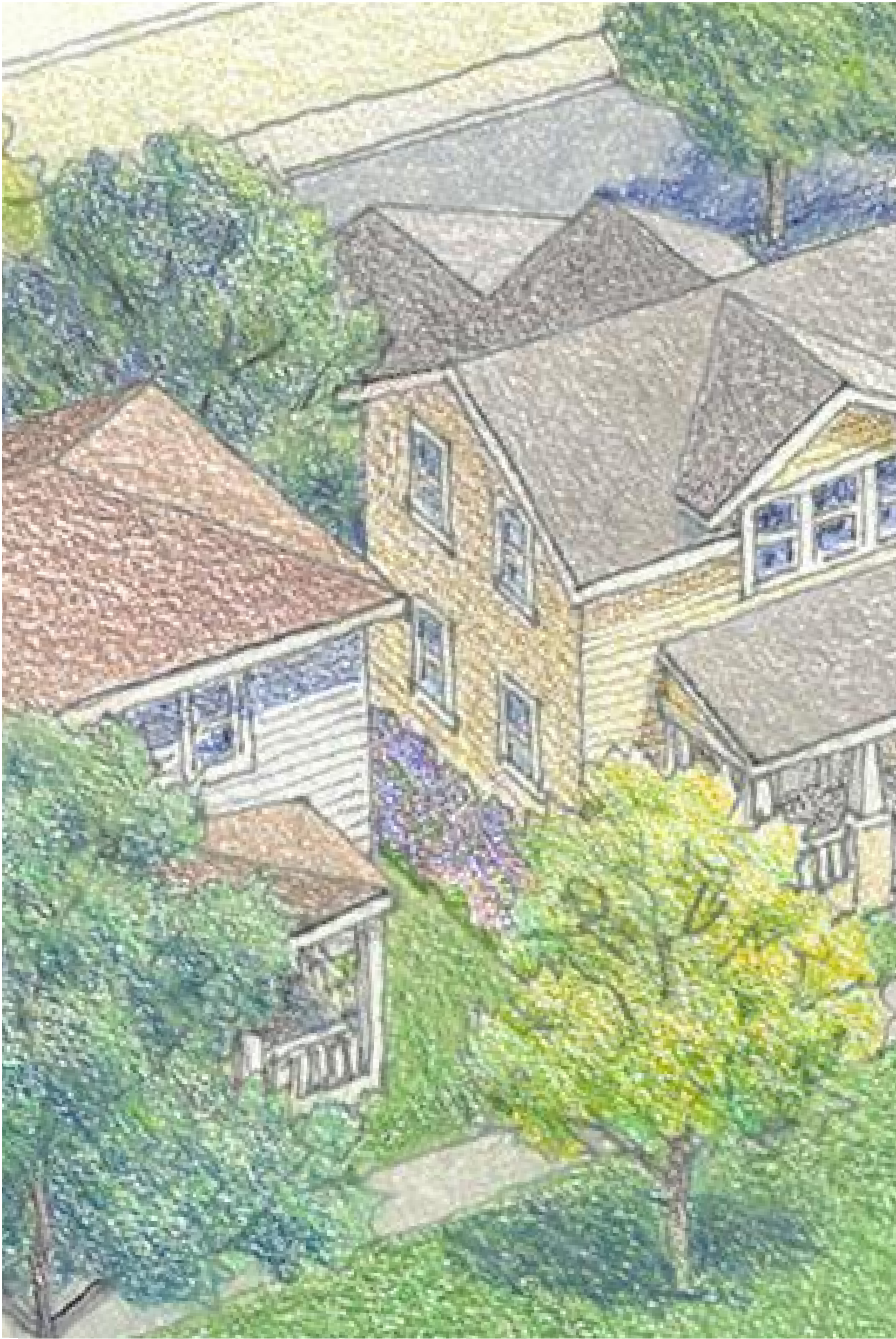


FIGURE 17: City of La Porte Downtown Streetscape Pattern Book

A short-, medium-, and long-term plan for the repair and replacement of the city's extensive downtown streetscape elements and infrastructure. This plan includes a pattern book that creates a hierarchy of downtown streets and a template for future replacements and improvements as well as identifying preferred street furniture and design elements such as lighting, benches, trash receptacles, pavers, planters, and trees. Image credit: Walker Consultants





PART 3: KEY FINDINGS

KEY FINDINGS

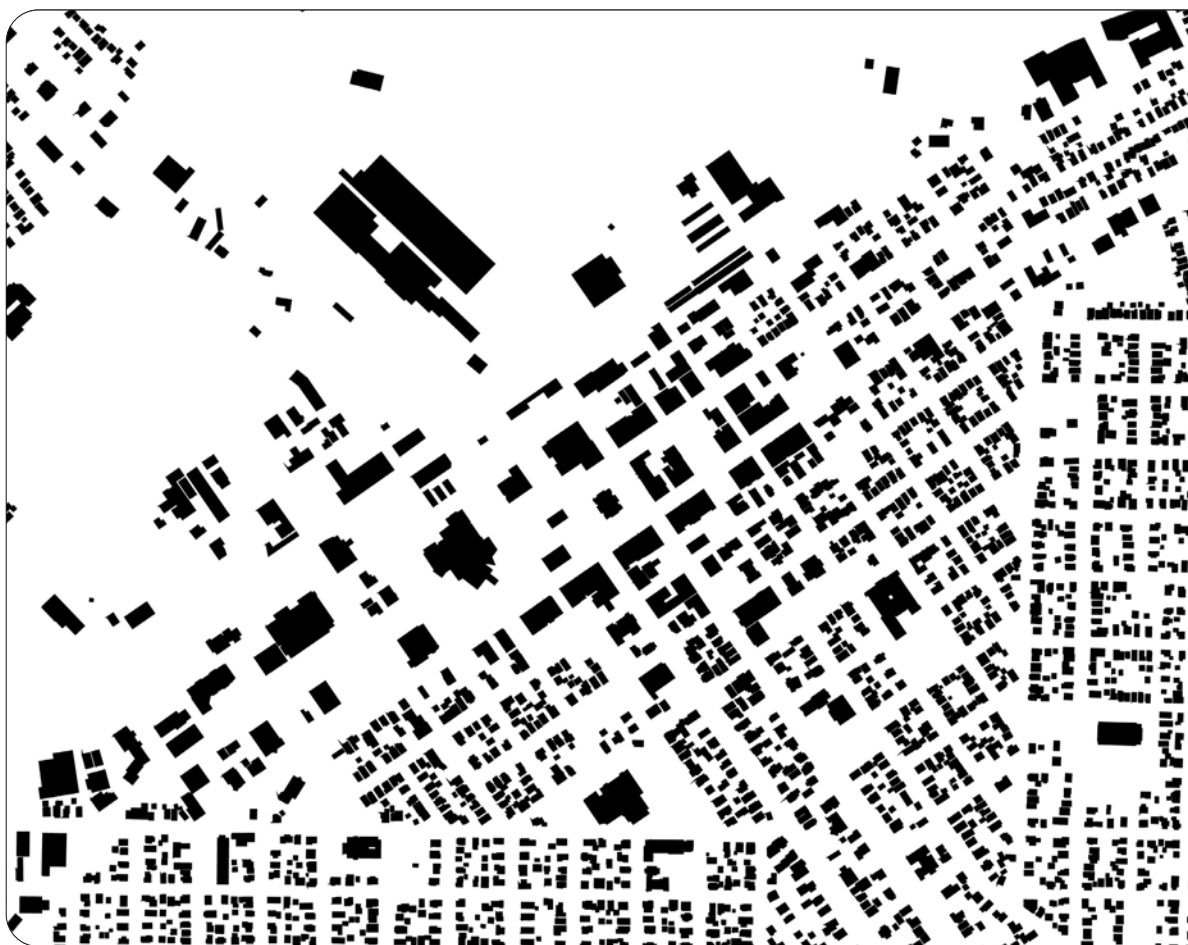
**VISION & ACTION PLAN
OVERVIEW**

MASTERPLAN OVERVIEW

KEY FINDINGS

The following Key Findings draw on information collected through stakeholder feedback sessions, meetings with the city staff and elected officials, meetings with the HFL team, as well as site tours and analysis by the professional team.

These six findings form the foundation of this report. Findings outline the challenges and opportunities facing La Porte and are presented with the goal of offering a holistic view of the existing conditions. The proposed vision and action plan outlined throughout this report will offer policy proposals and design solutions that seek to address the findings on these two pages.



KEY FINDING 1:

URBAN FABRIC INTACT, BUT AT RISK

A defining feature of La Porte is the character of place provided by the largely intact historic building fabric. Unfortunately, many of these buildings are at risk because they are caught between historic preservation protections that overly burden building owners and at the same time do not protect the city from losing irreplaceable buildings.

Years of disinvestment and a stagnant economy have left many of these structures in disrepair, partially vacant, or as blighted rentals. New commonsense preservation standards are needed to protect the future of the city in a way that meets market realities and minimizes displacement.



KEY FINDING 2:

VACANT & UNDER-UTILIZED LAND PROVIDES POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT SITES

Despite the largely intact building fabric, there are a surprising number of development opportunities throughout the city. Many of these opportunities are found on surface parking lots and in the “missing teeth” of the main street fabric.

The city can reactivate downtown and hold the street edge by building on the vacant lots, thus creating a more walkable city.

Legend

- Vacant Land
- Surface Parking
- For Sale Properties





KEY FINDING 3:

TRUCK TRAFFIC IMPEDES DOWNTOWN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The large volume of truck traffic rattling through downtown deters pedestrians from engaging with the street. When pedestrians feel unsafe downtown, businesses struggle.

The regional truck route that runs through the main street of La Porte inhibits economic development. Returning pedestrian activity to downtown will require rerouting truck traffic away from the heart of downtown.



KEY FINDING 4:

DILAPIDATED RENTAL PROPERTIES

Dilapidated rental properties, often owned in large portfolios by absentee landlords, create unsafe streets that impact the entire city as well as inhumane housing conditions that are unhealthy for residents.

Removing this blight is essential to regenerate downtown, but it must be paired with a housing strategy that offers safe and secure housing for those who require housing at a lower price point.



HOUSING PRODUCTION

City of La Porte should target production of **1,650 to 1,850** new units for a variety of income levels & household types

In addition to prioritizing housing rehabilitation efforts

Production targets address unmet housing needs for existing residents & expand the overall housing supply

RENTAL UNIT TARGET

450-550 New market-rate rental units, targeted to households over 80% AMI

300+ New rent-restricted affordable housing (<50% AMI) units

OWNER UNIT TARGET

900-1,000 New market-rate for-sale units, targeted to moderate- & higher-income households

35-50% Share of new market-rate for-sale units that should be targeted to active seniors (i.e., ranch duplexes)

KEY FINDING 5:

HOUSING SHORTAGE — AT ALL PRICE POINTS

Residents of La Porte have limited housing options, making it difficult to retain and attract residents.

The HFL housing study highlights the need to produce 1,650-1,850 new homes in the next five years, as well as renovating the existing housing stock. To meet the city's population growth goals, it is vital to provide a range of unit types and price points to serve multiple age groups and income levels.



KEY FINDING 6:

ENGAGED VISION KEEPERS — CITY LEADERSHIP, STAFF, AND NONPROFIT PARTNERS

Bold visions require vision keepers. La Porte is fortunate to have a strong team in place to advance the vision. This leadership starts at the top with the mayor and elected officials and can be found in the city staff who are implementing plans.

The HFL will play a central role in advancing these concepts. Together, this team of vision keepers has the fortitude to overcome the barriers over time to build a better future for La Porte.

VISION & ACTION PLAN OVERVIEW

The vision presented in this study draws on three foundational questions:

1. *Who are we solving for?*
2. *What does success look like?*
3. *What are the steps needed to realize this vision?*

The overview on the following pages draws on the information we received through stakeholder listening sessions, meetings with the HFL and city, feedback during public presentations, and our professional assessment of the existing conditions in the city.

The Goals for Key Constituents, described below, explain who we are solving for and highlight the primary concerns for each group. The Goals for Regeneration, page 21, explain what success looks like by outlining the characteristics of a regenerated city. The Action Plan for Downtown Regeneration and Housing Strategy, pages 22–23, provides a toolkit that describes the actions necessary to achieve these goals, both for individual residents and the city as a whole.

VISION GOALS FOR KEY CONSTITUENTS

1. PROTECTION FOR EXISTING LOW-INCOME RENTERS

Downtown regeneration and the remediation of dilapidated rental property will result in higher property values throughout La Porte, but especially in the near downtown neighborhood directly adjacent to downtown. While this will benefit the overall community, we must recognize that the price point offered by these neglected properties is essential for many hard-working residents of La Porte. ***Plans to remove blighted housing conditions must be paired with a comprehensive housing strategy to provide safe and secure housing options, rental and affordable homeownership, for the most vulnerable members of the La Porte community.***

2. PROTECTION FOR EXISTING FIXED-INCOME HOMEOWNERS

Higher property values will result in higher property taxes. This will directly impact existing fixed-income homeowners. This hardship can result in delayed maintenance to properties, forgoing basic purchases, and displacement. ***To avoid displacement, a comprehensive housing strategy must recognize this inevitable tax increase and prepare a plan to support these residents through grants in the short-term and policy protections in the long run.***

3. PROTECTION OF PROPERTY VALUE & QUALITY OF LIFE FOR ALL RESIDENTS

Residents of La Porte will enjoy the benefits of downtown regeneration as property values increase and activity emerges throughout the city. ***Affordable housing strategies will not deter from this market reality; in fact, building new housing at all price points will make it possible for children growing up now to afford to call La Porte home in the future.***

4. ATTRACTING, RETAINING, AND ENTICING NEW RESIDENTS AT ALL PRICES

A thriving city requires a growing tax base. ***Attracting new residents will require housing for all price points, affordable to high-end, that meets the needs of all life phases, from young people just starting out to retirees in their golden years.*** Meeting this mix of needs will require the construction of Missing Middle Housing types such as duplexes, multiplexes, and even townhomes.

5. SUPPORT FOR EXISTING BUSINESSES & ATTRACTING NEW BUSINESSES

Existing businesses are essential to the activation of downtown La Porte. ***Plans for regeneration must support the needs of local businesses to foster a culture of entrepreneurship and innovation.*** Population growth will generate demand for new local businesses. New businesses will create new jobs, which in turn will attract new residents. ***To support this virtuous cycle, plans for regeneration must support a thriving local business community.***

VISION GOALS FOR REGENERATION

1. ACTIVATION OF THE PUBLIC REALM DOWNTOWN

The public realm is the area of a city within the public right-of-way. This area can either be a space that we travel through or a place we experience from within. **Creating an active public realm requires the implementation of safe and walkable streets that are framed by active businesses and lead to public gathering places.** An activated public realm will attract families with children, young professionals, and senior residents who do not currently feel safe on streets with truck traffic.

2. PROTECTION OF THE HISTORIC BUILDING FABRIC

Historic structures, especially fabric buildings, provide demonstrable economic benefits to communities (refer to the Historic Preservation section starting on page 60). It is rare to find a city as intact as La Porte. While the buildings currently exist, however, very little of the city's historic fabric is protected. Downtown regeneration will apply short-term economic pressure to demolish historic fabric. This would be a catastrophic loss to the city and would undermine all regeneration efforts. **Protections must be put in place for the historic fabric of La Porte, or the city risks losing the core of its identity.**

3. MAINTAINING OPEN SPACE

As new housing and mixed-use development is built on empty lots and underutilized land throughout the city, residents may feel like they are losing precious open space. **The regeneration plan and housing strategy must include a comprehensive open space masterplan that ensures all homes are within walking distance of a range of outdoor parks and play areas.**

4. PROVIDE HOUSING OPTIONS FOR ALL PRICE POINTS

Housing need is not one-size fits all. The need for small, medium, and large square footages often do not align with their respective price points. Larger homes are often required at lower prices, whereas smaller units can be desirable at the higher end for those choosing to downsize and have less square footage to maintain. **A healthy community requires a housing strategy capable of meeting this increasingly diverse spectrum of need.**

5. CREATING A SAFE COMMUNITY WITH REDUCED CRIME

Safety is the cornerstone of a thriving community. Crime will be reduced by disincentivizing absentee landlords from allowing their dilapidated rental properties to foster crime. While this is a necessary action, it is critical to recognize that the price point of a home does not create crime, and being forced to live in slum conditions due to income does not make you a criminal. Neglect and disinvestment create the circumstances for crime. **Crime reduction will require replacing blighted housing with safe, affordable housing at an affordable price point for the renter. These new units will result in the stabilization of a vulnerable population rather than the displacement of crime.**

6. ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL CITY RESIDENTS

La Porte is positioned to grow and develop. Its industry and proximity to Chicago will ensure this growth over time. The question is, who will benefit? Will children growing up in La Porte today want to return and raise their own families here? Will they be able to afford to do so? Will fixed-income residents be able to stay? Will retired residents who've dedicated their lives to the community see themselves in its future? The answer to these questions will come down to the amount of economic opportunity each group feels they can access in La Porte. **Growth plans must include everyone, or the future La Porte will no longer feel like today's beloved city.**

ACTION PLAN

DOWNTOWN REGENERATION

1. REROUTE TRUCK TRAFFIC AWAY FROM THE DOWNTOWN CORE

The first step in activating a vibrant public realm is to reroute truck traffic away from the stretch of Lincolnway that runs through the core of downtown. The truck traffic acts as a barrier to economic growth by making streets unsafe for pedestrians and inhospitable for businesses. Pages 30–33 outline a phased strategy for rerouting trucks that addresses both short-term and long-term growth. ***This strategy will make smoother travel routes for drivers and a more enjoyable downtown for residents.***

2. INSTALL COMPLETE STREET DESIGNS TO CREATE A WALKABLE CITY

Complete streets promote freedom of movement by balancing the needs of the pedestrian with the needs of the automobile. Cars are welcome but they do not dominate. Complete streets connect people and facilitate walkability in the downtown and surrounding neighborhoods, and they connect downtown to other parts of the city. Narrow travel lanes slow traffic, and on-street parking by tree-lined sidewalks provide a buffer between moving vehicles and pedestrians. A large portion of society, including children and elderly residents, cannot drive or do not have access to a vehicle. ***A network of complete streets makes travel within the community safer for these residents and more enjoyable for all.*** Refer to pages 36–39 for complete street designs.

3. DEVELOP A CITY-WIDE RETAIL STRATEGY

Retail performs best when focused in a consolidated area. This allows visitors to park once and make several stops, while residents who arrive on foot have a shorter walk to pick up goods. Understanding retail market potential before, during, and after truck rerouting will require a comprehensive retail study to determine the square footage that can be absorbed successfully into the downtown as well as the potential revenue this retail can generate.

4. SUPPORT COMMONSENSE HISTORIC PRESERVATION STRATEGIES

Historic preservation can be stifling and oppressive (“George Washington slept here”) or rational and supportive. ***Rational, commonsense preservation balances the need to protect historic buildings, so the city can enjoy the economic benefits of these structures, with the property owners’ everyday economic realities.*** Pages 60–71 outline a toolkit for commonsense preservation strategies.

5. INFILL “MISSING TEETH” & INCENTIVIZE SECOND-FLOOR ACTIVATION

Infill development on empty lots and underutilized land will engage an active public realm downtown by physically defining the streets as well as providing more residences within walking distance of businesses and amenities. Additionally, many historic commercial buildings downtown have vacancies on the second and third floors. Incentivize the activation of this real estate to provide offices and apartments looking over the downtown area.

6. REDEVELOP THE FORMER HOSPITAL SITE WITH MIXED-INCOME HOUSING

The redevelopment of the former hospital site will drastically influence the future of downtown La Porte. It is rare to find a large “blank slate” opportunity within an otherwise intact downtown core. ***As such, the scale and character of the development on this site will either seamlessly integrate into the overall city or it will feel isolated and disconnected.*** Pages 44–57 provide a design proposal for a kit-of-parts-based design approach that can be calibrated to offer a wide range of unit types and price points at a scale of development that responds to the existing city fabric.

ACTION PLAN HOUSING STRATEGY

1. CONTINUE TO STRENGTHEN CODE ENFORCEMENT

Code enforcement forces property owners to remediate blighted conditions and disincentivizes predatory rental housing. Code enforcement has many facets. Page 71 outlines how strengthening historic preservation ordinances can unlock new code enforcement tools. Page 79 looks at how zoning and building codes can be used to strengthen code enforcement.

2. CREATE A HOUSING NONPROFIT

Remediating dilapidated homes will increase the value of the property, leading to the displacement of vulnerable low-income residents. **A local housing nonprofit is needed,** first to acquire properties as they become available. This will slow gentrification. After that, a housing nonprofit is needed to counterbalance market forces and ensure safe, stable, and affordable homeownership and rental options for low-income residents. Page 81 outlines strategies for establishing this entity.

3. UPDATE THE ZONING CODE

“Missing Middle Housing” is a toolkit of housing types commonly built in the United States before World War II. The types include duplexes, small apartment buildings, cottage courts, townhomes, and accessory dwelling units. This mix of housing choices ensures that residents can live and work within a community regardless of their income or life phase. **It is important to underscore that the current blighted conditions at rental properties in the city are a result of disinvestment and historic economic policy, not a result of the building type or ownership structure.** Correlation does not equal causation. Learn more on pages 80–83.

4. UNLOCK PRESERVATION RESOURCES FOR BUILDING OWNERS

Commonsense historic preservation ordinances protect the public good by limiting demolition and badly executed renovations, but they also unlock resources for property owners to encourage the maintenance and upkeep of historic structures. **Property owners often do not utilize the available resources because they don't know about them, or because they perceive the process to be too difficult to navigate.** Pages 68–71 provide a roadmap for property owners to unlock preservation resources.

5. INCENTIVIZE SMALL-SCALE DEVELOPERS & A NEW BUILDING CULTURE

The few new homes built in La Porte in recent years are on the outskirts of the city. These homes are typically low-density, garage-fronted, single-family homes on wide lots. **Building infill housing within urban neighborhoods requires looking to the existing fabric to inform massing, how the building meets the street, and overall details.** It also requires new business models designed around the incremental development of scattered site housing. A new movement of small-scale developers is taking off in neighborhoods throughout the country. Launching local adaptations of these businesses in La Porte will require training and access to capital. This is an opportunity to promote workforce development in conjunction with building trade programs in the area as well as skilled worker training programs for local unions. Refer to pages 78–81.

6. INCREASE PRESSURE ON NEGLIGENT LANDLORDS

A robust code enforcement strategy will put pressure on absentee landlords who have allowed their properties to fall into disrepair. This may result in portfolios of dilapidated properties coming on the market. Consider creating both a rental registry to pressure negligent landlords and a land bank to purchase and stabilize properties that fall into disrepair.

MASTERPLAN OVERVIEW

This report proposes a vision for the regeneration of downtown La Porte that minimizes the displacement of vulnerable citizens. The work seeks to answer the question, “Now what?” which was raised after the Health Foundation of La Porte identified critical housing shortages in its Housing Study. These shortages can’t be addressed in a vacuum, so this study comprises four layers:

1. **Downtown Regeneration** — Strategies for returning downtown La Porte to a pedestrian-friendly walkable center with economic vitality. Ensure new construction is scaled to match the historic urban fabric.
2. **Historic Preservation** — A guide for protecting the historic fabric and unlocking resources that will help realize economic benefits.
3. **Neighborhood Housing** — A toolkit to providing housing choices that fit a range of price points and life phases.
4. **Open Space & Urban Landscape** — A masterplan for an open space network that facilitates connection to nature.

Although the plan can be envisioned as an ideal future for La Porte, it is likely that the city’s needs will evolve over time. Rather than prescribe the be-all and end-all solution to all challenges facing the city, we offer a set of flexible strategies that can grow and evolve as La Porte does. The following pages of this report look at the city of La Porte layer by layer, zooming in per section from a citywide overview to specific strategies for areas of focus.

The proposed strategies operate on two levels by first establishing a vision and then defining an action plan. The following sections seek to address the goals for constituents and regeneration outlined on pages 20–21 with the action plan for downtown regeneration and housing strategy outlined on pages 22–23.

The current conditions in La Porte did not happen overnight. They are the result of decades of decisions and actions. Repairing the city will not happen overnight either. It will require belief in a vision of a better future and patient investment of time, energy, and capital to create that future. This study builds on the existing momentum created by the mayor, city staff, and the Health Foundation of La Porte to assist in realizing this goal.

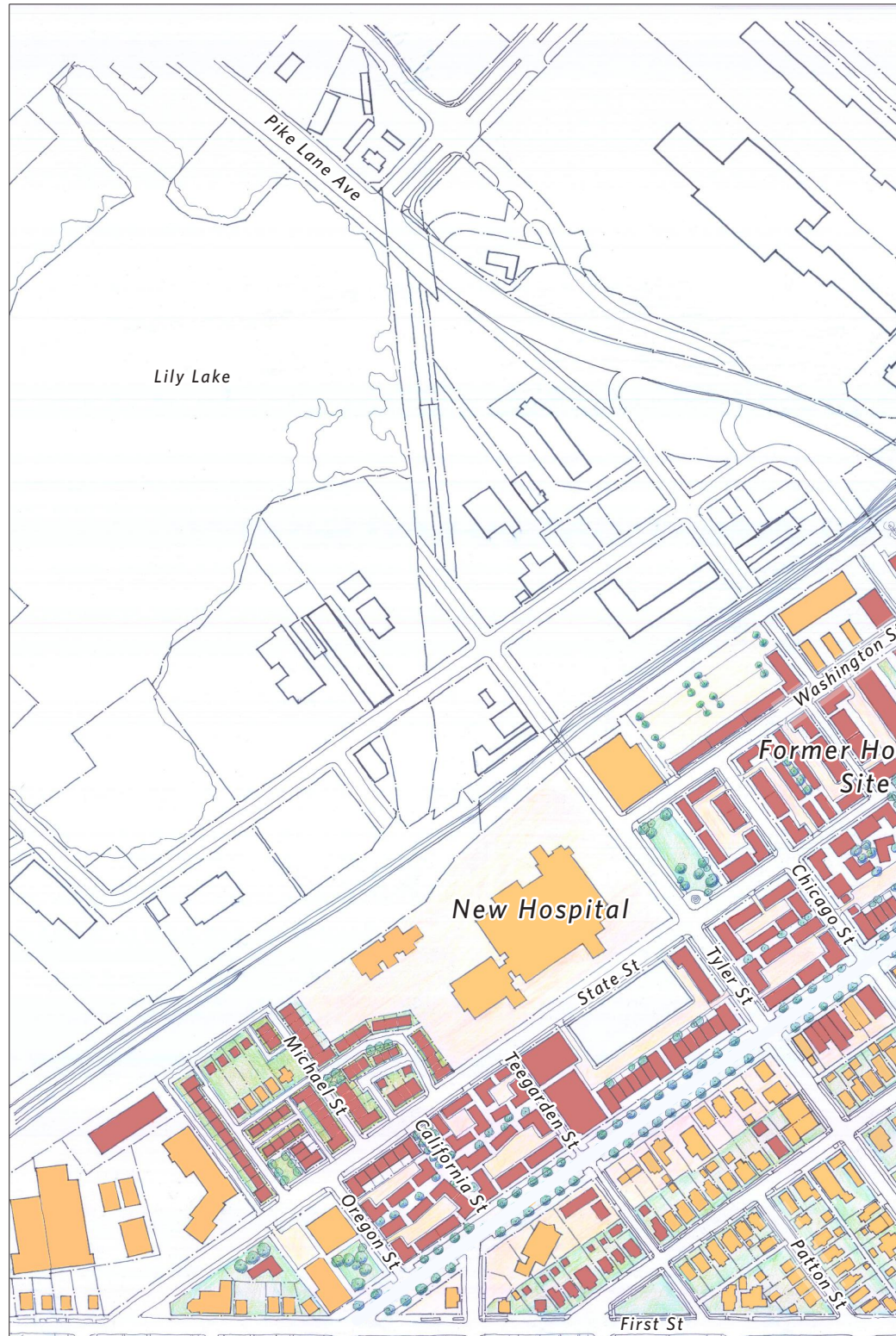


FIGURE 18: Proposed Masterplan of Downtown La Porte, Indiana

DOWNTOWN REGENERATION



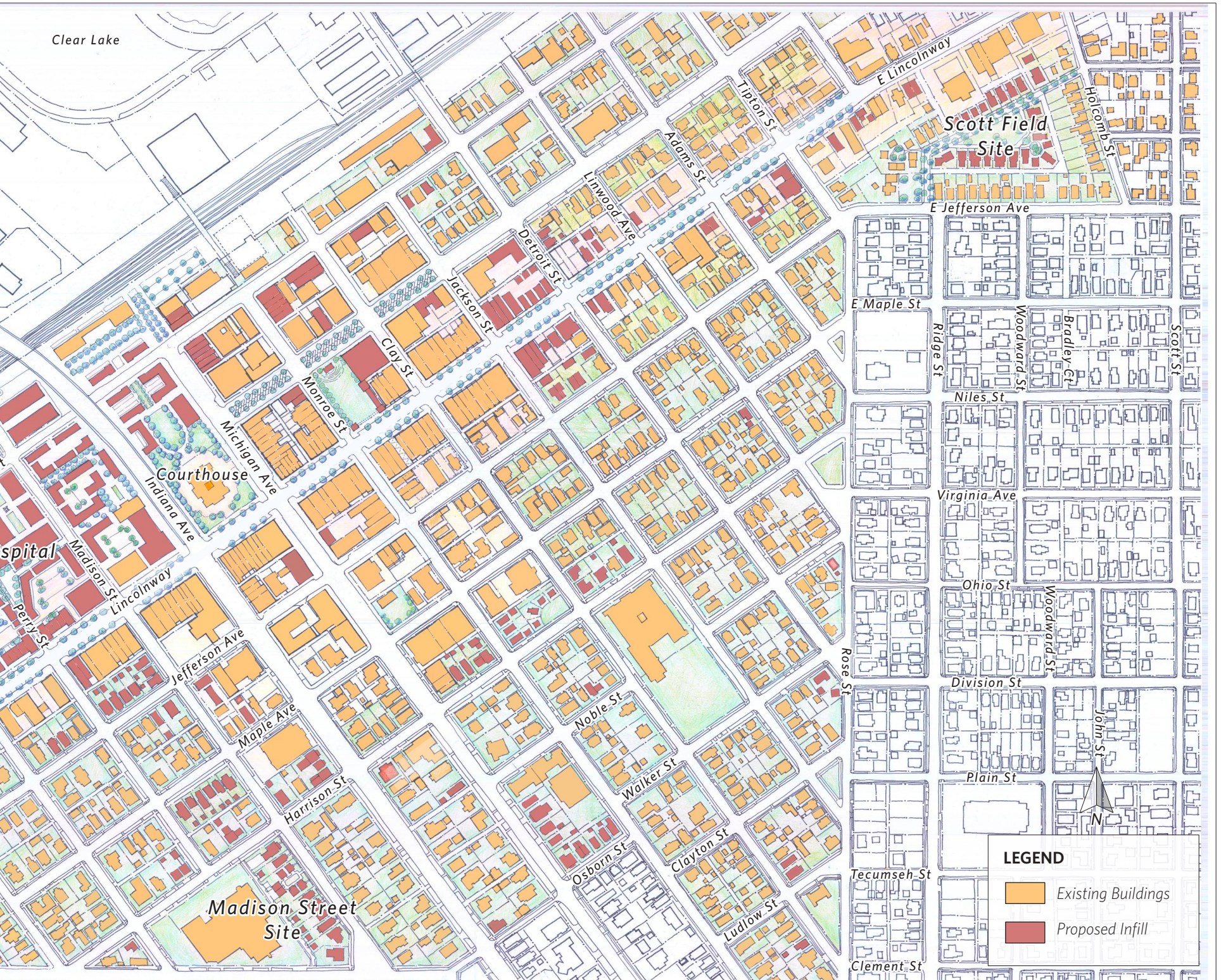
Downtown regeneration starts with the rerouting of truck traffic away from the center of downtown. With the removal of trucks, the public realm can be activated through complete street design, a focused retail strategy, and engaging infill opportunities. In parallel, the redevelopment of the former hospital site will help to form a walkable urban core. Refer to pages 28–57.

LAYER 2

HISTORIC PRESERVATION



La Porte has an extensive array of historic buildings that contribute to the unique character of the community. These historic buildings are worth protecting. Currently many of these buildings are not protected, and some are falling into disrepair. Commonsense preservation is needed to balance the public good with market realities. Refer to pages 60–71.



LAYER 3

NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSING



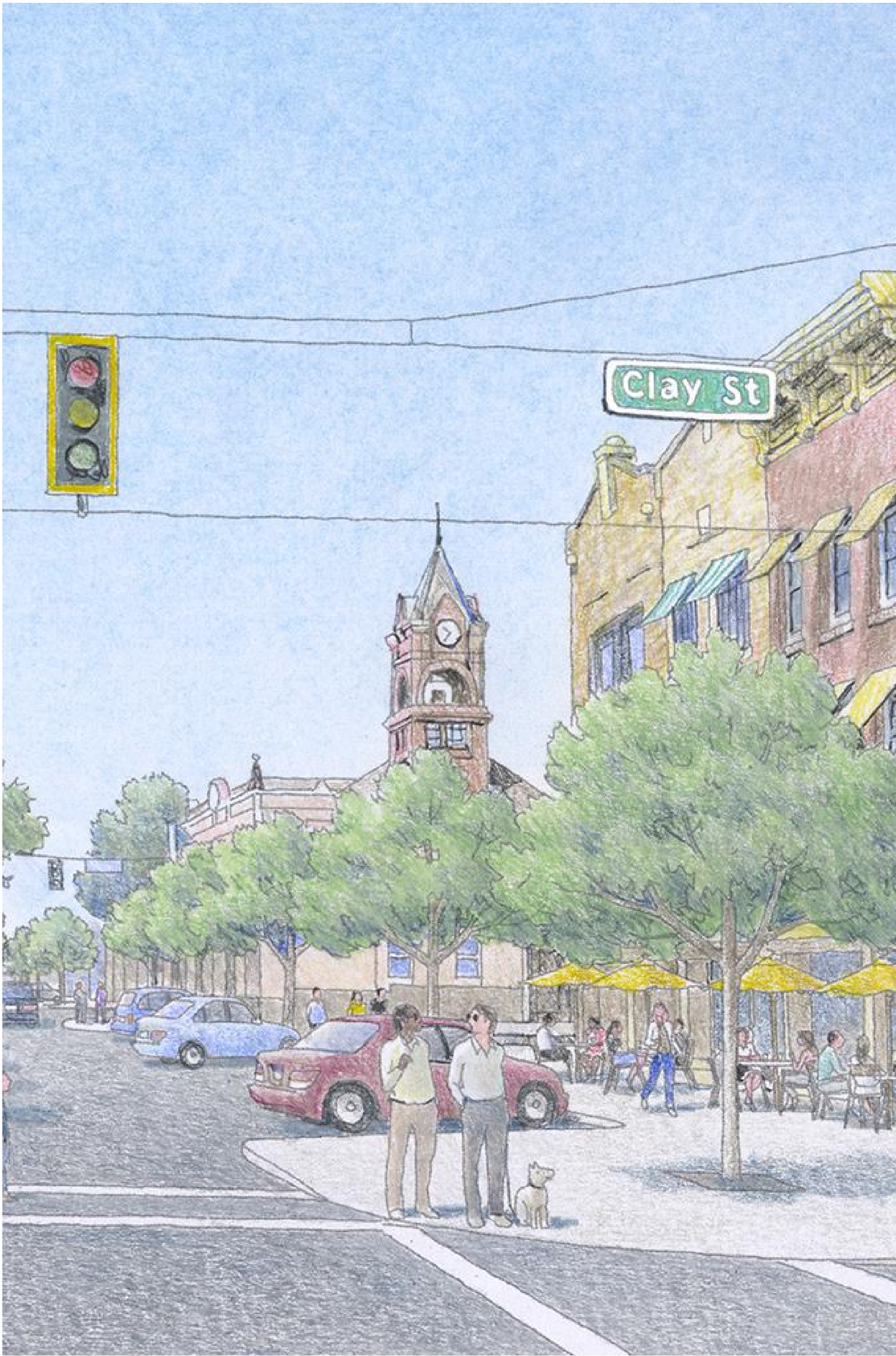
A comprehensive housing strategy first requires assessing the regulatory, financial, and cultural barriers that limit the production of housing at all price points, but especially affordable units. Second, it requires implementing a toolkit to overcome these barriers through policy and design. Refer to pages 74-93.

LAYER 4

OPEN SPACE & URBAN LANDSCAPE



Open space, areas for public recreation, and urban landscape are essential ingredients of a thriving city. Every home should be within walking distance to a green space. Streets throughout the city need to have green cover for shade and calm. A coordinated open space plan is especially important as the city begins to infill. Refer to pages 96-105.





PART 4: DOWNTOWN REGENERATION

DOWNTOWN OVERVIEW

**STRATEGY FOR
REROUTING TRUCKS**

**DOWNTOWN CORE
REGENERATION
& RETAIL STRATEGY**

COMPLETE STREET DESIGN

PARKING ANALYSIS

**DOWNTOWN INFILL
STRATEGIES**

**FORMER HOSPITAL SITE
REDEVELOPMENT**

DOWNTOWN OVERVIEW

While many cities in this region have demolished their historic fabric, the City of La Porte is fortunate to have a uniquely intact historic downtown core. The beauty of downtown main street buildings is the adaptability of the spaces. Many existing historic buildings in the downtown area have been used for different purposes throughout the years. The adaptability of these buildings makes them more sustainable, gives them more character, and provide a greater value to the community than big-box stores or strip development.

Yet, despite this rich urban fabric, downtown La Porte struggles because its main street, Lincolnway, doubles as a state truck route. Currently, 850–1,100 large commercial vehicles travel through downtown per day, damaging the streetscape, shaking buildings, and creating an unsafe pedestrian environment. Pages 30–33 provide a phased plan to reroute truck traffic away from Lincolnway.

The first step in regenerating downtown will be to restore a pedestrian-friendly environment by establishing an alternate path for large trucks. Once truck traffic is rerouted, streetscape improvements and public gathering spaces will reactivate the public realm. This will support existing businesses, attract new businesses, and encourage the redevelopment of the many vacant upper floors throughout downtown. Pages 34–39 illustrate the restoration of the downtown core and detail the street designs that will facilitate this recovery.

The success of this regeneration will depend on coordinated strategies for retail and parking. Retail and commercial uses need to be located close together to support economic growth. Focused retail allows visitors to park once and make more than one stop. Parking must also be coordinated; conventional planning overestimates parking need, but in fact too much parking harms retail because the space it requires forces activity further apart, which discourages walking as distances increase and parking lots create unpleasant walking experiences. Refer to pages 40–41 for retail and parking strategies.

While most of downtown remains intact, a few infill opportunities offer development potential. It is important that the design of this infill is scaled to complement, not compete with, the existing historic fabric. Pages 42–43 provide a toolkit for designing a mixed-use downtown fabric building.

Taken together, the former hospital site and the numerous parking lots in the northwest corner of downtown constitute a large development site that will require special care in planning and programming. The new design will either contribute to a healthy downtown or work against it. Pages 44–57 offer guiding principles of design as well as proportional plans for this site that propose a series of appropriately scaled, vibrant public places for area residents as well as patients and staff at the newly built hospital.



FIGURE 19: Proposed Masterplan for Downtown La Porte, Indiana



STRATEGY FOR REROUTING TRUCKS

The regeneration of downtown starts with rerouting truck traffic away from Lincolnway. Major infrastructure projects can take decades and cost hundreds of millions of dollars. While it would be ideal to remove the truck traffic once and for all, such a move would take too long, cost too much, and not provide the immediate impact that the downtown needs. Instead, we recommend investing in a solution that prioritizes the core of downtown by rerouting truck traffic from Lincolnway onto Washington Street with a proposed route along the Rail Corridor. Refer to Figure 25 on page 33. In the longterm, explore a partial or full corridor plan that removes all truck traffic from downtown. Washington Street is currently a locally designated truck route but is not desirable for current through-downtown truck traffic due to its current geometry and configuration. The following series of diagrams illustrates this phased approach to removing truck traffic from downtown.

KEY FINDINGS (KF) & RECOMMENDATIONS (R)

KF **Truck Traffic Through Downtown Impedes Economic Development**
Large, fast-moving vehicles deter pedestrians from spending time downtown. This impedes the success of businesses and residences along Lincolnway.

R **Short-Term Solution: Reroute Truck Traffic Away from Lincolnway**
Reroute truck traffic off Lincolnway and onto Washington Street along the railroad to calm part of downtown.

R **Long-Term Solution: Corridor Plan**
Over time, remove truck traffic from downtown with new infrastructure that creates a corridor around the city.

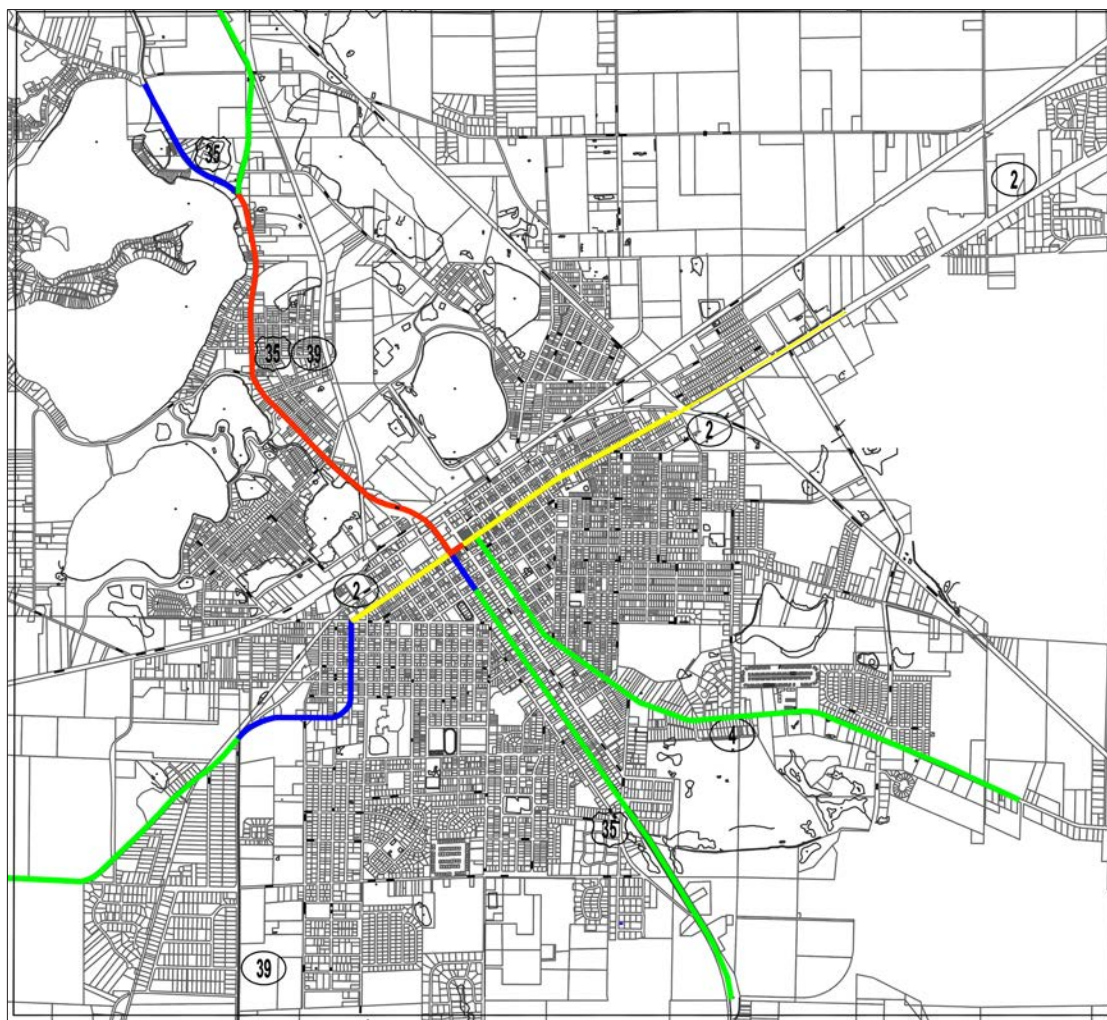


FIGURE 20: Existing Truck Route & Traffic Volume

CHALLENGES:

Truck traffic impedes downtown economic development.

- Streets feel unsafe for pedestrians.
- Car doors and street infrastructure are frequently clipped/damaged by trucks.
- Noise and vibrations from trucks are unsettling for pedestrians and outdoor diners.

Current route not ideal for truck drivers or INDOT.

- Current route creates a high risk for damaging cars or street infrastructure.
- Pedestrians are hard to see while driving.

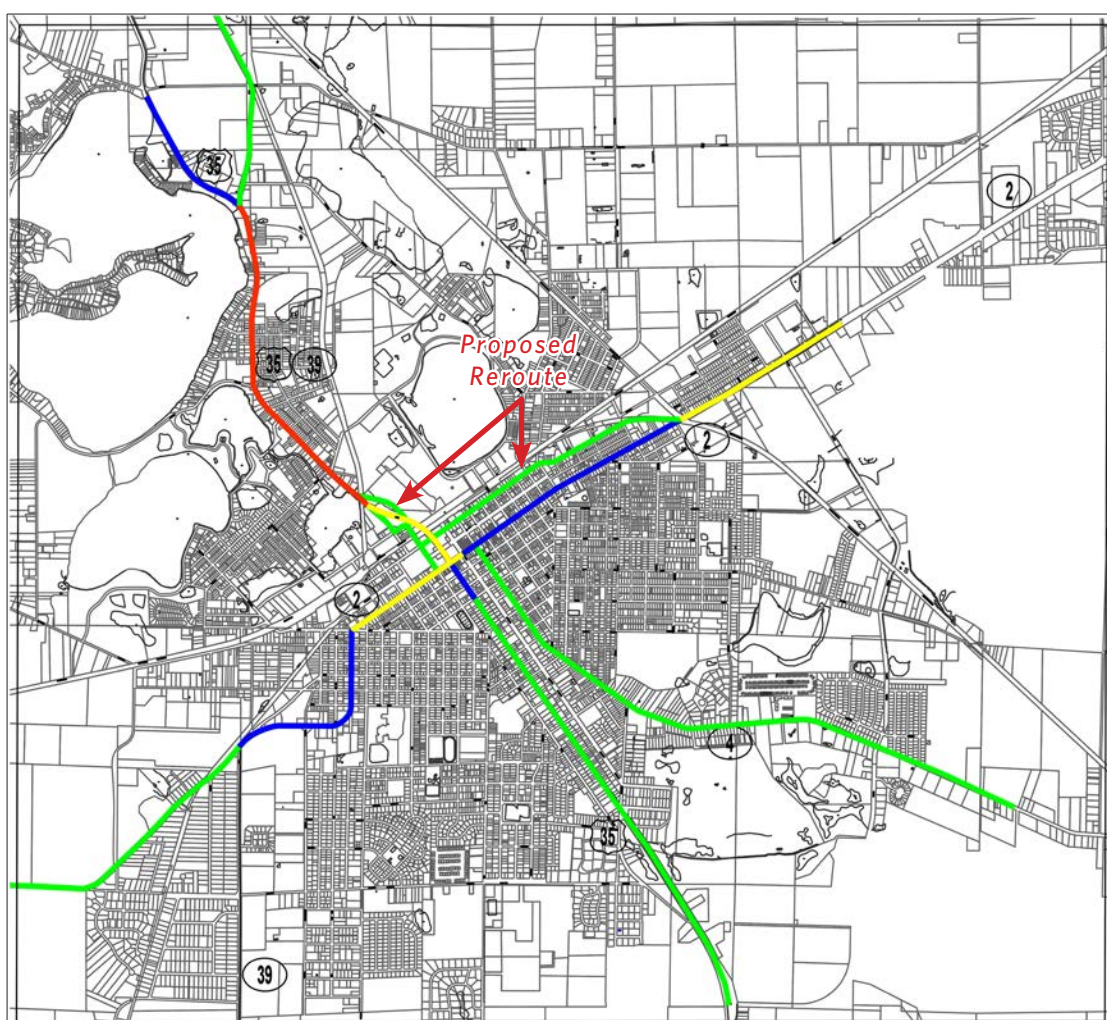
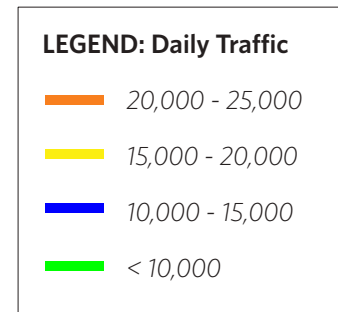


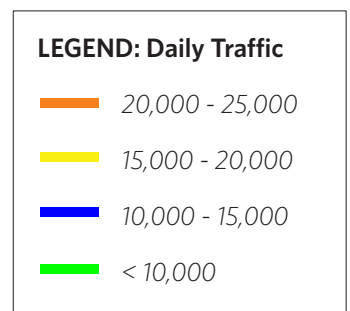
FIGURE 21: Short-Term Solution — Washington Street Reroute

PROPOSAL: NEW WASHINGTON STREET ROUTE

- **Proposed Path** — Reroute truck traffic off Lincolnway onto Washington Street. Redesign Washington Street section and configuration to accommodate.
- **Northwest Connection** — Exit 35/39 before railroad and cross at grade onto Washington Street OR cross over railroad tracks on Indiana Avenue, then make three right turns to reach Washington Street. Refer to Figure 24 on page 32.
- **East Connection** — Continue on Washington to Brighton Street. Consider new connection along the existing abandoned rail corridor. Refer to Figure 25 on page 33.

Estimated Cost

- \$10-15 million



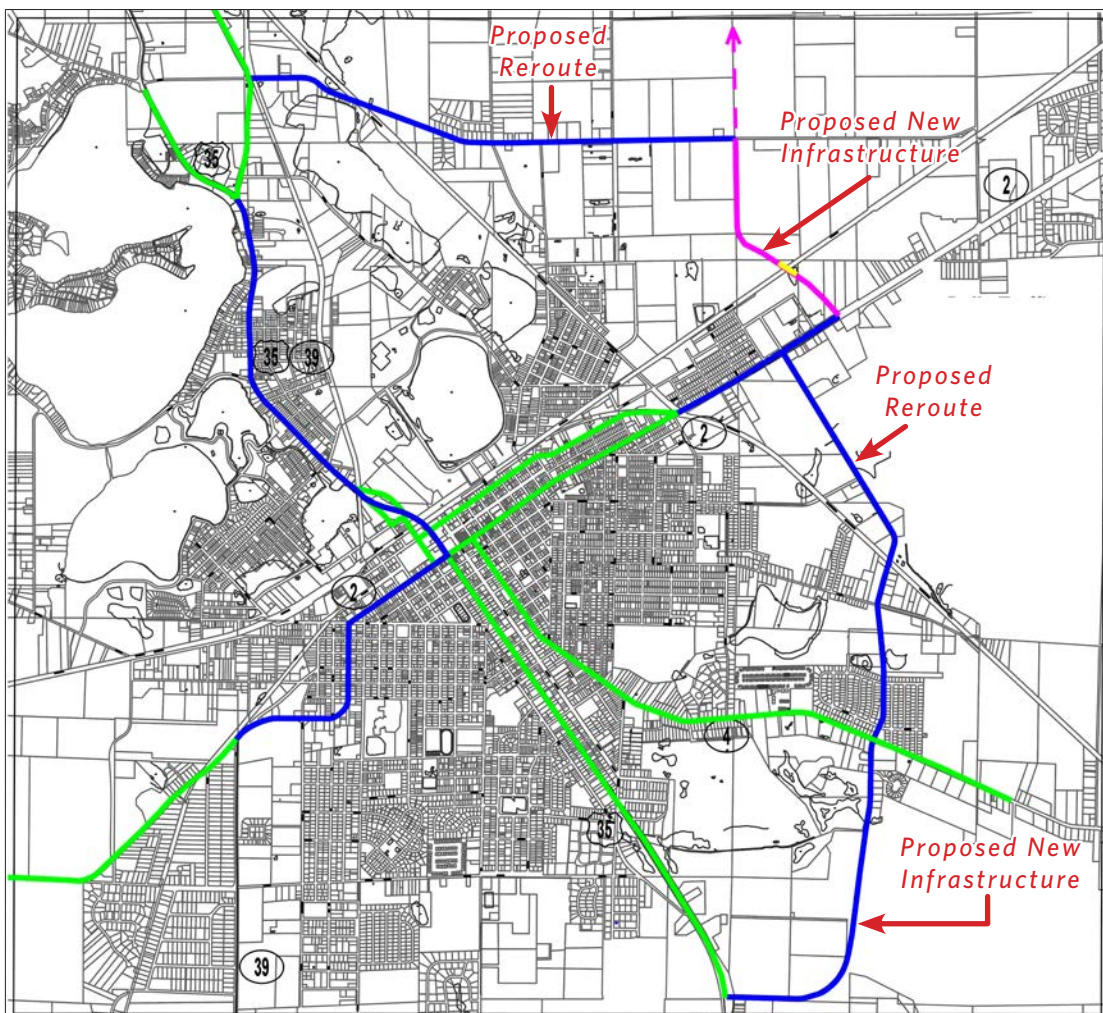


FIGURE 22: Mid-Term Solution — Boyd Boulevard Partial Corridor

PROPOSAL: REROUTE TRUCK TRAFFIC AWAY FROM DOWNTOWN ALONG BOYD BOULEVARD

- **Proposed Path** — Utilize existing infrastructure on Boyd Boulevard to reroute truck traffic away from downtown.
- **New Infrastructure** — Connect Severs Road to Lincolnway with new road or, as an alternative, connect to US 20 via a Range Road extension as is currently being studied as part of the preliminary design of the North-South Corridor.

Estimated Cost

- \$25-35 million

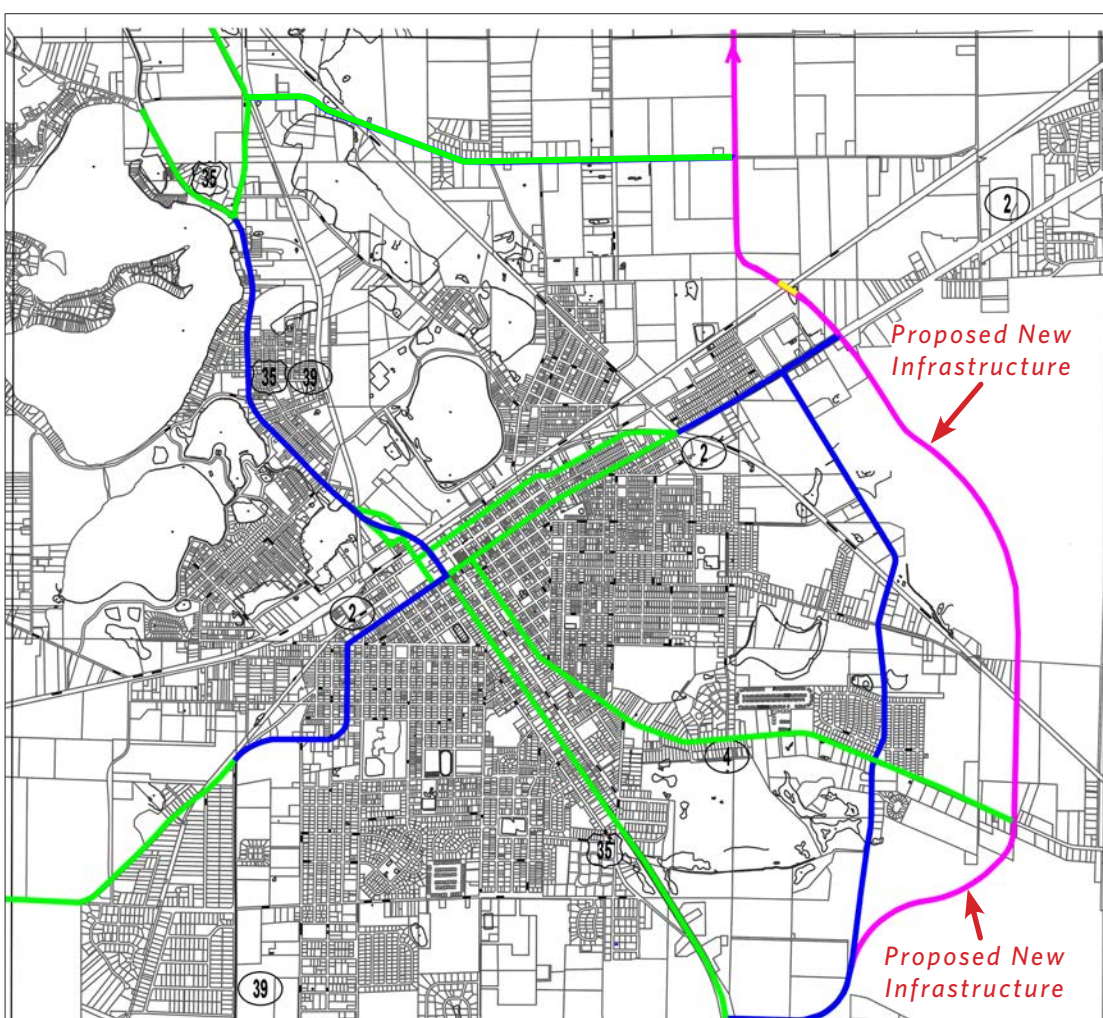
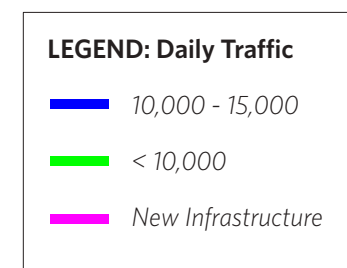


FIGURE 23: Long-Term Solution — Corridor Plan

PROPOSAL: REROUTE TRUCK TRAFFIC AWAY FROM DOWNTOWN ALONG BOYD BOULEVARD

- **Proposed Path** — New infrastructure to create a corridor east of the city.

Estimated Cost

- \$75-\$125 million

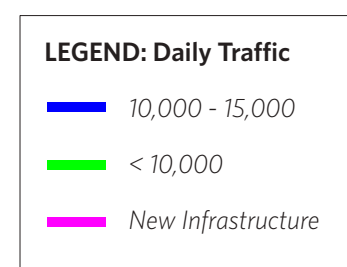
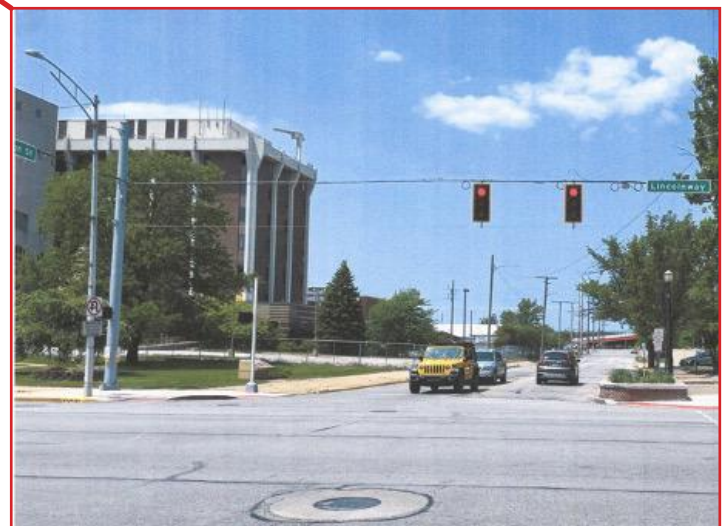




FIGURE 24: Short-Term Reroute Concept Overview

PROPOSAL: NEW WASHINGTON STREET ROUTE

- **Washington Street** — Upgrades needed on a portion of Washington Street to accommodate truck traffic.
- **East & West Connections** — Further study required at end connections to determine a preferred path.



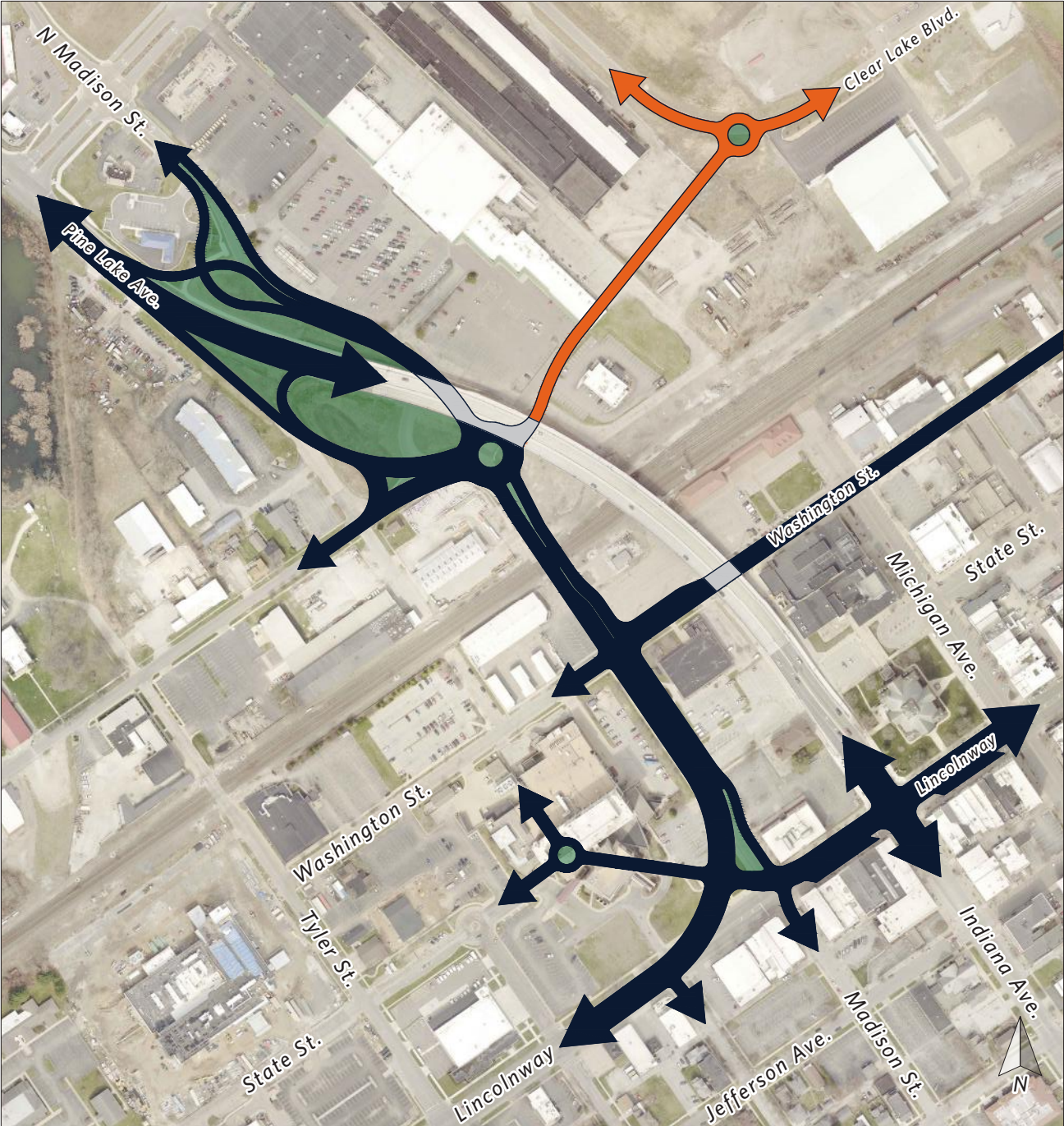
View of the Former Hospital Site before demolition from Lincolnway facing northwest down Madison St.



View of the Former Hospital Site after demolition from Chicago St. facing northeast between Lincolnway and State St.



FIGURE 25: Detail Study of Proposed Alternate Route for Truck Traffic



LEGEND

- Proposed Washington Street Alignment
- Potential Near-Term Alignment (using existing streets)
- Proposed Network Improvement Projects
- Funded Projects (Truesdell Under Construction)

FIGURE 26: Detail Study of Proposed Alternate Route for Truck Traffic at Indiana Avenue

DOWNTOWN CORE REGENERATION & RETAIL STRATEGY

Rerouting truck traffic to Washington Street east of Indiana Avenue creates the opportunity for downtown La Porte to not only reclaim its main street along Lincolnway, but also to activate a protected downtown core.

At the center of this core is a new plaza that will extend along Monroe Street between Lincolnway and State Street. This plaza will provide a venue for festivals, events, and outdoor activities. In addition to providing open space in the city, this plaza will pull energy toward a planned pedestrian bridge at the end of Monroe Street. This bridge will provide access across the railroad and connect downtown to the new redevelopment areas to the north and a trail network that wraps the lakes.

Developing a retail strategy is an essential step in creating a rich and lively downtown. Retail performs best when focused in a consolidated area. This allows visitors to park once and make several stops, while residents who arrive on foot have a shorter walk to pick up goods. Figure 28 on page 35 illustrates a proposed retail strategy. In this scheme, retail lines Lincolnway and the new plaza then extends out to activate the immediately adjacent blocks.

Understanding retail market potential before, during, and after truck rerouting will require a comprehensive retail study to determine the square footage that can be absorbed successfully into the downtown as well as the potential revenue this retail can generate. Below, Figure 27 highlights the executive summary of a retail study prepared by Gibbs Planning Group for the City of Kalamazoo, Michigan. This snapshot illustrates the type of information provided in a retail study. We strongly recommend engaging the services of a retail expert to determine the retail potential for downtown La Porte.

KEY FINDINGS (KF) & RECOMMENDATIONS (R)

KF

Once Truck Traffic is Rerouted, Downtown Will Return to a Pedestrian-Friendly Zone

Calming Lincolnway will allow a central downtown core to emerge.

KF

New Park Will Activate the Downtown Core

A new plaza along Monroe Street will provide an event space and will pull activity in the direction of the pedestrian bridge and connect downtown to the lakes.

R

A Comprehensive Retail Strategy Is Needed

We recommend hiring a retail consultant to analyze the market and forecast retail potential for downtown.

Downtown Kalamazoo
Retail Market Urban Design Impact Analysis
15 June 2022

SAMPLE



Figure 2: Downtown Kalamazoo (above right) looking northeast. Michigan Avenue is shown upper left between the Radisson Hotel and the Mall-Burdick Street downtown shopping district (Source Google Earth)

Executive Summary

This analysis concludes that Kalamazoo's proposed street and urban design initiatives will potentially increase the downtown's retail and restaurant sales by an additional \$20.6 million annually. This demand could support up to 36,000 square feet (sf) of new retailers and 16,000 sf of new restaurants for a total of up to 52,000 sf new space. This growth could be absorbed with the opening of 25 to 35 new businesses or by existing stores and restaurants through expanded operations and, or the repurposing of other downtown buildings.

If implemented as planned, the proposed urban design and traffic calming improvements may potentially support the following additional businesses in downtown Kalamazoo:

- 12,000 sf – Apparel, Jewelry, Shoes
 - 7,000 sf -Specialty Grocery & Pharmacy
 - 21,000 sf -Food, Beverage & Restaurants
 - 12,000 sf - Specialty Retailers: Books, Gifts, Home, Toys, etc.
- 52,000 sf Total Supportable Additional Retail Space with proposed street improvements**

The downtown's untapped market reflects increasing preferences for urban living and shopping by many demographic groups, especially by millennials, empty nesters, seniors and single households. Following this trend, leading retailers are leaving the suburbs to deploy new stores into attractive, walkable, well managed city or new urban town centers. Medium sized, upper Midwestern cities have become identified as desirable regions for new development due to their quality of life, affordability and possible climate change impacts.

FIGURE 27: Sample Retail Market Analysis Prepared for Kalamazoo, Michigan, by Gibbs Planning Group

This image illustrates the type of information provided in a retail study. We recommend hiring a consultant to offer a detailed retail analysis outlining potential market absorption and projected revenue in downtown La Porte.



FIGURE 28: Retail Strategy Diagram

Create a focused retail strategy that concentrates retail near the new public plaza. This will allow visitors to park once and meet more than one need.

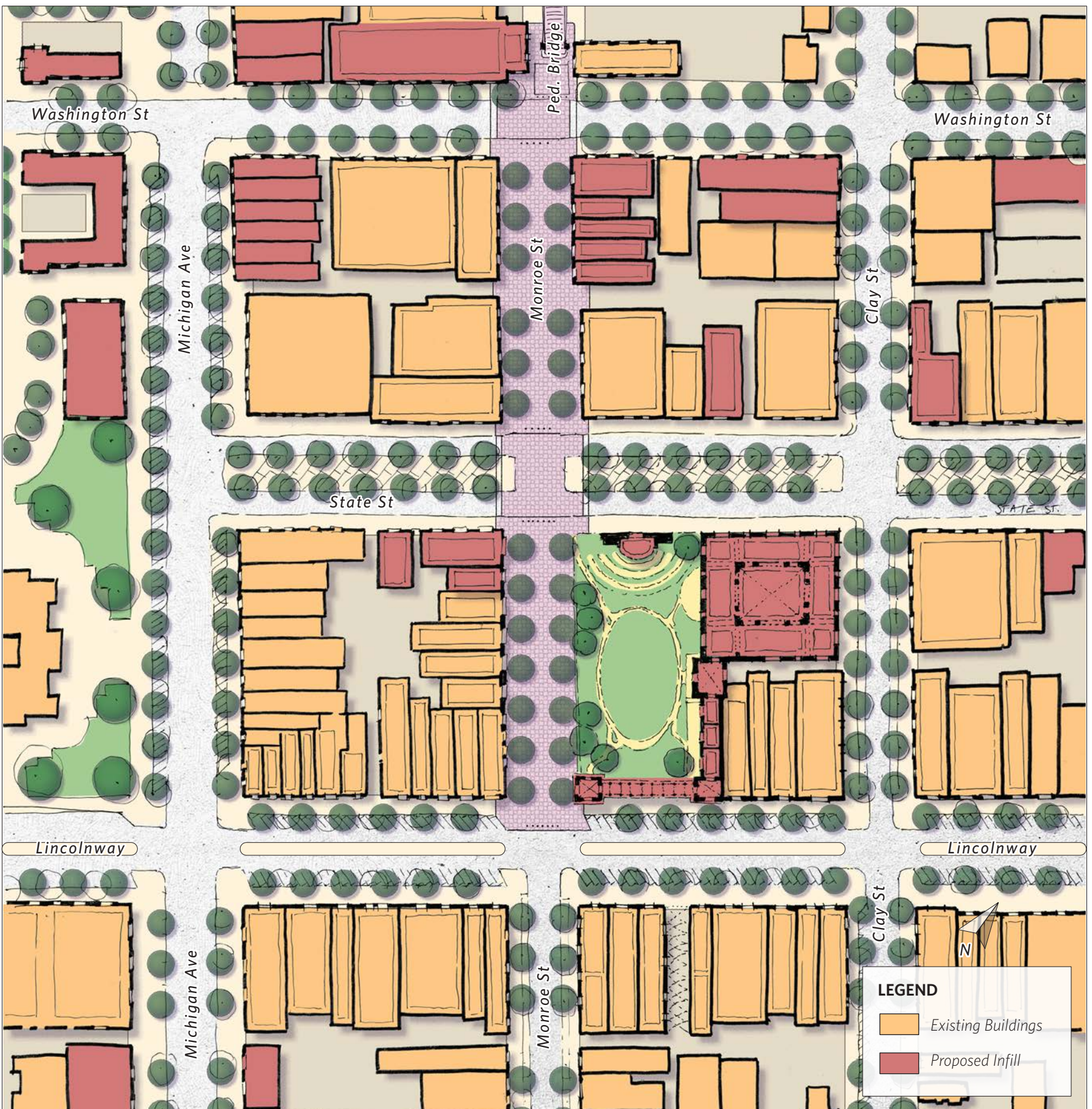


FIGURE 29: Detail Plan of the Core of Downtown without Truck Traffic on Lincolnway

Detailed plan showing a proposed new plaza and street designs that will be possible once truck traffic is removed from Lincolnway.

COMPLETE STREET DESIGN

Streets play two crucial roles in a city: first, they facilitate movement; second, they provide the outdoor room known as the public realm. A well-planned network of streets successfully connects locations within the city while providing a feeling of safety for all street users — especially pedestrians — and encouraging various engaging street-side activities. Complete streets balance multiple modes of transportation with an activated street life.

Safe street designs are identified by two characteristics: naturally slowed traffic and a barrier between moving vehicles and pedestrians. Traffic is slowed by reducing the number of and width of lanes. Pedestrians are protected by creating a barrier of street parking and street trees between moving vehicles and the sidewalk. Street trees not only beautify the city, but they also cool the sidewalk by providing protection from the harsh summer sunlight, making it more comfortable for pedestrians and retail consumers. They protect sidewalk activity from vehicular traffic; they act as a permeable and aesthetically pleasing barrier between the two spaces.

When possible, corner bump-outs also help to slow traffic by narrowing the dimension of the street just before the intersections. Additionally, they reduce the distance pedestrians need to walk to cross the street.

The street sections presented on the following pages use the principles outlined above to propose complete streets that balance the safety of pedestrians with the need for movement throughout the city. The detailed designs vary depending on the context and activities planned for each street. Note that these designs represent a vision and set of principles. The details will need further study to address changes in conditions between blocks.

KEY FINDINGS (KF) & RECOMMENDATIONS (R)

- KF** **Safe Streets Require Fewer and Narrower Lanes**
Reducing the number and width of lanes will slow traffic enough to make streets safer without causing delays.
- R** **Protect Sidewalks Behind Street Trees and Street Parking**
Pedestrian activity and street life flourish when protected from automobiles.

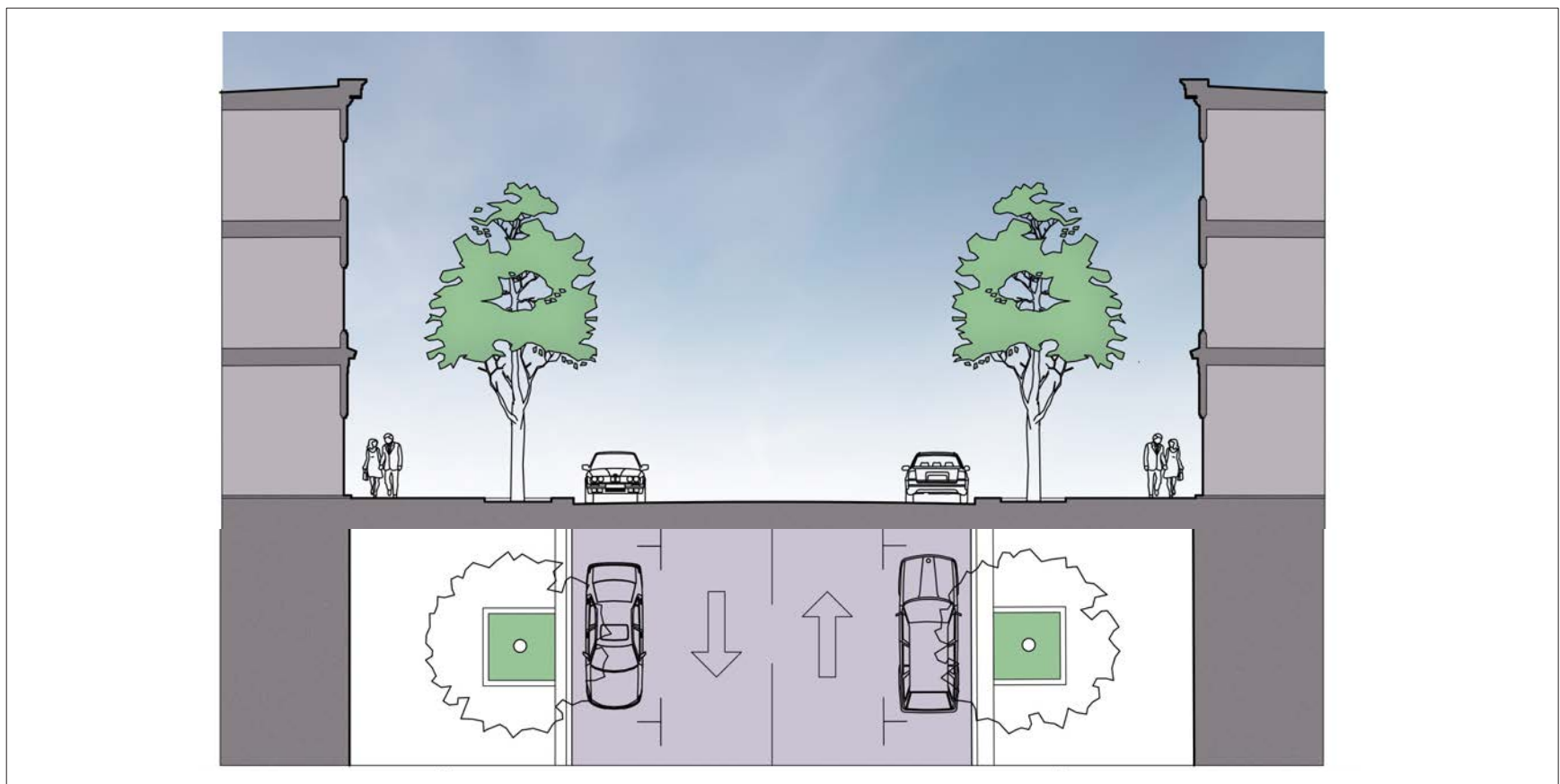
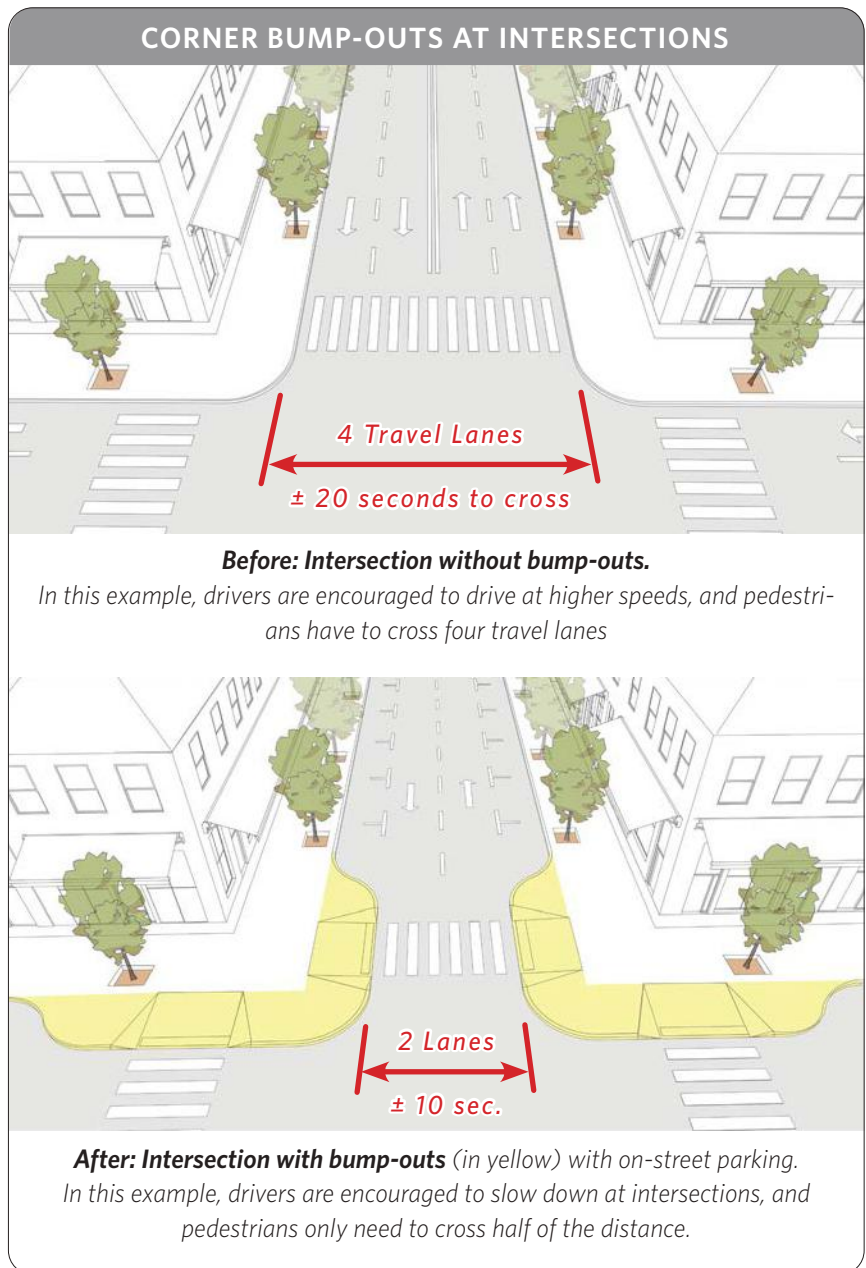
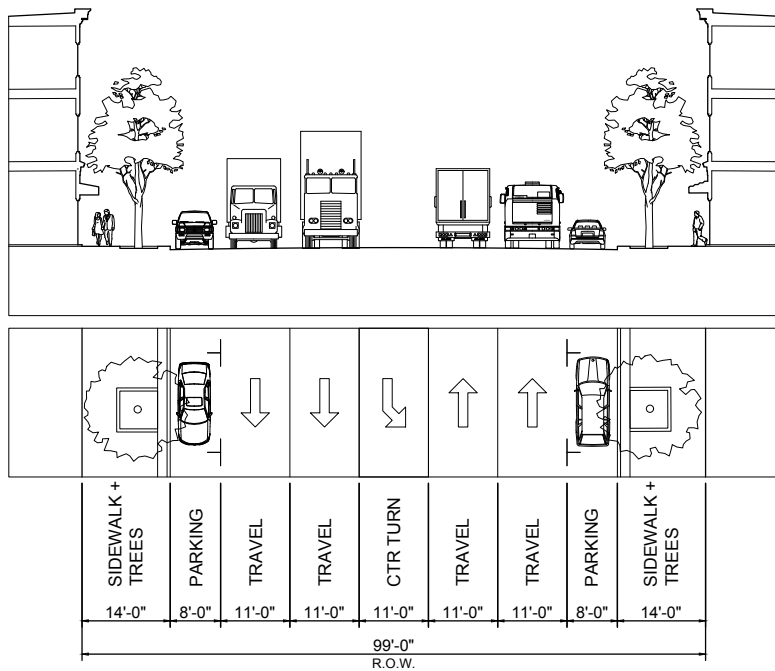
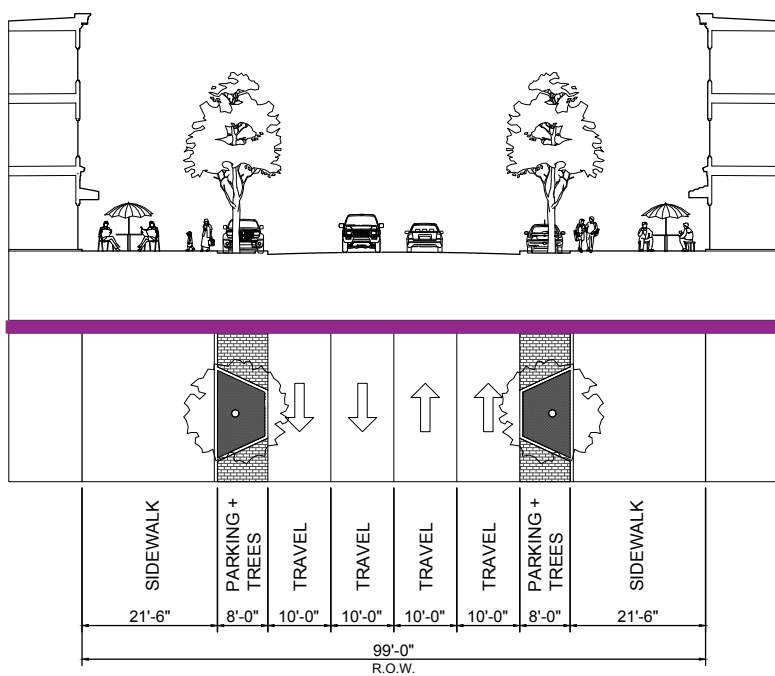


FIGURE 30: Safe Street Design Principles – Example Street Section

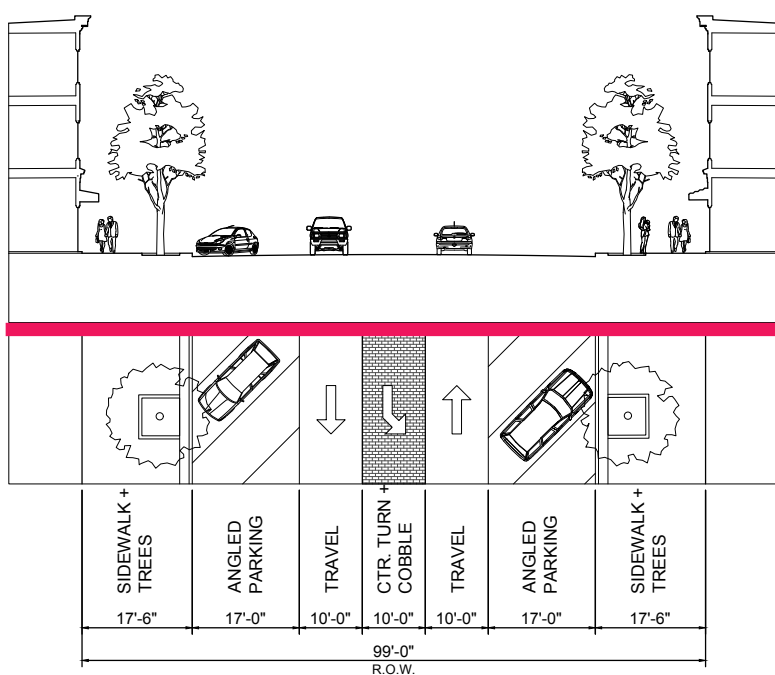
Safe street designs are identified by two characteristics: naturally slowed traffic and a barrier between moving vehicles and pedestrians. Traffic is naturally slowed by reducing to one lane in each direction. Pedestrians are protected by on-street parking and street trees.



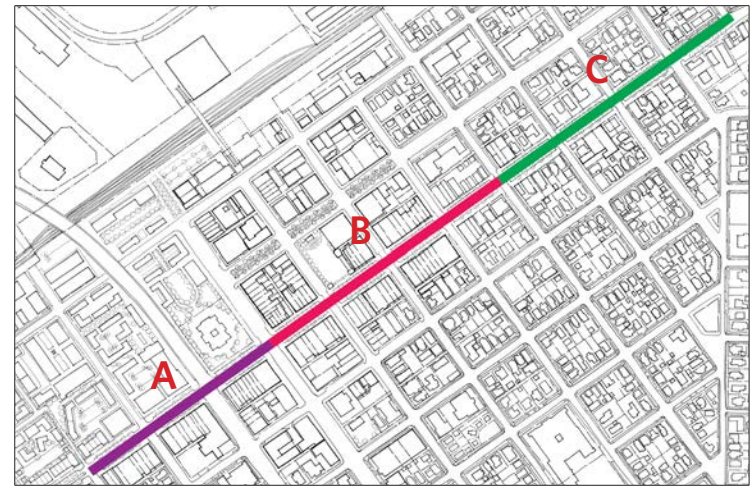
Lincolnway — Existing



A
Lincolnway — Proposed
Between Chicago Street and Indiana Avenue



B
Lincolnway — Proposed
Between Indiana Avenue and Jackson Street



Lincolnway — Existing

- Travel Lanes:** Four travel lanes, two in each direction
- Median:** Center turn lane
- Parking:** Parallel parking on each side of street
- Trees:** Within sidewalk
- Sidewalks:** Protected behind parallel parking and trees

Lincolnway — Proposed (Between Chicago Street and Indiana Avenue)

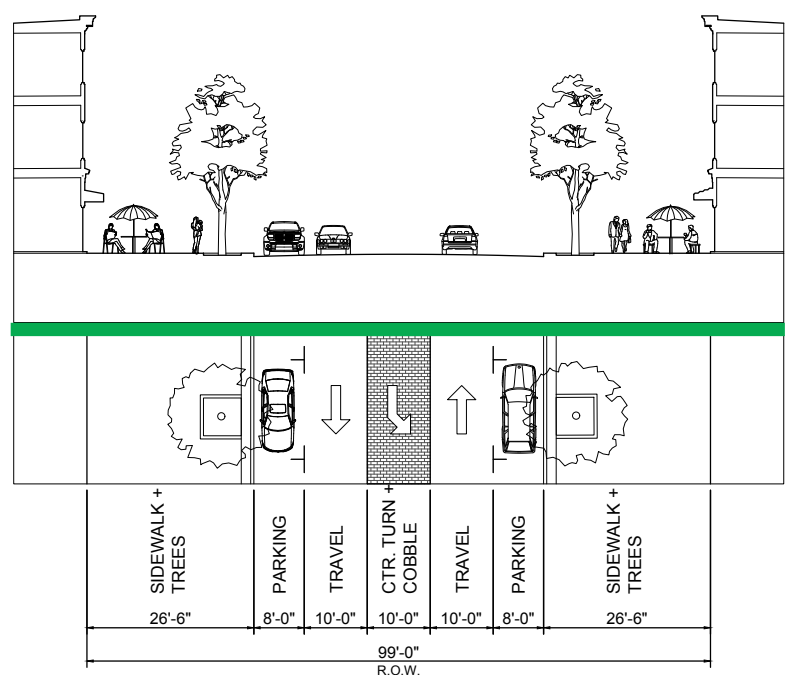
- Travel Lanes:** Four travel lanes, two in each direction
- Median:** None
- Parking:** Parallel parking
- Trees:** Bump-outs between parallel parking
- Sidewalks:** Protected behind parallel parking and trees

Lincolnway — Proposed (Between Indiana Avenue and Jackson Street)

- Travel Lanes:** Two travel lanes, one in each direction
- Median:** Cobblestone center turn lanes at intersections
- Parking:** Angled parking
- Trees:** Within sidewalk
- Sidewalks:** Protected by parking and trees

Lincolnway — Proposed (Between Jackson Street and Pulaski Street)

- Travel Lanes:** Two travel lanes, one in each direction
- Median:** Cobblestone center turn lanes at intersections
- Parking:** Parallel parking
- Trees:** Within sidewalk
- Sidewalks:** Protected by parking and trees



C
Lincolnway — Proposed
Between Jackson Street and Pulaski Street
(Use this street section for Michigan Avenue)

FIGURE 31: Lincolnway Existing & Proposed Street Sections

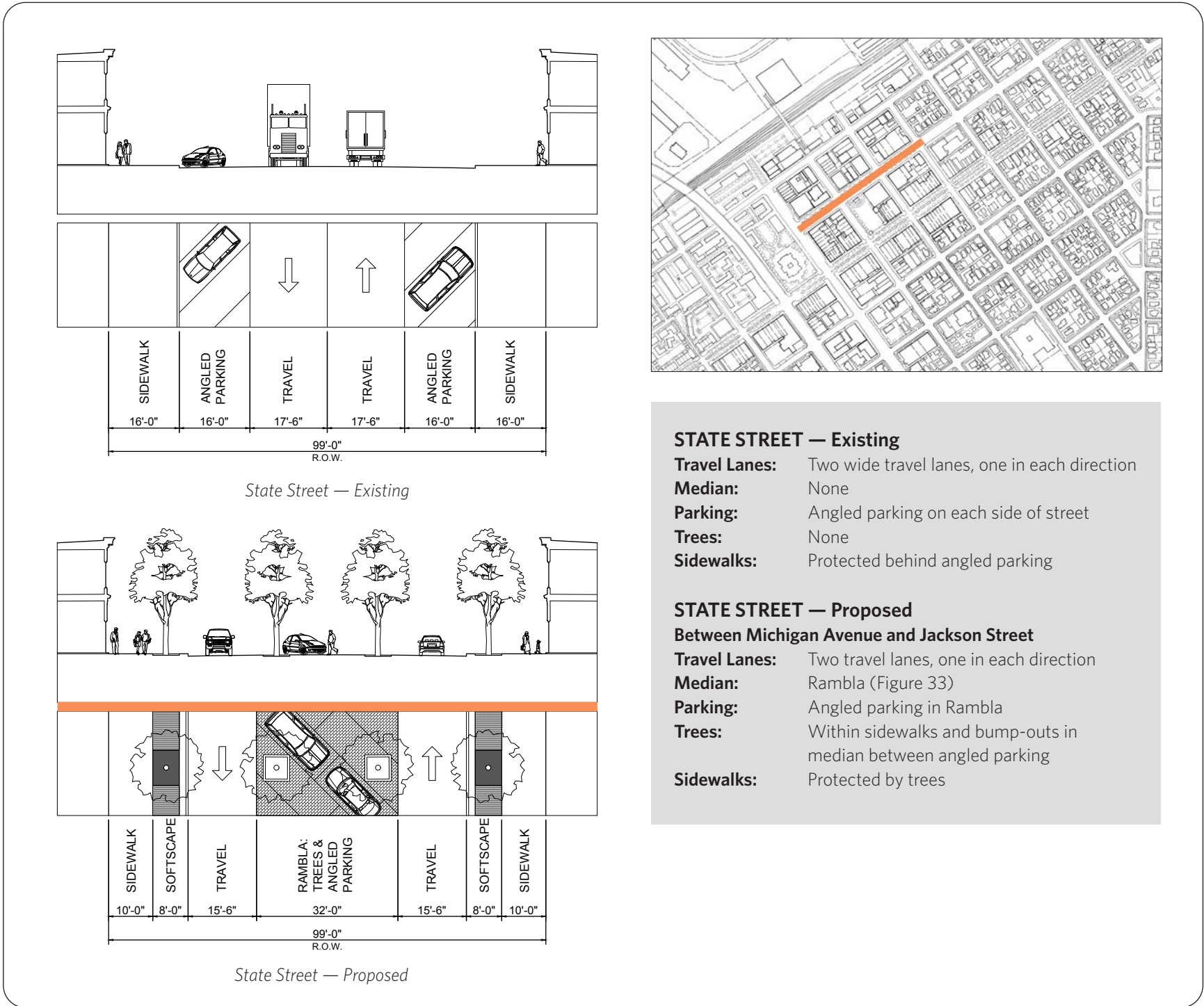


FIGURE 32: State Street Sections — Existing and Proposed



FIGURE 33: Rambla Case Study

INSPIRATION: Lancaster Rambla in Lancaster, California, by Moule & Polyzoides Architects illustrates the before and after transformation of an undefined five-lane space into a distinct place able to be shared by pedestrians and vehicles.

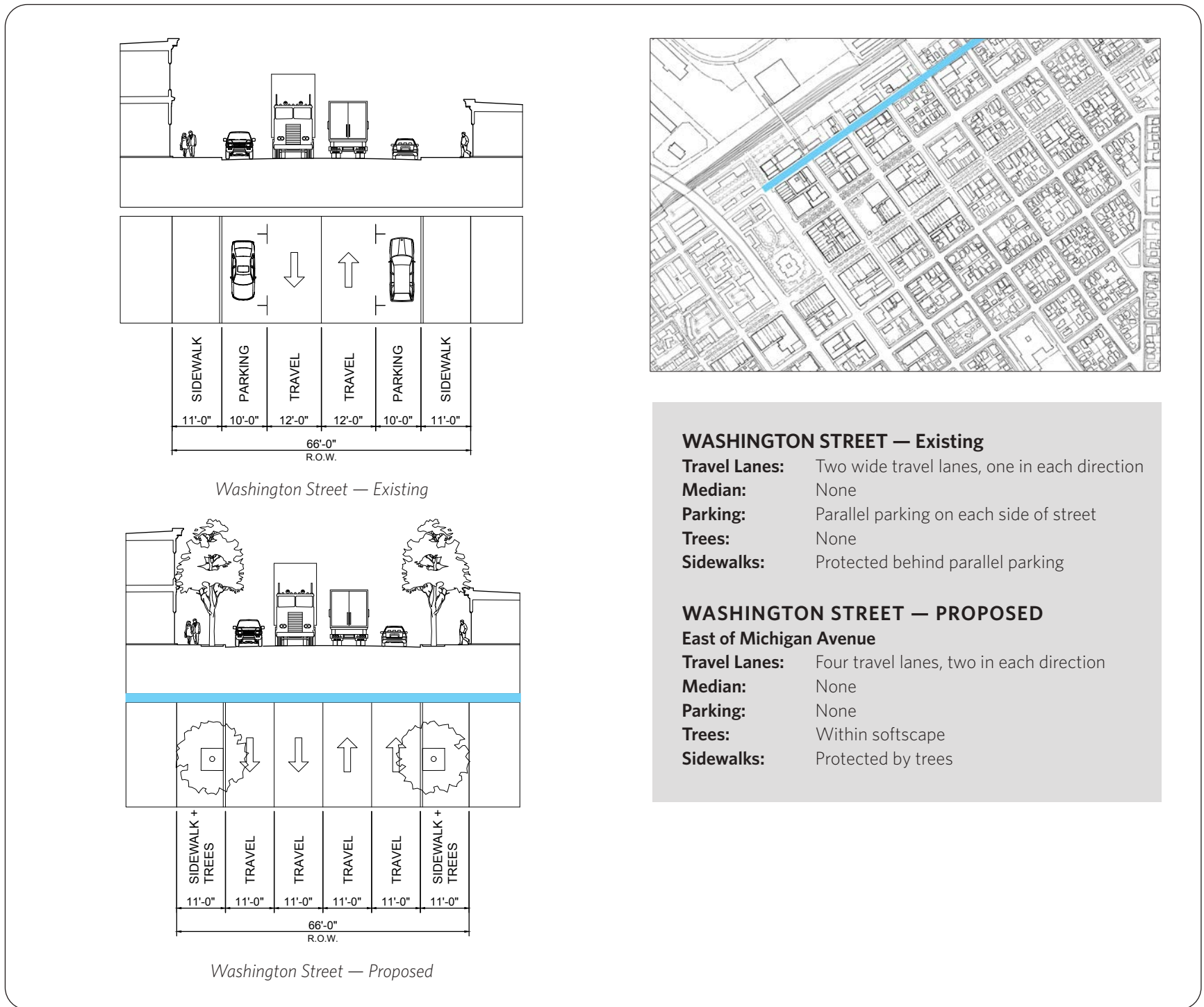


FIGURE 34: Washington Street Sections — Existing and Proposed



FIGURE 35: Monroe Street Sections — Existing and Proposed

PARKING ANALYSIS

Parking in downtown La Porte is underused and oversupplied. The Downtown La Porte Parking Study by Walker Consultants (Figure 36) emphasizes the oversupply of parking throughout the workday. At the peak hour of 10 a.m., downtown parking is currently 64 percent vacant. Based on parking levels in very active cities, if all existing buildings in downtown La Porte were fully occupied and operating, the parking would still be 20 percent vacant. This reality combined with high vacancies on the upper floors of downtown buildings indicate that in the near to mid-term future, La Porte has more than enough parking to accommodate new developments.

Further, since active small downtowns require fewer parking spaces per square foot of activity than suburban centers, creating a “park once” district, actively managing parking, and facilitating biking and pedestrian-friendly routes will substantially reduce the need for additional parking downtown once regeneration projects begin. Further study is recommended to accommodate parking for special events in downtown in a manner that does not compromise the quality of the pedestrian experience.

FIGURE 36: Walker Consultants Study Finds Downtown Parking Severely Underused

The Downtown La Porte Parking Study, conducted by Walker Consultants and adopted in March 2023, highlights the oversupply of parking throughout downtown during a typical weekday. A total of 3,015 parking spaces are available in the study area, outlined below in Figure 37. The spaces include on-street parking, public off-street parking, and private off-street parking. In addition, the abundance of truck traffic contributes to the perceived lack of parking along Lincolnway.

Image source: Walker Consultants

KEY FINDINGS (KF) & RECOMMENDATIONS (R)

KF

Study Finds Current Oversupply of Parking

In the near to mid-term future, La Porte has more than enough parking to accommodate new developments.

KF

Long-Term Locations for Potential Garages Identified

Two locations have been identified to accommodate long-term needs.

R

Manage Current Parking Before Considering Garages

Recommend implementing strategies to reduce parking demand because construction of a parking garage costs approximately \$40,000 a space, plus \$3,000 in annual maintenance fees.

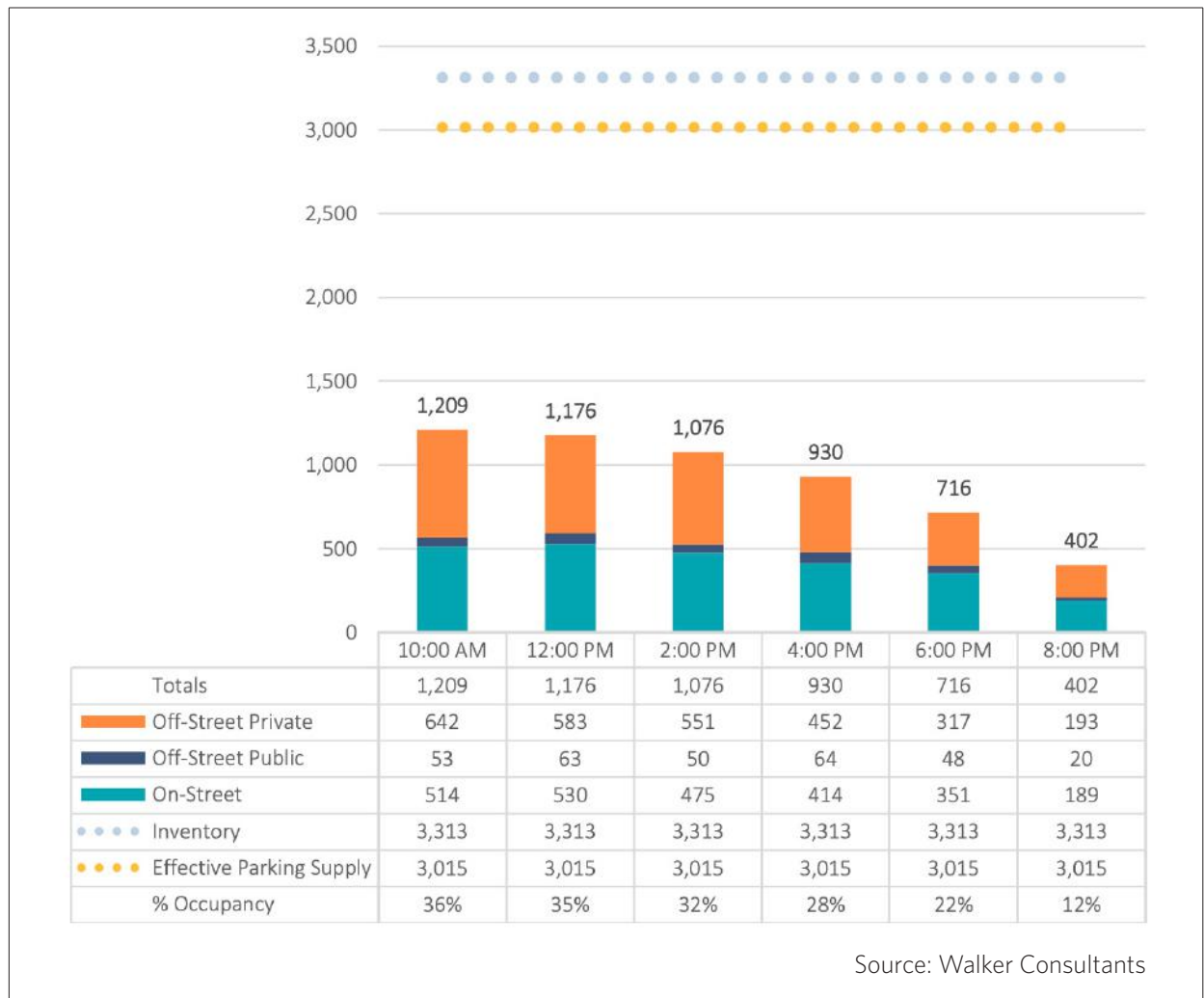
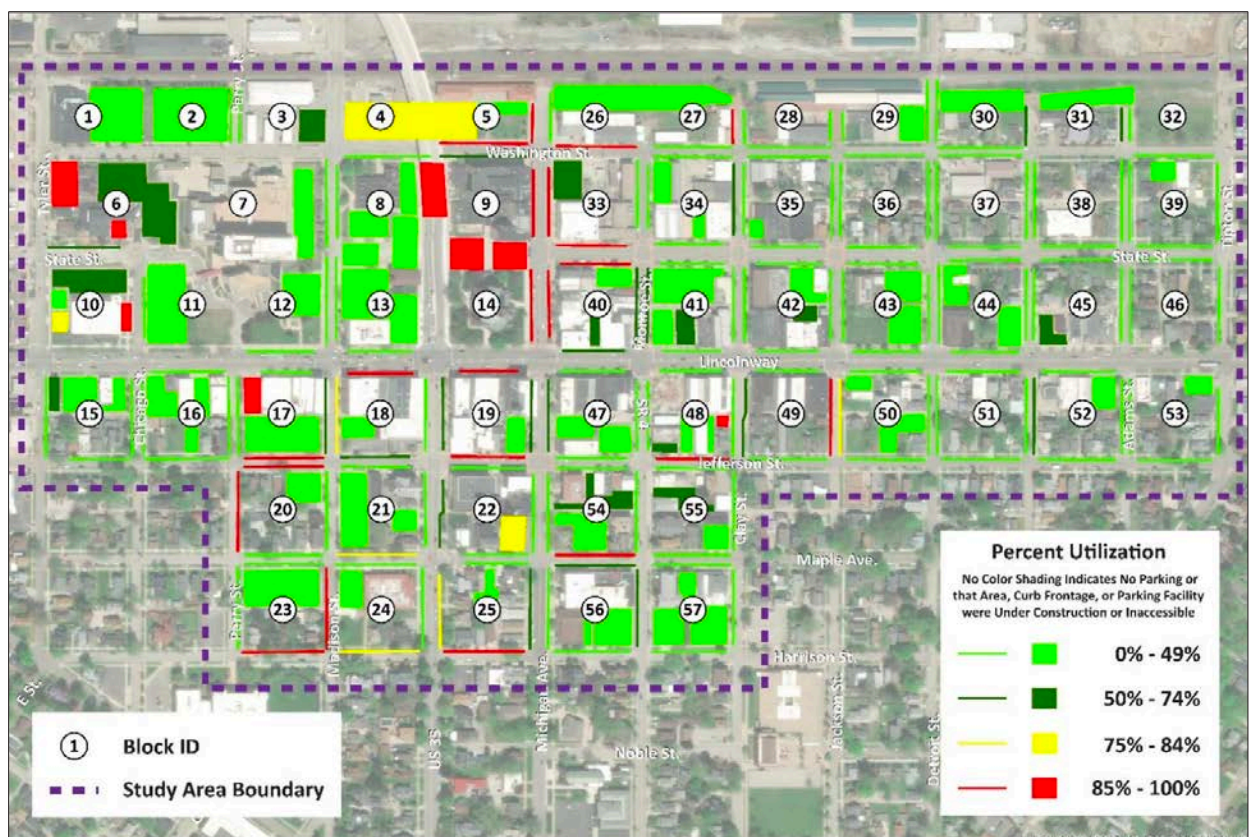


FIGURE 37: Parking Heat Map Peak Occupancy

The map shows the parking distribution at peak occupancy, which occurs at 10 a.m. Even at this peak, downtown parking remains 64 percent vacant. Note that even in areas that are 85-100 percent utilized, each location has available parking within a block. Note that this diagram illustrates daily use; peak parking for events will vary.

Image source: Walker Consultants



PARKING ASSESSMENT

Based on parking levels in very active cities, if all existing buildings in downtown La Porte were fully operating and occupied, the current parking would only be at **80 percent** capacity.

In the **near to mid-term** future, La Porte has more than enough existing parking to accommodate new development.



FIGURE 38: Average Parking Use Per Square Foot of Activity

Active small downtowns require fewer parking spaces per square foot of activity than suburban centers. It is important to consider development type when determining parking need.

Strategies for reducing parking need and associated costs include:

- Creating a “park once” district
- Actively managed parking
- Facilitate biking and walking to downtown



FIGURE 39: Existing Parking Use Per Square Foot of Activity

High vacancies on the upper floors of downtown buildings contribute to the underutilization of available parking spaces throughout downtown.



FIGURE 40: Potential Locations for Future Parking Garages

Once fully built out, downtown may require parking structures to accommodate additional demand. Consider locating a parking garage at the corner of Monroe Street and Washington Street. Another potential location is Jefferson Avenue and Clay Street. Garage locations will require closer study.



FIGURE 41: The Cost of Structured Parking Garages

Structured parking requires a substantial initial capital investment and ongoing investment. When possible, implement strategies for reducing parking demand before building parking garages.

DOWNTOWN INFILL STRATEGIES

Most of downtown remains intact, but a few infill opportunities offer catalytic development potential. These infill projects can promote walkability if the design of this infill is scaled to complement – and not compete with – the existing historic fabric. This means the height and width of the buildings should be reminiscent of existing fabric, and the details should stem from local examples.

One of the most important facets of matching building elevations is the percentage of window openings to walls. Windows are essential in the composition of individual facades, so matching the ratio of walls to openings on new building elevations to the ratios on the existing fabric will help tie the street front together and make the experience of moving along the street feel cohesive.

Scaling the buildings and their details correctly to the existing street elevation will allow for a pleasant and seamless transition from one end of the street to another. Infill projects must also effectively connect retail to the street. If the storefront meets the sidewalk, retail buildings can transform the frontage into a semi-public space where people feel drawn to the area, encouraged to explore further on foot, and compelled to shop, which fosters a stronger sense of community and benefits local businesses.

KEY FINDINGS (KF) & RECOMMENDATIONS (R)

- KF Match Scale of Infill to Existing Downtown Fabric**
Avoid large monolithic buildings that are overly horizontal and do not complement existing historic fabric.
- KF Match Percentage of Openings to Existing Downtown Fabric**
Openings define the look and feel of a building. Coordinate the size and proportions of openings on infill buildings to help tie the street facades together.
- R Meet the Street with Human-Scaled Retail Frontages**
Select details for retail frontages that engage the street at a human scale. This includes low panels and transom windows to frame and divide large pieces of plate glass.

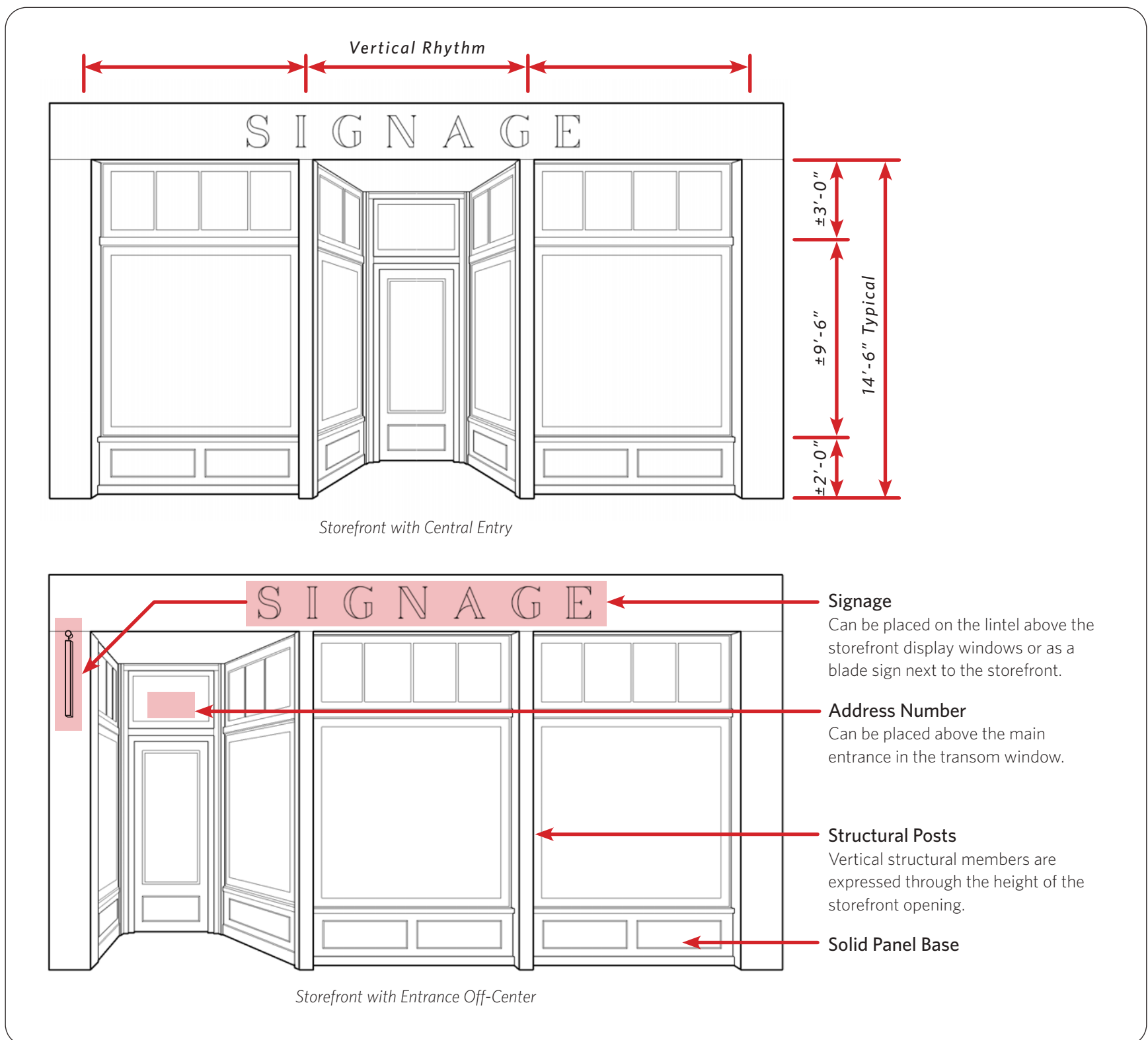
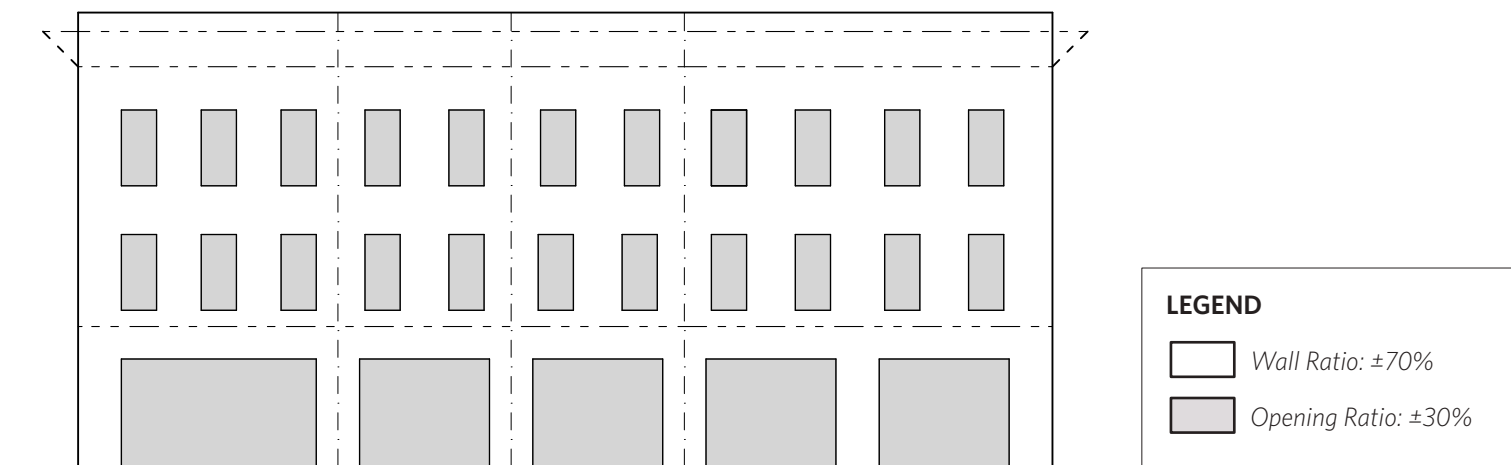


FIGURE 42: Examples of Storefront Design Details Based on Local Precedents

Storefront design configurations are limitless but draw from a basic kit-of-parts: low panel or base, display windows, door — often recessed — transom windows above, and mullions or frame between glass panels. The richness of a pedestrian experience depends on the scale and detailing of these elements since it is the portion of the building that meets the ground where people walk.



Typical fabric buildings on Lincolnway.



Wall-to-Opening Study of typical fabric buildings shown above.

FIGURE 43: The Typical Wall-to-Opening Ratio Among Typical Fabric Buildings Along Lincolnway is 70/30

Openings include windows and storefronts. Openings are evenly spaced and vertically aligned when possible. The 70/30 ratio is characteristic of historic buildings due to the way traditional building materials perform. Including this ratio as a guideline in an architectural code can encourage architectural designers to adhere to historic building forms, even when using modern materials.



Building Cornice

Decorative top of building, practical use to keep water away from the face of the building and transition from the materials used on the finish wall to the roof.

Windows — Punched Openings

Fabric buildings (defined in the caption below) typically have a simple wall plane with punched openings and double hung windows.

Storefront Cornice with Signage

The storefront cornice divides the retail portion of the building and the residential or office upper floors while also providing a place for store signage. If using an awning, attach it below the storefront cornice so signage remains visible. Also if using an awning, specify a deep one, minimum 8”.

Shop Display Windows

Display windows come in all configurations but will typically have a low panel for protection from foot traffic, a large display area, and transom windows above.

Outdoor Seating

Storefronts scaled to people attract people. For restaurants, this presents the opportunity for outdoor dining and seating areas.

FIGURE 44: Key Design Elements of Mixed-Use Fabric Buildings

Fabric buildings work together to define the character of the public realm. The coordinated nature of these buildings relieves the pressure on each individual design to be the center of attention. Rather, the best fabric buildings are simple forms with great proportions. The details that matter most are the details you can touch and feel at the level of the storefront.

FORMER HOSPITAL SITE REDEVELOPMENT

The former hospital site offers a rare large-scale redevelopment opportunity within an otherwise intact historic town. The former hospital site defied the urban patterns of the city by breaking the street edge with suburban-style setbacks and undefined spaces. The redevelopment of this site creates the chance to repair the public realm by reestablishing the street edge that was in place prior to the construction of the former hospital.

The scale of development on this site will strongly impact the growth of the rest of the city. The city and development team must work together to ensure that the growth plans for this site balance market viability as an investment with La Porte’s overall vision for the regeneration of downtown. Without coordination, this project risks undermining the city’s development goals, retail strategy, and overall character of place.

A handful of design features guide the proposal presented in this study. While the exact design proposal presented may not be implemented, it is imperative for the urban future of the city that three key features are applied to the design that is ultimately selected. These features are the distinction between fronts and backs of buildings; the inclusion of public space throughout the new neighborhood; and buildings scaled to match the historic fabric of downtown.

We also recommend that the city offers incentives to the developer to encourage the inclusion of affordable and workforce housing units mixed with market-rate units in this neighborhood.

KEY FINDINGS (KF) & RECOMMENDATIONS (R)

- KF** **Redevelopment of the Former Hospital Site Will Impact Downtown** *Without careful design and coordination with the rest of downtown, development of the former hospital site could overpower the area and undermine regeneration.*
- KF** **Great Urbanism Is Needed Here** *Ensure that new buildings frame public places by facing fronts of buildings to fronts of buildings, and include well-designed public spaces in beneficial locations.*
- R** **Scale Buildings to Match Existing Downtown Fabric** *Scale the new buildings to match the scale of the existing downtown buildings along Lincolnway.*



FIGURE 45: Proposed Aerial View of the Former Hospital Redevelopment Site Looking West

FIGURE 46: Existing Conditions for the Former Hospital Redevelopment Site in Context

The former hospital redevelopment site sits to the northeast of the new hospital. The two sites represent almost a quarter of downtown La Porte and are currently mostly surface parking lots and low one-story buildings.



LEGEND

- Former Hospital Site & Adjacent Infill Opportunities
- New Hospital Redevelopment Site Boundary — Future Infill

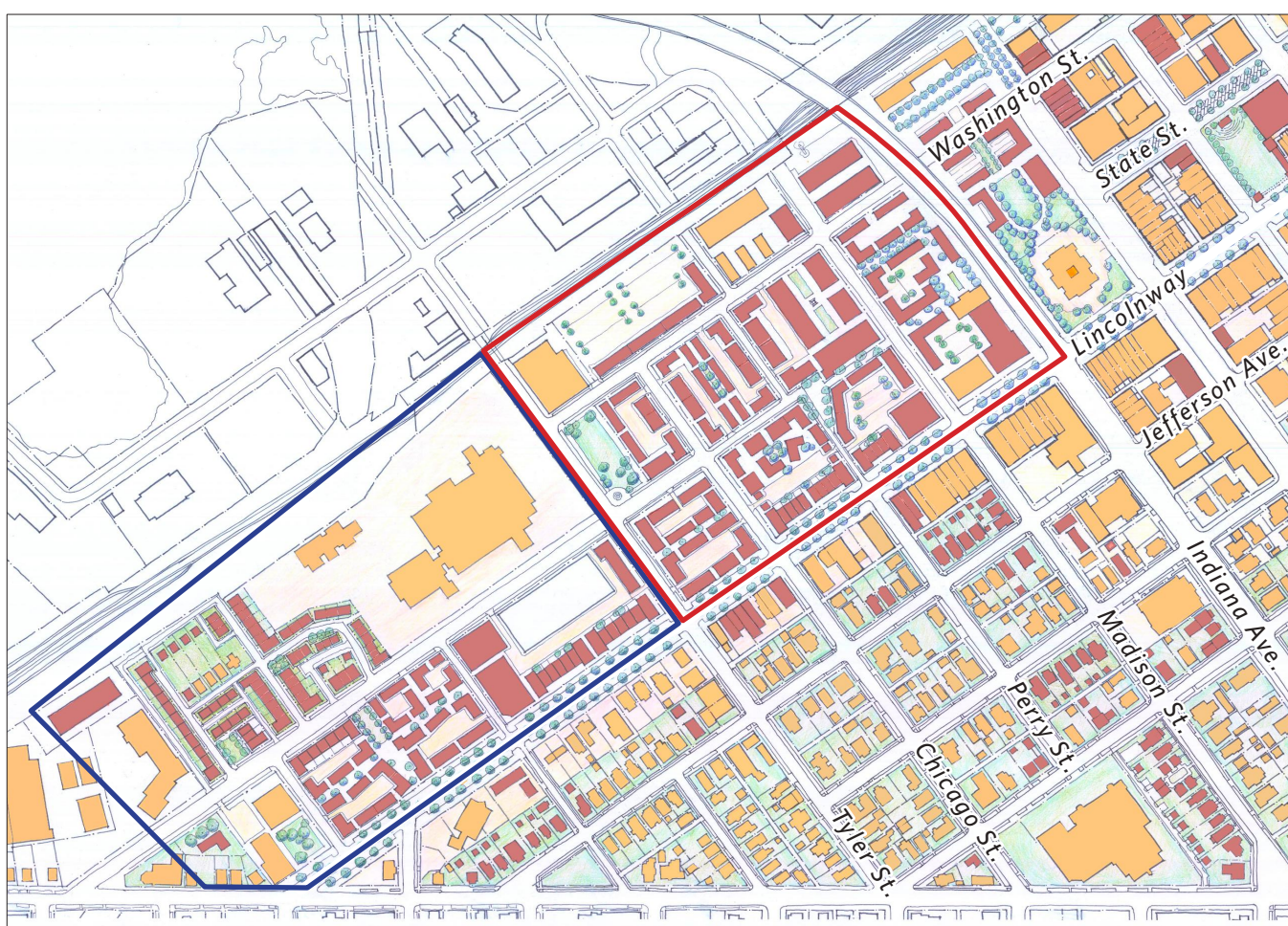


FIGURE 47: Proposed Site Plan for the Former Hospital Redevelopment Site in Context

Currently, the former hospital site and the adjacent lots are defined by parking lots with scattered object buildings. In the decades to come, after the core former hospital site is rebuilt and the new park has been built out, we recommend that the final phase be the definition of the streets around the new hospital. This street definition and infill should add Missing Middle Housing (referenced on p. 52).

LEGEND

- Former Hospital Site & Adjacent Infill Opportunities
- New Hospital Redevelopment Site Boundary — Future Infill



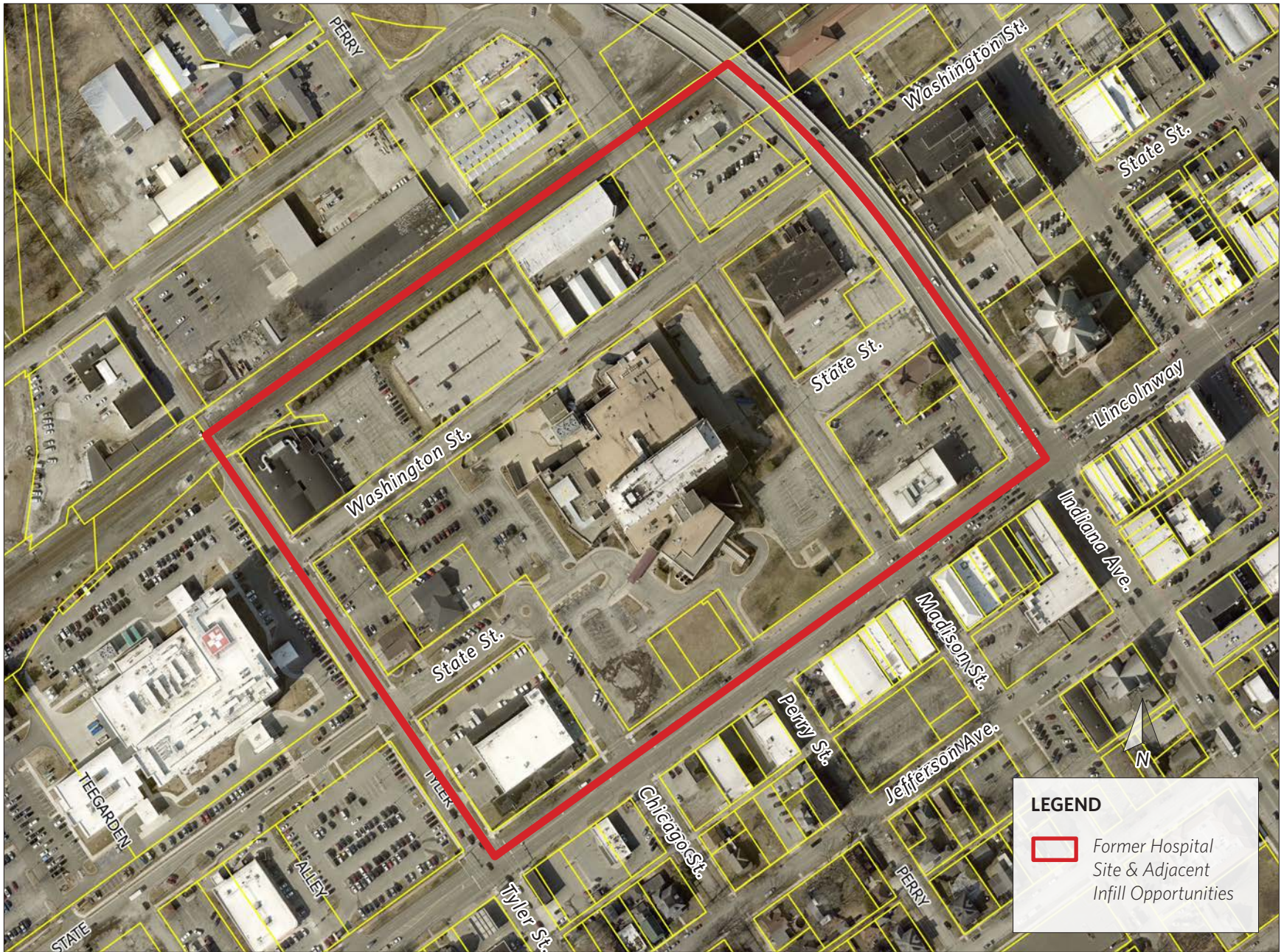


FIGURE 48: Existing Conditions at the Former Hospital Redevelopment Site

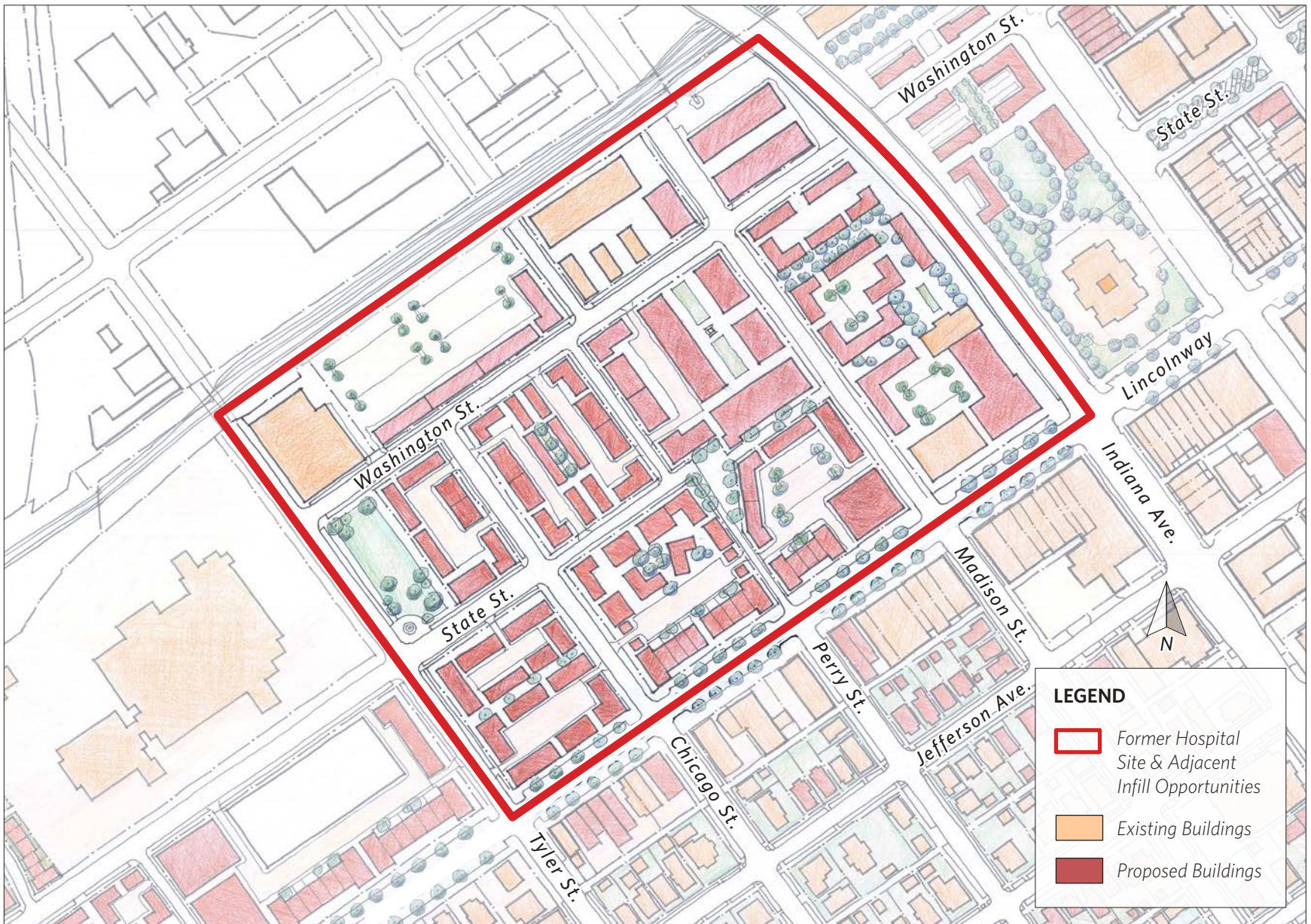


FIGURE 49: Proposed Site Plan for the Former Hospital Redevelopment Site



FIGURE 50: Key Design Feature 1 — Block Structure Defined by Fronts and Backs of Buildings

The first step in redesigning the former hospital site is to return a block structure to be in keeping with the scale of the blocks throughout downtown. Then, take care to maintain consistent fronts and backs of buildings. This means the fronts of buildings face the fronts of other buildings, and the backs of buildings face the backs of other buildings. Having strong building fronts creates a dynamic street edge and vibrant public realm.

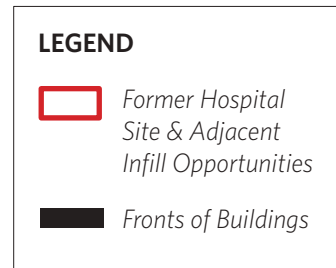


FIGURE 51: Key Design Feature 2 — Public Space

A vibrant public realm depends on a range of ways for the public to engage outdoors. This design offers a large park on the west side of the site, adjacent to the new hospital, as well as a series of pocket parks throughout the proposed development.

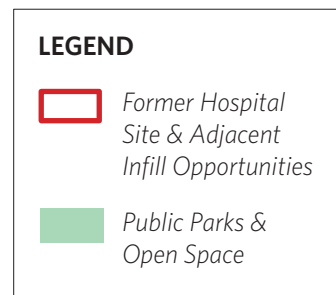


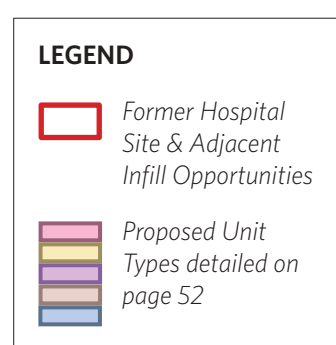
FIGURE 52: Key Design Feature 3 — Building Scale

It is critical to match the scale of future development in La Porte to the existing downtown fabric. This can be hard to achieve if the site is designed by one hand and built as a single large project. The designs on pages 48-51 illustrate how to balance the scale of the existing historic fabric with new development. Refer to pages 42-43 for downtown infill strategies.



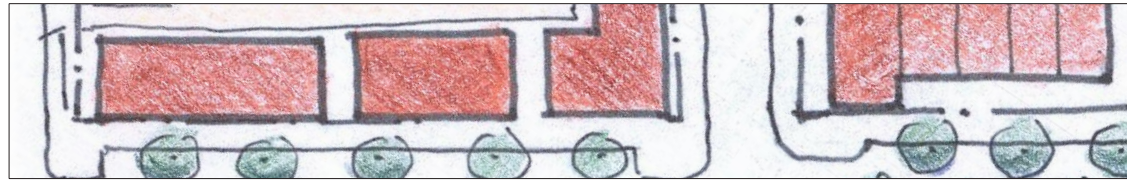
FIGURE 53: Key Design Feature 4 — Kit-of-Parts

Pages 52-57 illustrate a kit-of-parts design system that uses a limited palette of parts that streamlines construction and can be used to create a diverse range of housing types. The proposal in this study illustrates just one of many design options. The final design will need to be calibrated to meet market need.





LEGEND: Location Map

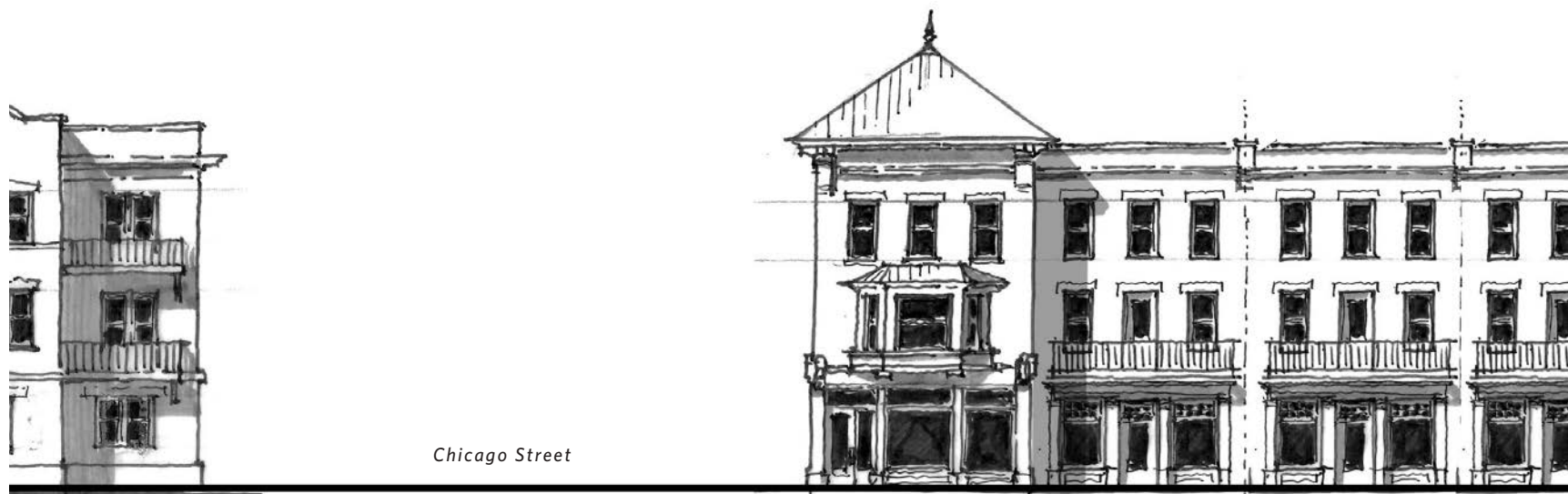


Plan view of street frontage along Lincolnway for reference.
(elevations shown below)



STREET ELEVATION A DETAIL

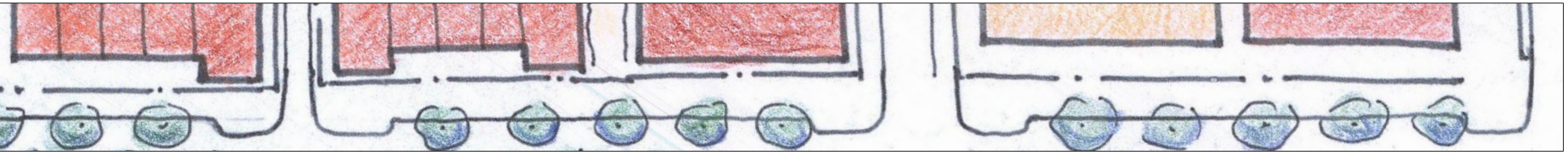
Note: All proposed building designs are based on the proposed Kit-of-Parts for Missing Middle Housing Types.



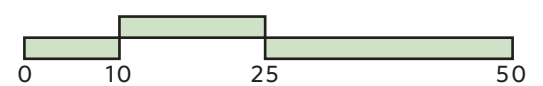
STREET ELEVATION B DETAIL

Note: All proposed building designs are based on the proposed Kit-of-Parts for Missing Middle Housing Types.

FIGURE 54: Proposed Street Elevation For Lincolnway Facing North between Tyler Street and Perry Street

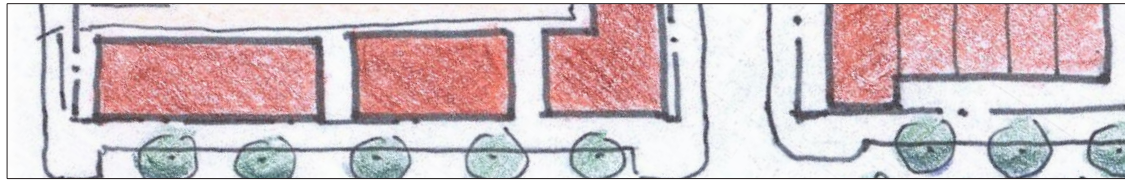


SECTION B





LEGEND: Location Map

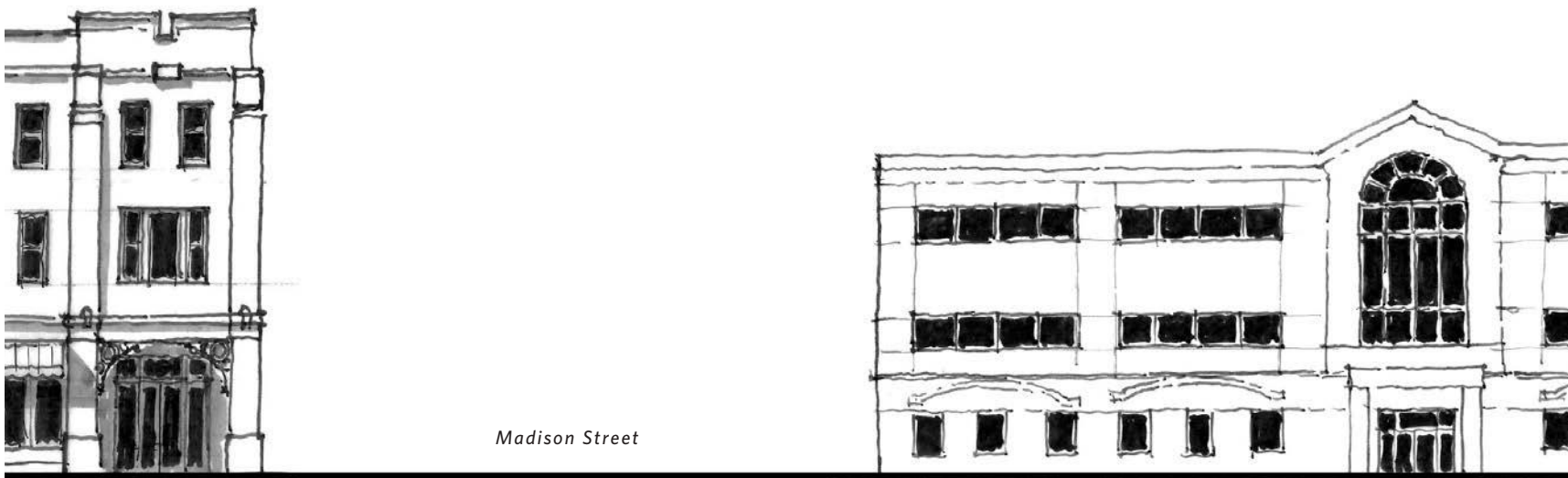


Plan view of street frontage along Lincolnway for reference.
(elevations shown below)



STREET ELEVATION C DETAIL

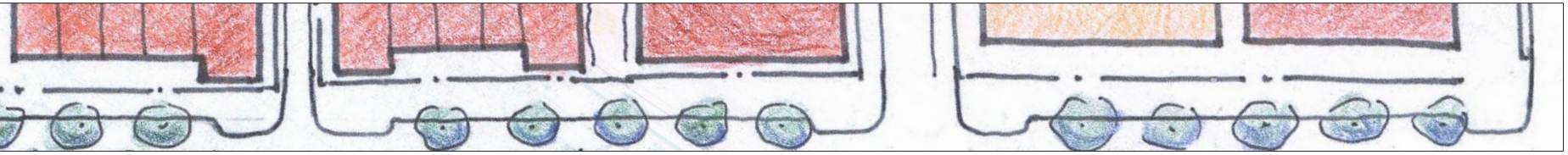
Proposed Mix-Use Buildings with Neighborhood Retail on Ground Floor and Missing Middle Housing Units from the Kit-of-Parts on Upper Floors



STREET ELEVATION D DETAIL

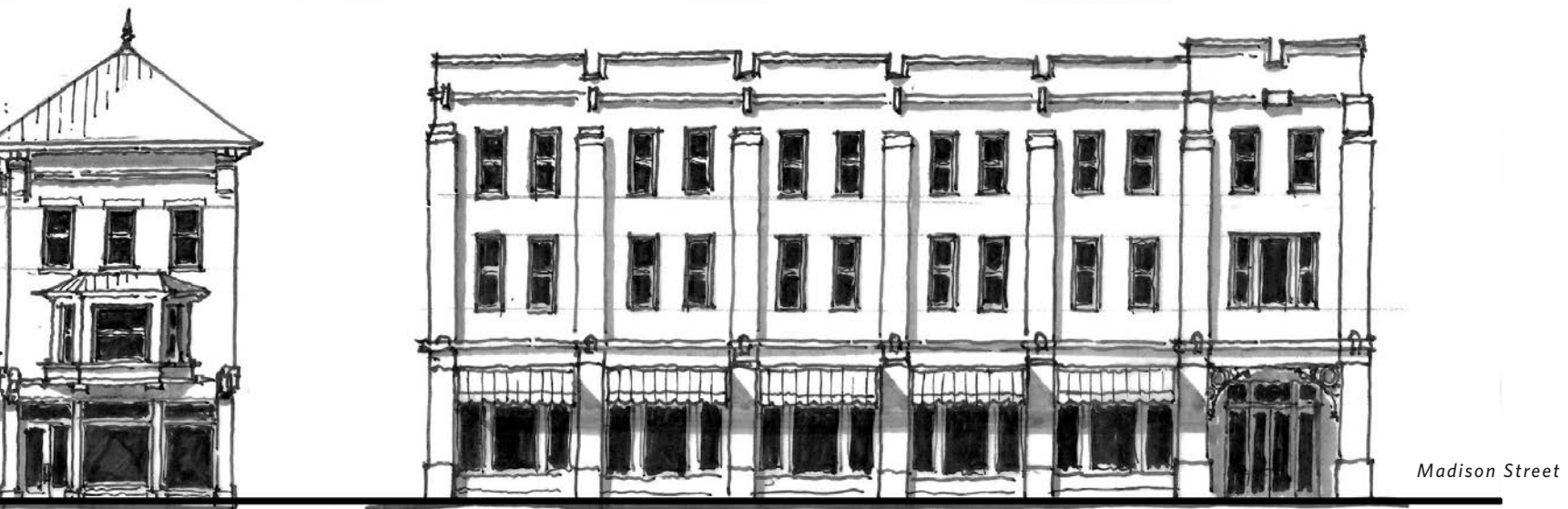
Existing Building — Heart & Vascular Center

FIGURE 55: Proposed Street Elevation For Lincolnway Facing North between Perry Street and Indiana Avenue

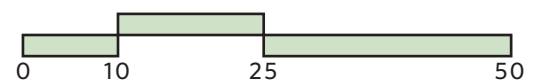


STREET ELEVATION C

STREET ELEVATION D



New Post Office Proposed at Indiana Avenue



MISSING MIDDLE HOUSING KIT-OF-PARTS

The Missing Middle Housing Kit-of-Parts provides a set of unit types that can be stacked and arranged into different building types that fit the varied block sizes and housing needs in the community. It also encourages a diversity of building appearances while offering predictability to the construction process.

The housing modules presented can either be narrow or wide to the street. They can be assembled as freestanding homes, duplexes, townhomes, or apartment buildings, with any number of units and floors. The individual units are connected into buildings, and these buildings then form blocks that line streets and hold open space for gathering.

This proposal offers just one out of many configurations possible and is presented to illustrate how the concept works, not to propose a specific design. The final design will need to be adjusted to meet specific market demands and program needs. The use of two or more unit types per

block, and the use of all of the unit types within a neighborhood, will result in the greatest diversity of offerings to meet the community’s needs and will create a unique neighborhood character that avoids feeling like a single homogeneous development project.

Regardless of the final configuration of the blocks, it is essential that the fronts of buildings face the fronts of other buildings, that they define a walkable public realm with open space, and that they are scaled to fit within the historic fabric of the city.

The elevations on pages 48–51 illustrate an example of the elevations for building fronts on the kit-of-parts designed for this site. In addition, pages 56–57 illustrate a range of built versions of these building designs, and all the buildings are scaled to fit within the context of downtown La Porte.

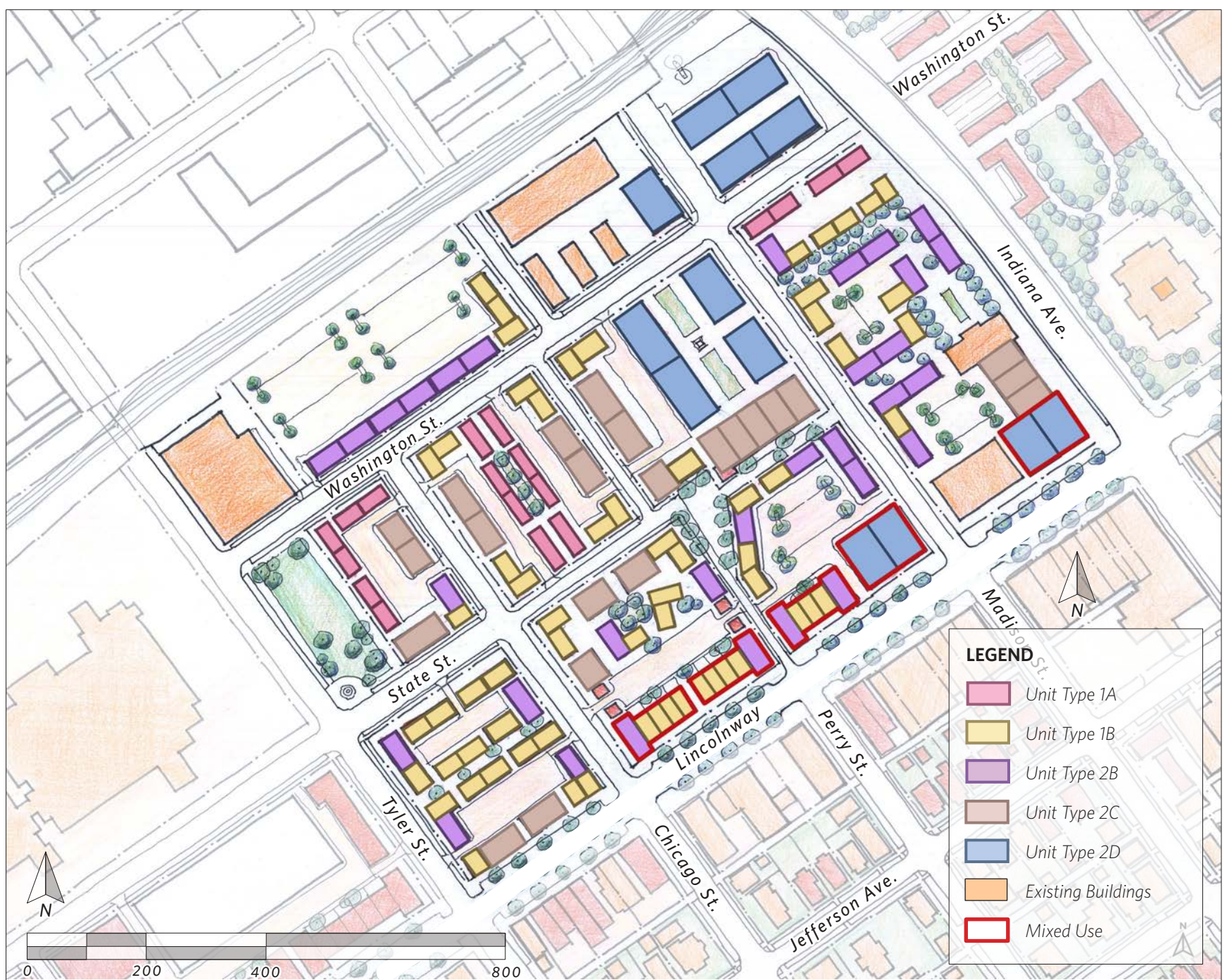


FIGURE 56: Missing Middle Housing Mid-Density Kit-of-Parts — Site Plan

Unit Type:	1A	1B	2B	2C	2D	ESTIMATED UNITS
3rd Floor	18	64	32	23	13	150
2nd Floor	18	64	32	23	13	150
Ground Floor	18	53	28	23	8	130
TOTAL UNITS	54	181	92	69	34	+/- 430

FIGURE 57: Missing Middle Housing Mid-Density Kit-of-Parts — Unit Count Table

Potential Mixed Use & Non-Residential: 17,408 SF includes 2,560 for the proposed post office. Numbers shown here are approximate and represent only one potential configuration.



6

MIXED UNIT TYPES

NOTE: These drawings are intended to be illustrative and are NOT FOR CONSTRUCTION.

June 5, 2023

AMC AMC ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN LLC
412.638.4485 | arthony@amcplans.com

Missing Middle Pre-Approved Designs

DRAFT

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FIGURE 58: Missing Middle Housing Mid-Density Kit-of-Parts — Potential Floor Plan Configurations



FIGURE 59: Missing Middle Housing Mid-Density Kit-of-Parts — Unit Type 1



FIGURE 60: Missing Middle Housing Mid-Density Kit-of-Parts — Unit Type 2

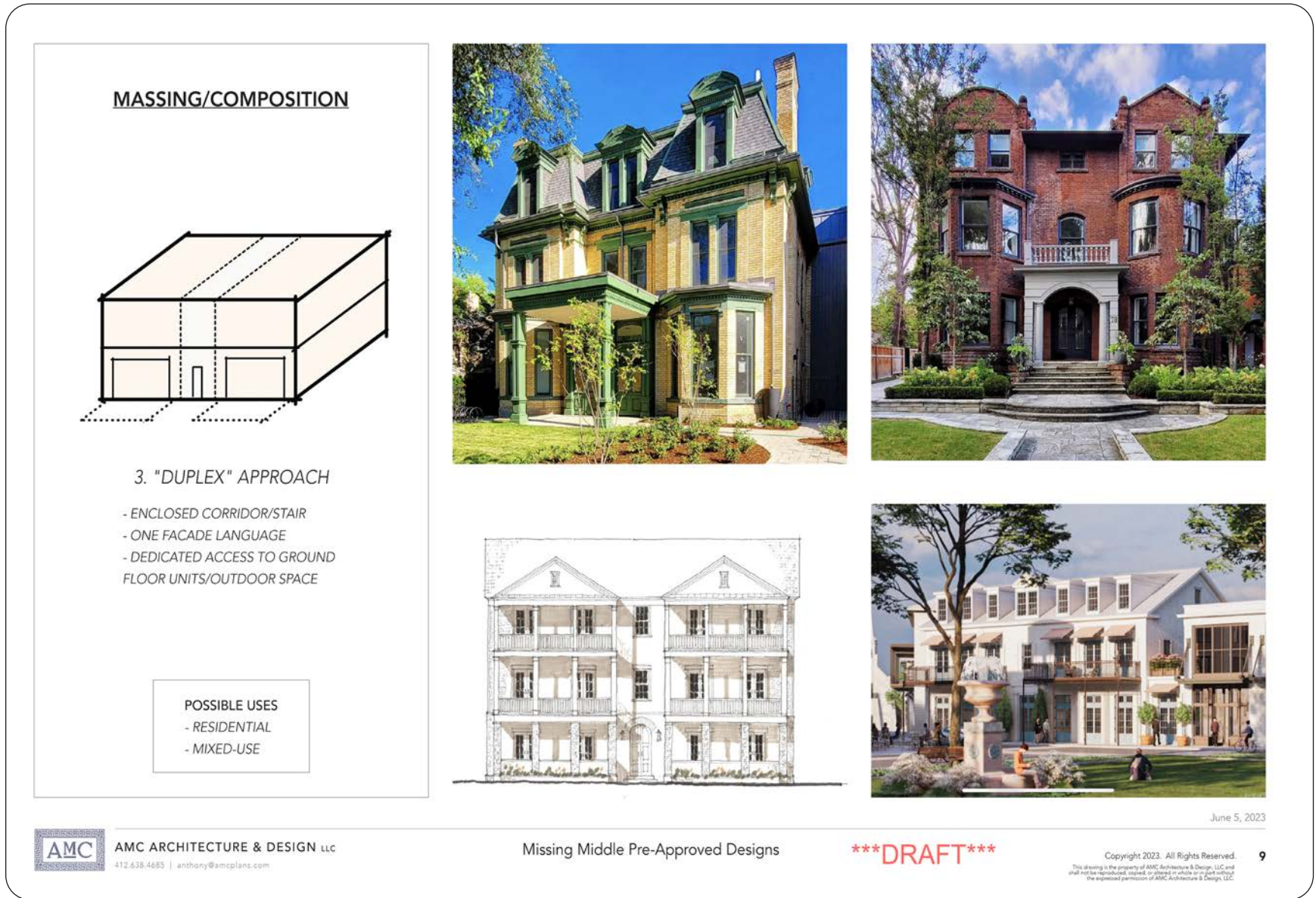


FIGURE 61: Missing Middle Housing Mid-Density Kit-of-Parts — Duplex Approach

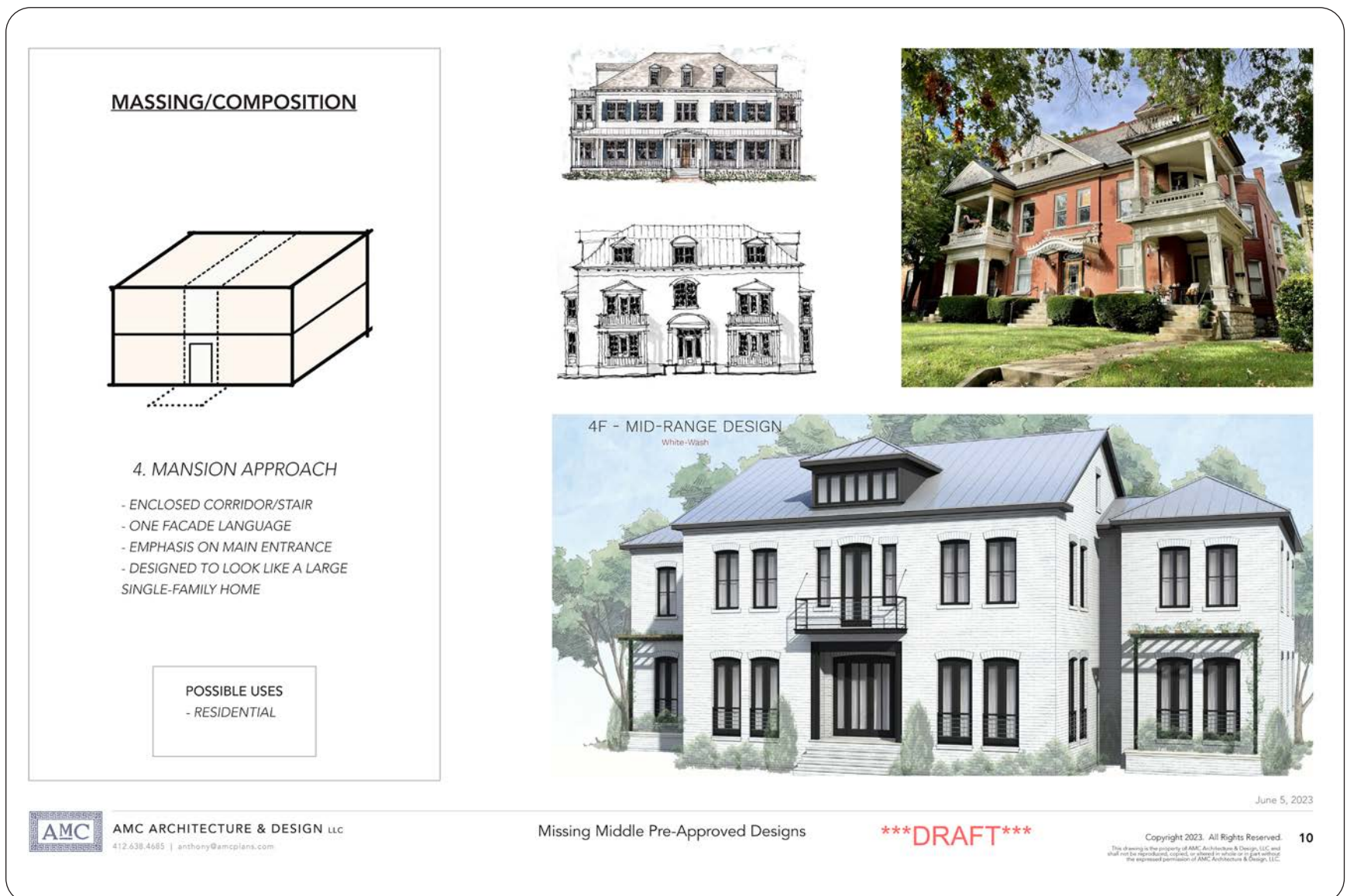


FIGURE 62: Missing Middle Housing Mid-Density Kit-of-Parts — Mansion Approach

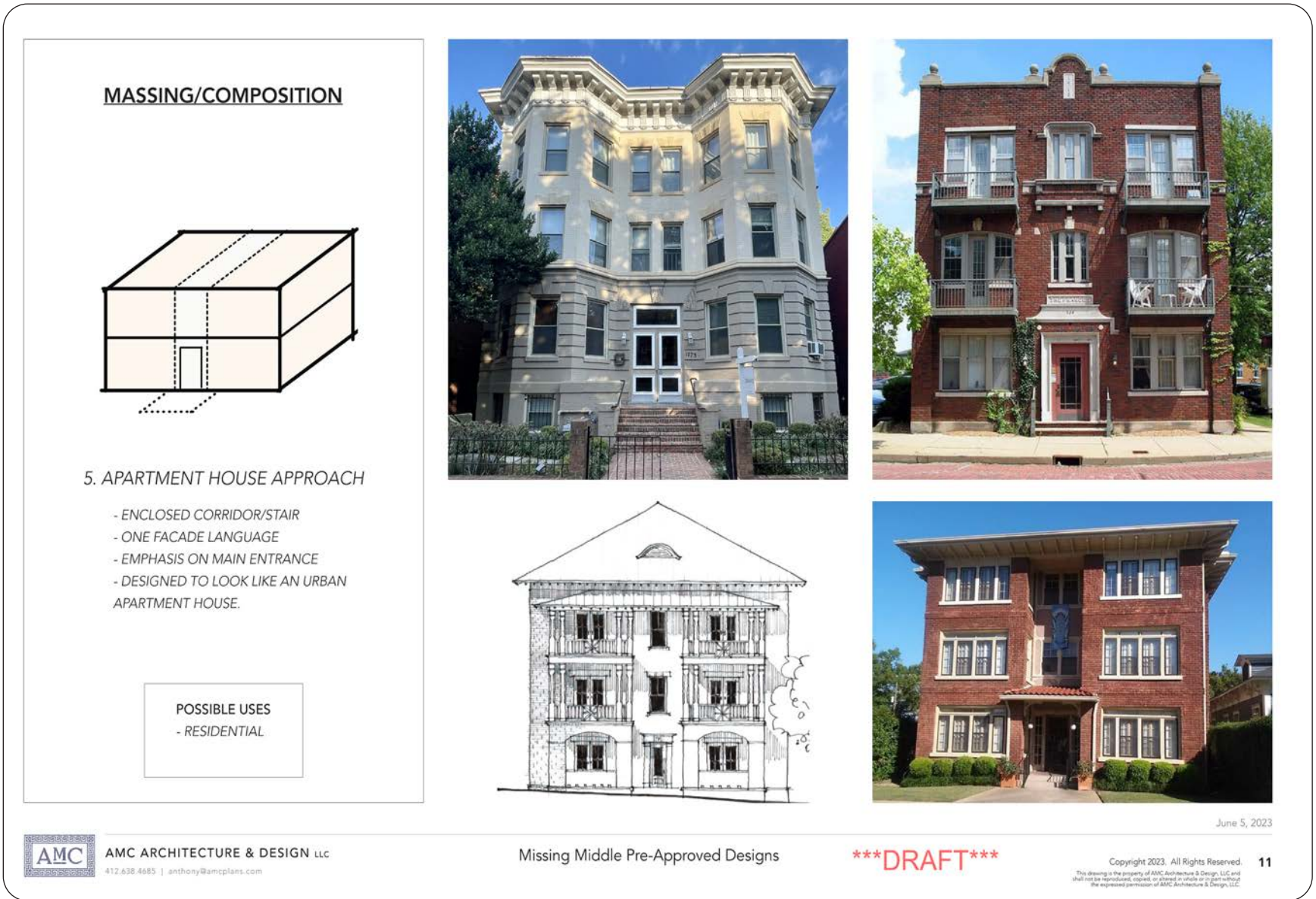


FIGURE 63: Missing Middle Housing Mid-Density Kit-of-Parts — Apartment House Approach

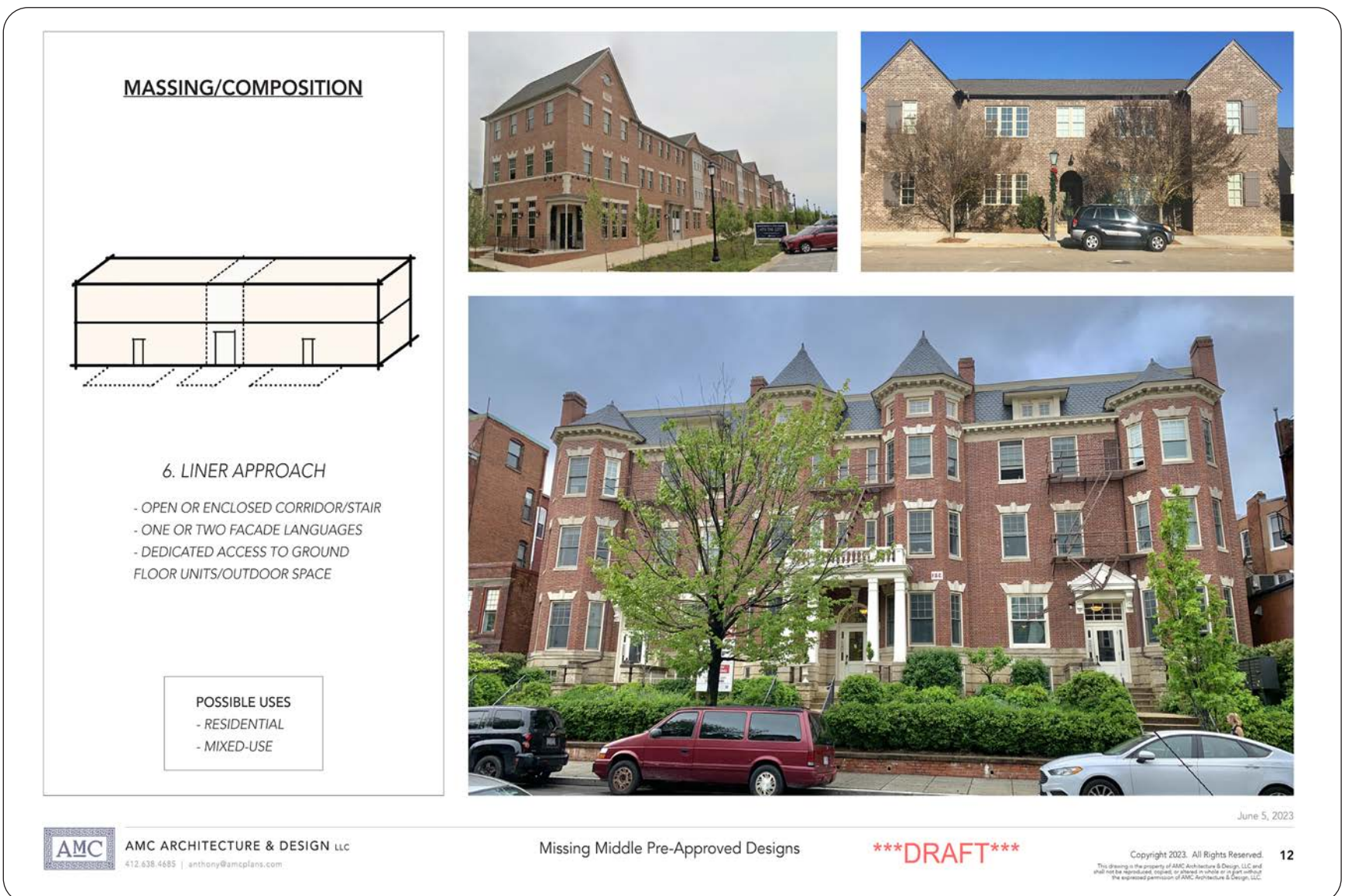


FIGURE 64: Missing Middle Housing Mid-Density Kit-of-Parts — Liner Approach





PART 5: HISTORIC PRESERVATION

HISTORIC PRESERVATION
OVERVIEW

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DISTRICTS

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HISTORIC PRESERVATION OVERVIEW

La Porte is a unique city because, in contrast with most of its peer cities in the post-industrial Midwest, it has not destroyed its historic building fabric. By contrast, after World War II, many cities demolished their historic downtowns in the name of progress. Over the years these once thriving cities, now blanketed in surface parking, often reconstruct with a one-size-fits all “anywhere USA” look. By avoiding this cycle, La Porte’s extensive array of historic buildings contribute to its unique character and identity of place.

Yet, while La Porte’s historic structures remain and actively contribute to the economy of the city, it is shocking to learn that only 36 of the nearly two hundred historic buildings are protected from demolition or being altered beyond recognition, despite the economic and cultural advantages these buildings bring to the city (Figure 66 on page 61).

Sadly, it is understandable how this situation happened. Preservation often operates at two extremes: overly restrictive or nonexistent. Overly restrictive regulations protect a community to death because the standards are often cost prohibitive. If preservation is understood as either perfection or nothing, property owners and local officials choose no protection. When this happens, everyone loses.

The following pages outline a set of commonsense preservation recommendations. These recommendations are based on a foundational premise that the future of La Porte depends on the protection of its past. If this heritage is lost, it can never be replaced. And while the value of preservation may be recognized widely, if the requirements are not achievable within today’s market realities, the process will fail — leaving these cherished buildings, along with the future of La Porte’s identity, at risk.

The preservation resource toolkit includes both carrots and sticks. In the interest of the public good, the commonsense preservation recommendations put guardrails on what individual property owners can do with their buildings. Yet the toolkit is not limited to restrictions. When fully activated, a complete preservation toolkit also unlocks resources to help property owners afford the renovations and repairs required to appropriately maintain these community treasures.

KEY FINDINGS (KF) & RECOMMENDATIONS (R)

KF

A Rich Heritage of Historic Buildings Provides Economic Value

La Porte is exceptional in its sheer number of historic buildings, unlike many other cities across the county. These buildings provide a substantial economic benefit to the city and its residents.

KF

La Porte’s Historic Buildings Are at Risk

The historic buildings in La Porte need to be protected to prevent demolition or alterations that change a building beyond recognition.

R

Continue to Enact Commonsense Preservation

Continue adhering to the existing Historic Downtown Design Review process and standards. Preservation does not have to be overly restrictive. Commonsense preservation is needed to balance the public good with market realities.

R

Unlock Preservation Resources

A complete preservation toolkit offers resources for property owners that offset some repair costs.

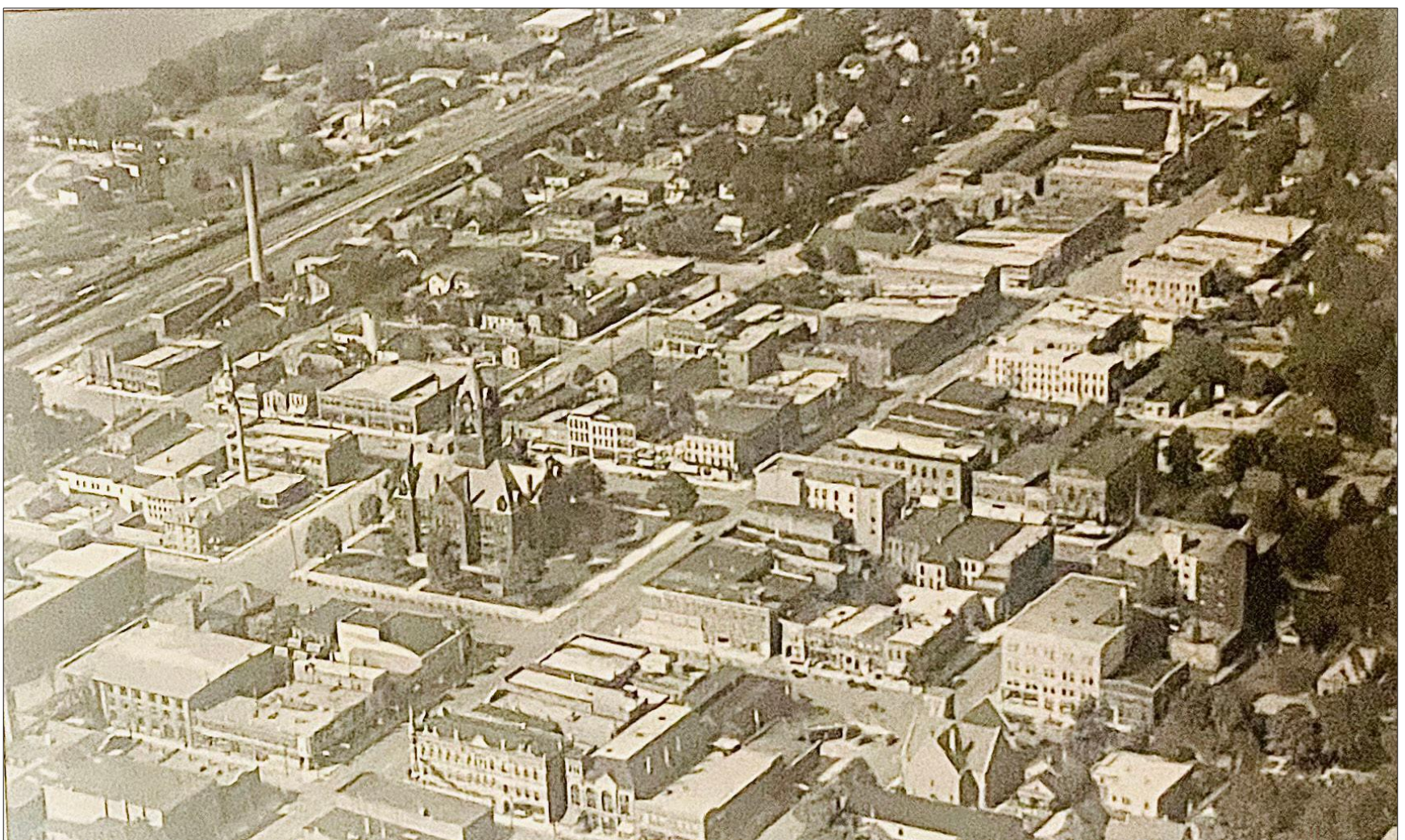


FIGURE 65: Aerial Photo Depicting Downtown La Porte in the 1950s

The historic fabric remains mostly intact except for the buildings impacted by the intervention of the overpass and the former hospital site. Photo courtesy of Images of America.

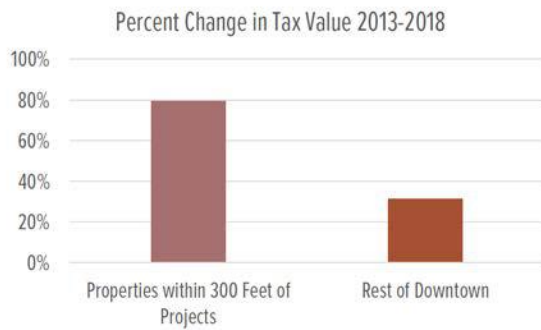
THE ECONOMIC BENEFITS OF PRESERVATION

“This historic preservation-based program didn’t ruin those towns; in many cases it literally saved them.” PlaceEconomics (2017)

HOME VALUE

Property Tax Values

Evidence of downtown Columbus’ revitalization is illustrated by the over 40% increase in property tax value between 2013 and 2018. However, properties in close proximity (within 300 feet of the projects studied) to the rehabilitation projects saw an even greater rise in property tax value, increasing at nearly 80%, compared to the rest of downtown, at 31%.

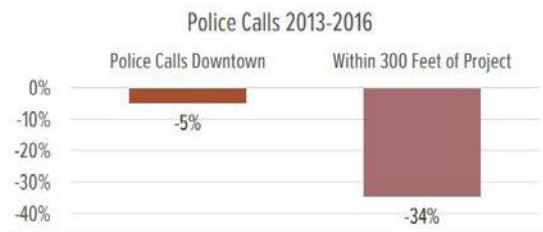


“In a small historic district in North Little Rock, Arkansas, houses were worth on average **\$31,000 more than comparable houses not in the district.** This meant annual **additional revenues for the county of \$40,000, for the city of \$50,000, and for the school district of \$200,000.**”¹

CRIME REDUCTION & INFRASTRUCTURE SAVINGS

Crime Reduction

The increased number of residents, workers, businesses, and in general people walking around downtown Columbus has had an impact on crime. While downtown Columbus has seen a 5% decrease in police calls, there were 34% fewer calls nearby the rehabilitation projects in 2016 than four years earlier. The crime reduction illustrates the catalytic nature of these rehabilitation projects.



Preservation projects save 50 to 80% in infrastructure costs compared to new suburban development.²

In Maryland, a study compared the differences in environmental impact of rehabilitating a 50,000 square foot historic industrial building to building a new structure at the edge of town.³ Findings included:

- **20%-40% reduction** in vehicle miles traveled
- **92-123 metric ton** reduction of travel-related CO2
- **55,000 Million BTUs** of retained embodied energy
- **5.2 acres** of greenfield land preserved
- **2.5 million tons** less demolition debris in landfills
- **\$100,000** of natural resources saved
- **\$500,000-\$800,000 saved** in infrastructure investment

JOBS

Historic rehabilitation = well-paid jobs (Particularly for those without advanced formal education)

- Rehabilitation tends to be more labor intensive than new construction.
- There is a greater ratio of labor to materials compared to new construction, so the secondary impact of workers is magnified.

Examples:

- **Savannah, GA** — \$1 million spent on the rehabilitation of a historic building will generate ~1.2 more jobs and \$62,000 more income for Georgia citizens than the same amount spent on new construction.
- **Columbus, OH** — Rehabilitation projects created 354 direct jobs with average income of \$69,296 and 315 indirect jobs with wages of \$50,600.
- **Oklahoma** — Over two decades of Main Street activity have created 24,437 jobs, equal to roughly 1.5% of the state’s entire non-farm workforce.



¹ “Economic Impacts of Historic Preservation in Arkansas” (Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, 2006).

² “Heritage Tax Credits: Maryland’s Own Stimulus to Renovate Buildings for Productive Use and Create Jobs, an \$8.53 Return on Every State Dollar Invested” (The Abell Report, March 2009).

³ “Twenty-Four Reasons Historic Preservation Is Good For Your Community” (PlaceEconomics, 2020).

FIGURE 66: Economic Benefits of Historic Preservation Data from PlaceEconomics

COMMONSENSE PRESERVATION

Preserving the historic buildings of a community is key to retaining its sense of character, but all too often preservation becomes overly restrictive and protects a place to death. The “George Washington slept here” version of preservation is overly burdensome because it is both complicated to navigate and cost prohibitive for most property owners.

The standards of altering or repairing a historic property within a historic district need to be achievable and incentivized by the local historic preservation ordinance. It can be expensive to alter or repair an existing historic building with period-appropriate details or material specifications, but there is a middle ground between a perfect replica and destroying the character of a historic building.

“Preservation Over Perfection” is a guide depicting the range choices for altering or repairing historic buildings. While the historically accurate design is always preferable, very often modern materials or simplified specifications can be substituted without harming the overall contribution of the building to the community. These standards are offered based on the belief that it is preferable to stabilize and maintain a building with essential renovations rather than to lose the entire structure.

KEY FINDINGS (KF) & RECOMMENDATIONS (R)

- KF Preservation Standards Can Be a Burden to Property Owners**
Preservation standards can be overly complicated to navigate and cost prohibitive to many property owners.
- KF Property Owners Disincentivized from Owning Historic Structures**
When preservation requirements make maintaining a historic home cost prohibitive, either the home is unlisted and lost or, if removing it from protected standards isn't possible, the home may be left vacant, which leads to further disrepair.
- R Adopt Commonsense Preservation Standards**
Adopt Commonsense preservation standards to balance the public good with market realities.



FIGURE 67: Lost Historic Sites in La Porte — Before and After
These photos depict how the lack of historic preservation can alter or destroy the historic fabric of the city. Photos courtesy of Preserve Historic La Porte unless noted otherwise.
















PRESERVATION OVER PERFECTION		
Bad (Avoid)	Better (Acceptable)	Best (Preferable)
Chimneys		
<p>AVOID: Removing a functional period-appropriate chimney or covering a brick chimney with stucco or cement.</p> 	<p>IF NEEDED: Cap a chimney with concrete or limestone.</p> 	<p>PREFERRED: Repair chimney with period-appropriate materials and techniques.</p> 
Windows		
<p>AVOID: Removing existing windows and installing non-appropriate bay or plate glass windows of different sizes.</p> 	<p>IF NEEDED: Remove failed window units and replace them with pre-approved window styles identified in design guidelines.</p> 	<p>PREFERRED: Repair and replace existing historic elements.</p> 
Doors		
<p>AVOID: Changing existing door frame sizes or installing period-inappropriate door surrounds.</p> 	<p>IF NEEDED: Replace historic door with one matching size and style using pre-approved materials as identified in the design guidelines.</p> 	<p>PREFERRED: Repairing existing door surround and decorative elements.</p> 
Siding		
<p>AVOID: Covering existing siding with metal or vinyl elements.</p> 	<p>IF NEEDED: Replace existing damaged siding with wood or cementitious fiberboard of matching size and profile.</p> 	<p>PREFERRED: Repair existing damaged siding in place, only replacing areas in which repair is unfeasible.</p> 
Roofs		
<p>AVOID: Removing existing historic material and replacing with new material before all exhaustive methods are used to retain the fabric.</p> 	<p>IF NEEDED: Replace existing roof with materials of comparable composition, size, and style.</p> 	<p>PREFERRED: Repair existing roof structure, replacing limited areas as necessary with materials comparable composition, size, and style.</p> 

FIGURE 68: Preservation Matrix

Whenever possible, it is preferable to repair historic buildings using traditional materials and construction techniques. Unfortunately, this is not always possible due to the cost and complexity of repairs. While basic standards must be maintained, prioritize saving the building over holding overly strict standards. Note: The Historic Preservation Commission and Downtown District Design Standards Committee in conjunction with Indiana Landmarks as a consultant to the City are currently employing a commonsense methodology and shall continue to adhere to and refine it.

HISTORIC FABRIC AT-RISK

La Porte contains a significant percentage of historic properties within its downtown core. Many of these historic buildings are listed on the National Register of Historic Places; unfortunately, this designation does not protect these structures from demolition. Federal protection offers incentives to maintain a structure but does not prohibit the destruction of a property. Protection from demolition must be implemented at the local level.

La Porte currently has only 36 locally protected buildings (Figure 69 below). The historic buildings on Lincolnway are protected to a point by a demolition delay ordinance, but this is not full protection. The City of La Porte in conjunction with Indiana Landmarks surveyed the city and identified an additional 399 historic structures that are rated outstanding or contributing (Figure 70 on page 65).

These buildings define the identity of La Porte and are at risk to be lost. Public support will be necessary to increase local protection for these at-risk properties. This will require honest communication and education programs that highlight the critical economic value of maintaining the historic fabric of the city, along with a clear explanation of how the

KEY FINDINGS (KF) & RECOMMENDATIONS (R)

KF

Only 36 Buildings in La Porte Are Protected from Demolition

There are only a few historic buildings that are protected locally — the rest are at risk for demolition or being altered beyond recognition.

R

More Protection Is Needed

While the existing Historic Downtown District Design Review process offers a good start, more buildings must be included under local protection. State and federal historic designations do not offer protections against severe alterations or destruction of historic buildings.

commonsense standards work, and the resources these protections unlock through grants and tax benefits (refer to pages 68–71).

Preservation efforts are not successful when imposed from the top down. Success requires developing a culture of preservation that engages property owners as advocates of the process.



1. 801 Michigan Avenue



2. 1201 Indiana Avenue



3. 1515 Indiana Avenue

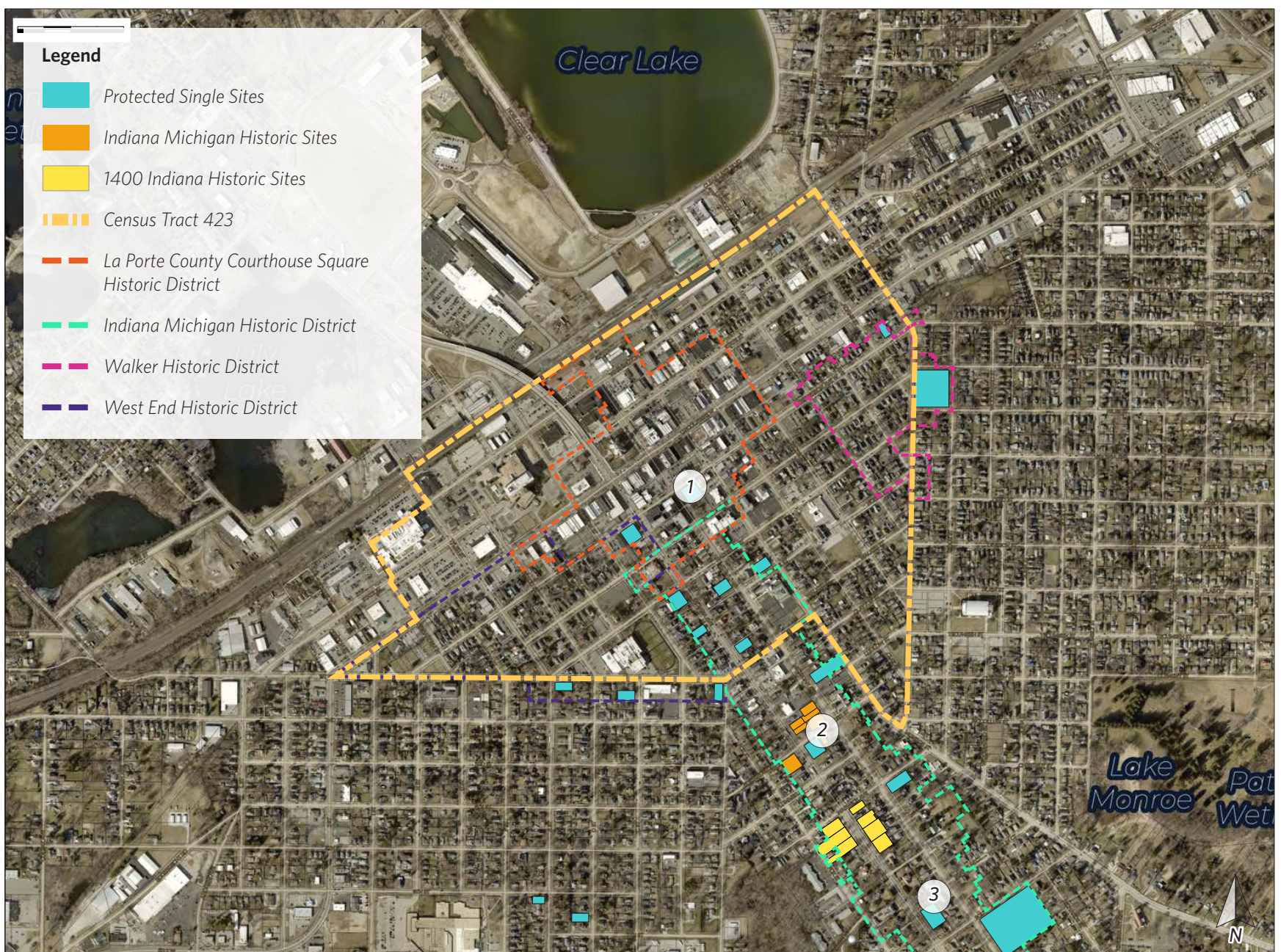


FIGURE 69: Locally Protected Historic Structures

Map depicting the 36 structures that are protected locally through the local Historic Preservation Commission.

THE LOCAL REVIEW PROCESS

WHAT WORK REQUIRES APPROVAL?

Buildings protected with a local designation are subject to review by the City of La Porte Historic Preservation Commission. A Certificate of Appropriateness must be issued before a permit is issued for:

1. Demolition or moving of any building.
2. A conspicuous change in the exterior appearance of existing buildings by additions, reconstruction, alteration, or maintenance involving exterior color changes.
3. Any new construction.
4. A change in walls or fences or construction of walls or fences.
5. A conspicuous change in the exterior appearance of non-historic buildings subject to view from the public right-of-way by additions, reconstruction, alteration, or maintenance involving exterior color change.

SHOULD PROPERTY OWNERS PARTICIPATE?

Adding protection for the properties highlighted in Figure 70 below will require buy-in from a majority of property owners in the affected areas who

will now have to make the effort to understand the Design Guidelines, navigate another layer of approvals to secure a building permit, and most likely have to pay more for home improvement projects. Despite these barriers, the positives will outweigh the negatives in the long run. These positives include higher property values for individuals, a higher tax base for the city, and access to state and federal funds, as well as tax incentives to help pay for renovations. Adoption of new protections will require community outreach to educate the public about the benefits of preservation and how to navigate the process.

CAN THE SYSTEM HANDLE MORE PROPERTIES?

Adding protection for 200+ properties will stress an already stretched system. The adoption of protection for these properties may result in a logjam of projects seeking approval. The city will need to plan to support staff and commission members as they accommodate a higher volume of applications. If the review process substantially slows a property owner's ability to get a building permit, the backlash will undermine program goals and most likely result in a reversal of protections.



4. 820 Jefferson Avenue



5. 1217 Michigan Avenue



6. 705 Lincolnway

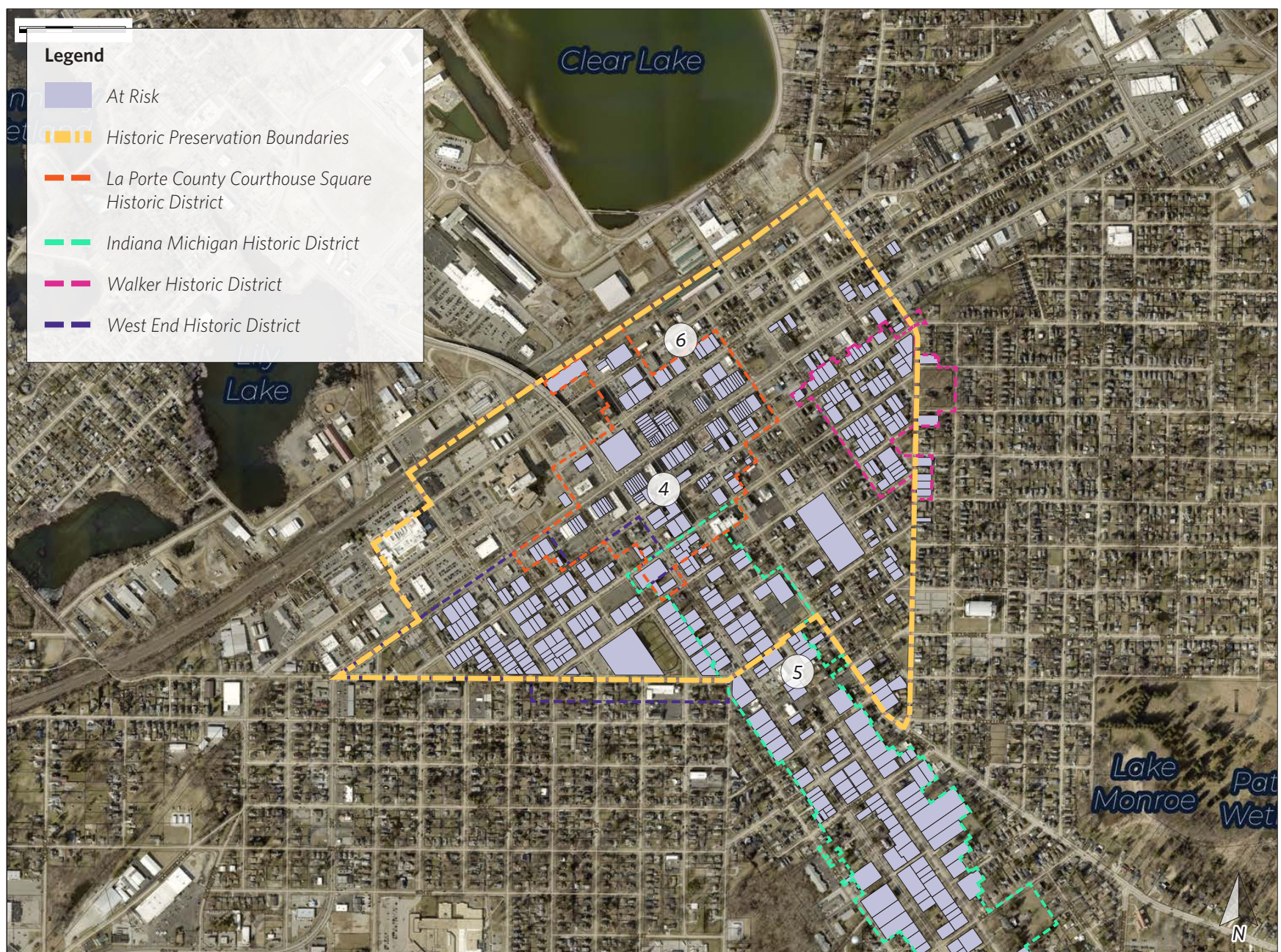


FIGURE 70: Buildings Surveyed as Contributing or Outstanding — AT RISK

Map depicting the historic structures and sites that have been surveyed and identified as “outstanding” or “contributing.” The lack of local protection deems these structures to be at risk of alteration or destruction, which in turn will erase the history and local character of La Porte.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION DISTRICTS

Federally registered historic districts provide the illusion of protection. Unless a building is locally protected, it is at risk for demolition (refer to pages 64-65). Yet despite this common misperception, creating and maintaining federally listed districts is still valuable for a city because they unlock potential resources and tax incentives to help property owners maintain their buildings.

La Porte currently has two nationally listed historic preservation districts, the La Porte County Courthouse Square Historic District and the Indiana Michigan Historic District (Figure 71 below). These districts offer resources for the core of downtown as well as the large homes that extend south along Michigan Avenue and Indiana Avenue. Two additional districts, Walker Historic District and West End Historic District, have been surveyed but they have not been submitted to be listed as Historic Districts. In the process of mapping Walker and West End we discovered a gap in coverage between Monroe Street and Detroit Street. We recommend surveying this area and including it in the West End Historic District.

The most critical first step is designating all four districts as Historic Districts. This classification will not only protect the at-risk buildings highlighted in Figure 70 on the previous page, but it will also streamline the state and federal approval process. With the listing of these two new districts, including the proposed new boundary for West End, nearly all of Census Tract 423 will be nationally listed. This will help unlock valuable resources that will help to maintain the homes and protect vulnerable citizens who might otherwise be forced to sell a home they can't afford to maintain.

KEY FINDINGS (KF) & RECOMMENDATIONS (R)

- KF Federal Preservation Districts Do Not Prohibit Demolition**
Only local protection will prohibit demolition of a historic structure.
- KF Historic Districts Unlock Resources**
Federal districts unlock resources that help to pay for maintenance and care of historic structures.
- R Local Historic Preservation Districts Are Needed**
Protection is needed at the local level in the four districts in Census Tract 423.
- R La Porte Has Two Federally Listed Districts**
The core of downtown and large homes along Michigan and Indiana Avenues are federally listed.
- R More Districts Are Needed**
Adding the West End and Walker Historic Districts will help property owners maintain their buildings.

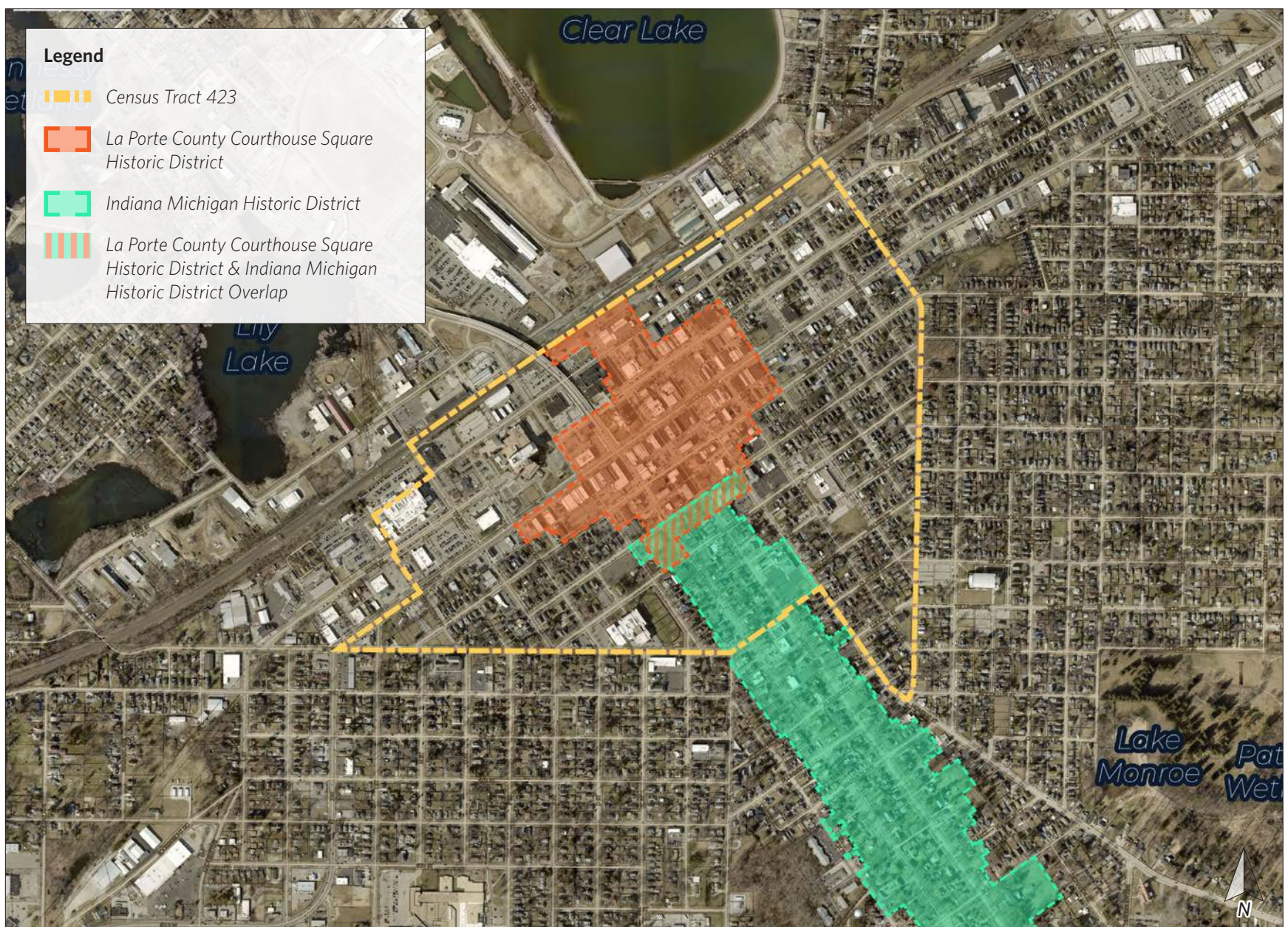


FIGURE 71: Current Federally Protected Historic Districts
Map depicting the boundaries of the existing Historic Districts.

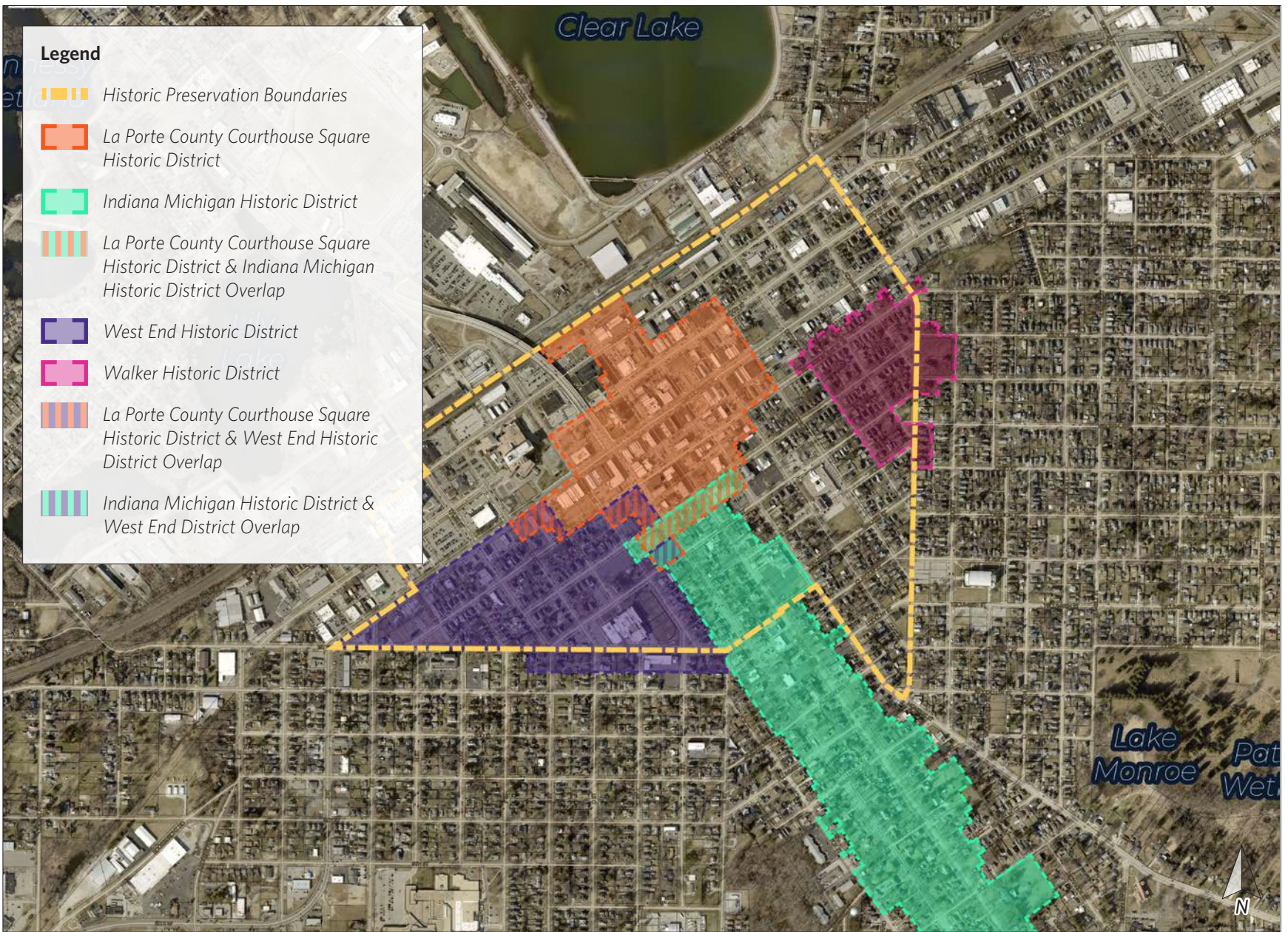


FIGURE 72: Federally Protected Historic Districts Existing and Surveyed

Map depicting West End and Walker Historic Districts, which were previously surveyed but never established as listed districts.

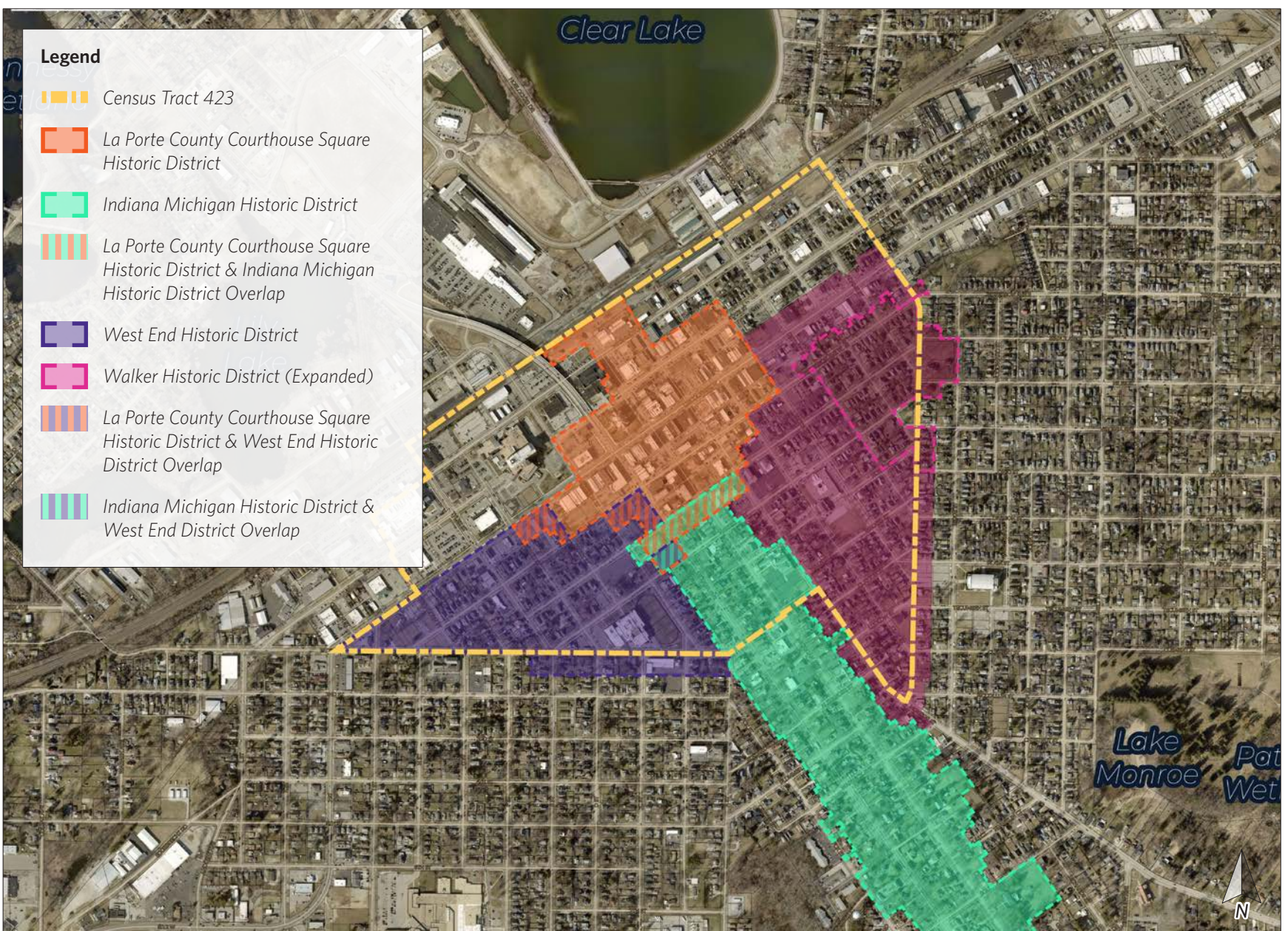


FIGURE 73: Proposed Locally & Federally Protected Historic Districts

Map depicting the proposal of expanding and establishing the West End and Walker Historic Districts.

UNLOCKING PRESERVATION RESOURCES

Historic preservation works on three separate yet interwoven levels: local, state, and federal. Local protections, overseen by the City of La Porte Historic Preservation Commission, protect the public good and set the standards for what a property owner can and cannot do to their building (refer to pages 62–63). State and federal designations offer resources and incentives for owners to help maintain historic properties.

The resources outlined in this report provide an abbreviated snapshot of available funding sources and incentives available to support the maintenance of a historic property. Conducting educational programs, outlined on page 70, will help members of the public as well as city staff to navigate the process and unlock the range of funding available to support La Porte's historic structures.

STATE & LOCAL RESOURCES

STATE OF INDIANA

Residential Historic Preservation Tax Credit

An adjusted gross income tax credit is available for the rehabilitation of historic residential property. The qualified expenditures for preservation or rehabilitation of the historic property must exceed \$10,000. The tax credit is equal to 20 percent of the qualified expenditures that the taxpayer makes for the preservation or rehabilitation of the historic property. A taxpayer qualifies for the credit if all of the following conditions are met:

- The historic property is located in Indiana, is at least 50 years old, and is owned by the taxpayer.
- The historic property is listed in the Indiana Register of Historic Sites and Structures.
- A proposed preservation or rehabilitation plan complies with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Rehabilitation of Historic Properties.
- The preservation or rehabilitation work that is subject to the credit substantially complies with the preservation or rehabilitation plan consistent with Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Rehabilitation of Historic Properties.
- The preservation or rehabilitation work is completed in not more than two years, or five years if the preservation or rehabilitation plan indicates that the preservation or rehabilitation is initially planned for completion in phases.
- The historic property is principally used and occupied by the taxpayer as the taxpayer's primary residence.
- The qualified expenditures for preservation or rehabilitation of the historic property must exceed \$10,000. The tax credit is equal to 20 percent of the qualified expenditures that the taxpayer makes for the preservation or rehabilitation of the historic property. The following costs do not count as qualified expenditures:
 - Acquiring a property or an interest in a property;
 - Paying taxes due on a property;
 - Enlarging an existing structure;
 - Paying realtor's fees associated with a structure or property;
 - Paying paving and landscaping costs;
 - Paying sale and marketing costs.

Indiana Residential Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit

A property owner who rehabs a primary residence may qualify if the house is at least 50 years old and listed in the Indiana Register of Historic Places either individually or as part of a district.

INDIANA LANDMARKS

Black Heritage Preservation Program

The Black Heritage Preservation Program bolsters efforts to recognize Black heritage by identifying places that should be listed in the National Register of Historic Places and seeking to expand the definition of those eligible for designation to include places where little or no physical evidence remains.

The Black Heritage Preservation Program offers grants ranging from \$500 to \$40,000 for restoration and preservation of sites important to Black heritage in Indiana. The program also offers grants ranging from \$250 to \$10,000 for interpretive projects that document and bring public attention to heritage and history that is no longer evidenced by physical sites.

Affiliated Groups (La Porte County)

Preserve Historic La Porte
P.O. Box 853
La Porte, IN 46352
Phone: 219-987-2962

Indiana Lincoln Highway Association, Inc.
lincolnhighwayassoc.office@yahoo.com
Website: www.indianalincolnhighway.org

LOCAL RESOURCES

Facade and Economic Development Grant

Consider establishing a facade grant program to incentivize local businesses to renovate storefronts. Programs can be structured as cash payments or tax benefits.

RESOURCES BY THE NUMBERS



Historic Preservation Fund Grant Program Impact INDIANA DISTRICT 2

- **Federally Certified Completed Projects:** 38
- **Housing Units Created or Rehabilitated:** 428
- **Low/Moderate-Income Housing Units Created:** 305
- **Qualified Rehabilitation Expenses:** \$91,331,883
- **Additional Project Costs:** \$15,651,798
- **Federal Tax Credits Provided:** \$18,266,377

STATEWIDE IMPACT SINCE PROGRAM INCEPTION

- **Federally Certified Completed Projects:** 487
- **Housing Units Created or Rehabilitated:** 7,112
- **Low/Moderate-Income Housing Units Created:** 3,706
- **Qualified Rehabilitation Expenses:** \$1,315,432,236
- **Additional Project Costs:** \$265,504,392
- **Total Project Investments:** \$1.580 Billion

FEDERAL RESOURCES

FEDERAL RESOURCES

Historic Preservation Fund Grant Program (HPF)

The HPF Grant Program provides the **Federal Historic Rehabilitation Investment Tax Credit**. This credit is administered by the National Park Service and the Internal Revenue Service in partnership with the State Historic Preservation Office, which, in Indiana, is the Division of Historic Preservation & Archaeology (DHPA). The Federal Historic Rehabilitation Investment Tax Credit offers a 20 percent income tax credit on qualified expenses for the rehabilitation of historic, income-producing buildings.

Property must be income-producing for at least five years following rehabilitation. This may include, but not be limited to, proposed uses such as hotel, restaurant or bar, retail, office, rental residential, industrial, or agricultural. Owner-occupied residential properties do not qualify for this program but may be eligible for the Residential Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit.

- **Eligibility Requirements:** Eligible applicants include registered not-for-profit organizations, county and municipal government agencies, and colleges and universities. Historic buildings or structures to be documented or rehabilitated with grant funds must already be listed in the National Register of Historic Places at the time of application.
- **Match Requirements:** All grant awards must be matched with funds from any non-federal source. The applicant must document that it has the required matching funds on hand and available within its own accounts at the time of application. The short program cycle does not allow time to raise the matching funds during the grant period.
- **Match Ratios:** Most subgrants have a 50/50 grant-to-match ratio; however, certain applicants and project types are eligible for more advantageous funding ratios. Communities that are federally designated as Certified Local Governments (CLGs) get a 60/40 grant-to-match ratio for any type of project.
- **Grant Award Amounts:** The maximum grant award is normally \$50,000.

The project must meet the “substantial rehabilitation test.” The cost of a project must exceed the greater of \$5,000 or the building’s adjusted basis. The National Park Service provides the following formula to calculate the adjusted basis:

$$A - B - C + D = \text{adjusted basis}$$

A = purchase price of the property (building and land)

B = the cost of the land at the time of purchase

C = depreciation taken for an income-producing property

D = cost of any capital improvements made since purchase

Community Development Block Grant

Community Development Block Grants are issued by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for historic preservation, including the rehabilitation, preservation, or restoration of historic property. This is the basic authorization for preservation but does not limit the scope of other activities which may include or support preservation. Funds can be used for land acquisition, planning, technical assistance, and code enforcement.

The Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC)

The Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program is the most important resource for creating affordable housing in the United States today. Created by the Tax Reform Act of 1986, the LIHTC program gives state and local LIHTC-allocating agencies the equivalent of approximately \$9 billion in annual budget authority to issue tax credits for the acquisition, rehabilitation, or new construction of rental housing targeted to lower-income households.

Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Qualified Census Tracts must have 50 percent of households with incomes below 60 percent of the Area Median Gross Income (AMGI) or have a poverty rate of 25 percent or more. Difficult Development Areas (DDA) are areas with high land, construction, and utility costs relative to the area median income.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Creating a culture of preservation starts with education. Educational programs can take the form of workshops to help property owners navigate the process of securing financial resources, grant funding, and tax incentives from the state and federal governments to preserve their buildings.

Educational programs can also teach homeowners and local trade professionals how to work on historic structures through hands-on courses. Offering training on basic repairs and more complex projects, like reglazing windows, will facilitate an engaged public that is educated about the requirements and priorities for maintaining historic structures. This engagement will generate support for protection of at-risk historic buildings.

In addition to homeowner programs, working with the local schools' building trades classes and local unions' skilled trades programs will increase education and skills related to historic preservation.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM SNAPSHOT

PRESERVATION 101

The following are examples of courses to help property owners navigate the process of gaining approvals for and funding a preservation project.

1. What Historic Preservation Is (and What It's Not)

- Basic terminology
- Introduction to the Secretary of Interior Standards
- Resources available for historic preservation projects
- Dispelling the myths and rumors

Presented by: City of La Porte, Indiana Landmarks, University of Notre Dame

2. How Do Tax Credits Work?

- Steps for applying for a tax credit
- What is a certified rehabilitation expense?
- What you can and can't do
- Documenting the progress
- Applying your credit

Presented by: Indiana Landmarks

3. Understanding the Review Process

- What is the role of the Historic Preservation Commission?
- What is a COA, and when do I need to apply?
- Administrative approval vs. board approval
- Materials to avoid
- What about my interior?
- Can I add onto my building?

Presented by: Historic Preservation Commission

4. Realtor Workshop

- How old buildings work
- Selling points of historic homes
- When not to panic at an inspection report
- Why design review is your client's best friend
- Economics of historic districts

Presented by: Indiana Landmarks

HOMEOWNERS ACADEMY

The Homeowners Academy is a series of one- and two-day workshops introducing historic property owners to proper repair techniques on historic structures as well as best practices to assess the ability of contractors to perform services that the property owner cannot do themselves. Discussion topics include the following:

- Window glazing and weather-stripping
- Masonry repointing
- Basic plumbing repair
- Understanding your electrical system
- Plaster repair
- Doors and hardware
- Fireplaces and how they work
- Roofs and gutters
- Hazardous materials and historic homes
- Painting your historic home
- Seasonal maintenance checklist
- Where's that water coming from?

Presented by: City of La Porte, Indiana Landmarks, local professionals



ENERGIZE & EXPAND EXISTING RESOURCES

EXPAND PRESERVATION STANDARDS

PROBLEM: Preservation guidelines are excellent, but protect only 36 buildings

NEED: Protection for buildings designated as “contributing” and “outstanding”

SOLUTION: Add local historic preservation districts

The existing Historic District Guidelines provide a solid foundation for commonsense preservation standards. The biggest issue is that the guidelines are not widely used. Figure 72 and Figure 73 on page 67 illustrate the proposed boundaries for two additional districts, as well as the current federally registered districts. Adding a local historic preservation designation to all four districts will offer protections for vulnerable structures.



STIMULATE CODE ENFORCEMENT

PROBLEM: Historic buildings falling into blight conditions due to neglect from absentee landlords.

NEED: Safety and health protections for residents and blighted homes.

SOLUTION: Add new tools to the toolkit, including: “Mayor’s Worst Properties” list, a rental registry, and the addition of more code enforcement staff.

Blighted buildings compromise the residents’ health and life safety. Often the same buildings have frequent violations. Strengthening the city’s code enforcement system will help to mitigate these issues. Tools include:

- **Create the Mayor’s Worst Properties List:** Name and shame owners that endanger residents’ health and degrade the city.
- **Create a Rental Registry:** A rental registry will allow the city to better monitor the condition of rental properties and flag violations before they become blighted or cause harm to occupants.
- **Hire Additional Staff:** Keeping track of housing conditions requires a constant presence in the impacted neighborhoods. Consider hiring new code enforcement team members who will be shared with the preservation staff.

SYNERGIZE THEIR LEVERAGE

PROBLEM: Preservation standards and code enforcement efforts are not coordinated.

NEED: Coordinated activities between city departments and Historic Preservation Commission.

SOLUTION: Expand code enforcement violations to include preservation standards.

The Historic Preservation Commission needs to strengthen its relationship with the city’s code enforcement team as a way to protect property maintenance and preservation standards against absentee landlords within locally designated historic districts.

Training the code enforcement officials to recognize and enforce preservation standards will compel absentee landlords to maintain aesthetic standards for their properties or decide whether it is easier to sell. Officials must take care to ensure that fixed-income homeowners are not displaced due to such new standards in the code enforcement toolkit.

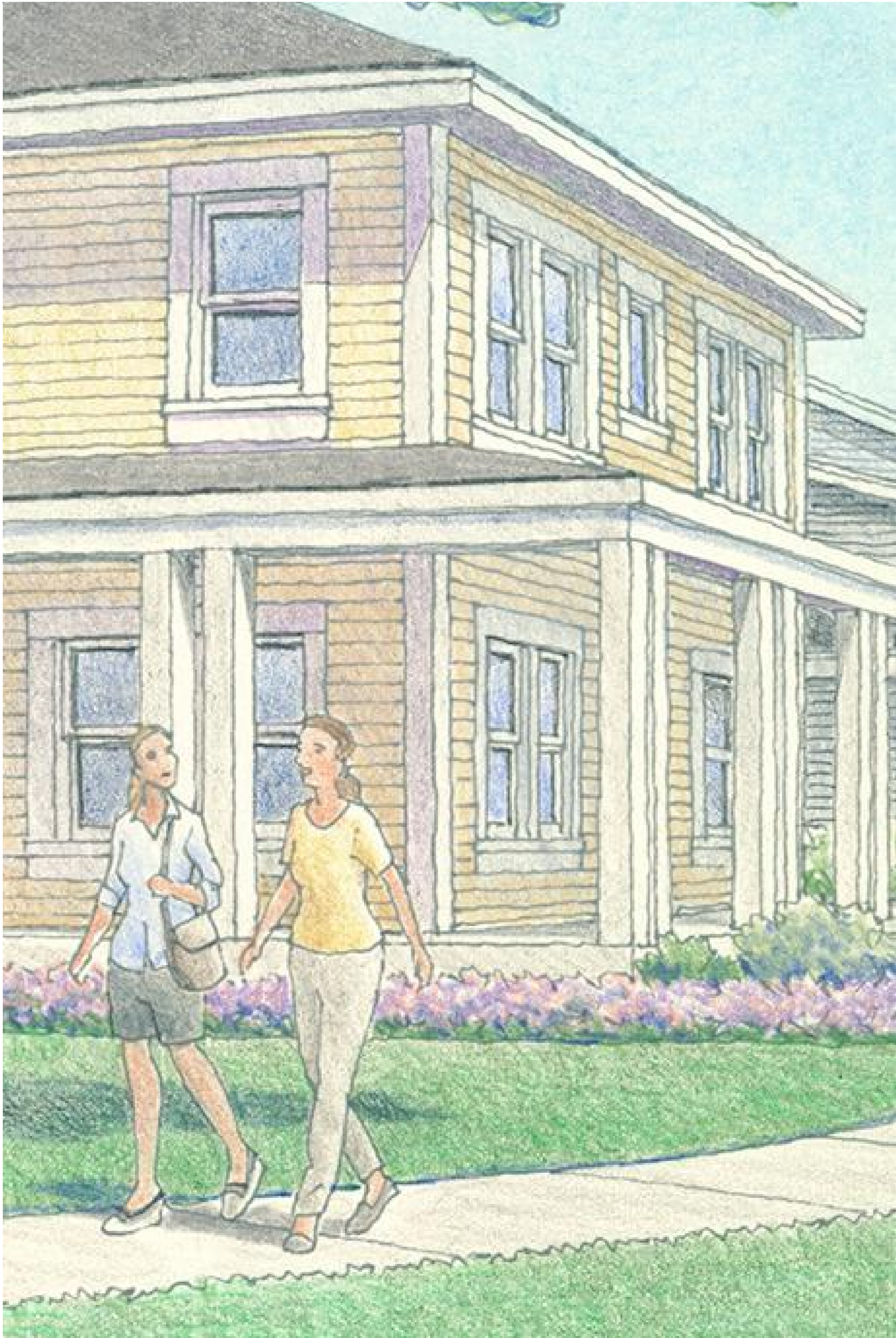
ADDITIONAL TOOLS

Revolving Fund

A revolving fund provides funds for a city or nonprofit organization to purchase and stabilize historic properties. Once stabilized, the properties are sold to a preservation-minded entity or individual that must return the property to use within an agreed time frame. Once sold, funds are reinvested in additional properties. If the new owner does not renovate the building in the agreed time, the property reverts to the nonprofit or city.

Receivership

If a property owner refuses to remediate code violations for life safety or preservation, or if they fall behind on taxes, a city can put liens on the property. Over time, if debts remain unpaid, the city can put the property in receivership. Once all legal issues are resolved, the city or an appointed nonprofit will stabilize the structure and then, similar to the revolving fund described above, sell the property to a preservation-minded entity assigned with the task of bringing the property back into use.





PART 6: NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSING

**NEIGHBORHOOD
HOUSING OVERVIEW**

**NEIGHBORHOOD
HOUSING DEMAND &
PRODUCTION GOALS**

**NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSING
OPPORTUNITIES**

**NEIGHBORHOOD
HOUSING TOOLKIT**

**HOUSING VARIETY: MISSING
MIDDLE HOUSING TYPES**

**NEIGHBORHOOD
HOUSING CASE STUDIES**

ZONING & REGULATING CODE

NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSING OVERVIEW

La Porte, like many cities across the United States, is facing a housing challenge. The existing housing stock does not provide fully for the diverse needs of current residents and households. In addition, recent housing studies conducted in La Porte have identified the potential for significant population growth over the next decade. If this occurs, the current housing stock will be even more strained.

Solving existing and future housing shortages requires insight into the complex housing ecosystem. Many factors affect a community’s ability to provide the housing needed for its residents: adequate public infrastructure, zoning code restrictions, financing availability, and the increasing cost of new construction, just to name a few. Problems with any one of these factors can hinder a community’s housing situation.

Unfortunately, no single tool solves every challenge. An assortment of tools, strategies, and resources all working together enables communities to affect positive change. Every community has its own distinctive challenges and opportunities, so tools must be calibrated for the local circumstances.

Overcoming a community’s housing challenges requires a comprehensive and multifaceted approach. The following section (pages 76–78) focuses on barriers to building new affordable and reasonably priced market rate homes. A toolkit and case studies provide a roadmap for how to develop infill housing throughout the city (pages 79–91). None of this will matter, however, if the zoning code is not updated to allow for the construction of right-sized homes. Pages 92–93 highlight key revisions that will allow the concepts presented in this report to be realized.



FIGURE 74: The Housing Ecosystem

Housing is a complex ecosystem, one that relies on the many factors listed above to be able to successfully meet a community’s housing needs. If any one of these factors is not functioning correctly, it can harm the entire ecosystem. Therefore, when working toward achieving a healthy housing ecosystem in a community — one where current and future housing needs are met — each of these factors must be studied and addressed so that they are all in alignment with and supportive of a community’s housing goals.

NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSING SNAPSHOT

Opportunities for new and renovated housing stock exist throughout La Porte’s downtown and surrounding neighborhoods. Below are some of the primary areas of opportunity that can accommodate additional housing of various sizes and price points.

NEWPORTE LANDING

NewPorte Landing is located north of the train tracks between Clear Lake and Lily Lake on a former industrial site. A major redevelopment is currently underway in the area. Plans are in place to connect this redevelopment area to downtown through a new pedestrian bridge in the coming years. Recently constructed market-rate apartments are fully occupied, and more housing may be included in future phases of development. We encourage careful study of the development patterns in this area and recommend creating a pedestrian-friendly community that engages the lakes and links to downtown, rather than isolated buildings that are accessible only by car.

FIRST WARD

First Ward is located north of the train tracks and east of Clear Lake. Many of the homes in this neighborhood are in poor repair. The city received a federal grant to build an overpass that connects First Ward to downtown at Tipton Street. While this area is outside of the scope of this study, we recommend a design study of this area to ensure the new infrastructure seamlessly engages the residences adjacent to the new bridge.

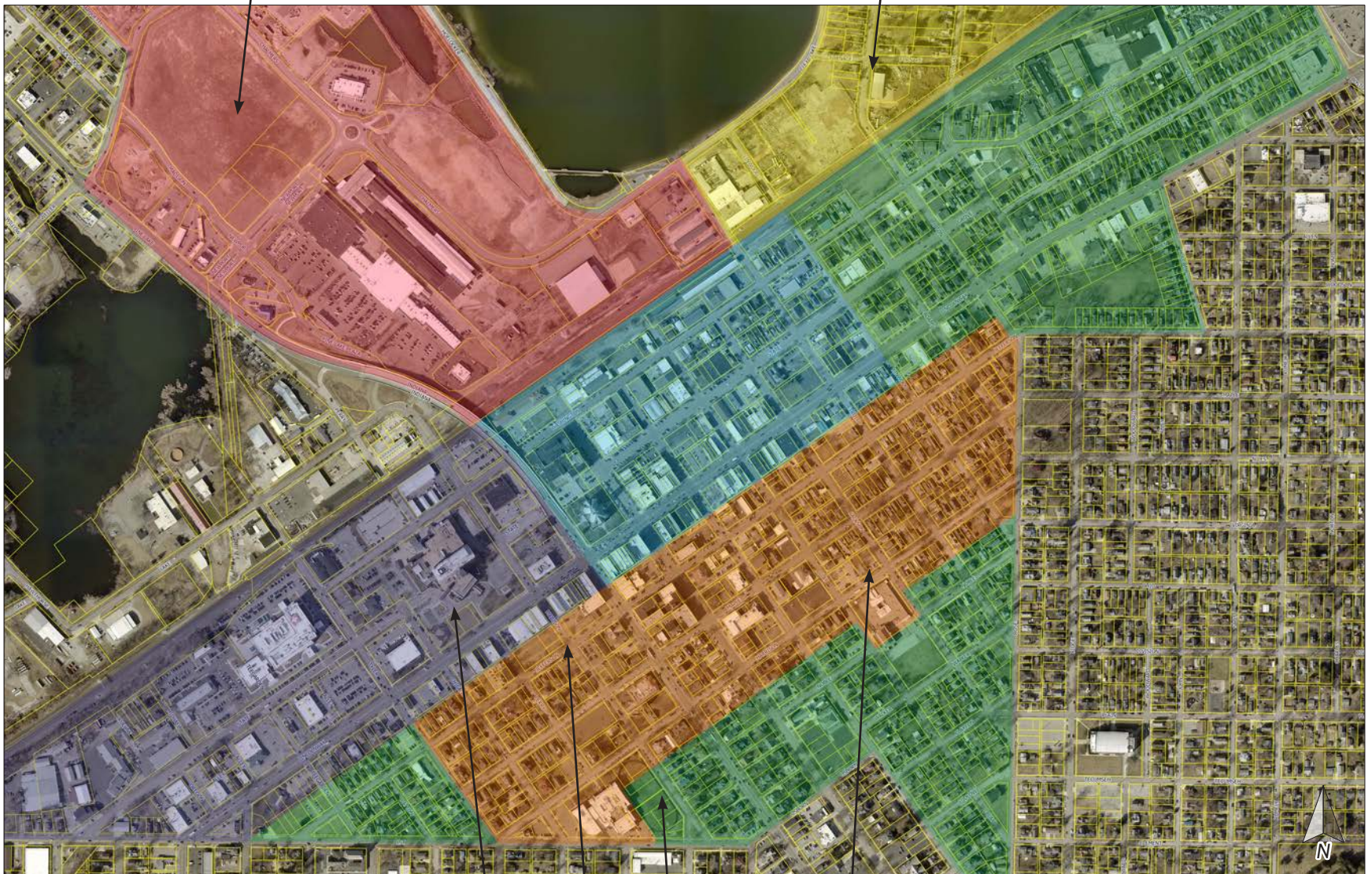


FIGURE 75: La Porte Housing Snapshot

FORMER HOSPITAL REDEVELOPMENT SITE

The former hospital site occupies the northwest corner of downtown La Porte. The site is located west of the overpass at Indiana Avenue, between the train tracks and Lincolnway. This site is slated for redevelopment and holds the potential to offer a wide range of housing options. Refer to pages 44-57 for a detailed proposal for the redevelopment of this site.

LINCOLNWAY — UPPER FLOOR VACANCIES

Many of the upper floors in commercial buildings along Lincolnway, the main street of downtown La Porte, are vacant or underutilized. Activation of this dormant real estate offers a prime opportunity to add needed housing units into the community, housing that will attract young professionals and essential workers to live downtown.

THE 'NEAR DOWNTOWN NEIGHBORHOOD'

The near downtown neighborhood is immediately adjacent to downtown La Porte on the south side of Lincolnway. It extends between Jefferson Avenue and Harrison Street from Tipton Street to Tyler Street. This neighborhood was a focus of the Health Foundation of La Porte’s Housing Study and the location of numerous properties in disrepair owned by absentee landlords. These few blocks represent the highest poverty rate in the county and lead the city in police calls. Remediation of these blight conditions is an essential step in the regeneration of downtown La Porte, but **as outlined in the goals of this study, it is crucial not to displace the law-abiding residents who live here because their income doesn’t allow for other options.** All efforts must be made to ensure that “cleaning up” does not result in “cleaning out.”

INFILL OPPORTUNITIES

While most of the fabric of La Porte remains intact, infill opportunities are available throughout the city. The largest parcels are at the Madison Street Site and Scott Field Site. Refer to pages 84-91 for case studies of these sites.

NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSING DEMAND & PRODUCTION GOALS

The Health Foundation of La Porte’s Housing Initiative Study, conducted in 2022, identified existing housing shortages and the target production goals necessary to meet this need. The following overview highlights this demand and goals, as well as offering an assessment of demographic groups in need of housing. The demographic assessment is drawn from feedback the charrette team received through stakeholder and community feedback sessions.

<h3 style="margin: 0;">HOUSING PRODUCTION GOALS</h3> <p>The community has set the following housing production goals to address existing unmet needs:</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; margin-top: 10px;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p style="font-size: 24px; color: #e67e22;">900-1,000</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p style="color: #34495e;">New market-rate for-sale units</p> </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; margin-top: 10px;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p style="font-size: 24px; color: #e67e22;">450-550</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p style="color: #34495e;">New market-rate rental units</p> </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between; margin-top: 10px;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p style="font-size: 24px; color: #e67e22;">300+</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p style="color: #34495e;">New rent-restricted units</p> </div> </div>	<h3 style="margin: 0;">HOUSING TYPES MOST IN-DEMAND</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workforce and rent-restricted rental housing One-story for-sale duplex/townhome developments that allow for aging in place For-sale developments that are more attainable for millennials/young families (such as duplexes, townhomes, smaller-lot single-family) Market-rate rental developments with on-site amenities Continuing Care Retirement Communities (CCRCs)
--	--

Production goals summary of from the HFL Housing Study conducted by SB Friedman

OVERVIEW OF HOUSING UNITS NEEDED

HOUSING UNITS NEEDED AT ALL PRICE POINTS

Below are the price point categories that both current and future housing need to provide for.

Affordable	[<50% Area Median Income (AMI)] Housing at this price point typically requires a subsidy to be financially viable. These units serve households that are low income and extremely low income. Though rentals are a key component of this type of housing, homeownership opportunities are also important for household wealth generation.
Entry Level	[50-80% AMI] Housing at this price point is still affordable but often doesn’t require a subsidy. It is important to have a healthy mix of both rental and homeownership opportunities at this price point.
Middle Income	[80-120% AMI] Middle-income housing is typically considered “market rate.” At this price point, housing units are needed both for rental and for sale.
High-End	[>120% AMI] Though housing at this price point serves households at a higher income bracket, there is still a need for both rentals and for sale units in this price range.

HOUSING UNITS NEEDED FOR MULTIPLE HOUSEHOLD CONFIGURATIONS & LIFE PHASES:

The nuclear family household consisting of 3.5 people does not comprise the majority of households today, nor will it in the future. Therefore, La Porte’s housing stock needs to correspond to a variety of household configurations and demographics.

Singles/Couples	One- and two-person households will increase in number as Boomers age and younger generations delay marriage.
Families of all sizes	Households of various sizes that consist of one or more parents and one or more kids will continue to make up a significant portion of households.
Multigenerational Households	In recent years, the number of these households has been increasing as adult children return home and as aging parents move in with and are cared for by their adult children.
Non-conventional Households	This household type includes a variety of living arrangements, from several adult roommates without kids to single parents and children sharing one house.
Seniors Aging-in-Place	This is a growing demographic that requires one-story living located in a walkable environment with access to daily needs.

KEY NOTES TO HIGHLIGHT:

Small, Medium, and Large Units Are Needed at All Price Points — For example, fixed income households may have large multigenerational families, while upper- and middle-income households may want to downsize into a smaller home.

Homeownership and Rentals Are Needed at All Price Points — Homeownership opportunities are needed for affordable and entry-level housing units, while rental units are needed for market-rate middle-income and higher-end units.

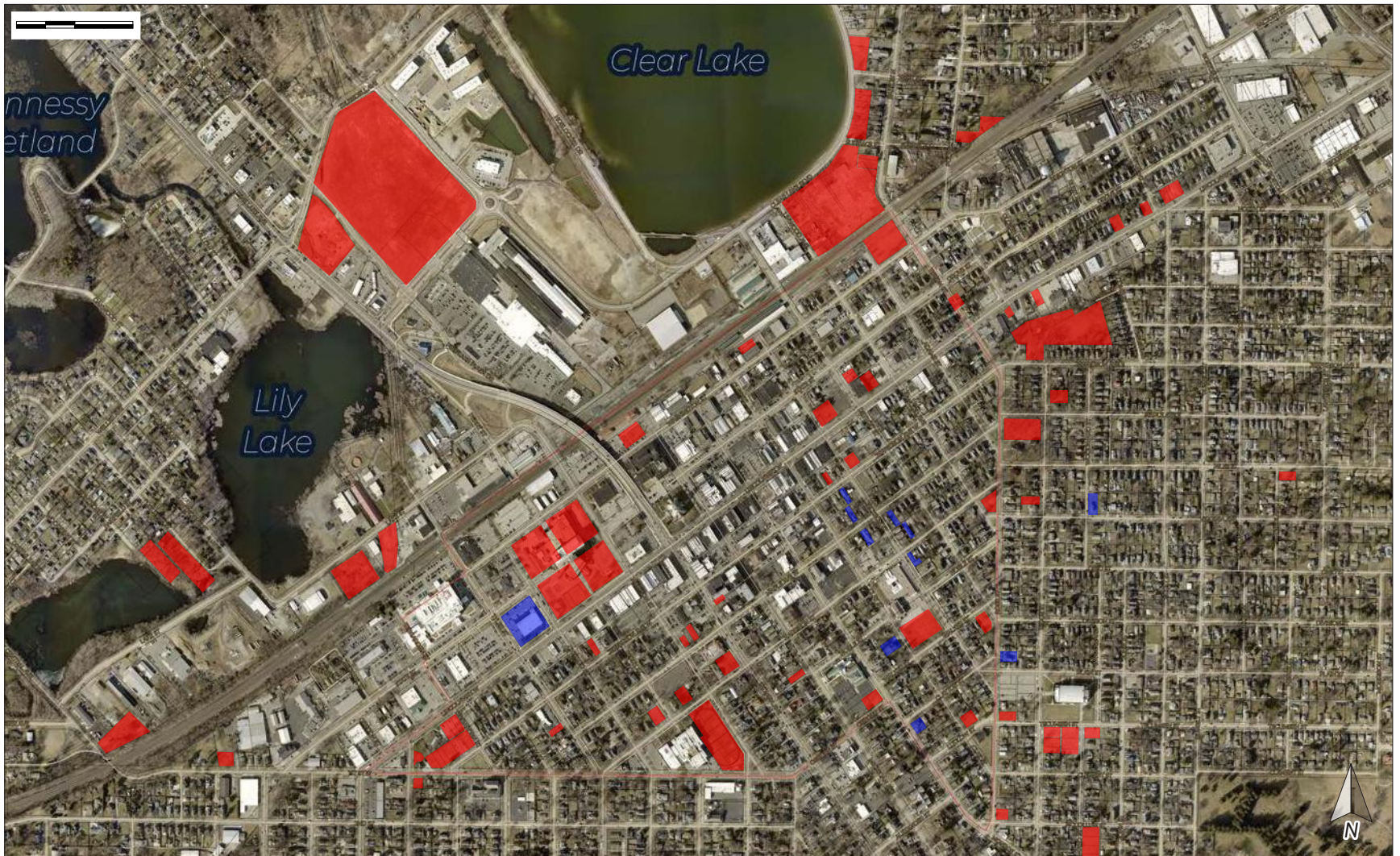


FIGURE 76: La Porte Housing — Opportunity Sites

KEY: ■ Vacant and Underutilized Lots and Land ■ Properties for Sale that are Opportunities for Conversion or Rehabilitation

NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES

With the housing shortages and potential demand identified, the next step is to conduct a housing market study to determine what quantity of housing units can feasibly be absorbed every year, as well as which unit types will be in the highest demand.

To support this next step, the map above begins to identify vacant and underutilized lots and land in and around downtown La Porte. These opportunity sites provide a starting point for new infill housing units.

Additional lots (identified in purple) highlight a portfolio of poorly maintained rental properties for sale at the time of the charrette. While these sites may have already been purchased, they belonged to just one of several property portfolios currently controlled by predatory landlords. Properties like these provide opportunities to rehabilitate existing buildings into better quality housing units. We recommend establishing a housing nonprofit to begin the acquisition of such properties. As the funding structure of this new entity is established, consider that existing residents of these properties most likely will need subsidies to afford to stay in renovated units.

ACTION ITEM

NEXT STEP: GROWTH PLAN NEEDED

The HFL Housing Study provides a strong foundation for setting overall production goals for the City of La Porte.

The next step is to develop a projected growth plan that outlines estimated production capacity alongside estimated market absorption by unit type and price point.

NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSING TOOLKIT

A mix of regulatory, financial, and cultural barriers push the price of housing out of reach for an increasing range of people at multiple price points. Housing affordability issues are not limited to the lowest price points. Housing insecurity, defined as spending more than one-third of your income on housing, impacts middle-income people from all walks of life. No single solution will simplify the complexity of building a new home or reduce the cost. Instead, solutions must address a range of barriers that limit the production of safe and dignified housing for a mix of incomes.

FINANCIAL BARRIERS

"GAP" BETWEEN INCOME & HOUSING COST

Stagnant Wages — "From 1970-2021, the median U.S. income increased 7.7 times, the median rent by 11 times, and the median home sales price by 18 times. The fastest increase came in recent years, especially during the wild pandemic housing market." Source: *The Hustle* via *The Week*.

Cost of Construction — Cost of construction has skyrocketed due to the skilled labor shortage, supply chain issues, and rising land costs.

Market Forces — Market forces push housing costs up, which leads to gentrification.

Appraisal Gap — The appraised cost of a home often does not align with market value or actual cost. A high appraisal can inflate values, while a low appraisal can limit lending options.

INTEREST RATES

Rising interest rates should reduce the cost of commodity building materials, but the gain will be counterbalanced by the higher cost of capital and its impact on overall affordability.

MODERN REDLINING

Location-Based Lending — Banks still limit lending in communities with the greatest need, partially due to the appraisal gap and partially due to lack of confidence that conditions will stabilize. These limits often override the applicant's ability to afford the loan.

"High-Risk" Lending — The people who need capital the most are often those born into a cycle of poverty. They may have a bad credit history or may not have enough for a down payment. Disturbingly, these same people often pay more for rent than they would if they had a mortgage.

Total Cost of Ownership — Missing Middle Housing types such as duplexes and accessory dwelling units offer homeowners the opportunity to offset their mortgage with a rental unit on site. Unfortunately, most lenders do not recognize the benefit of an income-producing unit on the same property, limiting access to homeownership.

REGULATORY BARRIERS

ZONING CODES

Exclusionary zoning, minimum requirements for parking, minimum square footage requirements, and minimum setbacks embed extra expense in the cost of construction and eliminate the housing types required to meet today's need.

CULTURAL BARRIERS

NIMBYISM & FEAR

The idea that building type (duplex vs. single family) and ownership structure (rent vs. own) causes higher crime rates and lower property values demonstrates the confusion between correlation and causation.

Regrettably, this misunderstanding — or bias — is also a major contributor to unmet housing needs. This happens because, without a clear understanding of why crime is high and property values are low in disinvested communities, fear takes over and otherwise kind people become exclusionary and protectionist.

ABSENTEE LANDLORDS

Landlords that let their properties fall into disrepair increase crime and perpetuate the myth that all residents of affordable housing are criminals. This myth makes Missing Middle Housing solutions more difficult to regulate and finance.

LOST CULTURE OF BUILDING

We stopped building in urban neighborhoods decades ago and, in doing so, lost the culture of how to run businesses that construct buildings scaled and detailed to contribute to walkable urban neighborhoods.

TOOLS FOR OVERCOMING FINANCIAL BARRIERS

DE-RISK THE DEAL

It's understandable, especially after the Great Recession of 2008, that lenders are cautious about who they finance. Unfortunately, without financing for new businesses to construct infill housing and first-time homeowners to make purchases, the housing crisis will remain. Wraparound financial services are required to support start-up businesses (help with business formation, accounting, insurance, contracts, etc.) and homeowners (personal financial education).

RESIDENTIAL TIF

A TIF, or Tax Increment Financing, is a financial tool that municipalities use to support the development or redevelopment of a designated area. It involves a municipality using taxes based on the additional assessed value above a base level of value at the time a TIF District is established to be reinvested back into that area in the form of projects and incentives for development. The State of Indiana allows the creation of one or more types of TIF for residential purposes. This can be a helpful tool to support neighborhood infill and infrastructure improvements and can help offset costs for revitalization of derelict or vacant properties.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST FUND

An Affordable Housing Trust Fund (AHTF) is a tool used to support the production and preservation of quality affordable housing in a community. The fund can provide a variety of loans and grants such as affordable housing development loans, homebuyer assistance grants, landlord incentive grants, and rental assistance grants. As such, an AHTF can support developers, landlords, and residents of affordable housing by providing funds not only for rental units but also for homeownership.

ESTABLISH A HOUSING NONPROFIT

A new housing nonprofit is needed to help with both supply and demand. For the supply, consider building new Missing Middle Housing units. On the demand side, as dilapidated properties are stabilized and renovated throughout the city, the rent may no longer be affordable. Subsidies will be necessary to avoid displacement of residents. Subsidies may take many forms, including but not limited to rental assistance, down payment assistance, and second mortgages. More on page 81.

PLAN FOR TOTAL COST OF OWNERSHIP

Total cost of ownership takes into consideration the operating cost of the home, as well as the potential for the home to provide additional income. Poorly constructed homes cost less to build up front but will be expensive to heat and cool over time. Spending a little more up front will pay back dividends over time as monthly costs to condition the home can be substantially reduced. Further, duplexes and accessory dwelling units can provide an income stream that offsets the homeowners' monthly expenses. Lenders often look at the entire cost of a property without considering the potential for income and then disqualify the applicant. New lending models are needed to cover Missing Middle Housing types. This will not only offer a path to homeownership for first-time buyers, but it will also add additional housing units into the market.

TOOLS FOR OVERCOMING REGULATORY BARRIERS

UPDATE THE ZONING CODE

Comprehensive zoning reform is required to reduce the cost of construction by allowing denser housing options that are appropriately scaled to complement existing single-family neighborhoods. Refer to pages 92-93 for recommended revisions to the City of La Porte's zoning regulations.

TOOLS FOR OVERCOMING CULTURAL BARRIERS

DEMYSTIFY NIMBY CONCERNS

While NIMBY fears are irrational, they feed on primal defense mechanisms and turn otherwise rational and open people into protectionists who fear that their property will lose value, their children will be unsafe, or schools will become overcrowded. Information and lived experience are the best antidotes to these fears (refer to page 78).

CODE ENFORCEMENT

A code is only effective if standards are clearly communicated, and enforcement is consistent. Continue to further refine and clarify the recently revamped code enforcement program and system to identify and process code violations. Then ensure a dedicated staff remains in place to oversee and manage code violations. Rental registration can also be an effective tool in the revitalization of neighborhoods. Page 71 offers tools for leveraging the synergies of preservation standards and code enforcement in historic districts.

GOLD STAR LANDLORD PROGRAM

A Gold Star Landlord Program provides incentives to landlords to engage in great rental practices. Landlords opt in to the program by agreeing to certain standards of quality in the management of their rental properties and in their relationships with their tenants. In return, Gold Star Landlords are given access to a variety of tools and financial incentives such as free advertising, application priority, affordable housing funding, and many other resources for success.

PRE-APPROVED BUILDING PROGRAM

A Pre-Approved Building (PAB) Program is a program that offers building designs and plans to the community that are pre-approved or pre-reviewed for construction. This program is especially effective for communities wanting to support quality neighborhood infill as well as to reintroduce new middle-scale housing into existing neighborhoods. Pre-approved plans streamline the permit process, reduce the cost of development, and ensure that the character and quality of new housing aligns with what the community wants. In addition, PABs help to democratize neighborhood development, providing a tool that local residents can easily access to develop and revitalize their own neighborhoods.

INCREMENTAL DEVELOPMENT

Incremental Development is the small-scale, many-hands approach to developing and revitalizing neighborhoods, mainly by local residents and entrepreneurs over time. This approach to neighborhood development is incredibly important to building local wealth over the long-term as well as to empowering local residents to be changemakers in the revitalization of their own neighborhoods. For incremental development to occur, it is essential for a city to provide the tools, resources, networking, and support needed to cultivate a community of local small-scale developers.

A DEEPER DIVE

DEMYSTIFYING AFFORDABLE HOUSING & “DENSITY”

DOES AFFORDABLE HOUSING CREATE CRIME?

No, the construction of new affordable housing does not increase crime. In fact, the opposite is true. Several recent studies, including a 2022 study in Orange County, California, conducted by University of California’s Livable Cities Lab, found that affordable housing reduces most types of crime, especially violent crime. These findings confirm findings from a 2013 Princeton University study, “Do Affordable Housing Projects Harm Suburban Communities? Crime, Property Values, and Taxes in Mount Laurel, NJ,” which also found that construction of new affordable housing DOES NOT increase crime.

WILL AFFORDABLE HOUSING LOWER MY PROPERTY VALUES?

No, affordable housing does not lower property values — in most cases it raises property values. The studies noted above from the University of California’s Livable Cities Lab (LCL) and Princeton University both found no evidence to support claims that new affordable housing lowers property values. Rather, new affordable housing can stabilize and potentially raise property values depending on the conditions of the community where it is built. The LCL study cites two additional studies, one based in Alexandria, Virginia, and the other in Chicago that showed affordable housing raised property values.

DOES DENSITY CAUSE OVERCROWDED NEIGHBORHOODS & TRAFFIC CONGESTION?

No, density does not cause traffic congestion. A thriving downtown without truck traffic will attract more businesses to the center of La Porte. Business will need customers. The closer these customers are to downtown, the better. Increased density through properly maintained duplexes and small multiplexes will reduce traffic because these residents will be able to walk to meet some of their daily needs. Right now, cars are needed for almost all trips outside the home in La Porte. A regenerated downtown will change this formula, but it will need more households to make the economics work.

WILL INFILL HOUSING CAUSE OVERCROWDING IN SCHOOLS?

No, infill housing does not cause overcrowding in schools. The opposite is true. Very often the people attracted to live in smaller infill housing are young couples, single professionals, and elderly individuals. These are all groups of people with fewer children per household. This is not to say families with children will not move into these homes, but they will only be one group within a range of residents served by the new construction. And it’s important to remember that all residents, with or without children, pay taxes that support local schools. So, smaller households benefit local schools.

DOES NEW AFFORDABLE HOUSING CREATE BLIGHTED CONDITIONS?

No, new affordable housing does not create blighted conditions. Blighted conditions are a result of decades of disinvestment and poor transportation policy, along with weak code enforcement and lack of hope. Recreating these outcomes with new construction would take decades. It’s important to uncouple the conditions of blighted buildings from the people who live in them because they are caught in a cycle of poverty. Blighted housing conditions can be avoided by offering stable and secure housing with wraparound services designed to break the poverty cycle, as well as robust code enforcement that stops blighted conditions from taking hold.

WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BUILDING TYPE, OWNERSHIP STRUCTURE, AND CONDITION OF A PROPERTY?

None. Single family homes that are owner occupied can become blighted in the right conditions. At the same time, rental duplexes can be luxury housing in perfect condition. The conditions of a property are independent from the ownership structure or building type. Uncoupling these factors frees up a community to deploy the full toolkit of housing options needed to address critical housing shortages. Refer to pages 82–83 for details.

TOOLS TO MINIMIZE DISPLACEMENT

Investment in La Porte and the stabilization of blighted homes will put pressure on fixed-income homeowners whose taxes will most likely increase, as well as residents who need safe and stable affordable rental housing. While the regeneration of the community is essential for the future of La Porte, it is critical that all residents get to participate in the progress of the city. Following are tools designed to minimize displacement and support the financially vulnerable residents of La Porte.

HOME REPAIR GRANT PROGRAM

A Home Repair Grant Program is a grant that is given to property owners, typically with a qualified income, to upkeep the health and safety of their homes. These grants are typically allocated for structural repairs or new roofing, not for cosmetic purposes.

GRANTS TO OFFSET PROPERTY TAXES

Regeneration of dilapidated properties throughout Census Tract 423 will result in higher property values, which will raise property taxes. Grant programs will be necessary to assist fixed-income homeowners who will otherwise be displaced. Several counties in the state, including neighboring St Joseph County, have approved property tax relief for seniors to minimize displacement. In parallel, state lawmakers are exploring similar statewide laws. We recommend following these trends closely and advocating for tax relief for fixed-income seniors to minimize displacement.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION TAX CREDITS

Historic preservation tax credits are a way for homeowners to pay lower taxes for preserving their historic homes. Historic buildings contribute to the local character of the community, and tax credits give opportunities to local homeowners located within historic districts. Refer to pages 68–69 for details.

UPPER-FLOOR REDEVELOPMENT GRANTS

An Upper-Floor Redevelopment Grant Program can incentivize owners of historic buildings along Main Street to renovate the second and third stories of buildings into apartments or office spaces. This program will not only activate downtown, but it will also generate rental income for the building owner.

CASE STUDY:

HOW TO “DEAL STRUCTURE” AN AFFORDABLE OWNERSHIP PROJECT

Affordable homeownership is out of reach for an increasing number of La Porte residents. The following structure provides a bridge that covers the gap between the cost of housing and a resident’s ability to pay. A key feature of this model is that the gap funding is not a windfall; rather, it is an investment. Once the property is sold, the equity is split proportionally between the homeowner and the impact investor. Residents earn equity proportional to their ability to contribute, which allows them to begin to build generational wealth. The impact investor earns a return on their investment. These funds are either recycled back into the program to support future residents or returned to the impact investor.

A key element of this program is that developments are mixed income; this is for social as well as economic reasons. Higher-end units help to offset the costs of subsidized units, but further, residents of the subsidized units are not separated into marked spaces that isolate and treat them as “other.” Breaking the cycle of poverty requires erasing the stigmas associated with low-income housing.

DEAL STRUCTURE

- **Increase Sales Price without Increasing Monthly Payment**
- The general rule is that the **homebuyer pays 30%–35% of household income** for “Total Housing Cost”
- **Total Housing Cost** includes utilities, property taxes, and maintenance costs plus P&I on first mortgage
- Lower utility costs
- Pay property taxes on affordable sales price
- Buy down the interest rate in first mortgage
- **Developer puts in junior mortgage to make up the gap**

ADVANTAGES OF A JUNIOR MORTGAGE

- Counts as a down payment for a mortgage lender
- Is an appreciated asset that can be repaid
- Allows long-term affordability protections
- Allows long-term oversight of the property

Content provided by Charles Loveman of Heritage Housing Partners

HOUSING VARIETY: MISSING MIDDLE HOUSING TYPES

It is clear from initial housing studies that La Porte needs a greater variety of housing options. This includes a diversity of price points but also a diversity of housing sizes to accommodate the variety of households that exist in La Porte now and that will exist in the near future. One of the best ways to provide for this variety while maintaining the character of existing neighborhoods is to allow a diversity of middle-scale housing types, often referred to as “Missing Middle Housing.” These types (illustrated below) are house-scale and fit well into single-family neighborhoods while they provide a gentle increase in the number of housing units and variety.

CARRIAGE HOUSE



A Carriage House is an accessory structure typically located at the rear of a lot. It typically includes a small residential dwelling, home office space, or small business space located above a garage or at the ground level.

COTTAGE



A Cottage is small single-family house. It can be grouped with other cottages on a site — in either a detached or attached fashion — to form a Cottage Court. Cottage Courts frame pocket parks and offer a small community within a larger community.

NARROW HOUSE



A Narrow House is a small- to medium-sized detached single-family house that is designed to fit on narrow lots. Narrow lots are those that are typically less than 35 feet wide for alley-loaded lots and less than 40 feet wide for front-loaded lots.

STANDARD HOUSE



A Standard House is a medium- to large-sized detached single-family house. The homes are designed to fit on typical urban lots from 35 to 60 feet wide.

FRONT-TO-BACK DUPLEX



A Front-to-Back Duplex consists of two attached dwelling units arranged front-to-back on a single lot. The front unit is typically accessed from the front of the building, while the rear unit is typically accessed from the side or rear. This duplex type can often be designed to fit on narrow lots.

STACKED DUPLEX



A Stacked Duplex is a detached building that consists of two dwelling units arranged one on top of the other. The bottom unit occupies the ground floor (and possibly the basement), while the upper unit occupies the second floor. This duplex type can resemble a Narrow or Standard House.

SIDE-BY-SIDE DUPLEX



A Side-by-Side Duplex is a detached building that consists of two dwelling units arranged side-by-side. Both units are typically accessed from the front and can have either a shared or separate porch or entry. This duplex type is often wider and can be designed to resemble a single-family house.

APARTMENT HOUSES (3,4,6 UNITS)



An Apartment House is a medium-sized structure that consists of three to six dwelling units, typically with a shared entry. This type has the appearance of a large single-family home and is appropriately scaled to fit within primarily single-family or medium-density neighborhoods.

CASE STUDY #1 — SCOTT FIELD SITE

The Scott Field Site is in the northeast corner of downtown La Porte and currently encompasses the undeveloped space within the center of a large irregular block. The western side of the park includes a shelter, playground equipment, and basketball half-court, while the larger eastern portion of the park is primarily an open grassy field with a small baseball diamond at its southeast corner.

Given its active recreational amenities and its high visibility from E. Jefferson Avenue, the western portion of the park is well utilized. However, the larger eastern portion of the park has limited to no visibility from any public right-of-way and is less used. Consequently, safety and maintenance of this of this portion of the park are ongoing concerns.

Potential redevelopment strategies for the site mitigate these concerns and address the need for a greater number and diversity of housing units. Two site plan options show different redevelopment approaches to the site. The first is limited, while the second is more comprehensive. Both options recommend maintaining and enhancing the existing active park space on the western side; the underutilized eastern portion of the site could be redeveloped to provide a variety of housing units around another greenspace.

KEY FINDINGS (KF) & RECOMMENDATIONS (R)

- KF** **Current Configuration of Scott Field Is Problematic**
 The western portion of the park is well used due to its existing recreational amenities and good visibility from E. Jefferson Avenue. The eastern portion of the park is less used and presents safety and maintenance challenges due to its lack of visibility and access from any public right-of-way.
- R** **Leverage Current Park Amenities**
 Maintain and enhance the western park space.
- R** **Provide Greater Access and Visibility into the Site**
 Introduce a street and/or alley right-of-way through the center of the block as well as housing units that face any greenspace.
- R** **Provide a Regulatory Framework to Allow Development of Unique Sites**
 The current zoning code needs a clear process to allow development on non-standard sites that aren't able to conform to the typical zoning standards.



FIGURE 77: Scott Field Existing Conditions

Scott Field currently occupies 3.3 acres within the center of this irregular block in the northeast area of downtown La Porte.



FIGURE 78: Scott Field — Visibility of and Access to Existing Park Space

The western portion of Scott Field has good visibility and access from E. Jefferson Avenue. The eastern portion of Scott Field has little to no visibility or access from any public right-of-way.

While converting existing park space into housing units is not ideal, the current configuration and lack of visibility of the eastern portion of the park impedes activity, safety, and maintenance.

Providing better access to the center of the site as well as incorporating housing units that front and activate the park will enhance the safety and vibrancy of park space in this area.

In addition, an initial mapping of existing parks and green spaces (Figure 79) within the study area indicates that multiple green spaces within a 10-minute walk can serve residents who live in this area of La Porte.

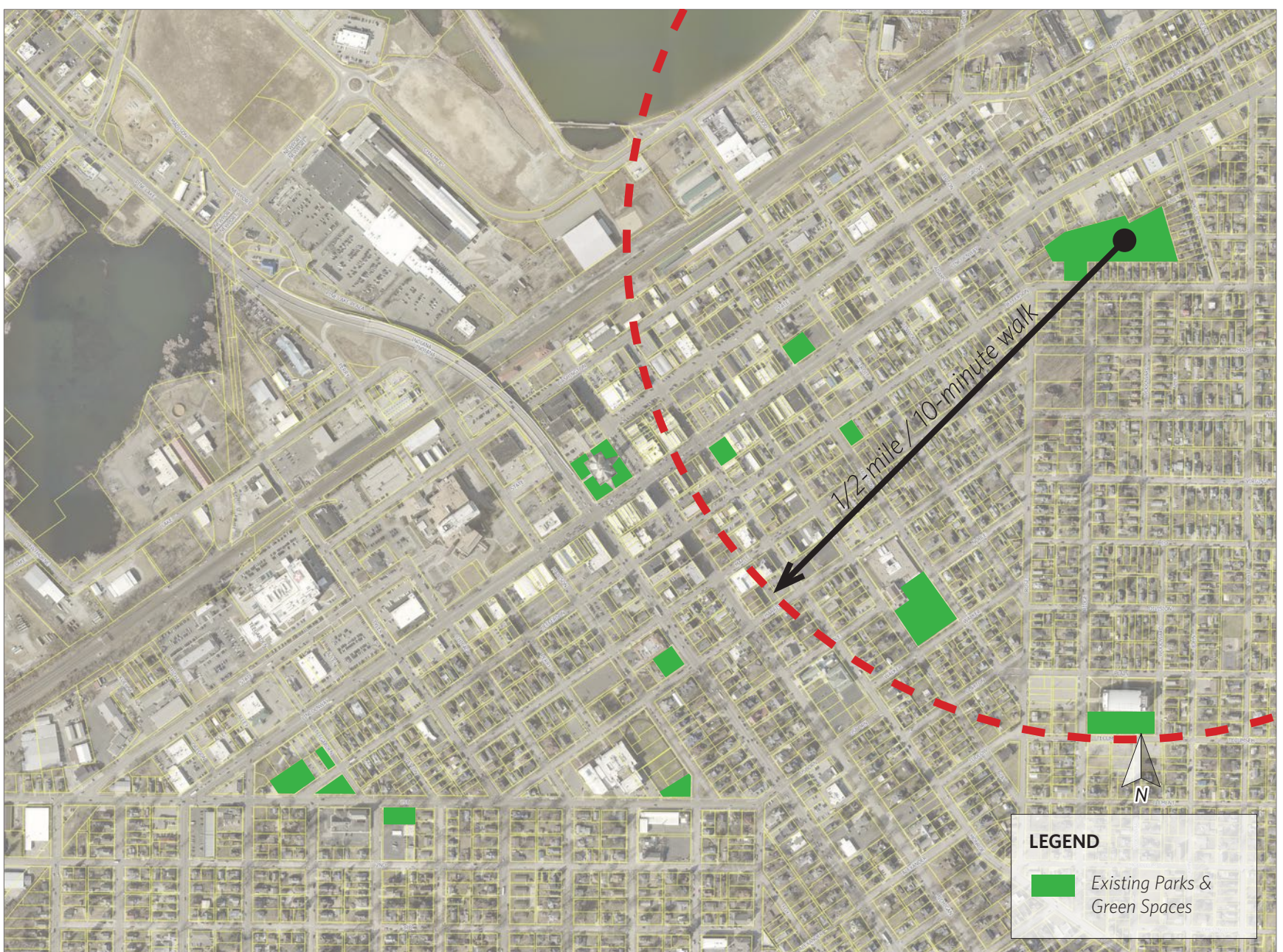


FIGURE 79: Existing Parks and Green Spaces

The above map identifies existing parks and green spaces within the study area and within a 10-minute-walk pedestrian shed from Scott Field.

SCOTT FIELD SITE — OPTION 1



KEY DATA

TOTAL LOTS 15

TOTAL UNITS 23

VARIETY OF UNIT SIZES
 1-Bed (580-670sf)
 2-Bed (1120-1210sf)

SUPPORTS

- Homeownership
- Rental

KEY:

- Existing Buildings
- Duplex
- Single-Family
- 4-Plex
- Carriage House
- 6-Plex

FIGURE 80: Scott Field Site Plan — Option 1

APPROACH — Develop Underutilized Land within the Site Only

Option 1 illustrates how to redevelop the underutilized portion of Scott Field into a cottage court that includes a variety of small- to medium-sized housing types.

Lot Configuration: Subdivide the existing property to create individual cottage court lots around a shared common greenspace. Create a new alley right-of-way around the cottage court to provide access to the individual housing units.

Zoning Code: Create a Planned Unit Development (PUD) process or Cottage Court regulations to allow for this type of development. Update code to allow for a greater variety of building types and number of units on each lot.

Green Space: The existing park space on the western side of the property is maintained and enhanced. A new (semi-private) common green space is provided at the center of the cottage court.

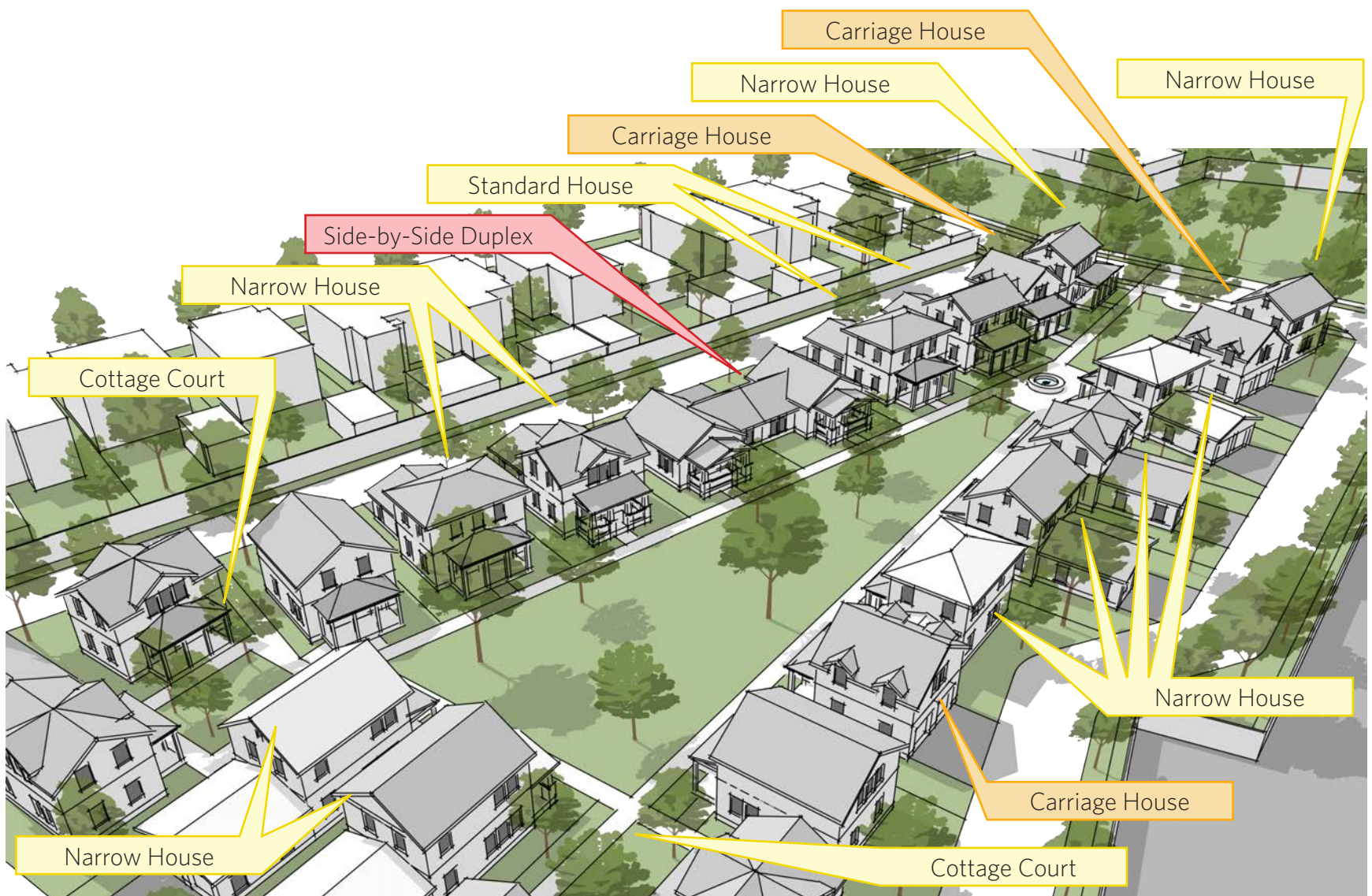


FIGURE 81: Scott Field Site Model — Option 1
 View from the northeast corner of the site looking southwest.

SCOTT FIELD SITE — OPTION 2



KEY DATA

TOTAL LOTS 16

TOTAL UNITS 28

VARIETY OF UNIT SIZES
 1-Bed (580-670sf)
 2-Bed (1120-1210sf)
 3-Bed (1630sf)

SUPPORTS

- Homeownership
- Rental

KEY:

- Existing Buildings
- Duplex
- Single-Family
- 4-Plex
- Carriage House
- 6-Plex

FIGURE 82: Scott Field Site Plan — Option 2

APPROACH — Develop Underutilized Land within the Site & Block

Option 2 illustrates how to redevelop both the underutilized portion of Scott Field as well as the underutilized rear lot space to the north into a cottage court that includes a variety of small- to medium-sized housing types.

Lot Configuration: Subdivide the existing properties to create individual cottage court lots around a shared common green space. Create a new street and alley right-of-way around the cottage court to provide access to individual housing units.

Zoning Code: Create a Planned Unit Development (PUD) process or Cottage Court regulations to allow for this type of development. Update code to allow for a greater variety of building types and number of units on each lot.

Green Space: The existing park space on the western side of the property is maintained and enhanced. A new (public) common greenspace is provided at the center of the cottage court.

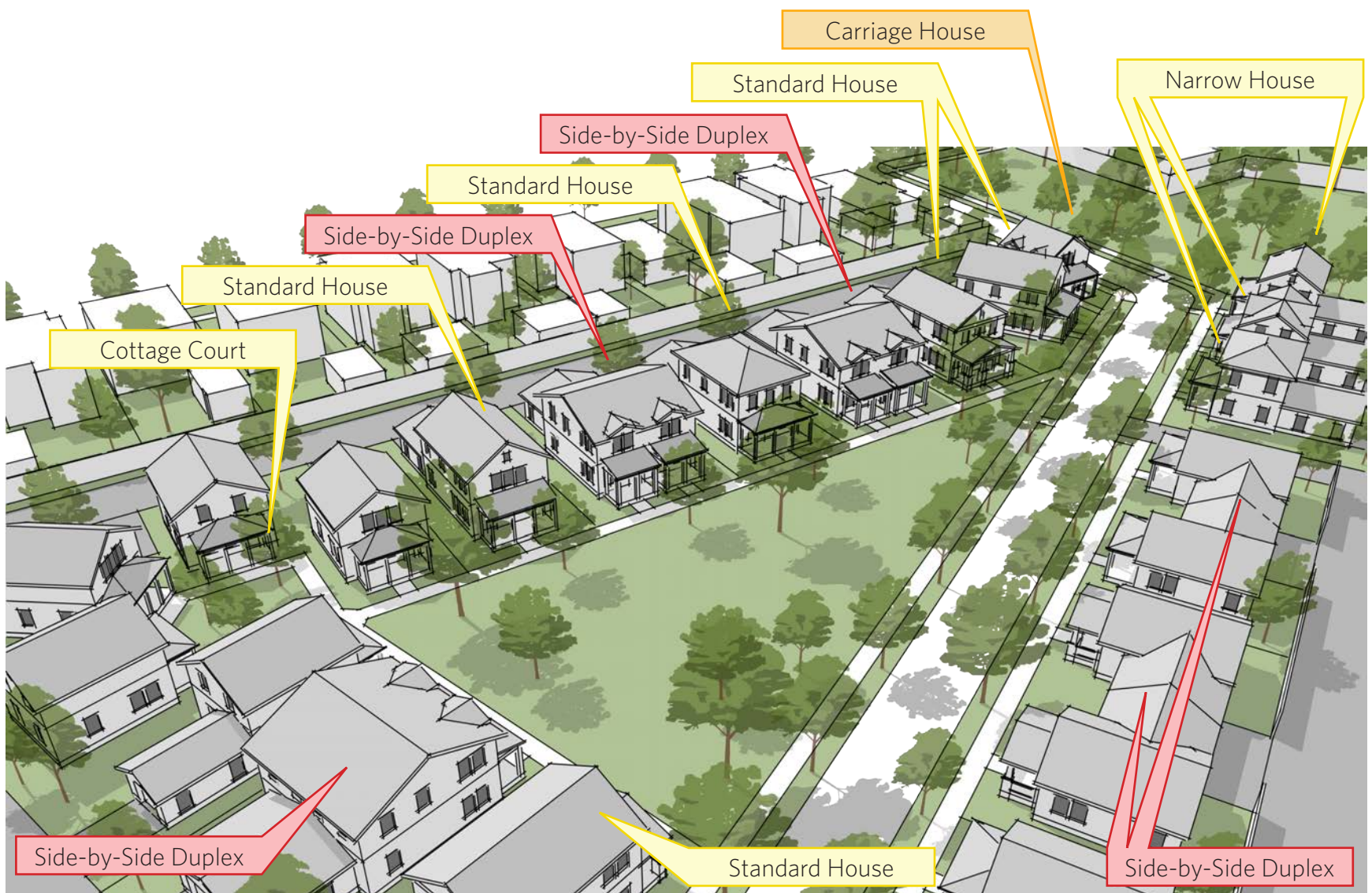


FIGURE 83: Scott Field Site Model — Option 2
 View from the northeast corner of the site looking southwest.

CASE STUDY #2 — MADISON STREET SITE

The La Porte Community School Corporation Site is located at the very southern edge of La Porte’s downtown neighborhood. The site was previously a middle school, but now houses the La Porte Community School Corporation offices as well as a daycare. Along the eastern edge of the site is the old middle school football field and running track. On the south side of this field along 1st Street is a playground for the daycare.

The football field and running track are currently fenced in and not open to the public. Without the activity of a middle school, they are underutilized. As such, this location may provide a potential site for future housing. Any new development on this site must be planned within a citywide open space strategy that ensures that every home is within walking distance to accessible open space. Refer to pages 96–97 for an open space plan for downtown La Porte.

The following Case Study is offered with the goal of illustrating how Missing Middle Housing, enabled through zoning changes, can meet the realities of today’s market need in a way that maintains the beloved character of La Porte’s existing neighborhoods.

About the Design

Three design options are shown, each taking a different approach to the potential development of the site.

- **Option 1** illustrates development working with the existing lot lines; housing was developed per the existing zoning code.
- **Option 2** illustrates the increase in both the number and diversity of housing units that can be achieved on the site by working with minimum lot widths to replat lot lines, and with updated zoning code to allow a wider variety of housing types in this area by right.
- **Option 3** illustrates the number of housing units that can be provided if the minimum lot size requirements are also reduced.

KEY FINDINGS (KF) & RECOMMENDATIONS (R)

- KF Underutilized Land Provides Opportunity for Housing**
The land on the eastern edge of the site that currently houses the old middle school running track and football field is underutilized and not available for public use on a regular basis. This land presents a potential opportunity for new infill housing within the downtown neighborhood.
- KF Zoning Code Adjustments Can Yield Better Housing Options**
Slight adjustments to the zoning code can provide a greater number and diversity of housing options that fit within the existing character of La Porte neighborhoods.
- R Utilize Site for New Housing and Public Park Space**
Consider redevelopment of the site to include a variety of neighborhood-scaled housing options as well as a new public park space.
- R Update Existing Zoning Code**
Update code to allow for this type of neighborhood infill throughout the downtown and in-town neighborhoods.

Though the options show a range of densities, they all maintain the existing character and scale of the historic neighborhood using middle-scale housing types (aka “Missing Middle Housing”). Moreover, each option provides space for a public park on the southeast corner of the site as well as a new playground for the daycare on the northeast corner of the existing school building.

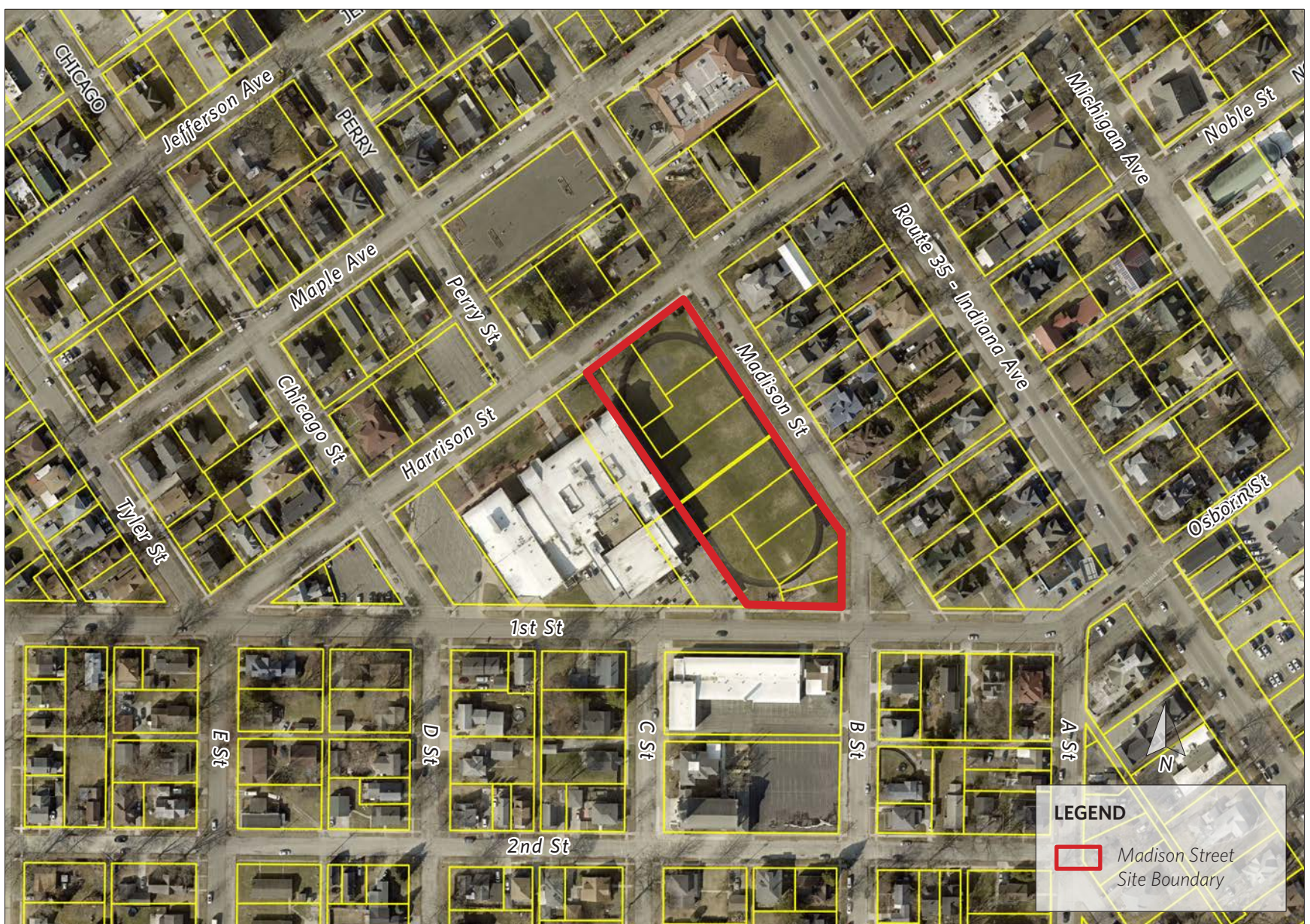


FIGURE 84: Madison Street Site

The 1.9 acres of land along the eastern edge of the Madison Street Site (outlined in red) is currently underutilized. The following design studies illustrate the potential for development of housing and a public park on the site.

MADISON STREET SITE ILLUSTRATION — OPTION 1



KEY DATA

TOTAL LOTS 7

TOTAL UNITS 7

VARIETY OF UNIT SIZES
3-Bed (2000sf)
4-Bed (2400sf)

SUPPORTS

- Homeownership
- Rental

KEY:

- Existing Buildings
- Duplex
- Single-Family
- 4-Plex
- Carriage House
- 6-Plex

FIGURE 85: Madison Street Site Plan — Option 1

APPROACH — No Zoning Adjustments

Option 1 illustrates what is possible if housing development occurred on the site using existing lot configurations and existing zoning code regulations.

Lot Configuration: Maintain existing lot lines and lot configuration.
Access to detached and attached garages is provided from the street.

Zoning Code: Use current lot size requirements (width, area, etc.).
Use current requirements for building type and number of units on each lot.

Green Space: The existing daycare playground remains on the southeast corner of the site.

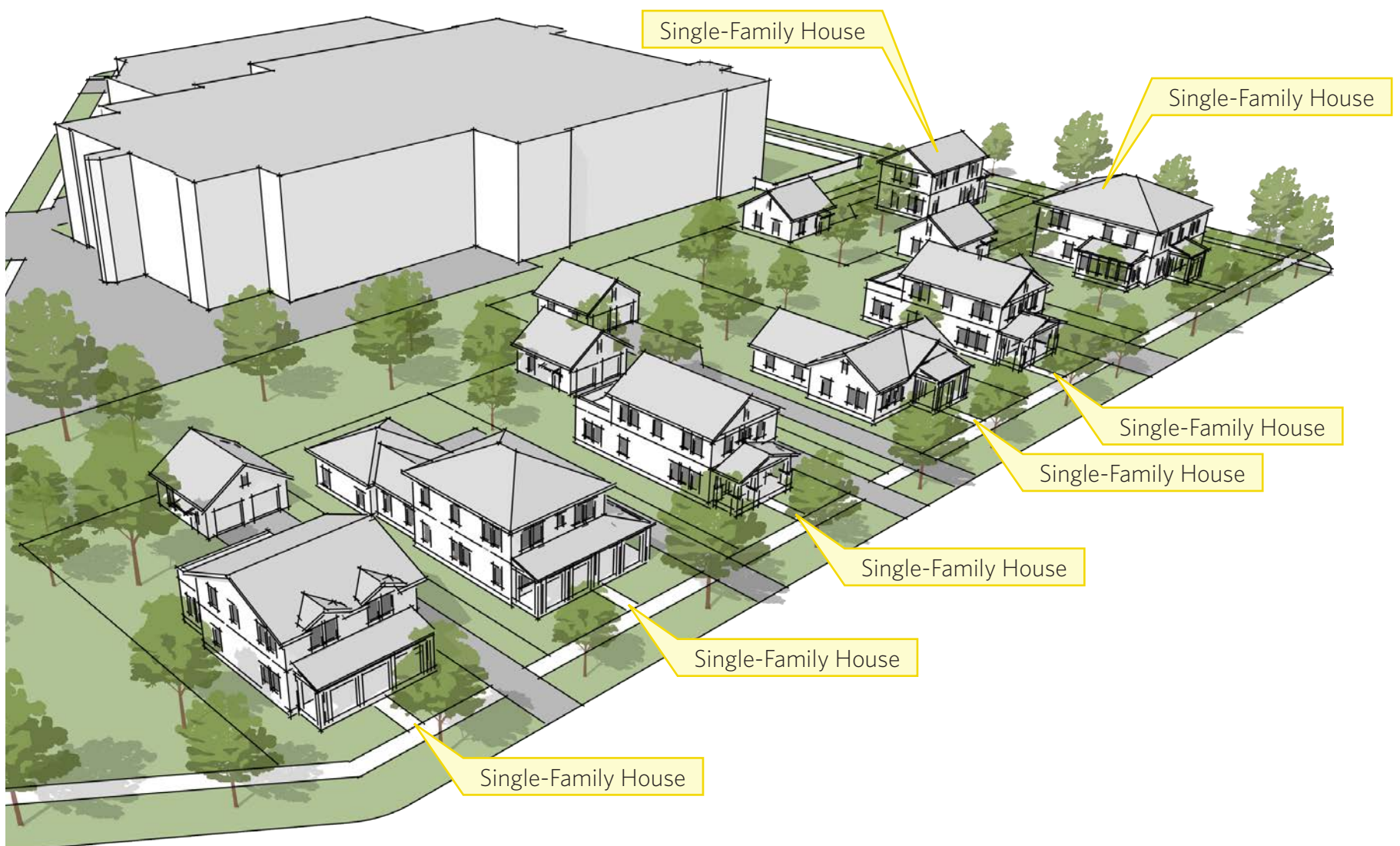


FIGURE 86: Madison Street Site Model — Option 1
View from the southeast corner of the site looking northwest.

MADISON STREET SITE ILLUSTRATION — OPTION 2



KEY DATA

TOTAL LOTS 7

TOTAL UNITS 19

VARIETY OF UNIT SIZES

- 1-Bed (580-700sf)
- 2-Bed (750-1150sf)
- 3-Bed (2000sf)
- 4-Bed (2400sf)

SUPPORTS

- Homeownership
- Rental

KEY:

- Existing Buildings
- Duplex
- Single-Family
- 4-Plex
- Carriage House
- 6-Plex

FIGURE 87: Madison Street Site Plan — Option 2

APPROACH — Minor Adjustments

Option 2 illustrates how reconfiguring the lots and allowing a greater variety of building types can provide for neighborhood infill that yields a greater number and diversity of housing types while still maintaining the scale and character of the existing neighborhood.

- Lot Configuration:** Modify existing lot lines to create a more standard configuration of lots.
Create a new alley right-of-way at the rear of the lots to provide access to both detached and attached garages.
- Zoning Code:** Use current lot size requirements (width, area, etc.).
Update code to allow for a greater variety of building types and number of units on each lot.
- Green Space:** The existing daycare playground is relocated to the northeast lawn of the La Porte Community School Corporation building.
A new public park is provided on the southeast corner of the site.

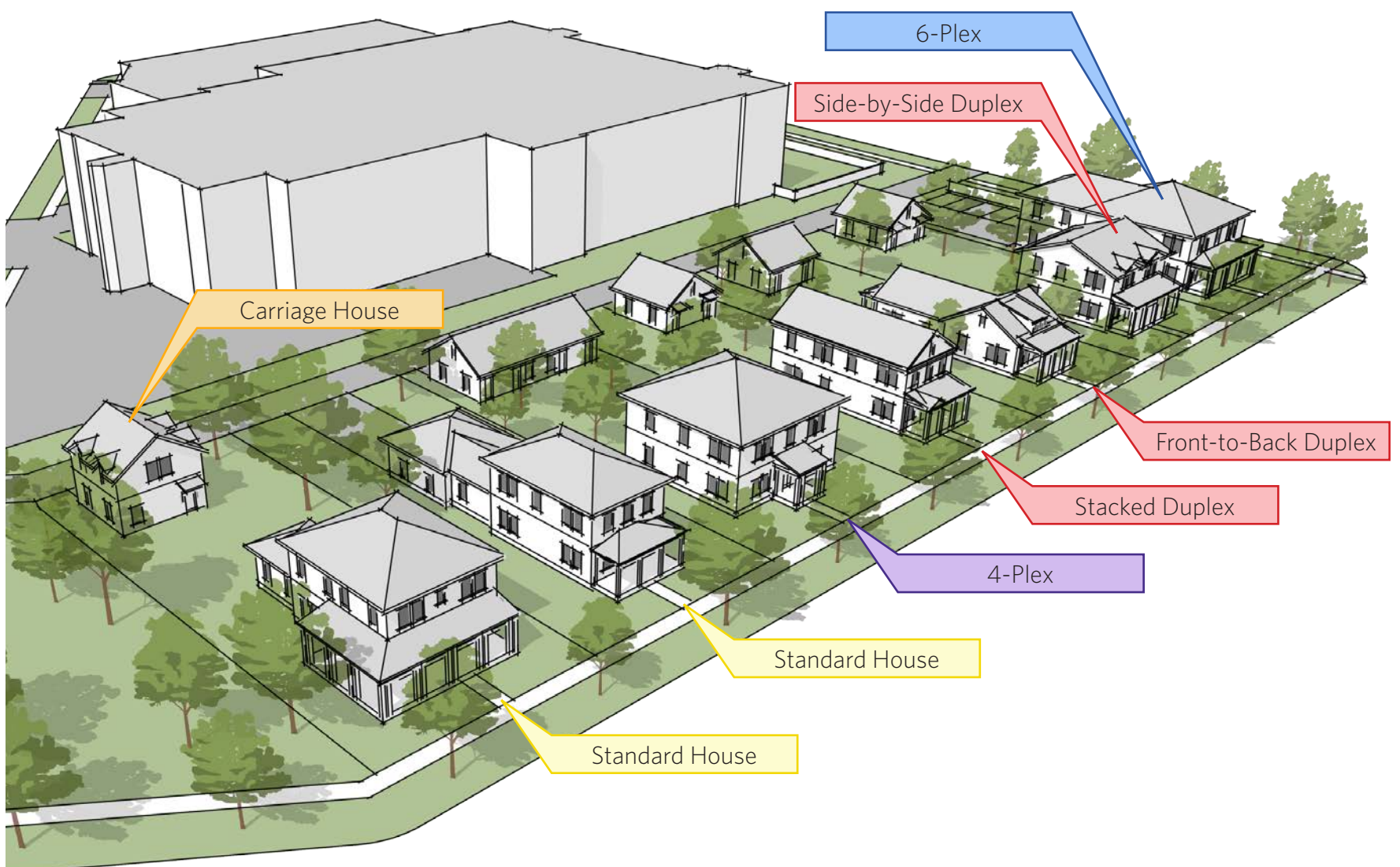


FIGURE 88: Madison Street Site Model — Option 2
View from the southeast corner of the site looking northwest.

MADISON STREET SITE ILLUSTRATION — OPTION 3



KEY DATA

TOTAL LOTS	7
TOTAL UNITS	24
VARIETY OF UNIT SIZES	1-Bed (580-700sf) 2-Bed (750-1150sf) 3-Bed (2000sf) 4-Bed (2400sf)
SUPPORTS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Homeownership <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rental

KEY:

 Existing Buildings	 Duplex
 Single-Family	 4-Plex
 Carriage House	 6-Plex

FIGURE 89: Madison Street Site Plan — Option 3

APPROACH — Further Adjustments

Option 3 illustrates how reconfiguring the lots, allowing a greater variety of building types, and reducing the minimum lot size can provide for neighborhood infill that yields an even greater number and diversity of housing types while still maintaining the scale and character of the existing neighborhood.

Lot Configuration: Modify existing lot lines to create a more standard configuration of lots. Create a new alley right-of-way at the rear of the lots to provide access to both detached and attached garages.

Zoning Code: Update code to allow for smaller minimum lot size requirements (width, area, etc.). Update code to allow for a greater variety of building types and number of units on each lot.

Green Space: The existing daycare playground is relocated to the northeast lawn of the La Porte Community School Corporation building. A new public park is provided on the southeast corner of the site.

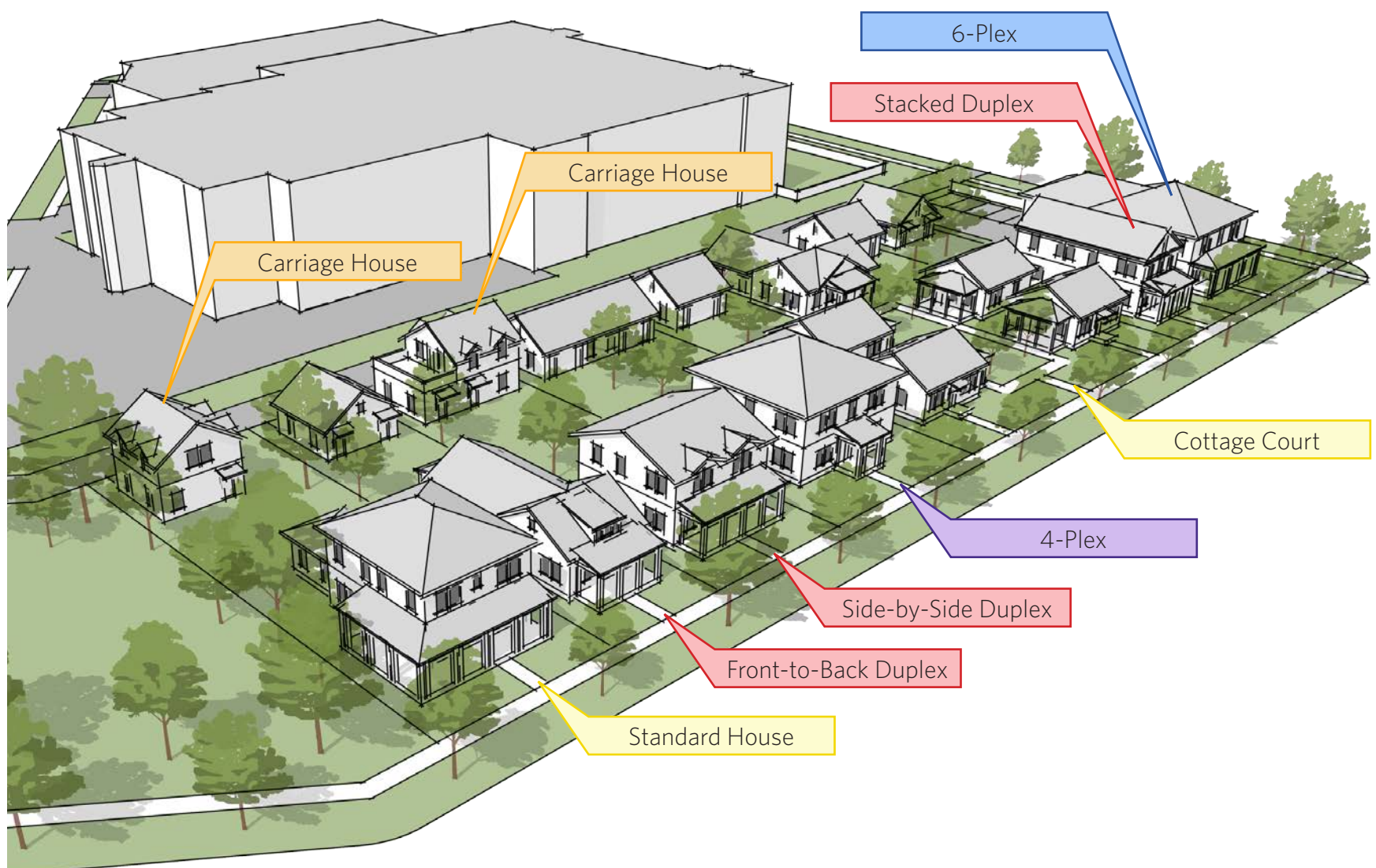


FIGURE 90: Madison Street Site Model — Option 3
View from the southeast corner of the site looking northwest.

ZONING & REGULATING CODE

Initial housing studies confirm that La Porte needs a greater variety of housing options to provide for both current and future households of diverse sizes and income levels. As seen from the Missing Middle building types and the housing case studies described within this section, a greater number and diversity of housing units can be provided through the reintroduction of Missing Middle housing types within La Porte’s downtown and in-town neighborhoods.

Though the reintroduction of these types seems an obvious path forward, La Porte’s existing zoning code does not allow for a diversity of housing options in its downtown and in-town neighborhoods. We conducted an initial audit of the existing code to begin to understand what will need to change in the existing code to allow for this variety of housing options.

The following is an initial summary of the zoning code audit. It identifies several regulations that will need to be modified to allow for a diversity of neighborhood-scale house types to be developed. This excerpt specifically looks at the R1C zone, within which the Madison Street site is located.

KEY FINDINGS (KF) & RECOMMENDATIONS (R)

- KF Existing code prohibits middle-scale housing**
The existing zoning code does not allow the development of middle-scale housing in several La Porte’s in-town neighborhoods.
- R Align Zoning Code with Housing Goals**
Complete a full audit of the existing zoning code to determine which regulations conflict with La Porte’s housing goals.
- R Update Existing Zoning Code**
Update and/or rewrite the existing zoning code to allow for a greater variety of housing options.

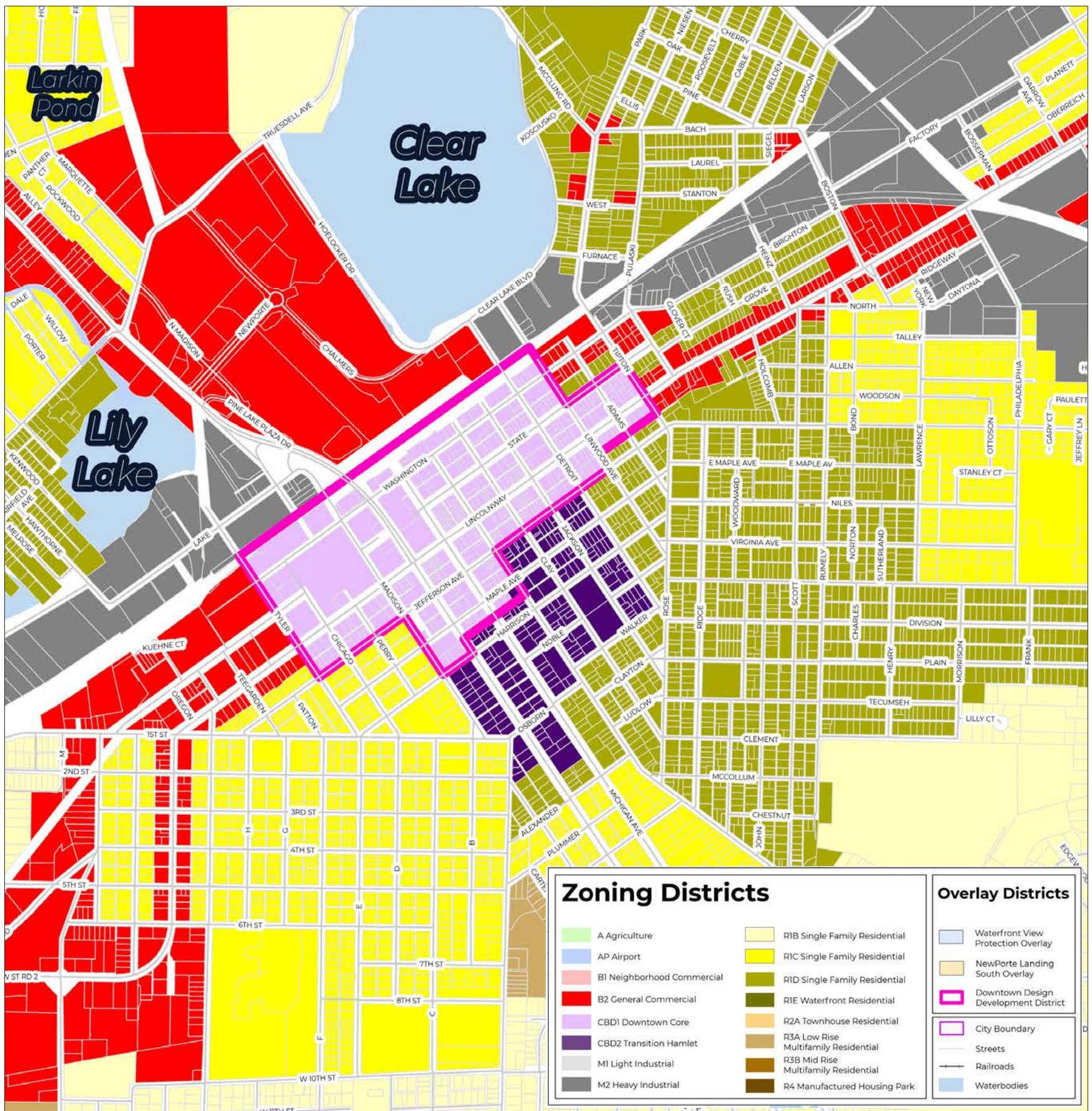


FIGURE 91: City of La Porte Zoning Map

The existing zoning map identifies where each zoning district is located. The La Porte Community School Corporation site is currently located within the R1C zone.

Use	RIA	RIB	R1C	R1D	R1E	Use Requirements
Residential limited to the following:						
Single-family detached dwellings	P	P	P	P	P	14.01(a)
Two-family dwellings	-	-	-	P	-	14.01(a)
Home occupations	P	P	P	P	P	14.01(b)
Agriculture and animal-related uses limited to the following:						
Agriculture	P	P	-	-	-	
Community Gardens	P	P	P	P	P	14.02 (f)
Keeping of horses and livestock	P	P	P	P	-	14.02(c)
Retail trade and Services limited to the following:						
Planned neighborhood shopping centers	-	-	S	S	-	14.03(c)
Accommodation and food services limited to the following:						
Bed & breakfasts	S	S	S	S	S	14.06(a)
Health care and social assistance limited to the following:						
Day care centers, commercial	S	S	S	S	S	14.08(a)
Day care homes, residential licensed for 12 or fewer children	P	P	P	P	P	

FIGURE 92: City of La Porte Joint Zoning Ordinance — Schedule of Permitted Uses for Buildings in Residential Districts

District (a)	(b)	Min. lot size (h)		Max. res. density (dwellings/ac.)
		Lot area (sq. ft.) (c)(d)	Lot width (ft.)(d)(e)(f)(g)	
R1A - Single family residential (h)	Individual septic	24,000	120	1.8
	Community sewer or cluster system	15,000	90	2.9
R1B - Single family residential (h)	Individual septic	24,000	100	1.8
	Community sewer or cluster system	10,000	100	4.4
R1C - Single family residential	Community sewer or cluster system required	7,200	60	6.1
R1D - Single family residential	Community sewer required	5,000	50	8.7
R1E - Waterfront residential	Community sewer required	5,000	50	8.7

FIGURE 93: City of La Porte Joint Zoning Ordinance — Schedule of Lot Area and Width Requirements in Residential Districts

Planned Unit Development		Article 25
(d)	Height Limitations. The maximum height of detached accessory buildings shall be one (1) story and 18 feet. Attic storage shall be permitted, provided the space shall only be utilized for storage. For residential lots located in the A1 and A2 agriculture districts, the maximum height of accessory buildings shall be the same as permitted for principal buildings.	
(e)	Use. Accessory buildings shall not be occupied for dwelling purposes. Accessory buildings shall not have plumbing for sewer or water.	

FIGURE 94: City of La Porte Joint Zoning Ordinance — Article 16 Governing Accessory Buildings, Structures, and Uses

Residential	
Single-family detached dwellings, two-family dwellings, single-family attached/townhouses	2 spaces per dwelling
Multiple-family dwellings	2 spaces per dwelling in county 1.5 spaces per dwelling in cities
Dwelling units for watchmen and operating personnel and their families	1.5 spaces per dwelling

FIGURE 95: City of La Porte Joint Zoning Ordinance — Schedule of Required Off-Street Parking Spaces for Residential Buildings

BUILDING USES

Currently, the R1C district only allows detached single-family dwellings by right. This effectively eliminates any middle-scale housing from being built in these districts even though examples of this type of housing already exist in neighborhoods in and around downtown La Porte. This also means that design Option 2 and Option 3 for the School Site illustrated above are not allowed to be developed by right. Consider allowing duplexes, apartment houses, and cottage courts, particularly in those R1C and R1D districts in and around downtown La Porte.

LEGEND

P : Permitted Use (by right)

S : Special Exception Use (by review & approval)

- : Not Permitted

MINIMUM LOT REQUIREMENTS

The R1C district has a current minimal lot width of 60 feet and minimum lot area of 7,200 square feet. Therefore, lots that are 60 feet wide must have a minimum depth of 120 feet. That said, some existing lots within R1C neighborhoods are narrower than 60 feet. Consider changing the minimum lot width of 35-40 feet. In lieu of having a minimum lot area, consider having a minimum lot depth (e.g., a minimum of 60 feet).

Consider making use of a Planned Development District to handle zoning flexibility for planned sites such as the Scott Field Site. Another useful tool in older, established areas of cities, such as the near downtown neighborhood, is the use of the Neighborhood Conservation District zoning concept, where all existing lots are considered legal as they exist today, and setbacks can be based upon the averages of houses on the same block.

ACCESSORY UNITS

Accessory buildings are currently allowed, but they are not permitted to contain dwelling units. This consequently prohibits Carriage House building types. In addition, accessory buildings are limited in height to one story and 18 feet. This prohibits the typical two-story carriage houses with a dwelling unit above a 2-car garage. We recommend that accessory structures be allowed to contain dwelling units and that their height be limited to less than the height of the primary structure on the lot or 24 feet, whichever is greater.

PARKING REQUIREMENTS

Streets within R1C neighborhoods are typically wide enough to accommodate on-street parking. Therefore, consider significantly reducing or eliminating any off-street parking requirements for this district and others. For example, a lot that is 40 feet wide can accommodate up to two on-street parking spaces along the front of the lot. Moreover, corner lots that are 40 feet wide and 150 feet deep can accommodate up to nine on-street parking spaces.

If off-street parking requirements will remain, allow nearby on-street parking to contribute to/meet the requirement.





PART 7: OPEN SPACE & URBAN LANDSCAPE

OPEN SPACE & URBAN
LANDSCAPE OVERVIEW

HARDSCAPE & PLANTING
DETAILS

OPEN SPACE & URBAN LANDSCAPE OVERVIEW

The transformation of the public realm in downtown La Porte offers opportunities for pedestrians to engage in a greener, more natural park environment while engaging with the historic character of the built environment. Streets will become an integral part of a network linking existing parks and downtown destinations into a seamless landscape framework.

Successful urban landscape is considered on three layers:

1. The overall citywide strategy
2. Tree specification
3. Hardscape and planting details

Urban landscaping is one of the strongest ways to make connections through a city. Tree-lined streets provide shade, create corridors of movement, and reinforce parks to provide protected places to gather. Safe streets are enabled by, and enable, a comprehensive landscaping approach. On a broad scale, the proposed design interventions identify a network of moments that will draw activity through the entire city, while also providing concrete suggestions for engaging the public realm at specific locations.

City-Wide Landscape Urbanism Strategy

Key elements of the citywide landscape urbanism strategy include:

- **Greening of the Core** — Softening hard edges and adding nature to the central core of downtown La Porte. Bringing nature to the city; emphasizing the public realm with tree-lined streets.
- **Streets as Parks** — Providing enhanced mobility and livability through the application of landscape techniques to create a green network of connectivity. Streets as linear gardens.
- **Enhancing the Parks** — Enhancing programming and activation and creating a network of parks that are complementary, flexible, and are more sustainable.
- **Placemaking** — Formalizing public spaces as destinations and defining this network in a new way that reflects La Porte's culture.
- **Redefining the Core** — Creating a new central public square will endow La Porte with a unique destination that centers the community and provide a place for residents to engage with each other.

STREET TREE SPECIFICATIONS

The presence of nature in the city provides rich psychological and practical benefits. Street trees contribute to the quality of the public realm by moderating the heat island effect produced by streets; they encourage walkability on urban sidewalks and produce a landscape continuity from the edge of the street to the front yards of houses and other buildings. The form of each street is characterized by its own unique streetscape. The shape and particular horticultural characteristics of trees are the key ingredient in differentiating the form of one streetscape from another. Street trees are chosen and planted in patterns that provide streets with a unique identity and a sense of composed ensemble. The correct planting of trees and their relationship to the hardscape around them is a major factor in ensuring that street trees thrive over time.

Tree Canopy

Enhancing the tree canopy is vital to creating healthy cities and promoting wellness.

The aim of urban trees is to provide a continuous high canopy and, when the street has been successfully narrowed, to provide an arch of branches across the asphalt. This canopy layer gives the look of a prosperous and beautiful neighborhood in its varied seasonal dress, a demonstration of care that brings in families and children to the society of the sidewalks. Tall, canopied trees mitigate summer heat at a time of increased warming and moderate glare and gusts in winter. A canopy also provides year-round privacy for upper stories, as even bare branches provide psychological space.

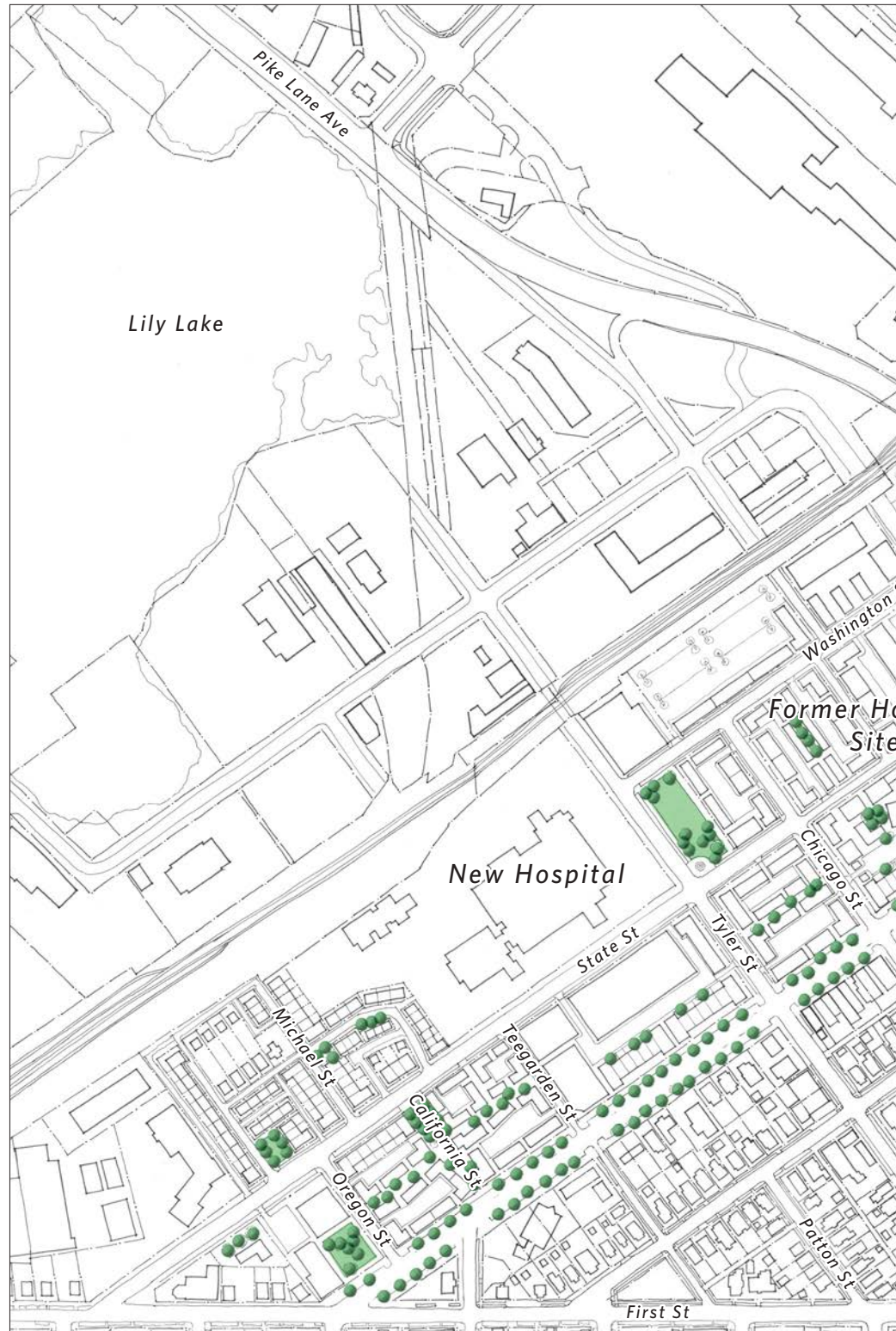


FIGURE 96: Open Space Plan of La Porte, IN

This vertical landscape “meets” the vertical building and requires only a small horizontal landscape. But this part is vital for the investment to produce the desired result. To avoid losing the tree investment within a generation, it is important to modify current practices. One essential modification is to provide a deeply ditched and amended planting strip. The life and health of a tree is in its roots — and so is its death or stunting.

Planting Palette

The planting palettes include specifications for canopy trees, understory trees, and ground plane plantings. Large canopy trees coupled with understory trees provide habitats at different levels, adding diversity to urban ecosystems.

To achieve the important objective of a mature canopy of street trees in downtown La Porte, the urban trees list must be tested and further developed by field checking successful mature group survival in the streets of the climactic region. Field observation must supersede all other sources of information. Concentrate on floodplain trees that grow as “single stands” or in ecological communities so that roots may graft, lending support and developing defenses as a single unit. Interspersing different species leads to unit defenselessness. This can be observed in local planning strips where only congruent clusters prosper.



HARDSCAPE & PLANTING DETAILS

The lifespan and health of a street tree will depend on how it is planted. Beware that conventional practices very often will stunt the growth and limit the longevity of a tree. Investing in best practices up front, while carrying a higher initial expense, will pay dividends in the long run through a large mature tree canopy's contribution to the public realm and through minimizing the frequent need to replace dead trees. Longevity of the tree depends on care and consideration for many factors, especially the ability of the root structure to connect into a continuous root zone below grade.

Planting Ditches

Tree balls should be subsurface, as they always have been. Perched root balls on top of compacted or badly drained planting strips often fail after the first year. In this regard, do not accept any tree with a root ball that was not root pruned before one growing season and that has not been kept continuously humid during transport. These details should be added to the standard contract. A lot can go wrong.

Planting preparations must be modified to ensure root grafting by ditching all new and compacted planting strips three feet deep and replacing the backfill with a mixture of one-third coarse sand (not mason's sand) at the bottom, shading to one-third fully composted organic material or topsoil toward the top. Backfill and amendment must be well mixed. The use of any form of peat or black swamp soil would be disastrous, as it would rob the planting ditch of nitrogen after the first year. Mixing with genuine topsoil is acceptable. Remember to inoculate the mix with commercial fungi additives or merely by adding local well-rotted leaves from a healthy natural tree stand.

Relatively uncompacted pre-existing planting strips (or sections thereof) may only require surface de-compaction. Use the same mix of sand and compost in the hand or rototill. Grass seed (or other short ground cover in grated planting holes) is always necessary to avoid surface hydrological impermeability.

In all cases, the volume directly underneath the planted root ball should be either the original soil or well compacted so as to support the tree.

These practices redirect investment into the preparation of the soil with a care that matches other investments in the hardscape. But beware of default settings! Practices and decisions in the landscape industry are overwhelmingly driven by short-term financial considerations.

Hardscape and Roots

Using the same mix of coarse sand and full compost under sidewalks adjacent to planting holes is an inexpensive way to connect roots to setbacks and dooryards. This tactic explains the happy existence of large trees in old towns. Compact the sand and compost under the brick, cobble, or sidewalk pores, as it will take years for the roots to replace the organic matter.

Adjacent sidewalks should be fiberglass-reinforced with wire mesh and rebar held two-thirds of the way up during the pour, a position aimed at flexibly containing root pressure from below. Inexpensive wholesale industrial filter cloth can be used to line the planting strip or serve as the base for the concrete pour and cobbled or bricked planting strips. Using these materials is the low-tech way to achieve the same root constraint that much more expensive materials achieve, but it requires crews that are experienced in judgment. It's possible to use the same technique to connect grated tree-planting holes, but this requires special coordination to allow oxygenation and water; trees in Paris are planted with simple air tubes and traditionally have deliberate drip leaks provided for them behind the curb.

Root Zone Soils

Expanded root zone soils allow street trees to reach a mature size. We recommend providing continuous root zone soils linking individual tree plantings. Use of new technologies such as Silva Cells or similar products to gain additional root zone soil volume will provide proper aeration and moisture to maximize tree growth.

Stormwater

In areas where water collection and flooding occur, stormwater tree planters can be used to collect and cleanse stormwater from streets and sidewalks. Using this technique, 40 percent — and in some cases 100 percent — of runoff can be captured using this streetscape typology. Porous pavers can also be added to sidewalks and parking lanes to further capture stormwater.

Planting Techniques

Two types of details can be used for street tree plantings:

Flush Tree Planting Islands: Using tree grates or ground plane plantings. The use of tree grates should be limited to intensely used streets. If tree grates are not used, ground plane plantings can be protected with low fencing or careful placement of street furnishings.

Curb Planters: Providing a landscape curb around street tree planting zones helps control foot traffic and protect ground plane plantings, thereby reducing root zone compaction. When this technique is used, the edge along the street curb should allow for a minimum 18-inch paved splash strip that provides pedestrian access and protects the plantings from salt spray during the winter. This technique has been proven to enhance tree growth and survivability.

For each type of planting, the above-mentioned enhanced root-zone-soils zone methods will improve the survivability and growth of the trees so that they will reach a maturity that provides enough canopy to reduce the urban heat zones.

Splash Strips

Salt spray from parking cars will damage a tree. Install a splash strip, 18-inch minimum, between the edge of the tree opening and the curb. This protects the tree from salt and it will provide a solid surface for people to stand on while entering and exiting parked cars.

RECOMMENDATIONS (R)

R

Tree Roots Must Connect for the Tree to Mature

The root structure of the tree must connect into an interwoven network in order for the trees to survive until maturity.

R

Soil Cells Allow Roots to Connect Below Ground

Soil cells allow tree roots to connect between trees. Verify the warranty before purchasing.

R

Lower-Cost Alternatives to Soil Cells

Soil cells may be cost prohibitive to use in all cases. A lower-cost alternative strategy is to dig a continuous ditch between trees and edge with industrial filter cloth. Backfill with a mix of fully composted compost and coarse sand. Bridge between the trees with a 5-inch structural sidewalk with rebar and mesh set high, not low, over the uncompacted compost combination.

R

Protect Streets from Salt with an 18-Inch Splash Strip

Install a splash strip, minimum of 18 inches, between the tree well and curb to protect the tree from salt spray as cars park, as well as to provide a place for people to stand as they enter and exit their cars.

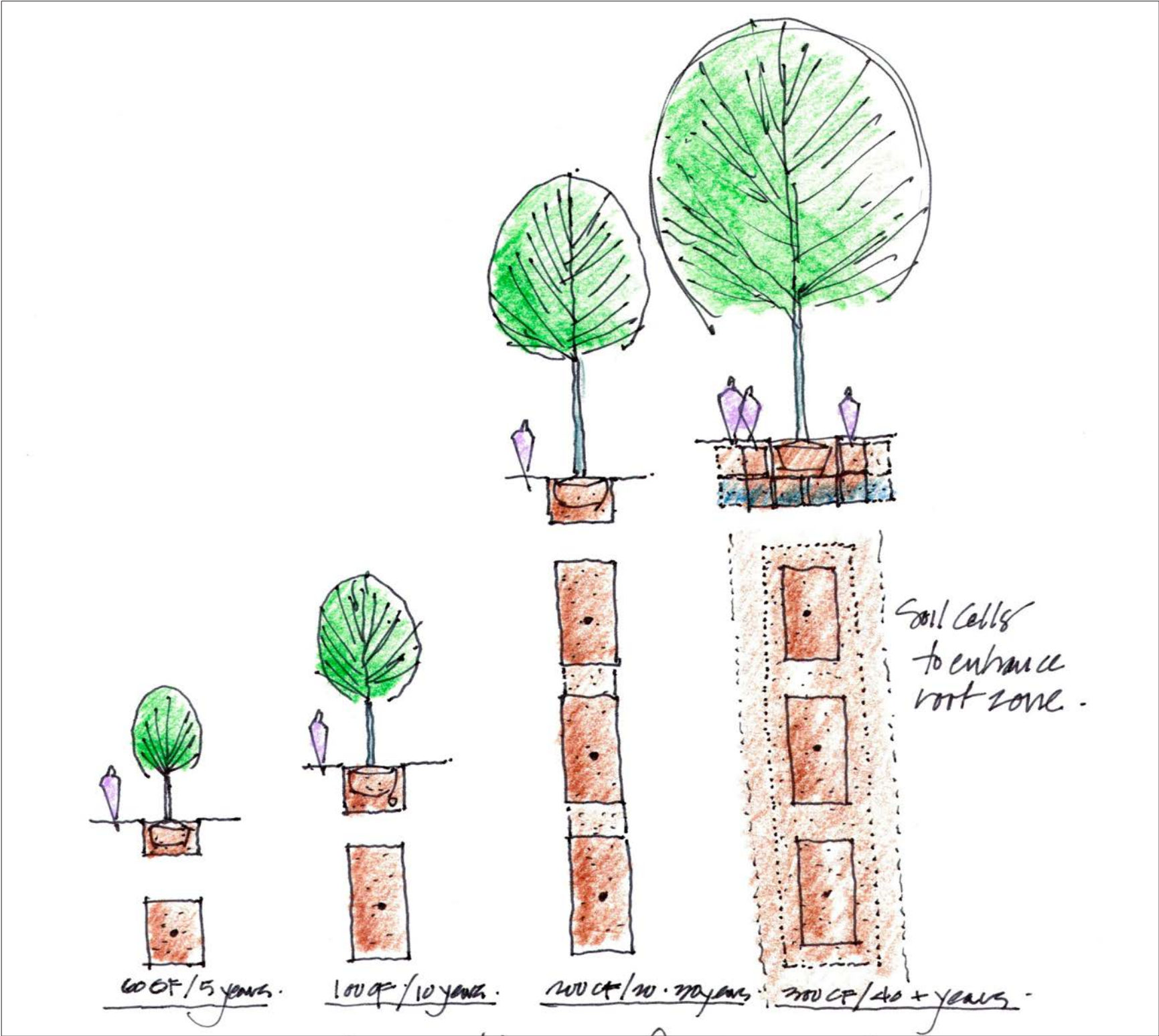


FIGURE 97: Tree Longevity Related to Root Structure

Trees planted in isolated tree holes will have stunted growth and a short life. Larger ditches and greater connectivity between tree roots will result in the highest return on investment in terms of lifespan, size at maturity, and contribution to the public realm.

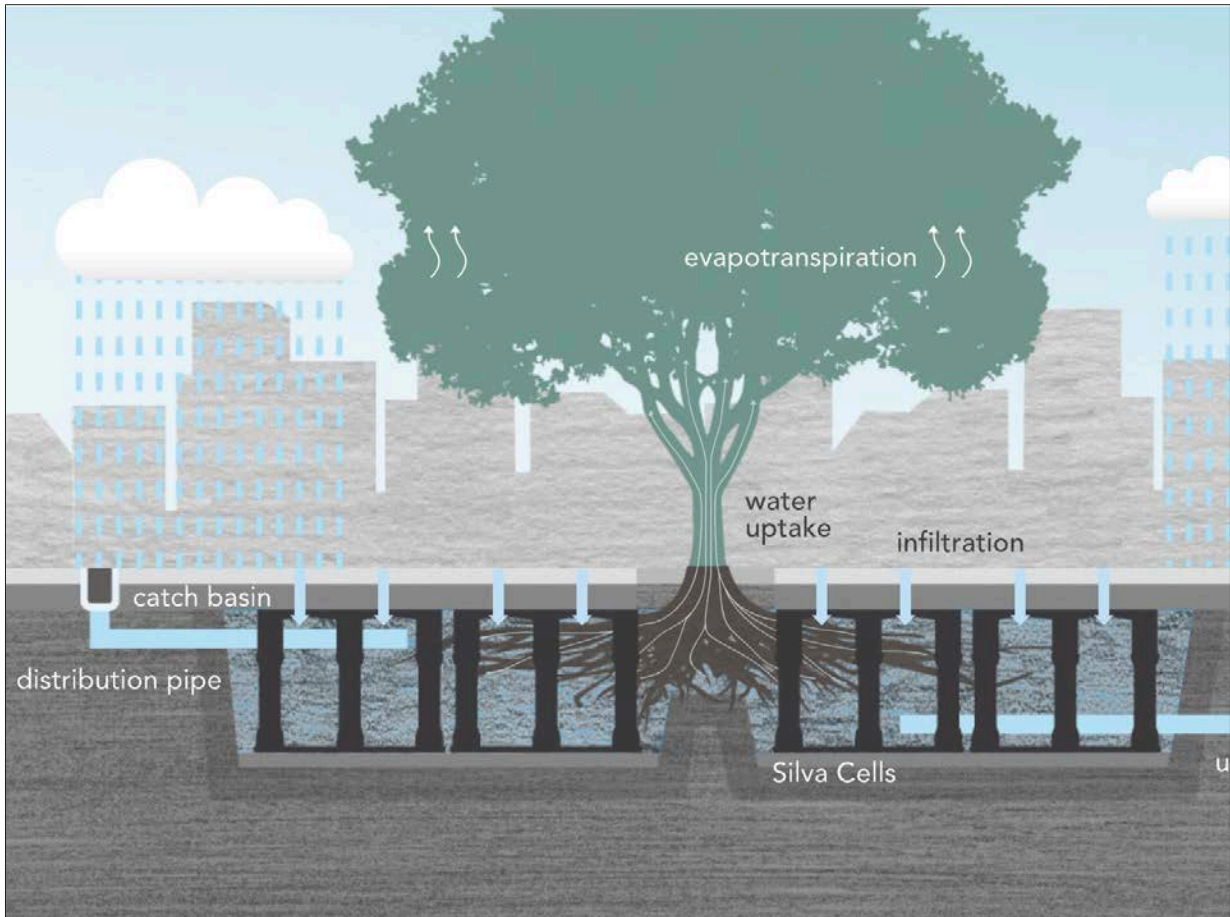


FIGURE 98: Soil Cell Examples — Tree Root Structure

Soil cells hold back the earth and allow the tree root structure to connect into an interwoven network that supports larger tree growth and contributes to the city's stormwater management system. Images courtesy of DeepRoot Silva Cell

FIGURE 99: Street Tree Planting Details with Structural Sidewalk — Plan

Plan view with structural sidewalk allowing root zone. Note the tree wells are set 18 inches away from the curb to protect trees from salt spray and to provide a place for people to stand when entering and exiting parked cars. Sidewalk material changes between trees. Trees are surrounded by plantings and ground coverings.

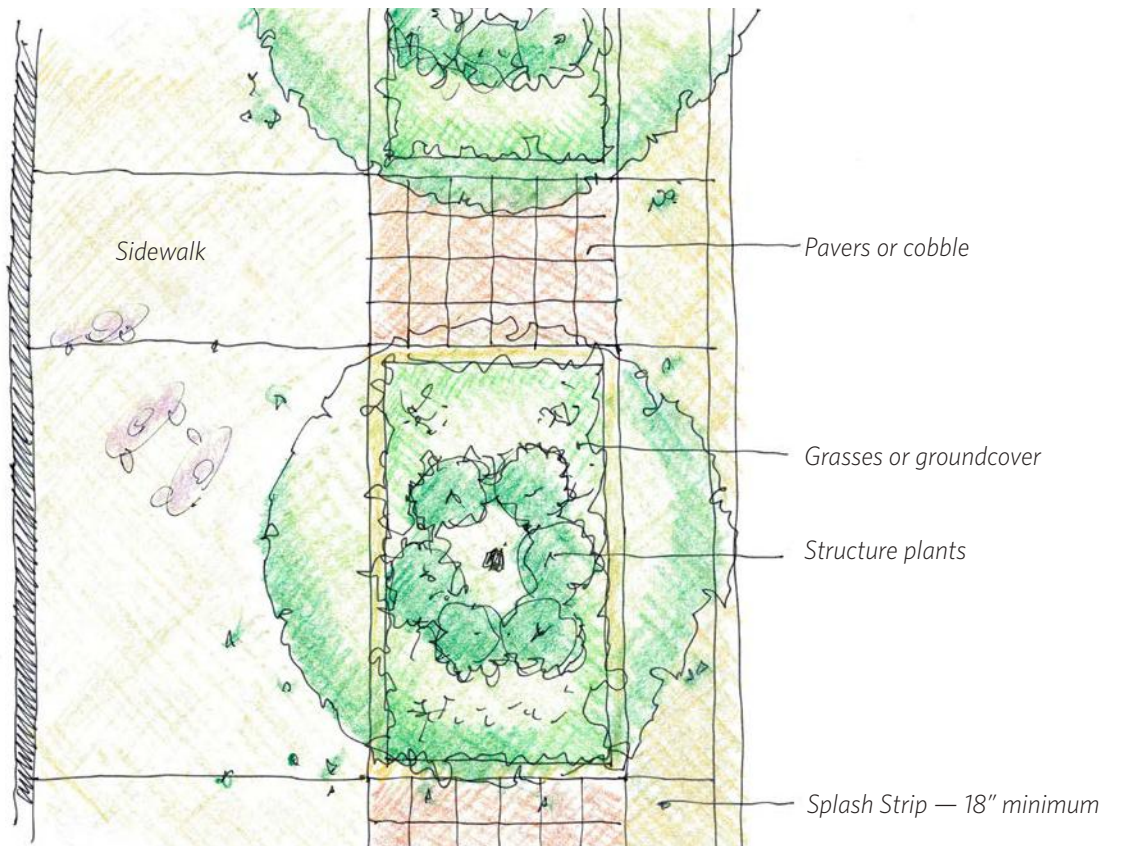


FIGURE 100: Street Tree Planting Details with Soil Cells — Plan

Soil cells facilitate root structures between trees. In urban conditions, pair them with tree grates. Continue to set tree wells back 18 inches from the curb to protect trees from salt spray. Use benches and urban landscape features to enhance engagement with the public realm.

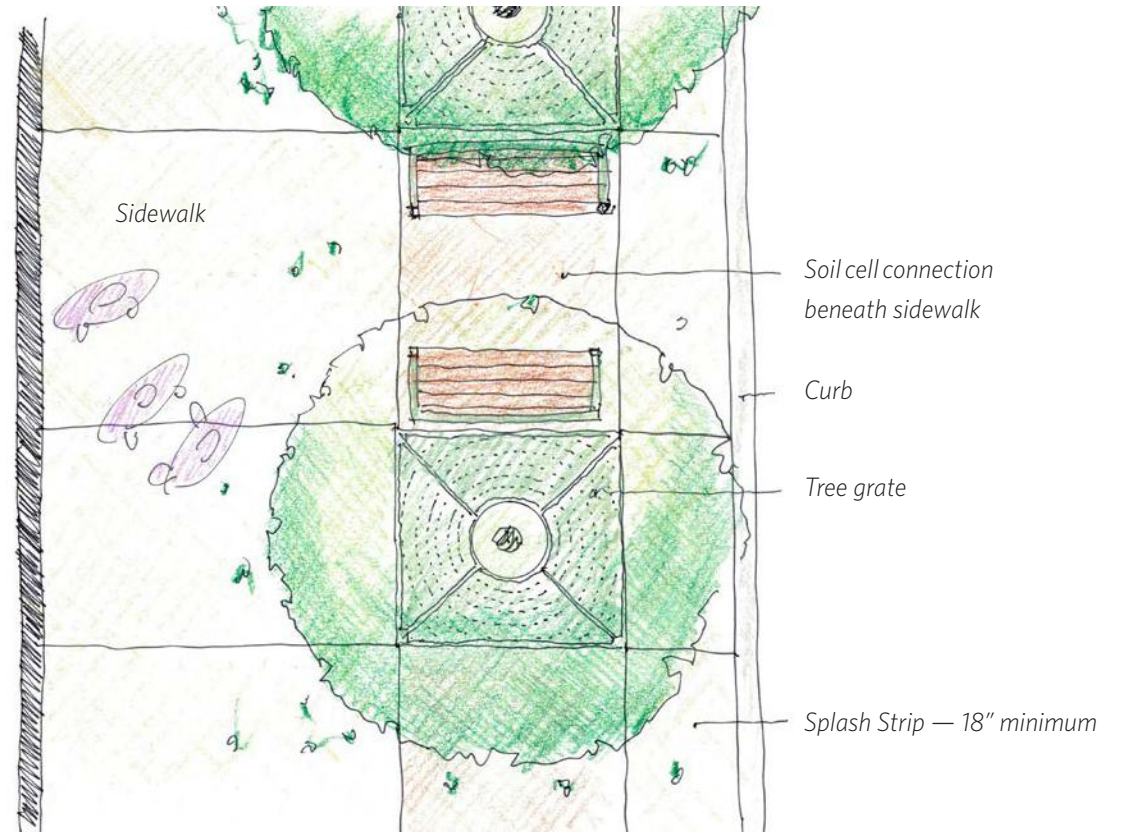


FIGURE 101: Street Tree Planting Details with Soil Cells & Bump-Outs — Plan

Bump-outs into the street provide additional sidewalk area for outdoor dining and seating. The example illustrates the bump-out paired with a soil cell system. Tree wells remain set back 18 inches from the street to protect trees from salt spray. In this example, ground cover is shown covering the tree well area. Due to cost, tree grates are typically reserved for the most urban conditions. Ground cover, as shown, is used in all other areas.



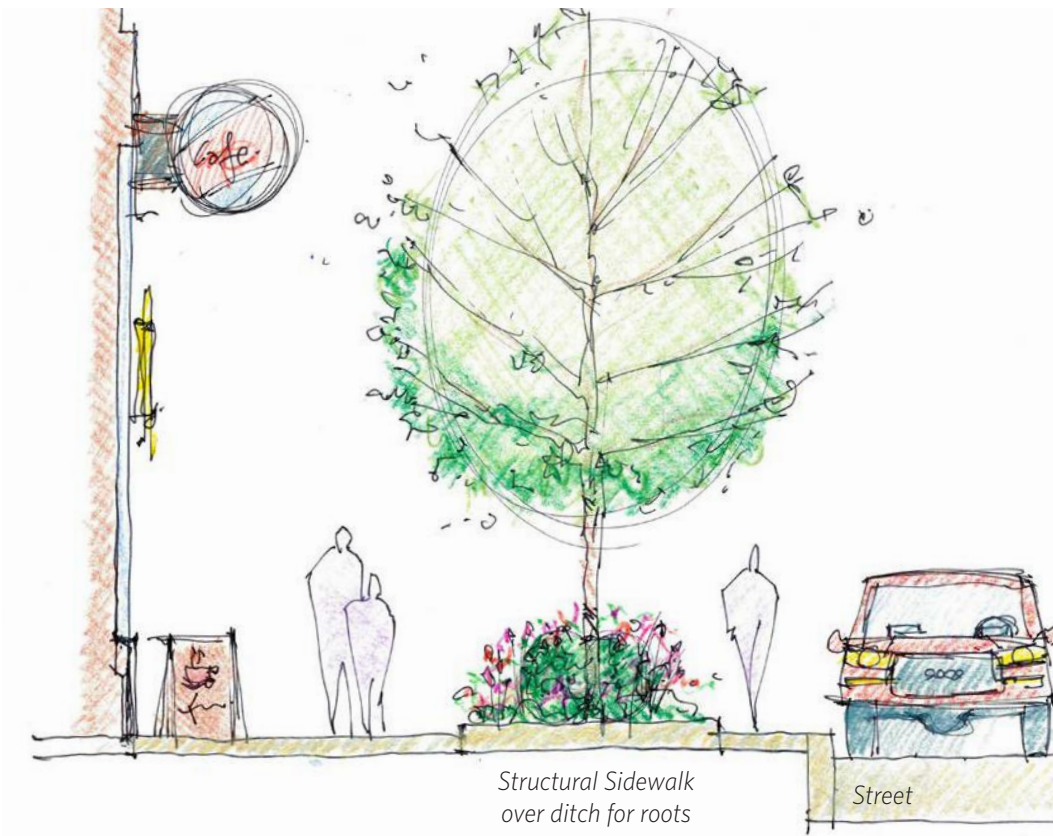


FIGURE 102: Street Tree Planting Details with Structural Sidewalk — Section

Section view with structural sidewalk allowing root zone. Dig a continuous ditch between trees and edge with industrial filter cloth. Backfill with a mix of fully composted compost and coarse sand. Bridge between the trees with a 5" structural sidewalk with rebar and mesh set high, not low, over the uncompacted compost combination.

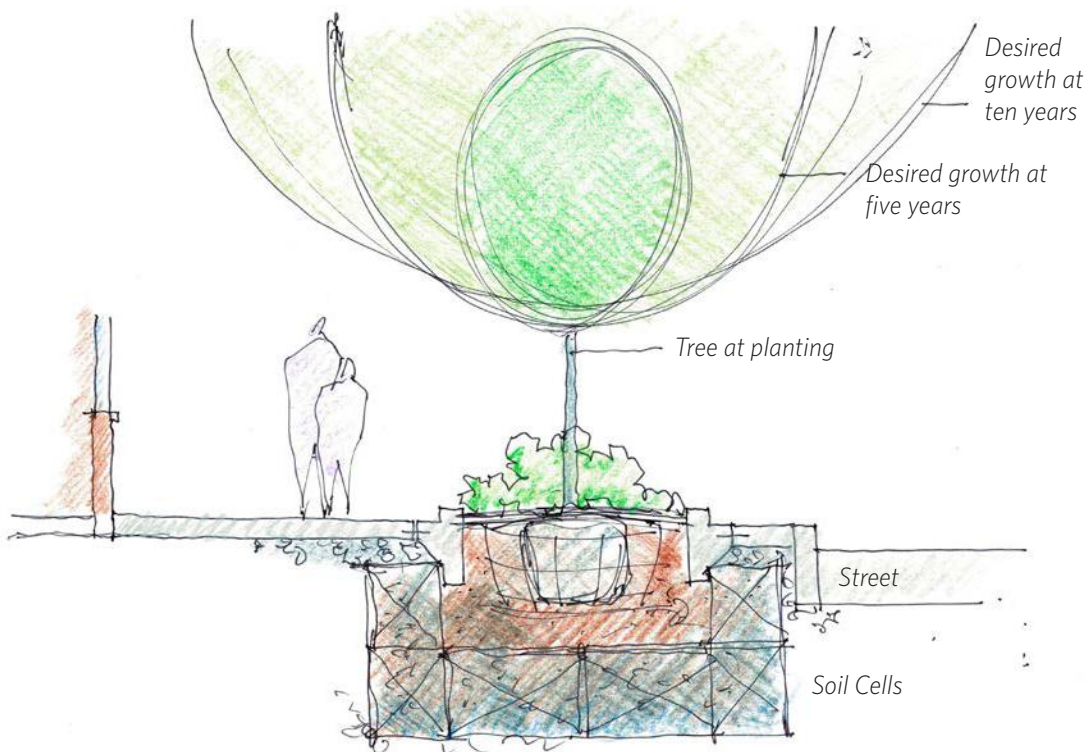


FIGURE 103: Street Tree Planting Details with Soil Cells — Section

Soil cells protect the root structure as it grows and allows a root system to become intertwined between adjacent trees; refer to pages 102-103 for more details. The size of the root ball will depend on the species and maturity of the tree. The potential for growth over time will depend on how the tree is planted. This image shows a progression of healthy growth by maturity.

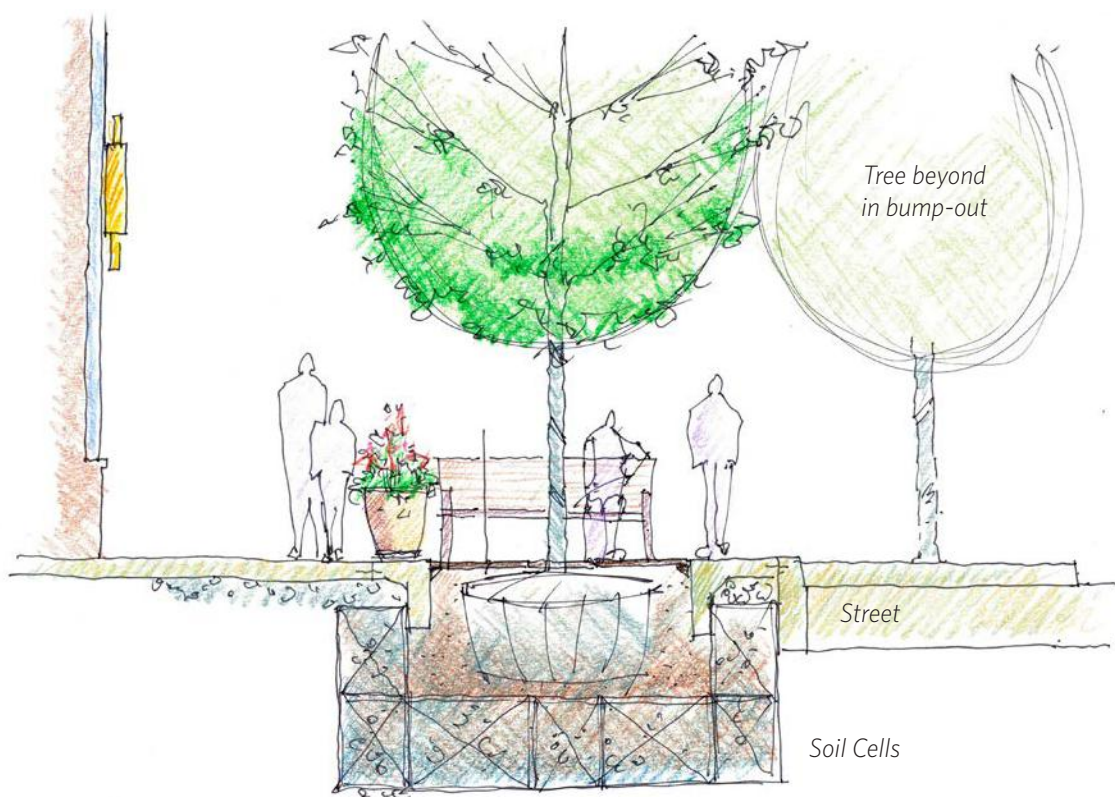
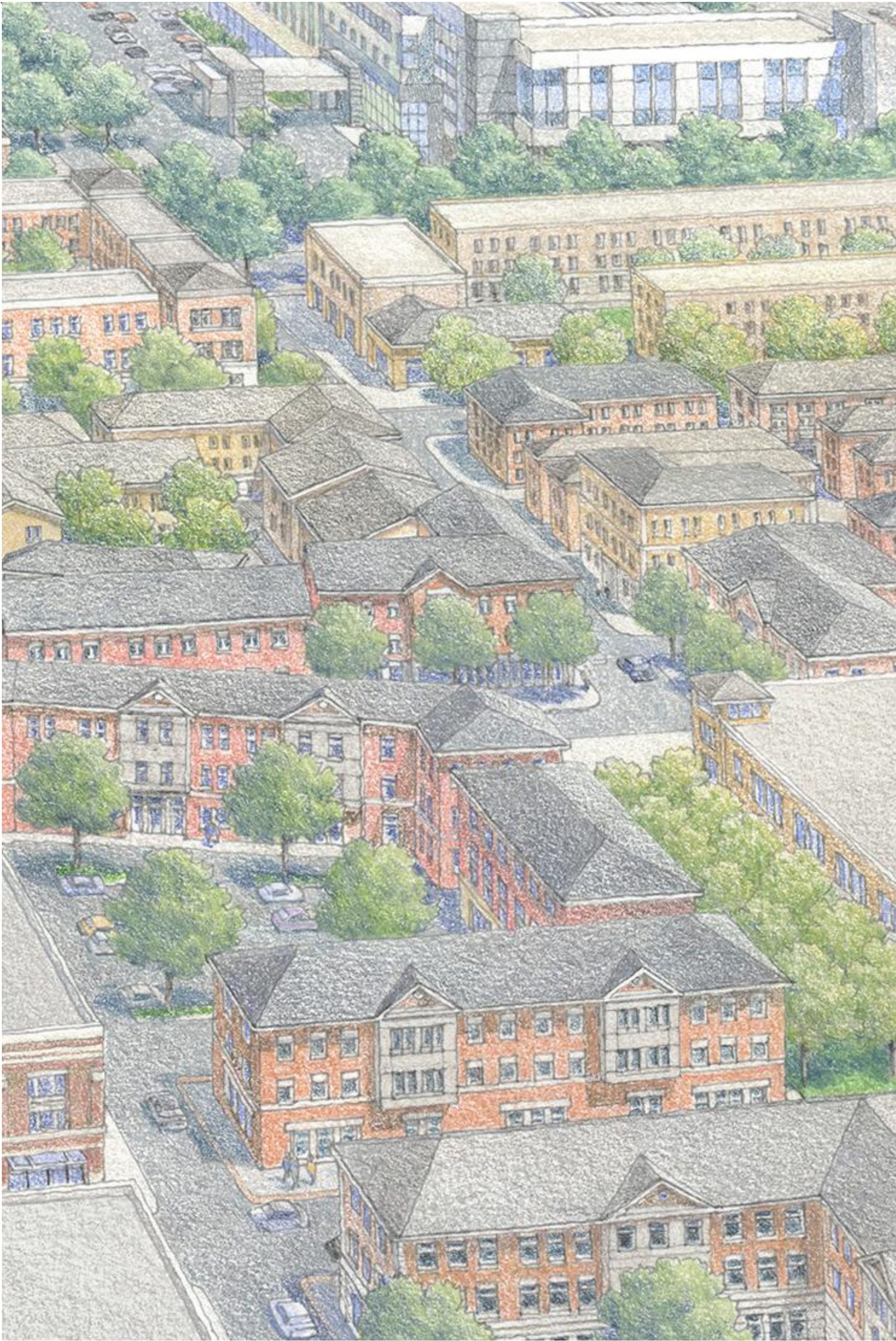


FIGURE 104: Street Tree Planting Details with Soil Cells & Bump-Outs — Section B

Create the largest tree well possible within budget considerations and available sidewalk depth to give the tree the longest lifespan. This illustration also shows tree bump-outs that extend into the street between on-street parking. Tree bump-outs can be paired with multiple forms of tree planting details.





PART 8: IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY & NEXT STEPS

IMPLEMENTATION & NEXT STEPS

IMPLEMENTATION & NEXT STEPS

La Porte is a city of great opportunity. The intact historic fabric and serene lakes create an ideal setting to attract new growth and investment. The strong leadership of the mayor, elected officials, and City of La Porte staff, paired with the civically minded and socially engaged Health Foundation of La Porte (HFL) position this community with the vision keepers needed to shepherd the city towards a vibrant future.

Yet, even with this strong foundation, implementing the vision presented in this study will require political will, patient investment, and determination.

The goal of this report is to help regenerate downtown La Porte and the near downtown neighborhoods without displacement. The first step in realizing this future is well underway through the numerous existing initiatives and studies initiated by the city and the HFL. This report builds on these efforts. The next step is to assess the current conditions in the city. The Key Findings (pages 18–19) outline our assessment of La

Porte's current challenges and opportunities. In our analysis of La Porte, we found that:

- The urban fabric is intact, but at risk;
- Vacant and underutilized land provides potential development sites;
- Truck traffic impedes downtown economic development;
- Dilapidated rental properties create blight conditions;
- A housing shortage at all price points makes it difficult to attract and retain residents;
- The city has engaged vision keepers – city leadership, staff, and non-profit partners.

The proposals in this report aim to leverage identified strengths to address the challenges facing the city. The following recommended next steps can be adopted as a single body of work or as a menu of options. They have been grouped into three categories based on responsible party: City of La Porte, HFL, and shared actions.

NEXT STEPS – The City of La Porte

IMMEDIATE RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Guide Former Hospital Site Redevelopment:** Work as much as possible with the owners of the former hospital site to encourage development that fits the character and scale of downtown La Porte. Refer to pages 44–57.
- **Reroute Truck Traffic:** Advance conversations with the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) as well as state officials to reroute truck traffic away from Lincolnway. Refer to pages 30–31.
- **Revise Zoning Code:** Continue efforts to rewrite zoning code to align with the city's housing goals. This includes allowing Missing Middle Housing, reducing and/or eliminating minimum parking requirements, and reducing minimum lot widths to encourage new construction that is capable of meeting market demand. Refer to pages 92–93.
- **Strengthen Historic Preservation:** Locally protect the West End Historic District as well as the expanded Walker Historic District. Refer to pages 66–67.
- **Continue Blight Removal:** Continue to strengthen code enforcement through implementing the historic preservation resources. Refer to page 71.

SHORT-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Commission a Housing Growth Plan:** The next step is to develop a projected growth plan that outlines estimated production capacity alongside estimated market absorption by unit type and price point. Refer to pages 76–77.
- **Commission a Retail Study:** Hire a retail consultant to analyze the market and forecast retail potential for downtown. Refer to pages 34–35.

MID-TO-LONG-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Unlock Preservation Resources:** Nationally list West End Historic District as well as the expanded Walker Historic District to open up potential funding sources for the stabilization, restoration, and renovation of historic structures. Refer to pages 66–69.
- **Incentivize Upper Floor Activation on Lincolnway:** Create an upper-floor redevelopment grant program to activate Lincolnway. Refer to page 81.
- **Employ Tools to Overcome Financial Barriers:** Establish a Residential TIF, an Affordable Housing Trust Fund, and other tools aimed at supporting construction and renovation of affordable housing units. Refer to page 79.
- **Create a Pre-Approved Building Program:** Make it easier to build in urban neighborhoods and downtown with pre-approved construction drawings for Missing Middle Housing types and commercial buildings. Refer to page 79.
- **Redesign Streets & Enhance Urban Landscaping:** Encourage walkable streets with safe street principles and urban landscape. Refer to pages 36–39 and pages 96–105.

NEXT STEPS - Health Foundation of La Porte

IMMEDIATE RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Guide Former Hospital Site Redevelopment:** Work as much as possible with the owners of the former hospital site to encourage development that fits the character and scale of downtown La Porte. Refer to pages 44-57.
- **Establish a Housing Nonprofit:** Create an entity to help vulnerable residents find and afford stable housing. This work may include activities such as renovating blighted homes, constructing new homes, subsidizing rental prices, providing down payment assistance, offering financial training, and helping fixed income homeowners. Refer to page 79.
- **Continue to Enact Recommendations from HFL Housing Study:** Designate a program manager to focus on housing-related projects; establish resources to aid vulnerable populations; develop a site acquisition strategy; support existing and new affordable housing providers, and make efforts to support and engage local developers while expanding housing rehabilitation initiatives.

ONGOING NEXT STEPS

- **Sponsor & Host Preservation Education Programs:** Help homeowners navigate the process of gaining approvals and funding for a preservation project. Include education on proper repair techniques for historic structures, as well as best practices to assess the ability of contractors to perform services that the property owner cannot do themselves. Refer to page 70.

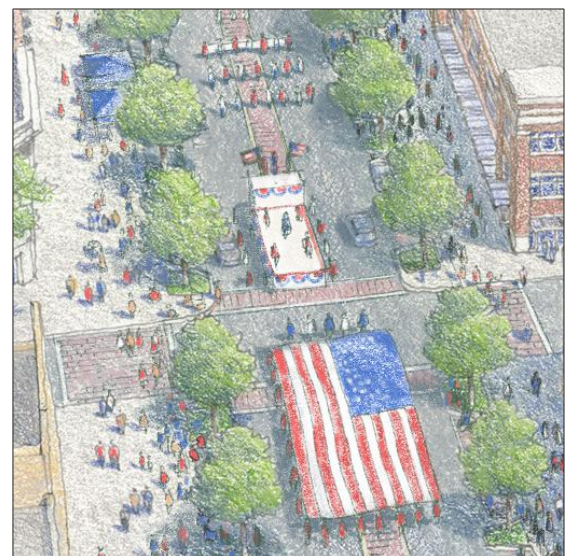
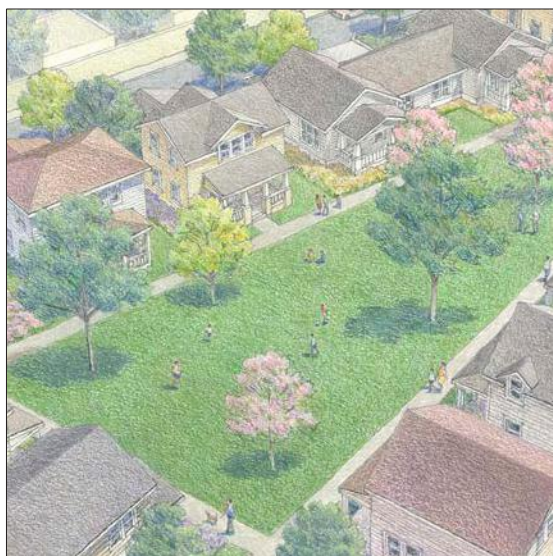
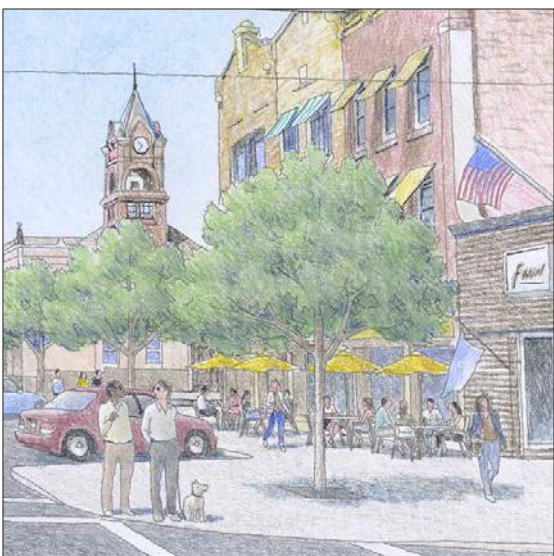
NEXT STEPS - Shared Actions - Public/Private/Nonprofit

SHORT-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Create a Revolving Fund:** A revolving fund provides funds for a city or nonprofit organization to purchase and stabilize historic properties.
- **Nurture a Small Developer Culture:** Offer knowledge-based resources, business networking, and financial incentives to encourage a new culture of small-scale developers to develop in downtown and the near downtown neighborhoods.
- **Infill Housing Program:** Seek state and federal grant funding to renovate existing homes and construct new ones within downtown and the near downtown neighborhoods.

ONGOING NEXT STEPS

- **Continued Collaboration:** The successful implementation of the vision and actions outlined in this report will depend on ongoing collaboration and shared initiatives between the city, HFL, and other partnering non-governmental organizations.





Proposed infill housing on a neighborhood street.