



A LITTLE TLC

FOR YOUR NEIGHBORHOODS

The Downtown Rockford Strategic Action Plan focuses on implementation strategies for the previously made recommendations, rather than just creating another shelf document that is years from realization.

While the strategies in the Strategic Action Plan were customized for application in Downtown Rockford, the overarching “TLC” principles can be applied in any neighborhood. This toolkit uses the Downtown Strategic Action Plan as a case study and provides step-by-step guidance on how to apply the “TLC” principles in other neighborhoods in Rockford, and elsewhere. This guidebook is meant to inspire community residents to take on a do-it-yourself attitude when it comes to neighborhood planning and take on projects in more digestible chunks that can start more immediately, and lead to long-term impact.

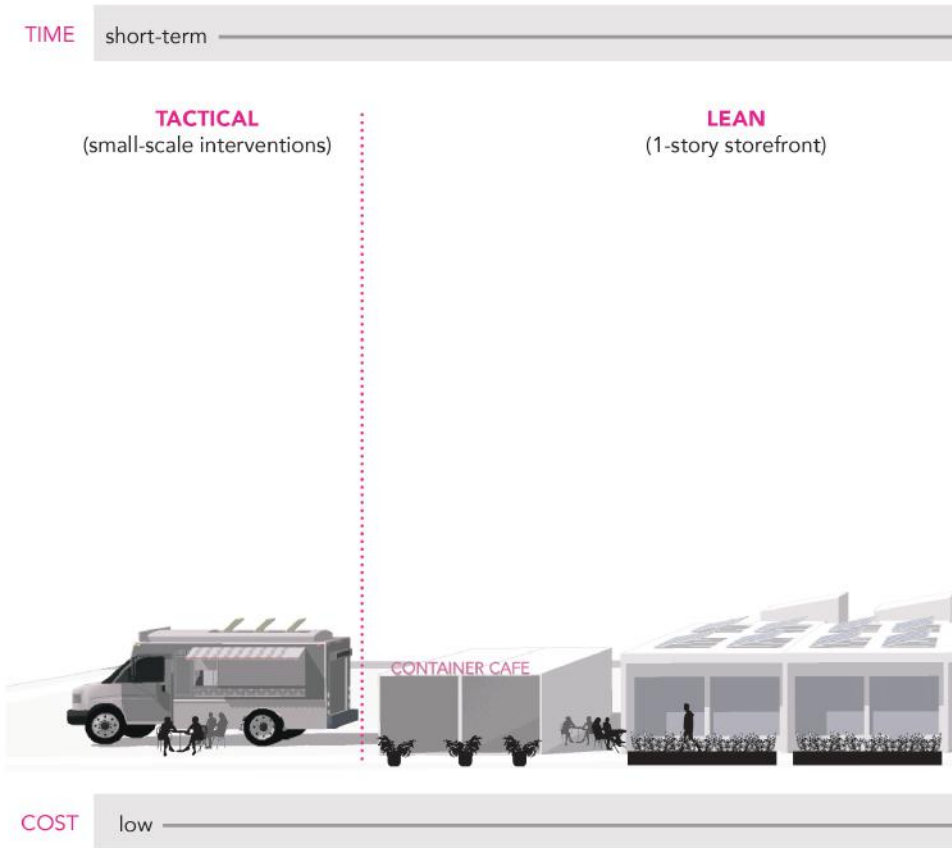
P R O J E C T P A R T N E R S



E X T R A C T S F R O M T H E D O W N T O W N
R O C K F O R D S T R A T E G I C A C T I O N P L A N

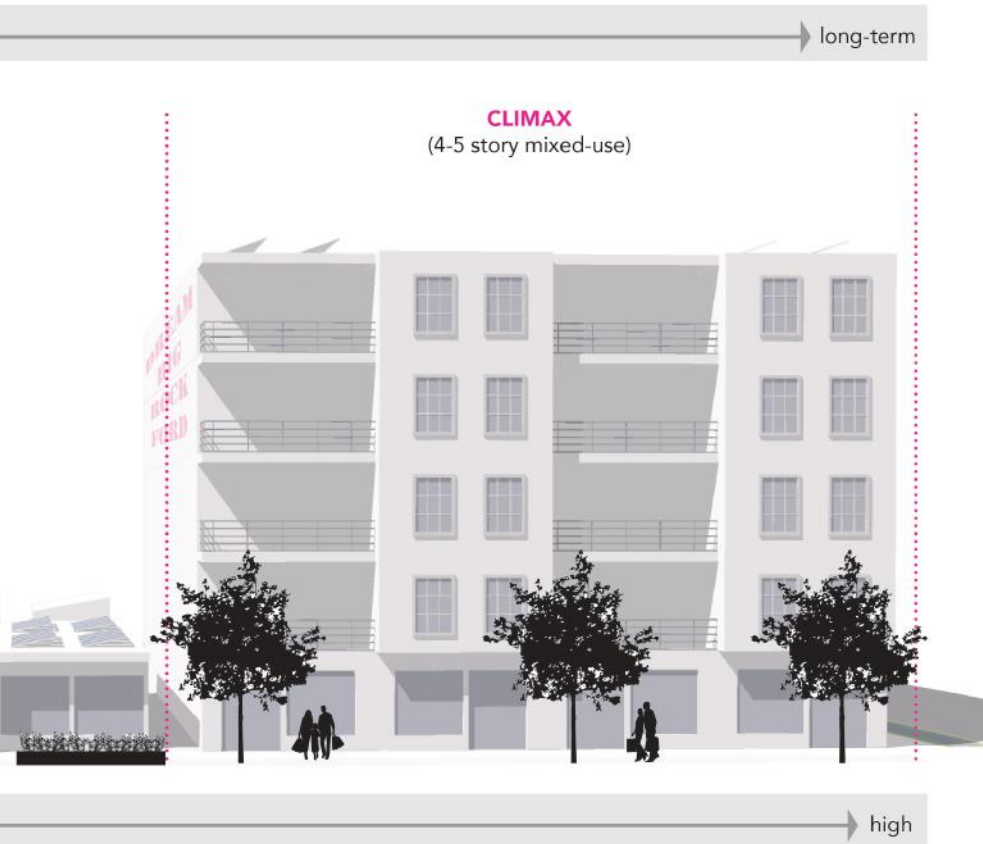
WHAT IS

Long-term planning processes often result in recommendations that are costly, resource-intensive, and have a timeline of 15-20 years. A **T[actical], L[ean], C[limax]** approach, on the other hand proposes shorter-term implementation tactics that ultimately lead to high-investment climax conditions. This approach allows for



TLC?

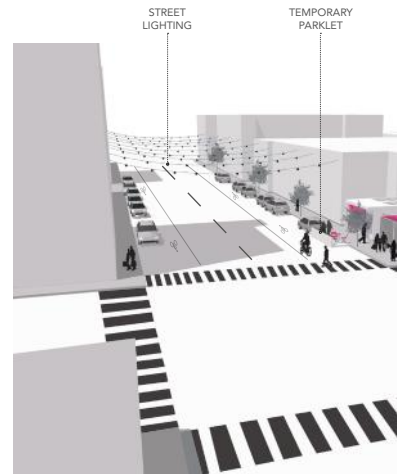
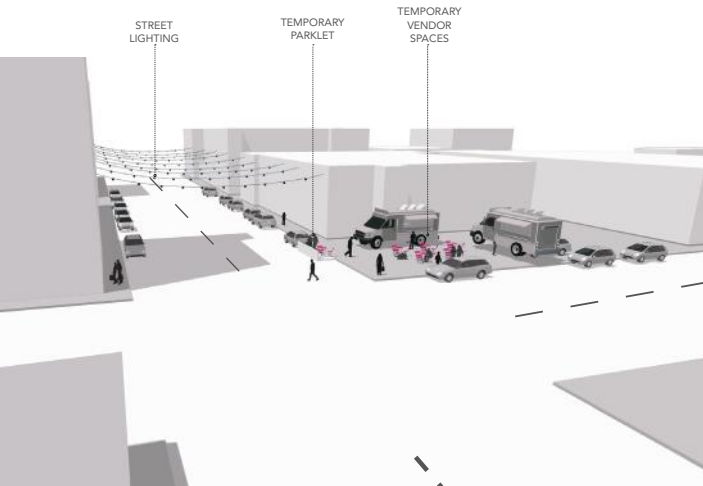
testing through prototypes, and more immediate results that lead to incremental, but impactful development. The implementation strategies are subdivided into TLC strategies that take a larger goal and show how to bring it to fruition through short, mid, and long-term steps.



PROGRESSION FROM

TACTICAL

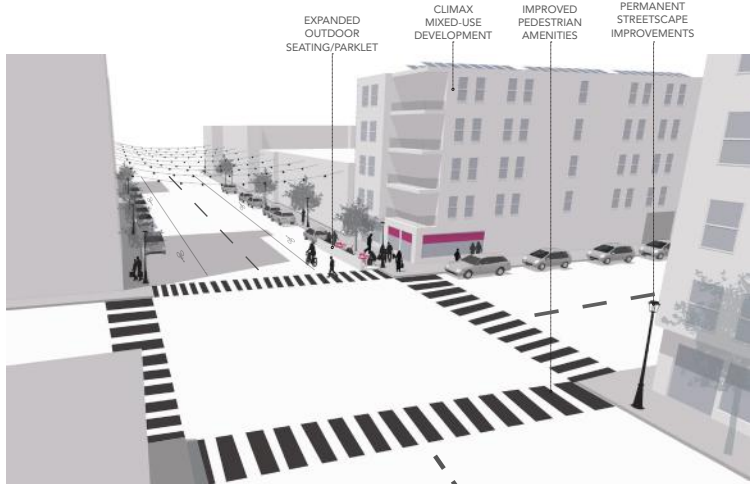
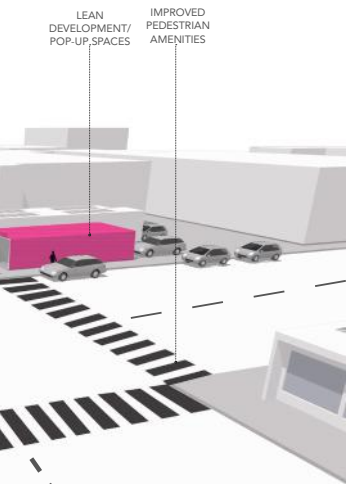
LEAN



TACTICAL TO CLIMAX



CLIMAX



WHERE CAN **TACTICS** BE IMPLEMENTED?



BLANK WALL



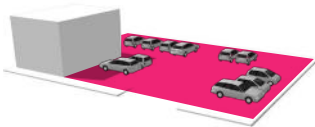
VACANT STOREFRONT



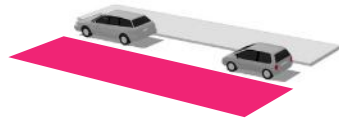
VACANT LOT



PARKING SPACE

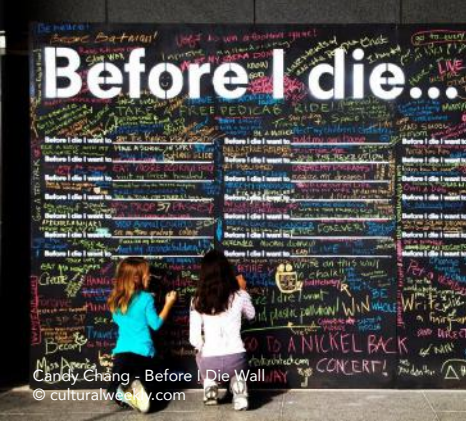


PARKING LOT



STREET

...and anywhere else you can imagine!



Candy Chang - Before I Die Wall
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WHAT ARE **LEAN** STRATEGIES?

WHAT IS A “LEAN” APPROACH?

Lean strategies are the middle-ground between Tactical Urbanism and Climax development, with an aim to work around the “red tape” that often hinders development and increases costs. Lean strategies are intended to be flexible and adaptable, with a higher level of permanency than tactical interventions. Lean strategies require more resources than tactical ones, however, are still less costly and resource-intensive than climax developments. An example of a lean strategy would be a 1-story retail building or a shallow, retail space made of shipping containers instead of the 4-5 story mixed-use development.

WHAT DOES LEAN RETAIL LOOK LIKE?

Lean retail ranges from testing businesses in vacant storefronts for a period of 3-6 months, to putting up temporary retail in shipping containers in a vacant lot, to building a simple, yet attractive, 1-story retail building. Other lean strategies that can also be used include:

- + Limiting depths of retail shops to 20'. If the goal is to complete a street wall with continuous storefronts, the depth of the store is not as important.
- + Creating micro-shops and shared business spaces. More and more retailers and restaurateurs are leaning towards smaller business footprints with shared spaces. This limits the amount of startup capital that a business might need and allows grouping of complementary businesses.



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Co-Op Space - Grand Rapids, MI
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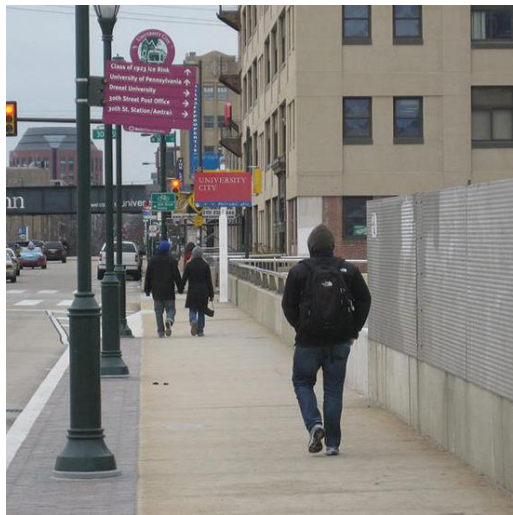
WHAT ARE CLIMAX STRATEGIES?

WHAT IS THE CLIMAX CONDITION?

Climax development is the end goal. In the case of Rockford and many other cities, it's what previous plans have called for from the get-go. Climax might look something like a four-story mixed-use building, a new apartment building, or even the permanent adjustment of street sections. This type of development takes a great amount of time, planning, and secure financing. Climax projects often require many partnerships, need greater assurances on return on investment, and more time and thorough planning when it comes to design and engineering.

WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS TO IMPLEMENTING THAT CONDITION IN THE NEAR FUTURE?

Climax projects generally require land ownerships, large amounts of money, community backing, and partnerships to come to full realization. There is also an opportunity cost with climax projects, where land and money is held out of for long-term, high investment projects, sometimes at the cost of smaller, but more immediate development opportunities. Neighborhood and business associations should continue to pursue climax opportunities in the background, however, should also be implementing lean and tactical opportunities simultaneously.





HOW
DO WE
START?



1 IDENTIFY STAKEHOLDERS TO
INCLUDE IN THE PROCESS

2 IDENTIFY KEY EVENTS AND ASSETS
IN THE AREA

3 IDENTIFY THE “A” STREETS

4 AUDIT GROUND FLOOR VACANCIES IN
THE NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER

5 IDENTIFY MULTI-MODAL MOBILITY
ISSUES IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

6 WITH STAKEHOLDERS, ARRIVE AT
END GOALS (CLIMAX STATE)

7 WORK BACKWARDS TO IDENTIFY
LEAN AND TACTICAL STRATEGIES

8 ASSIGN SHORT-TERM TASKS
AND GET STARTED!

1

IDENTIFY STAKEHOLDERS TO INCLUDE IN THE PROCESS

DETERMINE WHAT THE PROJECT SHOULD BE

Stakeholders should be engaged throughout the planning process. Identify stakeholders that can provide diverse perspectives and provide an accurate representation of those that will be impacted by any redevelopment strategies.

One method for kicking off the project may be through a round of stakeholder interviews, either conducted one-on-one or in small focus groups. Interviews are a great way for obtaining candid perspectives on community strengths and challenges, as well as identifying project priorities.

Input should then be solicited periodically as the project progresses and strategies should be refined to incorporate feedback. A public survey is another way of getting input from a wider audience and can be conducted online or in-person.

CREATE WORKING GROUPS THAT CAN DRIVE IMPLEMENTATION

During the stakeholder process, Working Groups should be created. These Working Groups can be based on project categories and should take the lead on the implementation of projects. The Working Groups are particularly helpful in carrying out "tactical" strategies as they often require sweat equity more than monetary and administrative resources. The Working Groups for the Rockford Downtown Strategic Action Plan included: "Large Redevelopment", "Urban Design", "Economic Development", and "Mobility".



2

IDENTIFY KEY EVENTS AND ASSETS IN THE AREA

EVERY NEIGHBORHOOD HAS ASSETS!

They may be schools, parks, churches, events, or even people! Many of these assets may even be concentrated in one part of the neighborhood. The key is to identify the existing assets and leverage them in the process. Recognizing the positives in the neighborhood early on can be a motivator for change and provide a starting point for conversations.



Example of key events (Downtown Rockford 2014)

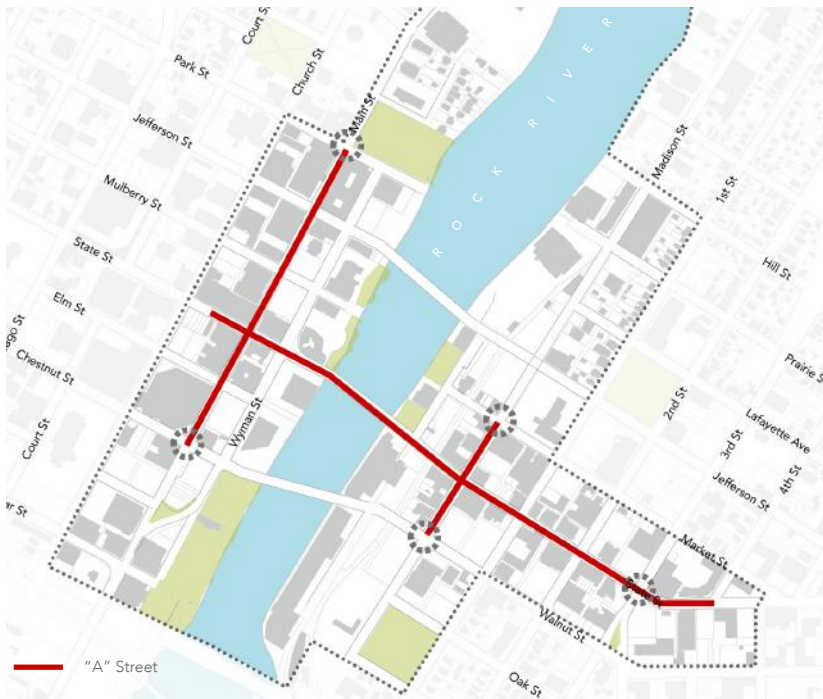


3

IDENTIFY THE "A" STREETS

WHY ARE "A" STREETS IMPORTANT?

"A" streets are the heart of neighborhoods, along which retail and active uses are located. Identify the street(s) or nodes in your neighborhood that already contain a significant number of retail, destinations, and/or events. Using the "A" streets as a starting point will allow you to leverage existing assets and add to existing momentum in the neighborhood. Start with a small area to improve and let the improvements and impact ripple out.



Example of "A" streets (Downtown Rockford 2014)

"A" STREET:

A street that is designed with or otherwise characterized by features that promote the safety, comfort, and convenience of pedestrians. Such streets typically feature sidewalks at least five feet wide, narrow streets, buildings pulled up close to the street, pedestrian-scaled lighting, on-street parking, aligned building facades, building entrances on the street, and a modest turning radius.

As defined by The Lexicon of New Urbanism
Duany, Plater-Zyberk Co.

"A" STREET IN ANN ARBOR, MI



4

AUDIT GROUND FLOOR VACANCIES IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER

FOCUS RETAIL IN THE CORE RETAIL AREA FIRST

A 1000'-1200' length is the general rule of thumb for the distance people will walk on a retail street. The 1000' length can be the priority when recruiting tenants and making improvements. The goal is to concentrate retail on facing blocks to create an area where customers see businesses on both side of the street and businesses have compatible adjacencies.

Identify the areas with the greatest concentration of retail to build upon and strengthen those corridors or nodes. Once the vacant storefronts and infill lots have been filled, retail should expand out along the rest of the "A" Streets.

CREATE A PROCESS FOR TEMPORARY BUSINESSES

Food and mobile retail trucks are a flexible and lower cost option for entrepreneurs looking to get into business since they require fewer startup and operating costs, and need fewer employees. Similarly, pop-up shops in refurbished shipping containers and micro-businesses are becoming increasingly popular. Many businesses are also seeing the benefit in sub-letting their spaces for pop-up events or other complementary uses, creating not just a business, but a destination for consumers.

While these temporary business models are becoming more common, they require a lot of collaboration between landlords, the City, and tenants. It is imperative to communicate with various entities to work through permits, waivers, insurance, and contracts.



1,780' (60%)
of Ground Level Occupied

1,200' (40%)
of Ground Level Vacancy

810'
of Parcel Vacancy

106,800 SF
of Ground Level Occupied

72,000 SF
of Ground Level Vacancy

48,600 SF
of Parcel Vacancy

Example of a Ground Level Occupancy/Vacancy map (Downtown Rockford 2014)

5

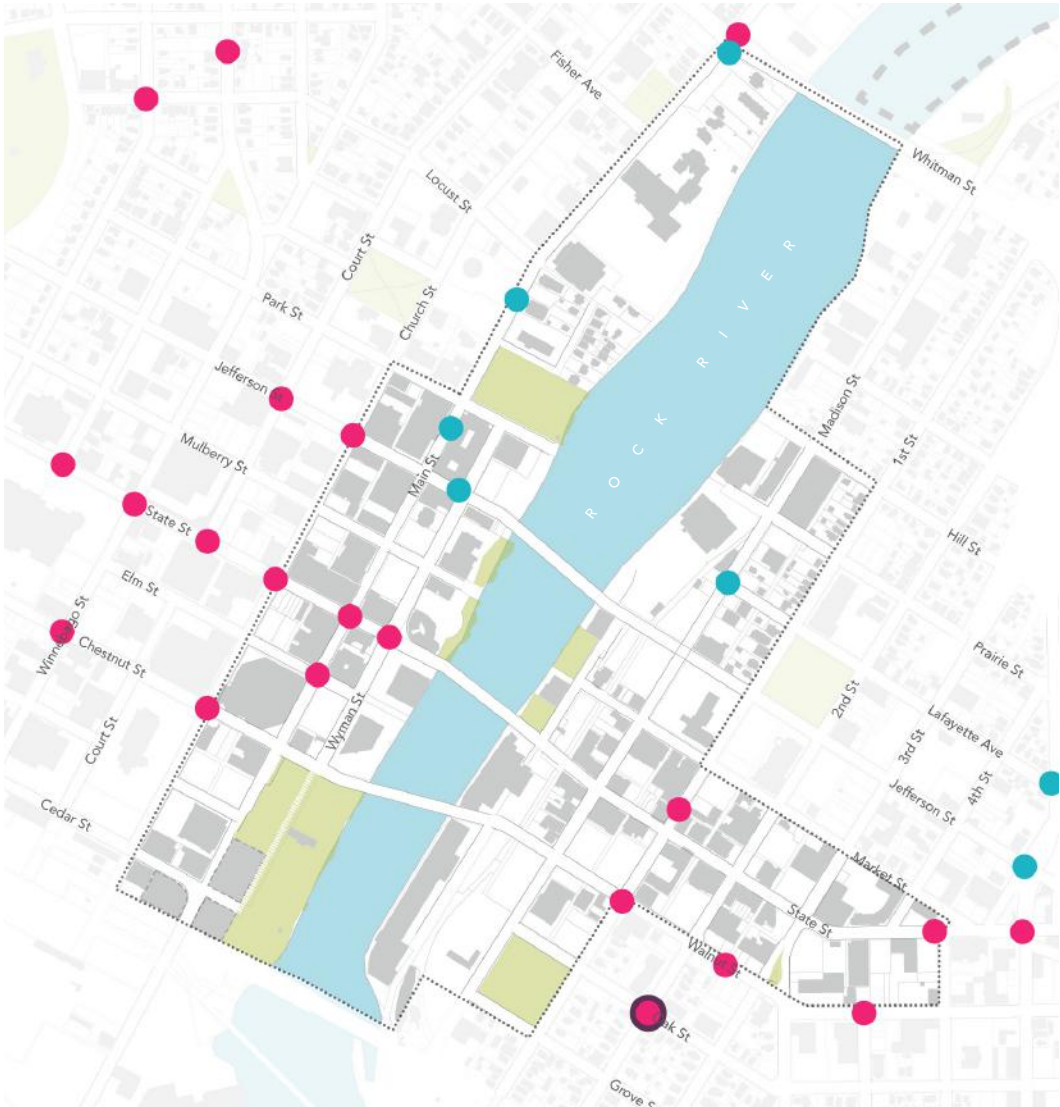
IDENTIFY MULTI-MODAL MOBILITY ISSUES IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

MOBILITY IN THE FOCUS AREA

Streets are often designed with just the automobile in mind. However, to have thriving and vibrant neighborhoods and neighborhood centers, it is critical to think about multi-modal mobility. When making improvements, consider all users of the public right-of-way including pedestrians, bicyclists, public transit, and automobiles. Connected streets with options for multiple modes of travel means more people can access the neighborhood (and neighborhood retail!).

Car crash data along with pedestrian and bicycle crash data can provide great insight into the availability or lack of alternative mobility options in an area. Once the problem areas are identified, traffic calming and pedestrian enhancement strategies should be identified and implemented in order to make the area safer for pedestrians and bicyclists. It is also equally important to provide a pleasant experience for the multiple modes of travel. These mobility improvements can be very costly so test out ideas before committing large amounts of money to costly and permanent infrastructure improvements.





- Pedestrian Fatalities
- Pedestrian Crashes
- Bicycle Crashes

Example of a Pedestrian Crash map (Downtown Rockford, 2014)

6

WITH STAKEHOLDERS, ARRIVE AT END GOALS ("CLIMAX" STATE)

OUTLINE THE LONG-TERM GOALS

Rockford currently has many climax projects in the pipeline. These projects have and will take years to come to fruition and are the result of complex partnerships and financing mechanisms. The completion of these highly catalytic projects will likely lead to further development.

While climax conditions often seem like a far-off reality, they are important to outline so that the long-term vision is clear and to ensure that short-term actions are contributing to that vision. For many neighborhood centers, the climax vision includes, but is not limited to:

- + Strong retail corridors with minimal-to-no vacancies
- + A strong community brand and identity
- + Uses that create a 24-hour community (i.e. grocery store, dry cleaners, pharmacy, residences, etc.)
- + Multi-modal transportation options (i.e. walking, biking, transit)
- + Good lighting and streetscaping
- + Easy access to quality parks and open spaces







7


WORK BACKWARDS TO IDENTIFY “LEAN” AND “TACTICAL” STRATEGIES

GOAL: Make Downtown Rockford a commercial, entertainment, and cultural center that residents take pride in and consumers visit often.

STRATEGIES

TACTICAL 	1	Identify occupied and/or underutilized storefronts that can be used for events.
	2	Recruit interested tenants to test temporary pop-up shops
	3	Market vacant properties through storefront stickers and banners (i.e. “I want to see ____ here”)
	4	Host pop-up shops and food trucks in vacant lots during community festivals and events (i.e. BMO)

LEAN 	1	Designate a Master Leaser to manage temporary businesses
	2	Create a contract for temporary occupancy
	3	Audit vacant buildings and identify up to 3 to bring up to minimum code
	4	Create a Temporary Occupancy Permit that outlines minimum code requirements to be met
	5	Create a retail strategy that identifies the types of retail that Downtown wants to attract and retain
	6	Market vacant properties and vendor opportunities through social media and websites
	7	Install container stores on vacant parcels

CLIMAX 	1	Recruit permanent tenants for vacant storefronts
	2	Build out vacant storefronts

Example of an Implementation Matrix (Downtown Rockford, 2014)

A list of end goals and the with very specific tactical, lean, and climax strategies should be created. These strategies can be shared with stakeholders through something like an implementation matrix below. Partners, recommended timelines, and funding sources should be identified as they relate to each strategy. These strategies should be viewed as a menu of options that stakeholders should implement based on resources available.

The goal of the Implementation Matrix is to provide a clear roadmap for accomplishing the goals laid out by previous planning efforts, as well as, additional goals identified by stakeholders.

	COLLABORATIVE ACTION NETWORK	TIMELINE	FUNDING
	RDA; RCP	Summer/Fall 2015	City and Partner Organization Operating Budget
	RDA; RCP; RRDP	Ongoing	City and Partner Organization Operating Budget
	RDA; RACVB; RCP; RAAR	Fall 2015	Tax Increment Financing
	RACVB; RCP; RDA	Ongoing	Self Funding through Participation Fees
	RDA; RAEDC; RRDP	2016	Leasing Fee
	RDA; RRDP	2016	
	COR; RDA	2016	City and Partner Organization Operating Budget
	COR	2015	City and Partner Organization Operating Budget; Permitting Fee
	COR; RAEDC; RDA	2015	City and Partner Organization Operating Budget
	RDA	2016	Tax Increment Financing; Leasing Fee
	RRDP; Land Owners; RDA; COR	2017	Real Estate Crowd Funding
	RDA; COR; RAEDC; RRDP	Ongoing	
	Land Owners; RRDP; COR; RAEDC	Ongoing	Real Estate Crowd Funding; Small Business Innovation Research Program

8

ASSIGN SHORT-TERM TASKS AND GET STARTED!

STATE STREET TEMPORARY SHARED-USE SPACE



The most critical part of implementing change is by getting in the trenches and actually making changes, even if temporarily. If the addition of a bike lane is being considered, test one out for a few months like on the State Street bridge in Downtown. If there is a need for more retail, but brick and mortar stores aren't affordable, create an event that allows people to test their entrepreneurial skills with temporary pop-up shops. Or if street vibrancy is lacking, test out parklets and sidewalk shops over a weekend. These are all low-resource efforts that can be taken on by local organizations and volunteers. Once the overarching goals are set, get local organizations and volunteers to commit to short-term tasks and dates for implementation.

SHOP THE BLOCKS EVENTS



