

MACON COUNTY & DECATUR COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



Sangamon River in western Macon County

May 22, 2009

Macon County/Decatur Comprehensive Plan

Macon County/Decatur Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee

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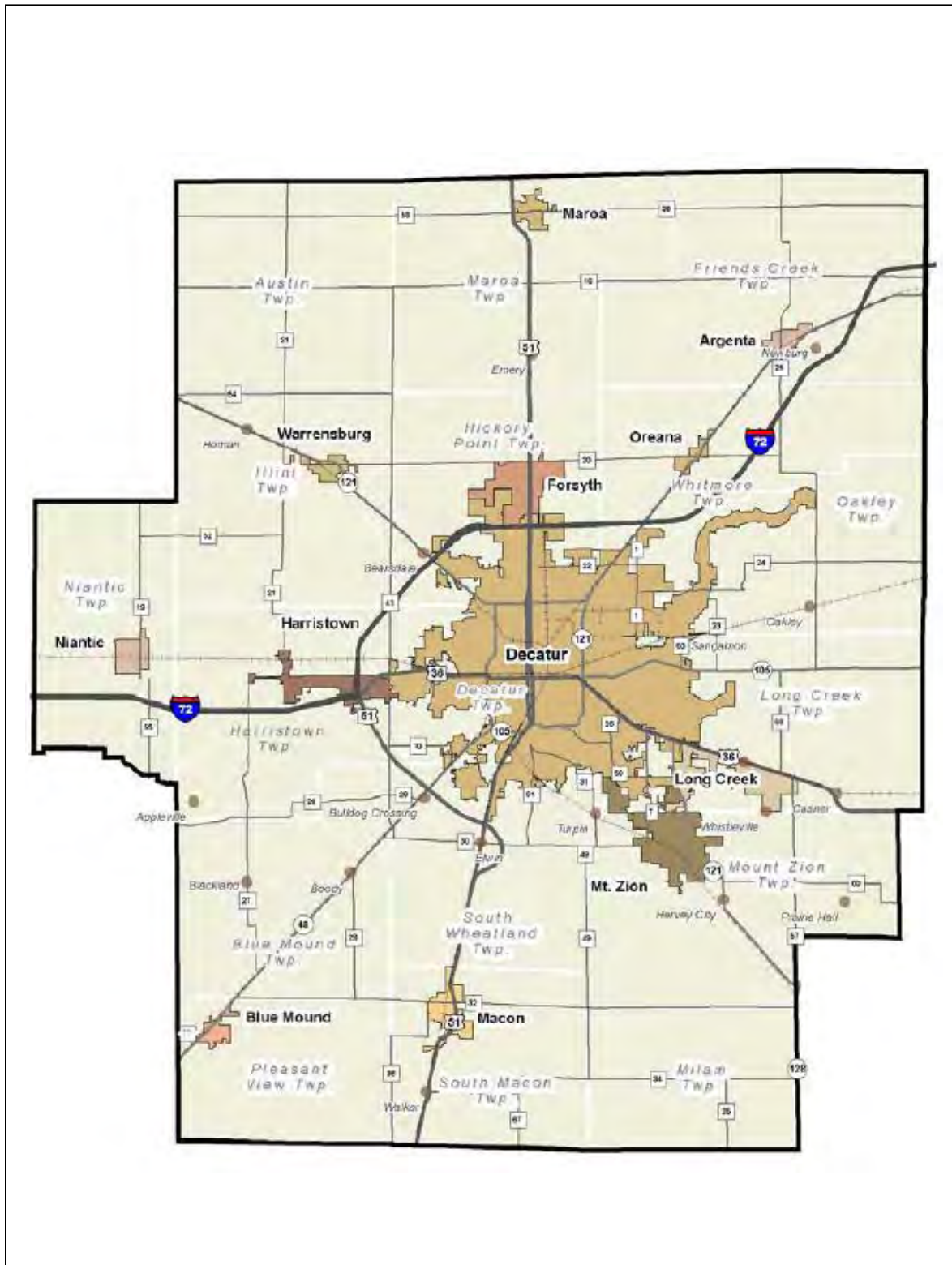


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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Welcome to the Macon County/Decatur Comprehensive Plan – our first-ever, joint land use and development plan. It is the culmination of an historic initiative to define a new vision for our community’s future growth and development.

We took on the challenge because the time was right. Our City and County compete for a declining share of regional growth while, together, we face increased global competition for jobs and services in the 21st Century economy. With these challenges, it is crucial that we collectively focus our efforts on building a "community of choice" as a whole and for all citizens. Much has been accomplished over the past decade. The Plan is about building on these strengths. It lays out a path to preserving and strengthening our quality of life, our natural environment and our economy.

A comprehensive plan is a community’s common vision of its future. It expresses through text, maps, and illustrations what the community wants to look like in the future - what it values and wants to preserve and what it wants to change and develop. This comprehensive plan serves two entities - Macon County and Decatur - to create one Vision. It was prepared with care to ensure that existing municipal, Park District, Conservation District, School District and other public plans were not infringed upon. Our intent was to make these various and sometime diverse plans as compatible and congruent as possible.

The Plan sets forth a vision which looks back to the land which brought us here today and forward to the opportunities this same environment can offer future generations as a place to live, work, and play. This vision will be realized by addressing five key themes:

Balanced Land Conservation and Development. Community residents value both the vista and open spaces created by our agricultural landscape and the opportunities created by new housing choices. We commit to a plan which conserves the unique and significant natural features of our County while compactly creating opportunities for the future. Key to our success will be:

- Focusing new development on vacant and underutilized land within and adjacent to the developed areas, especially within the municipalities
- Preserving high quality environments which promote resource conservation and biodiversity within Macon County and the region.
- Planning future water and utility expansion that is consistent with compact land use, transportation and other development objectives.

An Accessible and Connected County. Providing quality transportation service has been a major strength of our region. We move into the future with a well developed system of rail, road, and mass transit. We commit to a plan which reinforces these connections through the completion of the South East Beltway while increasing the capacity of the transportation system to support a full range of travel choices for residents and visitors. Key to our success will be:

- Securing infrastructure investment, including U.S. Highway 51 expansion and the South East Beltway to ensure that Macon County is competitively positioned within the region.

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- Transforming the roadways that bisect the City and County into corridors that create safe and attractive access to and identify the regions neighborhoods, villages, and special places.
- Designing our infrastructure to maximize the choices – auto, transit, cycling, walking – that residents and visitors have to move from place to place within the County and urbanized area.

A Quality of Life Community. Our villages and neighborhoods are the life blood of the larger Macon County Community and at the heart is the urban core of Decatur. The strength of each is dependent on many factors working together – safety, educational opportunities, access to services, and housing choices. We commit to a plan which puts the health of our existing municipalities and neighborhoods first. Key to our success will be:

- Positioning Decatur’s downtown as an economic and civic center of the County and the focal point of catalytic investments in education and services in the surrounding neighborhoods.
- Geographically targeting community public/private partnership investments to ensure equal access and create world-class, life-long learning environments in Decatur and all school districts in the County.
- Committing the resources of public and private partners to the creation of increased housing choices and access to homeownership throughout the County.
- Leverage private funding with public investment in a wide range of projects and initiatives which foster enhancements and improvements to the seen and unseen infrastructure which supports a high and sustainable quality of life.

A Diversified Economy. Quality of life is tied to the strength of the local economy. A more diversified economy is more stable and creates a wider range of employment choices. As Macon County enters the 21st Century, it is in the midst of a fundamental transition from an industrial economy. Our regional role as a provider of retail and healthcare services continues to grow. It is, however, the image and identity of our leading agricultural industry that positions us to become the center of technological innovation and research in agri-business, healthcare and other regionally significant industries. We commit to a plan which prioritizes the land use, transportation and infrastructure changes that are necessary to ensure that this transition is successful. Key to our success will be:

- A global economic development strategy that cultivates new industries and entrepreneurship in emerging technologies and support industries.
- Cooperative and collaborative public/private partnerships and endeavors which focus resources on the redevelopment and reuse of the County’s vacant, functionally obsolete and environmentally challenged sites.
- The creation of a modern agribusiness business park environment around Richland Community College and the Farm Progress facilities that provides existing and potential businesses with a competitive environment in which to grow.

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- Utilizing the natural and cultural resources of the County as an economic opportunity for tourism based business with the priority of making Decatur Landing a focal point of an expanded recreational campus encompassing amenities on both sides of Lake Decatur.

A Sense of Pride in Place. Macon County has a rich history embedded in the lives of its founding families and the working men and women whose legacy is found in the culture and institutions. We commit to a plan which reinforces the values we have to celebrate and the ways we can make them more a part of our daily lives. Key to our success will be:

- Protecting and enhancing our parks, open spaces and waterways as a catalyst to an improved image and identity for our residents and visitors.
- Honoring the County's growing diversity as partners in the preservation of places and the development of our neighborhoods, institutions and government.

Throughout the process, the Plan has been shaped by the people of Macon County. Hundreds of personal contacts and interviews with local leaders were conducted. Focus groups and working group committees met numerous times to provide input and guidance on proposed goals and objectives. Town Hall meetings were held in July and September with nearly 500 interested citizens telling us their stories while educating us about areas and issues of importance to them. Presentations were made to civic and community groups by the staff. And, out of this extensive public participation process came many recommendations. Those recommendations, along with an extensive factual analysis of our existing conditions, trends and comparison with other communities, have been woven together to form the foundation for this Final Draft Comprehensive Plan.

The promise of the Plan and the future of Macon County is before us. We want to thank the Decatur Urbanized Area Transportation Study for their generous commitment to this project. We want to thank the Federal Highway Administration and Illinois Department of Transportation for believing in this project and providing substantial assistance. We want to thank you, the people of Macon County, for your ideas, thoughts and suggestions during the planning process and for your energy and commitment to making Macon County and Decatur a place of pride for all of us.

*Macon County/Decatur Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee
May, 2009*

Chapter 1: Introduction

Macon County, founded in 1829, is located in central Illinois, approximately 170 miles southwest of Chicago and 116 miles northeast of St. Louis. It is located approximately 40 miles southwest of Champaign, Illinois and 35 miles east of Springfield, Illinois. The County has a total land area of 581 square miles and contains seventeen townships and twelve municipalities. The estimated 2005 U. S. Census population was 110,167.



Macon County is the epitome of America’s agricultural heartland. Vast expanses of corn and soybean cropland cover eighty-four percent of the County. It is a major center for agribusiness. Over 100,000 residents and many local, yet global, businesses participate in a thriving agricultural economy focused within Decatur, our central city.

Like many of our counterparts across the country, the County and its communities face a number of challenges, including globalization of the economy, an increasing dispersal of residential development, and the resulting disinvestment in portions of our developed communities. These challenges must be addressed in a coordinated manner to ensure continued economic growth and investment.

Decatur became the county seat in 1829. Today, it has an estimated 2005 population of 77,836. It is a mature community and only modest population growth is forecast to occur within the next twenty years. This limited growth requires careful stewardship of our resources to maintain a high quality of life and to remain competitive in the region.

Macon County and Decatur have continued to reinvest in its urban infrastructure and the central city, but more work remains if key questions regarding the future are to be successfully answered. Where should our limited growth occur? How will the future transportation system resolve current problems and accommodate future demand? What kinds of improvements are needed to create desirable neighborhoods? How should the next generation of retail development be accommodated? These are some of the challenges of this Comprehensive Plan.

Our Planning History

Macon County has a rich history of planning that dates back to 1920 when the Association of Commerce put forward *The Decatur Plan*. Since then, agencies within the County have engaged in many successful planning efforts to guide growth, development and conservation.

In November, 2006, the City of Decatur and Macon County authorized the preparation of this joint strategic and comprehensive plan. The Plan is sponsored by the Decatur Urbanized Area Transportation Study (DUATS), the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Decatur Metropolitan Area, through funding from the Federal Government. DUATS has been a mainstay of inter-agency planning in the Decatur area since the 1960’s, addressing the connection between land use and transportation investment.

The 'One Community' Plan

This *Comprehensive Plan* serves both Macon County and Decatur; it integrates planning for the two entities into one plan. It provides residents, business owners and visitors an opportunity to see how the vision of One Community has been developed by the people of Macon County who have shared what they value and what they want for their future.

The *One Community* plan commits us to proactively, but cooperatively, address the sometimes competing interests of urban and rural areas, our growing cultural diversity and the regional economic forces as we go forward. The fundamental challenge of the comprehensive plan is to retain the qualities of our individual parts while accommodating change in an increasingly interdependent world.

Our Commitment

The *Macon County/Decatur Comprehensive Plan* serves a variety of functions. Foremost, it is a roadmap for the future. It provides a set of policies which facilitate a coordinated approach to decisions regarding land use, transportation, the placement of community facilities, and the extension of public services. It also serves as a guide for elected and appointed officials within Macon County as they consider new program initiatives or review development proposals before them. The comprehensive plan also helps form the basis for zoning through the articulation of the land use plan and map. Lastly, the plan allows organizations and agencies to identify and respond to the changing needs of its citizens.

The Plan responds to the requirements established in the *Illinois Planning Technical Assistance Act* of 1992 (Public Act 92-0768 sec. 5). The Act requires that a comprehensive plan be inclusive of seven key elements: Land Use, Transportation, Economic Development, Natural Resources, Utilities, Community Facilities and Public Process, all of which are addressed by the policies contained in this document. Municipalities that adopt plans in accordance with the new guidelines may be eligible for additional preferences in funding under state economic development, transportation, planning and natural resource programs.

'One Community' - Three key components.

The plan is organized into three components:

The Vision and Guiding Principles: Chapters 2 and 3 of the plan provide a broad-brush description of the future of Macon County that reflects the aspirations and core values of its residents and stakeholders. It stresses five key themes of the plan.

- Balanced Land Development and Conservation
- Quality of Life Communities
- An Accessible and Connected County
- A Diversified Economy
- A Sense of Pride in Place

The Policy Plan: Chapters 4-8 provides a description of principles, policies and strategies, organized by the five themes of the plan.

The Implementation Plan: Chapter 9 addresses how organizational structure and inter-agency coordination relate to achieving the principles and polices of the plan. It provides guidance to decision-makers on how the policies of the plan should be achieved.

Relationship to Other Plans and Documents

The 2008 Comprehensive Plan is the official statement of the City and the County's vision. Though the goals and the implementation policies contained within the Comprehensive Plan covers a broad range of subject matter, it may not provide the specific level of detail required or desired for all topics, issues or geographic areas within Decatur and Macon County.

The recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan are intended to be used in conjunction with other concurrent plans and documents, both regulatory and functional, as discussed below. It further is intended that the Comprehensive Plan and each of these concurrent plans and/or documents work in a cohesive and supportive fashion. In instances of conflict between any of these plans and/or documents, the Comprehensive Plan should serve as the guide.

Regulatory Context

While the Comprehensive Plan provides the framework for making land use and other community-related decisions, the County and City of Decatur's regulatory documents provide specific criteria and requirements governing land use and development. These regulations, therefore, provide the most direct means for implementing the vision, goals and policies expressed within the Comprehensive Plan. The following provides a more detailed description of the regulations controlling land use and development.

Land Development Code of the City of Decatur (2005) and Macon County Zoning Ordinance (1991)

The Decatur and Macon County development codes are perhaps the most important implementation tools for the Comprehensive Plan. The regulations contained in the County and City zoning, subdivision, and other land related laws control the allowable uses of land, as well as the physical standards controlling a development's size, shape, and form. These regulations should correspond to the goals and the policies of the Comprehensive Plan to ensure that incremental development decisions reflect the community's vision. Privately owned, vacant land within Decatur will develop and redevelop over many years with different owners, developers, investors, urban designers, and architects. Land in the several municipalities and the unincorporated County will likewise change uses over time. The Comprehensive Plan provides a framework for making responsible decisions that reflect the desires of the community and encourages congruency, consistency, continuity, and compatibility between the various governmental jurisdictions and their neighborhoods. All land use applications should be reviewed for conformance not only with specific zoning requirements, but also for consistency with the direction and guidance provided by the Comprehensive Plan. Following the principles contained in the Plan will enhance the functionality of the existing land use and land use patterns while providing cost containment and efficiency for planned infrastructure extensions and improvements.

Functional Plans

The Comprehensive Plan is intended to serve as the principal planning document addressing Macon County and Decatur’s goals and policies related to land use and other key community issues. A number of other “functional” plans and documents have been or may be adopted by the respective governments to address specific topics or government functions. It is the City and County’s intention that this Comprehensive Plan will provide guidance for both updating current plans and formulating concurrent and future functional plans. As these plans are adopted, they will provide a detailed framework for future land use and growth management decisions.

Existing Functional Plans

- Decatur Urban Area Transportation Study, 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan, 2004.
- City of Decatur, Five Year Consolidated Plan, updated annually.
- Decatur Metro Area Greenway Plan, 1998.
- Decatur Park District Master Plan Update, 2004.
- Macon County Conservation District Master Plan, 2004.
- Mt. Zion Comprehensive Plan, 2005.
- Forsyth Comprehensive Plan Update, 2002.
- Urban Corridors Plan for the City of Decatur Illinois, 2004.
- Decatur Public Schools Strategic Plan, 2007.
- Feasibility Study Report for Macon County South and East Beltway, 2005.
- NEPA/404 Merger Meeting, South East Beltway Preferred Alignment Approval, May, 2008.

The Planning Process

The Comprehensive Plan is the result of careful participation by the community at all levels. The Mayor and the County Board Chairman were represented by a Steering Committee who provided guidance throughout the process and whose proposals were submitted to the City and Regional Planning Commissions for evaluation and recommendation to their respective elected officials. Five working committees supported the Steering Committee, each presenting local expertise in one of the plan’s major themes. The community participated extensively at each step in the process by providing input at Visioning Workshops, Open Houses and Public Meetings.



Chapter 2: Assets and Challenges

Through all of the conversations and studies we have conducted to investigate the conditions affecting our future, we have come to understand that there are six key issues of importance to the residents and businesses of the County:

- Demographic Change
- Development Patterns
- Transportation
- The Economy
- Quality of Community Life
- Image and Identity

Demographic Change

Modest future growth. It is apparent that growth over the next twenty years will be quite modest by most estimates. The ability to replace undesired trends with new more desired patterns of growth will be limited, since the bulk of the County's growth is already in place. It is important to be very thoughtful about what type of development is desired within the County, where it should be located, and those actions that will help or hinder the attainment of those desires.

Changing Population and Housing Patterns. Since 1990, Macon County has experienced an increase in housing development while simultaneously losing population. The loss of population was unevenly distributed both in the City of Decatur and in the smaller towns of the county. During the past fifteen years:



- Population and housing units increased in Maroa, Friends Creek, Illini, Hickory Point, Oakley, Niantic and Blue Mound and Mount Zion Townships.
- Population decreased, but housing units increased in Harristown, Whitmore, Long Creek, South Wheatland, South Macon and Pleasant View townships.
- Decatur lost population and housing units.

Homes get bigger while family size gets smaller. The overall size of homes in Macon County is increasing while the household size is declining. This may be making older, smaller homes less desirable investments. Further, the most easily developed areas to accommodate these new housing styles are on the fringe of Decatur and the villages where large "Greenfield" sites exist. This pulls the housing market further from existing neighborhoods.

Development Patterns

Macon County contains some of the highest quality and most productive agricultural land in the world. Coupled with the rolling topography of the Sangamon River Valley and Lake Decatur, our land is probably our greatest resource. It is the basis of our economy, the source of valued activities, the attraction for visitors from beyond the county, and is central to our quality of life.

Our land is a collection of farming and bedroom communities, all of which surround the center city of Decatur. Nevertheless, Decatur is shrinking, in part due to continuing decentralization of Macon County's population.

Managing the direction of growth. The attractiveness of commercial development to the Interstate interchange has resulted in a concentration of commercial uses in the vicinity of Route 51 and I-72. Some of the most desirable housing sites remain in the southeast nearby Lake Decatur, and the more varied terrain found there. The result is that the Decatur urban area continues to grow away from the center towards these attractions. Over time, this growth could adversely affect those elements of attractiveness resulting in sprawled growth, increased traffic and a quality of life that is the antithesis of that desired.

Protecting farmland and unique areas at risk. Outward growth, from the city and the rural villages can easily occur because of a lack of inherent limitations. Sewer service can readily be made available through the Sanitary District. Domestic water, if not accessible from a municipal system, is readily available via wells. Thus, the county could continue to lose prime agricultural land and conflicts between farming and urban life styles could be further exacerbated.

This is an important issue since the potential growth of bio-based fuels may further stimulate the demand for agricultural land. There is a tier of mineral rights land that might best remain fallow if access to coal and oil mineral rights is to be available. Protection of these areas is an issue central to County land use planning.

The challenge to center city Decatur. Typical of many Midwestern central cities, Decatur continues to experience a loss of population and disinvestment as the result of continuing suburbanization of housing and industry. This results in underutilization of major existing public investments city-wide, but especially in the central areas of the city – the major industrial core, the downtown and the nearby neighborhoods. Investment within these areas is challenged by the attractiveness of new housing subdivisions which provide larger sites to accommodate today's larger homes, open land at key interchanges which can accommodate big box and other extensive shopping facilities with easy parking, and "greenfield" industrial development sites which do not have to deal with problems of land assembly, site accessibility, and environmental conditions.

In many cities, this process of fringe area growth and central city decay starts to seek a balance as interest in the center is rekindled and reinvestment begins. However, such change requires significant area growth, something that is not likely for Macon County. As Macon County's economy continues to evolve from manufacturing it continues to be of particular importance to the creation of a healthy economy.

It is important that the planning process consider the implications of this slow, but inexorable change and identify strategies to address it. The lack of growth in central Decatur as compared to the fringe reduces future interest for reinvestment there if left to market forces alone. And, over time, this can work to the

detriment of the entire region as fewer living, shopping and entertainment options reduces its attractiveness as a place to live for young individuals and families. A viable central Decatur is important to the health of the entire County.

Maintaining small town character. Macon County is a region of small towns. These towns have a history of self-sufficiency and an identity tied to the rural economy. Most of the towns in Macon County can be expected to maintain this character. However, Forsyth, Mt Zion and, to a degree Harristown are well within the orbit of Decatur and are fast losing their small town character to become suburbs.

As new development in Macon County continues to be drawn to the urban fringe, the pattern of development within these communities will increasingly become suburban in character. This is characterized by tracts of single-family housing and areas of auto oriented commercial development along major arterials. While both forms of development respond to local desires – larger lots for new home styles and sites for big box retail easily accessible by auto -- there is also a significant cost. Clearly one cost is the impact upon Decatur as it loses population and commercial investment, thereby seeing reduced revenues but continually increasing demands for services. A second cost is the character of development occurring in the suburbanizing locations.



Downtown Decatur

Suburbanization of population from Decatur into other parts of the County over recent years is also changing our land use patterns. These changes include the underutilization of Decatur central core and its existing inner city neighborhoods, the growth of new development on the fringe of Decatur, along the County's waterways and wooded areas, and finally along the County's major arterial roads. The challenge moving forward is to find ways to balance development and harness the County's growth in ways that will strengthen our communities and neighborhoods, while increasing the County's overall wealth.

While there is a consensus that the location for new development should be market driven, opinions regarding the location of this new development are mixed. Many believe the primary location for new development should be within Decatur, while others feel new development should occur in Macon County's outlying communities or around the fringe of existing development. What is good for Decatur or one part of the County is good for the municipalities and all other areas of the County is obviously a valid principle. Conversely, what is good for the municipalities and the County also benefits Decatur. It is critical that the City and County establish clear policies regarding the future pattern of development, so that we do not inadvertently lose the land resource that is both our heritage and economy.

Transportation

Transportation improvements are a key to how land uses evolve. How we plan our transportation improvements directly affects how well we can balance land development and land conservation.

Maintaining Access. The Decatur Urbanized Area Transportation Study (DUATS) reports that current transportation investments will struggle to serve the decentralizing population and work locations of the County. The DUATS long-range plan proposes many surface transportation projects to help address this issue. Of principal significance, among other projects, is to complete a suburban loop south and east around Decatur from U.S. Route 51 on the south to I-72 at the northeast edge of Decatur. This route is referred to as the Southeast Beltway and will provide greatly improved highway access for County residents, will provide much needed access to the Decatur Airport and will assist in resolving regional connectivity issues within the transportation system.

Creating Transportation Choice. The second challenge is that our transportation plans address all modes of transportation within the county – air, rail, public transit, cycling and walking – as well as auto and truck movements. The challenge is to find the best ways to make all parts of the county accessible to each other and connected to the larger region of which we are a part.

Ensuring System Efficiency. The third challenge is to cost-effectively minimize and manage the transportation demands created by future land use patterns and to resolve present operational problems. These include rail/auto/truck conflicts, accommodating increasing numbers of household trips, and increasing distances between work, home, and play.



West Main Street, Decatur

Our freight movement systems need to be as efficient as our people movement systems. They must be accessible and connected. Areas of congestion must be resolved. Connections between work places and neighborhoods have to be improved. Freight and transit access to and through our communities need to be accommodated and enhanced. All of this must be achieved in an efficient and cost effective manner that helps grow our economy while also assuring a continuing high quality of life.

The Economy

Our County has been converting agricultural crops into new products for generations. During that time we have grown a number of industrial giants. For example, Mueller Co. was founded in 1857, A.E. Staley in 1906, and the Archer Daniels Midland Company in 1939.

These same crops and successor companies are moving



Decatur away from its manufacturing roots to become a center for the next generation of agribusiness – which not only deals with production, but with research and development, life science and biotechnology. The growth of the Farm Progress Show, a square mile outdoor trade show, reflects the continuing agricultural focus on Decatur. This trade show can become the core of an agribusiness “Research Triangle” given its proximity to Richland Community College and major industrial facilities.

Low Growth in Median Household Income. Yet this transition has a wrenching effect on our immediate economy and community. Since 1990, the share of employment derived from manufacturing has declined by 6 percent while the percentage of total employment in the service economy has increased by 11 percent. We need to diversify the employment opportunities available to our residents. This is a key challenge facing our region, and it is having near-term impacts upon our quality of life.

An Economy in Transition. Much of our agribusiness is no longer “old” manufacturing but is highly technological. Therefore, we must address changing operating needs as well as changing personnel. To this end, while we must resolve the infrastructure needs of industry, which may include the construction of a new reservoir, we also must address the skills issues facing our core industries.

Our new agribusiness industry needs a highly educated and skilled work force. Residents with “old” skills cannot compete for “new skills” jobs. In addition, the demand for a highly educated work force is not limited to agribusiness. Our major service employers including health care, government and education also need a skilled work force. The long-term economic viability of Macon County depends upon our developing, attracting, and maintaining that work force.



PPG

The key to our economy lies in improving the educational opportunities for our present population and creating an environment that attracts the type of skilled workers that can help our companies achieve their goals. Retraining and retaining a skilled workforce requires a physical, social, and economic environment that supports the lifestyle desires of that population.

Many of the “new economy” workers seek an environment that is stimulating and often in an urban setting. They want a range of living choices from urban to suburban to rural. We need to continue to enhance our

varied living environments, our center city initiatives and support quality of life issues in order to make sure our community provides these choices. We must build on our successes, such as downtown, both as a civic and entertainment resource for the County and stimulus for center city residential reinvestment.

This is a challenge for the entire region. We need to assure that living, shopping and entertainment options are found in the central core of the city, thereby enhancing its attractiveness as a place to live for young, “new economy” individuals and families.

Quality Community Services

There are many good things about the quality of life in our County today – a terrific park system, the beauty of and around Lake Decatur, a relatively compact urban pattern, and a variety of cultural and recreation opportunities. Yet, more is needed, at least perceptually, to provide the high quality of life deserved by the residents of the region and desired by new residents.

Equal Access to Quality Education. School quality is always at the heart of family decisions to live in a community or specific parts of the community. Our community meetings and survey results reflected a concern about the attractiveness of Decatur, yet when graduation rates and overall achievement scores for Decatur schools are compared with State averages the results are favorable. Decatur has the civic leadership in place to continue the dialogue, to clarify the reality over perceptions, and to implement actions that resolve the key issues affecting education disparities.

Decatur also has a wide range of educational opportunities available to its students including many highly praised magnet schools in District 61, parochial schools, a charter school, a 2-year community college and an independent liberal arts college offering undergraduate and master's degree programs.



Millikin University is an independent, 4-year university serving approximately 2,400 students in traditional and non-traditional undergraduate and Master's degree programs in the arts and sciences, fine arts, professional studies and business.



Richland Community College provides over 7,600 students with over 40 baccalaureate, technical, continuing education, and community service programs.

Other services also have their needs. It is clear from our discussions that our region will benefit from better relationships among the local service providers. There is growing consensus to have more and better interagency and intergovernmental cooperation to assure more efficient provision of public services. One notion is to find ways for our varied local governments – park districts, school districts, municipalities and the like – to come together on a regular basis to jointly discuss and agree upon coordinated actions to achieve the desired quality of life.

Image and Identity

Our community is what we make of it. Its image is a reflection of the real and perceived strengths and weaknesses of the area. Today in Macon County it is safe to say that a strong positive image of the region is absent in the minds of many of us. It seems that our problems are easy to identify, but our strengths and good qualities are not as apparent. We must reverse this if we are to realize the potentials of the region.

Community leadership, businesses, stakeholders and residents must work together toward a common goal. It is what is said about life in Macon County that shapes opinions about the County, even beyond its borders. Whether it is realtors who guide prospective clients to particular school districts, current or past workers of Decatur's biggest industries who share an opinion about relocation to Decatur, or lifelong residents who feel they must go outside of their community to work or shop, our opinions shape our self image and that which we project to the world at large.

Strengthening Our Sense of Place. We need to strengthen downtown and other centers of civic pride and to beautify our major corridors and public rights of way. But, on the other hand, we have some of the most varied and attractive landscapes within Central Illinois; we have many wonderful neighborhoods, parks and institutions. A drive along Lake Decatur provides vistas and recreation opportunities that are the envy of our neighboring cities, and attract numerous out of county visitors.



Merchant Street, Downtown Decatur

We must use the Comprehensive Plan to help restructure our image and establish a positive sense of pride in our County and our communities. We must do this by identifying actions and improvements that build upon our strategic location within Central Illinois, and we must do so in a manner that builds upon the economic, physical and social resources that are present within our region. This is our challenge. This is our opportunity.

Chapter 3: Vision and Guiding Themes



Archer Daniels Midland (ADM)

Macon County and its communities are blessed with the fertile farmland and the varied topography of the Sangamon River Valley that has shaped our history, identity and economy over the past 200 years. We honor this rich natural history as we shape a sustainable future by:

Capitalizing on our unique environmental resources to create regionally attractive recreational opportunities.

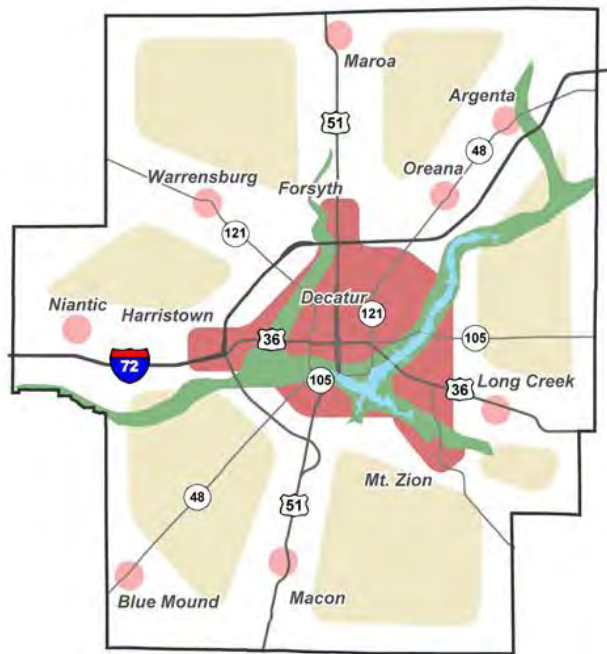
Building on our agricultural history by using the resources of the land to create quality jobs for our residents through new technologies and an economy that is competitive in the world market.

Meeting the needs of our citizens through the coordinated use of our resources to provide a high quality of education, housing, community services and employment,

Resulting in a sense of pride in place and fostering opportunities for public involvement that are responsive to the needs of our citizens.

Guiding Theme 1 Balance Land Conservation and Development

Our ancestors transformed the rich soils from open tall grass prairie to a sea of corn and soybeans. They settled along the vast watershed of the Sangamon River Valley and its tributaries. Its deep ravines create unique vistas that would eventually create Lake Decatur, one of Central Illinois’s largest body of fresh water and a defining element of Decatur.



These unique and significant natural features are an enormous recreational and natural resource. The Comprehensive Plan strengthens the community’s commitment to these natural assets.

The form of our County - a network of small farm communities and the City of Decatur, as the center of trade and commerce; is relatively compact. Yet, as in many urbanized areas, there is pressure to build new and grow outward from city edges by converting existing “greenfields” to suburban development. Managing this pressure to grow outward, even with limited anticipated growth, is one of the biggest challenges the County faces in the years ahead.

Community residents value both the vistas and open spaces created by our agricultural landscape and the opportunities created by new housing choices. They share a desire to maintain a small town lifestyle, not necessarily a wholly suburban one. This life style is characterized by having a relationship to the rural environment, not one of urban sprawl.

A community with a balance of land uses has long-term economic stability. Macon County is committed to providing job opportunities and a variety of housing types within a high-quality environment to maintain the area as a vital community.

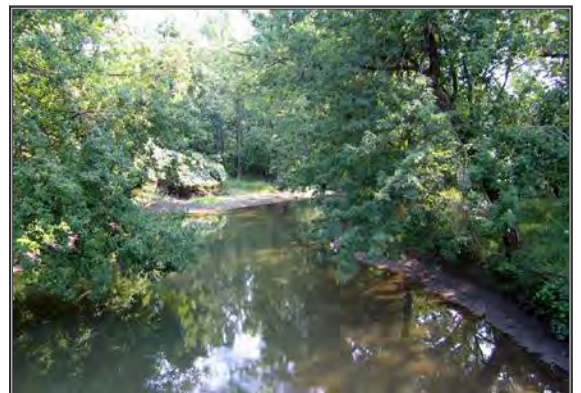
The guiding land use theme of this plan, to create “balanced land conservation and development” can be achieved if we plan according to the following principles.

Principles

- Focus new growth on vacant and underutilized land within and adjacent to the developed areas of the County.
- A network of centers, corridors and neighborhoods that will provide structure for guiding new growth and development.
- Compact designed new development minimizes the demand for land.
- High quality environments should be preserved to promote resource conservation and bio-diversity within and outside of Macon County.
- Plans for future utility expansions should be aligned with future land use and development objectives.
- A safe, suitable water supply should be maintained to meet agricultural, economic and community needs.



Wabash Crossing Neighborhood



Guiding Theme 2

An Accessible and Connected County

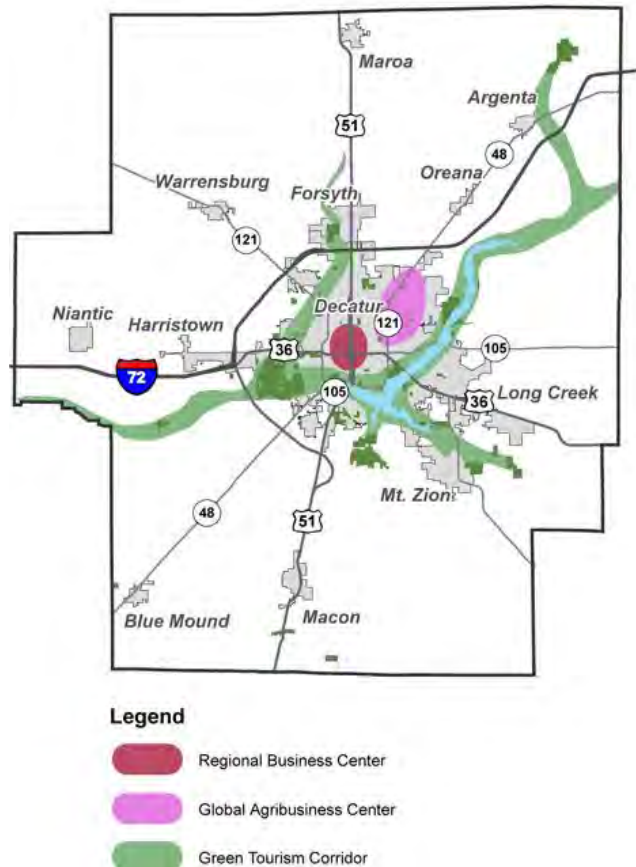
(We must use our transportation investments to enhance the efficiency and the character of our transportation corridors.)

A connected community brings us together through a local and regional system of pedestrian walkways, public transit opportunities and functional streets for vehicles. In a connected community, the transportation system is designed to provide choices. Connectivity means linking neighborhoods and places to one another.

Providing quality transportation services has been a major strength of our region since the Great Western Railroad and the Central Railroad crossed paths and created the first railroad intersection in the State of Illinois. County entrepreneurs were also early pioneers in mass transit by providing quality interurban electric train service between Decatur and neighboring cities.

We move into the future with a well developed transportation system consisting of good interstate connections, excellent urban and rural access to roads, a major rail hub, and the infrastructure in place for regional air traffic and local mass transit. But, we must maintain leadership in transportation services by addressing the freight needs of industry as well as the travel needs of our citizens.

We must also create well designed transportation improvements to help attract visitors in and through the community. Roadways serve as the gateways and corridors which define the image and identity of the County and its communities. Hence, the urban design of our transportation corridors is as important as the technical design of the systems themselves.



The guiding transportation theme of this plan, to create an “accessible and connected county” can be achieved if we plan according to the following principles:

Principles

- Transportation investments result in the safe, secure, and efficient movement of people and goods to, from, through and within the County.
- Improvements to the transportation system make the most cost-effective use of existing infrastructure.
- Macon County is the regional center for the distribution of goods through its extensive air, rail, and road network.
- Linkages give visitors and residents the opportunity to move freely within the region with a range of connected transportation choices.
- Circulation routes within and through neighborhoods reinforce the connection between residents and the service they need on a daily basis.



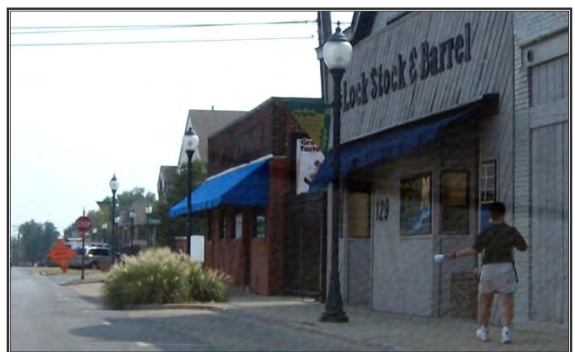
Brush College Road



**Southeast Decatur Shopping
(US Rt. 36 & IL Rt. 121)**



Decatur Park District Bike Trail



Oakwood Business Association

Guiding Theme 3 A Quality of Life Community

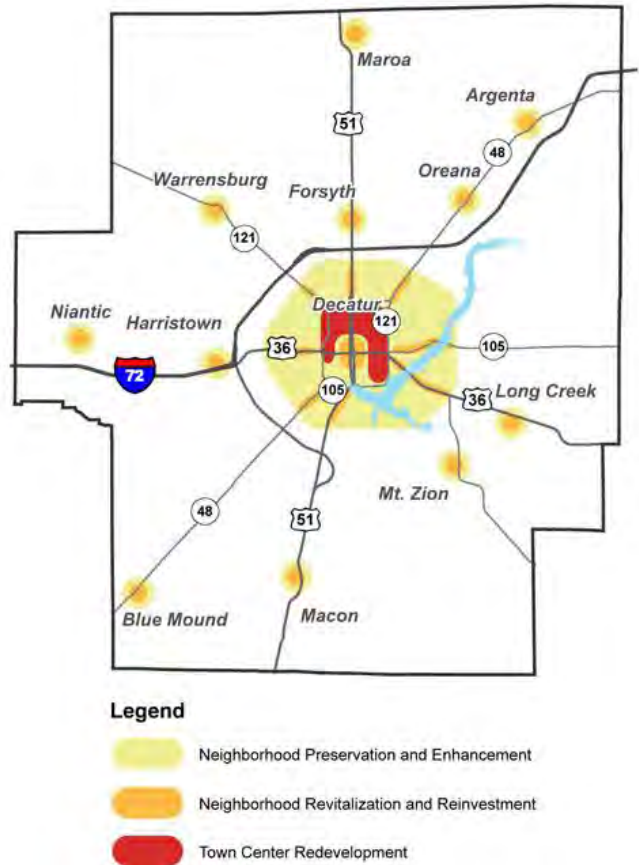
A good quality of life implies the ability of a community to provide its citizens with a safe environment offering quality work and career opportunities, good educational and recreational choices, desirable shopping and entertainment options and allows one to live within a well-designed and welcoming neighborhood of choice.

There is increasing evidence that quality of life issues are fast becoming essential elements in the business location, decision-making model. Macon County, with its prime location within the scenic landscape of the Sangamon River Valley is in a good position to take advantage of this changing dynamic.

Many of these elements are market driven, especially the provision of good shopping, entertainment and housing choices. Others depend upon the capability of local leadership and the availability of public resources.

One quality of life factor that cannot be achieved without community commitment is good schools. School quality is always at the heart of family decisions to relocate. In order to promote growth and progress, we must work together to address education and other issues related to overall quality of life. To that end, we must build on our history of self-sufficiency, not only to resolves issues in Decatur, but to insure that our surrounding towns continue to thrive and maintain their character.

The guiding community development theme of this plan, to create “quality of life communities”, can be achieved if we plan according to the following principles:



Principles

- Strengthening existing neighborhoods and villages is the focus of reinvestment strategies.
- Community design results in safe, walkable, diverse and attractive neighborhoods.
- Community investments reinforce a world-class, life-long learning environment.
- Housing choices expand to meet the needs of a changing population; younger and older people, and those with varying incomes.
- Private/public partnerships sustain and nurture the County's commitment to a high quality of life.



Historic Near West Neighborhood



Saint Patrick Catholic Church



**Rock Springs
Multipurpose Recreation Trail**



**Warrensburg Latham
High School and Middle School**

**Guiding Theme 4
Diversify the Economy**

Macon County’s goal is to increase the diversity of its economy to insure its long-term vitality as a place to live as well as work. Local business is committed to taking advantage of the County’s strategic location. It recognizes that there is strength in diversity and supports the idea of the County taking steps to attract a broader array of businesses, especially ones that reinforce the synergy between agriculture and industry.

A major milestone positioning the County as global leader in agribusiness is its selection as the biennial home of the Farm Progress Show. The proximity of Richland Community College, the Farm Progress Show and leading producers of agricultural products provides a networking environment that can drive the development, commercialization and marketing of new technologies and the future economic development of the County. Strategic investments, like the proposed Agribusiness and Occupational Technology Center located at Richland Community College, reinforce this key component of the economy.

At the same time, visitors have long been drawn to Macon County for its historic, cultural and natural attractions – including the shores of Lake Decatur and the surrounding park systems. The strong ties to Abraham Lincoln and the concentration of arts create visitor opportunities that are an untapped potential for a growing tourism industry.



The third leg of the economy is the central office and institutional core of downtown Decatur. Anchored on its north and south by two major healthcare institutions, downtown Decatur has the potential to further capture service-related employment industries of regional significance. A viable central Decatur is important to the economic growth of the entire County.

This three part program of economic diversity – agribusiness, recreational tourism and central city services - can be achieved if we plan according to the following principles:

Economic Diversity Principles

- The natural resources of the County sustain an economic engine of tourism to this unique attraction in the region.
- Agricultural production is a cornerstone of the local economy.
- Macon County provides existing and potential business with shovel ready sites and is actively working to promote and assist developers in creating modern business park environments.
- Agricultural-based industries serve as the core of an economic development strategy which cultivates new industries and entrepreneurship in emerging technologies and support industries.
- Downtown Decatur is the historic, cultural, governmental and emerging entertainment center of the County.
- Retail Services provide a range of quality goods and services to all parts of the County.
- Macon County captures the benefits of its economic growth for the greatest number of its residents.



Lake Decatur



Decatur Area Technical Academy



Hope Academy, Decatur Public Schools



Decatur Conference Center and Hotel

Guiding Theme 5 **Reinforce a Sense of Pride in Place**

Macon County has a rich history embedded in the lives of its founding families and the working men and women whose legacy is found in the culture and institutions. It is also an evolving landscape of diverse inner city neighborhoods and small communities. Today, Decatur honors this past with projects like the Lincoln Heritage Trail and celebrates the future with major events such as the Farm Progress Show.

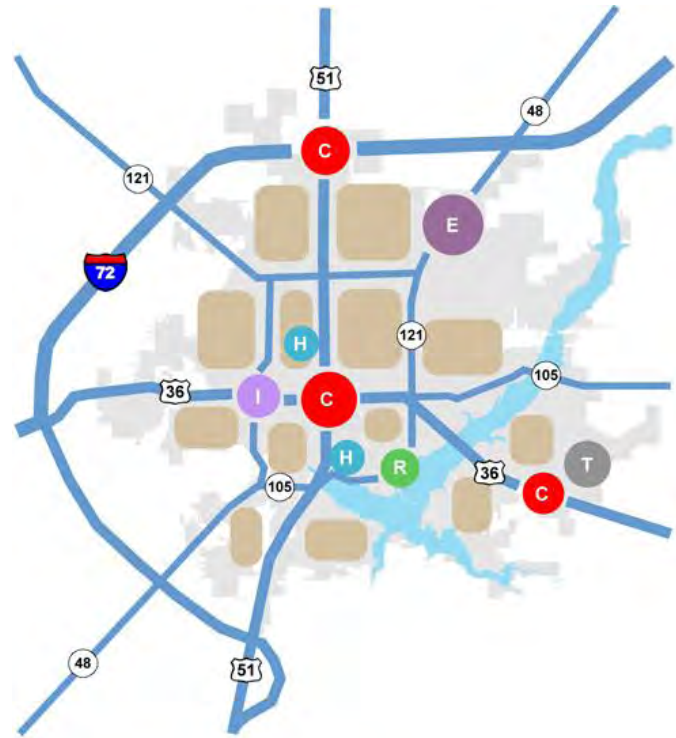
We need to find ways to re-instill the “can do” and entrepreneurial sense that built Decatur. We need to create places that bespeak our pride and come to define the value of our home.

People always tend to value the places they call home the most. While there is great value to be placed in our personal homes, the Plan will reach out, establish places of value, and protect places of beauty that we come to view as our community’s home.

Public spaces are the building blocks of a thriving city. Successful public spaces support many activities and uses, are comfortable and attractive, and are accessible. Macon County recognizes the benefits of creating good public spaces. They support the local economy, attract business, promote tourism and cultural activity, decrease crime, promote public health (through walking), and give identity to our city.

The plan enhances the City and County’s image through high quality design of the public realm, including creating attractive city gateways, preserving views, and providing attractive public right-of-way landscaping.

One Community will establish a strong sense of place within the region and give us all pride in the image as well as the quality of life in Macon County if we plan according to the following principles:



Legend









- | | | | |
|---|---------------------|---|-----------------------|
|  | Identity Corridors |  | Health Care Center |
|  | Neighborhood Places |  | Recreational Center |
|  | Commercial Center |  | Institutional Center |
|  | Employment Center |  | Transportation Center |

Image and Identity Principles

- Focal points of the arts, culture, and civic engagement are fostered throughout the County.
- The County's growing diversity is honored within its neighborhoods, institutions, and government.
- Parks, open spaces, and waterways are protected and enhanced as a catalyst to a reinvigorated image and identified as a source of pride to residents.
- Public infrastructure is located and designed to enhance the look and feel of the places it serves.



Public Participation - Visioning Session



West Main Streetscape in Decatur



Downtown Decatur



Decatur Park District's Fairview Park Pavilion

Chapter 4: Balanced Land Conservation and Development

Macon County contains approximately 586 square miles of land area within its boundaries. Over the past 150 years, the landscape has been transformed by agriculture.

Today, almost 84% of what was once a vast stretch of wetlands and prairies has been converted to agricultural purposes. The agricultural soils of Macon County are composed primarily of glacial till and loess material rather than being derived from parent rock. All are rich in humus providing the county with some of the most productive land in the nation.



Our county is also blessed with woodlands, wetlands, and waterways that residents have long enjoyed and sought to protect. Three percent of the County remains in woodlands and watersheds, particularly along the Sangamon River Valley which bisects the County. The preservation of these natural areas has been identified for their ecological value. Throughout the planning process, residents identified the feeling of common open space as one of the County’s strengths to be preserved.

The remaining thirteen percent is the heartbeat of the County, the City of Decatur and the surrounding towns and villages. Figures 4-1 and 4-2 identify the existing land use pattern within Macon County and Decatur respectively. It is a pattern which Macon County and its communities share with the national trend of a reduction in average household size over the past fifteen years. This has contributed to the contradictory trend of declining population and increased households in many areas of the County. The plan responds and redirects the allocation of growth proposed in the 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan to create a slightly more compact form of development. The pattern of Macon County’s future growth should generally occur in multiple directions around the urban centers.

An assessment of land use trends yields the following observations:

1. Since 1990, Macon County has experienced changes in its population that differ from the overall state trend. The population in Illinois has grown nearly 12 percent since 1990, while Macon County lost nine percent or 2,500 people during the same period. (Table 4-1).

Table 4-1

Jurisdiction	1990	2000	2005	Change, '90-'00	Change, '00-'05	Change, '90-'05
Illinois	11,430,602	12,419,293	12,765,427	988,691	2.8%	11.7%
Macon County	117,206	114,706	106,433	-2,500	-7.2%	-9.2%
Decatur	83,885	81,860	77,836	-2,025	-4.9%	-7.2%

2. Population change has varied across the County. The City of Decatur lost 2,025 or 7.2% of its population during this period. Growth in the rural communities of Long Creek, Niantic, Oreana and

Macon County and Decatur Comprehensive Plan

Mt. Zion were modest, on par with the state average. One striking exception was the growth of Forsyth, whose population has more than doubled, adding 1,159 people to its 1990 population of 1,275.

Table 4-2

Municipalities	1990	2000	2005	Change, '90-'00	Change, '00-'05	Change, '90-'05
Argenta	940	921	852	-19	-7.5%	-9.4%
Blue Mound	1,161	1,129	1,056	-32	-6.5%	-9.0%
Forsyth	1,275	2,434	2,762	1,159	13.5%	116.6%
Harristown	1,319	1,338	1,259	19	-5.9%	-4.5%
Long Creek	1,250	1,364	1,319	114	-3.3%	5.5%
Macon	1,282	1,213	1,151	-69	-5.1%	-10.2%
Maroa	1,602	1,654	1,563	52	-5.5%	-2.4%
Mount Zion	4,522	4,845	5,032	323	3.9%	11.3%
Niantic	647	738	690	91	-6.5%	6.6%

3. Macon County had the second largest decline in population of the peer counties. Between 1990 and 2005, Macon County lost 9.2% of its population, surpassed only by a 9.4% loss in Delaware County, Indiana. Overall, the peer counties grew by only 3.2% between 1990 and 2005, with only two counties – Champaign and Sangamon – reporting an increase in all three periods.

Table 4-3: Population Comparison to Peer Counties, 1990-2005

Peer Counties	Primary Cities	1990	2000	2005	Change, '90-'00	Change, '00-'05	Change, '90-'05
Macon (IL)	Decatur	117,206	114,706	106,433	-2.1%	-7.2%	-9.2%
McLean (IL)	Bloomington/Normal	129,180	150,433	146,894	16.5%	-2.4%	13.7%
Champaign (IL)	Champaign/Urbana	173,025	179,669	184,905	3.8%	2.9%	6.9%
Sangamon (IL)	Springfield	178,386	188,951	189,438	5.9%	0.3%	6.2%
Delaware (IN)	Muncie	119,659	118,769	108,356	-0.7%	-8.8%	-9.4%
Woodbury (IA)	Sioux City	98,276	103,877	99,729	5.7%	-4.0%	1.5%
Black Hawk (IA)	Waterloo/Cedar Falls	123,798	128,012	120,313	3.4%	-6.0%	-2.8%
Buchanan (MO)	St. Joseph	83,083	85,998	84,904	3.5%	-1.3%	2.2%
Peer County Average		129,344	136,530	133,506	5.6%	-2.2%	3.2%

Source: U. S. Census

4. Macon County and its communities have shared the national trend of a reduction in average household size over the past fifteen years. This has contributed to the contradictory trend of declining population and increased households in many areas of the County.

Municipalities	1990	2000	Change, '90-'00
Illinois	2.72	2.63	-3.3%
Macon County	2.55	2.39	-6.3%

Macon County and Decatur Comprehensive Plan

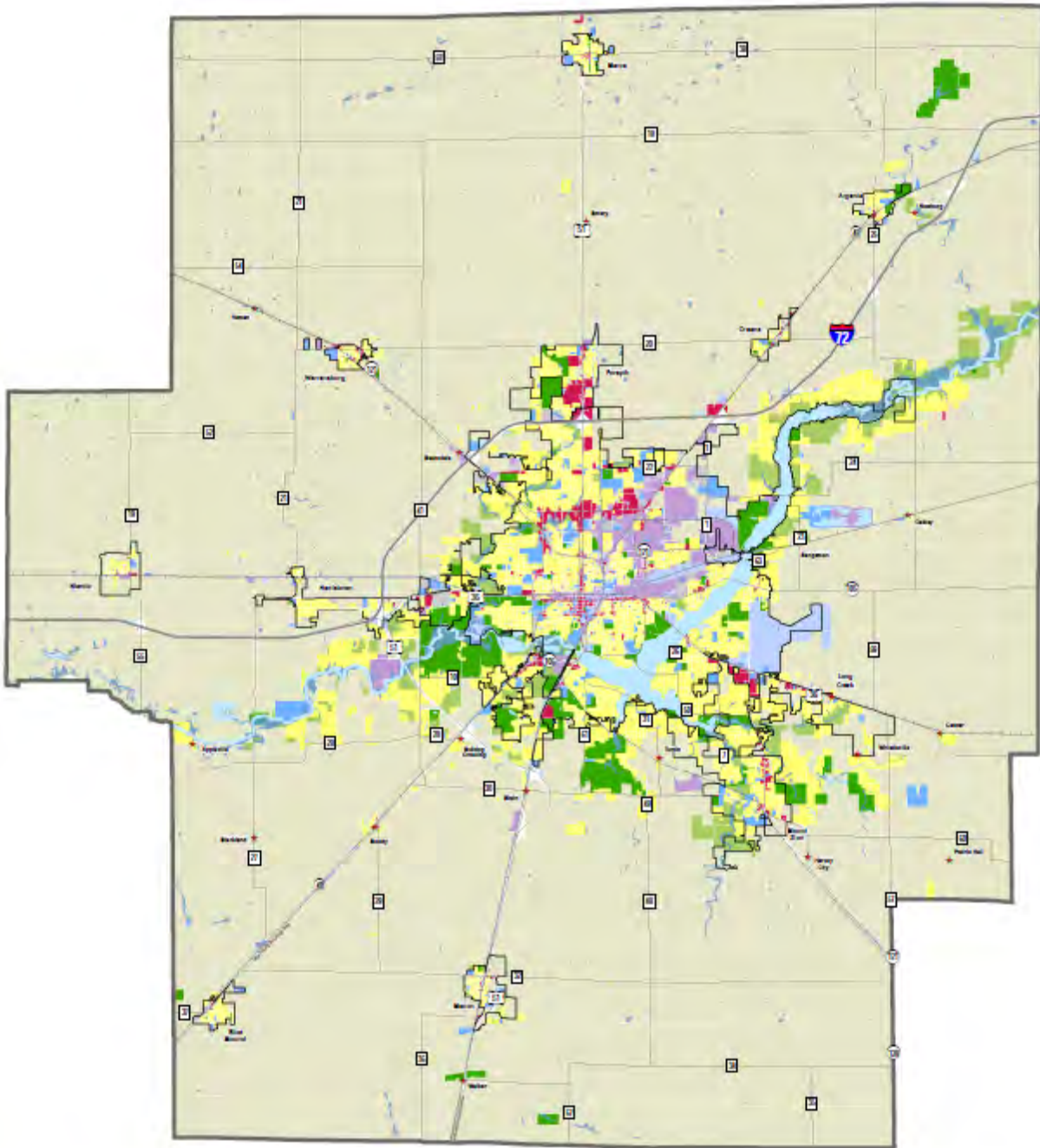
5. The Comprehensive Plan is based on the population projections prepared in 2004 by the Decatur Urbanized Area Transportation Study for the year 2030. These projections contemplate a low rate of population growth. They anticipate an increase of 3,455 households.

Source: U. S. Census

Table 4-2 Population by Township, 1990-2005

Townships	1990	2000	2005	Change, '90-'00	Change, '00-'05	Change, '90-'05
Austin	263	240	256	-8.7%	6.7%	-2.7%
Blue Mound	916	917	895	0.1%	-2.4%	-2.3%
Decatur	61,907	57,485	55,179	-7.1%	-4.0%	-10.9%
Friends Creek	1,429	1,451	1,398	1.5%	-3.7%	-2.2%
Harristown	1,956	1,911	1,827	-2.3%	-4.4%	-6.6%
Hickory Point	16,556	17,380	17,210	5.0%	-1.0%	4.0%
Illini	1,517	1,563	1,499	3.0%	-4.1%	-1.2%
Long Creek	10,628	10,512	10,167	-1.1%	-3.3%	-4.3%
Maroa	1,828	1,949	1,909	6.6%	-2.1%	4.4%
Milam	104	95	109	-8.7%	14.7%	4.8%
Mt Zion	5,922	6,265	6,406	5.8%	2.3%	8.2%
Niantic	850	896	861	5.4%	-3.9%	1.3%
Oakley	1,060	1,157	1,169	9.2%	1.0%	10.3%
Pleasant View	1,486	1,424	1,363	-4.2%	-4.3%	-8.3%
South Macon	1,633	1,540	1,491	-5.7%	-3.2%	-8.7%
South Wheatland	4,340	4,086	4,008	-5.9%	-1.9%	-7.6%
Whitmore	4,741	3,965	4,420	-16.4%	11.5%	-6.8%

Source: U. S. Census



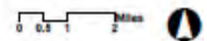
Legend

- | | | | |
|---|---|--|--|
| Residential | Public/Institutional | Undeveloped Open Space | Municipal Boundary |
| Commercial | Transportation/Utility | Agricultural | Vacant Land |
| Industrial | Park/Open Space | | * Unincorporated City |

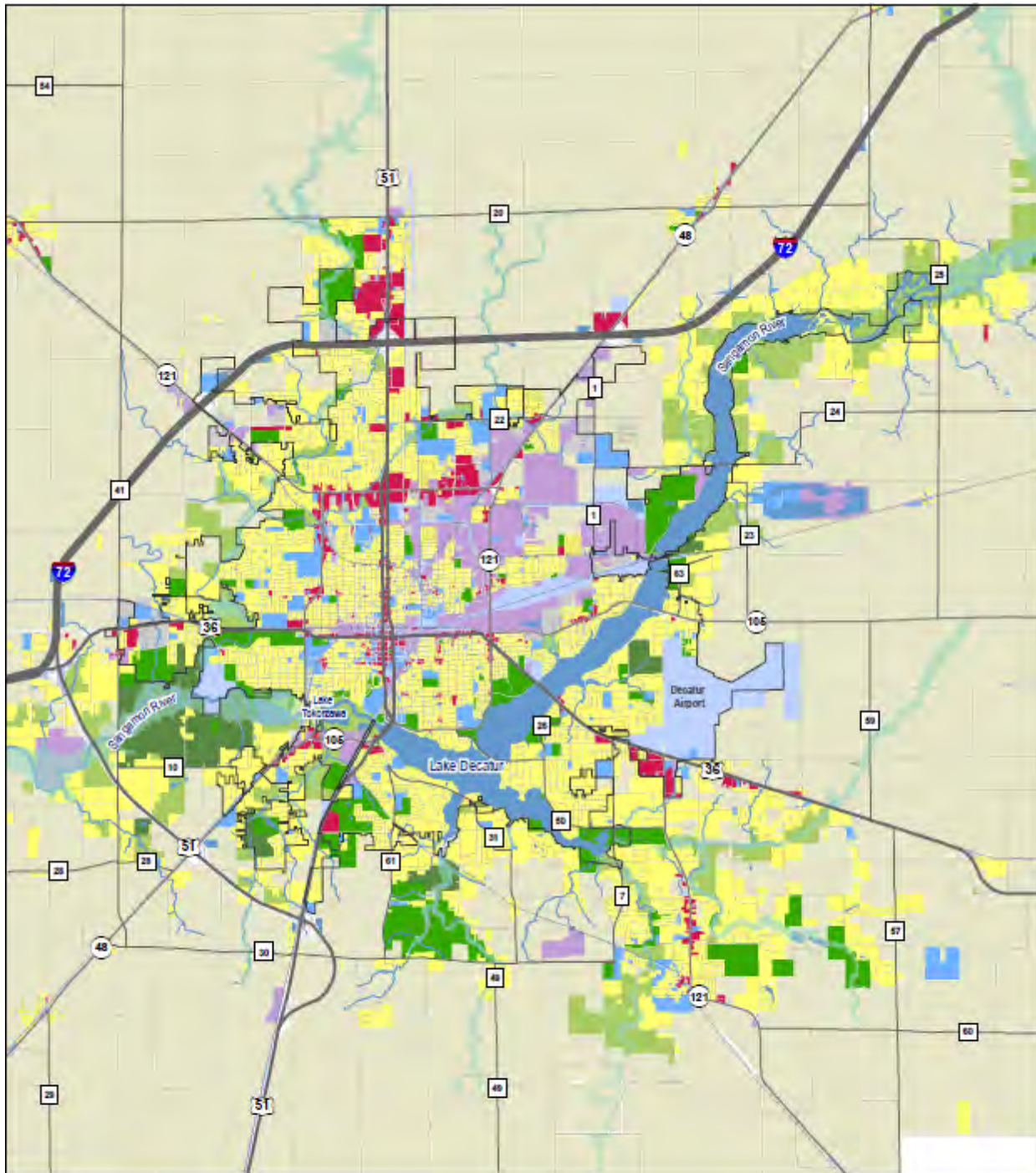
FIGURE 4-1

MACON COUNTY EXISTING LAND USE

MACON COUNTY/DECATUR COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



CAMIROS



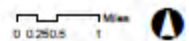
Legend

- | | | | |
|---|---|--|--|
| Residential | Public/Institutional | Undeveloped Open Space | 100 Year Floodplain |
| Commercial | Transportation/Utility | Agricultural | |
| Industrial | Park/Open Space | Vacant Land | |

FIGURE 4-2

DECATUR URBANIZED AREA: EXISTING LAND USE

MACON COUNTY/DECATUR COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



CAMIROS

Balanced Land Development and Conservation Principles

- D1. New growth within the County is focused on vacant and underutilized land within and adjacent to the developed areas of the County.
- D2. Compactly designed new development minimizes the demand for land.
- D3. High quality environments are preserved to promote resource conservation and bio-diversity within and outside of Macon County.
- D4. Plans for future utilities expansion are aligned with future land use and development objectives.
- D5. A safe, suitable water supply is maintained to meet agricultural, economic and community needs.

Principle D1. Focus new growth on vacant and underutilized land within and adjacent to the developed areas of the County.

Land is being developed at an increasing rate to accommodate all land uses. To minimize land conversion while accommodating growth requires a more efficient pattern of land development. The Plan divides the County into four development zones identified in Figure 4-3 and described below.

1. **Urban Density Zone.** This Zone consists of the Central Business District and the surrounding older neighborhoods of Decatur. It is typified by smaller lots and a higher percentage of multi-family buildings. The density ranges from 3-7 units per acre.
2. **Suburban Density Development Zone.** This Suburban Zone consists of land around the periphery of the Urban Density Zone and land within the municipal boundaries of the rural villages. This zone is predominantly developed land that is more suburban in character and function than the Urban Density Zone. In addition, there are undeveloped and agricultural areas within the Suburban Density Zone. This zone is the area where growth should occur over the next 25 years.
3. **Agricultural Zone.** The Agricultural Zone consists of areas within the county where the preferred land use is farming and the operation of agricultural related activities.
4. **Conservation Zone.** The Conservation Zone consists of areas within the county designated to preserve high quality habitat, watersheds, and environmental features.

The goal of the plan is to conserve open space and high quality agricultural land by limiting growth primarily to the 11,121 net developable acres within the Urban and Suburban Zones as shown in Table 4.3.

	Total Acres	Households		
		2000	2030	Change
Urban Zone	65,523	24,337	25,515	721
Suburban Zone	15,227	16,798	18,364	2,605
Villages	3,367	2,923	2,976	129
Unincorporated	287,456	2,499	2,499	0
Macon County	371,573	46,557	49,847	3,455

Table 4- 2: Demand for Developable Land by Development Zone

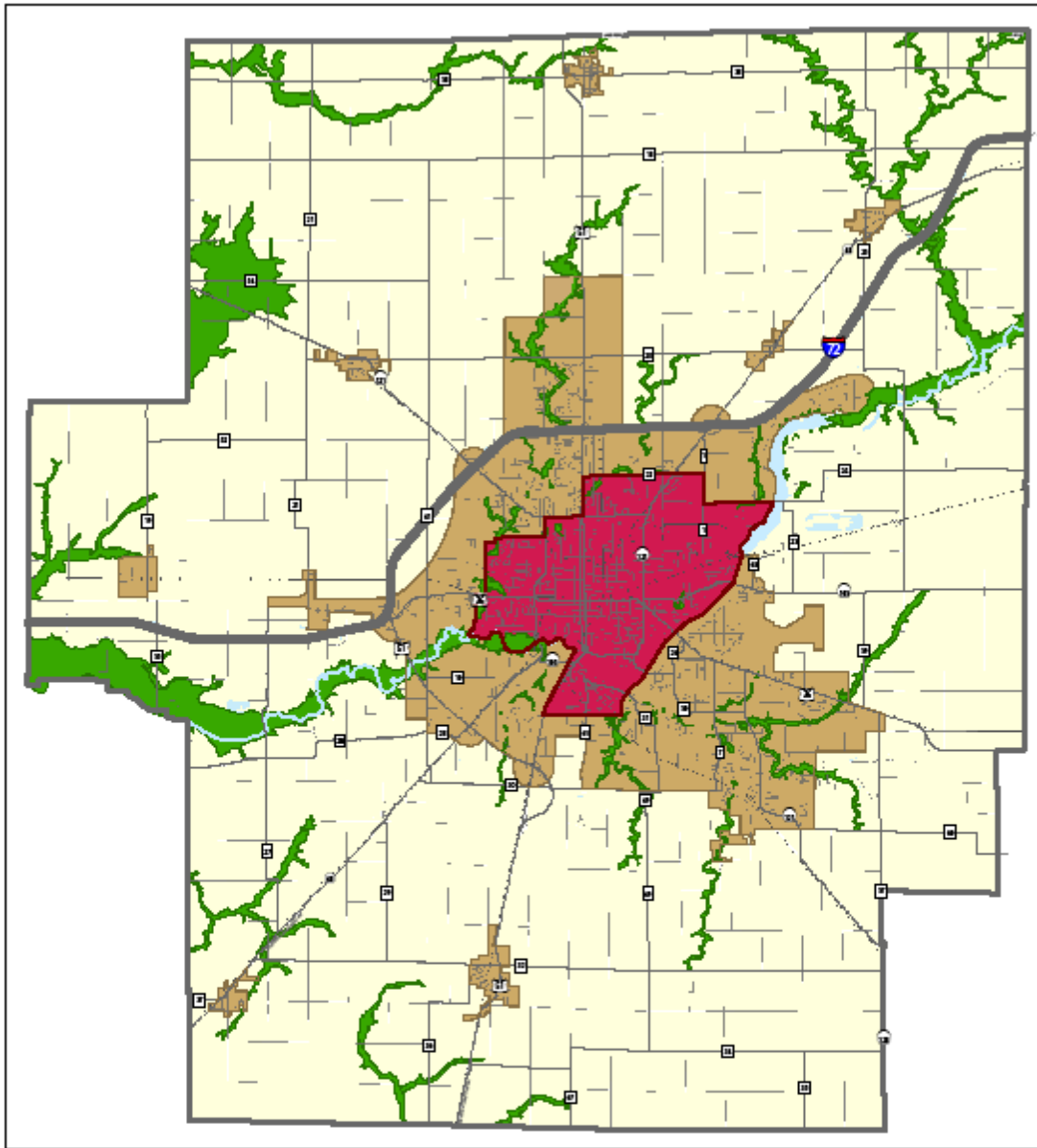
	Developable Acres Available within the Zone	Projected Residential Acreage Demand
Urban Zone	389	145
Suburban Zone	10,267	1,302
Villages	465	65
Unincorporated	0	0
Macon County	11,121	1,512

Table 4- 3: Supply of Developable Land by Development Zone

Carefully planning growth means providing a framework for Macon County and its communities to make informed long-range decisions about how and where growth will take place. Figure 4-3, Development Zone Map, should be used as a guide to making future land use decisions in the community.

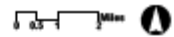
The Development Zone Map illustrates the planned future development of the county. The Map is a policy document and not a regulatory document. This document allows for informed decision-making by policymakers on future land use policy and, in particular, to shape specific zoning regulations and other development controls. The map, in addition to the specific land use goals, objectives, and policies of this Plan, are intended to guide land use decision-making in the County.

The primary land use strategy is to direct new development, particularly residential development, into the municipalities and areas where there is already infrastructure in place. Future development within the County should be concentrated within and around existing municipal boundaries. This strategy is specifically intended to preserve agricultural land and natural resources; as is evident throughout this Plan, Macon County identifies itself as both urban and rural, and therefore the intent of this plan for anticipated future development is to protect this balance.



- Legend**
- Urban Density Zone
 - Suburban Density Zone
 - Conservation Zone
 - Agricultural Zone

FIGURE 4-3
DISTRICTS (URBAN, SUBURBAN, AGRICULTURAL AND CONSERVATION)



MACON COUNTY/DECATUR COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

CAMIROS

- A. Classify the County into four development zones for the purpose of long-range planning and use this map as part of the land use decision-making process.
- Encourage municipal plans to be developed consistent with the development pattern set forth in the land use and development zone maps. They should also be presented to other special purpose governments for their adoption.
 - Update and coordinate the City and County’s land use regulation, mapping, and review process incorporating the land use recommendations as part of the review of zoning requests and development approvals.
- B. Limit the areas of new growth within the outlying villages to an area not to exceed ¼ mile from the existing municipal boundaries and that should occur only as part of a planned process of annexation.
- C. Establish environmental suitability as a key limiting factor in determining the nature and location of future development and integrating appropriate development options, like conservation design described in Detail 1, into the regulatory process.
- D. Shift new housing development away from scattered and isolated subdivision development to managed annexation and infill development.

Principle D2. Compactly designed new development minimizes the demand for land.

Mixed-use developments offer opportunities for residents to work, live, and play all within one neighborhood or district. To be successful, mixed-use projects should contain a mix of complementary and connected uses (such as retail, offices, and residential), with a variety of densities, as well as lively public spaces. Furthermore, the design of mixed-use areas should emphasize pedestrian comfort and safety and should include and support connections to other parts of the community.

- Vertical mixed-use: refers to the integration of two or more land-use types within a building, occurring on different floors, one of which is residential. A typical example of a vertical mixed-use building would incorporate active uses such as stores, offices, and restaurants, at the street level and residential or office uses on the upper floors.
- Horizontal mixed-use: refers to a pattern where several types of uses or buildings, together with residential, are included, as part of a cohesive development in proximity to each other, with each building containing its own separate use. An example would be a development site that might include an area for residential uses, an office building, and a retail center. They would be designed as a set of coordinated uses, with common parking areas, strong pedestrian connections, and similar design features, but would contain separate uses in each building.

Policies and Strategies

- A. Establish zoning techniques in new growth areas, such as conversation design described in Detail 1, to encourage compact development.

- B. Encourage mixed-use infill environments by targeting incentive funded projects within the villages and neighborhoods of the County.
- C. Guide the design of new development to encourage a continuous pedestrian system. Pedestrian safety as well as links to mass transit should be an integral part of the design of mixed-use developments within the urbanized area.

DETAIL 1: CONSERVATION DESIGN

Purpose

A Conservation Design development is intended to preserve environmentally sensitive areas while allowing for residential development. The intent is to work with – rather than against – the natural and scenic qualities of open space (i.e., lakes, streams, wetlands, and other natural land features). The creation of such a zoning district within the development regulations would accomplish a number of goals:

- A more detailed analysis of the proposed site to be developed would allow for better location and coordination of areas best suited for development or conservation.
- The County’s rural character would be maintained by permanent preservation of natural resources and scenic natural views.
- The preference is to select sites with low agricultural potential.
- Conservation design requires extensive buffering between residential development and non-residential uses, such as agriculture, to prevent land use conflict.

Conservation Design promotes clustering of residential development within the larger development space and maintains the remainder of the site as open space, common open space either shared by the community or preserved in its natural state. There is a perimeter buffer along the edge of the development, a minimum development size of 40 acres, required minimum open space for the development (typically 40% of the total site area), and spacing requirements between residential clusters within the development.

Regulation

Because Conservation Design is permitted throughout the County, the district must include additional standards that a proposed development must meet in order to receive approval. These relate directly to the purpose of the District – the preservation of natural features and agricultural areas.

Principle D3. High quality environments are preserved to promote resource conservation and bio-diversity within and outside of Macon County.

The purpose of balanced land use and development is to encourage a “sense of place” within the County. One way to do this is to emphasize and celebrate the natural features that distinguish it from other places.

Within the context of the Comprehensive Plan, open space is defined as those lands referred to in the Conservation Map (Figure 4-4) as being intentionally left free from future development, and in which it has been determined that it is in the public interest to acquire control over future development.

The Macon County Conservation District is responsible for acquiring, maintaining, and restoring native ecosystems within the County. The District manages over 3,200 acres of land, including mature oak-hickory forests, river and stream floodplain, wetlands, and open natural habitats that support a variety of plants and animals. In 2004, the District completed a plan for the management and development of its holdings, which, by reference, is made a part of the County plan.



Policies and Strategies

1. Limit development and minimize off-site development impacts in environmentally sensitive areas with best development practices consistent with the Conservation Zone.
2. Prioritize the expansion of the Conservation Zone based on preservation of natural resources, including but not limited to forest lands, agricultural lands, aquifer recharge areas and surface water, significant natural communities, rare plant sites, wetlands, and other important stands of vegetation. Figure 4-5 provides a detailed view of the Conservation Zone in the Decatur area.
3. Fully utilize all available resources, including acquisition, easement, sub-division regulation, and the Conservation Resource Enhancement Program, to support the Conservation Zone identified in this plan.
4. Target for future open space preservation areas within the Conservation Zone consistent with the priorities set forth in the 2004 Macon County Conservation District Comprehensive Plan.
 - Area along the Upper Sangamon River
 - Friends Creek south of Friends Creek Conservation Area
 - Areas with significant cultural or historic resources
 - Forested sites over 100 acres
 - Grasslands over 80 acres
 - Wetlands over 50 acres
 - In-holdings of private land associated with District holdings
 - Areas between district holdings and private land.

Principle D.4. Plans for future utilities expansion are aligned with future land use and development objectives.

One of the key findings of the State of the County Report was that the availability of adequate infrastructure, particularly sanitary sewer systems, is a primary driver of new development. The original Decatur Sanitary District boundaries included all of Decatur, Decatur Township, portions of South Wheatland and Long Creek Townships, and contained 33 square miles. As adjoining areas have developed and requested service, the District has grown to serve an area of 47 square miles. The Sanitary District has the authority to provide its service anywhere in the County and has excess capacity well into the near future to serve residential, commercial, and industrial.

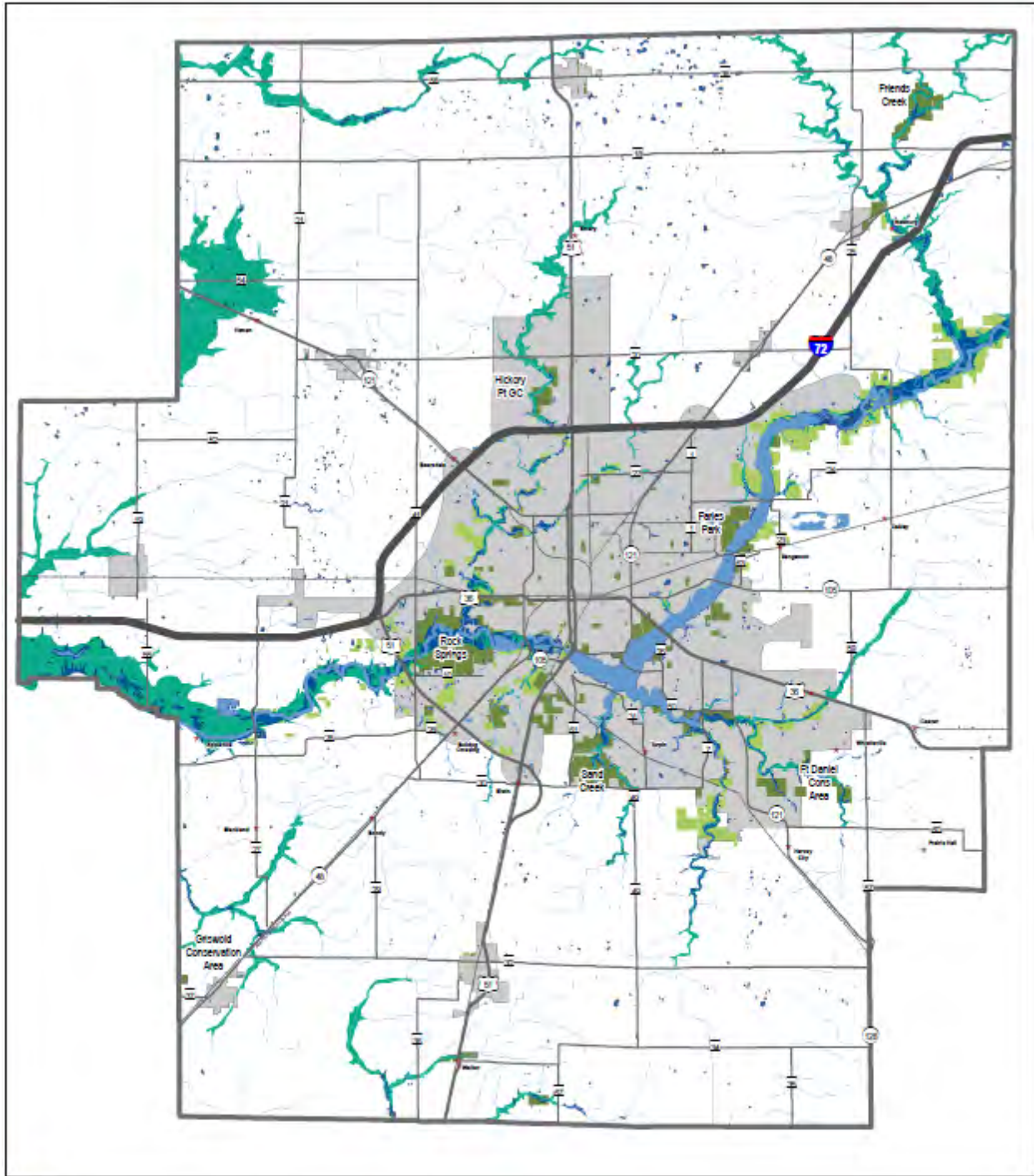
Policies and Strategies

- A. Utilize the Development Zone Map as a guide for the expansion of sewer and water service. In particular, this Plan calls for future development to be strategically compact and contiguous to existing development. Adherence to these development principles will enable utility services to be extended in a more efficient manner, with shorter lines accommodating a larger population.
- B. Establish agreements between the Sanitary District, City of Decatur, and the County that place reasonable limits on future sewer extension in order to achieve the land use principles of this Plan.

Principle D5. A safe, suitable water supply is maintained to meet agricultural, economic, and community needs.

Water is one of the most important natural resources in Macon County. Its availability has long been the subject of discussion and a cause for concern. In its natural state, Macon County is an imperfectly to well-drained area. The upland areas are generally too flat to drain well and require extensive tiling. The remainder of the County is well drained and has a good stream system. The major drainage way in the County is the Sangamon River, which bisects the County in an east-west direction. The tributary streams are Friends Creek, Stevens Creek, Long Creek, Findley Creek, Mosquito Creek, Grove Creek, Willow Branch Creek, Lake Fork and South Fork Creeks.

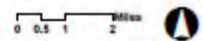
Residential demand in the City of Decatur has been relatively stable over the past decade. However, periods of drought have impressed residents with the need to plan additional water storage capacity to take advantage of the high-water periods of the Sangamon River and to serve both homes and key local employers. The very close cycle of economic partnership between the city and the city's major employers is a deciding factor in investing in water storage. Decisions as to additional water capacity had not been made at the time this plan was published.



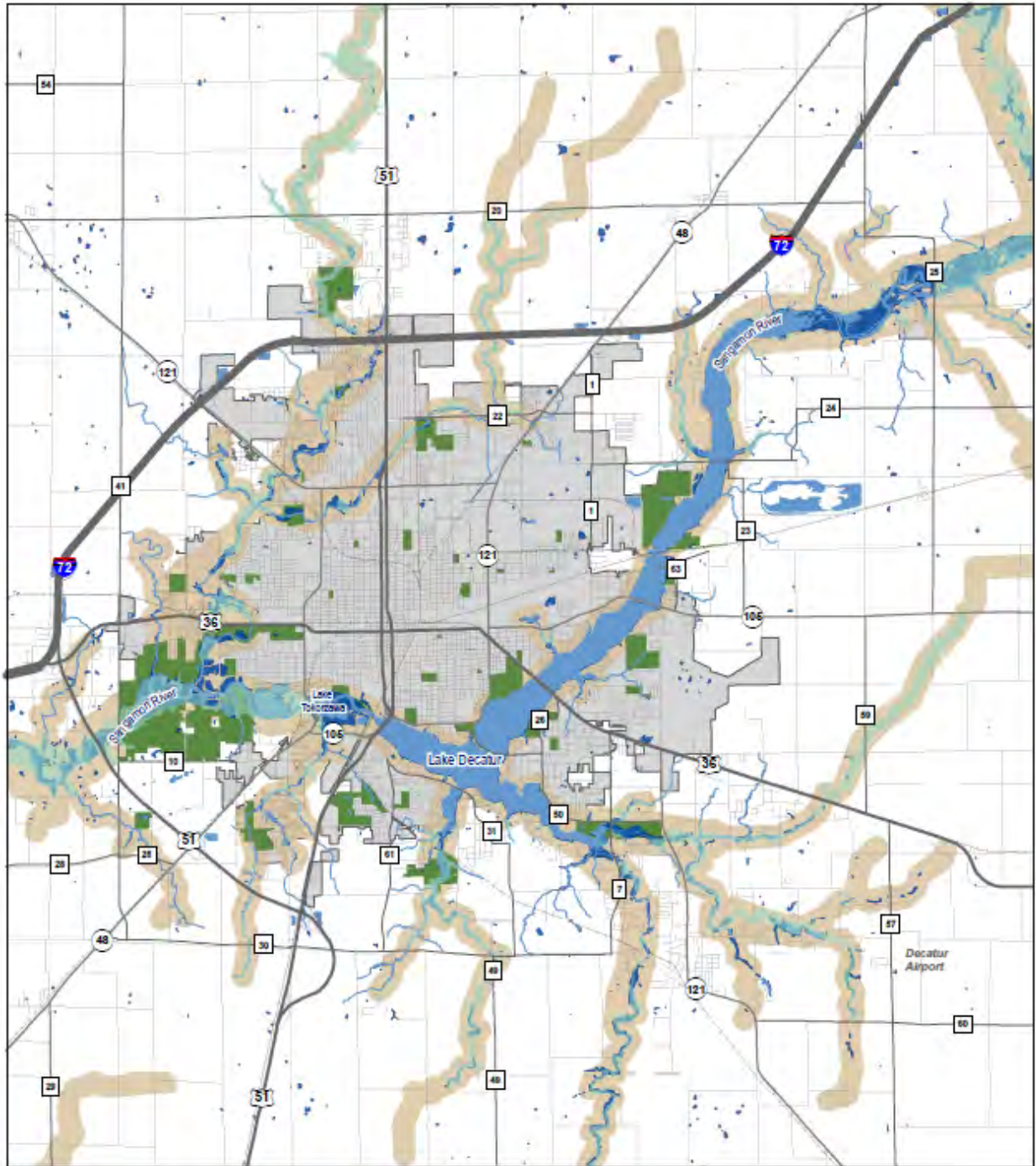
- Legend**
- Existing Park/Conservation Area
 - Other Environmentally Valuable Area
 - Wetland
 - 100 Year Floodplain
 - Suburban Density Zone

FIGURE 4-4
MACON COUNTY CONSERVATION ZONE

MACON COUNTY/DECATUR COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



CAMIROS



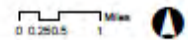
Legend

- Open Space/Conservation Area
- Water
- Half Mile Natural Resource Buffer Zone
- Wetlands
- 100 Year Floodplain

FIGURE 4-5

DECATUR OPEN SPACE AND NATURAL FEATURES

MACON COUNTY/DECATUR COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



CAMIROS

While the majority of drinking water for Decatur is supplied by the Sangamon River, most residents outside of Decatur rely on groundwater resources to meet their drinking water needs. Strategies for protecting and enhancing drinking water in Macon County and Decatur must address both groundwater and surface-water supply systems. The protection of drinking water systems can be enhanced by discouraging development on conventional septic systems.

Water resources know no boundaries. Groundwater and surface water flow freely between jurisdictions, as do various contaminants and storm water runoff. Therefore, solutions to protecting water quality must be inter-jurisdictional and cooperative.

Policies and Strategies

- A. Adopt cooperative decision making and uniform standards for providing adequate water capacity protecting water quality throughout the region. Local units of government should collaborate with local environmental groups such as the Sangamon River Watershed Initiative to identify and reduce pollution sources, expand green infrastructure that helps to filter contaminants, and encourage appropriate land use and development guidelines that will reduce river contamination.

For example, the City of Decatur and the Macon County Soil & Water Conservation District have jointly cooperated on reducing soil erosion and improving the water quality on the 925 square miles of East Central Illinois land that drains into Lake Decatur. Surface water from as far away as Gibson City in Ford County - 50 miles from the City of Decatur - eventually enters the lake. However, thousands of tons of soil and other contaminants have been prevented from entering Lake Decatur through the joint efforts of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Soil & Water Conservation Districts in the watershed.

- B. Scenic corridors and natural watercourse areas should remain free from development to protect water resources and/or riparian habitat. Riparian areas proposed for preservation include: 1) Lower Sangamon River, 2) Stevens Creek, 3) Spring Creek, 4) Long Creek, 5) Big Creek, 6) Findley Creek, 7) Sand Creek, 8) Upper Sangamon River, 9) Friends Creek, and 10) Kickapoo Creek.
- C. Create a countywide map of all wellhead protection areas. Encourage efforts to identify and map additional types of wells that could be significantly impacted by contaminated groundwater.
- D. Undertake measures to educate the public about ways to maintain clean and well-functioning water and septic systems.

Chapter 5:

A High Quality of Community Life

All community plans are directed toward assuring that the services and physical improvements provided by local government give local citizens and businesses a high quality of life in which to work, live, and play. Within the context of this plan, a “high quality of life” implies the ability of the County and its municipalities to provide citizens with a safe environment, offering quality work and career opportunities, good educational and recreational choices, desirable shopping and entertainment options, and allowing one to live within a well-designed and welcoming neighborhood of choice.

A theme expressed by many involved in the public participation process was the need to preserve small town character of the smaller communities. Although not part of the adoption of this plan, these communities play an important role in its development and will be instrumental in the implementation countywide.

This plan represents a collaborative vision and a collective responsibility. Under the present governmental structure, neither the cities nor the County can directly address all of the above needs. They can, however, set the context for these actions by taking specific policy positions, encouraging and supporting the work of sister agencies, and making certain service and infrastructure improvements in a manner which enables the other governments or private sector parties to take those actions which do result in the envisioned quality of life.

An assessment of current community development issues leads to the following observations:

1. The age distribution of the Macon County population has not changed significantly in recent years but, in numeric terms, the absolute decline in the 25-44 range may signal an aging population over the next twenty years.
2. Median household income in Macon County has increased 32.4% since 1990, compared to 44.5% statewide. Forsyth and Mt. Zion have the highest median household income levels in the county, with Forsyth experiencing the greatest overall increase of 46% from 2000. This change is in keeping with other trends that are occurring in Forsyth.
3. The total number of housing units has remained relatively flat in Macon County over the past twenty years. The largest margin of change has been through losses in Decatur and increases in Forsyth and Mt. Zion. The range of housing choices has not kept up with changes in populations.

Table 5-1: Number of Housing Units

Primary Cities	2000	1990
Macon County	50,241	50,049
Decatur	37,239	37,470
Argenta	385	369
Blue Mound	483	461
Forsyth	941	458
Harristown	525	485
Long Creek	500	447
Macon	491	489
Maroa	711	680
Mt. Zion	1884	1666
Oreana	353	304
Warrensburg	527	502

Source: U. S. Census (Macon County and Municipalities, 2000, 1999)

4. The median value of an owner-occupied home in Decatur in 2000 was \$63,200 as compared to \$130,800 for the state of Illinois. Rents are also affordable with the gross median rent in 2000 of \$447 as compared to \$667 for the State of Illinois. Housing costs are a product of median incomes and are determining factor in the market’s ability to provide housing choices.

5. One reason for the lower cost of housing in Decatur is its age and condition. Fifty five percent of residential structures were built before 1960 and over 87% are over 25 years old. The age of housing highlights not only the relative age of our housing stock but the challenge of meeting the contemporary demand for housing. The contemporary single-family home is getting larger, reflecting our desire for space and privacy and our desire for access to shopping and other community amenities. Older smaller homes in established neighborhoods are losing favor to larger homes further out on the urban fringe.

6. The cost of community services is increasing on a per capita basis as the population becomes more widely dispersed.

7. Identifying quality education as the number one priority throughout the community was the factor that was expressed in terms of disparities between school districts.

High Quality of Life Principles

- C1. A network of centers, corridors, and neighborhoods serves as the organizing framework for planning for future growth and redevelopment.
- C2. Good community design results in safe, walk-able, diverse, and attractive neighborhoods.
- C3. Community investments reinforce the development of an excellent, lifelong learning environment.
- C4. Housing choices expand to meet the needs of a changing population, younger and older people, and those with varying incomes.
- C5. Private/public partnerships sustain and nurture the County's commitment to a high quality of life.

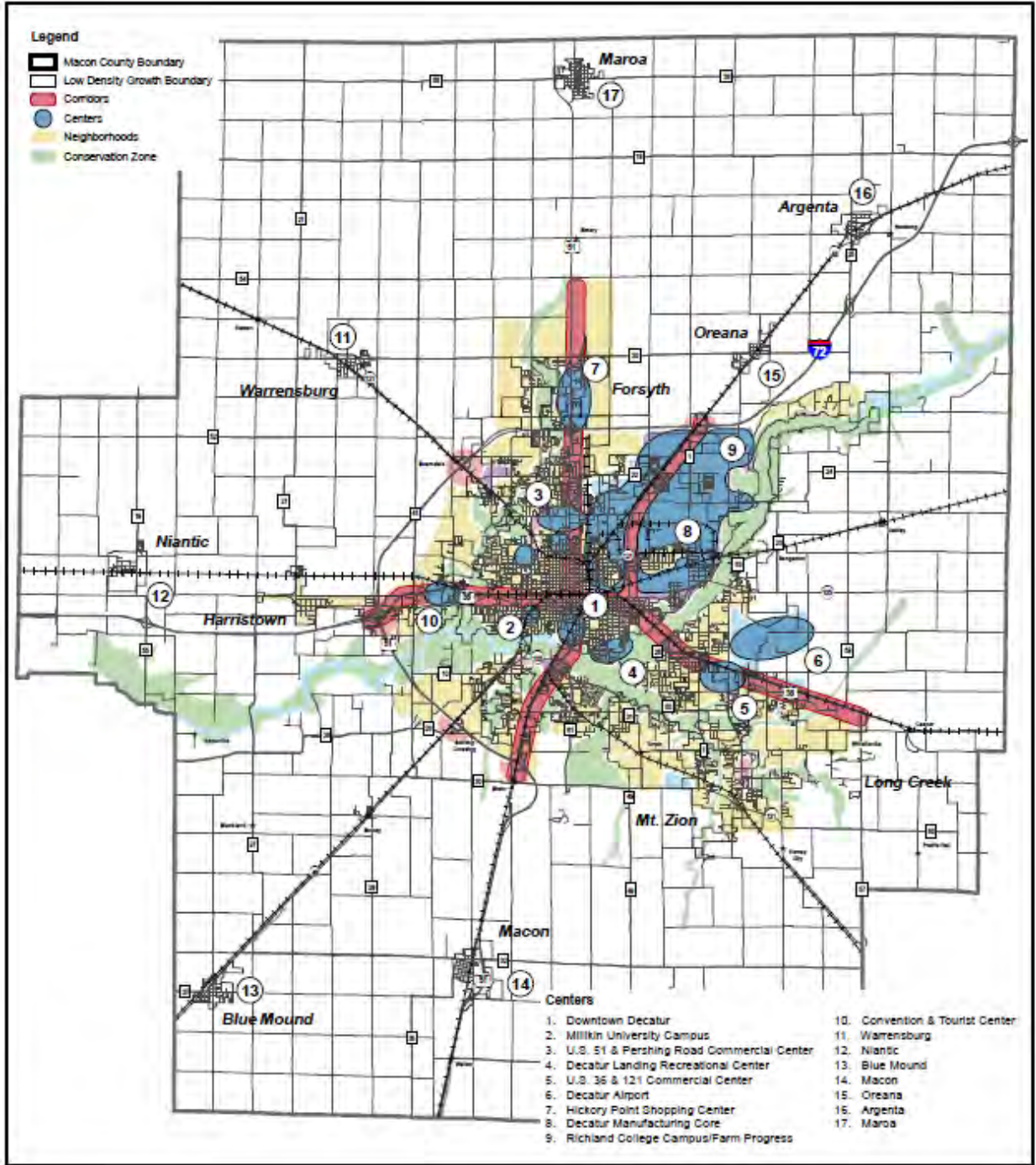


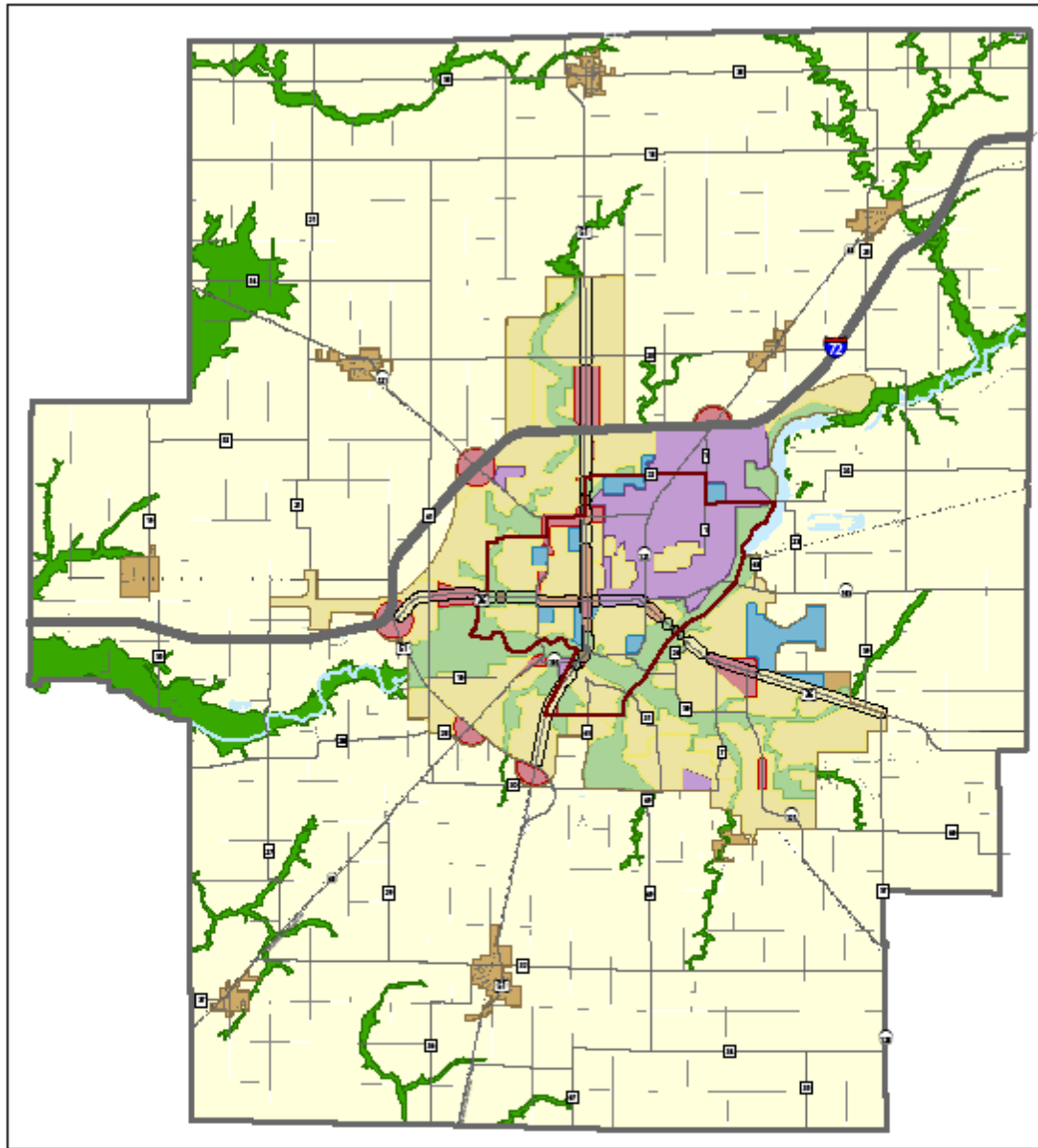
FIGURE 5-1

CORRIDOR CENTERS & NEIGHBORHOODS

MACON COUNTY/DECATUR COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

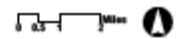


CAMIROS



- Legend**
- Urban Density Zone
 - Suburban Density Zone
 - Conservation Zone
 - Agricultural Zone
 - Residential
 - Industrial
 - Commercial
 - Institutional
 - Conservation Zone

FIGURE 6-2
COUNTYWIDE CONCEPTUAL PLAN
MACON COUNTY/DECATUR COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



CAMIROS

Principle C1. A network of centers, corridors and neighborhoods serves as the organizing framework for planning for future growth and redevelopment.

It is important as growth occurs within the Development Zone that the result is a pattern of functionally distinct but integrated places that contribute to each other's success.

- **Center:** Centers are places of concentrated community activities, which contribute regionally to the County's quality of life. Designated centers should be the focus of City and County efforts to strengthen existing locations and to build future activity centers. The plan identifies seventeen key centers throughout the county. (See Figure 5-1)
- **Corridor:** Corridors are transportation arterials which move people between centers and, by design, define the boundaries of centers. The plan identifies five key corridors, which radiate out from Downtown Decatur, through the neighborhoods and into the surrounding countryside.
- **Neighborhood:** A dense number of residences clustered together with the goods and services necessary to meet a community's daily needs and organized in a fine-grained pattern of local streets. These neighborhoods are part of the County's fabric at both the village and urban scale.

Policies and Strategies

- A. Implement a sub-area development strategy, which divides the developing region into centers, corridors, and neighborhoods. The conceptual development pattern of the centers, corridors, and neighborhoods are illustrated in Figure 5-1.
- B. Allocate future land use based on this strategy. The conceptual land use pattern within the centers, corridors, and neighborhoods strategy are illustrated in Figure 5-2.
- C. Plan and invest in neighborhoods in a manner which reflects their existing character and needs as defined by the categories below and illustrated in Figure 5-3.

Preservation Neighborhoods contain little additional developable land, have little pressure for redevelopment, and experience stable or appreciating property values.

Many areas within Decatur are established either as existing residential neighborhoods or as supporting commercial areas. Though these areas face comparatively limited pressures for new development and/or change, land use planning techniques and policies are needed to preserve these areas' existing, valued characteristics and to ensure that these areas remain vital and functioning areas within the community. Further, it is essential that adjacent new development and redevelopment is not only compatible, but also enhances these existing neighborhoods and commercial areas.

- Current levels of infrastructure investment and services should be maintained.
- Zoning maps should reinforce existing desired land use and urban design patterns.

- The model block strategy in Figure 5-4 serves as a guide to the design of programs that serve to stabilize and maintain the quality of preservation neighborhoods.

Regenerating Neighborhoods are neighborhoods undergoing a long-term adverse transition of land use and/or density. They exhibit physical deterioration of private structures and public facilities, underutilized land and buildings, and declining property values. The strategies are outlined below and exemplified in the model block strategies in Figures 5-5 and 5-6.

- Facilitate residential redevelopment of an infill on a block-wide scale as appropriate to existing conditions.
- Create mortgage equity insurance programs to reduce the risk of new residential and commercial investment.
- Encourage employer-subsidized home ownership programs that increase home ownership in targeted neighborhoods.
- Assure that code enforcement is backed by rehabilitation grants and loans to enable homeowners or landlords to make needed improvements within their financial means.
- Modify zoning requirements to enable lot assemblage and the development of new, contemporary sized housing types.
- Provide public infrastructure improvements including street and sidewalk repair, public landscape improvements, and lighting.
- Create vacant or abandoned lot purchase opportunities that favor adjacent homeowners, local developers who commit to constructing desired housing types priced to reflect local market, and other parties who can present a program that commits to carrying out city and neighborhood supported revitalization actions.

Emerging Neighborhoods are newly constructed on large in-fill sites or created as the result of new subdivisions in the suburban zone. The intent is to locate and build new development such that it links to adjacent existing development in a manner that creates cohesive neighborhoods, not isolated subdivisions. Thus, the preferred areas for new suburban development are those that are contiguous to existing developed areas and close to existing major roadways. This allows for the most cost and operationally efficient pattern of municipal services and infrastructure provision. The design and location of new residential development in emerging neighborhoods should:

- Occur primarily within vacant, developable land located within existing municipal boundaries, or be located such that the area can be directly annexed and served by a municipality.
- Extend and become part of adjacent residential development patterns through connected road, sidewalk, bicycle, and trail systems. The key is to build neighborhoods, not isolated subdivisions.
- Retain the natural and visual character derived from the natural character of the sites and respect areas such as woodlands, wetlands, and riparian corridors.

- Be compatible with the character of adjacent existing development, including historic and landscape features.
- Locate in areas, which are currently served by sewer and water systems or are adjacent to areas so served and amenable to cost effective system extensions.
- Provide a fair share of neighborhood amenities including dedicated land for parks, schools, and public safety facilities as appropriate.

Villages provide a distinct development type within the county. At a point in each of their histories, the Macon County towns of Macon, Warrensburg, Niantic, Argenta, Oreana and Maroa have been centers of agricultural commerce in the region, each with a discrete development pattern. Although they are not part of the adoption of this Plan, these communities play an important role in its development and will be instrumental in the implementation of these countywide strategies. Each has less than 2,000 persons (based on the 2000 U.S. Census) and varies one from another by only a few hundred residents

As part of the planning process, a Conceptual Development Plan was prepared that outlines geographic boundaries for growth surrounding each community. The growth boundary surrounding each city and town within Macon County reflects the amount of land area necessary to support population growth over the next several decades (see Figure 4.3 for further explanation of the growth boundary or framework in which each community can plan for growth.)

The boundary reflects where and how much growth is anticipated in the County. The next step is to identify how the growth should occur. Then, as now, the communities' compact, village-like form marks them as distinct from, but firmly connected to, the open countryside that surrounds them.

Recent growth within each of the communities has occurred in the form of single-use areas (e.g. residential, commercial and industrial) that are reinforced by single-use zoning districts. This type of land classification has contributed significantly to the segregated land use pattern (see Existing Conditions Report). The resulting form is in contrast to the historic, mixed-use development pattern that occurred prior to zoning.

The implications of development patterns are important considerations for communities in planning for the future. Each area has a unique character – the qualities that give them a sense of place. These characteristics include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Strong sense of community and place among residents.
- Discernable centers, with street-edge buildings, mixed uses, gathering places, public buildings, Parks, and other open spaces.
- Residential neighborhoods close to the center and amenities within walking distance.
- Civic open spaces within the community (e.g. schools, town halls, etc.) and rural open space nearby.
- Both pedestrian friendly and generally walk-able in size, and

- Streets scaled to adjacent uses.

- B. The planning and improvement of the Preservation, Regenerating and Emerging Neighborhoods should reflect the neighborhood divisions established by the City of Decatur and utilized by the Coalition of Neighborhood Organizations. Given that many of these neighborhoods are quite small, the Plan groups them into districts to assure compatibility and continuity of land use, neighborhood connectivity, unified public realm, and coordinated community services. Figure 5-8 identifies an approach to organizing the City into a series of cohesive planning districts. Figures 5-9 through 5-20 illustrates the key attributes and proposed land use patterns within each district.

- C. Utilize open space preservation as a tool to prevent urban sprawl, to shape the form of our urban areas, to reinforce community identity, and to establish buffer zones between incompatible developments.

- D. Encourage the provision of mixed-income housing throughout the residential areas of the County with consideration given to other principles and policies of this Comprehensive Plan. This land use should be located in areas with readily available water and sewer service, fire protection, public transportation, employment, shopping, schools, social services, and recreational activities.

- E. Identify, protect, and support historically significant neighborhoods, structures, and places through public support programs, regulatory actions, and economic initiatives that allow economically viable and appropriate adaptive reuse of properties.

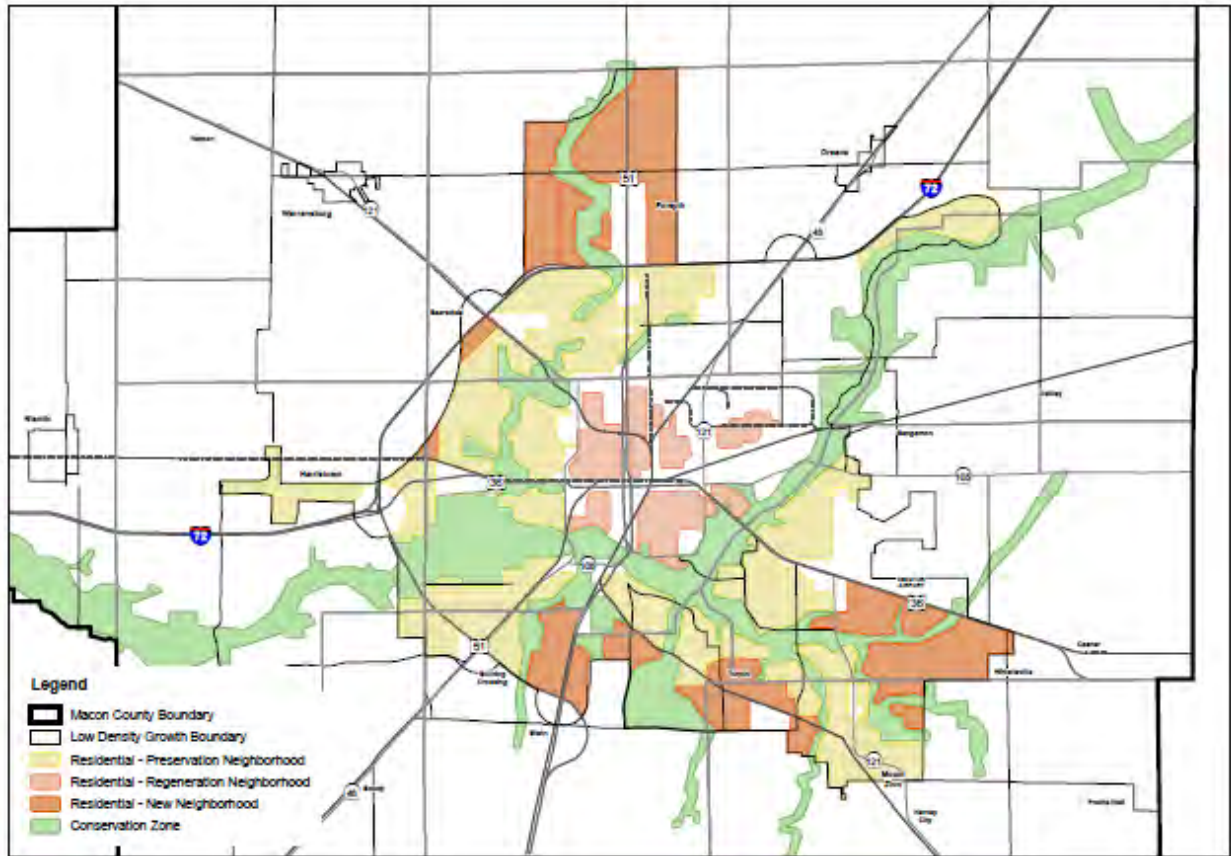
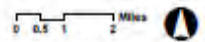


FIGURE 5-3

RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS

MACON COUNTY/DECATUR COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



CAMIROS

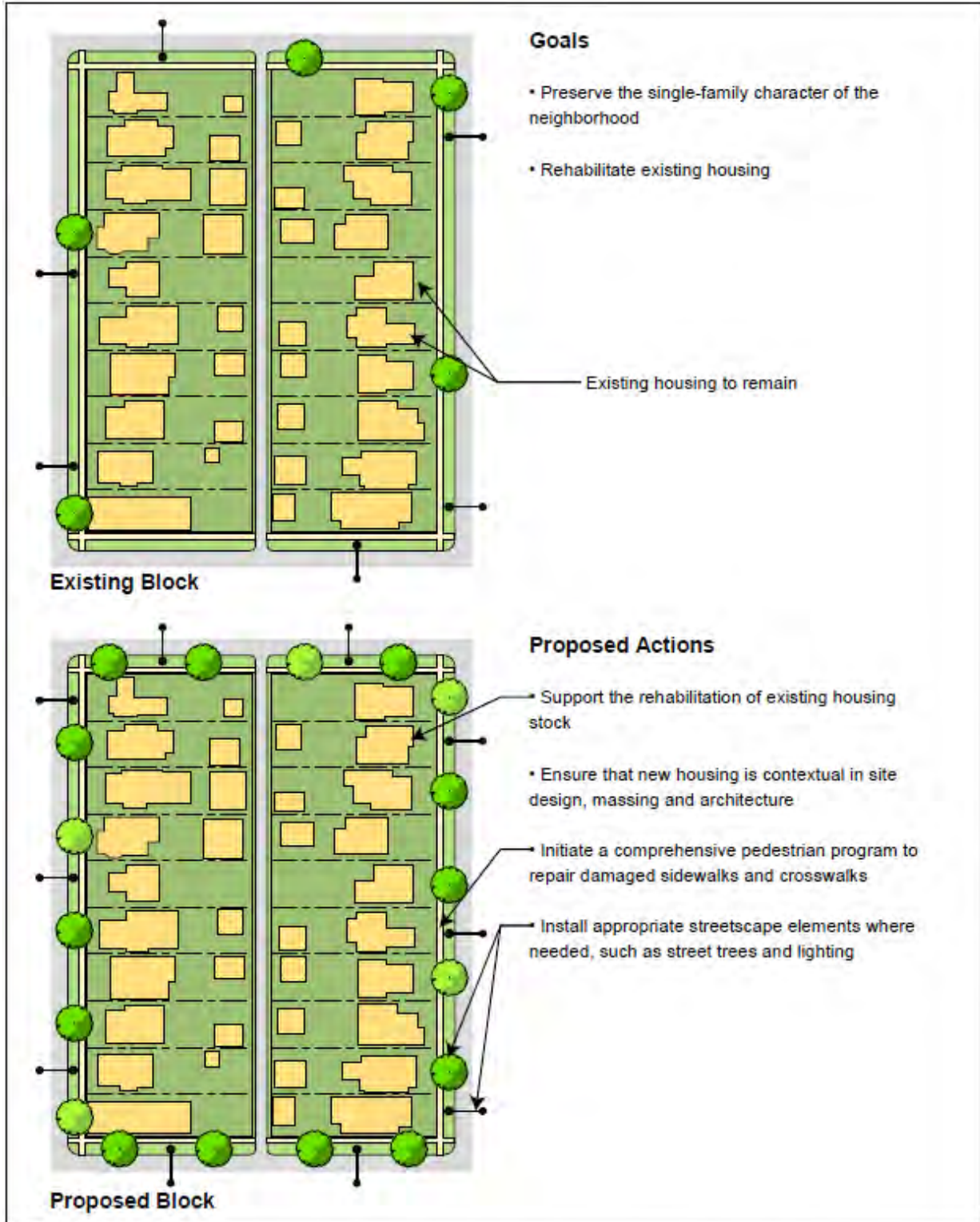


FIGURE 5-4
MODEL BLOCK IMPROVEMENTS-NEIGHBORHOOD PRESERVATION

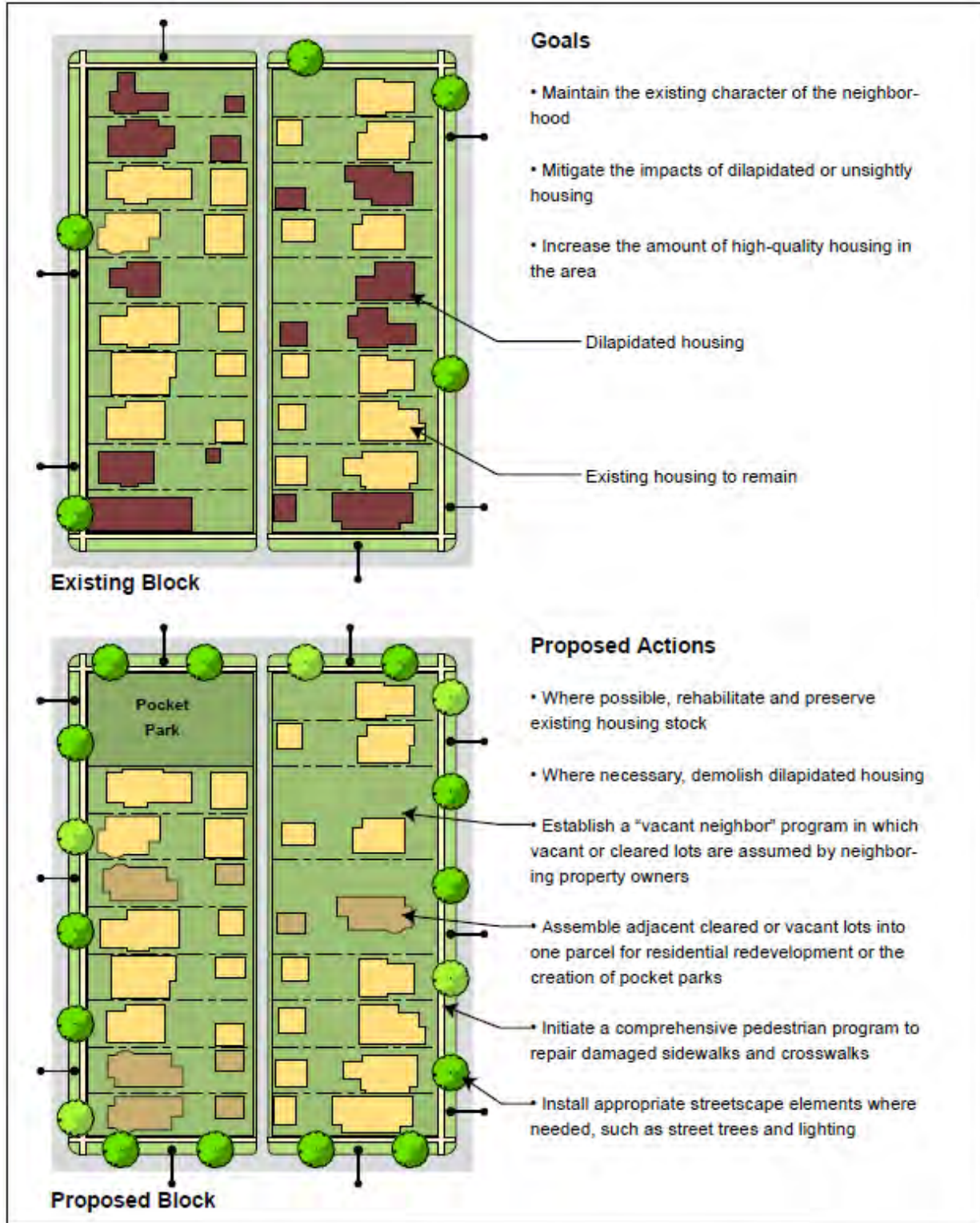


FIGURE 5-5
MODEL BLOCK IMPROVEMENTS-NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION

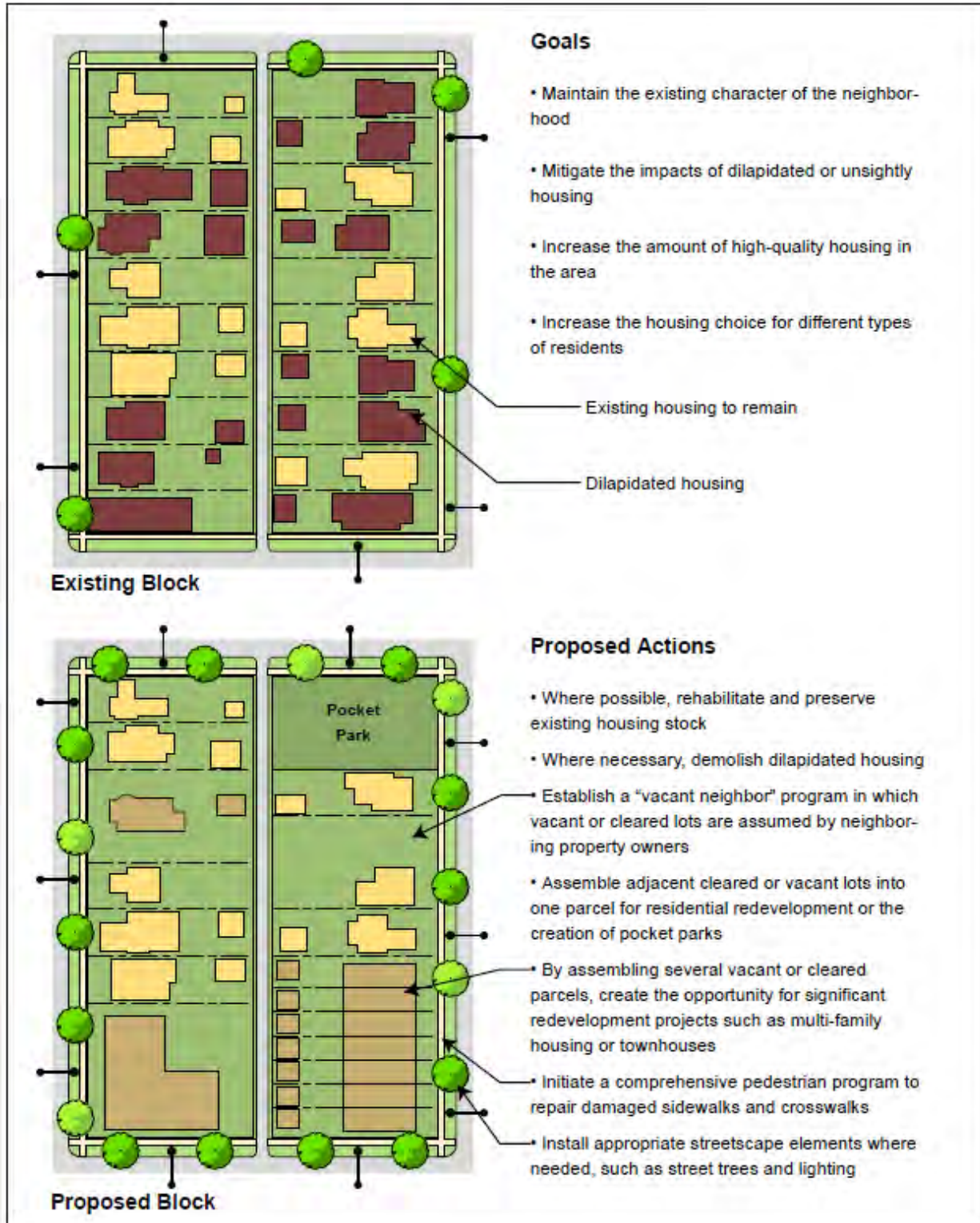


FIGURE S-6

MODEL BLOCK IMPROVEMENTS-NEIGHBORHOOD REDEVELOPMENT

Principle C2. Communities design results in safe, walk-able, diverse and attractive neighborhoods.

Macon County residents place a high value on their neighborhoods and the role they play in influencing the quality of life experienced in their communities. Neighborhoods influence how residents live and interact with each other and how they connect to the larger community. New residential growth should reconnect existing neighborhoods with new development. Individual neighborhoods should include a mix of housing types and prices, a system of interconnected local streets, and a neighborhood center that creates a central focal point for community activities. Individual neighborhoods also may include businesses and services. Decatur, historically, has developed along the lines of individual neighborhoods.

Policies and Strategies

- A. Encourage the design of residential areas to function as integral neighborhood units, each containing quality schools, parks, and other community facilities.
- B. Improve the accessibility to neighborhood-serving, retail or service activities within existing neighborhoods and villages by encouraging better pedestrian and roadway linkages between neighborhoods and nearby shopping areas, and encouraging more pedestrian oriented design of shopping areas.
- C. Assure that the design and layout of streets and sidewalks provide continuous, connected patterns of circulation within neighborhoods, and that individual neighborhoods are connected to one another and the larger city.
- D. Develop, adopt and utilize a “complete streets” program that looks at the design of city streets from a broad urban design perspective rather than from a limited engineering perspective. Complete streets design considers the location of buildings along the streets, the landscape adjacent to the streets, the adequate width and operation of the street for traffic purposes, the provision of sidewalks and bikeways, and access to appropriately designed parking.

Principle C3. Community investments reinforce a world class, life-long learning environment.

The economic future of the County is based on the educational achievement of the population in the schools and the workforce. The standard of living of each citizen is directly dependent on the community’s commitment to raise the education level of the community at large. As a community, the Decatur and Macon County region provide opportunities for high quality educational programming from Preschool to the Master’s Degree levels. High Schools provide students with opportunities to attend classes designed jointly by public school districts and local colleges, thereby allowing students to gain college level credit while attending high school. A vast numbers of Advanced Placement classes are available to high school students.

There are thirteen school districts in Macon County, eight of which cover a significant area of the County. The service areas of these districts are identified in Figure 5-7. They are Decatur, Warrensburg-Latham, Maroa-Forsyth, Argenta-Oreana, Cerro Gordo, Mt. Zion, Meridian, and Sangamon Valley. Generally, these systems have expanded as the population has decreased and dispersed throughout the County.

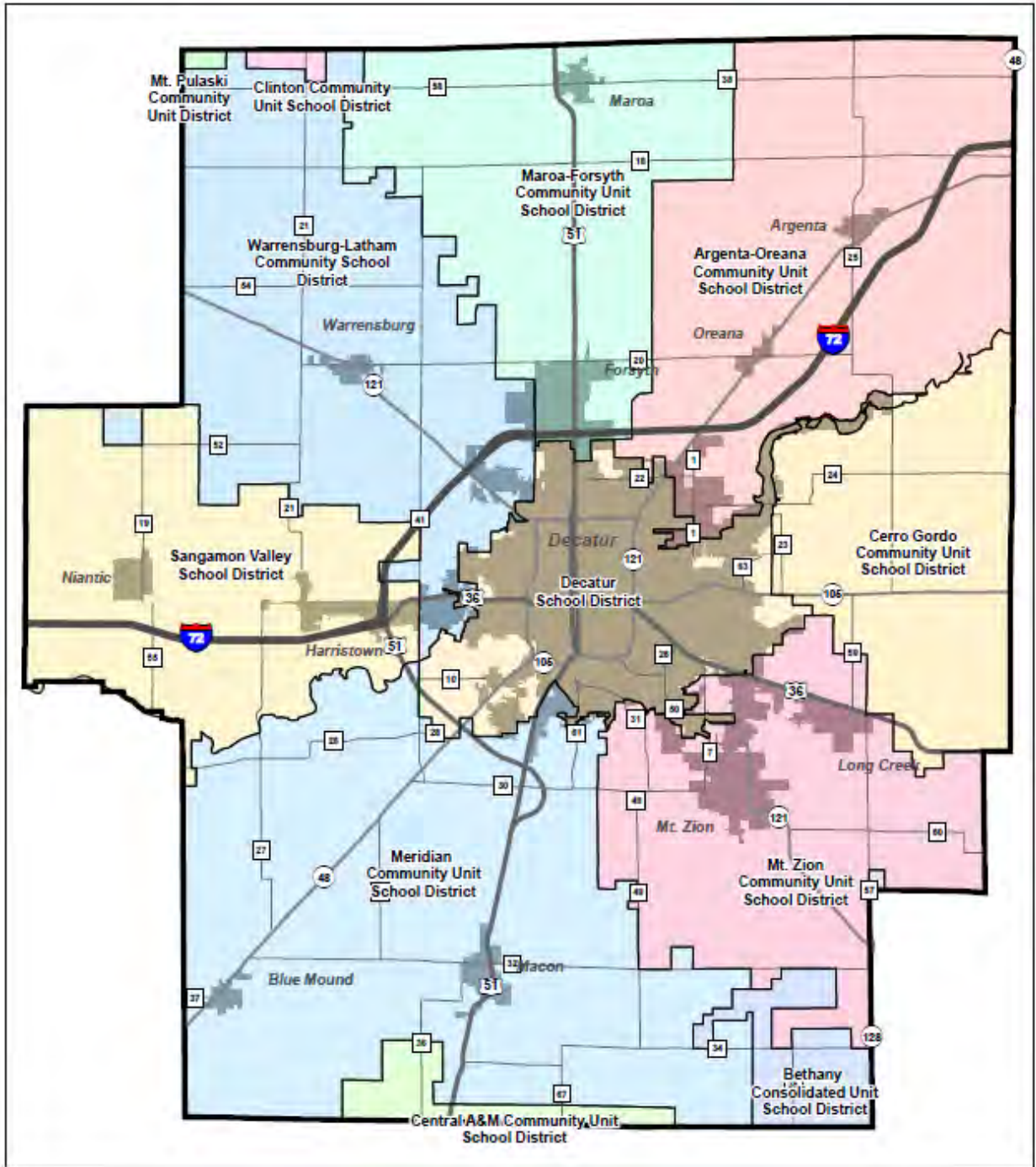
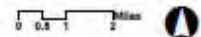


FIGURE 5-7

SCHOOL DISTRICTS

MACON COUNTY/DECATUR COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



CAMIROS

While, neither the County nor the municipalities directly control education, there are initiatives and partnerships that can assist and enhance the quality of education in Macon County. One major County initiative is the Education Coalition of Decatur and Macon County whose vision includes:



Hope Academy, Decatur School District

- Every child will be prepared for success when starting Kindergarten.
- Every child will master grade level work.
- Every child will graduate from high school with the skills and resources necessary to obtain a job or enroll in college.

Decatur School District 61 has aligned its strategic plan with the Decatur Area Education Coalition and is continuously working to improve the education of all District 61 students. District 61's Hope Academy, located in the Wabash crossing area, exemplifies the next generation in Decatur education. This recently opened, state of the art facility, has several unique characteristics including a year-round school calendar. As a result of collaborative relationships among the City's major institutions, Hope Academy represents what can be accomplished when all resources that provide life-long learning opportunities can be harmoniously utilized. Additionally, District 61 and the Decatur Area Education Coalition work with various local organizations to insure that community resources are available to students and that students have opportunities to connect their education to careers. In this endeavor, District 61 offers its high school students a number of advanced academic programs such as dual credit and Advanced Placement courses as well as internships and job-shadowing opportunities.

Policies and Strategies

- A. Evaluate, in partnership with District 61, all options available regarding secondary education. This should include an open community conversation regarding the merits of consolidating resources in the building of a single new public high school. Currently, Decatur has two high schools, MacArthur and Eisenhower, each housing approximately 1,100 students. Consolidation into one school may provide an opportunity to provide a state of the art educational facility in a cost-effective way.
- B Encourage the location and size of new elementary and middle schools in the County to enable children to walk or bicycle to them, particularly in rural communities. Assure that zoning and related regulations allow and encourage childcare centers to be located within county neighborhoods and near schools and parks when possible.
- C Assure that County and City regulations allow the use of public school facilities for a full range of community programs during non-school hours in accordance with the policies of the school districts.
- D Provide public policy support to public and private efforts to collaborate in the creation of community-wide, sustainable approaches to enhance education.

Principle C4. Housing choices expand to meet the needs of a changing population; younger and older people, and those with varying incomes.

As demographics shift and family structures change, Decatur and Macon County is committed to providing housing options that offer the appropriate range of locations, types, and prices to meet these changing needs. The following policies propose ways to diversify the local housing stock through incentives and the introduction of a larger variety of housing types.

Policies and Strategies

- A. Increase opportunities for sustainable homeownership by families of modest means - including minorities, immigrants, and people with disabilities - through the creation of public-private partnerships for that purpose, employer assisted housing programs, appropriate interest subsidies, and other techniques.
- B. Provide an adequate supply of accessible and special needs owner-occupied and rental housing for a range of income levels through the development of coordinated programs with related housing providers, modification of building codes and zoning ordinances to enable the use of existing housing stock for such purposes, and coordination with public housing agencies to provide such housing.
- C. Increase the number of downtown Decatur housing units with a goal of 5% of the units created by reducing any limitations to mixed-use housing development in existing buildings that might accommodate work-live as well as loft type living, providing property tax incentives for this purpose, and allowing density bonuses where appropriate.
- D. Encourage development of single-family attached, townhouse and multi-family housing types in areas adjacent to major destinations such as Downtown, shopping centers, and appropriate employment centers through revisions in the zoning ordinance. These include appropriate changes in zoning maps, allowances for mixed use, and accommodation of a range of building types.
- E. Increase the rehabilitation of older housing stock in the regenerating areas of Decatur through property tax incentives, the provision of grants and forgivable loans for homeowner based rehabilitation, linked tax incentives for rehabilitation within homes owned or assisted through employer provided support, and ownership programs tied to tax reactivation efforts on city owned properties acquired as a result of tax foreclosures and blight clearance.
- F. Establish programs to achieve more responsible ownership and maintenance of rental housing properties through support of programs to encourage the purchase of non-homeowner occupied homes by non-profit community development corporations or cooperatives willing to take responsibility for assuring well maintained rental properties, tax incentives for local property taxpayers to purchase and rehabilitate residential rental properties, and other innovative approaches to the problems.

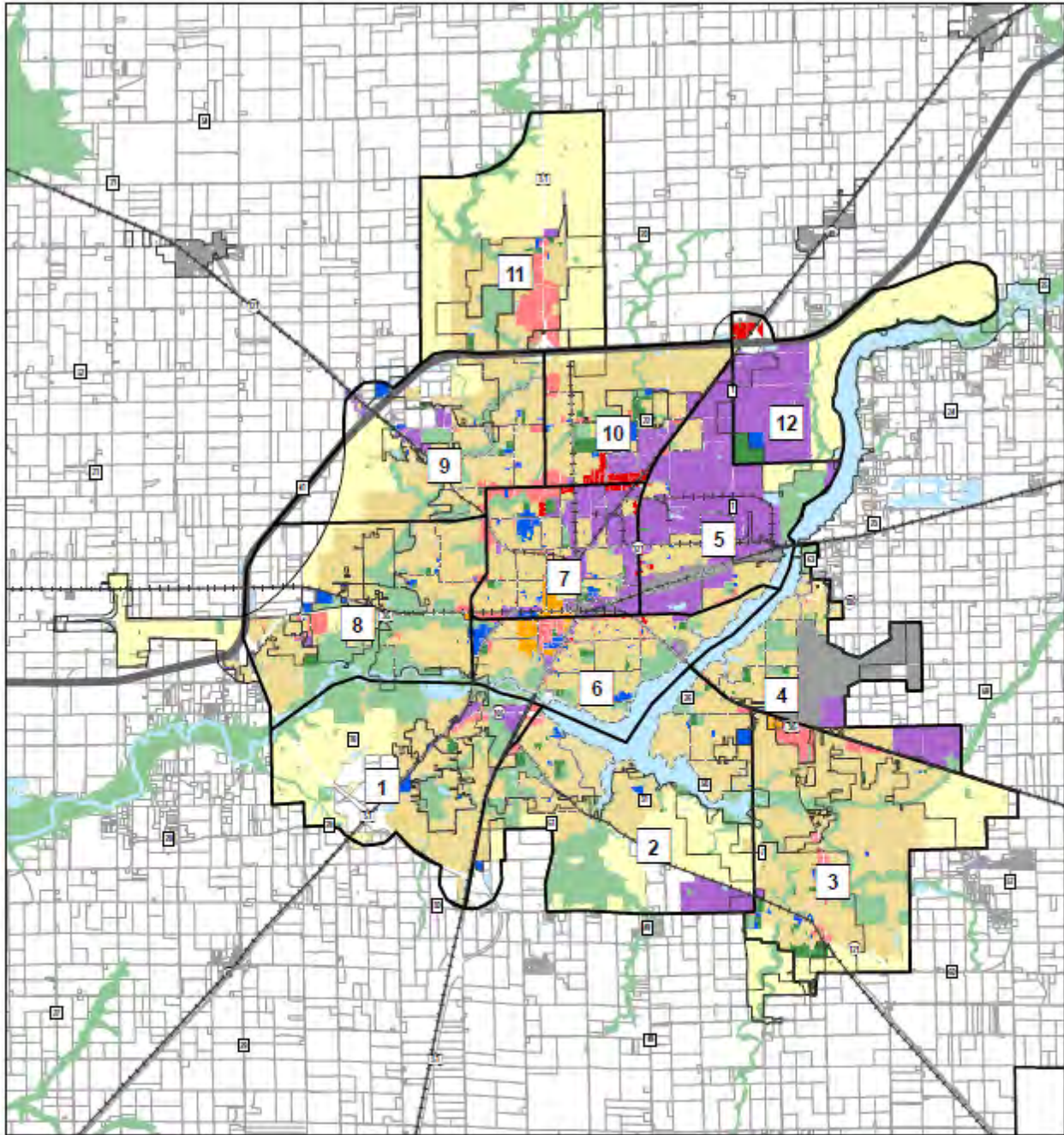
- G. Encourage assemblage of multiple adjacent lots to create suitable building sites for new homes within regenerating neighborhoods through advocacy of adjacent lot ownership programs, linked resale of publicly owned vacant lots, property tax and/or TIF incentives and zoning adjustments where appropriate. Consider short-term (five-year) tax incentives tied to reducing tax burdens caused by increased assessed value resulting from such new construction.

Principle C5: Private/public partnerships sustain and nurture the County's commitment to a high quality of life.

The quality of life in Macon County and Decatur has always been closely linked to the successes of its major industries. It is important to continue to recognize and build upon this linkage. It is critical to build coalitions which leverage civic commitments and public incentives with private sector commitments.

Policies and Strategies

- A. Encourage the development of close working relationships between those businesses having a stake in the success of Decatur and the public and non-profit entities that have the interest, responsibility, and capability to undertake regenerating neighborhood improvement efforts, including support of educational improvement.
- B. Encourage the use of community development corporations or other public/private partnerships to bring additional capacity and capital to development in the County.
- C. Market local neighborhood improvement success stories and communicate the techniques utilized in achieving success. By publicizing and promoting neighborhood success stories, Decatur and Macon County communities can recognize local leaders and accomplishments, encourage continued revitalization efforts, and develop a mechanism for sharing expertise and innovations across jurisdictions.



Legend

Municipal Boundary	Generalized Land Use	Retail	Schools - Public & Private
Planning District	Residential - Estate	Heavy Commercial	Open Space
	Residential - Low Density	Employment	Transportation/Utility
	Mixed-Use Commercial/Residential	Institutional	Landfill

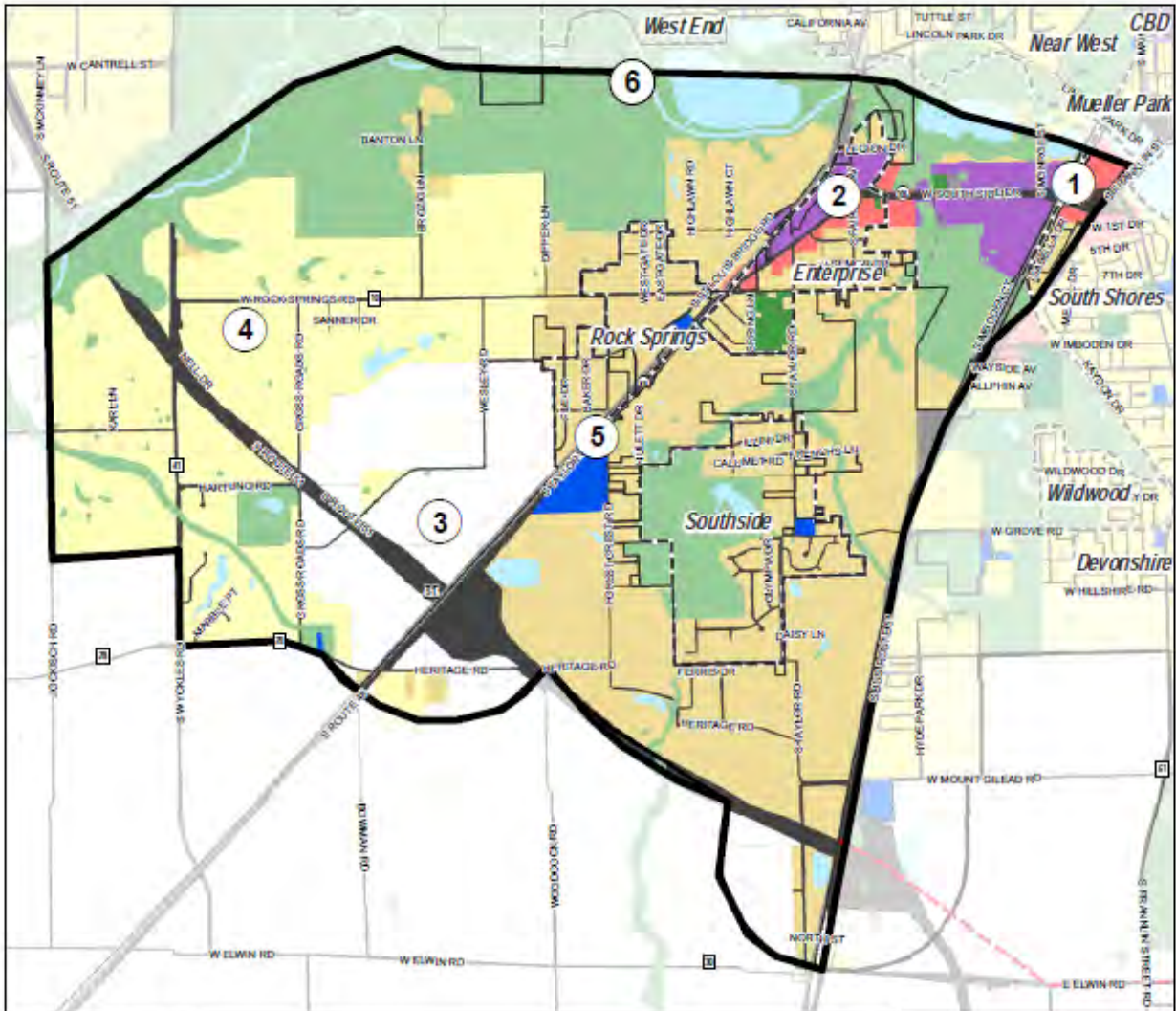
FIGURE 5-8

PLANNING DISTRICTS

MACON COUNTY/DECATUR COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



CAMIROS



Planning District 1:

The Enterprise, Rock Springs, and Southside Decatur neighborhoods and portions of Unincorporated Macon County are included.

Key Development Strategies

1	Concentrate community commercial services, formulate area design guidelines and encourage access to parcels northwest of US 51/South Side Drive via South Side Drive. Encourage commercial and entertainment uses in this area which optimize views and access to Lake Decatur.
2	Encourage redevelopment of this area to accommodate additional employment uses.
3	Limit development of this area through use of large (40 acre) lot zoning. Annexations should be limited to those which provide highly favorable cost/benefit ratios to the City.
4	Encourage future residential development as low density, cluster development linked to preservation of open space and natural amenities.
5	Undertake significant gateway and corridor landscape improvements to emphasize IL Route 48 as a major entry into Decatur.
6	Preserve existing access and encourage increased access to Lake Decatur and the Sangamon River through public/ private agreements, easements and purchases.

Legend

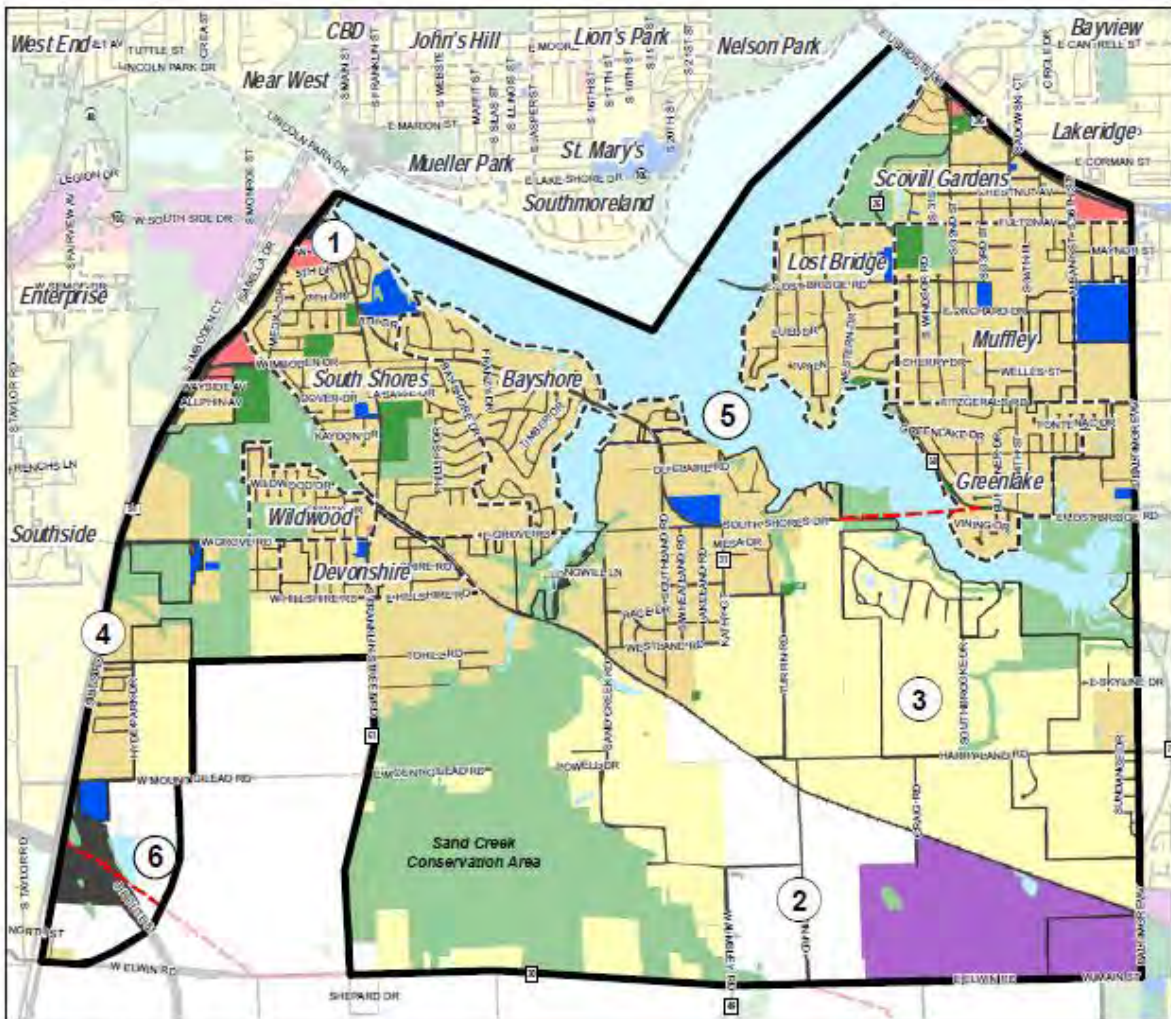
- Municipal Boundary
- Suburban Growth Boundary
- Neighborhood Boundaries
- DUATS Projects
- Generalized Land Use**
- Residential - Estate
- Residential - Low Density
- Mixed-Use Commercial/Residential
- Retail
- Heavy Commercial
- Employment
- Institutional
- Schools - Public & Private
- Open Space
- Transportation/Utility
- Landfill

FIGURE 5-09

FUTURE LAND USE: PLANNING DISTRICT 1



MACON COUNTY/DECATUR COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



Planning District 2:
 Portions of Unincorporated Macon County and the Decatur neighborhoods of Scovill Gardens, Lost Bridge, Muffley, South Shores, Devonshire, Wildwood, Bayshore and Green Lake are included.

Key Development Strategies	
1	Concentrate community commercial services, formulate area design guidelines for new development
2	Residential and conservation should be the principal uses for this area. Developments which preserve open space and natural amenities are to be encouraged.
3	Encourage future residential development as low density, cluster developments that strongly preserve open space and natural amenities.
4	Undertake significant gateway and roadway landscape programs to emphasize Route 51 as a major entry into Decatur.
5	Preserve existing access and encourage increased access to Lake Decatur and the Sangamon River through public/ private agreements, easements and purchases.
6	Development within this area by should be limiting to large lot zoning for highway commercial and employment center purposes. Annexations should only be allowed when uses provide a highly favorable cost/benefit to Decatur.

Legend

- Municipal Boundary
- Suburban Growth Boundary
- Neighborhood Boundaries
- DUATS Projects

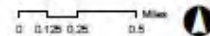
Generalized Land Use

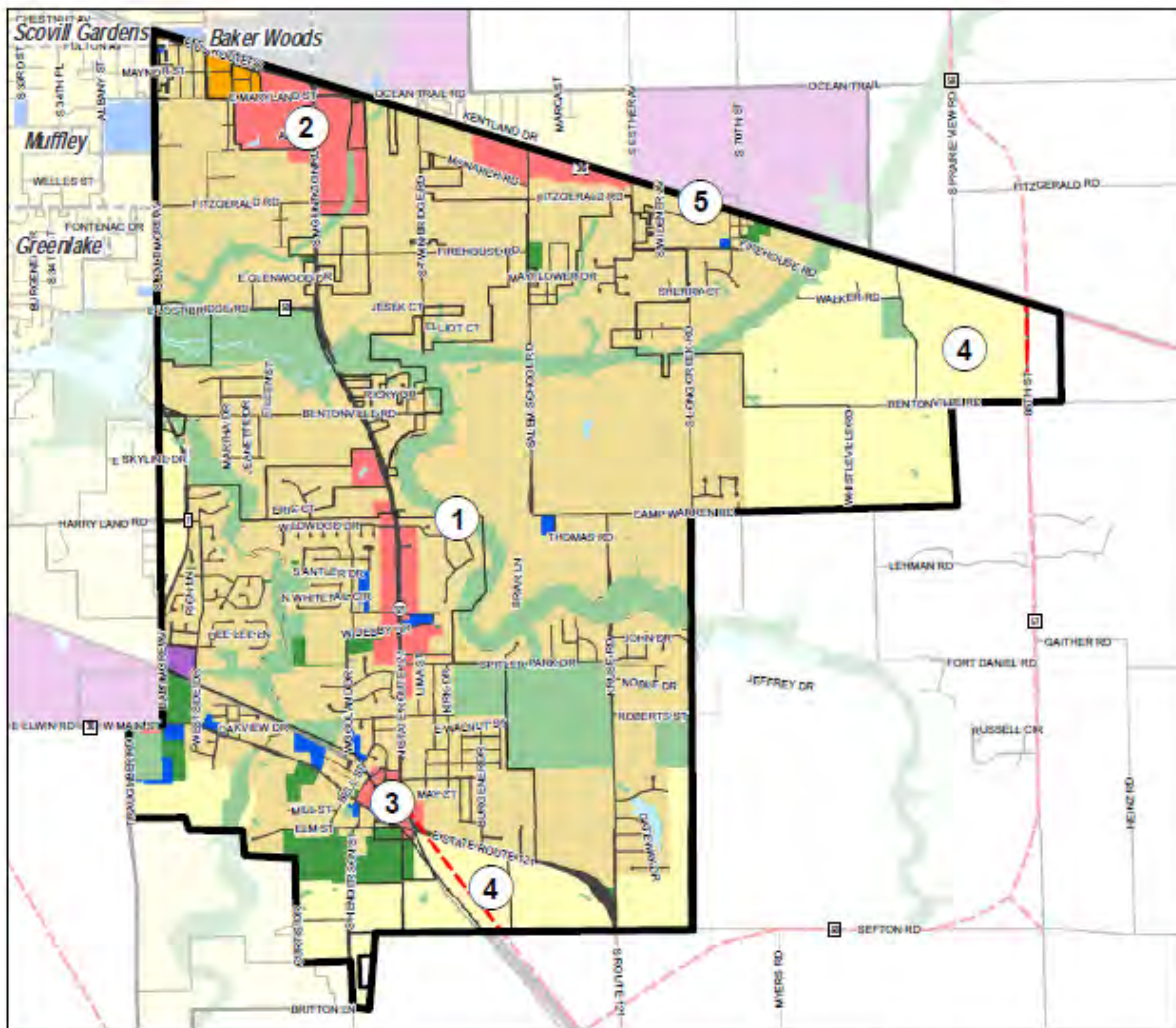
- Residential - Estate
- Residential - Low Density
- Mixed-Use Commercial/Residential
- Retail
- Heavy Commercial
- Employment
- Institutional
- Schools - Public & Private
- Open Space
- Transportation/Utility
- Landfill

FIGURE 5-10

FUTURE LAND USE: PLANNING DISTRICT 2

MACON COUNTY/DECATUR COMPREHENSIVE PLAN





Planning District 3:	
Includes the Villages of Mt. Zion and Long Creek and portions of Unincorporated Macon County	
Key Development Strategies	
1	Finley Creek, running north and south through the District, provides an opportunity for a permanent greenway that provides watershed and habitat protection as well as recreational opportunities.
2	Coordinate future development to create unified regional commercial shopping district. This requires access and internal roadway linkages, encouragement of common design guidelines, coordinated zoning and encouragement of redevelopment that creates a walkable commercial center.
3	Coordinate future commercial investment through coordinated zoning, design guidelines and site access management patterns to further encourage the area's central important to Mt. Zion.
4	Encourage future residential development as low density, cluster development linked to preservation of open space and maintenance of amenities.
5	Undertake significant gateway and roadway landscape programs to emphasize Route 36 as a major entry into Decatur.

Legend

- Municipal Boundary
- ▭ Suburban Growth Boundary
- ▭ Neighborhood Boundaries
- DUATS Projects

Generalized Land Use

- Residential - Estate
- Residential - Low Density
- Mixed-Use Commercial/Residential
- Retail
- Heavy Commercial
- Employment
- Institutional
- Schools - Public & Private
- Open Space
- Transportation/Utility
- Landfill

FIGURE 5-11
FUTURE LAND USE: PLANNING DISTRICT 3



MACON COUNTY/DECATUR COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

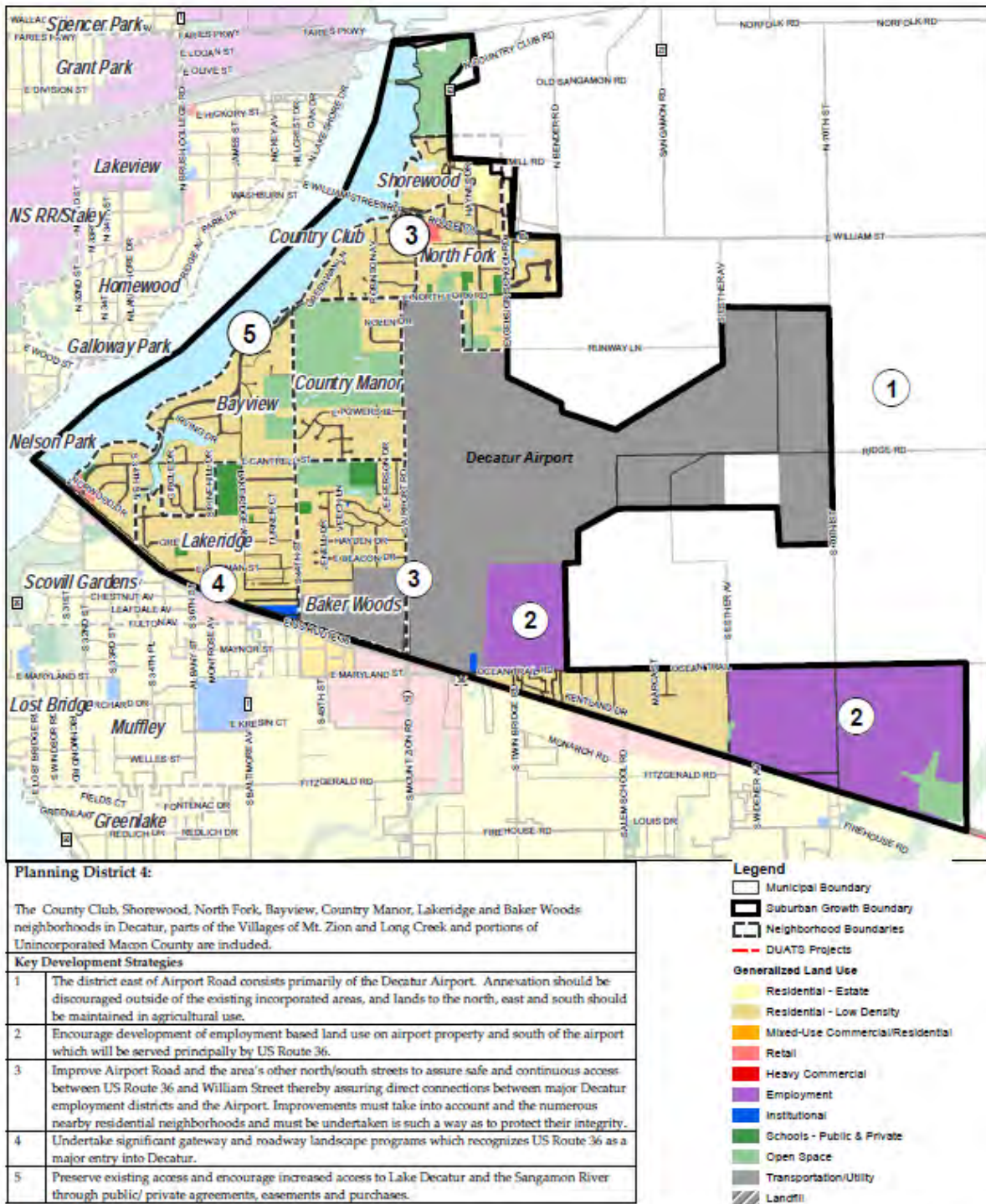


FIGURE 5-12
FUTURE LAND USE: PLANNING DISTRICT 4

MACON COUNTY/DECATUR COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

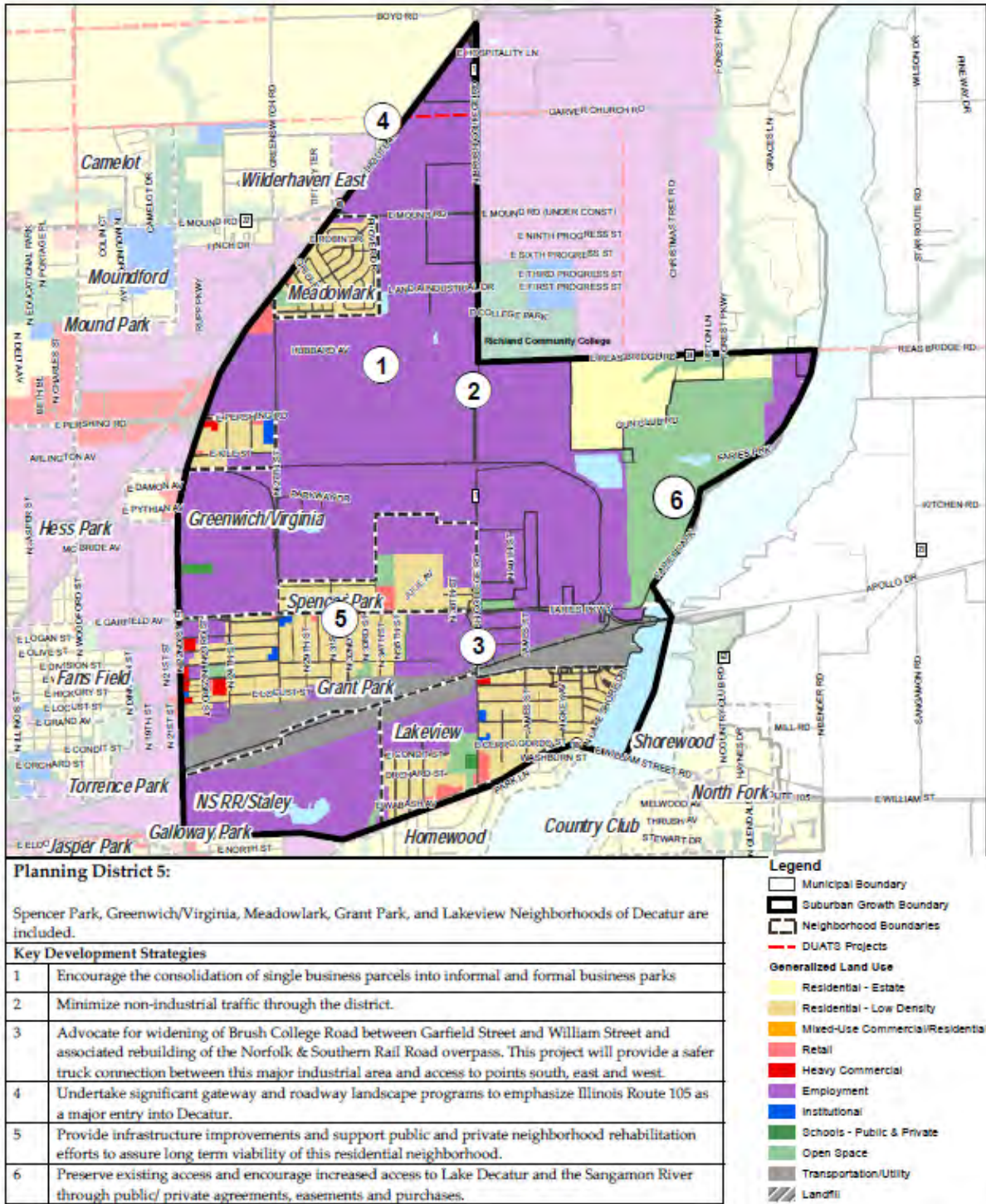
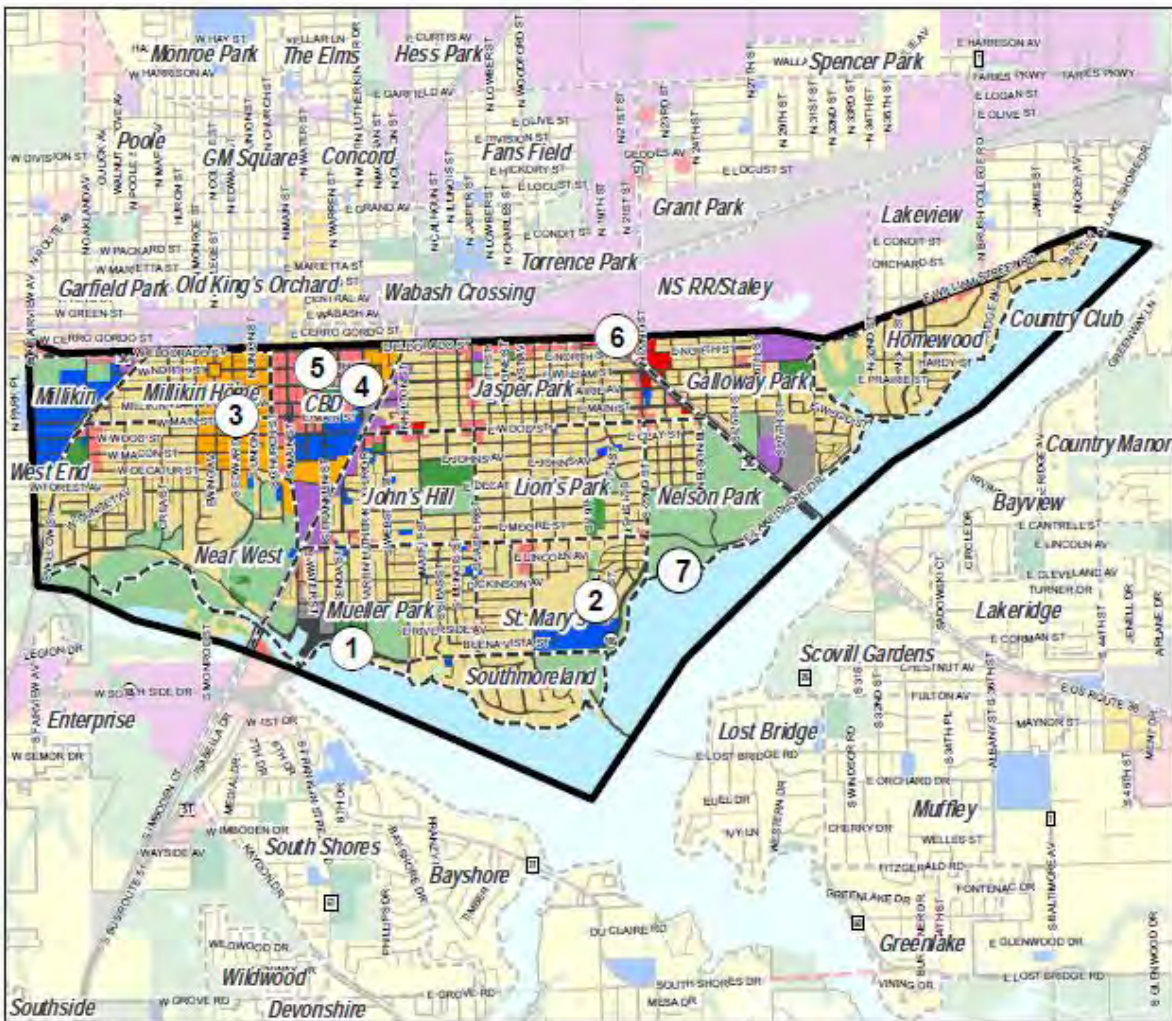


FIGURE 5-13
FUTURE LAND USE: PLANNING DISTRICT 5

MACON COUNTY/DECATUR COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



Planning District 6:

Includes the John's Hill, Mueller Park, Lion's Park, St. Mary's, Nelson Park, Southmoreland, Jasper Park, and the Near West neighborhoods as well as the Central Business District of Decatur.

Key Development Strategies

1	Expand the opportunities for recreation and entertainment along Lake Decatur, Adjacent to Decatur Landing
2	If high school consolidation is undertaken encourage development of mixed housing types oriented to the needs of knowledge economy workers attracted by the area's major corporation, and coordinate with expansion of St. Mary's hospital.
3	Encourage mixed use redevelopment to the west of downtown which provides range of housing choices and price ranges oriented to persons interested in living a more downtown life style.
4	Redevelop underutilized downtown parking area to accommodate a major hotel and event center bounded on the south by a reconstructed road which connects Williams to Prairie (see downtown discussion)
5	Develop a Jackson Street greenway which links redevelopment proposed north of Eldorado Street to the downtown.
6	Undertake major corridor redevelopment and landscape programs along Eldorado Street.
7	Preserve existing access and encourage increased access to Lake Decatur and the Sangamon River through public/ private agreements, easements and purchases.

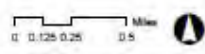
Legend

- Municipal Boundary
- Suburban Growth Boundary
- Neighborhood Boundaries
- DUATS Projects

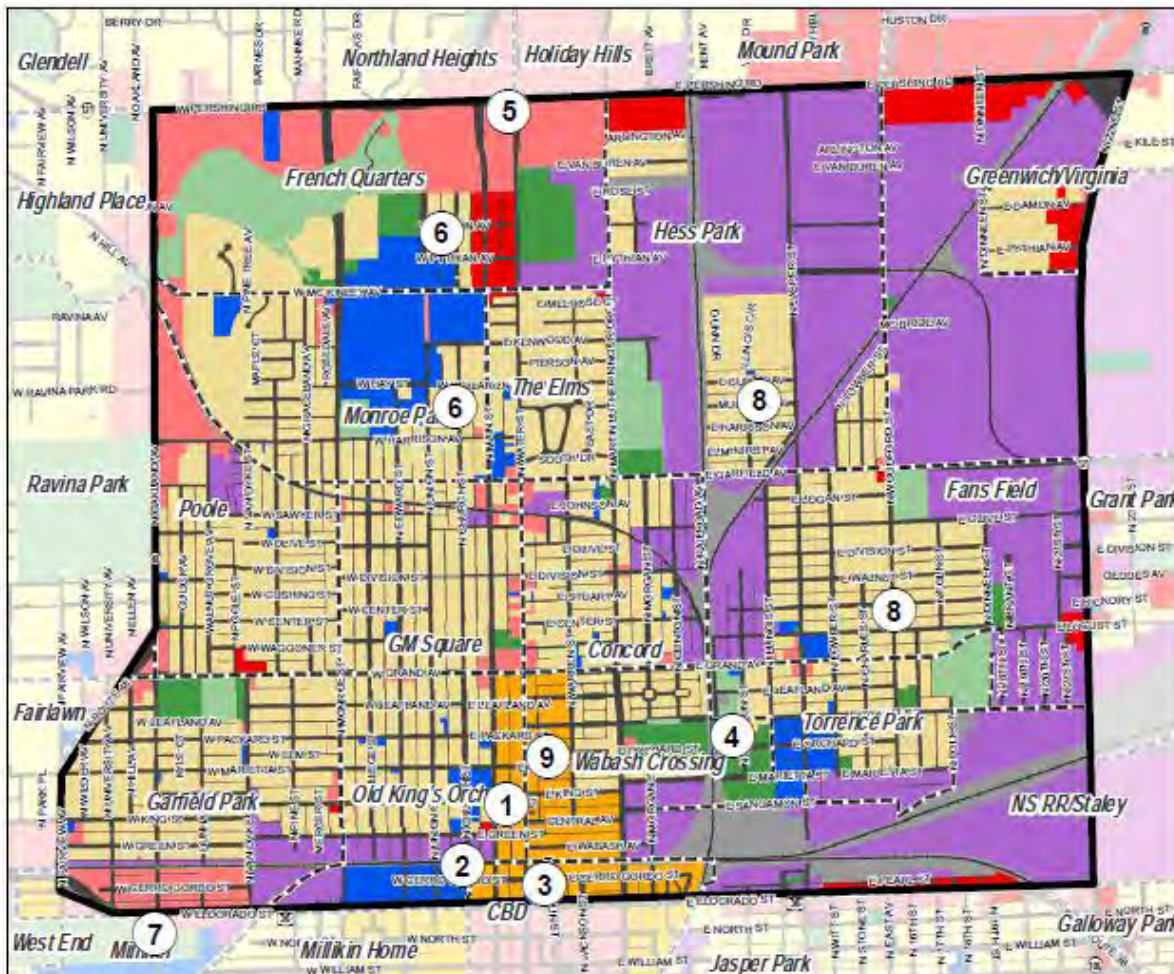
Generalized Land Use

- Residential - Estate
- Residential - Low Density
- Mixed-Use Commercial/Residential
- Retail
- Heavy Commercial
- Employment
- Institutional
- Schools - Public & Private
- Open Space
- Transportation/Utility
- Landfill

FIGURE 5-14
FUTURE LAND USE: PLANNING DISTRICT 6



MACON COUNTY/DECATUR COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



Planning District 7:

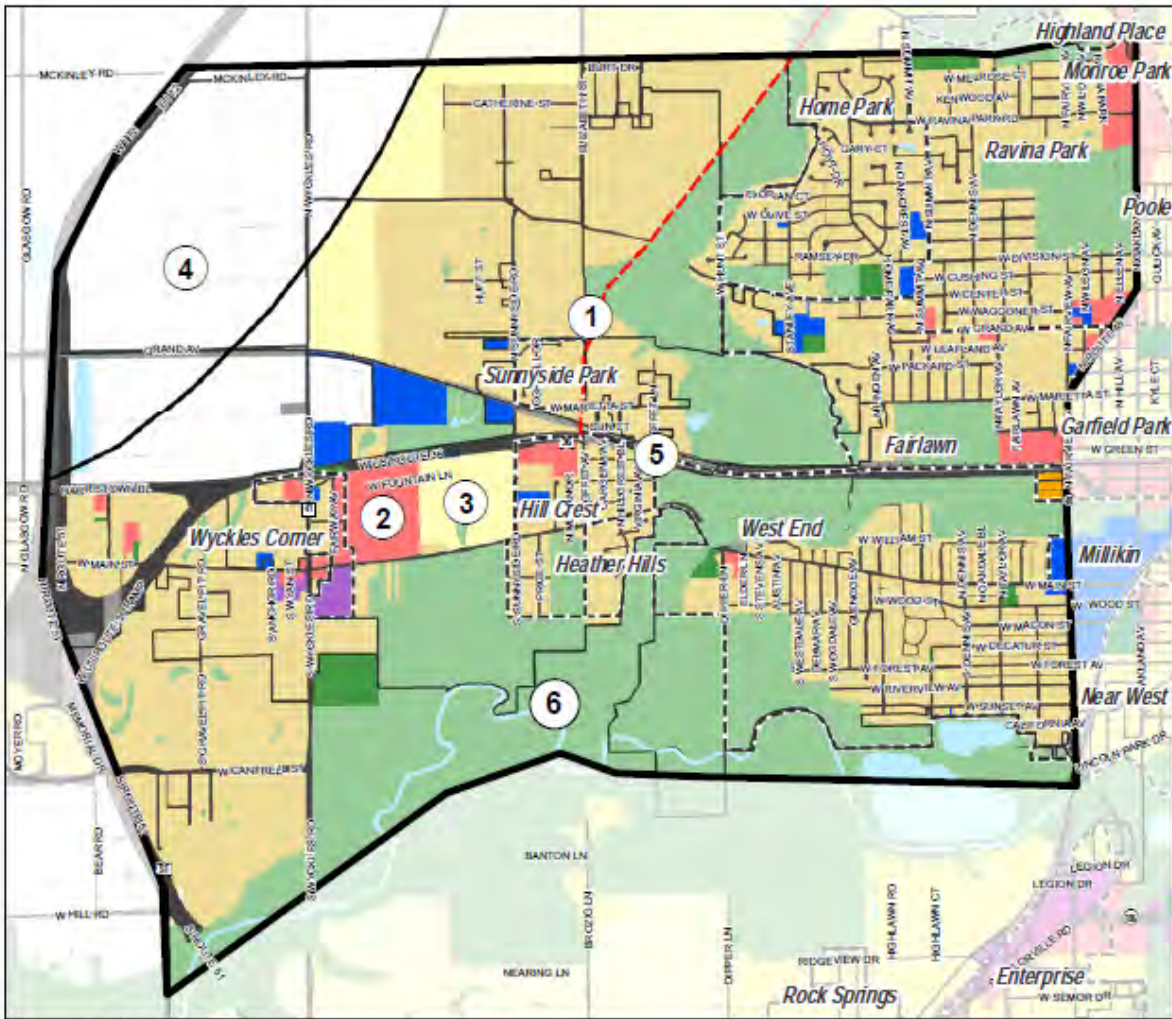
Includes the Decatur neighborhoods of Old Kings Orchard, Wabash Crossing, Concord, Fans Field, Torrence Park, Poole, French Quarters, Monroe Park, The Elms, Fairlawn, Garfield Park, NSRR/Staley, Greenwich/Virginia, Highland Place, and GM Square.

Key Development Strategies

1	Encourage mixed use redevelopment in this portion of the Main-Water corridor. Should the issue of high school consolidation move forward, the area east of Water Street, north of the railroad, should strongly be considered for the location of a new high school.
2	Advocate for a minor league baseball team and construct stadium to support center city attraction and reinvestment.
3	Develop a Jackson Street greenway which links mixed use redevelopment proposed north of Eldorado Street to the downtown.
4	Encourage community gardens in presently vacant land.
5	Encourage revitalization and reinvestment to improve quality of commercial development. Prepare and implement design guidelines to encourage adjacent lot traffic and parking cross easements, coordinate signage, public way landscape improvements and a more walkable commercial area.
6	Facilitate residential reinvestment and revitalization through joint efforts with Decatur Memorial Hospital to create new housing opportunities attractive to hospital staff while preserving the existing residential units.
7	Encourage appropriate redevelopment in conjunction with strict design guidelines to accommodate commercial uses oriented to Eldorado Street.
8	Provide infrastructure improvements and support public and private neighborhood rehabilitation efforts to assure long term viability of this residential neighborhood.

FIGURE 5-15
FUTURE LAND USE: PLANNING DISTRICT 7

MACON COUNTY/DECATUR COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



Planning District 8:

Includes the Decatur neighborhoods of Home Park, West End, Heather Hills, Hill Crest, Wyckles Corner, , Ravina Park, part of the Village of Harristown and portions of Unincorporated Macon County

Key Development Strategies

1	Growth which may occur in the northwest corner of the district will result in the need to provide extensive street and infrastructure improvements. Improvements in this area should utilize environmentally friendly construction practices so as to protect and preserve the area's aesthetics.
2	Explore long-term opportunity to transition the convention center hotel site into a family entertainment destination including golf and water park activities.
3	Encourage cluster housing development within developable portions of the woods, protecting the edges of the area to maintain natural wooded environment along main roads.
4	Limit development of this area through use of large (40 acre) lot zoning. Annexations should be limited to those which provide highly favorable cost/benefit ratios to the City.
5	Undertake major corridor redevelopment and landscape programs along Eldorado Street/Route 36.
6	Preserve existing access and encourage increased access to Lake Decatur and the Sangamon River through public/ private agreements, easements and purchases.

Legend

- Municipal Boundary
- Suburban Growth Boundary
- Neighborhood Boundaries
- DUATS Projects

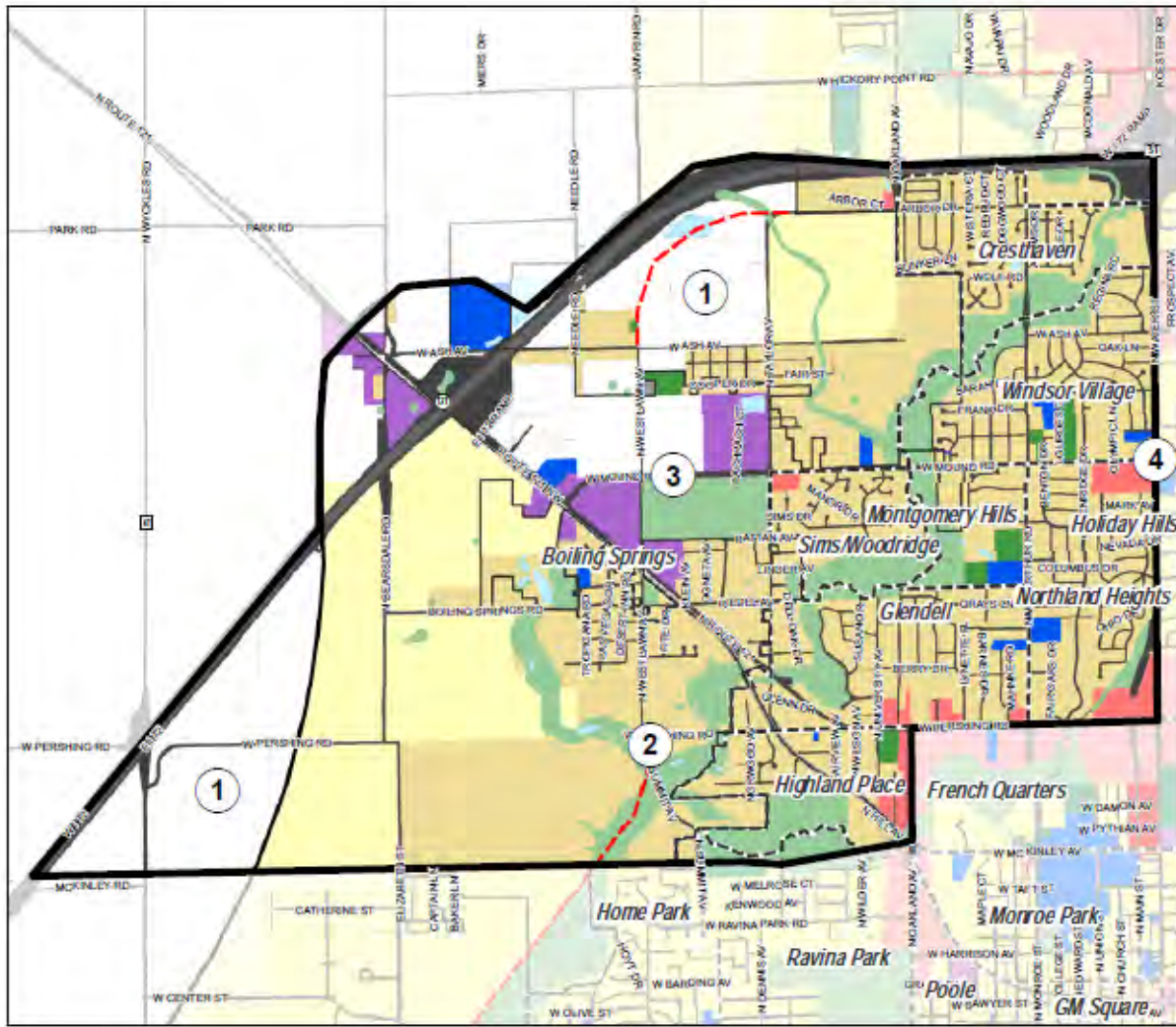
Generalized Land Use

- Residential - Estate
- Residential - Low Density
- Mixed-Use Commercial/Residential
- Retail
- Heavy Commercial
- Employment
- Institutional
- Schools - Public & Private
- Open Space
- Transportation/Utility
- Landfill

FIGURE 5-16
FUTURE LAND USE: PLANNING DISTRICT 8

MACON COUNTY/DECATUR COMPREHENSIVE PLAN





Planning District 9:

Included in this district are the Decatur neighborhoods of Boiling Springs, Sims/Woodridge, Grendell, Montgomery Hills, Cresthaven, Windsor Village, Holiday Hills, Northland Heights, Highland Place and portions of Unincorporated Macon County.

Key Development Strategies

1	Limit development of this area through use of large (40 acre) lot zoning. Annexations should be limited to those which provide highly favorable cost/benefit ratios to the City.
2	Residential growth is anticipated in the south central part of the district which will result in the need to provide extensive street and infrastructure improvements. Improvements in this area should utilize environmentally friendly design and construction practices so as to protect and preserve the area's aesthetics.
3	Encourage additional employment uses adjacent to and near the Macon County Fairgrounds.
4	Undertake significant gateway and roadway landscape programs to emphasize Routes 51 and 121 as major entryways into Decatur.

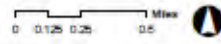
Legend

- Municipal Boundary
- Suburban Growth Boundary
- Neighborhood Boundaries
- DUATS Projects

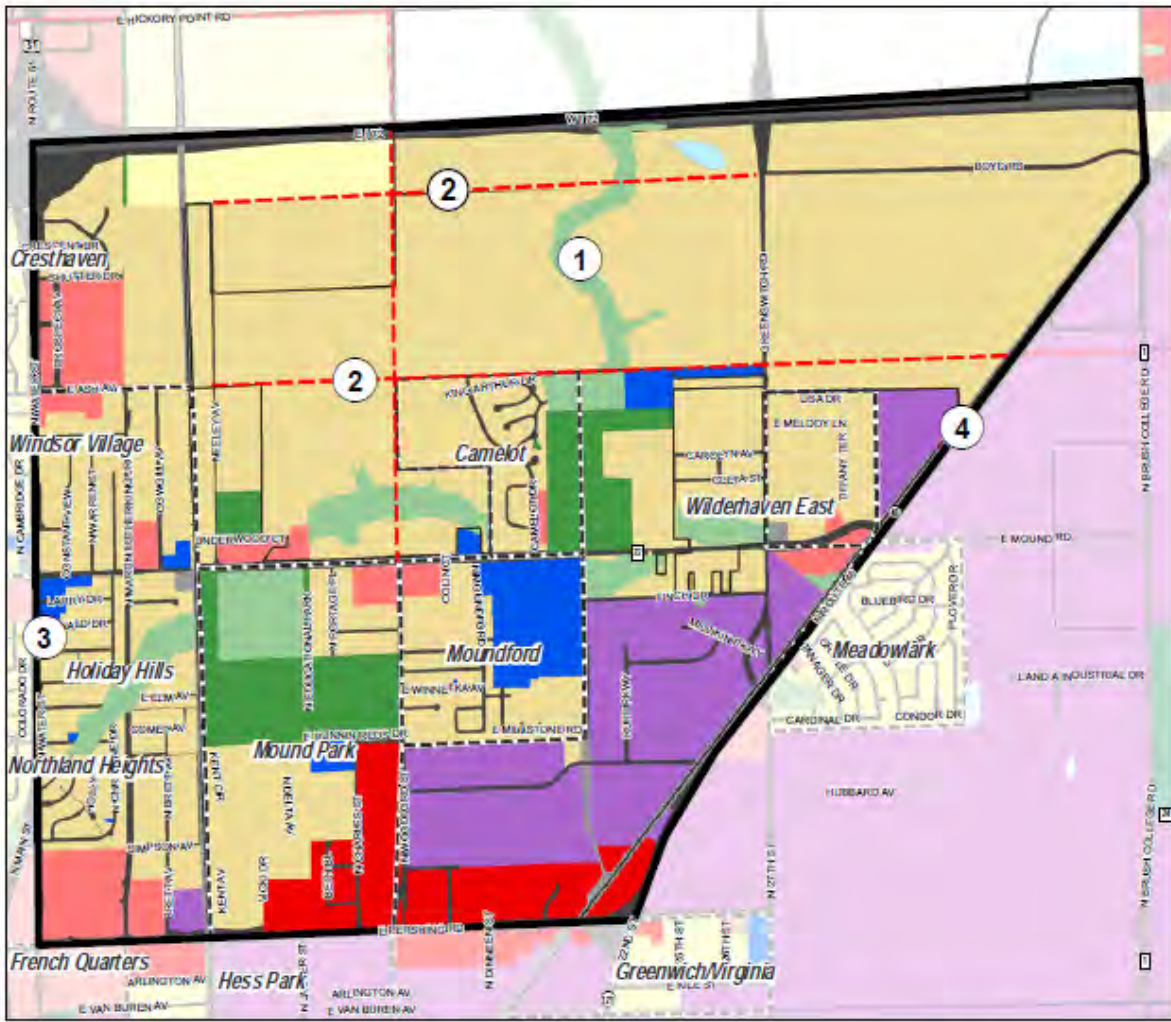
Generalized Land Use

- Residential - Estate
- Residential - Low Density
- Mixed-Use Commercial/Residential
- Retail
- Heavy Commercial
- Employment
- Institutional
- Schools - Public & Private
- Open Space
- Transportation/Utility
- Landfill

FIGURE 5-17
FUTURE LAND USE: PLANNING DISTRICT 9



MACON COUNTY/DECATUR COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



Planning District 10:

In addition to portions of Unincorporated Macon County, this District includes the Decatur neighborhoods of Holiday Hills, Moundford, Northland Heights, Windsor Village, Cresthaven, Camelot, Wilderhaven and Mound Park.

Key Development Strategies

1	Consider future development of a secondary reservoir north of Ash Avenue. Organize planning of this neighborhood growth area to assure new residential uses are linked to those of the existing neighborhood to the south.
2	Ash Avenue should be extended from Martin Luther King Jr. Drive east to Brush College Road and Boyd Road should be extended between Martin Luther King Jr. Drive and Greenswitch Road which would provide essential connections between future development in this planning area.
3	Undertake significant gateway and roadway landscape programs to emphasize that Routes 51 and 48 are major entryways into Decatur.

Legend

- Municipal Boundary
- ▬ Suburban Growth Boundary
- ▭ Neighborhood Boundaries
- - - DUATS Projects

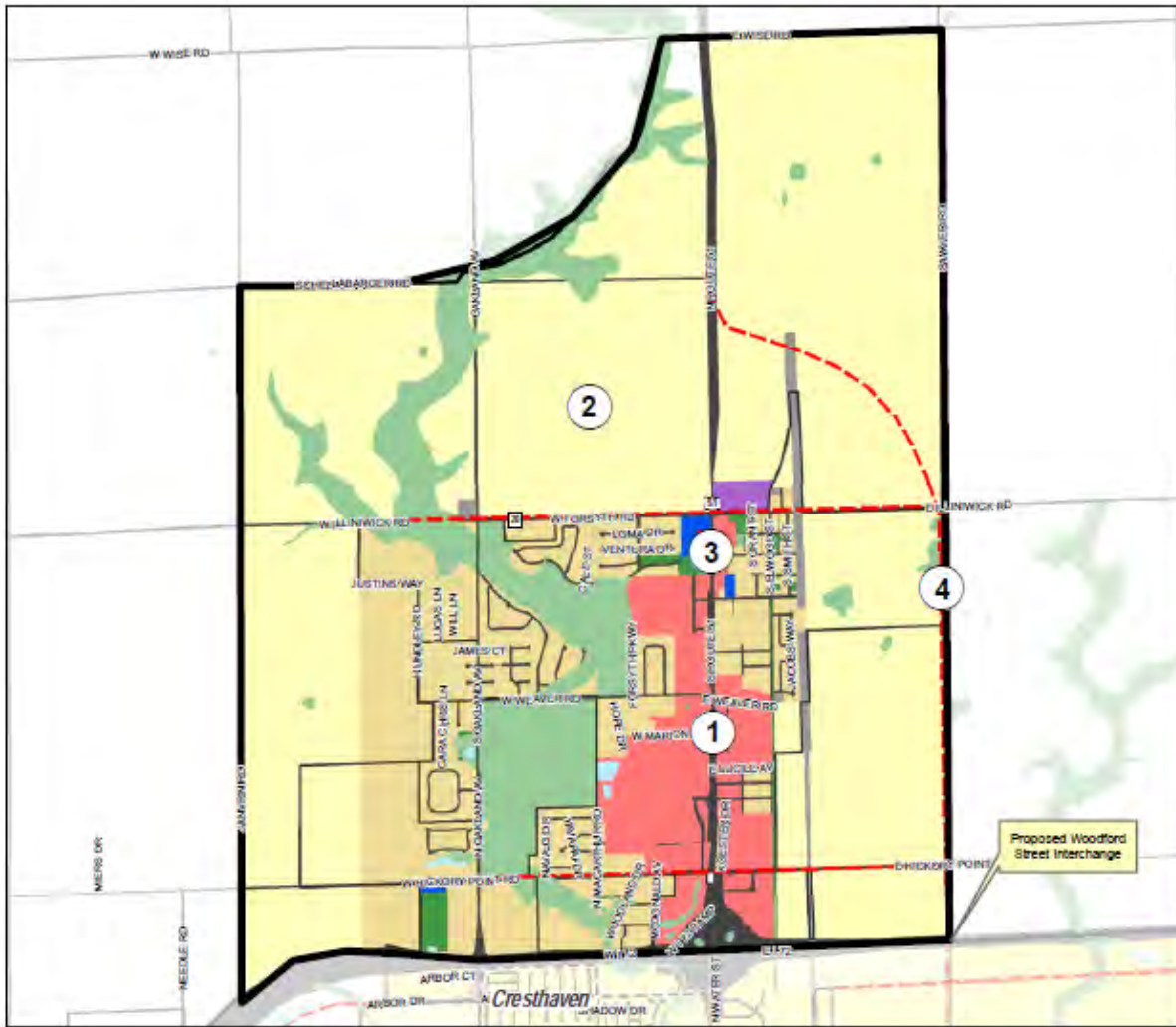
Generalized Land Use

- Residential - Estate
- Residential - Low Density
- Mixed-Use Commercial/Residential
- Retail
- Heavy Commercial
- Employment
- Institutional
- Schools - Public & Private
- Open Space
- Transportation/Utility
- Landfill

FIGURE 5-18
FUTURE LAND USE: PLANNING DISTRICT 10



MACON COUNTY/DECATUR COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



Planning District 11:
Includes the Village of Forsyth, part of the City of Decatur and portions of Unincorporated Macon County

Key Development Strategies	
1	Congestion management solutions need to be implemented along US. 51 north of I-72 including consideration of access roads to provide internal circulation within the commercial area.
2	Encourage future residential development as low density, cluster development linked to the preservation of open space.
3	Undertake significant gateway and roadway landscape programs to emphasize Route 51 as a major entry into Decatur.
4	Minimize street intersections and curb cuts to control sprawl and its impacts along the proposed Woodford Street extension and new interchange with I-72.

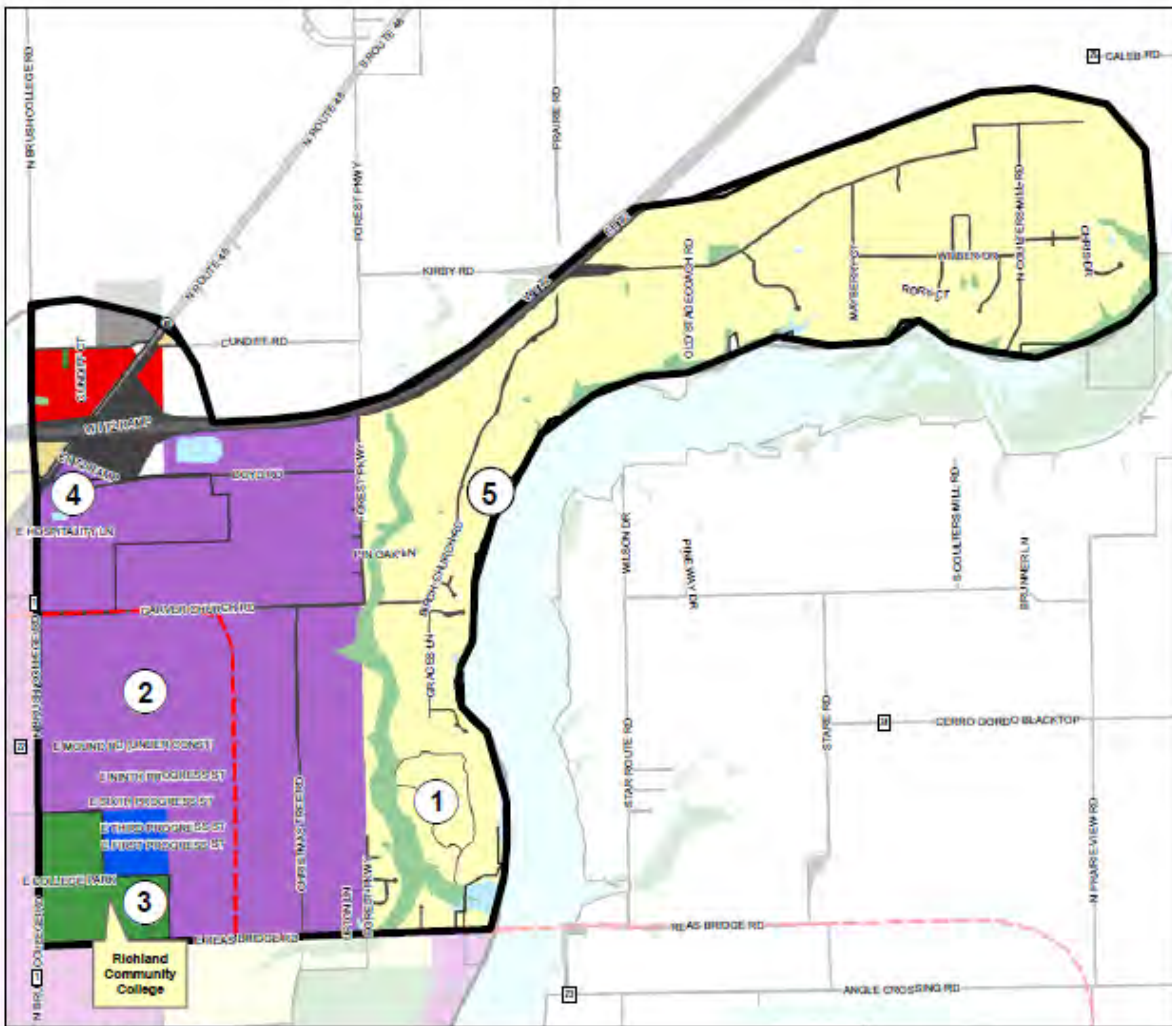
Legend

- Municipal Boundary
- Suburban Growth Boundary
- Neighborhood Boundaries
- DUATS Projects
- Generalized Land Use**
- Residential - Estate
- Residential - Low Density
- Mixed-Use Commercial/Residential
- Retail
- Heavy Commercial
- Employment
- Institutional
- Schools - Public & Private
- Open Space
- Transportation/Utility
- Landfill

FIGURE 5-19
FUTURE LAND USE: PLANNING DISTRICT 11



MACON COUNTY/DECATUR COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



Planning District 12:

Includes the far northeast part of Decatur and portions of Unincorporated Macon County

Key Development Strategies

1	The area east of Christmas Tree Road is a series of low density, stable neighborhoods along the west bank of the Sangamon River. Future subdivision development within this area should be cluster development linked to the preservation of open space.
2	The west side of the district, between Christmas Tree and Brush College Road is the existing site of the Richland Community College and the Farm Progress Show grounds. The master plan for the future development of this area as an agribusiness park should be followed.
3	Encourage growth and expansion of Richland Community College and linkage to the Farm Progress grounds as a continuous operation serving as Central Illinois' center for the display and sale of agricultural capital equipment and related agri-business, technology and research and development enterprises.
4	The northwest corner of the district is the Interchange of Route 48, Brush College and I-72. Gateway landscaping features should be developed for this intersection.
5	Preserve existing access and encourage increased access to Lake Decatur and the Sangamon River through public/ private agreements, easements and purchases.

FIGURE 5-20

FUTURE LAND USE: PLANNING DISTRICT 12

MACON COUNTY/DECATUR COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Chapter 6:

An Accessible and Connected County

Introduction

The City of Decatur is the Lead Agency designated to provide 3C planning within the Metropolitan Planning Area on behalf of the Decatur Urbanized Area Transportation Study (DUATS). DUATS consists of a technical and policy committee. It was formed in 1964 to handle the day-to-day activities of the MPO. DUATS is guided by a Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), the last one of which was approved in December 2004 for the period extending to 2030. The surface transportation recommendations of that plan are reflected in Figure 6-2.

The City of Decatur lies at the center of the Metropolitan Planning Area that includes Decatur, Warrensburg, Forsyth, Oreana, Long Creek, Mount Zion, and Harristown. Interstate 72 wraps around the city limits from the northeast to the southwest of the city in a sixteen-mile partial loop providing a means of access from the interstate system to the major arterials of the city.

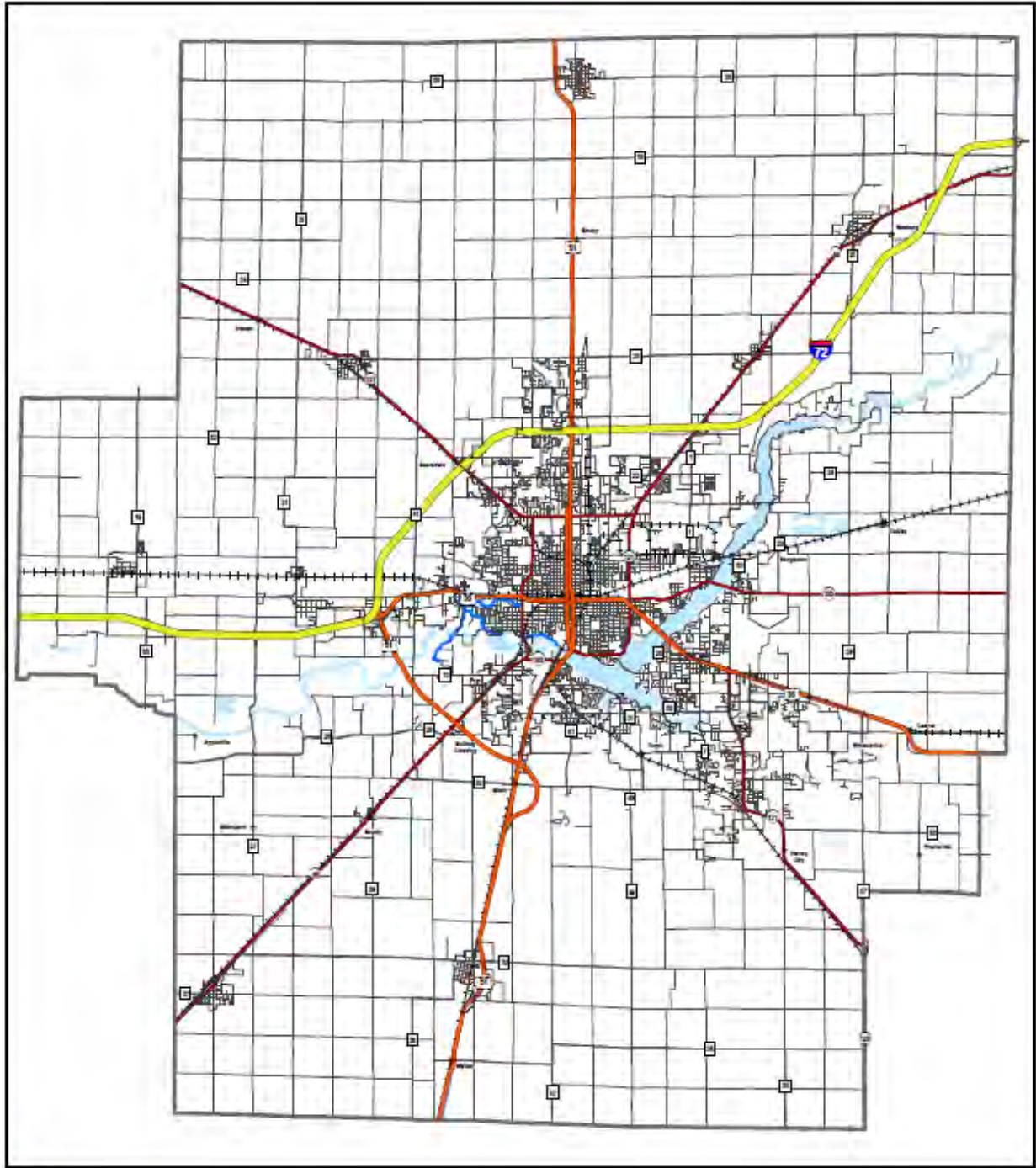
Macon County is connected to the region and the country by a system of Federal, State, and County highways as shown in Figure 6-1. Interstate 72 provides an east-west connection to the U.S. National Interstate Highway System. U.S. Route 51 runs north-south from the Wisconsin border to the Ohio River and is a four-lane limited access facility north of Decatur to the Illinois-Wisconsin state line. U.S. Route 36 provides access to and through Decatur from the east and feeds I-72. Illinois (IL) 48 is a state highway with a northeast-southwest orientation. IL 121 has a northwest-southeast orientation. IL-105's eastern access completes the spoke pattern that provides highway access to and from all areas of Macon County.

The minor arterial system combined with the principal arterial system creates a system that is at the high range of the Federal Highway Administration Guidelines. The collector road system, driven by the township level grid of rural roadways lies well above the accessibility percentage set by the FHWA.

Transit service within Decatur and Macon County is operated by the City of Decatur, Decatur Public Transit System (DPTS). Most of the transit service in the Macon County area operates within the City of Decatur. The Decatur Public Transit System service area is generally consistent with the municipal boundaries of Decatur, although not every home or business lies within walking distance of a bus stop.

An assessment of the overall current transportation system yields the following observations:

1. Macon County residents spend an increasing amount of time commuting to and from work. According to Census data, travel time increased 5% from 1980 to 1990 and 50% from 1990 to 2000. Increases in travel time were relatively flat during the first half of this decade.
2. The spoke system of City streets, County roadways and State highways give most of Decatur very good access to an urban principal arterial. The exception is the southeast neighborhoods of Decatur. The barrier created by Lake Decatur renders this area of the County less accessible than in the north and west. The proposed South East Beltway would serve the less accessible areas southeast of Lake Decatur.



- Legend**
- Interstate 72
 - U.S. Route
 - State Route
 - County Route
 - Local/Collector Road
 - Bicycle Path
 - Railroad

FIGURE 6-1

EXISTING TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

MACON COUNTY/DECATUR COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



CAMRUS

3. I-72, an east-west connection to the Interstate System, has had traffic volumes increase 27% since 1996. Aside from I-72, other principal arterials carrying nearly 20,000 AADT include U.S. 51 and U.S. 36. It is noteworthy that both Business Route 51 and U.S. Route 36 allow significant through truck traffic to travel through Downtown Decatur.
4. The segments of U.S. 51 immediately north of the I-72 interchange are operating over capacity; segments immediately south are operating at near capacity.
5. The Decatur Airport currently offers daily, round-trip passenger service to St. Louis, MO via Great Lakes Airlines. Since the deregulation of the airline system in 1978, local passenger service has diminished from an annual ridership of 50,000 passengers to 5,000 today. The future success of Decatur Airport hinges upon resumption of viable passenger air service to Chicago O'Hare and safe, efficient access to the Southeast Beltway and other routes to the interstate system, to allow ingress/egress for users of a proposed commercial business park.
6. Transit ridership has been increasing since 2002, when the Senator Severns Transit Center opened and revised routes and schedules were introduced. The 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan estimated that about 80% of the people in the City lie within $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile from a bus route. The overall 50% increase in fixed route transit riders since 2002 shows the importance of public transportation and the growing understanding and use of bus transit, and provides an opportunity for the City of Decatur to capitalize on this important asset.

Principles

The following six transportation principles have been established as a guide to future planning. These principles are consistent with the first six goals in the DUATS 2030 LRTP.

- T1. Land development and transportation investments are coordinated to enhance the function and aesthetics of the County's major corridors.
- T2. Transportation investments result in the safe, secure, and efficient movement of people and goods to, from, through, and within Macon County.
- T3. Improvements to the transportation system make the most cost-effective use of existing infrastructure.
- T4. Macon County is the regional center for the distribution of goods through its extensive air, road, and rail network.
- T5. Visitors and residents move freely through the region with a range of connected transportation choices.
- T6. Urban corridors and collector streets reinforce the connection between communities and the services they need on a daily basis.

Principles T1. Land development and transportation investments are coordinated to enhance the function and aesthetics of the County's major corridors.

Policies and Strategies

- A. Coordinate land development public infrastructure improvements along the major corridors consistent with the recommendations illustrated in Figures 6-5 to 6-9. New development and redevelopment within urban corridors should result in land uses scaled to the levels of accessibility provided by the corridor roadways.

Principle T2. Transportation investments result in a safe, secure and efficient movement of people and goods to, from, within, and through the County.

Policies and Strategies

- A. Implement local and regional policies that encourage through trips on major streets consistent with land use and economic development goals of the region.
 - Long-range growth of Forsyth will require the completion of an arterial and collector network that completes the street grid to accommodate additional traffic.
 - Reroute the through truck traffic off of Business Route 51 through downtown Decatur to minimize conflicts between pedestrian and vehicular traffic.
- B. Minimize the points of conflict between freight rail and auto traffic in future infrastructure planning.
- C. Develop a regional hierarchy of roads to concentrate major vehicle movements on uniformly spaced major corridors.
 - Extend Ash Avenue from Martin Luther King Jr. Drive east to Illinois Route 48 and Brush College Road to foster mixed use development in the northeast portion of Decatur as identified in Figure 6.2
 - Construct a Woodford Street extension north of Mound Road to the Ash Avenue extension.
 - Construct the South East Beltway in accordance with the Federally approved alignment corridor.

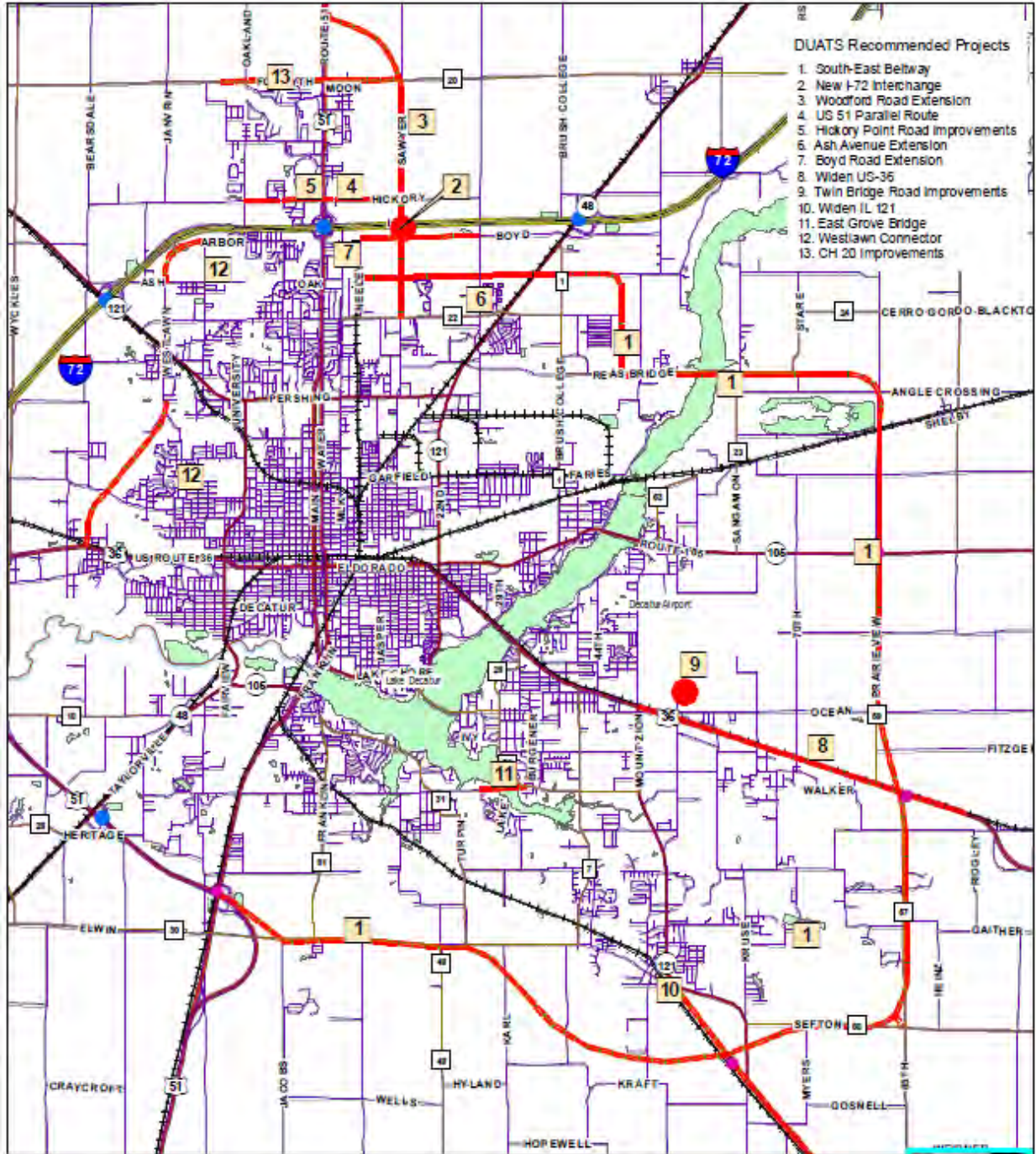


FIGURE 6-2

DUATS RECOMMENDED TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS

MACON COUNTY/DECATUR COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



Principle T3. Improvements to the transportation system make the most cost-effective use of existing infrastructure.

The biggest challenge facing Macon County's transportation system is accommodating the increasing traffic volumes created by movements to and from the activity centers in the Decatur metropolitan area. Long-term infrastructure solutions must understand and address the inherent congestion problems associated with a limited number of bridge crossings over Lake Decatur.

Policies and Strategies

- A. Program roadway improvements only after appropriate studies have shown the need for repair, increased safety, or carrying capacity.
- B. Minimize infrastructure development by using traffic and demand management techniques and intelligent transportation system programs.
- C. The proposal for the South East Beltway, in part, reflects the desire to accommodate more efficient truck access to the industrial centers of Decatur. It would also greatly enhance the long sought access improvement to the Airport. This Federally approved transportation improvement will address these goals and will provide enhanced accessibility to that part of the County southeast of Lake Decatur. Another project which would also address truck traffic, improved access to the Airport and general accessibility would be the reconstruction of the Norfolk Southern Railroad viaduct over Brush College Road to facilitate an improved four-lane connection between the Airport and industrial areas.
- D. Improve efficiency of roadway facilities by changing traffic operations or improving route design to upgrade road capacity in congested and potentially congested areas.
- E. The growing regional commercial center along U.S. Highway 51 north of I-72 is increasing roadway congestion. One solution proposed by DUATS is the construction of a four-lane facility east of and parallel to U.S. Highway 51 in Forsyth. There is concern that the new road, as proposed, may induce substantial growth along the eastern edge of Forsyth engendering development beyond that which is anticipated by this Comprehensive Plan and the 2005 Forsyth Comprehensive Plan. The solution should be explored in conjunction with a modified frontage road along U.S. Highway 51 (Figure 6.3) allowing traffic to move between developments without reentering the flow of highway traffic.
- F. Establish and maintain a consistent system of roadway standards within the County by adopting uniform construction standards, create policies and procedures which control access to roadways and streets within the metropolitan area, and provide linked, consistent connections of streets and other public ways.

Principle T4. Macon County is the regional center for the distribution of goods through its extensive air, road, and rail network.

Agricultural processing of oil-bearing crops remains a significant part of the Macon County economy. These industries receive 99 percent of their commodity from outside the County. The continued strength of the rail and road network is crucial to maintaining this industrial base.

Policies and Strategies

- A. Secure infrastructure investment that competitively positions Macon County as an intermodal freight hub for the region.
- The expansion of U.S. Highway 51 to a four-lane, limited access highway, south of Macon County should be a high priority in future long range transportation planning.
 - Twin Bridge Road Improvements to create a new connection to U. S. 36 and the industrial park.

- B. Maximize the value of available land, consistent with the 2025 Airport Master Plan. The primary users of the Decatur Airport are general aviation, commercial air service, air freight, and the military.

The Decatur Airport is a designated U.S. Customs Port of Entry. As such, it serves as an important regional service center for local corporations, including global entities such as Caterpillar and ADM.

Until 2008, Decatur served as a downstate United Parcel Service hub with facilities sufficient to the operation of wide-body freight aircraft. UPS employed the B757 in regular service at Decatur.

Decatur Airport also boasts an activated Foreign Trade Zone, which permits considerable tax differentials for local industry.

Great Lakes Airlines, an Essential Air Service (EAS) carrier, currently provides daily, round-trip passenger service to Lambert-St. Louis International Airport.

Three runways are maintained at Decatur Airport, including primary runway 6/24. With a grooved asphalt and concrete surface and distance of 8,500' x 150', it can accommodate large jet service. Runway 12/30 is 6,800' x 150' with a surface of grooved partial asphalt and concrete. Runway 18/36 is 5,300' x 150' with a surface of grooved asphalt. All are served by a full taxiway system and monitored by the Control Tower. Two multiple-storage hangars house some of the 125 base aircraft.

- Secure safe, efficient access to the interstate system through the construction of a Southeast Beltway and other links from Rte. 36 to I-72 are absolutely critical for the Decatur Airport to remain a viable service provider in the Decatur-area community. Efforts to build a new, non-aviation business park at the Decatur Airport are also heavily dependent upon transportation enhancements to accommodate increased traffic flow and provide direct interstate access.
 - New business development around the airport should utilize the Airport Overlay District to protect airport operations, enhance economic viability and ensure that development does not encroach upon airport flight zones.
- C. Encourage the strategic role of freight rail operations.

Decatur was the first railroad intersection in the State of Illinois. Today, Decatur serves as the Illinois Division hub of the Norfolk and Southern Railway and the Canadian National and the CSX Railways bisect it.

- Promote short line railroads such as the Decatur Junction Railway Company (Pioneer Railcorp) which offer growth potential to Macon County.

Principle T5. Linkages give residents and visitors the opportunity to move freely within the region with a range of transportation choices.

Decatur and Macon County will promote connectivity through a number of different approaches. The policies outlined below focus on providing alternatives to automobile transportation, and linking neighborhoods, schools, shopping, and other amenities through greenways and trails.

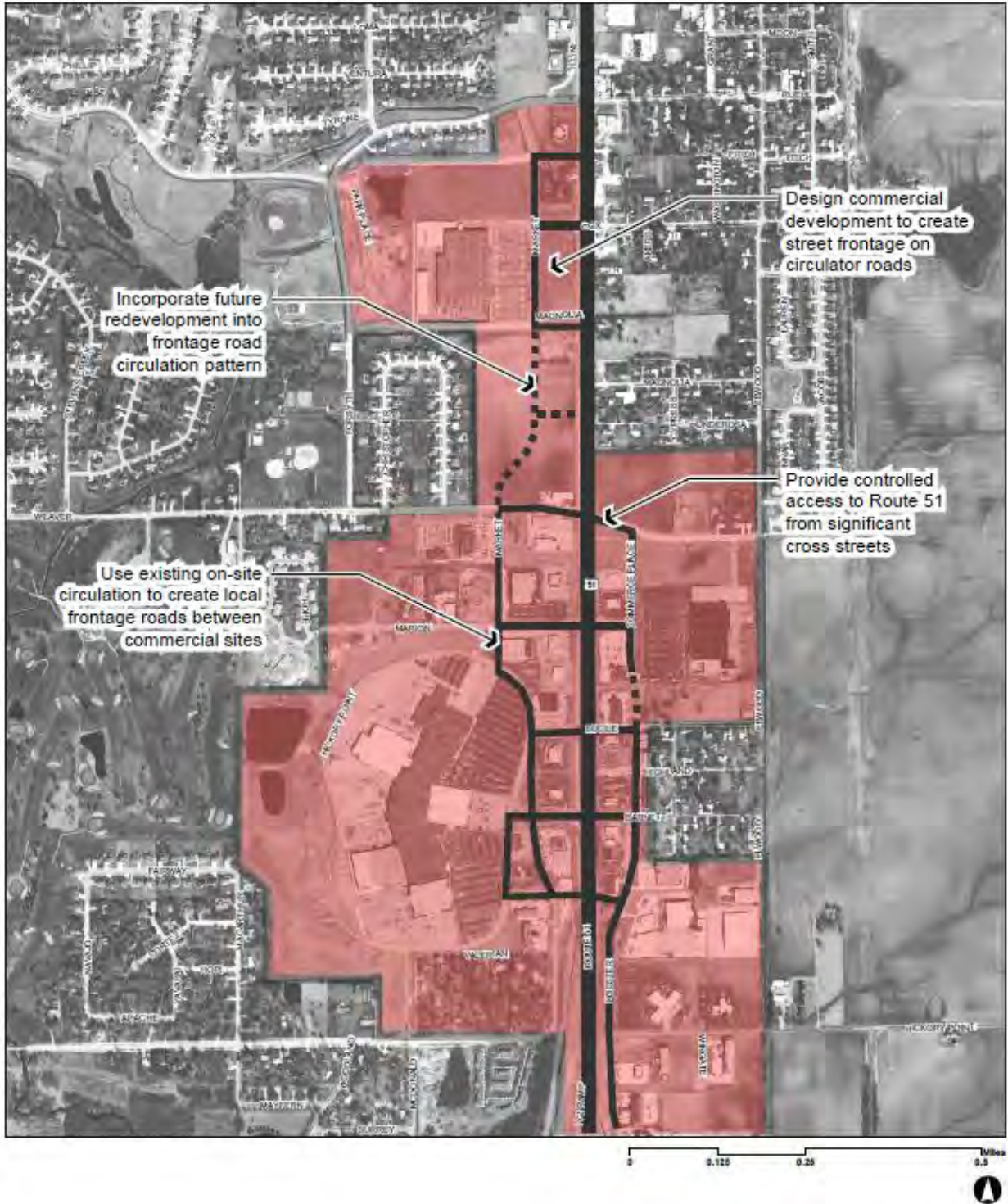


FIGURE 6-3
CENTER RECOMMENDATIONS - FORSYTH

MACON COUNTY/DECATUR COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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Policies and Strategies

- A. Encourage the planning and construction of bikeways and pedestrian walkways as an integral part of the transportation system improvements.

**DUATS 2030 Bicycle Plan
Mission Statement**

“Integrate bicycle travel into the transportation system and facilitate current and future bicycle and pedestrian transportation in the Decatur Urban Area.” - Mission Statement of the LRTP

Goal 1: To increase current levels of bicycle movement by at least 100 percent by 2030

Goal2: To ensure infrastructure, education, and safety needs are met for bicycle and pedestrian movements

Goal3: To consider bicycle and pedestrian movements in all future construction and maintenance projects.

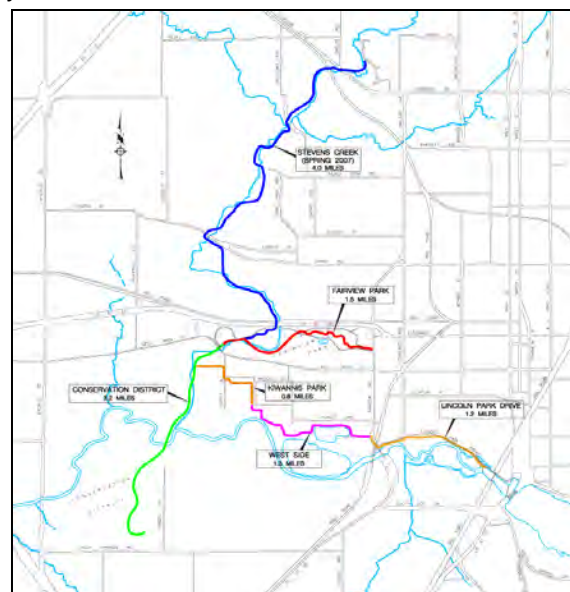
Trails are a part of Decatur’s park system that provides pedestrians and bicyclists transportation choice and recreational opportunities. The Decatur Park District currently has a set of interconnected multi-use



**Decatur Park District
Multipurpose Recreation Trail**

- Improve and accommodate multimodal travel across the bridges of Lake Decatur as part of future infrastructure projects.
- Conduct a feasibility assessment of modifying existing bridge crossings, specifically East William Street (IL 105) and U.S. 36/IL 121 to better accommodate bicycles and pedestrians.
- In Macon County, as well as in other Illinois counties, there is a current move

trails in the western part of the city. Trails wind through Fairview Park, cross Stevens Creek, trace the historic Interurban Railway, wrap around Kiwanis Park to Lincoln Park and end at Macon County Conservation Districts Rock Springs Environmental Center. Trails also follow natural greenways like the Sangamon River and Stevens Creek and through Decatur’s urban areas. The following improvements should be explored as a complement to the existing trail system.



Portion of the Current Trail Plan

to designate any rural route as an official bicycle route. There are legal implications to inviting bicycles to share the road and many governmental entities leave the route designation to bicycling advocates and clubs. Off-road opportunities for rural bicycling route planning also exist in the form of rails-to-trails, a movement to retrofit unused rail right-of-way as bicycle and pedestrian paths.

- Develop a county-wide trails plan, serving both transportation and recreation purposes, as reflected in the priorities established in the *Metro Greenways Plan* and the DUATS Bicycle Plan (Figure 6-4).
- Other than the Rock Springs Trail, a joint project between the Decatur Park District and Macon County Conservation District there are no formal striped bicycle facilities in Decatur. However, a set of interconnected city streets were designated as proposed city bikeways in the Decatur Pathways 2030 Long Range Plan. (See figure 6-4). Roads with ample shoulders, roads that are one-way, roads utilizing right-of-way through parks and open space, and roads with other features that make them bicycle and pedestrian friendly are good candidates for proposed bikeway elements.



Decatur Park District Trail

- B. Continue to monitor ridership trends and modify routes and services to encourage increased use of the public transit system.



**Decatur Public Transit Trolley
in Downtown Decatur**

- Create through an intergovernmental partnership, a regional transit board, to expand transit service beyond current service boundaries to key activity centers throughout the county.
- Extend transit service hours to meet the needs of employees and patrons of major retail and civic centers.

- C. Advocate for the inclusion of Decatur in the development of future high speed rail systems in the Midwest. High-speed rail would help diversify the transportation system by bringing another mode of travel to the community.
- D. Require all new development in incorporated areas to meet the ADA standards for sidewalks and curbs.

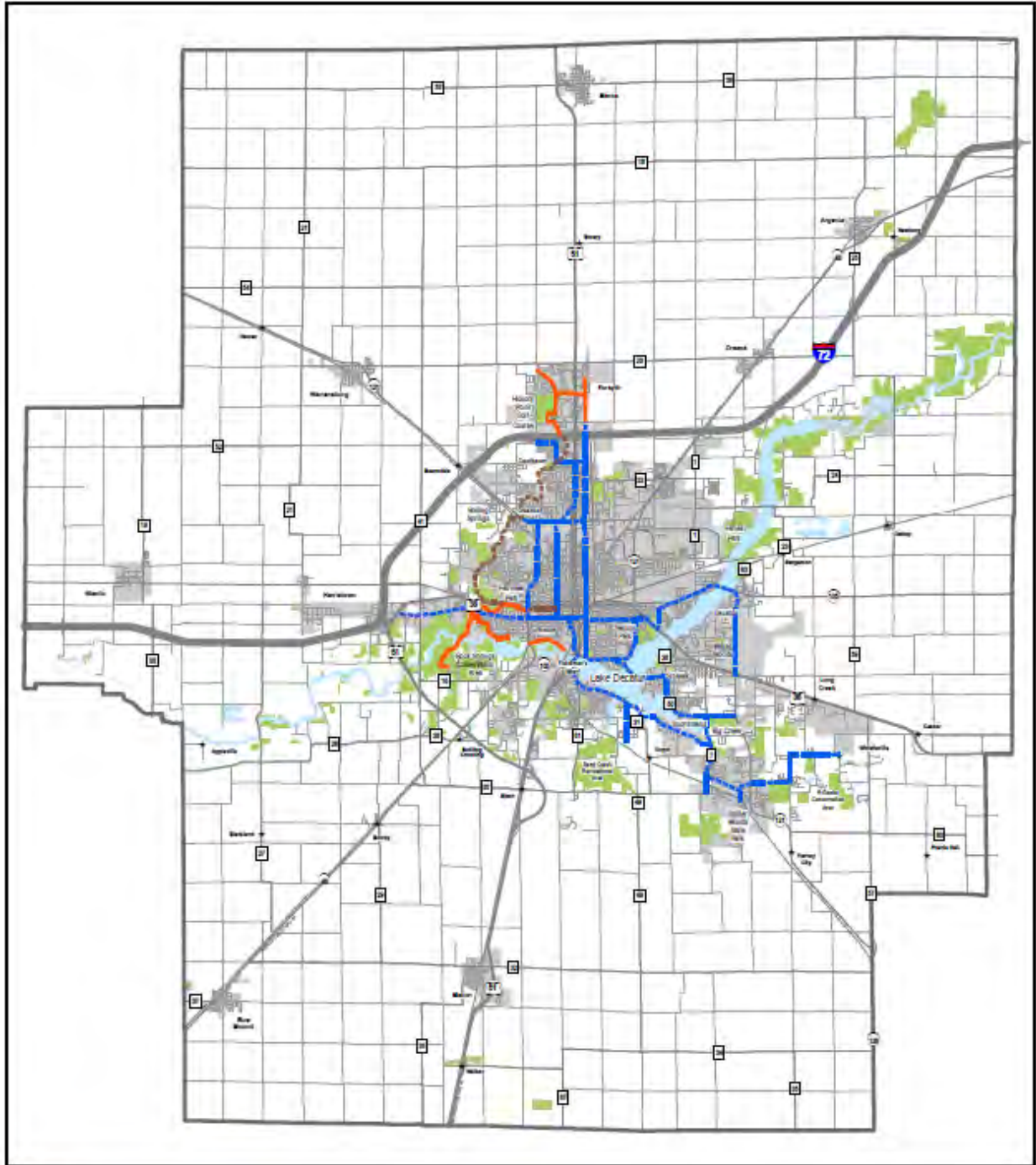
Principle T6. Urban corridors and collector streets reinforce the connection between communities and the services they need on a daily basis.

When new developments are not well connected with existing neighborhoods they contribute more cars and create greater traffic congestion on collector and arterial roads. When developers are required to integrate new subdivision transportation service into existing street patterns, sidewalks and trails, and provide a variety of choices for safe movement in and out of the neighborhood, new developments can actually increase connectivity within the region.

Decatur and Macon County should encourage well-connected roads and through streets. Options for future connectivity should be considered in new development. Where cul-de-sacs and dead end streets already exist, communities should consider plans to extend these streets to improve connectivity when approving adjacent development projects. Likewise, the review of proposed connections should also consider other traffic problems that could develop by interconnecting neighborhoods, namely, vehicular shortcut situations.

Polices and Strategies

- A. Design, engineer, and construct, over time, a consistent set of corridor improvements consistent with the character and function of the roadways. These major streets are the primary source of community image and identity to residents and visitors alike. They also influence investment decisions and the quality of the neighborhoods and the communities through which they traverse. Figure 6-6 identifies the overall pattern of land use along the key corridors of U. S. Highway 51 and U.S. Route 36. Figures 6-7 through 6-9 provide a more detailed direction on their improvement strategies.
- B. Modify subdivision regulations to minimize cul-de-sacs, gated communities, and other designs that restrict links to adjacent neighborhoods, open spaces and commercial centers.
- C. Design street systems that discourage non-local traffic on residential blocks to discourage high speed, cut-through traffic.
- D. New development and redevelopment within urban corridors should result in land uses scaled to the levels of accessibility provided by the corridor roadways. (See discussion in Chapter 5)



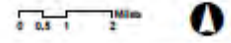
Legend

- Proposed DUATS Bikeways Public Park/Open Space
- Existing Bike Path/Trail
- Proposed Bike Path
- Proposed Trail

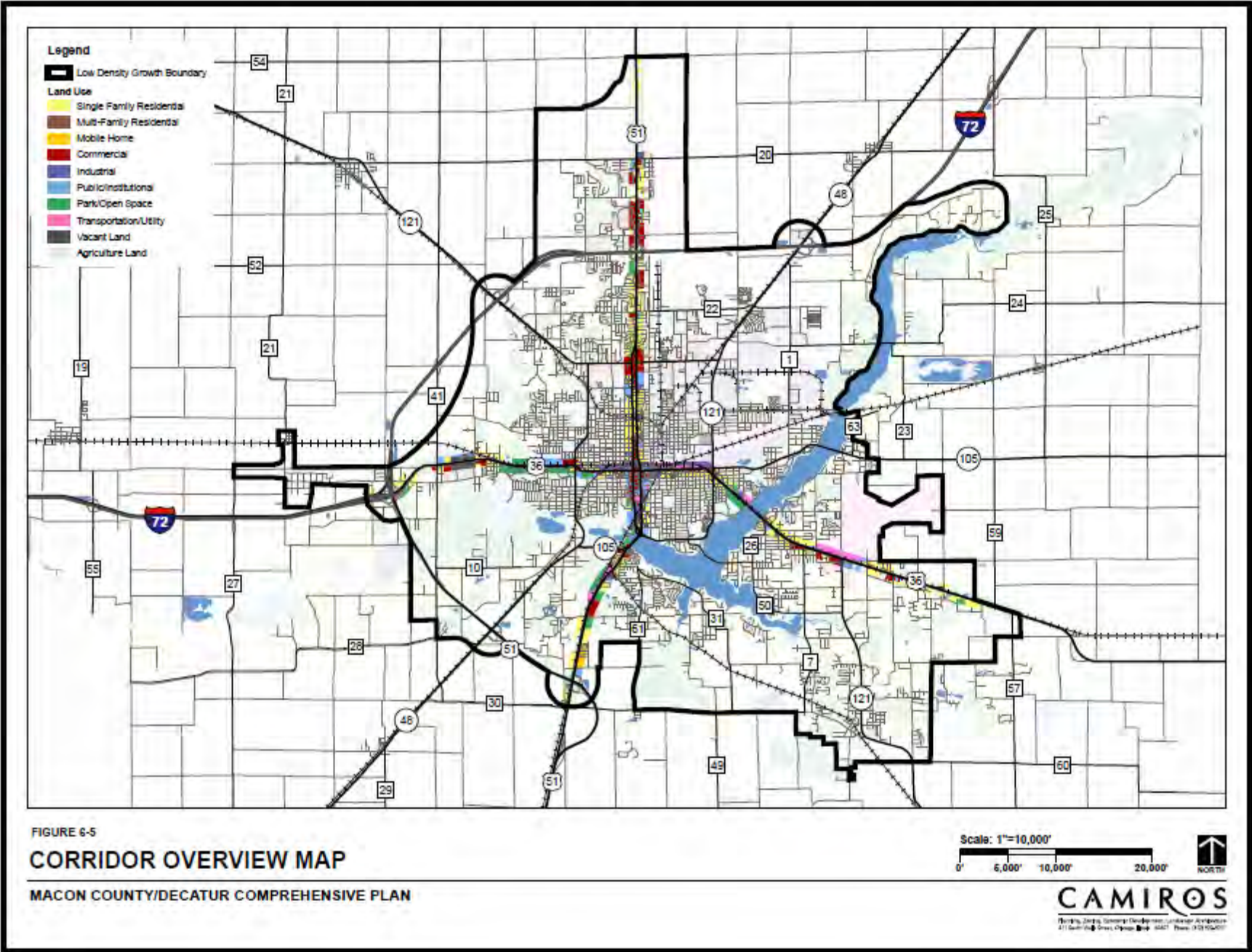
FIGURE 6-4

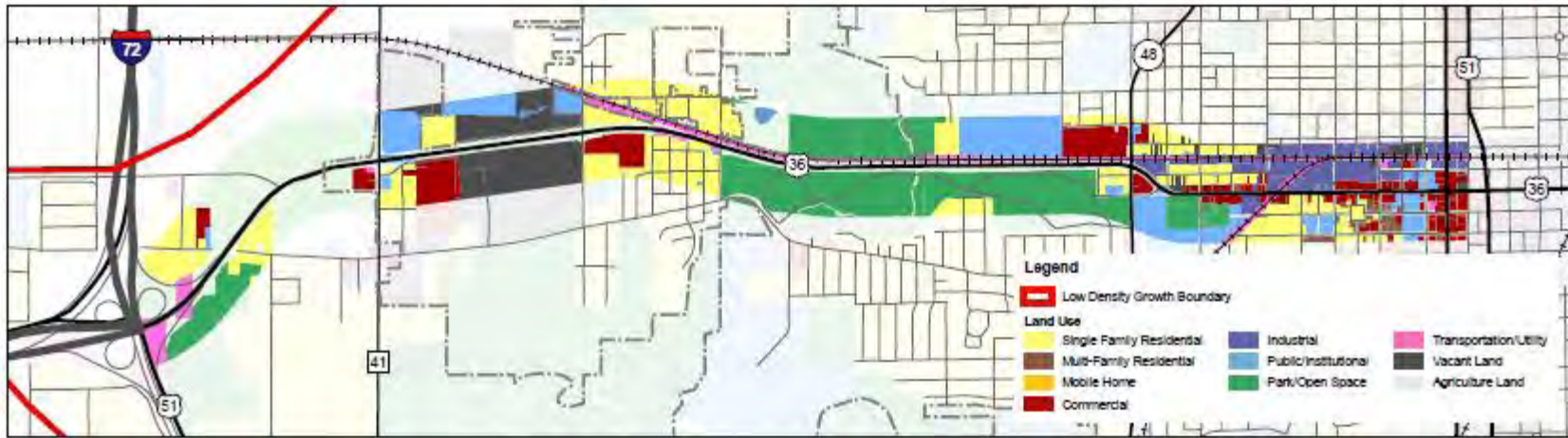
BICYCLE PLAN

MACON COUNTY/DECATUR COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

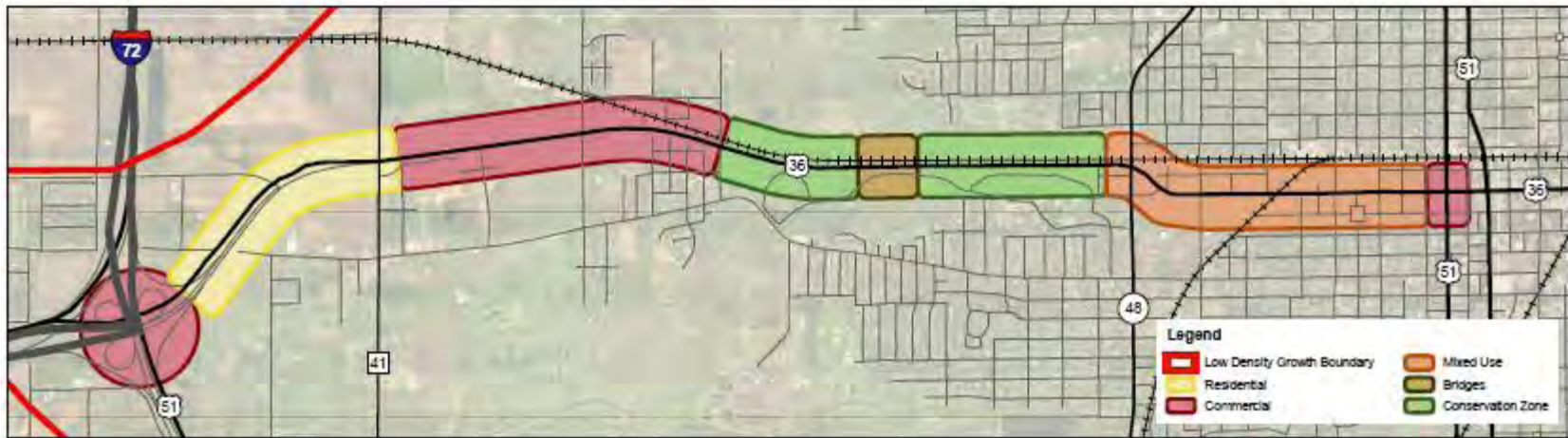
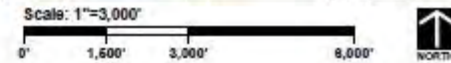


CAMIROS





Generalized Land Use

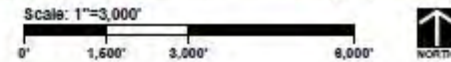


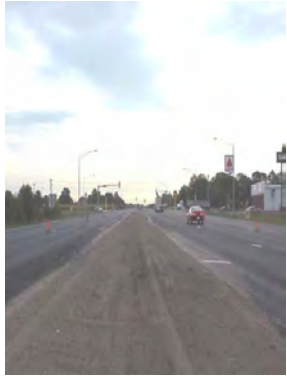

Proposed Corridor Land Use District

FIGURE 6-6

ROUTE 36: WEST CORRIDOR

MACON COUNTY/DECATUR COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



Corridor Segment	Function	Development Strategy	Enhancement Strategy
<p>Wyckles Road to Fairview Avenue</p> 	<p>This segment provides a greenway connecting the commercial center development at Wyckles Road with that at Fairview Avenue. The roadway segment is characterized by wide setbacks with access limited to major cross streets.</p>	<p>The corridor segment links to key centers in the long-range development of Decatur’s east side.</p> <p>The first is the transformation of the Decatur Convention Center at Wyckles Road into a family-oriented entertainment destination.</p> <p>The second is the development of mixed-use center at Fairview and Route 36 that marks the transition to urban Decatur.</p>	<p>Additional planting to reinforce the green corridor</p> <p>Screen residential areas and park maintenance storage yard.</p>
<p>Fairview Avenue to Church Street</p> 	<p>This segment transitions into an urban street serving commercial, office and institutional uses. It is home to the Mueller Museum. The pattern of land use is highway commercial with development set back and separated by multiple curb cuts per block and limited sidewalk widths.</p>	<p>Corridor segment borders the historic district on the south and is anchored by a series of large historic churches at the east end. Long-term development should strengthen the cultural and historic character of this portion of the street.</p>	<p>Develop a gateway feature at the railroad viaduct announcing the transition from suburban to urban character development.</p>

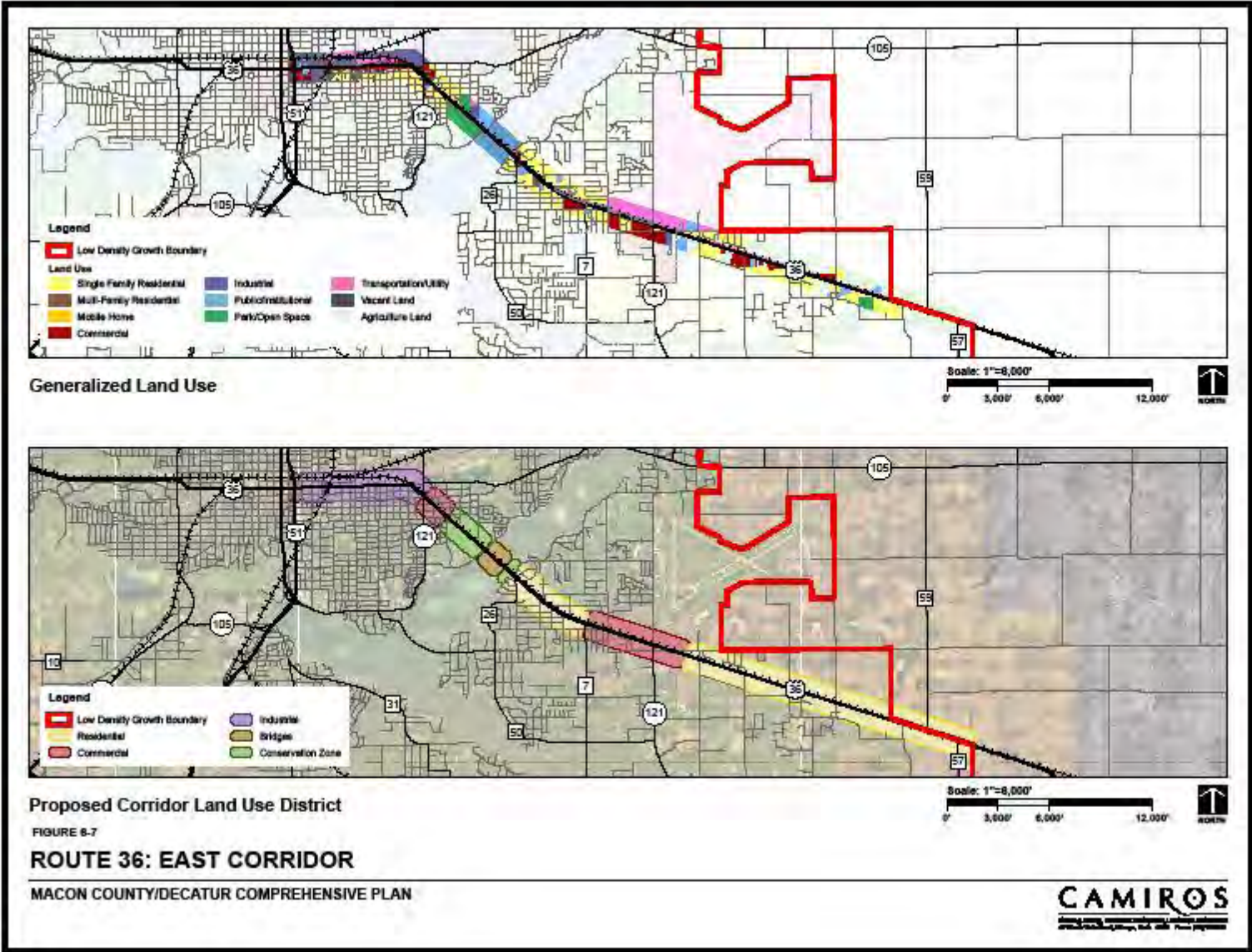




FIGURE 6-7

ROUTE 36: EAST CORRIDOR

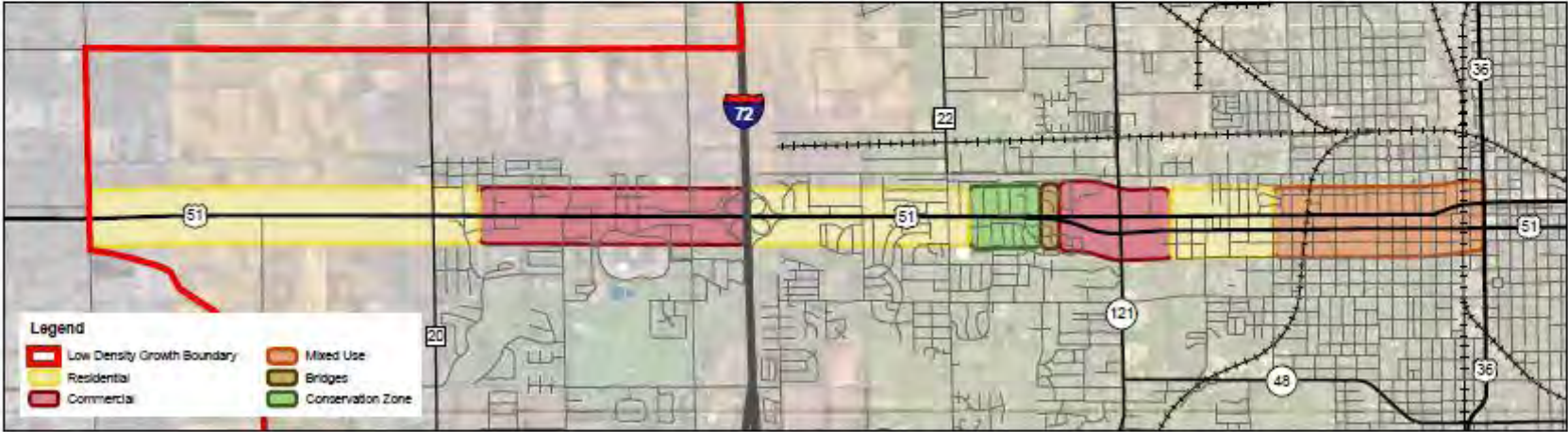
MACON COUNTY/DECATUR COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



Corridor Segment	Function	Development Strategy	Enhancement Strategy
<p>Front Street to 22nd Street</p> 	<p>This segment of Route 36 is a wide five-lane street. The predominate land use is underutilized older warehouse and distribution facilities. Sidewalks are narrow with limited street activity.</p>	<p>Encourage the conversion of existing warehouse buildings west of Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive into residential and reinforce with a walk-able streetscape connecting it to the Central Business District.</p>	<p>Minimize the impact of narrow sidewalks through the use of decorative railings and landscaping to separate the pedestrian from traffic.</p>
 <p>22nd Street to IL Route 121</p>	<p>This street section’s primary function is to move traffic. The north side of the corridor is a railroad right of way and the south side is residential transitioning into Nelson Park.</p>	<p>The predominant land use should remain residential. Commercial uses should be discouraged except the expansion of the retail center at Route 121.</p>	<p>Median and edge landscaping to enhance the naturalistic character and to unify the corridor landscape.</p> <p>Develop uniform bridge lighting and gateway features over time to create a sense of entry and transition into the historic urban center of the community.</p>



Generalized Land Use






Proposed Corridor Land Use District


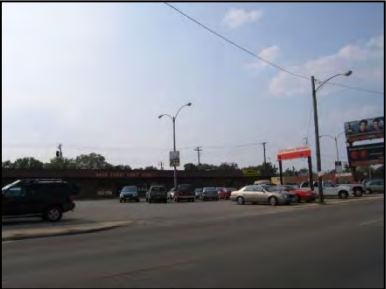

FIGURE 6-8

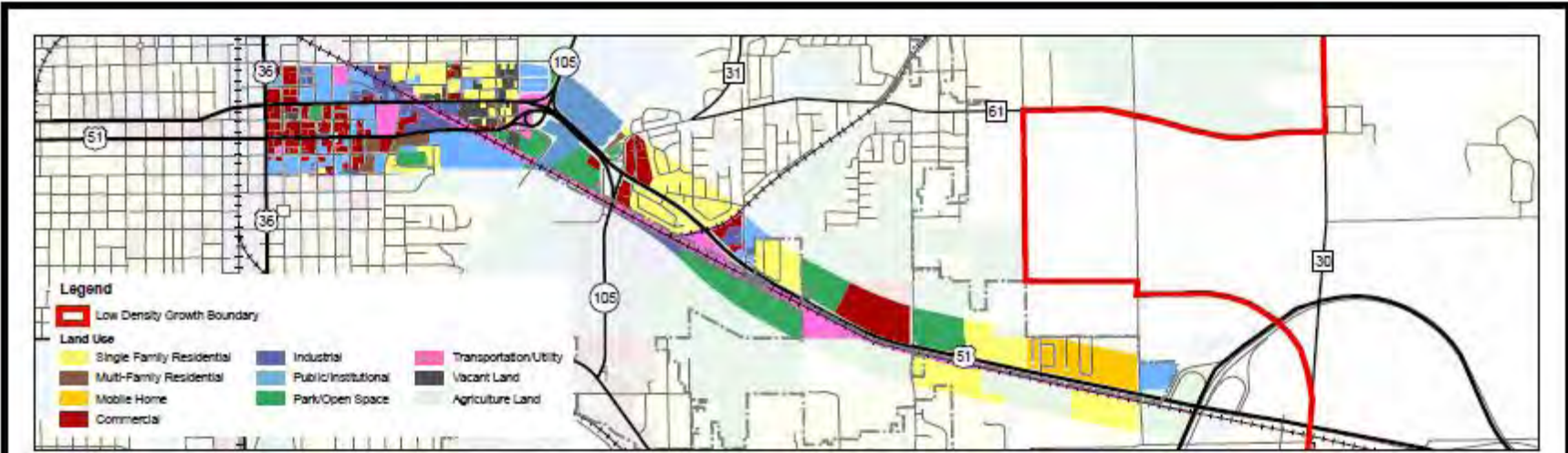
ROUTE 51: NORTH CORRIDOR

MACON COUNTY/DECATUR COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



Corridor Segment			
<p>Illiniwick to I-72</p> 	<p>U.S. 51 bisects a cluster of stand-alone retail establishments that are anchored by the Hickory Point Mall on the east.</p>	<p>Continue to encourage retail development but establish Illiniwick as the northern boundary.</p>	<p>Develop frontage road access between retail areas to reduce congestion on U.S. 51</p>
<p>I-72 to Emerson</p> 	<p>This section is a limited access roadway with wide setbacks from adjacent residential developments.</p> <p>There are no pedestrian amenities along the right of way.</p>	<p>Complete the build-out of the Target anchored community retail center, encouraging a greatly enhanced neighborhood center environment.</p> <p>Maintain the quality of surrounding stable residential neighborhoods.</p>	<p>Create a strong gateway feature at the point at which U.S. 51 splits into a one-way pair. Emphasize this as a point of transition by building on the greenway that crosses U.S. 51.</p>
<p>Emerson to McKinley</p> 	<p>The section of the one-way pair cuts through the largest commercial area in Decatur. It is characterized by auto-oriented uses setback front accessed by separated curb cuts. It includes two shopping centers: Northgate and Brettwood Village.</p>	<p>Develop and expand the retail area. Encourage the integration of developments, increased density and intensity with a mix of uses, and a sense of identity and destination.</p>	<p>Discourage multiple curb cuts. Establish gateway treatments and increase regulation of signage.</p>

<p>McKinley to Garfield</p> 	<p>The Decatur Memorial Hospital outpatient clinic anchors the southwest corner of McKinley and Main Streets. Main St. transitions into residential curb cuts and sidewalks to Garfield.</p>	<p>Provide residential services and assistance necessary to maintain a stable residential neighborhood.</p>	<p>Maintain curb and sidewalks. Parkway width limits tree planting in the Right of Way. Use banners and corner planting to unify the street.</p>
<p>Garfield to Grand</p> 	<p>Mix of commercial and service use facing Main and Water Streets. Broken pattern of residential uses.</p>		<p>Maintain curb and sidewalks. Parkway width limits tree planting in the Right of Way. Use banners and corner planting to unify the street.</p>
<p>Grand to Eldorado</p> 	<p>Commercial, storage, and light industrial uses dominate the gap between Franklin and Main. The east side of Franklin is a large area of vacant land.</p>	<p>Land between the Main and Franklin pair should be planned and developed as part of a larger mixed-use strategy for the Wabash Crossing area to the east.</p>	<p>Create gateway features which mark the transition south into downtown on Main and north on Franklin.</p>



Generalized Land Use

Scale: 1"=3,000'
 0' 1,600' 3,000' 8,000'
 NORTH



Proposed Corridor Land Use District




FIGURE 6-3

ROUTE 51: SOUTH CORRIDOR

MACON COUNTY/DECATUR COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Scale: 1"=3,000'
 0' 1,600' 3,000' 8,000'
 NORTH



Corridor Segment	Characteristics	Development Strategy	Enhancement Strategy
<p>Eldorado to Wood</p> 	<p>Four-lane roadway through Downtown. Predominate uses are office and commercial development in the Downtown core.</p>	<p>Encourage rehabilitation and redevelopment of ground floor retail with upper story office and residential.</p> <p>Buildings should hold the property line.</p> <p>Curb cuts should be prohibited for any new development.</p>	<p>Strengthen the pedestrian experience and encourage pedestrian movements across the street.</p>
<p>Wood Street to Illinois 47</p> 	<p>Main Street south of Wood transitions into a mix of commercial and light industrial uses with some multi-family housing as the road approaches the Lake.</p>	<p>Main and Franklin should function as two-way collector streets with the truck route shifted to another route, possibly Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive.</p> <p>Encourage the conversion of adjacent properties to residential, medium density development.</p>	<p>Enhance the sidewalk treatments and possible bike path connecting to Lake Shore Drive along Franklin St.</p>
<p>Illinois 47 to Southside and South Shores Drive</p> 	<p>U.S 51 crosses Lake Decatur</p>	<p>The southeast side of bridge should develop into a neighborhood-serving shopping center with a range of basic goods and services.</p>	<p>Develop uniform bridge lighting and gateway features over time to create a sense of entry and transition into the historic urban center of the community.</p>

Southside Drive to U.S. Route 51



U.S 51 transitions into a 4 lane, rural highway. Access is limited to major crossroads and there are no multi-modal amenities in the ROW

Residential development is expected to expand south along either side of U. S. 51.

Access from new residential development should remain limited to major collector streets.

Commercial development should be directed to the intersection with County Highway 30 and immediately south of the Lake Decatur bridge.

Maintain and improve through strategic landscaping of the green corridor.

Chapter 7: A Diversified Economy

Introduction

As Macon County enters the 21st Century, it is in the midst of a fundamental and gradual transition from an industrial-based to a knowledge-based economy. The outcome of this transition will have significant implications for the community, its workers, and its residents. The challenge is to expand the range of employment opportunities. The relationship between comprehensive planning and economic development is affected by this shift. The economy of this Century will require a new set of vocational issues and infrastructure demands.

The Comprehensive Plan recognizes that each of the 11 municipalities have developed their own goals concerning issues such as rate of growth, desirable land use types and patterns of development, service financing mechanisms, and economic development incentives. The municipalities recognize the value of seeking a balance between housing and job opportunities. The policies and programs of the Economic Development Corporation of Decatur and Macon County and the municipalities within its boundaries must, however, constitute a complementary statement about the economy in general and economic development in particular. It must reinforce the Plan's approach to channeling new urban development—commercial, industrial, and residential—to existing communities where plans are being made to provide necessary public services in a cost efficient manner, while limiting new growth in most of the unincorporated area to a rural or non-urban level.

Another significant component of the Comprehensive Plan is the recognition that environmental factors, natural and cultural amenities, and other "quality of life" issues affect the health of the economy. Indeed, the County's economy has benefited from a legacy of careful land use decisions, the provision and maintenance of parks and open space, and the public visual and physical access to Lake Decatur. Many of the physical elements of the region not only make life pleasant for all of us, but also attract tourists from outside of the County, thereby having an economic function as well.

An assessment of current economic conditions yields the following observations:

1. Macon County's workforce has been historically concentrated in a small number of large manufacturers. This has led to a disproportionately large impact by globalization and industry restructuring.

Macon County and Decatur Comprehensive Plan

Table 7-1 Total Employment, 1990-2005 (Workers age 16 and over)

Peer Counties	Primary Cities)	1990	2000	2005	Change, '90-'00	Change, '00-'05	Change, '90-'05
Macon (IL)	Decatur	52,639	52,584	48,680	-0.1%	-7.4%	-7.5%
McLean (IL)	Bloomington/Normal	68,058	80,759	77,737	18.7%	-3.7%	14.2%
Champaign (IL)	Champaign/Urbana	87,114	93,236	90,555	7.0%	-2.9%	3.9%
Sangamon (IL)	Springfield	91,949	97,526	98,943	6.1%	1.5%	7.6%
Delaware (IN)	Muncie	55,097	55,773	47,777	1.2%	-14.3%	-13.3%
Woodbury (IA)	Sioux City	46,324	51,827	47,335	11.9%	-8.7%	2.2%
Black Hawk (IA)	Waterloo/Cedar Falls	56,595	64,135	62,303	13.3%	-2.9%	10.1%
Buchanan (MO)	St. Joseph	35,952	39,031	37,490	8.6%	-3.9%	4.3%
Peer County Average		70,533	76,410	72,974	8.3%	-4.5%	3.5%

2. The manufacturing sector continues to decline as a percentage of employment but remains vitally important to the local economy. Archer Daniel Midland remains the County's largest employer with 3,400 employees.
3. Macon County economic base is growing slowly as a result of downsizing the manufacturing workforce and the slow pace of new investment to replace these losses. Macon County's manufacturing employment went from 23% of all jobs in 1990 to 17% in 2005, meaning a loss of more than a quarter of jobs from that sector.
4. Macon County had the lowest growth in median household income, in actual dollars, when compared to its peer counties. ¹ Peer counties had a median household income growth of nearly 54% between 1990 and 2005 as compared to Macon County's median household income of 37% over the same period.

Table 7-2: Median Household Income, Peer Communities 1990-2005

Source: U. S. Census

Peer Counties	Primary Cities)	1990	2000	2005	Change, '90-'00	Change, '00-'05	Change, '90-'05
Macon (IL)	Decatur	\$28,598	\$37,859	\$39,123	32.4%	3.3%	36.8%
McLean (IL)	Bloomington/Normal	\$31,366	\$47,021	\$51,563	49.9%	9.7%	64.4%
Champaign (IL)	Champaign/Urbana	\$26,541	\$37,780	\$39,227	42.3%	3.8%	47.8%
Sangamon (IL)	Springfield	\$30,350	\$42,957	\$46,115	41.5%	7.4%	51.9%
Delaware (IN)	Muncie	\$24,436	\$34,659	\$34,227	41.8%	-1.2%	40.1%
Woodbury (IA)	Sioux City	\$25,186	\$38,509	\$41,013	52.9%	6.5%	62.8%
Black Hawk (IA)	Waterloo/Cedar Falls	\$25,683	\$37,266	\$40,053	45.1%	7.5%	56.0%
Buchanan (MO)	St. Joseph	\$23,019	\$34,704	\$34,793	50.8%	0.3%	51.1%
Peer County Average		\$26,654	\$38,985	\$40,999	46.3%	5.2%	53.8%

¹ The plan looked at comparison data for McLean, Champaign, Sangamon Counties in IL, Delaware (Muncie) in IN and Woodbury (Sioux City) and Blackhawk(Waterloo) in IA. Detailed in State of the County Report.

5. Economic diversification must be a top priority in light of the current structure and growth of the local economy. Accelerating Entrepreneurship in Central Illinois (AE-Central Illinois) has advocated for a cluster-based approach. This comprehensive plan plays an important part in this strategy by ensuring that there are competitive locations for cluster businesses.

Principles

- E1. Agricultural production is a significant component of the local economy.
- E2. Agricultural-based industries serve as the core of a global economic development strategy that cultivates new industries and entrepreneurship in emerging technologies and support industries.
- E3. The natural and cultural resources of the County serve as an economic opportunity for tourism based on the natural resources in this region.
- E4. Macon County provides existing and potential business with shovel ready sites and is actively working to promote and assist developers in creating modern business park environments.
- E5. Downtown Decatur is the historic, cultural, governmental and emerging entertainment center for the County.
- E6. Retail Services provide a range of quality goods and services to all parts of the County.
- E7. Macon County captures the benefits of its economic growth for the greatest number of its residents.

Principle E1. Agricultural Production is a significant component of the local economy.

Agriculture is the predominant land use in Macon County with approximately 429 square miles, or 84% of the land area dedicated to agriculture. This includes active agricultural land, buildings, and livestock grazing lands. The main commodities are corn and soybeans. The annual economic contribution of these oil-bearing crops is significant, contributing in excess of \$30 million dollars in 1999, the last date for which data is available.

Policies and Strategies



Farmers Grain Company, Warrensburg

- A. Reinforce compact development to reduce pressure on land conversion.
 - Limit residential development in unincorporated Macon County to preserve existing farmland and mitigate the impacts of incompatible development.
 - Direct new development into incorporated municipalities and to areas within the development zone

around the Decatur metropolitan area.

- Residential development within the agricultural district should occur on lots not less than forty acres in size (one dwelling unit per forty acres). A minimum size of 40 acres limits the adverse impact on agricultural uses through adequate buffering and few conflicts on local roads.
 - Acknowledge the fundamental right to farm by integrating the use of Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Tool (LESA) described in Detail 2 in the evaluation of future development proposals. The County currently has the LESA system in place and should continue to maintain such system, with periodic updates and evaluations of its effectiveness. LESA scores should become a key factor in land use decisions, especially when evaluating new development in the agricultural areas.
 - Structure the County Zoning Ordinance to encourage the desired pattern of agricultural land use.
- B. Ensure that appropriate tools are in place to allow farm property owners to secure a fair return on their land while maintaining it for agricultural use. There are three common farmland conservation and preservation techniques.
- ***Agricultural Area Designation:*** The IL Agricultural Areas and Preservation Act provides for the designation of “Agricultural Areas”. These are areas of at least 350 acres owned by a single owner or multiple contiguous owners, which, once designated, provide a variety of protections to agricultural land. These include protection from laws that would unreasonably restrict or regulate normal farming practices, protection from special benefits assessments, and protection from locally initiated projects that would lead to the conversion of the land to other uses.
 - ***Transfer of Development Rights:*** Transfer of development rights (TDR) is a farmland preservation tool that has been used by local governments to preserve valuable agricultural land. Development rights of an agricultural area are transferred from the site, based on the sale of assigned development credits, to another area of the community where those credits allow for a density bonus. The agricultural land is then preserved (i.e., no development can occur on that land), but development pressures have been relieved.
 - ***Purchase of Development Rights:*** A Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) program is similar to a TDR in that development credits are purchased, typically by the local government, but there is no transfer of rights to another site. While the end result is the same – land remains in agricultural use - PDR financially “reimburses” the farmer for the potential development rights but does not transfer the rights elsewhere. However, PDR is not financially self-sufficient like TDR. It requires the necessary funding to purchase these development rights. PDR is also often called a conservation easement.

**DETAIL2:
THE LAND EVALUATION AND SITE ASSESSMENT TOOL**

The Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA) tool evaluates the quality of soil for agricultural use and the appropriateness of a site for development. LESA uses a point system, based upon various criteria, to assist in making land use decisions. The higher the points are, the more suitable that land is for farming.

“The LESA System provides an indication as to the continued agricultural viability of a tract or corridor of land currently used for agricultural purposes. Used properly, the LESA System can serve to protect and strengthen agriculture and, at the same time, allow for needed community growth and development.” Illinois Department of Agriculture.

The LESA point system is comprised of two parts – the land evaluation (LE) tool, which looks at soil quality, and the site assessment (SA) tool that determines the appropriateness of a site for agricultural development. From the Illinois Department of Agriculture, land evaluation includes:

“All the different soil types that are found in Illinois were put into 10 different groups, with the soils in each particular group possessing similar crop production capabilities. The first group contains soils that are the most productive, while the tenth group is comprised of the least productive soils possessing the most restrictions on their use for agricultural purposes. Three criteria were used in assigning each soil type to a particular group:

1. **Land Capability Classification.** Soils are grouped into eight Land Capability Classes based on their limitations for growing field crops or pasture.
2. **Identification as Prime or Important Farmland and Other Land.** Soils are evaluated for their suitability for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops. Illinois soils fall into one of three categories: Prime Farmland, Important Farmland, and Other Land.
3. **Soil Productivity.** This criterion is based on expected crop yields under a high level of management.”

From the Illinois Department of Agriculture, site assessment includes:

“The Site Assessment (SA) section of LESA is designed to evaluate the suitability of a tract of land or a corridor alternative for retention in agricultural use based upon factors other than soil quality. The factors used in the Site Assessment evaluation emphasize problems commonly associated with farmland conversion.”

The factors used in the evaluation are:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Land use on the site | 8. Compatibility of proposed use with surrounding land uses |
| 2. Adjacent land use | 9. Alternative sites proposed on less productive land |
| 3. General character of area within 1½ miles of site | 10. Availability of central water system |
| 4. Distance to city | 11. Availability of central waste disposal system (sewer) |
| 5. Zoned use of proposed site | 12. Transportation |
| 6. Zoned use of land adjacent to proposed site | |
| 7. Planned land use of proposed site | |

Principle E2. Agricultural-based industries serve as the core of an economic development strategy that cultivates new industries and entrepreneurship in emerging technologies and support industries.

Agricultural processing industries in Macon County accounted for more than 41% of the total industrial output in 1999.² This results in over 4,400 people directly employed in the industry and another 13,500 jobs that are indirectly the result of this industry. According to recent research by Millikin University, the region has a competitive strength in food production and processing relative to the nation, but global market forces threaten the commodity-based nature of the advantage.

The region can overcome these obstacles by building on its assets. There is the expertise and knowledge associated with Decatur's industrial leaders, ADM and Tate and Lyle. There is the local leadership, led by the Decatur Chamber of Commerce, whose successful bid for the Farm Progress Show creates an opportunity to access global food technology markets and build global relationships.

Macon County has the opportunity to harness the resources and brand itself as the Illinois Center for Agribusiness. Capturing a larger role in the agribusiness industry requires a competitive business park environment. The academic resources for such a venture are well within the County's reach beginning with Richland Community College and extending east to the University of Illinois at Champaign and northwest to the USDA in Peoria.

The concept of a Decatur Agribusiness Park represents Macon County's commitment to the future. The community recognizes technological innovation is crucial to the new economy and information sharing is crucial to sustaining a competitive advantage. Proximity fosters partnerships and the exchange of ideas. New products and processes can emerge through these relationships. The peer cities of Muncie, Indiana and Des Moines, Iowa offer some examples of how to proceed. We can learn from these successes as we build something uniquely our own.

Agriemergent Technology Park. The City of Des Moines embarked in 2002, on master planning for an approximate 1,100-acre site located in southeast Des Moines, being designed to offer agribusinesses and related industries an environment in which to develop inter-industry linkages and to capitalize on the area's competitive agribusiness advantages.

Agricultural Bio-Enterprise Zone. Muncie-Delaware County Indiana. In 2005 the Delaware County Commission approved the creation of this new zoning district. The AB-EZ was created to provide an area exclusively for industries that use or produce renewable

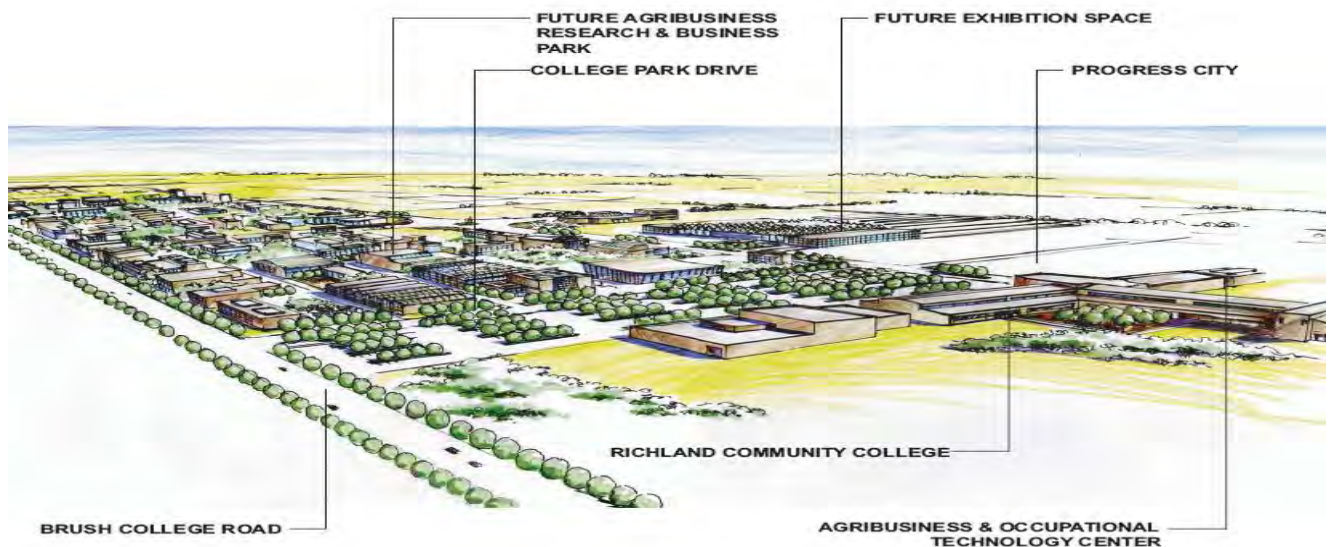


² IMPLAN Economic Analysis of Macon County Agriculture, Rural Economic Technical Assistance Center, Macomb IL 2002

agricultural products as inputs for their manufacturing production, processing, or research operations. It is intended to be occupied by multiple industries so that the infrastructure byproducts, expertise, and jointly developed knowledge and technology can be shared or reused by the occupying industries.

Policies and Strategies

- A. Identify and collaborate with existing anchors like ADM and Tate and Lyle.
- B. Target new and emerging businesses within the agribusiness cluster.
- C. Master plan and market a recognizable image for the agribusiness park concept as part of the adjacent Richland Community College Campus (see Figure 7-1).
- D. Utilize the resources of *In Decatur Ventures*, a venture capital firm, to cluster new business development around the theme “Agricultural Technology for Entrepreneurial Excellence”.
- E. Designate a local Development Finance Authority to support park infrastructure, business development, recruitment, and the operations of an Innovations Center through tax increment financing.
- F. Identify resources and engage partners to promote the expansion of business investment in connection with the biennial Farm Progress event.
 - Expand, over time, the capacity of Farm Progress to act as an all-season show room and marketing facility for products and equipment.
 - Recruit permanent corporate research and marketing facilities on the grounds of the Farm Progress Show.



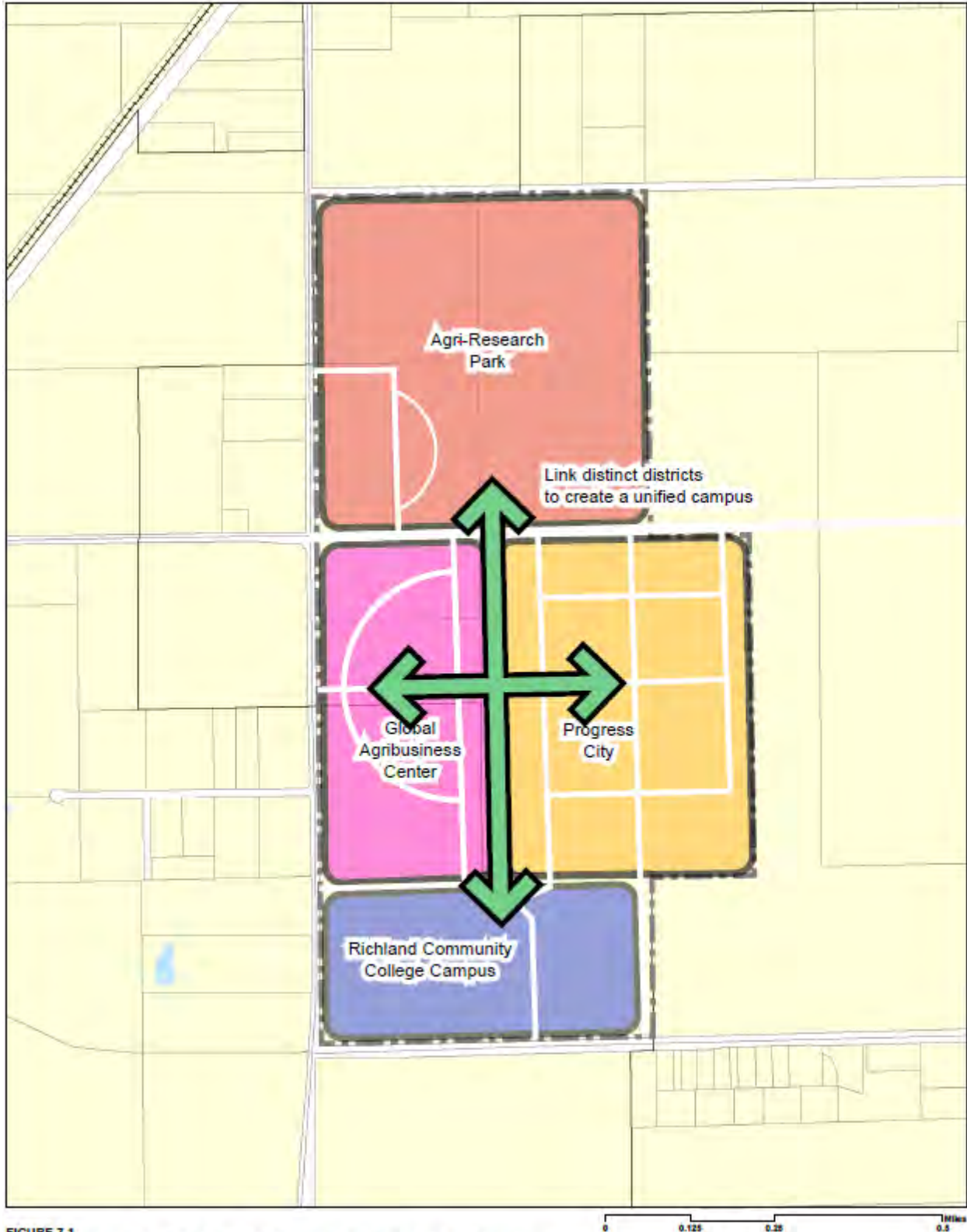


FIGURE 7-1
DECATUR GLOBAL AGRIBUSINESS CENTER

Principle E3. The natural and cultural resources of the County serve as an economic opportunity for tourism based upon the unique natural resources in this region.

Tourism represents one of the fastest growing industries statewide, as well as in the world. The definition of tourist is expanding to include either short-term visitors to the community or long-term visitors, such as employees who work but do not live in the community. Outdoor recreation, natural, historical, and cultural resources are increasingly important attraction for tourists.

Policies and Objectives

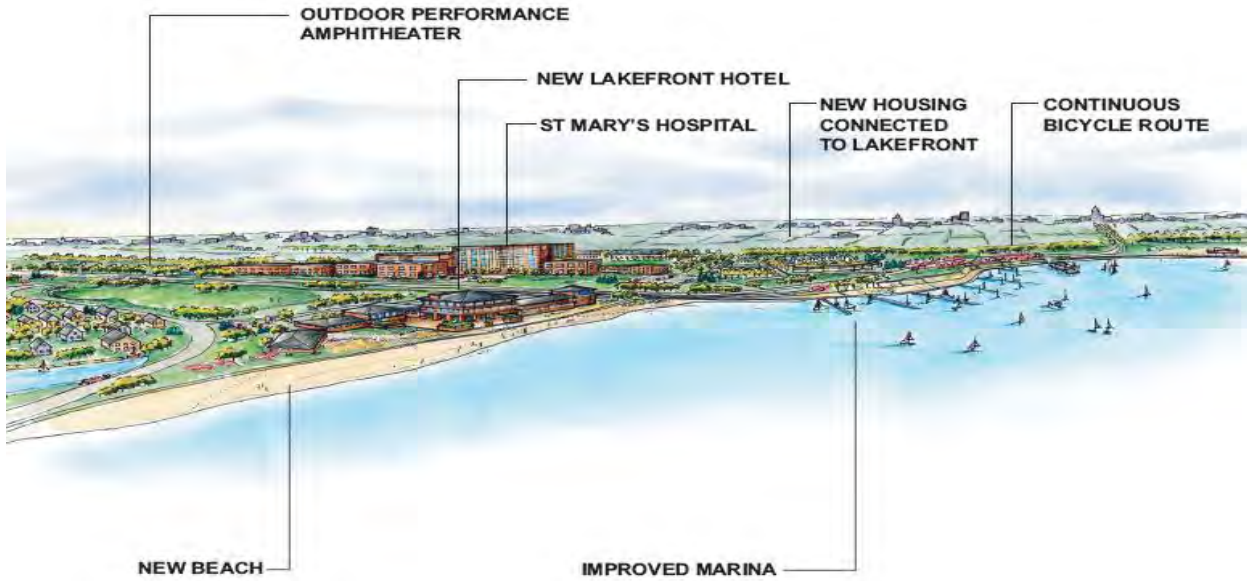
A. Coordinate the development and marketing of urban and non-urban recreational services and facilities necessary to increase the value captured from recreational tourism.

- Designate a local development corporation, involving the Decatur Park District, the Macon County Conservation District and the Economic Development Corporation to lead a tourism-based component of the economy.
- Establish Lincoln heritage development as an integral part of natural and cultural tourism.



B. Expand the range of amenities available to visitors at Decatur Landing along Lake Decatur between Mueller, Nelson, and Chandler Parks with the goal of creating a focal point for open space based mixed-use development strategy. The emerging concepts for this community focal point are illustrated in the Figure 7-2.

- Complete a master planning process which incorporates the following development principles:
 - Establish a pedestrian pathway that connects all venues along the waterfront from Mueller to Nelson Park.
 - Integrate Decatur Landing with Scovill Park and the Children’s Museum of Illinois to create a singular visitor experience.
 - Integrate a destination development that invites visitors to choose an extended stay on Lake Decatur.
 - Rationale the marina operations to minimize conflicts with pedestrians using the waterfront.
 - Complete the bike path connections to make Decatur Landing the center of multiple intersecting paths connecting downtown to the north and the communities to the east and west.



Concept sketch for "Decatur Landing" reflecting the emerging principles for development

- C. Pursue an economic development strategy for the Decatur Convention Center that transforms it into a family entertainment destination, building on its proximity to the Scovill Golf Course and the market interest in the development of a water park.



Concept sketch for "water park" reflecting the emerging principles for development



FIGURE 7-2

DECATUR LANDING CONCEPT PLAN

MACON COUNTY/DECATUR COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Scale: 1"=1,000'



CAMIROS

Principle E4. Macon County provides potential industrial end users with modern business park environments.

Macon County and Decatur is committed to making available an adequate supply of land, organized to meet future business needs that allows the County to compete regionally, nationally, and internationally, for a range of economic development opportunities.

Our priority is to retain existing companies while attracting new ones by building on current public investments. Significant capital has been invested over generations in industrial plant/equipment and supporting public infrastructure, particularly in Decatur's northeast quadrant. These informal districts and single industry campuses can increase their competitiveness by nurturing industrial park-like environments.

Policies and Strategies

- A. **Decatur Airport Business Park.** The presence of both U.S. Customs and the Foreign Trade Zone make the Decatur Airport unique among Illinois facilities. Coordinate marketing of the Zone with the Illinois Trade Offices through its nine Foreign Trade Offices.
- B. **Northeast Decatur.** Sub-area plan and strategically invest in existing clusters of industrial businesses and land, supporting a series of business park environments. Figure 7-3 illustrates this concept for the northeast quadrant of Decatur. Strategies appropriate to this objective include:

Accessibility

- a. Designate Class I truck route accesses within reasonable distances of the nearest Interstate highway and ensure that viaducts to and from the Interstate meet Interstate standards.
- b. Enhance the image and identity of these business clusters with signage to guide truckers to and from industrial areas.
- c. Limit non-industrial traffic within industrial areas by vacating or modifying streets to limit non-industrial traffic.

Marketability

- a. Define clear edges of each industrial area.
- b. Give each area an identifiable name and image.
- c. Assess the need for a common management entity to represent industrial users in each business park area.
- d. Provide well-designed gateways and signage to mark the edge of business areas.
- e. Establish development regulations that set a common standard for building setback, site screening, and landscaping.

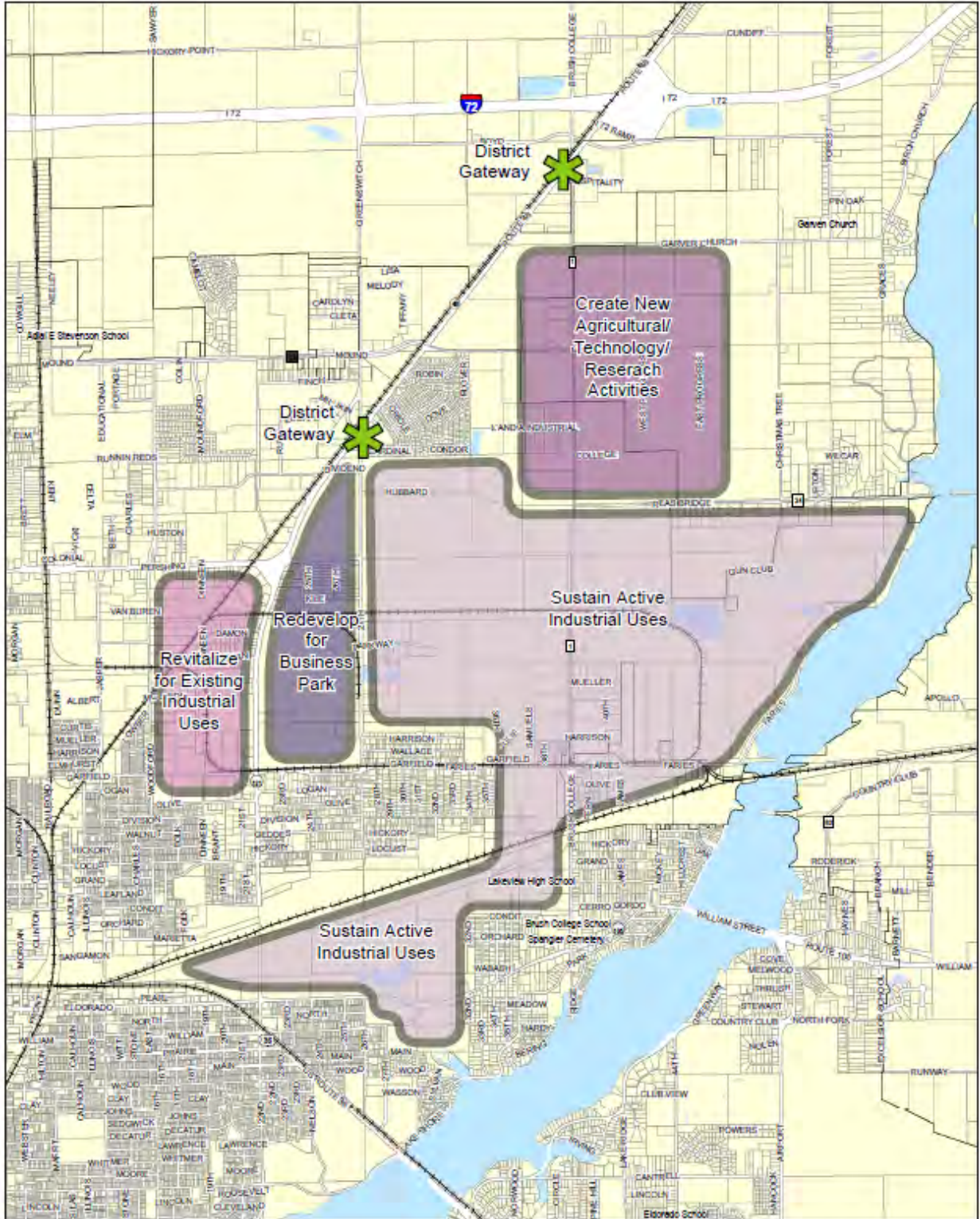


FIGURE 7-3
NORTHEAST INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT-FUNCTIONAL PLAN



MACON COUNTY/DECATUR COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

CAMIROS

Principle E5. Downtown Decatur is the historic, cultural, governmental and emerging entertainment center of the County.

Downtown Decatur is the historic, cultural, governmental and emerging entertainment center of the Macon County community. It is an irreplaceable community asset. While its role and purpose has changed, the downtown continues to play an important economic role, and in many respects, serves as the psychological barometer of the community. Locals and those outside the community frequently use the condition of downtown as a measure of the county's economic health and its collective civic pride.

The Central Business District is commonly defined as the area between the Norfolk and Southern Railway Line on the north, Martin Luther King Junior Drive on the east, Decatur Street on the south, and Church Street on the west. These boundaries define an area distinctly different from the surrounding neighbors, yet fragmented within it.

Rich with historic buildings and landmarks. Downtown contains a wealth of historic buildings and landmarks that include churches, theaters, warehouses, governmental and private office buildings, and arts facilities. Some of these buildings have been restored. Recent examples include Decatur's Lincoln Square Theatre and the Transfer House. Others are likely targets for renovation.



Lincoln Square Today



**Lincoln Square with Transfer House
Before it was Relocated in the 1960's**

Compact and walk-able core. The pedestrian experience on many downtown streets remains intact. On many blocks sidewalks have been landscaped, the street frontage is continuous, and historic structures and well-tended parks are present. The urban core is laid out in a grid that provides choices in pedestrian and vehicular movement. Short blocks also contribute to creating a strong walk-able environment.

Policies and Strategies

- A. **Sub-Area Planning:** Create a master development plan for downtown that divides the area into clearly defined districts as exemplified in Figure 7-4.

One of the elements of a healthy downtown is clearly defined districts, that it is a series of definable places of manageable size. Defined districts bring recognition to the downtown's unique businesses and points of interest by employing strategies that group them together. Businesses are more

successful when located in an area that is known to have a concentration of "like uses." Districting is a way to place a name and identity in a specific area; it is a form of brand awareness.

- **Retail District** generally bounded by Church, Wood, Franklin, and North Streets.
- **Government District** generally bounded by Wood, Merchant, Macon, and the Decatur Junction Railroad Line.
- **Mixed-Use District** generally bounded by Church, College, Decatur, and Eldorado Streets. That serves as a transition between the Near West neighborhoods and downtown.
- **A Hotel/Hospitality District** between Eldorado, Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive, Main, and Franklin Streets. This is occupied by the civic center and the concept is illustrated below.



Conceptual plan for development along for Jackson Street looking north (top). Underutilized parking lots looking north (bottom)



Decatur Public Library Parking Lot

- **An Office District** that would serve as the gateway to downtown at either end of the U.S. Highway 51 pair of one-way streets.

- East of Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive and north of Prairie to the Norfolk Southern tracks is a mix of warehouse buildings and the old depot. This area offers an opportunity for residential conversation and higher density development proximate to downtown.

B. Development Drivers

Downtown Decatur, like most downtowns, has undergone a profound transformation. Industrial uses, once an integral part of downtown, have moved out; retail activities have suffered from competition from regional malls; even offices have diminished in size. The results of these trends have been twofold. First, in the areas immediately surrounding the core, large tracts of land sit vacant or underutilized. Second, buildings within the core have been torn down to make room for surface parking lots. The former discredits arrival into the downtown and creates a wrong impression; the latter disrupts the quality of the pedestrian environment.

Disinvestment in downtown and the trends described above have transformed downtown Decatur into an area mostly focused on businesses, institutional uses (religious and cultural), and visitor-oriented uses. The combination of a strong visitor economy and the increased potential of a more walk-able and attractive downtown to capture some of the local and regional market will strengthen the downtown economy.

- Increase the connection between downtown and major institutional and entertainment facilities.
- Increase residential choice in the downtown core area in order to expand the local customer base and vitality to outsiders.

C. Develop Regulation. Implement the downtown master plan with a form-based zoning classification.

D. Marketing. Create a tiered system of marketing and management of the downtown that focuses the efforts of City Centre Decatur on the Retail District and create a private-public partnership to oversee the long-term development of the Central Business District.

E. Public Investment. Reinforce a strong identity and a consistent image.

The majority of the traffic moving through downtown is channeled into a pair of one-way streets: running north and south. This pair is designed to get people through and in and out of downtown as fast and efficiently as possible. This has created an artificial division between similar activities in the central area.

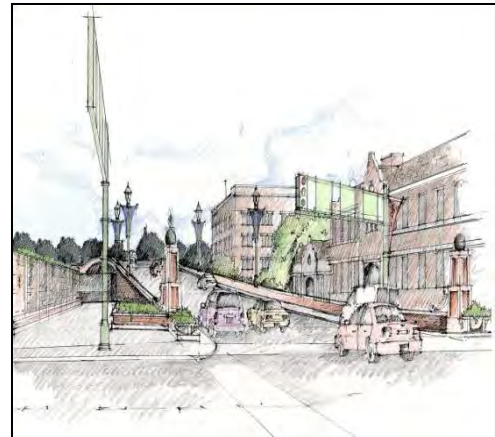
- Complete the process of making Main and Franklin two-way streets designed to accommodate the free movement of pedestrians.

There are areas where sidewalks have been narrowed to enlarge roadways, blank walls, and the chronic lack of retail frontage. These conditions are scattered throughout the core and are the dominant characteristic at the edges of the core. Recent plantings and landscaping have begun to alleviate these conditions. The quality of the walking experience in downtown is undermined where

surface parking and empty lots break up the block. These streets represent significant obstacles to pedestrian movement, depriving the core of the circulation advantages of the grid pattern.

The approach to downtown Decatur is marked by railroad underpasses and by large tracts of abandoned properties that give no indication of the historic and compact character of downtown. They introduce downtown to the visitor through a sequence of industrial environments.

- Elevate the prominence of Jackson Street as a civic address and “green corridor” from the Transit Station north with the possibility of connecting the downtown to future development north of Cerro Gordo by pedestrian bridge.
- Extend Main Street through the Central Business District to Prairie Street, connecting the residential neighborhoods to the east and west with a boulevard through the downtown core.
- Establish a strong system of gateways which define the transition between downtown and the neighborhoods.



Northbound Franklin Street Railroad Overpass
Decatur Urban Corridors Master Plan HOK 2004

Principle E6. Retail Services provide a range of quality goods and services to all parts of the County.

Retail business serves as a source of employment and revenue for the local economy as well as a contributor to the County’s quality of life by providing convenient access to goods and services, community identity, and social connection.

Policies and Strategies

- A. Strengthen and consolidate retail in community and regional servicing centers throughout the County into compact nodes at key locations along major corridors.

Encourage future redevelopment to incorporate strong pedestrian oriented design that integrates all commercial activities into a cohesive whole. The following key locations have been identified as opportunities to develop or enhance the County’s retail market.

- **Eldorado and Oakland.** This is a highly visible, well-trafficked, gateway location, proximate to the Millikin University Campus community. Several vacant sites create an opportunity for expanded neighborhood serving retail. (Figure 7-5).

- **U.S. Highway 51 and Pershing Road.** Currently an extended cluster of highway commercial surrounding two small shopping centers; Northgate and Brettwood Village. (Figure 7-6)
- **U.S. Highway 36 and IL Route 121.** This is the largest retail center south and east of Lake Decatur. It is currently anchored by a Wal-Mart and a Kroger's grocery store. This site has the potential to capture a growing demand for a range of retail goods on the southeast side of the County. (Figure 7-7)
- **South Shore Center.** U.S. Highway 51 and South Shore Drive. This is the key retail center south and west of Lake Decatur. It is anchored by a Kroger's Grocery Store. The site has the potential to capitalize on the Lake Decatur location and its proximity to the population centers south and west of downtown.
- **Hickory Point Mall.** U.S. Highway 51 from Interstate 72 to Weaver Road continues to grow as regional power center with the influx of big box retailers such as Lowes and Menards. Its long-term success will depend on the ability to manage the flow of traffic and to maintain a sense of place that attracts shoppers looking for a leisure experience.

Principle E7. Macon County captures the benefits of its economic growth to benefit the greatest number of its residents.

- A. Promote entrepreneurial business development in those areas with the greatest opportunity to capture expenditure leakage. Long term commitments should be found to sustain the Tabor School of Business, Center for Entrepreneurship, Millikin University, which serves as a regional hub for coordinating small business development, entrepreneurship training and development, and providing entrepreneurs with expertise, resources, and networks.
- B. Evaluate and modify City and County purchasing programs with the goal of increasing sources from local suppliers.
- C. Coordinate public, non-profit, and private sector resources to insure that economically disadvantaged residents of the County participate in the employment and income opportunities resulting from its economic development activities.
- D. Integrate the education and job training resources of the University of Illinois, Millikin University and Richland Community College into a coordinated resource for entrepreneurship, emerging industries, and support industries.
- E. Maintain current and relevant economic statistics and other information for the purpose of assessing the employment and economic status of the county within a single agency.

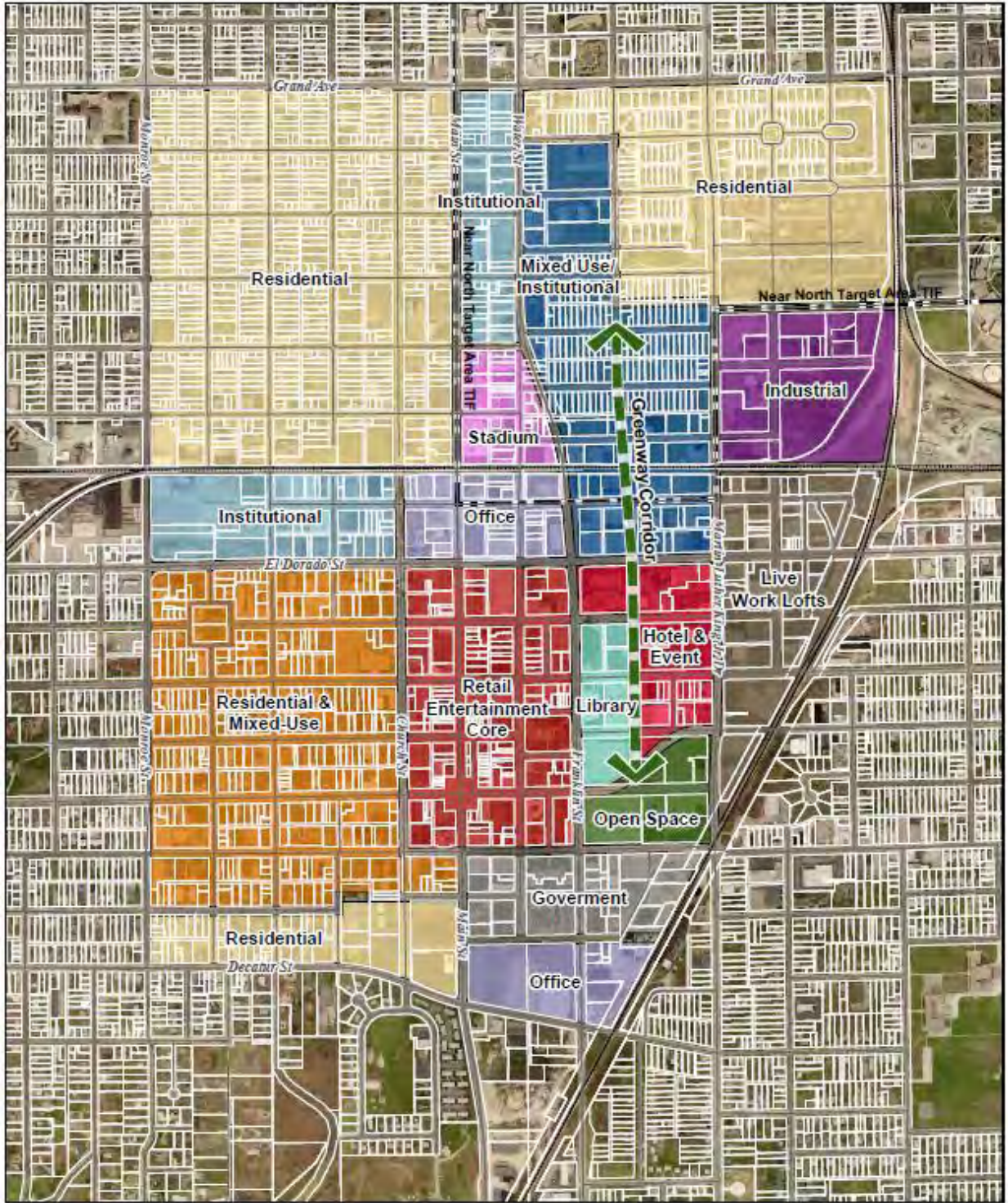


FIGURE 7-4

City Center Redevelopment

MACON COUNTY/DECATUR COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



CAMIROS



FIGURE 7-6
CENTER RECOMMENDATIONS - MAIN & OAKLAND

MACON COUNTY/DECATUR COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

CAMIROS

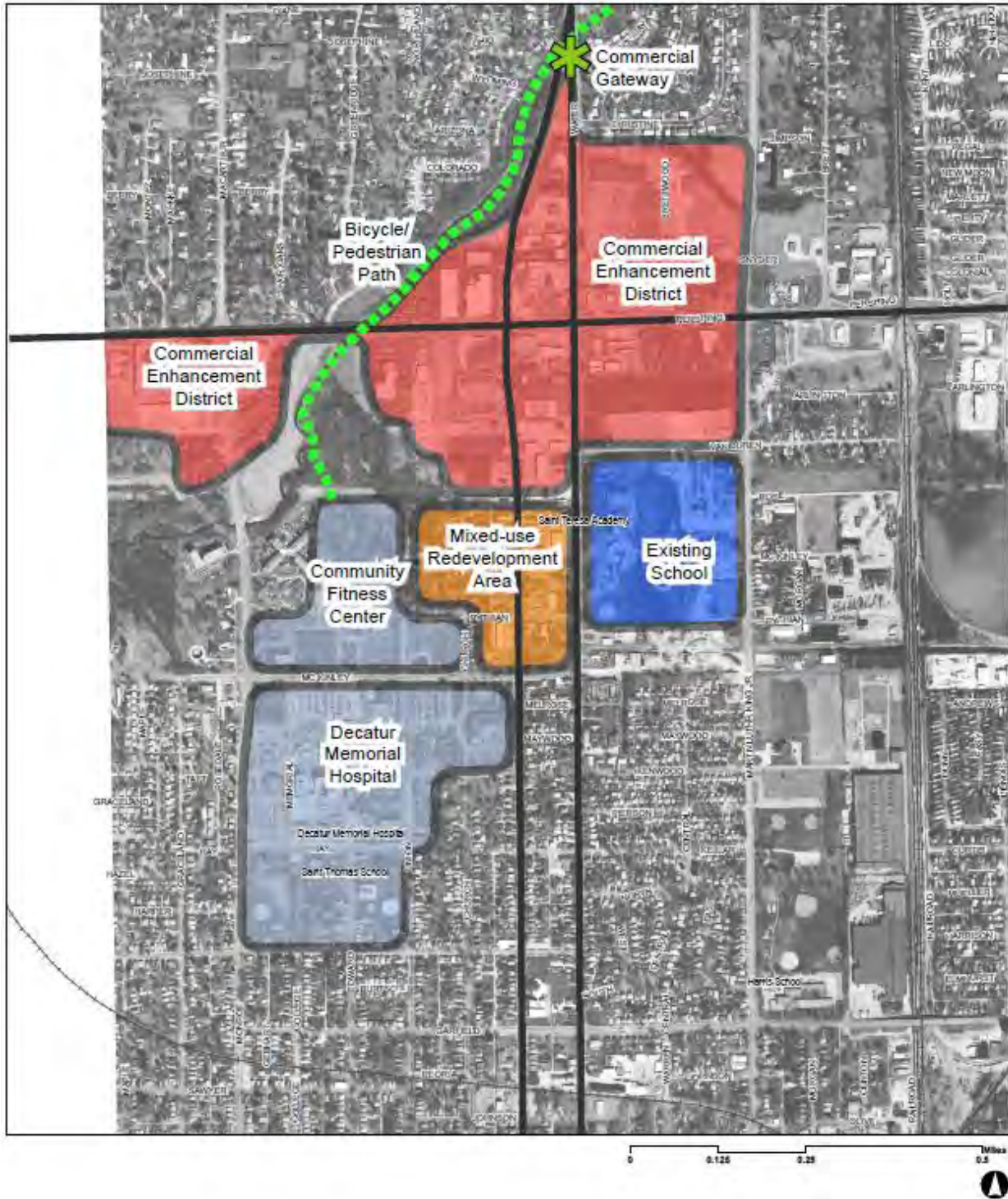


FIGURE 7-4
CENTER RECOMMENDATIONS - DECATUR MEMORIAL HOSPITAL



FIGURE 7-7
CENTER RECOMMENDATIONS - ROUTES 36 & 121

Chapter 8: A Sense of Pride in Place

Introduction

Decatur and Macon County are identified by a range of significant visual landscapes, from Lake Decatur and the historic urban neighborhoods to small towns, farmsteads, and natural areas. Citizens throughout the County are invested in preserving this unique sense of place, with particular attention to historic preservation, open space and environmental conservation, and the celebration of cultural diversity.

Community pride is an attitude as well as a visual statement. The City and County are committed to foster an attitude of value within the local communities and neighborhoods. This can be furthered through the civic commitment and partnerships with local businesses and institutions to provide funding opportunities for projects that project a positive image and strengthen the social institutions of the City and County.

This chapter focuses on a number of specific attributes that distinguish community identity and community appearance throughout Macon County, and suggests principles and policies for preserving, enhancing, and celebrating the community's defining characteristics.

An assessment of trends yields the following observations:

1. The Decatur Park District and the Macon County Conservation District systems are universally considered two of the community's biggest assets. There is a growing conflict, however, between the need for smaller parks to serve a shifting demographic and the difficulty in maintaining them.
2. Downtown Decatur retains its position as the civic center of the county, despite its declining role as a retail center.
3. The arts resources in Macon County exceed those found in cities of similar size but they remain an underrepresented part of the area's image and identity. Among these resources are Millikin University's Kirkland Fine Arts Center, the Decatur Arts Council and its home, the Madden Arts Center. The community leadership potential reflected in these resources is exemplified in the 2006 "International Arts Experience".

Principles

- P1. Focal points of the arts, culture and civic engagement are located throughout the County.
- P2. The County's growing diversity is honored within its neighborhoods.
- P3. Parks, open spaces, and waterways are protected and enhanced as a catalyst to a reinvigorated image and identified as a source of pride to residents.
- P4. Public infrastructure is located and designed to enhance the look and feel of the places it serves.

P5. Historic and architectural resources are managed to the benefit of the entire community.

Principle P1. Focal points of the arts, culture and civic engagement are located throughout the County.

The City and County recognize that arts and culture are important elements in our vision of a healthy community. We are committed to working, in partnership, to promote opportunities for participation in art and cultural activities throughout our community. We will seek to develop "marquee features" that create a distinct sense of place, including such features as gateways, community squares and performance places, and other active areas.

Policies and Strategies

- A. Encourage the distribution of civic facilities such as libraries throughout the County with priority given to those locations that strengthen existing commercial centers.
- B. Provide access to arts and cultural programming, in both citywide and neighborhood settings, through various means such as public art displays, themed streetscape programs, classes, special events, and cultural activities.
- C. Work with public and private partners to identify areas that may be underserved and formulate projects to make these programs affordable to all citizens.

Principle P2. The County's growing diversity is honored within its neighborhoods, institutions and government.

Decatur and Macon County is home to a number of distinctive cultural groups and neighborhoods. In order to celebrate the diversity of the region, efforts will be taken to increase public awareness of diversity through cultural festivals and activities, and the support of ethnic shops, restaurants, and products.

Policies and Strategies

- A. Organize neighborhood and citywide events that promote a sense of pride and ownership of the residents. These could range from organized block parties, commercial area art festivals and sidewalk sales, neighborhood picnics, to citywide programs located in major centers such as downtown, Hickory Point Mall, the lakefront parks, and Conservation District properties.
- B. Encourage architectural design of community facilities that incorporate the unique characteristics of the surrounding area in order to portray or reflect the traits of the neighborhood.
- C. Assure that new parks and recreational facilities meet the needs of diverse populations in the County by providing information and programming to accommodate special groups such as disabled persons, young people, senior citizens, and Spanish-speaking residents.

Principle P3. Parks, open spaces and waterways are protected and enhanced as a catalyst to a reinvigorated image, providing a source of pride to residents.

Public spaces are the building blocks of a thriving city. Successful public spaces support many multiple uses, are attractive, and accessible. The City and County recognize the benefits of creating good public spaces. They support the local economy, attract business, promote tourism and cultural activity, decrease crime, promote public health (through walking), and give identity to our city.

There are over 2,000 acres of parks and recreational facilities within the City of Decatur. This includes thirty nine parks and playgrounds, as well as ten miles of trails. The Macon County Conservation District manages another 3,200 acres of land for both passive and active recreation.



Policies and Strategies

- A. Encourage a variety of public spaces, from small plazas to large parks, to foster a variety of social gatherings and cultural events.
 - Local plazas within neighborhood and community shopping districts or made part of neighborhood institutions such as libraries, schools, and churches, can foster interaction within the neighborhoods.
 - Design outdoor public spaces such as plazas and civic centers to encourage social interaction and foster a distinct sense of place. Include amenities that provide comfort and relaxation in all seasons.
- B. Plan parks, greenways, and open spaces consistent with the Decatur Metro Area Greenway Plan to assure linkage of municipal and county trails and connections between communities.
- C. Provide for a consistent and coordinated system of park and open space land dedication between units of government and assure pedestrian, bicycle, and automobile/bus access to those areas where appropriate.

P4. Public infrastructure is located and designed to enhance the look and feel of the places it serves.

The use of context-sensitive design solutions in transportation projects can help to better integrate roadway improvement projects into the community resulting in positive impacts beyond its traffic or transportation function. It accomplishes this through an interdisciplinary citizen-based approach that equally addresses safety, mobility, and preservation of scenic, aesthetic, historic, and environmental resources.

Policies and Strategies

- A. Establish design guidelines and regulatory controls for private properties in order to achieve a consistent and desired pattern of development including lighting, signage, building setback, landscaping, and access controls. Utilize this concept as a design and as design review tool to address public infrastructure and street front design within the county’s corridors and centers.
- B. Establish streetscape guidelines and beautification programs to maintain a distinct character and ensure that new development respects existing historic and natural elements.
- C. Recognize and reward quality public and private design through County, citywide, and neighborhood design award programs.
- D. Establish a component of the County and City web pages that emphasizes pride of community and community design images to make this emphasis known.
- E. Establish community signage programs that stress quality, coordinated design and imagery related to community entry, area identification, and landmark signs. Review and revise current logos, taglines, and the location of such signs.



West Main Street in Decatur

Principle 5: Historic and architectural resources are managed to the benefit of the entire community.

Preservation has a positive impact on civic pride. Historic designations create an awareness of the role that the area and its inhabitants played in the development of the City and County. Designations instill a sense of ownership among residents that results in a desire to ensure that the entire neighborhood is well maintained.

The Decatur Historical and Architectural Sites Commission was created in 1976. The Commission advises and makes recommendations to the City Council on properties and areas for designation as landmarks and historic districts; it grants certificates of appropriateness of construction and demolition within the

local historic districts; and it reviews the maintenance of sites of historical and architectural significance throughout Macon County.

In recent years in Macon County, the approach of historic preservation has changed tides and may better be described as heritage planning. This is the careful management of a community's historic resources while avoiding wasting resources by careful planning and use by thriftily reusing available resources. Preservation is becoming and should maintain the idea of using or managing historic resources with thrift or prudence and avoiding their waste or needless expenditure.



Because technological advances are always changing the function of places, the form must also change. The preservation tactics of Macon County must aim to ease the tension between the form of a place and the ever changing function that citizens place upon it. It should *manage* the changing form with innovative design concepts while holding on to the original purpose of the place. This is important because in most cases a neighborhood still functions as a neighborhood and the residents of the neighborhood want to hold fast to past while improving their living conditions. Such tactics of preservation will only help to keep the housing stock updated and desirable for a variety of homeowners and tenants.

Additionally, preservation strengthens the economy. Visits to historic sites, highlighted by the significant connection between Decatur and the early life of Abraham Lincoln, are a major local component of the tourism industry. Decatur and Macon County's rich history has many stewards. These include the Macon County Museum Complex, Millikin University's Museum and the City of Decatur.

Policies and Strategies

- A. Maintain an electronic inventory of historically significant structures that can be cross-referenced with building inspections and building permits.
- B. Create an early warning system to provide property owners with assistance in maintaining and improving valuable structures.
- C. Establish an inter-agency working group to coordinate historic preservation education as an economic and community development tool.
- D. Look for opportunities to expand or create more districts throughout Macon County in addition to designating more landmarks.
- E. Provide more grant and funding opportunities to renovate, update, and maintain historic structures.

Chapter 9: Implementation

This section looks at the means for bringing about the Vision described throughout this Plan and for ways to ensure that the community continues to view the Vision and the Plan as remaining current and pertinent to them.

Bringing about the future portrayed in this document begins when the City and County formally adopt the Plan. The Plan then becomes the community's guide for directing its resources and energy toward making this common vision a reality. The ways to achieve this objective are further described below.

Macon County has a variety of governments – the County, the City of Decatur, numerous municipalities, and many special districts such as park districts, school districts, and the conservation district. All of these governmental units have specific duties and responsibilities to their constituents. All are interested in growth and development that provides their constituents with a high quality of life.

This comprehensive planning effort is supported by DUATS. Yet it has a specific focus – transportation. As this comprehensive planning effort reflects the common goals held by the many governments within the County, it would be best if there were some vehicle to assure coordination between them. This would provide a forum for coordinated community leadership to emerge such that understandings might be reached which would encourage all units of local governments to work together for the common end. Strong consideration should be given to establishing such an entity.

Communication, coordination, and skillful management between the County, the City of Decatur and the many incorporated and unincorporated jurisdictions can bring the prosperity of growth while mitigating adverse impacts. The guiding principles are the basis for decision-making within the County. The challenge is turning this vision of the future into reality.

Community Involvement & Consensus: Keeping the Tradition Alive

The City of Decatur and Macon County have long encouraged public participate in local government activities. Keeping people knowledgeable about and involved with the Comprehensive Plan's implementation is crucial to ensuring its ultimate success.

First, it is important to sustain the City and County's tradition of involving the public is having citizens regularly serve on boards and commissions. These groups address a wide variety of civic concerns. Meetings are kept open to all members of the community. Public hearings on key issues – such as Plan amendments, the capital improvements program, subarea studies, and specific development proposals – are held as part of the continuing planning process.

Second, it is important to encourage developers and others with planning proposals to make early contact with neighborhood groups and other interested parties. This will allow for a greater understanding of the issues and time to seek resolution of contentious points.

Interaction between the Comprehensive Plan and the Citizens

Although the Comprehensive Plan is intended primarily to guide the physical development of our community, individuals and their families ultimately feel the results of such development. The planning process aspires to make this interaction between people and their physical landscape one in which all facets of our community can prosper, not only economically, but also intellectually, aesthetically, and spiritually. The Comprehensive Plan seeks to accommodate and encourage the participation of all citizens of the City and County in making public policies to implement the visions of the community. Comprehensive planning is a continuous process, requiring a continuing, equitable, and frequent interaction between the governments and the communities. The following strategies will help keep this Plan alive.

- Maintain – through the City’s Economic and Urban Development Department – current mailing and contact lists of local neighborhood groups and homeowner associations.
- Contact and inform nearby property owners, interested groups, and other appropriate agencies of all formal development applications.
- Offer free Internet access on an on-going basis at public libraries, senior centers, and publicly owned locations of common assembly.
- Conduct periodic workshops and focus group meetings in various locations throughout the County to solicit ideas for planning and public policy.
- Examine ways of simplifying the development regulations and supporting documentation to encourage a broader understanding of planning concepts and their relevance to neighborhoods’ and businesses’ continuity and viability.

Land Use Regulation

The City and County have a number of administrative and regulatory tools for implementing comprehensive plans. Some of the land use administration approaches to be used in plan implementation include:

- *Zoning* - Zoning is the legal means cities and counties decide how land can be used, the intensity of those land uses, and the relationships between various land uses. Illinois State law – as with most all states – requires zoning to be developed in accordance with the community’s adopted comprehensive plan. This is one of the primary reasons cities and counties have comprehensive plans. Zoning, as a legal document, exists as both a map showing the geographic boundaries of each district and a written ordinance detailing the uses and conditions of each district.
- *Subdivision* – A subdivision is the process of dividing land into lots and/or streets. While a variety of standards apply to where, when, and how the subdivision of land can happen, having an approved subdivision plat is a basic step in the development process.
- *Design Standards* – Special site design or other conditions not otherwise covered in the zoning and subdivision ordinances are contained in a series of “design standards.” These standards spell out

unique characteristics that may apply to a type of development proposal. These include, for example, design considerations for older, more intensely developed neighborhoods, for childcare centers, for trails, and for the downtown.

Public Investment

The capital improvement programming process plays a vital role in guiding when and where the city – and even to some degree rural areas – grow. Public infrastructure – including transportation facilities, water, sewer, parks, schools, and libraries – is essential to the health, safety, and welfare of the community. As the community grows, it is desirable that these systems and facilities be developed concurrently – that is, at the same time – with that growth.

If growth occurs without the development of adequate public infrastructure, or the public infrastructure lags behind the growth of the community, the quality of life in the whole community will be diminished. Facilities may become overcrowded or overused. In the worst case, essential public services might not be available, thereby threatening the health, safety, and welfare of the community.

Conversely, infrastructure should not be built or developed if it is not needed. Public resources are scarce and should be conserved and used efficiently. Development of infrastructure beyond the needs of the community would not be beneficial to the community as a whole. The key to a successful community is the concurrent development of the infrastructure with the development of the community – a balance between the need for infrastructure and the need to conserve resources.

Capital improvements programming can be separated into two broad areas:

Public Sector Contributions. Investment in capital facilities – generally defined as any improvement with a useful life in excess of 15 years – has a powerful influence on the development of a community. Roads, water, trails, wastewater, parks, streetlights, fire stations, libraries, government administration buildings, schools, electrical facilities, and sanitary landfills are all basic pieces of what makes up a city. Hundreds of millions of dollars of public tax dollars and user fees are invested each year in these facilities. The public process used to determine where and when such investment occurs is basic in determining how the Comprehensive Plan’s Vision is achieved.

The City and County each use an annual capital improvements process. Both jurisdictions designate those capital improvements they plan to build over the next several fiscal years. The document that does this is called the “Capital Improvements Program” or CIP for short. A companion document to the CIP – called the “Transportation Improvement Program” or TIP – is prepared on an annual basis. Development of the TIP is a responsibility of the Decatur Urbanized Area Transportation Study. The TIP gathers together in a single document those local, State, and Federal transportation capital projects proposed for the next four years. These include improvements for streets and highways, airports, railroad support facilities, trails, and public transit.

Private Sector Contributions. Private capital is a significant part of the funding used to construct infrastructure in new developments. Most local streets, sidewalks, sanitary sewer, and storm sewer mains are built and paid for by the private developer. Decisions made in the private sector play an important role in managing and guiding the expansion of the urban area. Expenditures from private sources are critical to furthering the growth of the community.

Annexation Policy

Annexation policy is a potentially powerful means for achieving many of the goals embodied in the Plan's Vision. The provision of municipal services should coincide with the jurisdictional boundaries of the city or village. The extension of water should be predicated upon annexation of the area by the city or village. Annexation should occur before any property is provided with water, sanitary sewer, or other potential city services. Land that is remote or otherwise removed from the limits should not be annexed; land that is contiguous to a city and generally urban in character may be annexed; and land that is surrounded by the city should be annexed.

Annexation generally implies the opportunity to access all city services. Voluntary annexation agreements may limit or otherwise outline the phasing, timing, or installation of utility services (e.g., water, sanitary sewer), and may include specific or general plans for the private financing of improvements to the infrastructure supporting or contributing to the land uses in the annexed area.

The character of existing residential areas should be respected as much as possible during the annexation process. When low-density "acreage" areas are proposed for annexation due to the City's policy, additional steps should be taken to ease the transition as much as possible, such as public meetings, advance notice, and written explanation of changes as a result of annexation. In general, many aspects of a property may remain unchanged, such as zoning or covenants. However, any annexation of existing residential areas will include some costs that must be the responsibility of property owners.

Annexation to facilitate the installation of improvements and/or possible assessment districts is appropriate if it is consistent with the annexation policies of the Plan listed above. Plans for the provision of services within the areas considered for annexation shall be carefully coordinated with the Capital Improvements Program of the City and the County. Each town in Macon County will have their own procedures for annexation.