

DRAFT DOWNTOWN ROCKFORD STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

Planning Area: Central

Executive Summary December 2015

Acknowledgements

Mayor's Office

City Council

City Staff

Friends of Ziock

River District Business Association

Rockford Aquarium Board

Rockford Area Arts Council

Rockford Area Convention and Visitors Bureau

Rockford Area Economic Development Council

Rockford Area Venues & Entertainment

Rockford Community Partners

Rockford Etsy Team

Rockford Park Districts

Rockford Public Library

Rock River Development Partnership

Southwest Ideas for Tomorrow Today

The Element

The Get It Done Group

Transform Rockford

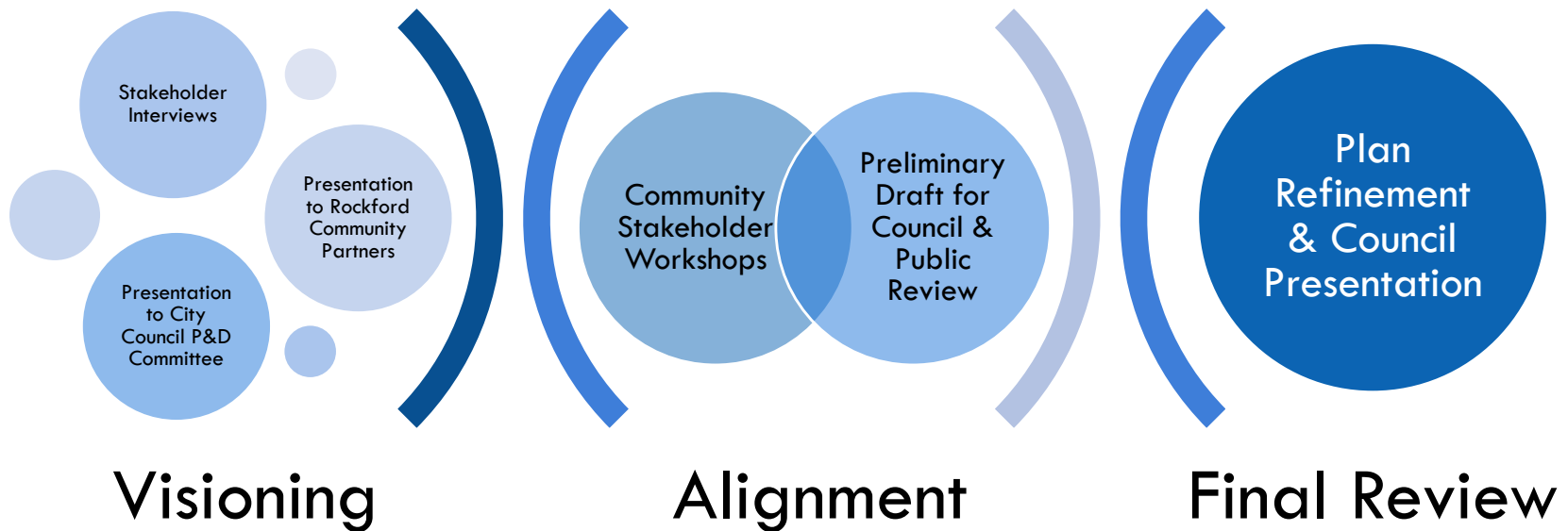
Winnebago County

Project Team

City Staff & On-Call Planning Consultants



Planning Process Review



Plan Framework Goals

- **Strategic Vision** to guide policy for continued revitalization of the downtown area
- **Align** land use, transportation, and urban design implementation strategies
- **Benefit** the overall growth and development of the City

TLC Planning Approach

Ttactical

Lean

Climax

Shorter-term implementation tactics that ultimately lead to high-investment climax conditions.

The vision and goals remains highly valued and is achieved through short, mid and long-term steps.

Testing through prototypes

Incremental and **impactful** development.



Vision Framework:
Past planning and
recommendations
visualized
together

Foundation for
Implementation
Strategies

14 Implementation Strategies

Proposed strategies are organized into 4 sections:

Mobility

Large Redevelopment

Urban Design


Economic Development

- Strategies listed as **menu of options** for consideration by that organizations and the City consider and implement based on resources available.
- The goal of the Implementation Strategies is to provide a **clear roadmap for accomplishing the goals laid out by previous planning efforts**, as well as, additional goals identified by stakeholders and the City of Rockford.

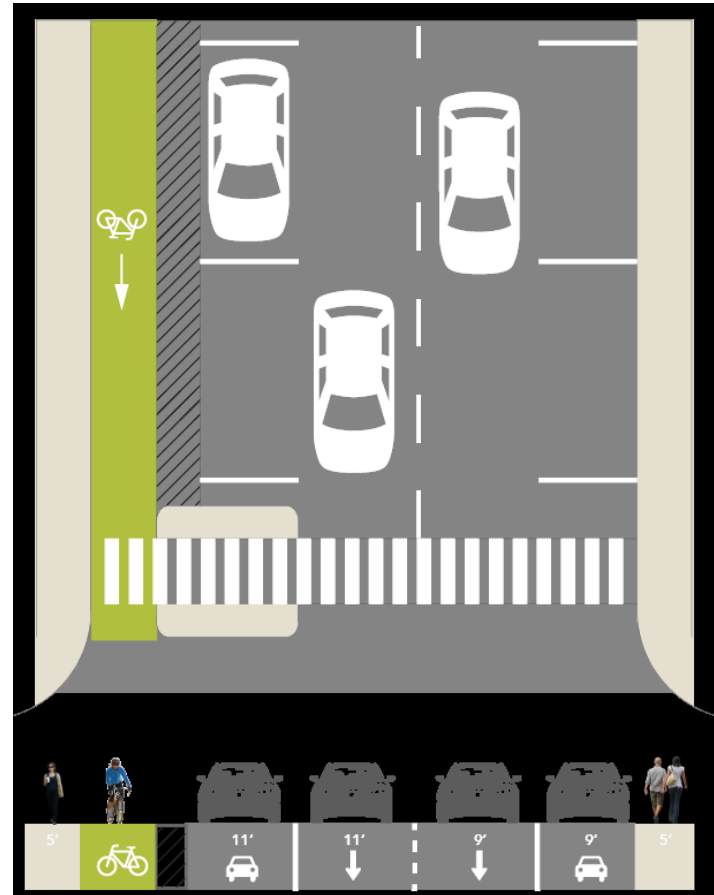
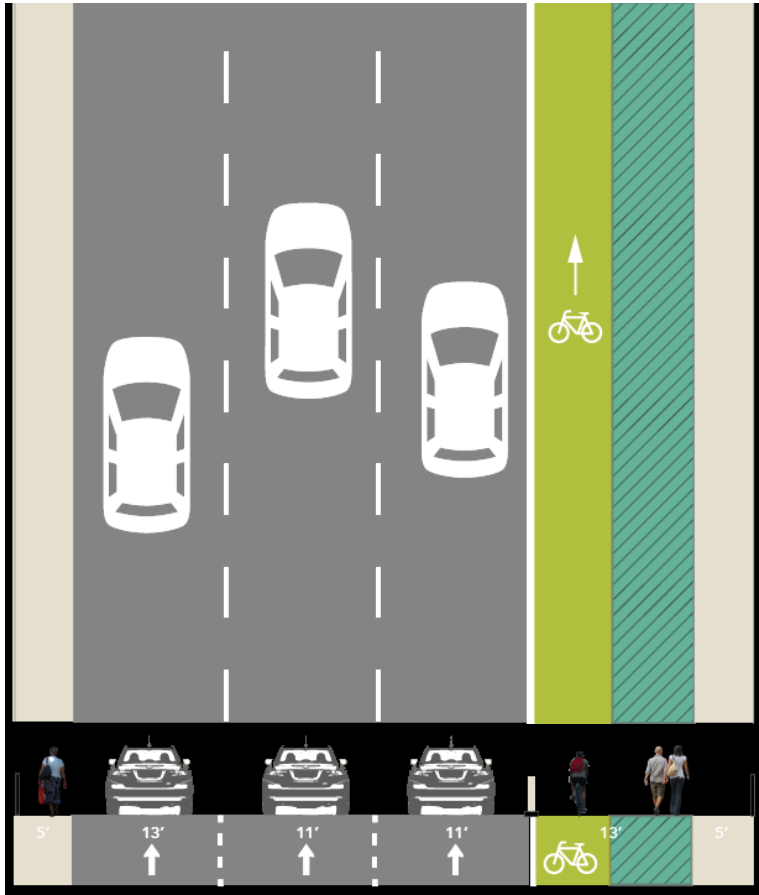
Mobility:

01 *Improve multi-modal mobility to and through Downtown.*

		STRATEGIES	COLLABORATIVE ACTION NETWORK	TIMELINE	FUNDING
 TACTICAL	1	Test shared-use space on State Street Bridge for 3 months	COR	Summer 2015	Capital Improvement Program
	2	Test shared-use space on Jefferson Bridge for 3 months	COR	Summer 2016	Capital Improvement Program

 LEAN	1	Negotiate with IDOT to study capacity requirements for bridge/corridors further. At a minimum, modify IDOT Chestnut Bridge MUP cross sections to reduce travel lanes to 11' and widen sidewalk	COR; IDOT; RMAP	2015	Capital Improvement Program; Rivers Edge Redevelopment Zone; Tax Increment Financing
	2	Conduct a traffic study to determine if Walnut and Jefferson can be reduced to (2) travel lanes each. ADT indicates that they can with appropriate signal intersection improvements	COR; IDOT	Initiate in 2015	Capital Improvements Program
	3	Conduct a study on the current use of CIP funding and other funding sources to evaluate how improvements can be financed.	COR	2015	
	4	Continue development of an event ingress/egress plan	COR; RMAP, RAVE, WinnCo	2016	Capital Improvements Program
	5	Refresh/add crosswalk striping and tighten curb radii on identified intersections	COR	2017	Capital Improvements Program; Federal or State Grant


 CLIMAX	1	Reduce travel lanes on State Street bridge to one in each direction	COR	2016	CIP
	2	Reduce travel lanes on Chestnut/Walnut and Jefferson, add separated bike facilities & on-street parking	COR; IDOT; RMAP	2020	City and Partner Organization Operating Budget/Capital Improvement Program



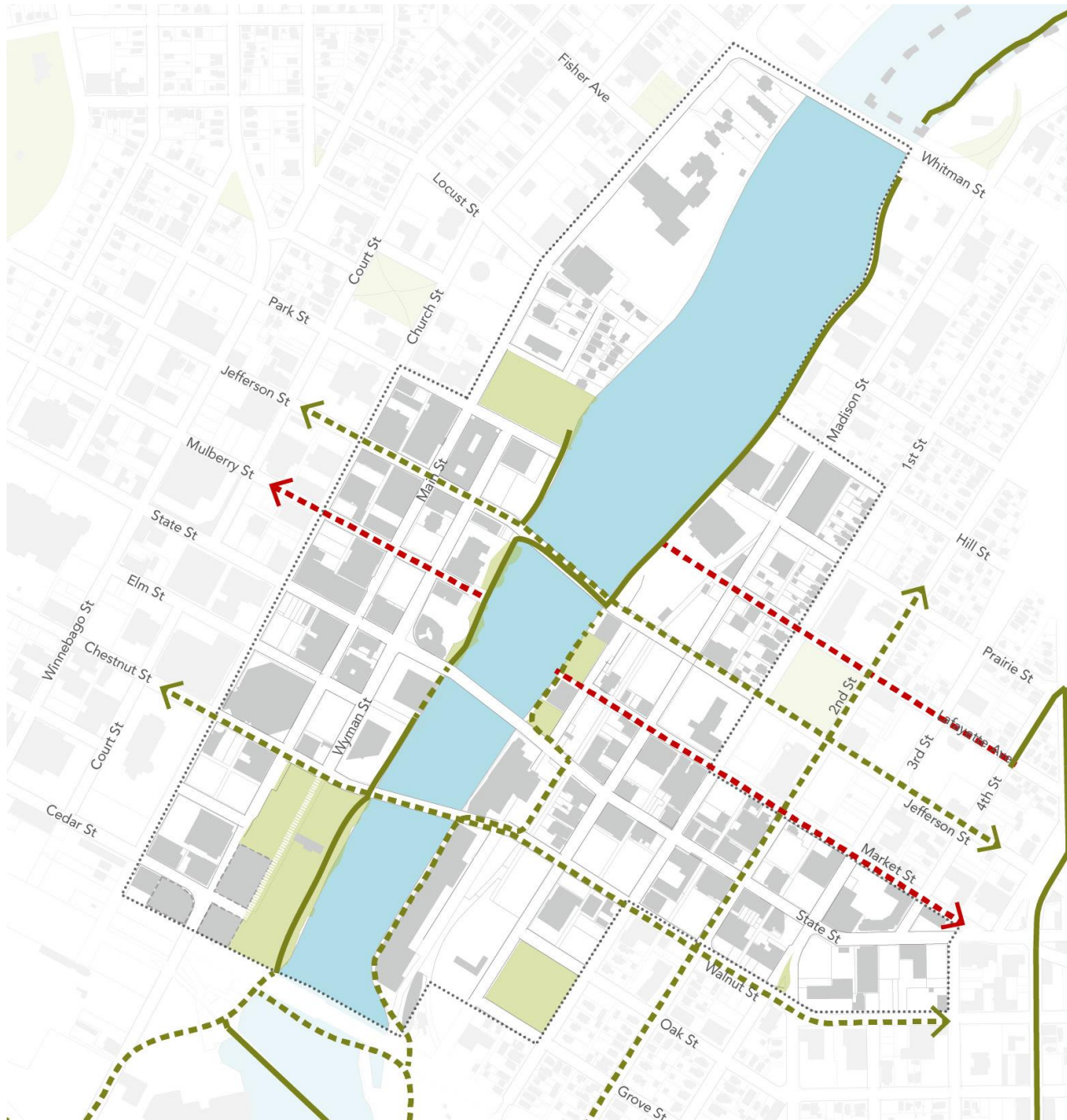
Mobility:

02 Improve *bike connections*.

STRATEGIES			COLLABORATIVE ACTION NETWORK	TIMELINE	FUNDING
<div>TACTICAL</div> <div></div>	1	Continue to hold reoccurring biking events (i.e Critical Mass) centered around Downtown	COR - WB; RDA; RMAP; RPD	Ongoing	Foundations; Private funding



	1	Develop a bike facilities master plan	COR; RMAP; WinnCo	Immediately	City and Partner Organization Operating Budget/Capital Improvement Program/ State & Funding Grants
	2	Commission a feasibility study on the riverfront bike/ped connection from (South) IL Railway Bridge to the (North) Museum Campus on both sides of the river	COR; RMAP	Initiate in 2015	City and Partner Organization Operating Budget/Capital Improvement Program
	3	Fill in on-street bike routes/signage connecting trails to Downtown (Mulberry, Lafayette, and Market are a priority)	COR; RMAP; WinnCo	2016	City and Partner Organization Operating Budget/Capital Improvement Program
	4	Implement a small-scale bike rental system	RACVB; COR; RPD	2017	City and Partner Organization Operating Budget/Capital Improvement Program/ State & Funding Grant

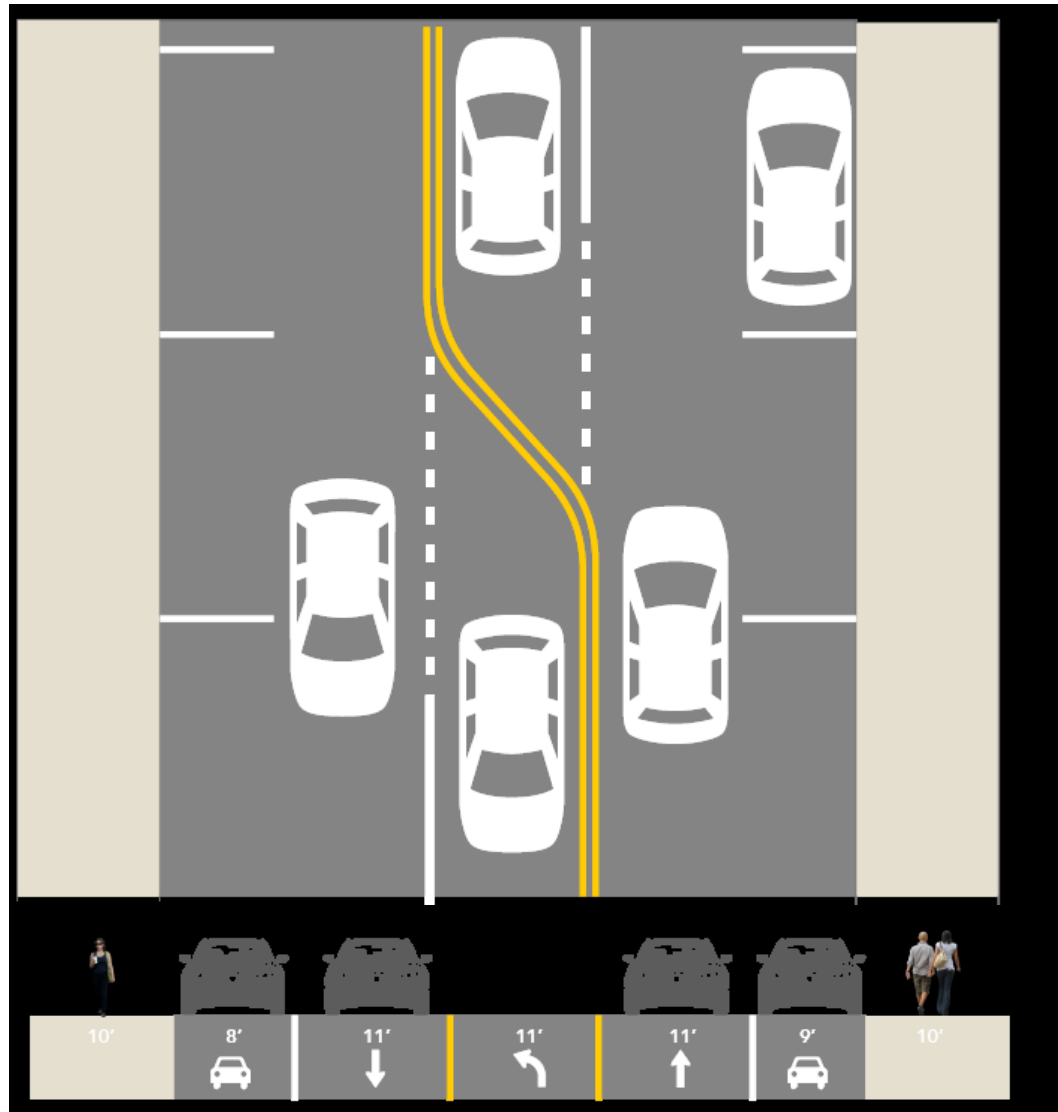
	1	Study the feasibility of Downtown bike share	COR; RMAP; WinnCo	2018	State & Federal Grants; Foundations
	2	Reduce travel lanes on Walnut & Jefferson and add separated bike lanes	COR; IDOT	2020	City and Partner Organization Operating Budget/Capital Improvement Program



Mobility:

03 Create more on-street parking.

	STRATEGIES	COLLABORATIVE ACTION NETWORK	TIMELINE	FUNDING
	1	Continue to pursue transfer of Wyman from State of Illinois	COR; IDOT; RMAP	2018
	1	Modify cross section to include parallel parking on the northbound side of Wyman Street	COR; IDOT; RMAP	2020
	2	Add on-street parking in identified locations on State, Jefferson, and Walnut Streets	COR	2018






Mobility:

04 Improve parking strategy to balance demand.

		STRATEGIES	COLLABORATIVE ACTION NETWORK	TIMELINE	FUNDING
TACTICAL 	1	Install temporary signage, and/or lights at garages until permanent wayfinding can be installed	COR; RACVB; RRDP	Ongoing	Tax Increment Financing; Rivers Edge Development Zone
LEAN 	1	Encourage "park once" attitude by creating an appealing pool of public parking (wayfinding, lighting, well-maintained clean decks, and improved general mobility and from).	COR; RACVB	2016	
	2	Improve parking time limit enforcement	COR	Ongoing	
	3	Work with employers to provide employee parking in decks or lots	RDA; RRDP; COR	2016	Special Service Area; Business Improvement District
	4	Work with retailers to create incentives to shop	RDA	2015	
	5	Test parking meters by installing at key locations on "A" streets	COR	2018	City and Partner Organization Operating Budget; State & Federal Grants; Special Service Area; Business Improvement District
CLIMAX 	1	Develop a Downtown Parking Authority	COR	2017	
	2	Install meters with mobile app/payment options	Designated Parking Authority; COR	2020	City and Partner Organization Operating Budget; State & Federal Grants; Special Service Area; Business Improvement District
	3	Install technology at parking garages to let people know of real-time parking availability	Designated Parking Authority; COR	2020	City and Partner Organization Operating Budget; State & Federal Grants; Special Service Area; Business Improvement District
	4	Adjust garage pricing structure to balance demand with market-rate on-street spaces.	Designated Parking Authority; COR	2020	Special Service Area; Business Improvement District

Large Redevelopment

05 Redevelop the Rockford Public Library as an anchor and learning institution of the future.

		STRATEGIES	COLLABORATIVE ACTION NETWORK	TIMELINE	FUNDING
TACTICAL 	1	Use the Library as a venue for programs by joint partnerships (i.e. Local/Regional Colleges and Universities, RMAP, EIGER Lab, etc.)	RPL; RMAP, Local/Regional Colleges and Universities, EIGER Lab	2016	ComEd; New Market Tax Credits; Foundations
LEAN 	1	Consider using vacant storefronts as "pop-up libraries" - this will activate vacant storefronts and create temporary satellite libraries during the redevelopment	RPL; COR; ComEd	2016	City and Partner Organization Operating Budget; ComEd; New Market Tax Credits; Foundations
CLIMAX 	1	Continue to work with ComEd to redevelop the Library in Downtown Rockford - arrive at a vision and secure partnerships/funding	RPL; ComEd	2016	City and Partner Organization Operating Budget; Rivers Edge Redevelopment Zone; State & Federal Grants; ComEd; New Market Tax Credits; Foundations

Large Redevelopment:

06 Redevelop Davis Park

TLC Strategies will be developed as part of a separate planning process.

Large Redevelopment:

07 Establish the Wellness Center as a Health Living anchor.

TLC Strategies will be developed as part of a separate planning process.

Large Redevelopment: **08 Build an aquarium.**

		STRATEGIES	COLLABORATIVE ACTION NETWORK	TIMELINE	FUNDING
TACTICAL 	1	Generate excitement towards the Aquarium (i.e. Fish and Chips)	Aquarium Board; RRWRD; Rockford Park District; RDA; RACVB	2015/2016	Crowdsourced Funding; Foundations
LEAN 	1	Install a pop-up aquarium in a vacant storefront or other temporary location (i.e. Museum Campus)	Aquarium Board; RRWRD; Rockford Park District; RACVB; RPL; RDA	2016	Crowdsourced Funding; Foundations; State & Federal Grants
	2	Brand Downtown Rockford as a river ecosystem	Aquarium Board; RACVB; RDA; Rockford Park District	2015/2016	Crowdsourced Funding; Foundations
CLIMAX 	1	Find investors and construct Aquarium in Downtown Rockford	Aquarium Board; RAEDC; RACVB; RPL; RPS 205; RRWRD; Winnebago County; RLDC; RDA; investors	2018	Crowdsourced Funding; Foundations; State & Federal Grants

Large Redevelopment:

09 Continue pursuit of large-scale redevelopment projects.

		STRATEGIES	COLLABORATIVE ACTION NETWORK	TIMELINE	FUNDING
TACTICAL 	1	Continue to activate and highlight large-scale redevelopment opportunities, particularly those that are vacant and/or blighted through temporary events and installations (i.e Barber Coleman site)	COR; SWIFTT; RPD Museums; RRWRD; Midtown District	Ongoing	EPA Grants for Brownfields
LEAN 	1	Conduct feasibility studies and identify the vision for redevelopment of the Museum Campus, Barber Coleman site	COR; River District Association; SWIFTT; RPD Museums	2016	Federal grants; EPA Grants for Brownfields
	2	Conduct a feasibility study to create a long-term plan for the redevelopment of the riverfront.	COR		EPA Grants for Water Quality Management
CLIMAX 	1	Find investors and funding for redevelopment of Museum Campus, Barber Coleman.	COR; River District Association; SWIFTT; RPD Museum investors	2016-2025	Historic Tax Credits; Federal Grants; EPA Grants for Brownfields

Economic Development

10 Make Downtown Rockford a commercial, entertainment, and cultural center.

STRATEGIES		COLLABORATIVE ACTION NETWORK	TIMELINE	FUNDING	
<div>TACTICAL</div> <div></div>	1	Identify occupied and/or underutilized storefronts that can be used for events.	RDA; RCP	Summer/Fall 2015	City and Partner Organization Operating Budget
	2	Recruit interested tenants to test temporary pop-up shops	RDA; RCP; RRDP	Ongoing	City and Partner Organization Operating Budget
	3	Market vacant properties through storefront stickers and banners (i.e. "I want to see ____here")	RDA; RACVB; RCP; RAAR	Fall 2015	Tax Increment Financing
	4	Host pop-up shops and food trucks in vacant lots during community festivals and events (i.e. BMO)	RACVB; RCP; RDA	Ongoing	Self Funding through Participation Fees
<div>LEAN</div> <div></div>	1	Designate a Master Leaser to manage temporary businesses	RDA; RAEDC; RRDP	2016	Leasing Fee
	2	Create a contract for temporary occupancy	RDA; RRDP	2016	
	3	Audit vacant buildings and identify up to 3 to bring up to minimum code	COR; RDA	2016	City and Partner Organization Operating Budget
	4	Create a Temporary Occupancy Permit that outlines minimum code requirements to be met	COR	2015	City and Partner Organization Operating Budget; Permitting Fee
	5	Create a retail strategy that identifies the types of retail that Downtown wants to attract and retain	COR; RAEDC; RDA	2015	City and Partner Organization Operating Budget
	6	Market vacant properties and vendor opportunities through social media and websites	RDA	2016	Tax Increment Financing; Leasing Fee
	7	Install container stores on vacant parcels	RRDP; Land Owners; RDA; COR	2017	Real Estate Crowd Funding
<div>CLIMAX</div> <div></div>	1	Recruit permanent tenants for vacant storefronts	RDA; COR; RAEDC; RRDP	Ongoing	
	2	Build out vacant storefronts	Land Owners; RRDP; COR; RAEDC	Ongoing	Reat Estate Crowd Funding; Small Business Innovation Research Program

Economic Development

11 *Develop more residential options.*



		STRATEGIES	COLLABORATIVE ACTION NETWORK	TIMELINE	FUNDING
<div>LEAN</div> 	1	Run a graphic and social media campaign in tandem with marketing available residential units	RACVB; RRDP; RDA; RACVB	2016	Non-Profit Media Rates; Foundations; Private Funding
	2	Demonstrate how well Downtown works for daily living - jogging, grocery shopping, biking, and dog walking	RACVB	2016	City and Partner Organization Operating Budget; Foundations; Private Funding
	3	Market adjacent residential communities within 1/2 mile of the focus area	RRDP	2016	Tax Increment Financing; Foundations; Private Funding
	4	Increase the number of upper story residential units	COR; RRDP; RDA	2016	Federal & State Historic Tax Credits; Real Estate Crowd Funding; Foundations; Private Funding
	5	Recruit small infill housing developers to develop infill housing projects (townhomes, 4-plexes, and 3-flats) at identified locations	COR; Developers; RRDP; RACVB; RDA; RAEDC	2017	Federal & State Historic Tax Credits; Real Estate Crowd Funding; Foundations; Private Funding
	6	Update zoning codes to allow for a variety of housing types	COR	2017	City and Partner Organization Operating Budget
	7	Expedite and streamline the permitting process to advance building rehabilitation	COR	2017	City and Partner Organization Operating Budget
<div>CLIMAX</div> 	1	Recruit an urban developer to develop a 35-50 unit residential project that offers a unique amenity (i.e. proximity to River or a park)	COR; Developers; RAEDC; RLDC	2018	New Markets Tax Credits; Tax Increment Financing; Real Estate Crowd Funding; Foundations; Private Funding







Urban Design

12 Adopt consistent streetscape standards.

		STRATEGIES	COLLABORATIVE ACTION NETWORK	TIMELINE	FUNDING
	1	Patch and repair critical sidewalks based on the priority list provided	RDA; Public Works; Get it Done group; Rockford Community Partners	Immediately	Tax Increment Financing; Capital Improvement Program
	2	Continue to install consistent banners on "A" streets and key intersections on both sides of the River as part of the Banner Program	COR; RACVB; RDA; RPD	2017	Tax Increment Financing; Capital Improvement Program
	3	Install hanging street lights at intersections and/or tree lights on "A" and "B" streets	COR; RACVB; RDA; RPD	2017	Tax Increment Financing; Capital Improvement Program
	1	Create a Streetscape Standards Manual for Downtown Rockford	COR; Environmental Design Consultant; RMAP; RACVB; RDA; RRDP	2016	City and Partner Organization Operating Budget; State & Federal Grants
	2	Present Design Standards to stakeholders for feedback and approval	RACVB; Environmental Design Consultant; RMAP; RACVB; RDA; RRDP	2016	City and Partner Organization Operating Budget; State & Federal Grants
	3	Install and enforce streetscape standards	COR	2017	City and Partner Organization Operating Budget; State & Federal Grants

Urban Design

13 Maintain day-to-day vibrancy.

		STRATEGIES	COLLABORATIVE ACTION NETWORK	TIMELINE	FUNDING
 TACTICAL	1	Hold a "Sidewalk Day" where retailers and restaurants can test sidewalk spaces	RDA; The Element; COR	Summer/Fall 2015/Ongoing	Tax Increment Financing; Foundations; Private Funding
	2	Post artwork, lighting, and community engagement boards in vacant storefronts and on blank walls on "A" and "B" streets	RACVB; RRDP; RDA	2016/Ongoing	Tax Increment Financing; Foundations; Private Funding
 LEAN	1	Create "parklets" in parking spaces for outdoor dining and sitting	COR; RDA; RACVB	2016	
	2	Create an all-inclusive permit that allows outdoor dining and seating as-of-right (review current ordinance and application process)	COR; RDA	2016	City and Partner Organization Operating Budget
	3	Consider establishing an SSA/BID for all businesses/landlords to be a part of to contribute to marketing, general upkeep, snow removal, and employee parking discounts/requirements	RDA; COR; RRDP	2016	Business Improvement District (BID); Special Service Area (SSA); Tax Increment Financing (TIF)

Urban Design

14 Create a narrative and brand identity.

	STRATEGIES	COLLABORATIVE ACTION NETWORK	TIMELINE	FUNDING	
TACTICAL 	1	Create an elevator speech about the identity of Downtown Rockford for all organizations and ambassadors to use	RACVB; RDA; COR; Branding Consultant	2015	Tax Increment Financing
	2	Attract and host civic community events in Downtown locations	RACVB; RDA; COR	Ongoing	
LEAN 	1	Work with a Brand Consultant to develop a "brand identity" to be used by all organizations in Downtown Rockford	RACVB; RDA; Brand Consultant; COR	2015/2016	Tax Increment Financing; Foundations; Private Funding
CLIMAX 	1	Run a national campaign that promotes the revitalized Rockford	RACVB; Brand Consultant; COR; RDA; RRDP	2017	Foundations; Private Funding

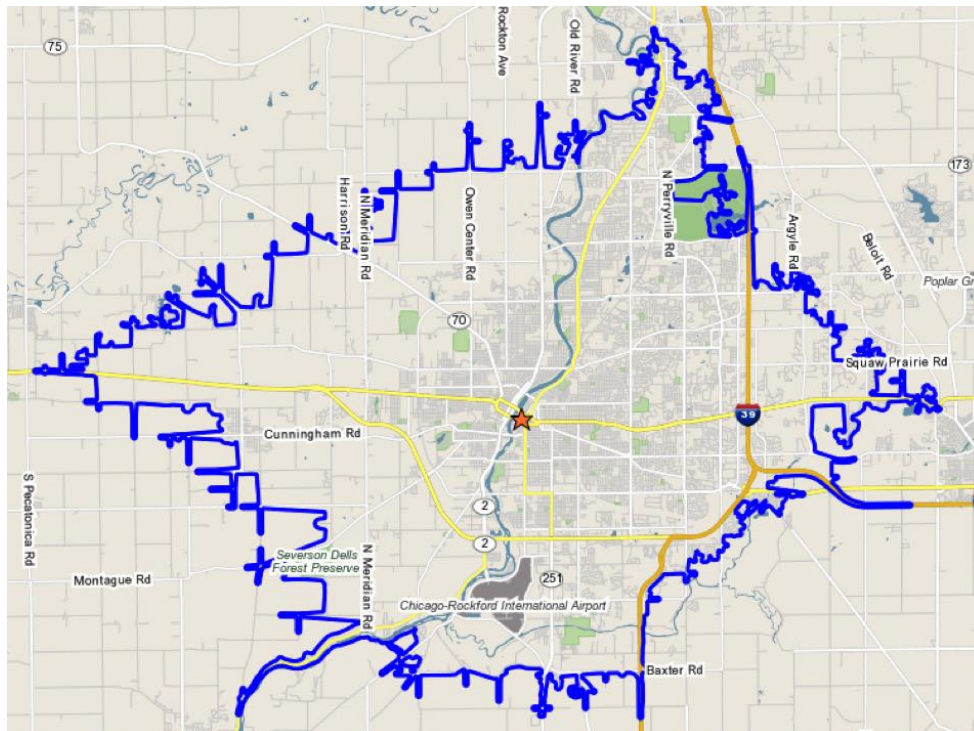
Refer to pages 60 – 145 for the complete set of strategies with images



Marketplace ROI

Marketplace Vision

By 2020, Downtown Rockford will be a commercial center that residents speak of with pride and consumers within a 20-minute drive time often visit for unique experiences and products.



- 241,356 people
- 95,179 households
- Average Household Income: \$62,610
- Median Household Income: \$46,203

Map: 20 Minute Drive Time Marketplace

Strengthening 1/8-Hour Marketplace

(Business Districts Inc. analysis/recommendations)

Ideal Conditions (within 1/2 mile of Commercial Development):

Residential Population: 7,000 residents

Employment Population: 10,000 – 15,000 employees

Accessible by car, biking and walking

Destination oriented stores, restaurants, and services

Current Conditions (Rockford):

Residential Population: 4,500 residents

Employment Population: 9,000 employees

Staged Approach to Improving Marketplace Conditions

(Business Districts Inc. analysis/recommendations)

Targets:

- Fill 200,000 square feet of ground floor study area space (70-100 businesses).
- Exponentially grow the housing market within and surrounding the study focus area.
- Establish downtown Rockford as the community's master brand.

Tactical-Lean-Climax objectives support the staged approach over a 5+ year time horizon.

Detailed strategy tools and techniques outlined in the Plan Appendix.

Example Outcomes *(estimates)*

Retail Sales Tax

Assumption:

\$300 per square feet (national average)

200,000 taxable retail square feet

20% vacancy rate

Outcome:

Estimated annual 1% sales tax revenue: **\$480,000**

Residential Units

Assumption:

20-30 market rate rental units per year

Average Household Size rate = 2.36
(Census 2010 Average household size of renter-occupied units)

Outcome:

100–150 additional residential units
(5-year period)

236–354 new residents within study
focus area (5-year period)

Next Steps

- With Plan Approval, next steps include:
 - Confirming the Collaborative Action Network approach to plan implementation.
 - Collective selection of metrics for achieving results and accountability.
 - Adjust implementation timelines annually (or as needed basis).