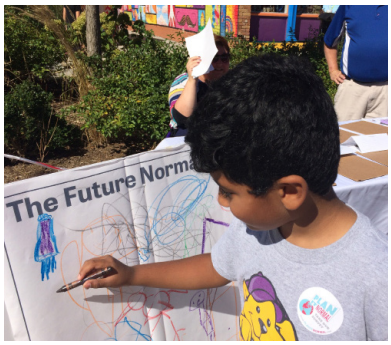
A community is a conglomeration of places where people live, learn, work, play, and do business. Collectively, these places—their physical forms, the connections and relationships between them—shape a community.

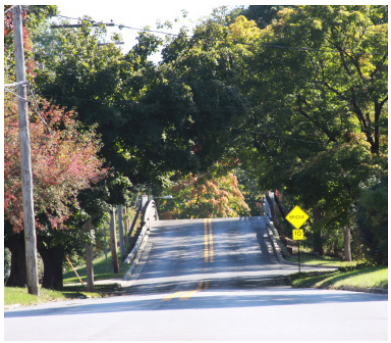
Growth and Development in Normal

Normal's physical form has evolved significantly over time, driven by diverse but interconnected forces, including technology, economic factors, architectural fashions, and shifts in residents' expectations. The strongest of these forces was the invention of the automobile. Prior to the proliferation of automobiles, development generally followed the traditional urban grid with compact blocks and mixed land uses. Once cars became the dominant mode of transportation, development patterns shifted to follow a suburban-style, lower-density model with less accommodation for other modes of transportation. At the same time, zoning regulations written with the new model in mind further stacked the deck in favor of low-density development while making traditional development with mixed uses more difficult. These changes literally reshaped Normal, as the Town's boundaries grew significantly faster than the population to accommodate the new style of development *[See Map F1]*. Cities and towns across the United States followed a similar progression.

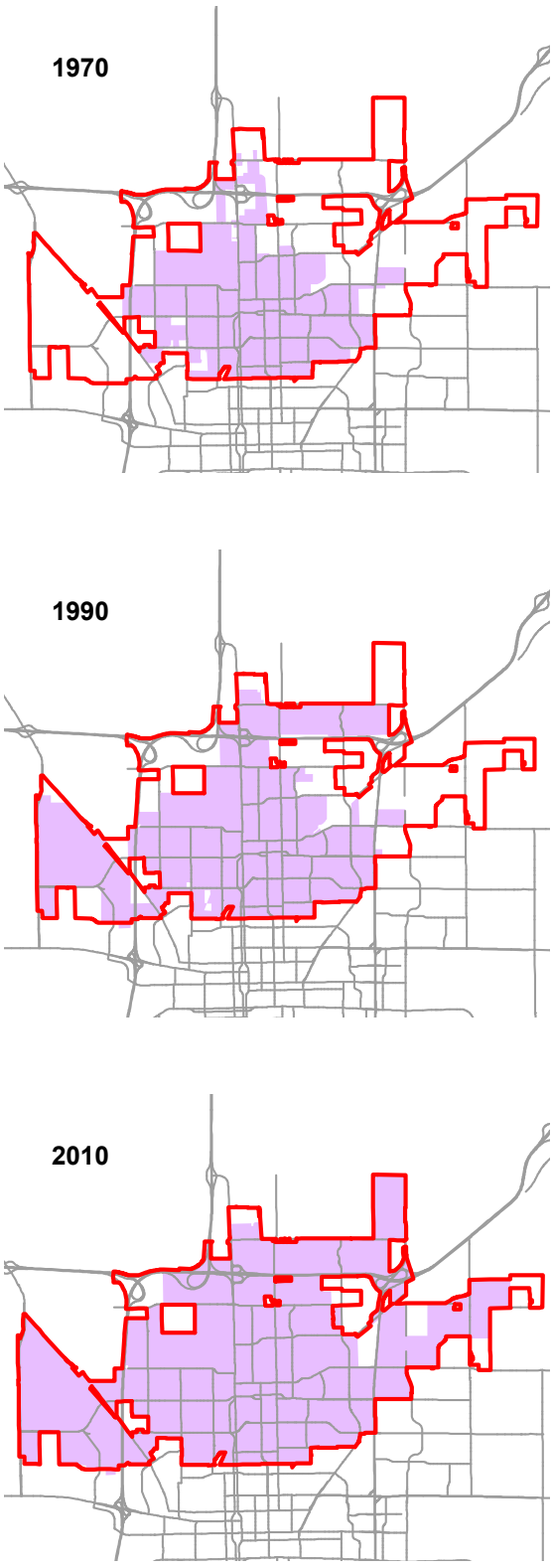
Over time, the costs of this kind of development have become clear. Residents need a car to get around efficiently, regardless of whether they want or can afford one. Local governments have to spend more on infrastructure expansion and maintenance. The natural environment is degraded by higher levels of air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. And the emphasis on enforcing certain types of use often comes at the expense of form: Cities look and feel eerily similar, with relatively little local character to differentiate one neighborhood, street, or community from another.

Normal has 150 years of growth and development to its credit, but much of its growth is fairly new—within the last five decades—and has followed this suburban-style development pattern. In recent decades, the Town has taken some steps to apply smarter, more sustainable growth concepts, such as denser, mixed-use developments, multimodal transportation options, and design that is environmentally sustainable and fosters a sense of place. These principles, however, have only consistently been applied within small geographies such as Uptown and segments of Main Street.





MAP F1: Corporate Boundary Changes Since 1970



Population nearly doubled Corporate Area increased by 2.5 times About 800 Fewer People/Square Mile			
Year	*Population*	*Area*	*Pop. Density*
1970	26,396	7.4 SqM	3,667/SqM
1980	35,681	9 SqM	3,963/SqM
1990	40,023	11.9 SqM	3,363/SqM
2000	45,386	15.2 SqM	2,985/SqM
2010	52,497	18.3 SqM	2,861/SqM

Major Streets

Historic Corporate Boundaries

2015 Corporate Boundary

The Town's 2040 Report (a.k.a. the Vision Report), received and endorsed by the Town Council in 2016, recognizes this newer growth philosophy as a step in the right direction and urges policymakers to apply smarter growth principles more aggressively and broadly across the entire community. The Vision and Core Values expressed in the *2040 report* became the foundation for the Goals expressed in various Elements of this *Comprehensive Plan*—Housing, Economic Vitality, Infrastructure & Public Safety, Health & Sustainability, Humanitarian & Social Aspects, Town & Gown, and Community Identity & Public Places. Together, these elements call for a Town of Normal that, in 2040, is:

Complete . . .

- With **neighborhoods** that provide a variety of housing choices, at various price points, to welcome residents of all backgrounds.
- With **streets** that support healthy and active lifestyles by promoting walking, biking and transit. Street vistas will capitalize on building design, scale, architecture, and proportionality to create interesting visual experiences and make every place unique and enjoyable.
- With vibrant and thriving **centers** of all sizes that serve as neighborhood destinations and employment nodes.

Connected . . .

- **Physically,** with neighborhoods connected to each other and to centers, providing convenient access to grocery stores, quality public schools, parks, and neighborhood commercial areas. An interconnected network of streets, sidewalks, and trails will make walking, biking and access to transit easy for all people.
- **Socially,** with gathering places—like streets, parks, front porches, coffee shops, ice cream parlors—that create informal opportunities to meet, get together, and socialize with neighbors.
- **Technologically,** with connected urban systems that deliver services more efficiently to the Town's neighborhoods and centers. Ubiquitous access to high speed, affordable and secure broadband will empower our residents, businesses, and institutions to thrive in this 21st century economy.

Compact . . .

- With **dense development and a mix of uses** that support safe and convenient access to a variety of destinations by any mode of transportation, while contributing positively to fiscal and environmental sustainability.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the geographical framework by which to translate these aspirations into a coherent plan for the Town's future land use, using smart growth and the place-based approach in Uptown Normal as models.

A New Approach: The Planning Framework

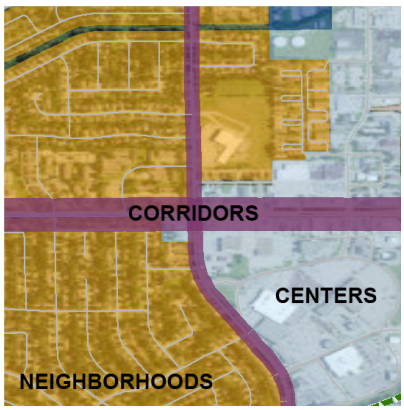
The new Planning Framework represents a slightly different approach to land use planning from past comprehensive plans. Past plans divided up the Town's land by type of use, in which each piece of land was designated with a particular category of use based on existing conditions and projections of what might happen there in the future. The focus was primarily on future growth rather than on existing neighborhoods. Over time, it has become apparent that these methods of land use planning were not adequately facilitating dense, walkable, mixed-use development, taking into account market feasibility, or promoting innovation.

The new Planning Framework will inspire more desirable development outcomes by more clearly defining the ways in which different types of places benefit from different types of land use, laying the conceptual groundwork for context-specific development that advances the Town's overall vision and goals in existing and new developments alike. It sets clear expectations of outcomes in each of several place types, while remaining flexible enough to encourage developers to find innovative ways to achieve those goals as conditions and best practices change.

Because this planning process marks the first time the Town is taking this approach, the following sections will provide context for the new land use plan by establishing its core aspirations and defining Neighborhoods, Centers, Corridors, and their associated Place Types.

Defining the Planning Framework

At a high level, the Planning Framework describes the physical places that make up the Town today and in the future, maps the layout of those places, and provides guidance for their growth and evolution. These places are broadly grouped into three general categories or elements—Neighborhoods, Centers, and Corridors—and then further broken down into Place Types that aid further in analysis and planning. Each place has unique characteristics, needs, and assets that are important considerations for future planning and development decisions. This system is by nature too broad to consider the unique circumstances of each individual place; however, it can identify common threads within Place Types and provide a more intuitive, flexible rubric by which to shape future development. This will not only help guide policy; but also help developers and the general public gain a better understanding of the reasoning behind policy decisions. Each element of the Framework is described below, along with definitions of its constituent Place Types.



Normal's Neighborhoods, Centers, and Corridors will each be unique places while contributing to the whole in creating a complete, connected, and compact community.

Neighborhoods

Neighborhoods are the basic social units where residents live, interact with neighbors, and conduct their most frequent daily activities. The time periods in which these neighborhoods were built, and the regulations at those times, influenced their development patterns, housing styles, affordability and many other key characteristics. Hence, they are grouped here by age of development.

Neighborhood Place Types

Old Neighborhoods (built prior to 1950): These neighborhoods contain all three of Normal's historic districts and other older homes. Because most of Normal's population growth occurred after 1950, there are relatively few of these neighborhoods.

Examples: Old North Normal, Cedar Crest

Early Suburban Neighborhoods (1950–1979): The Early Suburban Neighborhoods were built during the Town's first population boom, in which the population grew from a little under 10,000 in 1950 to nearly 36,000 in 1980. Due to the population explosion of this period, there are roughly four times as many housing units in these neighborhoods as in the Old Neighborhoods.

Examples: Pleasant Hills, Windsor Village

Newer Suburban Neighborhoods (1980 to present): These neighborhoods are mostly located on the fringes of Town, in several cases separated from the core by Veterans Parkway and other arterial roads. They account for roughly the same number of housing units as the Early Suburban Neighborhoods. The Newer Suburban Neighborhoods are more "suburban-style" than the Early Suburban Neighborhoods.

Examples: Ironwood Subdivision, The Vineyards

University Influence Neighborhoods (UIN)

- **UIN 1:** Student-oriented, predominantly residential neighborhoods around ISU.
- **UIN 2:** Single-family neighborhoods around ISU experiencing pressures related to nearby student housing.

These neighborhoods are discussed extensively in the Town and Gown Chapter.

Emerging/Future Neighborhoods: These are the neighborhoods that will be built after adoption of this *Plan*. Many could be integrated into the fabric of New Suburban Neighborhoods to make them more complete, connected, and compact.

Centers

Centers are hubs of commercial, educational, recreational, and institutional activity. They are categorized here by size and function.

Center Place Types

Neighborhood Centers are the smallest-scale centers, primarily serving a few neighborhoods (or even just one) at a time, rather than the entire community. At time of writing, Normal has few such centers due to decades of single-use, auto-oriented development.

Examples: Grocery stores/small shopping centers at Cottage and Hovey and at Raab and Main

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

Examples: Civic and cultural centers (e.g., Connie Link Amphitheatre); mid-sized retail and entertainment areas (e.g., Main Street commercial strips); community parks (e.g., One Normal Plaza)

Regional Centers have an impact that reaches beyond the Bloomington-Normal metro area—major retail centers, regional employers, major educational institutions, hospitals, etc.

Examples: Major retail clusters (e.g., retail area along Veterans Parkway); regional employment centers (e.g., Mitsubishi/Rivian area); major educational institutions (e.g., Illinois State University); hospitals (e.g., Advocate BroMenn)

Town Center (Uptown): Given its commercial, institutional, and cultural significance to the Town of Normal, Uptown Normal could be classified as a regional center. It is categorized separately here because of its unique status as the Town's central business district.

Corridors

Corridors are the pathways connecting our people, places, and natural areas. They serve a variety of purposes. This Framework focuses on Transportation, Cultural, and Natural Corridors.

Corridor Place Types

Transportation Corridors are the streets, roads, and railroads that physically connect our centers and neighborhoods.

Cultural Corridors are historically and culturally significant pathways, embodied in Normal primarily by Route 66 and the Constitution Trail.

Natural Corridors are the streams, riparian buffers, detention basins, and other natural or quasi-natural areas that serve as wildlife habitats and pathways.

Examples of Conservation Zones: Sugar Creek Riparian Buffer, detention areas, parks with natural areas hospitable to wildlife (e.g., Fransen Park, Hidden Creek Nature Area)

Quantifying Place Types

The purpose of the Planning Framework is to make Normal's neighborhoods, centers, and corridors more *complete, connected, and compact*. The tables below contain a number of indicators that can help quantify progress toward those goals.

While it may be obvious, it is worth noting here that these metrics should not be expected to tell the entire story. Abstract concepts like "complete," "connected," and "compact" are inherently qualitative and cannot be completely quantified. However, these metrics can help establish some real-world context for how these concepts relate to land use planning, and are a way to check qualitative interpretations against reality.

METRICS

Expectations to Fulfill the Vision	Measurements	
Complete . . . ■ With **neighborhoods** that provide a variety of housing choices, at various price points, to welcome residents of all backgrounds. ■ With **streets** that support healthy and active lifestyles by promoting walking, biking, and transit. Street vistas will capitalize on building design, scale, architecture, and proportionality to create interesting visual experiences and make every place unique and enjoyable. ■ With vibrant and thriving **centers** of all sizes that serve as neighborhood destinations and employment nodes.	**Neighborhoods** ■ Housing Type Diversity Index ■ % Owner-Occupied ■ Average Home Values ■ % homes with senior exemptions ■ % one-story homes ■ Nursing homes/assisted living ■ #Section 8 housing ■ #Supportive housing	**Centers** ■ % area as underutilized commercial land ■ % area as vacant non-residential land **Corridors** ■ Miles of creek with protected riparian buffer ■ Miles of creek with concrete beds by ownership ■ % of streets with sidewalks on at least one side ■ Miles of complete streets
Connected . . . ■ **Physically,** with neighborhoods connected to each other and to centers, providing convenient access to grocery stores, quality public schools, parks, and neighborhood commercial areas. An interconnected network of streets, sidewalks, and trails will make walking, biking, and access to transit easy for all people. ■ **Socially,** with gathering places—like streets, parks, front porches, coffee shops, ice cream parlors—that create informal opportunities to meet, get together, and socialize with neighbors. ■ **Technologically,** with connected urban systems that deliver services more efficiently to the Town's neighborhoods and centers. Ubiquitous access to high speed, affordable, and secure broadband will empower our residents, businesses, and institutions to thrive in this 21st century economy.	**Neighborhoods** ■ Link to Node Ratio: 1-2.5 ■ % streets with sidewalks ■ % access to parks ■ % assigned to the nearest school ■ % access to transit ■ % access to trail ■ % access to grocery ■ % access to pharmacy	**Centers** ■ Walk score ■ Transit score **Corridors** ■ % schools with direct trail access ■ % parks with direct trail access ■ Miles of on-street bike lanes ■ Linear miles of sidewalks ■ Bike and pedestrian crashes
Compact . . . ■ With dense development and a mix of uses that support safe and convenient access to a variety of destinations by any mode of transportation, while contributing positively to fiscal and environmental sustainability.	**Neighborhoods** ■ Housing density	**Centers** ■ % area as parking lots

Metrics Reference

Metric	Definition
Residential Housing Units	The total number of all residential units. A "residential unit" is defined as either a single-family residence (attached or detached), a multi-family unit (i.e., an apartment), or a mobile home. Group quarters (e.g., dormitories, group homes, nursing homes, shelters, correctional facilities, etc.) are not included.
Density (Units/Acre)	"Residential Housing Units" divided by the area. *Note: Vacant residential parcels as well as the Ironwood Golf Course have been excluded from the area calculation in order to minimize misrepresentation.*
Housing Type Diversity Index	The percent chance that two randomly selected residential housing units will be of different types. There are ten possible housing types: Single Family 1–2 bedroom, Single Family 3 bedroom, Single Family 4+ bedroom, Duplex, Condo, Townhouse/Rowhouse, Mobile Home, Apartment 3–10 units, Apartment 11+ units, and Mixed Use. Scores range from 0–100%, with higher percentages signaling greater diversity in available housing types. *Note: Ideally, square footage data would have been used to differentiate between single-family housing types; however, this data was not uniformly available and accurate.*
% Owner-Occupied	The percentage of residential housing units that are owned by their tenants.
Special-Needs Units	The number of housing units classified as "Supportive Housing" or "Social Services." These units are not included in the count of residential housing units.
Nursing Home/Assisted Living Units	The number of housing units classified as "Nursing Home/Assisted Living." These units are not included in the count of residential housing units.
Section 8 Units	The number of residential housing units enrolled in the Section 8 assistance program. This metric serves as a proxy for measuring housing affordability and inclusiveness.
% Senior Exemptions	The percentage of residential housing units with registered senior exemptions. This metric is a proxy for determining aging in place and inclusiveness.
% One-Story Unit Homes	The percentage of residential housing units that are only one story. While not all one story units are built to be accessible, they can be remodeled to better address accessibility issues. This metric serves as another proxy for aging in place and inclusiveness. *Note: This does not account for the ground floor of multi-family housing greater than 1 story.*
Link-Node Ratio	A measure of the connectivity of the street network; links are street segments, nodes are intersections, and dead ends. Scores are computed by dividing links by nodes and range from 1.0-2.5, with higher values representing better connectivity. A score of 2.5 represents a perfect grid system where every street is connected with no dead-ends.
Single-Family Detached Average Market Value	Average market value of Single Family Detached units, if available. Recorded sales occurred between 2004 and 2014. Values of "N/A" indicate no available data while values of "Insufficient Data" indicate fewer than ten sales occurred. *Note: Single Family Detached market values were used due to their greater availability. The available data for Duplex and Townhouse/Rowhouse units suggest that they have average market values slightly lower than that of Single Family Detached units.*
% Streets with Sidewalks	The percentage of street segments with sidewalks on at least one side.

Metrics Reference

% Transit Access	The percentage of housing units within 0.25 miles of a transit stop that receives service every 30 minutes or less.
% Trail Access	The percentage of housing units within 0.25 miles of a paved entrance to Constitution Trail. *Note: This does not account for parcels abutting the Trail that may have private entrances. Because of this, the analysis misses a total of 72 units that abut the Trail.*
% Park Access	The percentage of housing units within 0.25 miles of a public park.
% School Access	The percentage of housing units within 1 mile of any elementary school.
% Assigned School Access	The percentage of housing units within 1 mile of their assigned elementary school.
% Grocery Access	The percentage of housing units within 0.25 miles of a full-service grocery store.
% Pharmacy Access	The percentage of housing units within 0.25 miles of a pharmacy.
% Acres of Parking	Total acres of surface parking lots, as a percentage of total acres.
% Acres of Underutilized Commercial Land	Total acres of underutilized commercial land, as a percentage of total acres.
% Acres of Vacant Land Zoned Non-Residential	Total acres of vacant land zoned for non-residential uses, as a percentage of the total acres.
Walk Score	As calculated by walkscore.com, a measurement of the walkability of an area. Scores range from 0-100, with higher scores indicating greater walkability.
Transit Score	As calculated by walkscore.com, a measurement the viability of transit is for transportation in an area. Scores range from 0-100, with higher scores indicating greater transit coverage and frequency.
Crashes	Total crashes recorded by IDOT, measured over the most recent ten years of data available. Crashes involving pedestrians or bicyclists are highlighted separately.
Miles of Sidewalk	The cumulative length of all sidewalks in Normal.
Miles of Bike Lanes	The cumulative length of all bike lanes in Normal.
Miles of Complete Streets	Total miles.
Miles of Potential Complete Streets	Total miles of street segments that are not yet complete streets but should be.
% Parks with Direct Trail Access	The percentage of parks in Normal that are directly along the path of the Constitution Trail.
% Schools with Direct Trail Access	The percentage of public schools in Normal that are directly along the path of the Constitution Trail.

Note: All access measures include residential housing, group quarters, special-needs housing, and nursing home/assisted living housing. All access scores use network distance and not "as the crow flies" distance. Access scores do not take into account barriers such as high traffic areas.