Town *of* Normal









2040 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Existing Conditions Report

Town *of*
Normal



2040
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN
Community Snapshot & Outreach Report

Prepared By

McLean County Regional Planning Commission
115 East Washington St M103
Bloomington, Illinois 61701

In Cooperation with

Town of Normal

April, 2016

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INTRODUCTION & EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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INTRODUCTION

The Town of Normal's comprehensive plan was created in the mid-1990s and was last updated in 2006. Much has changed in Normal, Central Illinois, and the world in the intervening years. The region has experienced major population growth and weathered the worst global economic recession since the Great Depression. Technological advances and the shifting lifestyle preferences of demographic groups from Millennials to Baby Boomers have begun to have significant effects on the built environment, as they have in other communities around the country. In light of these and other changes, the Town has opted to create a new comprehensive plan instead of updating its previous plan. The McLean County Regional Planning Commission (MCRPC) was engaged to lead that process.

REGIONAL CONTEXT

Although this comprehensive plan focuses on the Town, it is vital to remember that Normal functions within a region that includes Bloomington, surrounding communities, and McLean County. Each of these entities relies on the others to achieve shared regional goals through cooperation, collaboration, and collective action. In addition, the fortunes of major institutions and corporations such as Illinois State University, Advocate Bromenn, State Farm and COUNTRY Financial are intertwined with that of the Town and the region.

The BN metro area has many attributes that have contributed to its growth and prosperity throughout its history: its strategic location; transportation connections; major corporate headquarters; and its high quality of life factors; education, parks and recreation, low crime, shopping, dining, cultural opportunities, and many more.

However, we are beginning to face some challenges. Issues such as State Farm's (the top employer in the community) expansion in other markets, the closure of the Mitsubishi plant in 2015, and the fiscal crisis in Illinois are undoubtedly topics of immediate concern for the region. Many of these concerns are being addressed at the regional level through initiatives such as BN Advantage.

WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

The Illinois Municipal Code (65 ILCS 5) authorizes communities in Illinois to develop comprehensive plans to address long-range growth and development. Comprehensive planning can be an 18- to 36-month-long process, typically including a discussion of existing conditions, community outreach, and a land use plan that identifies goals and objectives with respect to housing, infrastructure, education, recreation, transportation, and other topics that influence land use. While comprehensive planning is primarily focused on the physical development and built form of the community, social, economic, and political considerations are, by necessity, part of the discussion.

Once adopted, a comprehensive plan serves as the primary policy guide for growth and development in communities. The plan is an advisory document, and its goals and objectives are implemented through zoning and other ordinances and codes.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

In Fall 2015, MCRPC, in consultation and coordination with Town staff, launched PlanIt Normal, a process to create the Town's comprehensive plan with a horizon year of 2040. This 24-month process, graphically illustrated in Figure E.1, contains the following distinct steps:

1. **Existing Conditions Analysis (*Community Snapshot*):** A detailed assessment of the Town's existing land use patterns, demographic and economic trends, current initiatives, and past plans and studies, this analysis helps identify current strengths and potential future challenges and, more importantly, establish a starting point from which to move forward.
2. **Community Outreach:** As an overarching strategy for future growth and development, it is critical that the comprehensive plan reflect the community's needs and desires. This step engages residents and stakeholders of various age, income, educational, racial, and ethnic backgrounds to ensure that their perspectives shape the community's vision for the future.
3. **Visioning:** The data and analysis from the community snapshot and the needs and desires identified during the community outreach

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process will provide the framework for a shared community vision and a set of core values that will help shape the Town's built, economic, social, and natural environments as we move toward 2040. The Visioning Committee, a group of diverse, community-minded individuals appointed by the Mayor, will assist with this process.

4. **Working Groups:** Goals, objectives, and actionable items to implement the shared vision will be established through a number of working group meetings. These groups will be composed of individuals and professionals with expertise in topics such as housing, transportation, energy and air quality. By nature, some groups will work on specific geographies while others will consider county-wide solutions.
5. **The Final Plan** will include elements from the above steps, along with a series of maps depicting the community's desired future land use and physical development patterns.

Although these steps are somewhat sequential, it is important to note that each will inform and be informed by the other steps, and also that public feedback will be a key part of the process until the plan's final adoption. The report documents, such as this one, are designed to be placed in binders specifically to accommodate any suggestions or changes to the content.

STRUCTURE OF THIS REPORT

This volume, the *Community Snapshot and Outreach Report*, summarizes the first two steps of the comprehensive planning process. It is organized into the following sections:

- *Community Snapshot*: This section is organized into six interrelated chapters, as outlined in Figure E.2. These chapters analyze the Town's land

Figure E.1. Graphical illustration of the planning process

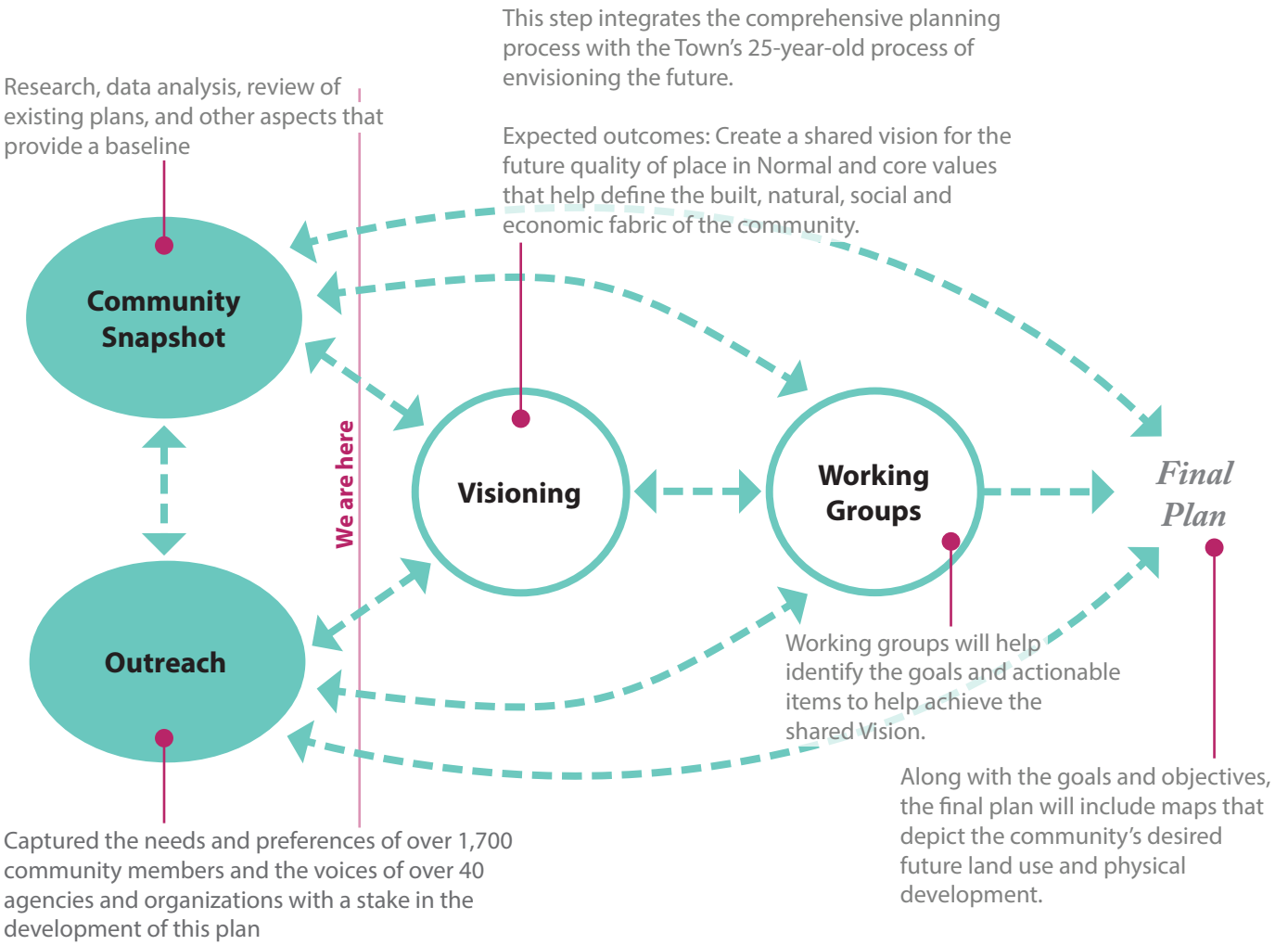

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Figure E.2. Report contents

Section 1: Community Snapshot

1.1 GROWTH & PLANNING HISTORY
From the Town's founding to the present day, this chapter places the Town's physical growth and development and the factors that shaped them into historical context.

1.2 DEMOGRAPHICS & PROJECTIONS
Population size and demographic composition are examined to understand patterns, distribution, needs and future trends.

1.3 LAND USE & DEVELOPMENT
Current land use patterns, development trends, zoning issues, and the availability of vacant and underutilized land for future development are some of the issues examined in this chapter.

1.4 ECONOMIC VITALITY
This chapter considers the implications of the recently adopted BN Advantage regional economic strategy for future land use and development. It also includes a snapshot of the Town's budget and finances and discusses other past and present economic development initiatives.

1.5 INFRASTRUCTURE & PUBLIC SAFETY
The transportation network, water mains, sewer lines, electric and gas lines, solid waste issues, community facilities, and other public infrastructure critical for day-to-day operations and community life are examined.

1.6 COMMUNITY HEALTH & SUSTAINABILITY
This chapter examines a variety of elements that contribute to physical health, social health and the health of the natural environment.

Section 2: Outreach

2.1 COMMUNITY SURVEY ANALYSIS
This chapter summarizes the results from the PlanIt Normal Community Survey, which gave residents a chance to share what they like and want to see improved in Normal and established residents' preferences and priorities with respect to neighborhoods and future growth priorities.

2.2 STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS
The voices of over 40 representatives from housing operations, nonprofits, business organizations, and other groups with a stake in the development of this plan are summarized in this chapter.

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use patterns, demographic trends and future projections, and the impacts of the built environment on health and infrastructure. In the interest of not duplicating efforts, it draws on a number of existing plans and studies. It also includes some discussion of best practices and future trends for the Visioning Committee and Working Groups to consider as they help lay out the blueprint for the future development of Normal.

- *Community Outreach*: This section summarizes the results of an extensive outreach effort conducted over six months. A plethora of traditional and non-traditional methods and scores of meetings with community and neighborhood organizations made it possible to engage a diverse cross-section of the community. This extensive outreach effort resulted in over 1,700 responses to the community survey (shown in Figure E.3) and engaged over 40 key stakeholder groups.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The *Community Snapshot and Outreach Report* is rich with information, data analysis and observations from residents and stakeholders. This executive summary touches on pivotal findings, chapter by chapter, regarding the Town and its community partners.

1.1 Growth and Planning History: Community-wide, the Town exemplified development policy and implementation similar to many American towns over its first 150 years. However, in the new millennium, Normal has achieved a remarkable reinvention. While the primary catalyst was (and is) the redevelopment of Uptown Normal, the Town has applied the principles of smart growth along Main Street and to some extent in newer residential neighborhoods.

- As rapidly as the population grew after 1960 (see Figure E.3), the incorporated area of the Town grew faster, leading to an overall decrease in population density.
- A landmark planning effort in Normal was the 2015 Report, adopted in 1990, which examined the Town's quality of life, impacts of growth and the importance of developing a more diverse and resilient local economy. The Town's most consequential recent planning effort is the redevelopment of Uptown Normal, applying New Urbanism and Smart Growth principles, which has brought the Town national recognition. These principles are also found in the ongoing Main Street corridor redevelopment.
- Illinois State University has had a significant influence on the formation and growth of the Town. The current economic challenges faced by the Town and the university necessitate a greater level of coordination to achieve a sustainable future for both. In recent years, Normal has dedicated substantial resources to the redevelopment of Uptown and the Main Street corridor, both of which bring great benefits to the university and the broader community. Normal has also accommodated shifts in ISU policy regarding student housing. Mutual commitment to the evolution of the Town-Gown relationship is to the advantage of ISU, the Town, and the broader region.
- Regionalism was an overarching theme of the 2015 Report, which has an assertive discussion of this principle. It called for regional planning, policy development, code standardization, consolidation of government services and a regional approach to growth management. While there are many existing regional cooperation arrangements, both formal and informal, between local governments, regional agencies, for-profit and not-for-profit entities, attempts at increased coordination have stalled. In the current era of fiscal uncertainty at both the local and state levels, heightened regional coordination is necessary to maintain the current quality of place and achieve positive change in the future.

1.2 Demographics and Projections: Normal's population is young, well-educated, and affluent, which is one of the greatest economic strengths for the Town and the BN metro area. Despite recent local economic challenges, Normal's population is projected to grow. This projection is in keeping with the Town's strong history of population growth and the metro area's economic strengths.

- Normal's median age is 24 years, median family

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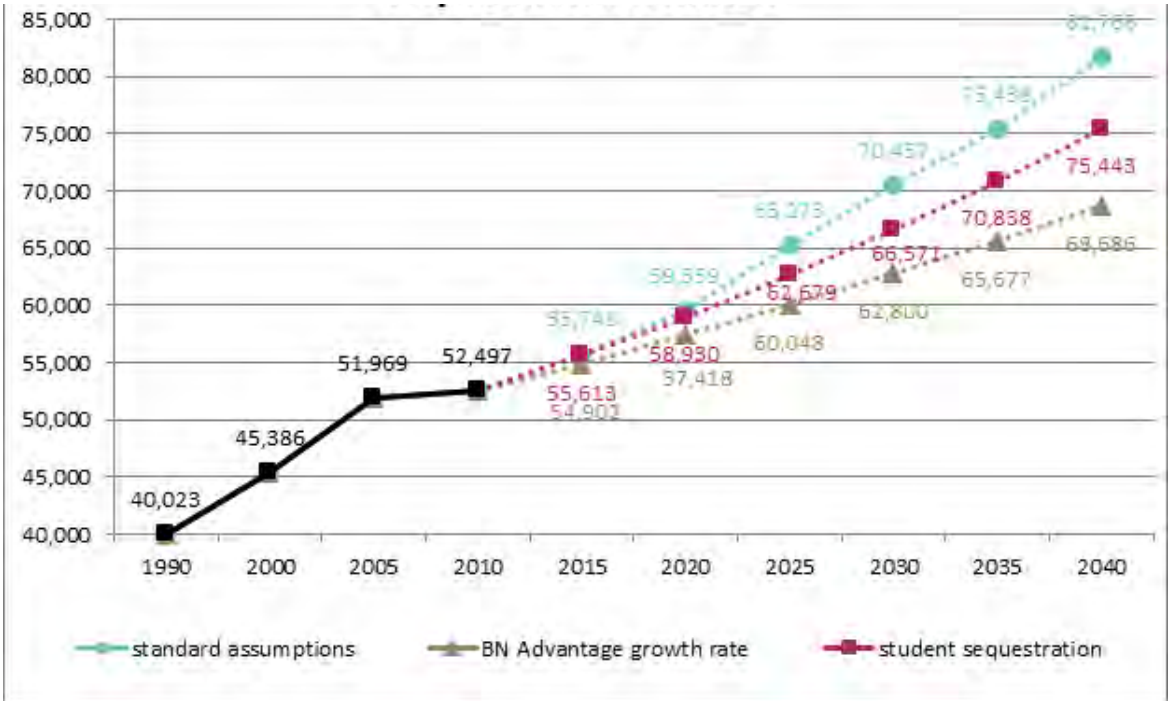
income is $86,851 (well above the state and national averages), and nearly half of its residents hold a bachelor's degree or higher.

- Normal has nearly equivalent shares of family and non-family households, with 53% percent of the former and 47% of the latter. This unusually high proportion of non-family households can be attributed to the student enrollment at ISU. The student population presents many unique opportunities and challenges to the community.
- While not at the same scale as national trends, Normal's family size is shrinking and its non-student population is slowly aging. These trends are hidden by the disproportionately large population of college-aged residents. As the community grows but ISU enrollment remains stable, these trends will become more pronounced.
- Because of their demographic dominance, Millennials are having a transformative effect on the structure of their communities. As young adults, they have shown preferences for mixed-use neighborhoods, multimodal accessibility, and other urban amenities. Aging Baby Boomers are drawn to the cultural and educational amenities of college communities. Both of these factors are and will continue to impact Normal.
- With more than 85% of the Town's population identifying as white, Normal's demographic composition is less ethnically and racially diverse than Illinois' or the nation's. The share of residents identifying as Hispanic is approximately 4.1%, far below the state and national share. Within the Hispanic population, over 60% identify as white.

1.3 Land Use and Development: There has been a significant shift in Normal's land use philosophy since the adoption of the Downtown Redevelopment Plan (now Uptown) in 2001. The Town embraced the principles of smart growth for the Uptown project. With major portions of the plan now implemented, Uptown is a model for smart growth and has earned the Town national recognition. Since then, the Town has used innovative regulatory tools and economic incentives to promote mixed-use redevelopment along Main Street.

- Broadly speaking, the Town's land use pattern is similar to that of any community. Residential use, the largest land use category, consumes 36% of total acreage. Nearly 70% of residential acreage is occupied by low-density, single-family detached housing, which accounts for only 40% of all housing units. Such low-density

Figure E.3. Population projection scenarios



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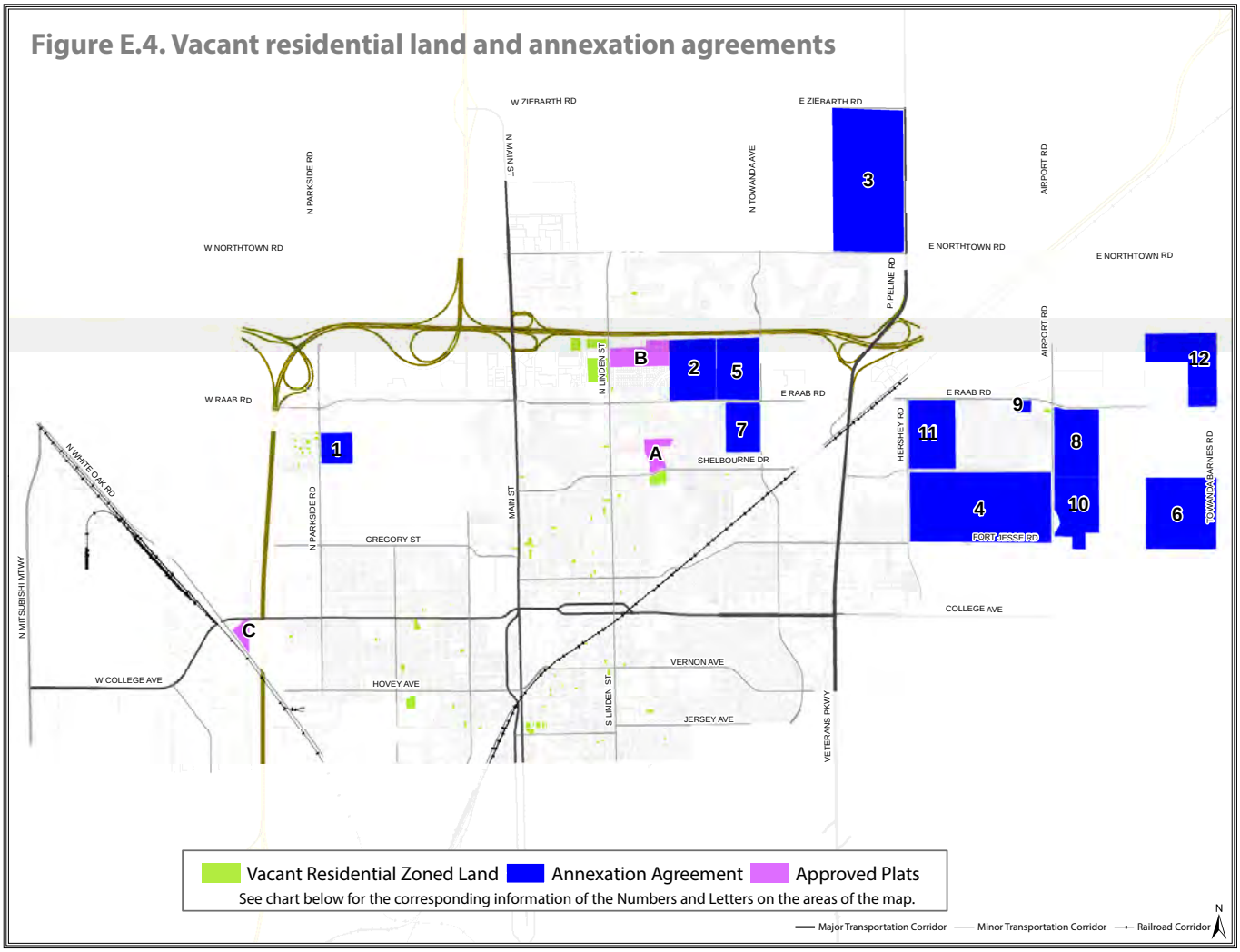
development strains municipal resources. In the last two decades, the Town has made a concerted effort to increase residential densities in pursuit of more compact and sustainable development.

- Not surprisingly for a college town with a high percentage of institutional land uses, over a quarter of the Town's developed land is tax-exempt. While institutional uses play an important role in the quality of life in the community, they must be balanced with revenue-generating uses and located strategically so as not to strain public resources.
- The physical growth of the Town happens through annexation agreements. The Town currently has 12 active agreements, along with approved plats and vacant residential lots, as shown in Figure E.4, that allow for the development of over 3,500 residential units. Further, the Uptown 2.0 plan recommends nearly 1,000 urban residential units. These roughly 4,500 potential units can accommodate upwards of 14,000 people, a major percentage of the projected population change in the next 20 to 25 years.

1.4 Economic Vitality: While the Town and the BN metro area have always enjoyed a stable economy, recent changes such as the closure of Mitsubishi Motors, the expansion of State Farm in other markets, and lackluster construction permit activity pose challenges to the local economy. To address these challenges, the community banded together to create a regional economic development strategy called BN Advantage. The Town of Normal, City of Bloomington, and McLean County adopted this strategy in 2015 and are actively working toward its implementation.

- BN Advantage recommends the following five sectors as suitable targets for the region:

Figure E.4. Vacant residential land and annexation agreements



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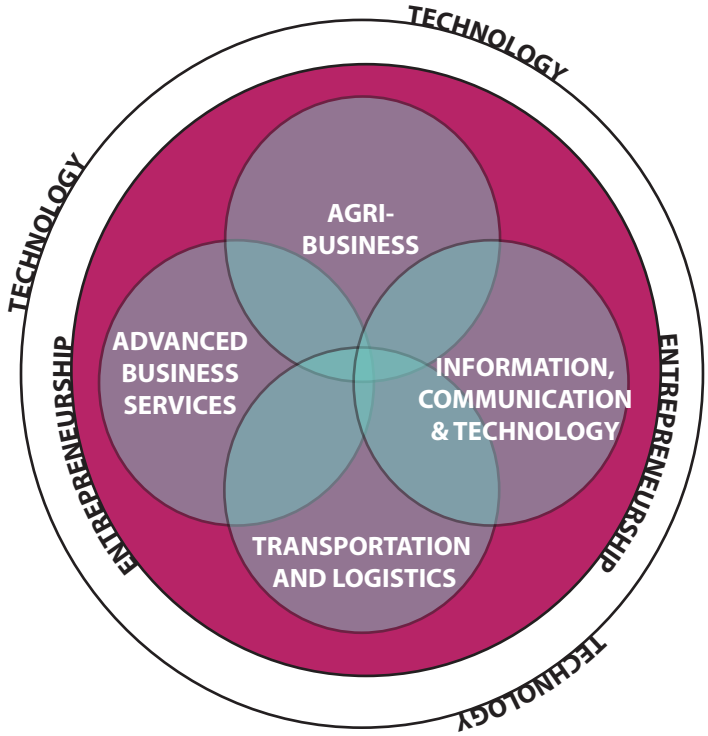
Entrepreneurship, Information and Communication Technologies, Agribusiness, Transportation and Logistics, and Advanced Business Services (see Figure E.5). It particularly emphasizes the importance of entrepreneurship in diversifying the local economy. Entrepreneurship is not a sector, but rather an overarching community culture that is critical to grow and sustain businesses in all sectors.

- The land use and infrastructure needs for industries within these target sectors vary greatly. Some businesses, especially startups and smaller businesses, are infill-capable and thrive in mixed-use urban environments that are walkable, bikable, and accessible by public transportation. Others require large acreages, adjacency to complementary uses, and connections to major transportation networks like highways and railroads. Regardless of the type and scale of business, all businesses need access to up-to-date technology infrastructure.
- The Town's revenue sources are fairly diverse. Sales taxes are by far the largest revenue source, bringing in a little over 21% of the Town's revenue. The property tax accounted for about 11% of the Town's revenue. Normal's property tax rate is the lowest among the seven largest downstate cities in Illinois.
- There are nearly 1,000 acres of vacant land zoned for commercial, office, and industrial purposes within the Town's corporate limits. The vacant land and the Town's many underutilized properties, including the recently vacated Mitsubishi Motors site and vacant properties under institutional ownership, represent opportunities for commercial, office and industrial development (see Figure E.6).

Figure E.5. BN Advantage target sectors and their interdependencies



1.5 Infrastructure and Public Safety: Nationally, infrastructure issues are a huge topic of concern and public policy debate. While our transportation network is the most visible aspect, water mains, sewer lines, electric lines and gas lines are part of a complex web of critical public infrastructure. The universal challenge facing American infrastructure is that it is aging and needs significant investment for repair or reconstruction. Federal infrastructure policies have a significant impact on local infrastructure issues. For example, the federal motor fuel tax rate determines the level of funding set aside to support local transportation infrastructure.

Generally speaking, Normal's infrastructure is in good repair. However, the Town continues to grapple with the same funding issues other communities are facing. The Town's increasing focus on compact, mixed-use development patterns and efforts to curb sprawl also assist in the efficient management of utilities, both by the Town and by other utility providers.

- Normal's more than 400 miles of streets provide connections at all levels of use. Upgrades to the transportation system are being made thoughtfully, keeping in mind the future role of the street network. These include accommodations for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit vehicles.
- In 2016, Connect Transit will implement a revised route structure, intended to prioritize frequency of service on more heavily used routes. This revision will make transit service more flexible for the majority of riders but will also remove routes with less ridership, including some routes in northeast Normal.
- Each infrastructure system, public or private, must be properly installed and maintained,

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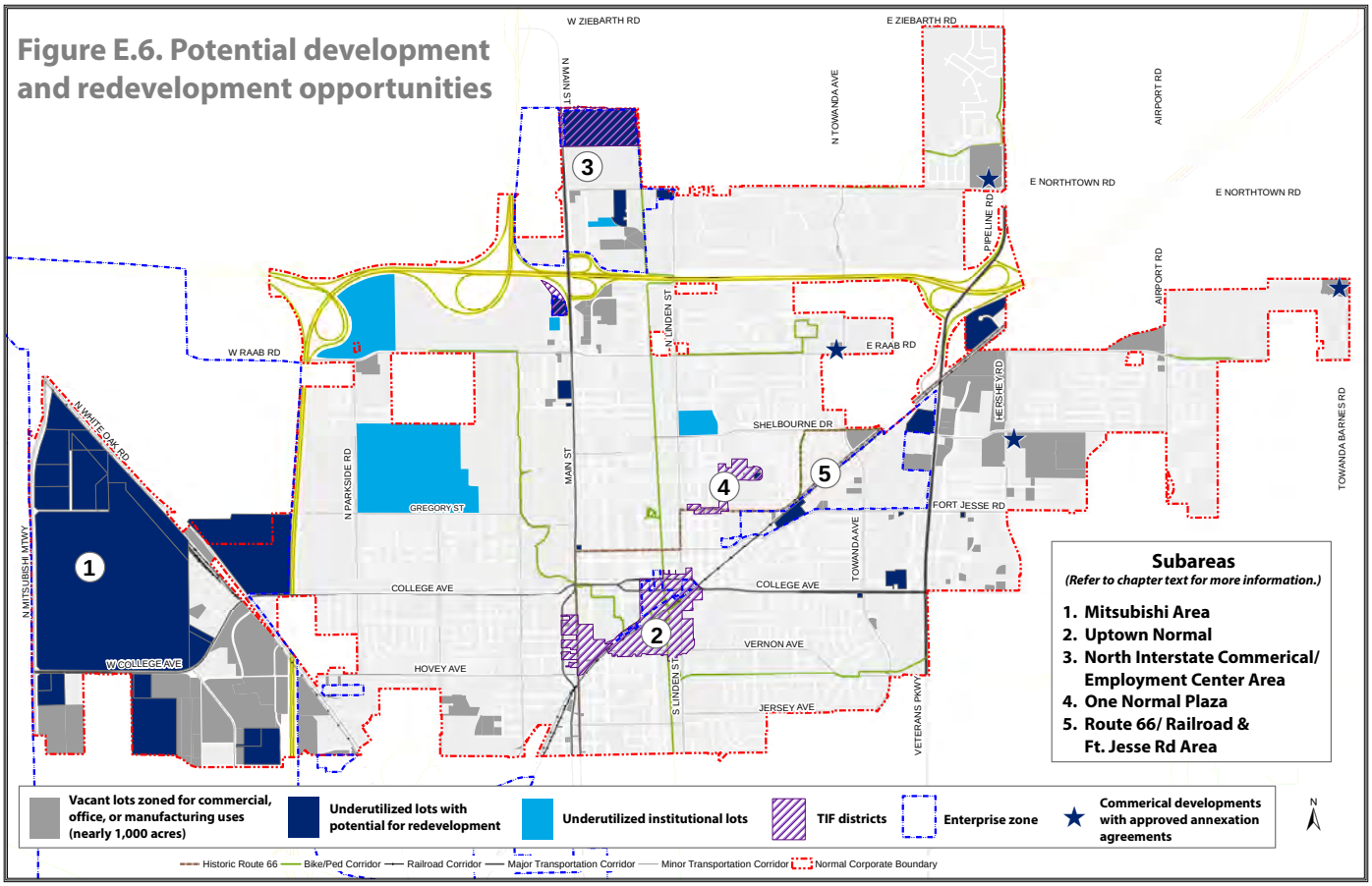

often in a location shared with other systems. There is limited space within right-of-way easements or on utility poles within which multiple service providers must compete for installation space. Newer technology infrastructure, such as the fiber optic network, exacerbates the problem.

- The Bloomington-Normal Water Reclamation District (BNWRD) advised during the stakeholder outreach process that under EPA standards, the west treatment plant on Oakland Avenue will require reconstruction, possibly within the next 5 to 15 years. This highly complex project could cost an estimated $140 to $160 million and should be thoroughly investigated over the course of the comprehensive plan process to determine its implications for the economy, environment, and cost of living.
- Landfill use is of principal concern given the anticipated closure of the McLean County Landfill #2 in the near future. The Ecology Action Center (EAC), the regional solid waste planning agency for the Town, City, and County, is currently updating the county-wide Integrated Solid Waste Management Plan to address this and other solid waste issues such as recycling and household hazardous waste.

1.6 Community Health and Sustainability:

Where people live, work, and play, how they travel, and what they eat all affect individual health and overall community well-being. To that effect, the concept of community health must be understood as the intersection of individual lifestyles, socioeconomic factors, and environmental conditions (see Figure E.7).

- Obesity is one of the major health concerns in McLean County. This is driven primarily by physical inactivity and unhealthy eating habits. Despite continuous efforts to improve walkability and bikability, portions of the BN metro area remains difficult to traverse without a car. Significant portions of the community are also designated as food deserts by the USDA, meaning access to fresh food without a car is difficult.
- Access to mental health services has become an increasingly serious issue in recent years,

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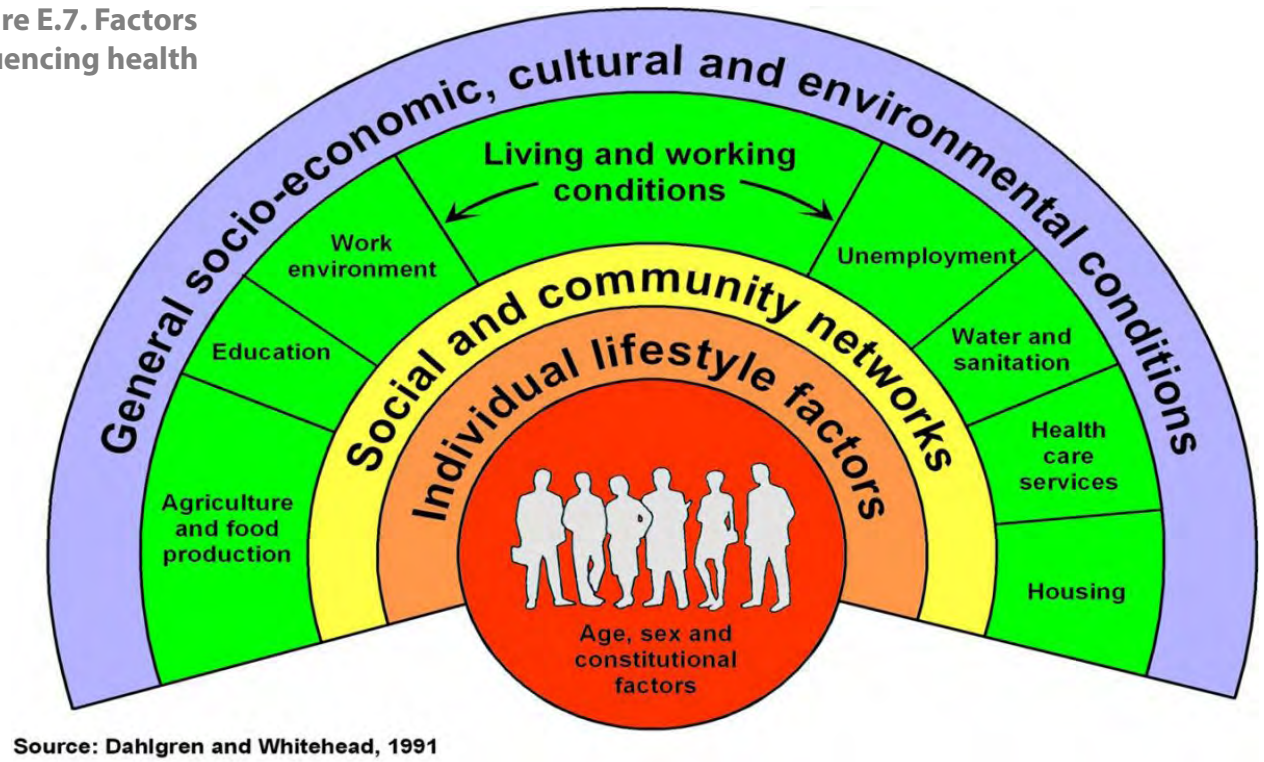
gaining public attention as the county jail has been overwhelmed by a growing number of inmates with untreated mental illnesses. The county's Mental Health Action Plan and the resulting increase in funding and services are positive recent steps toward addressing this crisis. However, there is more work to be done in this area. Housing and transportation issues identified in the Mental Health Action Plan must be carefully considered and addressed in the comprehensive plan.

- Normal is a well-educated and affluent community overall. However, some populations, including people with low incomes, seniors, and people with disabilities, need affordable housing options and access to amenities and facilities via alternative modes of transportation.
- The Town of Normal is a leader in sustainability. Its commitment is exemplified by Uptown Normal's environmentally friendly features and the adopted plans for Uptown 2.0 to achieve a net positive environmental impact. The Town is also an active partner in addressing regional environmental challenges. Immediate challenges include air quality, water quality and solid waste. Preservation of McLean County's richest natural resource, its farmland, is an ongoing challenge as well.

2.1 Community Survey Analysis: A huge outreach effort got the Comprehensive Plan process off to a strong start. Over 1,700 people who live, work, and play in Normal responded to the PlanIt Normal survey (see Figure E.8). Thousands more encountered the planning process through a variety of media and community meetings and events. Respondents shared what they like and want to see improved; the factors most important to them when choosing a neighborhood; and their priorities for the Town's future.

- Broadly speaking, respondents characterized Normal as a safe, quiet, family-friendly town with good schools and friendly neighborhoods—much like a small town in that respect—with city-like amenities in the form of excellent higher education institutions and a long list of cultural, shopping, and entertainment options. Uptown Normal, the Constitution Trail, other walking and biking infrastructure, and parks and recreation facilities were particular magnets for positive comments. The Town's leaders were frequently commended for their future-oriented thinking and effective implementation of ambitious plans.
- Certain neighborhood qualities are almost

Figure E.7. Factors influencing health



Source: Dahlgren and Whitehead, 1991

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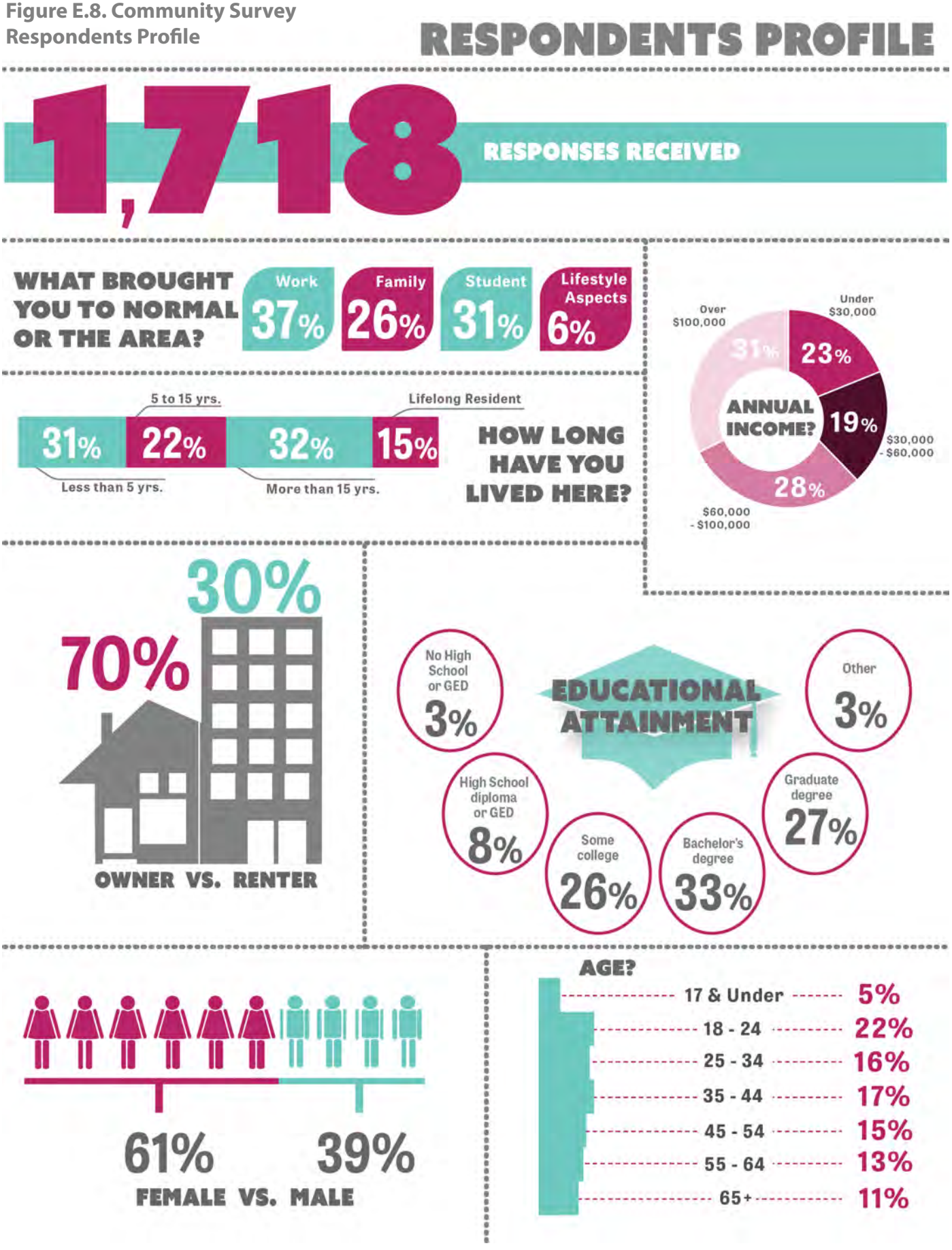
Figure E.8. Community Survey Respondents Profile



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universally desirable: safety and cleanliness, affordable housing, walkability, attractive public spaces, parks, schools, and proximity to work. Other factors were particularly important to certain demographic groups. For example, aging in place was rated highly by people aged 45 and up, while public transportation was rated most highly by lower income respondents.

- The survey revealed relatively few pressing concerns. Most were calls to build on the Town's existing amenities: infrastructure maintenance, more Uptown redevelopment, more bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, increased access to public transit, and curbside recycling for apartments, among others. There was some disagreement between student and non-student respondents regarding housing and law enforcement issues.

2.1 Stakeholder Interviews: Over 40 stakeholders representing apartment managers, the development community, social service agencies, utilities, and Town staff, were interviewed during this process. These one-on-one and small group meetings allowed for honest and detailed discussions about the critical work they do for the community and what they see as their greatest needs and challenges. All interviewees were generally complimentary of the Town and its way of conducting business.

- A lack of public awareness of issues facing vulnerable populations and a dwindling supply of reliable funding were two of the systemic issues raised by the social service agencies. More specifically, the agencies raised a number of concerns regarding the built environment:
  - a dearth of affordable housing
  - supportive housing for people with disabilities and mental illnesses
  - housing solutions for homeless individuals
  - increased access to and frequency of public transit
  - a connected network of trails and sidewalks
  - recreational spaces for people with special needs
  - a framework to support seniors and people with disabilities (e.g., universal accessibility, closing transit gaps and municipal policies that support aging in place)
- Representatives of local builders, realtors, and engineering consultants discussed various issues impacting development activity within the community. There was a general agreement that regulations and other costs of doing business should be lowered where possible. All interviewees believed that large homes are a thing of the past, and that the future is in smaller homes and denser neighborhoods, which also reduce development costs. Key development challenges include the slower economy and landowners holding large quantities of vacant land within the core of the community, forcing development to "leapfrog" to the outskirts.
- There was a general agreement, among interviewees that discussed infrastructure issues, that the accelerating cost of maintenance and expansion is and will remain a key challenge. One way to mitigate rising costs is to avoid sprawling development and to encourage infill. Other challenges include increasingly congested easements and street patterns not conducive to emergency or transit vehicles. All agreed that interagency and intergovernmental cooperation will be critical to navigating many of these challenges.
- A group of high school students was asked to describe their ideal community. Echoing the preferences of their demographic group nationwide, most of them named characteristics of urban areas: walkability and bikeability; the ability to attract businesses and support start-ups; diversity; and the presence of art in public places. They also want to have access to higher education opportunities and to be close to larger cities.

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KEY QUESTIONS

The above findings prompt numerous questions, a few of which are presented here are as a starting point for further discussion and investigation. These questions focus on the physical growth and development of the community and the quality of its environment through the lens of how they serve people today and in the future. Using this "people first" approach challenges the traditional scope and thinking of a comprehensive plan. This tasks us to re-imagine traditional plan elements, such as housing, transportation and parks, to more truly reflect how people experience the Town's physical and social spaces.

Growth and development: How can the Town continue to maintain its balance of a small town feel and big-city amenities as it grows?

- What action should the Town take when annexation agreements expire and extensions are requested? What happens if these annexation agreements are not carried out as originally intended? Should the Town continue to approve additional annexation agreements? How can the Town foster infill development in Uptown while simultaneously approving conventional subdivisions?
- What implications will the community's expanding physical footprint and declining population density have on the fiscal, social, and environmental aspects of the community? How can the region grow in a manner that preserves prime farmland while not inhibiting population growth?
- Is it possible to apply the smart growth principles that have guided the Uptown and Main Street redevelopments to the rest of the community?
- What can we learn from earlier efforts to apply smart growth principles to residential neighborhoods? How can the existing low-density residential neighborhoods adapt to better reflect those principles? How can the Town work with other partners, such as the school district, to strategically locate community facilities to achieve walkable and bikable neighborhoods?
- How should the Town continue to balance infrastructure maintenance and upgrades with the ongoing expansion of infrastructure?
- How can land under public ownership, such as streets or detention basins, be utilized more efficiently? As demand for new types of services (e.g., broadband) increases, how can public easements be best managed?
- When investing huge public dollars in infrastructure and facilities, how can we ensure that they support broader community goals?

- **Adapting to a new economy:** What should economic development incentives look like in this knowledge-based, 21st century economy? Can economic incentives also be used to further broader community goals such as smart growth? How can they be used to foster retail development without creating undue competition with the neighboring communities?
  - The land, building, and infrastructure needs of businesses within the BN Advantage targeted sectors vary greatly. Normal is positioned well to accommodate most of them, but which industries best embrace the Town's core values? How can the Town position itself to attract those most suitable to locate here?
  - What types of housing, transportation choices, public spaces, cultural offerings, and amenities do we need to attract and retain a qualified workforce?
  - How can the Town continue to balance the sometimes conflicting needs and preferences of students and non-students? What role should the university play? How can we do a better job of retaining our college graduates, most of whom currently leave the community?

- **Planning for people:** How can land use, transportation, and other local government polices be inclusive and address the needs of all current and potential residents?
  - How do we accommodate the changing housing, land use, transportation, and employment preferences of Millennials, Boomers, and other demographic groups?
  - As the Town plans the development of

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future neighborhoods, how inclusive can they be in terms of age, income, and physical abilities? How can new neighborhoods provide housing choices in terms of size, accessibility, pricing and ownership vs. rental.

- How can health be understood and addressed more comprehensively (instead of the current piecemeal approach)? What role should the municipalities play in addressing major local health concerns? Can health become part of all policies? If so, how can we measure the effectiveness of such policies on the health outcomes?
- Do our community's demographic characteristics create barriers for certain groups (such as lower-income residents or racial and ethnic minorities)?

- **Regionalism:** How can local governments continue to work with other partners toward a common vision that advances the immediate and long-term interests of the agencies and organizations involved and of the broader community? Who should lead the charge?
  - How can the Town and the university work together to proactively plan for the areas most directly influenced by the university? Can ISU's Master Plan and the Town's Comprehensive Plan be better integrated regarding land use issues?

THANK YOU

Producing this document was possible only through the efforts of many individuals and groups: passionate input from members of the public; assistance in reaching out to residents from a number of community partners; the knowledge and expertise of stakeholders; and the guidance of Town of Normal staff in putting it all together. We thank everyone who played a part. For a more detailed list of individuals whose contributions were invaluable to this effort, please see our Credits page.

Sincerely
MCRPC Staff

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COMMUNITY SNAPSHOT



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1.3 LAND USE & DEVELOPMENT

1.4 ECONOMIC VITALITY

1.5 INFRASTRUCTURE & PUBLIC SAFETY

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FINDINGS AND KEY QUESTIONS

Findings

- The Town grew slowly from its 1854 founding until 1960, after which it grew rapidly. As fast as the population grew, the incorporated area of the Town grew even faster, leading to an overall decrease in population density.

- Illinois State University has had a significant influence on the formation and growth of the Town. The current economic challenges faced by the Town and the University necessitate a greater level of co-ordination to achieve a sustainable future for both. In recent years Normal has dedicated substantial resources to the redevelopment of Uptown and the Main Street corridor, both of which bring great benefits to the university and the broader community. Normal has also accommodated shifts in ISU policy regarding student housing. Mutual commitment to the evolution of the Town-Gown relationship is to the advantage of ISU, the Town, and the broader region.

- A landmark planning effort in Normal was the 2015 Report, adopted in 1990, which examined the Town's quality of life, impacts of growth and the importance of developing a more diverse and resilient local economy. The Town's most consequential recent planning effort is the redevelopment of Uptown Normal, applying New Urbanism and Smart Growth principles, which has brought the Town national recognition. These principles have also driven the ongoing Main Street corridor redevelopment.

- Regionalism was an overarching theme of the 2015 Report, which has an assertive discussion of this principle. It called for regional planning, policy development, code standardization, consolidation of government services, and a regional approach to growth management. While there are many existing regional cooperation arrangements, both formal and informal, between local governments, regional agencies, for-profit and not-for-profit entities, attempts at increased coordination have stalled. In the current era of fiscal uncertainty at both the local and state levels, heightened regional coordination is necessary to maintain the current quality of place and achieve positive change in the future.

Key Questions

- What implications will the community's expanding physical footprint and declining population density have on the fiscal, social, and environmental aspects of the community? Is it possible to apply the same smart growth principles that guide the Uptown and Main Street redevelopments to the rest of the community? If so, how do we prioritize implementation?

- How can local governments continue to work with other partners toward a common vision that advances the immediate and long-term interests of the agencies and organizations involved and of the broader community? Who should lead the charge?

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Normal has 150 years of growth and development to its credit, but rather than a steady progression, the Town's changes have followed an idiosyncratic pattern. From its beginnings with a handful of buildings and a few hundred residents, it took nearly a century for the population to reach 10,000 people. Once that milestone was reached, Normal grew at unprecedented levels, and it continues to grow today at a more moderate but still healthy pace.

Community-wide, the Town exemplifies development policy and implementation similar to many American cities and towns over the past 150 years. Normal generally has followed a typical pattern of expansion, moving outward from its core and using more land per structure over time. In more recent decades, that phenomenon has changed slightly with the arrival of university-oriented housing and the Uptown redevelopment projects. Map 1.1.2, depicting residential construction dates, illustrates this phenomenon.

A CHRONOLOGY OF DEVELOPMENT

THE FOUNDING (1850s-1900)

The Town of Normal began in 1854 as the railroad junction of the Chicago and Alton Railroad and Illinois Central Railroad, just south of today's Uptown Circle. The Town consisted of a plot of land now bounded by North Street, Florence and Fell Avenues and Linden Street. See Map 1.1.1.

Incorporated in 1867, Normal had a quiet first century of growth, especially as the home to the first state-supported institution of higher education. The "normal school" (Illinois State Normal University, or ISNU) and the Town influenced each other from the establishment of the campus onward.



ISNU Old Main Building Circa 1860
Photo courtesy of the Dr. JoAnn Rayfield Archives at Illinois State University

Guided by Fell and other civic leaders, the Town and the university slowly grew alongside one another throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. In 1867, Normal became the site of the state Civil War Orphans' Home, later known as the Illinois Soldiers' and Sailors' Children's School (ISSCS), a dominant institution and feature of Normal's "east side" for over a century.

Early development was compact, mostly centered on government, institutions, or commercial features. Development spread away from the rail junction, for both residential and commercial uses, and for the ISNU campus.

Later in the 19th century further social and infrastructure development occurred, including paved streets, municipal water wells, electricity, fire response, the Town library and the founding of Brokaw Hospital (now the Advocate Bromenn Regional Medical Center). Businesses began and thrived, drawing on local agricultural and transportation resources.

Map 1.1.1
1854 North Bloomington Plat



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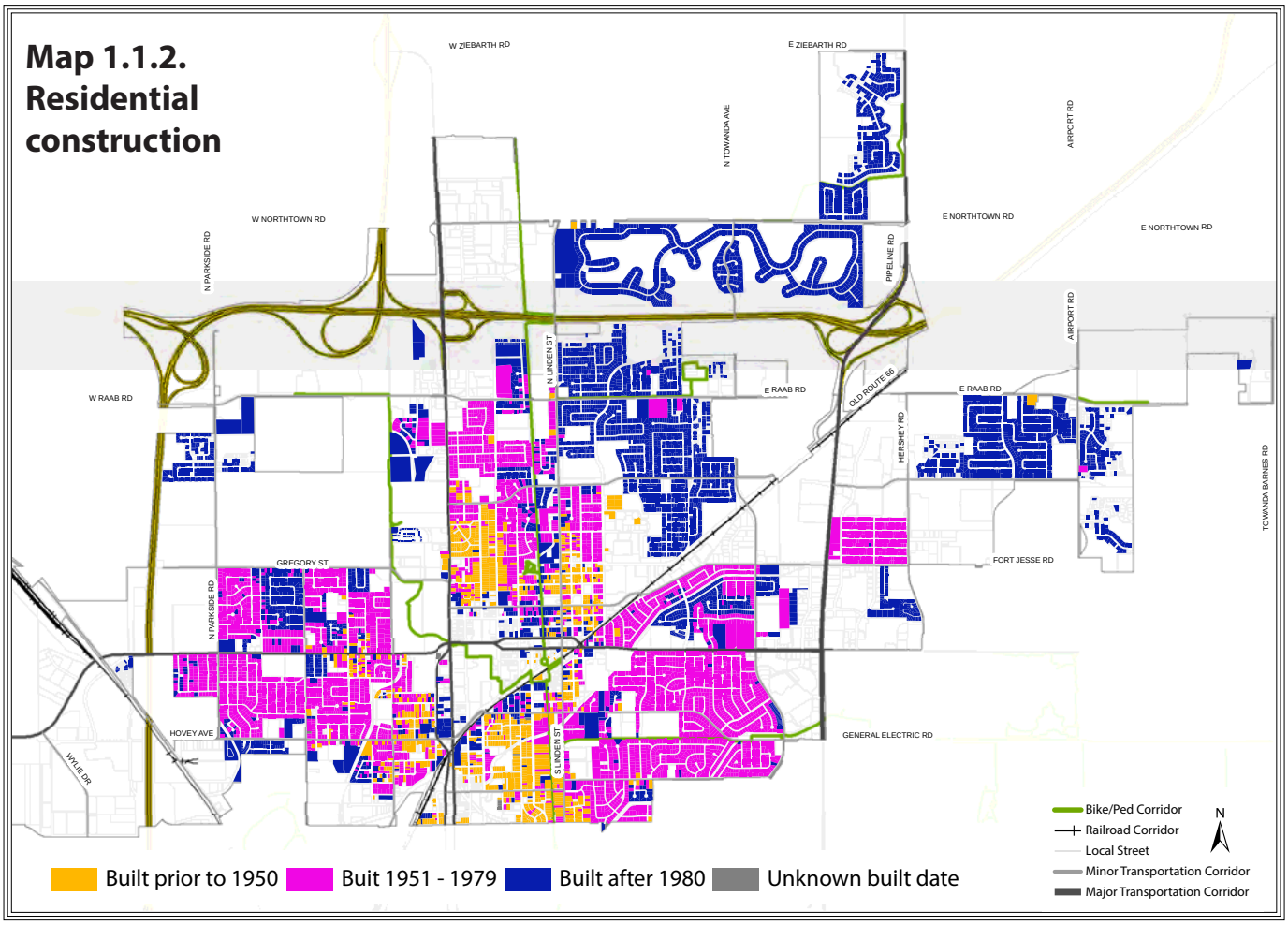

A few of the built components of the Town's founding period remain; several impressive residences survive, as do a handful of university buildings and some late 19th century commercial structures in what is now Uptown.

ACCELERATING MODERNITY (1900-1960)

Innovation paved the way into the 20th century. New technologies found their way to Central Illinois via the same expanding transportation network that brought people and goods from larger cities to live, study, or work. Water and sewer systems expanded to accommodate growth. Electrical power became available and enabled the creation of an interurban light rail network.

An example of how innovation affected planning and development in the Town is the Cedar Crest subdivision. Built between the mid-1910s and 1920s, Cedar Crest abandoned the traditional street grid for curvilinear streets.

Vehicles are another shift of emphasis found in the houses in Cedar Crest, a number of which have dedicated garages. In this era when private automobiles were still very new, the garages of Cedar Crest signaled acceptance that motor vehicles were part of daily life for households as well as governments. The proliferation of cars would reshape the Town's neighborhoods.

Accommodation of the car culture continued through the first half of the 20th century, as neighborhoods moved out from the Town core. Population growth remained slow during this period.

RAPID GROWTH ARRIVES (1960-1990)

The 1960s began an era of transition, from a small town with a small institution at its heart, to a rapidly growing community centered on a university with an expanded educational mission. Between 1960 and 1970, ISNU experienced growth which had more than quadrupled its enrollment. The population exploded, too: from 1960 to 1970, the Town's population nearly doubled, a challenging event for any community. This fast growth and

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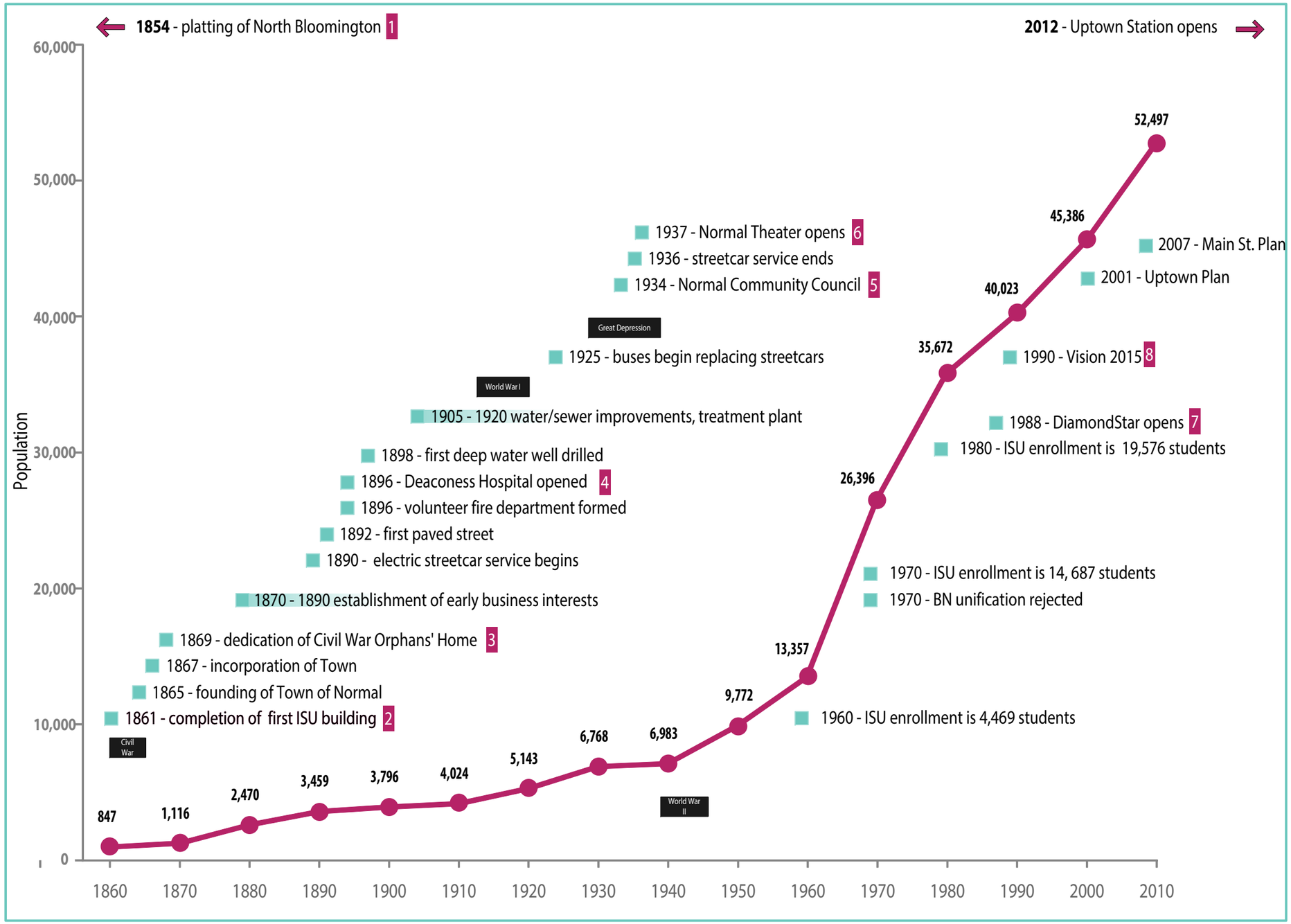
Figure 1.1.1
Town of Normal
Population and Development Milestones
Census 1860 to 2010



Notes

1. This platted area would form the core of the Town of Normal

2. The Normal School began classes in Bloomington until the completion of "Old Main." This ISU campus icon was demolished in 1961.

3. The charter of the Orphans' Home was later expanded to include children orphaned by later wars, and was eventually renamed the Illinois Soldiers' and Sailors" Childrens' School, often referred to as ISSCS

4. Deaconess Hospitalwas renamed Brokaw Hospital, merged with Mennonite Hospital to become BroMenn, and today is the Advocate BroMenn Regional Medical Center.

5. The Community Council undertook projects for the welfare of Normal, including a community garden and a reading room that led to the formation of the public library.

6. The first theater in the area built specifically for sound films, with state-of-the-art sound and air conditioning.

7. A joint venture of Chrysler and Mitsubishi Motors; later became Mitsubishi Motors NA; production ended in November 2015

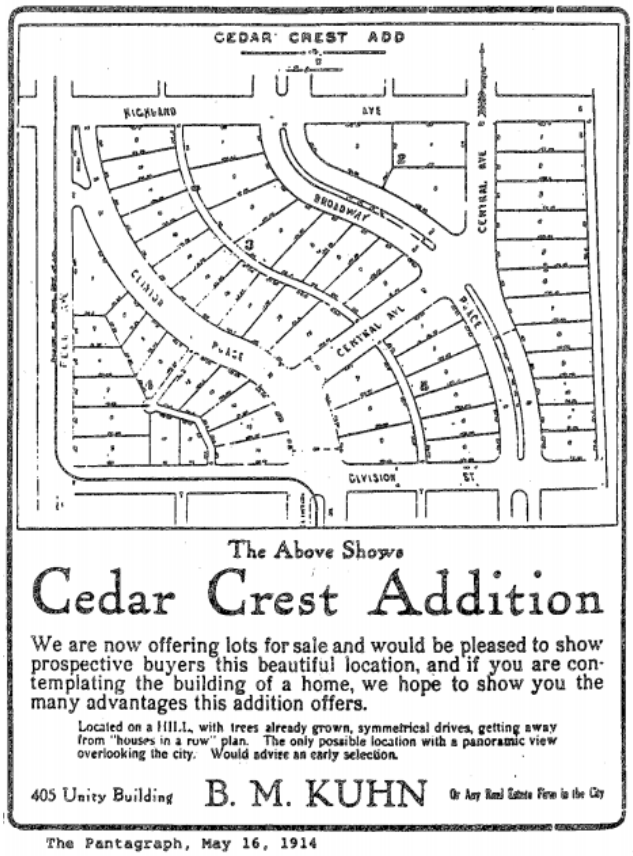
8. The Vision 2015 Report was the first of a series of visioning documents adopted by the Town mans revisited at 5-year intervals.

the arrival of new enterprises combined to challenge the Town's boundaries.

As the population began to boom in the late 1960s and onward, residential development followed models typical of the times. The Town had a period of standard suburban residential development characterized by reduced residential density. Changes in neighborhood form and density are illustrated in Map 1.1.2.

Commercial development shifted away from the compact core structure from which the Town began, although Normal was fortunate to retain distinctive downtown elements, such as the Normal Theater. In suburban-style retail, College Hills Mall has been through two models of concentrated retail development, the 1980 enclosed mall of its first iteration, and the "lifestyle center" model following the 2005 transition to the Shoppes at College Hills.

A significant industrial development event occurred in the late 1980s, when the Diamond Star (later Mitsubishi Motors) automotive plant began production on the west side of Normal, an annexation to the Town that significantly expanded its incorporated area. Brought to McLean County by substantial incentives from the state and the Town, the plant employed auto workers from across the region, and spurred additional business development as companies supporting Mitsubishi also located in Normal.



Advertisement for Cedar Crest Addition c.1914
Photo Credit: Pantagraph

RECENT TRENDS (1990-PRESENT)

The extraordinary growth seen in the second half of the 20th century has declined in intensity. The Town in the last 30 years continued a pattern of steady population growth. As illustrated in Map 1.1.3, this growth has occasioned new annexations (see Chapter 1.3, Land Use and Development for more discussion on this subject).

At the turn of the 21st century the Town encouraged efforts to adopt innovative development approaches, with the same spirit as the Cedar Crest development of the early 20th century. The Town has favored adoption of the "new urbanist" model for residential development, which stresses greater density, enhanced design standards, and a return to traditional neighborhood patterns, housing styles, street networks, and local amenities. This type of neighborhood development echoes the design of older neighborhoods, such as the area surrounding Fell Park or Old North Normal.

The Town has also been proactive in managing new off-campus residential development for university students. Projects in recent years have established new standards for student housing, and some have utilized vacant land or replaced older and deteriorated student housing lacking modern features. As with the more compact subdivision development, these newer student-oriented housing ventures have created localized areas of higher residential density.

Some areas of the community have undergone redevelopment or changes in use more quickly than adjacent areas. One example is the group quarters and multiple-unit housing targeted toward ISU students along Willow Street, which until relatively recently was still primarily single-family housing. As the ISU campus expanded north of the Quad, this street first saw conversion of single-family structures to house students, some in fraternities or sororities. As the pressure for off-campus housing intensified, converted hous-

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es were replaced with purpose-built apartments, some of conventional design, and more recently, with units combining common space with individually rented bedrooms. Some of the "Greek" organizations replaced converted houses with new buildings designed for their specific needs.

While Normal has been largely sheltered from the worst of the Great Recession and its aftermath, recent developments point to future changes in the Town's industrial makeup. Late in 2015, Mitsubishi announced its intent to shutter its U.S.-based manufacturing assets, and the Normal plant ceased production. This circumstance shifted the municipal and regional economic profile through its reduction in manufacturing, and was one of several events which prompted a regional economic analysis and strategy; see Chapter 1.4 (Economic Vitality) for more discussion of this initiative. Figure 1.1.1 illustrates milestones in the Town's development and population growth.

THE TOWN'S VISIONING, PLANNING, AND REDEVELOPMENT HISTORY

Throughout its history, the Town has actively planned for its future, from the early efforts of influential citizens to the current comprehensive planning process. This work has followed different approaches over the years, reflecting the concerns and the practices of the day.

Normal has periodically updated its comprehensive plan, most recently in 2006. The Town has also done extensive planning for specific areas of Normal and for infrastructure and economic development. These plans include the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan, the Parks and Open Space Master Plan, TIF planning, and participation in the Regional Greenways plan, Main Street Corridor Plan and Main Street Transportation Improvement Feasibility Study. Notably, the 2015 Report, a milestone visioning effort, and the Uptown Redevelopment Plan changed the face of the Town.

2015 REPORT: A VISION FOR NORMAL

One landmark in the Town's planning was initiated by Mayor Paul Harmon in 1989, as the Town prepared for its 125th anniversary. With the aid of one of his predecessors, former Mayor Carol Reitan, Mayor Harmon established the Normal 2015 Committee and tasked it to spend a year considering the needs and goals of the Town in the year 2015. Ms. Reitan assembled an executive committee and recruited some 50 citizen volunteers to examine and predict the Town's needs and targets for regionalism, education, communication, growth management and quality of life. Within each of these areas, the sub-committees formulated both broad guiding concepts and specific items for direct implementation. The committee reported its findings and recommendations to the Town Council.

The 2015 Committee recommended that its process of examining and reporting on Normal's future be repeated at five-year intervals, and the Town has made that commitment to advancing a vision for the community that reflects changing times and circumstances. The most recent iteration of this visioning process was carried out in 2010 through the Community-Wide Sustainability Plan Task Force.

Regarding regionalism, the 2015 Report promoted intergovernmental cooperation in consolidating government services, regional planning, code standardization, and cooperation between the Town and ISU. The report included very specific community education proposals concerning environmental issues and a call to leverage the resources of all the educational institutions in Normal and Bloomington. Proposals regarding communications proved highly relevant to the changes in telecommunications technology over the past 25 years. The report considered broad long-term initiatives as well as targeted short-term actions, some so specific that they referred to staff assignments and new school curricula. The facilities at One Normal Plaza answered the need for a community center.

The 2015 Committee thought carefully about the impacts of growth, acknowledging that both positive and negative results are possible. The committee emphasized the importance of developing and expanding a diverse and resilient local economy, insulated as much as possible from changes in national economic conditions.

The 2015 Report also examined the Town's quality of life as the ultimate result expected from implementation of the report's recommendations. Some planning considerations and topics were

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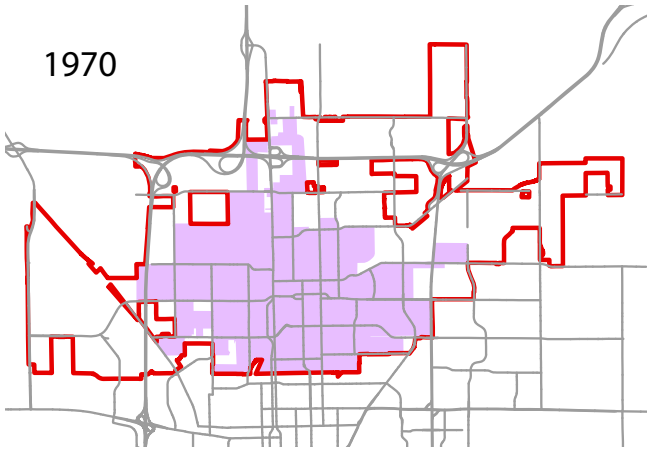
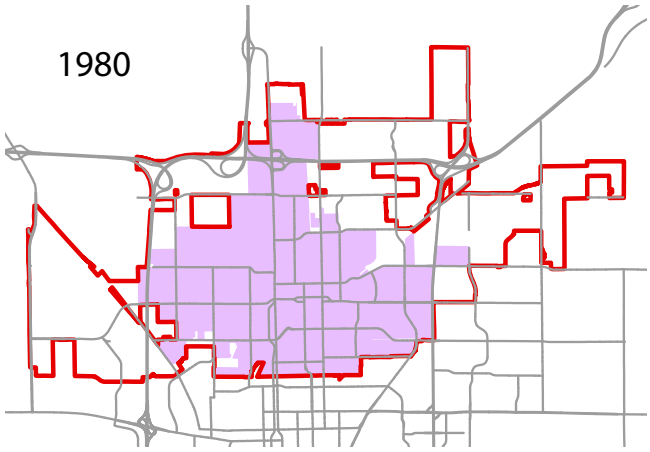
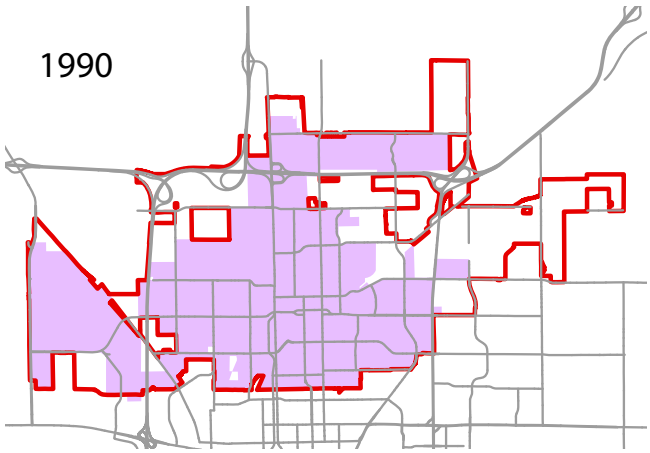
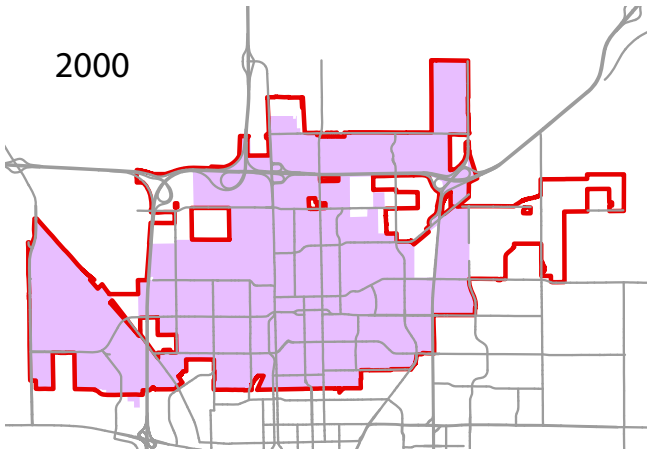
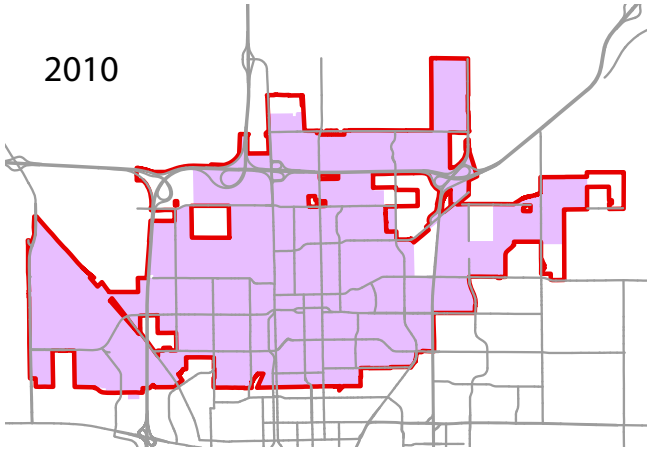
Map 1.1.3. Corporate boundary changes since 1970











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	35,672	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 | Normal Historic Corporate Boundary | Normal Corporate Boundary in 2015

N

Data Source: Census, McGIS, MCRPC

1970-2000 - Population density - Computed using GIS
2010 Population density as reported by Census

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essential to the Town's quality of life, and deserved separate consideration. Again, recommendations ranged from the very broad to the very narrow. The committee focused on environmental issues and made recommendations ranging from water and solid waste management to park expansion and the addition of a horticulturist to the Town staff. The committee also believed that quality of life is determined by the community's social environment, which is addressed through health care, social services and human relations, neighborhood organization, preservation, and the promotion of walking and biking.

Seen now from its target year of 2015, the report is remarkably prescient, and was successful in setting goals that would go on to be implemented. Many of the 2015 Report recommendations have reached fruition wholly or in part. Normal is designated as a Sterling Tree City and as a Bronze Level Bicycle Friendly Community. Uptown Station and the Children's Discovery Museum have achieved LEED® Silver certification from the U.S. Green Building Council, and a portion of Uptown has received Silver level LEED® for Neighborhood Development (LEED®-ND) designation, all pursuant to the adoption of a LEED® ordinance in 2002. The multi- and intermodal transportation functions of Uptown Station have drawn national praise, and remade the mobility choices in the Town's center. The success of the 2015 Report is a testament to the citizens who created it, and the work of the Town in implementing much of what was proposed in 1990.

The current comprehensive plan process will integrate the visioning work of the 2040 Committee, scheduled to begin in the spring of 2016. This existing conditions report will provide data for the committee's use, and in turn the 2040 Report will guide the vision expressed in the comprehensive plan.

UPTOWN PLANNING AND REDEVELOPMENT

The Town's most consequential planning effort continues to be the redevelopment of Uptown Normal. While the Town could have opted for a downtown facelift approach, Normal instead opted for a full-scale reinvention of its historic center. The complex process of planning and executing the redevelopment began more than fifteen years ago when the Downtown Renewal Plan was adopted in 2000.

Although the pace of implementation has recently been slower than first hoped, in part due to the global recession of the mid-2000s, an extraordinary amount of investment, building and business creation has taken place. In addition to the immediately visible changes, including the addition of the Carol Reitan Conference Center, a multi-modal transportation center, and two hotels to the Town center, the effort has produced important infrastructure improvements that will serve the Town for many decades. The new Uptown Circle is a good example; while its aesthetic value is visible to everyone, the sustainability features and other infrastructure modifications below the Circle are just as important.

The Town has now focused attention on the next stage of the Uptown redevelopment with the 2015 Uptown Normal Master Plan Update, expanding the area of attention to the south of the Union Pacific/Amtrak rail line and considering new types of projects, new partnerships, and an even greater commitment to community sustainability. Informally known as "Uptown 2.0," the plan calls for a substantial increase in housing development in the Uptown South area. This expansion of the vision for Uptown is incorporated in the 2015 Uptown Normal Master Plan Update.

THE REGIONAL CONTEXT

Currently, the Town engages in ongoing coordination with the City of Bloomington and McLean County on a variety of municipal issues, often involving one or more regional agencies. These working relationships between municipal, county and regional actors cover policy and operational areas in which the individual entities do not have the resources to act or the authority to make policy decisions unilaterally. This approach has worked well in a number of areas, notably in economic development in concert with the Economic Development Council, environmental management and research with the Ecology Action Center, regional sewer and storm water management with the Bloomington Normal Water Reclamation District, public transportation with Connect Transit, and planning with the Regional Planning Commission.

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These specific areas of cooperation can point the way to integrating the regional framework into other areas of local government policy and practice.

As identified earlier, Illinois State University has had a significant influence on the formation and the growth of the Town. Given the current fiscal challenges faced by the university, a greater level of coordination between the Town and the university are critical for a sustainable future of both entities. In recent years Normal has dedicated substantial resources and attention to the redevelopment of Uptown and the Main Street corridor, both of which bring great benefits to the university and the broader community. Normal has also accommodated shifts in ISU policy regarding student housing. Mutual commitment to the evolution of the Town-Gown relationship is to the advantage of both ISU, the Town and the broader region. The development of this comprehensive plan presents yet another opportunity to work closely with ISU and jointly pursue solutions for both the Town and the university.

AN EXPANDING ROLE FOR REGIONAL MANAGEMENT

Regionalism was an overarching theme of the 2015 Report and many of the plans mentioned above. The 2015 Report begins with an assertive discussion of this principle, calling for regional planning, policy development, code standardization and consolidation of government services with other local governments, all identified as strategies to pursue in addition to the formation of a regional council of governments comprised of the local jurisdictions. Beyond these specific regional recommendations, the 2015 Report abounds in regionalism applied to the themes of the report, particularly with respect to growth management, communication and quality of life. As noted above, there are existing regional cooperation arrangements between local governments and regional agencies in many areas. However, other attempts at increased regional coordination have stalled, such as merging select city services to achieve efficiencies. There are still opportunities for improvement. In the current era of fiscal uncertainty at both the local and state levels, heightened regional coordination is necessary to maintain the current quality of place and achieve positive growth in the future.

MOVING FORWARD

The Town's recent actions and plans all point to a commitment to smart, compact, and sustainable growth. Its ongoing investment in its Uptown core and its focus on Main Street underscore a policy-level commitment to infill and redevelopment. The eco-friendly infrastructure embedded in Uptown Circle and the proposed environmental features in the Uptown 2.0 plan (backed by the Community-Wide Sustainability Plan) reflect an awareness of environmental realities and a will to reduce the community's ecological footprint. The new multi-modal transportation center in Uptown and the recent bike and pedestrian infrastructure improvements highlight the



Uptown (then Downtown Normal) prior to the redevelopment. This photo is showing Beaufort Street looking west.



Uptown Normal today. This photo is showing Constitution Blvd looking south.

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importance placed by the Town on multi-modal travel. These priorities are consistent with what many in the broader community want (see section 3, Community Outreach, for more information).

Still, market forces, past annexation agreements, fiscal constraints and trying economic times, and an otherwise auto-oriented community culture all stand in the way of achieving growth in line with these priorities. The upcoming visioning and the comprehensive planning efforts should consider these challenges and priorities carefully while laying the path for the next 20 years.

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FINDINGS AND KEY QUESTIONS

Findings

- With a median age of 24 years, a median family income of $86,851 (well above the state and national averages), and nearly half of its residents holding a bachelor's degree or higher, Normal's demographic profile can be described as young, well-educated, and affluent. This is one of the greatest economic strengths of the Town and the BN metro area.

- Normal has nearly equivalent shares of family and non-family households with 53% percent of the former and 47% of the latter. This unusually high proportion of non-family households can be attributed to the student enrollment at ISU. The student population presents many unique opportunities and challenges to the community.

- With more than 85% of the Town's population identifying as white, Normal's demographic composition is less ethnically and racially diverse than Illinois' or the nation's. The share of residents identifying as Hispanic is approximately 4.1%, far below the state and national share. Within the Hispanic population, over 60% identify as white.

- Despite recent local economic challenges, such as the closure of Mitsubishi Motors and changes to local employment at State Farm, Normal's population is projected to grow while university enrollment remains stable. This projection is in keeping with the Town's strong history of population growth, itself a reflection of the metro area's economic strengths such as its strategic location, market access, educated workforce, and presence of major corporations.

- While not at the same scale as national trends, Normal's family size is shrinking and its non-student population is slowly aging. These trends are hidden by the disproportionately large population of college-aged residents. As the community grows but ISU enrollment remains stable, these trends will become more pronounced.

- Because of their demographic dominance, Millennials are having a transformative effect on the structure of their communities. As young adults, they have shown preferences for mixed-use neighborhoods, multimodal accessibility, and other urban amenities. Aging Baby Boomers are drawn to the cultural and educational amenities of college communities.

Key Questions

- How do we accommodate the changing housing, land use, transportation, and employment preferences of Millennials, Boomers, and other demographic groups?

- How can we do a better job at retaining our college graduates, most of whom currently leave the community?

- Do our community's demographic characteristics create barriers for certain groups (such as lower-income residents or racial and ethnic minorities)? If so, can the Town reduce these barriers through its policies and practices or is this a structural issue arising from the twin city dynamic?

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An understanding of current conditions in Normal first requires analysis of the Town's most critical component, its residents. This chapter reviews Normal's demographic composition and examines the Town's history to determine its relevance to calculating a sustainable future path. Analysis of the current demographic profile considers the Town's levels of economic, ethnic, racial, income, and other types of diversity in the Town population. The profile is also compared to population and growth trends in the region, state, nation, and globally, as the Town must now assess its future in a global context. The data and discussion in this chapter are the foundation from which updating the Town's vision may be considered and the goals promulgated by the comprehensive plan addressed.

Unless otherwise noted, data are drawn from the 2010 Decennial Census[2.1-2.3].

POPULATION

Normal has grown a great deal in its 150 years, especially in the past 50 years. The decade between 1960 and 1970 saw the population nearly double, and by 2010 the Town had nearly doubled its 1970 population (see Figure 1.2.2). Some of this growth is explained by significant increases in enrollment at Illinois State University during this era – the University grew from 4,469 enrolled students in the fall of 1960 to 17,549 in the fall of 1970. Enrollment continued to grow and eventually reached equilibrium at roughly 21,000 students enrolled annually. This growth in the student population spurred an influx of ISU faculty and other university staff. Businesses targeting the student population, including retail, entertainment, and the development of off-campus housing, also created population growth and redevelopment.

More recently, the corporate realignment taking place at State Farm has occasioned changes in the Bloomington-Normal employment and housing markets. While Normal is not as directly affected as Bloomington, the company's size and influence in the area's economic life mean that there are impacts throughout the community. Although subject to the consequences of realignment at the largest local employer, the Town's stability is supported by the presence of ISU and the Advocate BroMenn Regional Medical Center, both of which are less vulnerable to private market pressures and employment outsourcing.

The Town's population growth through its history should be considered not only in terms of absolute numbers of people but also with respect to the rate of change. During the century of slower growth, rates of population change were variable but not a burden to the community, as the actual numbers remained low. After the population explosion that followed ISU's expansion and community impacts resulting from the opening of the Diamond Star/Mitsubishi automotive plant, the rate of population change became a measure of the demands that might be placed on the Town's resources. However, the rate of growth over the past 25 years is more moderate than in the 1970s and 1980s.

Although the economic crisis of the mid-2000s had substantial effects locally and in the region, with particular impacts on the housing

2.1 U.S. Census data: Much of the demographics and population discussion in this chapter relies on U.S. Census Bureau data. Census data are compiled through a number of programs focused on specific demographic and socioeconomic issues, but the analysis herein relies on two primary sources.

2.2 The Decennial Census: As required by the Constitution and administered under Title 13 of the United States Code, every ten years the Census Bureau conducts the Census on which Congressional representation is based. The content of the Census survey is determined by Congress and has varied over the years. In 2010 the survey was limited to a 10-question format, but as in every Census it was intended to reach every person residing in the United States on April 1, 2010, a 100% tally of the country.

2.3 The American Community Survey (ACS): In place of the "long form" survey formerly used in the Decennial Census, demographic data such as economic status, education, employment and many other characteristics of the nation's population are collected through the American Community Survey. This program, while described by the Census Bureau as part of the Decennial Census, does not attempt to reach all residents. The ACS is a continuing survey of a changing sample of residents, with results reported in 1, 3 and 5 year aggregations. Due to the comparatively small sample sizes and the locations surveyed, the ACS is inherently less reliable than the Decennial Census itself. The Census Bureau acknowledges this limitation by publishing margin of error estimates for the results published.

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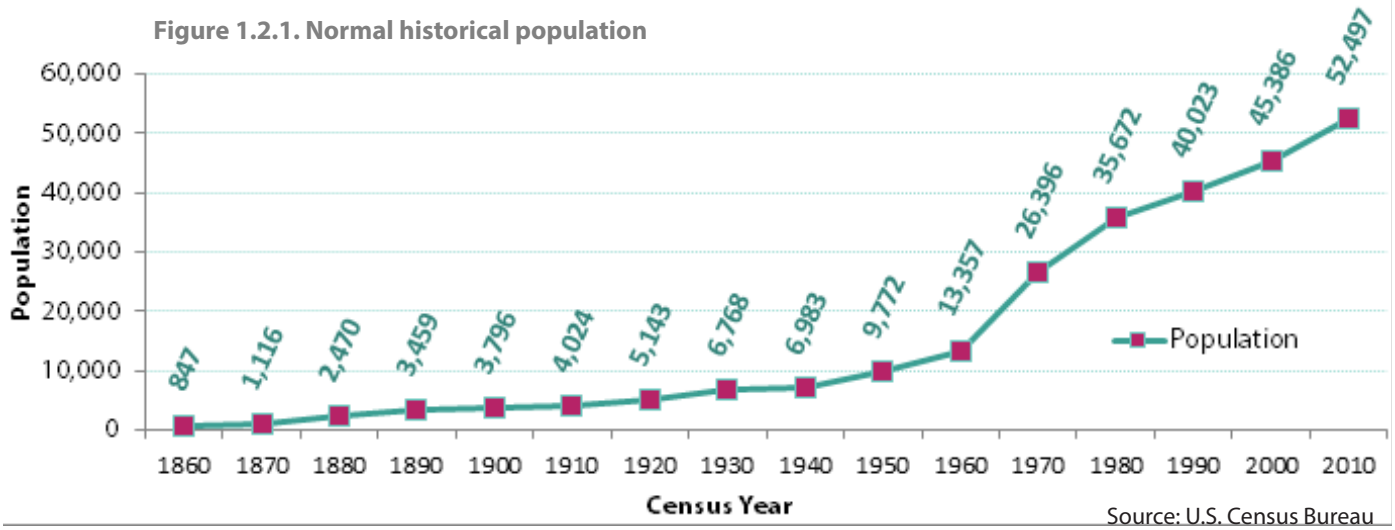
Figure 1.2.1. Normal historical population



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

and construction market, as of the 2010 Census Normal did not show the slowing of population growth found elsewhere in McLean County and Central Illinois, including the City of Bloomington.

DISTRIBUTION BY AGE

As in other college towns, Normal has a proportionately high population of young adults, those in the dominant years for higher education.

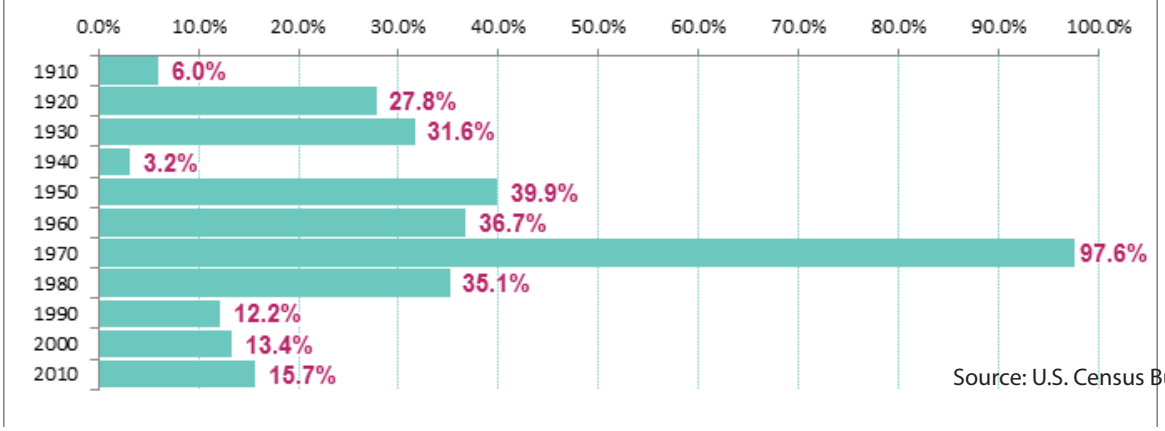
The population pyramid in Figure 1.2.4 demonstrates the expression of other general trends. These include:

1. A slight increase in the proportion of residents at or above retirement age, more pronounced among people older than 75 than among the newly retired.
2. The percentage of the population aged 35 to 44 contracted, reflecting the transition from a large generational cohort in the Baby Boomers to the smaller overall population group of the now middle-aged Generation X, which now takes a larger local population share as the Boomers age, move away, or die.

Two large-scale demographic trends are reflected in these results. The first, a global phenomenon, is an increase in the proportion of the population that is at or over the age of 65. Although in Normal this trend is not a dominant influence, it is evident in the slight increase in older residents.

The Town is well ahead of the demographic curve on the second trend, the anticipated Millennial population explosion. This largest-ever American population cohort has established itself already in Normal, accounting for slightly more than 50% of the 2010 population (see Figure 1.2.5). A significant segment of the Millennial population that attends local institutions of higher learning originates from within the community or from nearby in central Illinois. ISU estimates that roughly 18% of its enrollment is local, residing in

Figure 1.2.2. Normal historical population change, percentage by decade



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

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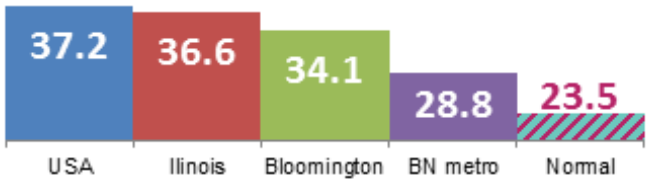
McLean County or surrounding areas in central Illinois. Heartland Community College draws the vast majority of its students from local and regional residents.

As discussed with regard to projecting population later in this chapter, only a portion of this Millennial population is likely to settle permanently in Normal (or Bloomington-Normal); those who located in Normal specifically to pursue an education, and those local students who have completed their education, may well seek employment elsewhere. For those who remain, their preferences in meeting their needs are likely to shift over time as did those of earlier generations. However, in the context of expected social, environmental and economic changes of genuinely global proportions, the patterns of past generations will confront substantially altered expectations and realities. If it is the Town's goal to retain a greater share of these educated young people as long-term residents in the Normal of the 21st century, policies and practices that are mindful of their generational characteristics will help reach that goal.

Figure 1.2.3. Median age in years



Normal is a very young community, with a median age well below that of the Bloomington-Normal metro area, the state, and the nation.

As reported by the Urban Land Institute, and like any group making their way through the stages of life, Millennials find their preferences shifting along with their circumstances. Many emerged into the job market in the teeth of the recession, and accordingly found that their resources dictated extended residence with family or in more affordable urban neighborhoods rather than in expensive downtown districts. Half rent rather than purchase homes, perhaps an artifact of the recession as well as their still-young profile. True to their reputation, they favor safe neighborhoods where car use is occasional rather than constant, with usable options for walking, biking,

Figure 1.2.4. Population distribution in Normal by age and gender, 2000 and 2010 Census



The "population pyramid" for population distribution in the Town captures the 2000 and 2010 Census enumerations. The pyramid also illustrates the slightly higher proportion of female versus male residents, which reflects trends in higher education throughout the United States.

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and transit access to work, education and entertainment. They tend to marry later than earlier generations. Most intend to pursue home ownership and anticipate better economic conditions to come. They focus on affordability and flexibility in housing and transportation.

While the Millennials have staked out a majority demographic position in Normal, the Town is still influenced by the last record-setting generation, the Baby Boomers. (Nationally, these groups hold nearly equal percentage shares of the population, with the Millennials edging ahead.) In Normal, although represented in nearly equal proportion to the later Generations X and Z, the Boomers have impacts beyond their numbers. For most of their lives this group has dominated the American discussion on major issues, including education, economics, culture, civil rights, equality, and aging. Many shifts in national opinion have been pushed forward by this group.

The leading wave of the Boomers is well into retirement, and the trailing edge is now into its fifties. To respond to the disparate needs of the oldest and youngest Boomers, the Town must consider accessibility in public and private settings, opportunities for a more active senior lifestyle, availability of health care for this aging population, and housing choices that appeal to downsized families. *Fundamental to these needs is the underlying policy question—does the Town wish to retain and attract these residents? If so, how can the vision for Normal and the framework of the comprehensive plan inform and support that policy?*

Across the country, many communities seek to attract this cohort of active adults likely to bring both work experience and comparative affluence with them. A particular affinity has developed between Boomers and college towns, with Boomers being drawn to the cultural and educational resources in college communities.

Despite the popular image of active and affluent retirees decamping to Florida, Texas, and the Southwest, many Boomers are choosing to stay in their homes and home communities, sometimes finding smaller housing options but otherwise choosing to "age in place." The Nielsen Company finds that few Boomers expect to relocate into assisted living but may reconsider over time.

As noted previously, a particular affinity has developed between those Boomers seeking a more active retirement and communities with colleges or universities. For many Normal Boomers, the preferences for aging in place and enjoying the collegiate atmosphere will be met in the Town, forestalling relocation to warmer or more urban settings.

HOUSEHOLD SIZE

Compared to the rest of the region, state, and nation, the Town's distribution of family households versus non-family households[2.4] is

Figure 1.2.5. Normal population share by generational group

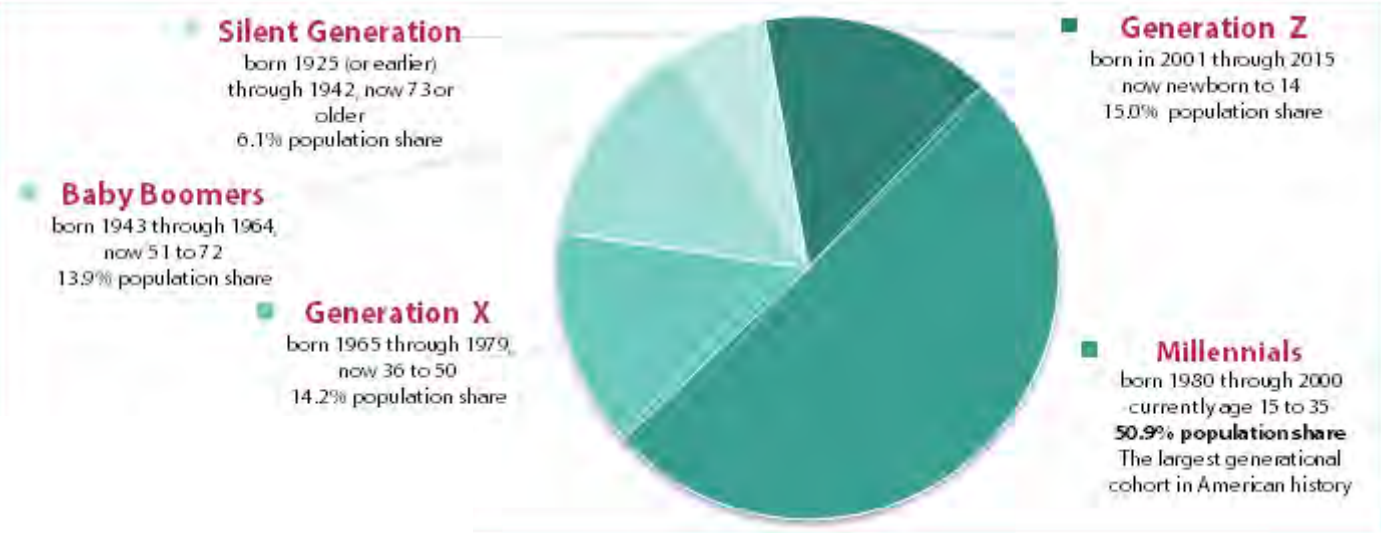

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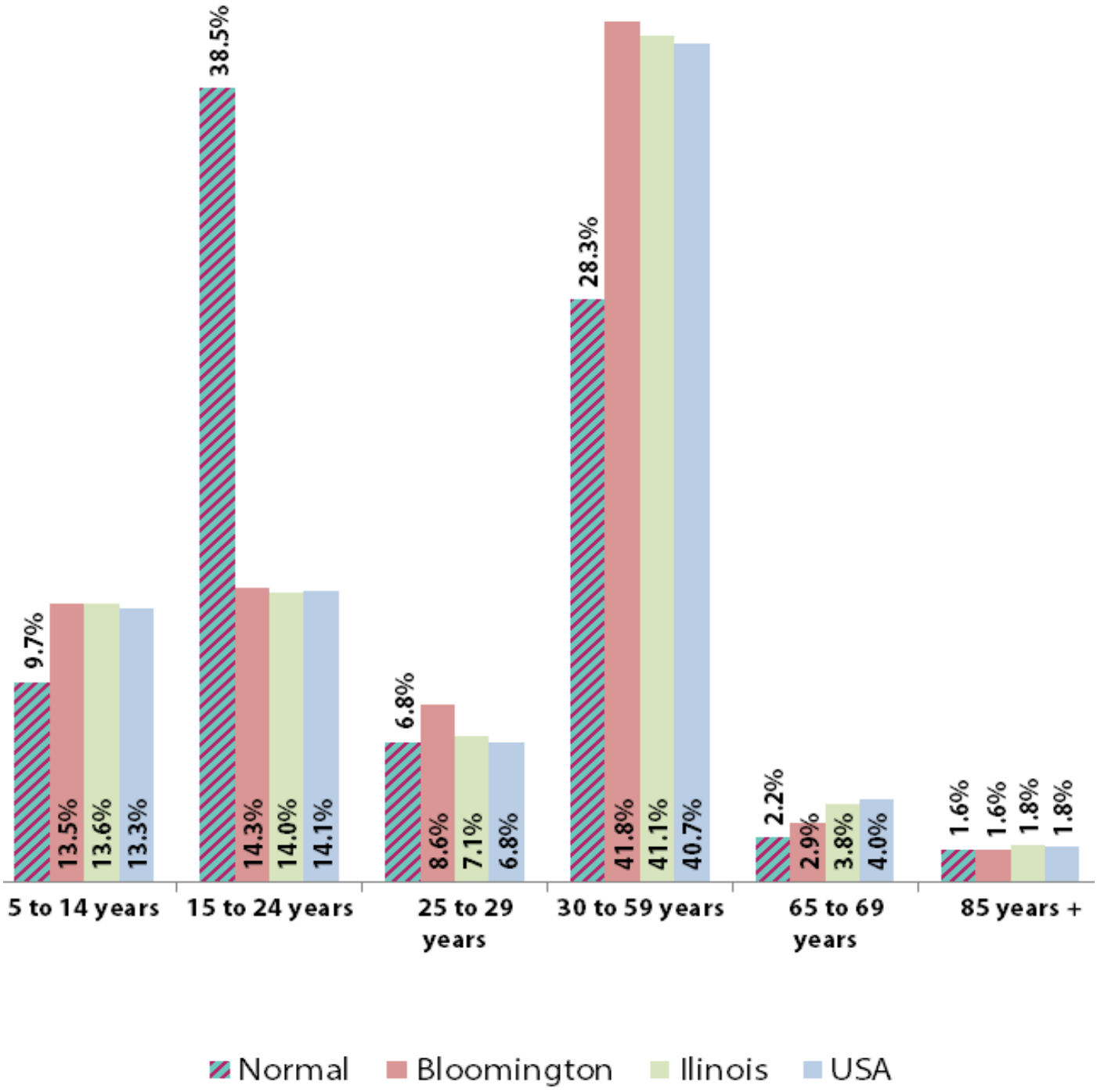
Figure 1.2.6. Comparative representation of significant population groups by age



5 to 14 (school-age children): Residents in the likely parental cohorts represent a higher percentage of the Town population than their likely children. Two known demographic trends may explain this finding. (1) There is a continuing trend towards delaying children as future parents and particularly mothers establish themselves in the workplace. (2) In highly developed countries such as the United States, there is also an established trend towards smaller families.

15 to 24 (young adults): The many higher educational institutions in Normal explain the large population share of young adults, especially those between the ages of 18 and 24. While a portion of these residents originate from McLean County and surrounding parts of Central Illinois, a substantial number migrate from outside the area to attend college and are likely to leave upon graduation.

30-59 (core employment years): The Town also has a notable underrepresentation of adult residents in their prime income-earning years, from ages 30 to 59. The lower percentage of persons in this age group also may explain the lower share of the population occupied by school age children. In addition, residents in this group comprise the core of the tax base as likely homeowners and consumers of goods and services.

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Map 1.2.1. Concentrations of selected age groups



Concentration of Families with Children Under 17



Concentration of Young Adults (18 to 24)

Source: Census 2010, Analysis Scale: Block, Table: SF1-P12
Census data was corrected for Block 4019 to reflect local knowledge.

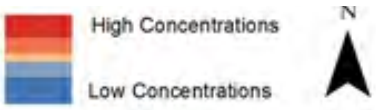


Concentration of Seniors (65 and Older)



Concentration of Senior Exemptions

Source: Normal Township Assessor; August 2015 snapshot ; Analysis Scale: Parcel Level



Families with children under 17 are found across much of the community but particularly in newer suburban neighborhoods. Such families and young adult residents practice mutual avoidance in neighborhood choice. In contrast, young adults and senior residents share neighborhoods in some instances but live separately in others. Seniors are somewhat concentrated in older neighborhoods, including areas surrounding the ISU campus. Other concentrations are shown through the illustration of senior exemptions, particularly highlighting neighborhoods in southeast Normal.

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skewed toward non-family households (see Figure 1.2.7). This is easily accounted for by the households formed by the thousands of students living in off-campus housing in the Town and elsewhere. Analysis of household data in this chapter concentrates on family households as the more accurate reflection of household characteristics in Normal.

As a percentage of all households, the prevalence of families with children under 18 is 3.5% to 4% smaller than the prevalence of such families regionally, statewide, and nationally. Average family size is only slightly smaller than the norm, but there are fewer households composed of families with children. The interrelated phenomena of older first-time parents and smaller family sizes

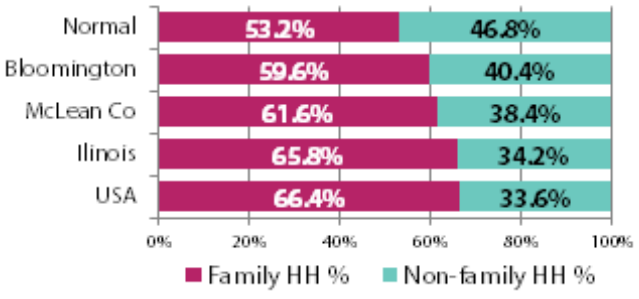
2.4 Definition of Households and Families

Census data from the American Community Survey is reported for people in various kinds of living arrangements, including non-family households and family households. As defined by the Census Bureau, these consist of the following:

A household includes all the persons who occupy a housing unit as their usual place of residence. A housing unit is a house, an apartment, a mobile home, a group of rooms, or a single room that is occupied (or if vacant, is intended for occupancy) as separate living quarters. Separate living quarters are those in which the occupants live and eat separately from any other persons in the building and which have direct access from outside the building or through a common hall. The occupants may be a single family, one person living alone, two or more families living together, or any other group of related or unrelated persons who share living arrangements.

A family consists of a householder and one or more people living in the same household who are related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption. All people in a household who are related to the householder are regarded as members of his or her family. A family household may contain people not related to the householder, but those people are not included as part of the householder's family tabulations. Thus, the number of family households is equal to the number of families, but family households may include more members than do families. A household can contain only one family for purposes of tabulations. Not all households contain families since a household may be comprised of a group of unrelated people or of one person living alone.

Figure 1.2.7. Family and non-family households



Source: American Community Survey, 2007-2013

Table 1.2.1 Town of Normal Households

Total population	**52,497**	
Households vs. Group Quarters	**Count**	**% of people**
Population in households (HH)	44,165	84.1%
In group quarters	8,332	15.9%
Household Types		
Total households	17,993	**% of HH**
Family households (families)	9,576	53.2%
Nonfamily households	8,417	46.8%
Two-spouse family	7,227	40.2%
With children under 18	3,312	18.4%
Male householder, no spouse	605	3.4%
With children under 18	303	1.7%
Female householder, no spouse	1,744	9.7%
With children under 18	1,125	6.3%
Other relatives	1,272	7.1%
Under 18 years	443	2.5%
65 years and over	168	0.9%
Nonrelatives	6,912	38.4%
Under 18 years	137	0.8%
65 years and over	68	0.4%
HHs with persons under 18	5,018	27.9%
HHs with persons 65 years & over	2,835	15.8%
Householder living alone	4,866	27.0%
Male	2,095	11.6%
65 years and over	273	1.5%
Female	2,771	15.4%
65 years and over	904	5.0%
Group Quarters		
Institutionalized population	391	0.74%
Male	107	0.20%
Female	284	0.54%

Source: 2010 Census

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support the continuation of a smaller cohort of children over the coming years. Both these phenomena and the current proportionately smaller cohort of adults aged 30 and 59 (see Figure 1.2.6) have implications for the Town's future growth that the comprehensive plan must address.

EDUCATION

Due to the array of educational institutions available to Normal residents and employers with high educational attainment requirements for their workforces, the Town's population is educated well beyond state and national norms, even slightly exceeding attainment levels elsewhere in McLean County. This is impressive, as the county and Bloomington also boast nearly universal completion of high school and completion of post-secondary degrees well above state and national levels. Nearly half of Normal residents have a bachelor's or advanced degree (see Figure 1.2.8).

DIVERSITY

Often discussions of community diversity focus specifically on racial and ethnic identity. This approach is reinforced by the parameters established for the collection of population data. The Town, particularly in the recent Uptown development efforts, recognizes the presence of residents of different age groups, races and ethnicities; ranges of ability to function in the community; LGBT and other orientations; and other measures of a diverse population.

Although diversity is often assumed due to the presence of many higher education institutions and organizations, Normal residents are predominantly white (see Figure 1.2.9). The Town's overall demographic composition is less ethnically and racially diverse than Illinois' or the nation's.

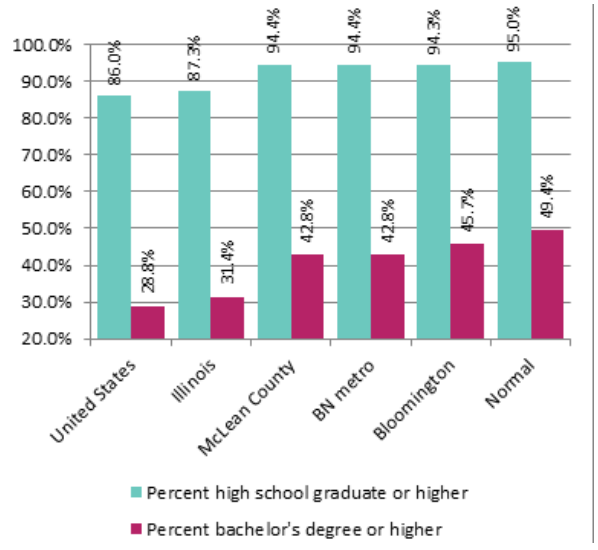
Similarly, Normal's share of residents identifying as Hispanic is approximately 4.1%, far below the state and national share of 16.3% of Hispanic persons in the 2010 Census (see Figure 1.2.10). Within the Town's Hispanic population, over 60% of Census respondents identify as white.

Normal's sense of diversity is enhanced by its more than 2,800 foreign-born residents (about 5% of the population), gathered here from across the world (see Table 1.2.2).

INCOME

Normal is generally an affluent community. Median household income, at $53,270, is in

Figure 1.2.8. Comparison of educational attainment



Source: American Community Survey, 2007-2013

Figure 1.2.9. Racial identification in Normal

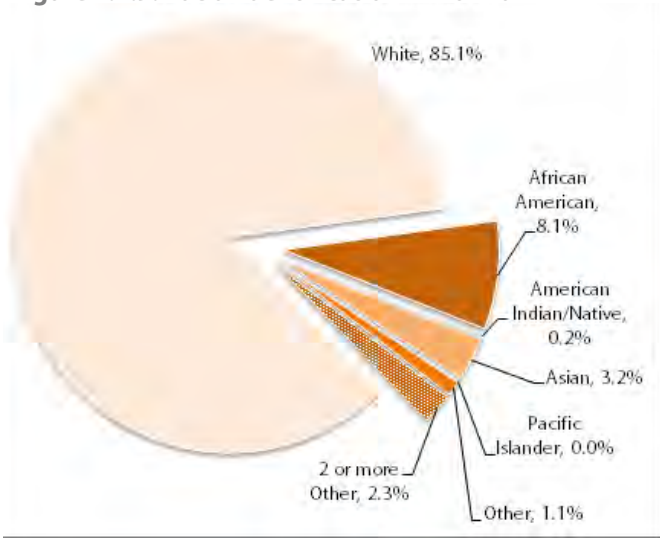


Table 1.2.2. Foreign-born residents by area of origin

Europe	369
Asia	1,614
Africa	61
Oceania	47
Americas	730
Total:	2,821

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009-2013 5-Year American Community Survey

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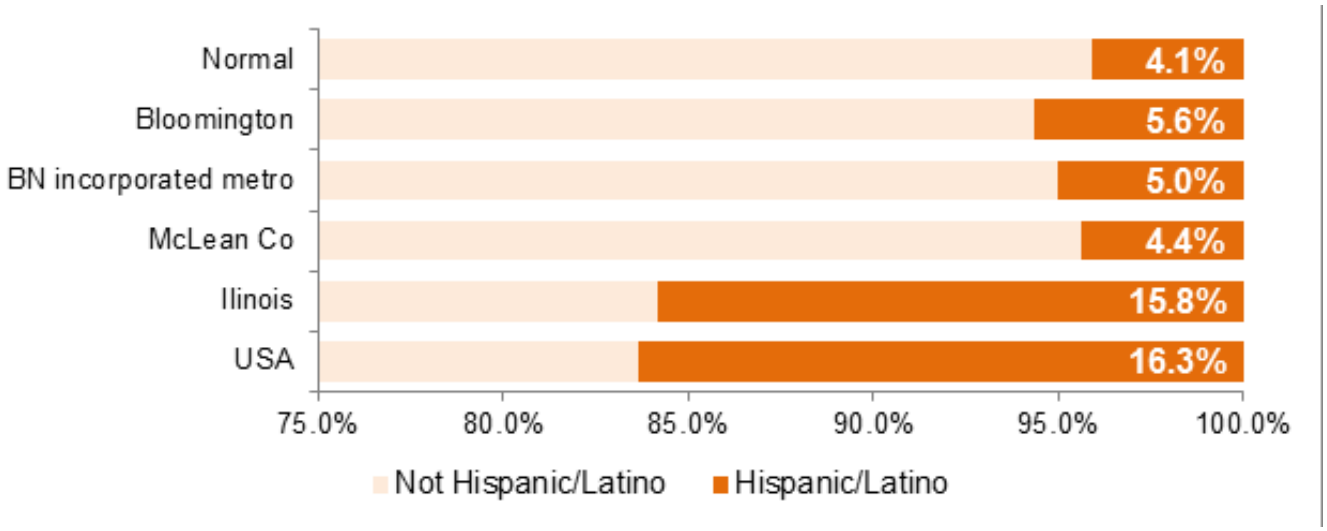
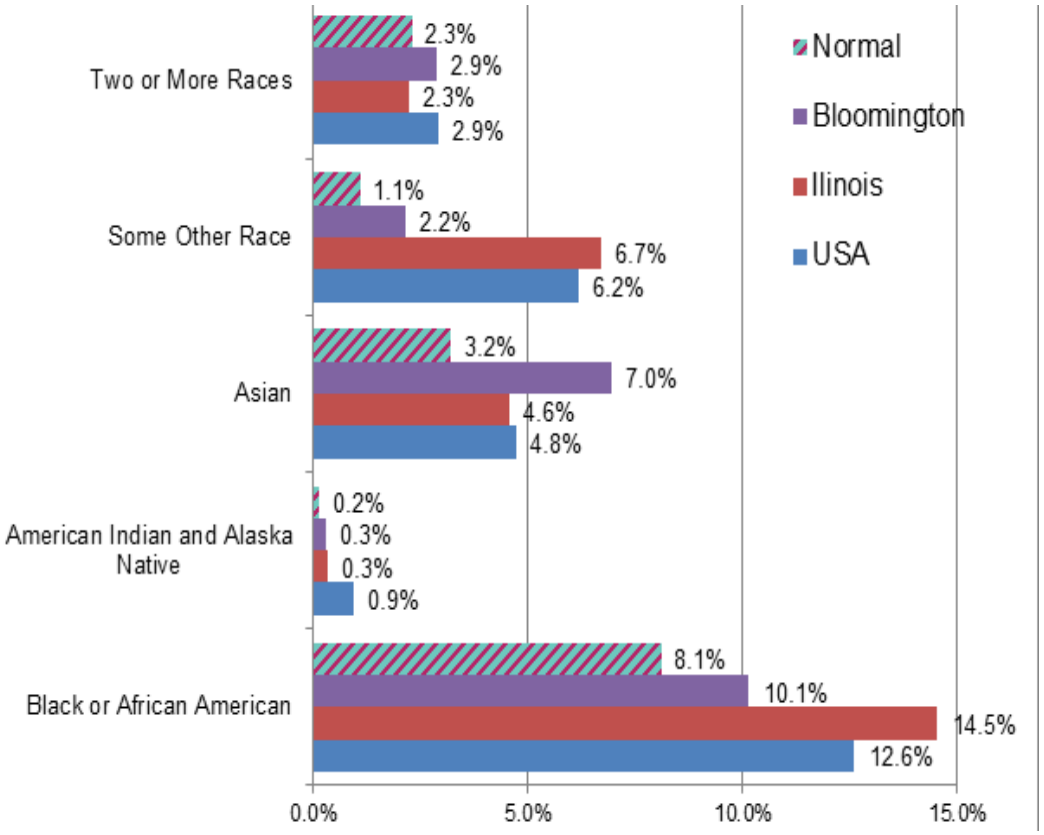
Figure 1.2.10. Comparison of Hispanic/Latino populations



The graph above illustrates the low levels of Hispanic residents in the Twin Cities and McLean County as compared to state and national percentages. The Census Bureau records Hispanic/Latino ethnicity separately from racial identification, meaning that Census respondents may identify as Hispanic and also identify with one or more racial categories. While this approach complicates the analysis of diversity, it recognizes the wide range of origins and traditions in the Hispanic diaspora throughout the Western Hemisphere.

Figure 1.2.11. Comparison of racial identification



85% of the Town population is classified as white, compared to 72.4% of the national population and 71.5% of the state population. In 2010, African Americans comprised 12.6% of the national population, 14.5% of the state population, and only 8.1% of the Town population. Persons identifying as Asian are also less represented in Normal than in Illinois and the nation.

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Map 1.2.2. Concentrations of selected racial and ethnic groups



Concentration of African American Households



Concentration of Asian Households



Concentration of Hispanic Households



Concentration of Households with Two or More Races

Race Concentrations

High Concentrations

Low Concentrations

N

African American, Asian, and Hispanic households are not evenly distributed across the Town's residential neighborhoods. Integration in residential areas requires additional investigation; for example, an analysis comparing school populations to determine if a lack of neighborhood integration creates issues for the school district.

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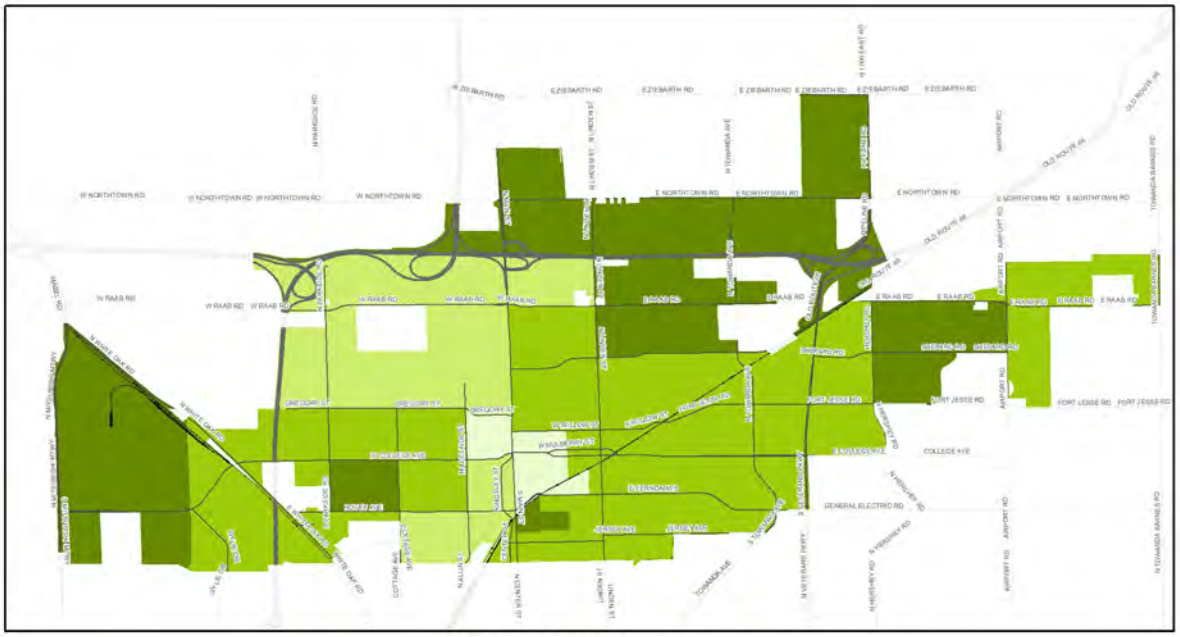
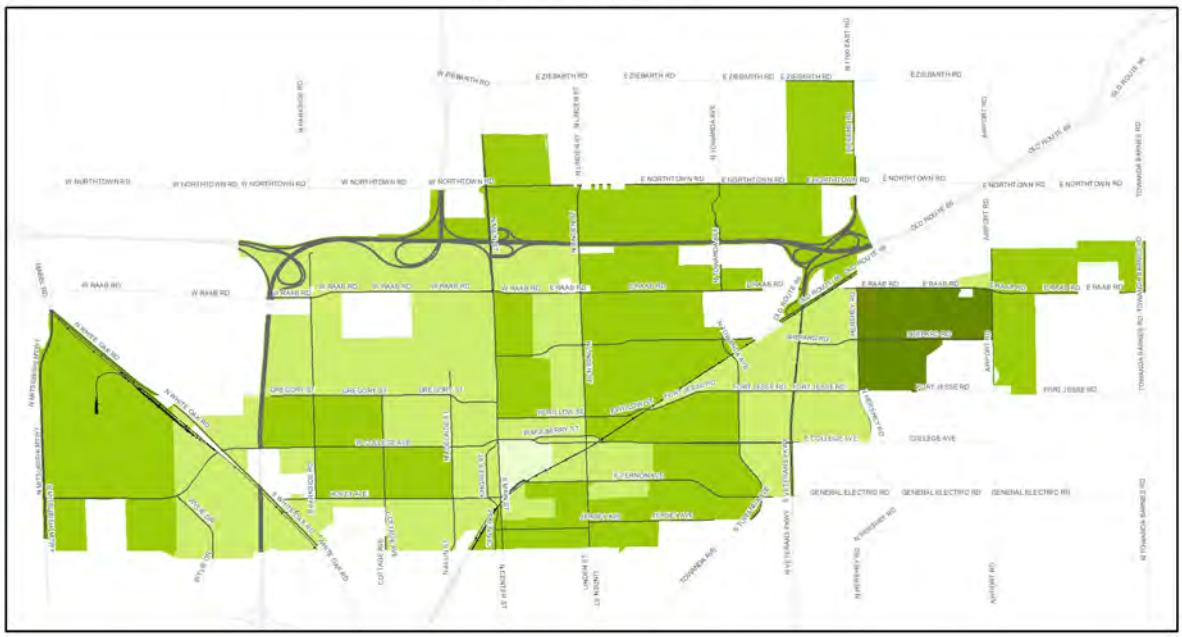
Map 1.2.3. Median family and household income



Source: ACS 2013; Analysis Scale: Block Group; Table: B19113

Median Family Income



Source: ACS 2013; Analysis Scale: Block Group; Table: B19013

Median Household Income

Town of Normal
Median Income

$14,000 - $49,999
$50,000 - $99,999
$100,000 - $163,875.00

N

These maps illustrate the geographic distribution of family and non-family household incomes in Normal, specifically the greater prevalence of higher-income family households. Most families with incomes exceeding $100,000 per year reside in newer suburban areas of Normal, particularly Ironwood, the subdivisions along Raab Road east of Main Street, and the subdivisions south of Raab east of Hershey Road. Concentrations of lower-income households occur near the ISU campus, northwest Normal between Raab and Gregory Street, and along Veterans Parkway. Compare with age group concentrations illustrated in Map 1.2.1.

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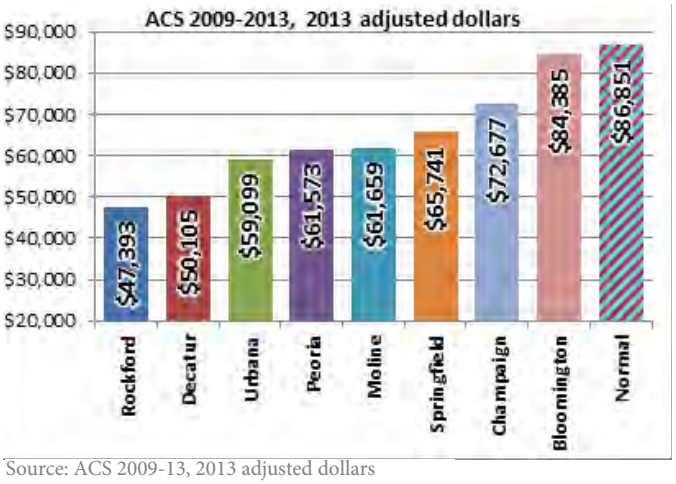
close alignment with the national median and slightly lower than the Illinois median. By contrast, at $86,851, median family income in Normal is notably higher than the national ($64,719) and state ($70,344) values. The difference is attributable to the much lower median incomes of the many non-family households in Normal, including off-campus student households. The income distribution chart in Figure 1.2.12 illustrates the disparate income expectations for family households versus non-family households in Normal. It also shows that a significant proportion of Normal families have good economic resources.

Because the non-family households in Normal include many formed by the student population, the data for the economic status of households generally does not provide a balanced picture of the Town's socioeconomic conditions. For this analysis the data relating to family households provide a more accurate view of the Town's affluence. Although Normal has unusually equivalent shares of family and non-family households, with 53% percent of the former and 47% of the latter, greater income is concentrated in families. In particular, Normal retains a population

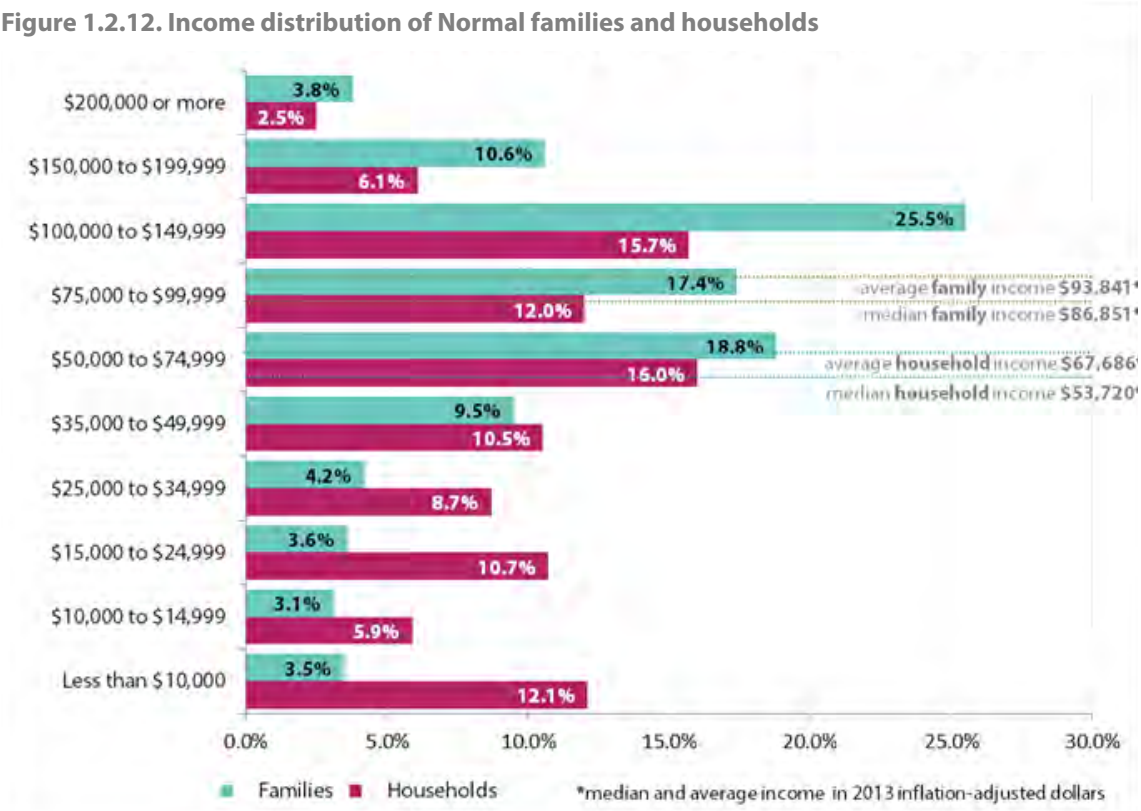
Figure 1.2.13. Comparison of median family incomes



Source: ACS 2009-13, 2013 adjusted dollars

Normal's family households not only have a median income significantly higher than the overall household median in the Town, but also significantly higher than the median family household incomes in other Illinois communities. Of particular interest is the comparison of median family income in Normal and Bloomington, nearly equal, to the disparate median incomes for family households in Champaign and Urbana. Although each twinned communities boasts a large public university, the effects of ISU and the University of Illinois on their respective communities are not equal in impact.

Figure 1.2.12. Income distribution of Normal families and households



Source: American Community Survey, 2007-2013

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of "middle class" families, with more than 60% of family households having incomes between $50,000 and $150,000. The 2009-2013 ACS results estimate that 7.6% of all families in Normal had incomes below the poverty level during the twelve-month period before being surveyed, below the national and state estimates. As is true across the nation, families with children, especially children under five, are more likely to fall below the poverty level. Single women heading households with children are in the greatest danger of falling into poverty. The last family grouping experiences roughly the same estimated impoverishment in Normal as in the state or nation.

The risk of poverty for people living outside of family households is three times higher than for people within family households, at 24.3%. As noted with respect to the variance between household and family income, this high percentage of income-challenged residents clearly reflects the presence of people not living in family groups. These may be students or others without a family structure. Individuals most at risk of poverty are persons age 15 or above not living with family members.

HOUSING

The presence of thousands of students living in Normal's neighborhoods creates issues in local housing, as the history of the relationship between the Town and the University demonstrates. Managing the interactions between townsfolk and their student neighbors has been a continuing challenge for Normal. Apartments and other rental units in the Town often target the student market. In recent years there has been new construction of rental units only suitable for student residents, consisting of units rented by the room with shared common space. While providing affordable rental opportunities for families and non-student residents may be less attractive to developers and property managers, access to these opportunities is important for lower-income residents, new entrants into the employment markets, and some older residents looking for smaller homes but not in need of or able to afford assisted living facilities.

One important metric for housing availability is affordability. "Housing cost burden" refers to conditions in which homeowners and renters are spending more than 30% of their income on housing (including rent, utilities, and other related costs). This level of housing expense is a significant challenge, whether for maintaining home ownership or continuing to live in a decent-quality rental unit. For homeowners, the highest incidence of this challenge is in Normal's older neighborhoods north and east of the ISU campus and in Uptown. In these areas, 24% to 30% of homeowners may be overburdened by mortgage costs. Neighborhoods north of I-55, southeast of the Union Pacific rail line, and southwest of the ISU campus are slightly less encumbered, but at least one-fifth of homeowners experience this burden. See the Appendix for a housing cost burden map.

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PROJECTIONS

Extrapolating the historical experience of population change into a reasonable projection of future expectations requires not only good historical data but also a methodological framework founded in equally reasonable assumptions regarding future circumstances[2.5]. This exercise is by definition speculative, but it is also a standard practice in planning. To plan for future community needs, there must be guidance as to the expected size of the community to be served.

Normal's unusual population profile poses additional challenges in forecasting future population growth. A substantial portion of the Town's population in any given year is composed of the students attending college at any of the local collegiate institutions. It is expected that some portion of each year's class will complete their degrees and either return to their home communities or migrate for employment opportunity. Two questions arise from the presence of the college student population:

1) How many of the students are actually captured in the Census count?
2) To what degree do students attending local institutions elect to remain in the community upon graduation?

The validity of Census data regarding the proportion of students remaining in the community is open to challenge, as the criteria for participation in the Decennial Census are often unclear to students, who may expect to be counted as part of their families, as opposed to being enumerated at their local addresses in Normal. It is difficult to quantify the degree to which the student population may be undercounted, and

2.5 Assumptions

Applying a population change model includes defining the conditions expected to prevail across the period for which a projection is made. Some of the underlying assumptions relate to regional, national or global conditions or trends, and others are specific to the immediate locale. For Normal from 2015-2040, the assumptions include the following:

- International commerce and other global relationships will not destabilize to an extent that significantly impacts the United States; this includes continued accessibility of energy resources.
- National economic and security conditions will remain generally stable, although during the planning period there may be changes in economic or other conditions.
- The State of Illinois will reestablish its functions as a governmental partner and as the primary source of operational funding for Illinois State University.
- The region will not experience a significant natural or manmade disaster such that social or economic structures break down, requiring substantial replacement of infrastructure, housing, and other regional resources, or degrading local resources beyond repair; this includes damage to agricultural production due to extended drought.
- Normal will retain its ability to act through the City Council and the fiscal and technical capacity to carry out policies and programs enacted by the Council.
- ISU will maintain a total enrollment of 21,000 students.
- Approximately two-thirds to three-quarters of the 21,000 Illinois State University students enrolled at any given time will reside in off-campus housing, including residences for members of social organizations.
- Through its participation in regional economic planning and development, Normal will increase employment opportunities through the growth of existing employers or the recruitment of new employers and types of enterprise.

2.6 The cohort component population model

Population projections generally rely on the use of a projection model based on a preferred type of statistical analysis. MCRPC uses a cohort component model of population change, in which the population is grouped into five-year age cohorts. Using the most localized data available regarding migration, deaths and births, the model applies these behaviors to population results from multiple Census periods, using the known population to extrapolate growth within each age cohort. Through each future five-year time period the cohorts advance and their behaviors produce the final population projection.

The Census Bureau offers the following comments on this approach to population projections:
"In the cohort-component method, the components of population change (fertility, mortality, and net migration) are projected separately for each birth cohort (persons born in a given year). The base population is advanced each year by using projected survival rates and net international migration. Each year, a new birth cohort is added to the population by applying the projected fertility rates to the female population." (http://www.census.gov/population/projections/about/)

"Estimates are for the past and present, while projections are based on assumptions about future demographic trends. Estimates generally use existing data collected from various sources, while projections make assumptions about what demographic trends will be in the future." (Ibid.)

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thus the Town must rely on information collected on each graduating class by the University or the Alumni Association to evaluate the degree to which graduates elect to remain in Normal.

In past iterations of projections for Normal, the cohort component model[2.6] has been applied using data for the total population, with students being treated the same as other residents. Using the most local available population data for the decade between 2000 and 2010, birth and death rates and female fertility estimates, and county rates for migration to and from the area, this version of the model produces the projection for 2015 to 2040 shown in Figure 1.2.14. This results in a population change of over 29,000 persons, an approximately 56% increase over the thirty years elapsing from the base population year of 2010 to the plan horizon. Calculated year to year, this requires an annual rate of growth of nearly 1.7%. While this level of growth is not unprecedented, it does outpace anticipated change in Normal.

That high prediction prompted an analysis using a modified approach to the cohort component model used in other communities with substantial student populations. This approach acknowledges the reality that some percentage of the students pursuing their education in Normal will not remain once they receive their degrees. Consequently, the inclusion of these likely out-migrants in the cohorts distorts the anticipated population change in older cohorts, which will not be affected by the behavior of the departed students in their future migration, childbearing and death.

To remove the distorting effect, the model was revised to retain a portion of the age cohorts in which students are most likely to have come from the BN metro area or the surrounding region. Guided by Illinois State University's information on the percentage of its enrollment that originates locally (meaning in McLean County or surrounding counties), the model assumes that of the 21,000 students enrolled annually, 14,500 will not be continuing as Normal residents upon graduation. The remaining 6,500 students are classified as of local origin upon their enrollment, for whom some level of migration is already anticipated in the model, or as students who do remain as residents.

This revised model produces the anticipated population increase illustrated in Figure 1.2.15. This results in a population change over the planning period of nearly 23,000 persons, an overall increase of almost 44%. Calculating the year-to-year change produces an annual growth rate of 1.35%.

The sequestration methodology has implications for the Town beyond the overall level of population change. If ISU enrollment remains constant and the Town's population grows, the

Figure 1.2.14. Cohort component model with standard data

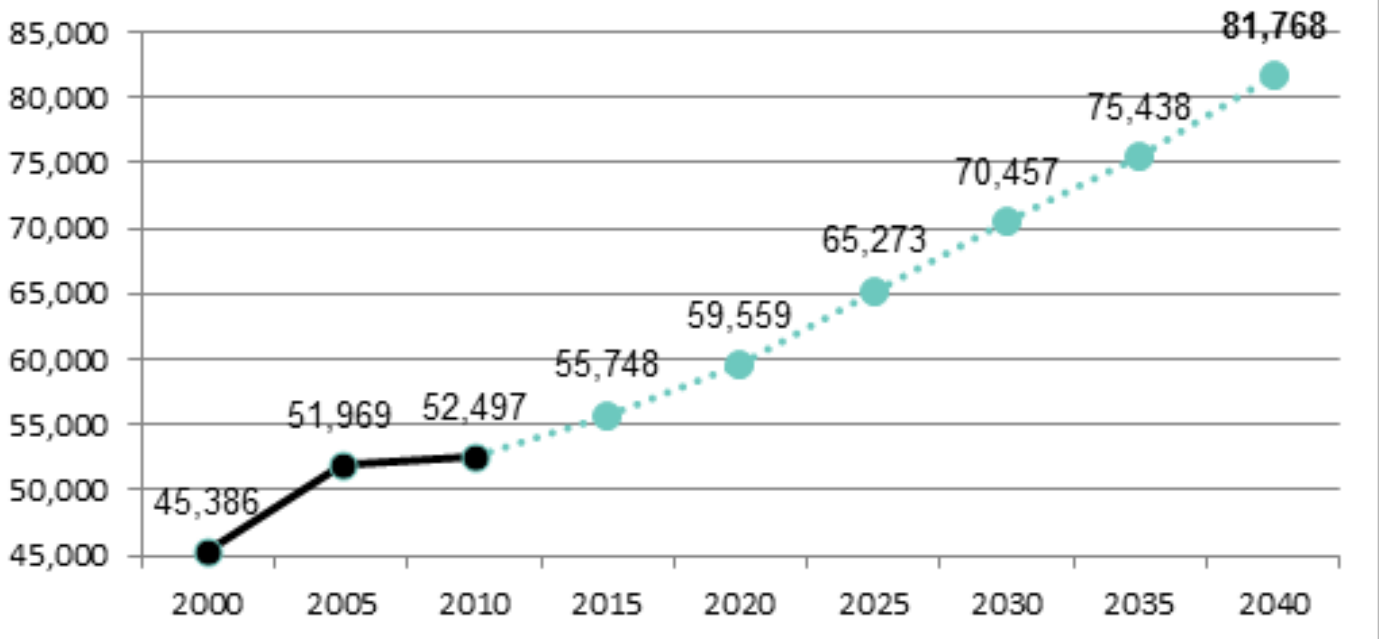

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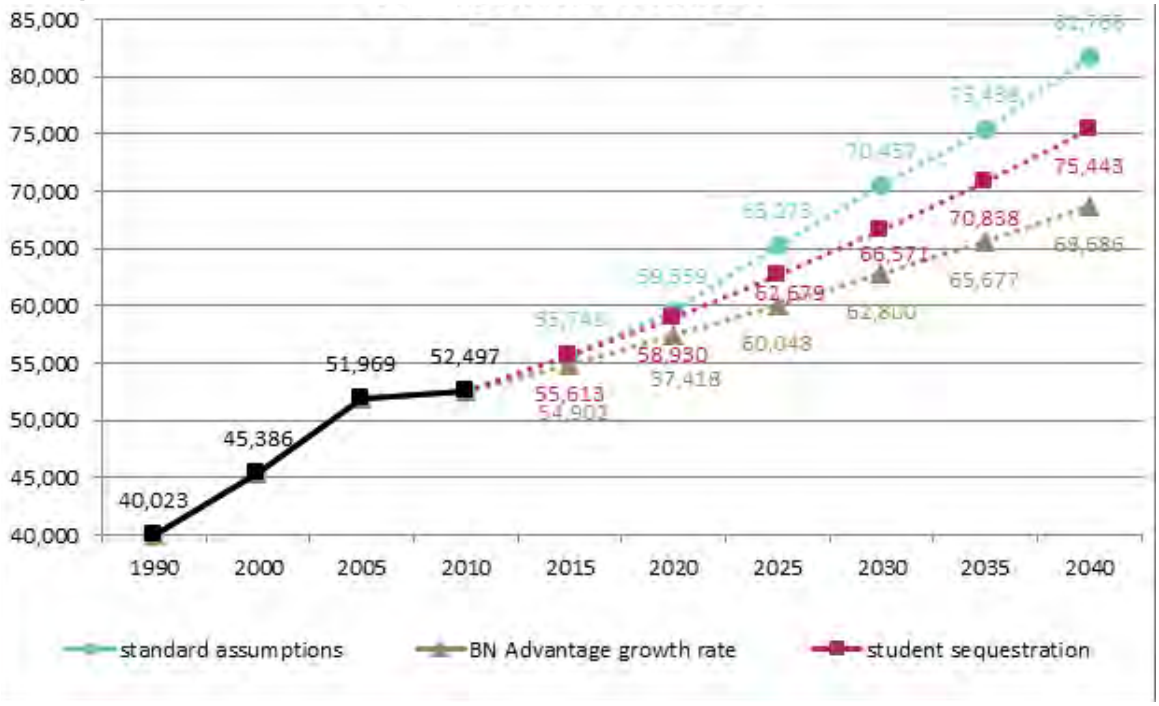
Figure 1.2.17. Population scenarios



percentage of residents directly connected to the University as students or faculty and staff will decline. Figure 1.2.16 demonstrates how the ratio of students to the overall population will change if the student sequestration projection results are correct. As the Town expands with residents not connected to higher education except as a community amenity, priorities for municipal investment may change as well.

The BN Advantage regional economic development study, basing its analysis in part on proprietary population estimates, suggests that the period encompassed by the plan will have a slower rate of growth, on the order of .9% annually. The extrapolation of this prediction is shown in Figure 1.2.17 with the previously described population growth scenarios. It results in the addition of more than 16,000 new residents by 2040, a growth rate of nearly 31% from the base year 2010. Because the BN Advantage analysis did not apply the student sequestration methodology to the regional population, it is represented here without the sequestration.

Population projections can only extrapolate from history and attempt to combine reasonable expectations for the future with the Town's vision and goals. This exercise seems especially fraught in the framework of economic and political turbulence that resulted from the crises of the last ten years, and which still dominate today's headlines. The Town may use the collective knowledge and insight of elected officials, staff, and the Vision Committee to select a population change scenario congruent with its expectations. Short-term predictions regarding population change will be tested in the 2020 Census, and will provide a concrete and current dataset against which future scenarios may be evaluated.

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LAND USE & DEVELOPMENT 3

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FINDINGS AND KEY QUESTIONS

Findings

- There has been a significant shift in Normal's land use philosophy since the adoption of the Downtown Redevelopment Plan (now Uptown) in 2001. The Town embraced the principles of smart growth for the Uptown project. With major portions of the plan now implemented, Uptown is a model for smart growth and has earned the Town national recognition. Since then, the Town has used innovative regulatory tools and economic incentives to promote mixed-use redevelopment along Main Street.

- Broadly speaking, the Town's land use pattern is similar to that of any community. Residential use, the largest land use category, consumes 36% of total acreage. Nearly 70% of residential acreage is occupied by low-density, single-family detached housing, which accounts for only 40% of all housing units. Such low-density development strains municipal resources. In the last two decades, the Town has made a conscious effort to increase residential densities in pursuit of more compact and sustainable development.

- Not surprisingly for a college town with a high percentage of institutional land uses, over a quarter of the Town's developed land is tax-exempt. While institutional uses play an important role in the quality of life in the community, they must be balanced with revenue-generating uses and must be located strategically so as not to strain public resources.

- The physical growth of the Town happens through annexation agreements. The Town currently has 12 active agreements, along with approved plats and vacant residential lots that allow for development of over 3,500 residential units. Further, Uptown 2.0 plan recommends nearly 1,000 urban residential units. These roughly 4,500 potential units can accommodate upwards of 14,000 people, a major percentage of the projected population change in the next 20 to 25 years.

Key Questions

- What can we learn from earlier efforts to apply smart growth principles to residential neighborhoods? How can the existing low-density residential neighborhoods adapt to better reflect those principles? How can the Town work with other partners, such as the school district, to strategically locate community facilities to achieve walkable and bikable neighborhoods?

- Diversity in land use is an important aspect to achieve smarter growth. How can the land use planning and zoning ordinances (and other regulatory tools) aid in achieving such diversity?

- Some current annexation agreements are set to expire soon, while others are valid through 2029. What action should the Town take when agreements expire and extensions are requested? What happens if these annexation agreements are not carried out as originally intended? Should the Town continue to approve additional annexation agreements? How can the Town foster infill development in Uptown while simultaneously approving conventional subdivisions?

- How can the Town and the university work together to proactively plan for the areas most directly influenced by the university? Can ISU's Master Plan and the Town's Comprehensive Plan be better integrated regarding land use issues?

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The distribution, type, and intensity of land uses compose the physical tapestry of the city and impact a city's economic and fiscal base. Public infrastructure such as roads, drainage facilities, sewer and water lines form the structural framework that supports development. Community services such as fire protection and parks are important to the safety and livability of communities, and their availability plays an important part in a community's development pattern. This chapter focuses solely on the breakdown of existing uses. The aforementioned growth determinants are examined closely in other chapters.

Unless otherwise noted, the land use analysis presented in this chapter is a parcel-based land use analysis[3.1] derived from local data sources such as McLean County GIS Consortium (McGIS), Normal Township Assessor, and the Town of Normal.

LAND USE MIX

Over 36% (or 3,332 acres) of the Town's parceled land is currently being used for residential purposes, making it the leading land use. Institutional land uses such as schools, colleges, churches, government buildings and social service agencies make up over 17%. Given the presence of Illinois State University and two other higher education institutions, it is not surprising that institutional land use is the second largest category. About 15.48% of land is currently used for employment, 7.74% for parks, 6.32% for commercial and less than half a percent for mixed use. For the most part, the mixed use category refers to residential uses mixed in with office or retail uses. Nearly 13% of the land within the corporate limits of Normal is undeveloped. Map 1.3.1 is a generalized map of existing land uses. .

There is no absolute right or wrong mix of land uses. Every community is unique and thus has a unique mix of uses. In Normal, approximately 27% of land is comprised of tax-exempt uses, such as parks and schools—a high number but not atypical for a university town. These uses are crucial for the quality of life in the community. However, it is important to maintain a healthy balance of revenue-generating and tax-exempt land uses for the long-term financial sustainability of the community. Since there is no magic formula to achieve that balance, this chapter includes comparisons between Normal's land use breakdown and those of similar communities[3.2]. While this is not a perfect apples-to-apples comparison, it provides some insight into Normal's typical and atypical land uses, given its size, university presence and other factors. Residential is the leading land use in most of the comparison communities. Other college towns, like Urbana, record higher percentages of institutional land uses when compared to non-college towns. No major anomalies appear in comparison to other communities.

Figure 1.3.1. Taxable and tax-exempt properties in Normal



RESIDENTIAL LAND USE

The style, size, age and ownership rate of housing stock all have a significant impact on the quality of a neighborhood, its revenue, and its de-

3.1. Parcel-based land use analysis: A parcel is a piece of real estate created for assessment and taxation purposes. It should not be confused with Lots or other divisions of land created to define ownership or other legal uses. The current extent of the Town's corporate limits is approximately 18 sq. mi., of which only 14.6 sq. mi. has been parceled. About 3.4 sq. mi. (or nearly 20% of the land within the corporate limits) is not parceled. This land is considered public right-of-way (ROW) and is under the control of the Town. The land use calculations included in this chapter are parcel-based. This means that the percentages of land presented by the use type is based on the 14.6 sq. mi. of parceled land within the Town limits.

3.2. Refer to Figure CS-A .1 in the appendix comparing Normal's land use with that of other communities.

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mand on services. Residential land uses are further explained below to gain a better understanding of the aforementioned residential land use determinants.

Housing Types in Normal

There are five main housing types in Normal:

1. Single-family detached housing
2. Single-family attached housing
3. Mobile homes
4. Multi-family housing (apartments)
5. Group Quarters

Each of these can be broken down further into sub-types (see Table 1.3.1). The single-family attached housing type is further illustrated in Figure 1.3.2.

Single-family detached housing accounts for nearly two-thirds of all residential acreage but accommodates fewer than 40% of all the housing units. On the other hand, single-family attached housing accounts for less than 7% of land acreage

			Acres	% Acres	# Units	% Units	Units/ Acre	Tax revenue/ Acre
Total Housing Units (GQ not counted as housing units)			**3331.6**		**20,151**			
Single-Family	Single-Family Detached		2376.7	71.3%	9,892	39.99%	4.16	$16,749
	Mobile Homes		100.5	3.0%	681	2.75%	6.77	$1,243
	Attached	Condos	106.8	3.2%	1,080	4.37%	10.11	$19,427
		Duplexes	100.7	3.0%	777	3.14%	7.71	$30,336
		Townhouses/ Row houses	23.7	0.7%	393	1.59%	16.61	$45,778
Multi-Family	Apartments		349	10.5%	6,604	26.7%	18.92	$23,565
	Mixed Use Apartments		18.5	0.6%	724	2.93%	39.23	$81,877
*Group Quarters (GQ)	Students		45.9	1.4	4,009	16.21%	87.29	**
	Non-Students		41.1	1.2	578	2.34%	14.1	**

Table 1.3.1 Breakdown of housing types by acreages and units.
***In an effort to stay consistent with Census data, Group Quarters are not included in the total housing unit count.**
****** **Taxes not computed due to institutional influences**

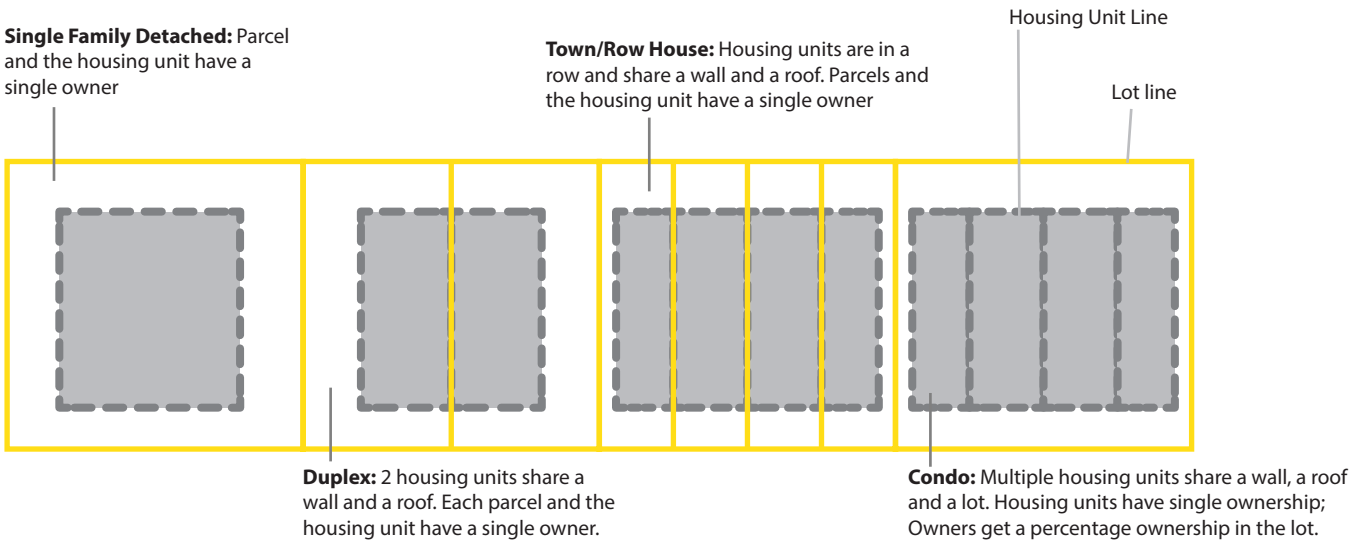

Figure 1.3.2. Single-family residential housing types, explained. These classifications are based on ownership and should not be confused with the housing style.

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MAP 1.3.1

Town of Normal Parcel Based Existing Land Use Map

ZIEBARTH RD
N PARKSIDE RD
N TOWANDA AVE
W NORTHTOWN RD
E NORTHTOWN RD
PIPELINE RD
AIRPORT RD
N LINDEN ST
W RAAB RD
E RAAB RD
HERSHEY RD
SHELBOURNE DR
SHEPARD RD
TOWANDA BARNES RD
N WHITE OAK RD
GREGORY ST
FORT JESSE RD
N MITSUBISHI MTWY
N PARKSIDE RD
N MAIN ST
COLLEGE AVE
W COLLEGE AVE
WYLIE DR
S LINDEN ST

N

Major Transportation Corridor — Minor Transportation Corridor — Bike/Ped Corridor — Railroad Corridor

Residential: 36.3%

Institutional:17.7%

Employment Center: 15.5%

Undeveloped/Agriculture: 12.7%

Parks/ Recreation: 7.5%

Conservation: 1.8%

Mixed Use: 0.24%

Commercial: 6.3%

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but accommodates a little over 9% of total residential units. This is an important distinction because the latter provides a single-family living experience without consuming as much land as the former. These attached housing types also yield the highest tax revenue per acre of all residential housing types (aside from mixed use apartments, which include commercial properties).

As can be expected in a university town like Normal, apartments (particularly mixed-use apartments) provide a greater density per acre. Most of the multi-family apartment units are concentrated around the university. The unique challenges and opportunities presented by this situation are examined in other chapters of this report.

Mixed-use apartment development in the last decade and a half has changed the image of the community, particularly along the Main Street Corridor near campus. Beginning in 2000, residential mixed-use development shifted from a few apartments above retail to large-scale complexes. The Edge, located at the corner of Main Street & Hovey Avenue, was one of the first such developments. These developments, guided by form-based zoning, are closer to the street with parking behind the building. This type of development is very pedestrian-oriented and has helped to bolster the variety of living options for students. However, the town has been less successful in attracting non-student mixed-use housing options. A need for this type of development was originally identified in the Uptown plan, adopted by the Council in 2000. It was further reiterated in the Uptown 2.0 plan, which was recently adopted by the Council in November 2015. Uptown 2.0 identified the need for nearly 1,000 residential units in and around the town center.

Ownership

The 2010 decennial census recorded 18,816 housing units in Normal. Based on the information gathered from building permits, there were 20,151 housing units as of Fall 2015. Of the 20,151 housing units, 45% were identified as rental. Map 3.6 and Table 3.4 in the appendix provide more detailed information on this subject.

The majority of the rental units are in the form of multi-unit apartment buildings or complexes. There are some exceptions to this general observation. The neighborhoods in the close vicinity of the ISU campus have rental units in the single family housing types. The opportunities and challenges presented by this situation are examined closely in the Planning Analysis Zone chapter (under the University Influence Zone).

INSTITUTIONAL LAND USES

Unsurprisingly for a college town, institutional land use is Normal's second-biggest land use category. Institutions such as the colleges and universities, schools, churches, government buildings, and social service agencies make up nearly 18% of the total parceled acreage.

The majority of institutional land uses are tax-exempt. When institutional land use is combined with other non-revenue- generating tax uses such as recreational (8%) and conservation (2%), the non-revenue-generating total comes to nearly 28%.

There are substantial vacant acreages under institutional ownership. Location of certain institutional uses, such as schools and churches, along the fringes of the corporate limits causes stress on infrastructure expansion and maintenance. The purpose of this exercise is not to diminish the value of institutional uses but merely to point out the need to locate them strategically and use them effectively.

COMMERCIAL AND EMPLOYMENT LAND USES

The commercial (6%) and employment (16%) land use categories house the retail, employment, office and other uses that drive the economy. Together, these two land use categories make up nearly 22% of the parceled area. As can be easily identified in the land use map, these properties are mainly along the major rail and road transportation corridors. These typically generate more revenue per acre and demand fewer services when compared to residential land uses.

Only 1.75% of commercial acreage is currently categorized as neighborhood commercial. Given the replacement of small neighborhood retail by big-box stores, this is somewhat expected. However, this phenomenon continues to pose challenges in achieving smart growth goals such as compact communities and pedestrian-oriented development.

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In October 2015, the Town of Normal, along with the broader regional community, adopted BN Advantage, a regional economic development strategy. This initiative identified five target sectors for retention, expansion and attraction in the community. The land, building, and infrastructure needs for these sectors are discussed at greater length in Chapter 1.4, Economic Vitality.

ZONING

The Zoning Ordinance is one of the tools with which land use is regulated. A zoning map is adopted and published annually to show the spatial extent and boundaries of the zoning districts. For the purpose of this analysis, the Town's various zoning districts are grouped into five categories: residential, commercial, office/manufacturing, institutional, and agriculture. Map 1.3.2 shows these groupings geographically.

It is important to note that zoning is different from land use. However, zoning for the most part dictates land use. The properties which use the land for purposes other than those currently permitted by the underlying zoning are called non-conforming properties. The Town of Normal has few non-conforming properties. Most of the existing non-conformities are residential uses along the Main Street corridor. This can be expected given the changes in the character of that corridor, particularly over the last two decades.

Although the Town's current form of Zoning Ordinance was adopted in 1969, significant updates have been made since then:

- Historic Preservation Code, added in 1990
- Downtown Design Review Code and Traditional Neighborhood Design, added in 2002
- Community Design Standards, added in 2003 as a replacement for the previous "Appearance Review Standards."
- Sign Code, comprehensively amended in 2001.

Many of these revised standards are enforced through overlay zoning, described below.

OVERLAY ZONING

Historic Overlay District: This overlay protects and preserves the historic properties in the three historic districts (Old North Normal, Highland, and Cedar Crest) as well as scattered landmark sites throughout the community. The Cedar Crest Historic District is the only district listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Parking Impact Zone: This overlay was estab-

Related Definitions

3.3. Form-Based Code: A form-based code is a land development regulation that fosters predictable built results and a high-quality public realm by using physical form (rather than separation of uses) as the organizing principle for the code. A form-based code is a regulation, not a mere guideline, adopted into city, town, or county law.

3.4. Planned Unit Development (PUD): A PUD is a large, integrated development adhering to a comprehensive plan and typically located on a single tract of land. PUD is a form of development that, although conceived decades ago, can be used today to advance a number of important smart growth and sustainability objectives. PUD has a number of distinct advantages over conventional lot-by-lot development. Properly administered, PUD can offer a degree of flexibility that allows creativity in land planning, site design, and the protection of environmentally sensitive lands not possible with conventional subdivision and development practices. Moreover, properly applied, PUD is capable of mixing residential and non-residential land uses, providing broader housing choices, allowing more compact development, permanently preserving common open space, reducing vehicle trips, and providing pedestrian and bicycle facilities. In exchange for design flexibility, developers are better able to provide amenities and infrastructure improvements, and find it easier to accommodate environmental and scenic attributes.

3.5. Traditional Neighborhood Design (TND): TND, also known as neo-traditional development and new urbanism, is used to describe planning and development of newer developments that take their forms from the structure and layout of early 20th-century neighborhoods built before automobiles were widely used. The key principles of TNDs include:

- Compact neighborhoods with a mix of uses and housing types.
- A network of streets with sidewalks and street trees to facilitate convenient and safe movement throughout neighborhoods for all modes of transportation, with a focus on pedestrian.
- Integration of parks and public spaces into the neighborhood.
- Placement of important civic buildings on key sites to create landmarks and a strong sense of place.

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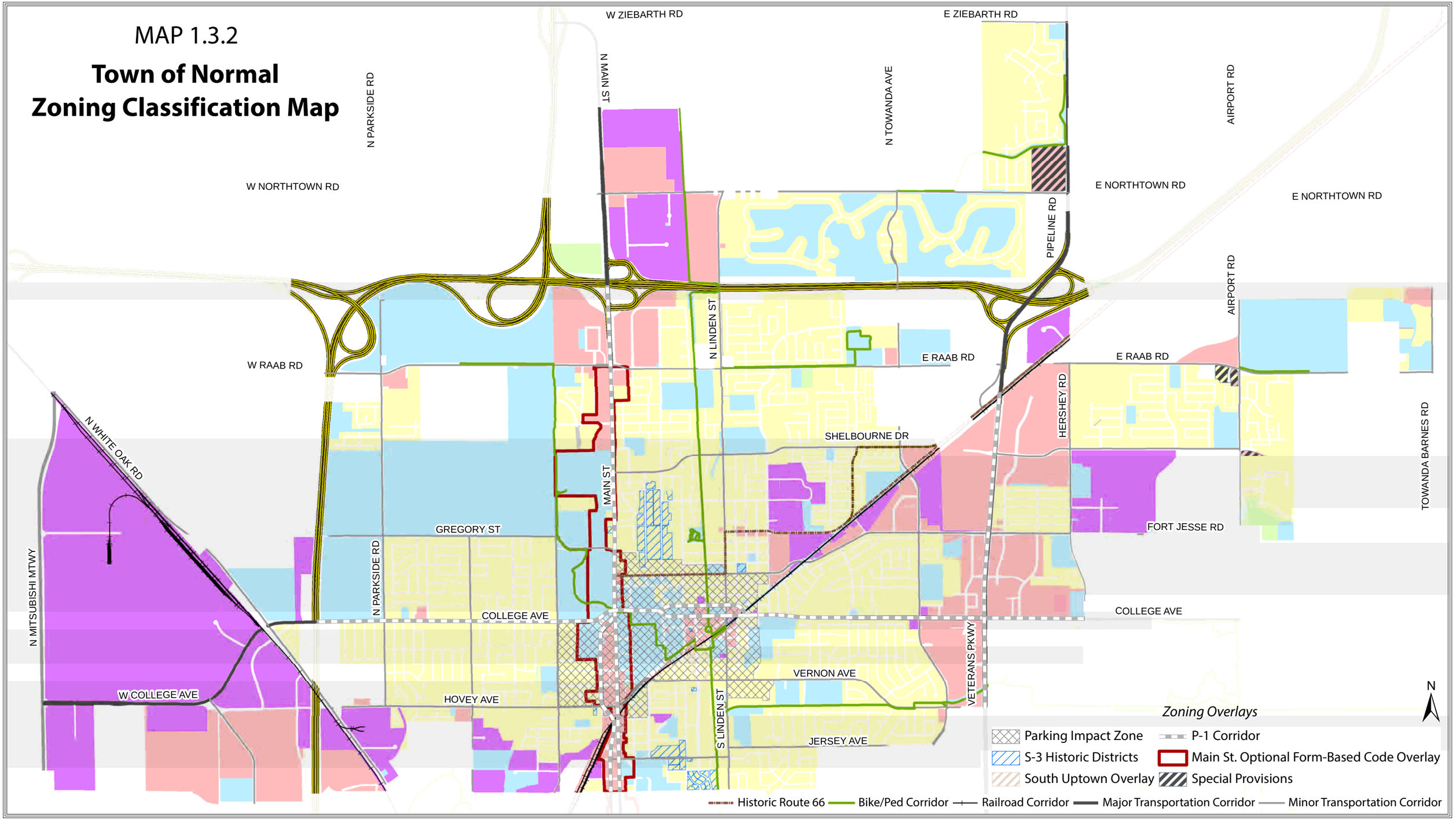
MAP 1.3.2

Town of Normal
Zoning Classification Map



Residential: 3697.4 Acres or 39.05%

R-1A- 1396.5 acres or 14.95%
R-1B- 1596.8 acres or 16.74%
R-2- 219.7 acres or 2.19%
R-3A- 448.9 acres or 4.81%
R-3B- 35.4 acres or 0.38%

Institutional: 2354.6 Acres or 25.85 %

S-1- 712.9 acres or 7.63%
S-2 - 16.41.7 acres or 18.22%

Office/ Manufacturing: 1819.8 Acres or 19.48%

C-1 - 229.9 acres or 2.46%
M-1- 399.4 acres or 4.28%
M-2- 1190.5 acres or 12.74%

Commercial: 1394.9 Acres or 14.81%

B-1- 1276.2 acres or 13.54%
B-2- 30.0 acres or 0.32%
C-2- 24.3 acres or 0.26%
C-3- 64.4 acres or 0.69%

Agriculture (0.6%)

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lished to increase safety and lessen congestion in the public streets, provide adequate but not excessive off-street parking facilities for commercial and residential properties, and set standards for the requirement of off-street parking and loading unique to the particular needs adjacent to the university campus.

South Uptown: This overlay was created to administer form-based code[3.3] in the area south of Uptown.

Figure 1.3.3. Single-family detached housing permits

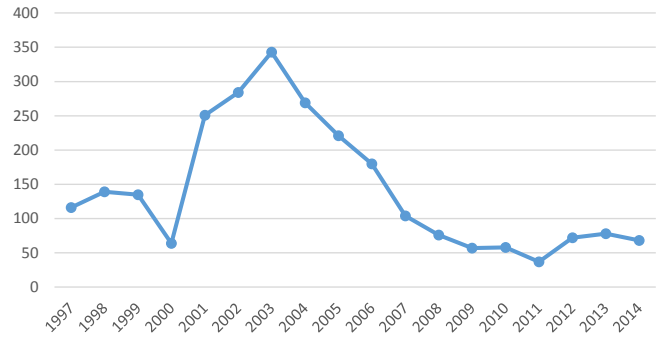


Figure 1.3.4. Multi-family housing permits

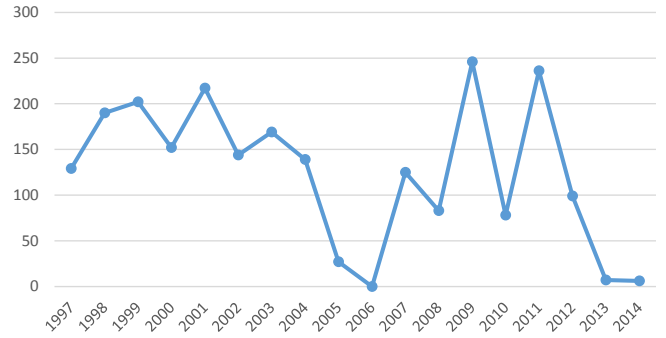
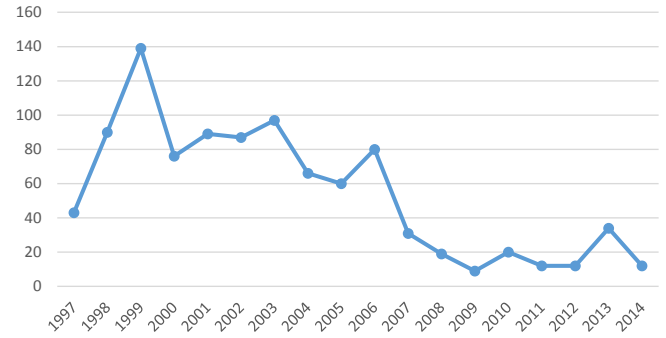


Figure 1.3.5. Single family attached housing permits



Optional Main Street Form Based Overlay District: This overlay district was created to enhance the livability, walkability, and appearance of the Main Street corridor.

P1-Corridor Overlay District: The intent of this district is to enhance the visual character and economic value of the Town's major commercial corridors (College Avenue, Main Street and Veterans Parkway) by prohibiting uses that have an industrial appearance.

The Town also uses tools such as Planned Unit Development (PUD[3.4]) to promote denser residential developments and advance Traditional Neighborhood Design (TND[3.5]) standards. These revisions allowed the Town to meet the land use and development needs of the 21st century while continuing to protect the health, safety and welfare of its population.

While the Town has achieved denser residential developments in recent years, TND has been a mixed success. A lack of clear urban design standards and the incomplete understanding of TND concepts by the local development community have resulted in the implementation of certain elements within the newer subdivisions, but none that satisfy the core intent of TND.

Given the number of overlay zones, the Town may need to consider a complete rewrite of its zoning code to improve the predictability of this regulatory tool.

DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY

The Town's growth can also be tracked by the number of building permits issued for new developments over a period of time. From 1997 to 2014, about 6,000 new residential units were constructed, of which 60% were single-family and 40% were multi-family.

SINGLE-FAMILY

These permits peaked in the early 2000's and fell to an all-time low during the recession years (2009-2011). With the exception of a slight increase in single-family attached housing in 2013, there has not been much improvement in

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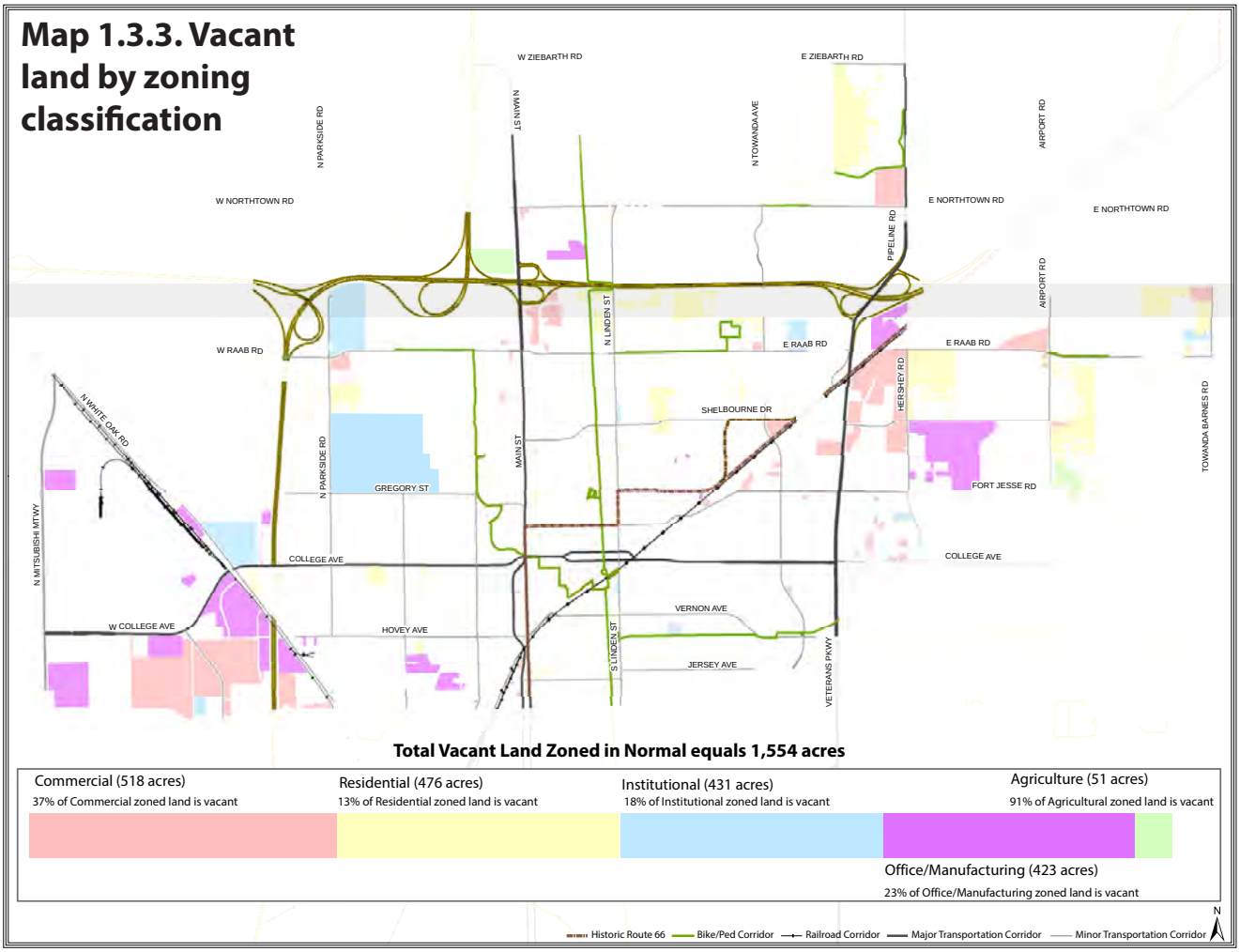
Map 1.3.3. Vacant land by zoning classification



this area. The single-family residential permits are directly correlated to the Town's population growth and local economic activity.

MULTI-FAMILY

These permits have increased and decreased in a pattern unrelated to other local economic fluctuations. This is partly due to the change in on-campus student housing at Illinois State University, which eliminated approximately 2,400 on-campus beds through building demolition and remodeling. Many of the new apartments built by the private sector to compensate for the lost beds fall into one of two categories:

1. Luxury student apartment complexes with on-site amenities, including theater rooms, high-end kitchen finishes, and workout rooms.

	Density in Units/ Acre		
	Allowed	Town-wide Avg	**New development Avg**
R-1A- Low Density Single-Family Residence Dist	4	3.4	**2.6**
R-1B- Medium Density Single-Family Residence Dist	6	4.9	**5.1**
R-2- Mixed Residence Dist	14	6.9	**7.1**
R-3A- Medium Density Multiple-Family Residence Dist	12 to 18	16.5	**16.8**
R-3B- High Density Multiple-Family Residence Dist	Up to 72	31.2	**45.1**

Table 1.3.2. Allowed and observed densities by residential zoning classification. The Town-wide column is the average density throughout the Town. The new development average is the density observed in newer residential developments (since 2000). The potential units for future developments are calculated using the newer development densities based on the underlying zoning, if within the corporate limits, or as stated in the annexation agreements.

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Figure 1.3.6. Mixed-use building permits

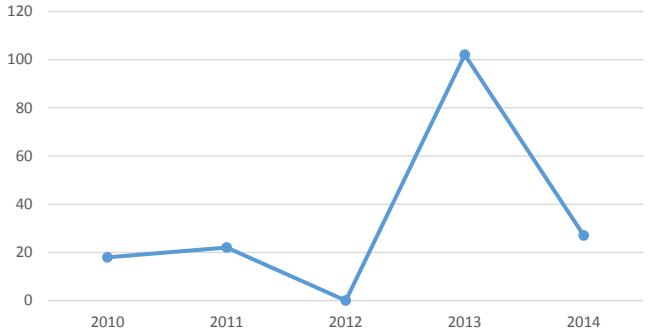
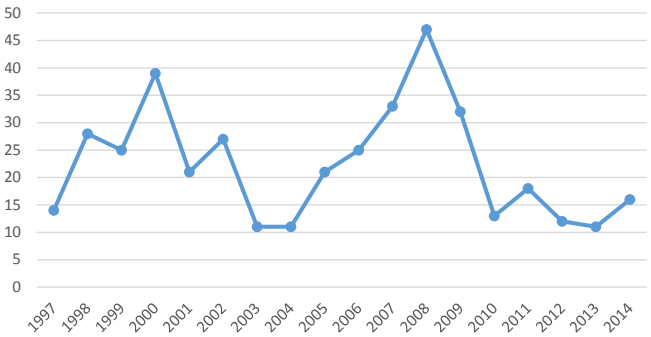


Figure 1.3.7. Commercial building permits



A prime example is the Lodge on Willow (northeast corner of Willow and School streets), where the apartments surround a courtyard with an in-ground pool.

2. Large-scale, mixed-use projects with student apartments above a first floor of commercial space. The first such project was The Edge, built at the corner of Main and Hovey. In addition to the mix of uses, The Edge was the first project to include structured parking. Several years after the construction of The Edge, the Town adopted an Optional Form-Based Code to encourage dense, mixed-use development along the Main Street Corridor, in keeping with the goals of the Main Street Plan. Building permit activity for these mixed-use projects is shown in Figure 1.3.6.

COMMERCIAL

These permits also reflect the health of the local economy. Commercial permits peaked in 2008 and steeply declined in 2009 as a result of the global recession (see Figure 1.3.7). Since then, the annual number of permits has been fairly steady from year to year.

VACANT LAND

A vacant land assessment determines potential or projected future development capacity. There are nearly 1,600 acres of vacant land within the Town limits. Map 1.3.3 shows the geographic location of the existing vacant land and its zoning.

RESIDENTIAL

The majority of vacant land is currently zoned residential and is subject to annexation agreements. Map 1.3.4 and the associated tables, 1.3.3 and 1.34, contain additional information on these agreements.

The potential capacity for future new residential units is summarized below (+/- 50 units):

- Currently annexed vacant land, platted for residential uses or available for residential development: 495 (+/-)
- Currently annexed vacant land with valid annexation agreements for residential development: 1,820 (+/-)
- Currently un-annexed property with valid annexation agreements for residential development: 1,357 (+/-)

Together, there is a potential for 3,672 (+/-) new residential units. As discussed earlier, the Uptown 2.0 plan identified a potential for approximately 1,000 new residential units in and around Uptown. Based on the Town's average family size of 3.01 (per Census 2010), these potential units can accommodate upwards of 14,000 people—the projected population increase over the next 15 to 25 years (please refer to Chapter 1.2, Demographics and Projections, for growth rates and population projection scenarios).

Given the amount of development that could potentially occur, it is important that the Town be careful and deliberate with the future expansion of the corporate boundary. Clear community-wide growth priorities must be established during the visioning process for new annexations, and the timelines on existing annexation agreements should be extended. Such guidelines play a key role in achieving the recently adopted Uptown vision. Why? Locating new residential develop-

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Map 1.3.4. Residential vacant land

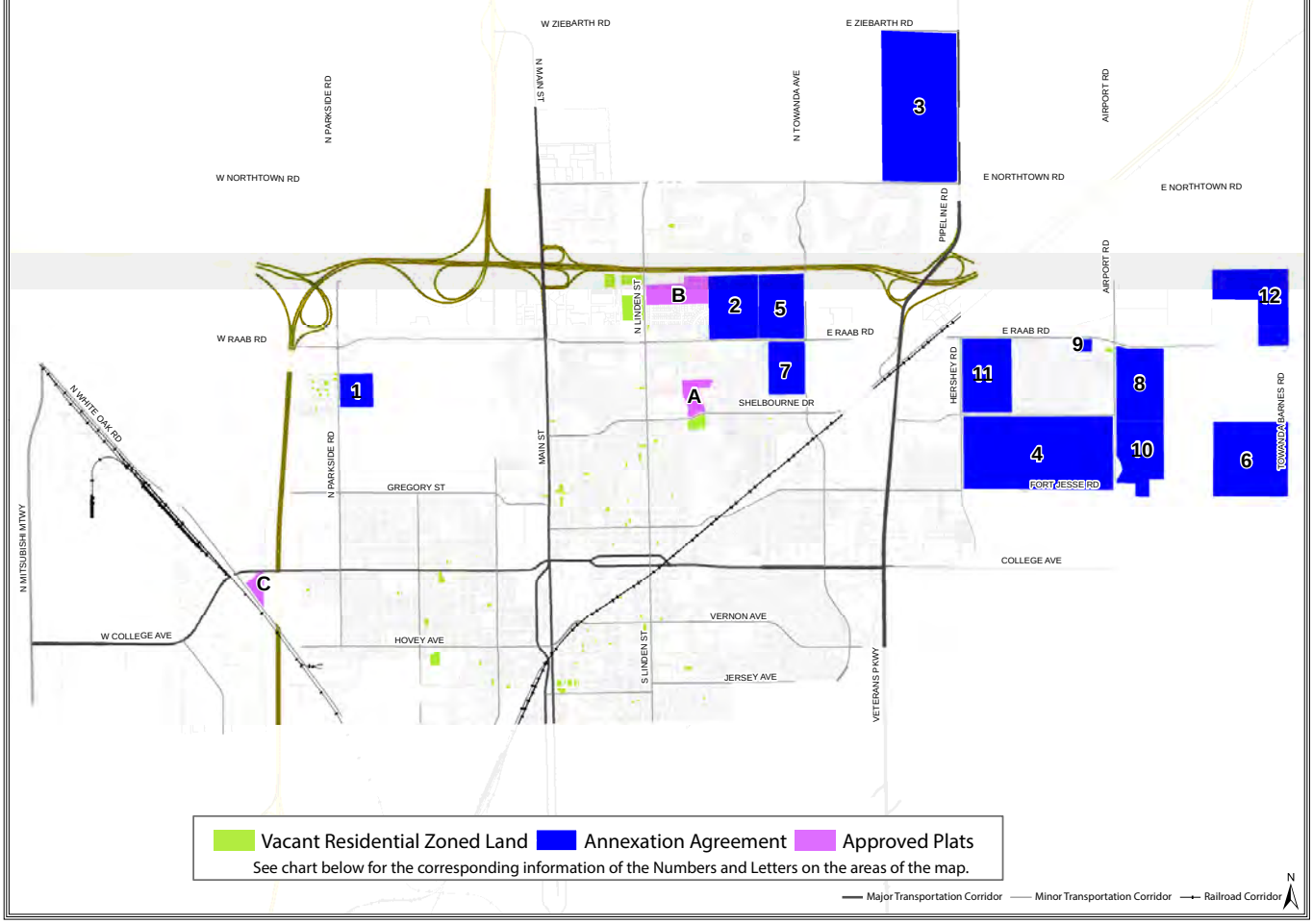

Table 1.3.3. Annexation agreements

ID	Development	Potential #'s on un-annexed property	Potential #'s on annexed property	Exp Date
1	Greystone Subdivision		144	
2	Wintergreen		146	2016
3	North Bridge		711	2019
4	Fort Jesse Office Complex/ Country Acres	958		2020
5	Carden Park	213	51	2020
6	Franklin Heights	426		2021
7	Kelley Glen	150	39	2022
8	Vineyards		140	2024
9	Taylor	36		2024
10	Trails on Sunset Lake		176	2027
11	Blackstone Trails		265	2029
12	Apostolic Christian Church		148	2029
	Totals	**1,357**	**1,820**	

Table 1.3.4. Approved plats & vacant lots

ID	Development	Potential #'s
A	Collie Ridge	80
B	Pheasant Ridge	79
C	Prairie Garden	36
	Vacant Lots dispersed throughout the community	300
	Total	**495**

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ments in the greenfields would make it difficult for the Town to facilitate infill redevelopments around Uptown, particularly in the current economic conditions.

OFFICE/ MANUFACTURING/ COMMERCIAL

There are nearly 900 acres of vacant land zoned for office/manufacturing/commercial uses. Combined with the redevelopment potential for the infill sites, these vacancies mean that there are many opportunities for commercial and employment center development. These possibilities are discussed more in depth in Chapter 1.4, Economic Vitality.

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ECONOMIC VITALITY

4

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FINDINGS AND KEY QUESTIONS

Findings

- While the Town and the BN metro area have always enjoyed a stable economy, recent changes such as the closure of Mitsubishi Motors and the expansion of State Farm in other markets pose challenges to the local economy. Lackluster construction permit activity in the metro area is yet another indication of the regional economic challenges. To address these challenges, the community banded together to create a regional economic development strategy called BN Advantage. The Town of Normal, City of Bloomington, and McLean County adopted this strategy in 2015 and are actively working toward its implementation.

- BN Advantage recommends the following five sectors as suitable targets for the region: Entrepreneurship, Information Communication and Technology, Agribusiness/Food Processing, Transportation and Logistics, and Advanced Business Services. It particularly emphasizes the importance of entrepreneurship in diversifying the local economy. Entrepreneurship is not a sector, but rather an overarching community culture that is critical to grow and sustain businesses in all sectors.

- The land use and infrastructure needs for industries within these target sectors vary greatly. Some businesses, especially startups and smaller businesses, are infill-capable and thrive in mixed-use urban environments that are walkable, bikable, and accessible by public transportation. Others require large acreages, adjacency to complementary uses, and connections to major transportation networks like highways and railroads. Regardless of the type and scale of business, all businesses need access to up-to-date technology infrastructure.

- The Town's revenue sources are fairly diverse. Sales taxes are by far the largest revenue source, bringing in a little over 21% of the Town's revenue. The property tax accounted for about 11% of the Town's revenue. Normal's property tax rate is the lowest among the seven largest downstate cities in Illinois.

- There are nearly 1,000 acres of vacant land zoned for commercial, office, and industrial purposes within the Town's corporate limits. The vacant land and the Town's many underutilized properties, including the recently vacated Mitsubishi Motors site and vacant properties under institutional ownership, represent opportunities for commercial, office and industrial development.

Key Questions

- How can land use and the comprehensive planning efforts complement the BN Advantage strategy? What types of housing, transportation choices, public spaces, cultural offerings, and amenities do we need to attract and retain qualified workers?

- The land, building, and infrastructure needs of businesses within the targeted sectors vary greatly. Normal is positioned well to accommodate most of them, but which industries best embrace the Town's core values? How can the Town position itself to attract those most suitable to locate here?

- What should economic development incentives look like in this knowledge-based, 21st-century economy? Can economic incentives also be used to further broader community goals such as smart growth? How can they be used to foster retail development without creating undue competition with the neighboring communities?

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Throughout its history, Normal and the BN metro region have enjoyed a growing and vibrant economy. Major employers, a strategic location in the state, access to broader markets, a talented workforce, and superior quality of life amenities have all contributed to that success. However, the regional economy is beginning to face some challenges. Issues such as State Farm's (the top employer in the community) expansion in other markets and the closure of the Mitsubishi plant in 2015 are undoubtedly topics of immediate concern, but the region's ability to adapt to the changing, globalized, and knowledge-based 21st-century economy is a much broader and longer-term priority.

At this critical juncture, many public and private, local and regional, for-profit and nonprofit entities in the Bloomington-Normal metro region have banded together to create and implement a unified regional economic development strategy called BN Advantage. The first half of this chapter briefly discusses the structure of BN Advantage, with a particular focus on the land use and infrastructure needs of the targeted sectors. The second half of the chapter is a brief discussion on the Town's economic profile including its revenues and expenses, tax base, availability of commercial and industrial properties, redevelopment activities, and other indicators of the Town's readiness to accommodate growth.

This baseline assessment makes it clear that Town of Normal is positioned well to accommodate the targeted sectors of BN Advantage. The visioning process, scheduled to begin in April 2016, will help further define the target businesses or industry sectors that best embrace the Town's core values and meet its long-term vision.

BN ADVANTAGE: A REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

In response to the changes in the BN metro area economy, five regional agencies (Bloomington-Normal Economic Development Council, McLean County Chamber of Commerce, McLean County Regional Planning Commission, Central Illinois Regional Airport, and Convention and Visitors Bureau) commissioned a joint study in 2014 to formulate a future economic development strategy for the region. The study was completed in fall 2015 by IO, Inc., and the strategy was subsequently branded "BN Advantage."

BN Advantage highlighted many of the region's enviable economic assets, such as the presence of major corporations, universities, medical institutions, a productive agriculture base, a young and talented workforce, high median incomes, and superior quality of life amenities. However, it also pointed out the overreliance on a few large employers and the long-term challenges likely to result from that overreliance (which the community has already started to witness). It emphasized the need to diversify the economy.

To further that goal, industries best suited to our region were identified based on a number of qualitative and quantitative factors, such as the area's high quality of life, regional and state economic growth, average wages, location quotients (LQs)[4.1], and the growth rate of a given sector. The target omdistroes are:

1. Entrepreneurship
2. Information Communications and Technology
   - McLean County LQ: 0.92 (IL: 1.01)
   - Educational requirements: Bachelor's to Graduate Degree
3. Agribusiness/Food Processing
   - McLean County LQ: 1.43 (IL: 0.76)
   - Educational requirements: HS Diploma to Graduate Degree
4. Transportation and Logistics
   - McLean County LQ: 0.81 (IL: 1.36)
   - Educational requirements: HS Diploma to Associate's Degree
5. Advanced Business Services (ABS)

Related Definitions

4.1. LQ or Location Quotient is a statistic that measures a region's industrial specialization relative to the nation as a whole. For example, an LQ of below 1.0 means that the region has a lower concentration of that industry than the nation; an LQ above 1.0 means that the region's concentration is higher than the nation's.

4.2. Shared Services is a way of organizing administrative functions to optimize the delivery of cost-effective, flexible, reliable services in a business environment.

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SNAPSHOT OF SELECT ECONOMIC ASSETS

SOURCE BN ADVANTAGE REPORT

DEMOGRAPHICS

32.2
MEDIAN AGE

$62,089
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

$30,460
PER CAPITA INCOME

Strengths include low median age, above average income levels and a trend towards increasing household and per capita incomes.

WORK FORCE

4
HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

49%
WITH ASSOCIATES DEGREE OR HIGHER

77%
LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION RATE

Workforce strengths include high educational attainment with a large share of residents in management and financial occupations that offer competitive wages.

EMPLOYMENT

44%
EARN MORE THAN $3,333/MO

179,100
TOTAL JOBS
PROJECTED BY 2040 IN THE METRO AREA

1.5%
ANNUAL EMPLOYMENT GROWTH RATE

Strengths include above average long-term employment growth projections, and an above average earnings profile for the resident workforce relative to comparable areas.

MARKET ACCESS

1
REGIONAL AIRPORT
WITH 9 DAILY DEPARTURES AND 8 NON-STOP DESTINATIONS

2
CLASS ONE RAIL CARRIERS

3
INTERSTATES
I-39, I-55, I-74

Strengths include local access to multiple interstates and rail carriers; excellent connections to major freight centers in Chicago and St. Louis; and a regional airport with non-stop service to major destinations in the Midwest and Southeast.

REAL ESTATE

$13/sq. ft.
OFFICE/BUSINESS PARK

$3.5/sq. ft.
INDUSTRIAL

102.7
CONSTRUCTION COST INDEX
(NATIONAL AVG 100)

Strengths include a good inventory of for-lease space for smaller users, comparable office and industrial lease rates, and lower construction costs relative to the Chicagoland area (Construction Index of Chicago Land Area is 117.2).

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a) Financial and Insurance Services
- McLean County LQ: 7.13 (IL: 1.18)
- Educational requirements: Bachelor's to Graduate Degree

b) Shared Services[4.2]
- McLean County LQ: 0.22 (IL: 1.34)
- Educational requirements: Bachelor's to Graduate Degree

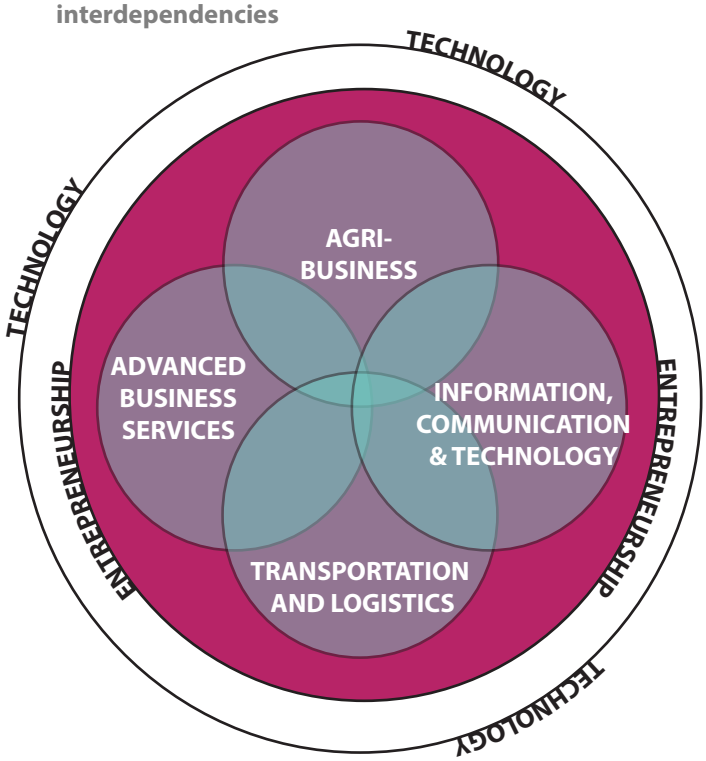
As illustrated in Figure 1.4.1, these sectors are not mutually exclusive. LQs for Agribusiness and the Financial and Insurance sectors are greater than 1, reflecting high concentrations of those businesses in McLean County, while ICT, Shared Services, Transportation and Logistics are less concentrated. Education requirements vary; while some targeted industries require Bachelors degrees or higher, others are open to workers with a broader spectrum of education levels.

It is important to note that entrepreneurship is not a sector, but rather an overarching community culture that is critical to grow and sustain businesses within the targeted sectors and beyond. Likewise, almost all 21st Century industry growth, regardless of sector, is tied to technology (availability, cost, reliability, and speed).

BN Advantage urged the community to move forward swiftly and proposed a framework for implementation (see Figure 1.4.2) with many actionable items over the short, medium and long terms. Metrics were also developed to assess its progress over time.

Upon its completion, BN Advantage was officially adopted by the Normal and Bloomington Councils and the County Board as the economic strategy for the region. Over 100 private, public, civic and educational leaders are serving on the Leadership Council or one of several Task Forces assigned to particular aspects of economic development. This unified action, taken within less than six months of the plan's completion, is a testament to the community's commitment to economic growth and vibrancy.

Figure 1.4.1. BN Advantage target sectors and their interdependencies



So as not to duplicate the efforts of the aforementioned Task Forces, this chapter does not cover many of the topics usually discussed in the economic development chapters of a comprehensive plan—trends in employment, median wages, workforce issues, etc. Instead, it provides a preliminary understanding of the physical needs—land, buildings, and infrastructure—of businesses in the targeted industries. This information helps provide an understanding of the community's ability to accommodate forthcoming changes and to plan ahead to do so in a fiscally sustainable manner.

Each targeted sector has been analyzed separately to understand its unique needs. An examination of these needs together will reveal that

Figure 1.4.2. BN Advantage implementation framework



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some businesses, especially startups and smaller businesses, are infill-capable and thrive in mixed-use urban environments that are walkable, bikable and accessible by public transportation. Others require large acreages, adjacency to complementary uses, and connections to major transportation networks like highways and railroads. These different land use requirements can conflict without proper planning.

Regardless of the type and scale of business, all businesses need access to technology infrastructure. Access to up-to-date technology, undoubtedly a moving target, is key to the success of existing and emerging enterprise.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Pointing to the more than 12% of area jobs provided by large employers, compared to 2% found in many regions in the United States, BN Advantage proposed entrepreneurship as a means to diversify the Bloomington-Normal economy. Unlike the other sectors, entrepreneurship is not a sector in and of itself. Rather, entrepreneurs are innovators, leaders and risk takers who are at the forefront of technological and social movements and startup businesses within their respective sectors. Entrepreneurs come in various sizes (see Table 1.4.1) and have varying needs.

One of the most important building blocks to fostering entrepreneurship in a community is its ability to enable a strong, supportive ecosystem. Factors such as finance, business support, policy, markets, human capital, R&D, infrastructure, and the culture of the community help determine the overall success rate of entrepreneurship in a given community.

BN Advantage highlights the rather lackluster startup activity in the region. A dedicated task force for entrepreneurship is addressing this deficiency. Led by the Bloomington-Normal Economic Development Corporation (EDC), this task force is working toward identifying strengths and challenges in an effort to support the entrepreneurial ecosystem in the BN metro region. The work of this task force is crucial to cultivating the culture of entrepreneurship needed to take advantage of the burgeoning array of technologies expected to arrive over the next 20 years.

Table 1.4.1: Stages of entrepreneurship

1. Sole proprietor: 1 employee
2. Stage 1 Firms: 2 to 9 employees
3. Stage 2 Firms: 10 to 99 employees
4. Stage 3 Firms: 100 to 499 employees
5. Stage 4 Firms: 500 or more employees

Source: YourEconomy.Org

Successful Startup Communities

The American Planning Association, in its PAS Memo dated July/August 2015, identified four common threads in communities that have had success in facilitating "startup communities" with an entrepreneurial culture: urban placemaking, innovative land use planning, future-oriented thinking, and collaborative action. These are inherently intertwined and mutually reinforcing (see Figure 1.4.3).

- *Urban placemaking* is the formation of a unique identity and feel (a "sense of place") that makes an area stand out as more than just another neighborhood or office park.
- *Innovations in land use planning* allow for impressive but human-scale architecture; mixed-use development to create dense, livable neighborhoods that integrate residential, commercial, cultural, institutional, and other uses; infrastructure that accommodates pedestrians, cyclists, and buses; and well-designed public spaces. All of these amenities work together to provide a framework for making

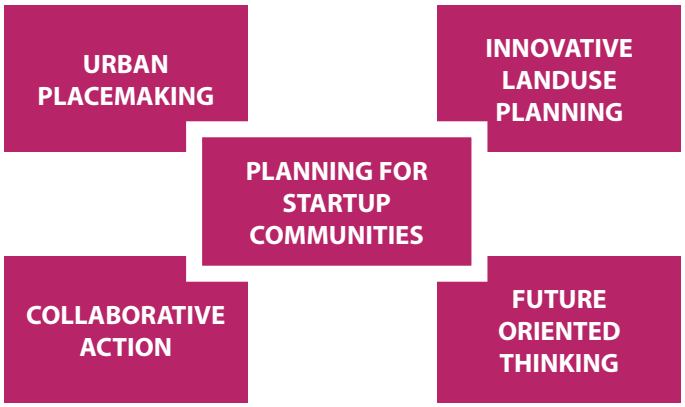

Figure 1.4.3. Planning framework for startup communities
Source: PAS Memo dated July/August 2015; Credit: Lucas **Lindsey**

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a place attractive to both entrepreneurs and their potential employees—especially young people, who tend to seek out vibrant urban environments with these characteristics.

- While increasing the number of startups in the community is a viable and useful short-term goal, *future-oriented thinking* is needed to make sure that nascent businesses have the support they need to move beyond sole proprietorship. As enterprises grow, their needs will vary significantly. For example, a sole proprietor may be able to have informal meetings in a coffee shop or a park; a stage two business (10-99 employees), on the other hand, will likely need a larger, dedicated space, and may prefer to locate in a distinctive business district with unique architecture, well-designed streets, and public places.

Successful startup communities exhibit patience and a willingness to make long-term investments. *Collaborative action* among all parties—public and nonprofit organizations, the business community, and residents—ensures that everyone is working toward these goals and everyone understands their stake in the outcome.

Planning Considerations for Entrepreneurship

Local governments play varying roles in enabling small business growth in their communities. Some review and update their antiquated zoning ordinances to ensure they are not stifling growth. This may be in the form of updating regulations on home-based businesses and other types of live-work arrangements, or adding new definitions and use permissions for pop-up retail(4.6), flex space, and small-scale manufacturing facilities. Others are choosing to invest in publicly owned incubators(4.3), accelerators(4.4), co-working spaces(4.5) (such as the Town's investment in Slingshot), community kitchens (see Agribusiness), or open workshops ("makerspaces") to help entrepreneurs with what could otherwise be prohibitive costs in the early stages of their businesses.

In recent decades, "innovation districts" have become popular in a number of urban areas around the country. As defined by the Brookings Institution, these are "geographic areas where

Related Definitions

4.3. Business incubators support entrepreneurs in a variety of ways. Business incubators offer mentoring, networking, management training, coworking spaces, and technical assistance to help entrepreneurs. Incubators work with businesses at a wide variety of levels of advancement, including some fledgling businesses that have not fully fleshed out their ideas. As a result, they operate under a wide variety of timelines, sometimes spending only a few weeks and sometimes over a year with a single business. Over 90% of incubators are run by governments, academic institutions, and nonprofits for the purpose of job creation and other economic development goals, though a few are for-profit businesses. About 20% take an equity stake in the businesses they assist, with for-profit incubators being particularly likely to do so.

4.4. Accelerators offer equity investment financing and a short (a few weeks to a few months), intense, "boot camp"-esque environment in which entrepreneurs develop existing ideas into solid business models with the help of mentors and gain access to vital networks. Accelerators tend to focus more on businesses that are already past the initial stages of development, and the most famous and successful (such as Y Combinator) are extremely selective about the businesses they accept into their programs. Some accelerators operate as nonprofits, though in general accelerators are more likely to have profit motives than business incubators.

4.5. Coworking centers are traditionally part of the business incubator model; as standalone entities, they are a relatively new phenomenon, and most have been founded since the Great Recession. Coworking centers are office environments in which "solopreneurs"—both aspiring and established entrepreneurs who have no or few other employees—share the costs of offices, conference rooms, IT systems, and other facilities that are cost-prohibitive for many startups. Users benefit not only from these physical features but from being able to exchange ideas with other entrepreneurs. Many coworking centers, including Slingshot in Normal, have both formal and informal connections to investors who see opportunities in these aggregations of talent.

4.6. The pop-up economy typically manifests itself as a shop or an event, although its uses go beyond these. A pop-up shop is typically a business that occupies a vacant storefront or a parking lot for a limited time. It can be a retail shop, restaurant or an art gallery. Pop-up shops give local entrepreneurs and artists a venue to test their product and the market. Pop-up events are often one-offs executed with small budgets and held in unusual or nontraditional locations to showcase those locations (e.g. particular neighborhoods or buildings). Pop-up planning, a way of implementing new ideas within the public realm temporarily, has also become very common.

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leading-edge anchor institutions and companies cluster and connect with startups, business incubators and accelerators. They are also physically compact, transit-accessible, and technically-wired and offer mixed-use housing, office, and retail." They often include shared physical spaces such as coworking and public meeting facilities to encourage collaboration and the exchange of ideas. Some have formed more or less organically; most, however, are the result of intensive, collaborative planning between local governments, businesses, and institutions.

Another model, which has become more common since the recession in 2009, is the "pop-up economy[4.6]". The ability to offset risk in a variety of ways has made the pop-up economy attractive to entrepreneurs, especially retailers, restaurateurs and artists. Pop-ups are typically located where there is demand (foot traffic). They typically start out as e-ommerce ventures before becoming pop-ups.

These temporary retail spaces improve sales tax revenues for local governments but come with their own set of complications. Traditional brick-and-mortar stores frequently disapprove of these establishments and claim that they have an undue advantage. Communities across the United States are trying to strike a balance between regulation and facilitation of these enterprises.

INFORMATION, COMMUNICATIONS AND TECHNOLOGY

The BN metro area has distinctive attributes that directly align with the locational requirements of this sector. These include:

- Access to a talent pipeline and educational opportunities.
- Multi-functional transportation networks that include highways, air, passenger and rail service.
- Attractive quality of life amenities that include schools, recreational opportunities and cultural attractions.
-

Target businesses within this sector fall into the following subsectors: Computer Systems Design (CSD) and Related Services, Custom Computer Programming Services, and Datacenters.

CSD and Related Services integrate hardware, software, and communications technology services, including office automation, LAN management, and design.

Custom Computer Programming Services (CCPS) is a very software-specific subsector. Establishments in this industry are engaged in writing, modifying, testing and supporting software.

The growth in these two subsectors is tied to other targeted industries that are increasingly reliant on technology. The costly and specialized nature these services make them great candidates for outsourcing, preferably to businesses located within the same community.

While these sub-sectors have both large and small firms, the majority are small. In 2014, about 78% of CCPS establishments employed five or fewer people. Most of these small establishments are startups hoping to capitalize on a specific market niche.

Workers in these sub-sectors tend to be young, college-educated, and in possession of up-to-date technological skills. Those who start their own companies often have experience at larger firms and have the knowledge base, networks, and business know-how to develop their own startups. These startups often provide support services to the entrepreneur's former employer or a similar client base.

The availability of clean and quiet office spaces, the ability to work on-site at the end client's facilities, and the ability to link remotely to the client's computers (which is facilitated by high-quality telecommunications infrastructure) are all important factors in where such firms locate and thrive.

Datacenters are the physical facilities used by enterprises to house computer, server and networking systems and components for the company's IT needs, which typically involve storing, processing, and serving large amounts of mission-critical data to clients in a client/server architecture. In order to achieve as close to 100% uptime as possible, datacenters usually require extensive redundant or backup power supply systems, cooling systems, networking connections, and policy-based security

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systems. There are two types of datacenters: retail or colocation centers[4.7] and cloud computing services[4.8]. There are many differences in technological offerings between these two, but the land use planning considerations are similar. While datacenters do not generate huge employment gains, they bring high-paying jobs and contribute greatly to property taxes.

Location criteria

a) Environment: A weather-resilient building (thick walls, secure foundations, and closed roofs without skylights or other openings) is of course important, but ideally a datacenter would be situated in a location where the incidence of severe weather or natural disasters is minimal—for instance, outside of floodplains and far away from fault lines. Cool weather that minimizes cooling costs is also a plus.

b) Utilities:

- Electric power (availability, cost, and redundancy): Datacenters require a great deal of power to run equipment. Access to more than one power grid enhances a potential location's profile. The maturity of the grid and fuel mix are also part of the consideration.
- Telecommunications infrastructure (availability, cost, and redundancy): Since telecommunications infrastructure is critical to datacenter operations, redundancy of infrastructure and multiple carriers are vital to minimize risk.

c) Construction and operating costs: Datacenter projects have the potential for high construction costs. Property tax rates can also have a profound impact on the location of a datacenter facility. The initial capital investment to construct and equip a datacenter, along with ongoing operating expenses (led by energy costs and property taxes), are significantly higher than for most other types of facility projects. This results in operating expenses being near the top of the list of site selection criteria.

Illinois has 79 colocation datacenters, 73 of which are in the Chicago area. There are two local colocation datacenters. A concentration of two datacenters in a relatively small market like Bloomington-Normal is noteworthy.

Local datacenter managers say...

- Access to existing office space, weather resistant building options, the availability of critical infrastructure, and relatively low maintenance costs all played a role in their choice of location in Bloomington-Normal.
- Both datacenters have significant room to grow (over 90% availability). While this is not financially detrimental to their business model, they hope to see a higher demand for their space and services.
- Obstacles cited for potential growth in this area included marketing and "lagging last mile" fiber connectivity issues, particularly to smaller businesses (their target clientele).

Planning considerations for ICT

- *Infrastructure:* In the 21st-century economy, in which many businesses are born in the cloud, access to high-speed Internet is not a luxury but critical infrastructure. The speed, quality, reliability, choice, and cost of broadband are key considerations within this sector. While there are many providers offering high-speed fiber in the BN metro area, the same quality fiber availability to end users such as small businesses or residences is lacking. This lagging last mile is a critical infrastructure issue that needs to be addressed in order for businesses in this sector to thrive.
- *Entrepreneurial ecosystem:* With the majority of firms employing five or fewer people, this sector has a high concentration of small to mid-size firms. Availability of clean and quiet office space and an entrepreneurial ecosystem are key to the success of these sectors.
- *Urban environments:* In recent years, this industry has begun to thrive in mixed-use urban

Related Definitions

4.7. Retail or colocation datacenters house many companies simultaneously. Companies lease space for IT equipment in flexible increments: by the rack or partial rack/cabinet. In other words, these are outsourced locations for companies' own hardware or software.

4.8. Cloud computing is the latest technological revolution in data storage and services. A cloud provides turnkey solutions with managed services, the hardware, and the software for a monthly fee.

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environments (such as Uptown) rather than isolated office complexes.

Additional considerations for datacenters

- Marketing: Datacenters tend to cluster with other datacenters. Bloomington-Normal's profile as a datacenter hub needs to be elevated for existing datacenters to thrive and for new ones to locate here. BN Advantage identified the need to attract a large, name-brand datacenter to the region.
- Land use and zoning considerations: These establishments can be noisy (depending on the size and design), and are typically located away from residential uses in intense commercial or light industrial zones.

AGRIBUSINESS

"Agribusiness" refers to any businesses involving farming and farm products (inputs, production or outputs). McLean County is a natural fit for a strong agribusiness sector. McLean County's advantages in this sector include:

- A long-established agricultural history
- A regional agriculture-based talent pool
- Multi-faceted transportation facilities that can easily tap into national and worldwide markets
- The presence of established educational facilities considered national and world leaders in agricultural education, both in the community and within an hour's drive

Noting McLean County's lead role in the state as a corn and soybean producer, BN Advantage urges support for this industry, including funding for improvements to roads, bridges and other transportation infrastructure, a lynchpin of growth and prosperity for this and other sectors. Along with supporting commodity production, BN Advantage identifies sub-sectors for targeted growth in the county: food processing and distribution, local food system, and agricultural biosciences (precision ag, renewable energy).

Food processing, in simple terms, is the transformation of raw ingredients, by physical or chemical means, into food, or of food into other forms. Processed foods can be placed on a continuum that ranges from minimally processed items such as bread to more complex preparations. Similarly, the food processing industry can range from a small operation washing and packing salad greens to a major operation preparing "ready-to-eat" foods such as cereals or carbonated beverages.

Businesses producing food at the "minimal" end of the food processing continuum might include home-based "cottage food" operations that produce baked goods, jams, etc. on a small scale. (The Illinois Cottage Food Operation Act allows certain types of foods prepared at home to be sold at local farmers' markets, though there are limits on the amount of sales revenue cottage food producers are permitted to take in.)

Value-added agriculture generally entails changing a raw agricultural product into something new through cooling, drying, extracting, or any other process that adds value to the original raw commodity. This can be understood as the next level on the food processing continuum. Examples in McLean County include Ropp Jersey Cheese, the DESTIHL restaurant and microbrewery, Rader Farms, and White Oak Vineyards. Value-added agriculture typically targets niche markets where smaller farmers can be most successful.

Both cottage food producers and small- to medium-scale value-added agriculture businesses face the same general challenges other entrepreneurs face, including organizing, marketing their businesses, obtaining financial assistance, and navigating the regulatory environment. In addition, these businesses need facilities to safely process, pack, and label their products to support their growth.

Finally, the "highly processed" end of the continuum includes large businesses in which processed foods are designed and mass-produced as industrial products. These enterprises are not engaged in farming, though they use farm products as raw materials. Many have their own research and development operations and use technology to achieve certain flavors, shelf stability, or other desirable qualities.

These enterprises are essentially manufacturers and thus have different needs from smaller food processors. As research in agriculture continues to grow, many new products are being developed using corn, beans, and livestock as raw

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materials (all of which can be found in McLean County). Several major food manufacturers are located in the state of Illinois. As evidenced by the presence of prosperous food manufacturers such as Nestle USA, McLean County has the ability to attract new food manufactures to the county. BN Advantage recommends focusing on meat/poultry processing, snacks that use corn and soy products, confectionery, and other food manufacturing to build on this existing cluster.

Location criteria for food processing or manufacturing: The International City/County Management Association (ICMA) has published the following guidelines for making a community appealing to this industry.

- Site requirements: a quality industrial park with light industrial neighboring uses, good highway accessibility, an assortment of rail and non-rail properties, third-party cold storage facilities, and the presence of other food processors in the area.
- Utility requirements: a nearby electricity substation with excess capacity; natural gas lines at property boundaries; quality, reliable water with strong pressure and excess capacity for potential expansion; and a sewer system with the capacity to accept high volumes of effluent and room for potential expansion.

Like other industries, the food processing industry is facing increasing costs of doing business. Water and wastewater treatment costs, energy costs, and available incentives all play a role in their site selection processes.

Local Food System: From jobs to community development to health and quality of life, local food offers many important community benefits. According to the US Department of Agriculture (USDA), there is no consensus on what constitutes a "local food system" in terms of the geographic distance between production and consumption. But defining "local" based on marketing arrangements, such as farmers selling directly to consumers, is well recognized.

The Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture at Iowa State University identified local food systems as one of the fastest-growing, most promising markets in agriculture. BN Advantage

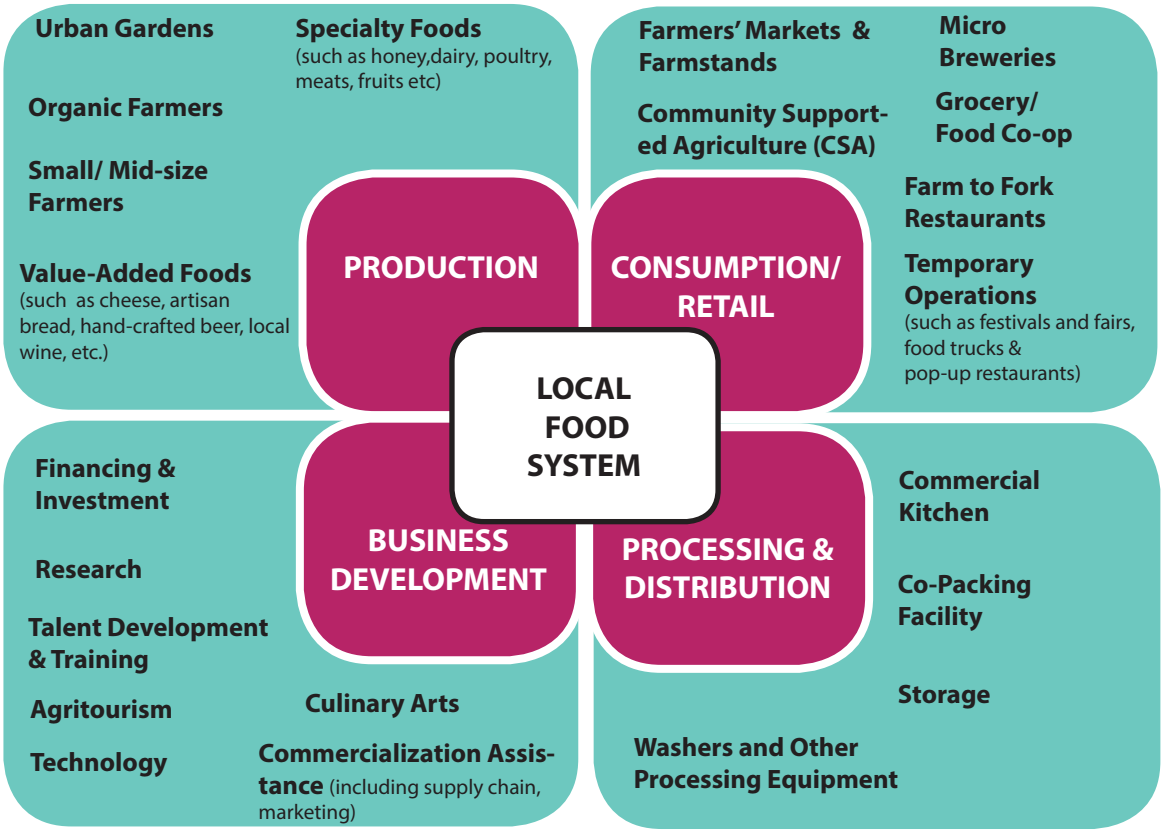

Figure 1.4.4. Components of local food systems and their interrelationships

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urges the community to capitalize on the growing locavore (a person interested in eating food that is locally produced) concept and support local food, including but not limited to culinary arts, agri-tourism, value-added food processing, vineyards and local wines.

There is a strong local food movement and a growing local food presence in Bloomington-Normal and McLean County. Organic farms, specialty crops, farmers markets, urban farms, community-supported agriculture, farm-to-fork restaurants, a growing wine industry, microbreweries, meat, poultry, cheese and honey are just a few of the local foods and food-related businesses that can be found in Bloomington-Normal.

However, there are many gaps in McLean County's local food system. While it is difficult to neatly model the complexities of local food systems, Figure 1.4.4 illustrates four essential components (production, consumption/retail, processing and distribution, and business development) that must be present to connect local food producers to consumers. No one component is more critical than the others, and gaps in any part of the system affect the whole.

Recognizing the deficiencies in McLean County's local food system, in 2010 Heartland Community College (HCC), in cooperation with the Edible Economy project, sought to establish a network of food hubs[4.9] to help farmers bridge the gap between themselves and consumers. This effort was funded by the USDA's Rural Business Enterprise Grant. Unfortunately, progress on this important initiative stalled when the grant expired.

In 2012, another grassroots movement began to close certain gaps in the supply chain. A group of committed individuals in Bloomington-Normal began working toward building a food cooperative[4.10] called Green Top Grocery (GTG). In its 4th year, GTG has over 1,000 owners and is in the final phase of fundraising to build its store. When completed, this store will provide another venue for both farmers and consumers to sell and buy local food. While GTG will help bridge a few gaps in the system, it does not address all the existing gaps.

Local food systems have far-reaching economic impacts. Businesses in this arena create a variety of jobs, both full-time and part-time, using both skilled and unskilled workers. They create local retail and commerce, and they help diversify the economy. Local food systems also contribute to a progressive culture that tends to appeal to Millennials. Other target subsectors such as food processing (at smaller scales) are also dependent on the community's ability to provide the necessary framework for a local food system to develop. Such a critical framework cannot rely solely on grants or grassroots efforts for support and stability. Public and private sector investments in this area are crucial to build the necessary infrastructure.

Agribiosciences: This emerging field relies heavily on research and technology and has applications spread across many industry sectors. Noting McLean County's lead role in corn and soybean production, robust transportation infrastructure, market access, universities, and the presence of existing industry, BN Advantage recommends Precision Agriculture and Biotechnology (including bioenergy) as suitable targets for McLean County.

Related Definitions

4.9. Food Hub: USDA defines a local food hub as "a business or organization that is actively coordinating the aggregation, distribution, and marketing of source-identified locally grown food products from primarily small to mid-sized producers."

4.10. Food Co-Op or Cooperative Grocery is like a grocery store except that it is member-owned, -operated, and -financed. It purchases food directly from producers and sells it to members and the general public. Most co-ops sell local, organic foods and operate under democratically defined "social responsibility" principles. Food co-ops play an important role in local food systems by offering alternatives to large grocery store chains, which typically offer few local options.

4.11. Food Innovation Districts (FIDs) are innovation districts that focus solely on local food systems. FIDs contain clusters of firms and institutions providing storage, processing, distribution, markets, and food business incubators, allowing local food producers to close the gaps between themselves and consumers. Aside from the clustering benefits of locating these mutually reinforcing entities in one place, an explicitly defined and strongly promoted FID could act as a focus and a force multiplier for public and private development and marketing efforts.

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Precision agriculture integrates information technology and data to improve agricultural production decisions. The prolific presence of this technology in agricultural implements (such as tractors) makes it nearly impossible for farmers to not use it at some level. However, the McLean County Farm Bureau estimates that only about 30% of area farmers fully utilize the technology to improve their farm productivity and enhance profitability.

The power of precision agriculture technologies throughout the supply chain is not yet fully exploited. There are numerous entrepreneurship opportunities in this arena.

Biotechnology: Merriam-Webster defines biotechnology as "the manipulation (as through genetic engineering) of living organisms or their components to produce useful, usually commercial products (as pest resistant crops, new bacterial strains, or novel pharmaceuticals)". Biotechnology is not limited to agriculture, but it is ingrained in all aspects of agriculture, from food to biofuels, and a region with excellent agricultural resources is in a good position to contribute to and benefit from this field.

BN Advantage underscores the potential for growth in this area and recommends convening a task force to examine the potential of advancing the region as a prime market for agricultural biosciences and biotechnology.

Given the emerging nature of this technology and its wide array of uses, defining the land, building and infrastructure needs is impossible until the aforementioned task force is convened and parameters further narrowed down.

Planning considerations for Agribusiness

- *Farmland protection*: McLean County is the largest county in Illinois and is home to some of the world's richest, most fertile and productive soils. McLean County ranks #1 in the state in the total market value of agricultural products sold. Limiting urban sprawl and protecting the county's rich and productive farmland should be a major priority.
- *Transportation infrastructure*: McLean County has major road, rail, and air transportation connections that are critical to the growth of agribusiness and other industries in the area. In addition, there are nearly 2,000 miles of rural roads and over 600 bridges. Maintaining rural transportation facilities in good condition is essential to connect producers to markets, accelerating the movement of agricultural products from farm fields to local and regional intermodal shipping hubs.
- *Food processing*: The BN metro area has many sites that fulfill the site selection criteria identified for this industry. The cost and availability of water and wastewater treatment capacity need to be carefully assessed for this sector.
- *Local food system*: Most of the jobs in this area are entrepreneurial in nature and need support. Businesses in this sector have specialized space needs. These include kitchen incubators, storage and processing facilities, year-round markets, etc. Like businesses in other industries, they benefit from proximity to each other (clustering).

Many communities across United States are making local food central to their economic development strategies and designating special geographic districts focused on food. This approach facilitates branding the area as the "place to be for all things food" —in other words, food-based placemaking. Communities use existing tools such as Overlay Zones and Planned Unit Developments (see definitions in Land Use and Development chapter), or create entirely new zoning districts to encourage a broad array of uses within such a district.

Food Innovation Districts[4.11] in Michigan are a great example of how *producer-oriented elements* (storage, distribution, processing, and other services needed to move produce from farms to consumers), c*ommunity-oriented elements* (such as education and local food purchasing programs) and *placemaking elements* (such as restaurants, pop-up restaurants, festivals and fairs) can, when brought together, accomplish the desired economic outcomes.

- *Precision agriculture*: The growth of businesses in this area greatly overlaps with other targeted sectors (see ICT and Entrepreneurship).

TRANSPORTATION AND LOGISTICS

The Transportation and Logistics industry is critical to moving goods both domestically and

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internationally. The services provided within this sector include transportation carriers, warehousing and storage, packing, customs, clearance, and freight forwarding services. Pressures to increase efficiency and cut costs in the supply chain, along with technology advancements, have forced many businesses to outsource these services. This provides huge opportunities for growth in this sector.

The BN metro's many attributes position the area well to attract and retain businesses in this sector. These include:

- Strategic location in the state
- Multiple modes of transportation (three interstates, two major rail carriers, and a regional airport)
- Market access (78 million customers and a major manufacturing base within a one-day trucking distance)
- Lower operating costs compared to other major transportation hubs like Chicago
- State-level focus on the transportation and logistics industry

The sector includes many aspects of transportation such as providing transportation of passengers and cargo, warehousing and storage for goods, scenic and sightseeing transportation, and support activities related to modes of transportation. Establishments in these industries use transportation equipment, or transportation-related facilities, as productive assets. The type of equipment depends on the mode of transportation.

There is some established base of trucking and warehousing in the county that primarily supports the agricultural industry. There is also an existing employment base at the Bloomington-Normal Airport Authority. Targeted subsectors in this area were identified to complement existing clusters. Those include:

1. **Warehousing and storage:** These businesses are primarily engaged in operating warehousing and storage facilities for general merchandise, refrigerated goods, and other warehouse products. These establishments provide facilities to store goods. They do not sell the goods they handle. These establishments take responsibility for storing the goods and keeping them secure. They may also provide a range of services, often referred to as logistics services and related to the distribution of goods. Logistics services can include labeling, breaking bulk (extraction of a portion of cargo), inventory control and management, light assembly, order entry and fulfillment, packaging, pick and pack, price marking and ticketing, and transportation arrangement.
2. **Support services for transportation:** Industries in this subsector provide services that support transportation, including air, rail, water, road, freight, and other activities.

Technology has produced a wide range of innovations in logistics, including barcode scanning, automated storage and retrieval systems, state-of-the-art material handling equipment, computerized freight tracking, voice recognition

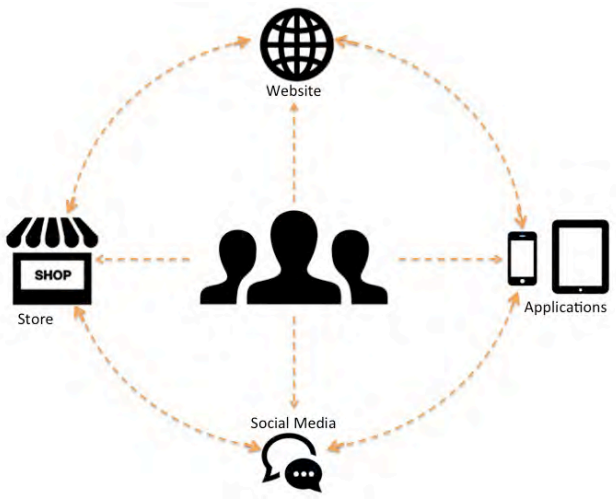
Related Definitions

4.12. Just-In-Time (JIT) is an inventory strategy companies employ to increase efficiency and decrease waste by receiving goods only as they are needed in the production process, thereby reducing inventory costs.

4.13. Omni-channeling is a multichannel sales approach that provides the customer with a seamless shopping experience, whether shopping online (desktop or mobile device), by telephone, or in a brick-and-mortar store .

4.14. E-commerce refers to any commercial transactions done electronically

4.15. Click and collect means you can pick up on a day and at a time that suits you.



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and advanced communications systems, and the automated purchasing, production and sales systems that support just-in-time [4.12] inventories and distribution, making it one of the fastest growing subsectors in this industry. Other growing trends in this sector include omni-channeling[4.13], e-commerce[4.14] and click and collect[4.15].

The Commodity Flow & Logistics Assessment, conducted by St. Onge Engineering Company in 2005, indicates that the BN metro area has a distinct advantage in connecting the northern cluster of interstate highways (I-90, I-94, I-80, and I-88) to the central cluster of interstate highways (I-74, I-55, I-70, and I-57). The I-39 Corridor is the most connected in the country for domestic and international trade.

The region also benefits from the surrounding intermodal rail hubs in Joliet, Rochelle and Decatur, which allow, for example, commodities coming in from the Pacific Rim via water ports to be put on trains and routed around Chicago to avoid severe rail congestion. Central Illinois Regional Airport, located in Bloomington-Normal, provides yet another vector by which perishables or smaller goods can gain access to regional markets.



One limitation on e-commerce in Bloomington-Normal and McLean County is the lack of manufacturing and population density compared to other areas like Chicago, Indianapolis or St. Louis. In addition, the model, based on omni-channeling, is pushing distribution facilities to be closer to urban centers to reduce the lead time for delivery to 12 hours or less.

Location criteria

- Site and Building: Many operations require at least 50 contiguous developable acres, with a few operations spanning up to 250 acres. The topography should be relatively flat and out of the floodplain. Typical warehouse facilities can be up to one million square feet with 30-foot-plus ceiling clearances and many truck doors to accommodate higher stacked pallets and the rapid movement of goods. As the movement of freight within distribution centers accelerates, cross-docking is also growing in importance. With cross-docking, goods come in one door and go out another with minimal delay. A package that might have once spent five days in a distribution center is now processed through in 24 hours or less.
- Multimodal access: The growth of intermodal service, i.e., containers and truck trailers carried on trains over long distances, has meant additional options for cost-conscious shippers as fewer distribution centers are needed to cover much larger areas. While interstate and highway access is critical, sites served by rail, or in close proximity to rail that have the capability of access by a spur, have a competitive advantage. Major highway visibility can be a plus.

  Air transportation is important for some businesses, especially for operations handling products with a limited shelf life that are needed in the "click and collect" model and those with limited weight whose shipping costs are relatively low. Surface access within 60 minutes to a commercial airport with jet service is preferred.
- Infrastructure: While the availability of electricity, gas, water and sewer are all important, the expanding use of technology for daily logistics operations places greater importance on the technology infrastructure a site can offer.

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- Proximity to support facilities such as trucking companies, truck mechanics, and other service providers; technology, computer, and telecom specialists; temporary staffing services; office and industrial supply warehouses; and courier services are important as well.

Planning considerations

- Infrastructure: The costs of building and maintaining transportation infrastructure have grown consistently over the last few decades while revenues have been falling. Addressing these challenges faced by federal, state, and local governments in terms of funding infrastructure needs is critical for the economy as a whole, but particularly for this sector.
- Regional transportation planning: Regional transportation plans should take into account freight-generating land uses, evaluate the regional transportation networks carefully, and have a dedicated freight plan or strategy. However, in the past, reliable freight data for McLean County has been difficult to access, and the freight management discussion in the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) is severely lacking in specificity. Currently MCRPC is updating the LRTP for McLean County. EDC's task force on the Transportation and Logistics sector and other entities interested in promoting this sector should become more involved in facilitating better freight information and planning.
- Land use and zoning: Due to high-volume truck traffic and potential continuous, round-the-clock operations, noise and lighting levels can become a concern. These uses should be located away from sensitive uses such as schools and residences. Direct access via an interstate interchanges and routes designated for trucks would be ideal. If such an arrangement is not possible, travel to and from the highway should avoid congested commercial, retail corridor or residential streets. The comprehensive plan should consider the competing land requirements of this sector and the agribusiness sector and encourage transportation and logistics businesses to be sited so as not to impinge on productive agricultural land.
- Environmental: Freight-related uses could potentially have negative air quality impacts. The Ecology Action Center (EAC), in its Greenhouse Gas Inventory (2014), points out that private transportation accounts for 98% of greenhouse gas emissions. The BN metro area is currently classified as an "attainment area," meaning that measured levels of the primary pollutants fall below the levels that violate air quality standards set by United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). Although the region has not yet reached the level of "non-attainment," it fluctuates close to it (see the Air Quality section in Chapter 1.5 Infrastructure and Public Safety). Such a designation would mean additional regulatory requirements at many levels, for both public and private entities.

ADVANCED BUSINESS SERVICES (ABS)

ABS encompasses financial and insurance services, shared service centers, back office operations, customer-contact centers and other strategic business functions that are value- and cost-driven. Major corporations like State Farm and Country Financial are headquartered in Bloomington-Normal, boosting the concentration, Location Quotient (LQ) of this industry to nearly seven times higher than the national average. In certain subsectors, LQ is as high as 32.

Given the long history and high concentrations of this sector in BN Metro area, there is a good understanding of the site, building, and infrastructure needs of this sector. Therefore, additional analysis has not been conducted.

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TOWN OF NORMAL ECONOMIC SNAPSHOT

While the Town's economic future is intertwined with that of the rest of the BN metro area, its ability to provide infrastructure, services, and land determines its tax base and sets the stage for economic development within the Town's corporate limits.

This section examines major employers, the Town's revenue sources and expenses, and potential development and redevelopment opportunities to gauge its ability to attract new businesses and to retain and grow existing businesses.

EMPLOYMENT BASE

The largest employers in the Town comprise a mix of education, healthcare, manufacturing, and government sectors. Excluding manufacturing, these sectors are known for their stability and growth over time. Four are publicly funded, including Illinois State University (ISU), Unit #5 Schools, Heartland Community College, and the Town of Normal.

Given that America's aging population needs medical care, and the knowledge economy of the 21st century demands an increasingly skilled and educated workforce, universities and hospitals ("Eds and Meds") are frequently characterized as essential pillars for stable local and regional economies. Both are personal service industries that require face-to-face interaction. Many refer to them as locationally "sticky" as they are unlikely to uproot themselves or outsource jobs.

While Eds and Meds do not themselves increase property tax revenue (they are typically tax-exempt), they do positively impact the neighboring property values and also act as anchors of employment. Both provide specialized and high-paying jobs, contributing greatly to the growth and stability of the communities in which they are located. The significant presence of these pillars is an indication of long-term stability in Normal and is reflected in the Town's population growth (See Chapter 1.2: Demographics and Projections).

However, the recent budget impasse at the state level has had a significant negative impact on many higher education institutions throughout Illinois, threatening some public universities' existence. While ISU is positioned to absorb the worst of the impact, the impasse has certainly made operations much more difficult.

Table 1.4.2. Major employers in Normal

Illinois State University	3,289
Unit 5 Schools	1,576
Advocate Bromenn Medical Center	791
Bridgestone/ Firestone Off Road Tire Co.	435
Town of Normal	371
Heartland Community College	308
The Baby Fold	277

* Mitsubishi Motors, which employed over 1,200 employees, ceased local operations in late 2015.

Source: Extracted from the Economic Development Council of the Bloomington-Normal Area's 2014 demographic profile.

FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT

The Town's Finance Department creates an annual Financial Trends and Conditions Report (hereafter "the Trends Report") that examines the current fiscal year in the context of historical information. That report discusses a variety of issues that impact the Town's finances either directly or indirectly. The report is divided into the following sections:

- *Community Growth* examines assessed property values by type, construction permits, average home sale prices, usage of Central Illinois Regional Airport and Amtrak, and labor force issues.
- *Revenue* analyzes and discusses trends in the Town's revenue sources.
- *Expenses* discuss all the Town's expenses, with the primary focus on Fire, Police and personnel costs.
- The *Balance Sheet* examines all funds and cash balances.
- The *Fiscal Strategy Review* provides a forward-looking review of the Town's major fiscal operations and how they align with financial management strategies.

The following findings from the Trends Report (FY 2014-2015) are particularly relevant to the Comprehensive Plan:

- **Community Growth:** The report noted a mixed outlook in this area. The Town saw mini-

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Figure 1.4.6. Assessed values ($ millions)

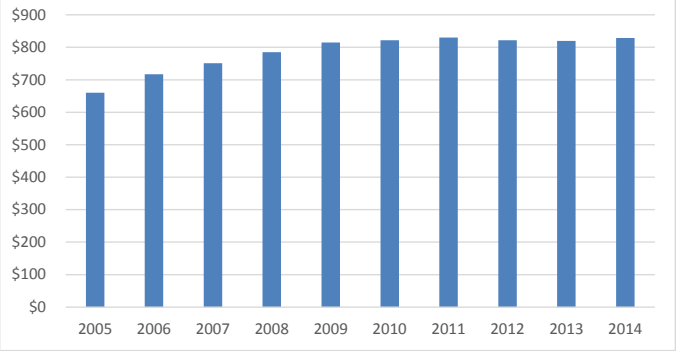


Figure 1.4.7. Average home prices in BN metro

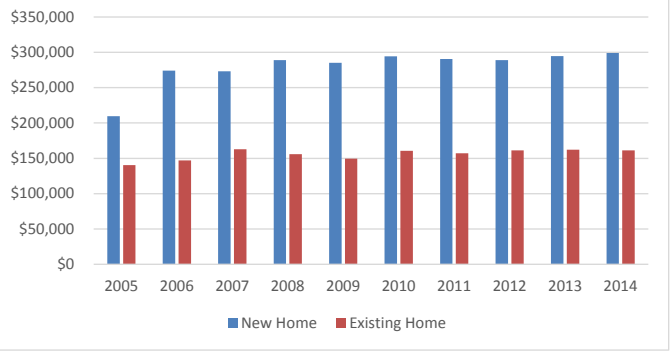


Figure 1.4.8. Revenue Sources

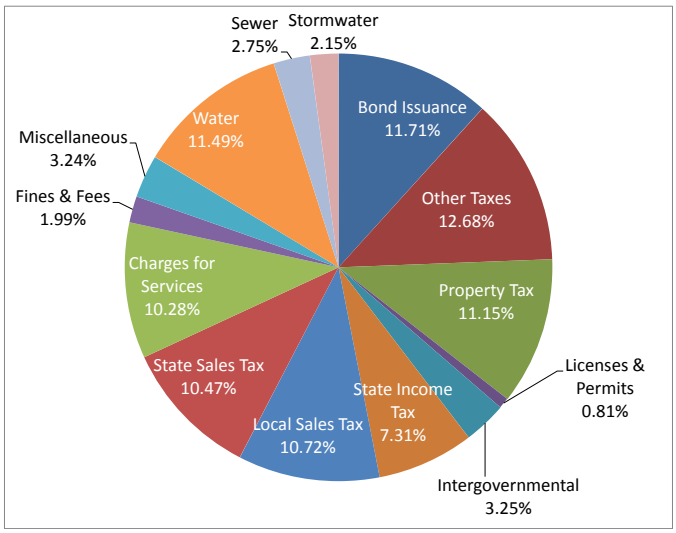


Figure 1.4.9. Expenses

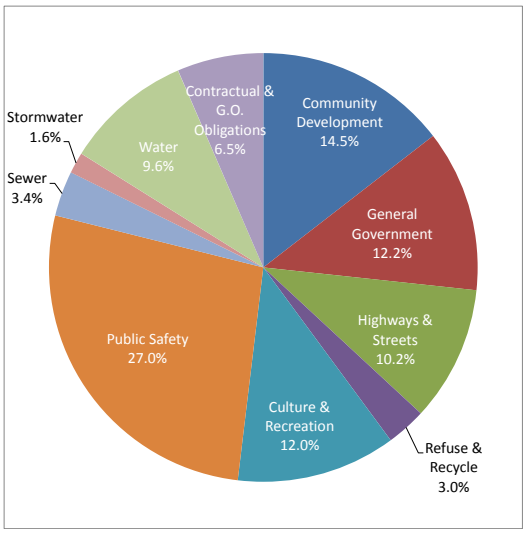


Figure 1.4.10. Municipal property tax rates

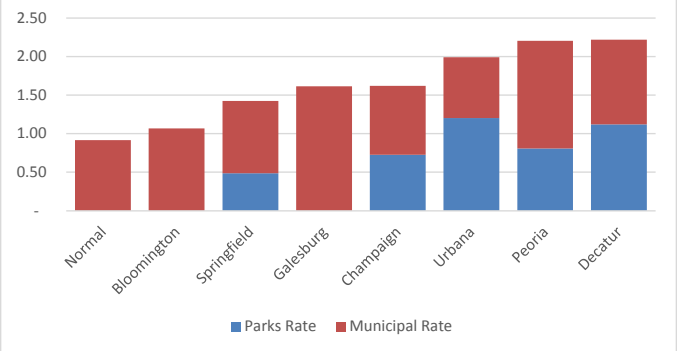
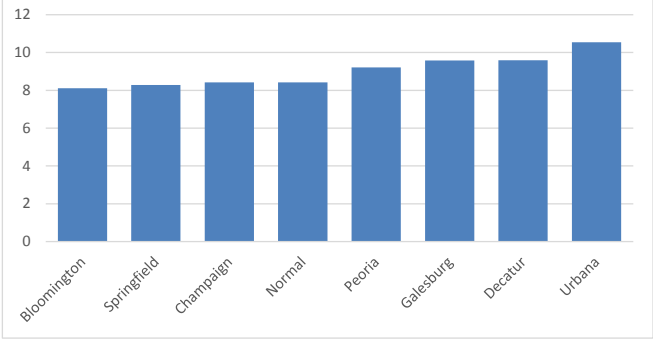


Figure 1.4.11. Community property tax rates



Some cities have parks and recreation operations that are funded through a separate taxing district. The graph above has combined the park districts (blue portion of the graph) with the appropriate city for an accurate tax rate comparison between cities with a park district and cities that provide those services without a separate tax levy.

Source: Town of Normal Financial Trends and Conditions Report

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mal growth (1%) in assessed values (see Figure 1.4.6). Residential values made up nearly 68% of assessed value, while commercial properties accounted for around 30%.

Not counting roof permits, overall construction permits were down 37% compared to the year prior. Average home prices in the metro area remained flat (also see Chapter 1.3: Land Use and Development).

The report stated that the current unemployment rate is low, but noted that the Mitsubishi plant closure and the continued drop in the size of the workforce at the county level add an element of uncertainty to the Town's employment outlook.

- **Revenue:** The Town's revenue sources remained relatively diverse (see Figure 1.4.8). Sales tax receipts (state and local combined) were by far the largest source of revenue. Receipts rebounded from recession-era lows, and staff predicted mild but continued growth in this revenue source.

  The property tax accounted for about 11% of the Town's revenue. The Town's property tax rate was the lowest among the seven largest downstate cities (see Figure 1.4.10). The overall community's property tax rate, which includes all government districts that assess a property tax within the municipality, also remained lower by comparison (see Figure 1.4.11).

  After three years of steady growth post-recession, the report noted fairly flat income tax revenue (<1% increase) in FY 2015 and expressed caution due to financial concerns at the state level.

  "Other taxes" are mostly made up of utility taxes and the food and beverage tax. Utility tax revenue was significantly lower than the years past. Staff projected lackluster performance in this area going forward. However, staff noted a strong performance in the revenue stream from the food and beverage tax and expects to see this grow in the future.
- **Expenditures:** Public safety (27%) accounts for the largest percentage of expenditures (see Figure 1.4.9). Included within public safety are the Police and Fire Departments and Inspections. Community development expenses include Uptown redevelopment projects.
- **Balance sheets:** The General Fund, Pension Funds and Water Fund performances are reported as positive. The sewer fund, while solvent, was identified as not financially strong. The report notes that staff plans to undertake a comprehensive rate structure study.

This annual analysis carefully monitors the Town's financial performance and provides policymakers important financial information in a historical context while also alerting them of potential upcoming issues before they become too huge to tackle. The Town's strong financial practices have afforded it strong ratings from all three national investment services (Moody's, S&P, and Fitch). Such high ratings help the Town get better interest rates when they issue or reissue bonds for redevelopment or other projects critical for community development.

Some of the economic uncertainties identified by the Trends Report (such as flat home prices and the drop in the size of the workforce) are regional in nature and not specific to Normal. These are currently being examined at a regional level as part of the BN Advantage project, in which the Town is an active participant.

Approximately 27% of the Town's properties are tax-exempt (see Chapter 1.3 Land Use and Development). While it is not unusual to see such a high proportion of tax-exempt properties in university towns, Normal is somewhat unusual in that its property tax rates are lower than in other university and non-university towns (see Figure 1.4.10). The fact that the Town has been able to keep property taxes low despite having an abundance of tax-exempt properties is partly a reflection of the strong local economic base, but also the Town's sound fiscal management. One point of concern is that a relatively high percentage of the Town's assessed value (68%) is tied to residential properties. Because the revenue generated by residential uses merely offsets the cost of providing services to residents, it may be necessary to carefully examine future land use and vacancy rates to achieve a fiscally optimal land use mix.

Relatively low property tax rates and a strong financial position allow for a lower cost of living and doing business within the Town of Normal. Many stakeholders interviewed for this project

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call Normal (and its leaders) forward-thinking and visionary. Several interviewees also commended the Town for its Uptown redevelopment efforts and their impact on the community's brand (see stakeholder input in section 2: Community Outreach). These stakeholder impressions are a reflection of community satisfaction with the Town and bode well for future growth prospects.

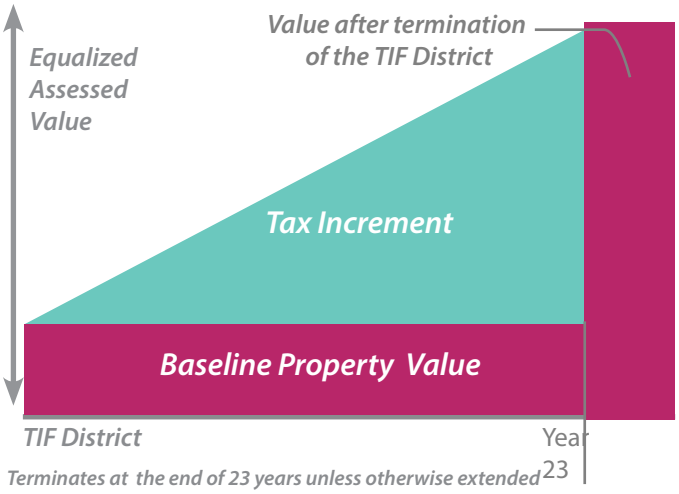
REDEVELOPMENT AND INCENTIVES

As outlined in the previous chapters, the Town of Normal has a proven history of successful redevelopment. While Uptown Normal continues to be the most notable project, there are many other development and redevelopment projects throughout the community (e.g., the Shoppes at College Hills and numerous projects along Main Street).

It is common for municipalities to offer incentives to existing or potential businesses to persuade them to build, stay, or expand within their boundaries. The Town has used a variety of tools, including tax increment financing (TIF), sales and property tax abatements, an enterprise zone,

Related Definitions

4.16. Tax Increment Financing (TIF) districts are created to fund economic development projects in areas where development would not otherwise occur. Property tax revenue derived from increases in property value that occur after the district is established, or the "tax increment," is used to fund projects within that district. The Town of Normal currently has five (5) active TIF districts: One Normal Plaza, Main/Osage, Main/I-55, North Normal Warehouse, and Uptown Normal. Some encompass wide areas; others are site-specific (also see Map 1.4.1).



4.17. Sales tax rebates are used to attract or retain sales tax-generating developments like shopping centers, auto dealerships, discount stores, and home improvement stores. This is a popular tool among Illinois municipalities, as sales tax revenues often exceed the costs of serving these developments.

4.18. Property tax abatements: Any district that extends a property tax can abate (or decrease) any portion of its taxes for certain properties. In McLean County, there are well over 100 taxing districts. Implementation of property tax abatements requires municipalities and counties to solicit the participation of underlying districts, such as school districts and townships, if they wish to abate their share of property taxes, or a portion thereof. Property tax abatements are often used for projects that generate jobs, such as commercial or industrial developments, or projects that improve the quality of life in the community, such as affordable or low-income housing.

4.19. Development agreements are contracts between municipalities and developers that set the standards and conditions that govern the development of propertie. They provide certainty to both the developer and the municipality. Cities use these agreements to ensure higher design and development standards, provide for infrastructure improvements and public open space, and much more.

4.20. Enterprise zone: Businesses located (or those that choose to locate) in a designated enterprise zone can become eligible to obtain special state and local tax incentives, thus providing an economic stimulus to an area that would otherwise be neglected. Map 1.4.1 shows the boundaries of the Bloomington-Normal enterprise zone. This zone is regional and spans the BN metro area and beyond. The enterprise zone has been instrumental in spurring a great deal of economic activity in the community. The current zone is set to expire in June 2016. The BN metro area's enterprise zone renewal application is currently under review by the state.

4.21. Metro-zone is an agreement between Normal and Bloomington that was approved in 1984 to provide for orderly and planned growth and development on the West Side of the Community. This agreement calls for the host city to share certain revenues (property tax, utility tax, sales tax, use tax, income tax, and any other tax, license and fee), deducting the costs incurred from the development located in that zone. This zone was instrumental in attracting Diamond Star (later Mitsubishi Motors), a car manufacturing business, to the community and continues to be a great example of regional cooperation.

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a metro-zone, and development agreements (see related definitions 4.16 through 4.20) to bring high quality growth and development into the community. In some cases, more than one tool has been used to attract the kind of development that fits the Town's and region's long-term vision.

Many economic development projects that may have been viable in the past without public sector assistance are no longer possible. The result of the financial crisis of 2008 and 2009 is a dramatic decline in credit availability and a tightening of underwriting criteria, which have reduced the level of economic development activity at a time when it is most needed by municipalities.

Those same economic conditions also limit discretionary spending by local governments. While local governments continue to provide incentives in recognition that significant new economic development is unlikely or will occur very slowly without them, they must be very judicious and see a need for creative solutions to balance financial risk.

At this juncture, many local governments are redefining their economic incentives to suit the new economy. The Town of Normal is at the forefront of such an effort. The International Economic Development Council, in its publication *Incentives for the 21st Century* (2015), published the following best practices to promote startups and small businesses, many of which can be seen in action in Normal.

- **Financial:** Financial incentives for entrepreneurs are not tied to an increase in property taxes or the number of jobs created, but rather to foster sole proprietorship, keep small businesses alive, and increase the number of corporate "headquarters" within the community. The incentives include loans for startups and small businesses, equity investment programs, mentorship and accelerator programs, small-business-only incentive programs, impact investment programs, increasing growth-company embeddedness, angel investment tax credits, and complimentary business services (see Related Definitions 4.22 to 4.27).
- **Placemaking:** An overwhelming body of research suggests that the physical and cultural characteristics of a place have a clear influence on the attraction and retention of talent, businesses, and investment. The report states that places where residents have a strong emotional connection to their community also have the highest rates of GDP growth. One example cited in the report is the Lower Town Artist Relocation Program in Paducah, Kentucky, where artists led the revitalization of a derelict neighborhood, generating higher rents and property values. Historic preservation is also an important component of distinctive places. Communities use a variety of incentives to help preserve historic structures.
- **Smart growth:** Smart growth is the effort to promote compact development patterns that facilitate the usage of public transit, bicycling, or walking between housing, workplaces, retail, and other amenities. Although smart growth is not the same as placemaking, developments that follow smart growth principles often have qualities that make them attractive as places. Smart growth is thus an important factor in attracting young professionals.

  The report highlights high business densities in smart growth environments and notes their positive economic impact. Just a one percent increase in regional business density can increase GDP by as much as 38 percent, reduce unemployment by as much as 20 percent, and increase patents by as much as 52 percent.

  Incentives to promote smart growth include live/work units, employer-assisted housing (EAH), zoning bonuses, as-of-right zoning, tax and fee exemptions, expedited permits for infill, reduced parking requirements, reassessment of fee structures, ride share programs, and transit-oriented development (TOD) tax credits (see Related Definitions 4.30 to 4.36).
- **Energy efficiency assistance:** Energy represents a significant business cost. In certain energy-intensive industries, such as manufacturing and datacenters, the cost of doing business is even higher. This study points out that LEED-certified buildings afford businesses lower operating costs.

  Communities offer a range of incentives in this area. Examples cited in the report include the City of Redmond, WA, which offers dedicated staff time to offer technical assistance and

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Related Definitions

4.22. Equity investments: The community (public/private partnership) creates seed funds. The equity made by those funds is invested in entrepreneurs or small businesses. These are typically targeted towards startups that have moved beyond the concept stage.

4.23. Small-business-only incentive programs: These are tax credit and grant programs specifically geared toward small businesses. Example: Kentucky's Small Business Tax Credit is available only to businesses with fewer than 50 employees.

4.24. Increasing growth company embeddedness: The owners of growth-oriented companies often aim to sell their companies to larger firms, and purchasers often move stage 2 operations closer to their headquarters. This strategy aims to keep them local. Example: Michigan's Entrepreneur in Residence Program.

4.25. Impact investment is a private sector investment to spur for-profit, community-oriented venture capital funds. The idea is for local venture capitalists to fund local ventures.

4.26. Angel investment tax credits: These have the potential to create a vibrant angel investment community, and in turn, provide an additional source of financing for entrepreneurs. Many of these are created at the state level. For example, the Illinois Angel Investment Credit Program allocated $10 million in tax credits annually from 2011-2016. The program offers a tax credit to qualifying claimants in an amount equal to 25% of the claimant's investment made directly in a qualified new business venture. It is unfortunate that only two McLean County businesses, Prairie Gold Inc. and SproutEcon, LLC., have benefited from this program thus far. According to the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, $7,976,256.65 is available in this program for FY 2016.

4.27. Complimentary business services: An alternative approach to assisting startup companies is to give entrepreneurs free or low-cost business services that would otherwise cost entrepreneurs significant amounts of money. For example, the City of Hamilton, Ontario gives entrepreneurs free meeting space and access to a group of volunteer lawyers, real estate agents, and accountants.

4.28. Relocation incentives are a new twist on workforce incentives. Instead of increasing the skills of current residents, relocation incentives focus on attracting skilled workers from elsewhere. Example: Kansas Rural Opportunity Zones (ROZ).

4.29. Leveraging local talent: Some programs work to ensure that locals are hired into at least some of the jobs at an incentivized business. Example: The Central Market and Tenderloin Area Payroll Expense Tax Exclusion in San Francisco, California.

4.30. A live-work unit is a way of referring to a building that is both the residence and place of business of the owner.

4.31. Employer-assisted housing help employees live close to work, which reduces their commute time and allows for a greater choice in transportation modes. In such an arrangement, the employer will contribute to the down payment when an employee purchases a home in the designated district. In turn, the employer will receive a tax benefit while also helping increase homeownership in their surroundings. Many communities in Illinois including Evanston, St. Charles, and Chicago have these programs. REACH Illinois, a not-for-profit organization, helps Illinois communities navigate the legal, technical, and financial aspects of the program.

4.32. Zoning bonuses for business uses allow for greater lot coverage and height for employment uses in designated compact development areas, such as near rail stations.

4.33. As-of-right zoning: Complex and unclear land use planning policies frequently serve as significant disincentives to transit-oriented development, especially in downtown areas. The prospect of long review processes, followed by the uncertainty of obtaining approval from zoning boards and other political bodies, can be enough to drive some developers to pre-zoned greenfield locations. Defining "acceptable" development on various sites, and communicating those definitions clearly, allows developers to build some forms of compact development "as of right."

4.34. Reassessing fee structures: Public safety, school, and water fees should be reviewed periodically to determine whether they accurately reflect the costs of servicing compact development.

4.35. Rideshare programs: An important element of smart growth is ensuring that workers can get to workplaces. The Memphis Area Rideshare program provides no-cost vanpool services to employers including passenger vans, maintenance and insurance to employers, and a ride-matching program for employees. The benefits of participation in the program include less congestion, reduced parking needs, decreased employee absenteeism, and an expanded labor market.

4.36. Transit Oriented Development (TOD) tax credits: Under Illinois' Economic Development for a Growing Economy (EDGE) incentive, businesses are awarded corporate income tax credits based on the value of personal income tax revenue that will be created at companies that are relocating or expanding. The Business Location Efficiency Incentive Act revised the EDGE incentive to better align with the state's goal of promoting compact development and defines a location-efficient project as one that "avoids or minimizes additional government expenditures for new infrastructure, and has nearby affordable housing or has accessible and affordable mass transit." Companies that locate in location-efficient sites get a 10 percent bonus on EDGE payments.

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expedited planning review for green buildings; and Ponca City, OK's Sustainable Alternative Green Energy program, which illustrates the mechanics of a quasi-loan program for green energy.

- **Broader community goals:** Financial incentives tied to broader community goals typically have a maximum rate of return. These could include developing vacant or infill sites, employing the chronically underemployed, restoring culturally significant buildings, revitalizing derelict neighborhoods or commercial corridors, and contributing to smart growth. Some communities also have relocation incentives to attract a highly skilled workforce (see Related Definitions 4.28).

As mentioned earlier, much of the redevelopment activity within the Town over the past couple of decades has followed best practices such as smart growth, placemaking, multimodal transportation, and environmental sustainability. Uptown Normal, in particular, has many of these features within a dense, mixed-use, urban environment. Slingshot, opened in Uptown in 2015, is the community's first co-working space. This project could not have come to fruition without the freely provided space, completely outfitted by the Town with the necessary technology infrastructure.

While there is more work to be done, the Town's extensive redevelopment efforts in and around Uptown Normal have become the nucleus for entrepreneurs and startups in the metro area.

POTENTIAL FOR GROWTH

As outlined in the land use chapter, approximately 15% of the Town's total land is zoned for commercial uses, and 20% of the total land is designated for office/manufacturing uses. As identified on Map 1.4.1, there are nearly 1,000 vacant acres in those zones. In addition to vacant land, there are a number of underutilized properties as well.

Along with these, there are a few vacant lots under institutional ownership that hold great potential for redevelopment. ISU's roughly 300-acre Gregory Street property, located at the northeast corner of Parkside Rd & Gregory St (see Map 1.4.1), is a notable example. In 2005, ISU adopted a development plan for that property that incorporates many smart growth principles. It envisions a central academic campus district surrounded by mixed-use neighborhoods and integrates many human and natural elements throughout the site. Unfortunately, the implementation of this plan was stalled by the recession and the subsequent financial troubles at the state level. While the Town has little control over the site, it continues to hold great development potential because of its location and proximity to the main campus.

Vacant lots and underutilized sites within certain sections of the Town, outlined below, are a natural fit for some of the businesses targeted by the BN Advantage strategy. These include:

Mitsubishi Area (Sub Area 1 on Map 1.4.1): Most of the underutilized properties on the west side of the community are attributable to the recent closure of Mitsubishi Motors and its subsidiaries.

Almost all of the land in this area was annexed by the Town of Normal in the early 1980's with an intent to accommodate manufacturing uses, and it is zoned accordingly. It has high visibility from the highway and is accessible both by road (I-74, Mitsubishi Motorway, College Avenue) and rail (Norfolk Southern) networks. The access streets are designed to accommodate up to 40,000 vehicles a day with design standards appropriate for truck traffic.

The area is in Corn Belt Energy's territory, but the Mitsubishi site has its own substation and is serviced by Ameren Illinois. This area is part of the metro-zone [4.21]. While most of the public services, including fire, police, and sewer are provided by the Town, water is provided by the City of Bloomington. Bloomington's water study for the pump station serving this area indicates that it is about 2.5 to 3 Mgd (million gallons of water per day) under capacity, served at 65 psi. This area also has access to fiber optic services.

The 2.5 million sq. ft. Mitsubishi building, sited on nearly 700 acres, is currently on the market. A community task force led by the Economic Development Corporation (EDC) is currently in the process of helping Mitsubishi find a new owner for the facility. Ideally, the task force will be able to find a new owner for that facility for a similar use. In case that does not come to fruition, it is import-

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ant for the community to be prepared with an alternative plan.

As discussed in the BN Advantage section, there are new opportunities for cutting-edge industrial growth in food processing and biotechnology sectors. Many of these can hugely benefit from the access and amenities offered in this area. One possibility for the area, drawing on examples from other communities, is an industrial park, offering varying sizes of office, industrial and flexible manufacturing spaces.

As we look 20 years into the future, this comprehensive planning process can be a forum for discussions of how this land should be used, although a specific area plan that takes a closer look at the site may eventually be warranted. Regardless of the specific plans, it is important to preserve this land for employment uses.

Uptown (Sub Area 2 on Map 1.4.1): In 2000, the Town Council adopted what was then known as the Downtown Normal Redevelopment Plan. It was subsequently branded "Uptown Normal". The heart of the plan, which was based on New Urbanism concepts, called for a new circular plaza at an otherwise confusing intersection anchored by the multimodal transportation facility.

Town earmarked portions of sales and food and beverage tax revenues and also established a TIF district to fund its implementation. The Town was also successful in securing approximately $22 Million in TIGER [4.37] grants to fund a multimodal transportation facility, the centerpiece for the Uptown Plan.

While the plan is a continuous work in progress, many core improvements have been in place for over five years now. Uptown has become a major urban design success. Uptown Circle was certified under the pilot version of the LEED [4.38] Neighborhood Development Program in 2009. It set the standard for what smaller communities could accomplish and brought national recognition to Normal as a leader in multimodal transportation and sustainability. This sustainable, mixed-use, dense, urban, pedestrian-oriented district has become a major community destination.

With that success under its belt, the Town hired the same planning firm that created the original plan, Farr Associates, to create a plan to redevelop the south side of the railroad tracks ("Uptown South"). The new plan, called Uptown 2.0, is also based on the New Urbanism model and proposes a development plan with goals more robust than the original plan. These include:

1. *Take advantage of current market opportunities:* The plan points to strong retail demand (70,000 sq. ft.) and housing demand (over 900 units) and proposes that the new redevelopment program try to meet both to the extent possible. It suggests gearing the housing toward non-students, especially young professionals and empty-nesters looking for a more urban lifestyle.
2. *Improve mobility for all users:* The plan provides specific guidance to make the streets immediately surrounding Uptown more pedestrian- and bike-friendly.
3. *Connect Uptown across the tracks:* Uptown Station needs a grade-separated crossing. After exploring three separate options, the plan proposes a well-designed underpass that reinforces the sense of place and increases property value south of the tracks.
4. *Increase development capacity on the remaining Uptown North sites:* Pointing to the scarcity of available sites in Uptown, the study suggests increasing development densities and limiting the remaining developable property to

Related Definitions

4.37. The Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery, or TIGER discretionary grant program, provides a unique opportunity for the Department of Transportation (DOT) to invest in road, rail, transit, and port projects that promise to achieve national objectives. Annually, DOT receives hundreds of applications to build and repair critical pieces of our freight and passenger transportation networks. The TIGER program enables DOT to examine these projects on their merits to help ensure that taxpayers are getting the highest value for every dollar invested.

4.38. Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) is a rating system devised by the United States Green Building Council (USGBC) to evaluate the environmental performance of a building or neighborhood and encourage market transformation towards sustainable design.

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Map 1.4.1
Potential Development and Redevelopment Opportunities

W ZIEBARTH RD
E ZIEBARTH RD
N PARKSIDE RD
N MAIN ST
N TOWANDA AVE
AIRPORT RD
W NORTHTOWN RD
E NORTHTOWN RD
E NORTHTOWN RD
PIPELINE RD
W RAAB RD
E RAAB RD
N LINDEN ST
AIRPORT RD
N WHITE OAK RD
SHELBOURNE DR
HERSHEY RD
TOWANDA BARNES RD
N PARKSIDE RD
MAIN ST
GREGORY ST
FORT JESSE RD
N MITSUBISHI MTWY
TOWANDA AVE
COLLEGE AVE
COLLEGE AVE
W COLLEGE AVE
VERNON AVE
HOVEY AVE
S LINDEN ST
JERSEY AVE
VETERANS PKWY

1
2
3
4
5

Subareas
(Refer to chapter text for more information.)

1. **Mitsubishi Area**
2. **Uptown Normal**
3. **North Interstate Commerical/ Employment Center Area**
4. **One Normal Plaza**
5. **Route 66/ Railroad & Ft. Jesse Rd Area**

Vacant lots zoned for commercial, office, or manufacturing uses (nearly 1,000 acres)

Underutilized lots with potential for redevelopment

Underutilized institutional lots

TIF districts

Enterprise zone

Commerical developments with approved annexation agreements

N

Historic Route 66 — Bike/Ped Corridor — Railroad Corridor — Major Transportation Corridor — Minor Transportation Corridor — Normal Corporate Boundary

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non-student housing and office space with retail on the lower levels.

5. *Redevelop Uptown South:* The large parcel remaining is the eight-acre site on which the old City Hall and Police Station are currently located. The plan proposes a high-density development with a mix of uses, including a relocated library, office space, a grocery store, higher-density residential, and green space.
6. *Intensify development in the neighborhoods:* Even with the Uptown North and Uptown South fully developed, there will still be an unmet potential market for urban-style housing. To provide a place for these residents and to bring more people within walking distance to Uptown, the surrounding neighborhoods and primary approach routes should be rezoned to promote higher densities.
7. *Raise the bar for sustainability by participating in the Living Communities Challenge:* The International Living Futures Institute sets the highest standards for sustainable communities. Projects that meet their challenge go beyond the goal of simply minimizing harm and aim for self-sufficiency and substantial contributions to the health of the environment.

It is obvious from these stated goals that Uptown 2.0 is not a small endeavor. However, given the Town's proven history of implementation, much of the plan could potentially come to fruition within the next decade.

It is absolutely critical to recognize that these mixed-use urban districts are not just a trend, but a critical economic development tool for the new economy. In that sense, Normal is not only positioned well but continues to move in the right direction to foster 21st-century growth.

North Interstate Commercial/Employment Center Area (Sub Area 3 on Map 1.4.1): Most of this area is zoned for Manufacturing or Commercial uses. This area is uniquely located at the intersection of I-39, I-55 and I-74. There is a statewide initiative promoting the I-39 corridor for transportation and logistics uses.



A sketch up view of Uptown 2.0 showcasing a potential built out scenario: Source: Uptown 2.0 plan.

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Given the current concentration of uses and the statewide emphasis on this corridor, this area appears to be a fit for transportation and logistics uses. However, it is currently surrounded by farmland and is also in close proximity to Nicor Gas operations. In addition, it is a prominent community gateway. This area needs additional analysis and planning prior to targeting an industry sector that could potentially demand vast acreages of land.

One Normal Plaza and the surrounding area (Sub Area 4 on Map 1.4.1): This area, located along Historic Route 66, has a unique mix of institutional, recreational, commercial, and residential uses. It has buildings old and new and caters to all age groups.

The 22-acre One Normal Plaza park, formerly the site for the Illinois Soldiers and Sailors Children's School (ISSCS), includes the Community Activity Center, a baseball field, a picnic shelter, two playground areas, a youth football field, and an abundance of open space areas suitable for recreational sports activities such as youth soccer. It is also home to an inline hockey rink. The general area encompasses a private cooperative school, a swimming school, businesses, and residences.



The "Circle of Friends" memorial at One Normal Plaza, dedicated to the people who lived and worked at the former Illinois Soldiers and Sailors Children's School site.

Recently the Town planted the Refuge Food Forest, consisting of a diverse planting of fruit, nuts, and perennial vegetables. The produce in the food forest will be free and available for anyone in the community. This is the first of its kind in the state to be located in a city park.

Even with all these diverse uses, this area can truly be described as one of the best-kept secrets in the community. People who utilize the park or one of the private uses within the area are aware of One Normal Plaza and are complimentary of the area. However, many community members are totally unaware of its existence or associate it with its historical uses alone (such as the old ISSCS function).

This area has been a subject of discussions within various plans for a long time, including the 2015 Vision Report. In 2009, the Town approved a TIF district to revitalize this area. Given the unique character of this space, its proximity to railroad and the surrounding industrial uses (Sub Area 5 on the Map 1.4.1), this area has the potential to become a district that supports the local food system such as a Food Innovation District (Figure 1.4.12). Such a district can contribute to and benefit from the Route 66 tourism efforts and the Uptown Normal redevelopment efforts.

Depending on their scope and maturity, the aforementioned local food districts can accommodate a variety of uses such as community gardens, office, warehouse, cold storage, processing centers, distribution hubs, wholesale commerce, retail, community kitchens, and waste management.

These districts are typically multimodal and thrive with public plazas, public art and food related festivals, fairs and events, all of which enhance the sense of place. The One Normal Plaza area not only can accommodate a diverse set of uses but also enhance such a district with its unique characteristics.

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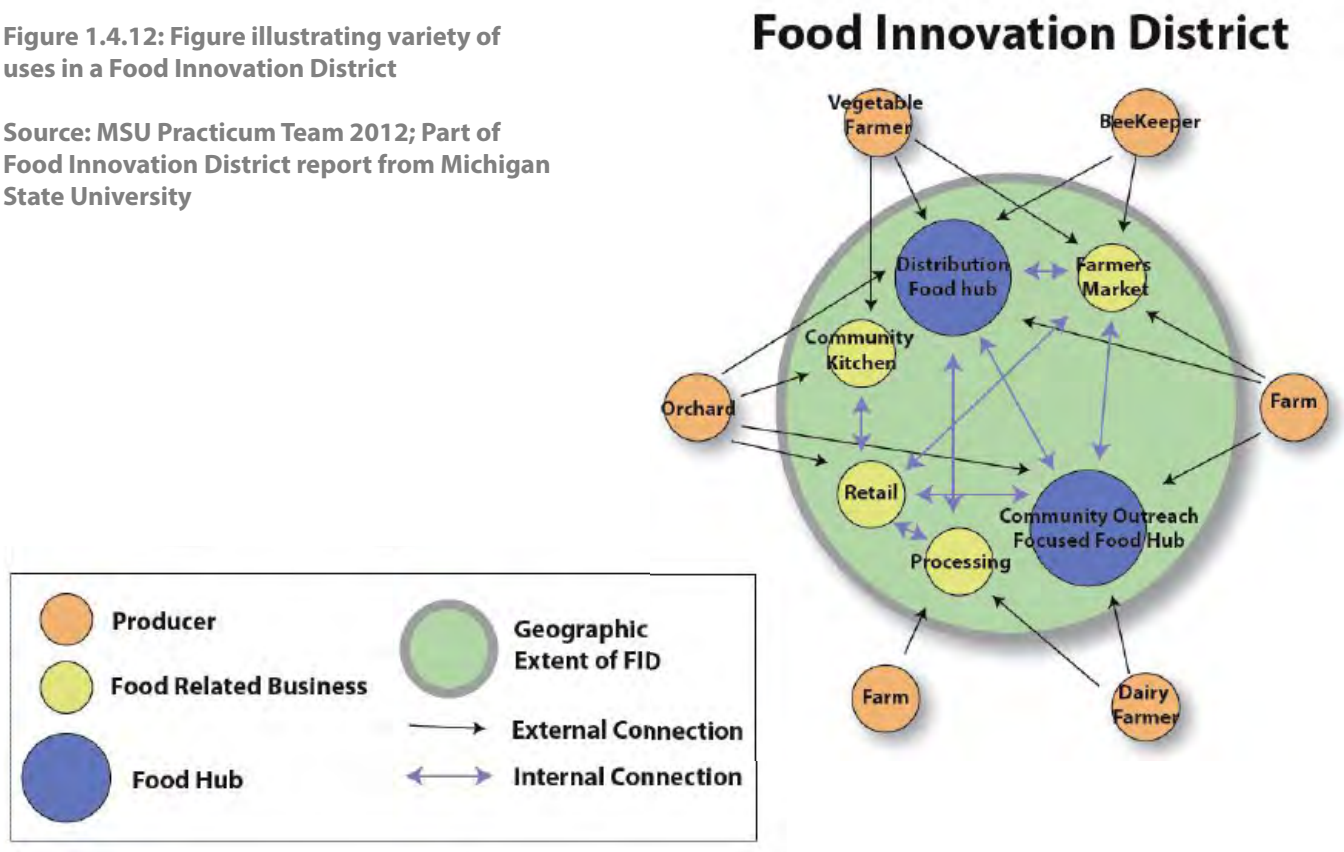
Figure 1.4.12: Figure illustrating variety of uses in a Food Innovation District

Source: MSU Practicum Team 2012; Part of Food Innovation District report from Michigan State University



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FINDINGS AND KEY QUESTIONS

Findings

- Nationally, infrastructure issues are a huge topic of concern and public policy debate. While our transportation network is the most visible aspect, water mains, sewer lines, electric and gas lines are part of a complex web of critical public infrastructure. The universal challenge facing American infrastructure is that it is aging and needs significant investment for repair or reconstruction. Federal infrastructure policies have a significant impact on local infrastructure issues. For example, the federal motor fuel tax rate determines the level of funding set aside to support local transportation infrastructure.

- Generally speaking, Normal's infrastructure is in good repair. However, the Town continues to grapple with the same funding issues other communities are facing. The Town's increasing focus on compact, mixed-use development patterns and efforts to curb sprawl also assist in the efficient management of utilities, both by the Town and by other utility providers.

- Normal's more than 400 miles of streets provide connections at all levels of use. Upgrades to the transportation system are being made thoughtfully, keeping in mind the future role of the street network. These include accommodations for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit vehicles.

- In 2016, Connect Transit will implement a revised route structure, intended to prioritize frequency of service on more heavily used routes. This revision will make transit service more flexible for the majority of riders but will also remove routes with less ridership, including some routes in northeast Normal.

- Each infrastructure system, public or private, must be properly installed and maintained, often in a location shared with other systems. There is limited space within right-of-way easements and/or utility poles on which multiple service providers must compete for installation space. Newer technology infrastructure, such as fiber optic network, exacerbates the problem.

- The Bloomington Normal Water Reclamation District (BNWRD) has advised that under EPA standards, the West treatment plant on Oakland Avenue will require reconstruction, possibly within the next 5 to 15 years. This project could cost an estimated $140 to $160 million and is of considerable complexity. This issue, raised recently during the stakeholder outreach process, should be thoroughly investigated during the course of the comprehensive plan process to determine its implications for the economy, environment, and cost of living.

- Landfill use is of principal concern given the anticipated closure of the McLean County Landfill #2 in the near future. The Ecology Action Center (EAC), the regional solid waste planning agency for the Town, City, and County, is currently updating the county-wide Integrated Solid Waste Management Plan to address this and other solid waste issues such as recycling and household hazardous waste.

Key Questions

- When investing huge public dollars in infrastructure and facilities, how can we ensure that they support broader community goals?

- How can land under public ownership, such as streets or detention basins, be utilized more efficiently? As demand for new types of services (e.g., broadband) increases, how can public easements be best managed?

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Infrastructure, particularly public infrastructure like schools, streets, sewers and parks, is the structural scaffolding that supports the community and makes modern life possible. People expect that the many interconnected infrastructure systems will work at the touch of a button or flip of a switch, and even a brief (and usually rare) interruption of service can have a real impact on lives and communities.

Infrastructure exists in three dimensions; while this seems obvious, it has far-reaching implications for cost, maintenance and longevity of co-located systems. Many elements of infrastructure interact and share space, multiplying their complexity.

NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

In recent years, incidents across the country have demonstrated the sometimes catastrophic impact of infrastructure failures. The most severe include the loss of life and destroyed neighborhoods in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina; widespread flooding, snow, and wind damage from Hurricane Sandy across the densely populated mid-Atlantic coast; and the water supply crisis during the persistent drought that has gripped California over the past several years. These threats to core infrastructure arose from weather or climate conditions. These and other events have prompted the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to create the Office of Infrastructure Protection and formulate the National Infrastructure Protection Plan to define critical infrastructure and safeguard against any threat, whatever its origin.

Debate about the condition of public infrastructure focuses on two concerns, system failures and the cost of remediation or replacement. For many public agencies and governments, the balance has shifted to cost reduction, and thus to delays in infrastructure repair or rebuilding. These calculations can be as catastrophic as hurricanes and floods, as demonstrated by the Minneapolis bridge collapse in 2007 and the lead contamination in the Flint, Michigan water supply documented in 2015. Delayed infrastructure management has created a massive backlog of needed work. The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) estimates that by 2020 it will cost $1.1 trillion to address national infrastructure deficiencies, but failure to act could cost the economy over $3 trillion between now and 2020 (see Figure 1.5.1).

TOWN OF NORMAL INFRASTRUCTURE

The Town of Normal has many miles of pavement, piping, and other infrastructural assets that require ongoing maintenance to keep them in good repair. Proper maintenance reduces the incidence of sudden system failure and allows the Town to avoid the fiscal shock of un-budgeted repair or maintenance. Specific systems and their needs are discussed below.

TRANSPORTATION

Transportation infrastructure is among the

U.S. Department of Homeland Security statements on critical infrastructure:

"The nation's critical infrastructure provides the essential services that underpin American society and serve as the backbone of our nation's economy, security, and health."

"Critical infrastructure includes systems, facilities, and assets so vital that their destruction or incapacitation would have a debilitating impact on national security, the economy, or public safety, health, or welfare."

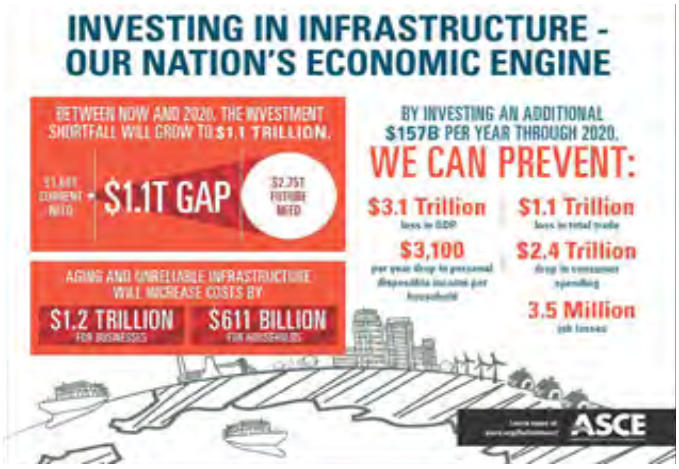

Figure 1.5.1
Source: American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE)

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most visible systems in the array of infrastructure people encounter each day. Streets, trails, transit, sidewalks, and Uptown Station lace the Town with travel options, whatever the nature and location of the origin and destination. At a regional level, Normal sits at the confluence of three interstate highways and has the benefit of extensive freight and passenger rail connections. The federal initiative to improve passenger rail has already produced track upgrades, fueled the development of Uptown Station, and will provide a more robust schedule of passenger routes. Uptown Station also provides a hub location for local and regional bus service, including Connect Transit, as well as for pedestrian and bicycle users of the Constitution Trail network.

Streets and Roads

Normal 's transportation network is generally in good repair, providing connectivity to major institutions, commercial or industrial areas, and residential neighborhoods.

Normal's more than 400 miles of streets provide connections at all levels of use, from individual houses to institutional campuses. They are designed to maximize the efficiency of vehicular traffic. Some streets fall under a federally defined functional classification system as illustrated in Map 1.5.1. Retaining the functional classification system permits the use of federal transportation funding. This support for street improvements extends the Town's fiscal capacity to address transportation and other needs. Unclassified streets give access to individual locations, such as those within neighborhoods.

Occasionally a street installation moves away from standard design and creates new ways of interacting with a neighborhood. The Uptown Circle is an example. Combining functions as an intersection, central park plaza, water filtration site, and public garden, the Circle has emerged as the focal point of the revitalized Town core.

Officially called a "circular intersection," the Circle replaces the previous awkward intersection, and connects to the new Constitution Boulevard.

Map 1.5.1. Functional Classification of Streets

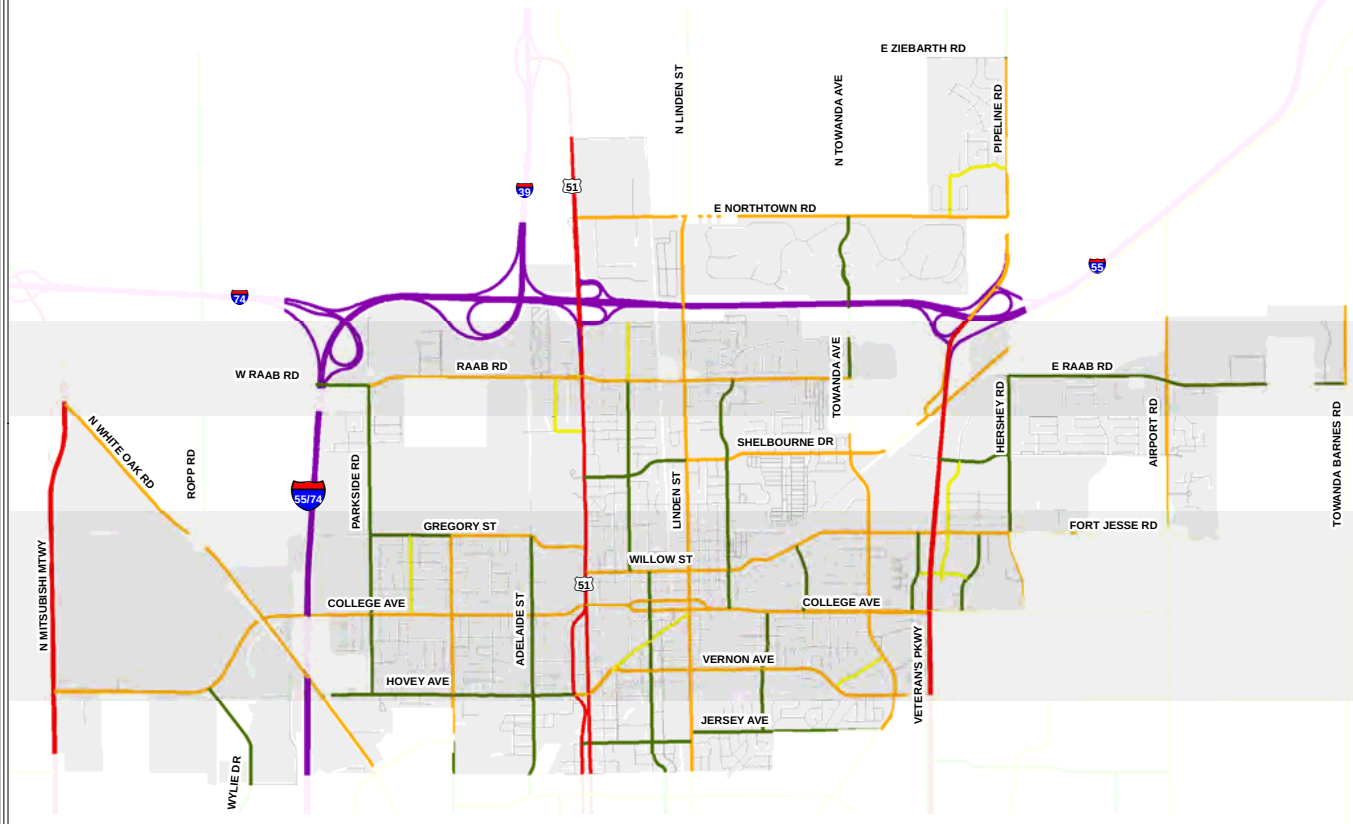

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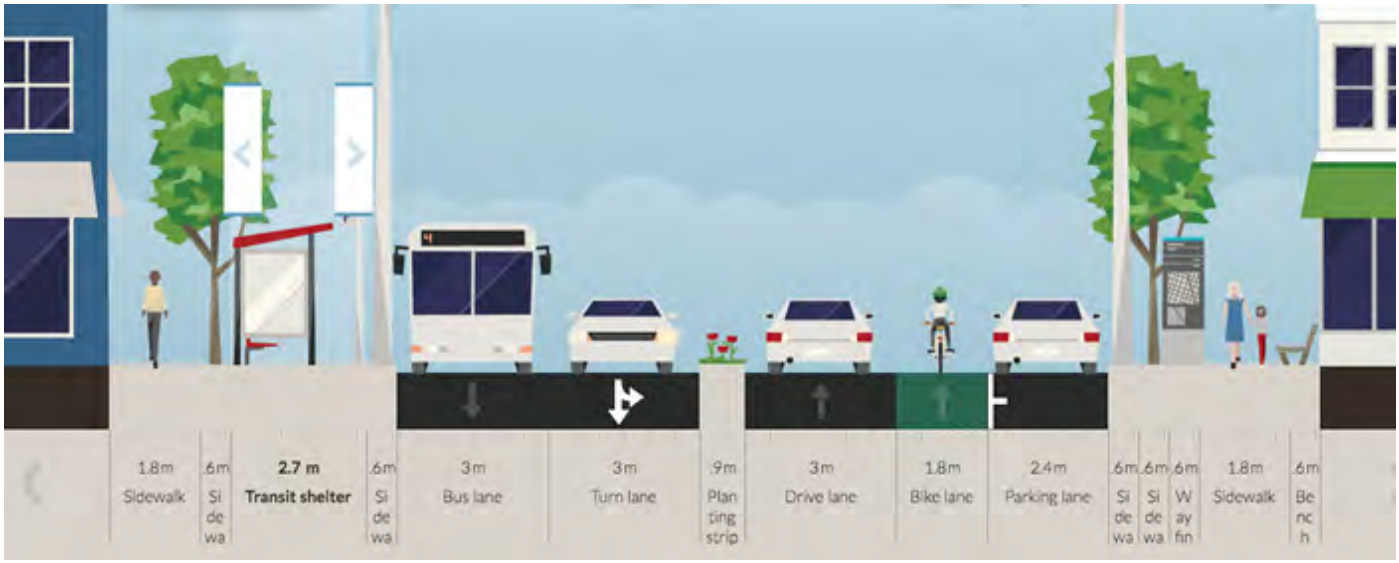
Figure 1.5.2. Cross-section of a Complete Street. Source: streetmix.net



The Circle also accommodates safe movement of pedestrians, bicyclists, transit and other modes.

Complete Streets

The planning advocacy group Smart Growth America defines Complete Streets as follows:

> *"Complete Streets are streets for everyone. They are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities. Complete Streets make it easy to cross the street, walk to shops, and bicycle to work. They allow buses to run on time and make it safe for people to walk to and from train stations."*

Figure 1.5.2 illustrates an implementation of the Complete Streets concept, executed within the limits of the prior conventional street design but providing separated areas of travel for vehicles, including transit, pedestrians and bicycles.

Although Normal has not officially adopted a Complete Streets policy, it is already employing many of the techniques that embody the Complete Streets concept. The *Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan* adopted by the Town in 2009 guides the improvement of such facilities. Maps 1.5.2 and 1.5.3 show the existing bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and the improvements recommended

5.1. Implementation of Bike/ Pedestrian projects in Normal

Bike/Ped improvements since adoption of the plan

1. Major upgrade and widening of the Vernon bridge section of Constitution Trail
2. Parks & Recreation has repaved many concrete sidewalk/ trail intersections
3. Repaved section of trail from Linden to Grandview, Connie Link Amphitheatre to Vernon, and Division to Vernon.
4. Trail extension to Ziebarth
5. Trail extension along Northtown
6. Southern Normal Corridor
   - Bryan Street Bike Boulevard logo designed and signs manufactured and installed
   - Jersey Bike Lanes
   - Wayfinding along rest of route
7. Added trail to NCHS
8. Addition of more than 225 bike parking spaces in Uptown and new bike parking at all Town parks
9. Installation of two Fixit stations on trail
10. Street markings
    - Sharrows on W. College from Redbird Arena to Parkside
    - Adelaide (College to south boundary)
    - Sharrows on Lincoln (starting at Beech), McKinley, Clay and into Fairview Park (2011)
    - Fell (Beaufort to south boundary of town)
    - Grandview (Jersey to Vernon)
    - N. School Street (Willow to Summit)
    - Bike lanes on Raab Road
11. Wayfinding for entire trail system
12. Town staff also organizes or collaborates with other agencies to create events that enhance the bike/ped culture in Town. These include
    - Bike Rodeo
    - Annual bike movie
    - Light the Night (free light giveaways)
    - Bike Summit
    - Free bike parking at various events in collaboration with Friends of the Constitution Trail and WGLT
    - and many more

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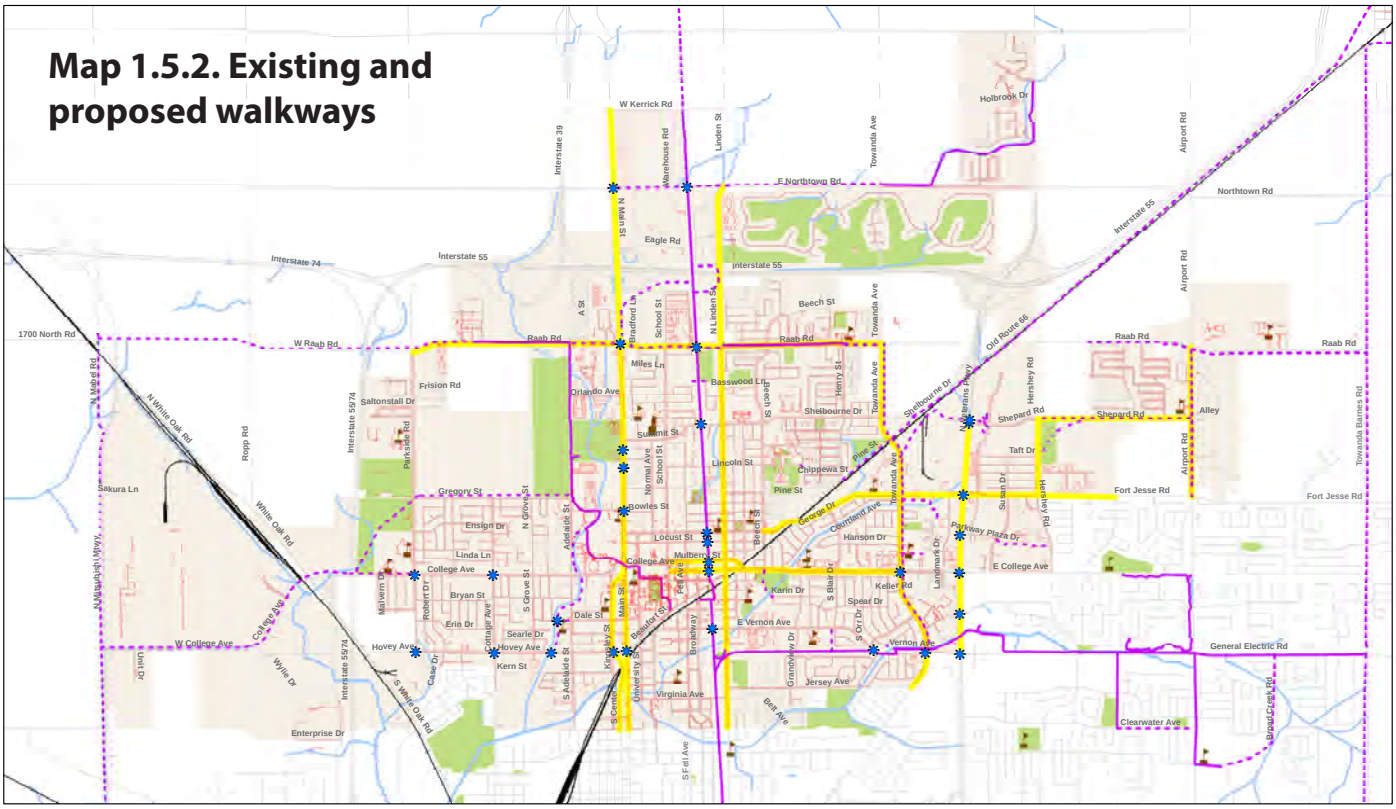
Map 1.5.2. Existing and proposed walkways

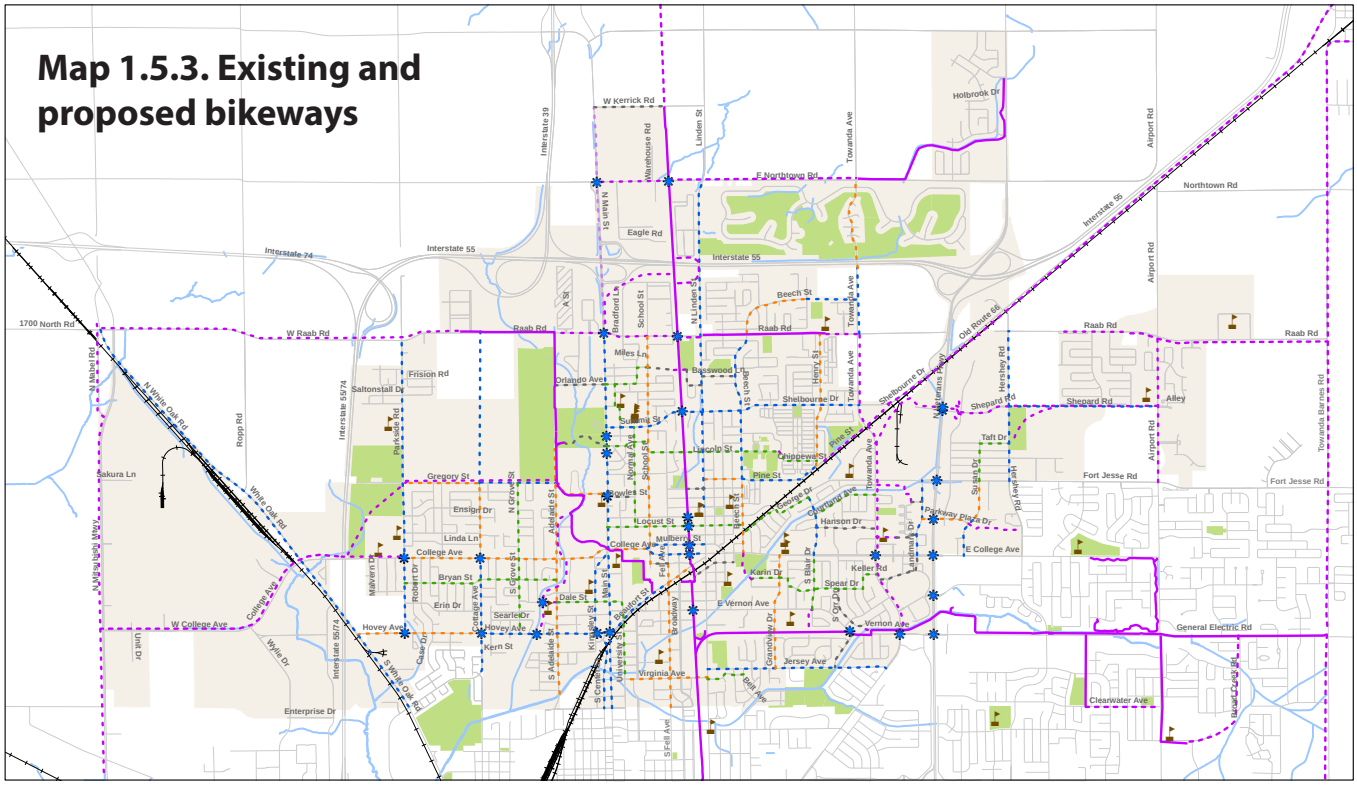


Normal Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan
Source: Town of Normal, Illinois
Author: HK
Date: July, 2009

- Existing Shared Use Path
- Existing Sidewalks
- Proposed Walkways
  - Shared Use Path
  - Pedestrian Priority Corridors
  - Intersection Improvements
- Schools
- Parks
- Normal Town Boundary
- Streets
- Railroad
- Waterways

0 0.25 0.5 Miles

Map 1.5.3. Existing and proposed bikeways



Normal Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan
Source: Town of Normal, Illinois
Author: HK
Date: July, 2009

- Existing Shared Use Path
- Proposed Bikeways
  - Shared Use Path
  - Cycle Track
- Bike Lane
- Shared Lane Markings
- Bike Boulevard
- Signed Connection
- Proposed Intersection Improvements
- Schools
- Parks
- Normal Town Boundary
- Streets
- Railroad
- Waterways

0 0.25 0.5 Miles

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by the master plan. Many suggested improvements have been implemented[5.1], and in 2014 the Town of Normal achieved Bicycle Friendly Community status from the League of American Bicyclists. The ISU campus and Heartland Community College also provide accommodations for pedestrians and bicycle riders.

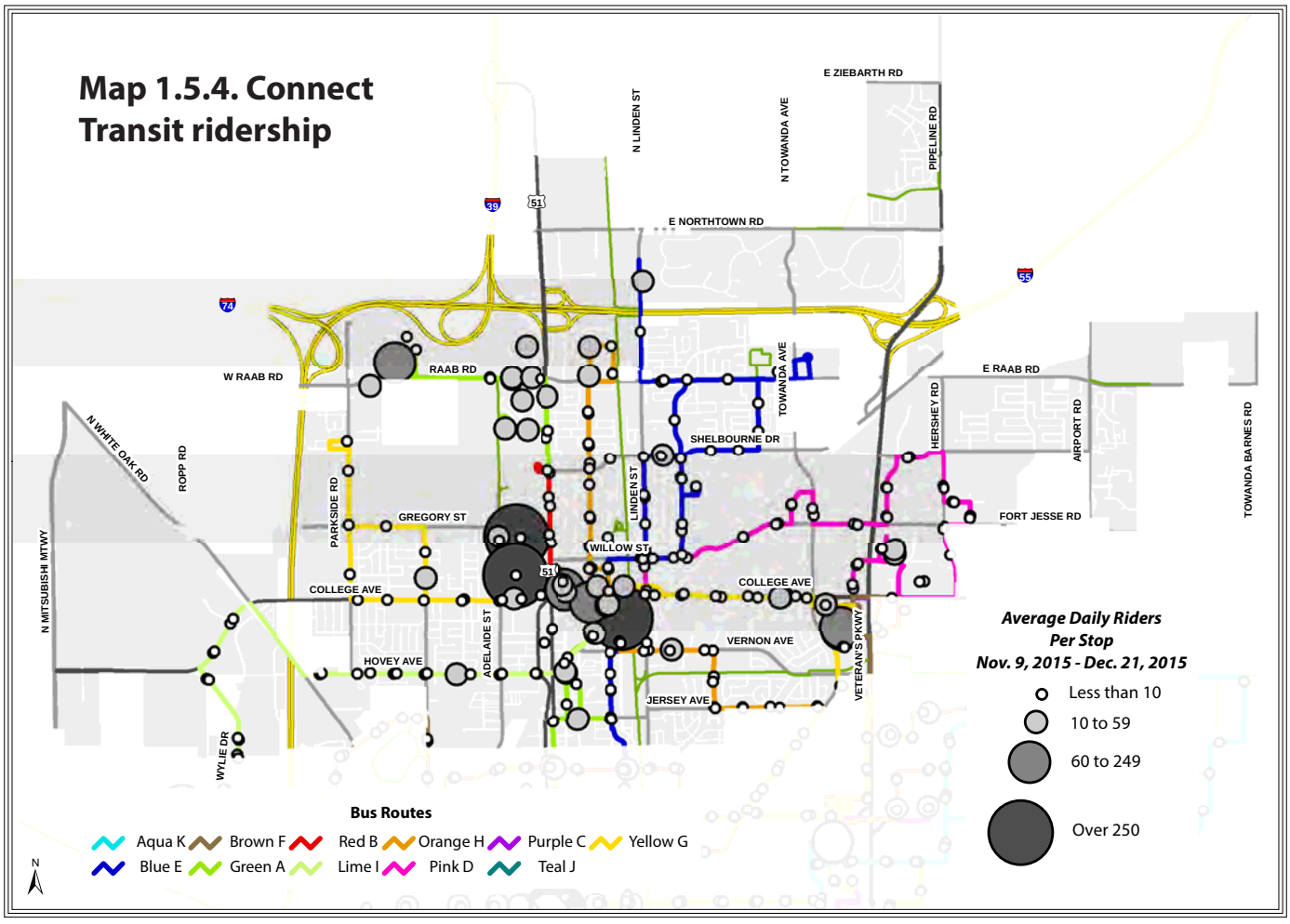
A prime example of regional cooperation, the expansion of the Constitution Trail has been a community effort since its inception 25 years ago. Normal and Bloomington, working with the Friends of the Constitution Trail, have built over 37 miles of trail throughout the community. In recent years, the Friends have been joined by newer groups such as the McLean County Wheelers and Bike BloNo in advocating increased bicycle access.

Main Street: A Call for Investment, released in late 2007, is a comprehensive planning document for the entire Main Street corridor spanning Normal and Bloomington. It proposed strategies with respect to mobility, accessibility, land use, and economic development. A subsequent transportation feasibility study, limited to the street right-of-way, examined the feasibility of the aforementioned strategies from an engineering perspective. It further prioritized the transportation-related strategies from the Main Street plan designed to broaden multimodal access.

Because Main Street is also US 51 and is controlled and maintained by the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), neither Normal nor Bloomington can modify Main Street without IDOT's consent. IDOT is pursuing funding for implementation of bicycle and pedestrian accomodations from College Avenue south into downtown Bloomington. These improvements implement elements of the Main Street plan and feasibility study.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Normal and Bloomington are served by Connect Transit, which is chartered to provide service only in the incorporated areas of the Twin Cities. In recent years, Connect Transit has



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experienced considerable growth in its ridership. This increase is in part the result of universal access agreements with Illinois State University and Heartland Community College.

On Connect Transit's fixed route network, bus stops are located roughly every quarter-mile. Map 1.5.4 illustrates each stop location and the intensity of its use. In 2016, Connect Transit will implement a revised route structure, intended to prioritize frequency of service on more heavily used routes. This revision will make transit service more flexible for the majority of riders, but will also remove routes with less ridership. In Normal this would impact the Blue E and Pink D routes.

Connect Mobility, the paratransit service, provides transportation to qualified riders who live within half a mile of any fixed route. As the new route structure is implemented in 2016, there should be a careful review of the impacts of these changes on paratransit availability in the Town.

Even with these options, there are gaps in public transit service in Normal and Bloomington. These include a lack of service in off hours and on Sundays, both of which impact transit-dependent riders. These gaps are partially addressed by not-for-profits such as the YWCA of McLean County(5.2), Faith In Action(5.3), and SHOW Bus(5.4). Other local agencies provide transportation services to agency clients, either directly or by contracting with transportation providers.

Although Connect Transit recognizes these gaps, limited resources and structural constraints make it difficult for them to quickly address these issues. In the interim, it is critical to provide the necessary support to the nonprofit agencies bridging that gap.

PASSENGER RAIL SERVICE

Uptown Station serves Amtrak passenger rail riders with ten trains per day, and it is the second-most heavily used Amtrak station in Illinois. In addition to passenger rail service on the Union Pacific line from Chicago to St. Louis, Uptown Station also serves Connect Transit and intercity bus service providers, and so provides intermodal connections.

Work continues on the implementation of high-speed passenger rail service to Normal. Amtrak consistently serves a high volume of passengers, and the substantial investment in the multimodal and intermodal Uptown Station is expected to support continued growth, especially as high-speed rail service becomes more available.

PASSENGER AIR SERVICE

Central Illinois Regional Airport (CIRA) has benefited from a series of infrastructure investments over the past 15 years, including the construction of a substantially larger terminal east of the original site that can accommodate large jets. The airport serves passenger and freight operations.

CIRA is currently served by three airlines: Allegiant, American, and Delta. They serve seven direct destinations, including O'Hare International in Chicago and cities in Florida, Georgia, Michigan, Minnesota, and Texas. The airport also provides services for general aviation.

After peaking in 2011, annual passenger volume has declined over the past several years, which airport management noted is the result of airline retrenching and the withdrawal of Frontier from CIRA. Recently, an expansion of airport freight operations began with the opening of a new FedEx hub facility.

Nonprofit organizations providing transit alternatives in Normal and Bloomington

5.2. YWCA of McLean County provides non-emergency medical transportation throughout Normal, Bloomington, and McLean County. This service is available to the general public, including Medicaid recipients. The YWCA program uses accessible paratransit vehicles with wheelchair lifts. The YWCA also offers a Sunday service, Wheels-to-Work, which for qualified persons provides service to and from Sunday employment.

5.3. Faith In Action provides service for older people who do not require use of an accessible vehicle, but need rides for everyday tasks, social events, worship and appointments.

5.4. SHOW BUS provides rural public transportation in McLean and six other counties, and in some instances may provide rides to an incidental destination in Normal and Bloomington or to a Connect Transit stop or transfer hub. SHOW BUS uses accessible vehicles.

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The Bloomington-Normal Airport Authority owns over 700 acres of property. It seeks to facilitate appropriate development in the airport area for warehousing and other transportation and logistics facilities (see Chapter 1.4, Economic Vitality, for more details on the BN Advantage regional economic strategy, which identifies transportation and logistics as a target sector).

TRANSPORTATION FOR FREIGHT

Freight rail service is provided by the Norfolk Southern and Union Pacific railroads operating through Bloomington-Normal. Norfolk Southern has six freight trains that pass through the urban area daily. Union Pacific (UP) traverses the urban area from the Northeast to the Southwest. It is important to note that the UP and Norfolk Southern lines through Bloomington-Normal are single mainline tracks. The high-speed rail initiative has added several sidings to the UP line, including one north and another south of Bloomington-Normal.

Bridge replacement, the development of new rail crossings, and safety infrastructure for high-speed rail are continuing points of discussion in Normal. Located at the connection of three interstate highways, Normal is a locus for highway freight traffic. Although the closure of the Mitsubishi automotive plant may produce reductions in freight activity, potential reuse of the plant may well compensate for that loss over time. The Town's arterial network provides freight access to sources and destinations, including the commercial and industrial areas along Veterans' Parkway, the large institutions reached by Main Street, and the former Mitsubishi industrial campus with its close connection to the interstate system via Mitsubishi Motorway.

Over the next year, MCRPC will be developing the 2017 update of the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) for our urbanized area. Prior iterations of the LRTP have been hampered with respect to freight planning, as accurate information on freight traffic is difficult to obtain. Most freight sources and carriers are private entities and regard the details of their cargo and operations as proprietary information. General data on freight traffic collected by the Illinois Departments of Transportation and Commerce and Economic Opportunity do not offer the level of detail needed to accurately assess local freight impacts. The upcoming LRTP update aims to improve local understanding of freight traffic in the urban area.

TRANSPORTATION AND AIR QUALITY

In 2014, the Ecology Action Center published a greenhouse gas inventory for Normal and Bloomington, using 2008 as the baseline year. The report attributed approximately 20% of the area's greenhouse gas emissions to the transportation network.

Transportation is the most easily constrained major source of greenhouse gas pollution. Emissions resulting from the transportation system, specifically by vehicle use, can be isolated to particular sources.

One measure of air quality is ground-level ozone concentrations. Ozone is an important element of the upper atmosphere, but at ground level it is a product and a component of greenhouse gas emissions, and a threat to human health. In October 2015, the standard for ground-level ozone was reduced from 75 parts per billion (ppb) to 70 ppb, based on a three-year average of air sampling results. Areas not in compliance with this standard will be designated by the U.S. EPA in October 2017 as non-attainment zones. The 2012-2014 average level in Bloomington-Normal was 71 ppb, slightly exceeding the new standard. Fortunately, the 2013-2015 ozone average fell to 66 ppb, within the standard but by a small margin.

Compliance with the new standard will be determined by the three-year ground-level ozone average for 2014-2016. Should Bloomington-Normal be designated a non-attainment zone, a series of regulations and programs will be required until ground-level ozone concentrations meet the standard. Such a designation would negatively affect our ability to attract new industries. While the comprehensive plan should acknowledge these restrictions and consider possible actions by the Town of Normal to reduce transportation-sourced emissions, a regional approach will be necessary to address this issue.

UTILITIES

There are two categories of utility infrastructure, those provided by public entities and

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those provided by private entities regulated by the Illinois Commerce Commission. Public utility services include water and sanitary sewer services provided by the Town as well as stormwater management and treatment facilities provided through cooperation with other local governments and the Bloomington-Normal Water Reclamation District (BNWRD). Private providers regulated as public utilities through the Illinois Commerce Commission include electric, gas, and telecommunication systems.

Each system, public or private, must be properly installed and maintained, often in a location shared with other systems. In the stakeholder interviews (see the Infrastructure and Public Safety subsection in Chapter 2.2, Stakeholder Interviews), one consistent concern was the limited space within easements or rights-of-way within which multiple service providers must compete for installation space. This means that each time the Town or another entity digs into the space, it has to take pains to avoid conflict with other installations. Efforts to install infrastructure further underground only make the entire process more complicated and expensive. There is increasing demand for installation space overhead as well, with similar limitations. As utility companies expand their capacity to use wireless technology to monitor and communicate with their systems, the number of transmitters, repeaters, and other electronics needing a utility pole to sit on can only increase. These increasing demands and best practices for the effective management of easements will be investigated further during the remainder of the comprehensive planning process.

The many layers of public and private infrastructure that permit the Town to function all bring their own challenges and complexities into already populated areas and those yet to be developed (see Figure 1.5.3). Each system must also be conducted through and around others, as disparate systems share space underground, on the surface, and overhead. Not only must the physical installations be managed and maintained, but the various public and private agencies and entities that own them must interact to avoid conflicts and maximize the benefits of infrastructure investment.

MUNICIPAL UTILITIES

The Town of Normal provides two critical utility services to residential and other occupants: the treatment and delivery of water by the Water Department and the sanitary and storm sewer systems run by the Sewer Division of the Public Works Department. Each of these systems requires substantial investment and continuous careful management.

The Water Department operates a well system and treatment plant, with substantial excess capacity at present. In 2014, the system pumped more than 1.4 billion gallons of water to Town residents. The Department has an ongoing pipe replacement program, which is intended to forestall system failures due to aging water pipes, in which approximately $2 million are invested annually. The Town has found that installing water distribution across (or under) interstate highways is expensive, and would prefer to avoid such situations. The Town is confident that the capacity of the system and the supporting infrastructure are more than adequate to support growth and increased densities over the next 30 years, based on current analysis. The level of density under consideration for the Uptown South redevelopment proposals can be served within the current production capacity.

The Sewer Division is completing a five-year plan for sewer improvements to address current needs but will not be addressing future growth issues or rate assessments. The Division maintains, repairs, and tests storm sewers, inlets, sanitary sewers, and lift stations. Town staff has noted that the current system has sufficient capacity in the short term; concerns arise from possible long-term costs for system maintenance, given the reliance on lift stations in the system. The five-year sewer program will evaluate where gravity sewer infrastructure can be augmented or installed without the additional cost and maintenance of lift stations. There is little expectation that the Town will expand its sanitary sewer infrastructure northward. Areas in north-east, north-west and west Normal are better suited for sewer expansion.

Currently the Town stormwater infrastructure is well within its capacity, including culverts and detention facilities. As with the water system, the Town periodically plans for the future stormwater system, and posts its stormwater utility plan.

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The Town and the City of Bloomington have discussed coordinated siting of high capacity stormwater detention basins. Larger detention facilities designed to serve multiple developments would simplify access, control, and maintenance and allow for fewer and more direct connections to the stormwater system. However, making the transition to this approach has proved difficult, and newer development still generally provides detention within the development site. As the comprehensive planning process moves forward, areas with potential for regional stormwater detention should be identified.

REGIONAL UTILITIES

The management of sanitary sewer effluent and stormwater is to some extent a regional endeavor, in which the Town, the City of Bloomington, and the County work with the Bloomington-Normal Water Reclamation District (BNWRD). BNWRD operates the two treatment plants (in west Bloomington and in Randolph Township) that receive sewage and stormwater flow from the urban area, process the effluent, and manage the controlled release of treated outflow. BNWRD has particular concerns about urban stormwater management. Stormwater that is not properly channeled and detained in the municipal systems will find its way to the sanitary sewage treatment system, where it can overwhelm treatment capacity and force the release of untreated effluent.

Planning for the water reclamation district is a process with long timelines. BNWRD spent many years developing and securing approval for the service area changes that enabled the siting, construction, and use of the Randolph Township treatment plant.

BNWRD advised MCRPC staff that under EPA standards, the West treatment plant on Oakland Avenue will require reconstruction, possibly within the next 5 to 15 years. This project could cost an estimated $150 million and is of considerable complexity. This issue, raised recently during the stakeholder outreach process, should be throughly investigated during the course of the comprehensive plan process.

ENERGY UTILITIES

The Town of Normal is served by two electricity utility providers, Ameren Illinois Corporation

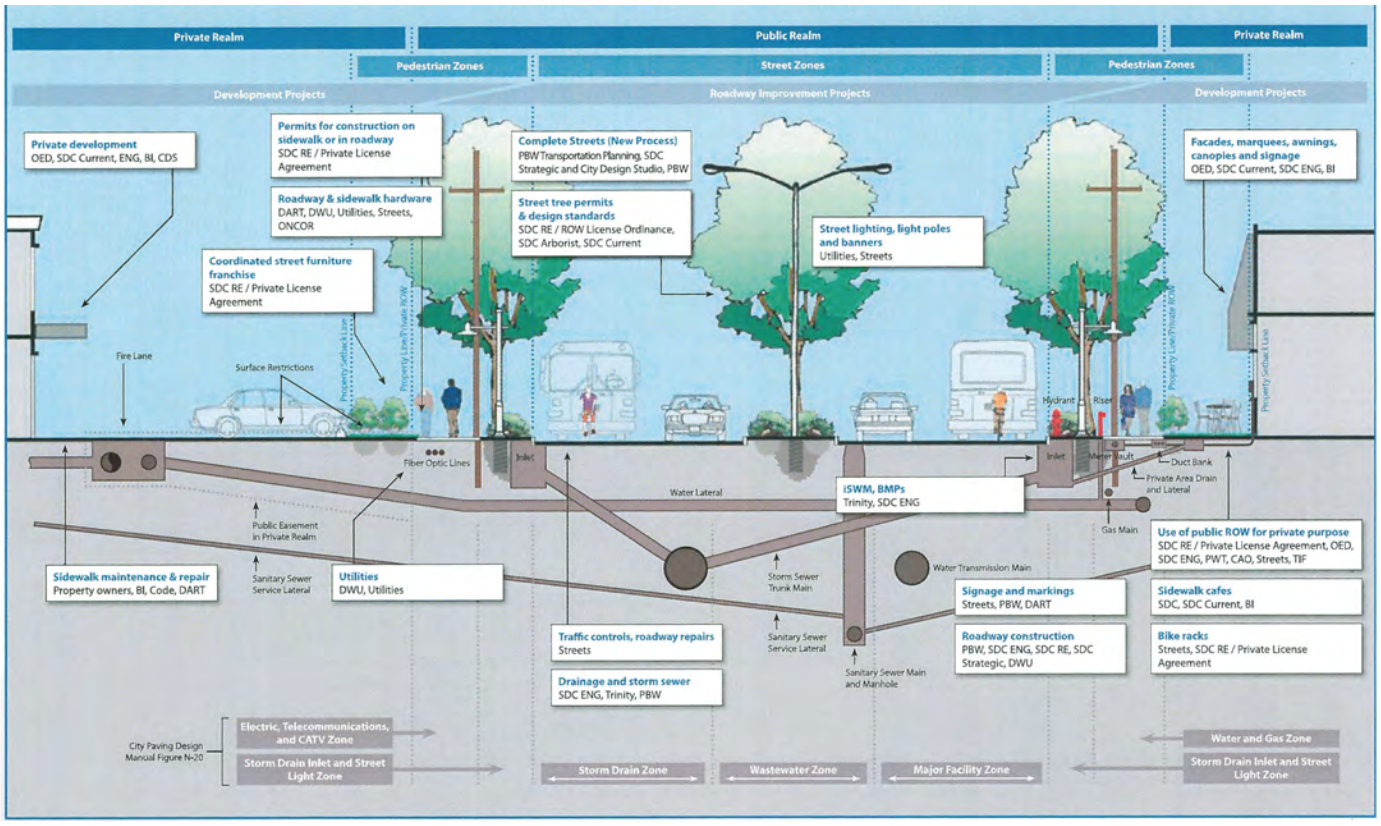

Figure 1.5.3. Agency roles on the Town's streets. Source: Dallas, TX draft Complete Streets Manual, 2012.

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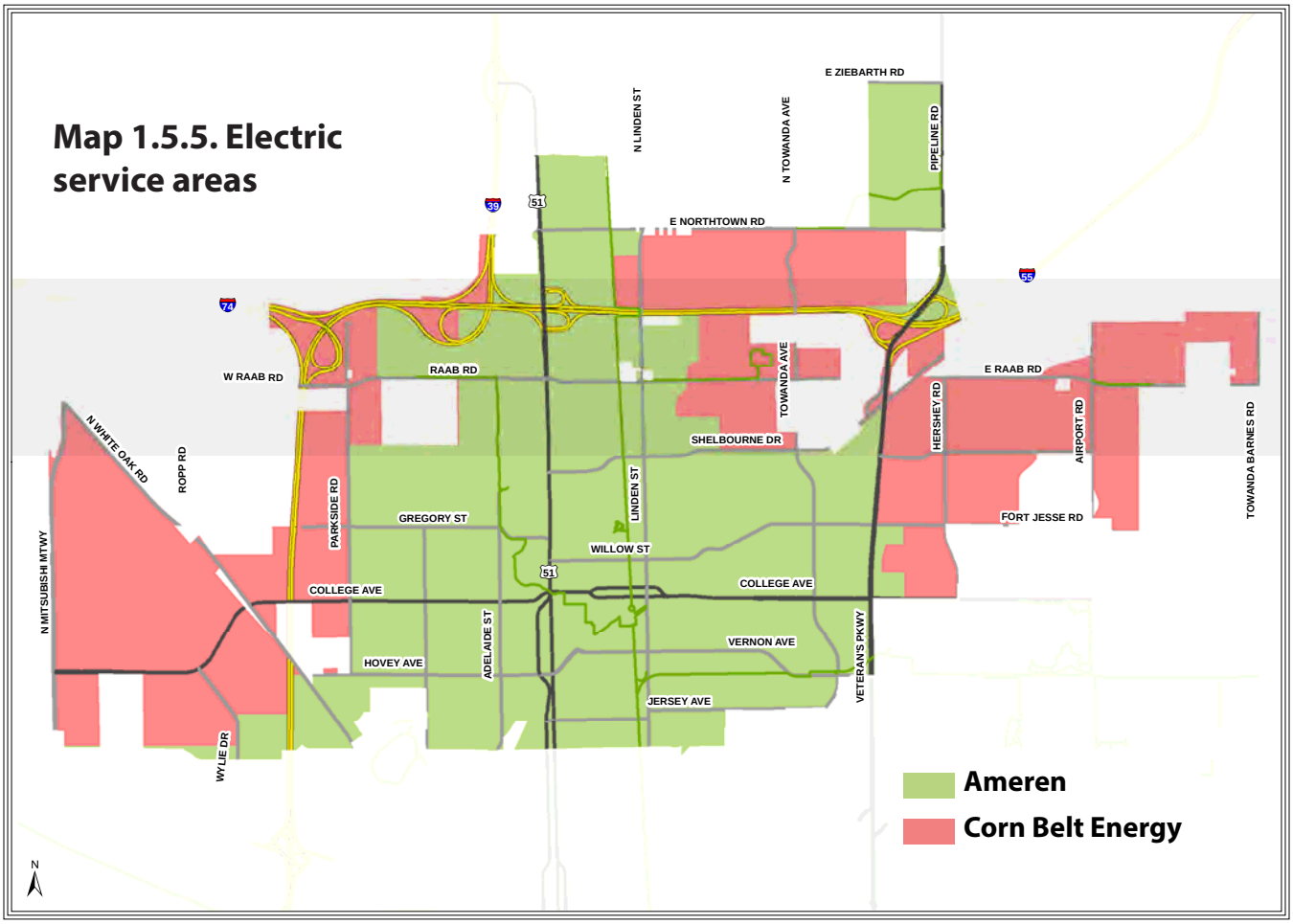
(Ameren) and Corn Belt Energy, which have designated territories for power distribution. Ameren is a publicly traded utility and is regulated by the Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC). Corn Belt Energy is a cooperative. As illustrated in Map 1.5.5, most of Normal is in Ameren territory. The newer developments on the north east and west of Normal are served by Corn Belt.

Illinois law allows municipal aggregation, whereby municipalities and counties purchase electricity on behalf of residential and small business utility customers within their corporate limits. Ameren customers within Town of Normal are eligible for and participate in the municipal aggregation program.

Nicor Gas is the primary natural gas utility serving the Town. Natural gas is not produced in the area. It is transported to the area by pipelines and stored in underground aquifers located north of Normal for supply during the winter months. Nicor has concerns about the area north of Normal occupied by its gas injection facility and the pipe network, well heads, and other infrastructure which support and monitor the status of the compressed natural gas stored in the aquifers. Wells are used to measure underground water displacement by the stored gas, allowing Nicor to confirm the quantity stored. Relocation of these wells to accommodate urban growth is possible but extremely expensive. Because the various infrastructure elements associated with natural gas storage and distribution require both monitoring and maintenance or repair, Nicor is reluctant to see extensive development take place in areas where concentrated infrastructure is present. In Map 1.5.6, blue lines indicate natural gas lines and red lines indicate hazardous liquid lines.

With respect to energy utilities, it is important to note that they are increasingly reluctant to support speculative new development with upfront investment in infrastructure. They see an unacceptable level of risk in extending distribution systems to areas that do not yet offer a sufficient customer base to offset the cost of new



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installation. This concern poses a challenge that the Town, commercial and residential developers, and the utilities will need to navigate.

ENERGY FOR EDUCATION

In response to the most striking energy development in the region, the installation of hundreds of megawatts of electricity generation capacity produced by wind, Heartland Community College has installed a 1.65 megawatt wind turbine on its campus. A part of the Heartland Green Institute, the turbine is one element in the college's commitment to environmental sustainability. The turbine generates approximately 50% of the electricity used on the campus and is a tool for teaching and practical experience in the expanding field of renewable green energy.

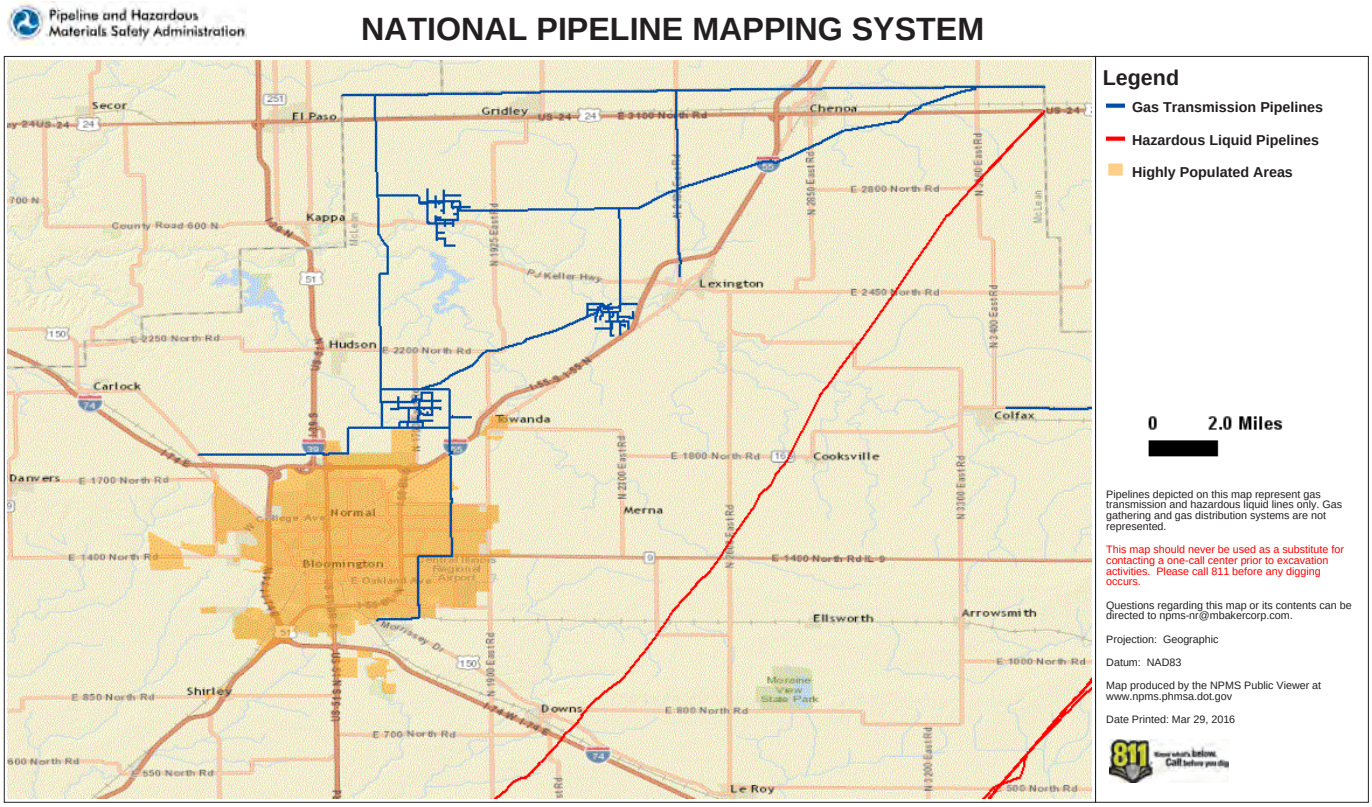
Telecommunications and Broadband

The Town of Normal is acutely aware of the shifting and increasingly critical role of telecommunications and especially broadband access in today's social and economic setting, and it has pursued initiatives to provide access in Town facilities. Illinois State University has also demonstrated recognition of this need, as campus buildings have been retrofitted to incorporate the necessary levels of connectivity. New public facilities, whether municipal or educational, are now designed to include these capabilities as a matter of course. Challenges in this area are based primarily on two factors: the speed with which these technologies change and expand their reach and the cost of keeping infrastructure on the same level as the technology.

In 2010, the community applied for and received a federal grant to expand broadband access in the region. Central Illinois Regional Broadband Network (CIRBN) was created to deliver high speed internet and intranet through fiber optic cable. This is overseen by the Town of Normal, the City of Bloomington, Heartland Community College, and Illinois State University. There are also private broadband service providers in the area with their own fiber networks.

SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

The Town of Normal is one of the few



Map 1.5.6. Gas transmission pipelines and hazardous liquid pipelines
Source: USDOT National Pipeline Mapping System

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municipalities in Illinois that directly provides trash and recycling collection services. Recently the Town has invested significant resources in its trash and recycling systems, including vehicle upgrades and new receptacles for residents.

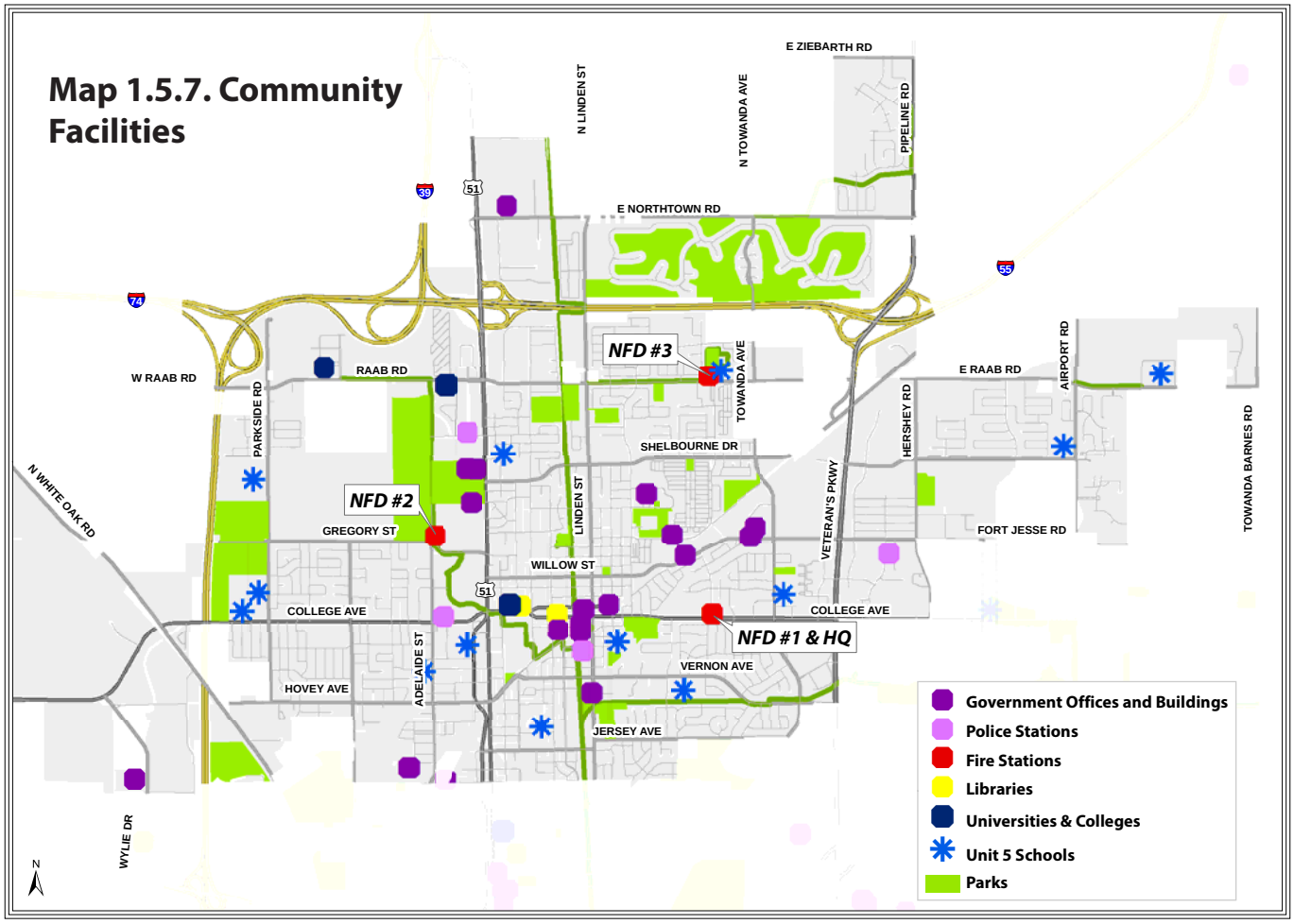
These upgrades increased efficiencies in trash collection and enabled curbside recycling services for single-family households. The Town does not have a curbside recycling program for multi-family structures. However, all residents have the option of taking certain materials to recycling dropboxes located around Normal. The Town also maintains an electronics drop-off location at the Public Works Annex on Warriner street.

Landfill use is of principal concern given the anticipated closure of the McLean County Landfill #2. The Ecology Action Center (EAC), which serves as the regional solid waste planning agency for the Town, City and the County, is currently updating the county-wide Integrated Solid Waste Management Plan. The landfill closure and alternate plans for waste management will be throughly addressed in that plan.

EAC also administers programs to promote recycling, conduct events to collect hazardous materials, and monitor performance in reducing solid waste. The Town is an active partner in these efforts.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

The Town of Normal boasts an extensive collection of community facilities and assets that contribute to the Town's quality of life and provision of public services (see Map 1.5.7). For the purposes of the comprehensive plan, community facilities are defined as buildings or places which are owned or substantially controlled by the Town. These include government buildings, departmental offices or workshops in other locations, police and fire facilities, parks and parking decks (see 5.5). The Parks and Recreation, Fire, and Police departments oversee and maintain their respective facilities. The Facilities and Energy Management Department is responsible for all aspects of building operations and maintenance of the 18 facilities,



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Uptown Station/City Hall: Uptown Station provides a transportation hub to the area. This facility serves several modes of transportation, including high-speed passenger rail, intercity and local bus service, airport shuttles, taxi services, passenger vehicles and pedestrians. Additionally, it provides a home to City Hall and Town Offices.

Normal Public Library: The Town library, built in 1972, is an excellent facility. Despite expansion in 1993, continuing population growth, the expansion of reference material, and demand for new media, have resulted in a need for additional space. The Library is considering plans for a new facility, with the location yet to be determined.

Children's Discovery Museum: The Children's Discovery Museum, located in Uptown Normal, is a destination for families and educators in central Illinois. It is a regional resource for innovative educational field trips and a unique family entertainment destination with three floors of professional exhibits and an abundance of innovative programs.

Carol A. Reitan Conference Center: The Town-owned conference center, named in honor of former Normal Mayor Carol Reitan, is attached to the Marriott Hotel.

Normal Theater: Restored to its 1937 Art-Moderne design, the Normal Theater includes plush seating, deco wall sconces, and a ceiling of recessed neon lights. The exterior features a neon marquee. The theater is connected to the Carol Reitan Conference Center.

One Normal Plaza: The 22-acre One Normal Plaza Park, formerly the site for the Illinois Soldiers and Sailors Children's School, includes the Community Activity Center; a baseball field; a 30-foot by 60-foot picnic shelter; two playground areas; a youth football field, which is home to the Twin City Tigers; an inline hockey rink; and open space suitable for recreational sports. The Community Activity Center features two rooms available to rent, the Social Room (40' x 65') and the Arts & Crafts Room (20' x 40'); is home to Heartland Theatre; and contains historic materials from the Illinois Soldiers and Sailors Children's School Historical Society.

Parks

Anderson Park: This 13-acre park includes the Anderson Aquatic Center, a lighted softball/baseball diamond, three lighted tennis courts, restroom facilities, two large picnic shelters, two large playground areas, a hard surface basketball court, and the Born Learning Trail, which was constructed in partnership with the United Way. The Aquatic Center includes a large pool with a diving board, which is also used for competitive swimming. A second pool features two water slides and a third offers shallow water with spray toys and a small slide for younger children. The Aquatic Center is home to the Normal Sharks swim team.

Carden Park: A five-acre park provided through a cooperative partnership with McLean County Unit 5 School District, Carden Park is near Prairieland Elementary School and the #3 Fire Station. It includes playground equipment, a backstop for baseball or softball, two soccer fields, a basketball court with adjustable baskets, an accessible picnic shelter, and a 1/3-mile walking path around the perimeter of the site. This path connects to Constitution Trail. Safety Town is designed for children to ride bikes in a safe traffic area with miniature signs, small scale roads, play equipment, and a miniature fire truck.

Connie Link Amphitheatre: The Connie Link Amphitheatre is accessible from the Constitution Trail. Current programs include: High School Summer Theatre productions, Dress-Up Movie Nights, and the Sounds of the Amphitheatre concert series, which highlights local talent from the Bloomington/Normal area.

Constitution Trail: The Constitution Trail is a 37-mile hard surfaced trail running through the Twin Cities for walking, hiking, jogging, and biking, providing the community with an outstanding linear park.

East Detention Basin: This nine-acre detention basin was developed to detain heavy amounts of stormwater. The area is maintained as open space and utilized as a neighborhood park. Park amenities include playground equipment and picnic tables, which are accessible from the parking area.

Fairview Park: Fairview Park contains the Fairview Family Aquatic Center, a lighted softball diamond, lighted tennis courts, a 60' by 30' picnic shelter, five smaller shelters, playground areas, a skate park and a restroom facility. Constitution Trail runs through the west end of the park and is accessible from the numerous parking areas. The Aquatic Center features four pool areas and five slides. For younger children, the facility has a spray toy area. Fairview also includes a zero depth activity pool, a full service concession area, a one-meter diving board and an area for lap swimming during public swim hours. The Skate Park offers a variety of obstacles, ramps and multiple surface types, and is open to inline skaters, skateboarders and BMX bikes.

Fell Park: The two-acre Fell Park is the oldest park in Normal, and was set aside as a park by Jesse Fell in the mid-1850s. The Town constructed a water tower in the park in 1898. The park includes a small shelter, a circular basketball court, horseshoe courts, and a playground. A central plaza is a monument to Jesse Fell.

Fransen Nature Area: This area is 5.5 acres of naturalized prairie enclosed by evergreen trees. A 1/4 mile gravel trail leads to an observation deck that overlooks a small pond. It can be accessed from the Constitution Trail or by vehicle from Sycamore Street. This passive recreational area features native

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flowers and grasses, benches for relaxation, mature trees, and a small butterfly garden.

Ironwood Golf Course, Ironwood Park: Ironwood Golf Course is a full-service golf facility. The Roger Packard-designed course features a par-72 championship layout playing from 5,400-6,900 yards with four sets of tees. Ironwood offers a grass tee practice range, a large putting green, and a practice bunker. The clubhouse contains a pro shop, snack bar, and meeting rooms. The eight-acre park site is adjacent to Ironwood Golf Course. There are four lighted tennis courts, a picnic shelter and playground equipment. The lighted baseball field includes dugouts, concrete seating areas, and a drinking fountain. Constitution Trail is located across from the park.

Kelly Detention Basin: The 16-acre Kelly Detention Basin serves as open space for a number of recreational uses by residents, such as soccer practices, football, baseball, Frisbee, and other sports. The park is home to the Central Illinois Cricket Association. This site is located on an original section of Route 66.

Martin Luther King Park: This neighborhood park, which was dedicated by the Town in memory of civil rights leader Martin Luther King, contains four acres and adjoins Sugar Creek Elementary School. It contains a small park shelter, playground equipment, and a soccer field. Sidewalks provide access from the school parking lots and nearby residential streets.

Maxwell Park: This 125-acre park is part of the school/park partnership between the Town and the Unit 5 school district, connecting Parkside Elementary and Junior High Schools, and Normal West High School. The park provides sports and recreational opportunities and passive areas for more relaxed activity. Facilities and equipment include the Champion Fields softball complex, six lighted tennis courts, playground equipment for all ages, a large picnic shelter, restrooms, and a dog park. Champion Fields has eight lighted diamonds in the main complex and two lighted diamonds at Maxwell Park. Fields have covered dugouts, bleacher seating, scoreboards, and P.A. systems. Each set of four fields has a concession stand and restrooms. A playground area is located in the center of the softball complex. Other facilities include an 18-hole disc golf course, a 12-pit lighted horseshoe court, three small picnic shelters, a hard-surfaced basketball court, and a large natural area in the rear of the park with hiking trails.

Oak Street Baseball Field: This baseball field is located on the south side of Chiddix Junior High School and is used by the school teams and local baseball organizations. The site includes parking at the school, a drinking fountain, bleachers, and dugouts.

Rosa Parks Commons: This 13.5-acre park site was developed to collect heavy stormwater from nearby properties. It is used extensively for organized sports including soccer and lacrosse and as a practice area for football teams within the community. Large open areas are available, with room for up to three soccer fields. There is access to Constitution Trail. Amenities include accessible playground equipment, portable restrooms, a drinking fountain, and a small shelter.

Savannah Green Park: This 2.5-acre neighborhood park includes a shelter, playground equipment, a drinking fountain, and a circular basketball court.

Shepard Park: Shepard Park includes a large picnic shelter, two baseball fields. two playground areas including a fenced tot playground, restroom facilities, a basketball court, and a large parking lot. A dog park is located at the north end of the park.

Underwood Park: Underwood Park contains 18 rolling acres with large mature trees. The park has two lighted tennis courts, a large picnic shelter, a softball diamond, restrooms, playground equipment, four smaller picnic shelters, and a hard-surface basketball court.

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including the Children's Discovery Museum, Uptown Station and the historic Normal Theater. This department also surveys facility conditions and provides an annual report on status and needed maintenance and repairs.

PUBLIC SAFETY

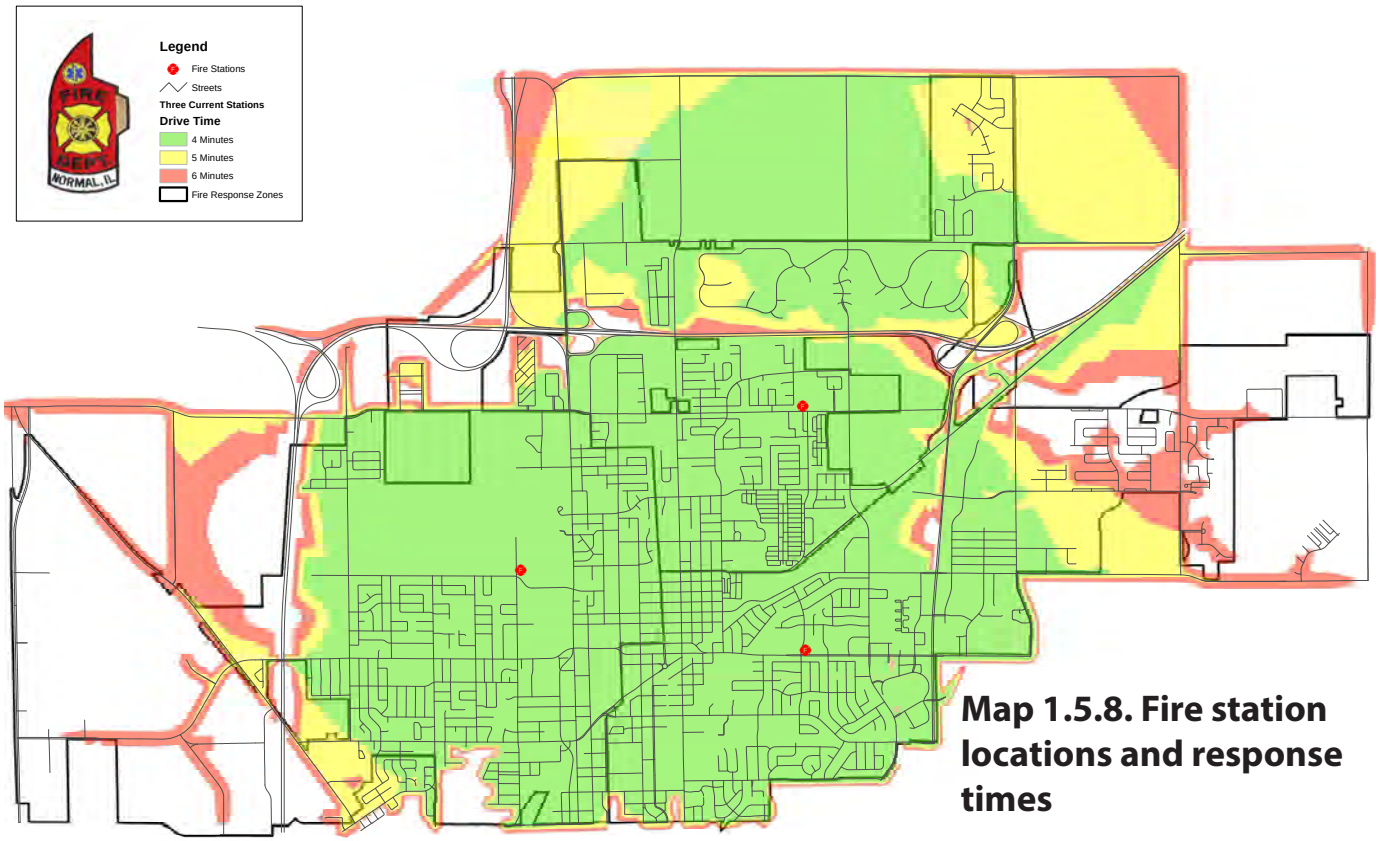
The Town protects the safety of its residents in numerous ways, including ordinances setting standards for construction, requirements for business licensing, inspections to ensure that safety standards for buildings and services are met, and other regulatory actions. These tools, combined with the management of land use and development, aid in maintaining Normal as a place that is safe and welcoming for its residents and visitors.

The Town's most direct contribution to public safety is through its first responders in the police and fire departments. Police officers, firefighters, and the emergency medical service responders staffing ambulances can be the literal difference between life and death. In less dire circumstances, these public servants provide reassurance, contact with needed resources, and education for the community to preserve everyone's safety and security.

FIRE DEPARTMENT

Normal currently has three fire stations. Within the last five years, the Town of Normal Fire Department (NFD) has evaluated the performance of these stations, including physical deterioration, design obsolescence, and geographic location challenges. Its evaluation indicated a need to replace at least two of the three existing facilities due to physical deterioration. It also reported that the locations of the existing stations no longer allowed for acceptable response times throughout the Town (see Map 1.5.8). Several options to address these deficiencies were presented to the Council in June 2013. Of those options, the Council chose to pursue the replacement of all three stations.

As a result, NFD is currently in the midst of substantial investment in new infrastructure, beginning with the relocation of its headquarters facility to a new building slated for construction on Main Street. This will be followed by the replacement of the remaining fire stations as resources permit. In the studies and assessments leading



Map 1.5.8. Fire station locations and response times

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to this realignment of facilities, NFD assumed that the Town's physical extent is likely to remain compact. Any further expansion could alter those assessments.

As changes to the fire stations are implemented, there should be ongoing evaluation of the results across the Town—in particular, to gauge the accuracy of the assumptions regarding response times and other metrics associated with the fire station relocation.

POLICE DEPARTMENT

As with other Town departments, the Normal Police Department's (NPD) analysis of programs and needs proceeds under the assumption that the Town will not grow substantially beyond its current boundaries in the near future. Much of the Department's focus is on maximizing communication between police officers and the public through the practice of community policing. Police activities are less infrastructure-oriented than is the case for other Town departments. However, information technology and the equipment, software, and staff that carry out IT-based tasks are important resources.

Using information technology, the NPD makes extensive use of data analysis tools, using analyses of call origins and criminal incident reports to identify areas requiring additional resources beyond the standard patrols and community contacts. Mapping is also used to identify problem areas for traffic incidents. Traffic data is categorized by the type of vehicle or pedestrian involved in a crash, as well as location and severity. More concentrated enforcement can be undertaken in locations with higher incidence of crashes or other safety concerns, such as jaywalking and improper actions by bicycle riders.

The NPD also works with apartment management companies to address issues in areas with concentrated university student populations or other locations with high residential densities. These areas are identified based on concerns reported by apartment managers regarding law enforcement issues as well as NPD's internal analysis.

The NPD also coordinates with other Town departments and the ISU campus police to evaluate patterns and develop responses. The Department has an excellent relationship with the Bloomington Police Department. The forces conduct joint trainings and coordinate on some activities, such as crowd control, SWAT deployment, and hostage negotiation.

The Police Department data analysis and the police response to conditions is part of the annual departmental report. The departmental strategy focuses on modifying behavior to comply with laws and ordinances and reduce the incidence of crime. This strategy is reinforced by extensive community outreach and communication through multiple channels, designed to sustain NPD awareness of enforcement and education needs in the Town.

FUNDING

The universal fact about infrastructure is its high cost. Creating and sustaining complex systems requires extensive technical preparation in forecasting needs, determining the scale of installation, determining feasibility, and designing and installing system components. Each step of the process requires substantial financial investment.

Infrastructure funding is drawn from a variety of sources. These include local government revenue, and for some types of infrastructure, funding from state or federal grant programs. Some infrastructure projects involve multiple agencies that may share the associated costs. The Town participates in several of these cooperative projects, including the Constitution Trail, regional stormwater management, shared street and intersection projects, the Historic Route 66 Bikeway, and others.

In the forecasting and planning efforts undertaken by the Town, various departments have calculated future needs for infrastructure under the assumption that the Town is unlikely to grow extensively in area over the next 20 to 30 years. Instead, the Town is expected to emphasize infill development during this period. Of course, maintenance and repair to existing infrastructure systems will require ongoing investment.

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FINDINGS AND KEY QUESTIONS

Findings

- Where people live, work, and play, how they travel, and what they eat all affect individual health and overall community well-being. To that effect, the concept of community health must be understood as the relationships between individual lifestyles, socioeconomic factors and environmental conditions.

- Obesity is one of the major health concerns in McLean County. This is driven primarily by physical inactivity and unhealthy eating habits. Despite continuous efforts to improve walkability and bikability, the BN metro area remains difficult to traverse without a car. Significant portions of the community are also designated as food deserts by the USDA, meaning access to fresh food without a car is difficult.

- Access to mental health services has become an increasingly serious issue in recent years, gaining public attention as the county jail has been overwhelmed by a growing number of inmates with untreated mental illnesses. The county's Mental Health Action Plan and the resulting increase in funding and services are positive recent steps toward addressing this crisis. However, there is more work to be done in this area. Housing and transportation issues identified in the Mental Health Action Plan must be carefully considered and addressed in the comprehensive plan.

- Normal is a well-educated and affluent community overall. However, some populations, including people with low incomes, seniors, and people with disabilities, need affordable housing options and access to amenities and facilities via alternative modes of transportation.

- The Town of Normal is a leader in sustainability. Its commitment is exemplified by Uptown Normal's environmentally friendly features and the adopted plans for Uptown 2.0 to achieve a net positive environmental impact. The Town is also an active partner in addressing regional environmental challenges. Immediate challenges include air quality, water quality and solid waste. Preservation of McLean County's richest natural resource, its farmland, is an ongoing challenge as well.

Questions

- How can health be understood and addressed more comprehensively (instead of the current piecemeal approach)? What role should the municipalities play in addressing major local health concerns? Can health become part of all policies? If so, how can we measure the effectiveness of such policies on the health outcomes?

- How can major community initiatives complement community health, and vice versa. For example, how can regional economic development efforts help further local food, farmland preservation, and social equality goals?

- How can land use, transportation, and other local government polices be inclusive and address the needs of all current and potential residents?

- How can the region grow in a manner that preserves prime farmland while not inhibiting population growth? How can we protect our finite natural resources such as clean air and water? Should we aim to do no harm or give back to the environment?

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Individual lifestyles, socioeconomic factors, culture, and environmental conditions all influence health. Land use and the built environment also play a key role. An overwhelming body of literature shows that where people live, work, and play, how they travel, and what they eat all affect individual health and overall community well-being. Figure 1.6.1 illustrates the complex interrelationships between different determinants of health.

In the past, topics such as alternative transportation, parks, and other factors that influence health were addressed individually or as sections of comprehensive plans. However, as the links between these factors and physical, social, and environmental health have become more clear, it has also become clear that health needs to be understood and addressed more comprehensively. This chapter discusses the three major aspects of health—physical, social and environmental—and their relation with land use and policies.

The chapter relies on a mix of national, state, and county health data (solid data are generally unavailable at the municipal level) and relevant special area plans such as the Town of Normal's Parks Master Plan, the county's Mental Health Action Plan, and the Uptown 2.0 plan.

MAJOR HEALTH CONCERNS IN MCLEAN COUNTY

The McLean County Health Department (MCHD) is the lead entity in health planning efforts in Normal, Bloomington and McLean County. As part of the Illinois Project for Local Assessment of Need (IPLAN), the MCHD creates a five-year work plan that identifies local health priorities. The last iteration of this plan, for 2012-2017, identified obesity and mental health as two of its top three health priorities for McLean County. (The third was oral health, which is not discussed here, as it is largely not a planning issue.)

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA), enacted in 2010, requires all tax-exempt hospitals to conduct community health needs assessments. The two major hospitals in McLean County, OSF and Advocate Bromenn, completed their individual assessments in 2013. Obesity and mental health were among the top concerns identified by those assessments as well.

OBESITY

Obesity is frequently defined as having a Body Mass Index (BMI) equal to or greater than

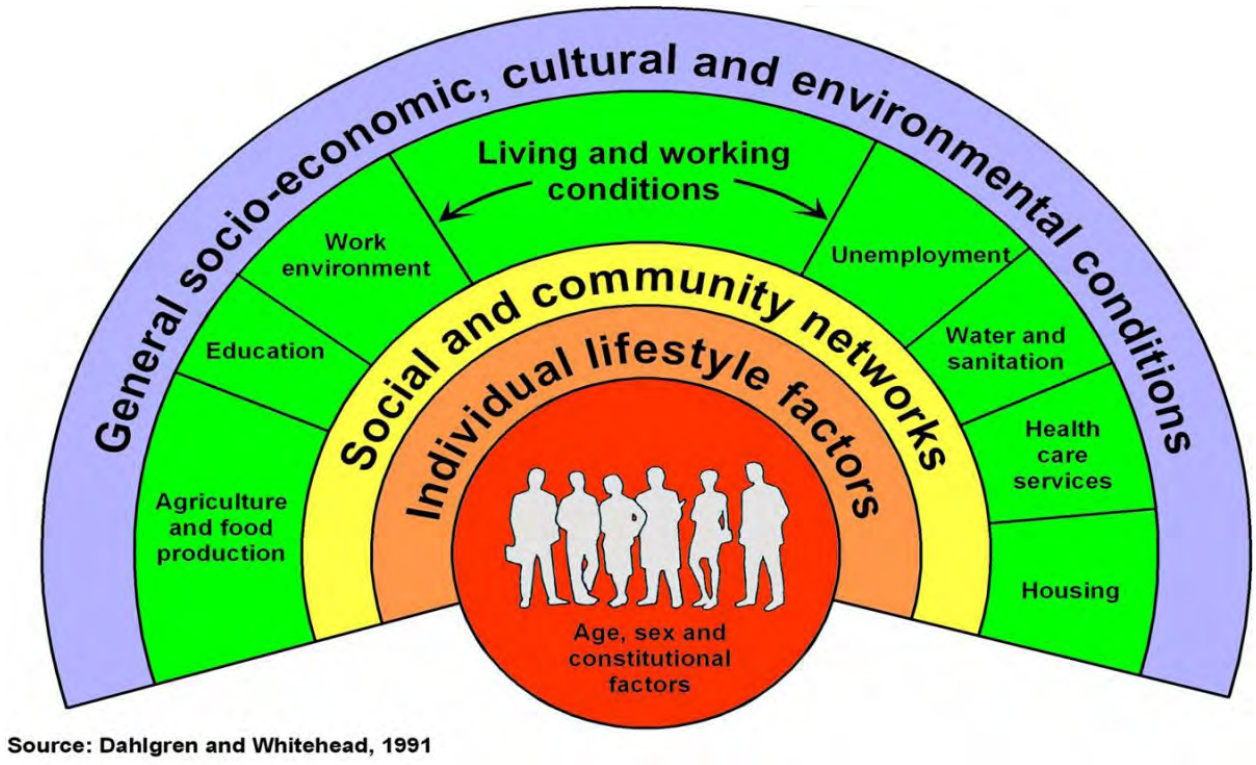

Figure 1.6.1. Factors influencing health. Note that "environmental conditions" is a general term referring to all aspects of the environments in which people live, including the natural, built, and social environments.

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30; an "overweight" BMI is between 25 and 30. Obesity puts individuals at increased risk for more than 20 chronic diseases, including type 2 diabetes and heart disease. Physical inactivity and unhealthy eating habits contribute to obesity and overweight.

As illustrated in Figure 1.6.2 and Table 1.6.1, over 32% of all adults in McLean County are obese, surpassing state and national numbers. An additional 33% of county adults are overweight. Together, nearly two-thirds of McLean County adults are either overweight or obese, and that percentage has risen steadily over the past decade.

While the built environment and land use are not the leading causes of obesity, they contribute to the problem. The Town of Normal has made great strides in the last couple of decades to make the built environment more conducive to health, but there is more work to be done.

One of the key precepts of "smart growth," discussed elsewhere in this document, is that amenities located within an accessible distance help promote physical activity. Attributes of the BN metro area's built environment such as decreasing population density per square mile and street patterns that are not conducive to alternative modes of transportation are deficits from a health planning perspective. The Town of Normal's Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Master Plan ("Parks Master Plan"), updated in 2015, pointed out that over 70% of residents do not have access to a neighborhood or a community park within half a mile of their home. (Beyond that distance, most people are unlikely to walk to and from the park.) Walk Score, which rates neighborhoods and communities based on the ease of performing errands and accessing amenities without a car, notes that certain neighborhoods (e.g., Uptown and Pleasant Hills) are fairly walkable but assigns the Town as a whole a rating of 35 out of 100, indicating that this is a "car-dependent community" (see Figure 1.6.3). Building more compact, walkable communities; allowing a mix of land uses; providing transportation options other than automobiles; balancing jobs and housing to reduce commute times and reduce reliance on cars; and achieving densities that support amenities within certain geographies should be important considerations during the comprehensive planning process.

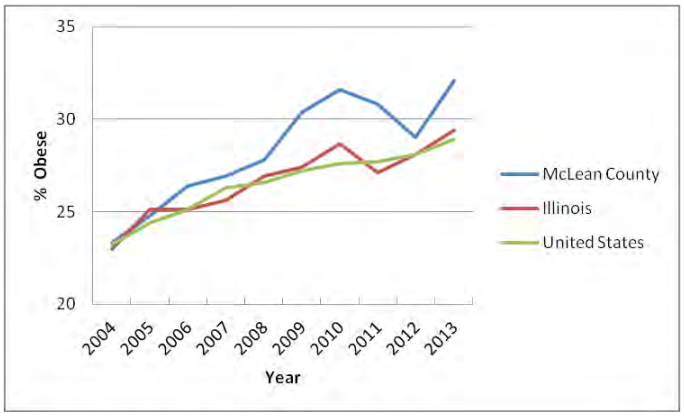

Figure 1.6.2. McLean County's obesity rate, compared to that of the state and the nation, 2004-13.
Note that the figure for each year is actually a three-year average including the year itself, the year prior, and the year after.
Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

	MCLEAN	ILLINOIS	US
Underweight/ Normal	35.20%	35.20%	35.20%
Overweight	32.70%	35.30%	35.40%
Obese	32.10%	29.40%	29.40%

Table 1.6.1. McLean County's obesity and overweight rates, compared to those of the state and the nation, 2013.
Source: CDC

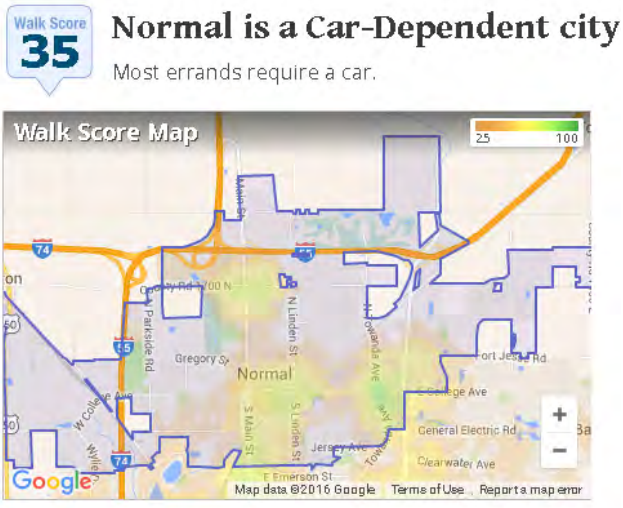

Figure 1.6.3. Town of Normal Walk Score
Source: www.walkscore.com

	2007 (per 1,000)	2012 (per 1,000)	% change (per 1,000)
McLean County	109 (0.665)	129 (0.749)	+18.4% (+12.6%)

Table 1.6.2. Fast food restaurants in McLean County, 2007 and 2012. Source: USDA Food Atlas.

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6.1. TOWN OF NORMAL PARKS MASTER PLAN: HIGHLIGHTS

- There are 5.72 acres of neighborhood and community park space per 1,000 people, or 14.2 acres per 1,000 people when natural areas, special uses, and linear parks (i.e., Constitution Trail) are included. According to National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) standards, communities should have at least 10 acres of park or open space per 1,000 residents. The study also identified a deficiency of over 50,000 sq. ft. in indoor recreational space.
- The Town was divided into planning areas for further analysis. Some areas were classified as well-served and others as underserved based on proximity and access to parks and recreational areas. This analysis concluded that over 70% of residents in Normal are underserved by neighborhood park space, meaning they are not located within half a mile of the park. See Figures 1.6.4 and 1.6.5.
- Planning areas 17, 3 and 5, in that order, were further prioritized based on population density.
- With over 15 miles of Constitution Trail in the Town of Normal and nearly 28 miles in the BN metro area, the community is well-served by this linear park. The trail links several parks and schools within the Town of Normal, as well as Illinois Wesleyan and amenities within the City of Bloomington.
- Currently over 65% of Town residents live within half a mile of the trail. Planned improvements would improve access for nearly 90% of Town residents. Figure 1.6.6 illustrates trail development priorities in three areas based on population served.
- Based on the community input, the following were identified as future recreational needs, along with a centralized maintenance facility and fiscal responsibility:
  - Indoor recreation and aquatic center
  - Soccer/sports complex
  - Constitution Trail linkages and extensions
  - Passive recreation/nature areas
  - Diversity in program offerings
- The plan outlined several strategies and actionable steps, prioritized based on their potential impacts to help address the aforementioned deficiencies.

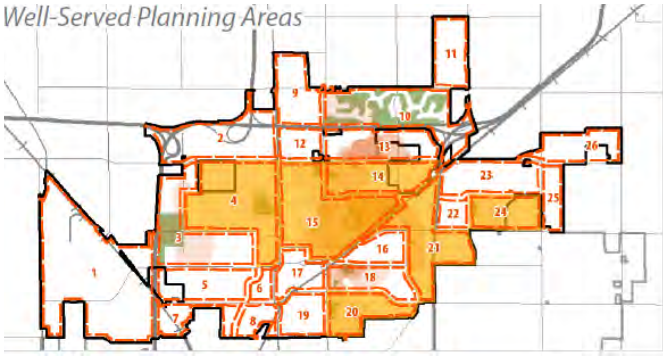
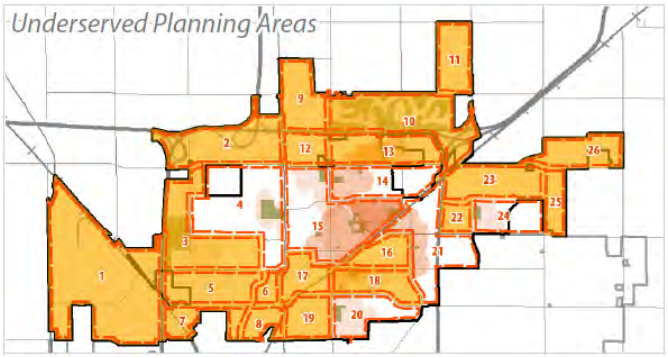
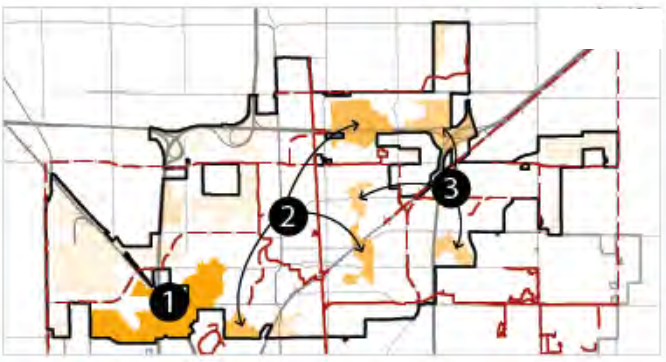


Figure 1.6.4. Well-served planning areas (over 50% of the planning area population has walkable access to outdoor recreational space)



Map 1.6.5. Underserved planning areas (less than half of the planning area population has walkable access to outdoor recreational space)



Map 1.6.6. Trail development priorities based on population served

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Access to healthy food is another major contributor to obesity. Normal and the BN metro area have many grocery stores, but most of them are located along Veterans Parkway. Figure 1.6.4 shows areas within the Town (and some of the metro area) that are designated as "food deserts" by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Food deserts are census tracts with high concentrations of low-income residents and low access to fresh food, meaning grocery stores are located far enough away to require access to an automobile—a potentially serious problem for low-income individuals.

Another barrier to healthy eating in McLean County is the strong fast food culture. McLean County has the 15th-most fast food restaurants per capita in Illinois, and that ratio is trending upward (see Table 1.6.2). The prevalence of fast food restaurants has been linked to obesity rates in national research.

Some efforts have been made, in both the public and private spheres, to try to make healthy food more accessible. The McLean County Wellness Coalition (MCWC), an alliance of several local government and private organizations, is actively promoting healthy eating, active living, and workplace wellness throughout the community. Efforts to build Green Top Grocery (GTG), a cooperative grocery store in Bloomington, are currently underway. GTG's mission to source local, organic foods and operate under democratically defined "social responsibility" principles should make it a key player in improving access to fresh and healthy foods.

While these initiatives are encouraging first steps, local government can do more to strengthen and enhance access to fresh, healthy, local food and improve food justice. The Town's Community-Wide Sustainability Plan and 2035 Report ("the 2035 Report"), adopted in 2010, recognized the importance of local food systems and their positive impact on economic vibrancy, fairness and justice, accessibility, health, and social responsibility. The 2035 Report identified many gaps in the local food system and identified strategies to

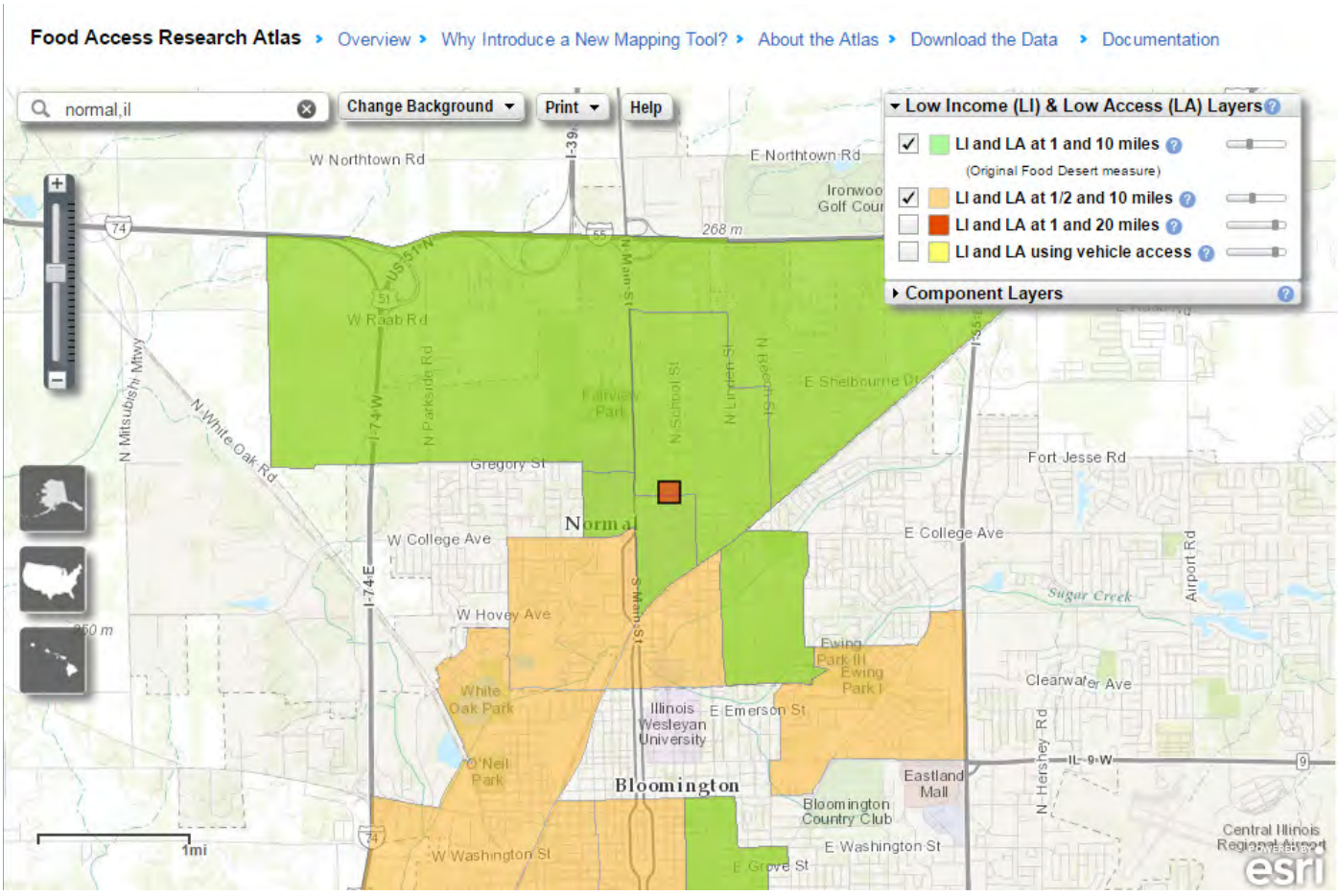

Figure 1.6.4. Food Desert in Normal
Source: US Department of Agriculture

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address them. The Town has implemented some of its recommendations already, such as urban garden plots and the Refuge Food Forest. Other recommendations, such as strategies to address the production and processing gaps within the local food system, have not yet been acted on. Some of these very important steps require commitment of governmental units above and beyond just the local governments. This visioning and comprehensive planning process is a great time to revisit such strategies and clearly articulate how the Town can play an active role in or lead such efforts to improve community health.

MENTAL HEALTH

In McLean County, mental health has been recognized in recent years as a major and growing concern. An estimated 20% of the population is at risk for having a significant mental health episode in their life. Suicide calls to the local social service support line maintained by Providing Access to Health (PATH) increased from 410 in 2007 to 920 in 2010.

In May 2015, the McLean County Board adopted a Mental Health Action Plan in response to the serious mental illness issues in the county jail. While conditions in the jail triggered that action plan, the plan highlighted the importance and complexity of mental illness as a community concern and identified a range of related issues, including homelessness, public safety concerns, and access to services. It criticized the current siloed approach to providing services and called for increasing collaboration among stakeholders and community leaders, including the local governments, hospitals, and service providers.

The Town of Normal and the City of Bloomington joined forces with the county in the implementation of that plan. Both municipalities recently passed a one-cent-per-dollar sales tax increase that will generate about $3.8-$4 million annually for mental health services. The county was also instrumental in securing state and federal grants to forward the plan's objectives. While much progress has been made since its adoption, including establishing a crisis stabilization unit and a "mental health first aid kit" to train individuals to help family and friends with mental illness, many gaps

6.2. MCLEAN COUNTY'S MENTAL HEALTH ACTION PLAN

The McLean County Mental Health Action Plan initially grew from an analysis of mental health conditions within the McLean County jail. This assessment provided recommendations to improve the jail environment for inmates with mental health issues and to provide greater access to services for those individuals once they have served their sentences and are back in the community. In 2014, the McLean County Board Executive Committee formed two working groups, one of which was tasked with assessing mental health needs in McLean County and the other with identifying best practices to resolve these issues.

The resulting action plan sets out short- and long-term goals and establishes timelines and lead agencies for each of the next steps. The action plan further outlines five areas of focus for improving the overall mental health of residents in McLean County, each containing several short- and long-term objectives to guide implementation. The areas of focus are:

1. **Collaboration and Coordination:** This section encourages all sectors to work together and advocates the "no wrong door" model for addressing mental health. Residents should, according to this philosophy, use any number of avenues in order to get the assistance that they need.

2. **Access to Medical Services and Medical Management:** This chapter focuses on improving access to medication and medical services for those suffering from mental illness and on the need to recruit additional behavioral health professionals to the community to address the behavioral health needs of children, adolescents, and adults.

3. **Juvenile Services (21 and Under):** This chapter highlights a wellness recovery action plan (WRAP) for different youth age groups, with action plans from birth to five years, five to 12 years, 11 to 15 years, 14 to 21 years, and post-high school. The WRAPs identify a number of measures to help youth with mental health issues, including prevention and identification, intervention, and possible institutionalization for someone experiencing a behavioral health crisis.

4. **Housing:** The plan identifies two main housing concerns for those suffering from mental illness: (a) access to clean, safe, and sanitary housing on a transitional/temporary, seasonal, or permanent basis, and (b) the availability of supportive housing.

5. **Crisis Services:** The County Board Mental Health Advisory Committee identified enhanced crisis services as a major need. For example, it highlights the need for a crisis response team with the necessary knowledge and skills required to effectively respond to crisis situations and calls for a 10-14 bed crisis stabilization program for adults.

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6.3 HOMELESSNESS IN MCLEAN COUNTY

The Continuum of Care Program (CoC) is an initiative from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to provide aid to state and local governments as well as nonprofits, with the goal of ending homelessness. in McLean and 10 other Central Illinois counties, the Central Illinois Continuum of Care (CICoC) is coordinated by Providing Access to Help (PATH) and consists of a number of regional social service providers. The Town is an active member in the CICoC.

The CICoC provides and coordinates housing options, programs and services for veterans, families, youth and individuals facing homelessness who are dealing with issues like disabilities, health challenges, domestic violence, and unemployment. The number of homeless people who received assistance through the McLean County CICoC has grown from 806 in 2003 to 1,813 in 2014. As the homeless population continues to grow, there remains a significant unmet need. Homelessness was discussed in the Mental Health Action Plan under the umbrella of housing, which was identified as one of the five major areas of concern that need to be addressed.

Homelessness comes in many forms and under many circumstances. The three broad categories listed below attempt to encompass these different forms concisely. Understanding these is critical to developing a plan to solve homelessness in McLean County.

1. *Chronic*: The Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development defines chronic homelessness as: either "(1) an unaccompanied homeless individual with a disabling condition who has been continuously homeless for a year or more, or (2) an unaccompanied individual with a disabling condition who has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years."
2. *Transitional*: Individuals generally enter the shelter system for only one short-term stay. Such persons are likely to be younger, and they are often recent members of the precariously housed population who have become homeless because of some catastrophic event and have been forced to spend a short time in a homeless shelter before making a transition into more stable housing. Transitionally homeless individuals account for the majority of individuals experiencing homelessness due to their high rate of turnover.
3. *Episodic*: Individuals who frequently shuttle in and out of homelessness are referred to as episodically homeless. They are most likely to be young, but unlike the transitionally homeless, episodically homeless individuals often are chronically unemployed and experience medical, mental health, and substance abuse problems.

In order to respond to these different forms of homelessness, it is necessary to provide different types of temporary housing. The CICoC provides the following in McLean County:

- *Permanent Supportive Housing*: This program works to provide housing and supportive services to those experiencing issues such as chronic homelessness, substance abuse issues, mental illness, or chronic health challenges. Permanent supportive housing programs work with tenants to assess their housing needs and allow them to stay in the housing unit for as long as they choose, provided they pay their rent, which is usually not more than 30 percent of their income. In McLean County, this type of housing is provided through Mayor's Manor, located just west of Downtown Bloomington. Mayor's Manor has 26 efficiency units available to residents who are 18 years or older and meet the income requirements. Fifteen units are set aside for people meeting the HUD definition of "homeless" or "disabled."
- *Transitional Housing*: Transitional housing aims to provide homeless individuals with temporary housing and stability as they work their way up to having their own housing. Individuals in this type of program could be those who have experienced sudden, unexpected homelessness, or are victims of domestic violence. Mid-Central Community Action in West Bloomington offers a transitional housing program that provides homeless families housing for up to 24 months, along with case management. Adult applicants must work full-time, or attend school and work at least part time.
- *Emergency Shelter*: An emergency shelter provides a temporary place for individuals to reside while experiencing homelessness. These facilities typically offer beds to homeless individuals on a first-come, first-served basis. Home Sweet Home Ministries (HSHM) and the Salvation Army in Bloomington provide these services. The HSHM shelter has over 90 beds and provides services such as a case worker to assist with employment, day care, and housing, among others. The Salvation Army, through its Safe Harbor Program, allows individuals to stay for 8 weeks. This program requires that individuals work toward overcoming their homelessness in that time and provides services including drug and alcohol treatment, mental health referrals, and training for job counseling.
- *Recovery Housing*: Recovery housing is geared toward individuals who are recovering from drug and alcohol addiction, or are experiencing mental illness, providing them a positive environment from which they can work towards bettering their lives. Chestnut Health Systems offers a variety of services such as Adolescent Addiction Treatment Services; case management for those dealing with mental illness; family therapy; domestic violence counseling; and community support services.
- *Seasonal Housing*: The McLean County Department of Human Services offers a warming shelter at its facility during the winter months. Seasonal housing is a program that could be further investigated to provide housing to homeless residents during the summer and winter months.

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remain.

Many issues intersecting mental health can be addressed effectively through planning. One such issue is access to social services, which can be enhanced through transportation improvements, siting and colocation, and interagency and intergovernmental cooperation.

Another key planning consideration is the capacity of emergency, transitional, and affordable permanent housing to meet community needs. Housing may not seem intuitively related to mental health, but serious mental illness can disrupt the ability to carry out essential aspects of one's daily life, including basic self-care and household management. Mental illnesses may also prevent people from forming and maintaining stable relationships or cause them to push away the caregivers, family, and friends who would otherwise prevent the problem from becoming more serious. As a result of these factors and the stresses of living with a mental disorder, people with mental illnesses are much more likely to become homeless than the general population.

Accordingly, the Mental Health Action Plan named housing as one of its five focus areas[6.2]. The plan proposed to increase the availability of supportive housing for behavioral health clients and construct a mix of permanent and transitional housing to help people with severe mental illness avoid homelessness[6.3].

SOCIAL HEALTH

"Social health" can mean many different things. For the purposes of this project, it refers primarily to the extent to which social conditions support individual health. The way society supports (or does not support) all of its populations—especially less privileged ones such as people without homes, people with low incomes, people of minority racial and ethnic groups, and people with disabilities—is not always understood as a health issue, but social status affects individual health in numerous and complex ways. It also refers to the strength of the social fabric—whether people feel connected to their neighbors and fellow residents and feel they are part of a single community. These two definitions of social health are mutually reinforcing. People who feel connected to their neighbors may be more willing to take social action to support them, and vice versa. The PlanIt Normal Survey revealed that this sense of community is one of Normal's strengths (see Chapter 2.1, Survey Analysis).

As discussed in Chapter 1.2 Demographics and Projections, Normal is a well-educated and affluent community. Based on the community outreach efforts detailed in Section 2, it is clear that Normal and the metro area have work to do in understanding and addressing the needs of an aging population, those with less education, low-income families, and people with disabilities.

With regard to how land use and the built environment can be used to address social issues, two predominant themes, affordability and accessibility, asserted themselves during interviews with social service agencies (see Chapter 2.2, Stakeholder Interviews, for a more detailed discussion):

- *Affordability*: Many social service agencies commented that there is insufficient affordable housing for their clients, typically lower income individuals and families. Access to more Section 8 vouchers and an increase in the number of apartments that accept them were both identified as challenges. Many interviewees also pointed out that some families who do not meet the federal guidelines for Section 8 vouchers are also in need of affordable housing. This segment of population typically goes un- or underserved.
- *Accessibility*: Many of the interviewees expressed concern about the availability of public transportation and other mobility options. Door-to-door and door-through-door transportation options; extended hours and weekend service for public transportation; pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure; and universal design standards in the built environment were all recognized as key to accommodating seniors, people with disabilities, and low-income, transit-dependent riders.

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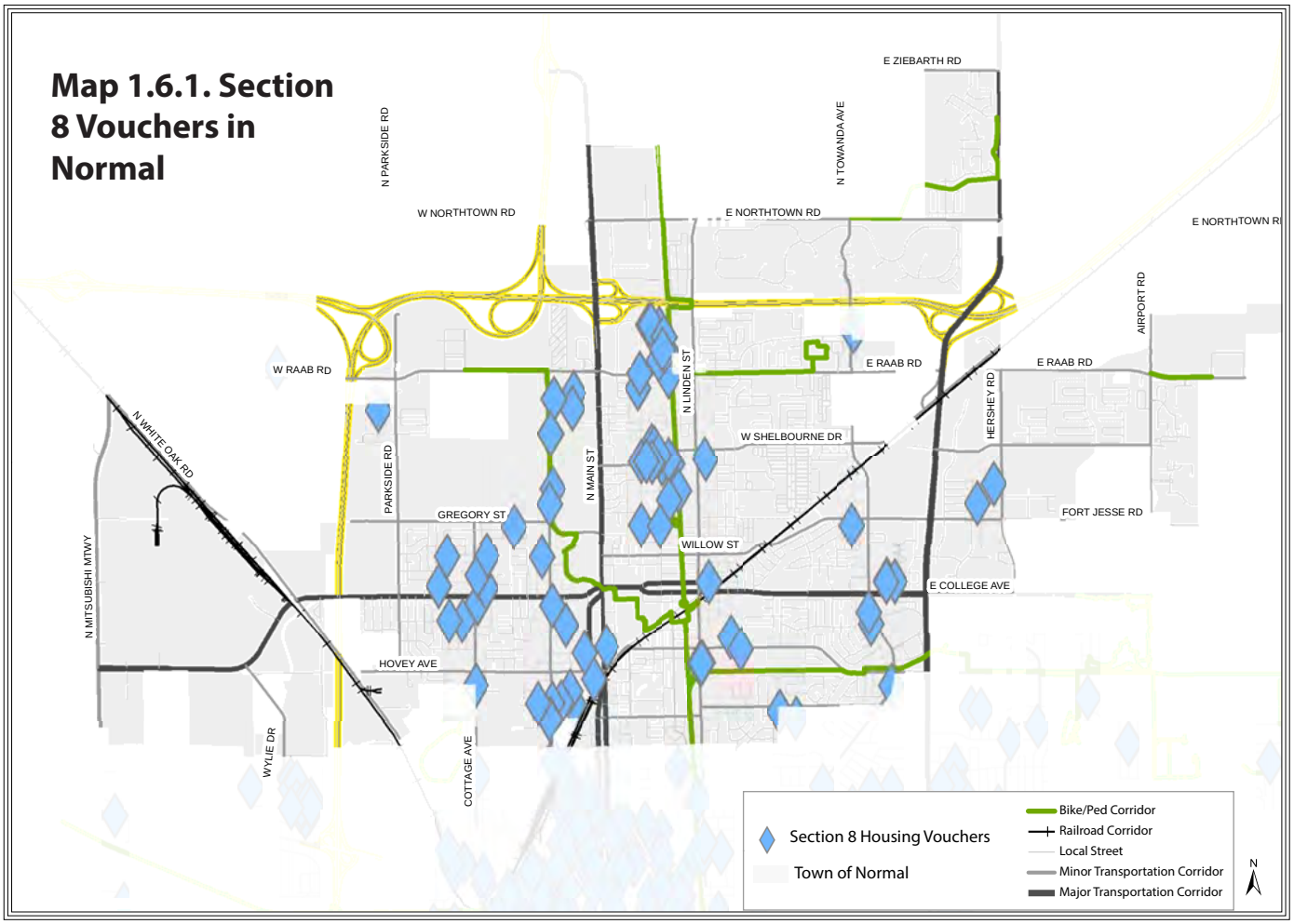
Other concerns voiced by the social service agencies were not directly related to the built environment but have a huge impact on the quality of life in the community:

- A lack of community awareness on the needs of underserved populations such as seniors and people with disabilities.
- Limited lack of employment opportunities for people with lower skill levels or with certain disabilities.
- A lack of funding for social service agencies, threatening their operations and in some cases their existence.

There is some perception among the interviewed social service agencies that Normal is slightly more expensive than Bloomington for their clients (most of whom live in West Bloomington). While it is not uncommon for certain neighborhoods within a metro area to attract lower-income families, this claim has not been factually evaluated in the BN metro area.

Most of Bloomington-Normal's inclusion and diversity concerns voiced during the outreach



The Bloomington Housing Authority (BHA) provides housing for the low- to moderate-income populations in Bloomington-Normal and McLean County. It is primarily funded by the federal Housing and Urban Development Department (HUD) and is responsible for managing both public housing and the Section 8 voucher program. Both public housing and the Section 8 program serve very low-income families, the elderly, and people with disabilities. Public housing is rental housing owned and managed by the BHA, whereas the Section 8 program provides vouchers that can be put toward the cost of rent at participating apartment complexes throughout the community. There is currently no public housing in Normal; all of the BHA's public housing units are in Bloomington. There are some rental units in Normal for which renters can use Section 8 vouchers—as of February 2016, 247 of the 771 vouchers issued in McLean County (about 32%) were used in Normal. It is important to note that the number of Section 8 vouchers do not fully reflect the need in our community. The BHA has over 2,000 members on its waiting list.

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process revolved around age, physical abilities, income, and education. Issues surrounding race and ethnicity did not come up as a major concern during that process. This is not to suggest that such issues do not exist. It may be that they were not mentioned more due to the relatively small presence of racial minorities in the community or the failure of the outreach process to reach those groups. As discussed in Chapter 1.2, Demographics and Projections, the trend nationwide (including in Normal) is toward greater racial and ethnic diversity, as the Millennial generation and Generation Z are the most diverse in American history. It is clear that additional data analysis and outreach efforts are required to better understand how issues of race and ethnicity will shape Normal through 2040.

As the community plans for its next 20 to 25 years, it is important to understand and address the needs of all people, not just those with the most representation. This will be an ongoing challenge for Normal, among many other communities, as local governments continue to grapple with tight budgets and feel compelled to prioritize projects based on the rate of return. It is critical to keep in mind that tomorrow's communities are those in which all segments of the population feel supported and have a decent quality of life.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

The natural environment is composed of vegetation, soils, water, plants, wind, energy, and air. Also included as part of the natural environment are all living things that interact within this sphere. The quality of life in any community is dependent on the quality of its natural environment. It is upon us to protect and preserve it.

McLean County has a rich natural environment, including farmland, water bodies, wetlands, riparian ecosystems, and rare plant sites that enhance and maintain the biodiversity and water quality of the region. McLean County's largest natural asset continues to be its rich soil. For better or worse, our farmland is generally flat and presents only moderate limitations to development and growth of the community. This requires the communities to be more deliberate about growing responsibly to preserve and protect this valuable resource.

The importance of protecting our natural resources at the regional level has been well recognized in McLean County. This is evidenced by the many longstanding intergovernmental agreements between Normal, Bloomington, and the county to solve environmental issues related to solid waste, greenways, and regional and urban watersheds. The Ecology Action Center (EAC), a nonprofit focusing on environmental issues, is supported by the Town, the City, and the County to act as a central resource within the community for environmental education, information, advocacy, and technical assistance. The Town has also been recognized nationally for its sustainable development efforts in Uptown Normal.

The Town's leadership on regional environmental issues is commendable, but Town officials would be the first to say that there is always more to be done to protect the health of the natural environment. Urban sprawl and farmland preservation, air quality and carbon emissions, the long-term water supply and water quality, and solid waste are some of the current regional environmental concerns.

Air quality has become an important issue due to changes in the USEPA's standards for ground-level ozone concentrations. Ozone is an important element of the upper atmosphere, but at ground level it is a product and a component of greenhouse gas emissions and a threat to human health. According to the USEPA: "Breathing ozone can trigger a variety of health problems including chest pain, coughing, throat irritation, and airway inflammation. It also can reduce lung function and harm lung tissue. Ozone can worsen bronchitis, emphysema, and asthma, leading to increased medical care."

In October 2015, the standard for ground-level ozone was reduced from 75 parts per billion (ppb) to 70 ppb, based on a three-year average of air sampling results. Areas not in compliance with this standard will be designated by the USEPA in October 2017 as non-attainment areas. The 2012-2014 average level in Bloomington-Normal was 71 ppb, slightly exceeding the new standard. Fortunately, the 2013-2015 ozone average fell to 66 ppb, within the standard by a small margin. Compliance with the new standard will be determined by the three-year ground-level ozone

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average for 2014-2016, so it is still possible that Bloomington-Normal will cross the non-attainment threshold. Aside from the public health considerations, should Bloomington-Normal be designated a non-attainment area, a series of regulations and programs will be required until ground-level ozone concentrations meet the standard, affecting the community's ability to attract new businesses (see Chapter 1.5, Infrastructure and Public Safety). A forthcoming regional energy plan, to be developed by MCRPC and the EAC, will address this and other air quality issues as they relate to energy production and use.

With regard to water quality, Sugar Creek has been placed on the IEPA's Impaired Waters list due to elevated levels of phosphorous. "Impaired waters" are defined by Section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act as rivers, lakes, or streams that fail to meet one or more water quality standards and are thus too polluted or degraded to provide sufficient support for aquatic life. The IEPA is concerned that the excess phosphorous in Sugar Creek will harm fish and macroinvertebrates (insects, crustaceans, and worms) living in the creek. The EPA is also concerned with downstream effects. The phosphorous in Sugar Creek eventually ends up in the Gulf of Mexico, which is already substantially polluted by phosphorous. Work must be done to identify the sources of this impairment and solve the problem.

One necessary step may be the development of a Sugar Creek watershed plan. Currently our region has two watershed plans, one for Lake Evergreen and one for Lake Bloomington, both completed in 2008. (There is also a Mackinaw River watershed plan, but it was completed in 1998.) Whether or not a Sugar Creek watershed plan is required by regulators, it would be beneficial to develop a unified plan for all of the community's 17 watersheds.

Finally, solid waste is of principal concern given the anticipated closure of the McLean County Landfill #2. The EAC, which serves as the regional solid waste planning agency for the Town, City, and the County, is currently updating the county-wide Integrated Solid Waste Management Plan. The landfill closure, alternate plans for waste management, and household hazardous waste solutions will be throughly addressed in that plan.

NORMAL'S LEADERSHIP IN SUSTAINABILITY

The Town of Normal has long been a leader in sustainability. In 2001, when the Town Council adopted the Downtown Redevelopment Plan, it made an unprecedented commitment to urban redevelopment and environmental sustainability. Implementation of that plan resulted in today's Uptown Normal, a community destination and an icon for smart growth and sustainability.

In 2007, Uptown Normal was among the first projects to register for the LEED Neighborhood Development (LEED ND) Pilot Program. LEED ND, administered by the US Green Building Council, was engineered to inspire and help create better, more sustainable, well-connected neighborhoods. It looks beyond the scale of buildings to consider entire communities.

At the heart of Uptown Normal is Uptown Circle. In addition to conveying traffic in a safe and efficient manner, the Circle provides a beautiful public gathering space and acts as a sustainable stormwater treatment area. The Circle received the EPA's National Award For Smart Growth Achievement in 2011. This highest honor is bestowed by the EPA on communities for their smart growth achievement and policies that protect human and environmental health while strengthening local economies.

Building on this momentum, in 2010 the Town adopted its first Community-Wide Sustainability Plan. The plan was developed in consultation with nearly 150 members of the community, representing a wide cross-section of community's demographics in terms of race, age, gender, class, ethnicity, vocation, avocation, political persuasion, personal and professional expertise, and more. Its findings and recommendations covered 14 topic areas: Arts & Culture; Continuous Learning & Community Building; Economic Development; Educational Institutions; Energy in the Built Environment/Energy Generation; Food System; Government: Planning, Public Safety, Public Services; Health & Wellness; Human Services & Spirituality; Resource & Carbon Management: Air; Resource & Carbon Management: Land; Resource & Carbon Management: Water; Transportation & Mobility; and Technology.

Several of the 2035 Report's recommendations have already been implemented[6.4],

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illustrating the Town's commitment to sustainability. Strategies yet to be acted on should be revisited during the upcoming visioning and comprehensive planning process to (1) evaluate any challenges faced in its implementation and (2) effectively integrate those strategies and avoid duplication of efforts.

In 2015, Town of Normal Council adopted the Uptown 2.0 Plan to redevelop the city-owned area across the tracks from Uptown Station (referred to in the plan as "Uptown South"). This robust plan challenges the Town to push the envelope on sustainability. It urges the Town to go beyond mitigating negative environmental impacts and aim to give back to the environment.

Uptown 2.0 proposes using the International Living Futures Institute (ILFI) Standard in pursuit of that goal. ILFI describes itself as an agency "committed to catalyzing the transformation toward communities that are socially just, culturally rich and ecologically restorative." The Town of Normal was the second community in the world to register a development project—Uptown 2.0—in the pilot program for ILFI's Living Communities Challenge (LCC). Launched in 2014, the LCC pushes communities to not only limit harm to the environment, but to strive to achieve self-sufficiency. The LCC has seven program areas, or Petals: Water, Energy, Beauty, Place, Materials, Health, and Happiness and Equity. These petals are further subdivided into 20 Imperatives. As shown in Figure 1.6.5, Uptown 2.0 will be pursuing Petal Certification, with a focus on the Water, Energy, and Beauty Petals. In accordandce with the program's requirements, the Town will also devote resources to educating the public about the environmental benefits of their LCC development, with the aim of inspiring others in the community to pursue similarly innovative efforts.

Achieving certification is no small task. The fact that the Town has volunteered for such a



Figure 1.6.5. LCC's certification process, from the Uptown 2.0 plan.

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6.4 TOWN OF NORMAL COMMUNITY-WIDE SUSTAINABILITY PLAN: PROGRESS

Arts & Culture

- Restoration of the annual Harmon Arts Grant in 2012
- Over 90 pieces of local artists' work displayed in Uptown Station
- Illinois State University Galleries in Uptown Station (opened in 2014)
- Continued support for the annual Sugar Creek Arts Festival (began 1984)

Energy in the Built Environment/Energy Generation

- LEED ND designation for Uptown Normal; five other buildings in Uptown also have LEED certifications
- Participation in energy aggregation, with power to be supplied from 100% renewable sources
- Portion of Uptown Station's 3rd floor roof covered in vegetation (green roof)
- Solar Electric Demonstration System on Children's Discovery Museum roof
- Upgraded the Normal Public Library HVAC system
- Lighting upgrades throughout the Town in many buildings: more efficient fixtures and occupancy controls
- Greenhouse Gas Baseline Emissions Inventory
- Energy Education
- Continued participation in Earth Hour (began 2008)

Economic Development

- Continued development efforts in Uptown, with a focus on green development.
- Town's Local Preference Purchasing Policy, adopted in 2011

Food Systems

- Two organic community gardens with 70 total plots in a variety of sizes, with water on-site and nearby parking.
- The Refuge Food Forest: The first food forest located in a public park in Illinois, located at One Normal Plaza, consisting of a diverse planting of fruit, nuts, and perennial vegetables. The fruits and nuts produced in the food forest will be free and available for anyone to pick for themselves.

Government

- Systems planning focused on redevelopment rather than new development
- Continued support of alternate modes of transportation (see Transportation and Mobility)

Resource and Carbon Management: Air

- 6 Mitsubishi "i" fully electric cars in the Town of Normal fleet
- Over 50 free Level 2 chargers; Only Level 3, "Quick Charge", charging station in Illinois outside of Chicago
- 4 Tesla Motors Super Chargers
- Over 300 electric vehicles on the streets of the community

Resource and Carbon Management: Land

- Curbside recycling program (began July 2012); 58% resident participation
- Support Household Hazardous Waste events

Resource and Carbon Management: Water

- Leadership in the protection of the Mahomet Aquifer from hazardous waste

Transportation and Mobility

- Uptown Station connects several modes of transportation: rail, bus, auto, bicycle, and pedestrian
- High Speed Rail (planned for 2016)
- Infrastructure improvements
- Street markings including sharrows, bike boulevards and bike lanes
- Main Street Feasibility Study, including bike/ped components
- Winter Constitution Trail clearing (began winter 2011-12)
- Bicycle/pedestrian trail counts 3x per year (began February 2011)
- Bicycle parking and repair stations
- Updated Constitution Trail map
- Annual Bike Rodeo (began September 2011)
- Annual Bike Movie (began February 2012)
- Annual Bike Summit: "founded" in Normal in 2012, Normal hosted 2012 and 2013
- Annual Light the Night event, in cooperation with Connect Transit (began September 2013)
- Constitution Trail 25th Anniversary Celebration (2014)
- Constitution Trail promotional video (fall 2015)
- Bronze Level Bike Friendly Community (designated November 2014)



The Sustainability Plan used the widely accepted United Nations Bruntland Commission's definition (1983) of sustainability: Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

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rigorous program reinforces this community's commitment to leading environmental change and achieving the highest standards in sustainability.

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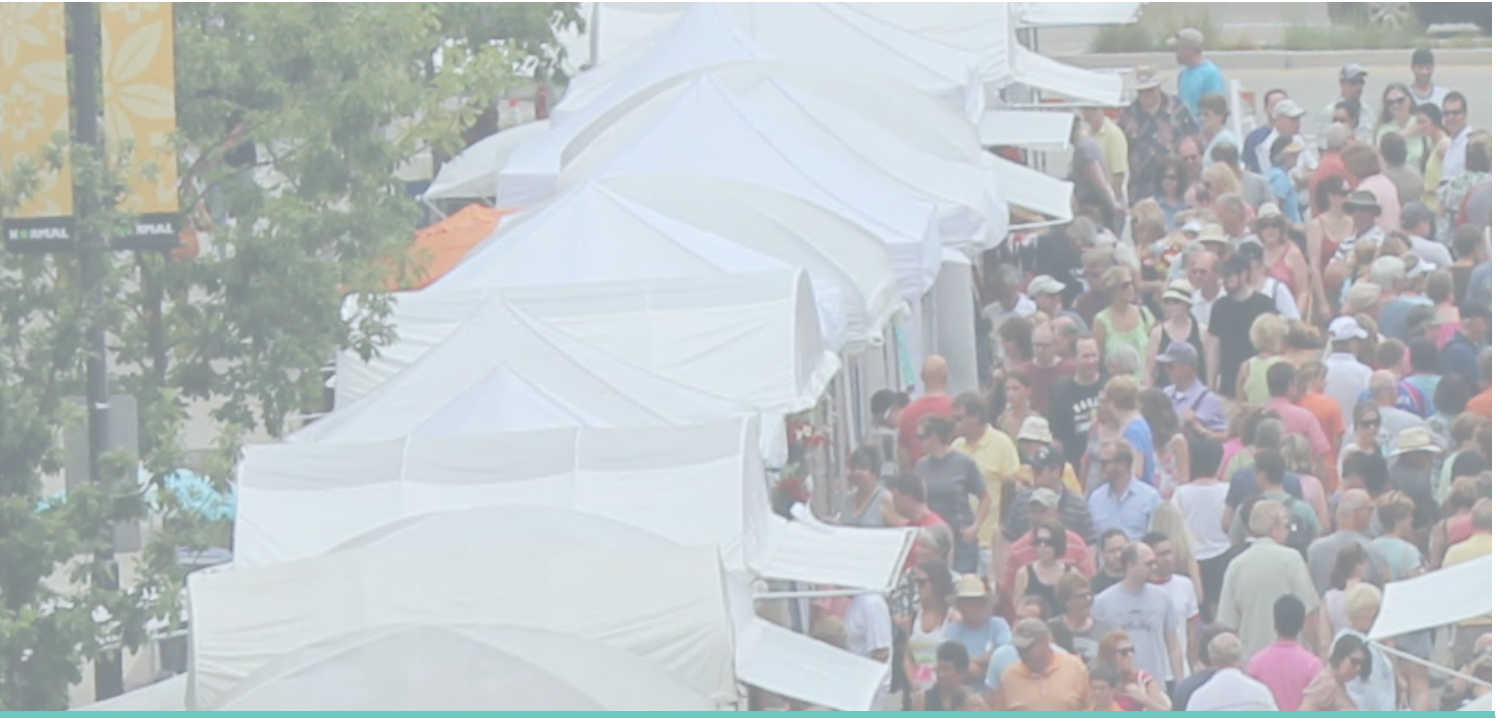

OUTREACH



2.1 COMMUNITY SURVEY ANALYSIS

2.2 STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS



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PUBLIC OUTREACH 3
SURVEY DESIGN 3
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UPTOWN 8
ECONOMY 8
MOBILITY 10
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FINDINGS AND KEY QUESTIONS

Findings

- A huge outreach effort got the Comprehensive Plan process off to a strong start. Over 1,700 people who live, work, and play in Normal responded to the PlanIt Normal survey. Thousands more encountered the planning process through a variety of media and community meetings and events. Respondents shared what they like and want to see improved; the factors most important to them when choosing a neighborhood; and their priorities for the Town's future.

- Broadly speaking, respondents characterized Normal as a safe, quiet, family-friendly town with good schools and friendly neighborhoods—much like a small town in that respect—with city-like amenities in the form of excellent higher education institutions, and a long list of cultural, shopping, and entertainment options. Uptown Normal, the Constitution Trail (and other walking and biking infrastructure), and parks and recreation facilities were particular magnets for positive comments. The Town's leadership was frequently commended for its future-oriented thinking and effective implementation of ambitious plans.

- Certain neighborhood qualities, such as safety and cleanliness, affordable housing, walkability, attractive public spaces, parks, schools and proximity to work, are almost universally desirable. Other factors were particularly important to certain demographic groups. For example, aging in place was rated highly by people aged 45 and up; public transportation was rated most highly by lower income respondents.

- The survey revealed relatively few pressing concerns. Most were calls to build on the Town's existing amenities: infrastructure maintenance, more Uptown redevelopment, more bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, increased access to public transit, and curbside recycling for apartments, among others. There was some disagreement between student and non-student respondents regarding housing and law enforcement issues.

Key Questions

- How can the Town continue to maintain its balance of a small town feel and big-city amenities as it grows? How can the Town continue to improve its quality of place, which is highly regarded by its residents, in an era of dwindling resources? How can residents participate?

- How can the varied priorities expressed by different demographic groups be accommodated? How can the Town continue to balance the sometimes conflicting needs and preferences of students and non-students? What role should the university play?

- As the Town plans the development of future neighborhoods, how inclusive can they be in terms of age, income, race and ethnicity?

- How should the Town continue to balance infrastructure maintenance and upgrades with the ongoing expansion of infrastructure for alternative modes of transportation?

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During the community outreach phase, a variety of traditional and electronic methods were used to engage residents in this planning process. These outreach efforts are critical to understanding the community's needs and crafting a vision for the future. The PlanIt Normal community survey, shown in Figure 2.1.1, was a core tool during this process.

The survey design; distribution; data processing; and an analysis of the survey results are included in this chapter. Chapter 2 provides a summary of the information collected from more than 30 key stakeholder groups.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

SURVEY DESIGN

The survey was composed of a mix of open-response (short answer) and multiple-choice questions (see Fig. 2.1.1). Two open-response (Q3 and Q4) and two multiple-choice (Q5 and Q6) questions formed the core of the survey; the rest were demographic questions to provide context.

The open-response questions allowed respondents to express, in their own words, what they like about Normal (Q3) and what they want to see improved (Q4). Answers to an open-response "additional comments" question (Q13) were re-

Figure 2.1.1. Snapshot of the survey instrument



It is time to update the Town of Normal Comprehensive Plan. We want to hear your ideas, hopes, and dreams for the future of Normal.

To take the survey online or to check the progress of the plan, visit:

www.PlanItNormal.com

@PlanItNormal @PlanIt_Normal

PlanIt Normal

#planitNORMAL

1. What brought you to Normal or the area?
   ○ Work ○ Student ○ Family ○ Lifestyle aspects _____ *(like Schools, Arts & Culture)*
2. How long have you lived here?
   ○ Less than 5 years ○ 5 to 15 years ○ More than 15 years ○ Lifelong resident
3. What about living in Normal or the area do you like the most?
   _____
4. What issues would you like to see addressed immediately in Normal?
   _____

5. Which of the following factors did you consider when choosing the neighborhood in which you live? Please rate the following factors.

	Very Important	Important	Not Important
Quality public schools	○	○	○
Parks and recreational opportunities nearby	○	○	○
Walking distance to destinations such as the university, restaurants, and public facilities	○	○	○
Cleanliness and safety	○	○	○
Affordability of housing	○	○	○
Historic home or historic neighborhood	○	○	○
Ability to live in my house as I get older	○	○	○
Neighborhood with :			
Mixture of housing types (single family, townhomes, apartments)	○	○	○
Racial and ethnic diversity	○	○	○
Mixture of ages and incomes	○	○	○
Connections to the Constitution Trail	○	○	○
Attractive public spaces that foster interaction among neighbors	○	○	○
Features such as sidewalks that encourage walking	○	○	○
Public transportation- access and frequency	○	○	○
Schools within walking distance	○	○	○
Proximity to work	○	○	○

6. As we look into the future of the community, what should be the top priorities? Please rate these priorities.

	Very Important	Important	Not Important
Stable Economy: Efforts to attract, retain, and expand employment opportunities and investment in the area.	○	○	○
Regional Cooperation: Increased collaboration among public entities, higher education institutions and the private sector.	○	○	○
Support for Existing Neighborhoods: Continuous efforts to enhance existing neighborhoods for long-term fiscal and environmental sustainability.	○	○	○
Healthy Community: Promotion of active and healthy lifestyles through access to healthy/nutritious food, recreational opportunities, and healthcare facilities.	○	○	○
Environmental Sustainability: Protection of our natural resources such as air, water, and farmland.	○	○	○
Human Elements: Cooperative efforts to establish an inclusive community that addresses the diverse needs of its residents.	○	○	○
Transportation Alternatives: A regional transportation system that expands public transit and is designed to accommodate vehicles, pedestrians, and bicycles.	○	○	○
Arts, Culture and History: Incorporation of arts, culture and history into the fabric of our community.	○	○	○
Technology: Access to high-speed internet connections via broadband and other emerging technologies.	○	○	○

6. Your Age: ○ 17 & under ○ 18-24 ○ 25-34 ○ 35-44 ○ 45-54 ○ 55-64 ○ 65+
7. I identify my gender as: ○ Female ○ Male ○ Other: _____ (please specify)
8. Home Ownership: ○ Owner ○ Renter
9. Highest Level of Education: ○ No high school diploma or GED ○ High school diploma or GED ○ Some college ○ Bachelor's degree ○ Graduate degree ○ Other: _____
10. Annual Household Income: ○ Under $30,000 ○ $30,000 - $60,000 ○ $60,000 - $100,000 ○ More than $100,000
11. If English is not your primary language, please list:
12. Please provide your address or nearest intersection:
13. Additional Comments:

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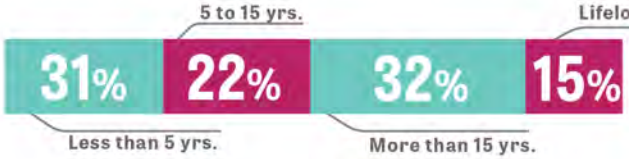
RESPONDENTS PROFILE

1,718 RESPONSES RECEIVED

WHAT BROUGHT YOU TO NORMAL OR THE AREA?

- Work 37%
- Family 26%
- Student 31%
- Lifestyle Aspects 6%

HOW LONG HAVE YOU LIVED HERE?



ANNUAL INCOME?

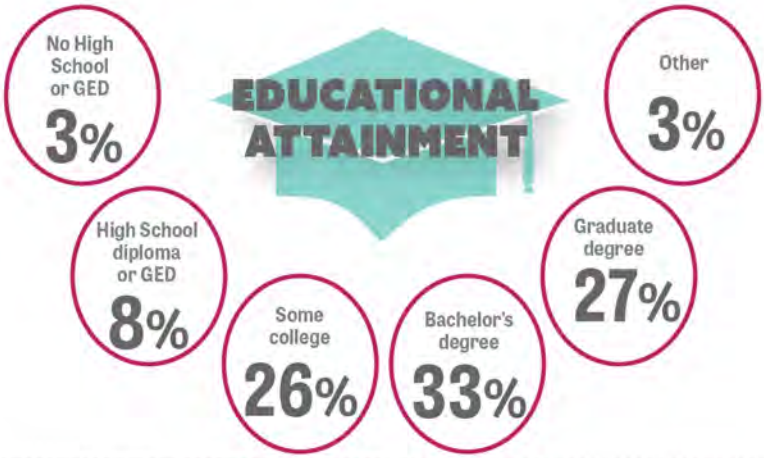


OWNER VS. RENTER



OWNER VS. RENTER

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT



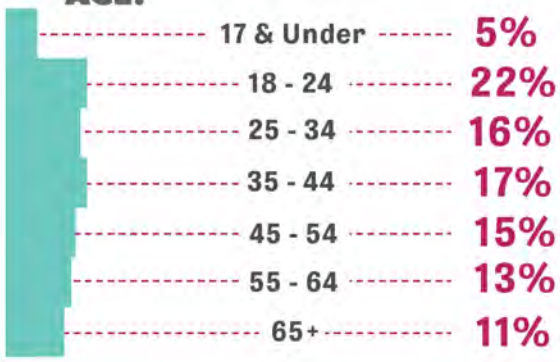
FEMALE VS. MALE



61% 39%

FEMALE VS. MALE

AGE?



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viewed as well. The multiple-choice questions, meanwhile, aimed to establish Normal residents' preferences and priorities on an array of issues of interest to both planners and the general public, particularly those related to physical growth and development. The housing, transportation, and land use sections of the final plan will be shaped in part by the answers to these questions.

It is important to note that this is not a controlled scientific survey, meaning that the respondent pool is not a demographically controlled sample of the Town's population. The goal was to reach as many people as possible, not only to gather their input for the plan, but also to highlight the importance of their involvement for the future of the community. Despite targeted outreach efforts, some groups like the college-aged population, males, and residents with low incomes were underrepresented.

SURVEY DISTRIBUTION

The McLean County Regional Planning Commission and the Town of Normal worked together to disseminate the survey through multiple channels, both in paper form and electronically. Over 1,700 residents responded to the survey, and the outreach process reached thousands more at home, online, or at community meetings and events.

The paper survey was distributed in a number of ways:

- *Newsline:* The Town of Normal publishes a community newsletter, Newsline, which it delivers to every resident. The September 2015 Newsline included a pull-out survey inside the newsletter for respondents to complete and mail back. The survey also had the URL for the Comprehensive Plan website on the front, so attendees could fill out the survey online if they preferred (see Fig. 2.1.1).
- *Community events and meetings:* Paper surveys were handed out directly at dozens of community events and meetings regarding the Comprehensive Plan.
- *Community partners/stakeholders:* In addition to meeting with and interviewing a wide variety of key stakeholders to gather their input, MCRPC formed partnerships with Connect Transit, ISU, the Normal Public Library, rental property managers, and a variety of social service agencies to distribute the paper survey among their patrons and constituents.

The electronic survey, hosted by SurveyMonkey®, provided another way for individuals to share their thoughts. The survey was accessible through a link that took respondents directly to the survey form. The link was made available through:

- *Town and MCRPC websites*: The Town of Normal and MCRPC made the survey link prominently available on their own websites and on the website for the Comprehensive Plan, www.planitnormal.com.
- *Social media promotion*: MCRPC and the Town of Normal used Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook to increase awareness of the Comprehensive Plan process and make the survey link available through those platforms.
- *Community partners*: Community partners

SUMMARY OF OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

27 COMMUNITY PARTNERS

PUBLIC OUTREACH EVENTS **12**

CONDUCTED NEARLY **40** STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

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were free to share the link with constituents or anyone else to whom they were electronically connected.

- *Spanish- and French-language outreach*: Spanish- and French-language versions of the survey were created for the benefit of the Town's Hispanic and Congolese populations, respectively. Unfortunately, the outreach efforts in these languages resulted in no responses.

DATA PROCESSING

The survey data required different types and amounts of processing. SurveyMonkey 's built-in analysis tools were used to analyze the multiple-choice questions. For open-response questions, NVivo, a dedicated qualitative analysis program, was used to code the short answer responses, a process necessary to make it possible to analyze the more than 3,800 responses (two open-response questions and additional comments from over 1700 surveys). This process necessarily involved some simplification and interpretation, but great care was taken to ensure that the resulting codes accurately represented the full responses.

Q3 AND Q4 (LIKES AND IMPROVEMENTS)

Responses to the survey's three open-response questions—Questions 3, 4, and 13 (see Fig. 2.1.1)—reveal much about the attitudes and preferences of Normal residents. This subsection discusses the data gathered from all three of these prompts in order to give a holistic, comprehensive picture of what respondents like and want to see improved in Normal.

The aforementioned coding process made it possible to organize the 3,800-plus responses into several dozen distinct themes. These themes were further distilled into eight broader topic areas: *Small Town Feel with Big City Amenities, Uptown Normal, Economy, Mobility, Community Health, Colleges and Universities, Government, and Infrastructure.* Most of the results are discussed further below under the headings corresponding to these topic areas. In addition, a few general things can be said about the responses that cut across those categories.

Overall, respondents shared largely positive sentiments about living in Normal. Some of this positivity reflects recent developments, most notably the revitalization of Uptown and the expansion of the Constitution Trail. However, many of Normal's most popular amenities—its safety, sense of community, and remarkable variety of educational, entertainment and cultural amenities for a town of its size—have been in place to some extent for decades. Normal's recent changes have reinforced, not altered, its longstanding identity.

Along similar lines, while a few respondents called for the Town to substantially cut taxes and general spending, stop embarking on major capital projects, and focus its efforts on basic city services like infrastructure maintenance, most improvement requests were for more growth and progress or refinements (street resurfacing, more alternative transportation infrastructure, etc.) that will not drastically alter the way the Town operates.

Certain demographic groups exhibited distinct patterns of responses. The clearest patterns in the open-response results manifested around students and senior citizens. Normal's demographic profile skews considerably younger than most cities due to the student population, but like most of the developed world, it is in the midst of a gradual graying of the population (see Section 1: Chapter 2 – Demographics and Projections). Much of the Town's development over the next twenty years will be driven by the needs and preferences of these groups.

SMALL TOWN FEEL WITH BIG CITY AMENITIES

One of the dominant themes emerging from the survey responses is that Normal mixes the traditional benefits of small towns with features typically associated with larger cities. The small town/big city dynamic goes beyond physical size, population, and density, which occupy a middle ground between a small town and a major city. The presence of four colleges and universities, employment options, and a variety of shopping, dining, and arts and entertainment amenities gives Normal a more cosmopolitan feel than is typical in a small town; however, the town still has "small town" or "suburban" features such as low crime, good schools, and a lower cost of living than in larger cities. Respondents were not unanimous in terms of

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ONE

of the dominant themes emerging from the survey responses:

Normal balances many of the traditional benefits of small towns with features typically associated with larger cities.

SMALL TOWN FEEL

AFFORDABILITY
Cost of living is low compared to larger cities, though some worried costs are rising.

CONVENIENCE AND PROXIMITY
Most parts of town are accessible and within a 15 to 20 minute drive of home.

SAFE, CLEAN, AND QUIET
Normal was described as "clean", "safe" and "quiet," either literally or metaphorically.



SENSE OF COMMUNITY
Frequently cited were friendly people and neighborhoods, the presence of old friends and family, community organizations and churches, and a general feeling of being at home.

FAMILY FRIENDLINESS
Good schools, nice neighborhoods, and a variety of family-friendly activities were among the most commonly highlighted amenities.

SHOPPING
The variety of shopping options within a short drive, walk, or ride and the unique small shops are poplar features.

DINING, CAFES, AND BARS
Normal's many options were cited as a favorite feature.

FAMILY-FRIENDLY ACTIVITIES
Children's Discovery Museum, festivals, and Parks and Recreation facilities like the Aquatic Center were all mentioned as affordable things for families to do.

FESTIVALS AND EVENTS
The Sugar Creek Arts Festival, the Sweet Corn Blues Festival, and other public events were listed among opportunities to have fun and meet people.



COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES
The culture and energy of ISU and HCC were cited as postive to the community.

ARTS/CULTURE/ENTERTAINMENT
Music, film, theatre, and sports keep residents entertained. Teenagers and young adults would like more options that fit their interests.

BIG CITY AMENITIES

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which of these features they cited as most attractive. Some liked its city-like attributes, some preferred its small-town traits, and some said they like the balance of the two. The fact that Normal can appeal in such different ways to different groups of people is one of the Town's unique characteristics.

Sample Comments

"The town is the perfect size: between Bloomington and Normal, we have everything we need in terms of shopping, dining and recreation. But together, the twin cities are still small enough to get around, to navigate and to feel like home. "

"Vibrant, young, developing town with a great university. Feels like things are always moving forward/improving. Clean, safe, lots to do for a small town."

"Small but not too small, plenty of culture and events for all age groups."

"A lot to offer families w/o being too big."

UPTOWN

Uptown Normal was by far the most frequently discussed area of town, and one of the most frequently mentioned topics overall. Most comments about Uptown showed satisfaction with what it currently offers. Uptown's cultural amenities, compact and walkable layout, and abundance of available activities were all mentioned often and approvingly. College-aged respondents praised Uptown more than other groups.

Most of the respondents who suggested improvements to Uptown asked for more development or refinement of what is already there. Calls for an Uptown grocery store, development of a currently vacant area ("the Hole in the Ground" or "the Pit"), and suggestions advocating either an overpass or underpass to connect Uptown with the area south of the tracks are all examples of such comments. A few respondents criticized the inconvenience of parking at certain facilities (the Library, Uptown Station, and the Children's Discovery Museum, most notably).

The ongoing development in Uptown has encountered vocal opposition in some quarters. Among respondents critical of the Uptown redevelopment efforts, many are philosophically opposed to what they view as a government that funds "flashy" projects over essentials.

Sample Comments - Likes

"…I have largely supported all of Normal's Uptown revamping. It's a beautiful uptown. I enjoy visiting the shops, I've spent countless hours at the CDM, the variety of restaurants is nice, and it just looks so much nicer than it did 15 years ago…"

"…Uptown is hip but approachable. As a parent of young children, I feel confident taking them to events in Uptown and exposing them to the great cultural opportunities available without worrying about feeling out of place among the college-age crowd…"

"...Walking around the Uptown area is the highlight of this city to me. There's a sense of community, of culture...In a sense, I feel like I'm connected to the community...."

"...Love hanging around the Uptown Circle when it's warm out."

Sample Comments - Improvements

"Continued uptown development - go under the railroad tracks, more new construction on the circle and trail. Get a medium size employer to locate uptown."

"…Keep the public library in uptown and increase parking."

"…grocery store in Uptown or closer to campus…"

ECONOMY

The responses to Question 6 (discussed later in the chapter) made it clear that respondents place high value on the stability of the local economy. Normal and the BN metro area have proved to have a stronger and more shock-resistant economy than other parts of the state and country. Perhaps as a result of this strength, only 15% of respondents directly discussed the state of the regional economy in the open-ended responses.

Of these 15%, a little over half called for

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NEARLY **1/3** of all respondents addressed **UPTOWN** and related subjects

Uptown appeals to every demographic, but 18-24 year olds were drawn to it slightly more than others



70% Love Uptown As Is

30% Suggested Improvements

WHAT PEOPLE LIKE ABOUT UPTOWN

UPTOWN CIRCLE
The circle and the activities that take place in the circle were almost always mentioned positively. Respondents appreciated the **sustainable elements** featured in the circle and the **unique culture** it brings to the community.

ACCESSIBILITY
People love the **Constitution Trail** connection to Uptown, its **pedestrian and bike friendliness** augmented by its **central location,** and its close **proximity to campus.**

ATTRACTIONS
Respondents like the variety of Uptown's **shops & restaurants**, including the many small businesses that create unique community culture. Community facilities like the **Normal Theater** and the **Children's Museum** are popular attractions.

REDEVELOPMENT
Respondents enjoyed the recent **redevelopment and rebranding** of Uptown. Many looked forward to additional growth and progress here.

ACTIVITIES
Uptown is viewed as a "fun place to be" with an abundance of things to do. **Loungeabout in the Roundabout, summer activities, the music scene, and events and festivals** are all cited positively.

LIBRARY
Many respondents appreciated the Library and suggested expanding it, preferably in Uptown. Many urged improving the parking situation.

IMPROVEMENT SUGGESTIONS

PARKING & TRAFFIC PATTERNS
About a quarter of the improvement suggestions for Uptown revolved around the need for additional on-street parking or fixing traffic patterns.

UPTOWN DEVELOPMENT
Many respondents wanted to see "The Pit" redeveloped. Some respondents were eager to see improvements on the south side of the tracks, as well as access improvements either under or over the tracks.

GROCERY STORE
A few respondents wanted to see a grocery store in or around Uptown close to the campus

WATCH SPENDING
Contrary to the sentiment among most respondents, a few suggested reining in the spending in Uptown.

Adjectives used to describe Uptown

Destination, Progressive, Hip, Accessible, Funky, Relaxing, Fun, Valuable, It Rocks!, Wonderful, Fresh, Family-Friendly, Vibrant, Active, New, Beautiful

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improvements. Most frequently mentioned were affordability and cost of living issues; in general, respondents seemed to consider the cost of living sufficiently low except in the realm of housing, where many (especially students) complained about high rents and others (especially seniors) about property taxes. Employment was a less frequent topic of discussion, although some pointed to the announcement of the imminent Mitsubishi plant closure and uncertainty regarding State Farm's future presence in the community as causes for concern. Comments touching on Normal's business community were largely positive. Respondents liked the Town's small businesses, many of which are clustered Uptown. A few respondents suggested measures to attract more businesses to the community.

While most respondents did not address Normal's economic status directly, they did frequently talk about community features that are important to the local economy. For example, hundreds of respondents discussed schools, higher education, and the student population. Similarly, hundreds of respondents talked about Uptown, a key focus of development initiatives in recent years and a center for economic activity. On these issues more indirectly related to the state of the economy, residents were typically very positive.

A few respondents noted the convenience of the Town's location within two to three hours of Chicago, St. Louis, and Indianapolis. Though it was not generally mentioned by respondents, this central location is one of Normal's fundamental economic advantages.

In sum, respondents frequently expressed their appreciation of specific features and amenities that contribute to the local economy, but they generally did not talk about the status of the economy as a whole unless they had major concerns.

Sample Comments - Likes

"A lot of opportunities with good employment and universities"

"Lots of small local shops and restaurants (we love Uptown!)"

"Moderate home prices"

"...great schools, lots of free or inexpensive entertainment/programs"

Sample Comments - Improvements

"Housing/renting costs, especially anywhere remotely close to campus areas. Increase job opportunities for blue collar workers, especially with Mitsubishi closing."

"Cost of living has been great, but is beginning to go up which is of a concern."

"Repurposing abandoned/run down companies, buildings and home areas to improve the safety of the town, the appearance of the area and provide new jobs for the area."

"concerns with SF moving so many people to other cities"

MOBILITY

Roughly 45% of survey responses were related to transportation in Normal and the B-N metro area. Responses covered both how long it takes to get across town in a car and the quality and availability of features that facilitate walking, biking, and public transit. These responses came in the context of increasing public debate about how to strike the correct balance between supporting the dominant auto-oriented infrastructure and encouraging alternative modes.

Cars: Among respondents who discussed traveling by car, most appreciated the limited street traffic and congestion that allow them to easily commute to work and travel across the community in a short period of time. However, a large number of respondents criticized the surface quality of the streets and roads. Some also highlighted problems with parking, traffic signals, and street layout in certain areas of the community (particularly Uptown and near campus).

Alternative modes of transportation: The Constitution Trail, on-street bicycle infrastructure, and walkability around Uptown and the campus area were mostly identified as "likes." However, many respondents identified room for improvement. Common improvement suggestions in these areas

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included Constitution Trail expansions; safer intersections between Constitution Trail and streets; more on-street bike lanes and sharrows; improved driver awareness of bicyclists and motorists; and improved quality and availability of sidewalks. Some also asked for bus service improvements, including better accessibility for people with disabilities, longer daily hours of operation, and Sunday service (the latter two being of particular concern to students and low-income respondents).

Sample Comments - Likes

"I like being able to walk down the trail to Uptown and back. I like the shops in Uptown and being able to walk to library…"

"…Easy to get around town by car..."

"…easy to get around by bike or bus if you live in the central part of town…"

"…light traffic, centralized Uptown…"

Sample Comments - Improvements

"…More connected Constitution Trails. Bike lanes on major throughways."

"Continuing to improve the alternative transportation opportunities, including bikes, walking, and bus. This will require culture change around driving as well."

"I would like to see sidewalk/street crossing improvements, particularly in older areas…"

"More bike education for community, rules of the road for bikes … maybe through DMV."

"Public transportation such as the city buses should run on Sundays. Just because it is Sunday does not mean that hard working people don't have work. I personally depend on public transportation to get to school, work, and home."

COMMUNITY HEALTH

Public health is affected by a myriad of factors, including innate personal traits, lifestyle choices, social forces, living and working conditions, and the health of the natural environment (Dahlgren and Whitehead, 1991). Many of these factors can be addressed through planning, improving health outcomes. This subsection covers the more than 40% of responses most relevant to the health of the community: community facilities that affect physical and mental health, social conditions, and the natural environment.

Personal health: Fitness amenities such as Normal's many parks and the Constitution Trail were among the most commonly identified "Likes" in this survey. As discussed in the Mobility subsection, respondents generally appreciated the existing on-street bike infrastructure and walkability circa Uptown, but many respondents requested continued expansion of bike infrastructure, along with better sidewalks and crossings and expanded public transportation.

A few respondents expressed appreciation for available local food options (such as farmers markets and restaurants sourcing local food), but more called for an increase in the number of such options.

Given the ongoing debate in local government and the local media about the county's mental health care crisis, it is perhaps surprising that only a few respondents discussed this issue. Those who did so unanimously called for more and better mental health services.

Relatively few respondents discussed the Town's major healthcare systems, OSF and Advocate BroMenn. Those who did generally said that they like having their healthcare providers nearby.

Social health: Individual and community health can also be affected by social issues such as homelessness, crime, or inequality based on age, race, ethnicity, income, and other criteria. These issues were not among those most frequently discussed by respondents, but some did call for the Town to increase its efforts to address these problems. On the positive side of the ledger, respondents generally appreciated Normal's "sense of community" (i.e., elements of social cohesion such as the friendliness of neighbors, community pride, and opportunities to be socially involved).

Environmental health: Comments about environmental health primarily touched on recycling.

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Less frequent topics included greenhouse gas and other pollution; the effect of sprawling development on McLean County's prime farmland; and vestiges of the natural environment, such as trees. As mentioned in the Colleges and Universities subsection, college-aged respondents were particularly concerned about recycling, as many student apartment complexes do not have recycling receptacles on-site.

These responses likely understate the degree to which the respondents value environmental stewardship. As demonstrated by the responses to Question 6, respondents believe environmental sustainability should be one of the Town's highest priorities over the next 20 years (see Q6 results).

Sample Comments - Likes

"...Access to good medical care…"

"Trails, bike friendly … ease of recycling…"

"…I think Normal is one of the most pro-active communities in the area in addressing the environment…"

"Constitution Trail gets me outside daily."

"great people, Town spirit, still has somewhat of a small-town feel"

"The mature trees..."

Sample Comments - Improvements

"More access to recycling for students in off-campus apartments"

"…food desert (maybe bring back the farmers market)?"…

"I think addressing the needs of the low income population is important –from affordable housing, to dental care, to educational opportunities."

"… Expand options for senior citizens living alone. Optimally, locate near small groceries and other services, to facilitate walking."

"Avoid sprawl. McLean County has the best farmland in the world."

"...Protection of natural resources. More green spaces & prairie restoration."

COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Higher education institutions are vital to Normal's identity. Roughly 40% of residents are enrolled in and thousands more are employed by ISU and the community's other three colleges and universities. Roughly 20% of survey responses mentioned colleges and universities or the student population, with responses going beyond the obvious educational benefits to discuss the institutions' cultural influence, relations between students and the rest of the Town, and collaboration between ISU and Town leadership.

Institutions: Respondents discussing higher education institutions were generally happy to be living in a college town with the attendant educational, cultural, and entertainment benefits. Most comments concerned ISU, though a few also discussed one or more of the other three institutions. A few respondents complained that ISU leadership has too much influence over Town policy, but more called for increased cooperation between ISU and the Town.

Students: Students and their concerns were almost as frequent a topic of discussion as the schools themselves. The tenor of these comments varied considerably based on the source. Students were typically happy with the Town (particularly Uptown, which is adjacent to campus and more popular with 18-24-year-olds than with any other group) and proud of being at ISU. However, some were displeased with what they see as unfair treatment at the hands of police, whether based on their student status or due to race. Perhaps the most common area of concern for students is housing. Many complained about high rents and a lack of recycling facilities at student-oriented apartment complexes. ISU Greek organizations lobbied for easing of zoning restrictions to enable more Greek housing near campus.

Non-students had mixed opinions of the student population. Some detailed noise concerns, obtrusive student housing, and other ways in which the student presence can disrupt neigh-

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About **43%** of respondents discussed issues relating to personal, social, or environmental health.

HEALTH



55% Like the Healthy Living Options

Constitution Trail

Mentioned by over 15% of respondents comments regarding the trail were generally positive.

Respondents use the trail for fitness, transportation, and recreation.

Typical improvement suggestions included expansion of the trail and on-street bike network, safer trail and road intersections, and more connections to popular places around town.

Environmental Stewardship

Normal's trees and green space and the Town's recent commitment to sustainability were usually mentioned as positives.

But some respondents would like more active efforts to reduce emmissions, conserve farmland, and the natural areas.

Parks

Responses were overwhelmingly positve and characterized the parks as attractive, fun, and provided facilities for physical activity.

Recycling

Current recycling efforts received mostly positive responses; college students requested more recycling options in the apartment complexes.

45% Suggested Improvements

Healthy Food Options

Not mentioned often; respondents did note options were limited; a few specifically asked for grocery stores in Uptown or near campus.

Mental Health

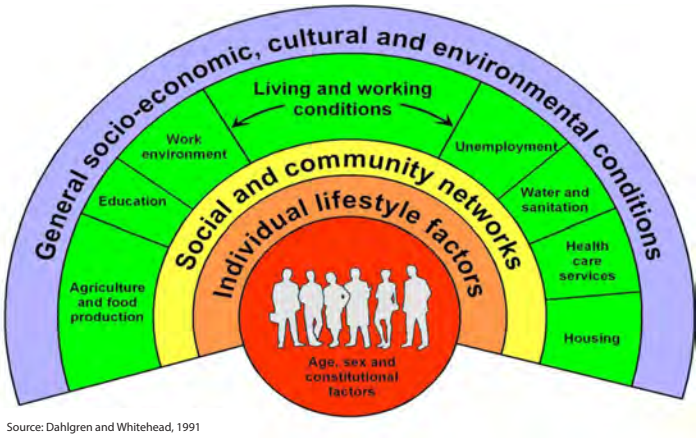
Infrequently discussed; most comments in this area called for better and more available mental health services.

Recreational Facilities

A small number of respondents asked for more indoor recreational facilities and activies to get through the winter months.

Social Health

A small but non-negligible number of comments mostly addresssed homelessness, racial and income inequality, and a lack of diversity in some aspects of town life.



Source: Dahlgren and Whitehead, 1991

Comprehensive Planning and Health

Dahlgren and Whitehead (1991) showed that many internal and external factors - including social conditions and the natural environment - can affect health. Community features as disparate as transportation facilities, social services, and environmental stewardship are now considered critical to achieving favorable public health outcomes.

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borhood life. Others, however, said they enjoy the energy and diversity brought by the student body.

Sample Comments - Likes

"…emphasis on higher education…"

"College town w/what goes w/that: theatre, music, sports, college town atmosphere, etc…."

"Due to the university, the education level is fairly high and I am able to find like-minded friends"

"Safe, Uptown is beautiful, I Love Constitution Trail"

Sample Comments - Improvements

"….Keep the student apartments from expanding further into the neighborhoods, especially the historic areas. (Ban frat parties!)…"

"student houses surrounding the university need to be better about picking up trash & generally being responsible. But the student behavior has vastly improved!"

"The police need to see the difference between college students being college students & college students being stupid/unsafe."

"…the apartment companies are definitely taking advantage of students with exorbitant prices for living…"

"More access to recycling for students in off-campus apartments"

INFRASTRUCTURE

Infrastructure forms the framework on which society runs, but much of it is either literally or figuratively "out of sight, out of mind." The Town's roads, parking facilities, trails, bike lanes, and bus stops are the infrastructure elements people are most likely to consciously interact with on any given day, and these were by far the most frequently discussed infrastructure subjects. Fewer respondents shared their opinions about parking, water, sewers, utilities, and other aspects of infrastructure. Overall, about 45% of respondents discussed infrastructure issues.

Roads: Almost every respondent discussing roads wanted them to be improved; usually this meant fixing potholes and other surface issues. However, road quality appears not to be a major impediment to mobility for most people: most respondents who discussed traffic and travel times said they like the present situation, and only a relative handful of responses included complaints on that score. In these critical comments, certain areas of town were singled out as areas of concern, such as Uptown and campus.

Alternative transportation infrastructure: See the Mobility subsection.

Technology/Broadband: Technology was identified as a high priority in Question 6, but only a few responses in the open-ended questions touched on this subject. Almost all of these were in the Improvement column—either complaints about the price of currently available broadband service or requests that the Town provide service on its own.

Sample Comments - Likes

"Constitution Trail. You can get anywhere in 10-15 minutes…"

"easy access by automobile anywhere in the twin cities."

"I like that I can either walk anywhere I need to go or take public transportation."

Sample Comments - Improvements

"INFRASTRUCTURE! Our streets and roads are crumbling."

"Nothing other than basic services – like roads and sewers. The rest can wait until limited revenue is not already paying down debt."

"More parking on the streets of UPTOWN – Closer parking for the handicapped."

"I was very hopeful when the town was considering a town wide Internet. I believe that would be a great service to the community."

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NORMAL IS A COLLEGE TOWN

3 Higher Education Institutions

About **40%** of Town's population is students

Nearly **50%** hold a bachelor's degree or higher

WHAT STUDENTS SAY

School Pride: Generally, students are satisfied with their choice of college or university.

Culture and Entertainment: Opportunities, both on campus and off, are popular with students.

Uptown: Uptown's proximity to campus and variety of affordable things to do are attractive to students.

Housing: Many students complain about exorbitant rents, insufficient Greek housing close to campus, and few if any recycling programs at local apartment complexes.

Police: Relations between students and police are somewhat strained; some students believe they are unfairly targeted for traffic and other violations.

WHAT "TOWNIES" SAY

Culture and Recreation: ISU sports, plays, concerts, art shows, speakers, etc. are generally popular.

Energy: Students bring youthful energy to the community. A few complain about the rowdy behavior.

Housing: Some complain about unattractive student housing creeping into residential neighborhoods.

20% of all respondents discuss issues related to higher education

22% of respondents were aged 18-24

31% of respondents came to the Town to be students



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GOVERNMENT

Respondents discussed a variety of aspects of Town government, including Town leadership, city service provision, and taxing and spending. Over 40% of responses mentioned at least one of these issues, with opinions varying significantly and reflecting different philosophical viewpoints about the role and scope of local government.

Leadership: Responses addressing the performance of Town leadership were typically positive, characterizing the Town's leaders as competent and forward-thinking.

Public safety: Most respondents discussing public safety issues left favorable comments. Respondents referring to police activity specifically, however, were more often critical, with a substantial percentage of these respondents complaining about the police's treatment of students and minorities or a perceived excessive focus on traffic violations at the expense of more serious crime prevention. The latter concern was not unanimous; some respondents asked for a greater crackdown on speeding, texting while driving, and other traffic offenses.

Town services: Waste-related comments were mostly centered on recycling and were split among those who said they like the current levels of service and comments calling for increased access to recycling for apartment dwellers. Water, snow removal, and other services were less frequently discussed; when they were, responses were generally either favorable but non-specific or requests for better service in specific areas (e.g., more prompt snow removal on the respondent's street).

Taxes and spending: About 13% of all respondents addressed taxing and spending issues. Much of this discussion was no doubt triggered by the sales tax increase that was approved by the Town Council the same week the survey was released. Property taxes were also criticized by many respondents. Some of the responses in this category advocated a limited local government focused strictly on basics like infrastructure and public safety.

As noted earlier, most respondents discussing Uptown redevelopment and other initiatives either applauded them or asked for more along the same lines. Respondents in the limited government camp took the opposite stance on the grounds that these initiatives are too expensive and take the Town away from its core duties.

Sample Comments - Likes

"Excellent fire & police protection; excellent public services (trash, snow removal, etc.)"

"... the curbside recycling program!"

"We have watched Normal & the surrounding area grow & improve over the 49 years we have lived here. Normal leadership has been positive & forward-thinking…"

Sample Comments - Improvements

"Have police focus on serious crime. Minor traffic violations (speeding and jay walking or random stops *to engage the residents) are NOT REAL CRIME."*

"crackdown on ISU students and their street-crossing stupidity and parties, Normal Avenue needs speed bumps/police presence (students are driving 50+ mph)."

"Lower taxes, lower water rates, lower real estate taxes. Stop improvements to Uptown area and put that toward fixing roads and lowering taxes."

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INFRASTRUCTURE

About **45%** of all respondents discussed issues with infrastructure with three major themes emerging: Auto-Oriented, Alternative Transportation, and Utilities.

Auto Oriented

Roads
Nearly 200 responses discuss the condition of Normal's streets and roads; most want surface or other improvements.

Parking
Mostly critical comments, particularly centering on Uptown facilities such as the Library, Uptown Station, and the Children's Discovery Museum.

Alternate Transportation

Trails
Mostly positive; connections with Uptown, workplaces, and various establishments frequently mentioned; improvement responses mostly suggest expansion and safer intersections with streets.

Sidewalks and crossings
Most comments call for better sidewalks and safer pedestrian crossing areas.

On-street bicycle infrastructure
Most comments ask for more on-street bike lanes.

Utilities

Water
Relatively few comments, mostly positive.

Residential broadband
A few complaints about the high price of broadband and requests for availability of ultra-high-speed internet in residential areas

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Q5 (NEIGHBORHOOD PREFERENCES)

The goal of this question was to find out which factors respondents considered important when they chose their current neighborhoods. Respondents were asked to rate 16 different factors as Very Important, Important, or Not Important, including mobility features, types and affordability of housing, proximity to work and amenities, and the character of public spaces in neighborhoods. Responses to this question will help shape the Visioning and Land Use facets of this Comprehensive Plan and aid in the planning of future neighborhoods.

Figure 2.1.2 provides a snapshot of the results and divides the 16 factors into three groups:

- Group 1 factors were rated Very Important or Important by at least three-fourths of respondents who answered the question. They include **Cleanliness and safety; Affordability of housing; Features such as sidewalks that encourage walking; Proximity to parks and recreational opportunities; Quality public schools; Proximity to work;** and **Attractive public spaces.** There was little disagreement about these features among different groups of respondents, and all will be weighted heavily during future planning processes.
- Group 2 factors were rated Very Important or Important by more than 50% but fewer than 75% of respondents. These include **Walking distance to destinations; Connections to the Constitution Trail; Ability to live in my house as I get older; Mix of ages and incomes; Schools within walking distance; Racial and ethnic diversity;** and **Public transportation – access and frequency**. As explained below, these factors were somewhat more demographic-sensitive (that is, some groups prioritized them more than others) than those in Groups 1 or 3.
- Group 3: Two factors—**Mix of housing types** and **Historic home or neighborhood**—were rated as Not Important by most respondents. Although having a variety of types of housing is key to achieving affordability of housing and neighborhood diversity—both of which rate higher than the "mix of housing types" factor—respondents did not make these connections, which are likely more familiar to planners than to the general public. In the case of historic homes and neighborhoods, most of Normal's growth has happened since the 1960s, so most of the Town's homes and neighborhoods are too new to be deemed "historic." A family who considered living in a historic home or neighborhood a high priority would find few options in Normal.

GROUP 2 FACTORS

Neighborhood factors within Group 2 showed substantial variation across demographic groups, and are therefore examined here in greater detail[(1.1)].

Walking distance to destinations (68% overall) was most important to 18-24-year olds, with 25-34-year-olds not far behind, and least important to respondents aged 35-44 (see Figure 2.1.3). With regard to income (Figure 2.1.4), the vast majority of those making under $30,000 rated it as important

1.1 A Note on Demographic Analysis

While the survey included several demographic questions, the respondent's age and household income were particularly determinative of their choices. Other demographic categories that appear to have been determinative are themselves functions of age and income—for example, whether the respondent is an owner or a renter appears to be important to various responses, but whether one owns a home is strongly determined by age and especially income. For that reason, this analysis focuses primarily on the age and income variables.

These demographic differences determined the information presented here. For Groups 1 and 3, there is little disagreement among people of different ages and incomes: Group 1 is important to nearly everyone, and in fairly intuitive ways, while Group 3 is unimportant to most respondents. Group 2, on the other hand, sees more variation across demographic groups than these other two, and therefore is examined in greater detail.

Note that respondents aged 17 and under are not included in any of the age analyses. Respondents in this cohort were too few and their concerns too different from the other age groups to be part of the same analyses.

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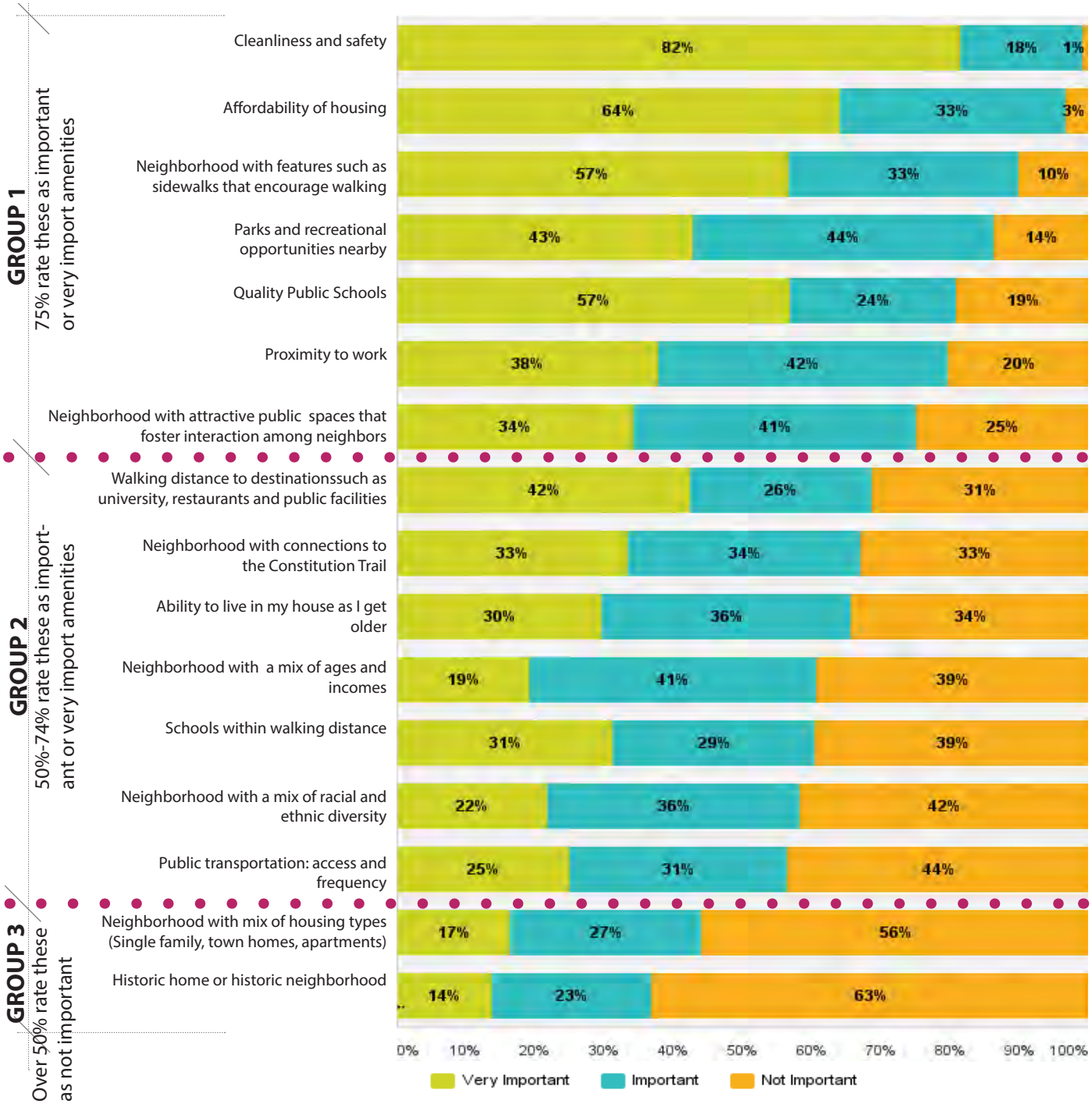
Figure 2.1.2. Q5: Which of the following factors did you consider when choosing the neighborhood? (Rating scale: Very Important, Important, Not Important)

Answered: 1,702 Skipped:16



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or higher, but it became progressively less important as income increased.

Connections to the Constitution Trail (67% overall) were most important to 25-34-year-olds and least important to senior citizens (Figure 2.1.5).

The ability to live in my house as I get older (i.e. "age in place"; 66% overall) was relatively unimportant to 18-44-year-olds, but starting with the 45-54 age bracket this factor became dramatically more important, peaking with senior citizens (see Figure 2.1.6). People with lower incomes were slightly more likely than people with higher incomes to rate this as important.

Living in a neighborhood with a mixture of ages and incomes (61% overall) was more important for lower-income people than for higher-income people (see Figure 2.1.7). It was also most important for respondents who were older or younger than the median age group, with 35-44-year-olds providing the lowest ratings (see Figure 2.1.8).

Living within walking distance of schools (60% overall) was most important to 18-24-year-olds. This choice was originally intended to establish the amount of interest parents have in being within walking or biking distance of their children's elementary, middle or high schools. However, most of the favorable responses to this choice were from college-aged students, for whom "school" naturally means "college." Low-income respondents were also more likely than other income groups to rate this factor highly.

Racial and ethnic diversity (58% overall) was most important to lower-income and younger respondents, with slightly more than half of those earning $100k or more saying this was not important (see Figure 2.1.10). This may reflect greater representation of nonwhite people among low-income and young demographics, differences in social attitudes among those demographics, or both.

Public transportation access and frequency (57% overall) was very important to 18-24-year-olds as well as respondents aged 55 and up (see

Figure 2.1.3. Walkability to destinations by age

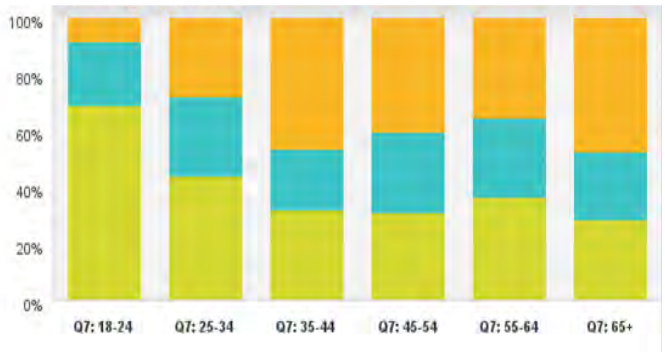

Figure 2.1.4. Walkability to destinations by income



Figure 2.1.5. Connections to the Trail by age

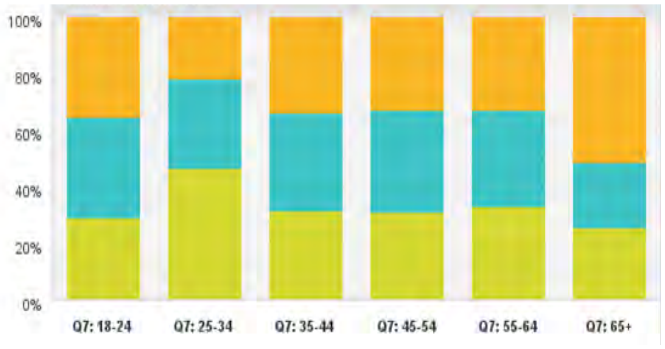

Figure 2.1.6. The ability to live in my house as I get older (i.e. "age In place") by age

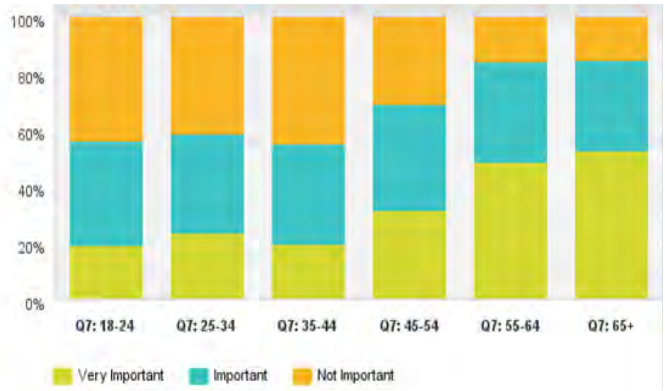

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Figure 2.1.7. Living in a neighborhood with a mixture of ages and incomes by income



Figure 2.1.8. Living in a neighborhood with a mixture of ages and incomes by age

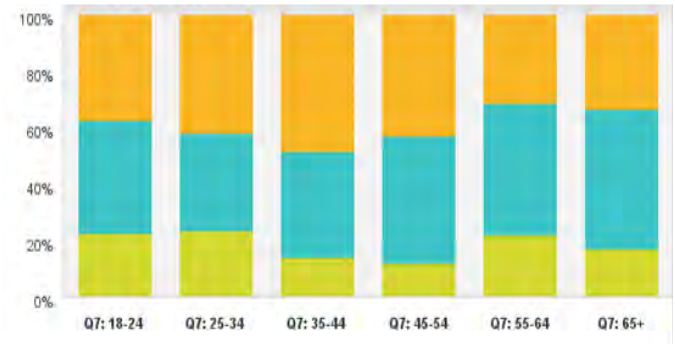


Figure 2.1.10. Racial and ethnic diversity by income



Figure 2.1.11. Public transportation access and frequency by age

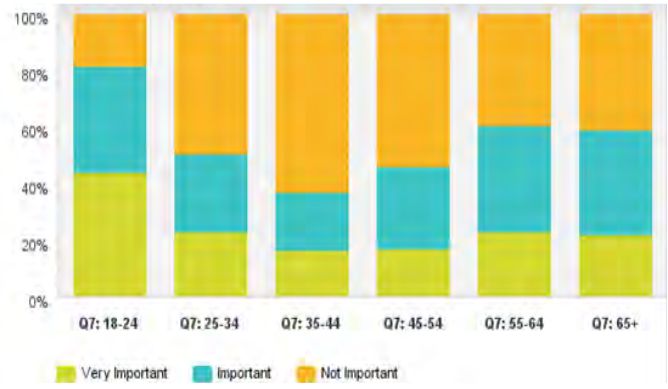


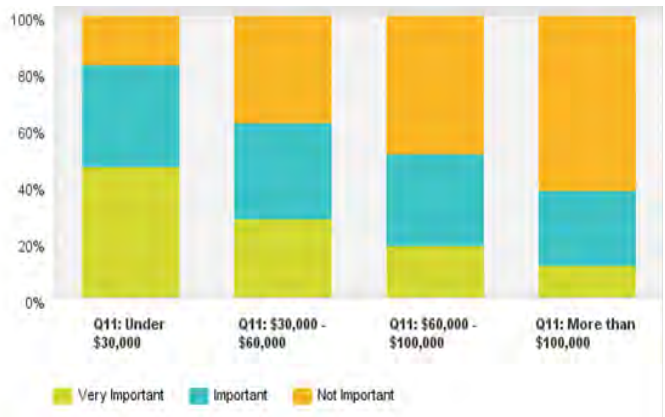
Figure 2.1.11). Under-$30k earners also prioritized public transportation more than other groups. Majorities of 35-44-year-olds, 45-54-year-olds, and $100k+ earners said that public transportation access and frequency were unimportant to them (see Figure 2.1.12.

Q5 CONCLUSIONS

Overwhelmingly, respondents said they prioritized safety and cleanliness; affordability; walkability; proximity to quality parks, public schools, and employment opportunities; and attractive public spaces when choosing their neighborhoods. Beyond these universal basic requirements, residents of different ages and socioeconomic situations had different priorities. Young and low-income respondents sought neighborhoods with racial, ethnic, age and income diversity; connections to public transportation networks; and walking distances to classes and amenities. Senior citizens wanted to be able to age in place in neighborhoods with people of a variety of ages and incomes. People in between, in their prime earning years, typically expressed somewhat less desire for alternative modes of transportation and gave less weight to diversity.

The Visioning Committee must closely examine the priorities of these different demographic groups, because they are crucial to predicting, however imperfectly, what will be important to Normal residents over the next twenty years — which, above all, will be the primary driver of how the Town and its neighborhoods grow during that time.

Figure 2.1.12. Public transportation access and frequency by income



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Q6 (FUTURE PRIORITIES)

While Question 5 helped identify and rank neighborhood-level features that are important to residents, Question 6 (see Figure 2.1.1) aimed to guide town- and regional-level policymaking by establishing which of nine priorities respondents considered most important to Normal's future. Respondents were asked to rate the priorities as Very Important, Important, or Not Important.

The priorities in Question 6 were chosen based on widely accepted planning principles and past Town of Normal planning and outreach efforts. All nine were rated Very Important or Important by at least 82% of respondents (see Fig. 2.1.11), suggesting that all should be points of emphasis over the next 20 years. Still, there were some minor differences in the degree of importance assigned to each area. Five of the nine—**Stable Economy, Environmental Sustainability, Healthy Community, Technology, and Supporting Existing Neighborhoods**—were rated Very Important by over 50% of respondents, and can therefore be considered the "top of the top" priorities (see Fig. 2.1.11).

Figure 2.1.13. Q6: As we look into the future of the community, what should be the top priorities?
(Rating scale: Very Important, Important, Not Important)

Answered: 1,704 Skipped: 14

Stable Economy: Efforts to attract, retain and expand employment opportunities and investment in the area

Environmental Sustainability: Protection of our natural resources such as air, water and farmland

Support for Existing Neighborhoods: Continuous efforts to enhance existing neighborhoods for long-term fiscal and environmental sustainability

Technology: Access to high-speed internet connections via broadband and other emerging technologies

Regional Cooperation: Increased collaboration among public entities, higher education institutions and the private sector

Healthy Community: Promotion of active and healthy lifestyles through access to healthy/nutritious food, recreational opportunities, and healthcare facilities

Human Elements: Cooperative efforts to establish an inclusive community that addresses the diverse needs of its residents

Transportation Alternatives: A regional transportation system that expands public transit and is designed to accommodate vehicles, pedestrians, and bicycles

Arts, Culture and History: Incorporation of arts, culture and history into the fabric of our community

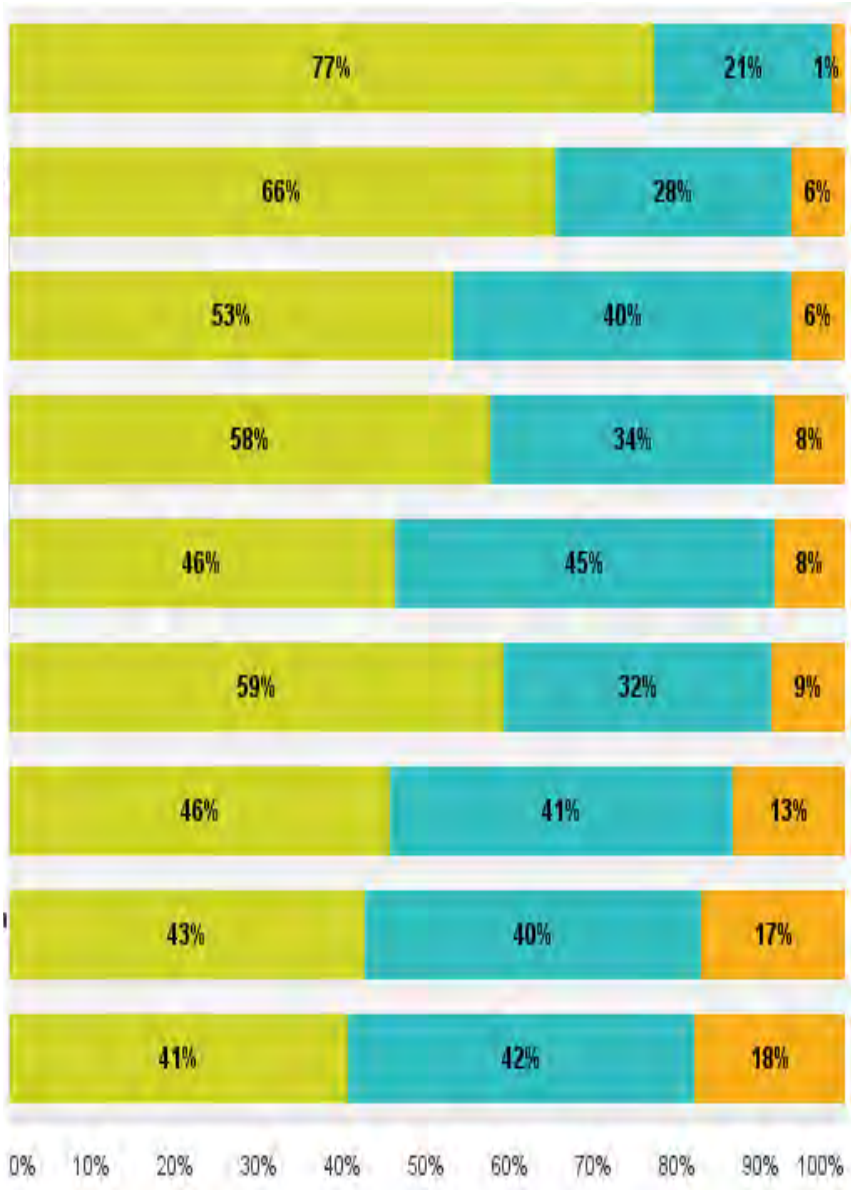

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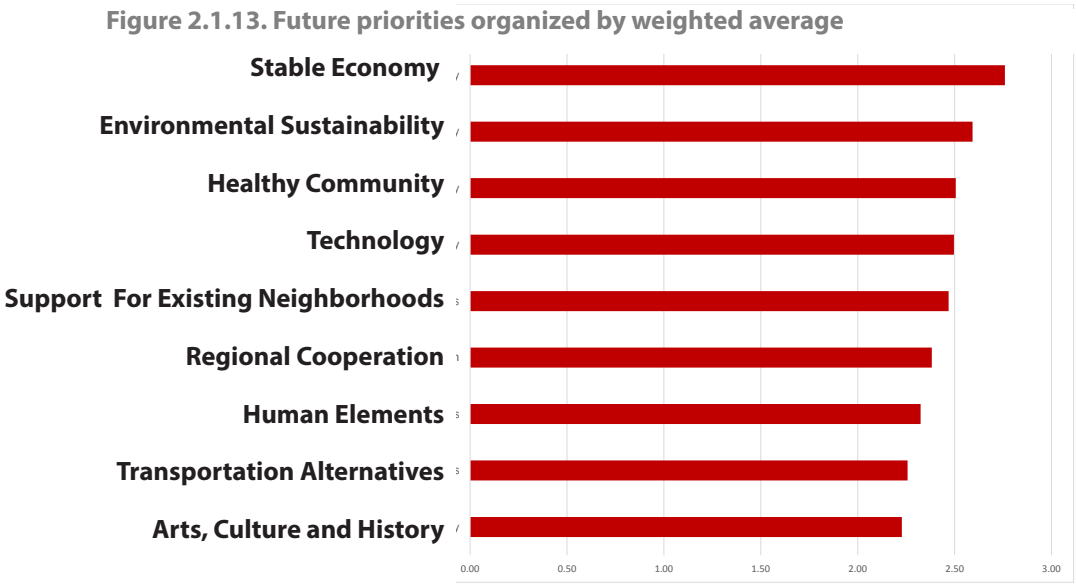
Figure 2.1.13. Future priorities organized by weighted average



All nine of the Q6 priorities were rated as Very Important or Important by the vast majority of respondents, but some had a particularly large proportion of Very Important ratings while others were more likely to be rated Important. In order to capture these differences, we used a weighted average that assigned three points to a rating of Very Important, two points to a rating of Important, and one point to a rating of Not Important. The maximum possible weighted average is 3 (100% rated it Very Important) and the minimum is 1 (100% rated it Not Important). For example, both Technology and Regional Cooperation were rated Very Important or Important by 92% of respondents, but Technology was rated Very Important by 58%, compared to 46% for Regional Cooperation. As a result, Technology's weighted average is slightly higher than Regional Cooperation's.

There is considerable overlap among the nine priority areas. Staying abreast of the latest technology is crucial to ensuring a stable economy, especially as the pace of technological development gets more and more rapid; the Town will have to coordinate with other local and regional actors to be an effective steward of the environment; and so on. While it is vital to understand the ways in which these priorities reinforce each other, knowing how residents value each one individually will help prioritize initiatives during the visioning and comprehensive planning processes.

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FINDINGS AND KEY QUESTIONS

Findings

- Over 40 stakeholders, including apartment managers, the development community, social service agencies, utilities and Town staff, were interviewed during this process. These one-on-one and small group meetings allowed for honest and detailed discussions about the critical work they do for the community and what they see as their greatest needs and challenges. All interviewees were generally complimentary of the Town and its way of conducting business.

- A lack of public awareness of issues facing vulnerable populations and a dwindling supply of reliable funding are two of the systematic issues raised by the social service agencies. More specifically, the agencies raised a number of concerns regarding the built environment, including a dearth of affordable housing; supportive housing for people with disabilities and mental illnesses; housing solutions for homeless individuals; increased access and frequency of public transit; a connected network of trails and sidewalks; recreational spaces for people with special needs; a framework to support seniors and people with disabilities (e.g., universal accessibility, closing transit gaps and municipal policies that support aging in place).

- Representatives of local builders, realtors, and engineering consultants discussed various issues impacting development activity within the community. There was a general agreement that regulations and other costs of doing business should be lowered, where possible. All interviewees believe that large homes are a thing of the past, and that the future is in smaller homes and denser neighborhoods, which also reduce development costs. Key development challenges include the slower economy and landowners holding large quantities of vacant land within the core of the community, forcing development to "leapfrog" to the outskirts.

- There was a general agreement, among interviewees that discussed infrastructure issues, that the accelerating cost of maintenance and expansion is and will remain a key challenge. One way to mitigate the rising costs is to avoid sprawling development and to encourage infill. Other challenges include increasingly congested easements and street patterns not conducive to emergency or transit vehicles. All agreed that interagency and intergovernmental cooperation will be critical to navigating many of these challenges.

- A group of high school students were asked to describe their ideal community. Echoing national demographic preferences, most of them named characteristics of urban areas: walkability and bikeability; the ability to attract businesses and support startups; diversity; and the presence of art in public places. They also want to have access to higher education opportunities and to be close to larger cities.

Key Questions

- Social service agencies represent the voices of the most vulnerable, typically not heard during traditional public outreach. How can we ensure that these voices are heard and effectively address the issues brought forward by their advocates in the comprehensive plan?

- How can the Town overcome barriers to contiguous growth? How can we ensure quality developments in new neighborhoods while keeping the costs down?

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MCRPC staff conducted over 40 interviews with representatives from government agencies and local not-for-profit organizations as part of the PlanIt Normal community outreach process. The purpose of these interviews was to provide an opportunity for stakeholders to identify major issues and concerns facing the Town of Normal and share their ideas about how to address them. The individual/small group nature of these interviews enabled participants to be more candid and in-depth than they otherwise might be in a larger community forum. Moreover, discussions were focused on the topics relevant and important to each agency. These key stakeholder interviews also helped MCRPC target social service agencies whose clientele are typically underrepresented in community surveys and other outreach efforts.

This chapter summarizes these interviews, conducted from September 2015 to February 2016. Highlights are summarized in Tables 2.2.1 and 2.2.2. All information here is presented as stated by the stakeholders themselves, and neither MCRPC nor Town staff has verified any figures or claims made by the interviewees.

APARTMENT MANAGEMENT

Managers of student housing operations (both large and small) and low-income/non-student multi-family housing were interviewed separately. Topics of discussion ranged from ages of properties; rents; parking; recycling (on-site and off); tenant/resident concerns; crime; future expansion plans; transportation (public and private); zoning issues; and relationships with the Town, particularly law enforcement.

STUDENT APARTMENT OPERATIONS

Interviewees in this area included First Site, SAMI, The Edge Apartments, Walk2Class and Young America. Most of these companies' apartments are located within easy walking distance of ISU, generally bounded by Adelaide on the West, Linden on the East, Hovey to the South, and Willow Street to the North.

All interviewees were pleased with the safety and other quality of life amenities in the B-N Metro area. Many noted that the redeveloped Uptown attracts positive comments from both students and their parents.

STUDENT APARTMENT OPERATIONS

Note: Rent ranges are expressed as per bedroom per month (except Walk2Class). Per-bedroom rents in one- and two-BR apartments are at the high end, while per-bedroom rents for the three- and four-BR apartments are at the low end.

Young America Realty rents to both student and non-student residents, mostly near ISU, IWU, or Heartland.
- Approximate number of students served: Not available
- Rent range: $340 to $1,100/BR/Mo.; most range from $400 to $600/BR/mo
- Inventory: 1,091 student housing units (105 one-BR, 226 two-BR, 114 three-BR, 609 four-BR) (Total - 3,400 beds)
- Occupancy: not available

SAMI owns and manages many high-end student apartments close to the ISU and Heartland campuses.
- Approximate number of students served: 2,500
- Rent ranges: $375 to $750/BR/Mo. w/ utilities and Internet
- Inventory: 961 total units; 300 one-BR; 496 2-BR; 66 three-BR and 99 four-BR.
- Occupancy: nearly 100%

First Site Apartments manages numerous off-campus apartments in Normal geared towards ISU and IWU students.
- Approximate number of students served: 1,600
- Rent range: $395 to $700/BR/Mo. including utilities
- Inventory: not available
- Occupancy: over 95%

The Edge Apartments is located at the intersection of Main Street & Hovey Avenue near the ISU campus. It features apartments with various floor plans, high end amenities and fully furnished living spaces.
- Approximate number of students served: <500
- Rent range: $640 to $830/BR/Mo. including utilities
- Inventory: 125 units; 12-two-BR; 21 three-BR; 448 four-BR (Total - 481 Beds)
- Occupancy: not available

Walk2Class Rentals primarily targets ISU and IWU students. All rentals are located within a half mile of ISU campus. Locations feature both older and newer student housing options.
- Approximate number of students served: not available
- Rent ranges: $525-$670 a month for one- and two-bedroom units; $50/Mo. utility allowance for each renter
- Inventory: 111 units (36 one-BR, 2 two-BR, 30 three-BR, and 43 four bedroom)
- Occupancy: over 90%

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Representatives of the larger student apartment operations expressed a great deal of satisfaction with Town staff and reported positive relations with the Police Department.

Unlike regular apartments, student apartments reported rents in terms of dollars per bedroom per month. Figures ranged from $340/BR/Mo. to $830/BR/Mo., with the typical range being $440 to $600/BR/Mo. Also in contrast to regular apartments, bedrooms in the single bedroom units were much higher than those in three- or four-bedroom units. These high rents are reportedly due to student demand for high-end, comfortable apartments with security features, proximity to "action," and interactive spaces that provide technology and opportunities for socialization. Despite the high prices, these locations operate at 90% to 100% capacities, a clear indication of the demand for high-end student housing within walking distance of ISU's campus.

Identified needs: Interviewees reported a strong desire on their tenants' parts to see the curbside recycling program expanded to large apartment complexes. This is further substantiated by the survey results, in which a significant number of respondents aged 18-24 requested recycling services at their apartment complexes.

APARTMENTS THAT ACCEPT SECTION 8 VOUCHERS

Interviewees in this area included Kauffman Apartments, Lancaster Heights, Orlando Northbrook Estates and Summer Tree rentals. All the complexes interviewed accept Section 8 vouchers, some more than others depending on the number they have available. Relationships with Town staff were consistently characterized as positive. Lancaster Heights management was very complimentary of the police department, citing an officer who lives in their complex whose presence they believe reduces crime. Apartment managers in the "Orlando area" (the apartments on Orlando Avenue in north Normal) saw room for improvement in terms of relations with the police department, though they said relations are much better now than a decade ago.

The Orlando area is where the highest concentration of low-income housing is located. Apartment managers in this area described the demographic make-up of their clientele as financially-challenged/low income families, seniors, and persons with disabilities. Many of the tenants of these complexes work in service industries and are transit-dependent. Tenant concerns include domestic violence and, for those who work second or third shift, a lack of overnight childcare and access to public transit during off hours.

APARTMENTS THAT ACCEPT SECTION 8 VOUCHERS

What is Section 8? The Housing Choice Voucher Program, authorized under Section 8 of the federal Housing Act of 1937, provides vouchers to low-income families to assist them in paying for housing. These vouchers are managed locally by the Bloomington Housing Authority.

Bloomington Housing Authority (BHA) The Bloomington Housing Authority (BHA) was established in 1947 with the mission to provide low income families decent, safe, sanitary housing and to empower them to build self-sufficiency and pride. Today, BHA has over 600 households in the public housing units and manages upwards of 600 housing choice vouchers (commonly known as Section 8 vouchers).

Kauffman Apartments manages nearly 180 non-student apartment complexes in both Normal and Bloomington. They usually have 30-40 vouchers. Rents range from $485 to $645 per month plus utilities.

Lancaster Heights Apartments is a multi-family apartment complex located along College and Towanda Avenues in Normal. It features one- to three-bedroom apartments for non-students. Section 8 vouchers are accepted on an availability basis (currently accepting 30 vouchers). Rents range from $610 per month for a one-BR apartment to $925 per month for a three-BR apartment.

Orlando Northbrook Estates is one of the few HUD-sponsored Low Income Housing (LIH) operations in the B-N area, located on Orlando Avenue in north Normal. Residents of the complex pay 30% or less of their gross income towards housing and receive assistance paying their utility bills. There are 115 units in all (39 one-BR; 59 two-BR; and 18 three-BR).

Summertree Rentals (also located in the Orlando area) features "row homes" with one to three bedrooms. This 136-unit apartment complex is a Section 8-approved housing development. Rents range from $595 a month to $735 a month plus utilities. They also have seven accessible units for persons with disabilities.

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TABLE 2.2.1- STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW SUMMARY			
Group	**Observations**	**Identified Challenges**	**Identified Needs**
Student Apartment Operations	• Generally happy about the high quality of life amenities • Uptown redevelopment a magnet for positive comments from students and parents • Greatly satisfied with Town staff (particularly police) • Students are demanding higher end housing and are willing to pay the price	None; many explicitly mention that the Town is doing a great job	Curbside recycling program for apartments
Apartments That Accept Section 8 Vouchers	• Appreciate safety and the quality of life aspects in the Town; some mixed reviews in working with police dept • Section 8 vouchers not widely accepted in Normal • Lack of affordable and accessible housing	• Increase in low income families and individuals since the recession • Widening gap between need (high) and availability (low) of affordable housing	• Need more apartment complexes accepting Section 8 vouchers in Normal • Increase public transit in the Orlando Area to service residents who predominantly work 2nd and 3rd shifts • Increase affordable and accessible housing options, particularly 3 or 4 bedrooms to accommodate families • Increase cooperation between the Normal Police Department and the apartment managers (particularly in the Orlando Area in North Normal) • Increase coordination between Town's rental inspections and Section 8 inspections
Builders, Realtors & Engineers (Development Community)	• Town is very "functional" in comparison to the surrounding communities • Slower economy at the local and state levels dampened building activity; expected to do so for at least another decade • "McMansions" a thing of the past; future is in 1500-1800 sq. ft. homes • Millennials: not buying new homes, but entering the housing market at a decent pace • Cost of code compliance in new house construction in BN metro: ~$28K • Infrastructure expansion should be curbed; existing infrastructure should be maintained in good shape	• Slower economy at state and local levels • Unmotivated landowners holding vast acreages of undeveloped property, forcing developments to "leapfrog" to the outskirts	• No particular needs were identified. However, there was a general sentiment that lowered regulations and costs of doing business in the area will improve the local economy
Social Services or Local Not-for-Profit Agencies	• Town staff easy to work with • Normal more expensive than Bloomington for their clients • "Living wage" jobs hard to find for people with lower education levels and disabilities; disproportionately affects minorities • Lack of affordable and accessible housing • Homelessness in general and youth in particular is an issue	• Difficult to obtain state and federal grants due to relative affluence of the community. • State budget impasse	**Housing** • Emergency shelter to address homelessness • Incentives to encourage landlords to accept Section 8 vouchers and support social service agencies' activities **Transportation/Mobility** • Increased access to public transit (particularly off hours and weekends) • Connected and accessible sidewalks clear of snow and debris, especially for clients with disabilities • Ride-share arrangements (including door-to-door and door-through-door) • Universal design standards **Health and support services** • Health centers and caregivers to treat mental health issues • Increased support of home therapy and social service in-home for autism treatment • Outdoor recreational and therapeutic spaces for children and adults with disabilities • Employment opportunities for persons with disabilities **Education** • Charter school arrangements for at-risk youths • Expanding social services into local schools **Funding** • Dependable local funding streams
Senior Service Agencies	**Health care** • Basic health care pretty good; health education a concern **Transportation** • Increased longevity + loss of driver's licenses = increased demand for transit, ride-share, walkability features **Senior-friendly housing** • Relatively wide range of senior-friendly housing options in Normal • High wait times for assisted living operations • Shortage of affordable housing with universal design features (accesibility) • Most important features for senior-friendly housing: safety and universal access. Other key features: proximity to amenities, relaxed pet policies, zoning changes to make it easier to retrofit homes, in-home assistance	• Lack of community education on senior issues; Seniors unaware of the local support services (or lack of senior education) • Lackluster coordination among agencies and health service providers • Shortage of qualified staff and aging of volunteers assisting with senior agencies	**Policy issues** • Municipal support on policy matters that help keep seniors in their homes longer (age in place) • Financial support for agencies providing senior services **Transportation** • Support for transportation gap services such as door-through-door and door-to-door services • Accessible sidewalks in good condition **Housing** • Affordable and accessible housing with supportive services **Employment** • Consideration of seniors for part-time/ seasonal employment or volunteer opportunities **Education** • Education on senior issues to the broader community

TABLE 2.2.2 - STAKE HOLDER INTERVIEW SUMMARY: INFRASTRUCTURE AND PUBLIC SAFETY

Group	Observations	Identified Challenges	Key Planning Considerations
TOWN STAFF	• **Water:** Current usage is well below the capacity; No technical barriers for expansion of water infrastructure, but it is expensive to cross interstate highway R-O-W • **Stormwater :** Public works department favors increased use of regional-scale detention facilities: reduces the number of ongoing maintenance locations and reduces the use of smaller and less-effective detention areas • **Sewer:** Long-term sewer plan in progress; Current sewer capacity will remain adequate even if population density increases; Future expansion of the sewer system will likely be expensive to install and create higher long-term maintenance costs; Service expansion north of Town and around Mitsubishi plant constrained by pump station capacity; expansion possible without additional pump stations northeast, northwest, and west of Town; extra capacity available around Franklin Heights • **Streets, trails, and sidewalks:** Town foresees more street improvements than new construction; want to reduce congestion without increasing facility size; Bridges and roads in good repair; Staff favor the use of complete streets concepts, including lane reduction and narrowing; Would like ISU to adopt complete streets approach in its own master plan; Town, ISU, IDOT have discussed plans to update Main St. corridor, especially pedestrian traffic through campus • **Information technology:** Concerns about service availability in new developments: waiting until areas are built out to install service would create development delays; staff say developers should provide high-speed internet access in new developments; Staff also expressed concern on R-O-W utility demand. **General observations:** Town is well-equipped to assimilate new development and higher residential densities--within existing corporate limits; Community facility planning is targeted toward the existing corporate boundaries and not for expansion; Coordination with ISU, IDOT, and other entities essential for sustainable and affordable development	• Accelerating costs for infrastructure maintenance and expansion, when needed • Dependence on other jurisdictions or agencies to complete projects; e.g., reliance on IDOT to relay data and project specifications	• Infrastructure and community facilities play a key role in the future growth of the community. The Town's recent plans addressing community facility and capital improvement needs (such as the recently adopted Fire Department Plan and the sewer master plan currently under development) should be carefully integrated into the comprehensive plan. • Future land use planning should aim for compact physical growth and development to improve service efficiencies and achieve long-term fiscal and environmental sustainability. • Street functions should be examined more comprehensively to accommodate multiple modes of transportation. • Street patterns such as cul-de-sacs that limit the serviceability of emergency and other service vehicles should be limited. • Easements in R-O-W's should be managed efficiently to accommodate current and future utility provision. • Recognizing the importance of information technology to the 21st century economy, facilitating broadband access should be a key consideration in the overall planning framework. • Emphasize regional (interagency, intergovernmental) cooperation for effective infrastructure, public safety, and natural resource planning and utilization.
CONNECT TRANSIT	• Connect is transitioning to larger, fixed-route vehicles (40ft.) to achieve efficiencies • Route changes to take effect late summer 2016; will reduce service in some places, especially Northeast Normal • Service changes: stops being overhauled--signage, locations, accessibility; service to be confined to areas with wide streets (to accommodate larger vehicles) and areas with on-street stops (no more stops in parking lots) • Connect's Redbird Express service for ISU unaffected by route changes • Paratransit services provided by Connect throughout the B-N community • Access for larger vehicles a concern in compact Uptown area • One-way couplet streets (e.g. Main-Kingsley and College-Mulberry): hindrance to efficient route design and stop placement • Higher-density development (especially residential) -> more ridership opportunities • Would like information in advance about pending development and redevelopment, especially along major corridors or arterials • Needs Town's assistance in improving walking/biking access to bus stop locations	• Sprawl development: limits efficiency and timely transit services due to limited routing options and longer travel times • Small residential streets and narrow turning radii: difficult for larger fixed-route vehicles to navigate	
AMEREN	• Towanda-Barnes substation: part of national grid, vital to power supply in central IL; service loop connecting substation to North Normal to be completed in 5-10 years • Service loop, once completed will reduce outages and provide redundancies in North Normal • Normal joined the residential municipal aggregation program to cut costs for residents; opted for 100% green energy • Eco-friendly street lighting provided by Ameren	• Fiscal constraints for infrastructure expansion (underground more expensive than overhead) • Utilities competing for easements • Sequestration of electrical lines from water lines • Spot loads created by major redevelopment projects such as Uptown	
CIRBN	• Fiber-optic cable installation is very expensive in developed areas; cost-prohibitive for small businesses and residential customers • Expansion of datacenters in Central IL recommended by CIRBN to leverage existing bandwidth • CIRBN provides broadband in student housing in Normal through other partners	• Easement access is increasingly difficult and costly • CIRBN not as well-capitalized for expansion as private-sector competitors • Lifespan of installed fiber optic cable: estimated at 20 years, replacement cost has to be included in business model while the competition is driving the prices down	
FIRE	• Ideally fire response times should be within 6 minutes; most parts of Normal are within 4.5-6 minute response time zone; Fringe development in NE Normal -> low response times (about 9.5 minutes) • Currently three stations in Normal. Fourth was explored but proved cost-prohibitive. Decision was made to rearrange the existing 3 stations for optimal coverage; If corporate limits expand significantly, a fourth station will eventually be needed • Bloomington and Normal fire departments communicate and cooperate a great deal • IL legislature recently passed a bill requiring counties with populations > 200,000 to have a single dispatch center; may be difficult and costly to implement	• Street patterns not a huge concern in Normal at this time, but developments with cul-de-sac streets can be challenging • Materials used in some newer structures (e.g. glued particle board) are especially dangerous in the event of a fire	
POLICE	• "Community policing" a key departmental principle (this includes proactive patrolling of known problem areas and community education) • Department works closely with apartment managers (including annual meetings with all apartment managers) • NPD works closely with Bloomington Police Department and ISU police • Neighborhood Action Team (NAT) (NPD + ISU officers and Town staff); addresses issues specific to address issues neighborhoods adjacent to the university • Dept. uses GIS (mapping and geospatial analysis) and other analytical tools to conduct hot-spot analysis on a daily basis. • Problem-Oriented Policing Unit (POP) identifies unresolved community issues that cause crime and attempts to address them • Dept. is accredited by the national Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA), which publishes best practices	• National negative attention on police and racial issues	

Observations: Some apartment managers indicated that the availability of low-income housing does not meet the existing need. There was a consensus that low-income populations are increasing in the B-N metro area. In a break from past experience, they are seeing an increase in low-income families that need three- or four-bedroom apartments. They also are seeing an increase in demand for low-income housing that is accessible by wheelchair. Currently very few apartment complexes in Normal accept Section 8 vouchers. Some managers would like the Town to encourage other apartment managers to accept Section 8 vouchers.

One apartment manager pointed out that Section 8 inspections and the Town's rental inspections are conducted at different times, sometimes back-to-back within the same month. Pointing to the redundancies in these inspections, he questioned why these efforts are not coordinated with each other. He argued that such coordination could be an efficient use of tax resources and save the Section 8 apartment managers some hassle.

One landlord who rents single family homes around campus, including some to students, advocated a change in the definition of the household size in the zoning ordinance and increased tolerance for the student presence in the surrounding neighborhoods. Based on the responses to the broader community survey, he is likely in the minority among non-student residents.

Identified challenges:

- Increase in low-income populations in B-N area; since the recession, there are more families in the lower income bracket than before
- A widening gap between the need and availability of affordable housing in the community

Identified needs:

- More apartment complexes in Normal accepting Section 8 vouchers
- Increased access to public transit in the Orlando area to service residents who predominantly work second and third shift
- More affordable and accessible housing options, especially three- or four-bedroom units that can accommodate families
- Increased collaboration between the apartment managers and the police department

DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY

MCRPC staff interviewed the Bloomington-Normal Home Builders Association ("Home Builders Association"); the Bloomington-Normal Association of Realtors ("Realtors Association"); and Farnsworth Group, an engineering firm. Interviewees discussed general market trends; the current status of local development; taxes and fees; governmental relationships; the local economy; zoning and code issues; the costs of doing business; the regulatory environment; and local infrastructure.

Generally, housing groups reported very positive relationships with the Town. They described Town government as "functional" and "easy to work with" in comparison to the surrounding local government units. While some members within these groups quibbled about minor aspects of the Uptown planning and redevelopment, they generally had positive comments about Uptown and complimented the Town's improvements to the underlying infrastructure as part of this project.

Observations: All three groups stated that the dampened local economy, due to State Farm's restructuring and the Mitsubishi closure, has signifi-

DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY

Bloomington-Normal Area Homebuilders Association (BNHA) is the professional association for area homebuilders that serves as a professional information clearinghouse and advocate organization. The Association also sponsors community projects such as the Easter Seals Camp and the Miller Park Zoo and provides shelters along the Constitution Trail.

Bloomington-Normal Association of Realtors (BNAR) provides services that ensure the professionalism and success of its members while promoting real property ownership and protecting property rights in the area.

The Farnsworth Group is a private firm offering engineering, architectural, survey, asset management and community sustainability services to its clients. It is one of the primary private engineering firms serving the Bloomington-Normal/McLean County area.

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cantly changed the housing landscape. They are convinced that homebuilding activity will be flat for the next 10 years. The Home Builders Association has seen a steep decline in their membership, from 198 members in its heyday to 108 in 2015.

All three agreed that the demand for large single family residential units is a thing of the past, though developers are still looking to finish the subdivisions they started prior to the recession. There was a general consensus that the local development community will no longer take the risks it did 15 to 20 years ago when the economy was booming, partly because the banks are not supporting speculative building activity. All three agreed that the future is in smaller houses (1,500 to 1,800 sq. ft.) and compact developments (neo-traditional neighborhood designs) that might reduce infrastructure and overall development costs.

The Home Builders Association and the Realtors Association, both of whom track construction costs closely, argued that rising development fees and compliance with new building codes have made new construction less affordable. They were also generally in favor of lowering taxes and fees; however, the Realtors Association acknowledged the need for public improvements to facilitate newer developments and suggested that taxing options such as special assessments, geared towards making the "right" end user pay the price of such development, would be preferable to a universal property or sales tax increase.

Identified challenges: Farnsworth's representative noted that the relatively slow projected growth in population (compared to the last several decades) may lead to slower expansion of the Town's corporate boundaries, which in turn may facilitate compact growth. However, finding the necessary land for residential development within or adjacent to the corporate limits may be difficult, as some owners of vacant or underutilized land feel unmotivated to sell or develop those properties. This forces development to leapfrog.

The Home Builders Association stated that Millennials (age 34 and under) not buying homes is a challenge. However, the Realtors Association felt that Millennials are entering the market at a decent rate. This difference of opinion may be an indication that Millennials are currently in the market for existing homes rather than new ones.

Both groups commented on increased outmigration of homeowners from Bloomington-Normal to the surrounding bedroom communities. The Realtors Association suggested that taxes for seniors may need to be lowered to encourage them to stay in the area.

Both the Realtors and Homebuilders were concerned about statewide economic issues that

SOCIAL SERVICE AGENCIES

AMBUCS (Cornbelt Chapter), chartered in 1982, is a community service organization that helps improve mobility for people with disabilities. Most of its local work involves building wheelchair ramps, distributng free AmTrykes (therapeutic tricycles) and promoting scholarships for therapists.

The Baby Fold provides a gamut of services, including specialized education, adoption assistance, and residential treatment care for children facing abuse and neglect, struggling with physical or mental challenges, or otherwise at risk.

Habitat for Humanity (of McLean County) is the local chapter of a global, non-profit housing organization that is dedicated to eliminating substandard housing by constructing, rehabilitating and preserving homes through a volunteer network. The organization also advocates for fair and just housing policies and provides training and access to resources to help families improve their shelter conditions. The local chapter has averaged five to six new single-family home constructions in recent years.

Homes of Hope supports and serves adults with intellectual disabilities. The organization provides both transportation and residential assistance for people with disabilities through its Community Integrated Living Arrangement.

The Immigration Project provides access to quality legal services in central and southern Illinois for immigrants documented and non-documented. The Project provides consultations on immigration issues including citizenship; assistance for victims of crimes; family unifications; removal defense; and legal assistance on Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA).

Life Center for Independent Living (Life-CIL) is an advocacy organization encouraging independent living for people with physical and mental challenges. Individual advocacy is done by teaching individual self-advocacy skills, while system-wide advocacy is promoted by LIFE-CIL staff who strive for a positive change in the community and work to create awareness and limit barriers for their clients.

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are beginning to have significant negative effects locally.

All three groups agreed that responsible infrastructure upgrades and maintenance are important for future growth in the B-N real estate sector.

SOCIAL SERVICE AND NOT-FOR-PROFIT AGENCIES

Nearly a dozen of these agencies that serve the residents of Normal (and the B-N Metro area) were interviewed. Discussion topics were geared toward each individual agency's work. Areas of emphasis included community affordability; local economics; government relationships; social service issues; crime; local support services; community partnerships; affordable housing; public transportation; schools; government funding; and community safety and welfare, among others. As with other groups, there was a general consensus that the Town of Normal is easy to work with and is generally very supportive of local social service initiatives. One group said, "When Normal has a vision, they stay with it and complete tasks to achieve that vision."

Observations: Citing the concentration of their clientele in West Bloomington, many groups perceived Normal to be slightly more expensive than Bloomington. They noted that this may be a result of lower concentrations of old (or depressed) housing stock in Normal.

- *Jobs*: Several agencies said there are not enough low-skilled jobs in the community that provide a "living wage." Demographic groups that are particularly affected by this include minorities, persons with disabilities, and persons with lower education levels. Agencies urged advocacy of such jobs as part of BN Advantage and other economic development initiatives.
- *Transportation*: Many people taking advantage of local social services do not have their own vehicles. All agencies were complimentary of local public transit, but several said they would like to see increased services to better serve second- and third-shift workers, a major portion of their clientele. Others noted that better education is needed on how to ride the bus. Some suggested ride-sharing as an option to be explored further. A few local organizations, such as Faith in Action and YWCA, attempt to address transportation gaps through their programming, but funding issues have made this task difficult for those organizations to contin-

SOCIAL SERVICE AGENCIES

Marcfirst McLean County connects families and people with developmental disabilities to their community through a lifetime of meaningful supports. Marcfirst programs include Services for Parent, Infant and Child Education (SPICE), an early intervention pediatric therapy center; the Transition Program, which provides a variety of services to assist students in planning for a smooth transition from high school to adulthood; the Supported Employment Program (SEP), which helps people with developmental disabilities find and keep viable jobs in the community; developmental training; residential services; and many more.

Project Oz has been serving youth and families in McLean County for over 35 years. The agency focuses on preventing drug abuse; empowering youth and young adults on a variety of issues; assisting homeless and runaway youth; and helping teens stay in school.

SHOW BUS is a nonprofit organization that has provided public transportation to residents of rural central Illinois since 1979. The organization grew out of a study group on aging in McLean and Livingston Counties. The initial transit program, which was restricted to those two counties, focused on service to seniors. Services were later expanded as more federal funding became available, first to people with disabilities and other special populations and then to rural residents more generally. The service area has also expanded over time as agencies in several neighboring counties saw the benefit of combining forces. SHOW Bus is now the primary rural transit provider in seven counties: McLean, Livingston, Ford, Iroquois, Kankakee, DeWitt, and Macon.

YouthBuild McLean County offers the following programs to youth ages 17 to 24: education assistance (attainment of high school diploma/GED); affordable housing "youth build" program and training; job training programs; the AmeriCorps Program; and youth leadership and empowerment.

YWCA of McLean County, founded in 1908, provides a huge variety of services for women, children, seniors, and families in McLean County. Services include early childhood education, a food bank, various adult services including medical transportation, transportation to work on Sundays, home care services, assistance for victims of sexual assault, and many more.

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ue offering those services.

- *Youth problems*: Major youth problems identified were truancy, homelessness, domestic violence, and drug-related problems in the home. These problems are most prevalent among minority youth.
- *Homelessness*: Youth and military veterans make up a significant portion of the homeless population. Runaway youth are a persistent problem. Several agencies also pointed to increased instances of "couch-surfing" and overcrowding under one roof as a rising challenge.
- *Housing*: Agencies that deal with housing pointed out that affordable housing, particularly affordable and accessible housing, is not adequate in Normal (or the B-N metro area). They reiterated the need for affordable housing to be intermingled with other housing in safe neighborhoods, not kept in segregated clusters. Agencies also highlighted the need to take youth sheltering and accessibility for populations with special needs into account while planning for affordable housing.

  Many agencies said they gravitate toward Bloomington for such accommodations, partly due to available older housing stock. Agencies also echoed the apartment managers' concerns that not as many apartments in Normal accept of Section 8 vouchers as those in Bloomington. Habitat for Humanity indicated that inflexible apartment leases prevent some low-income people from upgrading into a habitat (single family) residence when that housing becomes available. One agency commented on the growing economic divide around the ISU campus. They stated that students with money are becoming more demanding in housing amenities, which in turn affects the cost of student housing for others.

Identified challenges: A key challenge identified by many agencies is their ability to obtain state and federal grants. The affluence of the B-N metro area makes it very difficult for these agencies to prove the need for financial support for their line of work in this community. The current budget impasse at the state level has also created problems for many agencies. Several called for more local support to overcome these funding challenges.

Identified needs:

- *Housing*
  - An emergency youth shelter
  - Emergency housing to accommodate the homeless population
  - Incentives to encourage landlords to accept Section 8 vouchers and support the activities of social service agencies (for example, as the ability for a social service agency to retrofit an apartment to suit their client needs with the assurance that they may be able to use that apartment for a longer term)
- *Transportation/Mobility*
  - Increased access to public transportation
  - Connected and accessible sidewalks clear of snow and debris, particularly for their clients with disabilities
  - Ride-share transportation arrangements
  - Universal Design Standards that afford all

SENIOR SERVICE AGENCIES

Community Care Systems, Inc. (CCS) is a multi-purpose social service organization that provides in-home care, adult day care, individualized care and employment opportunities with a concentration on seniors and adult populations.

East Central Illinois Area Agency on Aging (ECIAAA) was founded in 1972 and authorized under the Older Americans Act to plan and administer services for older adults, persons with disabilities, caregivers and grandparents. The mission of ECIAAA is to empower seniors to live long and strong and in their own homes.

Evergreen Village Senior Supportive Living is a senior-assistance housing complex featuring various living arrangements that include on-site living quarters in addition to on-site condos, duplexes and cottage-style living. It offers an affordable assisted lifestyle for seniors. Both Medicaid and private pay arrangements are available.

Faith In Action provides spiritual, physical, and emotional support to seniors age 60 and over and their senior caregivers to maintain independence, dignity and an improved quality of life. This is accomplished through an interfaith network of volunteers, congregations and community organizations. Senior transportation assistance is a primary service of this organization.

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individuals the mobility they deserve
- *Health and support services*
  - Health centers and caregivers to treat mental health issues
  - Increased support for home therapy and other in-home services for people with autism
  - Outdoor recreational and therapeutic spaces for children and adults with disabilities
  - Employment opportunities for persons with disabilities
- *Education*
  - Charter school arrangements for at-risk youth
  - Expanding social services into local schools
- *Funding*: Dependable (local) funding streams for social service agencies

SENIOR SERVICE AGENCIES

In addition to comments from all the social service agencies, four different agencies and individuals were interviewed specifically regarding senior issues. Topics discussed included clientele needs; health care; transportation; community partnerships; local policies; housing; local service coordination; employment; and other issues.

Agencies report that seniors range in age from 60 into the mid-90s with diverse financial and, in a recent development for this community, racial and ethnic backgrounds (minorities now comprise about 10% of the local senior population, a number which has increased in recent years). Seniors' needs are much more varied than typically understood. Although most seniors prefer to live in their homes as long as they can ("age in place"), many face serious obstacles to doing so. Transportation and mobility, affordable housing, health care, and support services are particular areas of concern for seniors.

The growing and evolving senior population is placing a new level of demand for the type of services offered by the social service agencies. Agencies are seeing an increased demand for transit and meals sites, particularly from seniors around age 70. Seniors between the ages of 60 and 65 are less prepared for retirement than those in their 70s and above. Some lack sufficient retirement savings to take care of themselves long-term, especially given that many are living into their 80s and 90s. Many are in danger of outliving their finances, thus increasing the need for senior services.

Many local, state and regional agencies provide support services to help seniors age in place, including transportation/ mobility, affordable housing, job opportunities, social interactions, and exploitation issues (fraud, domestic violence, age indifference). Some of these agencies include Faith In Action, PATH, YWCA, Life-CIL, East Central Illinois Area Agency on Aging (ECIAAA), and Illinois Department of Aging.

Observations: Many senior service agencies are hurting financially. All agree that there should be increased collaboration amongst agencies serving seniors to achieve efficiencies, but they also want to see increased support from the broader community. Staffing is a major concern as well. There are not enough competently trained and experienced workers in social service careers locally, and many of the volunteers who provide necessary support are "aging out."

- *Health care*: Basic health care services are generally good, according to the interviewees. Most seniors deal solely with Medicare and Medicaid, though some are served by managed care companies or "fee for service" arrangements. There are limited options for home health care that provides meals and medication assistance. Health education for seniors such as medication management is the main point of concern in this area.
- *Transportation*: While many seniors are living longer, their driver's licenses are being taken away at earlier ages at the suggestion of medical staff. This forces them to depend on transit or ride-share services. Agencies that fill the gaps in public transportation reported that senior trips are usually for outpatient medical (about 80% of trips), grocery shopping, and leisure, in that order. While many agencies reported that Connect Transit service is dependable, they noted its limitations in serving elderly patrons with accessibility issues. Door-through-door [(2.1)] and door-to-door [(2.2)] transportation services are a major need today, and

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this need will increase as the population ages. There is also an increased need for senior transportation on the weekends. Local agencies that provide senior transportation service expressed interest in establishing partnerships or increasing their current levels of collaboration with local healthcare operations and hospitals, though they acknowledged that such efforts have sometimes proved difficult in the past.

Seniors also need amenities like good sidewalks and trails that are in good condition for recreational purposes. Agencies agreed that seniors should be more involved in infrastructure decisions related to accessibility.

- *Housing*: Agencies said that Normal offers a wider range of opportunities for senior-friendly housing and more affordable senior assisted living facilities than surrounding communities. Unfortunately, there are still gaps in affordable senior housing. According to the Evergreen Assisted Living facility, the average wait time for entry into their affordable senior assisted living operations is two years. Interviewees also pointed to a shortage of affordable housing with universal design features to accommodate seniors.

  Looking to the future, the agencies agreed that condos and apartments with on-site living assistance would better serve seniors. Safety and universal access should be a primary consideration in any senior housing planning. Proximity to amenities would make it easier for seniors to remain healthy and active even without a car. Some suggested that relaxed pet policies would be beneficial, as pets are vital companions for many seniors. Several agencies advocated zoning changes to make it easier for seniors to age in place--for instance, by permitting the construction of accessory units on existing single-family lots, making it easier for seniors to live with their families. In-home assistance with maintenance and other physically demanding tasks can also help seniors stay in their homes.
- *Employment*: Many physically capable seniors would love opportunities at part-time work. Unfortunately, local businesses typically hire young adults or college students for such jobs. Many seniors are also willing to volunteer under a variety of circumstances.

Identified challenges:

- A lack of community education on senior issues
- Seniors unaware of the local support services
- Lackluster cooperation among agencies and health service providers
- Shortage of qualified staff and aging of volunteers assisting with senior agencies

Identified needs:

- *Policy issues*
  - Municipal support on policy matters that help keep seniors in their homes longer (age in place)
  - Financial support for agencies providing senior services
- *Transportation*
  - Support for transportation gap services such as door-to-door and door-through-door services
  - Accessible sidewalks in good condition
- *Housing*: Affordable and accessible housing with supportive services
- *Employment*: Consideration of seniors for part-time/ seasonal employment or volunteer opportunities
- *Education*: Raising awareness on senior issues to the broader community

RELATED DEFINITIONS

2.1 Door-through-door transportation services offer a high level of physical support such as opening doors, helping users in and out of vehicles, and helping them move to and from the front door. This type of service is critical for people with significant mobility limitations. Door-through-door transportation services allow seniors and individuals with disabilities to continue living in their own homes and still stay connected to the services and activities that they need for health and happiness.

2.2 Door-to-door services provide transportation for people with mobility restrictions to and from the front door. These services are a step above the curb-to-curb transit services provided by most transit agencies as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

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YOUTH

In an effort to reach out to younger people who were not well represented in the survey results, MCRPC staff met with the members of Youth Engaged in Philanthropy (YEP), a program under the aegis of the Illinois Prairie Community Foundation (IPCF). Most of YEP's roughly 25 members (the number varies from year to year), drawn from community high schools, were present to learn about the comprehensive plan and share their own thoughts about Bloomington-Normal. These uniquely community-oriented students discussed what they like about Bloomington-Normal, what they see as challenges for the community to address, and what their ideal community would look like.

Each person had their own preferences and priorities, but several recurring themes made themselves apparent over the course of the meeting:

- The students were generally happy and enthusiastic about their community. Most of their comments echoed those of the broader community. They liked the size of the community, its schools and universities, its safety and family-friendliness, and its variety of things to do for people of all ages.
- The students had some concerns that can be described as age-specific—for instance, some expressed a desire for a new or upgraded mall, better outdoor and indoor recreation options that people their age can use and afford, and an Uptown that does not feel "reserved" for college students. Most of the challenges they named, however, were more generally applicable to the entire community and match the improvement suggestions made by adults in the 18-24 and 25-34 age brackets. The students were concerned about future economic growth and the community's overreliance on large employers; socioeconomic inequality; road and technology/communications infrastructure; and a perceived lack of diversity in Unit 5 schools and the broader community.
- When asked to describe their ideal community, most of them named characteristics of urban areas: walkability and bikeability; the ability to attract businesses and support startups; diversity; and the presence of art in public places. They also want to have access to higher education opportunities and be close to larger cities. Many of these preferences match Bloomington-Normal's existing conditions, or conditions in certain parts of the community.
- Interestingly, some of the students present said that they would like to see what other parts of the country and world have to offer, and are thus likely to leave Bloomington-Normal to attend college and start a career, but would like to return to Bloomington-Normal when it is time to raise their families.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND PUBLIC SAFETY

Interviews regarding infrastructure included CIRBN, Ameren, Connect Transit, BNWRD, Nicor Gas, and Town staff members responsible for maintaining or developing Town-owned infrastructure. Telecommunications and broadband access; availability of energy, including alternative energy; access to transportation in any mode; and municipal services such as water service; sewer service and treatment; stormwater management; streets, trails and sidewalks; and information technology for municipal and public use were among the topics discussed.

BROADBAND: The Executive Director of the Central Illinois Regional Broadband Network (CIRBN) was interviewed in this regard.

Observations:

- Fiber optic cable installation is expensive, especially in developed areas; for example, the director said that one block of installed cable in Downtown Bloomington can cost $10,000, approximately the same cost as one mile of

Youth Engaged in Philanthropy (YEP) is a program in which 25 Bloomington-Normal high school students allocate grant funds to local initiatives. YEP builds leadership and teamwork skills while engaging participants in a unique, philanthropic experience. YEP is itself a nonprofit group that funds local youth-run and/or youth-oriented programs. The 2015-16 school year marks the third year of the YEP program.

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installation in undeveloped areas. Current installation economics render fiber optic service cost-prohibitive for small business or residential customers. Providing "last mile" connections can cost from $8,000 to $80,000, depending on access and available connections.
- CIRBN encourages the expansion of data centers in central Illinois to properly leverage the available fiber optic bandwidth already installed. CIRBN currently provides service through partners to provide broadband to student housing in Normal.

Identified challenges:
- CIRBN, like other providers, finds easement access increasingly difficult and costly.
- CIRBN is not as well capitalized for expansion as its private sector competitors.
- The lifespan of installed fiber optic cable is estimated at 20 years; the replacement cost must be included in CIRBN's business model even if future technology offers lower-cost options.

ENERGY: Ameren's representative discussed $3.5 billion in system upgrades in Illinois over the next five years, involving new technologies and capacity expansion. This work will begin in Bloomington-Normal in three to five years.

Observations:
- The Towanda-Barnes substation on the south side of Bloomington is part of the national electric grid and is vital to electric power supply in central Illinois. A sub-transmission study for the area was completed in 2014. Some of its recommendations will be implemented within the next decade and will improve electrical redundancy and reduce the incidence of electric outages in Normal.
- Normal is part of the residential municipal electric aggregation program that provides cost savings to its residents. As part of this project, the Town opted for 100% green energy.
- The Town's street lighting is provided by Ameren – Normal opts for eco-friendly choices in lighting.

Identified challenges:
- Utilities competing for space in easements or on utility poles
- Separation of electrical lines from the Town's water lines
- Underground electrical transmission is far more expensive than overhead transmission
- Spot loads created by major redevelopment projects such as Uptown

NATURAL GAS: Nicor is a natural gas utility serving the BN metro area and most of the northern half of

INFRASTRUCTURE AGENCIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

AMEREN Illinois is a gas and electric delivery company that services a portion of Bloomington-Normal and McLean County. Ameren's service area in Illinois spans 43,700 square miles. Their delivery system includes 4,500 miles of electric transmission lines and 45,400 miles of gas distribution lines.

CIRBN is an advanced business service broadband provider, bringing high-speed fiber-optic-based internet and intranet services to local governments, institutions, schools, and other large-scale data users. A nonprofit consortium funded through the National Telecommunications and Information Administration's (NTIA) Broadband Technology Opportunities Program, CIRBN is overseen by a Board of Managers drawn from community stakeholders.

Connect Transit provides public transit service to the Twin Cities through 11 main service routes (plus three express routes during the academic year), 56 vehicles, and over 115 employees. It also provides curb-to-curb paratransit services for seniors and people with disabilities that qualify under the ADA. Connect is governed by a Board of Trustees appointed by the City of Bloomington and the Town of Normal. In 2015, the American Public Transit Association named it the best public transit system in North America among systems providing fewer than four million annual trips.

Bloomington and Normal Water Reclamation District (BNWRD) is a regional sanitary district that collects and treats wastewater from the Town of Normal, the City of Bloomington, the Bloomington Township Public Water District (BTPWD), and the Village of Downs.

Nicor Gas provides natural gas to more than 2.2 million customers in Illinois, including the Bloomington-Normal area. Natural gas is stored underground in aquifers to the north of Normal and transported by pipeline to B-N area homes.

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Illinois. Much of its critical infrastructure is located on the north side of Normal, some on its own property and some on private property owned by third parties and protected by easements.

Nicor's Manager for Community Relations and Economic Development was interviewed.

Observations:

- Given the location of its critical infrastructure and potential for conflict with their operations, Nicor would prefer if the private development was confined to the south side of Northtown Road. However, if developments are proposed on the north side, Nicor will work closely with all involved to help minimize any potential conflicts.
- Nicor is unwilling to lay down infrastructure prior to identifying billable customers. This policy may sometimes inconvenience developers looking for "shovel-ready" sites, but Nicor considers it an essential part of their fiscal sustainability.

Identified challenges:

- Like other utilities, Nicor has identified crowded utility easements under public right-of-way as a significant challenge.
- Nicor also identified urban sprawl as a point of concern. In the interest of increasing customer density per square mile, Nicor fully supports infill, higher density developments, and mixed use environments.

TRANSIT: Connect Transit was represented by its General Manager and Planner.

Observations:

- Connect is transitioning to larger, fixed-route vehicles (40 feet long).
- Route changes will be introduced in late summer 2016, reducing transit access to some portions of Normal (particularly the northeast section of the Town).
- Connect has begun to implement a system of transit stops with identifying signs. Adjustments to stop locations and modifications to improve access to stops are in progress. As the system is shifting to larger vehicles, service will be largely confined to areas with wider streets and room for buses to maneuver. Connect will be moving stops off private property (such as mall and store parking lots) and emphasizing transit access points at on-street stops.
- Connect Transit provides extensive service at ISU through the Redbird Express campus bus routes, which will not be affected by the upcoming route changes.
- Connect also provides paratransit service through much of Normal and Bloomington.
- There is continued concern regarding access for large transit vehicles in the compact street network of Uptown.
- One-way couplet streets, such as Main-Kingsley and College-Mulberry, make efficient route design and proper stop locations more difficult to design.
- Higher-density development, especially residential development, will improve ridership opportunities.
- Connect would like to receive advance information about both pending development and redevelopment, particularly along major corridors or arterials.
- Improving walking/biking access to bus stop locations is a key goal for Connect, which expressed a desire to work with the Town to accomplish this.

Identified challenges:

- Sprawl development that limits efficiency and timely transit services. Development expected to generate heavy transit usage should be discouraged at the edge of the community, where routing options are more limited and travel times are longer.
- Small residential streets and narrow turning radii are difficult to negotiate in the larger transit vehicles now becoming the standard on Connect Transit fixed routes.

WASTEWATER TREATMENT

MCRPC staff interviewed the Director and Chief Operator of the Bloomington and Normal Water Reclamation District (BNWRD). BNWRD is a municipal sanitary district that provides wastewater treatment to Bloomington and Normal. BNWRD operates two treatment plants, one on Bloomington's West Side (the "West Plant") that treats wastewater

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from western Normal and Bloomington, and one to the southeast of Bloomington (the "SE Plant") that treats wastewater from east of Veterans' Parkway and part of Ironwood Subdivision. BNWRD's primary service area is defined by the boundaries of the sanitary district, which encompasses Bloomington and Normal and some outlying areas.

Observations:

- Overall, BNWRD was fairly satisfied with the Town of Normal's efforts on wastewater issues. They noted that Normal's code enforcement, sustainability efforts, and lack of combined sewers have reduced the amount of stormwater entering the treatment plant. They did note, however, that improvements can still be made, particularly to the leaky sewers that are part of the Town's older infrastructure.
- When requested to respond to the Home Builders Association's claim that BNWRD's tap-on fees were significantly increasing the cost of new construction, BNWRD clarified that their connection fees are only a portion of the tap-on fee structure. However, they also acknowledged that tap-on fees are higher than they used to be and noted the increase was necessary to finance the new SE Plant that was built in 2005 to accommodate growth east of Veterans' Parkway. They explained that tap-on fees are one of the district's three sources of revenue, along with property taxes and user fees. The property tax levy is maxed, which leaves user fees and tap-on fees to account for any future spending increases. Tap-on fees are by definition tied to growth, so the revenue through this source was at a maximum during the rapid growth period. Now that east side growth has slowed down, revenue from these fees has been decreasing, and user fees will become the primary mechanism to pay for the infrastructure upgrades.
- BNWRD expressed concern over the amount of stormwater that is discharged into the SE Plant. This increased volume of non-polluted water coming into the treatment plant (inflow and infiltration, or "I & I")[2.3] exceeds the peak hydraulic capacity during extreme wet weather and may one day necessitate plant expansions. The misdirected stormwater comes from sources such as old, leaky pipes; malfunctioning manhole covers; and sump pumps and footing drains in people's homes being illegally connected to the sanitary sewer system rather than the storm sewer system. BNWRD stressed that reducing these inputs at their sources will be far cheaper than expanding capacity at the SE Plant (an estimated construction cost of $14-16 per gallon of capacity), which will be necessary if I & I are not reduced. They also pointed out that point source reduction of I & I is a major USEPA goal and that the last permit they obtained from the IEPA for the West Plant recommended that they establish intergovernmental agreements with contributing jurisdictions to achieve these reductions.
- A number of proposed regulatory changes at

RELATED DEFINITIONS

2.3 Inflow and Infiltration (I & I) is the dilution of wastewater in sanitary sewers by unpolluted stormwater. "inflow" is water that comes from the deliberate (and illegal) connection of sump pumps, footing drains, and other sources of stormwater to the sanitary sewer system. "Infiltration" is the accidental entry of stormwater through leaks, cracks, malfunctioning manhole covers, etc.. I & I increases operating costs by forcing treatment plants to treat water that was never meant for the sanitary sewer system. If left unchecked, it can require expensive infrastructure upgrades to increase capacity.

2.4 National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES): According to USEPA, the NPDES permit program addresses water pollution by regulating point sources that discharge pollutants to waters of the United States. Created in 1972 by the Clean Water Act, the NPDES permit program is authorized to state governments by EPA to perform many permitting, administrative, and enforcement aspects of the program.

2.5 Impaired Waters list: Under the federal Clean Water Act, impaired waters are rivers, lakes, or streams that do not meet one or more water-quality standards and are considered too polluted for their intended uses. The IEPA prepares a list of impaired waters to fulfill the requirements set forth in Section 303(d) of the federal Clean Water Act and the Water Quality Planning and Management regulation at 40 CFR Part 130.

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the national and state levels—for example, mandates to remove a greater percentage of phosphorous, ammonium nitrates, and chlorides—may bring new NPDES permit[2.4] requirements necessitating major system upgrades. As a result, BNWRD anticipates having to "gut and rebuild" the West Plant within the next 20 years at an estimated cost of $150-160 million. New permit requirements could come as early as 2017 if certain issues are not addressed (see below about Sugar Creek). Even if that does not happen, pending ammonium nitrate regulations, expected to take effect by the following permit renewal in 2022, will likely force an upgrade; however, by that point the loan on the SE Plant will be nearly paid off, making a West Plant upgrade more financially feasible.

- Sugar Creek, one of the two streams into which BNWRD discharges treated water, has been placed on the IEPA's Impaired Waters list[2.5] due to elevated levels of phosphorous. Failing to get Sugar Creek removed from that list could trigger stringent phosphorous limits on the West Plant when its permit is renewed in 2017. BNWRD maintains that infrastructure upgrades resulting from these limits would not necessarily benefit aquatic life in the creek because of other anthropogenic impacts downstream from the West Plant (most notably farm runoff and debris), which BNWRD believes is causing the bulk of the impairment. The new limits would also likely require the development of a watershed plan, a time- and resource-intensive process that would also introduce further monitoring and limits. BNWRD is working with the IEPA to reevaluate the impairment designation.
- When asked about the proposed bike trail extension along the south bank of Sugar Creek at the Bloomington-Normal border, BNWRD expressed strong opposition. Such a trail would present liability concerns for BNWRD, which owns the land in question, and would also risk damage to pipes buried underground at that location. BNWRD is slightly more open to the possibility of a trail along the north bank, which is narrower than the south bank but does not have as much buried infrastructure to contend with.
- Looking ahead, BNWRD noted that the USEPA wants to establish "satellite communities" (i.e., communities served by sanitary districts) to have permits to operate their sewer systems, which would make it easier for USEPA to regulate those communities' treatment efforts and ensure that its goals are achieved. Normal, Bloomington, and the other communities BNWRD serves would have to obtain these permits and meet increased reporting requirements. The time horizon for this change is unknown, but BNWRD expects it to happen in the near future. In preparation for this change, BNWRD suggested that the communities start benchmarking their environmental footprints and carefully tracking the savings realized by their green infrastructure improvements.
- While they noted good relations with the Town of Normal and City of Bloomington engineering staff, they expressed a need for better communications with the consultants retained by the Town or the City for long term sewer and stormwater planning projects.

Identified challenges

- Pending regulatory changes will, if implemented, likely force BNWRD to abide by stricter water quality limits, forcing the replacement of the West Plant within the next 15 years. The cost of this replacement is currently estimated by BNWRD at over $150 million. Given that BNWRD's revenue is drawn from local sources such as property taxes, user fees and tap-on fees, the community must be prepared to meet these costs in the near future.
- Unpolluted stormwater entering the SE treatment plant poses treatment and capacity challenges and in turn increases the cost burden. These I & I issues, if not kept to a minimum, will force either the expansion of the SE Plant or the restriction of new service by the IEPA if expansion does not happen in a timely fashion. Greater levels of community education and intergovernmental cooperation are needed to address these issues.

TOWN OF NORMAL STAFF: Interview subjects included the Public Works Director, the Water Director, the Town Engineer, the Director of Inspections

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and the Town Planner.

Water: The Water Director advised that the current water system has considerable excess capacity; current usage is about 4 million gallons per day (mgd), and system capacity is up to 12 mgd.

Most barriers to expanding the water system further are financial, not technical. For example, it will be difficult and expensive for water lines to cross interstate highway rights-of-way.

The Town currently spends on the order of $2 million annually in pipe replacement.

Denser development and associated water demand may reverse Normal's trend of water use reduction, but there are no technical constraints on serving higher densities. The Treatment Plant Plan provides additional guidance in this regard.

Stormwater: Although today's stormwater management system works well, the Public Works department favors increased use of regional-scale detention facilities as a matter of policy. This approach offers more efficient stormwater management by concentrating the locations requiring continuing maintenance, and reducing the use of smaller and less effective detention areas.

Sanitary sewer: A long-term sewer plan is in progress. The plan will include a 5-year sewer project program addressing current needs, to be completed in mid-February 2016, as well as a map of sections of Normal that can and cannot be sewered. Later work will consider rate changes and future growth issues.

Town staff members believe the current sewer capacity is adequate for the areas served even if population density increases. Development in areas where gravity flow will not suffice, and where pump stations are required, will be very expensive both for installation and maintenance. More generally, any future expansion of the sewer system will create higher long-term maintenance costs.

Staff members noted that some land outside of the current incorporated area can be sewered without requiring additional pump stations, including areas northeast, northwest and west of the corporate boundary. Growth in areas north of the Town is constrained by pump station capacity. There are also sewer constraints in the area surrounding the Mitsubishi plant. Extra capacity is available in the Franklin Heights area.

Streets, trails and sidewalks: Staff anticipate more existing street improvement rather than new construction, and Town staff members favor innovative congestion management that does not rely on increased facility size. They noted that bridges and streets are generally in good repair.

Town staff want to use complete streets[2.6] concepts to facilitate multimodal transportation, including narrowing and reduction of lanes. The Town, ISU and IDOT have discussed plans for the Main Street corridor, especially management of pedestrian traffic through the campus area. The Town would like ISU to incorporate complete streets and design for pedestrian traffic management into the ISU master plan.

Information technology: Town staff members have little direct knowledge in this area, aside from the right-of-way demands for installation along with other utilities. There are concerns about service availability in new development, as some providers are already suggesting that service will be held until areas are built out; according to Town staff, this will create delays for new development. At this juncture, staff believes developers should provide high speed internet access in new developments.

Observations:

- The Town is well-equipped to assimilate new development and higher residential densities within the existing Town limits.

RELATED DEFINITIONS

2.6. "Complete Streets," as defined by Smart Growth America**,** are streets that allow safe and comfortable access for users of all modes of transportation and people of all ages and abilities. "Incomplete streets," by contrast, are designed primarily or solely for automotive traffic, making other modes of travel inconvenient or dangerous. Complete streets may include any or all of a diverse array of features that make them safer and more versatile, including sidewalks, bike lanes, bus lanes, comfortable and accessible transit stops, frequent and safe crossing opportunities, median islands, narrower travel lanes, roundabouts, etc.

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- Facility planning is targeted towards the existing annexed area.
- Ongoing coordination and cooperation with ISU, IDOT, and other entities is essential for sustainable development and minimizing new infrastructure costs.

Identified challenges:
- Accelerating costs for infrastructure maintenance and expansion, if and when needed
- Reliance on other agencies, such as IDOT, to relay data and project specifications; generally, dependence on other jurisdictions or agencies to accomplish projects

Fire: Normal's fire chief discussed a number of issues facing his department, including response times, potential station relocations and upgrades, and how development and the built environment affect fire service.

Response times: One of the most important considerations for any fire department is response time; i.e., how long it takes responders to arrive at a location after receiving a call. While most of Normal is well within the recommended response time range of 4.5-6 minutes, decades of development on the fringes of the Town—especially on the east side—have extended the range some of Normal's fire stations have to cover. Northeast Normal, for example, is relatively far away from the nearest station; Normal Community High School, which is in that area, has an average response time of about 9.5 minutes, well outside the acceptable range.

Location of Fire Stations: There are currently three stations in Normal. A fourth was explored but proved cost-prohibitive. Instead, the Town has decided to reconfigure the locations and staff composition of the three existing stations. Plans have been made to move Station #1 (Headquarters) eastward from College Avenue to N. Hershey Avenue; Station #2 eastward from Gregory and Adelaide to Main and Osage; and Station #3 westward from Raab and Henry to Bradford Ln. In the case of Station #2, this move will come with a major upgrade in the quality of the facility, as it is over 40 years old and has significant maintenance issues.

There is currently no specific timeline for the station relocations; however, the plans are in the works, and the Town agreed in 2015 to a land swap with ISU that frees up land for the Station #2 relocation. These reconfigurations should result in a more consistent distribution of response times. However, the chief noted that these moves alone will be insufficient if the Town continues to grow outward at its current pace.

Intergovernmental cooperation: There is a great deal of cooperation between the Bloomington and Normal fire departments. Both Normal and Bloomington are part of the Mutual Aid Box Alarm System (MABAS), which provides mutual aid to other member agencies. Other cooperative efforts with Bloomington discussed in the recent past included a joint fire station on the east side of the community, which did not materialize. More intergovernmental cooperation will be required in the near future, as Illinois recently passed a bill requiring counties with populations under 200,000 to have a single joint police/fire dispatch center. In the short term, the chief indicated that the transition to a single dispatch center may be difficult and costly.

Identified challenges:
- While street patterns are not a huge concern in most parts of Normal today, the chief did note that cul-de-sacs can present challenges.
- Some apartment buildings also present complications due to height (the fire department's ladder trucks only go up three stories, which makes it difficult to fight fires in taller structures) or being too close together.
- Newer structures are built with materials, such as glued particle board, that are particularly unsafe in the event of a fire.

Police: Normal's Chief of Police met with MCRPC staff to discuss issues relevant to his department, including community relations; policing policies; cooperation with other agencies and private entities; crime data and mapping; and internal planning and reporting.

Community Relations: According to the chief, one of the department's key principles is "community policing," meaning that officers stay engaged with communities and work together with citizens to

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solve problems. This includes activities such as:

- Proactively patrolling known problem areas (as identified by number of citizen- or officer-initiated calls from that area)
- Making three community contacts per day (e.g., walking beats, liquor checks, and business checks)
- Community education
- Keeping abreast of public attitudes and perceptions regarding police activity by performing surveys

In response to some of the apartment managers' concerns, the chief specifically detailed some of the ways in which the department coordinates with apartment managers to ensure safety in their complexes:

- Some apartment complexes produce more calls than others, and NPD officers patrol those areas preventively.
- Officers have annual meetings with all apartment complex managers in the Town. These meetings are sometimes followed up with one-on-one meetings to identify or discuss specific complex-specific issues.
- The department shares appropriate crime information with apartment managers and works with them to write leases or suggest "sample leases" that allow police to intervene in eviction cases.
- The department also partners with apartment managers on measures to increase safety such as video surveillance.
- Although there is no official "Cop on the Block" program, NPD facilitates a similar program. This voluntary program is typically initiated by an apartment manager contacting the chief. The chief sends out an email to all the officers to gauge their interest in living in that apartment complex and doing informal walking beats on off-hours. When an officer expresses interest, he or she then works out a living arrangement with the apartment manager. The management at the Lancaster Heights complex, which has such an arrangement, told MCRPC staff that having a police car parked in the parking lot and an officer walking around in uniform has helped make their complex much safer.

Intergovernmental and interagency cooperation: The chief stated that NPD and ISU police work very closely. They communicate periodically and work together on issues such as crowd control, hostage negotiating and SWAT teams. He noted that the college students are "better behaved" than they used to be, perhaps in part because of the school's expulsion policy for students who commit serious crimes.

He characterized NPD's relationship with the Bloomington Police Department as "the best it has ever been," as the two forces communicate and coordinate on a variety of issues and tasks.

The chief highlighted the efforts of the Neighborhood Action Team (NAT), consisting of NPD officers, ISU officers and staff from other Town of Normal departments, such as planning and zoning. This team was formed to collaboratively and proactively address issues specific to the neighborhoods around the university.

Crime data and analysis: NPD tracks and reports crimes beyond what is typically required by state and federal agencies. They use variety of tools, including GIS. The department does not wait until the year end to do a hot spot analysis. Data are analyzed daily to help shape the enforcement patterns for that day.

The Town has recently increased enforcement of pedestrian and bicycle infractions, with areas of emphasis based partly on crash data. In some cases, NPD uses targeted enforcement increases not only to directly improve public safety, but also to achieve "compliance through education"—discouraging future unsafe behavior by making the traffic laws clear.

The chief noted that sexual assault cases have spiked in the last few years. He believes that these higher numbers are not only due to the prevalence of such crimes, but also the department's educational efforts. Sexual assault has long been notoriously underreported, both here and elsewhere, but the chief believes his department has made progress in encouraging people to come forward.

Planning and reporting: A general multi-year plan establishes high-level goals and objectives, while more specific plans such as the Officer Recruitment Plan and Work-Assessment Load Plan guide the

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department on those issues. Hotspot mapping shapes the department's decision-making about where to deploy resources. The Problem-Oriented Policing Unit (POP) identifies unresolved community issues that cause crime and develops strategies to address them. The department is nationally accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA), which means the department's policies, procedures and operations meet national best practice standards for progressive law enforcement.

The department's annual report, which is posted on the Town's website at the end of each year, details the department's core activities and new initiatives. The "citizen complaint grid," published on the Town's website, lists types and frequencies of complaints by Normal residents

Identified challenges:

- The chief stated that the national attention on police and racial issues has negatively affected local perceptions of the NPD.

KEY PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS (INFRASTRUCTURE AND PUBLIC SAFETY)

- Infrastructure and community facilities play a key role in the future growth of the community. The Town's recent plans addressing the community facilities and capital investments (such as the recently adopted Fire Department Plan and the sewer plan that is currently under development) should be integrated into the comprehensive plan efforts.
- Future land use planning should aim for compact physical growth and development to improve service efficiencies and achieve long-term fiscal and environmental sustainability.
- Street functions should be examined more comprehensively to accommodate multiple modes of transportation.
- Street patterns such as cul-de-sacs that limit the serviceability of emergency and other service vehicles should be limited.
- Easements in rights-of-way should be managed efficiently to accommodate current and future utility provision.
- The community's ability to effectively manage its sewer and stormwater infrastructure not only impacts the health and safety of its residents but also dictates the future growth and economic development of the area. Given the costs of treatment and the construction of a new treatment facility, communities should seriously consider sustainable stormwater management techniques in all aspects of planning, including green infrastructure improvements, promoting net-zero water in parks and buildings, and other approaches to help reduce I & I for long-term fiscal and environmental sustainability.
- Recognizing the importance of information technology in the 21st century economy, facilitating broadband access should be a key consideration in the overall planning framework.
- Emphasis should continue to be placed on regional (interagency and intergovernmental) cooperation for effective infrastructure, public safety, and natural resource planning and utilization.

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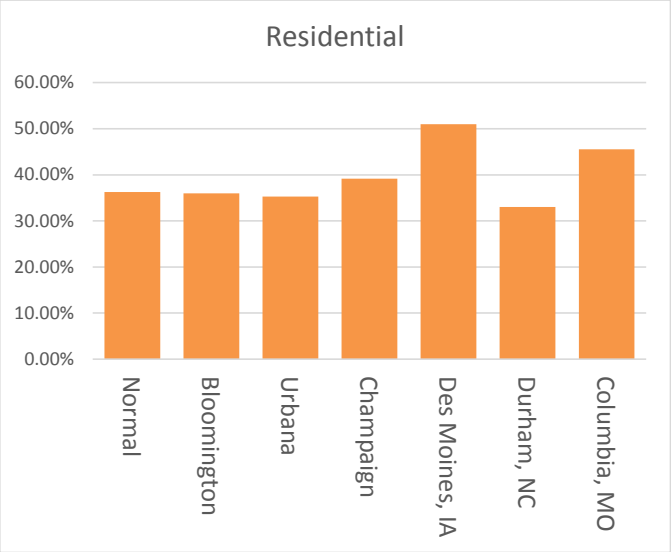
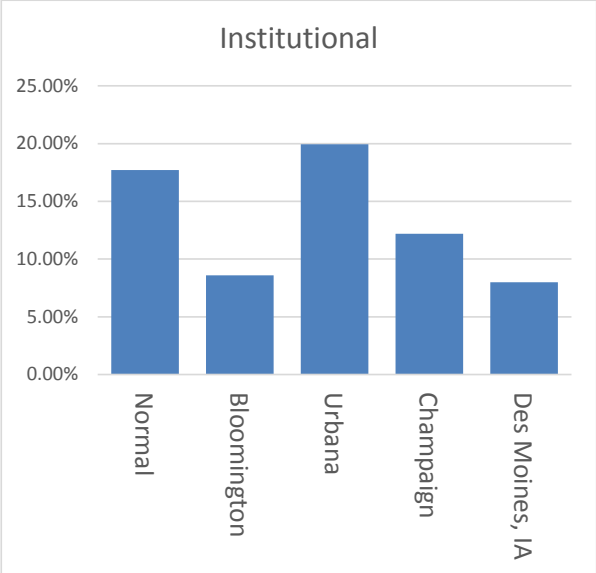
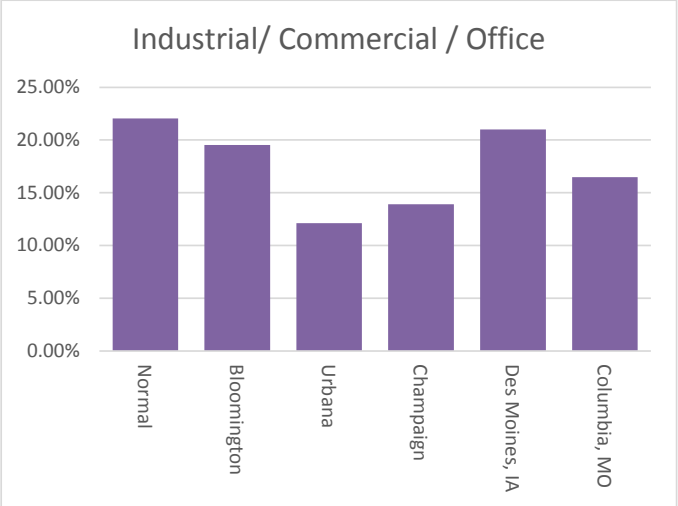
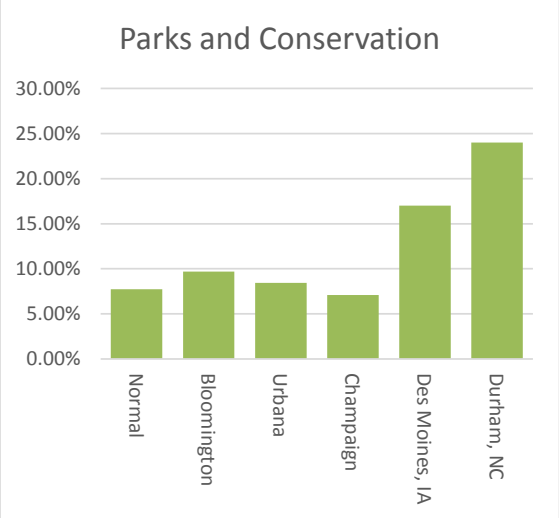
APPENDIX

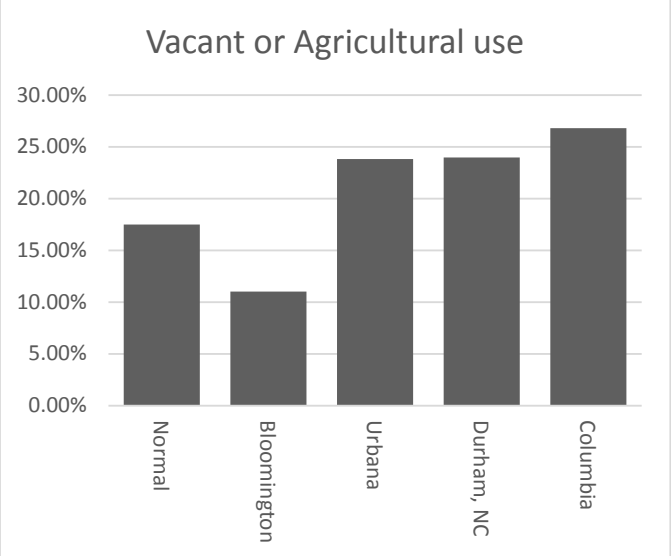
Figure CS-A.1 Normal's land use as compared with other communities











Normal's land use is compared with other similar central Illinois communities and BN Advantage Communities (refer to the Economy chapter for more information on these communities). Since there are no state or national stipulations on how communities should classify their land use, every community does it slightly differently. This makes land use comparisons across communities difficult. The information presented in the above charts was gathered from the published comprehensive plans of each community.

These comparisons do not reveal major anomalies in Normal's land use. There is, however, a stark difference in the percentage of land dedicated to Parks and Conservation between Illinois and non-Illinois communities. Another noteworthy observation is that Normal has a higher percentage of vacant land compared to Bloomington, but the BN metro area seems to be faring well in that regard compared to other communities.

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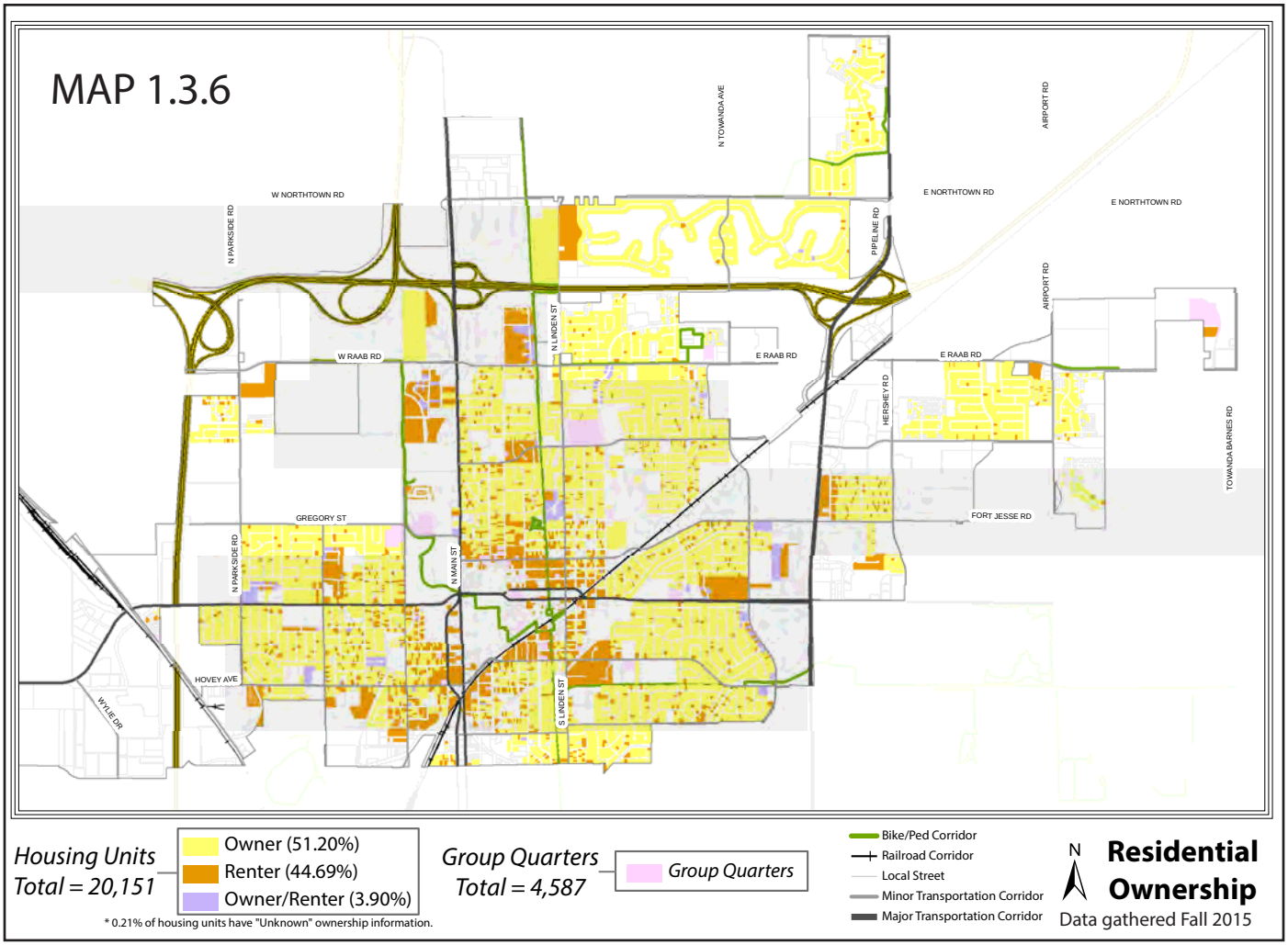

	Normal				Illinois			
	2000		2010		2000		2010	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Housing Occupancy								
Total housing units	15,683	100	18,816	100	4,885,615	100	5,296,715	100
Occupied housing units	15,157	96.6	17,993	95.6	4,591,779	94	4,836,978	91.3
Vacant housing units	526	3.4	823	4.4	293,836	6	459,743	8.7
Homeowner vacancy rate (%)		1		1.4		1.5		2.5
Rental vacancy rate (%)		4		5.5		6.2		9.1
Housing Tenure								
Occupied Housing Units	15,157	100	17,993	100	4,591,779	100	4,836,972	100
Owner-occupied housing units	8,364	55.2	10,261	57	3,088,884	67.3	3,263,639	67.5
Average household size of owner-occupied units	2.57		2.58		2.76		2.69	
Renter-occupied housing units	6,793	44.8	7,732	43	1,502,895	32.7	1,573,333	32.5
Average household size of renter-occupied units	2.25		2.29		2.37		2.38	

Table 1.3.4. Housing Occupancy and Tenure. Source: Decennial Census 2000 and 2010

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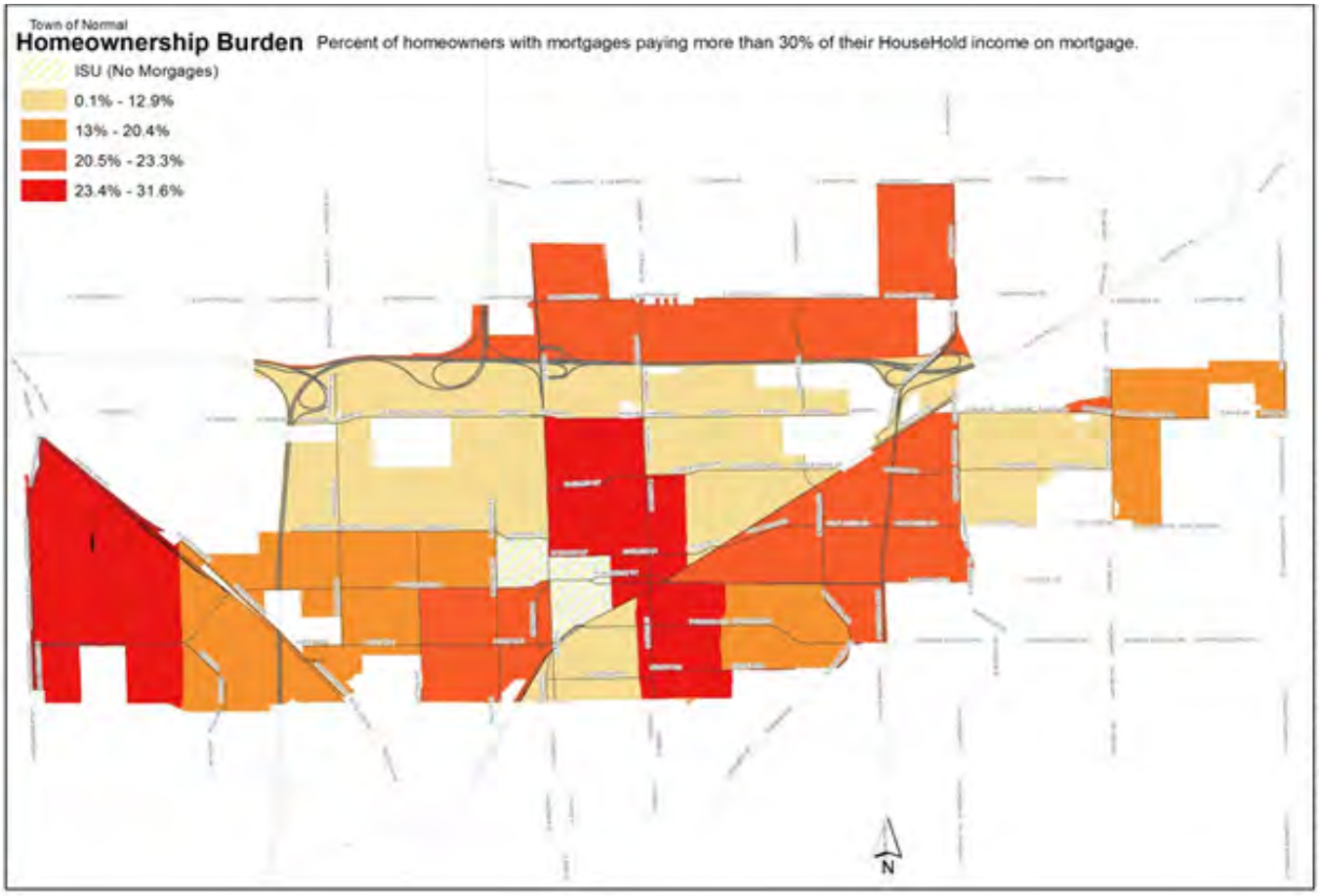
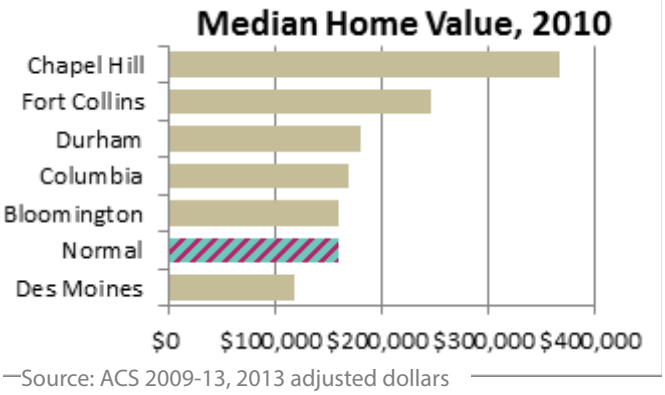
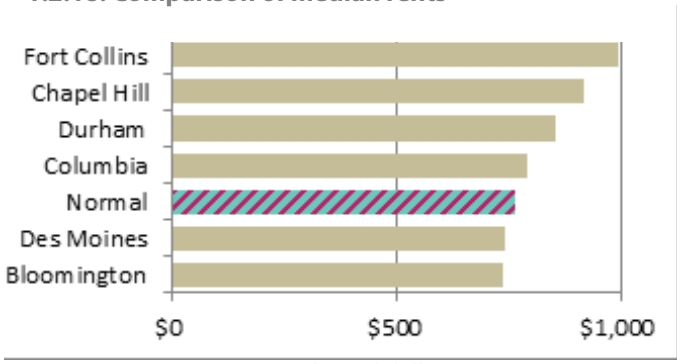


Map 1.2.4. Homeownership burden (percentage of homeowners whose mortgage payments are more than 30% of their household incomes)



Source: ACS 2009-13, 2013 adjusted dollars

1.2.18. Comparison of median rents



Source: ACS, 2009-13, 2013 adjusted dollars

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