

# DOWNTOWN STRATEGIC PLAN



**Urbana, Illinois**

**February 2002**

CAMIROS



# **Downtown Strategic Plan**

## **City Council Members**

Tod Satterthwaite, Mayor  
Esther Patt  
Ruth Wyman  
James H. Hayes, Jr.  
Danielle Chynoweth  
Laura Huth  
Joseph A. Whelan, Jr.  
Milton E. Otto

## **Downtown Plan Steering Committee**

Art Zangerl, Chair	Gerrit Knaap
Carolyn Baxley	Elizabeth Krchak
Jim Bernet	Dorothy Neuman
Chris Billing	Peggy Patten
Riley Glerum	Tony Stephens
Robert Hurt	William Volk
Cary Ware	

## **Community Development Services Department**

Elizabeth H. Tyler, AICP, Director  
April D. Getchius, AICP, Director (former)  
Rob Kowalski, AICP, Planning Manager  
Tim Ross, Senior Planner  
Reed Berger, Economic Development Coordinator  
Kathy Larson, Economic Development Specialist

## **Camiros, Ltd**

Leslie Pollock  
Richard Wilson

## Table of Contents

Project Background .....	2
Understanding the Downtown .....	4
Vision .....	17
The Downtown Leadership Initiative .....	22
The Downtown Image Initiative .....	24
The Center of Urbana Initiative .....	40
The Downtown Neighborhood Initiative .....	46
The Niche Market Initiative .....	52
The Lincoln Square Initiative .....	55
Implementation .....	59

## List of Figures

Figure 1; Population Estimate – 2000 .....	5
Figure 2: Shopping Districts .....	6
Figure 3: Existing Functional Zones .....	8
Figure 4: Building Conditions .....	10
Figure 5: Existing Zoning .....	11
Figure 6: Where do you shop downtown? .....	12
Figure 7: Existing Land Use .....	13
Figure 8: Picture – Vine Street and Main Street Intersection .....	15
Figure 9: Picture – Parking lot on Broadway Avenue .....	15
Figure 10: Picture – Schnuck’s .....	15
Figure 11: Picture – County Court House .....	16
Figure 12: Picture – Bergner’s .....	16
Figure 13: Framework Plan .....	21
Figure 14: Where are the key destinations? .....	25
Figure 15: Proposed Downtown Districts .....	26
Figure 16: Cunningham and University .....	27
Figure 17: Circulation Map .....	31
Figure 18: Gateway Feature at University and Cunningham .....	32
Figure 19: Broadway Avenue – Special Treatment .....	33
Figure 20: Mall Connections and Visual Access .....	34
Figure 21: Street Classifications .....	35
Figure 22: Parking Analysis .....	37
Figure 23: Where would you put new parking? .....	38
Figure 24: Pedestrian Corridor and Bike Path .....	39
Figure 25: Where is the center of town? .....	43
Figure 26: Public Gathering Space – Lincoln Square Mall .....	44
Figure 26A: Public Squares and Open Spaces .....	45
Figure 27: Where would you put new housing? .....	47
Figure 28: “Near North” Redevelopment .....	48
Figure 28A: Build Housing Downtown .....	49
Figure 29: “Near North” Redevelopment (Broadway looking south) .....	51
Figure 30: Public Market Concept Sketch .....	57
Figure 30A: Public Market Plan Sketch .....	58
Figure 31: Key Improvement and Redevelopment Sites .....	61

## List of Tables

Table 1; Total Square Footage in Downtown Urbana .....	14
Table 2: Total Retail Square Footage in Downtown Urbana .....	14
Table 3: Market Group Interest Analysis .....	19
Table 4: Action Plan .....	62

## **PROJECT BACKGROUND**

Work on the Downtown Strategic Plan began in early 2000 with the selection of Camiros, Ltd. as the primary consultant. Camiros, Ltd. is a city planning, development and design consulting firm based in Chicago. They have significant experience in developing redevelopment plans for downtowns in many different cities across the state. The agreed upon scope of services included establishing the framework for downtown, creating a vision, developing strategies, and producing a final plan.

Along with the selection of Camiros, Ltd., a thirteen member Steering Committee panel was appointed by the Mayor to direct and oversee the work of city staff and the consultant. The Steering Committee has met regularly since the beginning of the process and is proud to present this draft as the result of the effort.

The following summary gives a chronology of the work put into developing the plan.

### ***Kick-off Meeting – May 16, 2000***

Mayor Satterthwaite introduced the newly appointed Steering Committee and reviewed the expectations and goals of the effort. Les Pollock from Camiros, Ltd. introduced the consultants and described the framework for the plan.

### ***Key Person Interviews – May 16-17, 2000***

In an effort to get initial reactions to downtown and what the main issues are, Camiros conducted interviews with key stakeholders in the downtown. These stakeholders included private property owners, business owners, city officials, county officials, as well as representatives from the Urbana Free Library, the Champaign County Chamber of Commerce, Lincoln Square Mall, Busey Bank, and First Illinois.

### ***Town Hall Meeting – July 27, 2000***

The Town Hall meeting was a public forum held to get input from residents on what is needed downtown. Over 100 people attended and participated in an exchange of ideas. Participants were also given an overview of the process and given instruction on how to stay involved.

### ***Visioning Session – September 27-28, 2000***

Over the course of two meetings, the Steering Committee participated in a visioning process to develop a vision of what downtown Urbana could be. The Steering Committee identified current weaknesses downtown and discussed what changes need to be made to make downtown successful again. The end product of these meetings is a vision statement described on page 17 of this report.

### ***Strategies Workshop – December 7, 2000***

At this meeting of the Steering Committee, Camiros presented development strategies for different areas of downtown. These strategies were based on ideas discussed at previous meetings and the Town Hall meeting. The concept of mixed-use development along North Broadway was highlighted at this meeting.

### ***Plan Concept – May 15, 2001***

At this meeting, an overall plan concept was presented to the Steering Committee. The Plan Concept report illustrated the strategies discussed in the December 7<sup>th</sup> meeting and supplemented them with text describing the rationale behind the suggestions. This document also established the six primary initiatives for downtown.

### ***Draft Plan – August 28, 2001***

A draft plan was presented to the Steering Committee at this meeting. This draft contained all the illustrations and text from the Plan Concept plus a new Action Plan matrix which further described what concepts should be considered, how they could get completed and what priority they should have.

***Public Open House – November 15, 2001***

A public open house was held at Lincoln Square Mall on the evening of November 15<sup>th</sup>. At this open house, all the illustrations of the draft plan were presented along with the Action Plan matrix. Staff was on hand to answer questions about the plan and to give background for the concepts presented. Materials were on display in the mall for one week over the busy Thanksgiving weekend.

***Public Hearing – January 24, 2002***

On January 24, 2002 the Urbana Plan Commission conducted a public hearing to consider the plan. The Commission took testimony from individuals on the plan and ultimately voted to recommend to City Council that the approve the plan with some minor text revisions. The vote was a unanimous 5-0 decision.

***City Council Adoption – February 4, 2002***

On February 4, 2002 the Urbana City Council considered the recommendation of the Plan Commission and unanimously voted to adopt the Downtown Strategic Plan as an amendment to the City's Comprehensive Plan.

*\*\*\* The illustrations shown in this plan are conceptual and are intended to generally illustrate how the specific recommendations of the plan could be carried out. All design concepts shown are subject to modification as projects are proposed and implemented. \*\*\**

## UNDERSTANDING THE DOWNTOWN

Thanks to the dedication of business owners, the loyalty of area residents, and the support of city leaders, downtown Urbana has worked hard to hold its place among the retail and commercial marketplaces of greater Champaign-Urbana. While this continues to be a challenge, opportunities for revitalization are within reach, and could be achieved by capitalizing on the current assets of the area and the skills, creativity, and affection of residents.

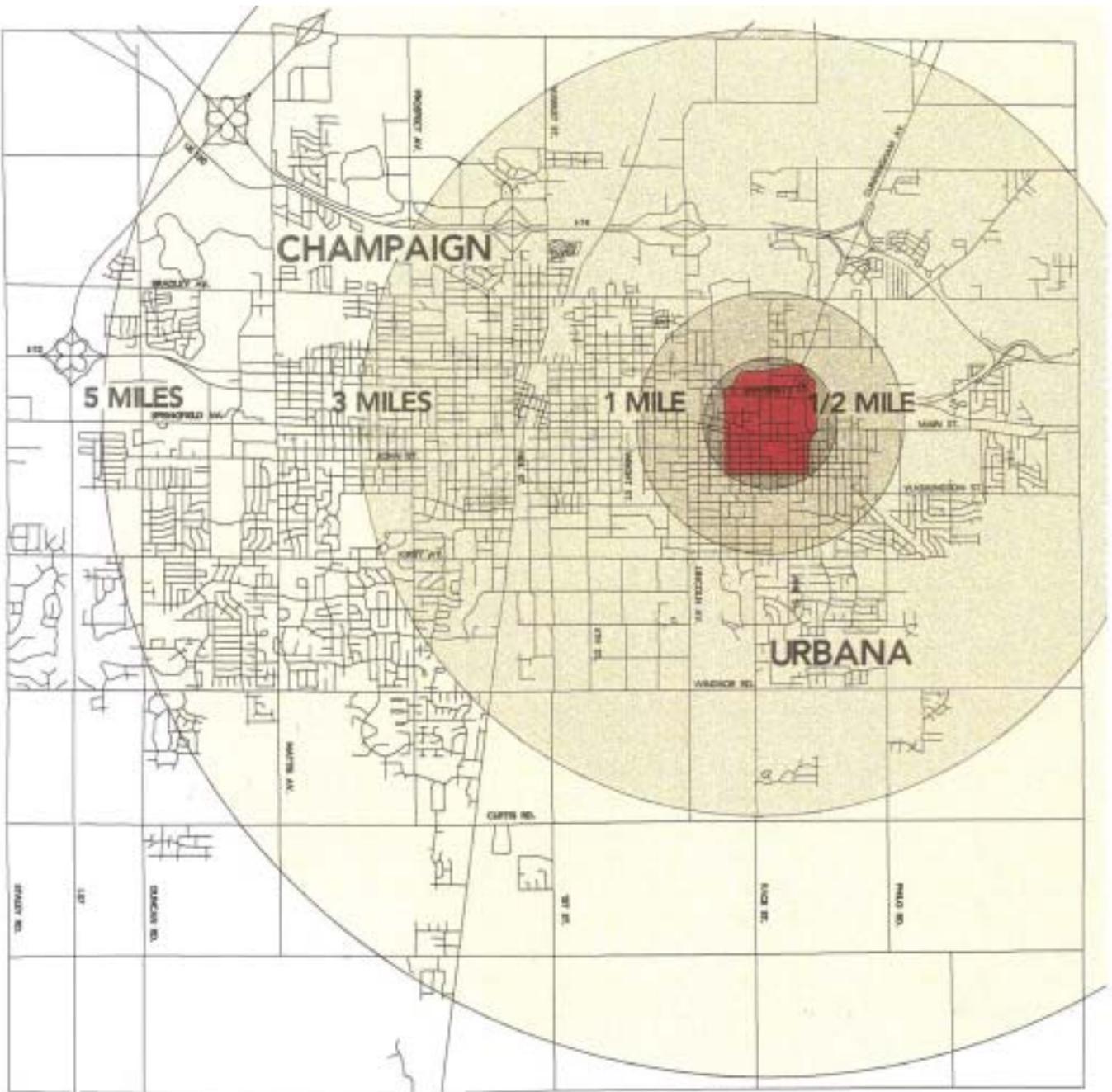
Understanding the state of downtown Urbana and the factors that have shaped it is necessary before developing strategies to realize this revitalization. In particular, knowledge of the geographic and demographic context, the land use activities found in the downtown, current zoning, and physical characteristics will help paint a picture of the current state of downtown Urbana. It is upon this base that an enhanced downtown environment can be built.

### **Demographic and Geographic Context**

Urbana is the county seat of Champaign County, and together with its neighbor Champaign, Urbana is part of the largest urban area in the county and one of the largest urban areas in central Illinois. According to the 2000 Census, Urbana has a population of approximately 36,400. Champaign is almost twice as populous, with roughly 67,500 residents. Combined, the two cities are home to nearly 58 percent of the residents of Champaign County.

The challenge facing downtown Urbana relates in part to its location within the metropolitan area. The downtown is located on the eastern end of Champaign-Urbana, but most of the urbanized area and the center of population are located to the west of the downtown. (See Figure 1, Population Estimate.) This means that downtown Urbana, unlike downtown Champaign, is relatively distant from many of the newer, populous housing developments of southwestern Champaign. In addition, Figure 2, Shopping Districts, shows that other major shopping areas are located much closer to most residents of Champaign than downtown Urbana. Furthermore, downtown Urbana is located more than a mile off Interstate 74. In contrast, the area's largest shopping centers are located just off the interstate at North Neil Street and North Prospect Street in Champaign—a far easier destination to reach for out-of-town shoppers than downtown Urbana.

Another factor affecting downtown Urbana is the unusual tripartite division of the metropolitan area: the city of Champaign, the city of Urbana, and the University of Illinois, which is almost a city unto itself. Many single cities of the combined size of Champaign, Urbana, and the University have a difficult enough time revitalizing their downtown areas, but the fact that Champaign-Urbana has three downtowns (Campustown serving this function for the University), makes revitalization that much more daunting. The most successful renewal to date has taken place in downtown Champaign, which has the advantages of being in the larger of the twin cities and more centrally located. Retail sales figures confirm downtown Urbana's place on the fringe of the metropolitan area. Total retail sales for greater Champaign-Urbana were approximately \$1.85 billion in 1999. (Source: Claritas, Inc.) Downtown Urbana accounted for approximately \$65 million in 1999, or roughly 4 percent of the regional total.



**LEGEND**

- DOWNTOWN URBANA STUDY AREA
- 1/2 MILE : 3,797
- 1 MILE : 19,069
- 3 MILES : 78,358
- 5 MILES : 116,040

SOURCE : CLARITAS, INC.



FIGURE 1:  
**POPULATION ESTIMATE - 2000**

**DOWNTOWN STRATEGIC PLAN**

Urbana, Illinois



**CAMIROS**  
COMMUNITY AND METROPOLITAN IMPROVEMENT RESEARCH ORGANIZATION



## **Functional Zones**

Downtown consists of a number of functional zones, as shown in Figure 3, Existing Functional Zones. Since these functional zones are distinguished in large part by physical characteristics, a descriptive review of them prior to a discussion of zoning and land use gives a sense of the appearance and character of the various areas comprising downtown Urbana.

At the heart of the area is the “Downtown Core,” which consists of clusters of mixed shops and services typically associated with a traditional downtown. However, the core is very small, comprised of only a few blocks. Brick buildings built closely to the streets characterize the core and make for an interesting and comfortable pedestrian environment.

To the south, the “Lincoln Square Mall Zone” is comprised primarily of the mall and Jumer’s Hotel—two destinations that historically have been major attractions in downtown Urbana. Although the physical connection of this zone to the downtown core works fairly well on Elm Street, the large parking lots that separate the buildings from the streets poorly define the southern entrance into downtown.

In the “Government Zone,” concentrates a range of government functions between the core and mall zones. These include the federal courthouse, post office, Champaign County Courthouse and Sheriff’s Office, and the Urbana City Hall, Library, and Civic Center. This district represents a strong employment and activity base that is, in effect, a captive market for downtown.

Immediately north of the downtown core is the “Downtown Secondary Support Zone.” The function of this “Near North” area is ill-defined. Although it does contain a small cluster of shopping and entertainment attractions, it is primarily a collection of parking lots. Given its proximity to the downtown core and limited number of buildings, this zone is underutilized.

To the far north and northeast, a “Highway-Oriented Mixed-Use” and an “Auto-Oriented Mixed-Use Zone” occupy large areas. These zones contain developments such as fast food restaurants and strip shopping centers that are designed specifically to accommodate automobile traffic. These developments are not built to a downtown scale and, therefore, are difficult for pedestrians to utilize.

A small “Service Zone” is located along east Main Street and Vine Street. This zone contains primarily automobile service providers.

Two “Industrial Zones” exist within the Study Area. The zone between Vine Street and Broadway, at University Avenue, contains a sporting goods manufacturer. This is a highly visible location due to the intersection of University and Cunningham Avenues, one of the busiest corners in Champaign County. The second industrial zone forms part of the northeastern boundary of the Study Area at Main and Maple Streets.

“Residential Zones” are located throughout the Study Area and contain a mix of single-family and multi-family dwelling units. Notably, a zone of “Mixed Office/Residential” is located directly to the south and southwest of the Downtown Core/Lincoln Square Mall zones. This zone contains a mix of existing homes converted to offices, as well as new office structures.

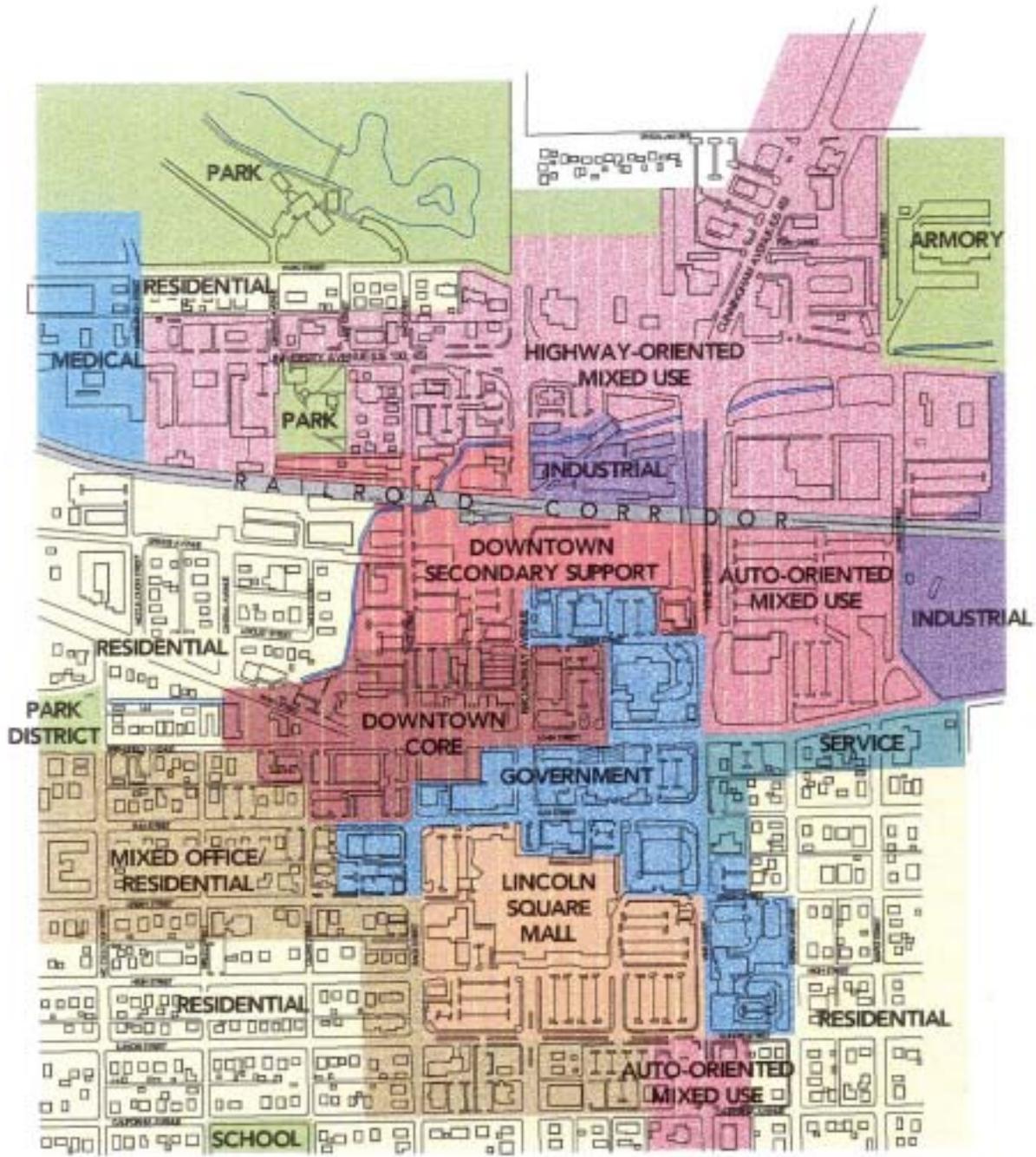


FIGURE 3:

# EXISTING FUNCTIONAL ZONES

DOWNTOWN STRATEGIC PLAN

Urbana, Illinois



**CAMIROS**  
THE URBAN INSTITUTE FOR PLANNING



Although outside of the Study Area, it is important to note a “Medical Zone” to the northwest of downtown. This is the location of Carle Hospital and Clinics, major regional medical destinations.

Figure 4, Building Conditions, indicates that even as downtown Urbana suffered a deterioration in vitality, it has not suffered much physical deterioration. The vast majority of buildings throughout the downtown area are sound or suffer only minor deficiencies.

## **Zoning**

The current zoning for the downtown does not encourage the concentration of retail, commercial, and office uses necessary to create a vital place. (See Figure 5, Existing Zoning.) Instead, the B-4 "Central Business" zoning classification extends over a huge area, roughly from University Avenue on the north to Illinois Street on the south, bounded by Race Street on the west and Vine Street on the east. In a sense, this arrangement leads to "downtown sprawl," where desirable uses are spread over such a large expanse that a strong, coherent center cannot be maintained. This problem is compounded by the MOR "Mixed Office/Residential" zoning located mostly to the west of the downtown, along Green and Elm streets. While the idea of areas with mixed uses is a good one, in the case of Urbana the MOR zoning may be causing people to locate commercial and office investments—and employment opportunities—outside of the downtown core.

Evidence of how this diffuse environment functions in the real world can be seen in Figure 6, Where Do You Shop Downtown?. Participants of the Town Hall meeting held in July of 2000 have identified four major shopping destinations, none of which are directly adjacent to each other: Strawberry Field natural food store, Main Street between Race and Broadway, Lincoln Square Mall, and Schnucks supermarket. These destinations would likely benefit from some synergy if they were located closer within a pedestrian environment or if other compatible uses filled the spaces between them.

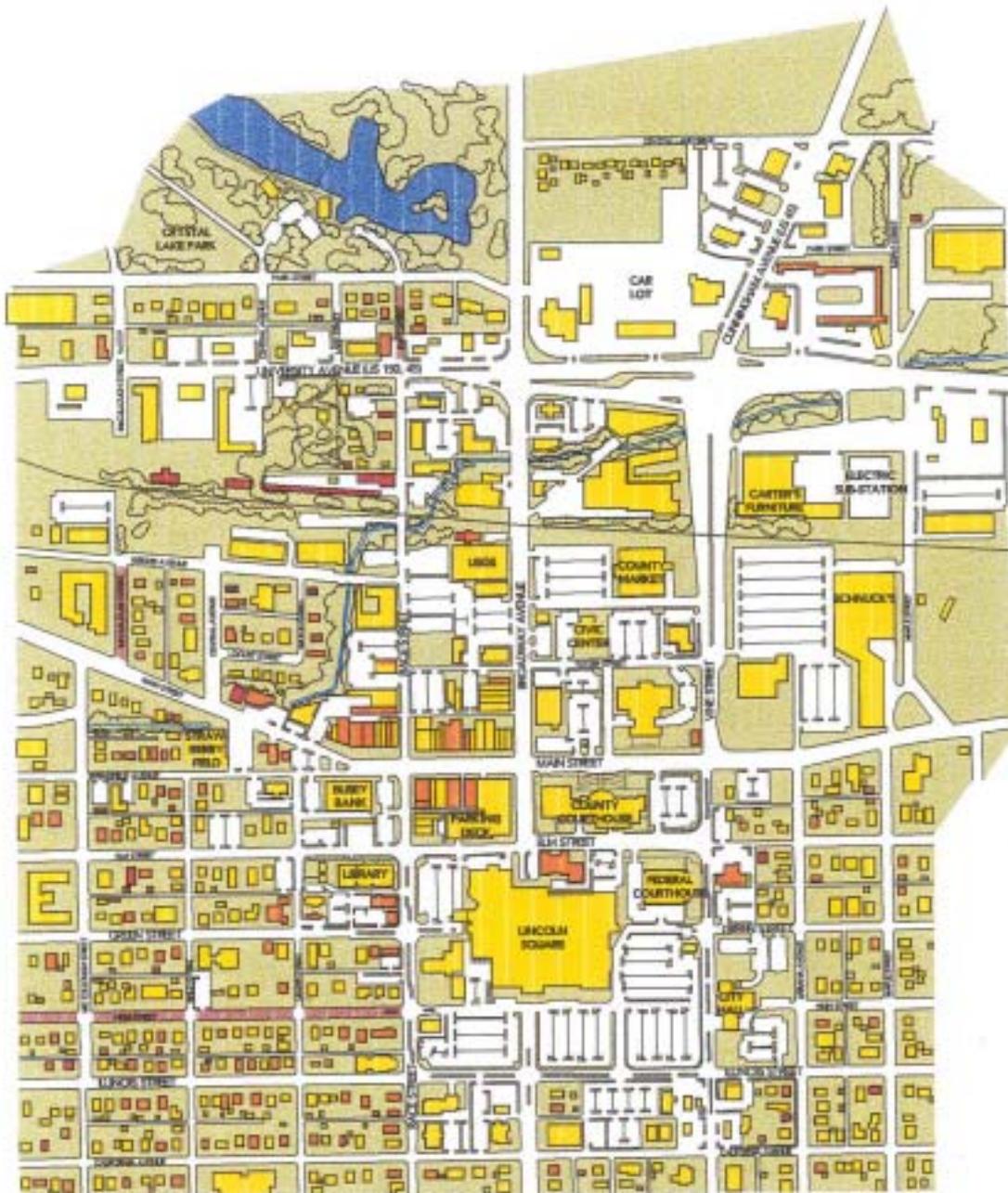
## **Land Use**

The existing land use in the downtown, shown in Figure 7, Existing Land Use, demonstrates the consequences of the zoning strategy to date. Only a few blocks in the core offer the fine-grained mix of uses that one expects to see in a vibrant downtown. The north side of Main Street west of Race Street and both sides of Main between Race and Broadway are the chief examples of this type. Lincoln Square Mall contains a number of "typical" downtown uses, but its location more than a block away from Main Street siphons some of the potential energy away from the street.

Auto-oriented uses dominate the areas around the intersection of University and Cunningham avenues, as well as along the east side of Vine Street near Main. Many of these uses represent retail stores serving everyday needs, such as supermarkets, fast-food outlets, banks, service stations, and video stores. Some of these types of businesses are clearly auto-oriented, but others might fit successfully into a traditional downtown.

Residential uses are located to the east, south, west, and northwest of the Main Street core, but not to the north or northeast. In addition, the large Lincoln Square site serves as a sizable barrier between the housing to the south (and to some extent, the west and east as well) and the Main Street core.

The only major industrial use in the area is located just south of the southwest corner of University and Cunningham, on a prominent site. The downtown also lacks significant green space; public parks are only located on the edge of the area, to the west and north.



**LEGEND**

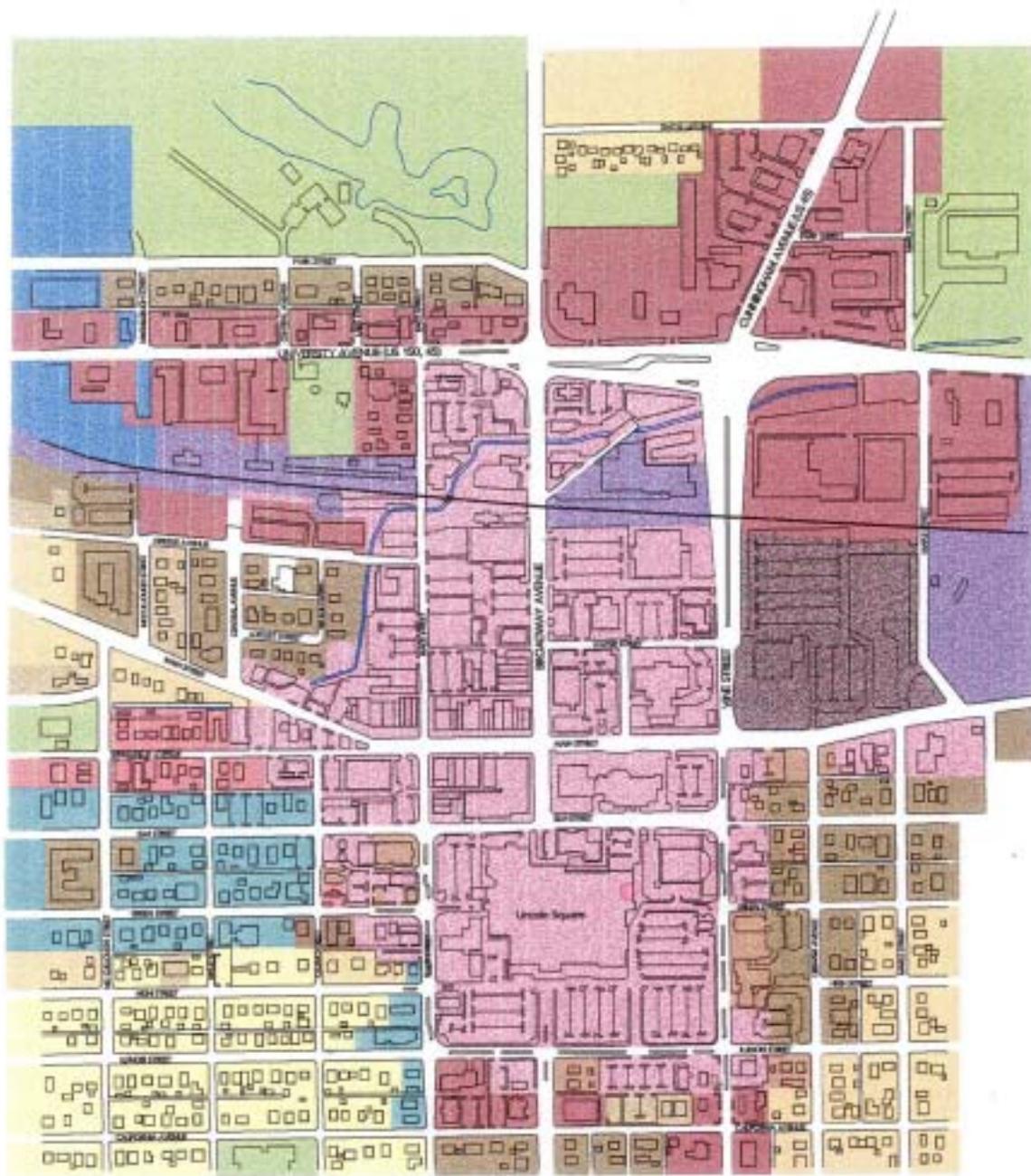
- |  |  |
|--|--|
|  SOUND            |  DETERIORATED |
|  MINOR DEFICIENCY |  DILAPIDATED  |



FIGURE 4:  
**BUILDING CONDITIONS**  
**DOWNTOWN STRATEGIC PLAN**

Urbana, Illinois

PLANNING: JULY 07, 2008  
 SCALE: 1"=400' 0"  
  
**CAMIROS**  
COMMUNITY AND METROPOLITAN IMPROVEMENT RESEARCH ORGANIZATION



**LEGEND**

B2 = Neighborhood/Business Arterial	R2 = Single Family Residential	R6B = High Density MFR - Restricted
B3 = General Business	R3 = Single & Two Family Residential	MOR = Mixed Office/Residential
B4 = Central Business	R4 = Medium Density MFR	MIC = Medical Institutional Campus
B4E = Central Business Expansion	R5 = Medium High Density MFR	IN = Industrial
	R6 = High Density MFR	CRE = Recreation

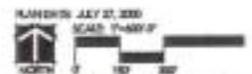


FIGURE 5:

**EXISTING ZONING**

**DOWNTOWN STRATEGIC PLAN**

Urbana, Illinois



CAMIROS  
Planning, Design, and Construction Services

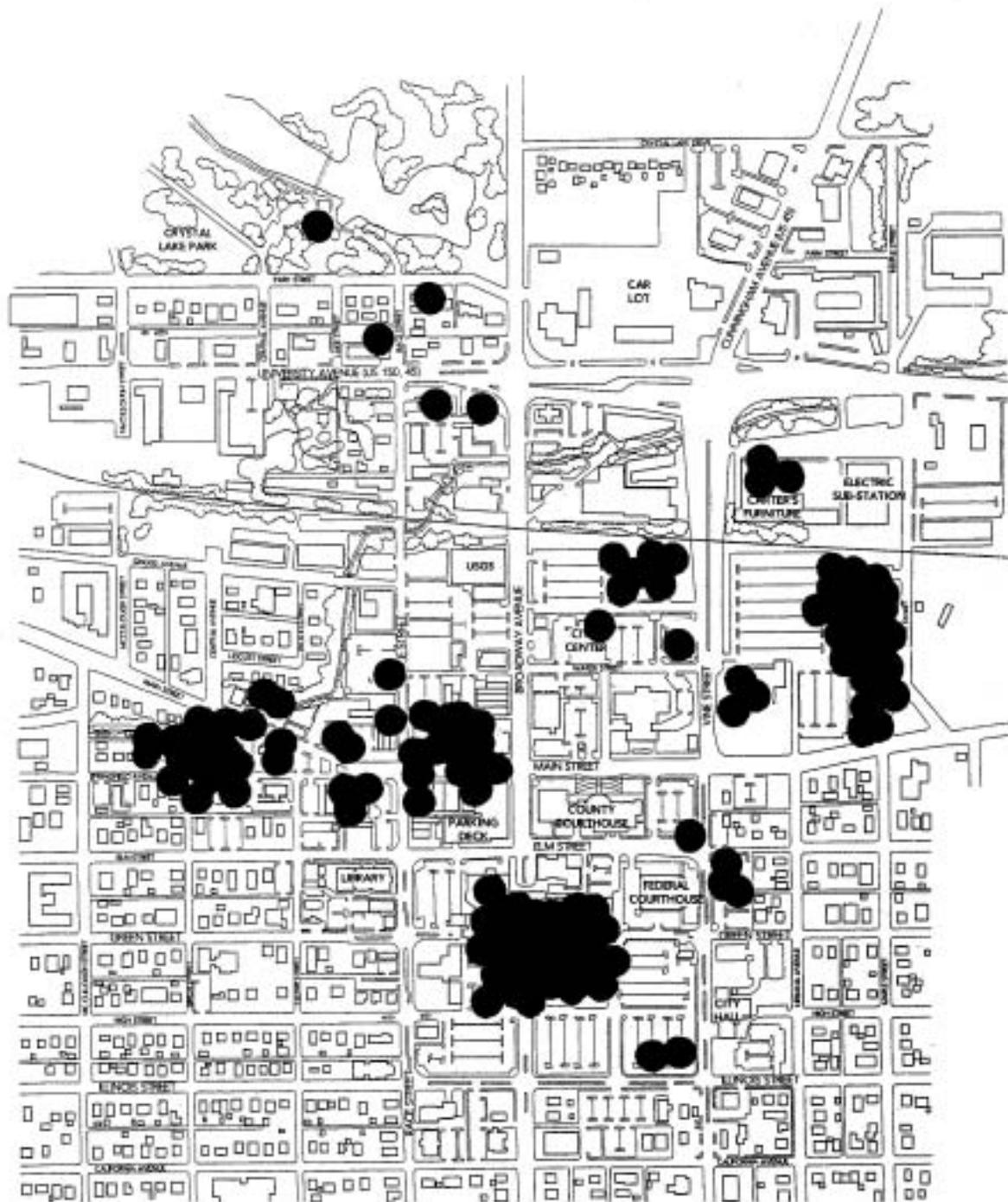
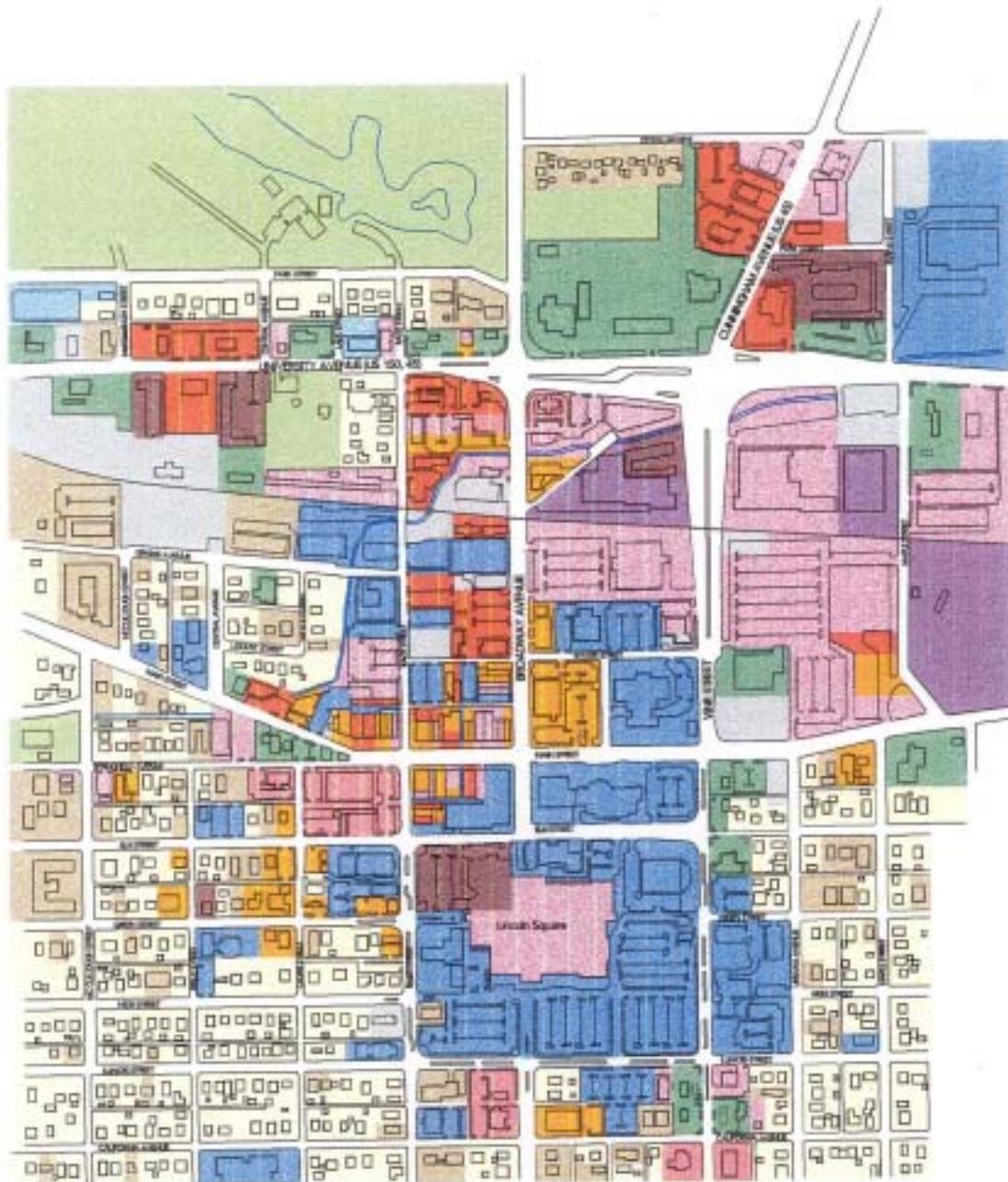


FIGURE 6:  
**WHERE DO YOU SHOP DOWNTOWN?**  
**DOWNTOWN STRATEGIC PLAN**      Urbana, Illinois





**LEGEND**

Commercial	Bank/Financial	Medical	Vacant
Restaurant/Entertainment	Automotive/Workshop	Public/Semi-public	Single Family
Office	Park	Hotel	Multiple Family
		Industrial	



FIGURE 7:

# EXISTING LAND USE

## DOWNTOWN STRATEGIC PLAN

Urbana, Illinois

PLAN DATE: JULY 27, 2006  
 SCALE: 1"=400' FT  
  
**CAMIROS**  
Community Analysis, Mapping, Information, and Research Services

Another notable feature of the land use pattern is that much of the fabric of the downtown core also now consists of very large-scale buildings on large lots. Examples along Main Street include Busey Bank, the County Plaza office building, the Champaign County Sheriff's Office, and the Champaign County Courthouse. The existence of these large-scale uses vastly impairs the ambiance created by the two- to three-story commercial buildings that form the streetscape of the traditional Main Street blocks.

Another way to look at the status of downtown Urbana is through an examination of the building area devoted to various land uses. Table 1 reveals some interesting statistics. Fully one-third of the total square footage in downtown Urbana is devoted to retail uses. Public, semi-public, and government uses comprise nearly a quarter of all the space. Somewhat surprisingly, given the common impression of Lincoln Square Mall, only four percent of the building space in downtown Urbana is vacant.

**Table 1: Downtown Urbana Total Square Footage**

Category	Square Feet	Percentage of Total
Retail	589,000	33%
Hotel/Motel	206,000	11%
Office	303,300	17%
Public/Semi-Public/Government	420,900	24%
Services (e.g. hair salons, cleaners)	64,300	4%
Banks	79,100	4%
Manufacturing	50,200	3%
Vacant	76,300	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,789,900</b>	<b>100%</b>

Retail business traditionally has been one of the chief functions of downtowns. It continues to be important today, though not in the same way. In the past, downtown was the chief source of everyday needs as well as special goods and services. Today, however, auto-oriented shopping centers serve basic needs, while successful downtowns concentrate on specialty goods, eating and drinking establishments, and entertainment. Table 2 shows how Urbana's downtown retail scene looks at present. "Downtown Urbana" as defined in the table, however, includes not only the Main Street core, but also the auto-oriented uses along University and Vine Streets, as well as a shopping mall (Lincoln Square). This means that one or two major stores may be responsible for much of the total of some categories. Nevertheless, the greater downtown has a fairly diverse range of retail stores; no category accounts for more than 18 percent of the total.

**Table 2: Downtown Urbana Retail Square Footage**

Category	Square Feet	Percentage of Total
Automotive and Gas	105,800	18%
Apparel	11,500	2%
Dining and Entertainment	89,400	15%
Drugs and Other	69,400	12%
Furniture, Household Appliances	73,000	12%
Food	101,700	17%
General Merchandise	104,000	18%
Lumber, Building Materials	35,000	6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>589,800</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Conclusions

Based upon the existing conditions and characteristics described above, six conclusions about downtown Urbana can be reached.

**Downtown Lacks Clearly Defined Boundaries.** As it exists, entry into downtown is not clearly defined. There is no sense of “arriving at” downtown or of “coming into” a special place. As Figure 8 illustrates, from the corner of Vine and Main Streets, it is difficult to know that you are downtown. Even if you make the turn, it takes a while to get a sense that you have made it into downtown or to know that you are there.

**Downtown is Comprised of Ill-Defined Districts.** The functions of some areas of downtown are unclear and ill-defined. Figure 9, located between Broadway and Race Street, begs the question – “Is this ‘some place’ or ‘no place’?” Most people would agree this is “no place.”

**There is No Sense of Place Downtown.** This is largely the result of the previous two observations. Another factor may be that the traditional elements that people recognize as downtown really comes down to about two blocks. There simply may not be enough of it to create a sustained sense of place.

**The Auto-Oriented Periphery is Stealing Synergy from the Downtown Core.** New businesses are locating on Vine Street and University Avenue and taking potential downtown customers with them. Although the development of the Urbana Crossing/Schnucks shopping center has brought much needed convenience to neighborhood residents, it is not helping to strengthen downtown. The linkage between downtown and Schnucks is weak because it is not the type of development to which people walk, as shown by Figure 10.



Figure 8: Main & Vine



Figure 9: “No Place” on Broadway



Figure 10: Schnucks

**Government is a Primary Function of Downtown.** Most people like to come downtown for fun activities such as shopping and entertainment while being able to take care of business at the same time. Although government institutions are a real benefit for downtown as illustrated by Figure 11, downtown should not be characterized primarily by their presence. Government institutions close at 5:00 p.m. weekdays and are not open at all on weekends. This results in large portions of downtown essentially being “closed” with them. The image of government and downtown is a balance of land use and of people’s perception that there other things to do.

**Lincoln Square Mall is a Key Component.** Clearly, the success of the mall is linked to the success of downtown. Figure 12 illustrates that visibility and connectivity are significant planning issues which must be addressed all the while seeking to integrate the mall’s function into downtown as a whole.



**Figure 11: Government Institutions**



**Figure 12: Inward Focused Mall**

## VISION

Figuratively the center of the community, the prior discussion of downtown Urbana shows that it is not perceived in that manner by the market or the community. Should we abandon downtown to the whims of the market? Should we consider it no more than one of many neighborhoods in the community? Should we reconsider its purpose, function and aim to make it more relevant to community image?

Members of the community have considered this question, and conclude that downtown is a unique place that serves a special role in defining the community. They hold a particular vision of downtown:

*“Downtown Urbana is the heart of our City and a regional attraction. It is a busy and exciting place serving all – the community, the University and visitors to the region. It accommodates business, housing and government. It is a regional entertainment center that offers a host of shopping, dining and entertainment venues set within intimately scaled development and quality public spaces. It is a cohesive area, and is distinguished by its unique visual character and a walkable, pedestrian friendly environment that preserves our past and accommodates our future. It is the keeping place of community heritage and home to longstanding community traditions. Downtown Urbana is the pride of our community.”*

The key challenge to achieving this vision is to find ways to attract increased numbers of users of downtown. This requires the creation of markets that can attract people, and the creation of a place where they want to come. The ability to do this, in large part, is dependant upon the commitment of local stakeholders – the City, County, downtown ownership and businesses, and active institutions such as the Urbana Free Library and the Park District – to help develop such markets. Indeed the scope and involvement of stakeholders needs to be broadened and deepened. Local stakeholders should be encouraged to focus efforts on the coordinated improvement of downtown. After all, it can only benefit them. Further, this vision should be shared with major “non-downtown” institutions such as Carle Medical Center and the University, with the intent of impressing upon them the larger benefits of a strong downtown Urbana on the larger community.

### The Markets

Six key market groups should be targeted:

- 1. Community residents.** For this group, downtown Urbana represents the center of government activities in the city, and citizens from all over Urbana travel downtown to use the post office, attend City Hall meetings, and conduct other government business. In addition, downtown Urbana also draws residents from throughout the city for special events, like the Saturday Market at the Square in the summer, the Sweetcorn Festival, art fairs in Lincoln Square Mall, and other occasions. Many citizens also periodically visit downtown retailers, restaurants, and bars. A truly successful downtown revitalization will cause more community residents to come downtown more often, greatly contributing to the vitality of the area.
- 2. University students, their parents and visitors.** Students from the University of Illinois are attracted to the downtown for a number of reasons: dining and entertainment, certain kinds of specialty shops, and possible part-time employment as well. In addition, Jumer's Hotel in downtown Urbana hosts a large number of parents and families of university students throughout the year. Certain special events can draw large numbers of college students as well. Finally, the large number of students living in certain parts of west Urbana, between downtown and the campus, should not be overlooked: they represent the nearest significant pool of students for

downtown dining, shopping, and entertainment venues. Once downtown Urbana begins making inroads into this local part of the student market, word-of-mouth will attract students throughout the Champaign-Urbana area.

- 3. Local youth, such as students from Urbana High School.** Many young people—particularly those under the driving age—thirst for activities they can pursue independently with their friends and venues hospitable to them. Parents want their children visiting a safe environment, which a livelier downtown could provide. Youth-friendly stores (e.g., those selling clothing, toys, music, candy, soda, etc.), restaurants, and community institutions have a potentially large pool of young consumers to serve. Community events, where young people can socialize with their peers, also can be highly popular. High school students, who tend to have greater autonomy and more resources, represent a particularly strong market for convenience stores and fast-food restaurants.
- 4. People shopping for food and entertainment.** Districts with a large number of dining spots and entertainment options have a clear advantage over isolated establishments: variety. People may decide to go out for the evening without knowing exactly what kind of food or entertainment they want. Downtown Urbana can become a stronger player in the local food/entertainment marketplace by providing exactly this kind of choice and variety. Restaurants, bars, and other entertainment venues can often benefit greatly from special events as well: when there are a lot of different things to do and see, not only at the special event but also in the environment, visitors are likely to stay longer and spend more.
- 5. Downtown residents.** A fair number of people already live within walking distance of downtown Urbana, and this plan proposes efforts to greatly increase the number of residents of the immediate downtown area. A positive cycle of change is at work: downtown residents locate there in order to be close to restaurants, stores, and community facilities; their presence makes the area more lively, attracting more visitors from outside the downtown itself, which in turn makes the area even more lively; this more vibrant downtown is then even more attractive as a place to live, and the cycle continues.
- 6. Downtown workers,** including those who work in the immediate area as well those as on the periphery, such as workers at Carle Hospital and the South Campus of the University. The people who work downtown represent a significant market for restaurants (lunch or coffee break visitors), bars (traditional destinations for many after work ends), and convenience shopping (many people prefer to run errands, such as to the drug store or bank, just before or just after work or during lunch).

The following matrix shows how the different interests of these various market groups will support different markets. The key to restoring vitality to downtown is to create a combination of uses, which provides the widest range of choices to these market groups.

**Table 3: Market Group Interest Analysis**

	<b>Community Residents</b>	<b>University Students, Parents, Visitors</b>	<b>Local Youth</b>	<b>Entertainment Shoppers</b>	<b>Downtown Residents</b>	<b>Downtown Workers</b>	<b>Rating</b>
<b>Convenience Shopping</b>	Modest	Weak	Strong	Modest	Strong	Strong	<b>3</b>
<b>Specialty Goods</b>	Modest	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong	<b>1</b>
<b>Food and Drink</b>	Modest	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong	<b>1</b>
<b>Entertainment</b>	Modest	Strong	Strong	Strong	Modest	Modest	<b>2</b>
<b>Banking</b>	Modest	Weak	Weak	Weak	Strong	Strong	<b>4</b>
<b>Lodging</b>	Weak	Strong	Weak	Weak	Weak	Weak	<b>6</b>
<b>Government Service</b>	Strong	Weak	Weak	Weak	Strong	Modest	<b>4</b>
<b>Special Events</b>	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong	Modest	<b>1</b>
<b>Housing</b>	Weak	Modest	Weak	Weak	Strong	Modest	<b>5</b>
<b>Rating</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	

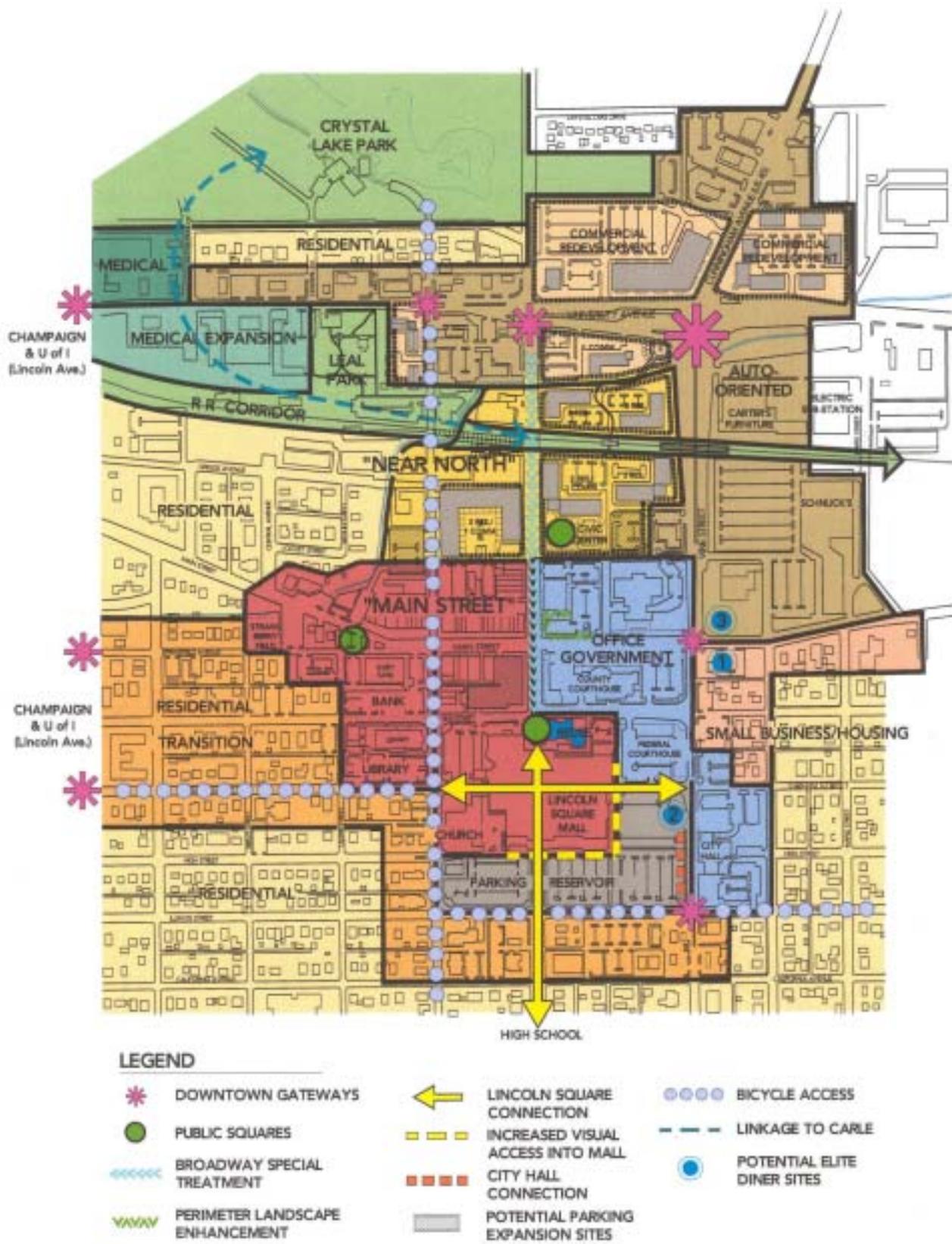
### **The Place**

Uses which have the broadest appeal to the interested markets are specialty goods, food and drink, and special events. The interested markets that seem to support the most use categories are downtown residents followed closely by the University, local youth, entertainment shoppers and downtown employees. Last in interest, although probably not in size, are other residents of Urbana. One can conclude from this that the success of downtown is dependent upon developing a distinct image as a gathering place for various elements of the community. The notion of “place” is important here. Studies have shown that while many areas can offer similar goods and services, these areas are differentiated in the market by the attractiveness or character imparted by an area’s facilities. Facilities which offer a sense of “place” – an atmosphere of pedestrian scale, visual interest, market opportunity, and activity – tend to be the most successful, and demonstrate a longevity as they create their own identity. This is strongly reflected in current approaches to "theming" retail areas in order to engage the patron in a shopping and entertainment experience. This notion is integral to the proposals of this plan.

The plan focuses upon implementing programs and projects related to six initiatives. Figure 13, Framework Plan, illustrates many of the projects suggested in these initiatives.

## The Initiatives

1. ***The Downtown Leadership Initiative*** – strategies designed to implement this plan and manage the development of downtown
2. ***The Downtown Image Initiative*** – strategies to improve the visual quality and aesthetics of downtown, and to better organize its development pattern
3. ***The Center Of Urbana Initiative*** – strategies for maintaining downtown as the center of town
4. ***The Downtown Neighborhood Initiative*** - strategies to increase the amount of downtown housing
5. ***The Niche Market Initiative*** – strategies developed to give downtown a particular market orientation and attract uses related to it.
6. ***The Lincoln Square Initiative*** – strategies to better integrate Lincoln Square into the core of downtown.



**FIGURE 13:**  
**FRAMEWORK PLAN**  
**DOWNTOWN STRATEGIC PLAN**



Urbana, Illinois

PLAN DATE: DECEMBER 2001  
 N.T.S.



# THE DOWNTOWN LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE

Establishing strong downtown leadership is crucial to the success of this plan and the future of downtown. The tendency for downtown redevelopment typically is to hold the City responsible. The City is a major stakeholder and has often taken the laboring oar in seeking ways to encourage private investment. A strong downtown is in the interest of the whole community. Local government should play a key role in encouraging downtown investment; assuring the proper delivery of services and entering into public-private partnerships to enable redevelopment to move ahead. But government should not be the leader. Downtown leadership should be the role and responsibility of all of those who are invested in the area—property owners, tenants and government.

Four proposals should be considered to share responsibility for downtown improvement:

## 1. Private / Non-Profit Development Corporation

A Private / Non-Profit Development Corporation should be created which has the mission and resources to take a leadership position in the development and management of downtown. Its purpose would be to promote and assist in the revitalization, development, beautification, preservation and advancement of downtown. The Development Corporation would be the “steward” of downtown and have implementation of this plan as its primary mission. Daily activities would be directed by a downtown coordinator who would function in a manner analogous to a shopping center manager.

## 2. Marketing and Promotion Corporation

This Private / Non-Profit entity would have as its primary purpose the marketing and promotion of downtown. Its purpose would be to develop a downtown marketing program focusing on business recruitment, customer attraction and image creation. Its purpose would also be to coordinate community events programming and a community performance venue. It is also a key player with the city in marketing downtown as a unique entertainment district. The Marketing and Promotion Corporation could be housed within the Development Corporation or could be a separate entity.

## 3. Public / City Downtown Commission

Recognizing that the emergence of an entity like the proposed Private / Non-profit Development Corporation will take time, initial leadership must continue to come from the city. To that end, the City should identify and charge a key staff individual as responsible for downtown development. This charge must also come with a parallel allocation of work time. It would be desirable if this individual had only the downtown as his/her responsibility.

The City must remain a key player in downtown beyond authorizing a staff individual. The importance of downtown must be recognized at the highest levels. Therefore, the City should activate a Downtown Commission, which has the primary purpose of reviewing and recommending downtown plans and projects, TIF redevelopment proposals, façade loans and other incentives, streetscape, parking and other public improvements. This Commission should keep the City Council informed about the status of downtown activities and recommend City investment and regulatory actions to encourage downtown maintenance and growth. It should have formal liaison with the Private / Non-Profit Development Corporation if and when it emerges. This might best be done by having a member of the City Council serve as a member of the Board of Directors of the Private / Non-Profit Development Corporation .

#### **4. “Downtown is the City” Marketing Program**

The Marketing and Promotion Corporation, along with assistance from the public sector should organize and implement a downtown marketing program with the following goals:

- ❑ To assure that all citizens of Urbana recognize the value of downtown to its tax base and community image, support investments in downtown, and use downtown.
- ❑ To establish the image of downtown as the food/drink based entertainment center of the region, and an urbane area to live as well as visit.
- ❑ To make downtown a viable place to locate and invest in new housing, specialty retail and small business development.

Support for this marketing effort should continue through a designated marketing fund with member support.

## THE DOWNTOWN IMAGE INITIATIVE

The image of downtown is critical to its market success. Downtowns that offer a sense of “place” – an atmosphere of pedestrian scale, visual interest, market opportunity and activity – tend to be the most successful, and demonstrate longevity as they create their own identity. Given the location and nature of downtown today, a series of actions are needed to inform people of its presence, build upon its traditional character, and firmly develop a perception of downtown Urbana as a distinct and special place.

Revitalization strategies also need to focus on strengthening downtown's existing destinations. As Figure 14, What Are the Key Destinations?, shows, Urbana residents who participated in the Town Hall meeting identified a number of important places: the Urbana Free Library, Lincoln Square, Strawberry Fields natural food store, and Main Street. Approaches that use these institutions in catalyzing revitalization will be the most successful in the long run.

### Downtown Districts

Downtown's functions need definition. The establishment of place requires that the City, through its zoning and planning activities, clearly identify the function of particular areas so that land use requirements and public and private improvements can work towards common improvement goals. As shown by Figure 15, Proposed Downtown Districts, the following districts are proposed:

***Main Street Entertainment District:*** The key pedestrian district oriented to niche markets stressing food, entertainment and downtown housing.

***Government District:*** The area dedicated to government uses and containing associated parking and services.

***Near North Housing District:*** An area of proposed redevelopment to contain multi-family housing units, some of which would be built over ground floor business uses.

***Auto-Oriented District:*** The University/Vine fringe of the downtown where retail uses are designed primarily for accessibility via auto. Special criteria should be developed to facilitate a transition from auto-oriented commercial toward a more pedestrian environment in areas where this district abuts the Near North Housing District. It is important to stress that while it is anticipated that most uses in this district will focus on auto access, the design image imparted along the street should transition to the downtown character of development. Therefore, buildings along Cunningham and University should be located close to the street so as to create a “streetwall” image reminiscent of the downtown. (See Figure 16, Cunningham and University.)

***Downtown Residential District:*** The areas surrounding the core where housing predominates, but allowance can be made to accommodate transitional or modest business uses as long as they reflect residential character.

Several other blocks are identified which are given over to present uses not expected to change. Appropriate zoning and urban design guidelines should be developed for each of these districts.

### Downtown Access

Traffic does not seem to be an issue downtown. But access is a problem. Downtown is no longer part of the regional arterial system, which, in this area, is served primarily by University Avenue, Cunningham Street and, to a degree, Vine Street. (See Figure 17, Circulation Map.) The separation of the downtown

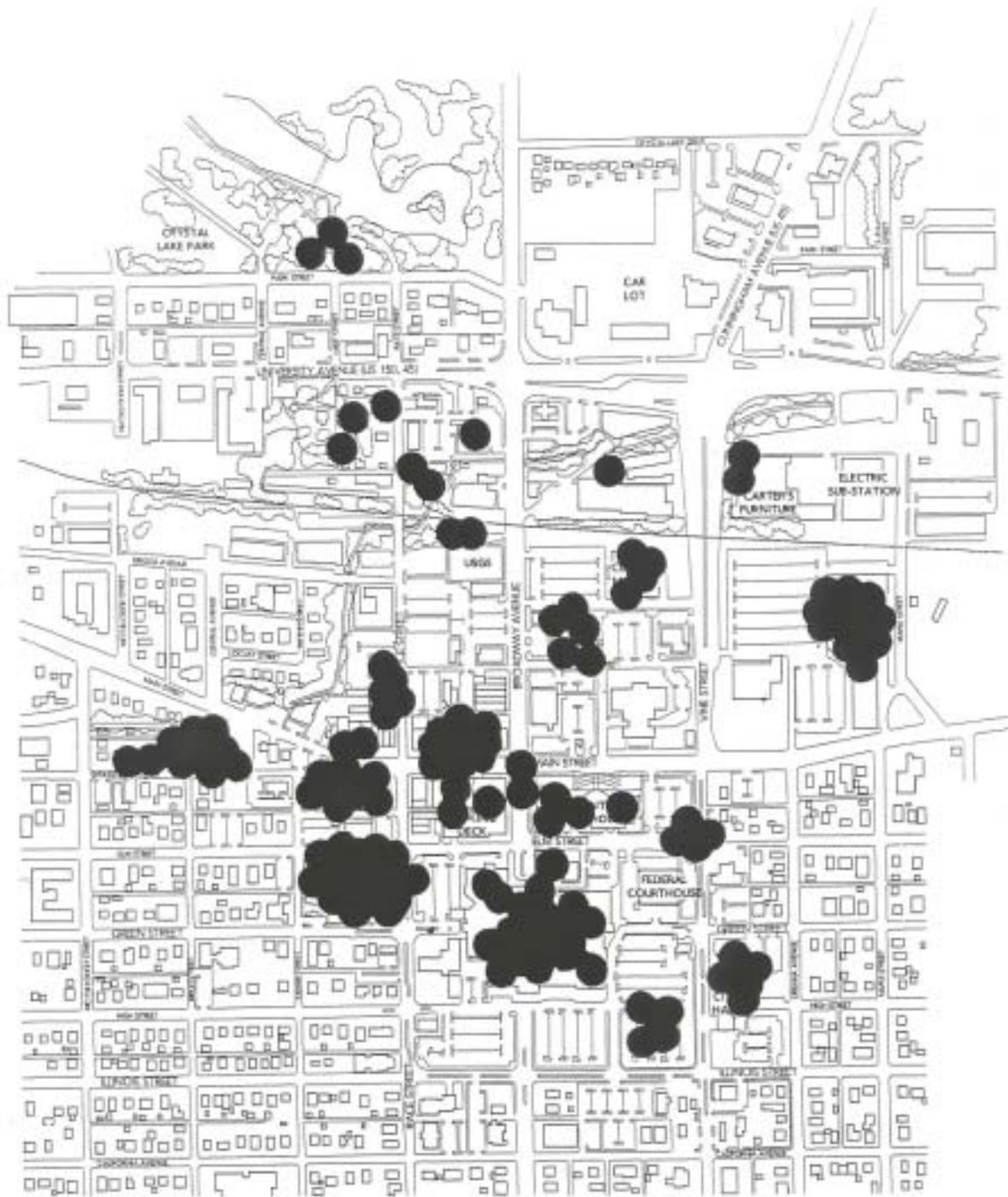


FIGURE 14:  
**WHERE ARE THE KEY DESTINATIONS?**



**DOWNTOWN STRATEGIC PLAN**

Urbana, Illinois



**CAMIROS**  
 COMMUNITY AND METROPOLITAN IMPROVEMENT RESEARCH ORGANIZATION

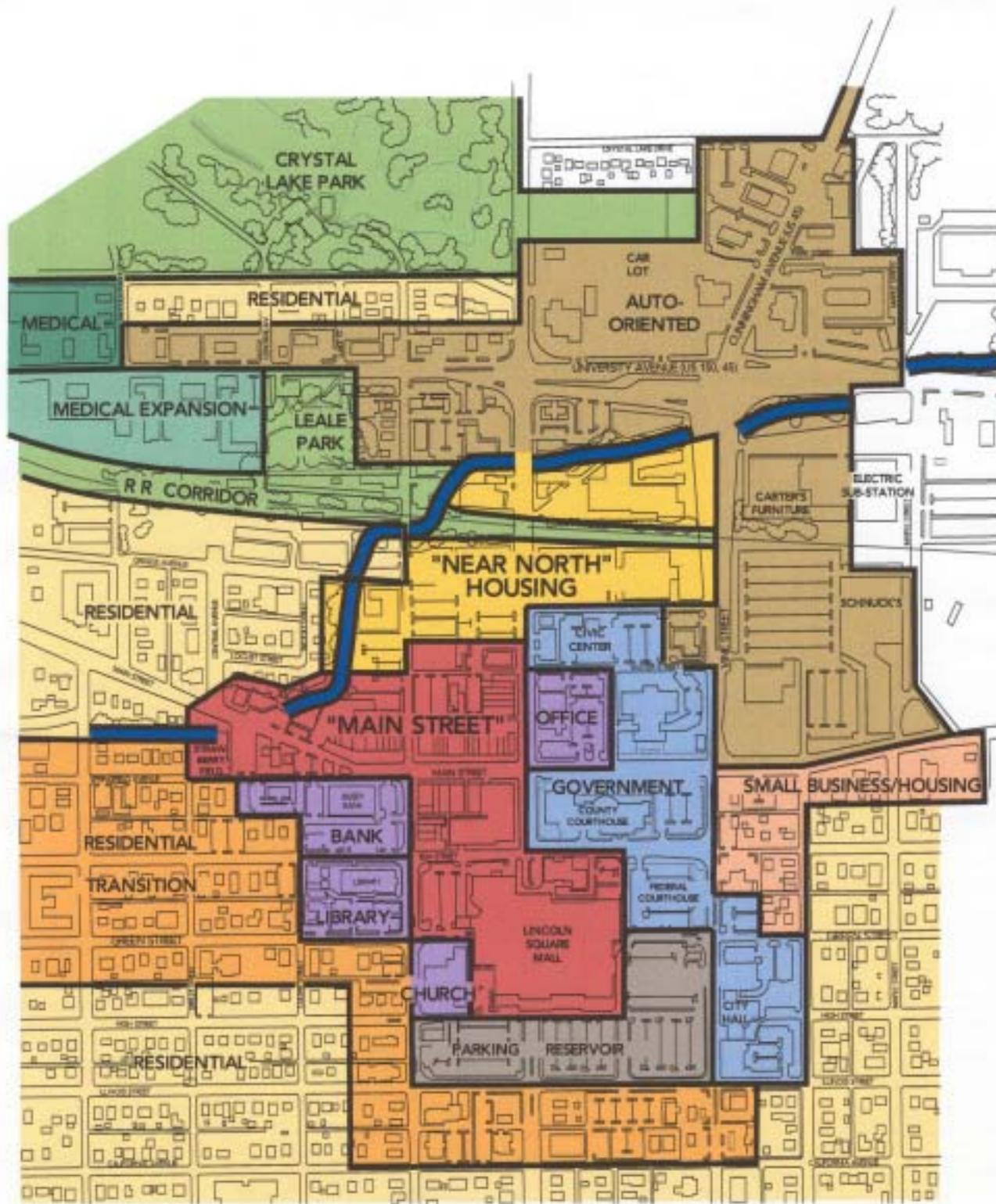


FIGURE 15:  
**PROPOSED DOWNTOWN DISTRICTS**  
 DOWNTOWN STRATEGIC PLAN

Urbana, Illinois



**CAMIROS**



- COMMERCIAL REDEVELOPMENT**

**2 & 3 STORY RESIDENTIAL**
- COMMUNITY FACILITIES**

**"RAILS TO TRAILS" PEDESTRIAN CORRIDOR**



**FIGURE 16:**  
**CUNNINGHAM & UNIVERSITY**  
**DOWNTOWN STRATEGIC PLAN**

Urbana, Illinois

PLANNING DEPARTMENT, 2008  
 SCALE: 1" = 200'

**CAMIROS**  
Creating Livable, Economic, and Sustainable Communities

core from this system removes it from the daily routes of many local residents and most tourists. This is both a blessing and a curse. The blessing is that it allows downtown to develop a pedestrian character; the curse is that much marketing must be done to get the people to sense and see that character.

The solution to this problem is not to relocate the arterials, but to make the image of downtown, as well as access to downtown, apparent from them. Consider the following:

**Gateways:** Visible and attractive gateways to downtown must be established at locations where arterial system users can recognize downtown. Each of these gateways should be subject to particular design treatment, which includes intersection designs that bring the downtown's historic character and pedestrian image into the view of the motorists. Figure 18, Gateway Feature at University and Cunningham, shows a proposed gateway for the southwest corner of University and Cunningham Avenues.

**Main Street:** Main Street is the focal point of downtown. Buildings are built close to the street and streetscape elements, such as trees, lighting, crosswalks and street furniture provide human-scaled elements that make downtown an inviting place to be. As such, the pedestrian-oriented scale and physical character of Main Street should be enhanced in order to set the tone for new development throughout the downtown area. Every effort should be made to improve pedestrian safety and the built environment of downtown.

Currently, Main Street has four lanes of vehicular travel that invites higher speed traffic through downtown. High speed traffic works against efforts to provide a pedestrian-scaled environment. Motorists should know that they have entered a special place, unlike others in the community, and accordingly, should slow down as they pass through. Consideration should be given to the development of traffic calming measures on Main Street in order to create a better pedestrian environment. One improvement to consider would place herringbone parking down the center of Main Street with a single drive lane, bike lane and parallel parking lane for both east and west directions. Another option to consider would construct a planted median down the center of Main with single drive lanes, bike lanes and parallel parking on both sides of the street. Similar options are illustrated in the following section.

**Broadway Avenue:** This street is a key entrance into the downtown and should be subject to special treatment to reduce its' wide expanse down to a friendly pedestrian scale. Three options are illustrated in Figure 19, Broadway Avenue Special Treatment. The herringbone parking option is based upon the historic parking configuration that once was typical of downtown. Parking bays would be located in the center of the street and terminated at street intersections with planted medians. One drive lane each would accommodate north and south vehicular circulation respectively, and bike lanes would be located along sidewalk curbing. The planted median option would place a raised planting bed down the center of Broadway. One drive lane each would accommodate north and south vehicular circulation and parallel parking would be located along sidewalk curbing. Bike lanes are located between drive lanes and parking stalls. The public trolley option would locate train tracks down the center of Broadway to accommodate train service into downtown. As illustrated, a metal structure could be erected along the tracks to accommodate banners and plant containers, and to frame the vista into downtown towards the mall. One drive lane each would accommodate north and south vehicular circulation and parallel parking would be located along sidewalk curbing. Bike lanes are located between drive lanes and parking stalls.

**Lincoln Square:** The mall must be better connected to the rest of downtown – both physically and perceptually. The interior concourses should be treated as parts of the downtown pedestrian system to

the degree that “air doors” might be considered at the entries so as to create the illusion of sidewalk continuity. For the same reason, it would be desirable, over time, to change the flooring to reflect a downtown pedestrian design scheme. More direct pedestrian linkages south to the High School and west to Green Street need to be developed for similar purposes. Figure 20, Mall Connections and Visual Access, illustrates one possible design approach.

***Downtown Streets:*** Specific design improvements should be provided to key streets within downtown, along a portion of Lincoln Avenue, and along select streets to connect downtown to the University. Figure 21, Street Classifications, identifies key streets and groups them into three categories described as follows. Auto-oriented streets are large arterials that handle high amounts of vehicular traffic. Typically, pedestrian circulation along these streets is limited. In the downtown, University and Cunningham Avenues, and a portion of Vine Street, are auto-oriented. Streetscape treatments along these streets should include decorative poles for traffic signals that correspond to the poles used downtown, festive banners and directional signage. Infill buildings should be located along frontage property lines and landscaping standards used to establish a unified image along the street edge. Pedestrian-oriented streets place emphasis on areas where buildings abut the streets and should feature streetscape elements that include landscape plantings, street lighting and street furniture such as bench seating. Main, Race, Elm, and Water Streets, and parts of Broadway Avenue, are designated pedestrian-oriented. Identity streets feature streetscape treatments that extend the character of downtown into the larger community, and thus invite people to come into downtown. These treatments typically include street lighting, banners, paving and landscape materials and gateway features. The streets that should fulfill this role are Lincoln, Springfield and Green Streets, Illinois Street along the south perimeter of Lincoln Square Mall, Broadway Avenue and portions of Vine Street.

***Bicycle Access:*** Bicycle access downtown needs to be improved. It is an important mode of transportation in Urbana. A clearly designated bicycle system should be developed downtown with connections to the University along Green Street and to Crystal Lake Park along Broadway Avenue. Downtown streets should be designed to be “bicycle friendly.” Suitable bike storage facilities should be provided throughout the downtown.

***Sidewalk and Pedestrian Access:*** Pedestrian access should be a major design concern for downtown. All new development proposals should be reviewed in terms of pedestrian access in the same manner as concern is now shown for the provision of vehicular access and parking. Such design concerns should be reflected in parking lot and structure design, as well as in sidewalk and other pedestrian design. It is important to develop a streetscape design palette that can be applied in various areas of the downtown as new development or infrastructure occurs and the opportunity to make such improvements arises. This palette should be tested and illustrated through a series of prototypical applications that are applicable to settings such as the Main Street Entertainment District, the Government district, the auto-oriented district, Lincoln Square and adjacent residential neighborhoods.

***Access from the University:*** Access from the University is critical to the success of the downtown. Downtown and the University precincts are separated by as little as one-half mile. Actions should be taken to extend the image of downtown west to key intersections along Lincoln Avenue – especially to Green and Springfield Streets.

Key projects that might be developed for this purpose include:

1. Expand the banner and street lighting program to extend downtown identity.

2. Modify the present Mixed Office Residential (MOR) zoning district to better accommodate limited mixing of non-residential uses in the residential areas.
3. Design and locate downtown identity signs to link Lincoln Avenue to downtown.
4. Accommodate higher density, yet neighborhood-scaled, apartments within the area to increase the number of residents adjacent to downtown. These units should be a combination of ownership and rental units. They should be oriented toward a variety of housing markets including “empty nesters,” young professionals, seniors and students.
5. Strengthen the Green Street connection by focusing downtown image design improvements along it in concert with improving bicycle access. Further a redesign of the entry to Jomers and Lincoln Square, at the east end of Green should be considered. This is the visual terminus of the approach from campus. Presently it is very nondescript and should be redesigned to provide a strong visual focal point when downtown is viewed along the length of Green Street.

A long term, yet exciting potential for connecting the University to downtown might be through some form of fixed guideway system. While substantial feasibility testing is needed – reflecting the economics and physical ramifications of location — this possibility has been raised by individuals with significant experience in transit management and operations. One concept envisions connecting downtown to Campustown along Green Street, routing the fixed guideway south along Race or Broadway, and then connecting it to the Carle Medical Center area via the Conrail Railroad tracks. This improvement reflects the use of rail transit to stimulate downtown activity by creating a useable, yet highly entertaining and attractive form of transportation. It is similar in purpose to that underlying the recent construction of a similar short line trolley serving portions of downtown Kenosha, Wisconsin, and the adjacent lakefront.



FIGURE 17:  
**CIRCULATION MAP**  
**DOWNTOWN STRATEGIC PLAN**

Urbana, Illinois



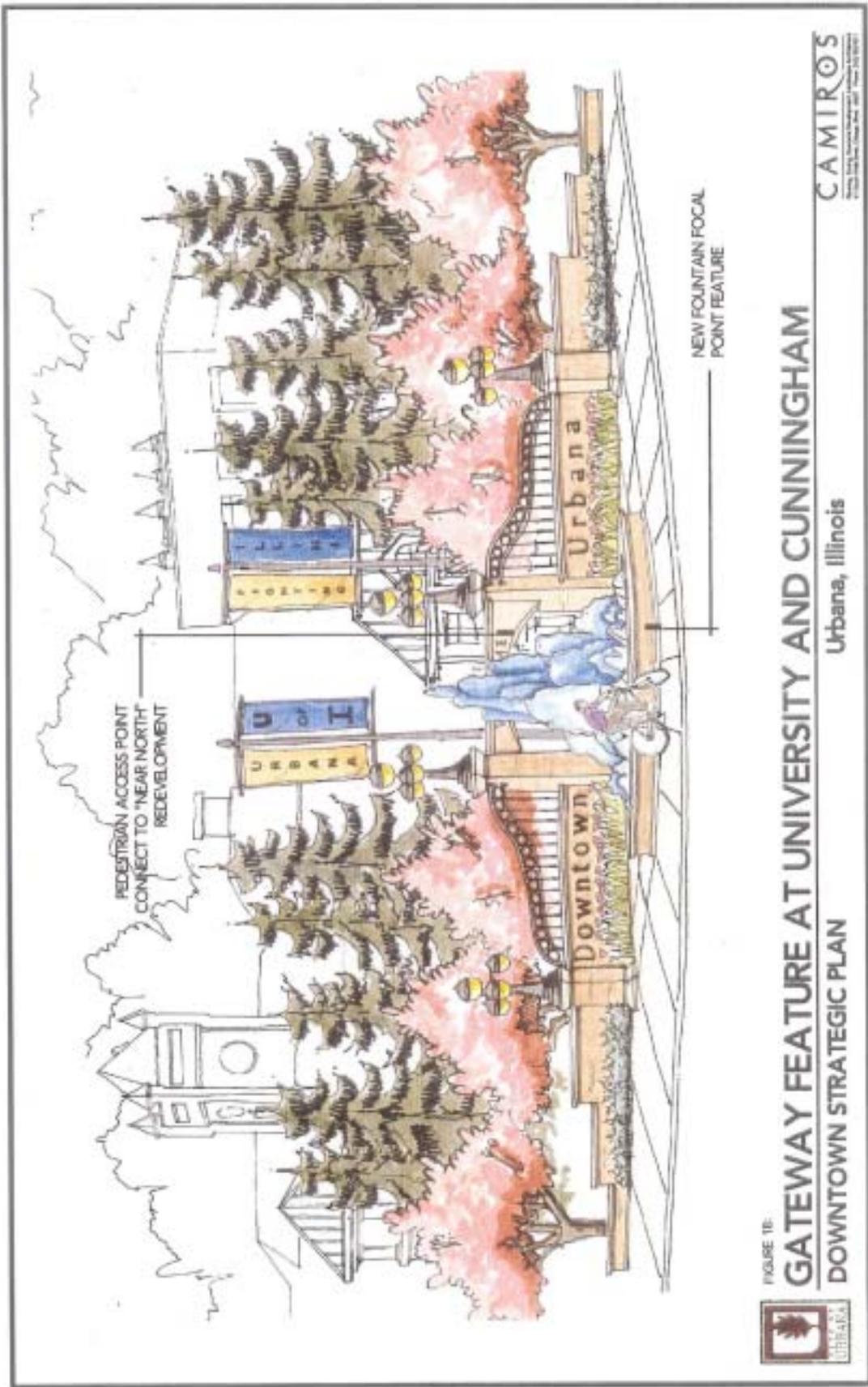
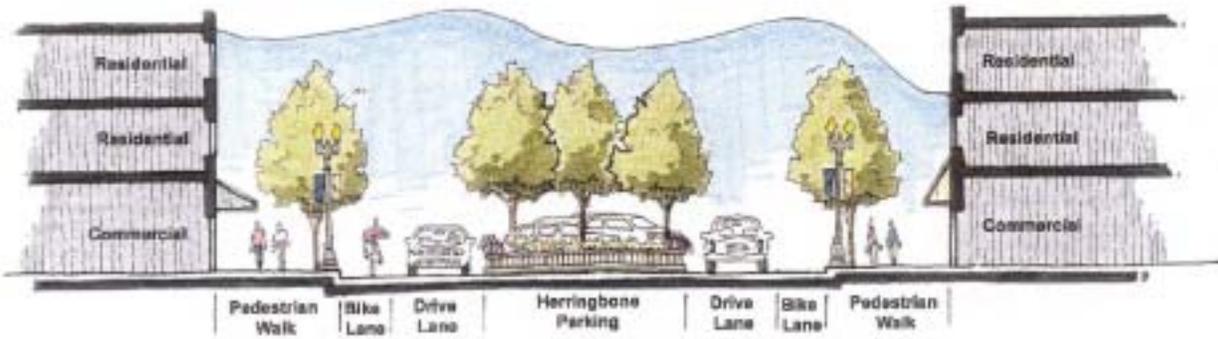


FIGURE 1E:

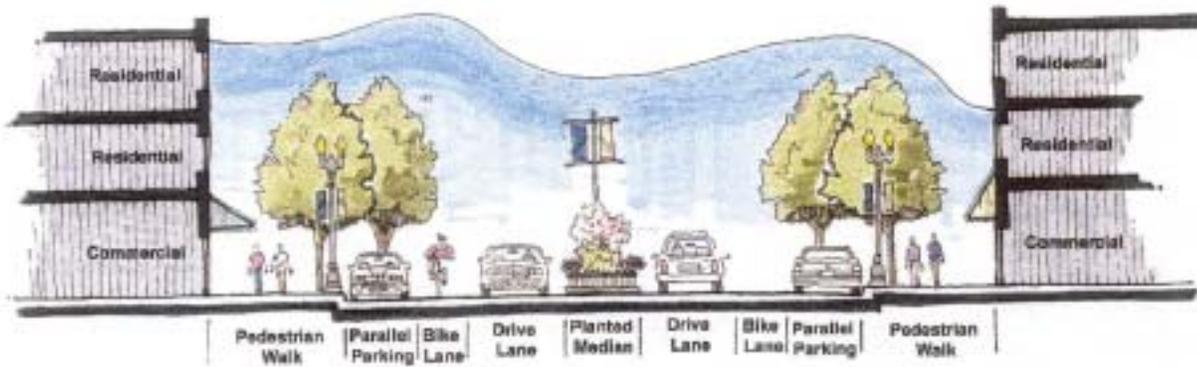
**GATEWAY FEATURE AT UNIVERSITY AND CUNNINGHAM**  
**DOWNTOWN STRATEGIC PLAN**

Urbana, Illinois

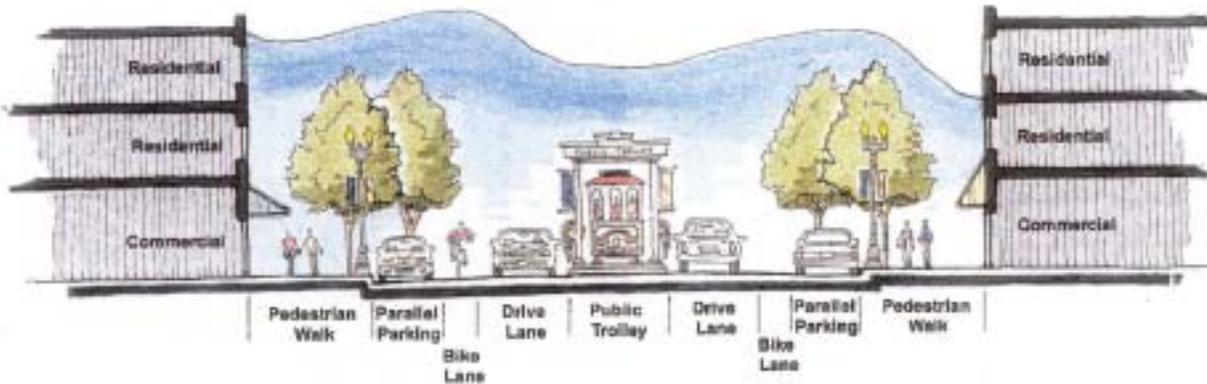
**CAMIROS**  
ARCHITECTS



**Herringbone Parking Option**



**Planted Median Option**



**Public Trolley Option**

FIGURE 19:

**BROADWAY AVENUE SPECIAL TREATMENT**

**DOWNTOWN STRATEGIC PLAN Urbana, Illinois**

**CAMIROS**

Planning, Design, Economic Development, Landscape Architecture  
111 South Park Street, Chicago, IL 60607 Phone: 312.753.1011



CAMIROS

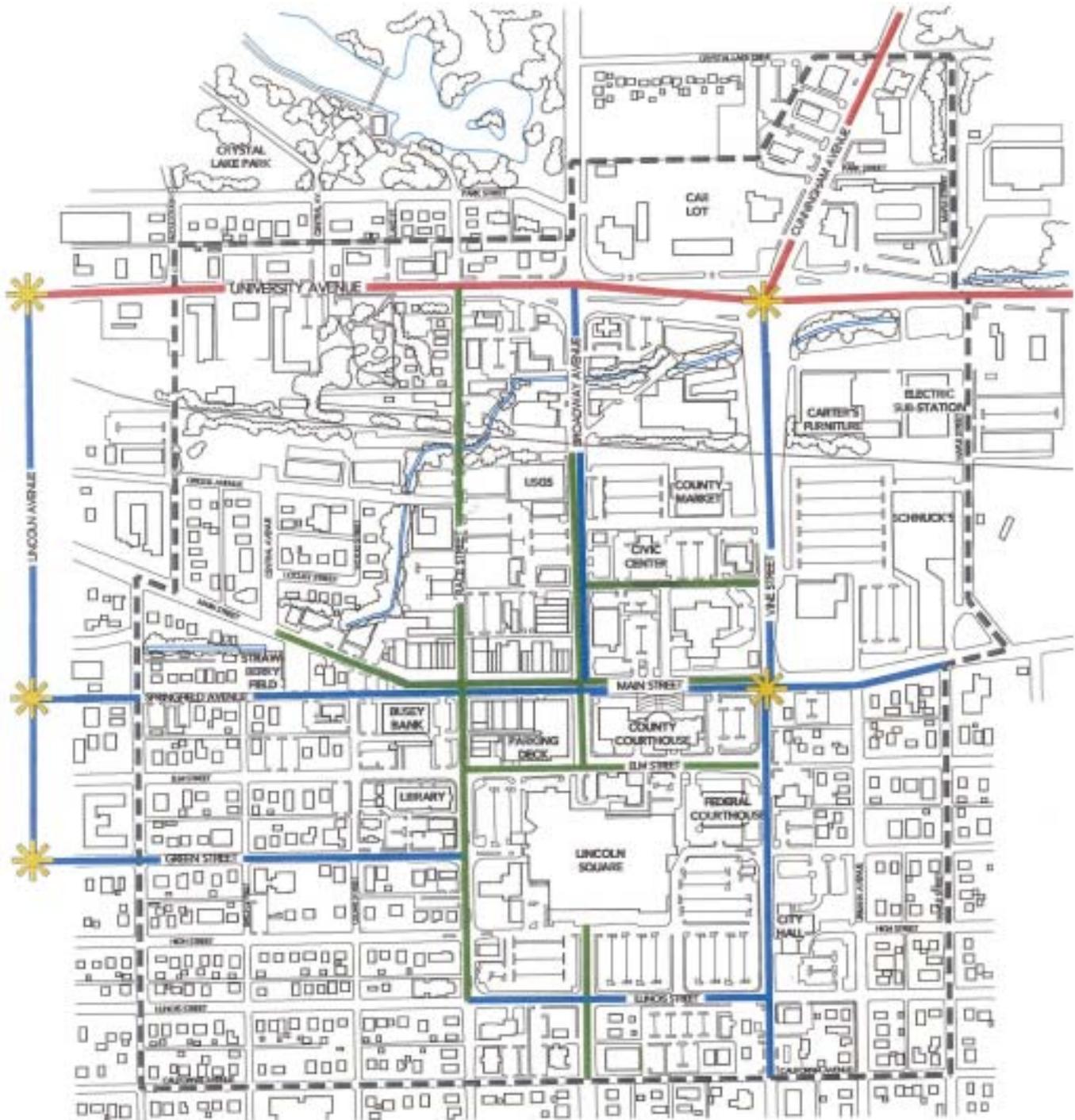
Andrea Camiros, Licensed Professional Landscape Architect  
111240 19th Street, Chicago, IL 60641 Phone: 312.552.8871

# MALL CONNECTIONS AND VISUAL ACCESS

Urbana, Illinois

DOWNTOWN STRATEGIC PLAN





**LEGEND**

-  GATEWAY FEATURE
-  AUTO ORIENTED
-  PEDESTRIAN ORIENTED
-  IDENTITY



FIGURE 21:  
**STREET CLASSIFICATIONS**  
 DOWNTOWN STRATEGIC PLAN

Urbana, Illinois



## **Parking**

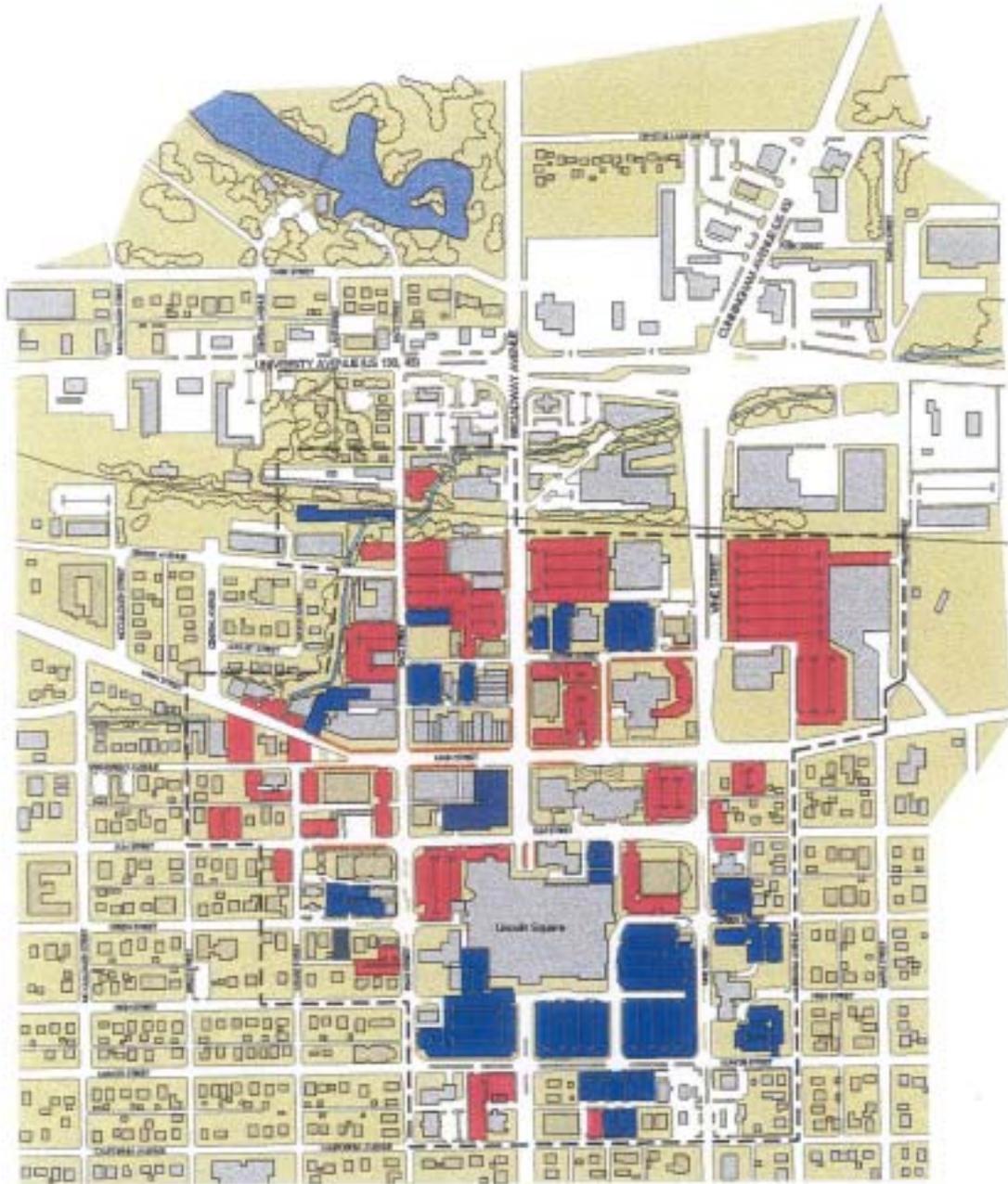
Parking is a critical use for downtown. Downtown Urbana has never had an oversupply of parking based upon available square footage. However, because it has been “underdeveloped,” a suitable number of spaces have been available. Figure 22, Parking Analysis, provides an inventory and location diagram of parking within an area around the downtown core. Public parking lots include 1,940 spaces fairly well distributed around downtown as illustrated in blue. Concentrations of these spaces are located in the municipal parking deck at Broadway and Elm Street, and the surface lots around Lincoln Square Mall. There are 137 on-street parking spaces located primarily along Main Street and Broadway. Private parking lots include 3,075 spaces located in surface lots dispersed around the Study Area as illustrated in red. All totaled, there are 5,152 parking spaces downtown which equates to a ratio of almost three spaces per 1,000 square feet of downtown building space. By comparison, three per 1,000 is the ratio used for new suburban office development, double the allotment for typical downtowns.

Assuming continued revitalization of Lincoln Square, and that the proposed housing development is built, there will be a need for additional parking. As some of the existing parking locations might best be used for redevelopment, it is important to look at a reorganization of potential parking and the identification of new sites for this use. Input from the Town Hall meeting indicated that more parking could be useful north of Main Street between Race Street and Broadway, and at the municipal parking deck, as illustrated by Figure 23, Where Would You Put New Parking?. As shown on the concept plan, new parking areas might be considered adjacent to the proposed Leal Park expansion, the Civic Center, north of the Courier Restaurant, and by adding levels to the existing parking structures.

## **Open Space**

Public squares and open spaces should be placed within downtown to reinforce its pedestrian orientation, establish gathering spaces and provide an attractive setting. The concept plan shows the location of four potential areas – Post Office Square, the Main-Springfield Triangle, Busey Plaza and Near North. These areas should be landscaped as pedestrian attractions. Post Office Square should be carefully designed to accommodate ceremonial occasions.

Leal Park, the only significant existing park in the downtown area, should be maintained and improved. Upon abandonment of the railroad tracks, the park should be expanded by extending it south within the railroad right-of-way, thereby providing access from the downtown. This expansion should be in conjunction with a bike trail reuse of that right-of-way. (See Figure 24, Pedestrian Corridor and Bike Path.) This action can also help to accommodate a pedestrian linkage between Carle Medical Center and the downtown. This is an important improvement given the substantial employment within, and use of, the Medical Center, and its potential market impact upon the downtown. Every action ought to be taken to encourage the patrons and employees of the Medical Center to use downtown. Further, additional housing might be considered in lieu of auto oriented uses along Race, to the east of the park if proper park and adjacent housing connections can be created.



**LEGEND**

- PUBLIC PARKING - 1,940 SPACES
- PRIVATE PARKING - 3,075 SPACES
- ON-STREET PARKING - 137 SPACES
- ANALYSIS BOUNDARY

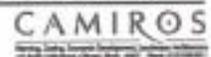
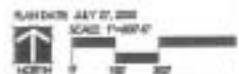


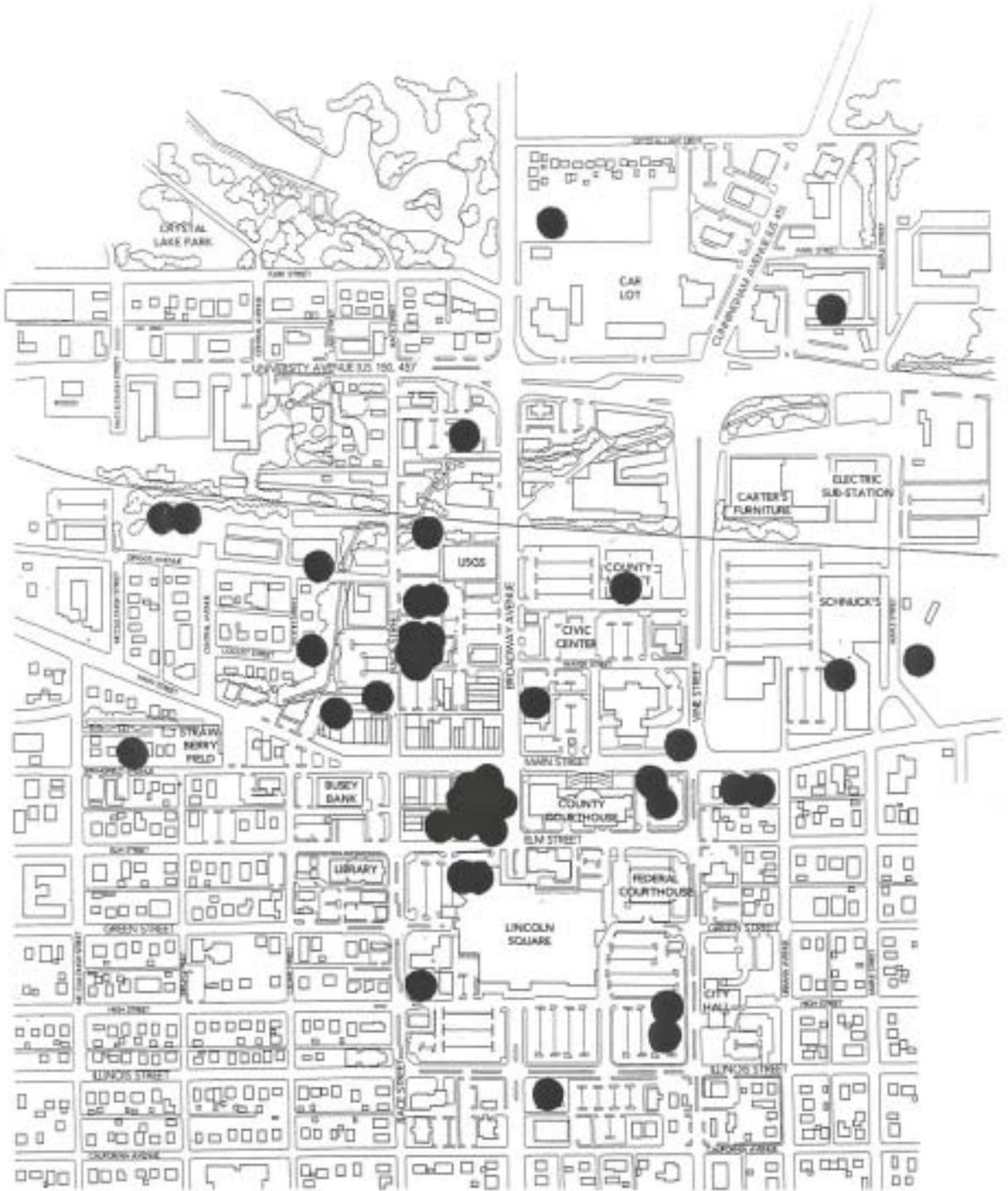
FIGURE 22:

**PARKING ANALYSIS**

**DOWNTOWN STRATEGIC PLAN**

Urbana, Illinois





THERE'S ENOUGH!



BIKE PARKING



FIGURE 23:

# WHERE WOULD YOU PUT NEW PARKING?

**DOWNTOWN STRATEGIC PLAN**

Urbana, Illinois

PLAN DATE: JULY 21, 2009



**CAMIROS**  
COMMUNITY AND METROPOLITAN IMPROVEMENT RESEARCH ORGANIZATION



**PEDESTRIAN CORRIDOR & BIKE PATH  
DOWNTOWN STRATEGIC PLAN**

Urbana, Illinois

**CAMIROS**

Planning, Design, Research & Construction - Landscape Architecture  
211 East 10th Street, Chicago, IL 60607 Phone: 773.232.0100

Figure 24

## **THE CENTER OF URBANA INITIATIVE**

Downtown Urbana still retains some hold on the public mind: Figure 25, Where is the Center of Town?, shows that Main Street is still seen as the center of town by a great number of residents. As long as the downtown continues to be viewed as the locus of community events – parades, meetings, community fairs, dedications, etc. – then downtown will be viewed as the City center. This role attracts people downtown and provides a marketing opportunity. But even this opportunity can be lost or wasted if not pursued. Attention must be given to the continued location of community destinations and community events downtown. The policy must be: If there is an Urbana public facility or activity that attracts people, put it downtown. The retention of the County Courthouse downtown is an example of this policy. More is needed. A fivefold program is suggested:

### **The “Locate Downtown” Program**

The key step is proactive implementation of a “locate downtown” policy, which should be adopted by the public and private sectors, and made part of all downtown marketing efforts. Currently, downtown is host to most of the key public services – City Hall, library, courts, and postal service. It is also host to a number of community festivals – the Market at the Square, Sweet Corn Festival, etc. It is important that these services and festivals continue downtown and be marketed to attract more users. Some, such as the Market at the Square, should be investigated for expansion, perhaps into a longer season, and one that sells crafts as well as food beyond the growing seasons.

This policy could be further enhanced by the establishment of a grant, loan, or other financing program that helps new businesses locate in downtown Urbana.

### **Encourage more Public Art Downtown**

The presence of public art helps create a niche for downtown and can beautify the area and attract new visitors. The newly organized Champaign County Arts Council should be encouraged to promote downtown Urbana as a new opportunity to display public art. Opportunities to help achieve this goal could include:

1. Encourage more gallery uses in existing and newly developing areas of downtown
2. Promote public art in downtown open spaces
3. Public murals where appropriate
4. Develop public art themes for downtown corridor entryways

### **Encourage and Accommodate Community Events**

The maintenance and growth of downtown events could be enhanced through aggressive outreach, management, and provision of proper space. Such actions could complement what is already underway. For example, the Urbana Business Association (UBA) in conjunction with the Park District and the city sponsors Friday Night Street Dances on Race and Elm Streets on Friday nights in the summer. However, the calendar of events is not large enough. It should be increased such that something occurs at least once a month. Consideration should also be given to encouraging greater use of Lincoln Square Mall for community events. Additional ideas could include:

1. Winter ice sculpture competition
2. Memorial Day, Fourth of July or Labor Day Parades
3. Downtown winter lighting festival
4. Community garage sale
5. Spring garden show and plant sale

## **Grow the Market at the Square**

Consideration should be given to improving accommodations for the Market at the Square, especially if it can be expanded beyond its present operating period. These can range from simple actions of coordination to significant investments. Consider the following:

1. The current hours of operation of the Market at the Square do not correspond to the present Saturday hours of Lincoln Square, which, while not the host of the market, certainly could benefit from potential synergies. Such coordination could help grow the Market at the Square and increase use of Lincoln Square.
2. Lincoln Square could work with the market manager to attract a larger collection of vendors, including crafts and specialty food vendors, who could operate expanded hours or days throughout the year. The mall management could consider using inside concourse space for this market during the late fall, winter and early spring periods.
3. The City, as owner of the parking lots where the market occurs, should review parking layout and the location of the market with an eye toward improving site layout and, perhaps, establishing a temporary canopy system that might extend the period of market operations. This assumes that vendors would be available if the season was extended, perhaps for one month at both the beginning and end.
4. Current established businesses such as food, crafts, antiques, and clothing that have fixed site businesses in other areas of the region should be approached regarding the establishment of vendor stalls at the market during operation times. This would allow them to expand sales and contacts, learn about the Urbana market, and perhaps consider a second location within downtown Urbana.

## **Provide Community Outdoor Space**

Improving outdoor space is another important action. If downtown is the center of Urbana, places must be available to host dedicatory or community gatherings, establish settings for community monuments, and play host to group events that wish to commemorate a special occasion by having it occur in a setting with a positive community image. Currently, there are no adequate spaces for such outdoor celebratory public gatherings downtown. To this end, community squares or plazas should be established within the downtown that will help give the downtown focus as well as fulfill these purposes. These spaces need not be very large. Rather, it should create an inviting place to sit, and should be located at a busy place. It should be of a size so that it will look crowded when small events occur so that it adds to the sense of interest and excitement downtown. Perhaps one, Post Office Square, might be located in front of the Post Office and Lincoln Square, and be of a size large enough to host a small celebratory event. Figure 26, Public Gathering Space, shows how Post Office Square might look.

## **Establish a Community Performance Venue**

While recognizing that the University is the dominant provider of performance venues, opportunities should be found to either upgrade the Civic Center or establish space within Lincoln Square or Jumer's Hotel for a small performance venue which might accommodate local performers, children's presentations and theater, or repertory theater. This facility could be leased and managed by the City. As an alternative, existing community performance groups might band together as an "arts association" for the purpose of leasing, refurbishing and managing the space.

## **Keep the Post Office Downtown**

One of the greatest assets of downtown Urbana is the availability of services. The close proximity of personal services ensures that downtown visitors, residents and workers have the ability to complete a variety of errands all within a relatively short distance. Without a doubt one of the greatest available services in downtown Urbana is the post office. Many Urbana residents find the downtown post office most convenient for their postal needs. It is for this reason that Urbana has traditionally felt very strongly about keeping the presence of the post office downtown.

The current location of the post office facility is in question as the building is listed on the retail market. The ultimate sale of the building could result in the post office either staying at its current location or moving to another site. Regardless of the ultimate outcome of this transaction, the fact remains that the presence of a postal facility in downtown Urbana is crucial to the overall vision of this plan which is to in part create a “busy” downtown serving the community. Should the current post office building be sold under the terms that the post office facility relocate, every effort should be made to keep the facility in downtown.

One of the keys to a successful post office operation downtown is the availability of parking. Short term parking is crucial as individuals need to quickly stop and send packages or pick-up mail. At the current post office location, there are 13 public meter spaces immediately outside the post office building which is very popular with patrons to the facility. The public parking deck is also located in very close proximity. Although this plan illustrates the concept of a public plaza at this location, the current parking availability should be preserved as long as the post office facility remains at its current location. Should the post office eventually relocate to a new facility in the downtown, the concept of the public plaza should be considered in conjunction with the reuse of the post office building. The availability of parking should also be seriously considered for any possible new post office facility location.

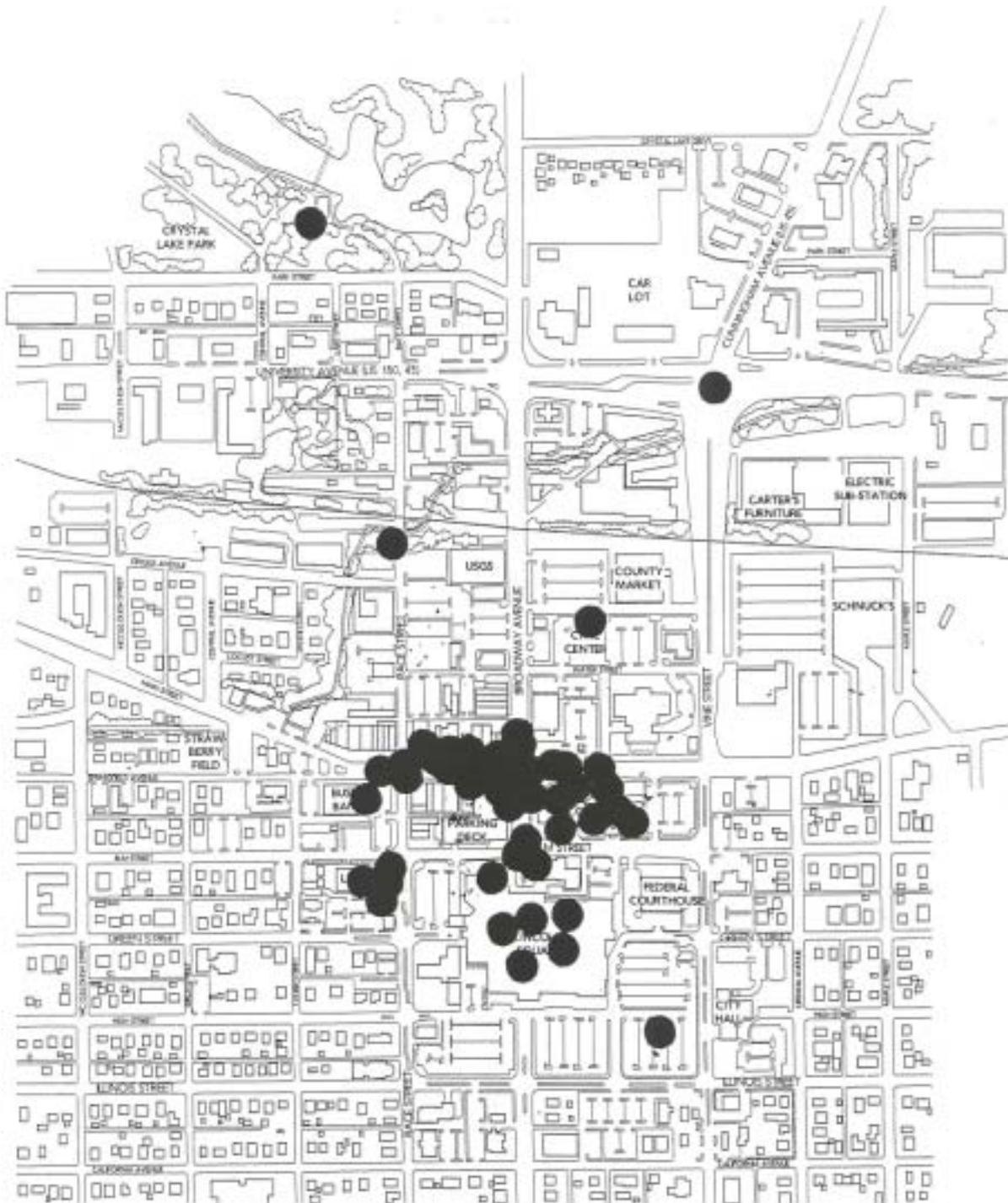


FIGURE 25:  
**WHERE IS THE CENTER OF TOWN?**

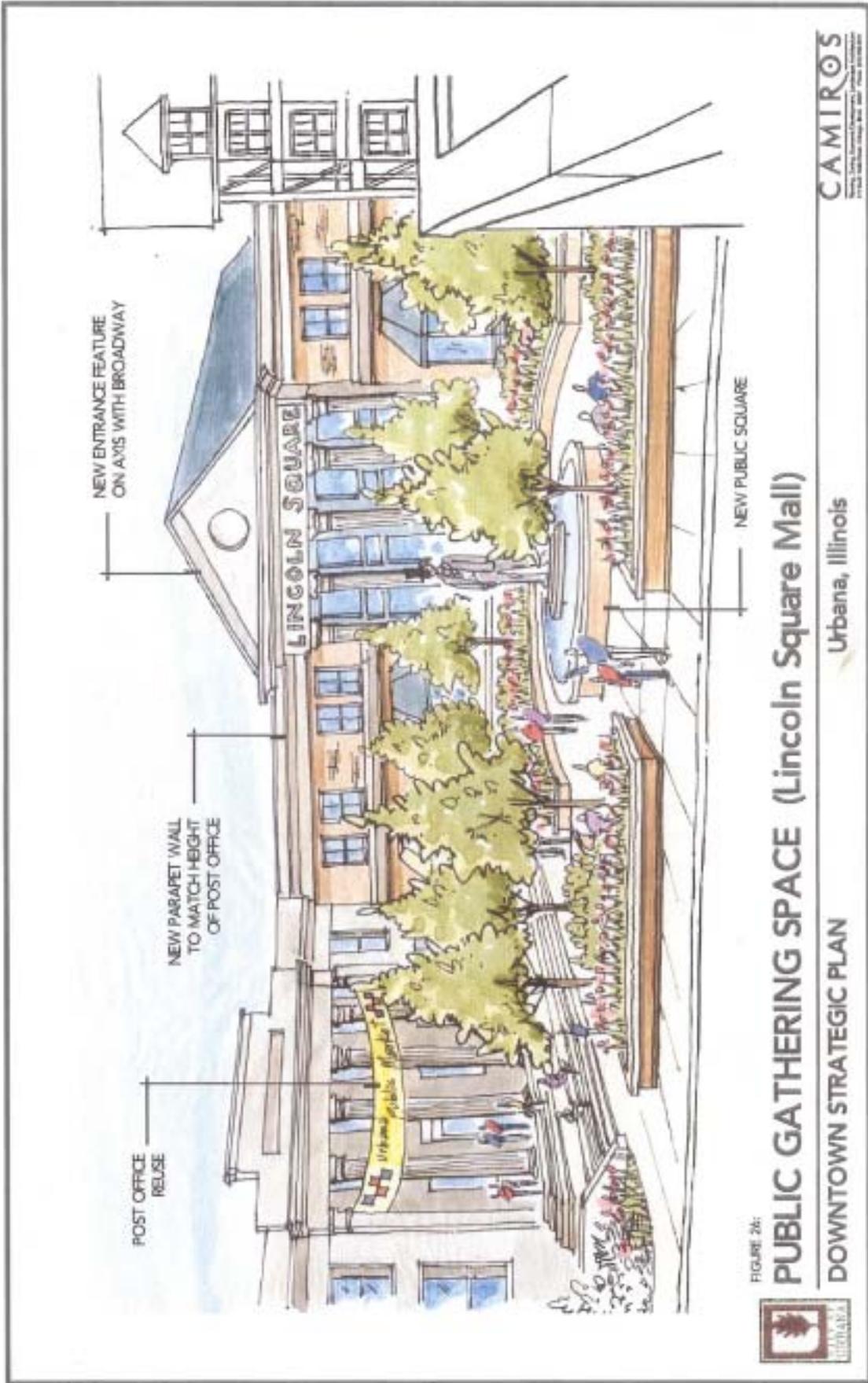
**DOWNTOWN STRATEGIC PLAN**

Urbana, Illinois

PLANNED: JULY 21, 2009



**CAMIROS**  
 Planning, Survey, Engineering, Transportation & Utilities Solutions  
 11200 10th Street, Suite 200 • Fort Worth, TX 76102 • 817.335.1100





CAMIROS

Portland, Oregon, Illinois & Chicago, Illinois  
417.233.7600 • www.camirosgroup.com

**PUBLIC SQUARES AND OPEN SPACES**

**DOWNTOWN STRATEGIC PLAN**



Figure 26A

# THE DOWNTOWN NEIGHBORHOOD INITIATIVE

In communities where the downtown is the economic center, there is often little opportunity or desire to establish it as a residential neighborhood, since the competition for land by non-residential uses tends to price residential development to the edges. In such downtowns, economic support for the non-residential components is region wide, and residential uses are viewed as augmenting other uses creating what is today termed a "twenty-four hour environment." Downtown Urbana is not the economic center of the region. Indeed, at present, it is the weakest of the competing centers within the region. Thus, it is important for downtown to create a character that will help to establish its market niche, and one element of that character is to present itself as a pedestrian-scaled, mixed-use environment.

At present, downtown has a very modest residential component. It is estimated that approximately 3,500 people live within the general boundaries of what is perceived as downtown. Downtown is surrounded by neighborhoods, primarily on the west, south and east edges. Elements of those neighborhoods take some of their identity from downtown. Indeed, the westerly neighborhood is probably most closely associated within an image of downtown.

## Build Housing Downtown

Downtown has the potential to become a significant neighborhood, and one which is quite different from all others within the City and, indeed, the region. Within downtown, there is an opportunity to develop an environment that mixes living and working, creating a significant and attractive choice for persons who seek a dynamic, rather than a passive, living environment. The key to this is new housing, which not only accommodates downtown residents, but also creates customers of downtown businesses and a constituency for downtown growth and improvement. It is estimated that the development of a downtown neighborhood could increase area population 15 to 20 percent, from its present 3,500 to an estimated 4,200. While the numbers might be small, in terms of what is needed to grow businesses, this growth in downtown-focused customers can create a critical mass for many businesses. Moreover, it changes the local environment and begins to add interest and activity in a manner that will attract others to frequent the area.

Through public forums and a workshop to solicit input about downtown, Urbana residents identified three potential locations for new housing as illustrated in Figure 27, Where Would You Put New Housing? These locations include the area north of Main Street between Race and Vine Streets (Near North), the area around Lincoln Square Mall, and along the downtown's eastern fringe. Other housing opportunities may result in the redevelopment of neighborhoods adjacent to downtown.

Residential density should increase as one moves from the fringe of downtown toward its center. Thus, new development in the "Near North" area along street frontage could consist of three-story structures that feature two levels of residential units located over ground level shops as depicted in Figure 28, "Near North" Redevelopment. Three-story residential structures could be located behind mixed-use structures. Housing in the Lincoln Square Mall area could vary from new single-family on the south side of California Street to mixed density, perhaps high-rise, placed upon, or in place of, the mall. Depending upon the strength of the hotel market downtown, it is possible that the Jumer's building might see partial redevelopment into housing. Housing east of Vine Street might be predominantly row houses or two-story apartments.

As evidenced by the proposals illustrated in Figure 29, "Near North" Redevelopment (Broadway looking South), the redevelopment of the "Near North" area of downtown represents the greatest opportunity for downtown housing. This proposal suggests the creation of a unique housing and shopping environment

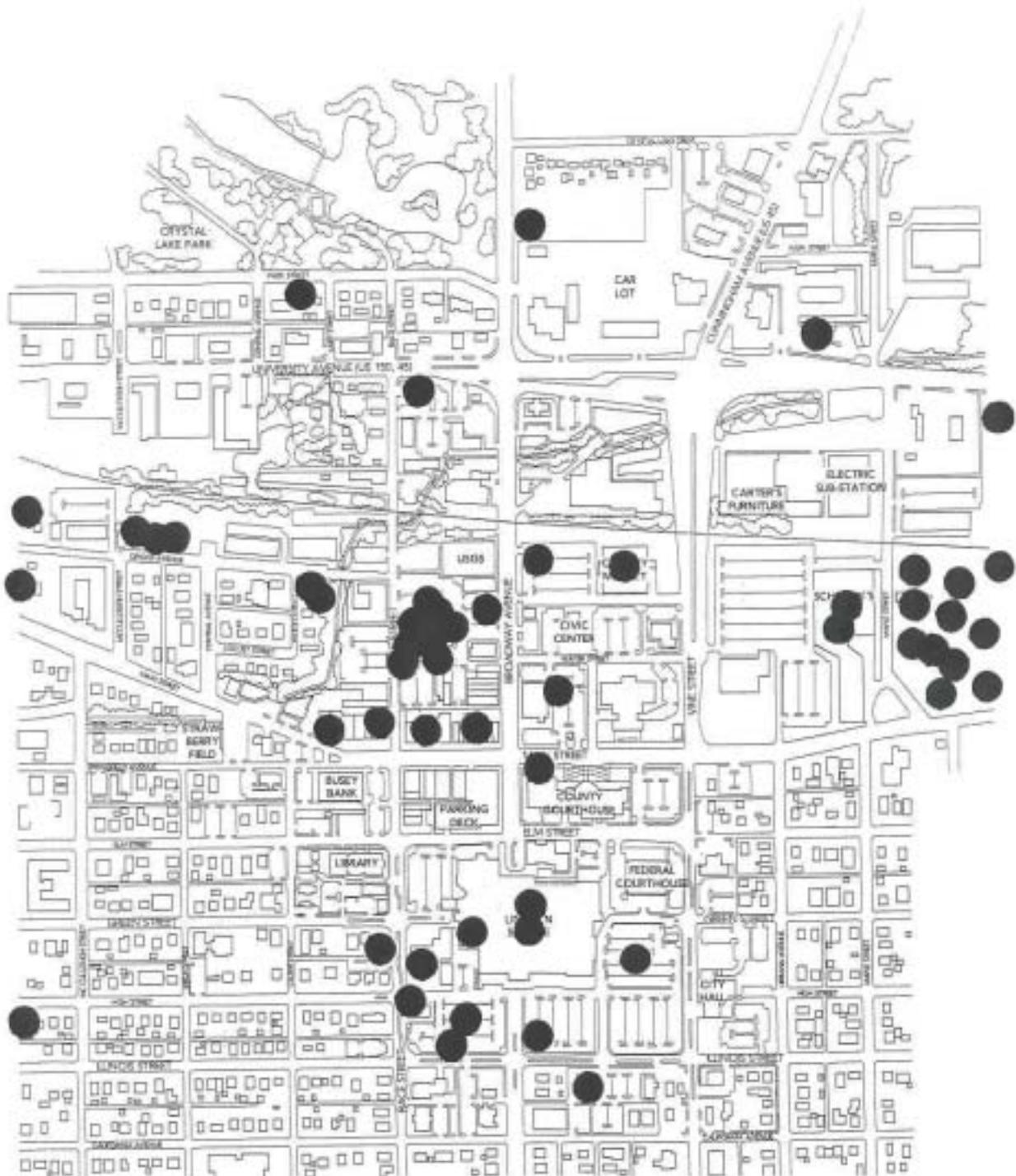


FIGURE 27:  
**WHERE WOULD YOU PUT NEW HOUSING?**



**DOWNTOWN STRATEGIC PLAN**

Urbana, Illinois





- |   |   |   |                                       |
|---|---|---|---------------------------------------|
|  | 2 STORY RESIDENTIAL OVER GROUND LEVEL SHOPS |  | COMMUNITY FACILITIES                  |
|  | 2 & 3 STORY RESIDENTIAL                     |  | "RAILS TO TRAILS" PEDESTRIAN CORRIDOR |
|  | COMMERCIAL                                  |   |                                       |



FIGURE 28:  
**"NEAR NORTH" REDEVELOPMENT**  
 DOWNTOWN STRATEGIC PLAN

Urbana, Illinois

PLAN DATE: AUGUST 2011  
 SCALE: 1" = 200'



**CAMIROS**  
 COMMUNITY AND METROPOLITAN IMPROVEMENT RESEARCH ORGANIZATION



**BUILD HOUSING DOWNTOWN  
DOWNTOWN STRATEGIC PLAN**

**CAMIROS**

Photo: City of Urbana Strategic Planning & Community Development  
11 South Oak Street Chicago, IL 60607 Phone 312.552.6111

**Urbana, Illinois**

unlike any other found in the region. Housing is located above ground level shops with outdoor dining located next to a new public square. Parking should be located in the interior of the blocks in order to maintain continuous street frontage. The structure located on the west side of Broadway could accommodate two levels of parking covered by a rooftop garden for residents.

### **Extend the Downtown Neighborhood Image Beyond the Core**

In addition to encouraging housing within the downtown core, it is useful to expand the residential perception of a downtown neighborhood so as to increase downtown support and to reinforce the “urban” image downtown. Within the core, mixed-use and especially non-residential use, will create the dominant image. In the neighborhood periphery, residential use will continue to be the dominant image, but mixed-uses should also be accommodated. Local zoning should accommodate this difference, as should scale and style of building and parking requirements.

The size of this expanded neighborhood should vary to reflect local conditions. The development of an auto-oriented environment along University Avenue probably precludes any extension of the downtown image north of this major arterial. The modest housing area to the east of downtown should become part of the neighborhood, especially since the downtown is the closest commercial location for this area. To the south, the downtown neighborhood should extend to abut the High School since high schoolers present a strong market for downtown businesses.

The residential neighborhood extending west to Lincoln Avenue ought also to be considered the downtown neighborhood. This area sits between the downtown and University, and attachment to the downtown, especially for image purposes, is critical since Lincoln Avenue is a main entry for University tourists, and they need to be aware of the existence and attraction of downtown. Moreover, the area along west Main Street, from Central Avenue to Lincoln Avenue, has some of Urbana’s most historic homes. While this area also contains some newer multi-family development, consideration should be given to emphasizing this historic resource as a gateway to the larger downtown. One way to do this is to reduce the tendency towards new construction to accommodate mixed-use buildings under the MOR zoning district. This might be achieved by creating incentives to reuse existing buildings rather than constructing new. The process should begin with a careful review of the applicable development regulations, which often hinder reuse by requiring compliance with zoning and building standards which are very difficult to achieve in adaptive reuse projects. One possible change to the zoning ordinance would allow non-residential reuse of existing buildings which doesn’t change the character of a site as a permitted use, and make new non-residential construction a special use. Another option would be the adoption of performance-based zoning for the MOR district, rather than use-based zoning. Grant and loan programs to assist in adapting older structures to new uses should also be considered.



## **THE NICHE MARKET INITIATIVE**

Downtown Urbana needs a function. It needs a marketable image. No longer the economic heart of the community, its continued viability depends, in large part, upon establishing a distinctive character. While it can play many roles – host to local government, neighborhood, and spiritual center of the city – it needs a larger, regionally valued role if it is to compete beyond its present ability. Considered opinion, and the realities of the marketplace, indicate that many of the key regional roles have been taken by other area centers. North Prospect Avenue dominates the regional retail market, the University dominates the entertainment market, and South Neil Street appears dominant in the hotel market. At present, there is no dominant restaurant area. They are found within downtown Champaign, as well as downtown Urbana, and at other scattered locations.

The interests and realities of owners and operators of real estate in Downtown Urbana, the characteristics of development in the downtown, and the general interests of Urbana citizens, as they have made known at planning meetings indicates that, in addition to its present function as employment center, convenience retail area, and a locus of government and associated services, the most viable future for downtown lies in housing, food and entertainment. As evidenced in a host of small downtowns, this is a reasonable direction. Areas such as downtown Urbana, which have a pedestrian environment, reflect an older, often historic character, and offer viable buildings with relatively small floor plates that are attractive locations for restaurants, bars, specialty shops and the like.

While downtown Champaign also offers similar services, there are strong reasons why downtown Urbana might be able to successfully establish itself as a key regional venue for such services.

1. It is small enough to create an imageable environment, yet large enough to provide choice.
2. It contains sites amenable to the establishment of activities, which might serve to anchor this service (mall for public market or book seller).
3. It is supported by the housing strategy.
4. It is close to, yet separate from, the University environment such that it can serve as a defined, yet accessible, destination.
5. It builds upon food-based events such as the Market at the Square.
6. It has convenience goods and supermarkets within its area that helps to complement the theme.
7. It is supported by the community.

Several programs and projects are proposed to help bring this about:

### **The Public Market**

A centerpiece of this initiative could well be a public market. Public markets are making a comeback in American cities. They are emerging in a form that embraces many farmers markets, crafts markets and even flea markets. It could represent a unique use within Champaign-Urbana and, given the present traditions and character of public and private space in downtown Urbana, offer great potential as a centerpiece for implementing this initiative and encouraging reinvestment within downtown. Market feasibility for this use should be further tested.

Three characteristics distinguish public markets from other types of related retail activity.

1. Public markets have public goals. These goals might include attracting shoppers downtown, providing affordable retail opportunities to small business, activating the use of public space – all of which are directly applicable to conditions in downtown Urbana.

2. A public market is located on, or creates a public space within, the community. This is the visible aspect of the market – an inviting, safe, lively place that attracts a wide range of people. As a place where people mix, the public market can become the heart of a community, its common ground, and a setting in which other community activities take place. A public market need not be located on public land. As long as the privately owned land is easily accessible, the market may be perceived as public space.
3. Markets are made up of locally owned, independent businesses. This characteristic helps to account for the local flavor of public markets and the distinctiveness of the shopping experience.

The key to a successful market is the accumulation of three or more vendors in the key food categories such as produce, meats, and bakery items. Besides these vendors, the market should have other fresh food vendors that could include fish, bulk grains, spices, or any other specialty food products. That is not to say that some markets do not have three or more vendors in each of these categories, for it is internal competition that distinguishes the food market from the supermarket. Having three vendors in each of these three categories allows each to differentiate their product mixes, which attract a wider audience needed to support these fresh food markets. The goal is to have multiple vendors in narrow product categories. In bakery goods for instance, one vendor may specialize in breads, another in cakes, and the third in sweet rolls. Some vendors may overlap in the product lines they sell, but each needs to distinguish themselves sufficiently to attract their own customer base. That could be accomplished by targeting products on different ethnic food traditions in the area, different price points, or by carrying organic products.

It is critical to have enough space to support internal competition; that is, a dozen vendors with each vendor occupying an average of 500 square feet of leasable area and requiring another 500 square feet in common area or between 12,000 and 15,000 square feet total as the minimum size

This facility can be the potential centerpiece of this initiative, indeed of downtown. The desire for a place to come and be together is amply demonstrated in many of the activities already proven in downtown Urbana; the library functions in just that way. The Market at the Square is not just an opportunity to purchase goods; it is a meaningful social event. Perhaps it is possible for potential public market sites to capitalize upon these events.

### **The Entertainment District**

Efforts should be made to designate, design and market the historic core of the downtown (the Main Street District) as a food and entertainment center or, to use a much maligned term, a festival marketplace. While it will continue to have a variety of mixed uses – offices, traditional retail, and perhaps a limited amount of housing in its upper stories, the image to be created is that this is the place to go for restaurants, specialty food shopping, bars, and related specialty goods. This district should contain a special lighting program, coordinated façade design, and streetscape, all oriented toward the creation of a pedestrian environment. Provisions should be made to allow more innovative signage than allowed in other portions of the City, especially with regard to projecting signs, neon and the like.

### **Joint Niche Marketing Program**

Businesses within this area should continue to participate in a joint marketing program oriented toward food and entertainment. Beyond coordinated advertising, this program should prepare and publish an entertainment and events calendar, perhaps establish a common frequent diner rewards program and coordinate in the joint booking of entertainment (musicians, poets, etc) as support for its businesses.

### **Economic Incentives**

The City might investigate the development and use of certain economic incentives to attract and maintain desired business investment within the downtown. This might involve tax incentives or perhaps limited special assistance to food and entertainment uses which remain in operation for a given number of years.

### **Historic Character Niche**

The historic character of downtown and the surrounding neighborhoods should be promoted in an effort to encourage heritage tourism opportunities. Where appropriate, historic districts should be considered, to safeguard historic resources and highlight areas of interest for tourists.

# THE LINCOLN SQUARE INITIATIVE

There is nothing more important to the success of downtown than the success of Lincoln Square. The largest property downtown, and a centerpiece of downtown's retail activity, integration of the mall into the fabric of downtown, and enhancement of it as a retail attraction, is critical if the vision of this plan is to be attained.

## **Lincoln Square Mall and Urbana**

Lincoln Square is not just a mall, it's an Urbana institution. Being one of the country's first enclosed malls, it now offers nearly 40 years of history for Urbana. Residents continue to demonstrate their desire to improve the mall and strengthen it as a viable shopping alternative to the more congested suburban shopping areas in Champaign. On July 20, 2000 over 100 people attended a Town Hall meeting focused on the plan for downtown Urbana. Most of the residents who spoke at the meeting offered their suggestions for Lincoln Square Mall including more retail, entertainment and events. The comments and suggestions offered at the meeting showed how much residents care about the mall and want to see it succeed and also that they view the mall as more of a community center rather than strictly a retail center. The unique disposition of Lincoln Square given its location and history helps create this feeling of a community center.

## **Linking to the Vision**

Lincoln Square Mall is privately owned and the owners are free, within the limits of zoning and any other covenants, to address a host of directions. However the success of downtown, and most likely, the success of the mall, requires the owners to join with other downtown property owners to address the vision of this plan. That vision is to create a strong distinction from other shopping areas in the region and strive to create a niche for downtown Urbana. The vision is also focused upon making downtown Urbana a people place with an "urban feel" that is a center for the community. It is this vision that is typically missing from newly developing suburban marketplaces.

Lincoln Square Mall owners could address this vision by developing plans that cost-effectively address internal and external physical improvements that would "update" the mall and would better establish a linkage with the rest of downtown. Specifically, its plans should address:

1. How to establish a better physical relationship between the north side of the mall and Main Street.
2. How to make the mall more transparent by opening up its north, south and east sides to make the inside of the mall feel like a continuation of the downtown.
3. How to better take advantage of the placement of directory signage.

There is good reason for the City and mall ownership to continue to work together to identify what can best be done to make the mall an even greater asset for its ownership and for downtown. Considering or testing ideas like those outlined in this plan, together with continuing to work towards attracting new investments through local and regional marketing initiatives could help Lincoln Square emerge as a more viable component of downtown.

## **Community Retail Center**

Previous leasing efforts that have focused *solely* on national tenants have not been successful. Given this experience it is evident that the most practical composition of the mall is a mix of both national and local uses. Currently, some of the most successful tenants within the mall are local businesses such as Art Mart and International Galleries. The opportunity for the mall to fulfill its potential as a viable community, retail center will continue to rely on a creative mix of uses.

Along with the retail component of the mall, Lincoln Square in many respects serves as a community center for Urbana and the surrounding area. Many residents regularly visit the mall to attend events such as toy exhibitions, antique shows, health fairs, holiday events and much more. Programmed events at the mall continue to be successful and generate foot traffic that result in increased sales for the retail stores. These events and exhibitions should continue and be increased throughout the year in order to keep Lincoln Square Mall as an active part of downtown.

## **Public Market**

The idea of a Public Market as described in the Niche Market Initiative on page 51-52 should be considered within Lincoln Square Mall. One of the most successful events for all of downtown Urbana is the Farmer's Market which operates in the mall parking lot every Saturday morning from May to November. The Farmer's Market brings thousands of people out in search of fresh produce, flowers, baked goods and homemade arts and crafts. Many market patrons and vendors alike have indicated a desire for more indoor market opportunities during winter months and perhaps on weekdays. The location, design and function of Lincoln Square Mall creates an opportunity to accommodate a public market of some determined scale and function. Offering market goods and other food and dining opportunities within the mall is also consistent with the goals of this plan to create a food and entertainment niche for downtown.

The idea of a public market in Lincoln Square Mall can range from a small number of kiosk vendors in the main corridors or with leased space within available space in the mall. A likely concentration of public market type of activities would be near the existing food court area where visitors would enter from either Green Street to the west or Broadway Avenue to the north. Figure 30 illustrates how physical improvements to the mall coupled with the presence of public market uses would create an inviting atmosphere to the mall and potentially attract shoppers multiple times a week.



CAMIROS

101 S. 1st St., Suite 200, Chicago, IL 60601 | Phone: 312.329.1100

**PUBLIC MARKET CONCEPT SKETCH**

**DOWNTOWN STRATEGIC PLAN**



Figure 30

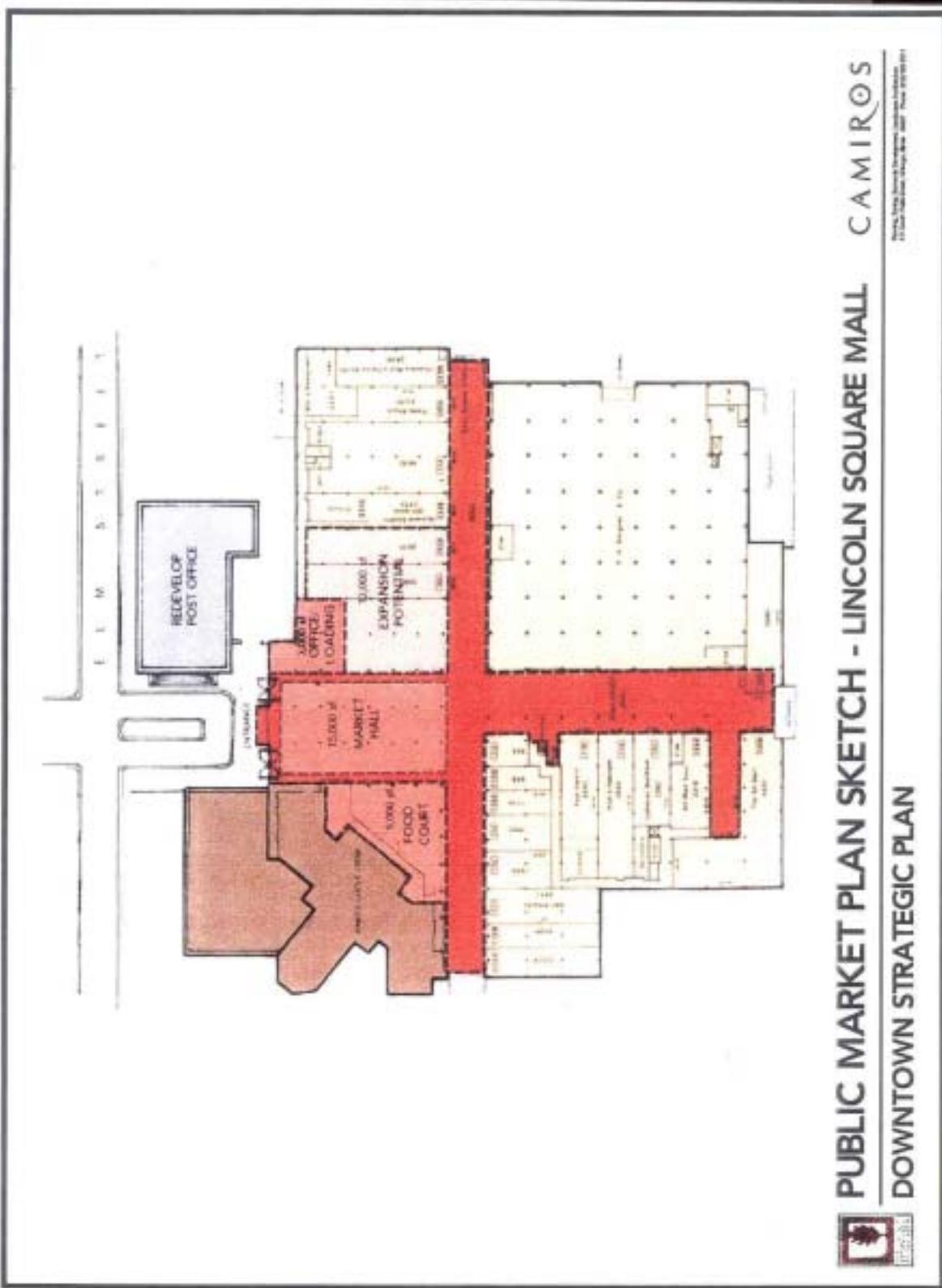


Figure 30A

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

The program described in the previous section seeks to realize a bold vision. Figure 31, Key Improvement and Redevelopment Sites, summarizes many of the proposals which contribute to the vision described in the prior chapters. The key to achieving that vision is to positively focus the city's, the property owners', and the citizens' attitudes and commitment toward the downtown.

### **Policy Orientation**

The city must take a strong, proactive stance toward downtown development and the implementation of this plan. Yet, it must not see itself as having the sole responsibility for downtown implementation, but rather as a leader who can energize the private sector to become the steward for, and developer of, downtown. In doing so, it cannot just trust in the private sector and step aside. Rather, this plan requires a greater commitment by the city to support, act, cajole, demonstrate, and to fund coordinated downtown improvement. The key here is to have the city, like all the downtown stakeholders, maintain a continuous and consistent commitment to the implementation of agreed-upon plan directions.

To that end, it is critical for the city, upon adoption of the plan, to assist in the formation of a Private / Non-Profit Development Corporation and to sit down with representatives of the group to clearly discuss roles and responsibilities, establish liaison, and to identify how best to assist in its stewardship role. It is also critical for the city to activate a Downtown Commission which can serve as the conduit for the Development Corporation to coordinate and implement the many responsibilities that will continue to fall to the city.

### **Regulatory Action**

Many of the components of this plan require regulatory action. Probably the most significant is modification of the zoning ordinance to carry out the planning and design structure outlined by the plan. However, there are also other regulatory issues to be addressed, such as how the city will structure its parking program in response to the dictates of the plan, whether or not there should be new special service districts established to facilitate the plan recommendations in the Entertainment District and along Broadway. Lastly, there may be changes in ordinances regulating hours of operation, signage and the like to facilitate the plan. All of these issues should be addressed directly through the aegis of the Downtown Commission.

### **Financing**

Money is always at the heart of any successful plan. To date, the major sources of revenue outside of the general fund have been the downtown Tax Increment Finance Districts (TIFs). This method of financing should be reviewed to determine whether changes are needed to boundaries, objectives, projects and budget. Further, as the TIFs near expiration, a major question is whether or not new or amended TIF districts should be created.

One approach that cuts across policy, regulation and financing is the question of whether or not to create a Business Improvement District downtown (BID). A BID is a very powerful tool to coordinate, manage and redevelop downtown as it allows a host of strong municipal powers for bonding, condemnation, and the like. Careful consideration as to the utility of the BID should be undertaken. At a minimum, commitments to the formation of a BID should be reserved until the plan is in the process of

implementation and momentum has developed. In this manner the BID can be seen as a response to the momentum of implementation rather than as one more tool to start up the plan.

The following Table outlines the implementation program for this plan. It lists 30 projects, each containing one or more actions designed to respond to the vision and initiatives of this plan. This Table should become the work program for downtown development. As such, it can provide the basis for developing yearly agendas for downtown development and coordinating the actions of the Development Corporation with the city and other stakeholders.

In the following table, responsibility for the execution of the action steps is assigned to a private entity (such as the Private / Non-Profit Development Corporation or the Marketing and Promotion Corporation), to a public entity such as the City, or to both. These assignments are not intended to be set in stone and in many cases, the private and public sectors will work together in carrying out a specific action step. As the plan is implemented and as a Development Corporation is in the process of being formed, it may become necessary to reevaluate responsibilities for specific action steps. In the end, the goal is to have the steps completed regardless of which entity is in the best position to accomplish the goal.

The Action Plan also identifies priorities for the action steps. In general, high priority represents action in the next 1 to 2 years. Medium priority is intended for action in 3 to 5 years and Low priority represents action after 5 years.



1. **Commercial Redevelopment** - Locate buildings on frontage property lines and integrate landscaped pedestrian connections.
2. **Commercial Redevelopment** - Locate buildings on frontage property lines and integrate landscaped pedestrian connections.
3. **Medical Expansion** - Integrate buildings into Leale Park setting. Provide pedestrian connections to proposed walking/biking corridor.
4. **Leale Park Expansion** - Expand park south to new pedestrian walking/biking corridor. Develop new parking lot to serve park and abutting businesses.
5. **Mixed Commercial/Residential Redevelopment** - Provide attractive frontage and connection to Leale Park.
6. **Long-Term Commercial Redevelopment** - Incorporate corner streetscape enhancements.
7. **Commercial Redevelopment** - Integrate pedestrian access via Boneyard Creek and connect to "Near North" development.
8. **Gateway Feature** - Construct a focal point entrance feature for Downtown Urbana. Provide pedestrian connection to "Near North" development.
9. **Long-Term Housing Redevelopment** - Develop three-story residential with parking in center. Provide pedestrian connection between development at University and Cunningham and the proposed walking/biking corridor.
10. **Housing Redevelopment** - Develop infill multi-family housing.
11. **Mixed Commercial/Residential Redevelopment** - Develop two stories of residential above ground level shops along Broadway frontage. Develop three-story residential fronting Vine Street. Provide parking in center of block with access through commercial development. Connect function to proposed public square.
12. **Parking Expansion** - Provide connection along Boneyard Creek south to Main Street.
13. **Mixed Commercial/Residential Redevelopment** - Develop two stories of residential above ground level shops. Provide 2 levels of parking in center of development covered by rooftop garden for residents.

14. **Public Square** - Construct new public gathering space to connect commercial development and Civic Center.
15. **Parking Expansion** - Potential for additional structured parking on municipal property.
16. **Public Square** - Develop public gathering space in landscaped setting. Reuse brick structure for entertainment-type business such as a restaurant. Demolish small gas station structures.
17. **Streetscape Enhancement** - Enhance perimeter of County Plaza along Main and Broadway to include lighting, trees and planters. Explore possibility of developing public gathering space on southwest corner of site.
18. **Commercial Development** - Locate buildings on corner frontage property lines and integrate landscaped pedestrian connections. Potential relocation site for Elite Diner.
19. **Commercial Development** - Locate buildings on corner frontage property lines and locate parking to the west. Potential relocation site for Elite Diner.
20. **Long-Term Commercial/Parking Expansion** - Convert ground level to commercial use. Add additional level of parking to structure.
21. **Public Square** - Redevelop Post Office parking lot into public gathering space for festivals, performances and a portion of the outdoor farmers market. Extend parapet wall of Lincoln Square to match height of Post Office and incorporate showcase display windows. Construct new mall entrance feature on axis with Broadway Avenue.
22. **Post Office Reuse** - Locate proposed year-round public market in Post Office structure. Incorporate smaller branch office of Post Office into reuse.
23. **Parking Lot Enhancement** - Reconfigure parking lot to include trees. Repair and resurface parking lot. Potential relocation site for Elite Diner.
24. **City Hall Access Improvement** - Reconfigure parking lot to provide short-term parallel parking for access to City Hall on Vine Street. Incorporate pedestrian access into improvement to link City Hall and Lincoln Square Mall.



FIGURE 31:

## KEY IMPROVEMENT & REDEVELOPMENT SITES

DOWNTOWN STRATEGIC PLAN

Urbana, Illinois

PLANNING: AUGUST 2001  
SCALE: N.T.S.



**CAMIROS**

Planning, Design, Construction, Transportation  
2000 North Lincoln Street, Suite 200 • Urbana, IL 62521

## ACTION PLAN

Initiative	Project	Responsibility	Priority	Action Steps
<b>PLAN ADOPTION</b>	Adopt Downtown Plan	Public	High	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Undertake formal adoption process.</li> <li>2. Notify County, University and Carle Hospital of adoption and request them to affirm support of plan.</li> <li>3. Call meeting of major property owners, explain plan, and request support of plan.</li> </ol>
<b>DOWNTOWN LEADERSHIP</b>	Establish a Private / Non-Profit Downtown Development Corporation	Private	High	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Work with small stakeholder group to encourage local business and property owner commitment and support of a downtown development corporation.</li> <li>2. Establish a Downtown Coordinator within the Corporation.</li> </ol>
	Hire Downtown Coordinator	Public	High	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Designate full-time individual within City focused on the advancement of downtown. Base job description on that typical of “mall manager” or downtown coordinator of successful downtown development programs.</li> </ol>
	Activate a Downtown Commission and Designate Planning Staff for Downtown Implementation Program	Public	High	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Appoint commission.</li> <li>2. Reaffirm purpose.</li> <li>3. Staff Commission with Downtown Development Coordinator.</li> <li>4. Establish yearly work program.</li> <li>5. Appoint representative from Private / Non-Profit Development Corporation.</li> <li>6. Appoint representative from Urbana City Council.</li> <li>7. Review and refine TIF and other city downtown programs and zoning to bring in line with downtown plan.</li> <li>8. Implement city-assigned components of downtown plan.</li> <li>9. Initiate Request for Proposals for major projects identified in plan.</li> </ol>

<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Action Steps</b>
<b>DOWNTOWN LEADERSHIP</b> (cont'd)	Identify and Secure Downtown Funding	Private / Public	High	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Purpose of fund is to provide money to facilitate marketing program, supplement public investment for downtown improvement, support downtown-specific staff, etc.</li> <li>2. Undertake fund raising campaign to seek institutional and corporate donors – (Private).</li> <li>3. Survey and solicit interest in institutional and corporate donors in forming Private Downtown Development Corporation to implement plan (see Establish Downtown Development Corporation above) – (Private)</li> <li>4. Consider initiation of a downtown Business Improvement District (BID) or some other funding mechanism to coordinate and fund improvements – (Public or Private).</li> </ol>
	Downtown Marketing Program	Private / Public	High	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Continue marketing program which addresses coordinated print, broadcast and electronic advertising.</li> <li>2. Focus program components on business recruitment, customer attraction and image creation</li> </ol>
	City Incentives Program	Public	High	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reevaluate boundaries and scope of TIF districts per the plan.</li> <li>2. Consider use of Special Service areas as vehicle to fund specific improvement in Entertainment District and Broadway Corridor.</li> <li>3. Consider implementation of a BID.</li> </ol>

Initiative	Project	Responsibility	Priority	Action Steps
<b>DOWNTOWN IMAGE</b>	Adjust Zoning to Reflect Plan	Public	High	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Review proposed and implied types of uses, building and site design policies as contained in plan districts. Note specific needs of Entertainment District (see Niche Market Initiative).</li> <li>2. Review current zoning for conformance to plan district policies.</li> <li>3. Prepare specialized zones to reflect district policies and to maintain the elements of the existing downtown character.</li> </ol>
	Broadway Avenue	Public	High (design), Medium (construction)	Develop new design concept for street, sidewalks, parking and streetscape and make part of city CIP
	Downtown Streets	Public	High (Design Palette and Typical sections), Medium (construction)	Continue a design palette for streetscape, sidewalk and pavement improvements within various categories of downtown streets – pedestrian streets, auto streets, identity streets (key streets which stress and impart the design and function image of downtown). Prepare typical sections for use in guiding construction projects.
	Lincoln Avenue, Green Street and Springfield Avenue Downtown Identity Street Improvements	Public	High (design) Medium (implementation)	Extend downtown identity to these streets to create linkage between University and Downtown. Key design issues are to establish signage, banners, landscape, street lighting improvements which reflect downtown design palette. (Lincoln Avenue components to be between University Avenue and Green Street).

<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Action Steps</b>
<b>DOWNTOWN IMAGE (cont'd)</b>	Bicycle Route Designation and Design	Public	Medium	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Designate Green and Broadway Streets as downtown bicycle access streets, prepare bicycle-friendly cross sections; coordinate construction with CIP.</li> <li>2. Assess amount and location of bicycle racks in downtown. Coordinate fixture selection as part of streetscape design, specify locations and formulate adjacent development purchase program.</li> </ol>
	Bicycle and Pedestrian Pathways	Public	Medium	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Prepare plans for redevelopment of Rail ROW when abandoned to become a bike path extending from at least Lincoln Avenue to County Farm Complex west of Vine. Secure Illinois Bicycle Grant from state for reconstruction.</li> </ol>
	Downtown – University – Carle Streetcar Connection	Public / Private	High	Meet with City and University to introduce concept and determine merits of feasibility testing.
	Parking Program	Public	Medium	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reassess combined downtown parking need based upon plan direction.</li> <li>2. Identify specific parcels for new parking according to plan.</li> <li>3. Review present parking policy to allow contributions to a city parking fund in lieu of on-site parking in Main Street, Office and Government Districts. Require off-street parking provision in Housing, Auto Oriented and Small Business Districts.</li> </ol>

<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Action Steps</b>
<b>DOWNTOWN IMAGE (cont'd)</b>	Public Squares	Public / Private	High (Design) Medium (construction)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Designate locations of public squares per plan.</li> <li>2. Assess and promote design and construction of "Post Office" Square per plan discussions.</li> <li>3. Design and construct Main-Springfield Square in coordination with Main Street Streetscape improvements.</li> <li>4. Finalize location, design and construction of Broadway Square in coordination with Broadway redevelopment activities.</li> </ol>
	Leal Park Improvement	Public	Medium (design), Low and long term, depending upon Rail Closure, (Construction)	Redesign park to accommodate improved access via bike trail reuse of Rail ROW when abandoned. This should become key access route into park from downtown.
<b>CENTER OF URBANA INITIATIVE</b>	Locate Downtown Program	Private / Public	High	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Establish a business, housing and institutional recruitment program.</li> <li>2. Meet with University and Parkland College to determine if any program, offices or facilities might be located downtown.</li> <li>3. Discuss creation of financial assistance program for new business with the City.</li> </ol>
	Community Events Programming	Private	High	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop and promulgate calendar of downtown events.</li> <li>2. Meet with local groups to identify other events that can be accommodated downtown.</li> <li>3. Prepare five-year plan of events.</li> <li>4. Consider greater use of Lincoln Square Mall for community events.</li> </ol>

<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Action Steps</b>
<b>CENTER OF URBANA INITIATIVE (cont'd)</b>	Grow Market at the Square	Public / Private	High	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Encourage the coordination of events and hours of operation between the Market at the Square and Lincoln Square Mall in order to benefit both entities.</li> <li>2. Test feasibility of expanding Market at the Square to limited operation during selected weekdays and hours. Consider expanding season.</li> <li>3. Continue recruitment of additional vendors.</li> <li>4. Consider an indoor location for market events in winter months.</li> </ol>
	Community Performance Venue	Private / Public	Medium	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Assemble list of downtown performance locations and make available to local and other interested performance groups.</li> <li>2. Assess viability of using Civic Center as performance venue and market to local groups.</li> <li>3. Contact University to list downtown venue as a performance location.</li> </ol>
	Public Art	Private / Public	Medium	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Work with the Champaign County Arts Council to help establish downtown Urbana as an opportunity to display and promote public art.</li> <li>2. Establish programs for the display of public art including murals.</li> <li>3. Consider public art themes in the redesign of entryway corridors such as North Broadway Avenue.</li> </ol>

<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Action Steps</b>
<b>DOWNTOWN NEIGHBORHOOD INITIATIVE</b>	Downtown Housing	Private / Public	High	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Contact owners of land and buildings in housing area to encourage development. Advocate particular housing types per plan.</li> <li>2. Organize “Housing Development Roundtable” which creates a forum for home builders and land owners to discuss how to facilitate new downtown housing.</li> <li>3. Review present incentives and disincentives for housing and suggest incentive programs which address funding, regulatory relief and infrastructure support.</li> <li>4. Organize and fund a downtown housing incentive program – (Public).</li> <li>5. Consider design guidelines for new residential development downtown.</li> </ol>
	Modify MOR Zone	Public	Year 1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Examine development regulations to ensure adaptive reuse projects are feasible</li> <li>2. Review this zone to assure that it accommodates mixed uses but does not change character of neighborhood.</li> <li>3. Consider performance-based zoning rather than use-based zoning.</li> <li>4. Consider financing programs to assist adaptive reuse projects.</li> </ol>
<b>NICHE MARKET INITIATIVE</b>	Historic Character	Public	High	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Consider historic preservation as a potential niche for downtown.</li> <li>2. Preserve historic character of by considering local historic district designation where appropriate.</li> </ol>
	Food and Entertainment District	Public / Private	Medium	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Design unique identifying features such as public lighting and signage for this area – (Public).</li> <li>2. Establish special zoning district which allows wide variety of lighting and signage, extended hours of operation, outdoor dining on public ROW, etc. – (Public)</li> <li>3. Establish committee of entertainment/hospitality business owners to identify other actions to encourage and recruit similar and allied businesses – (Private).</li> </ol>

				<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Establish marketing programs aimed at high school and university students – (Private).</li> <li>5. Prepare joint marketing program that might offer frequent-diner awards through participating venues, joint booking of entertainers, and an Entertainment District events calendar – (Private).</li> </ol>
<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Action Steps</b>
<b>LINCOLN SQUARE INITIATIVE</b>	Encourage Lincoln Square Improvements	Public	High	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Suggest to Lincoln Square ownership the need to open up access to the center per the plan.</li> <li>2. Continue to partner with Lincoln Square ownership on issues of signage, events and more public art.</li> <li>3. Consider financial support through TIF of actions taken by Lincoln Square which reflect plan.</li> <li>4. Install directory signage on the east side of mall.</li> </ol>
	Link Lincoln Square to Downtown	Private	Medium	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Refurbish external wall and free standing signage</li> <li>2. Increase use of transparent glass on building exterior, especially on north, south and east sides.</li> <li>3. Enhance directory signage outside of mall at north entry</li> <li>4. Redesign and rehabilitate entries and concourse floor to extend image of public street through mall.</li> <li>5. Work with City to optimize occupancy of mall.</li> <li>6. Reface north front of building to unify with Post Office at time of Post Office Square construction.</li> </ol>
	Develop Specific Lincoln Square Market Position	Private	Medium	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Establish a clear and distinctive market orientation for Lincoln Square that can be a theme for leasing and for tie-ins with downtown marketing.</li> <li>2. Consider the concepts of a public market within the mall corridor areas that would offer specialty food and craft goods for sale and also create an atmosphere consistent with the goals of the plan which is to create a food and entertainment niche for downtown.</li> </ol>

