CMAP

Will County
Fairmont Neighborhood Plan

Draft - February 15, 2012

Prepared by the Will County Land Use Department

With technical assistance provided by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning
Conceptual illustrations by Solomon Cordwell Buenz (SCB)

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Acronyms

AADT – Average annual daily traffic

CDC - Community Development Corporation

CMAP - Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning

CMAQ - Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program

EPA - Environmental Protection Agency

FHWA - Federal Highway Administration

FLIP – Future Leaders in Planning

GIS – Geographic Information System

HPC - Will County Historic Preservation Commission

HUD – U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

IDNR – Illinois Department of Natural Resources

IDOT – Illinois Department of Transportation

LTA – Local Technical Assistance Program

LRMP - Land Resource Management Plan

NRPA - National Recreation and Parks Association

RTA - Regional Transportation Authority

SRA – Strategic Regional Arterial

Section 1
Introduction and Regional Context

The Fairmont community is located in unincorporated Will County, between the City of Lockport and the City of Joliet. It is a community of approximately 2,500 residents founded in the early 20th Century, primarily to provide workforce housing for industries in Lockport and Joliet. The community was never fully developed and today contains a mixture of homes from various historical periods interspersed with vacant, undeveloped lots. Fairmont has struggled to attract investment and in many ways has been left behind by the growth which has occurred in other parts of Will County.

An aerial of the Fairmont community with parcel lines shown. Parcels in the western segment of the study area are much smaller in the subdivided residential areas when compared to the larger agricultural and undeveloped parcels in the eastern portion.

This document – the Fairmont Neighborhood Plan, abbreviated as "the Plan" – is hoped to turn around the fortunes of Fairmont, bringing new growth, improved infrastructure, and a stronger sense of identity to the community. The Plan should serve as a guide for elected officials, staff, community residents, business owners, and potential investors, allowing them to make informed administrative and implementation decisions about community development that affect land use, transportation, infrastructure, and capital improvements within Fairmont. The Plan's highest priorities are to provide county and local guidance and to address community needs and desires, but it also reflects how Fairmont fits into the larger region, to help the community understand and plan for the impact of regional economic and demographic changes. The Plan is not "set in stone"; it should be used as a guide for the community's future but also must be adapted as conditions change.

Coordination with Existing Plans

The Plan builds on past planning and design work that covers the Fairmont community. Two past plans in particular have shaped the Fairmont Neighborhood Plan. The first is Will County's Land Resource Management Plan (LRMP), which provides a future vision for growth and preservation for the entire county (2002). Within this plan, the Fairmont community is unique, as it is the only area classified as an urban area that is not within a municipality. Recognizing the challenges of planning for urban needs in an unincorporated area, the Will County Land Use Department led the creation of the Fairmont Neighborhood Plan to add a more detailed plan for the Fairmont area into the LRMP. A more detailed summary of the LRMP is available as part of the Existing Conditions Report produced as an interim product of the Fairmont Neighborhood Plan.

The second is GO TO 2040, the long-range plan for the Chicago metropolitan area, produced by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP). Adopted in October 2010 by leaders from across the seven-county region, GO TO 2040 guides the agency's activities, including the Local Technical Assistance (LTA) program through which CMAP assisted the Will County Land Use Department with the development of the Fairmont Neighborhood Plan. The recommendations contained in this document are consistent with the principles of GO TO 2040, which is described more fully in the Existing Conditions Report.

Beyond these, the Plan also incorporates ideas and recommendations from the Will County 2030 Transportation Plan, the Openlands Plan for a Heritage Park Corridor in Joliet and Lockport, the Community Design Workshop which occurred in Fairmont in 2008, and the Fairmont-focused planning done by high school students in 2009 through CMAP's Future Leaders in Planning (FLIP) program. It also is intended to be consistent with the comprehensive plans of Fairmont's adjacent municipalities, including Lockport's Master Plan.

In addition to completed studies, the Plan also acknowledges ongoing reports, including Will County's Zoning Ordinance Update and the City of Joliet's Redevelopment Plan for the Joliet Correctional Center and U.S. Steel site. CMAP is currently helping the City of Joliet to create the Redevelopment Plan, which includes property adjacent to the southern border of the Fairmont community. Joliet's Redevelopment Plan may impact Fairmont by recommending future open space connections and potential development that will bring new investment into the area.

Planning Process

To create the Plan, the Will County Land Use Department used a multi-step planning process that was built upon public input and guidance. The eight-month planning process included multiple opportunities for public review. The key steps in the planning process are illustrated in the following figure.

Figure 1. Planning process

FIGURE 3. PLANNING PROCESS

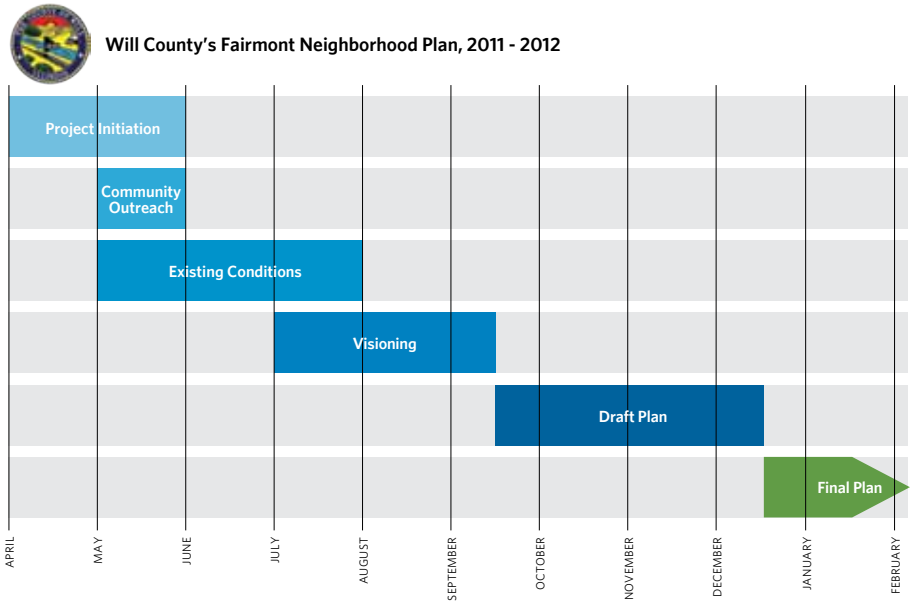
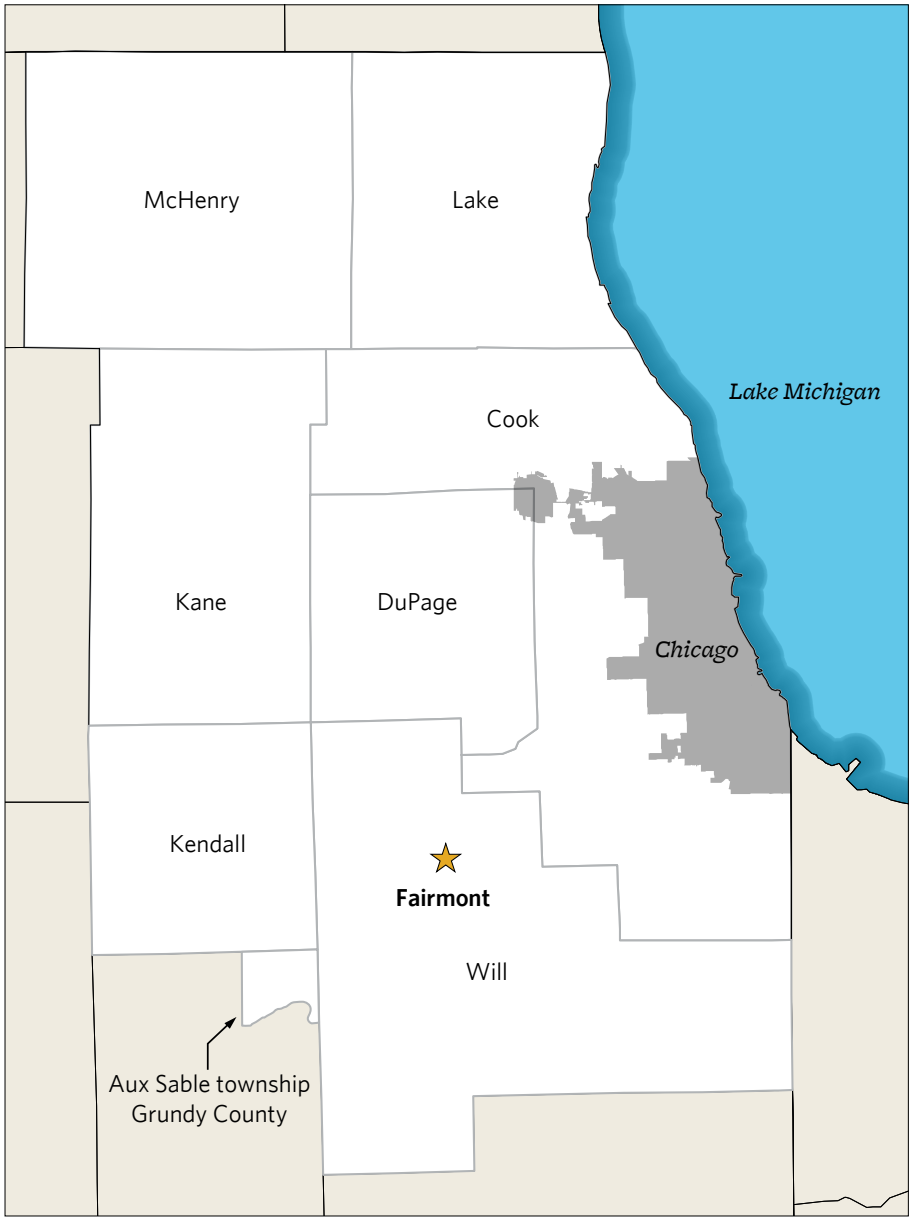
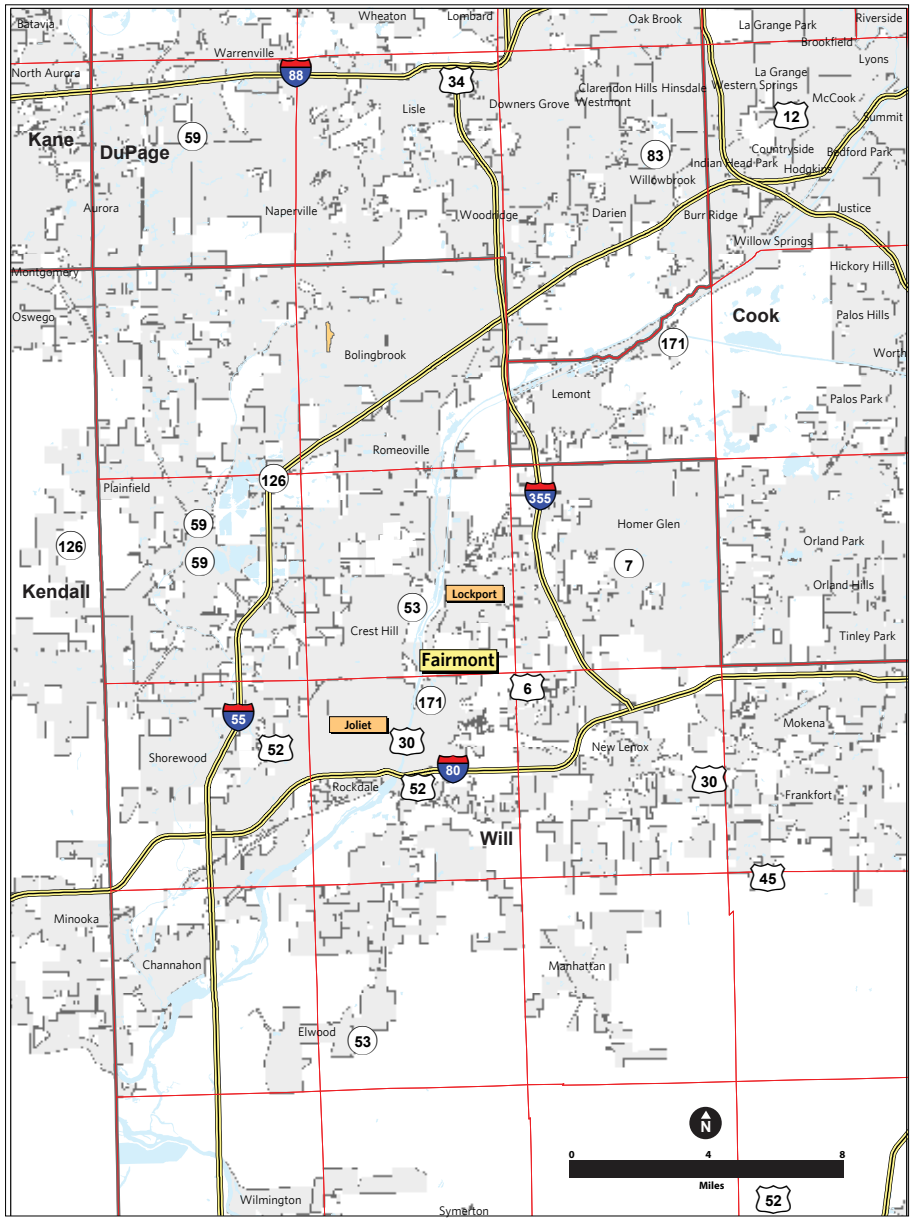


Figure 2. Fairmont study area

Figure 3. Location





Section 2
Challenges and Opportunities

The purpose of this section is to describe the major challenges and opportunities that face the Fairmont community as it seeks to plan for its future. This section includes research, analysis, and maps taken from the interim Existing Conditions Report, produced for the community in July 2011. It also includes conclusions from the community engagement activities conducted in Fairmont, which are summarized in greater detail in the Appendix.

Summary of Key Challenges and Opportunities

Fairmont is a distressed community with a declining population. Although it is surrounded by growing communities, Fairmont has lost population and is faced with high poverty and unemployment rates. Housing in the community is primarily detached single-family homes that are significantly older than Will County averages, presenting a serious challenge in attracting new residents.

Fairmont also suffers from an abundance of vacant land and structures. Vacant parcels dot the community, bringing down nearby property values and damaging the appearance of the community. Little commercial land exists in Fairmont, limited to auto-oriented industrial uses and a smattering of retail businesses on Route 171. While the community yearns for reinvestment, this has been slow to come; while this is partially due to market conditions, some stakeholders believe that land use regulations in the community do not match its residents' vision and should be updated.

Basic infrastructure systems such as sidewalks and streetlights do not exist in Fairmont, and their absence is keenly felt by the community's residents. While two Pace bus routes pass through Fairmont, accessing the bus stops is a challenge and ridership is low. Many streets are in poor condition, and a lack of adequate infrastructure (curbs, storm sewer, overland flood routing, etc.) contribute to flooding problems in some locations.

Many of the issues facing Fairmont are impacted by its status as an unincorporated community. It is one of only a handful of unincorporated areas in Will County to be considered an urban area by the County's long-range plan. Because of this, no single general-purpose unit of local government has primary responsibility for the Fairmont community; services are provided by the County, Lockport Township, Lockport Township Park District, and other governments. Therefore service provision is fragmented and complex, and some services such as garbage pickup do not exist at all.

Despite the challenges enumerated above, Fairmont has reason for high hopes for its future. It has a strong system of religious institutions, with nine churches located in the community, with many of them taking an active interest in the results of the Plan. Fairmont has a strong identity as a community, and a unique though largely undocumented history. Even many of the challenges identified above can serve as opportunities: Fairmont's many vacant parcels, for example, are potential sites for new homes or businesses. They also provide an opportunity to expand park space in the community, which is highly desired by its residents, or to support local agriculture such as community gardens.

The remainder of this chapter describes key current conditions in Fairmont in more detail, including analysis of demographics, land use and housing, transportation, the natural environment, community facilities, and history and identity.

Demographics

Fairmont is a moderate- to low-income community, with significant pockets of middle-class and working-class family households, as well as more impoverished sections. It has high rates of poverty and unemployment, and it has lost population in recent years. Fairmont is overwhelmingly a community of single-family homes, with a very limited number of multifamily units in the area. Analysis of U.S. Census and American Community Survey data yields the key findings contained in the following pages.

Population, Race, and Ethnicity

Despite being in the region's fastest growing county, Fairmont is losing population. As shown in Table 2.1, between 2000 and 2010, Fairmont's population declined by 4.1 percent (from 2,563 to 2,459 residents). That decline stands in contrast to the rapid population growth of Will County over the same period (34.9 percent). Region-wide, population grew by 3.5 percent during the same period.

The growth that has occurred in surrounding areas provides Fairmont with the opportunity to remake its identity. Will County in general, and Lockport in particular, have grown substantially over the last decade, but Fairmont has witnessed little of that growth within its boundaries. However, Fairmont is well-positioned to benefit from additional growth once market conditions improve.

Table 2.1. Population Change 2000 to 2010

	Fairmont	Will County	Region
Population, 2000	2,563	502,266	8,146,264
Population, 2010	2,459	677,560	8,431,386
Population Change, 2000-2010 (Pct.)	-4.1%	34.9%	3.5%

Source: 2000 and 2010 Census

Fairmont is unique in its racial and ethnic diversity, particularly for Will County. As shown in Table 2.2, nearly three-quarters of Fairmont residents are members of a minority group, far exceeding the same percentage for Will County (30 percent) and for the region (47 percent). As shown in Table 2.3, between 2000 and 2010 Fairmont gained Hispanic or Latino population, with declines in other racial and ethnic groups.

Table 2.2. Race and Ethnicity, 2010

	Fairmont	
	Count	**Percent**
White	710	28.9%
Hispanic or Latino*	555	22.6%
Black or African American	1,133	46.1%
Asian	8	0.3%
Other**	53	2.2%

Source: 2010 Census
* includes Hispanic or Latino residents of any race
** includes American Indian and Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, Some Other Race, and Two or More Races

Table 2.3. Change in Race and Ethnicity, 2000-2010

	Fairmont		Will County		Region	
	Change in Population	**Percent Change**	**Change in Population**	**Percent Change**	**Change in Population**	**Percent Change**
White	-129	-15.4%	67,054	17.3%	-200,702	-4.3%
Hispanic or Latino*	276	98.9%	62,049	141.8%	414,407	29.4%
Black or African American	-240	-17.5%	22,439	43.2%	-72,117	-4.7%
Asian	-4	-33.3%	19,437	176.4%	137,701	36.6%
Other**	-7	-11.7%	4,315	61.9%	5,833	4.3%

Source: 2000 and 2010 Census
* includes Hispanic or Latino residents of any race
** includes American Indian and Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, Some Other Race, and Two or More Races

Table 2.4. Age Cohorts and Median Age, 2010

	Fairmont		Will County		Region	
	Count	**%**	**Count**	**%**	**Count**	**%**
Under 19 years	720	29.3%	215,132	31.8%	2,346,937	27.8%
20 to 34 years	516	21.0%	119,370	17.6%	1,790,049	21.2%
35 to 49 years	512	20.8%	163,084	24.1%	1,807,886	21.4%
50 to 64 years	448	18.2%	117,160	17.3%	1,534,488	18.2%
65 to 79 years	196	8.0%	47,240	7.0%	679,470	8.1%
80 years and over	67	2.7%	15574	2.3%	272556	3.2%
Median Age (2010)		34.7		35.4		N/A

Source: 2010 US Census

Housing Characteristics

Housing in Fairmont is older, smaller, and much less expensive than housing in Will County and the region. In 2010, the median age of a home in Fairmont was 54 years, as shown in Table 2.5. This is similar to the Chicago region (46 years), but stands in contrast to Will County (23 years). Unlike Will County, whose rapid housing growth led to a substantial decrease in the age of structures, the addition of a far smaller percentage of new homes in Fairmont over the last decade has had a negligible impact. Fairmont's homes tend to be smaller on average than those in Will County and the Chicago region, with an average of 5.3 rooms in 2009 (compared to 6.4 for Will County and 5.4 for the region).

Table 2.5. Housing Age

	Fairmont		Will County		Region	
	Count	**Percent**	**Count**	**Percent**	**Count**	**Percent**
Built 2000 and after	88	9.1%	52,369	23.1%	307,175	9.2%
Built 1990 to 1999	15	1.5%	53,206	23.5%	345,094	10.4%
Built 1980 to 1989	64	6.6%	20,665	9.1%	305,277	9.2%
Built 1970 to 1979	47	4.8%	33,840	14.9%	476,954	14.4%
Built 1960 to 1969	148	15.2%	20,890	9.2%	411,159	12.4%
Built 1950 to 1959	286	29.4%	18,532	8.2%	460,203	13.9%
Built 1940 to 1949	111	11.4%	7,742	3.4%	231,878	7.0%
Built 1939 or earlier	213	21.9%	19,299	8.5%	784,965	23.6%
Median year built, 2009		1956		1986		1965

Source: 2005-09 American Community Survey, U.S. Census

However, the starkest housing contrast for Fairmont lies in its value. Table 2.6 shows that owner-occupied home values in Fairmont are about half of the value of homes overall in Will County and in the Chicago region. An opportunity may exist for Fairmont to diversify its housing stock with newer homes at various price points. The age and relative affordability of Fairmont's older homes may have had a dampening effect on new home construction. However, a market may exist for current and potential new Fairmont residents who desire newer homes in the community.

Table 2.6. Housing Value

	Fairmont		Will County		Region	
	Count	**Percent**	**Count**	**Percent**	**Count**	**Percent**
Less than $100,000	182	27.5%	9,261	5.1%	108,665	5.3%
$100,000 to $149,999	176	26.6%	20,519	11.3%	182,204	8.9%
$150,000 to $199,999	181	27.3%	35,460	19.6%	313,805	15.3%
$200,000 to $249,999	58	8.8%	35,178	19.5%	330,215	16.1%
$250,000 to $299,000	28	4.2%	22,829	12.6%	236,885	11.6%
$300,000 to $399,999	37	5.6%	30,312	16.8%	389,185	19.0%
$400,000 to $499,999	0	0.0%	14,596	8.1%	196,534	9.6%
$500,000 to $749,999	0	0.0%	9,753	5.4%	181,827	8.9%
$750,000 or more	0	0.0%	2,937	1.6%	107,841	5.3%
Median value, 2009	$124,800		$235,800		$249,900	

Source: 2005-09 American Community Survey, U.S. Census

Economic Characteristics

The number of employed adults in Fairmont has fallen dramatically since 2000. The number of employed adults in Fairmont dropped 34 percent between 2000 and 2009. Will County saw a growth of 32 percent of employed adults over the same period, spurred on by the rapid growth of the last decade. For the Chicago region, the number of employed adults grew by 4 percent.

Fairmont's workers are increasingly employed in industries and jobs that are declining at the county and regional level. Fairmont has long been considered a "blue-collar" community, and over the last decade the share of workers in manufacturing, construction, transportation and production jobs grew. However, data at the county and regional level indicate that jobs in those areas are declining while jobs in areas such as education, health care and services are increasing, and Fairmont's residents are not benefitting from the shift.

Fairmont's median income is much lower than the county and the region. Table 2.7 shows that in 2009, the median income in Fairmont was $45,476, while median incomes were $60,289 in the region and $74,118 in Will County.

Table 2.7. Household Income, 2009

	Fairmont	Will County	Region
Less than $25,000	213	25,353	590,496
$25,000 to $49,999	202	39,894	647,461
$50,000 to $74,999	179	4,2395	560,678
$75,000 to $99,999	135	36,787	413,233
$100,000 to $149,000	67	42,427	453,565
$150,000 and over	0	25,773	359,250
Median Income (2009)	$45,476	$74,118	$60,289

Source: 2005-2009 ACS

Land Use

Current land use in Fairmont is shown in Figure 4 and is summarized briefly in the paragraphs below. On the following pages, several issues are described in more detail, including Fairmont's significant amount of vacant land and housing, its lack of thriving retail, and the current zoning regulations that cover the community.

The majority of the residential areas in Fairmont include single-family detached homes. These homes are mostly modest sized single-story homes on fairly narrow parcels. It is common to see older homes adjacent to new homes throughout all residential blocks. Many of the residential blocks suffer from vacancies that detract from the sense of community and cohesiveness of the neighborhoods. Very few multi-family units exist in the Fairmont community. Most multi-family units are part of larger group homes or assisted living developments.

A limited number of retail businesses exist in the community. All existing retail is located along Route 171 and includes two restaurants and a barber shop. The majority of acreage along Route 171 in Fairmont is used by auto wreckers and auto service businesses. Many of these uses have outdoor storage areas that are unscreened. Other industrial uses within Fairmont include a range of uses such as storage, landscaping companies, offices, and heavy industry. Similar to the auto service uses, many industrial uses have unscreened outdoor storage areas.

Several acres within the Fairmont study area are used for active farming especially in the eastern portion. Some of the larger parcels that are zoned agricultural also appear to be sitting already platted, fallow and unused. Some parcels are also used for horses and for keeping outdoor livestock.

Vacant Land and Housing

Vacant land and housing in Fairmont is a significant problem. As shown in Table 2.8, over 700 of the lots in the study area, which is 16 percent of the total acreage, are vacant. This includes both vacant platted parcels and structures. Vacancies detract from any sense of "rhythm" in the neighborhoods and create unoccupied pockets within residential areas that are often unmaintained and unattractive. In addition to vacancies within neighborhoods, a large number of platted parcels are undeveloped, especially near the intersection of Green Garden Place and Rev. Walton Drive. Vacancies are highlighted in the map shown in Figure 5.

Table 2.8. Existing Land Use Inventory

	Number of Lots	Acreage	Percent of Total Acreage
Residential	1,582	463.9	48%
Commercial	77	71.6	7%
Exempt	44	109.8	11%
Agriculture	28	268.8	28%
Industrial	24	28.0	3%
No coding in parcel data	13	30.5	3%
Total, non-vacant parcels	1,768	972.8	100%
Vacant**	715	161.5	16%

Source: Will County, December 2009
** Approximate based upon field survey work in June 2011.

As shown in Table 2.9, vacant homes are more common in Fairmont than in the rest of the region. More than 11 percent of homes in Fairmont are not occupied, which is more than twice the Will County average. Between 2000 and 2010, vacant units increased from 40 units to 106 units. This major increase can be partially attributed to the localized impact of the national housing market crash and foreclosure crisis but is still a significant concern for Fairmont.

Table 2.9. Housing Occupancy

	Fairmont		County		Region	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Occupied	842	88.8%	225256	94.8%	3088156	91.6%
Vacant	106	11.2%	12245	5.2%	284601	8.4%

Source: 2010 Census, U.S. Census Bureau

The large number of vacant properties, while a major challenge, presents excellent potential for infill development. Because of the large number of vacancies located throughout the community, several sites could be attractive for new infill development. Promoting infill development to reinvest in vacant structures and residential lots was one of the top initiatives recommended by residents at during the public engagement process, with a focus on attracting new families to fill vacant homes.

Figure 4. Existing land use

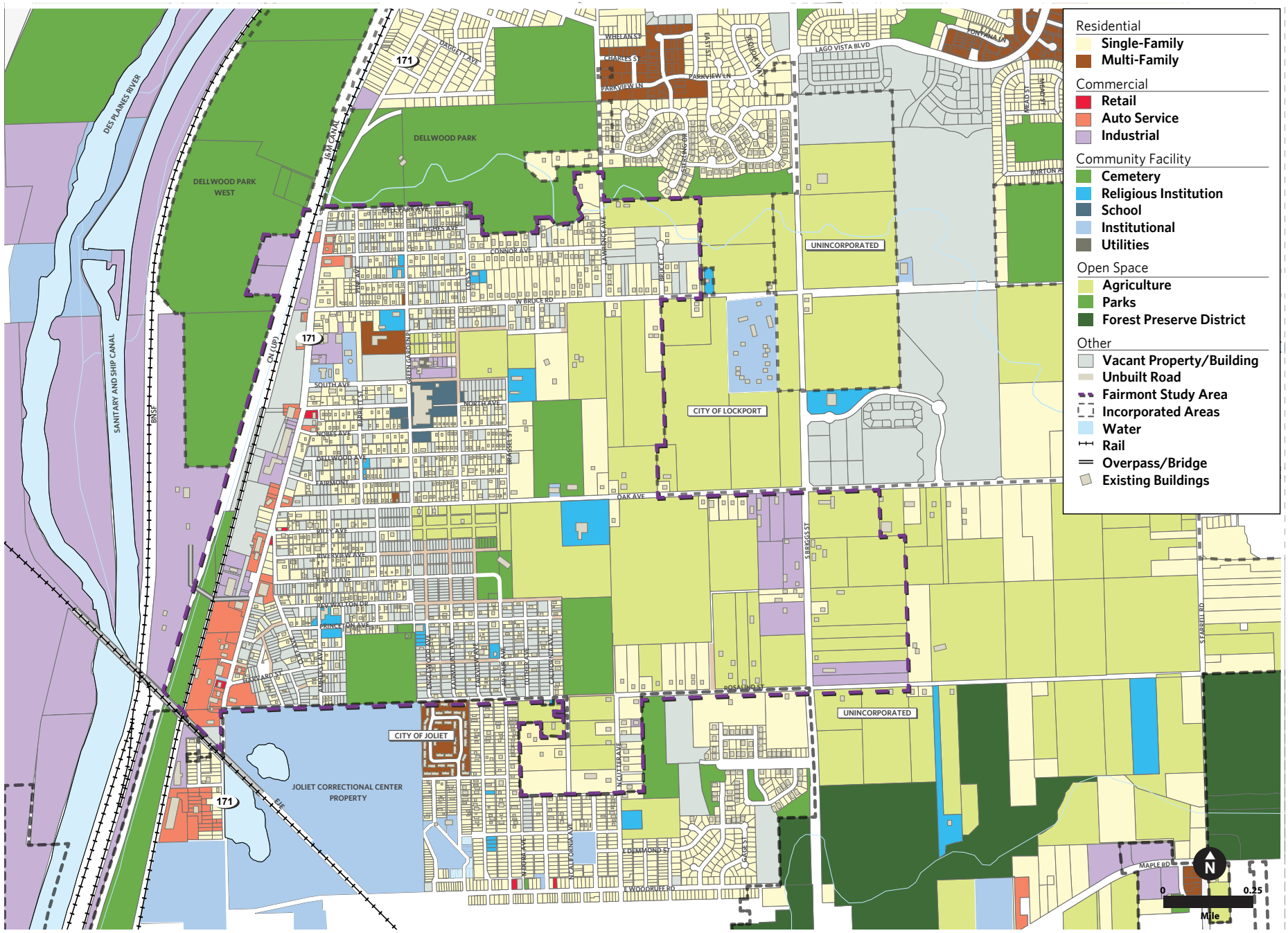
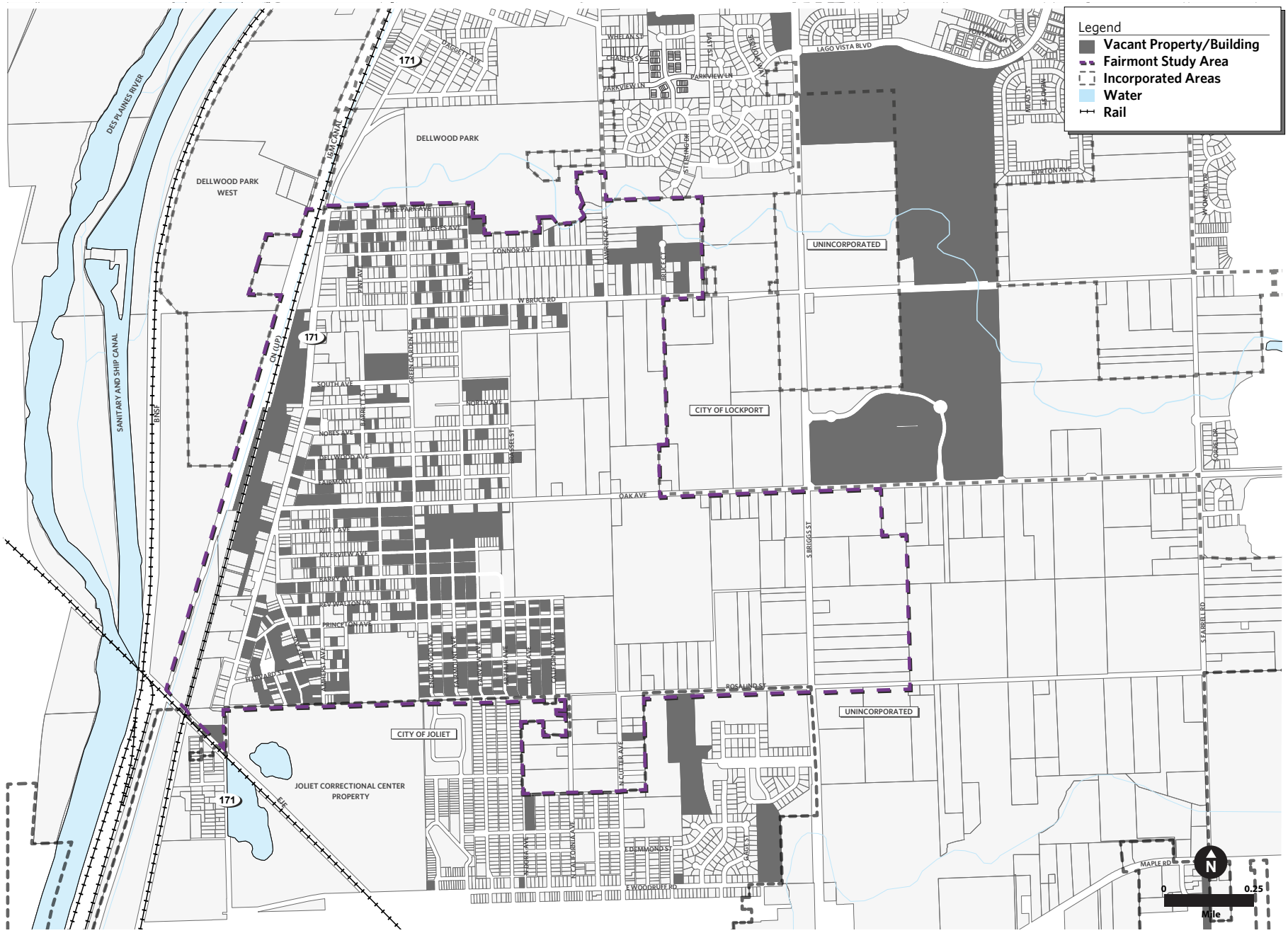


Figure 5. Vacancies



Retail Underdevelopment

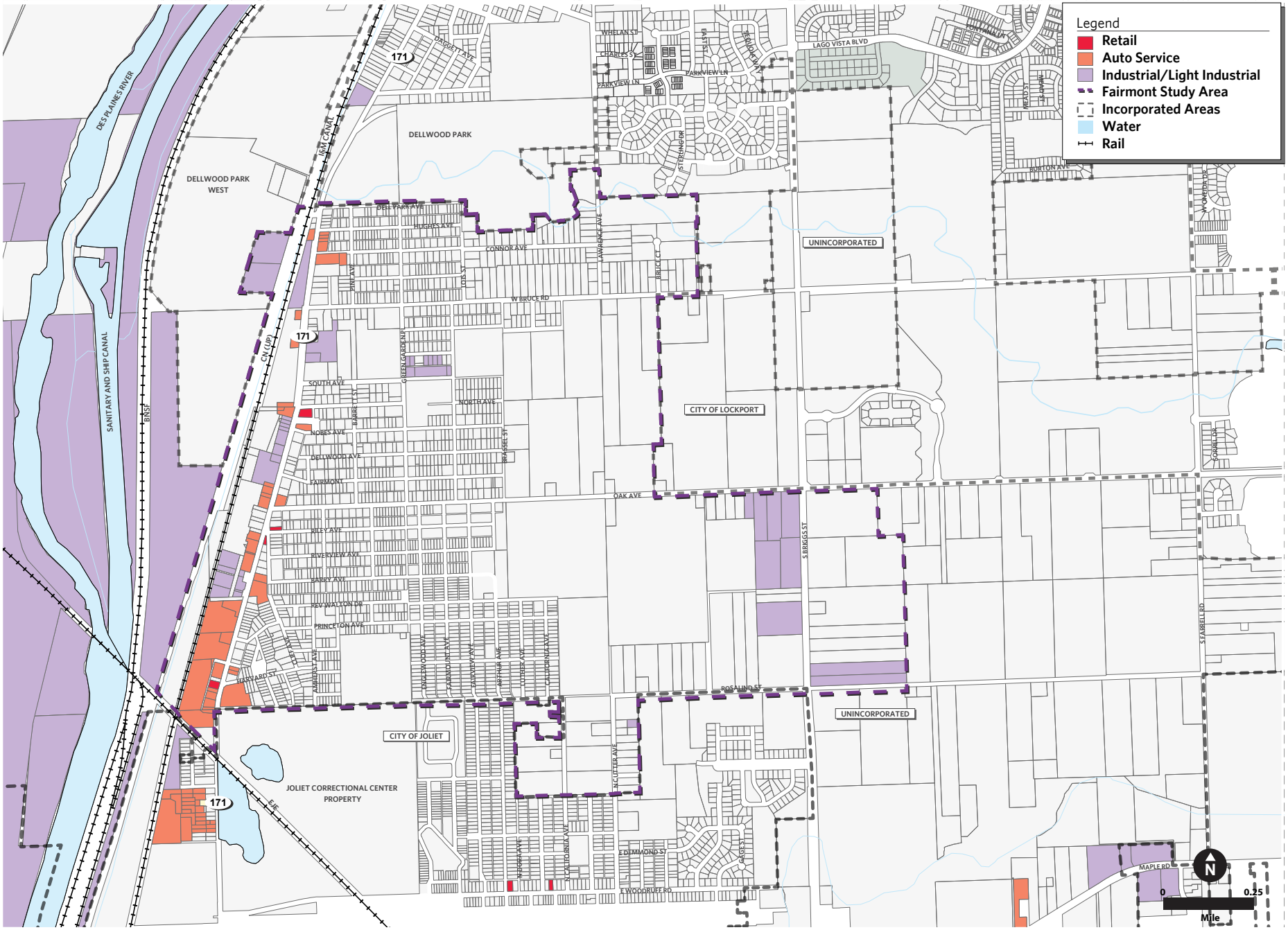
Fairmont currently has few retail opportunities, as shown in Figure 6. Route 171, an arterial roadway that forms the western boundary of Fairmont, is the key commercial corridor in the community. The majority of businesses located in this corridor consist of automotive service and outdoor storage businesses.

Route 171 businesses do provide employment opportunities and attract potential shoppers into the area. The majority of the businesses (automotive and industrial) along Route 171 appear to be well occupied based upon a windshield survey of the parking lots and activity within each business. However, the corridor is quite automobile-oriented, and the built environment in the Route 171 Corridor does not support walkability. There are no sidewalks located within the corridor, and there are very few reasons that pedestrians would walk to, or along, this segment of the street. For this reason, it appears that few Fairmont residents patronize the businesses in this area, or if they do, they likely drive.

One of the top issues identified through the public engagement process is the need to attract more businesses to open along Route 171 and within the Fairmont community. Many residents noted that Fairmont should build upon the high traffic volumes along Route 171 and Briggs Street to promote new retail and employment opportunities. There was also considerable interest in attracting new business to locate near or within the residential areas of Fairmont.

Many residents who attended the public workshops identified a number of desirable businesses to locate in Fairmont including a farmers market, small grocery store, gas station, or convenience store. In general, residents expressed a strong interest in redeveloping the community's considerable supply of vacant land with retail businesses.

Figure 6. Commercial and industrial



Zoning Regulations

The Fairmont community is in unincorporated Will County, so the County regulates land use in this area. Most of the unincorporated areas within Will County are rural or low-density suburban; Fairmont is unique in being an urbanized area that is not within a municipality. Therefore, it appears that the County's existing zoning districts may not be ideally suited to regulate land use in a community like Fairmont. Zoning is shown in Figure 7, with brief descriptions of the major districts in Table 2.10.

Currently, Will County is working with a consultant group, led by Duncan Associates, to update their Zoning Ordinance. The current ordinance was adopted in 1978 with several amendments since that time. In May 2011, a Concepts and Directions Report was written with the intention of forming the conceptual framework for the new ordinance. One of the key objectives of the update is to reinforce the county's leadership role in promoting livability and sustainability. As the County works to update its Zoning Ordinance, it should ensure that the types of development envisioned in Fairmont, as recommended in this Plan, are allowed.

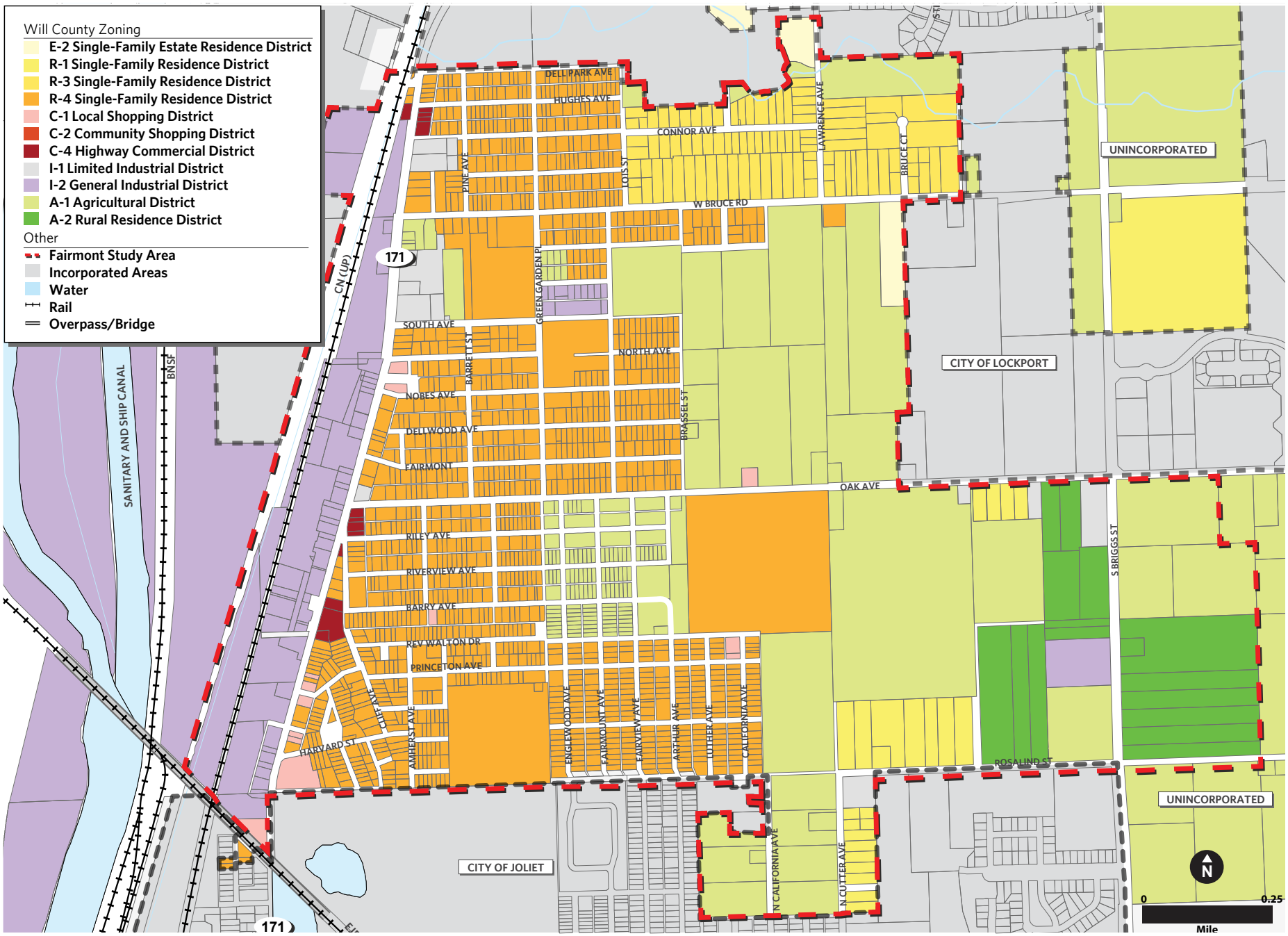
During the public engagement phase for the Fairmont Plan, some property owners indicated that the County's land use regulations do in fact restrict their activities. Due to the size of some parcels, constructing new homes that meet the county zoning requirements, including minimum setbacks, presents challenges. Will County has taken steps to address this issue. In 2006, the Department amended the lot size requirements for a residential district to allow development on smaller lot sizes. Further, in 2007, the Will County Board passed Resolution No. 07-39, which amended the Zoning Ordinance to allow development on the smaller lots that already exist in the Fairmont area, however, not all of the smaller lots were addressed Proposed zoning changes to requirements for nonconforming lots and uses would greatly assist future development in Fairmont.

Despite these positive directions, some challenges remain. For example, many residents who attended public workshops expressed a desire for additional quality "senior housing" units. However, there are very few multi-family housing units in Fairmont today, and the Will County Zoning Ordinance has no parcels zoned for multi-family housing within the study area. Proposed zoning ordinance changes include allowing "group living facilities".

Table 2.10. Zoning Characteristics

Classification	Area	Minimum Frontage	Other
E-2, Single-Family Estate Residence District	Minimum area of 2.5 acres	Minimum frontage of 180 feet	No structure shall exceed the height restriction per the Building Code; Lot coverage 20%
R-1 Single-Family Residence District	Minimum area of 60,000 square feet	Minimum frontage of 165 feet	No structure shall exceed the height restriction per the Building Code; Lot coverage 20%
R-3, Single-Family Residence District	Minimum area of 20,000 square feet	Minimum frontage of 180 feet	No structure shall exceed the height restriction per the Building Code; Lot coverage 30%
R-4, Single-Family Residence District	Minimum area of 12,500 square feet	Minimum frontage of 70 feet	No structure shall exceed the height restriction per the Building Code; Lot coverage 40%
R-5, Single-Family Residence District (*not currently in Fairmont)	Minimum area of 10,000 square feet	Minimum frontage of 70 feet	No principle structure shall exceed two and one-half stories, or thirty-five feet in height, and no accessory structure shall exceed one story or 15 feet in height. Lot coverage – Forty-five percent.
R-6, Multi-Family Residence District (*not currently in Fairmont)	Maximum of 12 units per acre	Minimum frontage of 60 feet	No principle structure shall exceed three stories or 40 feet, and no accessory structure shall exceed two stories or 25 feet in height Lot coverage – Forty-five percent
.C-1 Local Shopping District	Minimum area of 12,000 square feet	Minimum frontage of 80 feet	Maximum height of 25 feet; Floor Area Ratio not to exceed 1.0
C-2 Community Shopping District	Minimum area of 12,000 square feet	Minimum frontage of 80 feet	Maximum height of 45 feet; Floor Area Ratio not to exceed 2.0
C-4 Highway Commercial District	Minimum area of 20,000 square feet	Minimum frontage of 80 feet	Maximum height of 45 feet; Floor Area Ratio not to exceed 2.0
I-1 Limited Industrial District	Minimum area of 10,000 square feet	Minimum frontage of 60 feet	Maximum height of 35 feet; Floor area ratio not to exceed 1.2
I-2 General Industrial District	Minimum area of 10,000 square feet	Minimum frontage of 80 feet	No structure shall exceed 2 stories or 35 feet when within 200 feet of a residence. Beyond 200ft. from a residence district, one additional foot in height may be added from each 2 feet of distance. Floor area ratio not to exceed 1.5
A-1 Agricultural District	Minimum area of 10 acres	Minimum frontage of 300 feet	No structure shall exceed the height restriction per the Building Code; Lot coverage 20%
A-2 Rural Residence District	Minimum area of 2.5 acres	Minimum frontage of 300 feet	No structure shall exceed the height restriction per the Building Code; Lot coverage 20%

Figure 7. Current zoning



Transportation

A well-functioning transportation system is a key priority of residents of Fairmont. However, transportation infrastructure in Fairmont has a number of shortcomings, including a lack of basic facilities such as sidewalks and street lights, coupled with inadequate maintenance of the infrastructure that does exist. The transportation system in the Fairmont community is shown in Figures 8-10.

A lack of basic transportation infrastructure is one of the top issues in Fairmont. Residents and business owners who attended public meetings as part of the planning process continually raised concerns regarding existing infrastructure and were primarily concerned with the lack of street lights and sidewalks.

No formal sidewalks exist along the majority of the public streets in Fairmont, so many residents walk on the streets, especially near Fairmont School. (Will County has applied for a grant to construct a segment of sidewalk near Fairmont School through the Federal Safe Routes to School program, but the success of this application is not yet known). The lack of sidewalks can create unsafe conditions for motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists, especially in the evening when it can be difficult to see pedestrians and bicyclists on the street. Limited street lighting compounds the safety issue created by a lack of sidewalks. At the first public meeting, several residents noted that there are not enough street lights within the residential neighborhoods and discussed the need to improve street lighting within the community.

There are also limited pedestrian or bicycle connections outside of the community to adjacent neighborhoods, parks, and community facilities, which also discourages walking and bicycling as an alternative mode of transportation. In addition to the lack of sidewalks, there are also no off-street bike trails in Fairmont. Off-street trails do exist outside of Fairmont in Dellwood Park, and one regionally significant facility, the I&M Canal Trail, passes within a mile of Fairmont. Unfortunately, accessing these trails from Fairmont is difficult, and no clearly demarcated direct connections exist. For example, the nearest connection to the I&M Canal trail is through Dellwood Park, approximately 1 miles north of Fairmont.

Two Pace bus routes provide service in Fairmont: Route #509 Forest Park and Route #834 Joliet-Downers Grove. The Pace bus routes provide connectivity to the two nearest Metra stations, which are Joliet Union Station and the Lockport Metra Station. Although marked bus stops exist in the community, no formal bus shelters exist. Currently, based primarily upon resident's input expressed during this planning process, the Will County Land Use Department is working with Lockport Township and Pace to introduce bus shelters at key locations along Green Garden Place.

Infrastructure condition is also a concern. In general, the conditions of most street surfaces in the Fairmont community are in poor condition. Many streets are in need of resurfacing or pothole filling. Furthermore, lack of curbing throughout the community has also led to deterioration along many sections of pavement edges.

The residents of Fairmont clearly understand the importance of infrastructure, including roadways, utilities, water, sewer, and drainage. At a number of public meetings, the top issues for attendees included poor infrastructure and the potential costs to make the necessary improvements. At one meeting, when asked to vote on the most important idea presented at the meeting, attendees clearly identified the need to improve all aspects of infrastructure as their highest priority (approximately 70 percent voted it as the top issue).

The public engagement process also gave stakeholders an opportunity to identify potential specific improvements that they would like to see. Numerous residents indicated support for addressing drainage issues and installing street lights, signs and sidewalks and repairing streets. Residents were particularly interested in the conditions of the major collector streets that served the community and expressed interest in multi-modal transportation improvements on these roadways.

Figure 8. Roadway system

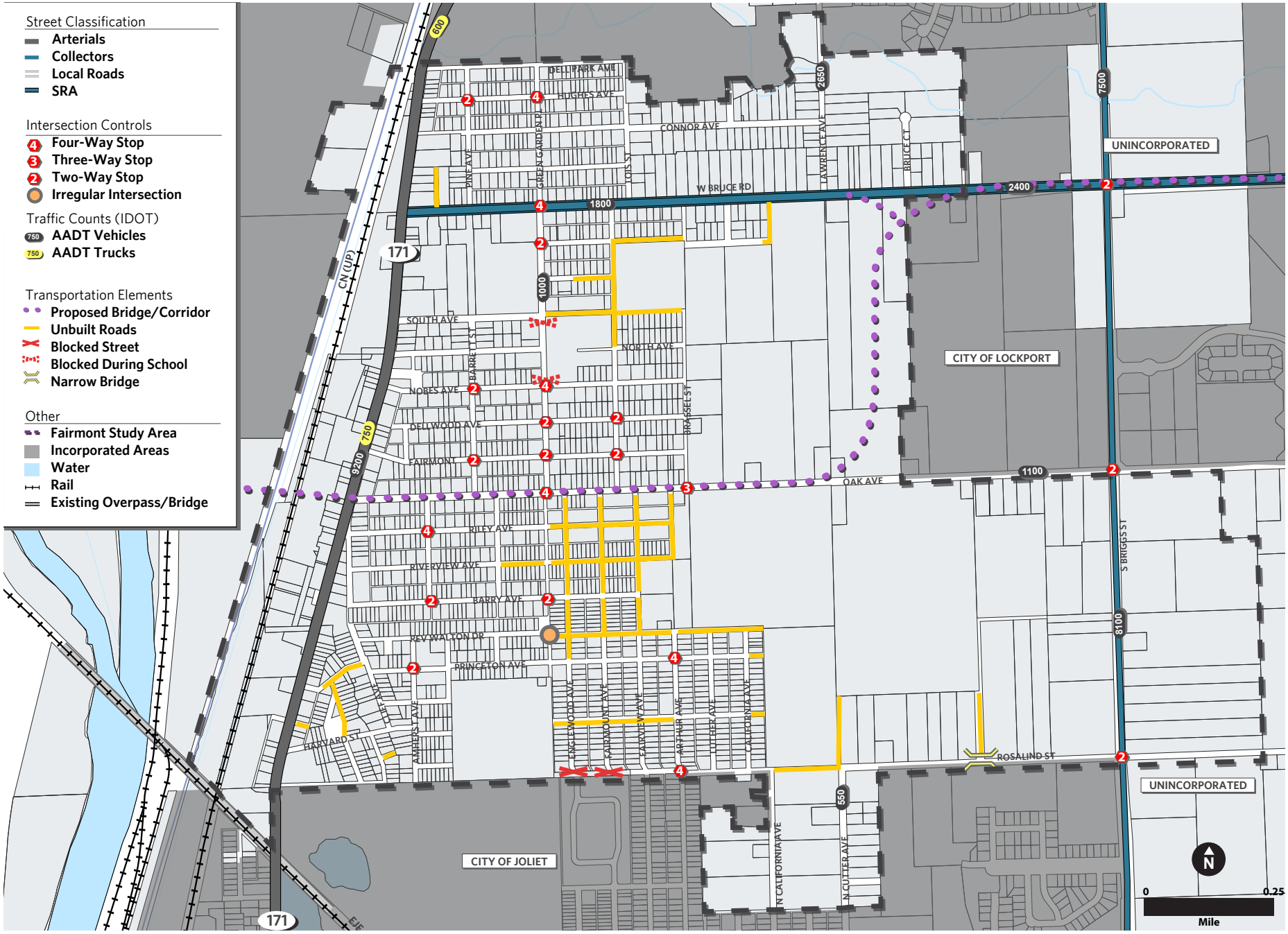


Figure 9. Pedestrian circulation

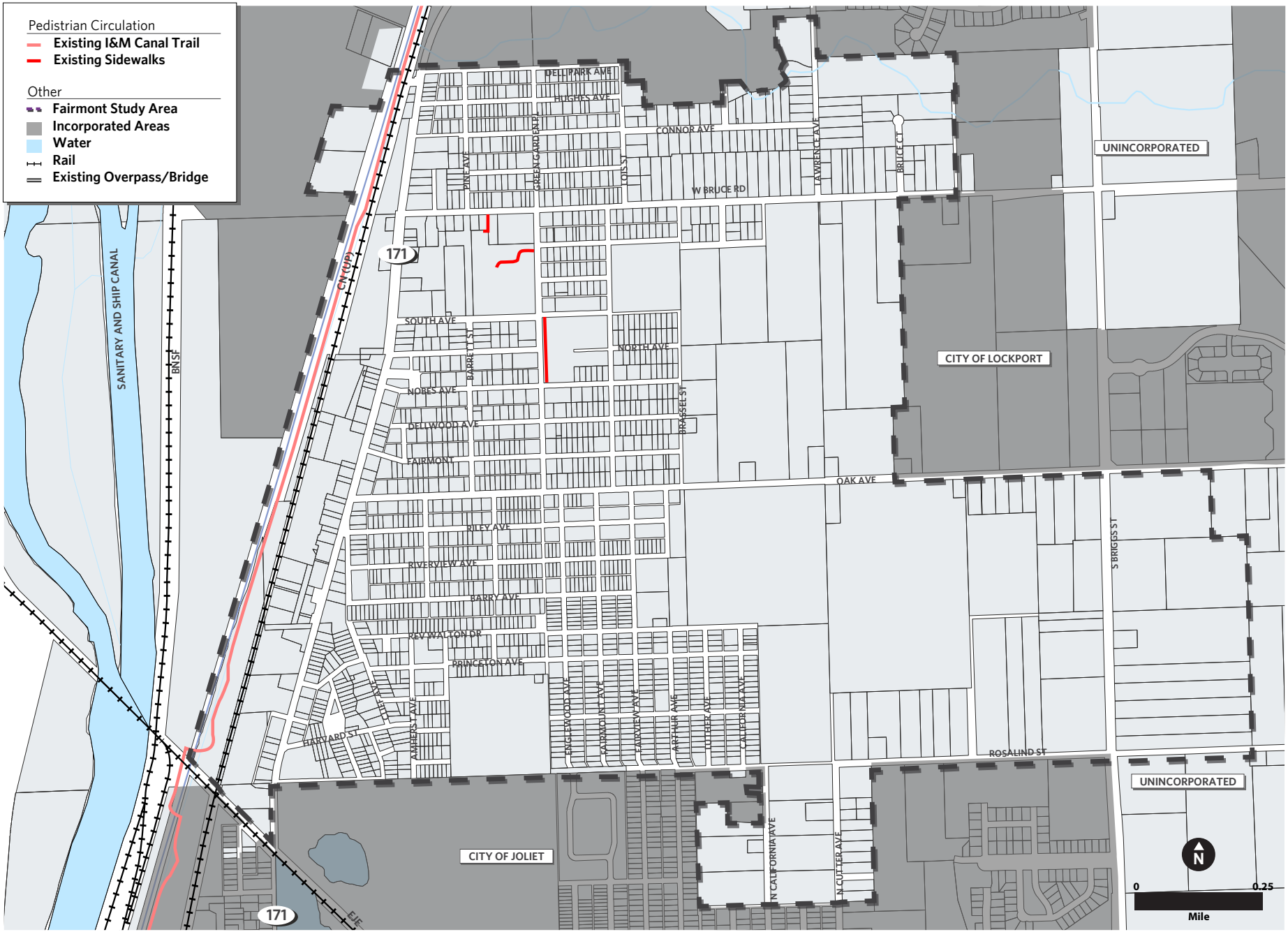
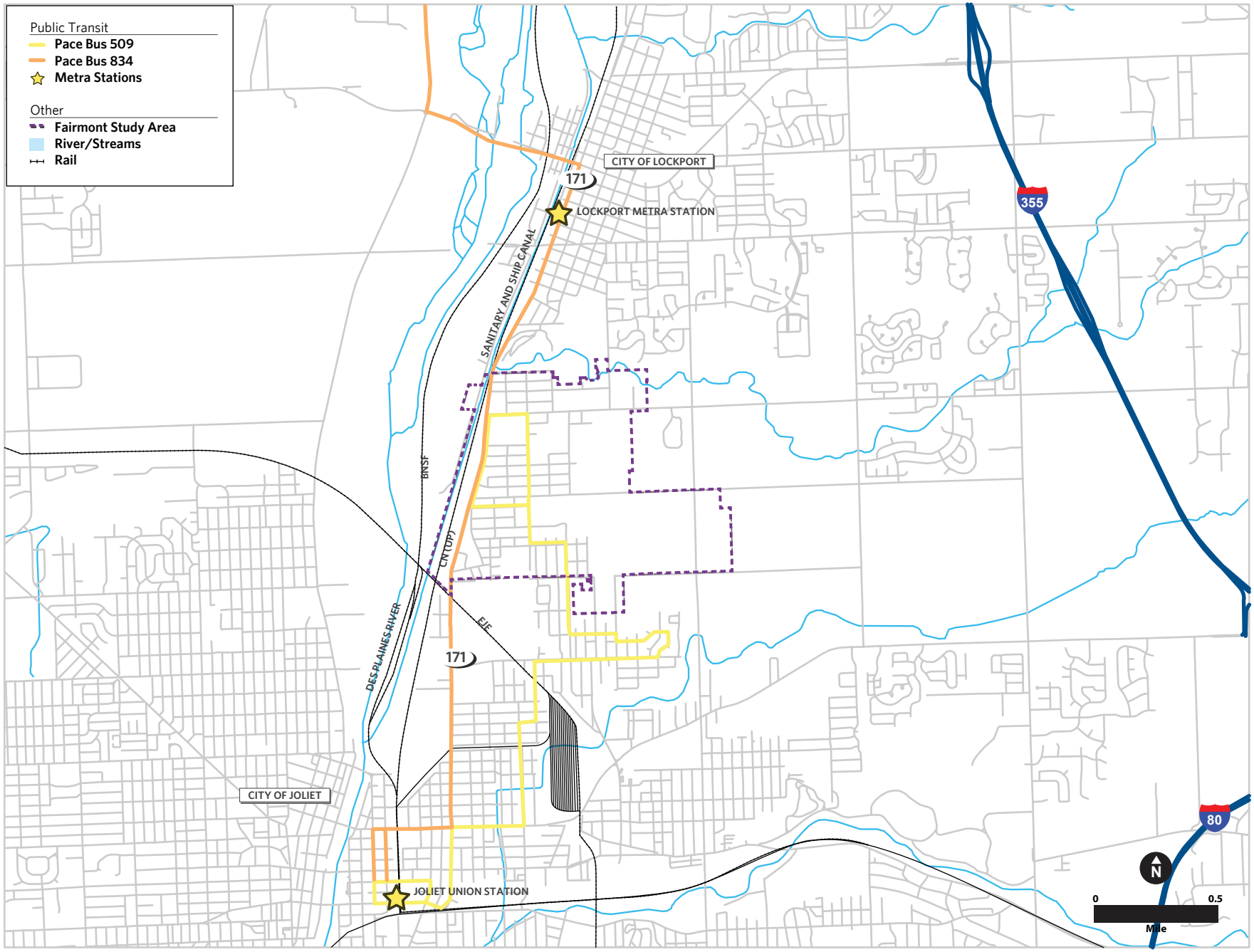


Figure 10. Transit



Natural Environment

The Existing Conditions Report identifies a number of valuable environmental features within Fairmont, but no sensitive lands of region-wide significance. Key issues regarding the natural environment to be addressed in the Fairmont Plan include flooding, which is a significant concern for residents in some parts of the community, and access to parks and open space. Also, the concept of local food production has had considerable resonance in Fairmont and is also discussed further below.

Flooding and Stormwater Management

Flooding is a significant problem in some areas of Fairmont. As shown on Figure 11, some parcels are likely impacted by the existence of a floodplain that radiates from Faction Run Creek, and two wetlands near Fairmont School. Several areas outside of the designated floodplain are likely impacted by poor drainage or inadequate stormwater systems.

In addition, flooding problems are compounded by the unimproved transportation system described in the previous section. Because no curbs or gutters exist on streets in the community, most streets are crowned to drain into the adjacent open ditches. At the first public meeting, a number of residents expressed concern regarding the flooding of residential properties adjoining the streets. According to residents, potential causes may be 1) that as streets were resurfaced over time the elevation of the streets has continued to rise, and 2) existing open ditches and culverts may become obstructed. Together these issues have compounded the flooding problems on adjacent residential parcels. Most county subdivisions have open ditches adjacent to roadways that adequately convey stormwater. However, in these types of older subdivisions, drainage problems are usually associated with years of poor maintenance on the ditch systems.

The Transportation section of this chapter has already described the interest of Fairmont residents in improving infrastructure in their community; this applies to stormwater management infrastructure as well as transportation infrastructure.

Parks and Open Space

The Fairmont community is directly served by two park sites managed by Lockport Township Park District, including A.F. Hill Park, a 20-acre park in the southern portion of the community with a number of recreational amenities, and Fairmont Community Center and Park, which includes the community center structure and approximately 3 acres of open space. Although not a public park, Fairmont School does provide outdoor open space for students and residents (after school hours). Approximately 2.5 acres of open space exists east of the school building that includes a baseball field, open play area, and a playground.

Although not within Fairmont, the 150-acre Dellwood Park, one of Lockport Township Park District's largest parks, is located just north of the Fairmont community. Significantly, Dellwood Park also includes a connection to the I&M Canal Trail, a major bicycle trail that cannot be accessed directly from Fairmont. The Park District has also acquired 176 acres west of Route 171 for a new facility called Dellwood Park West, and is in the planning process for determining the future design of the park. However, despite the close proximity of these major open spaces, there is limited direct pedestrian or bicycle access between Fairmont and Dellwood Park. As a result, many Fairmont residents do not know how to directly access the park and are not fully aware of its assets.

An aerial view of the southern portion of Dellwood Park showing the lack of formal access to the Fairmont neighborhood to the south. A street connection does exist at Louis Avenue, however, there is a lack of directional signage to this access point from the neighborhood, and more pedestrian access points should be considered, especially at the end of Green Garden Place.

In total, approximately 25 acres of public open space is located within Fairmont. Based upon a population of 2,500 residents, this equates to a ratio of 10 acres of open space per 1,000 people. This number meets the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) standard of 10 acres of open space for 1,000 residents. In addition, when adding in the acreage of nearby Dellwood Park (150 acres) and the new Dellwood Park West (176 acres), the ratio well exceeds the NRPA standard.

One of the top projects cited at the first public meeting was the desire to see the Lockport Township Park District improve their existing parks with new recreational amenities. Another top initiative identified by the public at the first meeting was the need for new parks to be created in Fairmont. New public open space was discussed by residents to include a combination of larger community parks and smaller neighborhood parks. In particular, participating residents identified potential recommendations such as converting vacant lots to public parks, improving facilities at existing parks, and developing a trail system through the community, with particular interest in bicycle facilities on Green Garden Avenue and connections into Dellwood Park.

Local Food Production

Throughout all public meetings, residents repeatedly communicated their support for community gardens within Fairmont. Beginning at the first Steering Committee meeting and continuing through subsequent public meetings, residents were interested in farmers' markets, grocery stores, and other food-related retail opportunities. One of the most popular resident ideas was to create a community garden and farmers' market with culturally-significant crops, linking the local production of food with an economic development opportunity.

Figure 11. Floodplains and wetlands

Figure 12. Open space

Community Facilities and Services

As an unincorporated area, Fairmont must rely primarily on non-municipal governmental agencies such as Lockport Township and Will County for public resources. Service provision is fragmented and complex, and some needed services do not exist. Community facilities, including both government and nongovernmental facilities, are shown in Figure 13.

During the planning process, residents expressed a desire to see Will County, Lockport Township, School Districts #89 and #205, the Lockport Township Park District, and the Cities of Lockport and Joliet work together to help plan for and improve the Fairmont community. Some workshop attendees noted the perceived lack of government support for the area, called for more public resources in general to be spent in the community to help Fairmont residents, and expressed confusion concerning the roles of the different levels of government that serve the community.

Some confusion is understandable; a variety of levels of government provide different services. Water is provided by a private firm on contract with Lockport Township; sewage treatment is handled by the City of Lockport; road maintenance as well as fire protection is provided by Lockport Township; law enforcement is the responsibility of the Will County Sheriff's Department; parks are maintained and operated by Lockport Township Park District; nearby library services are provided by the Des Plaines Valley Library District; education is provided by school districts #89 and #205; and no public agency handles waste disposal, leaving residents to contract with waste haulers on their own.

Throughout all meetings, residents and steering committee members discussed the desire for improved services. However, most were very much aware of potential costs that would be associated with improved or new services. Some top government service issues that have arisen during the planning process include additional police protection, regularly scheduled garbage pick-up, and the overall need to determine which future government services will be required and how they should be provided.

In contrast, Fairmont has strong nongovernmental institutions, especially churches. Nine churches are based there, drawing membership from a much broader area than just the Fairmont community. Throughout all of the Steering Committee and public meetings, the many religious institutions in the community were seen as a key asset. Many believe that local religious institutions could be used as a foundation to attract new residents and businesses into the area.

Another example of a nongovernmental institution that has a strong presence in Fairmont is Habitat for Humanity. Habitat for Humanity has built 53 houses in Will County, including 20 houses in Joliet and 32 houses in Lockport Township. Over 30 Habitat homes have been constructed in Fairmont. The building and trades classes at Lockport Township High School, HVAC and electrical classes at Joliet Junior College, and the WILCO Career Center all play important roles in the construction projects. In addition to Habitat for Humanity, there are existing neighborhood groups that exist in Fairmont. One example of such a group is the Fairmont Partnership which is a local neighborhood group that works to support local businesses, residents, and advocate for appropriate development and services in Fairmont.

Figure 13. Community facilities

Community Identity

Throughout the public engagement process, residents stated that maintaining Fairmont's identity was important. During the 1920s, a good portion of the Fairmont area was platted as parcels to be used for modest housing. For the most part, it was expected that families and individuals who were employed by the industries in Lockport and the east side of Joliet would occupy these homes. From the time of this area being platted, development was sporadic and undefined. One can spot brick bungalows that were built near the time of the original platting, along with a great number of smaller homes built on slab foundations that appear to be built in the latter half of the 20th Century.

The history and culture of the Fairmont community is in need of documentation and preservation. Many long-time residents have interesting and proud stories of Fairmont's past, but few resources exist to document the history of the community have been created. As part of the planning process, community leaders, residents, and others, were asked to provide their stories and experiences in the area to document the history of Fairmont in an ongoing effort to create and strengthen a unique image and identity for the community. Through discussions with longtime residents and business owners, the history of events in the community has begun to unfold. Interviews have led to the start of compiling Fairmont's history, but further work is needed.

Related to the need to document Fairmont's history for preservation purposes and to strengthen its identity was the need to improve the appearance of the community. One of the top issues at the first public meeting was the perceived unattractive appearance of Fairmont due to its lack of gateway signs, sidewalks, landscaping, street trees, or any other types of visible amenity, especially along Route 171, an unattractive image of the community is presented. Many residents also expressed concerns regarding the amount of litter and debris that has accumulated on vacant parcels and within alleyways, which also hinders efforts to attract reinvestment to the community.

Section 3
Vision, Goals and Objectives

To assist in directing the recommendations of the Fairmont plan, the following vision, goals, and objectives have been established. The vision is based upon input received from residents, stakeholders, elected and appointed officials, and other public workshop participants. The following is the community's vision for what it wishes Fairmont to become in the next 10 to 15 years:

Vision

In 2025, Fairmont will be a community that has a reputation for being diverse, friendly, family-oriented, growing, neighborly, and safe. It is a place where people are proud to live and where infrastructure is in good condition to support community life.

Goals and Objectives

Building upon the vision are goals and objectives that serve as guides in preparing the recommendations for the Neighborhood Plan. Goals and corresponding objectives are provided to assist with plan elements for housing, transportation, community services, health and infrastructure, retail, industry, natural environment, and image and identity.

The following goals and objectives are based upon the results of the planning process which included multiple opportunities for input from residents, businesses, elected and appointed officials, and government agencies.

Land Use Goal#1:

Encourage the redevelopment of all vacant residential parcels in the community.

Key Objectives:

- Develop vacant residential properties with new homes, new neighborhood parks, or community gardens.
- Attract new investors and developers to the community.
- Work with current property owners in obtaining grants or other funding sources to assist with home repair and maintenance.

Land Use Goal#2:

Improve the quality and quantity of housing stock in the community.

Key Objectives:

- Develop vacant residential properties.
- Encourage the rehabilitation or replacement of blighted homes.
- Support improvements to the appearance, and/or structural integrity of all homes in Fairmont.
- Support new senior housing opportunities.
- Minimize flooding of residential properties.

Land Use Goal #3:

Attract new commercial and retail businesses to locate in Fairmont.

Key Objectives:

- Encourage new neighborhood commercial businesses that provide daily shopping opportunities and services to locate within the community.
- Work with property owners and developers to attract larger shopping opportunities, such as grocery stores and/or pharmacies to locate in the community.
- Ensure that commercial businesses are attractive and well-maintained.
- Support existing commercial uses.
- Attract new retail, commercial, or industrial businesses to provide additional shopping and employment opportunities.

Land Use Goal #4:

Support existing industrial businesses and work to attract new light industrial businesses.

Key Objectives:

- Continue to support existing industrial businesses and work to attract new light industrial businesses.
- Work with industrial businesses to improve the appearance of their buildings, parking areas and signage, especially for those businesses visible from IL Route 171.

Transportation Goal:

Enhance Fairmont's transportation system by accommodating cars, transit, pedestrians and bicyclists, while also improving the condition of the existing street surfaces.

Key Objectives:

- Pursue the construction of sidewalks along key streets.
- Install stop signs at uncontrolled intersections with higher levels of traffic.
- Construct on-street or off-street bicycle paths/trails throughout the community providing connectivity between neighborhood parks, churches, schools, and Dellwood Park.
- Improve the condition of all streets.
- Install street lighting at key locations.
- Install bus shelters at key stops in the community.

Natural Environment Goal:

Ensure that quality parks, open space, and environmental features are preserved and provided within or near Fairmont.

Key Objectives:

- Work with the Lockport Township Park District to support their efforts to provide well-maintained parks and recreational amenities within Fairmont and near the community (i.e., Dellwood Park).
- Ensure that the open space and connectivity needs of Fairmont residents are included in the creation of the Park District's new Parks and Open Space Master Plan.
- Install a multi-use trail system throughout the community with connectivity between local parks, religious institutions, Fairmont School, the Community Center and Dellwood Park.
- Create a new gathering place for Fairmont residents.
- Support the creation of a new community garden(s) in Fairmont.
- Protect large areas of mature woods.
- Preserve and improve the creek that traverses the northern boundary of the study area to provide an environmental feature and to improve with stormwater management.

Community Facilities and Services Goal:

Through collaboration between governmental agencies, provide high quality services to Fairmont, and support Fairmont in exploring cost-efficient and efficient ways to provide local services, recognizing that this may include a change in its current governance.

Key Objectives:

- Assist local community leaders in exploring options that are available for the community in receiving future services and infrastructure.
- Attract a medical center, office, or urgent care facility to open in the community.
- Work toward the improvement of all street surfaces in Fairmont including the addition of curbs and gutters to help minimize flooding in residential areas.
- Implement infrastructure improvements to minimize flooding.
- Explore the potential of constructing a new multi-use community center in Fairmont.
- Support Fairmont School in providing a high-quality education.

Community Identity Goal:

Continue to improve the image and identity of Fairmont.

Key Objectives:

- Explore the potential of creating an advisory council of residents.
- Work with local residents and historians to document the history of Fairmont.
- Share the history of Fairmont, either through historical markers, informational signage, or publications that can be made available online or at the local libraries.
- Support the addition of new gateway signs at key entrance points into the community to easily announce arrival into Fairmont.
- Continue the gateway design and features in the installation of intersection improvements at key locations to strengthen a "sense of place."
- Work with current property owners and homeowners to pursue programs to fund façade and structural improvements to homes and businesses.
- Work with others to remove debris, litter, and "dead vehicles" from their properties.
- Require property owners of vacant buildings or properties to remove litter or garbage.
- Encourage industrial businesses along IL Route 171 to appropriately screen their outdoor storage areas from the street.
- Support residents, religious institutions, and businesses to hold community events in Fairmont.

Section 4
Recommendations

The Challenges and Opportunities and Vision, Goals, and Objectives chapters of this plan show that Fairmont is a community with significant challenges, but bright hopes for its future. This chapter of the Fairmont Plan lays out recommendations for achieving the community's vision. Recommendations are divided into several sections, each of which identifies existing issues, lays out a plan for the future, and provides strategies by which the plan can be implemented.

This chapter is organized differently from the preceding chapters in order to group similar concepts, and includes the following sections:

- The reinvestment section lays out a future land use plan for Fairmont, with a particular focus on a new neighborhood center at the heart of the community, and also includes recommendations related to reinvestment in housing, commercial development, parks and open space, and community facilities.
- The infrastructure section recommends physical improvements such as sidewalks and trail connections, street lighting, intersection controls, bus shelters, and improved standards of maintenance for streets, as well as stormwater infrastructure.
- The image and identity section recommends a formal effort to document the community's history, as well as a series of streetscape and other small-scale improvements to create a stronger visual identity for the community.
- Finally, the governance section does not make specific recommendations for the future governance of this area, but it discusses the challenges inherent in planning for an unincorporated community and describes the impact that the community's future governance will have on the implementation of the recommendations of the Fairmont Plan.

Each section includes specific recommendations, as well as implementation strategies that lay out actions to be undertaken within the next two years. Over this period, the Will County Land Use Department, with assistance from CMAP, will continue to be engaged with the Fairmont community to advance these actions. After these two years are concluded (in early 2014), a Plan addendum will be prepared that has new implementation strategies, reflecting implementation progress to date.

Reinvestment

The redevelopment of vacant land and vacant housing within Fairmont is one of the most important recommendations of the plan. As described in the Challenges and Opportunities section of this document, 16 percent of Fairmont's area is land that is vacant (not to be confused with agriculture or open space, which are separate categories). There is also a high rate of vacant structures, with more than 10 percent of the housing stock in the community being vacant.

Redeveloping these sites is a high-priority recommendation for two main reasons. First, vacancies detract from the community, reducing nearby property values and leading to concerns about crime, safety, aesthetics, and overall community image, to name a few. Second, redevelopment of these areas will increase Fairmont's tax base – likely a necessary precondition to the pursuit of future governance options.

The recommended land use pattern for Fairmont is to build upon existing land uses while focusing on appropriate infill development. Strengthening the primarily single-family residential neighborhoods with additional housing, parks, shopping, and employment opportunities will improve the viability of this community. The future land use plan focuses on developing the numerous vacant properties and homes with new residences, as well as new open space, community gardens, and neighborhood retail.

The future land use plan is shown in Figure 14. A map that shows only new land uses – those that change from their current use in the future land use plan – is shown in Figure 15. These recommended land uses were built upon the area's existing conditions and community input.

Key features of the land use plan are summarized briefly below, and in more detail in the following pages. They include:

- The neighborhood center, a mixed-use development at the Green Garden Place and Oak Avenue which will serve as the focal point of the community.
- Significant residential development, focusing on "infill" development on vacant parcels and including a mix of housing types.
- New commercial development, including community-oriented retail at the heart of the community and a mixture of commercial and industrial on nearby arterials.
- Improvements to parks and open space, including new and expanded parks, improved access to nearby open space, and specific attention to promoting local food production.
- Building on Fairmont's strong community institutions, including coordinating among its many churches to take a leadership role in redevelopment activities.

Finally, this section includes implementation strategies to be undertaken within the next two years to achieve these recommendations, including the formation of a nonprofit Community Development Corporation (CDC) based around collaboration between the many religious institutions that are located in Fairmont; revisions to Will County's zoning ordinance to facilitate development; further detailed planning for investment in parks and open space; and initiation of a new community garden as a demonstration project.

Figure 14. Land Use

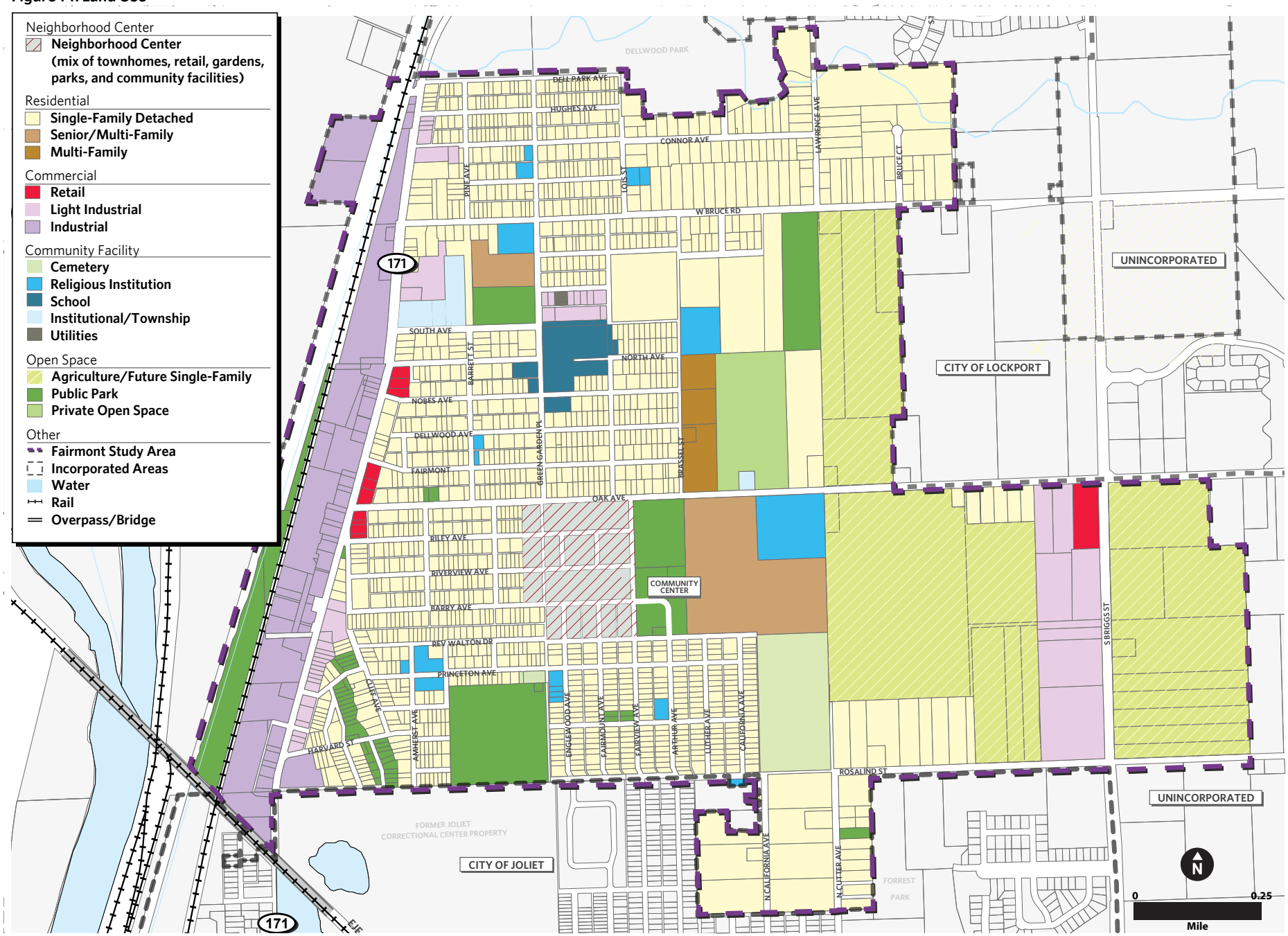
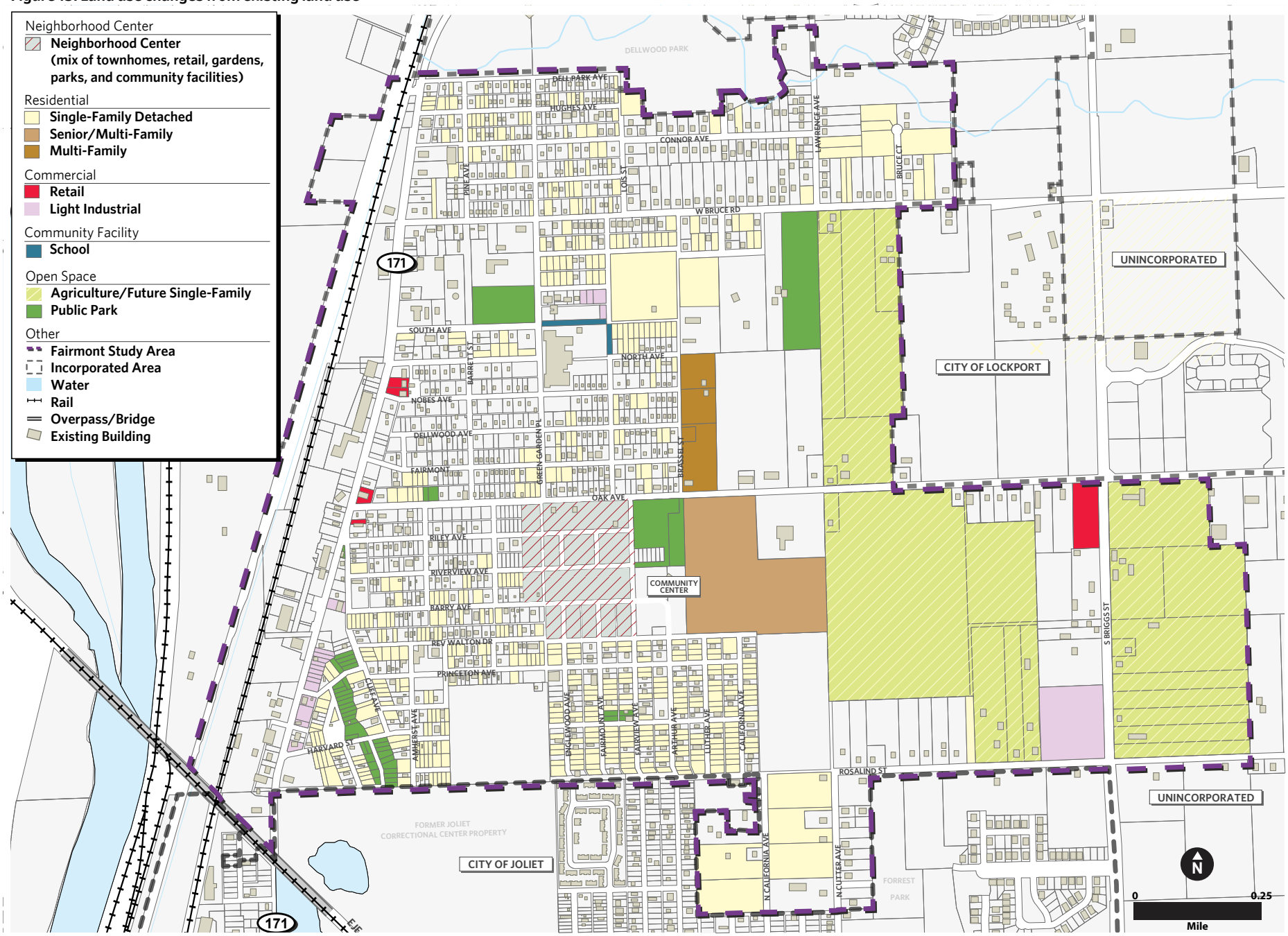


Figure 15. Land use changes from existing land use



Neighborhood Center

The most significant "catalyst" project recommended is the creation of a Neighborhood Center which will serve as the focal point of the Fairmont community. Residents who attended public meetings held throughout the planning process expressed a strong desire to create a true focal point that would strengthen the identity of Fairmont. To keep consistent with the character of resident's vision, Fairmont's Neighborhood Center should feature a mix of uses such as townhomes, neighborhood commercial development, an enlarged park and potential new community facilities. The area should also include a community garden that could act as a recreational space, an educational area, and a tool for economic development.

The Neighborhood Center should be developed as a mixed-use project. Mixed-use development refers to the practice of including residential and nonresidential uses in a single building or within a single site. Mixed-use projects are designed to allow for residents to work, shop, recreate, and live all within walking distance which lessens the dependence upon the automobile and supports a healthy lifestyle through biking and walking opportunities.

The scale, type, and location of the future Neighborhood Center envisioned by the community may be an appropriate candidate for pursuing certification through the LEED for Neighborhood Development (LEED-ND) rating system. According to the U.S. Green Building Council, aaLEED, or Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, is "an internationally recognized mark of excellence that provides a framework for identifying and implementing practical and measurable green building design, construction, operations and maintenance solutions. The LEED for Neighborhood Development (LEED-ND) Rating System integrates the principles of smart growth, urbanism and green building into the first national system for neighborhood design. LEED-ND certification provides independent, third-party verification that a development's location and design meet accepted high levels of environmentally responsible, sustainable development. " (Source: www.usgbc.org) The County should encourage future development of the Neighborhood Center to pursue LEED-ND certification.

The Neighborhood Center is recommended to be sited at the very center of the community, at the intersection of Oak Avenue and Green Garden Place. Currently, the recommended location consists primarily of vacant lands abutting and surrounding the Fairmont Community Center, west of the newly constructed Shiloh Baptist Church. For the area to develop as recommended, parcel consolidation and changes to Will County's current land use regulations willbe necessary. Potential changes to the zoning ordinance may assist in the development of the Neighborhood Center particularly if it is developed as a PUD. Potential ordinance changes may more easily provide for the development of already platted (yet still vacant) parcels.

Zoning Regulations for the Neighborhood Center

Currently, Will County is in the process of updating its zoning regulations. As of today, Will County's zoning ordinance does not permit the development of the Neighborhood Center as proposed, however, if certain requirements are met, the owner/developer could either apply for a Planned Unit Development (PUD), or the ordinance could also be updated to include a new overlay district, such as a neighborhood character or neighborhood conservation (overlay) district.

Planned Unit Development (PUD) Approach

The pros and cons of the PUD approach are discussed further below. A PUD would allow for a Neighborhood Center development that includes a mix of uses and the provision of common open space. The county's existing PUD process is designed to encourage a higher level of design and development than it is possible to achieve under normal zoning requirements. It allows flexibility in the zoning process and encourages innovative land use and development techniques. A PUD is planned and built as an overall unit, therefore fixing the type and location of uses and buildings. According to Will County's Ordinance, the PUD process encourages:

- A mix of land uses.
- The clustering of residential land uses.
- The provision of public and common open space.
- High-quality site planning and design.
- Implementation of the community plan or vision.
- The use of high-quality design and development guidelines.
- Preservation of natural features.

Potential benefits of a PUD process include more efficient site design, preservation of amenities such as open space, lower costs for street construction and utility extension for the developer, and lower maintenance costs for the county and township. The PUD would also provide for more detailed review and approval of the design of the project by the County than is normally required. The county's current PUD ordinance provides potential density bonuses for the provision of high quality common areas and site design. (Section 15.4.1.l)

However, there are also some potential negatives associated with using a PUD. The PUD process assumes that the development is fully owned by an association, which is responsible for maintenance of infrastructure within the PUD. If common space is owned by the resulting association, the costs to maintain public open space, plazas, and other common amenities will be paid by residents and businesses. Private infrastructure,

including private roads, may one day become the county or township responsibility if the association cannot properly maintain it. Also, to be built as a PUD, the entire site must be under single ownership.

Overlay District

If not addressed in the current zoning revision, in the future there could be a specific Neighborhood Center Overlay District used to promote the type of development envisioned. A Neighborhood Center district would be a geographically defined area that would have a significant concentration, linkage or continuity of sites that are united by physical development or architecture. To be eligible for Neighborhood zoning, the area should comply with specific criteria developed by the county. The county could include the "enabling authority" for such district and then after the Fairmont Plan is adopted, the county could insert Fairmont-specific regulations as a text and map (overlay) amendment.

Neighborhood Center Design Concepts

Figures 16 and 17 are presented to help illustrate what a future Neighborhood Center could look like in 10 to 15 years. The illustrations are conceptual, meant to reflect what a new focal area for the community could look like, and should not be interpreted as a specific proposed development plan.

Figure 16. Neighborhood Center (note that plan is conceptual)

EXISTING

1. Shiloh Baptist Church
2. Retention Pond
3. Woodland Areas
4. Fairmont Community Center

PROPOSED

5. Farmer's Market, Community Plaza and Bus Stop
6. Neighborhood Shopping Center
7. Townhomes
8. Senior Assisted Living Facility
9. Stormwater Wetland / Bio-Swale
10. Senior Independent Living Duplex
11. Single Family Homes
12. Community Gardens
13. Recreational Park with Sports Fields
14. Playground

FIGURE 17. **Potential Development Concept for the Neighborhood Center (for illustrative purposes only)**

Residential Development

Residential redevelopment within the built-up part of Fairmont is a major goal of the Plan. The recommendations contained in this section are built upon existing conditions as well as community input received throughout the planning process. The overall goal of the residential recommendations is to assist in supporting and improving the condition of the housing stock, while promoting new residential infill development on the existing vacant lots.

One of the most important recommendations of the Plan involves the redevelopment of vacant land and vacant housing in the community. The substantial number of vacancies damages the character of Fairmont and creates unattractive, and potentially unsafe, areas. An overall goal of this Plan is to promote "infill" development, meaning both the redevelopment of vacant properties, as well as bringing residents to occupy vacant homes. Reinvestment of this type is a higher priority than the development of new projects outside of the existing residential neighborhoods.

A mix of housing options is desired, keeping the existing character of the community but also providing a greater breadth of options in terms of housing density, size, and price. Future residential uses should build upon the already established single-family home character of Fairmont while also adding in appropriate amounts of additional housing options. Townhomes would be appropriate within the Neighborhood Center to help create a "sense of place" and to support recommended retail. Senior housing developments are recommended near Shiloh Church and as an addition to the existing Township senior apartments. Multi-family residences are recommended on the north side of Oak Avenue near the Neighborhood Center.

Preservation of the housing that currently exists and is occupied is also a priority. Current homeowners may be able to take advantage of federal, state, and regional programs that promote energy efficiency, such as Energy Impact Illinois (EI2) or the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). Will County should take the lead in assisting Fairmont residents in investigating and applying for these programs.

The land use plan recommends four types of residential land use categories in Fairmont to support the existing character while adding additional housing options. These are shown in Figure 18, which includes the residential elements of the future land use plan, and in Figure 19, which highlights only the residential elements which are a change from the current land use.

Table 4.1 presents potential densities for each residential type recommended in the Neighborhood Plan. Although the county is in the process of updating its current zoning ordinance, Table 4.1 shows both the current densities allowed and potential densities. The potential densities are slightly higher than those currently allowed in the ordinance. These higher densities could be used in "urban communities" such as Fairmont to encourage public transit and local business development. The county should consider these residential densities to support the types of housing options desired by residents especially for townhomes and senior housing developments.

Table 4.1. Potential Residential Densities

Type	Current Zoning Ordinance Densities	Potential Dwelling Units/ Acre to further support increased public transit and neighborhood businesses
Single-Family Detached	R3 (2 units per acre), R4 (3.63 units per acre), R5 (4 units per acre)	6-8 dwelling units/acre
Townhomes	R6 (12 units per acre)	10-12 dwelling units/acre
Multi-Family/Senior Housing	R6 (12 units per acre)	15-20 dwelling units/acre

The following is a more detailed description of the types of housing options that are recommended in Fairmont.

Single-Family Detached

Single-family detached neighborhoods should continue to be the primary housing type in Fairmont. A substantial number of single-family residential homes and parcels are currently vacant. Wherever possible, vacant residential properties should be filled with new single-family homes. These homes would serve as infill development and would eventually replace all vacant lots and dilapidated structures. New residential development should be strongly encouraged to occur on these vacant parcels. "Infill" development should be preferred over new "greenfield" developments.

Single-Family Home: An example of an existing single-family home in the Fairmont community that illustrates the types of homes that are located throughout the neighborhood.

Single-Family Attached

Single-family attached homes such as townhomes should be included in the overall Neighborhood Center development. Townhomes would add additional residents to support recommended commercial developments as well as provide "eyes on the street" in the area. Given that central areas are typically characterized by a higher density than the rest of the community, townhomes would be an appropriate development type for Fairmont's Neighborhood Center. The townhomes would be suitably dense development to transition from single-family homes on the west.

Senior Housing

To allow for Fairmont residents to "age in place," senior and multi-family housing is recommended. Instead of relying on only single-family detached homes, the community should begin to add other types of housing options that would support seniors and other residents who no longer wish to maintain a single-family home. Senior housing options would allow residents to remain in the community where their existing support system of friends, family, and church is located. Senior housing developments could consist of both independent and assisted living facilities including ranch-style, single-family attached homes and multi-unit developments for the senior population.

Multi-Family Housing

To further support the recommendation of aging in place and provide a range of housing options, moderately dense multi-family housing is recommended. Multi-family housing is recommended on Oak Avenue near the proposed Neighborhood Center. Multi-family housing would provide additional housing options and add potential "shoppers" for the recommended commercial businesses.

Agricultural/Single-Family Detached

Currently a number of relatively large parcels are being used for livestock or agricultural purposes in the eastern portion of the study area. These areas are proposed to remain agriculture for as long as feasible, but the plan recognizes that eventual development is likely; when this occurs, moderate-density single-family homes would be an appropriate use. Future residential development in these areas should be designed as "cluster developments" rather than more traditional subdivisions. Cluster development allows residential development while still protecting the area's environmental features, allowing for more open space, and protecting farmland. Future "greenfield" development should not occur until a significant number of infill development projects have been completed in existing neighborhoods, which is the higher priority.

Single-Family Attached (Townhomes): An example of high-quality townhomes that should be considered as part of the future neighborhood center.

Senior Housing: Instead of relying on only single-family detached homes, the community should begin to add other types of housing options that would support seniors and other residents who no longer wish to maintain a single-family home. An example of senior housing as part of a townhome development.

Multi-family: To further support the recommendation of aging in place and provide a range of housing options, moderately dense multi-family housing is recommended. An example of an appropriately scaled apartment building.

Agriculture/Single-Family Home: Existing agricultural areas are proposed to remain agriculture for as long as feasible, but the plan recognizes that eventual development is likely; when this occurs, moderate-density single-family homes would be an appropriate use.

Figure 18. Housing plan

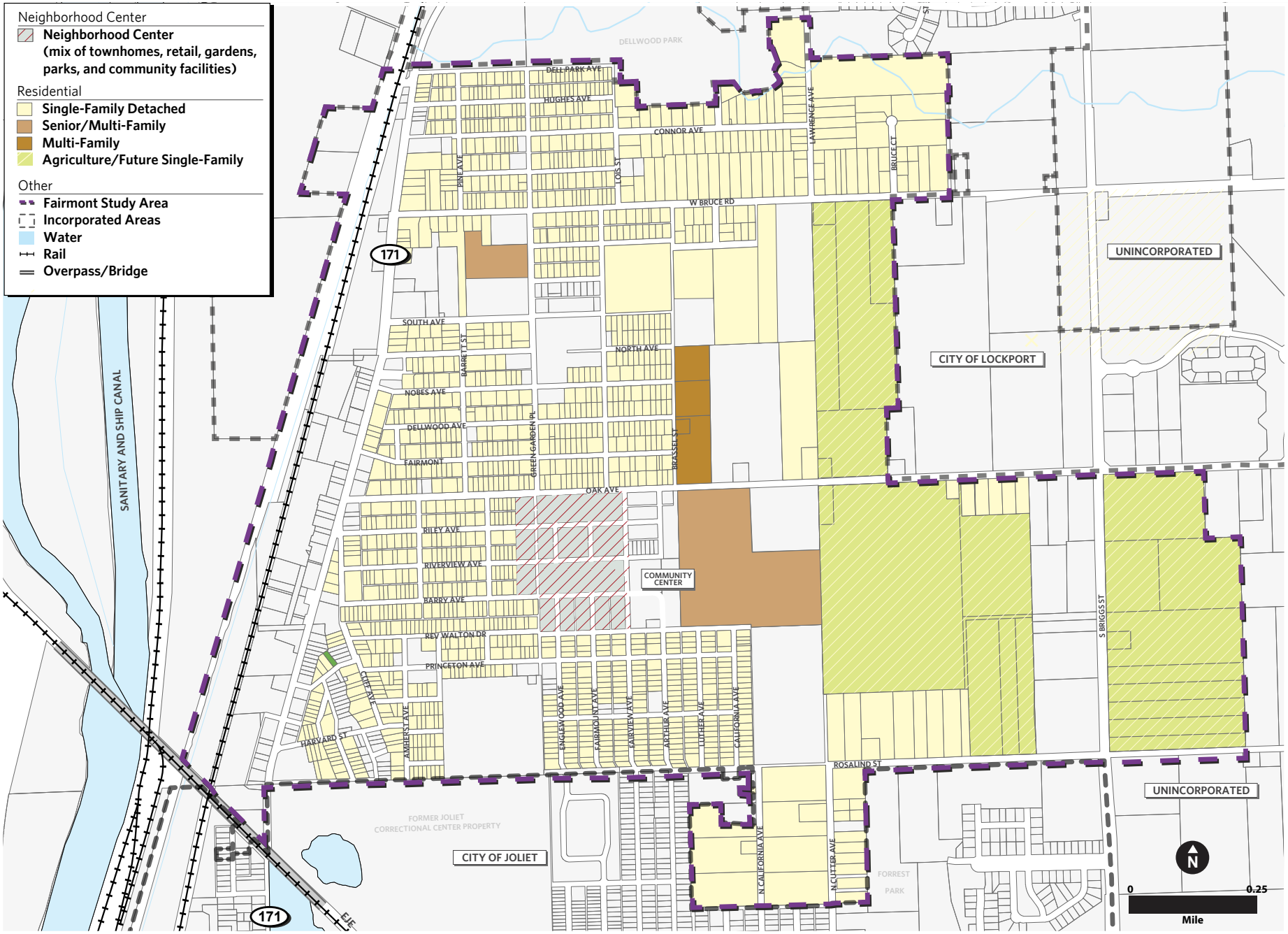
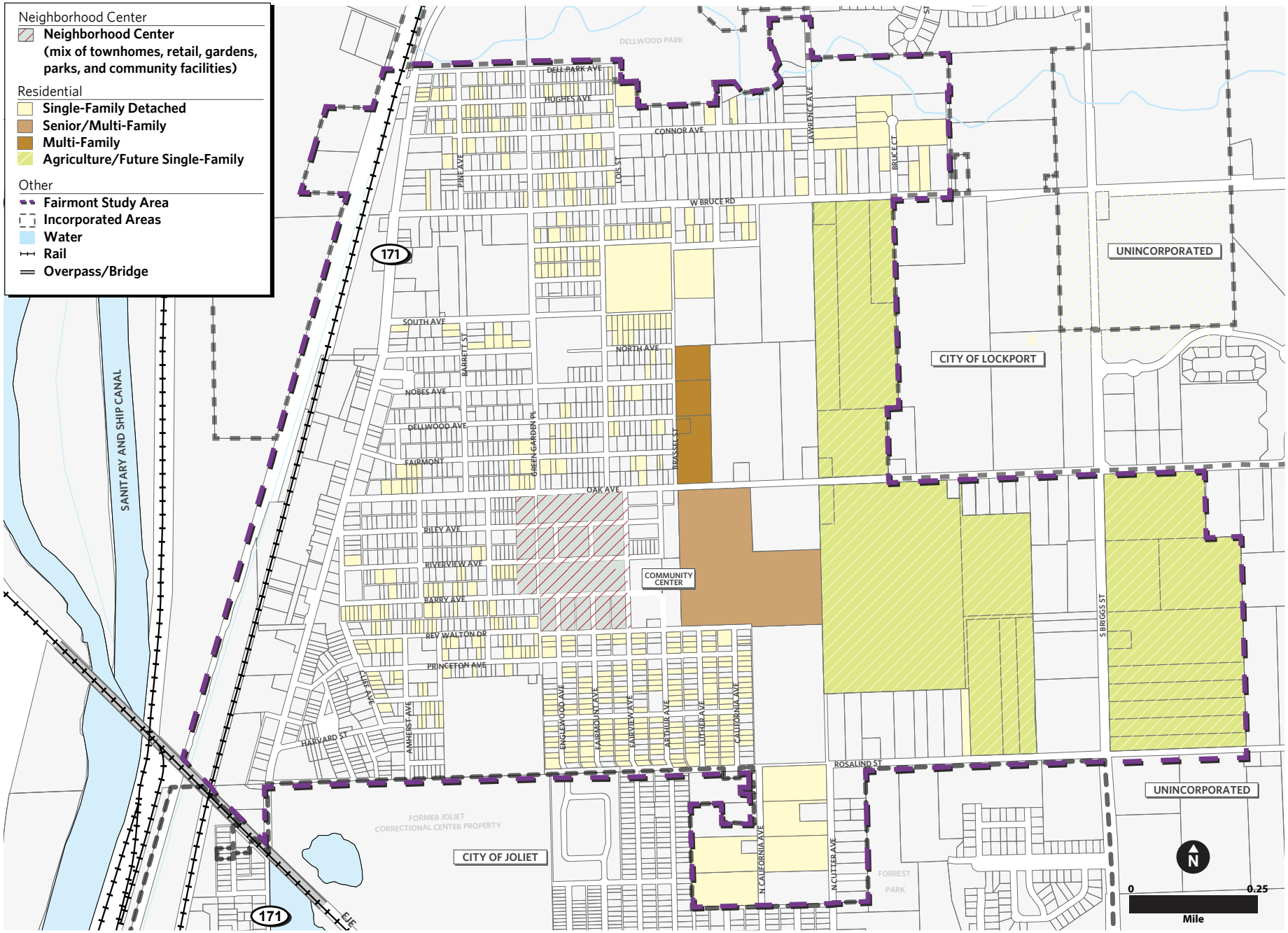


Figure 19. New housing elements



Commercial Development

Fairmont is underserved in terms of commercial development, particularly retail (small grocery, specifically) and service providers that meet needs of residents. The Fairmont Plan recommends supporting existing commercial businesses and seeking to attract additional new retail opportunities to the area. Retail stores that cater to the daily shopping needs of residents, such as convenience items and fresh food, would be a welcome addition to Fairmont.

Overall, the plan recommends commercial development of different types at three locations within Fairmont. The Neighborhood Center should include commercial uses fronting Oak Street and should be made up of businesses that service the daily needs of Fairmont residents. In the eastern part of the community, Briggs Street provides an opportunity for limited new retail and light industrial development. On Route 171, on Fairmont's western edge, maintaining the existing industrial uses, improving the screening of these uses, and clustering retail development around commercial nodes are recommended as longer-term activities. These three areas are shown in Figure 20, with new commercial development highlighted in Figure 21, and are described further below.

Neighborhood Center

New retail is recommended as part of the future Neighborhood Center, which is planned as a walkable, attractive development that offers easy access to its commercial uses by pedestrians and drivers alike. Retail in the Neighborhood Center should front Oak Avenue to capitalize on the relatively high traffic on this roadway, but also may draw walking traffic from Fairmont's residential areas, as it is located centrally in the heart of the community. The retail businesses should support the daily shopping needs of Fairmont residents. During the public engagement process, residents consistently indicated a need for a grocery store within the community, and this is explicitly recommended as part of the Neighborhood Center.

Briggs Street

In addition to retail within the Neighborhood Center, new corridor retail should be located along Briggs Street to support not only Fairmont residents, but also motorists passing through the community. Larger retail businesses such as a gas station or pharmacy would be appropriate in this location. Beyond retail, light industrial and office uses would provide additional job opportunities in Fairmont. Light industrial is recommended south of the future commercial area on Briggs Street, building upon some established similar uses in this area. Light industrial uses can include automotive businesses, indoor or outdoor storage business, landscapers, and offices, among others.

Route 171

Route 171 is currently a mixture of automobile-oriented industrial and retail uses. It is disconnected from the main Fairmont community by a steep change in elevation, as well as a complete lack of pedestrian infrastructure. Addressing land use and transportation in the Route 171 corridor is a longer-term activity and is not the primary focus of the Plan. Over time, some businesses along Route 171 are recommended to be clustered to create more cohesive commercial "nodes" fronting the roadway. These commercial nodes would likely improve the success of each business by increasing visibility and access. Adjacent businesses could provide improved access/egress points, shared parking, consistent business signage, and improved visibility.

Throughout the planning process, residents expressed a desire to see more employment opportunities. To support existing jobs in the area, the Plan recommends that the existing light industrial and auto service related businesses that front Route 171 remain. Although these businesses, specifically some outdoor storage areas, are unattractive and in need of improved screening, these businesses are occupied and active, providing employment opportunities. Therefore, the area is recommended to remain industrial, and the community should continue discussions regarding the long-term plan for the area west of Route 171.

Figure 20. Commercial plan

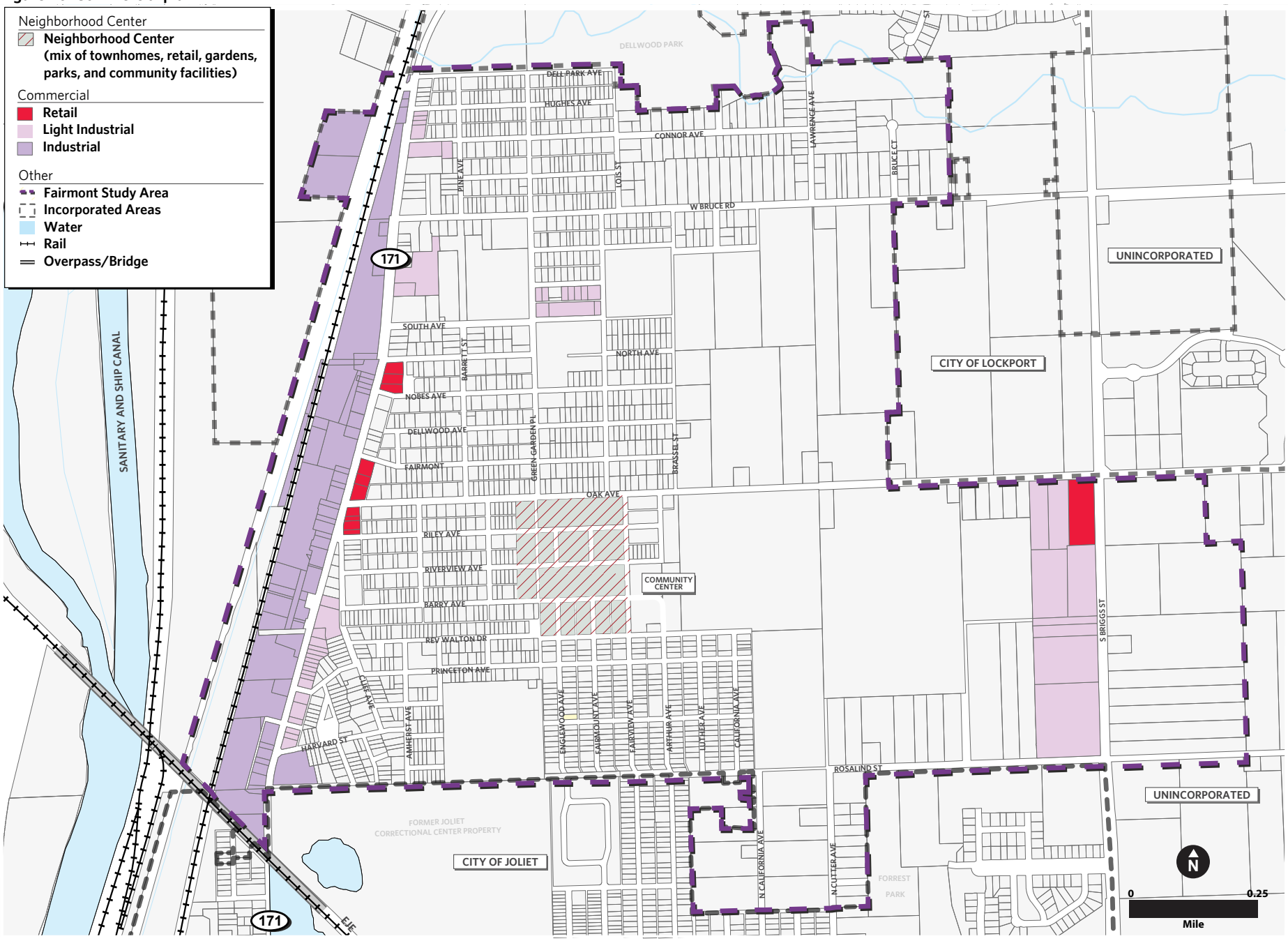
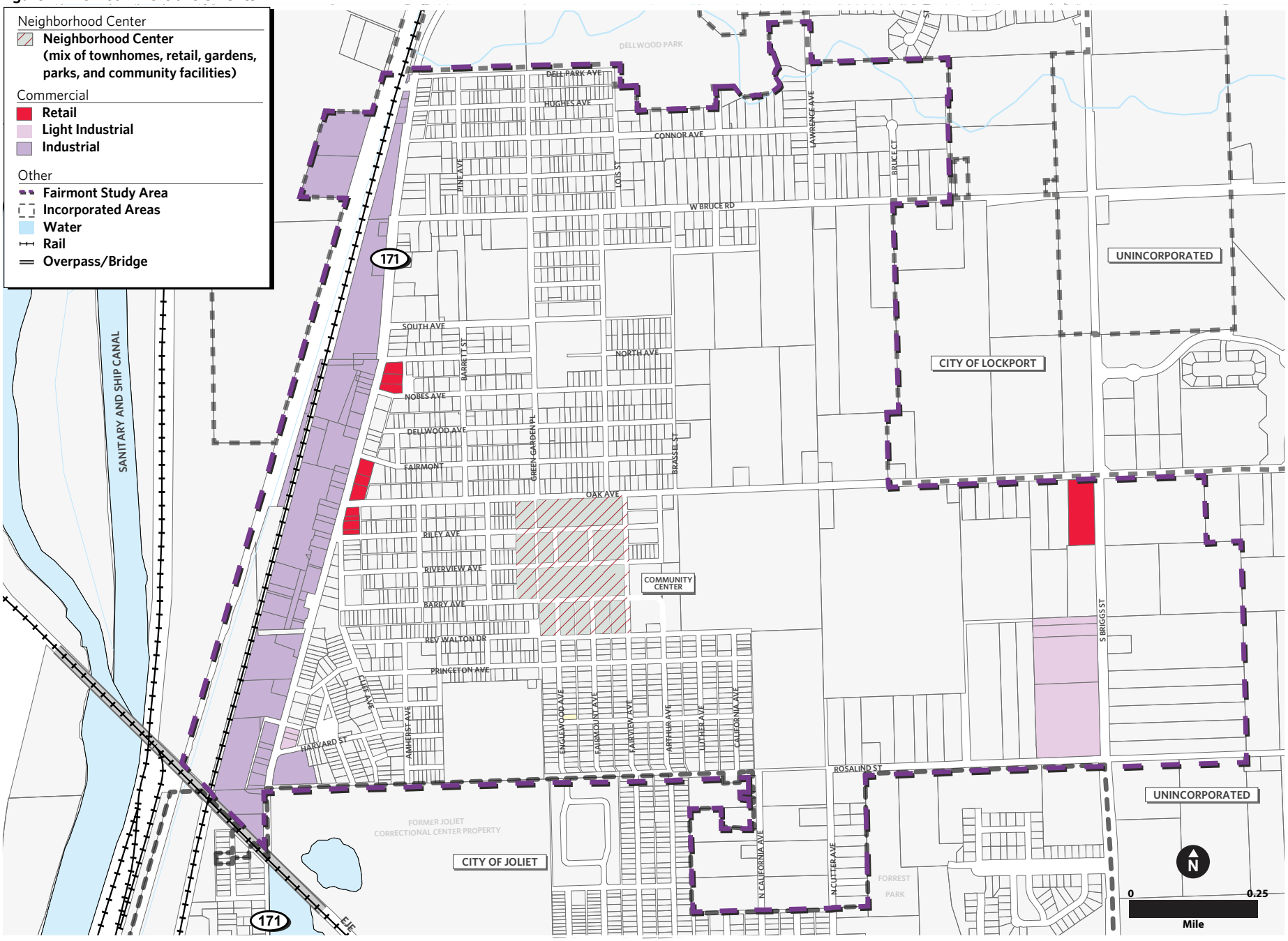


Figure 21. New commercial elements



Parks and Open Space

Not all reinvestment involves new structures. Reinvestment also includes planning for new open space and strengthening the parks and environmental features that already exist. Fairmont would benefit from additional recreational open space to serve its residents, and there are also environmental features that should be preserved. The Plan recommends improving parks and open space in the community through several activities.

First, existing parks within the community should be maintained, improved, and if possible expanded, and connections to nearby park space outside the community should also be pursued. Second, a number of new public parks should be established within the community, taking advantage of its large supply of vacant land. When possible, these new parks should preserve Fairmont's currently wooded areas, and should also include green infrastructure elements such as native plantings and bioswales to improve stormwater management. Finally, specific attention should be paid to the establishment of community gardens or other opportunities for small-scale food production in Fairmont; this may take the form of including community gardens within new parks, or other options.

As part of any effort to improve parks and open space, institutional and intergovernmental coordination issues must be considered. Once parks or community gardens are established, they typically require programmatic support from a public or nonprofit organization to provide needed maintenance, cleanup, and enforcement of applicable rules. The ultimate acquisition and ownership of future parks and open space will vary between potential public entities, including the Will County Forest Preserve District or the Lockport Township Park District, as well as private or non-profit groups.

The plan for new parks in the community is shown in Figure 22. To assist in determining where future park sites should be located, the map shows mile service radices from both existing and proposed park sites. The National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) recommend a half-mile radius from parks as an appropriate walking distance. This NRPA standard assists communities in ensuring that parks are adequately spaced to provide equal opportunities for all residents. As shown in the figure, with the addition of new neighborhood park sites all of Fairmont's residential neighborhoods will be within walking distance of a park.

Support and Improve Existing Parks

Fairmont is directly served by two park sites, as well as the Fairmont school, which includes open space that can be used by community members. The community considers the existing public parks to be an asset that helps bring residents of all ages together. The County should work with the Lockport Township Park District to identify what recreational needs may be missing in the park system and the Park District should be encouraged to install new recreational amenities whenever feasible.

It may be possible to expand several existing parks through the strategic acquisition of nearby properties. Land acquisition of parcels adjacent to A.F. Hill Park, Fairmont Community Center Park, and Forest Park should be pursued to determine if park expansion is feasible. Several of the parcels in these locations are currently vacant.

In addition, improving connections to nearby parks which are outside of Fairmont would improve residents' access to open space. Specifically, Dellwood Park, immediately to the north of Fairmont, is a significant open space asset. However, it is difficult to access from Fairmont, and access should be improved; this issue is covered in further length in the "Infrastructure" section on page 55.

Create New Public Parks

Residents expressed a desire throughout the planning process for additional open space to allow for new and improved recreational activities. New parks would provide additional recreational opportunities and would reinforce the "sense of community" for the neighborhoods near the parks.

Figure 22 illustrates general areas for where new parks should be established. It is important to note that although new parks are identified that their exact location and size will vary depending on parcel acquisition and land availability. New parks would provide increased gardening opportunities, preservation of existing wooded areas and steep slopes, additional playgrounds, and they should also include green infrastructure elements such as native plantings and bioswales to improve stormwater management.

To help strengthen the residential areas, new park space should be acquired within existing neighborhoods. Ideally, two or three vacant parcels that are contiguous should be priority sites. The creation of smaller "tot-lots" or "pocket parks" would be an aesthetic improvement over vacant lots and structures, providing a productive land use with limited infrastructure investment needed. New parks also benefit the neighborhood by providing a sense of pride and a neighborhood gathering area. New neighborhood parks could include small playgrounds, seating areas, historical or educational displays, and gardens.

Also, new parks should be created as part of new development. The proposed Neighborhood Center is recommended to include park space as one of its central

features. Other larger development proposals, particularly those occurring in the eastern part of the community, should also include open space and preserve environmental features, and the County should require set-asides for parks when new developments are being approved in this area.

Fairmont already includes an unusual example of privately-owned open space. Trinity Links, an approximately 20-acre parcel located in the northeastern section of the study area, is a private disc golf course (http://www.dgcoursereview.com/course.php?id=831). Much of the property is heavily wooded and encumbered by wetlands. The property should remain private open space; however, in the future, if the disc golf course closes, the County should support its acquisition for public open space. If such an acquisition is not possible, any future development on this site should be clustered to preserve natural features, and in particular to preserve right-of-way for an eventual north-south trail connection through the property.

Local Food Production

Local food production should also be addressed in the Fairmont community. This can take the form of community gardens, managed by an informal group of residents or a government or nongovernmental agency; it also could include food production by individual residents on their property. Fairmont also lacks a grocery store, so access to healthy food may also be improved by local food production in this area.

A new community garden is recommended as part of the proposed Neighborhood Center. The central location of the Neighborhood Center within the community means that a community garden in this area would be easily accessible to residents throughout Fairmont. As planning for the Neighborhood Center advances, the best specific location within the site for the community garden should be identified. It may also be possible for small community gardens to be sited on vacant lots in other locations in the Fairmont community, and the county should work with interested residents as interest in this possibility grows.

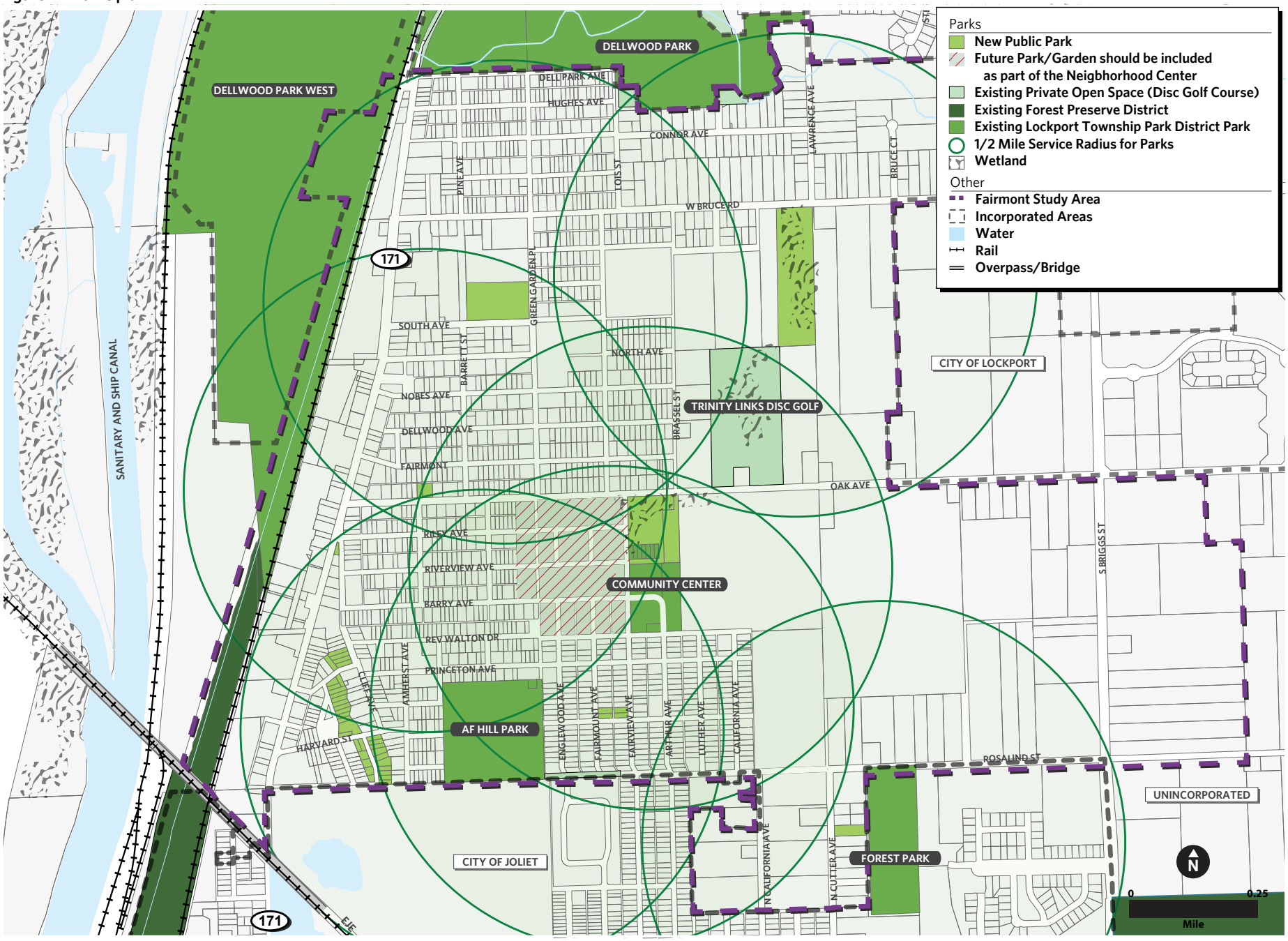
Community gardens are most effective when they are accompanied by a thoughtful and thorough management strategy; this will require extensive coordination between the county, other relevant government and nongovernmental agencies, and Fairmont residents. The county should support investment by property owners, nearby residents, and other groups such as religious institutions. Investment may include the dedication of land, contributions to organizing and running a committee that maintains the gardens, or the possible designation of garden plots to individuals for the season.

Another element of local food in Fairmont involves food production on individual lots. This may include growing fruits and vegetables, or raising small livestock such as chickens. Currently, as stated earlier, Will County is updating its current zoning ordinance and a preliminary direction as stated in their consultants' May 2011 report is that "the ordinance needs to more clearly identify whether community gardens and small farm uses, including community-supported agriculture (CSA) farms are allowed in non-agricultural zoning districts." (Will County Zoning Ordinance Update: Concepts and Direction Report, Duncan Associates, Primera, Lakota, May 2011, Page 22.) The Concepts and Direction Report continues by saying that the county should also consider clarifying where bees and chickens should be kept. The proposed draft zoning ordinance may allow for local food production in all residential districts (not including farming).

Community gardens improve access to healthy food, and can even be an economic development tool if local produce is sold at local businesses. Currently Fairmont does not have a grocery store, and there are few options nearby to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables. The Neighborhood Center is proposed to include a grocery store, and ideally this store would be able to offer locally grown produce.

Local Food Production: Community gardens are recommended to improve quality-of-life, improve health by providing fresh produce, and to offer potential economic development opportunities. The conceptual plan for the Neighborhood Center (shown above) illustrates the addition of community garden plots surrounding the existing Fairmont Community Center.

Figure 22. Parks plan



Community Facilities and Institutions

Fairmont's community facilities, including government and nongovernmental facilities and services, are of critical importance to its residents. Community facilities and services are vital to support Fairmont's unique identity and maintain its image. The Plan recommends continued support for existing community facilities and the development of a new community facility as part of the proposed Neighborhood Center. In one of the Plan's most important recommendations, it also calls for the establishment of a Fairmont Community Development Corporation (CDC), a faith-based nonprofit organization meant to actively involve Fairmont's religious institutions in the community's redevelopment.

New Community Center

Fairmont currently has community facilities owned and operated by Lockport Township, School District #89, and the Lockport Township Park District. Together these government entities provide a number of park sites, Fairmont School, and water and sewer service. Recommendations for improvements to parks are discussed in a separate section of this document.

During public meetings, many residents expressed a desire to locate new community facilities in a central location (such as the proposed Neighborhood Center). Therefore, a new community center is recommended as part of the Neighborhood Center development. Adding community facilities into the Neighborhood Center would further strengthen its role as the "heart of the community."

Fairmont Community Development Corporation (CDC)

One of the strengths of the Fairmont community is the presence of numerous religious institutions. Fairmont's churches are very important players in the future of this community and may hold the key to successful reinvestment. Additionally, according to anecdotal information from key stakeholders, a good portion of the vacant land in Fairmont is owned by churches. As described further in the reinvestment implementation strategies, the churches should formally coordinate their efforts to bring stability and growth to the Fairmont community.

Some religious institutions apparently have specific expansion plans that require the use of the land they have acquired. In other cases, the reason for the church's acquisition of the land, or the feasibility of their potential future expansion, is less clear. Some discussions with local religious leaders indicate that churches may have purchased vacant homes and properties as an investment, to provide for future church expansion or relocation, or to demolish the vacant home to remove blight. While the ownership of land by churches contributes to the immediate fiscal challenges facing the community (since religious institutions do not pay property taxes), it also provides an opportunity for future redevelopment.

The best way to realize this opportunity may be to create a faith-based community development corporation (CDC) that involves the churches of Fairmont in the redevelopment of the community. Organizations of this type already exist in the region; examples include Bethel New Life in Chicago, and the Lawndale Christian Development Corporation, which operates on Chicago's west side. The Lawndale Christian Development Corporation is a nonprofit organization that was formed by a group of churches to support redevelopment of a distressed neighborhood. Its mission includes real estate development, both residential and commercial, among other activities. This organization, as well as others, could provide models for similar efforts in Fairmont. Essentially, the purpose of the new "Fairmont CDC" would be to attract private development to the community, focusing on redeveloping currently vacant or abandoned sites and buildings into new, productive uses.

Implementation Strategies

The Fairmont Plan's recommendations for reinvestment are aggressive but implementable. The purpose of this section of the plan is to identify priority strategies that will lead to the plan's implementation. There are clearly other actions which would also help to support the Fairmont Plan; those listed in this section are not meant to be exclusive.

Four major sets of strategies are recommended to support the reinvestment recommendations. First, the Will County Land Use Department should take some initial steps to establish a faith-based community development corporation (CDC) consisting of Fairmont's religious institutions, which would lead redevelopment efforts of the area. Second, the county should continue to develop its new zoning ordinance to ensure that the plan's recommended land use changes are permitted and even encouraged. Third, a number of government agencies should work together to acquire additional park space in the Fairmont community. Finally, the county should take the lead in bringing together government, educational, and other groups to initiate a demonstration community garden in Fairmont. Each of these sets of strategies is described in more detail below, with specific actions, entities, and timeframes identified.

Create a Faith-Based Community Development Corporation

Redevelopment of vacant land in any community is a challenge. However, Fairmont's strong religious institutions create a unique situation in this community that provides a potential way forward. The religious institutions in the Fairmont should join together to create a new faith-based CDC, using existing models from elsewhere in the region, to take a leadership role in reinvestment in the community.

Implementation Action Area #1: Support the Creation of a CDC

Action	Responsibility	Description
Apply for funding.		
Timing: 0-6 months	Religious institutions, County	Funding applications for staffing (one full-time or part-time person) and feasibility study should be submitted to relevant philanthropic organizations.
Conduct a feasibility study.		
Timing: 6-12 months	Religious institutions, County	The study should be conducted by consulting organization using funding received through the grant described above. It should explore the feasibility of a faith-based CDC in the Fairmont neighborhood.
Coordinate among churches.		
Timing: 6-12 months	Religious institutions, County	The staff person funded through the philanthropic grant should coordinate among the churches to build interest and support for the Fairmont CDC.
Involve the community.		
Timing: 6-12 months	Religious institutions, County	The staff person should also develop mechanisms to regularly inform the community about progress in development of the Fairmont CDC.
Form CDC as nonprofit organization, with staff, board, and by-laws.		
Timing: 12-18 months	Religious institutions, County	Once the feasibility study is complete and a high level of support has been developed among churches in the community, the CDC should be formed as a nonprofit organization (assuming that the feasibility study recommends its formation and the churches are supportive). The new organization should establish bylaws and a board of directors made up of relevant stakeholders and community leaders.
Short-term grantwriting for operational support.		
Timing: 18-24 months	Fairmont CDC	One of the CDC's first activities should be to seek grant funding for continued operational support. Some level of outside funding is necessary to sustain the CDC, so grant writing is likely to be a continual activity of the organization.
Develop strategic plan moving forward.		
Timing: 18-24 months	Fairmont CDC	The CDC should also develop a strategic plan for its activities. Most importantly, this includes attracting residential and commercial development to Fairmont, with a possible initial focus on the Neighborhood Center.

Update Will County's Land Use Regulations

The Fairmont Plan's recommendations require changes to Will County's zoning ordinance because many of the recommended development types would not be permitted under current regulations. The County is already undergoing a significant modification to its zoning ordinance, managed by the Will County Land Use Department. This modification process is recommended to include the following elements:

Permit the development of the proposed Neighborhood Center. This may be desired as either 1) a by-right development, which would require ensuring that zoning classifications permit a mixed-use neighborhood center development, 2) the creation of a new overlay district, or 3)asa Planned Unit Development (PUD), following the County's existing PUD process. It is recommended that the County consider these options and make a decision concerning the future zoning of the Neighborhood Center site.

Revise the residential districts that cover Fairmont. The current zoning classifications permit only low-density single-family homes in the Fairmont community, but the Plan calls for permitting single-family attached and multi-family dwellings as well as senior housing. The proposed ordinance may include additional residential opportunities such as group living facilities. Additional residential types such as townhomes, or multi-family apartments should be permitted in the appropriate zoning designations or through the PUD process and potential overlay district requirements.

Include new regulations concerning community gardens and local food production. Currently the Will County Zoning Ordinance does not specifically address community gardens. However, the proposed zoning ordinance may provide for community gardens and local food production in all residential areas (not including farming). The County should continue to work towards this ordinance update to allow for and support community gardens as well as small-scale agriculture on residential lots.

Make other changes to "green" the County's ordinances. The U.S. Department of Energy's Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant provided funds for the consulting team of Duncan Associates, the Lakota Group and Primera to assist Will County in updating and greening the County's zoning and building ordinances. The County seeks to comprehensively revise its zoning ordinance and make appropriate revisions to the building ordinance, particularly with regard to energy efficiency and sustainable development practices.

Implementation Action Area #2: Continue to Update County Regulations

Action	Responsibility	Description
Determine if the Neighborhood Center should be developed as a Planned Unit Development (PUD), as an overlay district, or by-right zoning.		
Timing: 6-12 months	County	The Neighborhood Center could be accomplished through either a PUD process, through the creation of an overlay district, or a new zoning district that permits this type of development by right. The pros and cons of these different approaches are described in the recommendations text for the Neighborhood Center.
Include incentives or benefits for using green development techniques.		
Timing: 6-12 months	County	Green development techniques include stormwater best management practices, solar and wind power, and water reuse features. These are being proposed as part of the County's ongoing work with its consultant team to do a full ordinance update.
Adopt new ordinances		
Timing: 6-12 months	County	The County's ongoing ordinance update is scheduled to be completed within the next 6 to 12 months.
Either rezone areas in Fairmont to correspond with the Plan's recommendations or assist property owners/developers in using other regulatory means such as a PUD approach for the Neighborhood Center development.		
Timing: 12-24 months	County	After new ordinances are adopted, some work creating a new zoning map may be necessary especially as it relates to the potential development of the recommended Neighborhood Center. Any County-initiated rezoning consideration should transpire after the current zoning ordinance update is complete.

Invest in New and Improved Parks

The Fairmont Plan recommends the improvement of existing parks within the Fairmont community, and the establishment of new parks in key locations. This will require coordination between a number of organizations, including Will County, Lockport Township, Lockport Township Park District, and the Will County Forest Preserve District.

Implementation Action Area#3: Invest in Parks

Action	Responsibility	Description
Update the Lockport Township Park District Parks and Recreation Master Plan		
Timing: 6-12 months	Park District	During this ongoing update, the Park District should give consideration to the needs of Fairmont, as described in this Plan. These include some new parks, expansions of existing parks, and improved connections between Fairmont and Dellwood Park.
Find locations for park expansion with multiple benefits		
Timing: 12-24 months	Park District, Township, County	When possible, the Park District should invest in parks in a way that also serves other goals, such as managing stormwater and reducing flooding. Coordination between the Park District, Township, and County would identify sites where installation of green infrastructure as part of a park project would have these benefits.
Identify non-public options for park acquisition and management		
Timing: 12-24 months	Park District, Township, County	While the Park District is the primary provider of park facilities, non-profit or private open space options should also be explored to supplement public funding, for both acquisition and management purposes.

Initiate a Demonstration Community Garden

There is considerable interest in the Fairmont community in local food production. This could be supported through the creation of a small community garden to demonstrate the benefits of this type of activity. Coordination is needed between interested residents, religious institutions, Will County, and other organizations.

Implementation Action Area#4: Initiate a Community Garden

Action	Responsibility	Description
Identify an appropriate community garden site		
Timing: 0-6 months	County, religious institutions	The first step in creating a community garden is identifying an appropriate site. Land currently owned and maintained by one of Fairmont's churches is likely to be the best option.
Develop management plan		
Timing: 0-6 months	County, religious institutions	For a community garden to be successful, a clear plan for management of the garden is necessary. A similar plan involving a Joliet community garden is described here: www.cooljoliet.net/garden.html
Develop educational programs for residents interested in gardening		
Timing: 6-24 months	County	Resident education can also add benefits to a community garden. It would be beneficial to link the garden to programs offered by educational institutions, such as one offered by Joliet Junior College: www.jjc.edu/about/committees/sustainable-campus/Pages/default.aspx

Infrastructure

Improvements to Fairmont's infrastructure are a major priority of the Plan. Serious infrastructure deficiencies were identified by residents during outreach activities. This section presents recommendations to help improve the condition of necessary infrastructure in Fairmont. The Plan identifies recommended improvements, most of them quite basic and relatively low-cost. The Plan's recommendations are built upon the findings of the existing conditions report as well as community input that consistently raised concerns regarding transportation and stormwater infrastructure.

One of the most pressing infrastructure issues is the poor condition of many roadways. Many streets should be repaved or resurfaced to improve their usability and overall condition. Also, basic features like sidewalks, curbs and gutters, street lights, and traffic controls at intersections are lacking throughout the Fairmont community. During the public engagement process, many residents discussed the need for improvements in these areas; for example, it was frequently noted that the lack of sidewalks and street lights within the residential neighborhoods creates a safety issue.

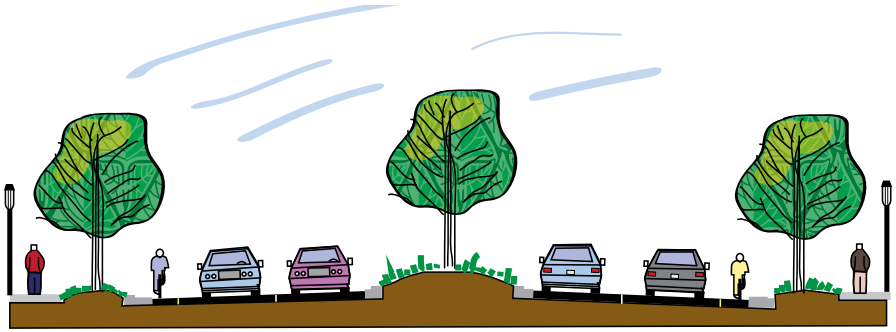
Flooding is also a concern in Fairmont, particularly in areas in the northwestern part of the community. Some properties are entirely or partially within a floodplain; this causes significant flooding problems, which are exacerbated by drainage issues related to nearby transportation infrastructure. The Plan recommends the use of stormwater best management practices and the application of green infrastructure solutions to address the community's flooding problems.

Implementation strategies are directed to the public agencies responsible for Fairmont's infrastructure, and call for including the plan's infrastructure recommendations within short-term capital improvement programs, seeking outside funding for the more costly improvements, and working with state and regional transportation agencies.

Transportation Infrastructure

The transportation system needs improved maintenance and basic features like sidewalks, stop signs, and street lights. The Plan's transportation infrastructure recommendations address vehicular transportation and circulation needs, public transit, and bicyclist and pedestrian circulation. An overall goal of the Plan is to provide a 10-15 year plan that can help Will County, Lockport Township, the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), and Pace in working together to provide a well-connected and multi-modal system that is easily accessible to all residents of Fairmont.

Overall, as new streets are constructed the County and Township should follow "complete streets" guidelines. The concept of "complete streets" is to accommodate pedestrians, bicyclists, transit, and cars, creating multi-modal transportation networks. The National Complete Streets Coalition defines a complete street policy as a "policy to ensure that transportation planners and engineers consistently design and operate the entire roadway with all users in mind – including bicyclists, public transportation vehicles and riders and pedestrians of all ages and abilities." (http://www.completestreets.org/)



Complete Streets: As new streets are constructed in the neighborhood, especially collector and arterial streets, the neighborhood should encourage the use of complete streets techniques that support pedestrians, bicyclists, transit, and cars, creating multi-modal transportation networks.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Infrastructure

Improvements to the bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure in Fairmont are recommended, and are shown in Figure 23. These include a combination of sidewalks, on-street bicycle paths, and off-street trails.

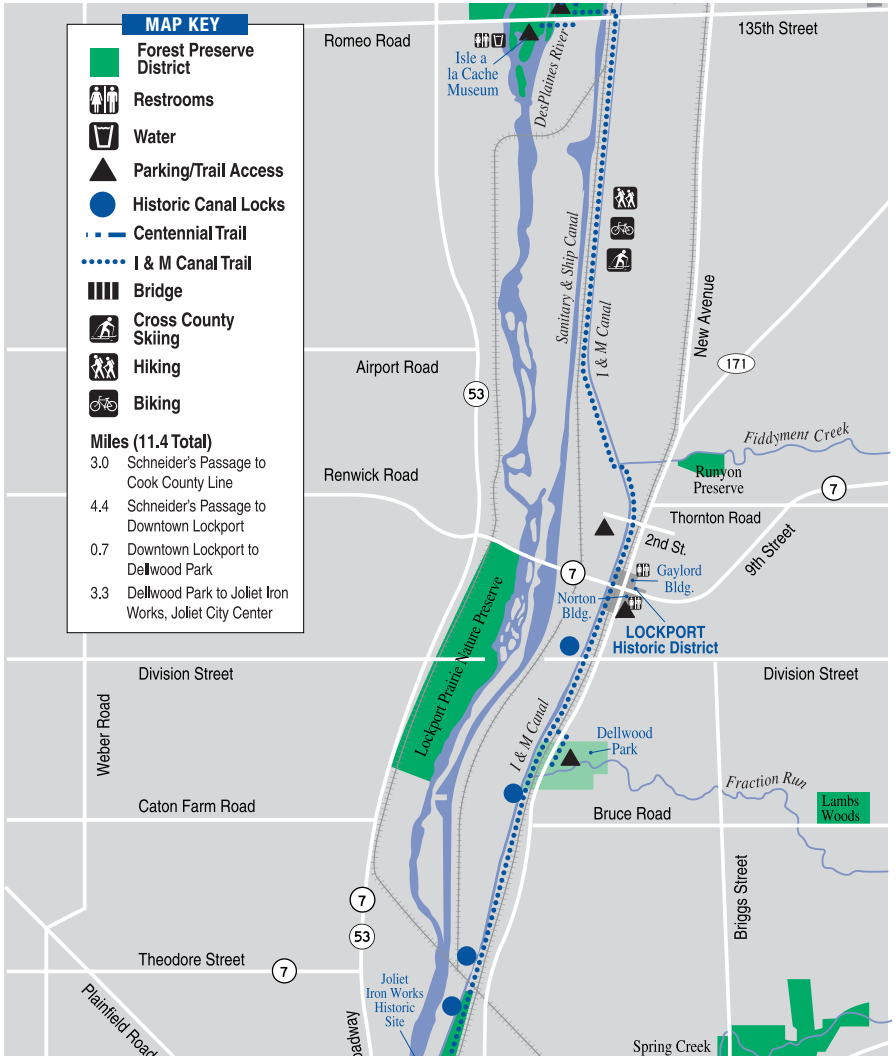
Potential safety issues in the community exist for pedestrians due to the lack of sidewalks. This issue is especially of concern for students walking to and from Fairmont School. Currently students must walk directly on the streets. Sidewalks should be constructed along main arterials in the community to improve pedestrian safety. Sidewalks are recommended along three main east-west streets (Bruce Road, Oak Avenue and Rosalind Street) and north-south along Green Garden Place. Sidewalks would allow pedestrians to travel safely along the main streets of the community with connectivity between Fairmont School, several parks and religious institutions.

Will County and Lockport Township should work together to conduct detailed planning for new sidewalks and coordinate efforts to pursue alternative funding sources such as grants. Last year, Will County applied for a grant to construct a segment of sidewalk near Fairmont School through the federal Safe Routes to School funding program. The County and Township should continue to apply for grants to extend the sidewalk system along the community's major streets.

No bicycle paths or trails exist in the Fairmont community. Connections should be made to improve connectivity with existing trails in nearby Dellwood Park, and in particular the regionally significant I&M Canal Trail. This 20-mile off-street trail parallels the I&M Canal, extending north from Fairmont into Cook County and south into Joliet. Today, accessing these trails from Fairmont is difficult and no clearly demarcated direct connections exist. The nearest pedestrian or bicycle connection to the I&M Canal Trail is approximately 1.5 miles north of Fairmont in Lockport.

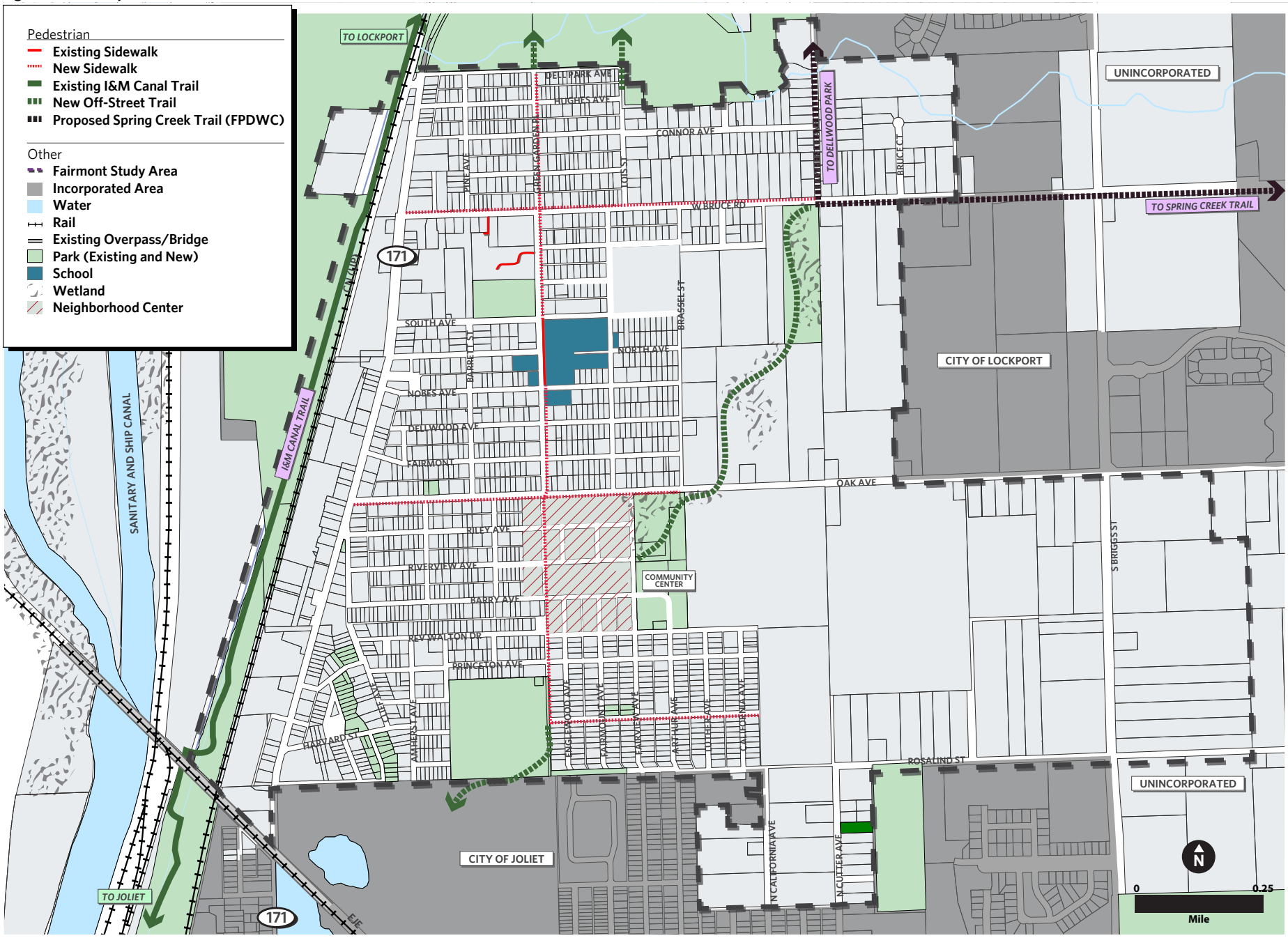
In addition to installing sidewalks along streets, new off-street multi-use trails should be constructed to provide further connectivity. The numerous vacant parcels and vacant street right-of-ways in the community provide exciting opportunities for future trail development. Recommended off-street trail alignments shown in Figure 23 are designed to provide linkages to both Dellwood Park and the County's larger regional multi-use trail system through vacant parcels and proposed future open space. The most significant new off-street trail within Fairmont links the proposed Neighborhood Center with a future extension of the Spring Creek Greenway Trail, which would run through the northeastern part of Fairmont and is recommended by Openlands as part of the Lockport-Joliet Heritage corridor. The Fairmont Plan supports this trail extension and encourages the Forest Preserve District to continue to advance this project. In addition, a series of smaller off-street paths are envisioned as part of the Neighborhood Center.

Finally, Green Garden Place is envisioned as a multi-modal boulevard that encourages bicycle travel. As noted above, this road is a priority for sidewalk construction; it should also be a priority for striping of an on-street bicycle lane. This would connect A.F. Hill Park, which lies on Fairmont's southern boundary with Joliet, with Dellwood Park, which is directly to Fairmont's north.



Regional Trail Network: The I&M Canal Trail runs just west of the Fairmont community, west of IL Route 171 and the I&M Canal Trail. The nearest access to the trail for Fairmont is through Dellwood Park, approximately 1.5 miles north. *Map source (Forest Preserve District of Will County, 2011)*

Figure 23. Trails plan



Transit Infrastructure

Two Pace bus routes serve the community. Routes #509 and #834 provide connectivity to nearby Metra Stations in Joliet and Lockport as well as the cities themselves and other regional employment and shopping areas. However, ridership is not very high. The community is currently not dense enough to support a higher level of transit service, but this may be possible after the new development described in the Reinvestment section occurs. The existing Pace bus routes should continue to be supported, and the community should continually work with Pace to monitor routes and look for opportunities to increase service.

Throughout the public workshops, residents expressed a desire for bus shelters, which Fairmont currently lacks. The community, through representatives of the Will County Land Use Department, should work with Lockport Township and Pace to install permanent bus shelters at key locations along Green Garden Place, as shown in Figure 24.

Roadway Infrastructure

A number of improvements to Fairmont's street system are recommended. These include increased maintenance, intersection improvements, access management, and street lighting; also, several new streets are proposed, and several platted but nonexistent streets are recommended to be vacated. Proposed roadway improvements are shown in Figure 24.

At the most basic level, increasing maintenance standards for existing transportation infrastructure is the most important recommended improvement. This is primarily the responsibility of Lockport Township. The Township should improve maintenance of roadways, many of which are marred by potholes. A long-term capital improvement program (CIP) for maintaining transportation infrastructure in Fairmont should be created by Lockport Township and Will County. The CIP should include potential funding sources, such as grants, to assist in paying for necessary infrastructure repairs.

Beyond maintenance, several relatively small-scale improvements are recommended. The first addresses traffic control at intersections. Currently, a number of streets intersect collector or arterial streets without stop signs. It is recommended that stop signs be installed at all street intersections along Bruce Road, Oak Avenue, Route 171, and Green Garden Place with other signs installed at additional intersections as warranted. Another small-scale improvement is to improve the intersection of Green Garden Place and Rev. Walton Drive by installing signage or improving the right-turn lane off of Rev. Walton Drive to be more visible.

A second type of improvement involves access management. Several businesses along Route 171 have multiple access and egress points (curb cuts) that complicate circulation in the corridor. Some businesses have three curb cuts, or even "rolling" curb cuts, which are long stretches of parking areas without any curb separation from the street. The number of curb cuts along Route 171 should be reduced to improve circulation and safety.

Throughout the public workshops, residents expressed a desire for more street lights at key intersections to improve safety and visibility. In general, street lights should exist near the intersections of key streets in Fairmont, and at strategic locations within residential neighborhoods.

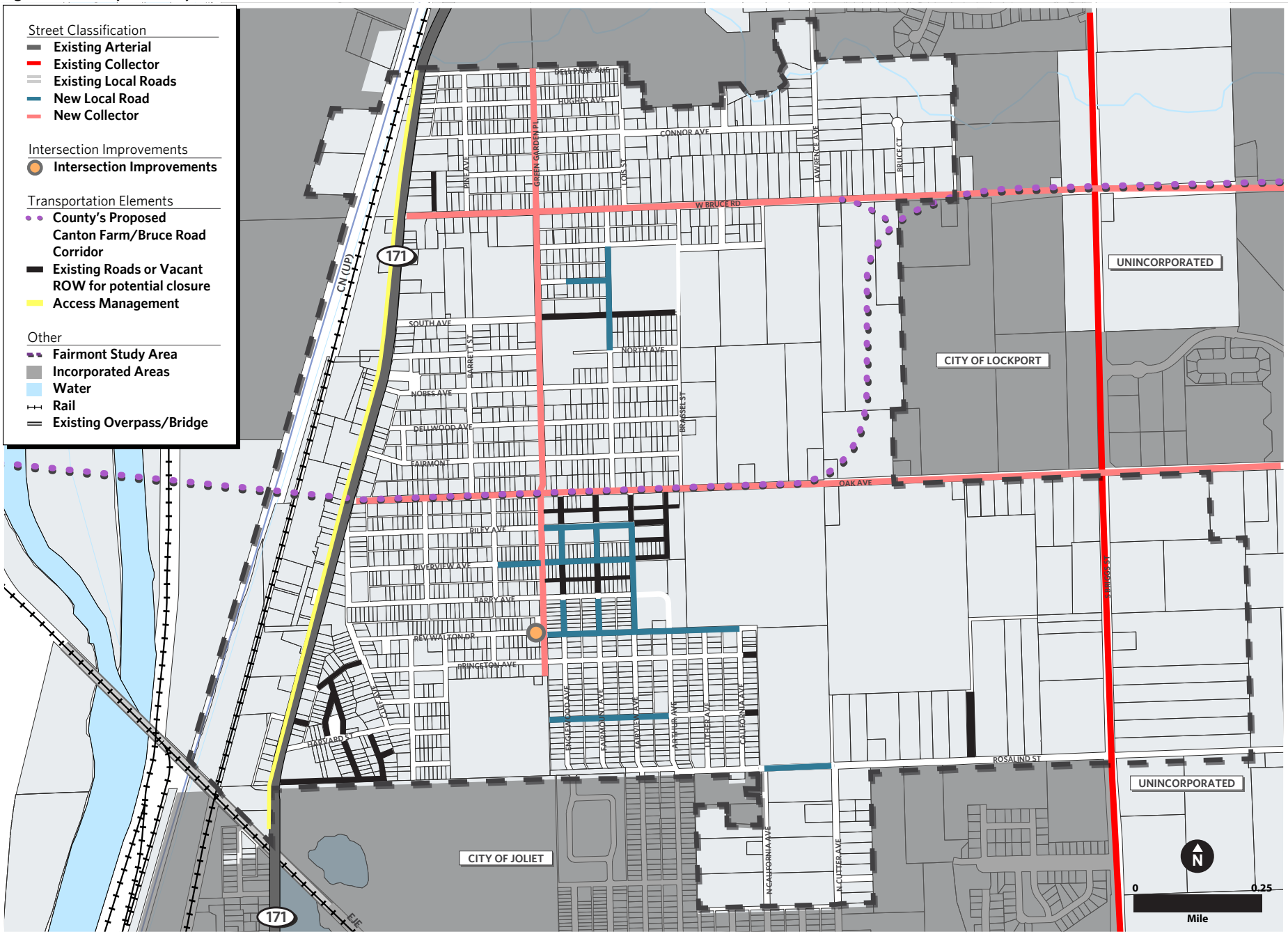
To address the expected growth of the Fairmont community, the construction of new streets is recommended in a few locations. Most of these are already platted, but have not yet been built. There is one exception: a very short (0.1-mile) connection of Rosalind Street, which is currently discontinuous between Cutter Avenue and California Avenue on the southern boundary of Fairmont. This limits access to the southern part of Fairmont, which will likely make it difficult to attract reinvestment to this area. In other cases, proposed streets are already platted, and the Plan recommends that they be constructed as originally intended. The timing of these new streets will likely depend upon future developments that are likely to require such improvements.

Several roads and street right-of-ways are unnecessary and should be vacated. Vacated right-of-way should either be combined as larger parcel consolidations (to create new parks or assemble land for redevelopment), or should be split with adjacent residential parcels to create larger parcels. Vacated right-of-ways may also be appropriate for future multi-use bike trails. Many streets that have been platted, especially near the proposed Neighborhood Center, have never been constructed, and future developments should determine if those streets are still necessary.

In addition, a major proposed transportation project, the Caton Farm-Bruce Road Connector, is planned through the Fairmont community. This is a long-term project under development by the Will County Department of Transportation; it is fiscally unconstrained within their 2030 Transportation Plan, meaning that funding for its construction has not been identified within this time period. It involves a bridge across the Des Plaines River and the I&M Canal, and a new high-capacity roadway replacing Oak Street, turning north in the eastern part of Fairmont to connect with Bruce Road.

The project would have a significant impact on the Fairmont Plan. While a river crossing would bring better access to the community, its path through Fairmont would require demolition of a number of homes, change the character of the proposed Neighborhood Center, and create a barrier between the north and south parts of Fairmont. The new bridge is supportive of the Fairmont Plan, but the County is encouraged to investigate other alternatives than its path through Fairmont, such as directing bridge traffic to Bruce Road via Route 171, which is already suitable for high-volume, high-speed traffic.

Figure 24. Transportation plan



Stormwater Infrastructure

Flooding has been identified by the community as a problem, especially in the neighborhoods near Nobes Avenue, and infrastructure improvements to manage stormwater are recommended. Overall, the County should work with Lockport Township to conduct detailed engineering analysis to determine the most cost effective means by which flooding can be alleviated. The recommendations contained in this section are initial proposals only, and do not replace the need for engineering expertise to determine the best solutions to this problem.

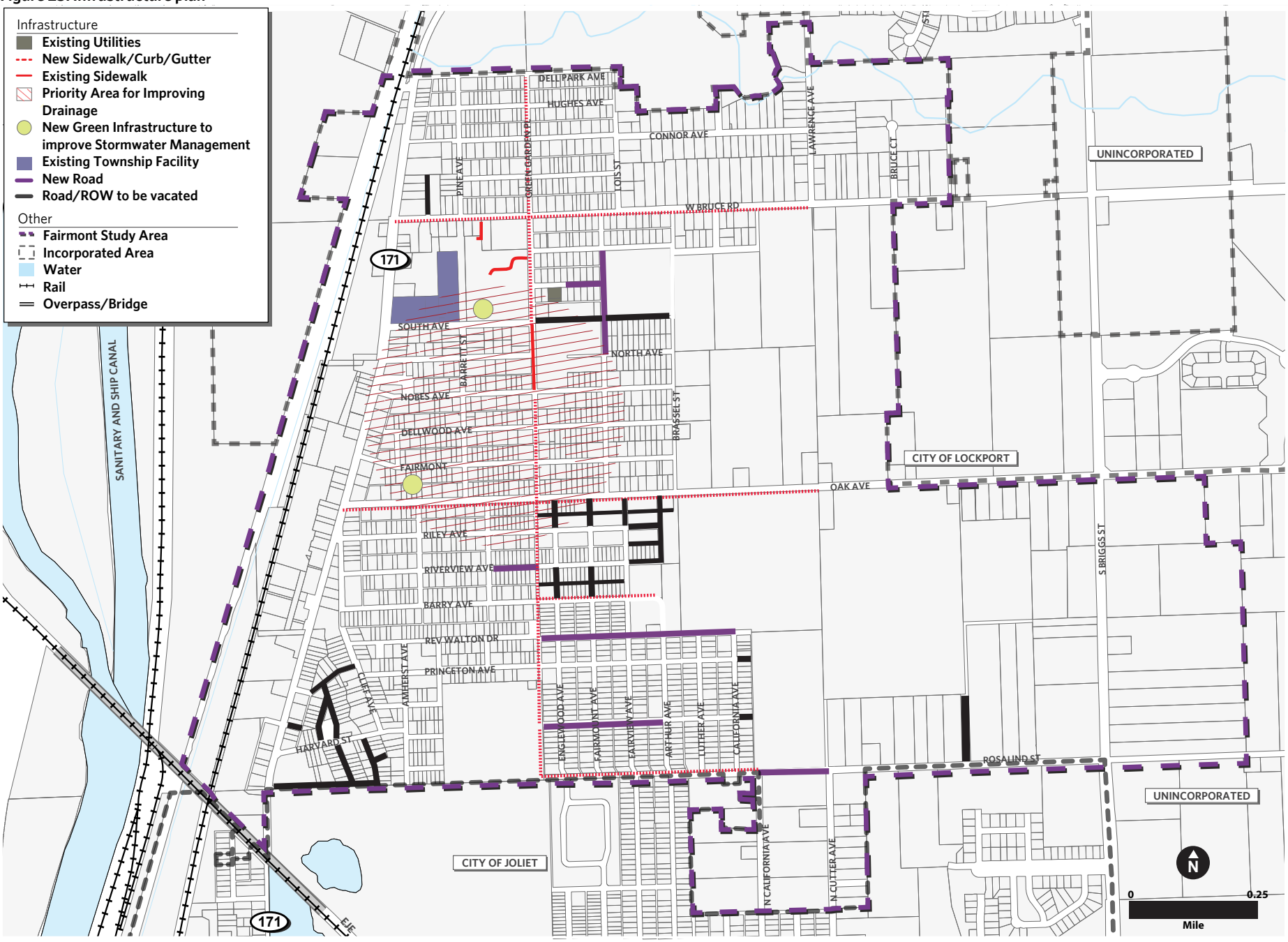
In general, it is recommended that green infrastructure techniques be used to the extent possible to address Fairmont's flooding problems. Green infrastructure techniques can reduce, capture, and treat stormwater runoff at its source before it reaches the sewer system, and are meant to mimic natural systems. Many examples of green infrastructure exist throughout the region, and include vegetated drainage swales, green roofs, rain barrels, downspout disconnections, rain gardens, permeable pavers, and many others. These techniques can compare favorably to traditional methods in terms of cost and effectiveness, and should be considered as stormwater management options.

Green Infrastructure Elements: Green infrastructure techniques can reduce, capture, and treat stormwater runoff at its source before it reaches the sewer system, and are meant to mimic natural systems. These photos illustrate native planting lined detention ponds, pervious paver parking lots, bioswales, and rain gardens.

There is also opportunity to use the new parks and open space described in the Reinvestment section for stormwater management. It is recommended that two ponds consisting of green infrastructure elements (native plantings, bioswales, etc.) be positioned at opposite ends of the area most currently impacted by flooding, in new parks proposed in these areas (as shown in Figure 25). The creation of new green infrastructure features would assist greatly in handling stormwater issues in this area. In addition to these new ponds, at the time of this report, the Township is beginning to install new storm sewer drains in the area. The combination of the new sewer drain and green infrastructure is likely to be an effective solution to the flooding problems.

For areas in Fairmont that have ongoing flooding, the Township should explore the potential of installing curb and gutters on nearby streets to determine if this would ameliorate the flooding problem. This should be done in conjunction with other transportation improvements described earlier. In addition to installing curbs and gutters on adjacent streets, the County and Township should increase maintenance of the existing drainage system (open swale ditches and culverts) running through the neighborhood.

Figure 25. Infrastructure plan



Implementation Strategies

The Fairmont Plan's recommendations for infrastructure improvements are significant, but can be implemented if there is sufficient coordination between the relevant public agencies. To summarize, they include the following:

- New sidewalks on Green Garden Place, Bruce Road, and Oak Avenue, and installation of curbs and gutters on these streets as well as others adjacent to flood-prone parcels.
- An on-street bicycle path on Green Garden Place.
- An off-street bicycle path linking the proposed Neighborhood Center to the future extension of Spring Creek Greenway Trail (likely a longer-term project).
- Improved connections into Dellwood Park from Fairmont.
- Bus shelters in three locations along Green Garden Place.
- Increased maintenance standards for streets throughout the community.
- Stop signs and street lights at major intersections.
- Reduction of curb cuts on Route 171.
- A new street filling a short gap in Rosalind Street, and construction of currently platted streets as new development warrants.
- New green infrastructure elements such as native plantings and bioswales in two proposed new parks in the northwestern part of Fairmont.

The purpose of this section of the plan is to identify priority strategies that will lead to the accomplishment of these infrastructure improvements. There are clearly other actions which would also help to support the Plan; those listed in this section are not meant to be exclusive.

Three major types of activities are described in this section. First, Will County and Lockport Township, as the agencies primarily responsible for infrastructure in this area, should jointly develop a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) that includes a fiscally constrained, reasonable schedule for the implementation of the improvements listed above. Second, Will County and Lockport Township should aggressively seek outside funding to supplement the resources that they can provide through their regular budgets. Third, the Fairmont community should work with other regional or state agencies – primarily including IDOT and Pace – to accomplish the recommendations of this section which are beyond the control of the County and Township.

Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) Development

Will County and Lockport Township should create a shared Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) which includes the infrastructure improvements listed above. This document should translate these improvements, which are presented here in fairly conceptual format, into a program of specific projects. The CIP should include a realistic budget and schedule for project accomplishment. It is expected that prioritization of the infrastructure ideas listed above will be necessary, and it is understood that not all projects can be undertaken in the short term, but a CIP can demonstrate the commitment of the County and Township to improve the Fairmont area over time. Implementation

Action Area #5: Develop a Capital Improvement Plan

Action	Responsibility	Description
Divide infrastructure recommendations into specific projects.		
Timing: 0-6 months	County, Township	The infrastructure recommendations of the Fairmont Plan, while fairly specific, need further refinement before they will become buildable projects. The County and the Township should work together to develop a finite list of feasible projects based on the Plan's infrastructure recommendations.
Develop more specific plans and cost estimates for each project.		
Timing: 6-12 months	County, Township	Basic planning-level cost estimates should be prepared for each discrete project identified. The nature of each project should be clarified at this point if necessary as well.
Identify project priorities.		
Timing: 12-24 months	County, Township	Based on the cost estimates and further project investigation already conducted, the County and Township should jointly identify priorities for infrastructure improvements in Fairmont.
Identify other small-scale projects outside of County and Township control.		
Timing: 12-24 months	County, Township	Some recommended infrastructure projects may be the responsibility of other agencies beyond the County and the Township. Other implementation strategies address actions to be taken by the Park District, Pace and IDOT; other groups should also be involved as relevant.
Adopt joint Capital Improvements Plan (CIP), or two separate CIPs.		
Timing: 12-24 months	County, Township	Ideally, the County and the Township should agree on project priorities and funding, and create a jointly-adopted CIP for a Fairmont community. Alternatively, two separate but complementary CIPs should be created. At any rate, these should translate the Plan's recommendations into a fiscally constrained program of projects, recognizing that not every recommended project can be completed in the short term.

Federal and State Funding Applications

Will County should lead efforts to secure outside funding to construct some of the more significant improvements recommended above. The County has already begun this process by seeking Safe Routes to School funding for a sidewalk near the Fairmont School; other applications to this and other sources should be pursued. This is most appropriate for larger and more costly proposals, such as off-street trails or sidewalk construction; other types of improvements such as stop sign installation are typically not covered by federal or state grant programs.

Implementation Action Area #6: Pursue Funding

Action	Responsibility	Description
Identify projects which are most suitable for external grants.		
Timing: 6-12 months	County, Township	The CIP development described above should identify projects which could use external grant funding. Larger infrastructure projects, such as the off-street bicycle trail, new sidewalks, or new parks with green infrastructure features, are likely good candidates for this type of funding.
Submit applications to appropriate sources for transportation projects.		
Timing: 12-24 months	County, Township	Many of the transportation projects recommended in the Fairmont plan could be funded through a number of federal sources, including Safe Routes to School (SRTS) administered by IDOT, the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality program (CMAQ) administered by CMAP, and the Surface Transportation Program (STP), administered by the Will County Governmental League.
Investigate state and federal funding for green infrastructure.		
Timing: 12-24 months	County, Township	Other federal sources for stormwater and green infrastructure related projects should also be explored and prioritized. Likely state agencies to seek funding from include IEPA and IDNR, as well as federal agencies like USEPA and FEMA.

Coordination with State and Regional Agencies

Some of the recommendations listed above are outside of the jurisdiction of Will County and Lockport Township, such as installing new Pace bus shelters and addressing access management on Route 171. The County should take the lead in identifying the appropriate agencies with which coordination is needed, and should also facilitate these coordination efforts.

Implementation Action Area #7: Coordinate with Other Agencies

Action	Responsibility	Description
Identify projects that require external coordination.		
Timing: 0-6 months	County, Township	The CIP development described above should identify projects which require coordination with external agencies. Several examples of these are listed below.
Coordinate with Pace on bus shelter installation.		
Timing: 0-6 months	County, Township, Pace	Pace bus shelters are recommended in three locations along Green Garden Avenue. Discussions are already underway with Pace to install these shelters, and this project is recommended to occur in the short term. With their installation, sidewalks on these streets become an even higher priority.
Coordinate with IDOT on Route 171 projects.		
Timing: 12-24 months	County, Township, IDOT	The Plan recommends access management and improved streetscaping along Route 171, although these are not among the Plan's most immediate priorities. When future IDOT projects are planned along Route 171, they would provide good opportunities to accomplish these goals at a lower cost than pursuing a stand-alone project. It is recommended that the County and Township remain in contact with IDOT about Route 171 projects, and look for any opportunities to address access management and streetscaping.

Image and Identity

The Fairmont community has a long and rich history, but there is a need to document its history and find ways to educate the public. There is little in the community to distinguish it from surrounding areas. It is quite possible that the thousands of motorists per day who travel Route 171 through Fairmont have no knowledge of the residential neighborhood that is located "on top of the hill."

This section presents recommendations to help strengthen the area's image and identity. These recommendations are built upon the findings of the existing conditions report and reflect high levels of community pride in the history of Fairmont that were found during the public engagement process. The Plan recommends formal documentation of the history of Fairmont, which currently exists only in the memories of its residents. It also recommends basic streetscape improvements throughout the community to improve its aesthetic appearance. Implementation actions primarily include small-scale investments and activities by government and private groups.

Historical Documentation

The history and culture of the Fairmont community is in need of formal documentation and preservation. Many long-time residents have interesting and proud stories of Fairmont's past, but these have not been documented or organized. As part of the planning process, community leaders, residents, and others have been asked to provide their stories and experiences in the area to document the history of Fairmont. This should be part of an ongoing effort to create and strengthen a unique image and identify for the community.

The Will County Land Use Department should take the lead in working with residents to build upon the preliminary research completed during this process to formally document Fairmont's history. Documenting the story of Fairmont through historical research and resident interviews should be a project undertaken by interested local volunteers with some coordination by others such as Will County, Will County Heritage Alliance, and the Lockport Area Genealogical and Historical Society.

To further strengthen the community's sense of history, the County's landmark designation program should be pursued by homeowners. Residents with historic homes in Fairmont should be educated about the Historic Landmark Status. Landmark designation is granted by the Will County Board, and the Will County Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) administers the County's landmark program. To date there are 41 landmarks in the County, but none in Fairmont. Upon designation, the County donates a bronze plaque to the property owners and local landmark designation opens up opportunities for funding, technical assistance, and of course, enhancement of a community's quality of life and sense of place through the protection of its historic and cultural assets.

The new developments recommended in the Reinvestment section of this plan can also be used to reinforce Fairmont's history. For example, new park sites could include historical markers or educational signage that would tell Fairmont's story. Additionally, new major developments like the Neighborhood Center, as well as smaller-scale home construction on infill lots, should be designed to fit into the existing character of the community while also creating a "sense of place."

Streetscape and Image Improvements

Streetscape elements should be installed in select locations and along key corridors in the community. Streetscape improvements should be included as part of the street and sidewalk improvements described in the Infrastructure section. This is especially important along highly-traveled streets, or along those like Green Garden Place that are planned to be the centers of the community. Intersections should include easily identifiable pedestrian crosswalks, street-lighting, benches, street trees, and directional signage highlighting Fairmont School, the Community Center, parks, and religious institutions.

It is likely that many people have their perceptions of Fairmont shaped by Route 171, which is generally characterized by industrial uses with outdoor storage. Currently Route 171 acts as a "hard edge" for the community. No sidewalks lead to the street, nor are there sidewalks or streetscaping along the corridor, as there is no strong reason for pedestrian activity. Aesthetic improvements to Route 171 would help the positive image of Fairmont.

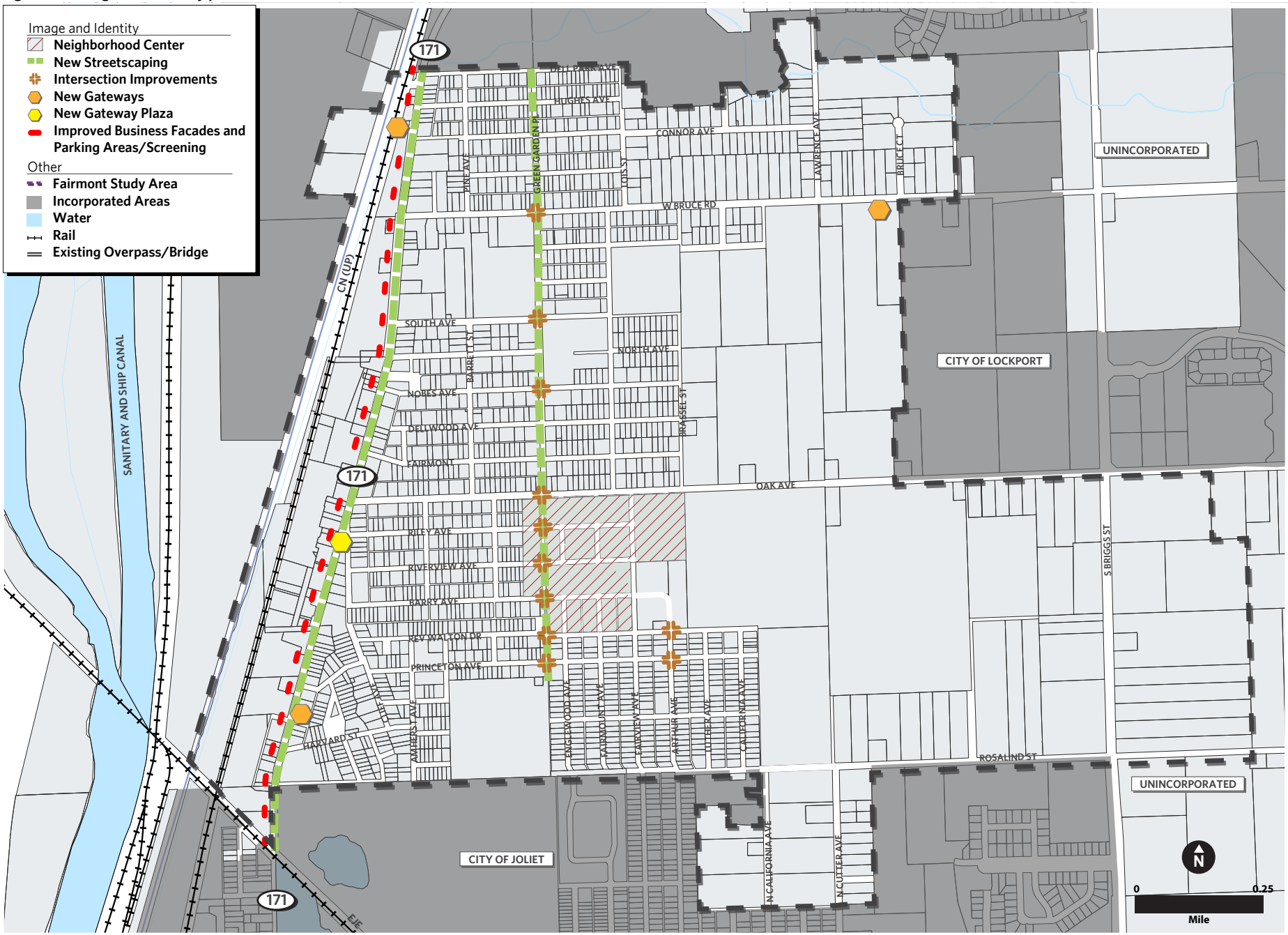
The existing industrial uses along the corridor, west of Route 171, provide valuable economic activity and should be retained; however, additional screening should be installed wherever feasible to improve motorists' views from the street. Many businesses do have screening in place, either through fencing, landscaping, or a combination of the two, but screening should be increased for all outdoor storage areas where sufficient right-of-way and sightlines can be retained. In addition to screening, several businesses along the corridor should improve their facades, business signage, and the condition of their parking lots. Improvements to the appearance of these properties will increase the overall image of Fairmont.

Gateway signs may also be appropriate at major points of entry to Fairmont. They should be appropriately scaled, should be constructed of traditional materials and design (a limestone base would be ideal), should include solar powered uplighting, and should include low-maintenance landscaping.

Other improvement programs that could enhance community identity should be investigated as well. The County should continue to work with Lockport Township and others to research potential grants and funding sources that are available to assist homeowners and businesses owners in making improvements. In addition to grants and funding sources, other programs from around the country should be studied to determine if they would be successful in Fairmont. One example of an existing program to improve the appearance of vacant structures is Cleveland's "decorative board program." (http://blog.cleveland.com/metro/2010/08/program_uses_decorative_boards.html)

Gateway Sign and Landscaping: An illustration of a potential "gateway" sign and landscaping for the Fairmont Neighborhood along IL Route 171.

Figure 26. Image and identity plan



Implementation Strategies

The Fairmont Plan's recommendations in this section are generally not costly, but would greatly help to improve the community's image and identity. The purpose of this section of the plan is to identify priority strategies that will lead to the plan's implementation. There are clearly other actions which would also help to support the Fairmont Plan; those listed in this section are not meant to be exclusive.

Two major types of activities are described in this section. First, Fairmont stakeholders should lead an effort to formally document the history of their community, which is in danger of being lost to the passage of time, as well as seeking Local Landmark Status for significant properties. Second, a coalition of public agencies and local stakeholders should identify and prioritize key streetscape improvements that would enhance Fairmont's image, including gateway signs, improving screening of industrial businesses on Route 171, and similar efforts.

Promote Community History

Will County should coordinate a group of volunteers as well as relevant County staff to document the history of Fairmont, and to pursue Local Landmark Status for appropriate properties.

Implementation Action Area #8: Promote Community History

Action	Responsibility	Description
Create a volunteer group to write history of Fairmont.		
Timing: 0-6 months	County	There is strong interest in writing a history of Fairmont, but such an effort is time-intensive and probably beyond the staff resources of the County. Therefore, the County should convene a group of interested volunteers to do most of the work on this project.
Conduct interviews with key community informants and conduct other research.		
Timing: 6-12 months	County, volunteers	The volunteer group should conduct its historical research through first-person interviews, and reviews of secondary information sources.
Write and publish history.		
Timing: 12-18 months	County, volunteers	Once the research is complete, the volunteer group, with assistance from the County, should compile the results into a single document and make the document publicly available through the County.
Develop marketing materials for Local Landmark Status program suitable for Fairmont and distribute them.		
Timing: 6-12 months	County	The County's Local Landmark Status program is relevant to Fairmont, but has never been used in the community. The County should develop customized marketing information to reach Fairmont residents to inform them of the program.
Describe benefits of program to local institutions such as churches and encourage them to advocate for program.		
Timing: 12-24 months	County, religious institutions, Fairmont CDC	The County should also use trusted local institutions such as churches to describe the Local Landmark Status program to residents. The Fairmont CDC, upon its creation, could also play this role.
Proactively identify several potential sites and approach property owners.		
Timing: 12-24 months	County	Also, the County should proactively identify potential sites and structure, and conduct outreach to the owners of these sites concerning potential landmark status.

Streetscaping and Property Improvement Programs

Will County should facilitate a process by which Fairmont stakeholders identify streetscaping improvements and other aesthetic improvements.

Implementation Action Area #9: Undertake Streetscape Improvements

Action	Responsibility	Description
Identify potential streetscape improvements and prioritize them.		
Timing: 6-12 months	County, Township	A number of streetscape improvement in the Fairmont community are possible, and should be prioritized.
Develop cost estimates and work with relevant government agencies.		
Timing: 12-24 months	County, Township	Cost estimates for priority streetscape improvements should be developed. Most of these will likely be on roadways controlled by the Township or County; if some are on roadways controlled by other jurisdictions, there should be coordination with these agencies.
Undertake more regularly scheduled code enforcement for businesses along IL Route 171.		
Timing: 0-6 months	County	The County conducts code enforcement along Route 171, but only infrequently. Increasing the frequency of its code enforcement activities would improve the appearance of this roadway, which gives many drivers their first impression of Fairmont.
Research other programs that could be used for aesthetic improvements.		
Timing: 12-18 months	County	The County should investigate other programs that could improve the appearance of Fairmont at low cost. For example, a program used in other cities across the country involves decorative board-ups of vacant homes, which improves their appearance greatly. This and other methods should be explored and prioritized.

Governance

As an unincorporated area, Fairmont has significant governance challenges. The community is classified as an urban area in Will County's Land Resource Management Plan, the only unincorporated area with that classification. The types of services and infrastructure needed by an urban area – sidewalks, street lighting, curb and gutter on streets, garbage pickup, and others – are typically provided by municipalities. Fairmont relies on non-municipal governmental agencies such as Lockport Township and Will County for the provision of public infrastructure and services. While these agencies recognize the issues facing the Fairmont community and have sought to address them, neither county nor township levels of government in Illinois are ideally suited to managing the needs of an urban area, and with limited resources, major improvements are difficult to implement.

The Fairmont Plan does not recommend a single solution to this issue. Governance is a complex issue, and should be addressed deliberatively by the Fairmont community as well as relevant government agencies including Will County, Lockport Township, and Fairmont's municipal neighbors, the Cities of Joliet and Lockport. Because this document does not recommend a specific action related to governance, it also does not identify implementation strategies. However, described below are two short-term actions that would help to eventually address the issue of governance.

First, Will County should create an advisory council of residents and business owners (termed the "Fairmont Advisory Council") that will be facilitated by the Will County Land Use Department. Currently, residents of Fairmont feel that they have little influence over the future of their community. This could be addressed by forming an advisory council of residents that meets regularly. Specific responsibilities for this group would need to be determined. Possible duties of the advisory council could be to hold public meetings that help educate Fairmont residents about the development process, and serve as a conduit of information between the County and Fairmont stakeholders. The Will County Land Use Department could also assist in inviting "guest speakers" to attend the meetings to discuss areas of specialty (such as how to create a community garden).

Second, Will County should also facilitate a process to engage the Fairmont community in addressing its future governance. While this may be staffed by the Will County Land Use Department, participation by the County Board members that represent the Fairmont community will be essential. The purpose of this process would be to conduct research and analysis to determine what future governance structure is most efficient and effective, and then recommend clear steps to achieve this outcome.

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