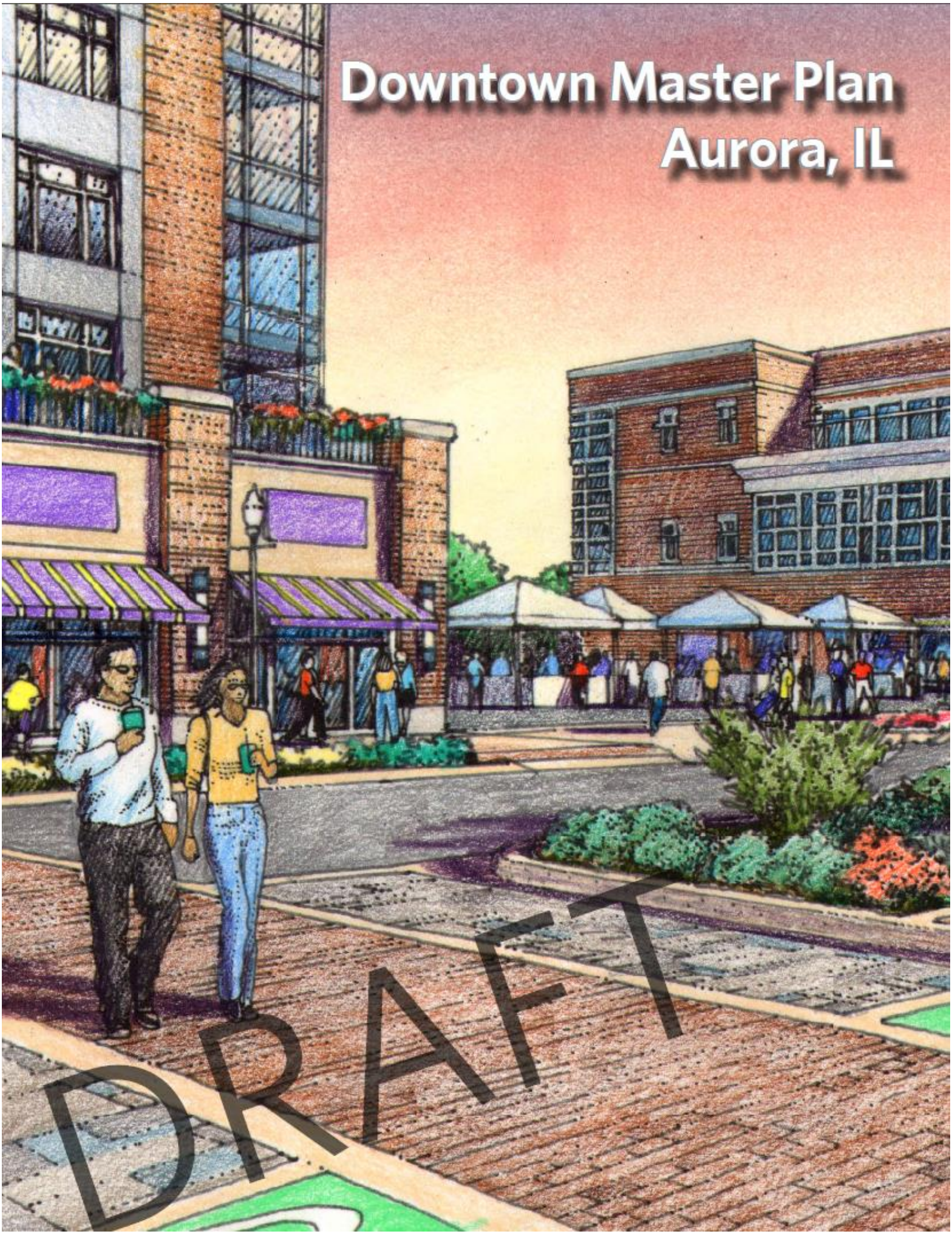
Downtown Master Plan
Aurora, IL



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Downtown Aurora Master Plan

From Arts to Industry: Rebuilding the Historic Downtown

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Introduction & Overview

Project Background

Throughout the years, many plans have painted impressive and ambitious visions of downtown Aurora's potential, and many of those plans have had major implementation successes – such as RiverEdge Park and the John C. Dunham Music Pavilion. Other small changes have perhaps been less noticeable, but impactful, such as the Downer Place traffic calming and streetscaping project. Many people in Aurora are working tirelessly toward their bold vision for the future, creating a more livable, walkable, and vibrant downtown.

In late 2015, the City of Aurora began a process to update their Downtown Master Plan for the community as part of the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning's Local Technical Assistance Program. The planning process to create this Plan included multiple steps that were undertaken over approximately 14 months. The process was crafted with assistance from a Steering Committee consisting of various community stakeholders and designed to include a broad range of input from residents, City staff, business owners, and others. In the Fall of 2015, Aurora planning staff met with CMAP staff to develop a scope of work for the project. A work plan established program tasks, a timeline for the program, outreach activities, and recommended participation by a community steering committee to assist CMAP staff in developing the final plan and recommendations. This Plan will outline the community's vision and define policies to help achieve that vision.

Organization of the Plan

The Downtown Aurora Master Plan is organized into the following chapters:

- Introduction & Overview
- A Vision for downtown Aurora
- Focus Areas
    - The Downtown Experience
    - Revitalizing the Downtown Economy
    - Activating Downtown through Arts & Culture
    - The Heart of Downtown: The Fox River
    - Mobility: Getting to and around Downtown Aurora
    - Building the Downtown Community
- Conclusion

Each of the focus area chapters includes a vision statement, highlights of key findings, and a set of recommendations with a description of actions to be undertaken.

Community engagement overview

One of the primary goals of the Downtown Master Plan planning process was to optimize community engagement–particularly focusing on engaging populations and issues that are typically underrepresented in planning processes. To reach this goal, CMAP staff devised a public outreach strategy with City staff and the Steering Committee to include a broad base of Aurora residents, business owners, property owners, and other local stakeholders. This process helped ensure that the community's concerns and interests would be reflected in the Downtown Master Plan. The tools and techniques that CMAP staff employed during the planning process varied according to the activity, amount of time available, and the specific characteristics of each group. The outreach efforts had four major goals:

1. Engage a broad representation of the community in the planning process.
2. Educate the community about the purpose of the project.
3. Garner public input on key issues and opportunities for Downtown Aurora.
4. Clarify the community's vision for Downtown Aurora.

The planning process to create the Aurora Downtown Master Plan began in late 2015 when the project team held a kick-off meeting with the Steering Committee for this project, which is comprised of individuals representing a wide variety of interests and perspectives. The purpose of this kick-off meeting was to define project objectives, review the scope of the project, and gather initial feedback on key issues and opportunities for downtown Aurora. In November and December 2015, CMAP held a series of key stakeholder interviews with residents, community leaders, development professionals, City staff, and local officials to gain further insights into issues and opportunities that exist in downtown Aurora. In January 2016, CMAP and the City of Aurora hosted a pubic visioning workshop to formally introduce this project to city residents and local stakeholders, highlight the relationship between this project and recent planning accomplishments, and build a wider understating of planning issues facing the community. From January until May, CMAP conducted a targeted outreach process to introduce the project and solicit feedback from key stakeholders and hard to reach members of the community regarding their vision for Downtown Aurora. This step of the process entailed presentations to local community groups and organizations, visioning with participants at First Fridays events, and engaging with residents at the 15th Annual El Día de Los Niños celebration.

The second phase focused on creating strategies for Aurora's downtown. To that end, CMAP staff and the City hosted a public open house on June 16th, 2016. The goal of the open house was to present key findings from the existing conditions in the downtown area, and garner feedback from residents and stakeholders, including their thoughts on potential solutions to the challenges identified during phase one. The third and final phase included plan creation, review by Steering Committee, community feedback, and plan adoption.

To encourage full participation from a broad-range of participants, CMAP staff developed an interactive online tool using MetroQuest to engage people who could not attend meetings, available in English and Spanish. This website served to educate the community about the purpose of the project and to gather input about their priorities and preferred choices for the future of downtown Aurora. A phase one online survey was available from mid-January until early May 2016 and received 2,776 visitors, with 780 fully completed surveys. Phase two of the online survey was designed to allow residents and stakeholders to provide feedback on potential recommendation ideas. The website was available from June 16th through December 24th, 2016. Over 1,663 people visited the website to get informed and over 900 responses were received.

To publicize the online surveys, CMAP staff worked with the City staff and the Steering Committee to promote the survey through the City's website, newsletter, posters at high traffic areas, during community meetings and events, including First Fridays events. CMAP staff also utilized two interactive kiosks with the survey that rotated to different locations within Downtown Aurora.

Since the start of the formal planning process, over 5,800 residents and stakeholders have participated. Overall, participants held many of the same concerns and generally expressed the desire to make the downtown a vibrant destination with mixed-use development, family-friendly activities, and nightlife entertainment. In addition, residents and stakeholders want the downtown to attract new businesses with diverse stores and restaurants to complement the current arts and culture scene. Many emphasized the need to address misconceptions about what downtown is really like; people who haven't been downtown in many years mistakenly think the river still smells bad, crime is rampant, parking is still metered, and there's nothing to do. Many people voiced concerns about the need and importance of celebrating the diversity and character of the community. Furthermore, a number of participants expressed the need to address absentee landowners and maintain the downtown's character.

A Vision for Downtown Aurora

Over the course of this planning process, a vision for the future of downtown Aurora emerged. The process began with an analysis of past planning efforts, to identify what goals were still appropriate to be pursued. Based on the input of residents, City staff, business owners, recreational and environmental advocates, several guiding principles stood out that shaped the strategies outlined in this Downtown Master Plan. Applying these guiding principles together will help the community build toward a future where unique local businesses thrive; where live music and social gatherings attract people from around the region; where diversity is embraced and residential population grows; where theater goers can dine al fresco at an array of restaurants overlooking a picturesque river scene; where walking and biking is a comfortable way to get around town and access trails; and where people discover all that Aurora has to offer – an experience unlike any other Fox Valley community.

The following are vision statements which align with the chapters of this plan, and chart the course for downtown Aurora's future through the recommendations that follow.

An experience to remember

With a full calendar of events and activities, a backdrop of re-energized iconic buildings, an edgy art scene, award-winning Broadway shows, a scenic river, and a diverse and broad-minded populace, downtown Aurora has something for everyone. With an enhanced marketing campaign, it will be promoted and recognized as a desirable destination in the region. A comprehensive wayfinding system will help make the downtown area more inviting for people arriving by all modes of transportation, whether they are coming from nearby neighborhoods or far-away regions. Unique, memorable, and attractive public spaces filled with people and events will help to craft a downtown where people want to be.

Growing and diversifying businesses

As more and more people choose to live downtown, new businesses are following their lead and the demand for new amenities has increased. A strong and diverse economic base, built up by creative entrepreneurs and restaurants, has capitalized off of recent arts successes. An active business support center has dedicated staff working hard to build strong relationships with existing businesses and help get new small businesses off the ground.

A place for creatives

Known for its robust and inspired arts, culture, and entertainment community, downtown Aurora has given balanced attention to a range of artistic endeavors. Aurora is known as a welcoming place for all. With an intrinsic historical and aesthetic appeal, the city has a lot to offer potential artists. The city has continued to develop as a haven for the arts community by giving local artists display opportunities, financial support, and helping to build a local arts network. Working with local schools and schoolteachers, the City has broadened the reach of arts into the community.

Safe and easy to navigate

Downtown Aurora has a comfortable and inviting environment for all modes of transportation. By calming traffic while reducing bottlenecks, the city has reduced crashes and improved travel experiences for motorists. With a focus on getting people to downtown and facilitating movement throughout the downtown core, the city encourages drivers to slow down and be alert for pedestrians and bicyclists. Parking signage and information are used as part of a strategy to improve utilization of long-term

parking lots, along with continued analysis of parking management strategies. Complete streets, safe for travelers from ages eight to eighty, is the goal, as more and more people seek to live downtown.

A vibrant Fox River

By orienting more aspects of the riverfront community toward the Fox River, Aurora has been able to attract more visitors and riverfront activity. The city has capitalized on the river's unique place-making opportunities, its connection to the history of the area, and its abundance of natural amenities. Through programming, open space, and water-based recreation, the river annually draws thousands of residents and visitors alike, helping to create a thriving and ecologically sustainable downtown business district.

An engaged community

Downtown Aurora's creative and targeted approaches to engage its diverse residents, businesses, and institutions helped to forge new relationships and led more people to choose to live downtown. By listening to residents and incorporating stakeholder priorities into plan implementation activities, improved levels of trust have helped projects roll out smoothly. Through innovative public engagement methods, increased communication, and inclusive practices, the City built trust among community stakeholders, is fostering a new generation of leaders, and is strengthening local capacity for the growing residential population.

Focus Areas

The Downtown Experience

Vision: Downtown Aurora will be promoted and recognized as a desirable destination to people who live here, work here, or just come to visit.

Successful cities are built upon the connections of mutually supportive activities and functions and the overall ease and comfort with which people can fluidly navigate those activities. Downtown Aurora is many things to many people; the Fox River, Stolp Island, and historic and cultural assets give downtown a unique sense of place. Other aspects of the experience of coming downtown can create a sense of welcoming and help to support meaningful social interaction.

Key findings

Past downtown planning efforts have aimed to create a pedestrian-friendly environment, encouraging access to the Fox River. The FoxWalk Design Guidelines, the RiverEdge Park Master Plan, the Riverfront Vision, Seize the Future, and the Bicycle and Pedestrian plan all emphasize the importance of walkability. The Aurora Zoning Ordinance emphasizes pedestrian comfort and walkability in the downtown and provides standards for new developments to maintain pedestrian access and incorporate potential views of the Fox River.

Downtown Aurora has a high number of historic buildings and landmarks which are maintained through various historic preservation initiatives. In the downtown area, there are numerous historic buildings representing a range of architectural styles from Art Deco to Prairie School. Twenty historic buildings are within the Stolp Island National Register Historic District alone, including the Paramount Theatre and the Grand Army of the Republic Memorial.

Aurora has integrated streetscape and signage amenities in the downtown. People who live and work in downtown Aurora already know their favorite dining spots, where they can easily find parking, and where their favorite stores are located. However, many of these amenities are historic in nature and are concentrated on Stolp Island where signage pertinent to the business district is limited. For newcomers to Aurora, signage and wayfinding could help to make their visit more enjoyable and seamless. Particularly for visitors arriving by train, clear and direct paths to the downtown should be more evident and recognizable.

***Major gateways into the downtown area lack distinction and appeal*.** While Aurora has an attractive skyline and central streets, there is little indication for visitors traveling to downtown that they have arrived in the heart of Illinois' second largest city. The first impression along north-south corridors offers views of the new RiverEdge Park alongside scrap recycling centers with no sidewalk, or strip shopping centers, and limited signage.

For a city of its size, Aurora has one of the lowest crime rates in the nation. A low crime rate doesn't erase the memory of many from the eighties and nineties, and addressing misconceptions about safety still remains a challenge for the City.

Recommendations

New visitors to Aurora are often surprised to find such a lovely, historic, walkable downtown core. Having limited knowledge of recent beautification efforts and economic development activity, many people –including Aurora residents – pass through downtown or along the north-south routes outside of the core, without stopping to "smell the flowers" and appreciate downtown's attractions. Despite all the transformative improvements in recent years, Aurora continues to suffer from negative stigma from people who have not come to see the downtown for themselves.

A downtown area that is inviting to visitors and residents alike, will respect the historic context of the area, and highlight its importance in the region. Simple, unobtrusive signage, markers, and maps combined with aesthetic and infrastructural enhancements at key destinations will help improve visitors' first impressions of the area. Many of the recommendations for improving the overall downtown experience mirror efforts that are already underway, and therefore recommend continued action in several areas. The police department's efforts to build ties with the community and target unwanted criminal activity have dramatically improved the area's crime rates. Further improvements to the marketing and branding of the downtown could help to promote successes and local improvements, and break down past perceptions.

The following strategies are recommended to improve the downtown experience.

Enhance the built environment to create a sense of place

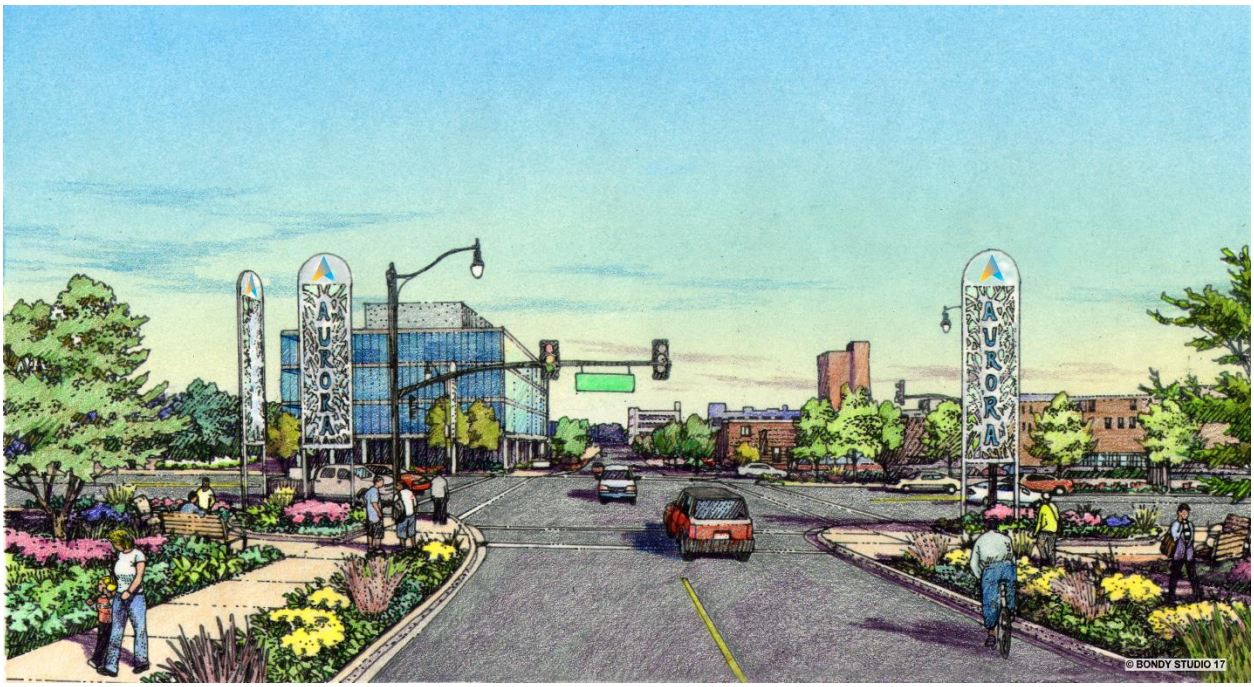
With multiple routes into the Downtown from state routes IL-31 and IL-25, New York Street, and Galena Boulevard, the visual impact of neglected properties on these heavily traveled corridors detracts from the downtown's image. And while Leland Tower draws attention by nature of its height, Downtown Aurora is not highly visible to people traveling on these roads. In fact, the two major state routes running north and south through the downtown area give no indication to drivers that they are entering the heart of a major downtown.

Businesses in the downtown district may benefit from improved lighting, updated signage, and the use of color and texture in the facades to attract visitors and to maintain favorable visual effect along business corridors. The aesthetics of downtown would also be enhanced with roadway improvements to make walking more comfortable, which is covered in more detail in the Transportation section.

Identify and prioritize major and minor gateway entrances into, and prominent corridors within downtown

Major destinations and point of interest should be identified to be added to (or removed from) the general map of downtown (Figure 1). For all community maps, a procedure should be established for adding businesses to a map that will not create excessive burden if businesses change or re-locate. Gateways and corridors should be identified to receive a prominent piece of art, an iconic marker, or simple banner treatment like the current treatment. Some gateway entrances are viaduct underpasses and will need to be evaluated for appropriate lighting, cleanliness, as well as aesthetics. Traffic counts should be used to assist in the prioritization of locations.

Figure 1. Downtown attractions and icons



Target infrastructural and aesthetic improvements to enhance the sense of place

Public and private infrastructure improvements can create a sense of place. Focusing higher density development near key locations, such as the Aurora Transportation Center, will add more people and jobs to these prioritized corridors and create the sense that visitors are entering a central part of the city. In addition to the added density of housing and mixed uses in the downtown fringe, the improvements to major corridors should include streetscaping and lighting enhancements.

Multicultural and arts districts should be cultivated and resources and attention focused to particular areas to foster a distinct character or identity of the neighborhood, which will help to increase building occupancy. Americans for the Arts has developed a toolkit[1] for creating cultural districts; a partnership can be created with Aurora Downtown, the Public Art Commission, the Preservation Commission, and local cultural groups to walk through steps outlined to develop and advance a cultural district.

The previous "Seize the Future" downtown master plan called for the creation of an identifiable "Mercado Neighborhood" to cultivate a sense of place for local residents with family members who came to Aurora from other countries. An outreach program may be helpful to increase communications and collaboration among Aurora's various cultural advisory boards, like the Aurora Hispanic Heritage Advisory Board, the Indian American Advisory Board, and the African American Heritage Advisory Board, and initiate discussions about how best to honor Aurora's unique local history and culture. As an example of community building through cultural history, the Aurora Historical Society hosted an exhibit in 2011 of Mexican-American identities and worked with the Aurora Hispanic Heritage Advisory Board and local families to add photos and information to the exhibit. A similar initiative could be undertaken to generate ideas for sculptures, historic markers, and cultural events.

[1] Americans for the Arts National Cultural Districts Exchange Toolkit: http://www.americansforthearts.org/by-program/reports-and-data/toolkits/national-cultural-districts-exchange-toolkit

A design competition can be held for enhanced gateways and gateway markers in downtown. These gateways or markers could be placed on River Street, Broadway, LaSalle Street, Lake Street, or as enhancements to rail overpasses. Markers should be installed along the regional bike trail system to inform cyclists that they are entering Downtown Aurora, and alert them to amenities such as local eateries and a bike shop, would also be beneficial. If done in coordination with a local arts committee (See Activating Downtown through Arts and Culture), gateways can incorporate art into road treatments. For example, Fort Lauderdale, FL hired a local artist come up with colorful designs to be painted by the community at prominent intersections.

Source: City of Fort Lauderdale, Painted Intersections Project

Other communities that have painted streets include: Portland, OR; St. Paul, MN; Ocean City, NJ; Seattle, WA; and Los Angeles, CA.

Develop stronger visual and physical links to the river front

Downtown Aurora is one of many communities that developed near a major water source, the Fox River. Aurora is unique in that it has several small islands in the middle of the river, including Stolp Island with many attractions and government offices. The Fox River Trail runs through downtown and is used by people riding bicycles, walking, bird-watching, canoeing and kayaking, and more. As a gateway, aesthetic improvements can be added to the trail including more prominently highlighted access points to riverfront trails, and direct trail users to the downtown businesses. Enhancing the connection with the river, as part of the downtown Aurora experience, is a strong focus of the plan, with more coverage in the Fox River chapter.

Develop and implement a comprehensive signage and wayfinding program

Wayfinding is more than a collection of signs and maps. A comprehensive wayfinding system will identify important routes to access key destinations, catered to various transportation modes. Successful wayfinding makes it easy to route between destinations, find parking, and helps a visitor feel confident navigating the area. A simple and elegant wayfinding aesthetic connected to the history of downtown was supported by public comments on potential approaches.

A clear and simple wayfinding system placed at popular destinations, cultural landmarks, parking lots, transit, and schools can increase walking and allow for easy transition between modes. Possible elements of a wayfinding system include: the number of minutes it would take to walk between destinations, clear parking information, historic and cultural information, and ecological information. Some good examples of wayfinding systems include: Alexandria, VA; Philadelphia; San Francisco, and New York City.

Identify key routes between destinations and important gateways in downtown

From the locations identified by the City and Aurora Downtown, likely routes will need to be identified between destinations and primary points of entry into the downtown, depending on transportation mode. The Aurora Transportation Center is a key entry point for travelers arriving by Metra rail and many Pace buses. Drivers from the tollway are likely to be arriving from IL-31, while local drivers take many different routes to enter downtown. People walking or riding bicycles arrive in downtown Aurora from regional trails, as well as neighborhood streets.

In Figure 1, each of the orange pins in the map represents a potential entry point or gateway into downtown, yet they are all unique and each should not receive the same treatment. Some gateways are

underpasses, some cater to drivers already heading into the downtown, and on some most drivers are just passing through.

The signage system should include signs directed at drivers, pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users. A signage consultant, planning/urban design/architecture consultant, or staff expert should determine the placement and spacing between signs, font sizes, and appropriate information for each type of sign.

Coordinate with other riverfront communities to create a cohesive wayfinding package to promote riverfront downtowns

Exploring a wayfinding system that includes a larger network of Fox River communities might produce a more cohesive regional design, with familiar icons and fonts all along the river. This could help to promote recreational river usage and trail activity. While each community would apply their distinct character to the signage, a familiar set of signs would facilitate easy comprehension of information.

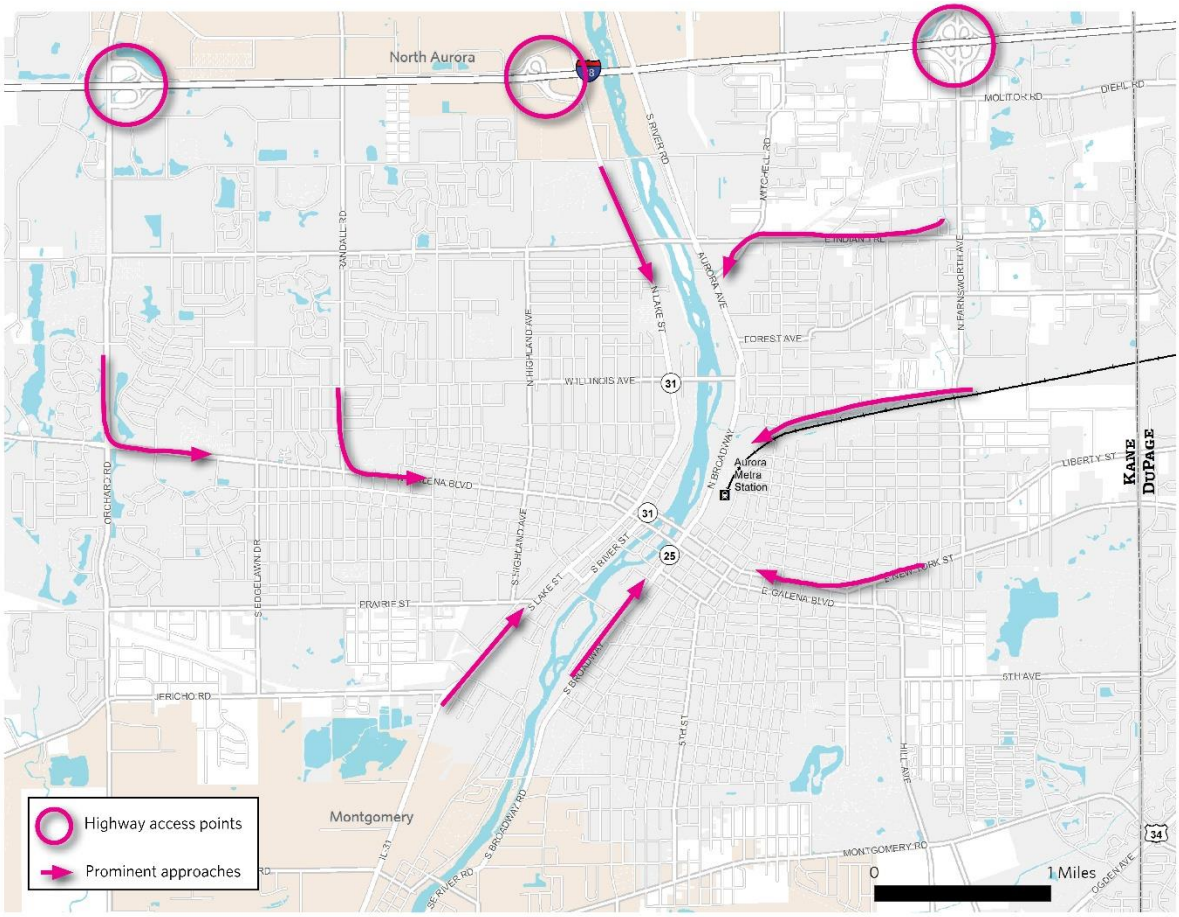
Extend signage and marketing to the tollway and the City's major arterials to draw visitors into the downtown area

While the tollway has strict rules about signage on the highway, installing additional signage, or improving existing signs just past exit ramps would help to connect drivers to the downtown. As an example, at the Orchard Road exit ramp there is a standard highway sign sending drivers in the direction of various communities, with Aurora being the only one to the south. Just before Sullivan Road, there could be signage to indicate that the downtown is approximately 2.5 miles away with an arrow to the

south, and another sign at Galena Boulevard with an arrow to the east. The current signage for downtown on IL-25 and IL-31 is small and easy to miss. Additionally, the Tollway may allow decorative signage at overpasses or bridges, which would further increase Aurora's visibility.

Prominent approaches and feeder routes (Figure 2) to downtown on the east side of the river include Broadway (IL-25) from the north and south, and New York Street from the east. Prominent approaches to downtown on the west side of the river include Lake Street (IL-31) from the north and south, and Galena Boulevard from the west.

Figure 2. Prominent approaches to downtown Aurora



Enhance marketing, branding, and communication

Paramount Theatre, RiverEdge Park, Aurora Downtown, and the City have done an extraordinary job of attracting visitors to the downtown area. Community events, like the Farmer's Market and First Fridays, are bringing in residents and new visitors that help to activate the downtown on a regular basis. Expanding marketing efforts to increase awareness of downtown activities and improvements can appeal to creative, tech-savvy and entrepreneurial-minded individuals.

The City of Aurora has very active and enthusiastic departments that are successfully engaging many residents. A partnership between the Greater Aurora Chamber of Commerce and Aurora Downtown recently created compelling promotional material for downtown Aurora by highlighting cultural and

lifestyle destinations. Collaboration with these and other organizations to promote the downtown as a regional cultural and business destination should continue. An important element of this strategy should be to overcome historical biases and misconceptions about downtown and highlight the current lifestyle possibilities.

Promote and cultivate the creative, cultural identity of downtown

Aurorans are proud of their city and its history. Many feel that the area's cultural richness and people of diverse backgrounds is something that sets the city apart from neighboring communities. This culture and diversity, which extends back generations, is something that should be celebrated and capitalized upon. Banners, signage, murals, or markers can be used to distinguish important and historic features of downtown and highlight the welcoming, multicultural history of Aurora. For example, a mural at a railroad overpass depicting the diverse mix of laborers in the 1920s, could be used to highlight the history of railroad-building in Aurora.

Establish a broad marketing reach

Enhanced informational kiosks downtown and advertisements including billboards outside of the city should be considered. Aurora Downtown is also pursuing innovative marketing strategies to piggy-back on the popular Pokémon game that has brought many new visitors to downtown, which can help existing businesses gain attention. The city's fiber optic network may appeal to people in the technology sector, and strategic advertisements at Chicago tech events and at 1871, Chicago's Technology and Entrepreneurship Center, could help attract new residents and businesses to downtown. Other current communications efforts, such utilization of newsletters and social media to keep residents informed of downtown events, should be continued.

Improve feelings of comfort and safety

The Aurora Police department has overhauled and improved their service to the public by establishing community partnerships with neighborhood groups and organizations to discuss policing tactics and ways to combat violence. The City's violent crime rate decreased by more than fifty percent between 2002 and 2012. Despite a significant increase in safety and a decrease in crime in Aurora, some people still hold a negative perception of downtown, and the city as a whole, that may impact their willingness to visit, walk, and bike there. Continuation of current neighborhood policing tactics as well as programs and infrastructural changes that can improve neighborhood safety and make visitors more comfortable, is recommended.

Identify and evaluate common pedestrian routes and parking facilities for safety improvements

Using a public parking map and common destinations, the nighttime routes from various parking lots should be evaluated, as well as conditions in the parking lots in the evening. Public comments have indicated that lighting improvements in and around Public Lot "E" would make it more attractive to drivers who currently avoid it. Completing a Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) audit may help to reveal potential areas for improving the downtown landscape for optimal safety, such as lighting improvements. Without better understanding of current conditions, it is hard to tell if people are avoiding the parking lots because they are unaware of their existence, they are unsure of how long they can park, they don't want to walk, or if they are concerned for their safety.

Identify and activate vacant spaces

One of the biggest areas for improvement in the overall sense of comfort and safety is in the occupancy and upkeep of downtown properties. In partnership with Invest Aurora, the City of Aurora has made strides to incentivize property owners to lease vacant spaces or sell property that has been abandoned. These efforts should continue, along with incentives and assistance to help encourage reinvestment in existing structures and new developments. Additionally, Aurora Downtown has worked to beautify vacant properties through a "Vacant Windows Project," adding signage and artwork to vacant storefront windows. Expansion of this effort to create more pop-up events and shops will help to reinvigorate downtown, even if only temporarily, and will help others to see the possibilities for downtown properties. Efforts to preserve existing structures should be prioritized.

Promote community engagement and enhanced patrolling techniques

The City's neighborhood policing strategies can serve as a model for other mid-size communities, and should be continued. In patrols, Aurora could increase the number of officers on bicycle, which can be helpful for connecting officers to the community, outside of the confines of a vehicle, and demonstrate that biking downtown is possible. Promoting Aurora's successes is also important for community pride, as well as continued engagement through social media.

Revitalizing the Downtown Economy

Vision: Downtown Aurora will have a strong and diverse economic base, highlighting its creative entrepreneurs and restaurant options, built upon arts and cultural successes.

Downtown Aurora's re-emergence as a regional destination and an attractive home to new residents may not happen overnight, but it is happening. By reinvesting in the City's historical buildings, leveraging infill opportunities, filling niche business opportunities, and supporting the vitality of businesses downtown, there are many opportunities to continue downtown Aurora's progress.

Key findings

There are market niches to fill that could improve economic diversity in downtown. Appealing to a broad market base, as some local businesses do, helps businesses survive by attracting patrons for an area considerably larger than the city proper. In addition to the sizable draw of the Paramount Theatre, Aurora has local breweries, coffee roasters, boutique-clothing retailers, and other attractions drawing people in from neighboring communities. Other niche cultural, entertainment, and accommodation businesses could be appropriate for downtown Aurora.

Downtown Aurora has seen an increase in renovated and rehabilitated properties that have brought new housing units online. There are several rehabilitation and renovation projects that have brought new housing units into the downtown. These projects also have helped fuel rent growth. Invest Aurora has continued to support these efforts by leveraging additional funding for these types of projects. However, there are still many property owners downtown who struggle with making improvements and completing renovation and rehabilitation projects.

Downtown Aurora's residential new construction has lagged behind other suburban locations. While the supply of housing stock in Downtown Aurora has increased in recent years, there are still too few viable options available. Inflation-adjusted per square foot multifamily effective rents grew by 9.2 percent between 2011 and 2016 (CoStar 2016), 5 percent higher than their pre-recession peak. New housing options could support more households with strong purchasing power living in close proximity.

Retail and Service spaces available in downtown will require targeted marketing to fill. There are many small-scale service and retail properties in downtown catering to a variety of service, as well as personal service businesses. Older spaces have charm, but also impose limitations, which can be inappropriate for certain uses and desirable for others. Smaller spaces could be more appropriate for small-format venues and businesses, such as specialty food stores, pop-up locations, accommodation, and amusement venues. Smaller format businesses may also be able to generate a profit within some of the narrower spending gaps in the trade area.

With significant competition in the retail and restaurant markets, it is challenging to attract national businesses. Downtown has a number of restaurants and drinking establishments serving a variety of cuisines. However, the number of Mexican options in downtown is far greater than the others. Downtown is lacking in quantity and variety of retailers. Unfortunately, the area was hit harder by the recession than neighboring submarkets, and is still recovering. Retail development trends are now focusing on experiential dining/retail concepts, which could work in downtown Aurora, depending on the availability of appropriately sized and priced land and/or buildings. The clustering of similar businesses combined with attractive streetscapes and a bold marketing strategy could create a destination for both.

Private sector jobs have declined. There is a wealth of talent close to downtown Aurora, and many stakeholders have expressed a desire to work in the downtown. Jobs in health care, social assistance, arts, education, and recreation increased between 2002 and 2014. At the same time, private sector jobs declined downtown while growing in other parts of the city. Finance and insurance sectors have not returned to pre-recession levels, butmay be offset by growth in other sectors. The City's fiber network, overseen by OnLight Aurora, is an attractive amenity to business in IT sectors. There could therefore be opportunities to tap into national trends in IT.

Office space in downtown may not meet the needs of modern office tenants. In downtown Aurora, there is an abundance of vacant underutilized office space in existing buildings, but limited vacant land. This restricts the potential for new office tenants without activating these existing spaces. The current office vacancy rate may be due to the relocation, restructuring, or closure of firms within the finance and insurance, information, and other service related sectors. However, the vacancy rates may also be due to the conditions of the available properties. As of late 2015, there was no Class A office space in downtown Aurora and the average age of office space was 80 years old. Nationwide building standards have changed since many of these properties were built, this effects the permitting, accessibility and occupancy of these older structures. Similar to the retail spaces discussed earlier, there are many office buildings that may need to be updated.

Recommendations

Many efforts to revitalize the downtown economy are already underway through programs developed by the downtown's three economic development partners, the City of Aurora, Invest Aurora, and Aurora Downtown. Aurora Downtown is an association of property owners who manage the funds collected from the downtown Special Service Area tax (SSA #1). The organization functions as a combined visitor's bureau and chamber of commerce for the downtown, and markets events, resources, and opportunities. Invest Aurora is a public private economic development partnership that focuses on expanding economic opportunities throughout Aurora. The organization works to attract, retain and promote commercial, industrial, retail, and mixed-use development to increase Aurora's economic vitality.

Significant progress has been made in recent years to create a welcoming downtown attractive to new residents and businesses. Some of the efforts and successes are not highly publicized and many residents are unaware of all the work that is going on behind the scenes. The following recommendations highlight some areas for enhancing the atmosphere of collaboration between the various agencies, groups, and departments, as well as focusing on economic development initiatives and programming to encourage investment. There is an emphasis on growing small, local, and niche businesses and supporting livability by increasing the number of residential units and expanding access to goods and services.

Enhance the business climate by focusing on economic development initiatives and programming to encourage investment

Downtown's three economic development partners, The City of Aurora, Invest Aurora, and Aurora Downtown, should continue to work collaboratively to cultivate a strong business base downtown. These partners should coordinate their roles as facilitators to leverage resources that can enhance the business environment.

Create a redevelopment facilitation strategy and continue to streamline and improve efficiencies in permitting for redevelopment

A Redevelopment Facilitation Strategy, setting out specific goals for employment and industry mix in the downtown, could be a useful tool to focus the efforts of the economic development partners. The Portland Development Commission is a good example of the combined efforts of many organizations to create a holistic business support strategy.

One part of the strategy to meet those specific goals should be to continue to identify and remove barriers to redevelopment, including offering assistance in navigating the downtown design review process and the national building code requirements. Another, to provide customer service and a clear and simple process for businesses that want to open downtown. Continue programs to expand the inventory of turn-key spaces through support of the renovation and revitalization of retail and office properties, and continue to provide information on a public list of available sites and properties. Additionally, the building inspections department can help to identify opportunities for buildings to share infrastructure, such as fiber connections, heavy power supply, grease traps or elevators in common areas, to help to reduce the cost of renovation.

Identify an Individual to Coordinate Downtown's Economic Development Partners

Because of the City's size and the multiple economic development partners in downtown Aurora, there is a need for close management and coordination. Prior to the recession, there was a Downtown Development Coordinator position within the City of Aurora, since then the responsibilities once held by one individual have been divided across the three economic development partners.

The primary focus of a downtown development coordinator, or similar position, would be to integrate activities, facilitate communication, and provide transparency of efforts by downtown partners. A person in this position should have high business acumen, a grasp of finance, and knowledge of broader real estate and economic development trends. This position does not require any additional staff per se, but the position would be responsible for coordinating plans, initiatives, and efforts that are specific to the downtown. Although the staff person would be accountable to all downtown partners, they should have the authority to work independently. A successful development coordinator should be engaging, charismatic, and able to build strong relationships and partnerships in local, regional, and national contexts.

Continue efforts to attract, retain and expand businesses through engagement and collaboration

Invest Aurora maintains an extensive list of resources that are available to existing and new businesses. A small, yet increasing, number of businesses take advantage of these resources. To extend resources to additional businesses, Invest Aurora should continue to engage with key business stakeholders to address their needs and concerns. An engagement strategy, with regular check-ins or surveys of existing business owners, can help to identify new services to be added to the current business support strategy and open new lines of communication with the downtown business community outside of those that typically engage with the Aurora Downtown association.

Additionally, Invest Aurora and Aurora Downtown should continue to facilitate stronger lines of communication that enhance business-to-business relationships. Invest Aurora and Aurora Downtown have worked with a number of key partners (such as downtown business associations and the chambers of commerce) to host business appreciation, networking, and matchmaking events for local businesses. Such as in 2016, Invest Aurora and its partners hosted more than 20 of these types of events for local businesses.

Focus on growing small, local, and niche businesses

In order to activate underutilized space and grow small and niche businesses more tools should be developed to empower entrepreneurs and existing businesses.

Re-establish specialized efforts for growing small businesses

Small businesses add to the resilience of any community. International Economic Development Council (IEDC) research suggests that the smaller and more agile a business is, the better it can respond to shocks such as changing consumer preferences and economic downturns. The study also suggests that entrepreneurs can enter niche markets much faster than large firms.

Unfortunately, the Small Business Development Center at Waubonsee Community College was closed due to a lack of state funding. Some of the services once offered at the business center have been taken up by other organizations however, identifying and addressing gaps in service, and coordination of physical and programmatic resources is needed. Some initial steps have been taken, many local partners are working together to create the AuroraWorks.org website to be a one-stop shop for small businesses looking for support programs. Through the City website you can learn about how the City of Aurora, Invest Aurora, the Chambers of Commerce, and Waubonsee Community College worked together with state and local representatives to support the launch of "ScaleUp Aurora", a 12 week educational program geared towards growing an existing business which is part of the Women's Business Development Center (WBDC) a Women's Business Center network organization; the work the WBDC has done on aligning additional resources for small businesses through the WBC, such as mentorship from other successful startups; and the extensive list of resources and incentives Invest Aurora has to offer to improve the physical environment. One gap which has been noted, although others may be discovered, is the increased interest and need for resources for tech-enabled businesses, additional support programs targeting local businesses and entrepreneurs in tech-enabled sectors should be developed.

Explore the expansion of new hotel exhibition/meeting space opportunities throughout downtown and support boutique hotels in existing properties

There could be a missed opportunity to accommodate theatergoers, casino-patrons, and other tourism and leisure travelers with overnight stays. Currently, downtown Aurora is served by one hotel, it is a national chain with 82 rooms located just south of the Metra Station and Two Brother Roundhouse, across from RiverEdge Park. A hotel, convention, and accommodation feasibility study should be undertaken and local hoteliers should be engaged with to explore the potential for new accommodation and exhibition space.

Supporting boutique and destination hotels could provide an opportunity for additional small scale strategically placed accommodations near attractions and amenities. According to a leading hotel consulting firm, boutique hotels provide a unique combination of accommodations with personal service, experience, and artistic-design. Boutique hotels do not have to conform to preset brand standards, and can be created out of existing buildings. There are several boutique hotel examples in the region. For example, the Herrington Inn in Geneva is also a spa. A boutique hotel like the Herrington could create a resort-like experience for a weekend getaway in downtown Aurora. Additional examples

of boutique destination hotels include the Hotel Baker in St. Charles, the European Margarita Inn in Evanston, and the Write Inn in Oak Park.

Continue to expand technical assistance provided for local business development including incubator resources for startups, and accelerator resources for growing businesses

Incubators and accelerators support first-time entrepreneurs, emerging technologies, and new and untested business models. The services that incubators and accelerators provide vary by community. Accelerators are typically started by investors, and are often focused on providing technology-oriented startups with mentoring and seed funding. Incubators, according to the National Business Incubator Association (NBIA), mostly focus on: creating community jobs, improving the entrepreneurial and business climate, business retention, building or accelerating growth in local industry clusters, and supporting economic diversity in local economies. Affordable space could be one challenge for businesses, so some communities operate business incubators with walls. The incubator with walls approach could be helpful for small businesses and entrepreneurs who are currently operating home-based businesses. There are also many incubators without walls. Most often, incubators provide services such as networking opportunities; marketing assistance; accounting or financial management assistance; and access to financial resources. Invest Aurora has started to pursue a kitchen incubator concept for the downtown, to support a culinary arts niche. Such an incubator has the potential to support the growth of restaurants, vending carts, and food trucks. Another idea for downtown could be an artisan-focused workshop incubator which could help to transform art into industry.

A business incubator and accelerator study should be conducted through a collaboration of partners, including Invest Aurora, WBDC, Aurora University, Waubonsee Community College, and the City, which focuses on identifying key industries that would work best in downtown Aurora. The partnership should develop a strategy for delivering resources to businesses in these industries. Some recently completed business incubator studies include, the University of Illinois business incubator and accelerator study and the City of Eureka, CA business and accelerator incubator study.

Support the downtown core by enhancing livability

Initiatives to increase the number of residential units and expand access to goods and services in downtown Aurora should continue. Specifically, downtown's three economic development partners should focus on activating underutilized properties by leveraging the use of incentives, programming, policy, and outreach.

Maximize the rehabilitation of the existing downtown residential spaces through engagement, resources, and support

Finish Line Grants are available for property owners who want to renovate residential spaces. This grant can be leveraged to strategically engage with property owners to understand their needs, and expand resources for, those property owners who want to renovate residential spaces. Through strategic engagement, opportunities can be identified to fill additional gaps in the resources that are currently available. This process could result in more strategic intervention processes and resources for these property owners. These resources could include connections to local tradesmen and contractors, providing sweat equity, or guiding project management for challenging renovation projects. Additionally, an incentives policy for residential projects, establishing priority activities, project types, and areas for using incentives should be developed.

Increase access to goods and services for current and future downtown residents

Efforts to attract new amenities to support residents who live downtown should continue. Key sites should continue to be actively marketed to specific retail tenants, such as grocery, drug, and convenience stores. Moreover, underutilized sites could be used for pop-up events, which could create an excellent opportunity to test new concepts that are not currently represented downtown. Additional amenities should also be pursued such as green spaces, day care, gyms, dog parks, and niche entertainment spots, such as a bowling alley, or boutique movie theater. Regular surveys should be conducted of downtown residents to understand their desires and opinions on downtown development and community needs.

Continue to support inclusive and supportive housing initiatives

In addition to market rate housing, a strong and diverse community also needs a long-term supportive housing supply. There are a number of Aurora's lower income and disabled citizens that do not have a permanent home. Investments made in long-term supportive care can have significantly better "returns," as the chronically homeless can place more financial burdens on society when they do not have a stable living environment. As part of the Redevelopment Facilitation Strategy mentioned above, there should be specific goals for the quantity and income mix of housing units in the downtown, to provide a benchmark for the efforts of downtown's three economic development partners. The partners should continue to work with housing advocacy groups to support affordable housing initiatives. In addition to setting housing goals and supporting renovation projects, a task force should be convened focusing on long and short term supportive services and housing needs in the downtown area.

Identify and support key sites for the construction of new higher density residential development

Using the tools mentioned above, incentives should be used to concentrate higher density development on the fringe of the downtown core. Focusing on the fringe of downtown is important because there are fewer bulk and density restrictions, more open spaces, and fewer historic structures in these areas. There are several redevelopment opportunities and under developed sites throughout the study area, including the East Bank site along South Broadway, parcels in close proximity to the Aurora Transportation Center, and parcels on the west bank of the river along River Street near the future pedestrian bridge. These parcels, especially those which are owned or controlled by the City, should be actively marketed. Utilizing city-owned parcels can make new residential development financially viable in the short term, which could stimulate interest in other key sites in the long term.

Activating Downtown through Arts and Culture

Vision: Downtown Aurora will have a robust and inspired arts, culture, and entertainment community.

Aurora has a robust arts and culture scene that has showcased the rich artistic and creative expression of the community, and brought renewed interest and appreciation for the downtown area. In addition to the long standing work of the Aurora Public Arts Commission, a variety of new grassroots activities demonstrate the depth of Aurora's passion in this area, including Aurora's large-scale First Fridays, its Downtown Aurora Arts Mixer get-togethers, and many others. There is an extraordinary potential for arts and culture to help Aurora achieve its broader goals for the downtown and strengthen the entire community in the process.

Key findings

Downtown Aurora is home to many public and civic organizations. In addition to City and Township government offices, downtown Aurora has a number of schools, religious institutions, a library, post office, police and fire stations, parks and recreation facilities, historic museums, and other cultural organizations within the study area boundary or within close walking distance.

With so many arts efforts in the community, there is a need for direction and coordination. To avoid duplication of efforts and to build upon successes in related areas, improvements in coordination of efforts is needed to develop a unified strategy and coordinated support for arts and culture in Aurora.

There is a need for greater variety of arts and culture attractions, especially to attract younger adults to downtown. High-level arts have been very successful in Aurora, and there is a growing grassroots arts scene that is more appealing to a younger demographic, and should be encouraged.

There has been a history of successes and accomplishments relating to arts and culture. These include successful initiatives such as First Fridays, and infrastructural improvements such as the signs for the Downtown Heritage Tour, a set of Architecture Trading Cards and posters, downtown planters, and eight public sculptures commissioned by the Aurora Public Art Commission.

Some members of the community feel there is insufficient support for arts and culture initiatives. Some artists are skeptical of government efforts, worry about a lack of autonomy, and expressed concern over bureaucratic "red tape." Others are more concerned with the amount of support committed to arts and historic preservation efforts.

Recommendations

While arts and culture are sometimes marginalized and seen as a nice "extra," they are necessary ingredients for making communities attractive and vibrant places to live and work, helping municipalities like Aurora increase tax revenues, property values, retail activity, and job creation.

Collaborative relationships can develop between arts and culture activities and local businesses, as well as aid in the attraction of tourist dollars—even the creation of a tourist economy. Arts and cultural activity can increase attention and foot traffic to an area, including attracting visitors and increasing the length of time and money they spend, thereby contributing to continued development. Similarly, the presence of public art and related streetscape amenities—such as artist-designed lighting, wayfinding signs, bike racks, and benches—are ways to attract pedestrians. Communities can also develop creative ways to make artistic activity happen in vacant properties and underutilized spaces, visually enlivening areas of town that might otherwise seem deserted and uninviting. Last, local artists can be put to work,

such as collaborating with stores and restaurants (especially in opportunity areas like the Broadway corridor) to develop inspired signage and marketing, or even assisting with rehabilitation of vacant City-owned properties.

Along with helping communities achieve their local economic development goals, arts and culture activities, initiatives, and planning can have other benefits for downtown Aurora, including improved access to the arts for all community members. This helps promote the formation of cognitive and emotional development and social connections in everyone from the youngest participants to the most senior of citizens. It can develop and nurture a local artist network and foster collaboration among downtown residents, while also connecting them to even more extensive networks, information, and resources within the larger region.

Arts and culture activities and initiatives can help define Downtown Aurora's identity and create a sense of place. They can tap into, preserve, and enhance the existing artistic, cultural, and historical characteristics and assets of the neighborhood. To achieve the vision of a robust and inspired arts, culture, and entertainment community, the following actions are recommended.

Coordinate and encourage local efforts to promote art, highlight culture and support the performing arts

Develop an Arts and Culture Consortium to leverage resources through coordination and collaboration

In addition to downtown Aurora's thriving arts and culture scene described above, other individuals pursue artistic and creative expression through a variety of outlets, from theatrical performances and painting to food festivals and local craft groups. Some participants are professionals, many are dedicated amateurs, and even more are consumers. As a whole, many forms of arts and culture naturally manifest as aspects of daily human activity.

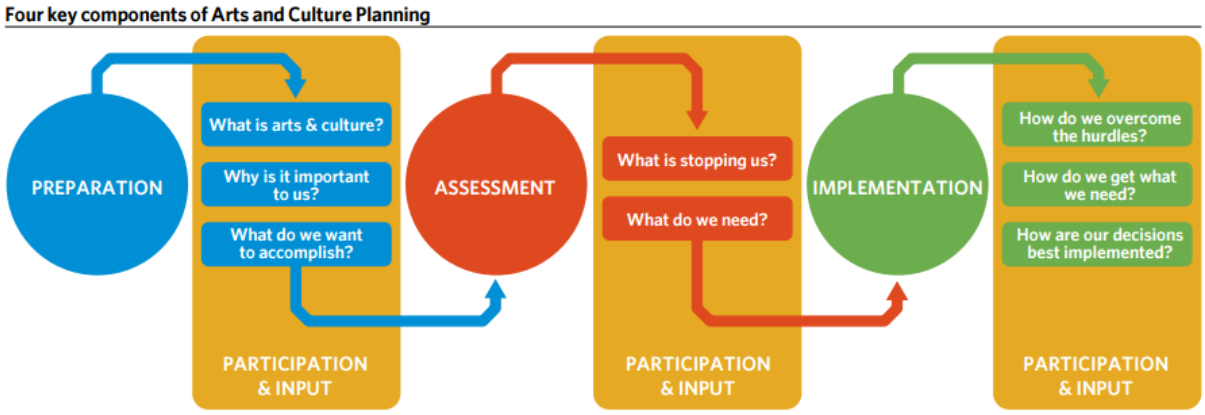
There is a need to coordinate the variety of arts and culture activities and initiatives already taking place in downtown, and work in partnership to help Aurora reach its potential, and expand its future capacity. A new Arts and Culture Consortium can serve this role. Similar to the Cultural Arts Commission in Geneva, an Aurora Arts and Culture Consortium could more efficiently identify opportunities and prioritize focus areas for the arts community, most effectively through the development of a cultural plan.

Through coordination and collaboration, the new Consortium would better leverage resources, revealing unnecessary redundancies and identify gaps to be filled by the most appropriate members of the group. In addition to bringing together the Aurora Public Arts Commission with the organizers of First Fridays and other community events and initiatives, the Consortium can give a stronger voice to grassroots efforts, by including the participation of local artists, gallery owners, museum administrators, representatives from local schools' art departments, and other private and public entities. The Consortium would create a single point of information and contact for arts and culture initiatives—with City and Kane County government, local business owners, area schools, and others.

Develop a comprehensive arts and culture plan for Downtown Aurora

While there are plenty of arts and culture activities and events already underway, the primary duty of the new Arts and Culture Consortium would be the development of a comprehensive arts and culture plan for Downtown Aurora. Just as the proposed Consortium would provide a means for all persons engaged in arts and culture initiatives to work together as a team, development of an arts and culture plan would provide a means of determining the community's goals—and how to get there. A comprehensive arts and culture plan would establish priorities for existing funding and make Aurora more competitive for additional grants and other funding.

CMAP has created a toolkit that details steps that can be taken by communities to develop such a plan. These steps are organized by four key components of the arts and culture planning process: Preparation, Participation and Input, Assessment, and Implementation. Overall, the toolkit helps communities assess their options and choose the arts and culture policies that are right for them. Fortunately, the toolkit is detailed enough that the members of the new Arts and Culture Consortium could use it to guide their development of the arts and culture plan, step-by-step, with little or no additional assistance.



Arts & Culture Toolkit

CMAP's *Arts and Culture Planning: A Toolkit for Communities* can be used to help develop a plan for Downtown Aurora. It offers a primer on the different types of arts and culture, including visual arts, theater arts, music arts, culinary arts, applied arts (such as industrial design and graphic design), fashion design, and media arts (such as film and animation); this can help participants think through the complexity and richness of its own arts and culture community. The toolkit details primary functional needs—what each type of arts and culture needs to be successful, such as studio space, rehearsal space, performance space, production facilities, retail space, or classroom space.

The toolkit explains how adaptive reuse can take advantage of existing physical resources to create such spaces, as well as how temporary uses provide a unique opportunity to further expand opportunities. The toolkit details typical regulatory considerations that are key to the implementation of these and similar strategies. It provides model regulatory language that could be used to define allowed arts and culture activities within a zoning district in its downtown, standards for uses to mitigate impacts, provisions to allow and encourage the adaptive reuse of existing institutional structures, as well as guidance as to how to construct an arts district.

Pursue targeted arts and culture endeavors

While the process to develop an Arts and Culture Consortium and a comprehensive arts and culture plan with identified priorities will take some time, there are small steps that can be taken to continue the momentum of arts initiatives in the downtown. These are mostly efforts that will help to bring positive attention to the downtown and sustain ongoing efforts.

Boost architectural tourism to strengthen Downtown Aurora's sense of heritage and identity

While a number of tours of the downtown area and surrounding neighborhoods have been developed, many of these tours could be updated and put into a more useful platform. Walking and biking tours, architecture and photography tours, and tours that make use of educational boards and historic photos can be used to promote the extensive architectural resources. Efforts to boost architectural tourism could start right away with an educated citizenry willing to dedicate time by hosting a photography meetup group. A more official connection to the architectural history could result from a partnership with the Chicago Architecture Foundation, or other local tour groups. Much of the existing resources and information that has already been developed could be used.[2]

Add public art installations to downtown at strategic locations with a self-guided public art tour

Investments have already been made in public art that beautifies and enlivens downtown Aurora. The most prominent sculpture, Isaac[2] Swimming Stones, creates a sense of place and an area for kids to play; more efforts to engage the public as they walk through the downtown will improve the overall experience. Adding art to other public spaces, along with a self-guided tour would also increase foot traffic at those sites.

Creating a community identity through public art is an effective way to show support for the arts community and emphasize the priority that the community has placed on arts and culture. Through the Aurora Public Art Commission, and later the Arts and Culture Consortium, work can begin to identify locations throughout downtown that would be appropriate for display of public art, identify funding sources and/or developer donations, grants and private donations; identify potential contributing artists and evaluate the appropriateness of individual pieces of art; and work to add more public art to downtown.

[2] CMAP staff developed a sample downtown walking tour, using information on the City of Aurora's website.

Increase support for both active and passive arts and culture initiatives

The most obvious way that the City of Aurora can show support for arts and cultural endeavors is through financial commitments. While current municipal budgets likely do not have room to add new sources of funding, public art could be funded as part of new and large-scale private developments. A "Percent for Art" program can be developed to provide an established arts funding source. A certain percentage of large-scale construction projects' value, typically one percent, would be set aside by the developer for the addition of public art to the site or to be placed into an arts fund. The art fund can be used in City capital improvement projects paid for wholly or in part by the municipality. Such projects could be to construct or remodel a decorative or commemorative structure, building, park, plaza, bridge, sidewalk, parking facility, or any portion thereof for public art purposes.

Support for other arts endeavors could include the creation of a website to promote the performing arts and events, ensuring that local arts and preservation committees are fully staffed, and working to simplify processes and procedures for allowing public art displays in downtown.

Create a comprehensive inventory of space available for cultural uses

An inventory of cultural spaces, such as sites for public display of art, venues for concerts and plays, gallery spaces, outdoor venues, and streets that are preferred for street festivals could be developed. Bridges and exterior walls of public buildings, are examples of public spaces that could be appropriate for changing exhibitions or accommodate permanent installations. The inventory should also be used in the process to improve neighborhood gateways and transportation hubs, as an opportunity to integrate local cultural assets into the design of the improvements.

Simplify processes for arts and culture initiatives

Barriers should be removed for activities that add culture and vitality to public spaces, including street vendors, performance artists, food trucks for festivals, and street art installations. Strategies for providing customer service, and a simple and clear process could include lower fees for simple permits and the creation of arts-specific how-to guides and training sessions to help walk people through the process for City approvals, permits, and regulations.

The Heart of Downtown: The Fox River

Vision: The Fox River will be celebrated as the heart and center of Aurora.

The Fox River is the heart of downtown Aurora, providing recreational opportunities, wildlife habitat, and an iconic, historic, and aesthetic asset to the city. Embracing and celebrating this valuable resource, and building upon its potential as an attraction, will help to remake the river as the city's front porch and a connecting element of downtown activities. The commitment to improving the river's quality and visibility has been demonstrated by a number of green infrastructure projects and open space developments in recent years. Further integration of the Fox River into downtown life will be enhanced through increased recreational use and access, activation of the riverfront, and additional management and restoration of this important ecological resource. These improvements will continue to draw people downtown for events and to enjoy the natural landscape and its wildlife.

Key findings

The City of Aurora has been a leader in regional water resource planning. In addition to assisting with the formation and leadership of the water supply focused Northwest Water Planning Alliance, the City has also demonstrated a commitment to water resource management through stormwater planning and green infrastructure projects that will improve the Fox River. Additionally, the City has supported the development of recreational amenities such as infrastructure and access points for canoes and kayaks.

***The Fox River provides recreational opportunities, wildlife habitat, and drinking water*.** The city draws the majority of its water supply from the Fox River**.** The river also provides aquatic habitat, opportunities for canoeing and kayaking, and many popular sites for fishing.

Aurora residents enjoy access to a large amount of riverfront open space. Lands along the river offer passive and active recreation opportunities, community event space, and a pleasant environment for walking and biking. The City and Fox Valley Park District offer a number of high quality plazas, parks, and trails. RiverEdge Park, with its performance pavilion and high quality amenities, is a notable recent addition to downtown Aurora.

The Fox River, while improving, continues to suffer from impaired water quality. The Fox River exhibits water quality problems along its entire length. According to the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the river contains multiple pollutants and low levels of dissolved oxygen, while not a concern as a source of drinking water, this does create an environment that does not adequately support aquatic life, primary contact, nor aesthetic quality, and makes fish in the river unsafe for human consumption. Impairments are caused by flow alterations (such as dams), bacteria, riparian degradation, stormwater runoff, and others.

***Significant portions of downtown are located in floodplains with a 1% or 0.2% annual chance of flooding*.** While a large amount of the floodplain in the study area is part of parks and preserved open space, there are industrial areas and even some commercial and mixed-use areas in the mapped floodplain. The largest developed areas within the floodplain are along Indian Creek near Broadway.

Recommendations

Increasing the recreational use of the river, enhancing overall enjoyment for residents and visitors, and improving the quality of the environment are high priorities for many, as evidenced by the recently

completed RiverEdge Park and the use of best management practices. In some cases, relatively small improvements to existing open space areas, including canoe and kayak launches and educational signage, can activate and improve connections between the river and the downtown. Additional recommendations are presented below.

Activate the Fox River Corridor

Past plans have focused on the importance of building upon the assets and opportunities provided by the riverfront environment. Recent City-driven changes along the river have already greatly improved the multi-use trail, views and aesthetics, recreational activities, and available space for community events. Throughout the planning process for the Downtown Master Plan, stakeholders highlighted a need for additional family-friendly attractions and events along the river, highlighting the Fox River as an outdoor recreation destination, and more educational environmental attractions.

Enhance riverfront infrastructure to increase active recreation

Establishing and enhancing riverfront infrastructure that supports additional amenities will improve access to the river's recreational opportunities, attract additional users, and create a more exciting riverfront experience. As recommended in previous studies, improvements should be made to the canoe chute and paddling entry points and portages around obstacles such as dams. Engineers should continue to study the necessity of dams and explore alternatives including modifications and removals. Other riverfront infrastructure could include overlook areas and a river's edge children's splash pad that would draw crowds in the summer.

Promote events and activities along the river

RiverEdge Park has already attracted paddlers who can watch a concert from the river; other planned activities and programming for children and adults could draw more visitors. Additional river-focused

events should be held, events like the Fox Valley Park District's Mid-American Canoe and Kayak Race, which end as McCullough Park, help to introduce more paddlers and visitors to the downtown. Events could be staged at the launch point behind Waubonsee Community College to draw people further into the downtown core. A good example of a potential river-focused event is the Chicago Southland Dragon Boat Festival held in The City of Blue Island, Illinois.

Create passive recreational attractions

RiverEdge Park was designed so that the space could be open to the public when there are no ticketed events. Because the park is relatively new, the space has been underutilized outside of major concerts or festivals. Even with limited staffing and funding availability, there are ways to engage the public in passive recreation in RiverEdge Park and along the river front path. This could include holiday lighting walks (such as Brookfield Zoo's "Holiday Magic"), yoga in the park, ice sculpture displays, meetups for dog owners, dance lessons, or walking/running meetups. These attractions allow users to come and go at their leisure and bring more people to the riverfront to activate the trails and open space.

Provide and enhance river and riparian habitat to create a wildlife friendly environment

Improved habitat within the river and along the riverfront will contribute to an enhanced wildlife population, which is a draw for wildlife enthusiasts, anglers, and bird watchers. Strategically located overlooks and benches, as well as informative signage, can support this type of recreational activity. Natural areas should be restored and maintained to provide habitat for birds and other wildlife. Efforts to improve the habitat for wildlife will also contribute to flooding mitigation; the use of native plants along the river and removal of invasive plants should encouraged. Elimination of pesticide use, minimizing leaf and log clearing, and reducing lawn area should be done where practicable. A Comprehensive Land Use and Downzoning Study of the properties along the river should be done with a goal to provide for redevelopment while creating more habitat and restoration of the floodplain.

Enhance environmental education opportunities and facilities

The river can serve as an educational asset to the community. Providing seasonal programming, such as nature camps for kids and birdwatching outings, will activate the riverfront. It will draw community members to the river, as well as bring community members together. The river can also serve as a destination for school field trips to educate children in the community about nature and the environment.

As recommended in the 2007 RiverEdge Park Master Plan, a wetland should be created or restored at the site where Indian Creek flows into the Fox River and as its focal point an Indian Creek Wetlands Environmental Center. The restored wetlands can help reduce flooding and improve water quality flowing into the Fox by trapping sediments and retaining excess nutrients and other pollutants. An environmental education center at this site, with natural areas and boardwalk or wood chip nature trails, will promote conservation and provide active and passive recreation opportunities, such as birdwatching, group nature walks, and classes. The educational story of the site can include "before and after" conditions as well as information about the importance of the river to the history and industry of Aurora and its rebirth as an environmental amenity.

Enhance connections between the Fox River and downtown

The riverfront can be more than a recreational asset and visually attractive amenity – it can also support the ongoing efforts to promote and attract businesses and economic growth. It can drive unique events that bring visitors from around the region and can be another gateway to the downtown.

Implement improvements that enhance connectivity

Better connectivity should be promoted for all modes of transportation along the river and to downtown by connecting the Fox River Trail to other local and regional trails, open space, and the street and sidewalk network. Wayfinding signage should direct trail and other riverfront users to local

destinations. And trail and crossing improvements for bicyclists and pedestrians should include lighting for visibility, signalization, and signage.

Align riverfront planning and economic development planning

The riverfront can be used to promote and attract business and economic growth. Existing plans are to add mixed use development along the riverfront to strengthen existing businesses and build a network of diverse destinations and attractions along the river. Work should also be done with businesses to identify ways that riverfront programming, accessibility, and other improvements can support the needs of local businesses and attract businesses that will thrive in the downtown riverfront environment.

Improve signage to provide information and connect to downtown attractions

Signage along trails directs users to local area destinations and creates a more inviting riverfront. Trail maps, wayfinding signage, and mileage markers should be placed along the Fox River Trail to inform walkers and bicyclists of the trail geography and downtown attractions. Signage can provide information on destinations, history, and natural resources, which will enhance users' experience on the trail and direct them to downtown.

Continue to demonstrate leadership in improving environmental quality

The City of Aurora has been active in planning for and stewarding natural resources. Continuing those efforts to work with residents, activists, and local districts on water quality and habitat restoration projects along the riverfront should remain a priority. Other means of improving water quality should be explored including through land use practices and standards that, among other priorities, improve management of stormwater that flows to the river.

Pursue collaborative environmental improvement efforts with other Fox River communities

Coordinating with other municipalities, governmental agencies, cross-jurisdictional groups and stakeholders whose actions affect the river will produce more effective strategies for improving water quality. Best practices can be adopted more strategically and broadly if multiple jurisdictions collaborate on devising and implementing policies. For example, better stormwater management practices that improve the quality of the Fox River have be implemented by all riverfront communities through the Kane County Stormwater Ordinance in order to improve the resource for all of them. Likewise, working with its peers and partners maintenance staff can experiment with creative ways to reduce the use of chlorides to control snow and ice. It takes up to four times as much material to remove ice than to prevent it, and preventative treatments are recommended to reduce the impacts on the river. Options include pre-wet and pre-treated salt and sand, beet juice, and pretreating roads prior to storm events may reduce the total amount of chemicals needed.

Identify priority restoration areas

Restoration of wetlands, riverbanks, floodplains, and riparian areas can have a positive impact on water quality by capturing and filtering stormwater runoff, stabilizing streambanks from erosion, and moderating floodwaters. Reintroduction of prairies and deep-rooted native plants can also improve water quality and aquatic habitat. In addition to the Indian Creek location, other priority locations should be identified along the river close to downtown for environmental restoration. If sites become a restoration priority for the Fox River Watershed, they may be eligible for funding through grants and other funding opportunities.

The restoration of the river through dam modification and/or removal should continue to be pursued. Water quality, river safety, and recreational river use concerns tend to collide around the discussion of the Fox River's iconic dams. Opinions differ about the different opportunities offered by maintaining or remove the dams, however, it is well documented that the greatest ecological benefits follow from a complete removal of a dam.

Encourage pride and stewardship of the river through education

A program should be developed to educate property owners in riparian areas on the benefits of native vegetation, filter strips, bank restoration, phosphate-free home and garden products, permeable pavement, and other practices which would encourage implementation of these approaches.

Mobility: Getting to and around Downtown Aurora

Vision: Downtown Aurora will have a comfortable and inviting environment for all modes of transportation.

Most Aurorans rely on their car for a majority of trips, yet walking, biking, and transit are increasingly convenient ways to navigate the downtown core. A review of the various transportation options available in downtown Aurora highlights many recent improvements including new pedestrian and bicycling infrastructure, as well as two-way street conversions. Existing opportunities to create a more walkable downtown and improve safety for all modes include addressing jurisdictional hurdles, removing push-button wait signals, and improving infrastructure built around the personal automobile. Gateways into downtown lack distinction and due to traffic speed and narrow sidewalks, some thoroughfares must be made more comfortable to walk along.

Key findings

Broadway in the downtown core can be a particularly challenging stretch of roadway in the study area. The current four-lane configuration of Broadway creates unsafe conditions for all users, and does not necessarily move more vehicles than an alternatively safer three-lane configuration. There has historically been a high density of car crashes between New York Street and Benton Street, often a result of cars veering around turning vehicles in the middle lanes. Additionally, on-street parking is dangerous due to heavy traffic and high rates of speed.

One-way streets lower overall access and connectivity. The City has converted several downtown one-way streets to two-way streets, which in the short term caused some confusion (and crashes), but in the long-term, should result in improved safety, traffic flow, and business visibility.

While only two blocks away from downtown Aurora, the Metra station feels disconnected from the core. Due to a challenging pedestrian environment, the eight-minute walk along the state highway to the downtown core is perceived to be long and uninviting.

Aurora has a rapidly improving bicycle route network. Completion of the City's first barrier-protected bike lane (along River Street) fills a major gap in the regional trail network, and improved connections to city neighborhoods are forthcoming.

Pedestrian infrastructure in the downtown core is strong, but improvements are needed in other areas. Sidewalks, planters, and clearly marked crosswalks are present throughout much of the study area, with excellent examples in the core. Other corridors could benefit from these pedestrian enhancements, especially the corridor along Broadway, which connects to transit facilities to the core of downtown.

Transit access is high, but ridership is low. Pace and Metra serve downtown Aurora, but Aurora transit ridership is low. While there are approximately 4,000 people getting on or off trains at the Aurora Metra Station during the weekday, less than five percent of Aurora's commuting population uses transit to get to work.

Certain areas of downtown are difficult to navigate for people with mobility challenges. Direct access to the Fox River Trail from New York Street involves stairs. Ramped entrances to the RiverWalk exist at other entry points, but accessibility at all entry points would be beneficial for people using wheelchairs, as well as parents with strollers and people on bikes. While there are plans to add a drop-off location for RiverEdge Park, there currently is no convenient place to drop off passengers, including visitors with mobility challenges.

There is on street parking congestion around high-demand areas while nearby off street parking lots are underutilized. At the urging of the downtown business owners, the parking meters were removed from downtown in 2013 because they were seen as a deterrent to those that would otherwise patronize their businesses. Some stakeholders now feel that the removal of parking meters has contributed to parking congestion around high-demand areas and that the time restrictions that replaced them are generally unpopular. Downtown has thousands of free public on-street and off-street parking spaces within the downtown, yet there is still unmet demand at certain locations and especially during peak hours and public parking lots are underutilized.

Recommendations

Identify traffic network bottlenecks and high crash locations for projects to improve traffic flow

Smooth traffic flow without excessive speeding can move more people and increase safety for all roadway users. While data is limited to determine where the most traffic congestion occurs in downtown Aurora, certain conditions in Aurora exist that can be problematic. These recommendations are long-term approaches to improving traffic flow and enhancing safety in the area.

Evaluate Broadway lane reconfiguration to address network bottlenecks and crashes

Currently, Broadway has four travel lanes and two parking lanes through the downtown core. However, Broadway has only one lane in either direction both north and south of the downtown core. The four-lane section, between New York Street and Benton Street, has the highest concentration of crashes in the study area. Added lanes create additional potential conflict points, leading to more crashes. Some have proposed removing parking to help traffic move faster through the core, but reallocating roadway space to remove one of four travel lanes and convert another lane into a continuous center turn lane is a preferred strategy for reducing crashes, supporting a multimodal downtown, and improving local business exposure. The parking spaces along Broadway support businesses and enhance the pedestrian experience by creating a physical separation from traffic.

When there is no roadway construction in the area, much of the congestion on Broadway results from drivers attempting to turn left, limiting through traffic in the middle lanes. Specifically, the stretch of Broadway between New York Street and Downer Place has the highest concentration of crashes, often as a result of cars trying to go around turning vehicles. Frequent crashes create traffic nightmares, even if they are minor fender benders. According to the Federal Highway Administration, a roadway lane reconfiguration from four lanes to three can lead to a “crash reduction of 19 to 47 percent, reduced vehicle speed differential, improved mobility and access by all road users, and integration of the roadway into surrounding uses that results in an enhanced quality of life.” The creation of a continuous center turn lane on Broadway and dedicated space for buses to pick up/drop off passengers could improve traffic flow, reduce crashes, and make parking on Broadway much safer. A detailed analysis of site conditions by a qualified engineer will be necessary to evaluate the possibilities.

Continue 2-way conversion initiative with New York Street and Galena Boulevard to improve traffic flow

In addition to being less confusing for visitors, two-way streets can help to relieve congestion by providing a "release valve" when one street has an incident or traffic congestion, some traffic can funnel to parallel routes. When the parallel streets are one-way in the opposite direction, this is not an option. While the process to transition roads from one-way to two-way will create temporary congestion as long time drivers of the area figure out the new circulation pattern, the end result is reduced long-term congestion. Travel speeds may be slightly slower, but that is generally better for downtown businesses, and for the safety of people walking and riding bicycles.

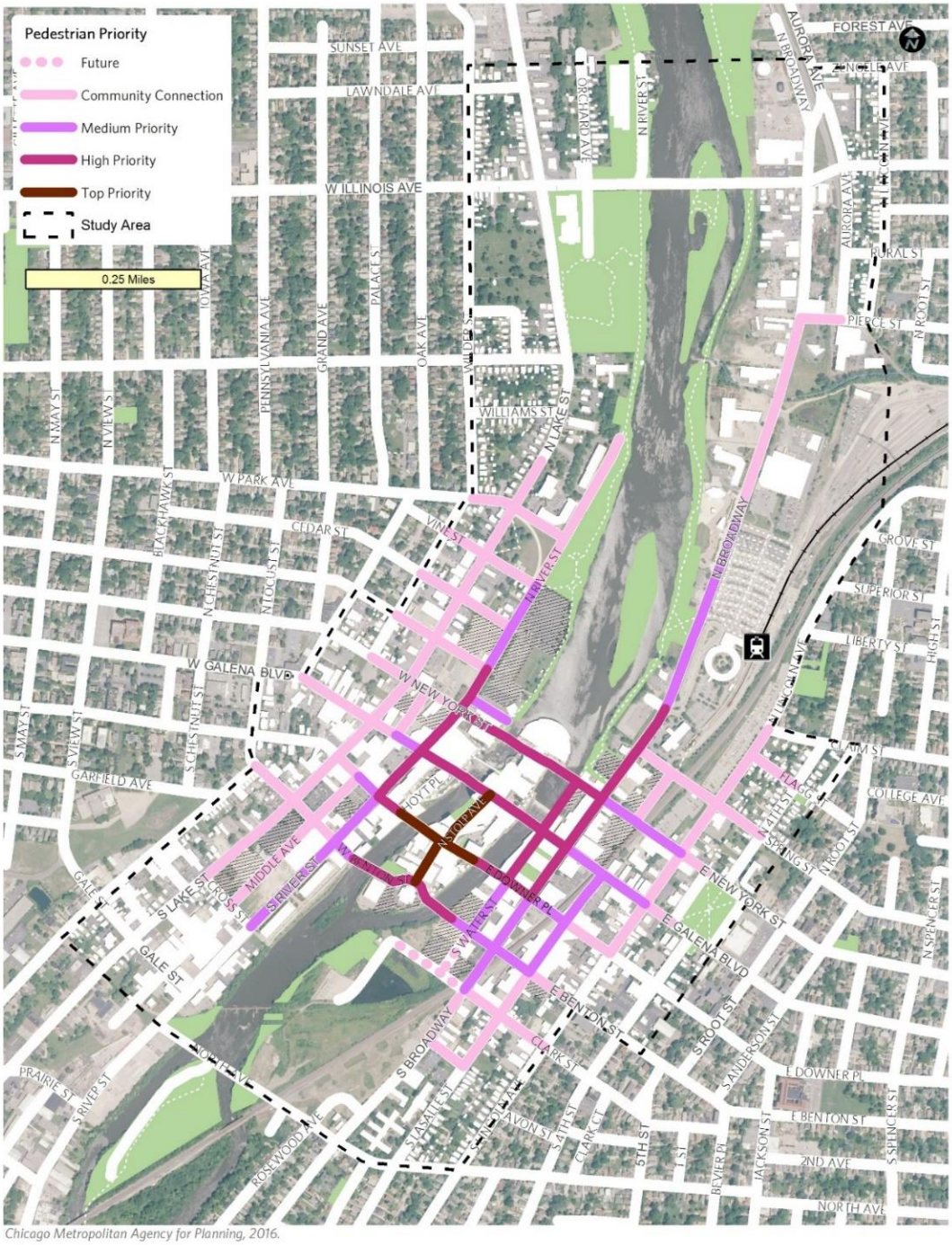
For these reasons, it is recommended that the City continue to push for the two-way conversion of New York Street and Galena Boulevard, including engineering changes if needed to the parking garages, and/or a signalized intersection with center turn lanes into the casino.

Encourage walking and enhance the transition to walking from all transportation modes

Walking is a part of almost every trip, whether it is the sole mode of travel or the first and last stage in a trip that includes a bus, train, automobile, or bicycle. The safety, accessibility, and design of pedestrian facilities are core components of the transportation network. Beyond providing a simple and free mode of travel for residents and visitors, walking and pedestrian facilities are also a growing part of how communities make themselves livable, accessible, healthy, and prosperous.

Establish a hierarchy of walkways and pedestrian routes within the downtown and surrounding neighborhoods

Providing safe passage and walkways for pedestrians on all streets is a goal for the City of Aurora. Due to higher densities of destinations and potential for many pedestrians, some streets should have priority treatments to make the experience of walking even better (Figure 3) such as wayfinding, street furniture including creative drinking fountains with water bottle fill-stations, and public art. Priority should also be given to walkways connecting public parking lots and the Metra station to the downtown.



Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, 2016.

Create a clear pedestrian connection between the Downtown Metra Station and Stolp Island

Newcomers arriving at the Aurora Transportation Center / Metra Station have few clues as to how to get to the downtown core. The presence of truck traffic, buses, and high-speed automobiles makes walking along Route 25 (Broadway) from the Metra train station toward the downtown core uncomfortable for pedestrians, with no buffer between them and the moving vehicles –particularly on the east side of the street where there is no parkway separating the narrow sidewalk from the fast-moving traffic. This corridor is a key connector between the downtown core and the Metra station, yet information and signage is minimal.

To improve the pedestrian experience and the experience of a visitor without familiarity of the area, several improvements can be made. The route should be optimized for pedestrian travel, be well lit, have clear information, and feel safe. First, the sidewalk along Broadway (IL-25) should be separated from the roadway with a parkway and street trees. The continuation of the Broadway lane reallocation proposed above, could free up some space along the road to provide a more comfortable barrier between pedestrians and the roadway. Second, signage and maps should welcome visitors from the train platform and guide them to the most direct, pleasant walk to the core. For people walking to the train from Spring Street, there is a point on the walkway where a pedestrian must decide which side of the tracks to walk on. Sometimes there are trains on both sides and a simple electronic sign indicating which train will be departing next would help a traveler get to the correct train in a timely manner.

As part of any reconstruction of the station there should be a clear and obvious way to get from the platform to downtown. The curb radii at intersections around the station should be as small as possible (while still large enough to accommodate car and bus traffic), to maintain shorter pedestrian crossing distances, allow for proper placement of ADA-compliant curbs, and to keep turning vehicles to slow speeds. Other recommendations mentioned below should also be employed along the path between the train station and the downtown core.

Eliminate the use of pedestrian buttons and transition to automatic walk icon at all traffic signals

At signalized intersections, pedestrian push-buttons are typically installed as part of a process to improve motor vehicle speed and reduce delays for motorists. When the light is green and there are no pedestrians, there is no walk signal. If pedestrians are present, pushing the button allows them to request the right-of-way. An automated walk signal to accompany a green light is preferred so that pedestrians are always given the right-of-way. Without the automatic walk signal, pedestrians arriving at a green light have to wait through two light phases to cross. And for those unaccustomed to push buttons, or with visual impairments, they may not realize that the button is there, and either cross without the walk signal or wait a long time before noticing the button. Making this adjustment will require an analysis of signal phase timing to allow for enough crossing time at each phase.

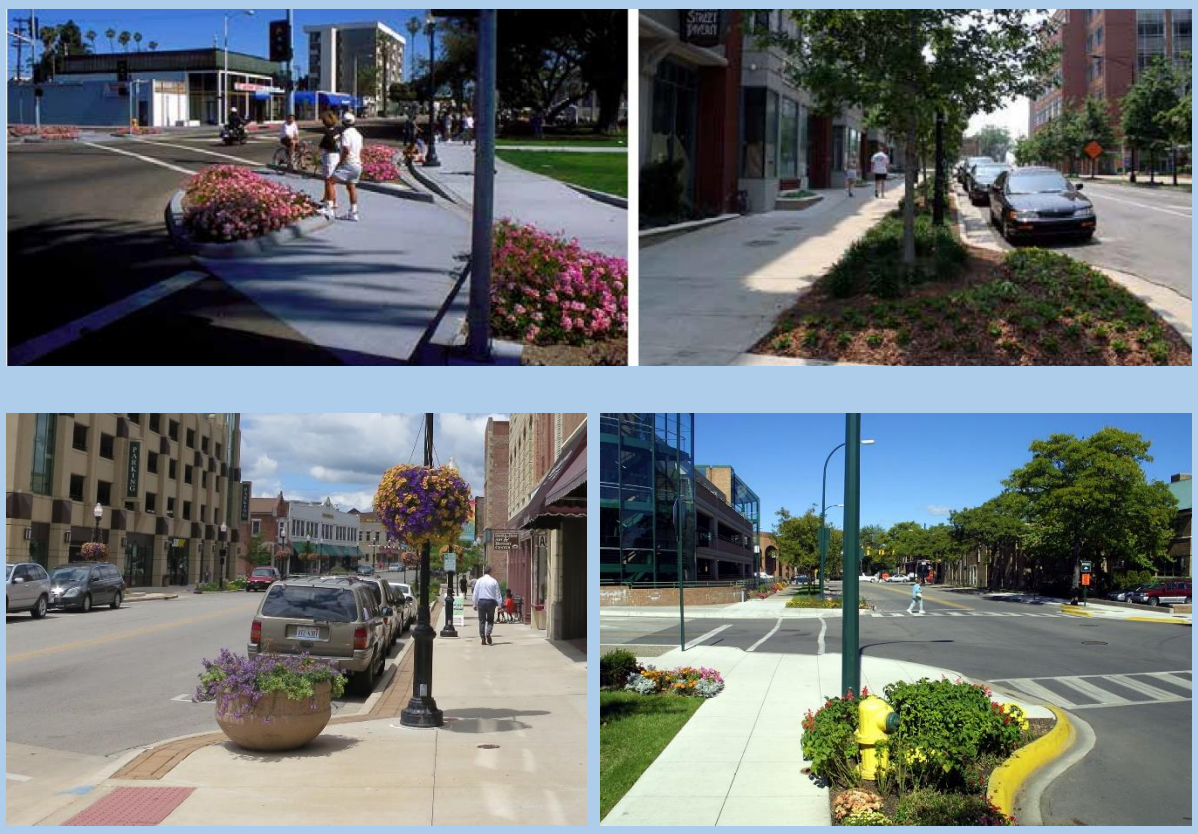
Continue to enhance overall pedestrian experience with infrastructure changes

The City has made great improvements to the pedestrian environment in the downtown core in recent years. Continuing these aesthetic improvements and sprucing up other public spaces is recommended. Water Street Mall, for example, is an underutilized asset in the downtown. Some events and markets make use of the space, but a just few aesthetic touch-ups could enhance the pedestrian way and entice more utilization of the space. Decorative or artistic lighting, especially during the holidays, could be used to enhance the walkway, adding to the overall ambience and perceptions of safety. If Water Street Mall is part of the RiverWalk and should be a prominent pedestrian corridor, therefore it should not be used as a parking lot for service vehicles. The added wear and tear on the brick pavers, potential damage to the trees' root systems, along with the degraded walking environment should be a concern.

Experimentation with street alterations should continue across the study area to improve safety at high priority pedestrian locations, streets with high crash incidents, areas near schools, or in areas where speeding is prevalent. Some potential treatments include:

Curb extensions

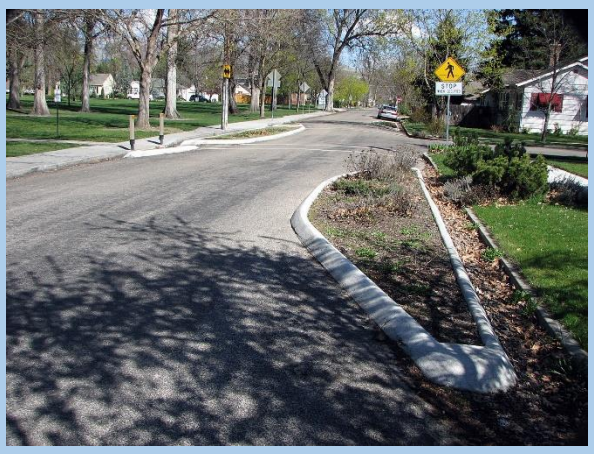
The use of curb extensions ("bump outs"), to extend the sidewalk out into the roadway has a two-fold benefit: it narrows the roadway, which encourages drivers to slow down and it reduces the distance that pedestrians have to cross. Additionally, curb extensions help to decrease the turning speed of vehicles by reducing the radius of the corner, and reduced speed improves a driver's field of vision and reaction time while increasing the perception of a safer intersection by pedestrians. This is appropriate in locations with on-street parking. This has been used on Downer Place on Stolp Island.



Images: Dan Burden and CMAP staff (bottom left).

Chicanes or chokers on neighborhood streets

Near schools or areas with high pedestrian traffic, chicanes and chokers can be implemented to improve safety. Like curb extensions mentioned above, “chokers” are extensions of the curb, located mid-block rather than at corners. They reduce driver speeds while creating safe crossings for pedestrians and will not cause delays or difficulties for emergency response vehicles (in contrast to speed bumps). A choker was recently installed in front of the Paramount Theatre to accommodate high numbers of pedestrians crossing mid-block around show times. Chicanes or “serpentine design” roadways add curvature to the street with curb extensions. This design technique is used to reduce cut-through traffic and increase drivers’ attention to and awareness of surroundings. This design is appropriate for low-volume residential streets and provides opportunities for landscaping and aesthetic enhancements. These treatments will require approval of, and collaboration with, public works to ensure that street cleaning and snow removal vehicles can safely navigate the re-designed street.



Images: Dan Burden

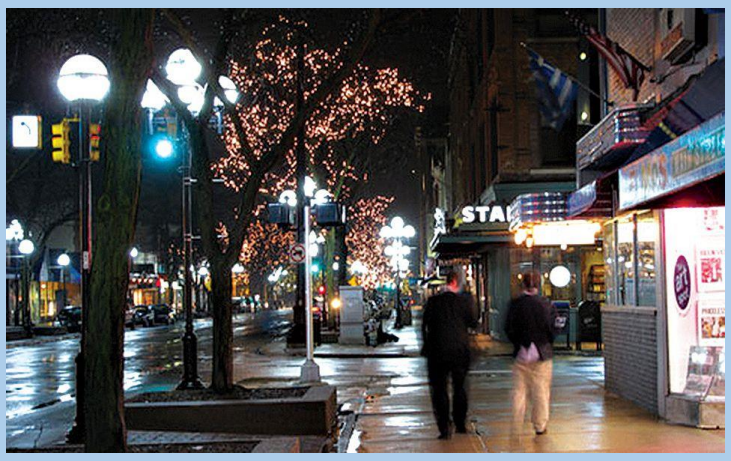
"State Law – Stop for Pedestrians" signs

A 2010 Illinois state law requires motorists to stop (not just yield) for pedestrians in crosswalks. Since the law is relatively new, many drivers may not be aware of it. At non-signalized crosswalks, these signs are a physical reminder to drivers that they have to stop for pedestrians. Some, but not all, intersections and mid-block crossings with dangerous conditions may be appropriate for this type of signage.

Images: Dan Burden

Pedestrian scale lighting

In commercial areas with expected pedestrian activity, streetlights and building lights can improve pedestrian safety while enhancing the area's ambiance. Pedestrian-scale lighting is lower in height (12 to 16 feet) than standard street lighting and spaced closely together, on both sides of the street, and provides for better visibility of pedestrians. Pathways to underutilized parking areas should be evaluated for appropriate lighting levels so that people feel safe using those lots. Creative lighting could also be used to activate the Water Street mall, either year-round for particular holidays and events. Artistic displays on buildings, lights strung between buildings, or well-lit sculptures could be added to the downtown.



Images: CMAP staff (left), and National Association of City Transportation Officials (right)

Encourage the use of bicycles for transportation

Aurora has the honorable distinction of being a Bronze Level Bike Friendly Community, as designated by the League of American Bicyclists. Improvements in physical infrastructure, such as the River Street protected bike lane connecting regional trails, and the Zagster bike share system have helped the City achieve this goal. To capitalize on these successes and strengthen the culture for bicycle use within Aurora, while continuing to build a safe network of transportation options, partnerships should be made to develop supportive programs and events. Areas identified for improvement with the Bronze designation include Education, Encouragement, and Enforcement activities. Focusing resources in these areas will be important to improving conditions for cycling, attracting more people to ride bicycles, and to help Aurora achieve a Silver level status.

Continue to enhance overall bicycle experience with infrastructure

For the Bike Friendly Community award, Aurora scored high marks for engineering, and infrastructure improvements, such as the River Street protected bike lane, are noted as important to winning the Bronze level distinction. The commitment to provide safe bike facilities on appropriate roadways, identify ways to reduce crashes and improve the safety of the cycling community, and bring more cyclists into the downtown area should continue.

Connect bicyclists to the downtown core from the Downtown Metra Station

As a terminal station on the BNSF line, Aurora could be a starting point for people planning extended regional bike rides or getting to jobs in the area via bicycle. There is currently no obvious signage or direction given to two-wheeled visitors arriving in Aurora by train. Providing guidance on the preferred route into the downtown core and to the regional trails, past downtown businesses, would improve the experience for people bringing bikes on Metra to Aurora. Maps on the kiosks at the station should have bike route information and tips. The planned bicycle and pedestrian bridge over the Fox River will create a safe and direct path to the Fox River Trail, and safe on-street routes that take people to local businesses will complement the bridge.

Assess Zagster use to determine if expansion of the program is optimal

Efforts should continue in the evaluation and expansion of the Zagster bike share program, user data should be analyzed to determine the need and location of additional bicycles and stations. Partnerships with neighboring Fox River Valley communities, local healthcare providers, or the Park Districts should be explored to create a larger regional network. Surveys sent to users and members can be helpful to identify areas for improvement, and special deals or promotions can be used to encourage more people to become members.

Encourage active transportation and healthy living through programs and activities

While cars will continue to be the primary mode of transportation for most, small increases in other modes — like walking, bicycling, and transit — could make up a greater share of trips in the future, and would help to activate the sidewalks and improve public health. Throughout the planning process, a number of residents expressed a desire to see the promotion of active living in Aurora, either by the City

on its own, or in partnership with the local School Districts[3], Park Districts, Kane County, local hospitals and health care providers or other entities, and communicate the benefits of walking and biking.

Special events should be organized in conjunction with these partners and the Aurora Police Department. Bike maps could be distributed which include walking/biking distance times and give information about biking around downtown.

A notable program in Park Forest encourages good behavior and academic achievement through their Better Involvement Concerning Young Children's Learning (B.I.C.Y.C.L.E) program. Each month, one student from participating schools, who excels in the core values established at the school, is selected to receive a new bicycle from the Police Department. This program both encourages good student behavior and promotes bicycling.

Adopt a Complete Streets policy

A Complete Streets policy formalizes the commitment of the City to include consideration for bicyclists, pedestrians, and transit users, along with drivers, within all street design activities. A Complete Streets policy should be adopted by the City Council which indicates the intent of the City to use Complete Streets principles whenever relevant. CMAP recommends that the Complete Streets policy itself be relatively simple, expressing the City's priority in creating safe streets for all users, regardless of age, ability, or mode of transportation. As streets are improved, they can be designed to make the street network better and safer for all users. Types of complete streets vary in design due to a number of reasons including right-of-way widths, street classification, and location. Common elements include: sidewalks, bike lanes, crosswalks, wide shoulders, medians, bus pullouts and bus lanes, and audible pedestrian signals.

Sample policies: Park Forest (award-winning), Blue Island, Berwyn, Tinley Park, Des Plaines

Address downtown parking challenges

Improved parking management and parking information delivery can help mitigate downtown parking problems, and improve the overall parking experience. Since there appears to be a large supply of underutilized parking, additional parking would not be a cost-effective solution. At $30,000 per space, millions of dollars could be spent on a garage without making a dent in the perceived parking problems. A successful downtown with free parking will have parking congestion problems, regardless of time limits, heavy-handed enforcement, or increased supply.

Use simple signage and information delivery to improve the parking experience

Downtown has thousands of public on-street and off-street parking spaces within the downtown. Yet finding a space can still be problematic at certain locations during peak hours. Managing an adequate supply of parking is an essential ingredient to the success of any downtown. The challenge is that everyone wants to have a spot in front of their destination, and they don't want to pay for it.

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[3] For more ideas on youth and teen bicycle and pedestrian education programs, see Walk Bike to School's list of resources for curricula: http://www.walkbiketoschool.org/keep-going/ongoing-activities/classroom-curricula and also page 71 of Wheeling's Active Transportation Plan: http://www.cmap.illinois.gov/programs-and-resources/lta/wheeling, completed by the Active Transportation Alliance in 2013.

Improved signage to direct people to long-term parking and well-lit paths connecting those lots to the core are needed. Online maps of the parking, with walking distance information (Figure 4) should be clarified and made readily available.

Figure 2. Sample Parking Map with walking information

An online reservation system should also be considered for a handful of high demand spaces in the core, where a driver could book the parking spot before arriving, such as SpotHero or similar provider.

In Naperville, the City conducts annual parking surveys of drivers to understand problem areas, frustrations, and asks questions about where drivers parked, how long it took to find a spot, if that was the first place they looked, how easy it was to find the parking space, etc. Aurora could conduct a similar survey to collect more qualitative information about the parking experience.

Continue to assess strategies for managing demand, including the potential of user fees for on-street parking

A quantitative assessment of the parking situation is recommended to better understand current conditions. This would include conducting seasonal occupancy counts of how parking is being used during the day and night. An occupancy survey has the potential to reveal underutilized parking spaces and high demand areas, which can then inform educational and outreach strategies, as well as policy. While there is the option to increase supply by building more parking garages, it comes at an extremely high cost. A modest 400-space garage would cost about $12 million, plus on-going maintenance costs, and it would not address the fact that drivers still want to park directly in front of their destination.

Many communities manage demand for convenient on-street parking with pricing. This means that free parking spaces should be located further from the high demand areas, and the high demand areas should be given the lowest price that will open up one or two spaces per block. If too many spaces are vacant, the price is too high. If all the spaces are full, the price is too low.

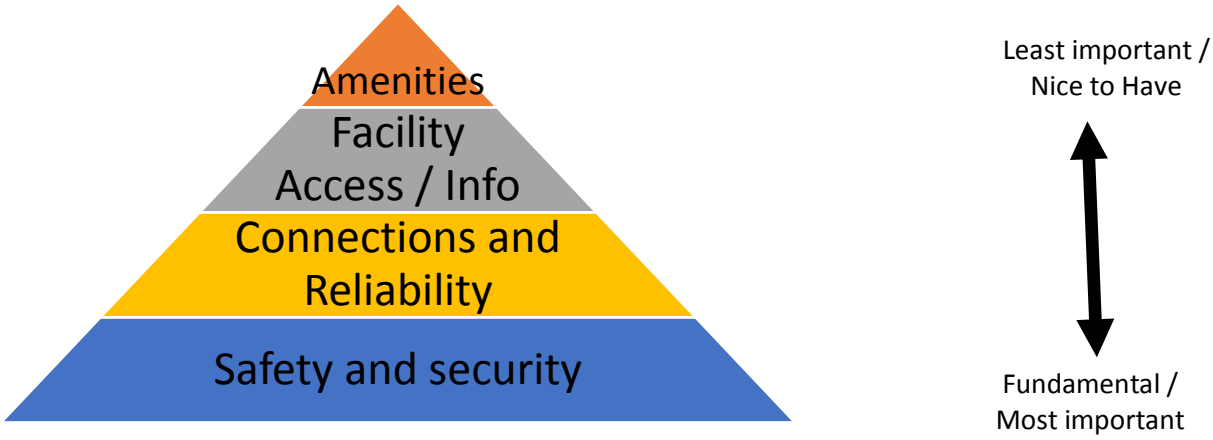
People may expect free parking, and free parking should continue to be available, but not necessarily in the downtown core on-street spaces. When parking at a mall, people don't notice they are walking five minutes from their parking space to the stores, but they are reluctant to park two blocks from their destination in a downtown setting. A pricing strategy allows for options, so that someone who doesn't want to walk can find a convenient parking space and someone who doesn't want to pay for parking (like a student on a tight budget) has that choice, with a short walk. One of the main benefits of a pricing system is that it can allow drivers to pay to park for as long as they want (as long as "feeding the meters" is allowed) without worrying about a ticket, so long as they pay.

Restructure fines to create more of a deterrent to parking abuse

Typically, a small number of repeat offenders rack up a majority of parking tickets. Creating a fee structure that will curb abuse means instituting an initial fee that is a strong deterrent, and either a tiered price schedule that exponentially increases or hits repeat offenders with a heavy fine after a certain number of tickets. In downtown Hinsdale, the Village kept the ticket fines low, but after a vehicle receives 5 tickets, they get a $250 fine. For the much larger City of Aurora, a higher base parking fee is recommended, starting at (still low) $25, and increasing for each additional ticket. Tickets should also include information about the longer-term parking lots, and ways to avoid future tickets.

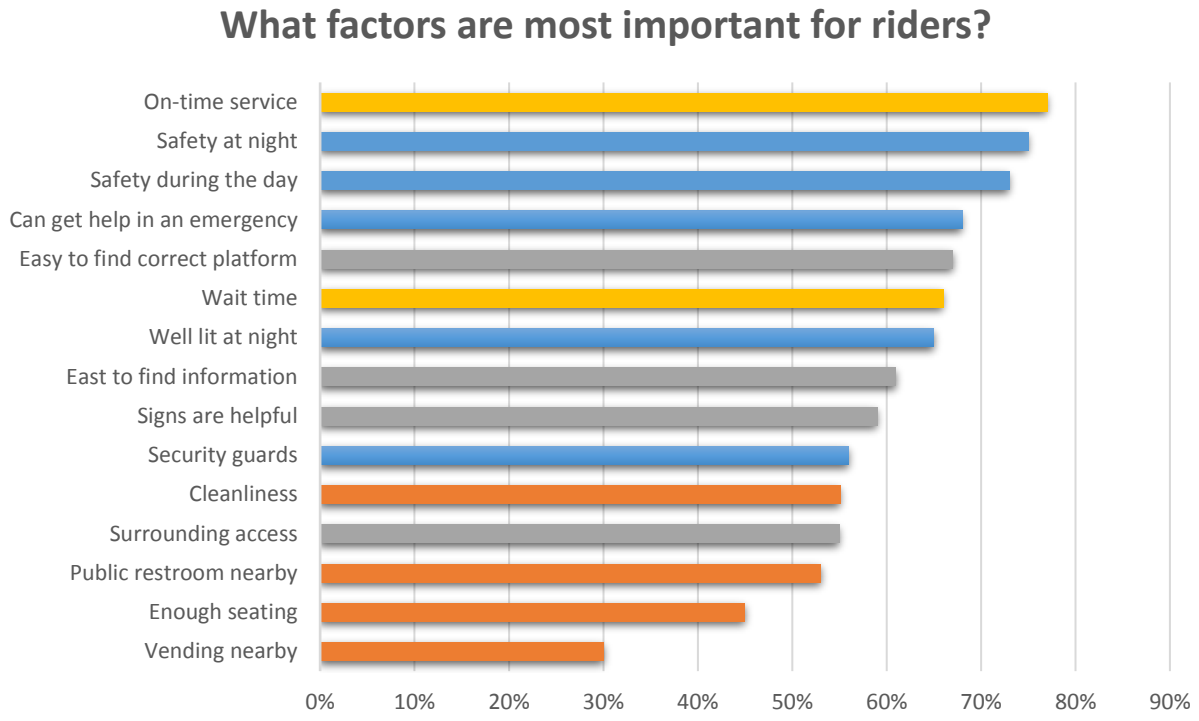
Encourage more transit usage and visitors by train

To encourage people to ride transit, the service provided must be frequent, reliable, and safe. A study conducted at UC Berkeley found that safety and security, along with connection and reliability, outweighed amenities. They identified a hierarchy of traveler wait/transfer needs[4]:



A more detailed analysis, found that while on-time service is the most important factor for bus ridership, safety concerns, as a group, were the most fundamental needs.

[4] Taylor, Brian D.; Iseki, Hiroyuki; Miller, Mark A.; Smart, Michael. "Thinking Outside the Bus: Understanding User Perceptions of Waiting and Transferring in Order to Increase Transit Use." California PATH Research Report. https://trid.trb.org/view.aspx?id=886713



Provide clear, direct, and inviting options for connections between downtown and the Downtown Metra Station

Getting from the Downtown Metra station platform to downtown should be a simple and pleasurable experience. The distance is less than one mile, but Broadway is currently unsuitable for safe bike riding and unpleasant for pedestrians. There is limited signage to direct traffic to more pleasant routes. Improved lighting and traffic calming would give the corridor a more welcoming feel. An improved, well-lit path connecting the platform to Spring Street and LaSalle Street, and beyond, would also help. In addition to people riding bikes, this path, with excellent, pedestrian-scale lighting would also serve the high number of pedestrians that could walk from the station to downtown.

A planned bicycle and pedestrian bridge over the Fox River, along with re-designed bus access will improve the experience for people walking and riding bikes from the west side, and using Pace buses to access the station. Future assessment for the possibility of a trolley connecting downtown destinations is recommended to determine if there would be a desire for such a service, and if the benefits would outweigh the costs.

Improve real-time transit information delivery at bus stops

Riding the bus is not a popular mode of transit in Aurora. Besides a general stigma surrounding buses, many people are simply intimidated by the lack of information. A rider may not know where the bus is going, or when the bus will be arriving at their stop. Pace has real-time bus information available for every vehicle and that a rider can access online or through a text message service. To make the information even more accessible, the use of real-time message boards at key locations are recommended. These message boards are planned for the improved Downtown Metra station, and should be installed at other destinations such as Waubonsee Community College and the Aurora Public Santori Library.

Information about text-messaging for real-time transit information should be placed on all bus signs. Improved bus route maps could help to overcome confusion about where the bus is going, or more simply, a list of destinations along the route could help.

Market transit for events, destinations

Major events downtown could become potential marketing opportunities for transit. A partnership with Pace and/or Metra should be explored to evaluate the possibility of offering free transit rides to select events (with extensive advertising) to introduce residents to the bus system and offer a free way to test it out. If successful, this would also relieve some parking demand.

Additionally, the various transit options for accessing the downtown and connecting to residential areas should continue to be promoted. Frequent bus service is a key factor in a high demand bus transit system, but increased ridership is needed to support the cost of providing frequent service. With improvements to awareness of transit, lighting enhancements, and clarity of information, the community would likely experience an increase in ridership, which would allow Pace to provide more buses and shorten wait times between buses.

Identify and fix barriers for those with mobility challenges

Improve Riverwalk accessibility from downtown streets

There are riverfront trails on both sides of the Fox River, but only New York Street has connections to both, since the path on the east side ends at New York Street. Yet, direct access to the trails from New York Street is only available via staircases, which are completely impassible for people in wheelchairs and are a major barrier to people with strollers and bicycles. While costly, making these entry points accessible would greatly improve trail access for people with mobility challenges. Future points of entry to the trail should be accessible.

Continue with plans to create a drop-off area near RiverEdge Park

The RiverEdge Park Master Plan calls for a drop-off area north of the pavilion, near a proposed environmental interpretive center. This would greatly enhance access for people with mobility challenges, and also improve access for people using taxis and ride-hailing services like Uber and Lyft.

ADA improvements on downtown streets

Ensuring that all streets are ADA accessible makes them more comfortable for all pedestrians, especially those using wheelchairs and traveling with strollers. Many locations throughout the downtown currently meet the ADA code requirements, but they are not optimal or overly pedestrian-friendly. Additional improvements that exceed the requirements include automated walk signals (without a push-button), zebra-style painted crosswalks, countdown timers, and audible/chirping crossings for people with vision impairment at key locations. Increased use of “State law – Stop for pedestrians” signs, and enforcement of this law, is also recommended in the downtown.

Building the Downtown Community

Vision: Downtown Aurora will have a growing and engaged residential community.

Creating opportunities for community engagement and capacity building among elected officials, City staff, and community stakeholders will be a major key to strengthening community relations and implementing the recommendations of the Master Plan. Creative and targeted approaches should be considered to engage the city's diverse residents, businesses, and institutions while forging new relationships and incorporating stakeholder priorities into plan implementation activities. The following summarizes the key findings that underpin the community engagement and capacity recommendations of the downtown Master Plan.

Key findings

Community stakeholders are committed to participating in community activities and plan implementation. The planning process employed an outreach strategy that optimized community participation with particular focus on engaging hard-to-reach populations. Efforts should be made to continue the momentum to make headway on the objectives of the downtown master plan by forming partnerships and building a culture of inclusiveness and collaboration.

The Aurora has many longtime residents and several major longstanding institutions that can serve as resources for effective community engagement. Strong relationships with residents and institutions through long-term community engagement can help move both existing and new projects forward.

The planning process for this Master Plan received great public input however, community participation was not fully representative of the diverse character of downtown Aurora. Limited participation in public processes and community life can contribute to, or exacerbate, groups feeling unwelcome or unable to participate in public processes. Further, it could lead to isolation from the broader community and contribute to social problems.

Community Stakeholders expressed a desire for more cultural integration in downtown Aurora, particularly with the Latino community. As seen in other communities, if Latinos do not participate in public processes and decision-making, it can mean that their priorities and needs may not be addressed, leading to challenges in all areas, from housing and health, to education and employment. Engaging Latinos and other underrepresented groups in community life also means that their ideas and contributions can be heard by the greater community.

Recommendations

The following strategies, many of them low-budget and involving strategic partnerships, offer concrete ways to better engage and involve the community in projects and decision-making. Successful implementation of this downtown master plan itself will rely in large part on community engagement. Given the city's demographics, several strategies are targeted to specifically engage underrepresented populations in downtown Aurora.

Explore innovative public engagement methods to implement the downtown master plan

Throughout the planning process for this Plan, CMAP received great community input from a wide range of community residents. The Strengthening of partnerships with residents and community groups, including local institutions and businesses should continue and build off the momentum of this planning

process. A first step is to develop and maintain a database of community leaders and organizations who were involved in the planning process. The database should include contact information for key individuals within each entity and should be periodically updated in order to maintain its effectiveness for communicating with stakeholders about the master plan and engage them in activities. A precise and up-to-date listing of community leaders and local groups will make it easier to recruit partners and volunteers for specific objectives that relate to the downtown master plan.

Hold educational forums

Although Aurora officials and staff will become well-versed in the recommendations of this master plan, residents, stakeholders, and community partners may not be as familiar with its content. In the months following adoption of the plan, it is recommended that educational forums could be held throughout the community to introduce the topics, challenges, and implementation activities related to the Plan. These educational forums can be held in conjunction with community meetings, events, or other municipal activities that already attract residents and stakeholders.

Re-engage existing resident groups and facilitate the creation of new community groups

Residents will always be the backbone of the Downtown Aurora community. Supporting an engaged, informed, and active resident base will not only improve implementation of the downtown master plan, but it will also create a network of participants to move future plans and activities forward. An outreach plan should be developed based on the objective of the downtown master plan and the opportunities to engage various segments of downtown's diverse population. The downtown master plan planning process should be used to start the conversation with local community groups, and use the implementation of the Plan to provide these groups with new energy and focus.

While it is important to reconnect with existing community groups, assistance should also be given to the creation and coordination of new community groups. There may be opportunities to create new community groups whose focus parallels some of the objectives of the downtown master plan, particularly as these objectives relate to specific plan recommendations.

Update website and use social media outreach

The soon to be launched webpage for the downtown Master Plan that residents and stakeholders can use to read the Plan in its entirety, should allow the public to keep track of plan progress, and access information on community events related to the Plan. This webpage should also house interim plan materials, such as the Existing Conditions Report in order to view maps, demographic information, and community engagement materials. The downtown master plan webpage should be easy to access from the homepage of the City's website, and should provide updates to users through social media and community newsletters.

Engage the diverse population of Aurora

The diversity of Aurora's residents is a major asset to the community. A commitment should be made to actively engage all stakeholders and residents in plan implementation activities. The continued growth of Aurora's Latino population will make it essential to target this important demographic in community planning activities for years to come. Best practices and existing resources should be identified to increase community engagement with residents across the entire community. Some ways to engage its diverse population include:

- **Youth engagement:** Engaging youth lends a unique perspective to the implementation of the downtown master plan. There are numerous recommendations in the Plan that can be made more successful by involving the city's school-aged population, including improvements to facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists (*Mobility: Getting to and around Downtown Aurora*) and riverfront programming and activities (*The Heart of Downtown: The Fox River*). Engaging with the school districts, the Aurora Public Library, Aurora Police Department, Fox Valley Park District, Family Focus, Boys II Men, and the Aurora Township can strengthen the impact and outcome of the Plan's recommendations.
- **Latino outreach:** Even though 41 percent of downtown Aurora's population identifies as Latino, community participation by this group was not representative of this fact during the master plan planning process. In order to better integrate the growing population of Latinos in future community activities, all marketing materials should continue to be translated into Spanish and distributed in key locations throughout the city including schools, places of worship, and public buildings, such as libraries, park district facilities, and municipal buildings. Existing leaders within the Latino community should be fully engaged and new leaders should be recruited to circulate the recommendations included in the downtown master plan. These community leaders should be asked to facilitate engagement with Aurora's Latino population and invite the community to participate in projects that implement plan recommendations.
- **Immigrant integration:** As a further indication of the diversity within Aurora, nearly 25.4 percent of the population of the city is foreign born. Steps should be taken to ensure that foreign-born residents and stakeholders are provided with the same opportunities to engage in community planning activities as other resident groups. The Metropolitan Mayors Caucus (MMC) and CMAP have developed an *Immigrant Integration Toolkit* that presents a variety of techniques that municipalities have successfully implemented to address integration and to create a culture of inclusion. The toolkit addresses common challenges associated with engaging immigrant populations, such as marginal participation in municipal government, lack of representation on local boards and commissions, mistrust of government, and language issues. This toolkit should be utilized to identify relevant case studies that can be implemented successfully.

Make public engagement accessible

A critical component to making public engagement accessible is to make public meetings and materials appropriate for participants. Input should be solicited from leaders and organizations in determining the best models of engagement. Aurora's cultural advisory commissions and boards could help mediate this process by serving as sounding boards to assist, guide and offer input on existing issues and opportunities based on their institutional knowledge, and reviewing outreach strategies and meeting materials.

Outreach strategies may need to vary depending on which community groups from which engagement is sought. For example, phone calls may be more effective than emails. Specific radio stations, newspapers, and electronic media outlets that target the specific groups should be utilized. In addition to the standard practices for engagement, like choosing meeting sites that are welcoming, safe, and accessible and selecting dates and times for meetings when more people can participate, the following practices should also be considered:

- **Location:** Rather than hold meetings in government/public agency office buildings, which may be intimidating, consider using public schools, the public library, churches, or parks.

- **Outreach:** Ensure that outreach and other meeting materials are available in multiple languages. Mention if there will be translation services available at an event. Social media, such as Twitter and Facebook, is a good way of connecting with the Latino community.
- **Incentives:** Provide small incentives as a way to increase participation. Examples include providing food and childcare, holding raffles for donated items, and recognizing participation.
- **Agenda:** Create an agenda that reflects the community's priorities, including those of the Latino population. Ensure that there is a common understanding about the goals and processes of the meeting.

When possible, public meetings, such as City Council meetings, should be broadcast on local TV stations to provide increased transparency and awareness of ongoing work that the city is doing.

Address communication barriers

For many localities, achieving successful public engagement is one of the biggest challenges. Often municipalities do not have the staff capabilities or resources to conduct effective public participation processes. This becomes a much greater challenge when trying to engage underrepresented groups. With Aurora's diverse population, it is important to address communication barriers, strengthen relationship with residents, and set a tone of inclusivity.

Frequent, two-way communication between the municipality and the Latino community is particularly essential. Latinos should feel assured they will be contacted when necessary and that they may contact local authorities with issues or concerns. Possible strategies to increase communication with the local Latino community include:

- Partnering with neighboring community public safety agencies as appropriate to leverage limited resources and avoid coverage gaps.
- Working with key leaders who might serve as a conduit of valuable public safety information. Many immigrants are likely to turn to spiritual or community leaders if they witness or are a victim of a crime.
- Increasing media relations or public service announcements. Regularly reach out to ethnic radio and television stations, blogs, and print media to make them aware of local initiatives.
- Cultural sensitivity training and diversity awareness should be included in police and fire academy curricula. Offer language training programs to officers, cadets, and recruits. Encourage a pipeline of ESL and multilingual personnel by noting such opportunities in marketing and recruiting material.
- Providing a hotline that does not require callers to leave contact information to promote crime reporting.

It is also important that local residents know who to go to when they have questions. A community liaison for police, fire, and emergency management departments is important. Some communities have a designated community liaison position within their police or fire departments to assist with outreach to local community groups. The liaison role could be filled by current employees who are bicultural and bilingual or volunteers from local community-based organizations. Such positions also serve as a tool for recruitment to bolster diversity within local government.

Improve language access

Improving language access is a critical aspect of integrating downtown Aurora's diverse population, and is important from a public safety, civic life, and economic perspective. The following activities are designed to assist immigrants' ability to access information in a language they understand and the City's ability to communicate effectively with residents who speak limited or no English, also known as LEP individuals.

Utilize community interpreters and establish a volunteer language bank. Community volunteers are an important and all too often untapped resource for municipalities. Latino residents should be invited to serve as volunteers offering language and cultural guidance or informal translation or interpreting services. A good way to connect with potential volunteers is to partner with local faith-based organizations, community-based organizations, and community college student groups. Partnerships should be created with local school districts to create a dual language program and offer a certification, including language proficiency assessment and basic training, in order to help ensure and improve the quality of volunteer services. Engaging young people is a great way to get entire families involved in the community. When recruiting interns and volunteers, communities should take advantage of younger residents' cultural diversity and language abilities.

Provide information in the languages your community needs. It is important to ensure that emergency communications systems can include a Spanish option or other widely used language. Simple strategies, such as signs in municipal offices indicating that assistance in other languages is available, can help spread the word and set a tone of inclusivity. Additionally, communities should ensure that key safety signs, brochures, and informational materials are translated into the languages the community needs.

Strengthen local capacity

The contribution of residents, businesses, and organizations in downtown Aurora make the community stronger. Enhanced local capacity will help the City as it works to provide regular municipal services as well as longer term projects, such as implementing this plan. Additional partners and engaged residents will help address the needs of Aurora residents.

Build trust and collaboration with residents

Developing strong partnerships with organizations can help enhance cooperation and utilization of the existing capacity, expertise, and knowledge of community-based organizations. The City already has established relationships with organizations active in Aurora and should continue to expand the list of partners, particularly those who work directly with Latino and African-American groups. To do this, an up-to-date list of local existing businesses and institutions should be kept and individuals should become familiar with the services they provide. Local business and community meetings should be used to keep these groups informed and support should be given to efforts to develop community leadership and participation. Potential organizations include:

- Business organizations or chambers
- Church clergy and congregations
- Community or neighborhood groups
- Consulates
- Cultural and hometown organizations
- Ethnic media
- Health organizations or centers (county and community)
- Latino leadership, organizing, or advocacy groups

- Schools and libraries
- Unions

Foster leadership among the various constituencies

Downtown Aurora has a younger population; 52 percent are under 35 years of age and most do not have experience in municipal leadership. Local leadership capacity should be bolstered by offering training and leadership development opportunities for residents. Similar to Aurora's citizen police academy, a municipal citizen academy teaches local residents about how city operations and departments work. Citizen academies can help residents feel empowered to reach out to public agencies when issues arise and to get more actively involved by participating in meetings and events or even serving as volunteers. It can also give residents a better understanding of the fiscal impacts of different municipal decisions.

Aurora should work with Waubonsee Community College or other partners, like the Aurora Public Library, to help coordinate the development of a program like this in the community. This is a great way to train residents and the next generation of leaders to serve on boards or commissions. In addition to connecting with other municipalities who have run an academy, like the Village of Oswego, there are other resources available, including already developed curriculums. The U.S. Hispanic Leadership Institute offers a free Grassroots Leadership Development Program designed to bridge the gap between citizens and local government.

Promote civic engagement

While not unique to downtown Aurora, low voter turnout in local elections can contribute to uneven representation, which in turn affects government spending priorities. Encouraging participation in municipal elections leads to a stronger, more representative government. There are a number of strategies that can be used to increase voter turnout such as posting election reminders in water bills and/or electronic newsletters, partnering with community groups to host meet and greets with local candidates, and working with school districts to hold mock elections for local students to get young residents interested.

Aurora has an opportunity to encourage greater civic participation among underrepresented groups. This in turn helps foster inclusion and cross-cultural representation on elected bodies. Partnerships should be sought with community organizations that organize and conduct nonpartisan voter registration and turnout campaigns. The U.S. Hispanic Leadership Institute provides voter registration trainings and materials (available in various languages) free of charge. The Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights coordinates voter registration campaigns at naturalization ceremonies to educate and encourage new citizens to exercise their constitutional rights. Working with these and other organizations can help to leverage resources and encourage voter participation.

Organize community building activities

In many cases, the most effective way to engage residents is through community events. Block parties, street fairs and festivals, and community gardens can all help bring different groups together and help residents feel more integrated. A number of community events are already being held and these can be used as opportunities to bring different segments of the population together. Partnerships, including advisory boards and commissions, and local community groups, should be used to figure out ways to engage diverse groups of residents in the process of designing, planning, and hosting year-round community activities in the downtown.

Components could also be added to existing events to help draw different audiences. Additional new events could be more low-key. For instance, the Village of Skokie has sponsored "Know Your Neighbor Week," during which residents are encouraged to invite their neighbor over for coffee in their homes. The Village provided host "kits" that include invitations, conversation starters, and coupons to local bakeries.

Raising cultural awareness should continue so that all residents are aware of the rich diversity of the community. An annual Festival of Cultures celebrating the heritage of Aurora's residents could be added to the festival list or as a component of an existing festival. African American Heritage Advisory Board, Aurora Hispanic Heritage Advisory Board, and the Indian American Community Outreach Advisory Board could partner to coordinate multi-cultural events and activities.

Update the City's Comprehensive Plan

The most recent Comprehensive Land Use Plan for Aurora is over 30 years old; many things about the city have changed in the last 30 years. The City of Aurora should pursue a detailed Comprehensive Plan to build upon the 1984 Comprehensive Land Use Plan, and create a vision which ties together the various neighborhoods, industrial areas, and the downtown. The new plan elements should include long term strategies for neighborhoods and housing, quality of life, economic and workforce development, transportation, and parks and recreation. Community buy-in to a shared vision is one of the most critical aspects of plan implementation, and the recommendations outlined previously can help build that community partnership.

Conclusion

The goal of this Downtown Master Plan is to build off previous implementation successes and continue forward within the context of Aurora's historic downtown to create a more livable, walkable, and vibrant core. The Master Plan outlines the community's vision and defines guiding principles to help achieve that vision.

The strategies recommended in this Plan begin with creating a unique, memorable experience to solidify downtown as a desirable destination for people who live here, work here, or just come to visit. Increasing the number of people in the downtown will lead to the development of supportive businesses, entertainment, and retail activity. Arts and culture activity will find direction and increased support at various levels. The Fox River will continue to be the heart of Aurora with attractive new open space, and wetlands to improve water quality and mitigate flooding. Transportation improvements will help to encourage more walking, and reduce frustrations with parking and traffic. Creative and targeted outreach approaches will help to foster a stronger relationship with the municipality and its residents, and cultivate new leaders along the way. The Aurora Community has been, and will continue to work tirelessly toward this bold vision for the future—a future that is, indeed, bright.

IN 2030, DOWNTOWN AURORA WILL
AESTHETICALLY IMPROVE buildings

IN 2030 DOWNTOWN AURORA WILL
Have More visitors.

EN 2030, EL CENTRO DE AURORA...
más negocios y MVATOS.
NO SOLO RESTAURANTES
TIENDAS DE VASTIDAS DE IS

EN 2030, EL CENTRO DE AURORA...
MAS actividades Eventos Cultivo para la comunidad

IN 2030, DOWNTOWN AURORA WILL

IN 2030, DOWNTOWN AURORA...
More Shops and people walking around!!!

IN 2030, DOWNTOWN AURORA
Bus Pick up & Drop off from School & Home

IN 2030, DOWNTOWN AURORA...
Small Business EXPLOSION!!!

IN 2030, DOWNTOWN AURORA WILL similar to Geneva with small Shops bakeries & restaurants

IN 2030, DOWNTOWN AURORA WILL
BE CRAWLING WITH YOUNG ENTRETRENEURS!

IN 2030, DOWNTOWN AURORA WILL
bus + sidewalks full of people

EN 2030, EL CENTRO DE AURORA...
Mas Parques y Seguridad

IN 2030, DOWNTOWN AURORA WILL
Most my daughter's high school graduation party

IN 2030, DOWNTOWN AURORA...
Flying cars
Human Robots

IN 2030, DOWNTOWN AURORA WILL
more trees
more clean

IN 2030, DOWNTOWN AURORA WILL
be nice as it was in 1901

EN 2030, EL CENTRO DE AURORA...
Artes y programas Educativos para los niños

IN 2030, DOWNTOWN AURORA WILL...
have all green rooftops.

IN 2030, DOWNTOWN AURORA WILL
Flying cars

IN 2030, DOWNTOWN AURORA WILL...
Be open for business

IN 2030, DOWNTOWN AURORA WILL...
Elect me as Mayor

IN 2030, DOWNTOWN AURORA WILL...
ASCEND.

IN 2030, DOWNTOWN AURORA WILL...
more business

IN 2030, DOWNTOWN AURORA WILL...
be a fulfilled City with great arts & sense of life!

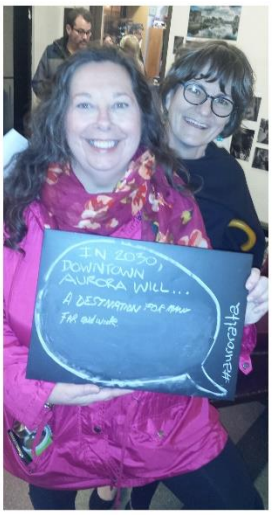
IN 2030, DOWNTOWN AURORA WILL...
Still be HOME!!

IN 2030, DOWNTOWN AURORA WILL...
SOAR like the falcons on the LELAND TOWER

IN 2030, DOWNTOWN AURORA WILL...
More Express art Scene

IN 2030, DOWNTOWN AURORA WILL...
Create MURALS Soon!!

IN 2030, DOWNTOWN AURORA WILL...
PAGE & GLASS MUSEUM....


IN 2030, DOWNTOWN AURORA WILL...
A DESTINATION FOR ANY FAMILY

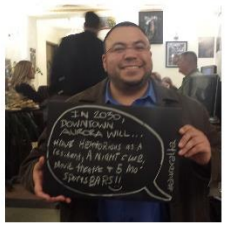
SciTech Academy
IN 2030, DOWNTOWN AURORA WILL...
Family oriented venues

Snacks Here!
IN 2030, DOWNTOWN AURORA WILL...
More family oriented Programs

IN 2030, DOWNTOWN AURORA WILL...
Like - remembered it in the 60's

IN 2030, DOWNTOWN AURORA WILL...
Tim Simes more rides

IN 2030, DOWNTOWN AURORA WILL...
KEEP PIE CLOSE TO HOME

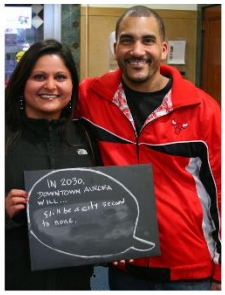

IN 2030, DOWNTOWN AURORA WILL...
Have Hopkins as a family, a night club, have House & Paul Sports Bars!!

IN 2030, DOWNTOWN AURORA WILL...
Restaurants with live music

IN 2030, DOWNTOWN AURORA WILL...
Have more affordable condos for students

IN 2030, DOWNTOWN AURORA WILL...
open space & greenery

IN 2030, DOWNTOWN AURORA WILL...
have a playground for me!!


IN 2030, DOWNTOWN AURORA WILL...
Still be a city second to none.

IN 2030, DOWNTOWN AURORA WILL...
be more butterfly

IN 2030, DOWNTOWN AURORA WILL...
SHINE & Become ALIVE

IN 2030, DOWNTOWN AURORA WILL...
set world records!!