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I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A. INTRODUCTION

1. Purpose of the Plan

This Comprehensive Plan is a blueprint for the short-range and long-range growth and development of the Village of Rockton, prepared under the authority of Chapter 65, Division 12 of Illinois Statutes. It is designed to be used by Village officials as a policy guide to:

- Direct community development and land use decisions,
- Assist with community facility budgeting, and
- Focus and stimulate private housing, business, and industrial investment in the community.

In addition to providing sound public *policy* guidance, a Comprehensive Plan should incorporate an inclusive public participation *process* to ensure that its recommendations are as reflective of a broadly supported future vision. Before being adopted by the Village Plan Commission and the Village Board, a Plan must go through a formal hearing and review process. The Village has incorporated other public participation efforts into its process, including focus groups and a community survey. This formal, well-publicized process facilitates broad support of plan goals and activities.

Adopting a Comprehensive Plan is just the first step in directing community growth. Subsequent planning efforts must focus on providing direct connections between the Plan's recommendations and actual development. The most effective ways of accomplishing this are to adopt development regulations that directly implement planning policies, and then, for the Village to evaluate all development related proposals (annexations, land divisions, rezonings, special uses, planned developments, and public investment and service decisions) based on their consistency with this Plan. Reference of decisions to plan recommendations will help establish both their legal defensibility and their economic efficiency.

Finally, to be effective, this Plan should continue to be evaluated by community representatives and amended as needed to keep current with changes brought about by time. A five-year evaluation cycle is recommended.

This document is organized in four sections based on principal planning issues:

- *Part I: Background Information*, gives an overview of important political, natural, socio-economic, existing development, and local planning factors.
- *Part II: Planning Policy Framework*, outlines the policy desires of the community and provides the basis for the plan recommendations that follow.
- *Part III: Plan Recommendations*, describes detailed recommendations for community character, land use, transportation, recreation, community facilities, and utilities.
- *Part IV: Implementation*, provides recommended actions that should be taken to ensure that the plan is realized.

2. Regional Context

The Village of Rockton is located in far northern Illinois near the Wisconsin border, approximately 15 miles north of Rockford and 5 miles south of Beloit, Wisconsin. It is located among other suburban communities, such as Roscoe and South Beloit in northern Winnebago County. The Village is about 100 miles northwest of Chicago.

Figure 1: Regional Context



3. Planning Area

The General Planning Area for this Plan has been selected to include all lands in which the Village has both a short-term and long-term interest in planning and development activity. The General Planning Area includes the following areas:

- All lands currently within the Village's corporate limits.
- Lands within the Village's 1½ mile extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ). In certain cases, if fully extended, this ETJ line would cross the municipal limits and ETJ lines of other incorporated municipalities. In such cases the shared ETJ line, is located along a line equidistant from each municipality (see thick solid Line in Map 1).
- Lands south of a previously agreed future growth boundary line with the City of South Beloit (see dashed line in Map 1).
- Properties where the Village has pre-annexation agreements with property owners. However, in accordance with the limitations within Illinois Statutes, the area in which detailed recommendations are offered does not include any such properties outside of the Village's 1½ mile extraterritorial jurisdiction.

This Plan covers a planning period of approximately 20 to 25 years (running through the year 2025). Within that period, much of the land within the Village's Planning Area will remain outside the municipal limits (i.e., the land will not be annexed). Still, the Village has an interest in assuring that development activity within the entire General Planning Area does not negatively affect the capacity for logical urban growth within and beyond the planning period.

4. Relationship of this Plan to Other Jurisdictions

This Comprehensive Plan is for the Village of Rockton. As an incorporated jurisdiction anticipating population growth, this Plan must accommodate and facilitate planned municipal expansion. However, this Plan attempts to coordinate recommendations with those of adjacent and overlapping jurisdictions. These include the State of Illinois, Winnebago County, the City of South Beloit, the Village of Roscoe, Rockton Township, and other jurisdictions such as the school and utility districts.

As a result of growth and territorial overlaps, tension between these jurisdictions is likely. This Plan seeks to minimize such tension by reflecting the recommendations of plans adopted by these jurisdictions in instances where the Village's interest is not jeopardized. The Village's interest is defined by the policy framework presented by the Plan's goals, objectives, and policies, described in Part Two. Where such efforts are insufficient to prevent conflict, a preferred approach is to seek meaningful and on-going intergovernmental planning through joint agreements. A supporting, or alternative approach, is to minimize conflict by limiting planning and development actions to mutually acceptable "spheres of influence."

Map 1: Jurisdictional Boundaries

B. NATURAL FEATURES

The natural features of the General Planning Area provide a basic framework for analysis and suggest possible locational advantages for particular land uses, and suggests the relationship between the Village and the surrounding region. The natural resource base, especially environmentally sensitive areas with respect to soils, environmental corridors, wetlands, and floodplains are critical factors in local planning decision-making. Maintenance sensitive natural features is important for both the visual attractiveness of the community and the prevention of severe developmental or environmental problems that may be difficult and costly to correct in the future.

1. Landforms/Topography/Geology

The Village of Rockton lies within the Rock River Hill Country physiographic province of Illinois.¹ The physiographic features of the area have been greatly influenced by the advance and retreat of glaciers. The glaciers gouged the limestone ridges and diverted streams, thus carving deep channels in the bedrock. Till plains that have drumlins, eskers, and kames are scattered throughout Winnebago County. The relief of Winnebago County is characterized by broad rolling glaciated uplands that rise 100 to 200 feet above the valleys. Most upland soils formed in a thin layer of loess and the underlying glacial drift. Limestone bedrock is near the surface throughout the county, and bedrock outcrops are numerous.²

2. Hydrology

a. Rivers and Streams

The Rock River is a predominant feature in and around the Village. The river runs along the edge of the community to the west and through the community just south of the downtown. The Pecatonica River and Raccoon Creek drain the area west of the Village and flow into the Rock River just east of the Village north of the Macktown Forest Preserve.



b. Floodplains

Flood hazard areas are located along the Rock and Pecatonica Rivers and their tributaries. These have been identified and mapped by the Federal Insurance Administration for risk management purposes. The 100-year flood area—where the flooding probability is greater than 1% in any given year—is generally restricted to no development. See Map 2: Natural Features for the general location of the floodplains. Note the particularly wide floodplain areas to the west of the Village. The National Flood Insurance Program maps produced by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) designate official floodplain boundaries.

¹ “Geology for Planning in Boone and Winnebago Counties”, Illinois Dept. of Energy and Natural Resources, State Geologic Survey Division, Circular 531 (1984), page 3

² “Soil Survey of Winnebago and Boone Counties, Illinois”, U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service (1980), page 1

c. Wetlands

Wetland areas are located along streams and drainageways and in isolated low spots. These have been identified and mapped by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. These areas are important for aquifer recharge, groundwater and surface water quality improvement, and wildlife habitat. Significant wetland areas are located in areas near the Rock and Pecatonica river channels. Generally, these areas are restricted to no development by Federal and State regulations.



d. Groundwater

According to the County Soil Survey, the water supply in the area is good. The deep glacial outwash and underlying Cambrian aquifer of the Rock River Valley is the main source of water for the larger industries and municipalities. They are capable of supplying much more water than is currently used. The sandstone aquifers of Ordovician age supply water to smaller industries and cities. The shallow dolomitic limestone aquifers in the uplands supply water for domestic and livestock use.³ In areas of granular soils, these shallow aquifers are susceptible to contamination from both surface and subterranean sources. Deep aquifers in the planning area are generally of higher quality and considered substantially less susceptible to contamination.

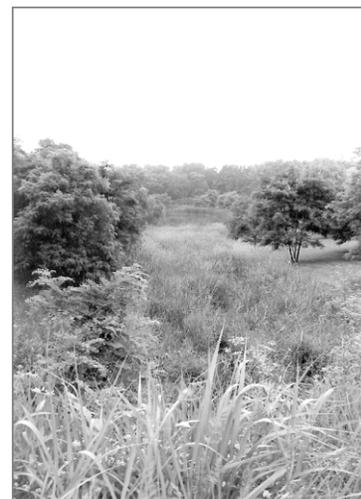
3. General Soils Information

Soils in the Rock River Valley lowlands are deep, well drained, nearly level to sloping soils that formed in loamy and sandy sediment underlain by sandy and gravelly sediment. Soils in the uplands to the south and southwest of the Village are mostly deep, well drained, gently sloping to strongly sloping soils that formed in glacial till or in thin loess and the underlying glacial drift.⁴ The U.S. Department of Agriculture Soil Conservation Service's *Soil Survey of Winnebago and Boone Counties, Illinois* contains more detailed information on soils in the planning area.

4. Other Sensitive Environmental Features

a. Woodlands

Significant areas of wooded land are located throughout the planning area, particularly to the south of the current Village limits. These woodlands are generally located on hillsides or along water features. Existing woodlands that have not been broken up by residential development are valuable contributors to the area's character and beauty. As such, these remaining woodland areas should be preserved, and any development in and around them should take special care not to destroy these resources. Several mature tree lines, as shown in Map 3, also provide logical future breaks between different types of land use.



³ "Soil Survey of Winnebago and Boone Counties, Illinois", U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service (1980), page 2

⁴ "Soil Survey of Winnebago and Boone Counties, Illinois", U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service (1980), General Soil Map

Map 2: Natural Features

b. Steep Slopes

Much of the planning area is made up of gently rolling or flat areas. Areas of steep slopes (exceeding 12%) occur generally to the south and southwest of the village and directly adjacent to waterways.

c. Hilltops and Ridgelines

Important natural features that are often overlooked in comprehensive planning efforts are hilltops and ridgelines. Hilltops and ridgelines serve to define the horizon—and perhaps provide a “natural edge” for a community. Large structures constructed on top of them (including homes) tend to be visually prominent—especially if not blending with the area’s character in terms of color, material, or style. Significant hilltops and ridgelines are present within the planning area, particularly to the south and southwest of the Village.

C. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC FACTORS

1. General Community Profile

The following pages contain a general community profile of the Village of Rockton prepared by the Northern Illinois Business and Industry Data Center in the Center for Governmental Studies at Northern Illinois University. (Please note that most of this data is based on the 1990 Census and is 10 years old.) Some of the key factors from this community profile are described below. Additional information, mostly from the 1990 Census, has also been included.

a. Population

The median age of residents of the Village was 34.7 years in 1990. This was slightly less than that of the County, which was 35.6 years. The community had a small non-white population of 2%, compared to 10% for the County. Although the U.S. Census Bureau's estimated 1998 population for the Village is 3,269, estimates from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs put the 1998 population at 4,733. More detailed information on population history and projections is included in Section 2, below.

The population of the Village is generally a bit more mobile than the population of the County, State, or the U.S. According to the 1990 Census, 47% of Rockton residents lived in the same house as they did 5 years ago (compared to 56% for the County and State and 53% for the U.S.). About 17% moved from a different state (compared to 7% for the County, 6% for the State, and 9% for the U.S.). This most likely reflects Rockton's location near the Wisconsin border.

b. Housing

The average household size in the Village was 2.47 persons per household in 1990. This compares to 2.57 persons per household for Winnebago County as a whole. Household size has been decreasing throughout the region and country. This trend toward smaller household sizes is expected to continue into the future.

Also in 1990, almost 70% of housing units in the Village were single-family, with less than 10% of housing units in apartments with more than 10 units per building. These numbers are approximately the same as the countywide percentages. The median home value for the Village in 1990 was \$66,900, higher than the median value for the County, which was \$60,600. According to the 1990 Census, about 34% of the housing units in the Village as of that date were built between 1980 and 1990. This compares to about 12% for the County. Housing development accelerated in the 1990s. Most new housing development has occurred on the Village's south and east sides.

Monthly housing costs, as a percentage of household income, are a good indicator of the affordability of housing. For owner-occupied housing, almost 11% of households were paying more than 30% of their income for housing (compared to 13.2% for the County). For renter-occupied housing, about 25% of households were paying more than 30% of their income for housing (compared to 34% for the County).

c. Labor Market & Income

Employment of Rockton residents is concentrated in manufacturing (33%), services (30%), and wholesale/retail trade (20%). Almost 80% of commuters in Rockton drive alone and the mean travel time to work is 20.5 minutes (this compares to 17.8 minutes for Winnebago County).

Median household income in 1990 was \$35,078 in the Village—higher than that of Winnebago County (\$31,336). About 4% of the population in the Village fell below the poverty level in 1990, compared to 10% for the County.

2. Population

This section details the population characteristics of Rockton. Unless noted otherwise, data is from the U.S. Census Bureau's 1990 Census of Population and Housing.

a. Historic Changes in Population

Table 1, below, shows the population of Rockton since 1980. The Village experienced an increase of 615 people between 1980 and 1990. Between 1990 and 1998, the Village population increased by 1,805 people (almost 3 times as much as the '80 to '90 increase).

Table 1: Historic Village Population, 1980-1998

	<i>1980</i>	<i>1990</i>	<i>1998</i>
Population	2,313	2,928	4,733
Percent Increase	--	26.6%	61.6%
Sources: Illinois Dept. of Commerce & Community Affairs			

b. Population Projections

Population projections are important for helping communities estimate, and plan for, the future needs of residents. When considering population projections it is important to remember that it is difficult to accurately project populations for small areas, such as the Village. Therefore, any projections should be considered an educated guess of future growth based on past trends in the community. Unforeseen changes in the local or regional economy, decisions made by individual landowners and developers in the community, or significant changes in birth, death, or migration rates can dramatically alter population growth in the community.

INSERT COMMUNITY PROFILE – PAGE ONE

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INSERT COMMUNITY PROFILE – PAGE TWO

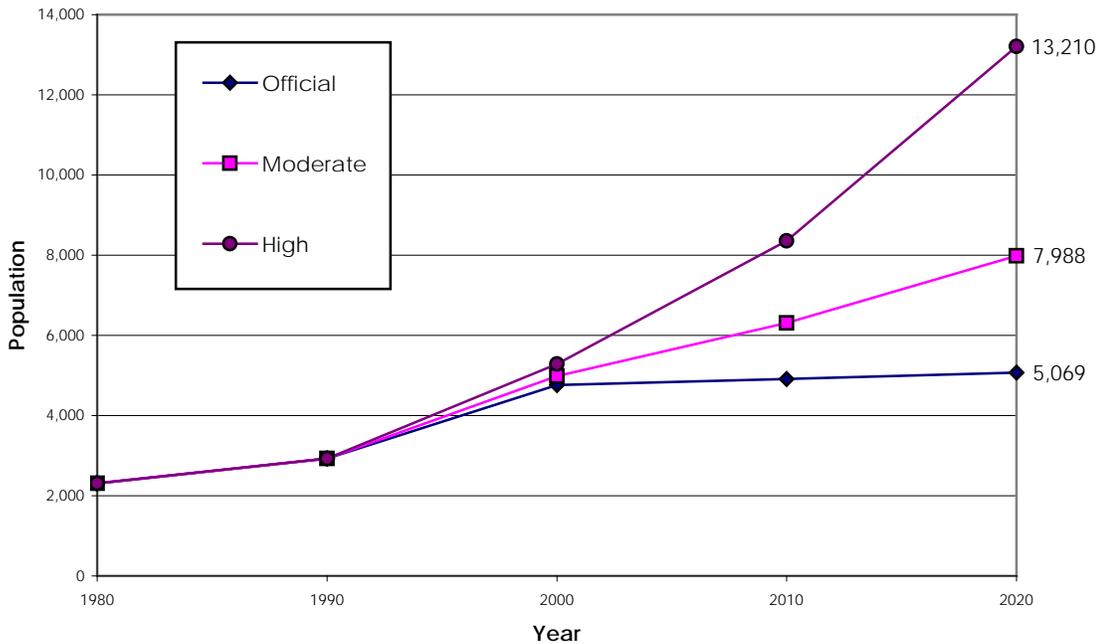
Table 2 shows three different population projection scenarios for the Village through the year 2020. The first column (Official) assumes that the Village will grow at the same rate as the County (based on the official State of Illinois population projections for Winnebago County). The second column (Moderate) represents a growth scenario with a population increase at the same rate that the Village experienced from 1980 through 1990. The third column (High) represents a growth scenario with a population increase at the same rate that the Village experienced from 1980-1998. See Figure 2 for a graphical representation of these three growth projections.

Table 2: Alternative Population Projections, 2000-2020

Year	Official ¹	Moderate ²	High ³
2000	4,763	4,985	5,283
2010	4,913	6,310	8,354
2020	5,069	7,988	13,210

¹ Extrapolated from County growth rate projected in "Illinois Population Trends 1990 to 2020", State of Illinois Bureau of the Budget (1997)
² Projection using 1980-1990 Village growth rate
³ Projection using 1980-1998 Village growth rate

Figure 2: Population History and Projections, 1980-2020



As mentioned above, it is difficult to predict future population for an area the size of the Village due to a host of variables. To be conservative, this Plan should be designed to accommodate the high-range population projection.

3. Historic Resources

a. Rockton Historic District

(much of the following is adapted from an article in "Historic Illinois", December 1984)

Founded in 1835 and known as Pecatonic before 1844, Rockton's historic district is one of northern Illinois earliest settlements (see Map 3). Many residences from Rockton's pioneer period survive today and the structures are more sophisticated than those normally associated with frontier towns (fully one-quarter are "Greek Revival" – making it the largest and most significant collection of such architecture in the State of Illinois). These homes were largely built in the 1830s through 1850s. Rockton's Historic District, focused around the current downtown area, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Most of Rockton's historic commercial downtown area is notably excluded from the Historic District due to remodeling in the 1970s at odds with the original facades. However, much potential still exists for the restoration of historic downtown.

Rockton's founder, William Talcott, dug a millrace along the Rock River, which provided power for saw and grist mills and sparked Rockton's early industrial growth. Many of the resulting industries were the first of their kind in the Rock River Valley. Railroad transportation was established in 1856, but major routes through Rockford and Beloit soon bypassed Rockton. As nearby areas started their own mills and factories, Rockton's prominence was supplanted by Beloit and Rockford. Rockton's nineteenth century economic misfortune, however, has been the fortune of twentieth century preservationists. Because there was little growth after the turn of the century, many of Rockton's oldest and most distinguished buildings have survived for nearly 150 years.

b. Macktown Forest Preserve/Settlement

(adapted from materials provided by the Macktown Restoration Foundation)

Located along the south shore of the confluence of the Rock and Pecatonica Rivers is a site with undisturbed historic and prehistoric resources. Archeological evidence indicates that this site was used by natives of the area dating back 10,000 years. This site was also the location of one of the earliest Anglo settlements in northern Illinois. The site is listed as a National Register Historic District.

A Master Plan has been prepared for a Living History Education Center that would serve to restore the site and create an educational resource to interpret the culture of the inhabitants and showcase the historic and prehistoric significance of the area. Implementation of such a plan would contribute to the community character of Rockton, and could spur tourism-oriented development on surrounding lands and in the downtown.

D. EXISTING BUILT ENVIRONMENT

1. Existing Land Use

The existing land use pattern provides an important foundation for compatible future land development in the Village. Map 3 shows existing (2000) land use within the planning area.

a. Land Use Map Categories

This Plan uses a detailed system of land use map categories that address both *use* and *community character* factors. Traditional land use classifications (such as agricultural, residential, commercial, and industrial) are combined with modern community character classifications (such as “neighborhood,” “planned,” and “general”) to create a system of categories that provides for a higher level of description and more detailed recommendations. These map categories are briefly described below:

1. *Agriculture/Rural/Vacant*: agricultural uses, farmsteads, other open or vacant lands, and single-family residences at or below one dwelling per 35 acres;
2. *Rural Residential*: single-family residential development in rural subdivisions not served by public sewer and water, typically on lots between one and five acres in area;
3. *Single Family Residential*: sewerred single-family residential development at densities up to five dwelling units per acre;
4. *Two Family Residential*: predominantly duplex development at densities up to eight dwelling units per acre;
5. *Mixed Residential*: mobile home, two-family, and multi-family residential development at densities greater than five dwelling units per acre;
6. *Neighborhood Office*: neighborhood-related professional office and office-supporting uses which preserve neighborhood residential character through building scale, building appearance, landscaping and signage;
7. *Planned Office*: high-quality office, institutional and office-support land uses with very generous landscaping and limited signage;
8. *Neighborhood Business*: neighborhood-related commercial uses which preserve neighborhood residential character through building scale, building appearance, landscaping and signage;
9. *Planned Business*: high-quality indoor commercial, office and institutional land uses, with generous landscaping and limited signage;
10. *General Business*: indoor commercial, office, institutional, and controlled outdoor display land uses, with moderate landscaping and signage;
11. *Central Mixed Use*: pedestrian-orientated indoor commercial, office, institutional and residential uses with streetscaping and low-key signage typically associated with downtowns;
12. *Planned Industrial*: high-quality indoor manufacturing, assemble and storage uses with generous landscaping and limited signage;
13. *General Industrial*: indoor industrial land uses and controlled outdoor storage areas, with moderate landscaping and signage;
14. *Institutional*: large-scale public buildings, hospitals, and special-care facilities. Small institutional uses may be located in other land use categories;
15. *Active Recreation*: open space facilities generally devoted to playgrounds, play fields, play courts and related recreation activities, whether public or private;
16. *Passive Recreation*: open space facilities generally devoted to trails, picnic areas, natural areas, and related recreation activities;
17. *Environmental Corridor*: officially designated wetlands and 100-year and 500-year floodplains
18. *Cemetery*
19. *Extraction*: quarries, gravel pits, clay extraction, peat extraction and related land uses;

20. *Surface Water*: lakes, rivers, and perennial streams;
21. *Road rights-of-way*: publicly-owned land for transportation uses, including roads, highways, and railroads.

b. Existing Land Use Pattern

(1). Residential Development

The majority of residential development, in fact the majority of all development, in the Village of Rockton is *Single-Family Residential*. Areas of single-family development include the older neighborhoods surrounding the downtown, and newer neighborhoods to the east along Rockton Road and Hononegah Road and south of the Rock River. Limited *Two-Family Residential* development is located in the historic core of the community, particularly along Blackhawk Blvd (Highway 75). Other small concentrations of *Two-Family Residential* development are located at the south edge of the Village.



View of historic neighborhoods from east

Limited *Mixed Residential* development is located within the Village, typically focused along major transportation routes, such as along Blackhawk Blvd.

Areas of *Rural Residential* development are located within the Planning Area outside of the current Village limits. Locations of such development include areas south of the Rock River along Old River Road and Freeport Road and northwest of the Village along Rockton Road and South Bluff Road.

(2). Commercial/Office Development

The historic core of the community along Blackhawk Blvd. and Main Street is the primarily location of retail, service, and office development in the Village. There are smaller pockets of newer commercial development along North Blackhawk Blvd between Warren Street and Highway 2. The abandoned Wagon Wheel property, located at the southeast corner of Freeport and Wagon Wheel Roads, is coded as *Agriculture/Rural/Vacant* on Map 3.

Map 3: Existing Land Use

(3). *Industrial Development*

Older industrial development within and near Rockton is focused near the Rock River, including the former Beloit Corporation property just north of the Village limits and property in the downtown area. There are relatively few areas of new industrial development, with the notable exception of the Woodward campus at the Highway 2/Rockton Road intersection. Areas north (in South Beloit) and east (across Highway 251) of the Village limits are also developed with newer industrial uses.



View of former Beloit Corp. property from north

(4). *Active and Passive Recreational Areas*

There are large forest preserves on the west side of the Village (Macktown Forest Preserve) and near the southeast edge of the Village (Hononegah Forest Preserve). The 700+ acre Nygren Wetlands are also located west of the Village in the Pecatonica River Valley. The forest preserves and Nygren Wetlands are coded as *Passive Recreation* uses on Map 3. There is an 18-hole golf course in the Macktown Forest Preserve. The Village also has a few smaller parks and one private 9-hole golf course, which are coded as *Active Recreation* uses.

(5). *Other Existing Development*

Most *Institutional* development in the Village is focused in the downtown, including the Village Hall, Post Office, Library, and other community facilities. Schools, churches, and institutional living facilities are located in neighborhoods throughout the community.

A number of extraction sites are located within or just outside the Village's Planning Area. The one quarry within the Village's Planning Area is located south of the Village west of Highway 2, with access from Wagon Wheel Road. Another quarry is located northeast of the Village, south of Prairie Hill Road between Dorr Road and Highway 251. A third quarry is located southeast of the Village in the Village of Roscoe, southwest of the intersection of Highway 251 and McCurry Road.

c. *Pre-annexation Agreements*

The Village has entered into a number of "pre-annexation agreements" with property owners owning land within the County (i.e., outside of the Village limits). These agreements generally specify that, if such properties are to be annexed to an incorporated community, that community would be the Village of Rockton.

Some of the properties on which pre-annexation agreements currently exist are outside of the Village's 1½ mile planning jurisdiction. Therefore, official Village recommendations for future use may not be made for such properties within this Comprehensive Plan. Except as indicated below, these properties are in agricultural production or open space. The following is a general list of properties for which the property owner and the Village have executed a pre-annexation agreement as of August 1, 2000:

- A parcel between Yale Bridge, Prairie, and South Bluff Roads northwest of the Village.
- A 160 acre parcel at the northeast corner of Rockton Avenue and Roscoe Road, southwest of the Village.

- A property at the southeast corner of Roscoe Road and Owen Center Road, about two miles southwest of the Village.
- A very large ownership(s) (over one square mile) west of Main Street and both north and south of Latham Street in the Town of Owen, starting about four miles south of the Village.
- Roughly 280 acres on Steward Road in the Town of Owen, about four miles southwest of the Village.
- Several small properties which include homesteads on Steward, Owen Center, and Halley Roads in the Town of Owen.
- Several small residential properties in a subdivision to the southwest of Owen Center Road and Elmwood Road, nearly seven miles south of the Village.
- A few small residential properties near the intersection of Highway 70 and Tate Road, near the City of Rockford.
- A large holding northeast of the intersection of Highway 70 and Meridian Road, approximately seven miles southwest of the Village.

2. Existing Transportation System

Access is a key determinant of growth because it facilitates the flow of goods and people into and around the community. The Village of Rockton is connected to the region through different transportation modes, summarized below.

a. Roadways

Rockton is approximately 1½ miles west of Interstate 90. Access to Rockton via Interstate 90 is via the Rockton Road interchange east of the Village, and the Highway 2/75 interchange northeast of the Village.

Three state or federal highways run through or near the Village, including:

- STH 75, which extends from west of the Village, through the downtown, and northeast to Interstate 90. According to the Illinois Department of Transportation, traffic volumes on STH 75 just south of Main Street have increased from 6,800 cars per day in 1990 to 7,700 cars per day in 1999 (13% increase). Peak hour traffic congestion is especially apparent at STH 75's intersection with Main Street.
- STH 2, which runs north-south through the east side of the Village. From the Village's south end, STH 2 is a limited access, four lane divided facility. Within the planning area, access is available at Wagon Wheel Road, Rockton Road/Union Street, and Blackhawk Blvd. (STH 75). Traffic volumes on STH 75 just south of the Rockton Road intersection have increased from 4,850 cars per day in 1990 to 5,900 cars per day in 1999 (22% increase).
- USH 251, which runs north-south along the east edge of the planning area. Access to this limited access highway is available via an interchange at Rockton Road.

The above highways run in a generally north-south direction through the area. The local road network carries the bulk of east-west traffic into and through the Village. This includes Hononegah Road/Main Street, Rockton Road/Union Street, and Prairie Hill Road, which function as major collector roads. These are mainly two-lane roads with a rural cross-section (i.e., no curb and gutter), except in the older parts of the Village. Particularly Rockton and Hononegah Roads experience traffic congestion during peak hours. Between 1990 and 1999, traffic on Rockton Road just east of Dorr Road increased from 3,650 to 6,300 vehicles per day (73% increase). Over that same period, traffic on Hononegah Road just west of Dorr Road increased from 5,900 to 9,600 vehicles per day (63% increase). Officials should generally consider expansion of roadways to four travel lanes when volumes reach about 13,000 vehicles per day.

Other north-south collector streets within and near the Village include Dorr Road on the Village's growing east side, Wagon Wheel Road on the southwest side, and (increasingly) Old River Road south of the Village.

The states of Illinois and Wisconsin have collaborated on the planning of a south bypass of Wisconsin State Highway 81, which currently runs east-west through central Beloit. If constructed, that bypass route is planned to follow the Prairie Road corridor north of the Village of Rockton. Construction of that bypass has yet to be programmed.

b. Airports

The nearest public use airports are the Greater Rockford Airport, located south of the City of Rockford, and the Rock County Regional Airport, located between Janesville and Beloit in Wisconsin. Each of these airports is roughly ½ hour from the Village. Larger air carrier and passenger facilities are located at Chicago's O'Hare Airport and Madison's Dane County Regional Airport, each located about 1¼ hour from Rockton.

c. Rail Service

Rockton's historic development was tied, in part, to the railroad. Today, the only active rail line is operated by the Canadian Pacific Rail Company, running south to Rockford and north to Janesville. Freight rail service is relatively light along this line. Rockton is not directly served by passenger rail service. Passenger rail service via Amtrak is available in Davis Junction, south of Rockford. Also, the Chicago Metra Commuter Rail System has a stop in Harvard, in McHenry County.

d. Public Transportation

Rockton is currently not served by public or quasi-public transportation. Quasi-public transportation includes shared ride taxi service, particularly for the elderly, which has proven beneficial in similar communities. There have been some recent discussions regarding the possibility for a limited regional bus transit system connecting the existing Rockford and Beloit public transit systems.

e. Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

Bicycle and pedestrian facilities are important for a small village like Rockton, where uses are often within walking distance of one another and schools are such an important part of the community. Bike and pedestrian facilities are also important for commuting and recreational use.

Central portions of the Village are generally served by sidewalks, although gaps in the network exist and maintenance is an issue in certain locations. For the most part, newer areas of the Village have not been provided with sidewalks. This greatly limits access for all but cars.

A 2.75 mile bike path currently runs along Hononegah Road. In 2000, that path was extended along the Rock River between the former end of the Hononegah path and Blackhawk Boulevard directly south of Downtown Rockton. The Village does not currently have any designated on-street bike routes.

According to national standards, bike routes may be designated along streets that provide a direct route to a useful destination, have traffic volumes less than 2,000 cars per day, and have speed limits of 30 MPH or less.

3. Existing Utility Systems

Public sanitary sewer and water services are available throughout the Village. The Rockton Sanitary Sewer District provides interceptor sanitary sewer service to the Village and some areas surrounding the Village. The Rock River Reclamation District provides sewer service to portions of the eastern parts of the Village. Installation and maintenance of smaller lines (less than eight inch diameter) are the responsibility of the Village government. The wastewater treatment plant reportedly has sufficient treatment capacity to meet demands into the near future.

Public water service is provided to different parts of Rockton by three separate water utility districts. The Rockton Water District provides service to all parts of the Village.

4. Existing Park & Recreation System

The Village is not currently covered by a park district. Village officials have recently discussed the formation of such a district. Existing village-owned park facilities are mainly smaller neighborhood parks, shown as *Recreation* areas on Map 3. The Village also operates the 2.2 acre Village Park near the center of the community (includes an outdoor pool); a boat launch on the Rock River, east of the Downtown area; and the 16+ acre woodlands park on the Village's south side.

The Winnebago County Forest Preserve District operates three forest preserves in the Rockton area (see Map 3), including:

- The 281 acre Macktown Forest Preserve, which includes archeological and historic sites, an 18-hole golf course, and a boat launch.
- The 127 acre Mill Race Isle Forest Preserve, a natural area located across the Pecatonica River from the Macktown Forest Preserve.
- The 228 acre Hononegah Forest Preserve, which includes a campground and bike path access.

Other recreational facilities and services are provided by or in association with schools in Rockton. These include athletic fields located near Hononegah High School and other playground and recreational space is provided at Rockton Grade School and the Stephen Mack Middle School/Whitman Post Elementary School Campus. Hononegah High School facilities, including an auditorium, are available to community groups on a rental basis. The Talcott Free Library also provides children's programming.

5. Existing Community Facilities and Services

a. Administration and Public Safety

Rockton's Village Hall is located on West Main Street within Downtown Rockton. The Village Hall includes administrative offices, meeting space, and a Village Board Chambers. The Village provides police services within its corporate limits from its Downtown building. There has not been a recent evaluation of administrative or police space or staffing needs.

The Rockton Fire Protection District provides fire and emergency medical services an area about 65 square miles in area, including the Village and surrounding unincorporated lands. Fire Station #1, built in 1978, is located at 201 North Blackhawk Boulevard. In 1999, a storage building was built at this site. The District currently has four permanent employees, supplemented by volunteer firefighters. The District operates three fire engines and two ambulances. Space and staffing levels are generally sufficient to service the current population in the District.

b. Village Library

The Talcott Free Library operates out of a 10,000 square foot library building located in Downtown Rockton. The original section of the building was constructed in 1854, with three additions over the years. The library's service area includes the Village plus surrounding areas (service area of 12,275 persons). The library is currently staffed by a full-time librarian and eleven other employees. There has not been a recent evaluation of library space needs. Challenges include space and keeping pace with changing information technology.

c. Public Schools

Rapid population growth in the Rockton area during the 1990s placed increasing strains on the two school districts serving the area.

The Hononegah Community High School District operates a high school on approximately 42 acres at the corners of Union, Salem, Kocher and Main Streets. The High School District's service area includes Rockton, Roscoe, and surrounding unincorporated areas, particularly to the south and west of the Village of Rockton. School year 2000-2001 enrollment was 1,719 students, which is above the ideal capacity of 1,504 students using State Board of Education Standards. Enrollment is projected to grow to approximately 1,875 students by the 2004-05 school year.

The Hononegah High School District has proposed a package of additions and remodeling to the high school building to increase student capacity by 750 students. The project has received State grant approval. Construction could begin as soon as 2002, contingent on the states funding cycle.

The Rockton School District currently provides K-8 education to the Rockton area. It is one of four elementary school districts providing students to Hononegah High School District. Total year 2000-01 enrollment was 1,335 students. Current schools include the Rockton Grade School on a three acre site at the corner of Union and Salem Streets (390 students), the Whitman Post Elementary School at the along Rockton Road east of Highway 2 (435 students), and the Stephen Mack Middle School (510 students) at the same location.

These two schools share a 30-acre site.

By 2001, the Rockton School District will begin construction of a new 600-student middle school on a 30-acre site on Old River Road south of the current Village limits. Upon completion, students from the Stephen Mack Middle School will be relocated to this new school. Stephen Mack School will be remodeled and expanded as an elementary school, and Rockton Grade School students will be transferred to that school.



New middle school site in foreground (view from west)

E. EXISTING PLANNING FRAMEWORK

This section briefly describes existing plans, studies, and ordinances in and for the Village and surrounding areas that help guide development. These existing documents provided background information for the development of this Comprehensive Plan.

1. Village of Rockton, Illinois Comprehensive Plan (1971)

The Village's most recent Comprehensive Plan was adopted in August 1971 and has not been updated. The City-County Planning Commission prepared the Plan. This Plan is out of date and no longer serves a useful purpose as a policy document for the Village.

2. Village Zoning Ordinance (Last Update 1994)

This document serves as the primary mechanism for regulating land use and development in the Village, and ultimately to implement the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan.

3. Village Subdivision Ordinance (1974)

The Village adopted its current subdivision ordinance on January 15, 1974. These regulations have been amended a few times since adoption. These regulations govern the division of land within the Village and its extraterritorial jurisdiction.

4. Rockton Shared Vision Project Downtown Revitalization Forum (1997)

The Rockton Shared Vision Project (RSVP) is a group of citizens and merchants working together to revitalize Rockton through organized planning, volunteer work, and donations. The main goals of the project are to increase community involvement, make Rockton an even better place to live, and to enhance the business community.

An RSVP Forum was held in June of 1997 as part of a strategic planning process designed to empower and motivate citizens to develop a vision for the future and to work together toward achievable goals. A primary outgrowth of that forum was a decision to complete this Comprehensive Plan. Other frequently listed recommendations for building the Rockton community included:

- Create a coherent historic preservation plan and oversight group.
- Provide more activities and options for youth in the community.
- Organize regular community events, and designate space for outdoor events.
- Promote tourism through marketing, wayfinding signage, and provision of a hotel.
- Develop a marketing plan for economic development in the community, and recruit general retail businesses.

5. Year 2025 Land Use Plan; Winnebago County, Illinois

Winnebago County's Year 2025 Land Use Plan includes policy guidance and a land use plan map for the unincorporated areas of Winnebago County. The primary considerations of that plan are to:

- Preserve farmland, greenbelts, and rural open space. Protect prime agricultural soils from any type of development.
- Focus higher density development within "urban service areas" where sanitary sewer and public water services are available.
- Recognize plans of incorporated municipalities within their 1½-mile extraterritorial planning areas. These areas should contain a mix of urban uses planned by the municipality.

6. Boone and Winnebago Regional Greenways Plan (1997)

The Boone and Winnebago Regional Greenways Plan identifies and promotes the development of “greenways”—corridors of open land connecting existing parks and open spaces—in the region. This document reviews existing area plans; identifies key parks, open spaces, existing bicycle and walking paths, and other natural areas; promotes a vision of future greenways preservation; and outlines ways to implement the plan. Key recommendations affecting the Rockton area include:

- Develop a continuous greenway system along the Rock River.
- Improve the Macktown Historic District by moving golf holes adjacent to the historic district (in accordance with the Thomas Graceffa & Associates Master Plan) and providing restroom facilities.
- Acquire an active and passive park area on lands between Old River Road, Highway 2, and the Rock River near central Rockton.
- Develop multiuse trails along the existing Canadian Pacific rail line south of the Village, connecting to that park acquisition area.
- Develop a multiuse trail along the abandoned east-west rail line through the Village, connecting to the existing Hononegah and riverfront trails.

7. Soil Survey of Winnebago and Boone Counties, Illinois (1980)

The Soil Survey contains information useful for land planning in the County. It contains general information on soils and natural resources in the County, as well as more detailed information on soil types. It includes predictions of soil behavior for selected land uses and highlights limitations and hazards inherent in the soil, improvements needed to overcome the limitations, and the impact of selected land uses on the environment. The document also includes a Countywide General Soil Map and a detailed set of soil maps for the county overlaid on aerial photos. (U.S. Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service)

8. Geology for Planning in Boone and Winnebago Counties (1984)

This report provides comprehensive information on the geology, hydrogeology, and mineral resources for use in resource-based land use planning and development. The primary goals of this study were to help locate suitable landfill sites, prevent contamination from existing disposal sites, and cope with problems arising from large concentrations of individual septic tanks in rapidly growing communities. (Illinois Department of Energy & Natural Resources, State Geologic Survey Division)

9. Boundary Agreements with Other Municipalities

Illinois Statutes allow communities to enter into intergovernmental agreements with neighboring communities. Pursuant to these Statutes, the Village of Rockton and the City of South Beloit entered into an intergovernmental agreement fixing the boundaries for the purpose of future annexation between the two municipalities. The agreement was adopted by both communities in 1996, and recorded with Winnebago County in January 1997. The agreement will be in effect until December 31, 2016. The boundary line agreement has been reflected on all maps included within this Comprehensive Plan.

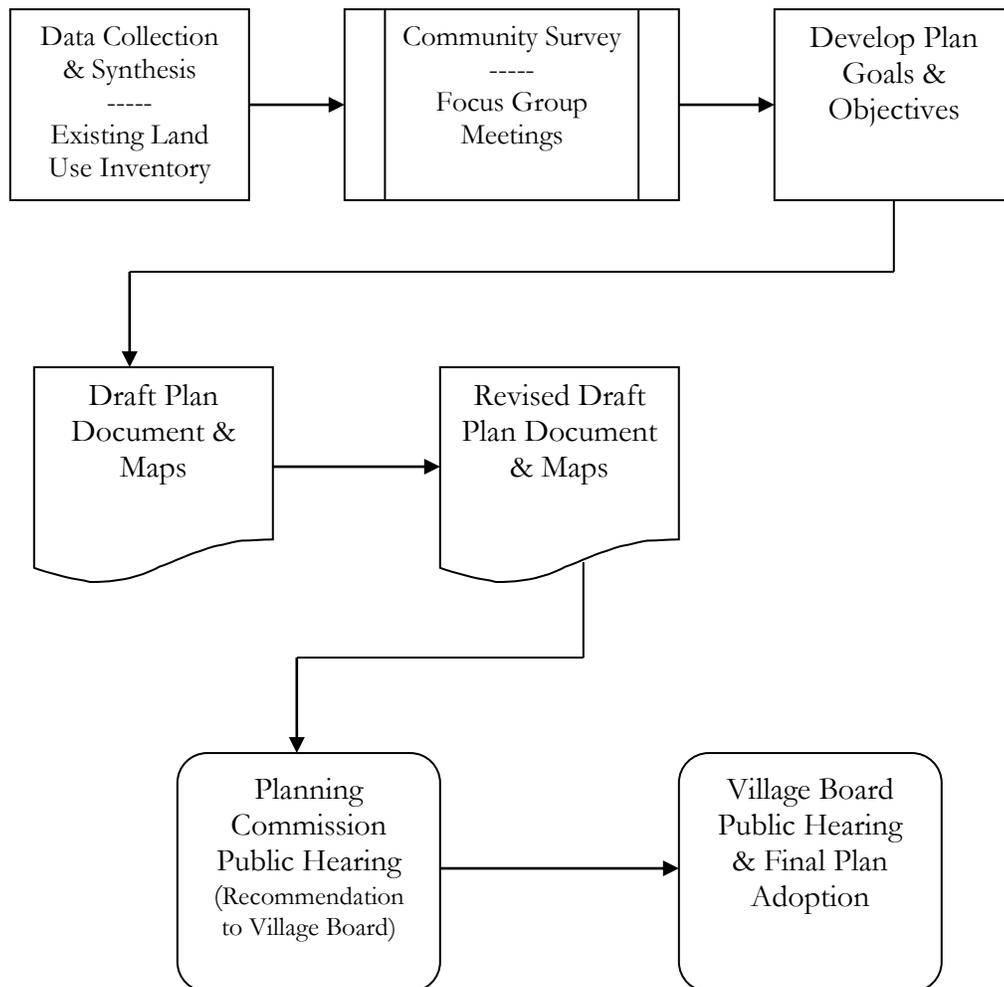
II. PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

A. PLANNING PROCESS

This Plan was developed through a one-year planning process. The Village of Rockton Comprehensive Plan Committee (CPC) was established to guide the development of the Comprehensive Plan and to coordinate with the planning consultant.

The planning process included a public participation element to ensure that the plan was based on the community’s vision for the future. A community survey was prepared to gather public opinion on a variety of issues related to the future of the community (a summary of survey results can be found in the following section). Three focus group sessions were held with local business interests, developers/ builders, and community organizations to get the unique perspective of each of these groups. Based on this input, a Draft Plan Document including maps was produced for review by the CPC, Village staff, and the public. Revisions to the Draft Plan were made based on their review and comment. Finally, public hearings were held at the Planning Commission and Village Board before final plan adoption. (See Figure 3 below.)

Figure 3: Comprehensive Planning Process



B. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The development of this plan included a public participation process. A summary of the results is included below:

1. Community Survey

To gather citizen perceptions of the Village of Rockton and its growth, a written citizen survey was sent to all Village households and business addresses (just under 3,400) in January 2000. The survey included questions to learn citizen perceptions on existing conditions in Rockton, and attitudes on how the Village should grow in the future. The Village received 812 completed surveys, representing just fewer than 25% of the surveys distributed. This is a good response rate for a written survey. Approximately 70% of respondents are residents of the Village. Unless noted otherwise, the results identified below are based on the responses of Village residents.

a. General Survey Results

In general, Rockton residents are quite satisfied with their community and optimistic about its future. Residents value and wish to retain Rockton's small town atmosphere. This can be emphasized through revitalization of the downtown areas, development of new parks and trails, maintenance of housing and neighborhoods, and special attention to the pace and quality of new development. Still, many want Rockton to be an economically diverse community, with a mixture of employment opportunities and community retail and services. Maintaining Rockton's small town character while providing more jobs and services will be a challenge for Rockton over the next 25 years.

b. Reason for Living in Rockton

Respondents were asked to rank the three most important reasons for choosing to live in the Rockton area. This question aids in understanding what residents value most about the community. Rockton's "small town atmosphere" was ranked highest with 66% of respondents listing this in their top three. The second most popular reason was "good schools" at 62%. "Low crime rate" (32%), "near job" (26%), "appearance of neighborhood" (24%), and "near relatives and friends" (23%) were also common responses. These responses suggest that Rockton is a community with a high quality of life focused around family, friends, and schools—all contributing to small town character.

c. Community Vision/Image

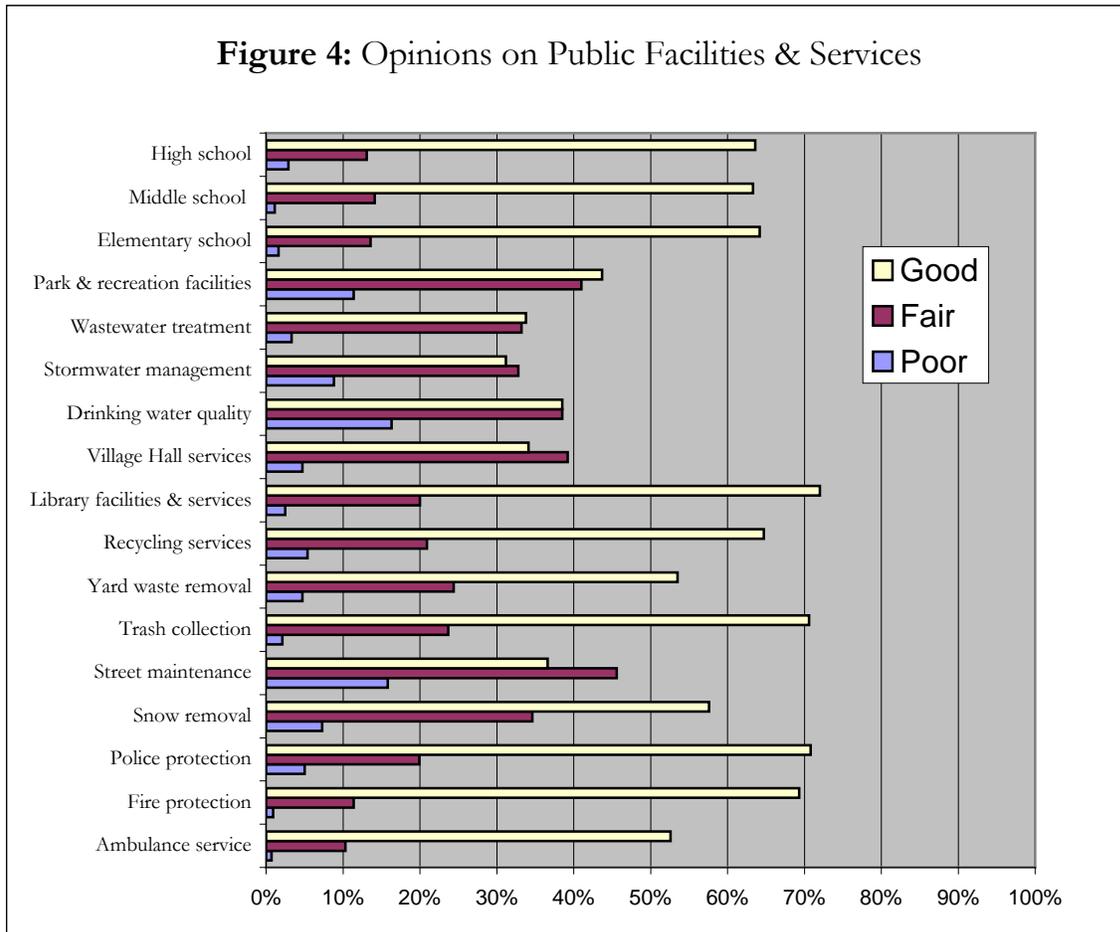
Questions were designed to get respondents' vision of Rockton in the future. Residents clearly want the community to remain small. A sizable number (30%) indicated that the ideal population of the Village was just right at about 5,000 people (the estimated population of the Village for 1997 was 4,236). A slight majority (52%) believes the ideal population to be between 5,000 and 7,500 people. Only 15% believe that Rockton should be between 7,500 and 10,000. Less than 3% thought the ideal population is over 10,000 for the year 2020. These responses suggest a low to moderate growth future for the Village.

When asked to select from five options their vision for the Village of Rockton, the most common response was: "a fairly diverse community with some shopping and job opportunities, but the emphasis should be on keeping the Village small." (82.6% chose this vision, 61% as first choice) Being a "full-service village..." was the second most common response (21% as first choice). Later questions on economic development help further explain respondents' attitudes on economic development.

When asked an open-ended question to identify a favorite place in the Village, respondents offered various suggestions. However, common responses included Main Street/downtown area, the park with the swimming pool, the library, and the riverfront. When asked to identify their least favorite place in the Village, common responses included the Wagon Wheel, Sonoco area (paper recycling plant), a number of drinking establishments, the pit area along Hononegah Road, and the riverfront.

d. Community Services and Facilities

Attitudes for community services and facilities were mainly positive. Figure 1 indicates the percentages of respondents who considered various services good, fair, or poor. Village residents were particularly satisfied with trash collection, fire protection, police protection, library services, and the schools. Street maintenance and water quality received comparatively low ratings.



Respondents were asked more specific questions regarding their attitudes on park and recreational facilities. 49% indicated a need for additional neighborhood parks, 46% indicated a need for additional passive recreational park space (including walking trails, wildlife areas, etc.), and 44% indicated a need for additional bicycle and pedestrian trails and routes. Approximately 10% of community residents felt that all park and recreational needs are being met.

e. Housing

The majority of respondents rated the overall appearance of residential neighborhoods in the Village as good (61%), while a smaller group felt that these areas were average (37%). Only 2% of respondents thought that the appearance of residential neighborhoods was poor.

When asked about their desired future mix of housing, respondents indicated a general desire to maintain Rockton’s primarily single-family residential character. Still, there was also interest in including other types of housing in that mix, particularly townhouses/condominiums and elderly housing. Provision of elderly housing will become more important as baby boomers reach retirement age. Respondents generally prefer “medium single-family houses” (58%). There is also interest in “large single-family houses” (34%), with less interest in “small single-family houses” (15%). Almost 20% of

respondents chose “none” for the type of new housing they would like to see in the community, reflecting the desire of many residents for the Village to remain small.

Respondents were asked where they would build a new home, if they were planning to build a new home in the area. One-third of respondents indicated that they would build in the Village, while 45% indicated that they would build in a rural area near the Village. 15% would choose a subdivision outside the Village, while 8% would build in another city or village.

When asked which direction they would like to see the Village grow, respondents favored growth to the south (44%). Growth to the west was the second choice (36%), with growth to the north and east getting less than 25%. Many residents saw no need for additional residential development (27%).

f. Economic Development

Residents were optimistic about Rockton’s economy. A vast majority of respondents considered the local economy either “healthy and growing” (24%) or stable (59%). These respondents reflect the current strength of the economy at all levels—characterized by low unemployment and stable prices. Earlier questions suggest that residents desire an economically diverse community.

Respondents were asked to rate various features in the downtown. The overall design and layout of the downtown, pedestrian access, and street signs all received very favorable ratings. The most significant negative ratings were attributed to the mix of businesses, the availability of parking, and parking layout.

When asked to indicate the types of new non-residential development respondents were interested in seeing, 54% indicated a desire for additional development and redevelopment in the downtown/riverfront area and 51% wanted to see additional neighborhood shopping and offices (such as convenience stores, bakeries, doctors offices). 42% want to see additional sit-down restaurants. There was less interest in additional large-scale shopping and fast food restaurants. There was only moderate support for industrial park, business park, hotel/motel, and mixed-use development. These responses reflect residents’ desires to maintain the small town character of the community, but still providing additional community-level services and jobs.

There was no clear consensus when respondents were asked specifically about the best future use for the Wagon Wheel property. About 25% believe that the best use would be a hotel/motel and another 25% chose a shopping center as the best use. About 18% wanted to see this area as park or open space and 12% thought single-family homes would be most appropriate. There was very little support for using this site for multi-family housing, industrial uses, offices, or institutional uses.

g. Transportation

About 60% of respondents believe that the Village has a safe and adequate system of sidewalks. When asked to identify areas of the Village most in need of sidewalks, the most common responses were “neighborhoods”, Hononegah Road, Blackhawk Blvd., Rockton Road, and Bridge Street.

A large majority (77%) of respondents believe that the Village has a safe and adequate street system. When asked to identify areas that need improvements, the most common responses were around the Rockton Grade School, the High School area, Hononegah Road, Union Street, and Blackhawk Blvd.

h. Growth & Development

When asked to rate efforts by the Village government to guide where new development occurs, almost 40% indicated that there is not enough planning and regulation of development, 25% believe that there is the right amount of planning and regulation, while 10% believe that there is too much.

A number of questions were asked regarding future directions for the Village. Below are some of the highlights from these questions:

- 88% believe that the Village should lead efforts to revitalize the downtown
- 87% believe that the Village should do more to protect and restore historic buildings and districts

- 87% believe that the Village should work with other area communities to provide joint services
- 72% believe that the Village should actively promote tourism (although only 50% believe that the Village should use tax dollars to promote tourism)
- 67% believe that the Village should actively promote industrial and business development (50% believe that the Village should use tax dollars to help develop an industrial park somewhere near the edge of town)
- 63% believe that traffic is a growing problem in the Rockton area
- 61% believe that the Village should plan for a second shopping area
- 60% believe that the Village should actively attempt to expand its boundaries
- 58% believe that housing affordability is a growing problem in the area

2. Focus Groups

The Village Comprehensive Plan Committee held three focus group meetings in Spring 2000. The focus groups allowed detailed discussions of specific issues related to development of this Plan. The three focus group concentrations were business/economic development, developers/builders/realtors, and community organizations. The main recommendations from each of the groups are summarized below:

a. *Business/Economic Development*

Primary recommendations included:

- Develop a strategy for the revitalization of Downtown Rockton that is focused on historic character, tourism, community activities, and hospitality uses.
- Better market Downtown Rockton through a stronger Chamber of Commerce, wayfinding signage (including on Interstate), marketing brochures, and events organization/community calendar.
- Plan for new commercial development area for uses that are not appropriate in the downtown.

b. *Developers/Builders/Realtors*

Primary recommendations included:

- The south side of Rockton (south of the Woodlands) provides the next available opportunity for substantial residential development.
- A mix of retail, office, residential, and lodging uses should be considered for the former Wagon Wheel property.
- Senior housing will be an increasingly strong market in the future.
- Existing regulations and administration of those regulations do not allow for higher density development, which discourages development in and near the Downtown.

c. *Community Organizations*

Primary recommendations included:

- Consider development of a community center to provide a community gathering spot and a place for activities for youths and the elderly, in particular.
- Provide a larger outdoor recreation facility including athletic fields.
- Acquire and preserve riverfront properties, and provide multiuse path connections in this area.
- Provide space for community events and music performances along the riverfront.
- Professionalize Village staff and provide training/educational opportunities for Village officials.

C. PLANNING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The Village of Rockton is preparing a new Comprehensive Plan to guide and accommodate growth in a manner that forwards the long-term objectives of the Village. When used in combination with development regulations, public investments, and intergovernmental planning efforts, comprehensive plans are very effective in achieving a future which best fulfills the desires of the community.

The development of a comprehensive policy framework is necessary to ensure that the small steps taken by the Village are complementary, rather than contradictory. This consistency of purpose and the actions to back it up are the key to achieving long-term community desires.

Within the Village, key planning issues revolve around the issue of how, when, and where new development is approved. This concern necessarily involves issues of the location, type, and quality of development; the provision of required public utilities, transportation, recreation facilities, and services; and decisions on annexation. Community consensus on these issues is essential to maintaining the highest possible quality of life at the lowest possible cost of living.

The following set of planning goals and objectives is designed to establish the comprehensive policy framework necessary to effectively respond to the key issues facing the Village as identified in the Comprehensive Planning process.

The development of goals and objectives is an important step in the planning process because these statements represent the basic values and needs of the community, in addition to serving as a strategic guide for plan realization. The following goals and objectives are based on a review of existing plans and ordinances, community survey results, meetings with community representatives, and basic planning principles. Together these goals and objectives (along with the policies in the following section) will help the Village Board, Planning Commission, the general public, and other interested groups and individuals guide the future growth and development of the Village. These goals, objectives, and policies should guide both the preparation and implementation of this Plan.

- *Goals* are broad statements that express general public preferences for the long-term development of the community over the next 20 years or more. They specifically address key issues affecting the community.
- *Objectives* are more specific than goals and are usually attainable through strategic planning and implementation activities.
- *Policies* are specific activities or regulations used to ensure plan implementation and to accomplish the goals and objectives of the plan. Because some policies address more than one goal or objective, and because some policies are specific to certain land uses, policies are included separately in the section immediately following the Goals and Objectives.

1. Land Use Goals and Objectives

GOAL 1.1: PROMOTE AN ECONOMICALLY EFFICIENT AND ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT PATTERN.

Objective 1.1.1 Utilize existing public facilities to serve development whenever possible.

Objective 1.1.2 Require all new development within the Village of Rockton's Facility Planning Area (FPA) to be served with a full range of municipal services, including sanitary sewer, storm sewer, municipal water, and urban police, fire, and garbage collection service.

Objective 1.1.3 Encourage redevelopment and infill development in areas already served by public services and facilities.

Objective 1.1.4 Maintain most lands outside the Facility Planning Area in agriculture, open space, and agricultural related development.

- Objective 1.1.5 Coordinate land development with transportation system improvements.
- Objective 1.1.6 Minimize the development of prime agricultural lands and sensitive natural areas.
- Objective 1.1.7 Require new development to be consistent with this Comprehensive Plan and more detailed development plans. Strongly discourage piecemeal, unplanned development.
- Objective 1.1.8 Separate or buffer incompatible land uses from each other.
- Objective 1.1.9 Require development to “pay its own way” for the facility and service demands it generates.
- Objective 1.1.10 Consider the impact on the school system when reviewing development proposals.

GOAL 1.2: PRESERVE AND ENHANCE THE “SMALL TOWN” CHARACTER OF THE VILLAGE.

- Objective 1.2.1 Protect historic resources that contribute to Rockton’s character.
- Objective 1.2.2 Encourage rehabilitation, redevelopment, and infill development of older areas of the Village in a manner that respects Rockton’s character, is compatible with surrounding uses, and improves appearance.
- Objective 1.2.3 Require design and phasing of new neighborhoods and developments in a manner that respects and reflects Rockton’s character.
- Objective 1.2.4 Establish appearance and landscaping standards for new development.
- Objective 1.2.5 Preserve and reestablish attractive entryways into the Village and passageways through the community, such as State Highways 2 and 75, Hononegah Road, and Rockton Road.
- Objective 1.2.6 Support community events and programs which celebrate the community of Rockton, in collaboration with the School District, Chamber of Commerce, and other groups.
- Objective 1.2.7 Carefully analyze the community and social impact of any large-scale development proposal.

GOAL 1.3: STRENGTHEN AND DIVERSIFY THE JOB BASE, TAX BASE, AND RETAIL OPPORTUNITIES.

- Objective 1.3.1 Maintain a sufficient supply of developable land for industrial and commercial land uses, and provide necessary municipal services to these areas.
- Objective 1.3.2 Actively participate in the development of an industrial park.
- Objective 1.3.3 Preserve and enhance the historic downtown business district, and encourage stores, services, and products that promote tourism.
- Objective 1.3.4 Provide for planned commercial development and discourage unplanned, incremental strip commercial development along major community entryways.

GOAL 1.4: PROVIDE SAFE, AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND ATTRACTIVE NEIGHBORHOODS FOR ALL ROCKTON RESIDENTS.

- Objective 1.4.1 Design new neighborhoods that are pedestrian-oriented (e.g., served by sidewalks and bike routes) and located within walking distance of civic spaces such as schools, parks, and churches.
- Objective 1.4.2 Encourage the maintenance and rehabilitation of older homes and neighborhoods.
- Objective 1.4.3 Design neighborhoods that provide a range of housing types, densities, and costs, but which maintain the predominantly single-family character of the community.
- Objective 1.4.4 Avoid the concentration of higher density, rental housing in any one part of the community.
- Objective 1.4.5 Encourage small-scale neighborhood retail and service uses to locate close to residential neighborhoods.
- Objective 1.4.6 Separate and buffer mainly residential neighborhoods from higher intensity commercial and industrial areas.

2. Transportation Goals and Objectives**GOAL 2.1: COORDINATE TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AND IMPROVEMENTS WITH LAND USE DECISIONS.**

- Objective 2.1.1 Ensure that transportation system improvements support the land use recommendations of this plan.
- Objective 2.1.2 Provide safe and convenient access to connect neighborhoods, employment centers, schools, commercial centers, and recreational areas.
- Objective 2.1.3 Reserve and protect areas for future roadways, expanded rights-of-way, or other transportation improvements.
- Objective 2.1.4 Divert heavy traffic around existing and proposed residential areas and, to the extent possible, the downtown.
- Objective 2.1.5 Encourage a land use pattern that minimizes reliance on the automobile.

GOAL 2.2: PROVIDE A SAFE AND EFFICIENT TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM THAT MEETS THE NEEDS OF PEDESTRIANS, BICYCLISTS, MOTORISTS, TRUCKS, AND TRAINS.

- Objective 2.2.1 Improve key intersections to reduce accidents and increase pedestrian safety.
- Objective 2.2.2 Limit access points on arterial roadways, like state and county highways.
- Objective 2.2.3 Support development of public transit or paratransit options, particularly for residents with limited mobility.
- Objective 2.2.4 Support commuter and freight rail service to Rockton.

GOAL 2.3: DEVELOP AND MAINTAIN A COMPREHENSIVE SYSTEM OF BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES.

- Objective 2.3.1 Plan and implement a connected sidewalk system in all new areas of the Village and older areas which are important pedestrian routes.
- Objective 2.3.2 Plan and implement on-street and off-road bicycle route systems that connect to the regional system.
- Objective 2.3.3 Ensure that schools, parks, playgrounds, and facilities for elderly residents are well served by sidewalks.
- Objective 2.3.4 Require pedestrian and bicycle access to be considered during development reviews.
- Objective 2.3.5 Ensure that pedestrian crossings at intersections maximize safety.

3. Utility System Goals and Objectives

GOAL 3.1: PROVIDE A COST-EFFECTIVE SYSTEM OF PUBLIC UTILITIES.

- Objective 3.1.1 Maximize the use of existing utility systems before extending systems.
- Objective 3.1.2 Plan for the orderly, sequential extension of municipal utilities.
- Objective 3.1.3 Consider the impact on the utility system when reviewing development proposals and ensure that the utility system has adequate capacity to accommodate projected future growth.
- Objective 3.1.4 Support the upgrading of the cable, telephone, and fiber optic systems.

GOAL 3.2: COORDINATE UTILITY SYSTEMS PLANNING WITH LAND USE AND TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AND NATURAL RESOURCES PROTECTION.

- Objective 3.2.1 Require all urban development (e.g., utilizing municipal sewer and water) to locate within the Village of Rockton corporate limits.
- Objective 3.2.2 Prevent low density, unsewered development within the Village's Facility Planning Area.
- Objective 3.2.3 Avoid urban development in areas that cannot be easily or economically served with municipal utilities.

4. Natural and Community Resources

GOAL 4.1: PROTECT NATURAL RESOURCE FEATURES IN THE ROCKTON AREA.

- Objective 4.1.1 Preserve environmental corridors and associated waterways, floodplains, wetlands, ground water recharge areas, steep slopes, wildlife habitat, scenic vistas, and woodlands.

- Objective 4.1.2 Use zoning, subdivision, and official mapping powers to protect environmentally sensitive areas.
- Objective 4.1.3 Encourage the clean-up of contaminated sites and locate potentially polluting industries away from sensitive environmental areas and water supply.
- Objective 4.1.4 Protect productive agricultural lands from land consumptive rural development and premature urban development.

GOAL 4.2: PROVIDE QUALITY, ACCESSIBLE PARKS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE FACILITIES AND SERVICES.

- Objective 4.2.1 Prepare a *Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan* for the Village, and coordinate with the implementation of the *Winnebago County Park and Outdoor Recreation Plan* and the *Boone and Winnebago Regional Greenways Plan*.
- Objective 4.2.2 Ensure that all residents of the Village, of all ages and abilities, have adequate access to a diverse range of park and recreational facilities.
- Objective 4.2.3 Through official mapping and other means, preserve attractive areas for eventual park or recreational purposes.
- Objective 4.2.4 Provide parks within walking distance of all neighborhoods.
- Objective 4.2.5 Coordinate with the School District, the City of South Beloit, the Village of Roscoe, and Winnebago County on the joint provision of recreational facilities and services to Rockton residents, where feasible and appropriate.
- Objective 4.2.6 Encourage expansion of Winnebago County parks and recreational facilities in the Rockton area.
- Objective 4.2.7 Establish a Village Park Board to oversee park and recreation facility and service provision in the Village.

5. Intergovernmental Relations

GOAL 5.1: ESTABLISH MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS WITH SURROUNDING JURISDICTIONS.

- Objective 5.1.1 Encourage collaboration among the Village of Rockton, the City of South Beloit, the Village of Roscoe, Winnebago County, area school districts, and other jurisdictions with regard to planning initiatives and development policies.

D. POLICIES

Policies are rules or courses of action used to ensure plan implementation and to accomplish the goals and objectives of the plan. The following policies guide the specific plan recommendations in Part Three. For example, the Village should use these policies on a day-by-day basis as it:

- Considers proposals to rezone property, review site plans, or issue conditional use permits.
- Revises development-related ordinances like the zoning ordinance, subdivision ordinance, and official map.
- Develops capital improvement plans.
- Communicates with private developers so that they know what the Village expects in terms of the location, timing, and quality of development.

1. Land Use Policies: Fringe Area Development and Annexation

- 1.1 Require through intergovernmental cooperation, annexation, and subdivision review that all non-agricultural development within Rockton's Facility Planning Area be served with the full array of municipal services, including sewer and water.
- 1.2 Strongly discourage unsewered development within Rockton's extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ), and do not allow unsewered development within Rockton's Facility Planning Area.
- 1.3 Extend Village-provided public utilities only to areas within the Village's corporate limits.
- 1.4 Encourage cooperative planning with neighboring communities and Winnebago County to ensure that development is guided to appropriate areas.
- 1.5 Require that all fringe area development meet all Village public improvement standards, including those included within the Village's subdivision regulations, to the extent allowed by law.

2. Land Use Policies: Detailed Development Planning

- 2.1 In new development areas, encourage use of traditional neighborhood design concepts to contribute to small town community character. Traditional neighborhoods typically include a range of housing types; parks, plazas and public squares; civic buildings and civic art; bicycle and pedestrian paths/walkways; institutional uses (churches, schools) which serve as neighborhood focal points; and neighborhood scale commercial, service, and office uses.
- 2.2 Require that, subdivision plats and new neighborhoods comply with the Village's historic housing mix. The desired mix of residential uses should be mostly single-family, generally with not more than 30 percent of dwelling units being duplex units and multiple family units.
- 2.3 Use the site plan review process to encourage compatible land uses; protect community character; and achieve high quality design, signage and landscaping.
- 2.4 Protect the visual quality of major community thoroughfares and entryways by establishing and enforcing specific design standards for these areas.
- 2.5 Encourage redevelopment and open space provision within key areas of the community including Downtown Rockton, riverfront properties in the downtown area, the Beloit Corporation area, and the former Wagon Wheel property.

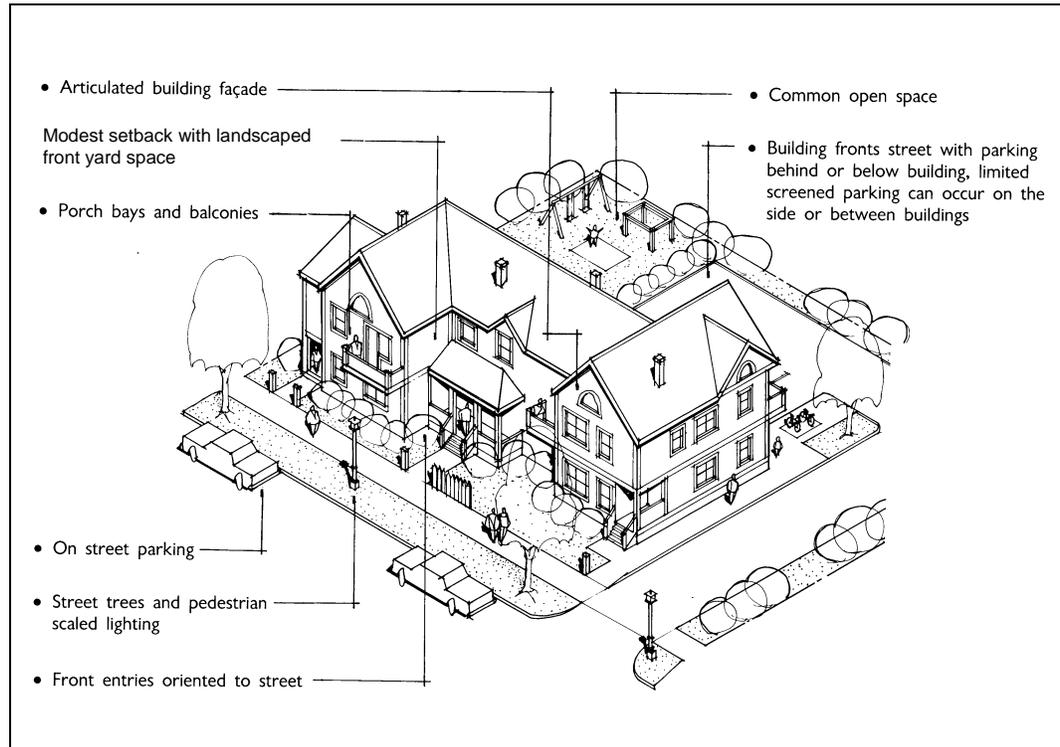
3. Land Use Policies: Residential Development

- 3.1 Encourage a full range of high quality housing types in Rockton (e.g. single family, duplex, multi-family, and elderly) for various age and income groups.
- 3.2 Improve existing housing within older neighborhoods through rehabilitation, maintenance, and promotion of home ownership.
- 3.3 Strengthen existing neighborhoods through maintenance of the existing housing stock, creative reuse of vacant or under-utilized buildings, infill development on vacant parcels, and maintenance and improvement of parks and infrastructure.
- 3.4 Require all proposed residential developments to dedicate land, or pay a fee in lieu thereof, for public park, recreation, and open space acquisition and development.
- 3.5 Conduct an analysis of appropriate impact fees to charge against residential development for the following community facilities: schools, fire, police, library, stormwater management, and roads. Require all proposed residential developments to pay impact fees to cover the costs of providing additional facilities generated by new residential development.
- 3.6 Require the planting of street trees in all new residential developments.
- 3.7 Avoid creating large pockets of higher-density rental housing in any one neighborhood.
- 3.8 Plan for multiple-family developments in parts of the community where streets and sidewalks can handle the increased amount of traffic; there are adequate parks, open spaces, and civic facilities nearby; and the utility system and schools in the area have sufficient capacity.
- 3.9 Enact the following design guidelines for all multiple family residential projects (see also Figure 5), and enforce them during site plan review, conditional use, and planned unit development processes:
 - Incorporate architectural design that fits the context of the surrounding neighborhood, and Rockton's overall character. Encourage layouts where buildings appear as a grouping of smaller residences. Within and near the downtown, promote building materials, designs, scale, and setbacks that are compatible with the surrounding historic character.
 - Use brick and other natural materials on building facades. Avoid monotonous facades and box-like buildings. Incorporate balconies, porches, garden walls, varied building and facade setbacks, varied roof designs, and bay windows.
 - Orient buildings to the street with modest front yard setbacks, bringing street-oriented entries close to public sidewalks to increase pedestrian activity. Include private sidewalk connections.
 - Locate parking, dumpsters, and other unattractive uses behind buildings.
 - For parking lots and garages, (a) locate garage doors and parking lots so they are not the dominant visual element; (b) screen parking areas from public view; (c) break up large parking lots with landscaped islands and similar features; (d) provide direct links to building entrances by pedestrian walkways physically separated from vehicular movement areas; (e) large parking garages are undesirable, but where necessary, break up facades with foundation landscaping, varied facade setbacks, and recessed garage doors.
 - Provide generous landscaping of sufficient size at time of planting. Emphasize landscaping (a) along all public and private street frontages; (b) along the perimeter of all paved areas and in islands in larger parking lots; (c) along all building foundations; (d) along yards separating land uses which differ in intensity, density or character; (e) around all outdoor storage areas such as

trash receptacles and recycling bins (also include screening walls in these areas); (f) around all utility structures or mechanical structures visible from public streets or less intensive land uses.

- Provide on-site recreational and open space areas to serve the needs of residents. Whenever possible, develop contiguous rear yards as a unit to encourage use by building residents and guests.

Figure 5: Desired Multiple Family Residential Project Layout

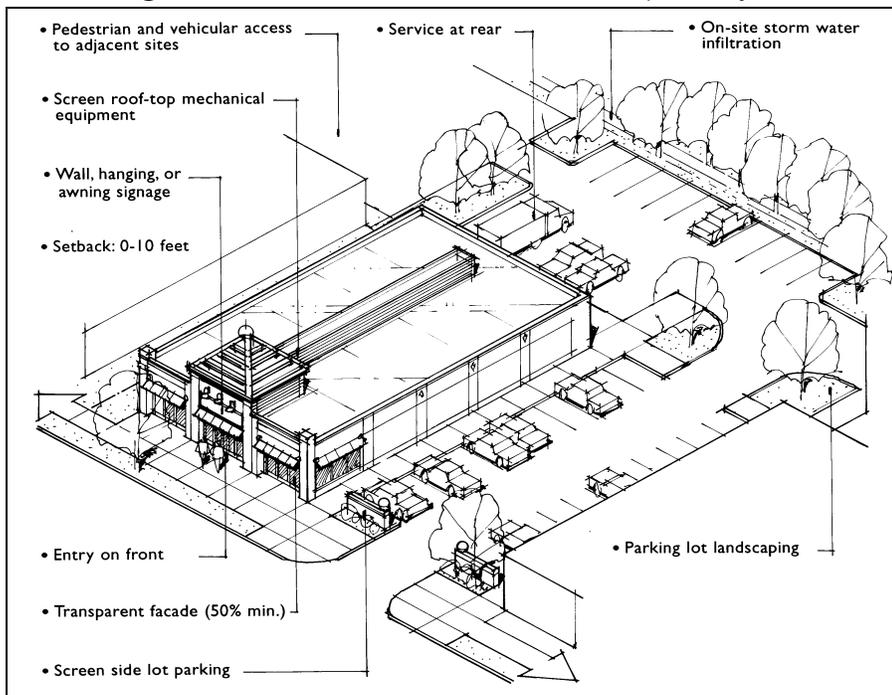


4. Land Use Policies: Commercial Development

- 4.1 Support proposals that provide a range of commercial development opportunities, while considering the importance of preserving Rockton's small village character and the Downtown.
- 4.2 Require or encourage the following design features in new or expanded commercial uses (see also Figure 6):
 - New driveways with adequate throat depths to allow for proper vehicle stacking.
 - Limited number of access drives along arterial and collector streets.
 - Common driveways serving more than one commercial use, wherever possible.
 - High quality landscaping treatment of bufferyards, street frontages, paved areas and building foundations.
 - Street trees along all public street frontages.
 - Intensive activity areas such as building entrances, service and loading areas, parking lots, and trash receptacle storage areas oriented away from less intensive land uses.
 - Parking lots heavily landscaped with perimeter landscaping and/or landscaped islands, along with screening to block views from streets and residential uses.
 - Parking to the sides and rear of buildings, rather than having all parking in the front.
 - Signage that is high quality and not excessive in height or total square footage.

- Location of loading docks, dumpsters, mechanical equipment, and outdoor storage areas behind buildings and away from less intensive land uses.
- Complete screening of loading docks, dumpsters, mechanical equipment, and outdoor storage areas through use of landscaping, walls, and architectural features.
- Safe, convenient, and separated pedestrian and bicycle access to the site from the parking areas to the buildings, and to adjacent commercial developments.
- Site design features that allow pedestrians to walk parallel to moving cars.
- Illumination from lighting kept on site through use of cut-off luminaires.
- High quality building materials, such as brick, wood, stone, and tinted masonry.
- Low reflectant, solid earthtone, and neutral building colors.
- Canopies, awnings, trellises, bays, and windows to add visual interest to facades.
- Variations in building height and roof lines, including parapets, multi-planed, and pitched roofs and staggered building facades (variations in wall depth and/or direction).
- All building façades of similar quality as the front building façade.
- Architectural details on the building façade.
- Central features that add to community character, such as patios and benches.

Figure 6: Desired New Commercial Project Layout



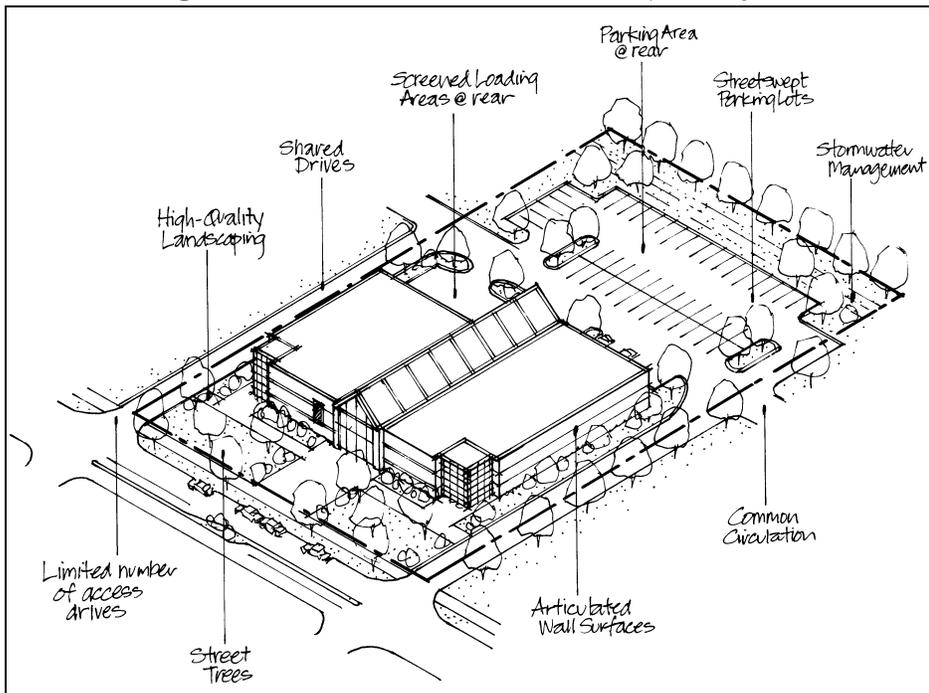
- 4.3 Avoid speculative commercial rezonings on the fringes of the community in order to prevent unplanned, uneconomical, and unattractive strip commercial areas.
- 4.4 Strongly encourage shared driveways, shared parking spaces, and coordinated site plan designs to avoid the creation of new commercial strips.
- 4.5 Use the zoning process to limit hours of operation for certain types of land uses that have the potential for significant negative impacts on neighboring land uses.

- 4.6 Consider the impact of proposed commercial rezonings on the economic viability of existing commercial areas in the community before making a decision on the request.
- 4.7 Preserve and enhance the historic downtown within Rockton by:
- Promoting the expansion, retention, and upgrading of specialty retail, restaurants, financial services, offices, neighborhood retail and services, and community uses.
 - Considering investment and incentive strategies to encourage additional business development.
 - Establishing incentives, such as a Façade Improvement Fund, to support property and business owners to renovate, rehabilitate, and improve facades and landscaping.
 - Capitalizing on tourism activity by attracting new businesses that serve tourists and complement existing downtown businesses.
 - Directing tourists to the downtown business district through a cooperative effort by the Chamber of Commerce, Village government, and other civic organizations and regional tourism groups.
 - Establishing a comprehensive wayfinding signage system for the downtown.
 - Encouraging new residential development and redevelopment nearby to provide a “built-in” market for goods and services and to increase foot traffic.
 - Encouraging the establishment of consistent, regular business hours for downtown merchants, including evening and weekend hours and during events held downtown.
 - Maximizing the usage of downtown by attracting new businesses that complement existing downtown merchants.
 - Emphasizing the significant historic aspects of downtown in marketing campaigns.
 - Beautifying the downtown through additional landscaping and pedestrian furniture.
 - Providing adequate, accessible parking in and near the downtown.
 - Supporting the establishment of commuter rail to Rockton, with a stop close to downtown.

5. Land Use Policies: Industrial Development

- 5.1 Require or encourage the following design elements in new industrial developments (see also Figure 7):
- New driveways with adequate throat depths to allow for proper vehicle stacking.
 - Limited number of access drives along arterial and collector streets.
 - High quality landscaping treatment of bufferyards, street frontages, paved areas and building foundations.
 - Screening where industrial uses abut non-industrial uses, in the form of hedges, evergreen trees, berms, decorative fences or a combination.
 - Screening of parking lots from public rights-of-way and non-industrial uses.
 - Complete screening of all loading areas, outdoor storage areas, mechanical equipment, and dumpsters using berms, hedges, or decorative walls or fences.
 - Street trees along all public road frontages.
 - Location of loading areas at the rear of buildings.
 - Separation of pedestrian walkways from vehicular traffic and loading areas.
 - Design of parking and circulation areas so that vehicles are able to move from one area of the site to another without re-entering a street.
 - Variable building setbacks and vegetation in strategic locations along foundations.

Figure 7: Desired New Industrial Project Layout



- 5.2 Work in concert with private economic development interests to prepare and implement an economic development action plan for Rockton.
- 5.3 Maintain an adequate supply of industrial land in planned locations of the community, appropriately pre-zoned with public facilities available.
- 5.4 Provide appropriate incentives to encourage industrial development in planned areas of the Village, including tax increment financing.
- 5.5 Provide adequate infrastructure in and around industrial parks, including sufficient sewer and water capacity, and streets of sufficient width with curb and gutter.
- 5.6 Promote better coordination between Village government, private utilities, and economic development interests to encourage economic development and resolve service conflicts.
- 5.7 Avoid locating or expanding industrial uses close to existing and planned residential areas, other incompatible development and sensitive environmental resources.

6. Land Use Policies: Institutional Development

- 6.1 Use the following standards when the Village reviews institutional development projects:
 - The use shall not have a negative effect on existing traffic flows and volumes in the surrounding neighborhood.
 - The existing street system must be adequate to meet increased traffic demands.
 - Nearby residential uses shall be adequately buffered from the institutional use via the use of decorative fencing, vegetative screening, berms or similar features.

- Institutional uses should not generate on-street parking in neighborhoods.
 - The use should have high-quality site design, building design, landscaping, lighting and signage.
- 6.2 Assure that site acquisition, expansion, and new construction of institutional uses complies with all provisions of this Comprehensive Plan.
- 6.3 Locate institutional uses in areas that serve as focal points for the community and, where appropriate, support downtown activity levels and redevelopment.

7. Transportation Policies

- 7.1 Adopt an official map to reserve right-of-way for future arterial and collector streets, pedestrian and bicycle paths, and other transportation-related features, both within the Village limits and within the Village's extraterritorial jurisdiction.
- 7.2 Incorporate new street right-of-way and pavement widths within the Village's official map and subdivision regulations. The Village should consider the following minimum standards for different types of streets, which may vary with addition or removal of bike or parking lanes:
- 80 to 100 foot wide right-of-way and variable pavement width for arterial streets.
 - 70 to 80 foot wide right-of-way and 38 foot pavement width (curb-face to curb-face) for collector streets.
 - 60 foot wide right-of-way and 32 foot pavement width (curb-face to curb-face) for local streets.
 - 60 foot right-of-way radius and 40 foot outside curb radius for cul-de-sac bulbs.
- 7.3 Before approving any subdivision, site plan, conditional use, or planned development, assure that the proposed development is consistent with the official map and subdivision regulations.
- 7.4 Establish bicycle routes throughout the Village to connect neighborhoods with schools, parks, and shopping. These routes should be identified with appropriate signs, and connected to a regional bikeway system.
- 7.5 Require all new development projects to accommodate the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, and the physically challenged through use of sidewalks, paths, and other pedestrian amenities.
- 7.6 Provide for sidewalks on the following types of streets:
- Both sides of all arterial and collector streets.
 - Both sides of key routes to schools, parks, and other key community facilities.
 - At least one side of all other local streets.
- 7.7 Require traffic impact studies for certain developments that have the potential to create on- or off-site traffic problems.
- 7.8 Limit the number of direct driveway access points on arterial streets and space them accordingly to maintain traffic flow and improve safety.
- 7.9 Require new subdivisions to provide more than one vehicular access point.
- 7.10 Discourage creation of cul-de-sacs except in limited situations, such as where topography or the pre-existing development pattern in the area necessitates their use.
- 7.11 Work with the Illinois Department of Transportation to address both short- and long-term traffic issues on State Highways 2 and 75.
- 7.12 Establish comprehensive community-wide wayfinding signage system to better direct travelers to key destinations in the community.

- 7.13 Coordinate capital improvements with the recommendations presented in the Comprehensive Plan.

8. Utility and Community Facilities Policies

- 8.1 Guide urban growth to areas that can be efficiently served with sewer and water.
- 8.2 Promote infill development and redevelopment that uses existing utility systems and roads, and is close to schools and parks.
- 8.3 Do not extend Village-provided utilities outside the Village's corporate boundaries.
- 8.4 Adopt impact fees where appropriate to pay for public facilities and utilities, following the requirements of State Statutes.
- 8.5 Assure that site acquisition, expansion, and new construction of public facilities and utilities complies with all provisions of this Comprehensive Plan.
- 8.6 Do not allow development in drainageways and stormwater storage areas.
- 8.7 Follow the recommendations of the Village's utility studies when making utility decisions. Prepare and update these studies as appropriate.
- 8.8 Maintain good relationships with independent sewer and water utility districts serving Rockton to facilitate utility expansion to planned areas.

9. Natural and Community Resource Policies

- 9.1 Prepare a Park and Open Space Plan, and follow its recommendations when making park acquisition and development decisions.
- 9.2 Following Illinois Statutes, establish a park district to guide park acquisition and development.
- 9.3 Develop a bike and pedestrian trail system through the community that connects to the regional system.
- 9.4 Design all parks with multiple, wide access points from surrounding neighborhoods.
- 9.5 Coordinate acquisition of park and open space lands with urban growth and development to provide for reasonable acquisition costs and facilitate site planning.
- 9.6 Acquire neighborhood and sub-neighborhood parks in developing areas through park land dedication or fees-in-lieu of dedication.
- 9.7 Design park facilities to meet the needs of all residents of the Village, including the elderly, the disabled, and pre-school age children.
- 9.8 Protect environmental corridors and other key natural resources from development through the strategic use of the zoning ordinance, subdivision ordinance, and official map. Update these tools as necessary to effectively protect the environment.
- 9.9 Require all site plans and preliminary plats to depict all natural resources (e.g. wetlands, floodplains, steep slopes, drainageways, etc.) on the site.
- 9.10 Require new development projects to include construction site erosion control and on-going stormwater management facilities. Post-development stormwater run-off should not exceed pre-development conditions, and minimum stormwater quality standards should be met.
- 9.11 Support nomination of key historic buildings and districts in the community to the National Register of Historic Places.
- 9.12 Consider adopting design guidelines for the remodeling and renovation of historic commercial and residential structures.

10. Administration and Intergovernmental Cooperation Policies

- 10.1 Consult this Plan before making all community development decisions.
- 10.2 Implement the Plan through the Village's zoning ordinance, subdivision ordinance, property maintenance code, official map, and capital improvements program. Amend these tools as necessary to implement this Plan.
- 10.3 Update the Comprehensive Plan at least once every ten years. Do not amend the recommendations or maps in this plan more frequently than once every two years, except in the case of technical errors or significant changes in community conditions.
- 10.4 Adopt intergovernmental agreements and land use plans with adjacent communities to address land use issues of mutual concern, including future growth boundaries and impact fees. The goal of such agreements should be to assure that new development is of consistently high quality, pays its own way in terms of service and facility demands, and contributes to the character of the surrounding community.
- 10.5 In the absence of intergovernmental agreements and plans that specifically address development in the extraterritorial jurisdiction, exercise the Village's official map authority and subdivision review authority within the extraterritorial jurisdiction, and consider adoption of extraterritorial zoning in special situations.
- 10.6 Professionalize Village staff and provide training opportunities to Village officials to respond to the growing number and complexity of issues as the Village continues to grow.

III. PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

A. COMMUNITY CHARACTER PLAN

This section of the comprehensive plan is the overall framework for community growth, providing the basis for the more detailed Comprehensive Plan elements that will follow (e.g., land use, transportation). This section begins with a definition of “community character” planning, and a description of the key elements which together form community character. Based on these community character elements and an analysis of the specific strengths and opportunities for Rockton, a Community Opportunity Plan is then presented through a map and accompanying text description (see Map 4).

1. Overview of “Community Character” Planning

During the 1990s, the Village of Rockton experienced tremendous increases in population and development. This growth has been accommodated with a blend of development that has been both elegant and disruptive. This pattern of “good” and “bad” development has affected the overall “small town character” and quality of life in Rockton. This uneven track record has resulted from development standards and procedures that simply do not ensure that new development will reflect the desired *character* of the community. Specifically, critical aesthetic components of development (such as architecture, open space connections, or the preservation of community entry experiences) are often not addressed.

Many communities have begun to realize this shortcoming, and adopted standards and processes that attempt to achieve desired development character. Detailed site plan and building design review are two commonly used techniques that have yielded noticeable results. Required landscaping standards and tough signage limitations are other commonly used aesthetic techniques. In addition, many older communities are now making concerted efforts to guide re-investment into “worn-out” portions of communities and to preserve historic resources. This Plan recommends that the Village of Rockton pursue all of these techniques and approaches.

Still, these endeavors cannot ensure that a community will retain its identity, older neighborhoods will remain attractive to new residents, new neighborhoods will contribute to community character, or an aging commercial area will compete successfully with new edge-oriented projects. In recognition of these more complicated challenges, progressive planning practice has evolved into the realm of truly planning, protecting, enhancing, and creating the desired character of community development.

2. Elements of Community Character

For a community like Rockton, a variety of elements contribute to the creation of community character. These elements should be considered with all development proposals and government actions associated with implementation of this Plan. The Village has some measure of control of nearly all of these elements through zoning, subdivision, and building regulations and public investments. These community character elements also suggest many of the community opportunities presented in Map 4.

a. Geographic Context/Open Space

A key element defining Rockton’s character is its setting in its natural environment. Rockton is largely defined by its location at the confluence of the Rock and Pecatonica Rivers, its rolling topography and large blocks of remaining woodlands (particularly south of the Rock River), and the three large forest preserves in the area. Productive agricultural lands, interspersed with pockets of wetlands and woodlands, define the surrounding countryside (except to the east).

Planning and development within the community must ensure that the relation of new development to these defining geographical features is always considered. Other, more subtle, components such as drainageways and steep slopes evoke a strong “sense of place” for Rockton and create a distinct landscape for this region. These features should be protected, and yet made as visible and accessible as possible.

b. Urban Form

Historically, growth in Rockton occurred in a relatively compact form centered on the historic downtown. While undergoing some changes since its initial development, the downtown area retains many of the charms of historic downtowns of the mid 1800s. This character is reflected in both the commercial buildings along Main Street and numerous architecturally significant residential homes in the surrounding neighborhoods. These unique properties, along with the “living museum” promised through the Macktown Settlement project, provide local landmarks, and enhance the overall historic character of the community. The street pattern in the central part of the Village is an interconnected grid. New development and redevelopment in these areas must respect and reflect this character.

The development of large highways through the area in the 1950s through 1970s, particularly east of historic Rockton, promoted and responded to a different development form. The more recently established pattern on the fringes of the community is more auto-oriented and suburban in character. It includes larger lots, single story buildings, large parking lots, and less emphasis on pedestrian connectivity. Although the automobile will continue to be the dominant form of transportation for the foreseeable future, the Village should promote consideration for bicycle and pedestrian friendliness, better designed and interconnected neighborhoods, and a variety of housing opportunities.

c. Building Scale

Building scale is comprised of height (including number of stories), width, area, and density or intensity. Consistency of building scale on adjacent and nearby properties or zoning districts is extremely important in creating a harmonious development pattern.

With the exception of carefully designed and properly sited institutional uses, large differences in building scale on adjacent parcels are disruptive to an urban fabric. For example, proposed townhouses, multiple family residential buildings, or commercial and industrial structures which are inconsistent with a smaller scale of surrounding buildings should either find other locations or incorporate design elements that create an appearance of several smaller structures. Maintaining consistent building scale may be obtained through the application of appropriate zoning districts and detailed design review with reference to surrounding properties and buildings.

d. Building Location

Consistent building setbacks are also important to define a visually pleasing and historically sensitive development character in both residential and non-residential areas. Often, communities are successful in achieving desired minimum setbacks, but not in achieving desired maximum setbacks. The result is frequently a hodge-podge of buildings set back anywhere from the minimum setback to up to a couple hundred feet behind the minimum setback. In general, front building setbacks in Rockton should be modest in deference to the historic character of development.

e. Building Design

Architectural styles provide a challenge in a growing community. Where it is possible to identify a dominant architectural style (such as in Downtown Rockton), infill development should be complementary. Where a wider variety of styles exist, common architectural themes or elements (such as materials, colors, roof pitches or stylistic appurtenances) should be reflected. In peripheral locations, styles should be evaluated based on probable long-term merit, rather than on short-term trends, and quality of materials should be stressed. Also, the value and desirability of standard “corporate architecture” should be constantly evaluated and challenged with new development proposals. Detailed visual design guidelines should be prepared and followed for different parts of the Village.

f. Signage

Signs can have a dramatic influence on the character of a community. The size of wall signs should relate to the area of the wall on which they are located. No wall should contain more than one sign—except in center-type developments. In such centers, sign materials and the location of signs on the facade should be consistent, and the use of consistent colors and lettering styles should be rewarded with an area bonus.

Free-standing, pylon signs should never exceed a height of 20 feet, and only heights below eight feet are noticeably low. Such low monument signs can be effectively landscaped—tall pylon signs confound such attempts. No building—whether a single use building or a shopping center—should be allowed more than one freestanding sign per street frontage. Trademark-type buildings, color schemes, and backlit awnings may also be considered forms of signage, and should be addressed in any sign ordinance.

Several types of signs should be prohibited since they are very difficult to make and keep attractive. These include off-site advertising signs (including billboards), roof signs, and portable signs. Billboards, in particular, have the potential to significantly degrade the community roadway corridors. At the same time, community entryway signs can enhance community identity.



g. Public Furnishings and Spaces

The obvious use of public furnishings (such as benches or planters) conveys a sense of public investment and pride in a community that cannot be replicated through other means. Particularly in areas with many visitors, such investments complement the variety of goods and services offered and create a festive or civilized character that encourages repeat visits. Public furnishings should be provided throughout the Village Center Activity District (proposed below and through Map 4) and in parks or other key spots along the Green Corridor network (again, see Map 4). These furnishings should be of high aesthetic quality and proven durability.

h. Landscaping

Landscaping creates a more friendly, healthy, and beautiful community. Significant amounts of landscaping should be required of all development, particularly along Community Roadway Corridors depicted in Map 4. Landscaping should be required around building foundations, in and around paved areas, and along streets with required supplemental plantings in yard areas. Landscaping should also be used to screen potentially incompatible adjacent uses, such as where the different districts shown in Map 4 abut one another. Existing tree lines can also serve this function.

Landscaping materials should be of adequate size to ensure both a high degree of survivability and immediate visual effectiveness. Native plantings, including prairie plantings, should be encouraged. Either required landscaping should be installed before building occupancy permits are granted or performance guarantees should be required if occupancy occurs before installation.

i. Land Use Transitions

Older areas in the Village have a historical land use pattern which generally transitions elegantly from traditional single-family areas to small-scale commercial development in the downtown area. Although most of the modern development on the edges of the community contains similar types of transitions, individual subdivisions and projects sometimes exhibit jarring transitions and act in isolation from each

other. This results in a defensive, rather than inviting, relationship between subdivisions, buildings, the sidewalk system, and the street.

Very careful attention must be paid to creating a clear-cut pattern of land use that transitions in a gentle fashion and invites the pedestrian or viewer to venture or gaze across land use boundaries. The most visually successful transitions of land use occur where residential densities (as defined by the number of dwelling units per acre) and non-residential intensities (as defined by floor area ratios or the percentage of land left in green space) are relatively consistent, even though dwelling unit types or land uses may vary significantly. The creation and careful application of zoning districts which encourage uses of similar density or intensity make for more gradual and visually comforting transitions between adjacent zoning districts and adjacent parcels in the same district.

j. Key Vistas and Topographic Features

Views are the most difficult aspect of community character to address. The protection of important views is particularly challenging because the desire of the private developer or landowner to capture and protect the view often requires visual barriers which block general public views. It is impossible for a community to protect all aesthetically pleasing views. However, in a community like Rockton, certain views are essential defining elements of a neighborhood, entry experience, or the community as a whole. These critical views should be protected through view mapping, public acquisition in fee or easement, and/or responsive site design techniques. The importance of mapping cannot be underemphasized, as many important views are lost through ignorance as are lost consciously. Views are particularly important along riverfront areas, and in the areas with hills and valleys. The Rock River corridor and much of the southern growth area of the Village exhibits these qualities.

k. Community Edges

Visually distinguishing the edges of a community is a very important tool for protecting community identity and ensuring the wise use of land. Clearly defined community edges create the distinctions between “city and country”. The absence of clearly definable edges is a primary element of many peoples’ understanding of “urban sprawl.” The combination of development breaks, views, open space features, architectural styles, and urban forms that create these edges should be recognized and protected.

Map 4 depicts both inner and outer community edges. Inner community edges are located where urban development begins. Outer community edges help define the boundaries of “Greater Rockton ” (i.e. the General Planning Area). Recognition of outer community edges helps to foster a sense of common destiny between the jurisdictions located within the region. This awareness is often an important early step in effective intergovernmental planning efforts. At these outer community edges, lands should ideally be kept in open space uses to foster the sense of anticipation before entering the urban community to advance the objectives of community separation and agricultural preservation.

l. Community Entryways

Community entryways are roadway segments located at community edges. They are unique and highly valuable assets which cannot be duplicated in other communities (or replaced within Rockton at other locations). As its visual “front doors,” the community should protect the character of these entryway corridors and establish a “sense of entry” through the use of public entry and wayfinding signs, lighting, street trees, and furnishings.

In addition, zoning standards should require high-quality landscaping, building and site design, private signage, and lighting. Zoning standards may be upgraded either Village-wide or through the creation of a community entryway “overlay” zoning district. Under such a proposal, the base zoning would remain on the property (e.g., B-2, R-4), but the overlay district would apply additional or different requirements on development in these key areas. In public rights-of-way, high quality landscaped public entry signs

and/or public art may be used to formally announce entry. Street trees and appropriate street lighting also help announce entry into a community. Because entryways extend into the unincorporated areas, the Village should work with the townships and county to protect these corridors before urban development occurs.

m. Community Roadway Corridors

Community roadway corridors are the most heavily traveled roads through the community. These corridors provide visitors with their first impression of the community and are the most visible portions of the community for residents. They set the tone for the overall community character in the minds of both residents and visitors. Careful attention should be paid to these areas to make sure that these corridors present a high-quality character, particularly in regards to the aesthetic concerns listed above for community entryways (e.g., signage, landscaping, and building materials). Again, the Village may adopt an overlay zoning district and public investments to preserve and enhance the character of these corridors. The same overlay district created to protect primary entryways could easily be adapted to suit both purposes.

3. Community Opportunity Plan Map

The Community Opportunity Plan is illustrated through a map showing and describing different “planning districts” in the community, and the connections between those districts (see Map 4). Each district is an area that should have its own particular character, mix of land uses, and sense of place as the Village grows. In certain districts, these characteristics are already present; in others, the community will have to make concerted efforts over the next 25 years to realize the full potential of these districts. While some planning districts represent a specific, clearly defined place (e.g., Village Center Activity District), others represent several places or corridors with similar characteristics (e.g., Planned Neighborhoods, Community Roadway Corridors). Connections among the districts are established primarily through open space, roadway corridors, and a thoughtfully planned transition between different land uses.

The Community Opportunity Plan is *not* the detailed land use plan for the Village of Rockton. As such, it should not be used as a basis for detailed implementation efforts, such as zoning decisions.

a. Green Corridors

“Green corridors” are a central defining aspect of Rockton’s community image, and often connect and define other planning districts. They should be preserved and acquired whenever possible, and development should be limited. The green corridors shown on Map 4 include environmentally sensitive lands along rivers and primary drainageways, and prime farmlands to the west of the Village. The green corridor network includes the three forest preserves, the main bicycle and pedestrian corridor along the river, and a proposed Riverfront Community Park between Old River Road and Highway 2. Existing and potential general functions of the green corridor network include:

- Active and passive recreation
- Neighborhood amenities and connections
- Natural stormwater management
- Resource protection and restoration opportunities
- Community separation areas, particularly between Rockton and Roscoe near Hononegah Road

b. Major Wooded Areas

Large remaining blocks of mature woodlands are sometimes, but not always, included within the green corridor network. Large blocks of wooded areas are present in the Village’s southern growth area. Where these areas are planned development, mature trees should be preserved to the extent possible as a community and neighborhood amenity. This requires sensitive neighborhood and site planning.

The Village should also consider a tree preservation ordinance to maximize the percentage of mature woodlands that may be removed with development proposals. If those maximums are proposed to be exceeded, mitigation (i.e. planting new wooded areas) would be required.

To right: Example of sensitive development in wooded area



c. Existing and Planned Major Parks, Open Spaces, and Schools

Map 4 shows the most important existing and planned park locations, and all existing and planned schools. Parks and schools serve as obvious community gathering spots, providing numerous opportunities for recreation and special events. Key park recommendations, described in more detail later in this report, include acquisition and development of:

- A 10 acre park along the north shore of the Rock River, just south of Downtown Rockton. In 2000, a bike trail was constructed through this park. This park could serve as a future location of community events and activities.
- A 76 acre Riverfront Community Park and natural area along the south shore of the Rock River between Old River Road and Highway 2. This park could provide for a number of active and passive recreational pursuits (including athletic fields) and environmental protection areas.



View of 10-acre park on Rock River

- A large neighborhood park adjacent to the 30 acre middle school site on the Village's south side. This would serve a large neighborhood area planned for areas around the school.
- A neighborhood park on the Village's east side, in a mostly developed area that is severely deficient of park space.

d. Outer and Inner Community Edges/Entryways

Community edges and entryways are important for solidifying Village identity, establishing a sense of entry to the community, and contributing to a compact, efficient development pattern. Map 4 shows the key community edges where located along main roads. Inner community edges, which signal entry to the Village, are important places for public entry and directional signage. Inner edges include:

- Rockton Road near Highway 251
- Hononegah Road at the northern edge of the "green corridor" near the forest preserve.
- Highway 2 and Wagon Wheel Road, near their intersection with one another.
- Highway 75 (Freeport Road) near its intersection with Wagon Wheel Road.
- Highway 75 (Blackhawk Blvd.) and Highway 2 near their intersection with one another.

Map 4: Community Opportunity Plan

e. Village Center Activity District

Different areas of historic, recreational, institutional, and community value near the heart of Rockton define the proposed Village Center Activity District. The existing and future places within the Village Center activity district have the potential to build off one another, and become a source of pride and a destination for local residents and tourists alike. These places, each within a reasonable walk of one another, include:

- Historic Downtown Rockton, with its mix of retail, restaurant, and community service uses. More detailed recommendations for Downtown Rockton are provided in the “Land Use” section of this Plan Recommendations chapter.
- Hononegah High School, which includes the Performing Arts Center available for community use.
- The Village swimming pool.
- Largely undeveloped parkland on the riverfront, just south of the downtown and east of Blackhawk Blvd., which could be the home of community events and festivals.
- The Macktown Forest Preserve, planned to become home to the Historic Macktown Settlement, a living history and education center including a collection of buildings and landscapes from northern Illinois’ past designed according to the 1999 *Master Plan: Historic Macktown Settlement*.
- Mixed-use redevelopment on the former Wagon Wheel property. More detailed recommendations for this parcel are provided in the “Land Use” section of this Plan Recommendations chapter.
- A planned riverfront community park on the south shore of the Rock River, between Old River Road and Highway 2, which could provide a wide range of active and passive recreational pursuits.

It will be important to provide safe and attractive connections between the various places within this district for bikers, pedestrians, cars, and even ferries! The Village should focus streetscaping activities along Freeport Road, Old River Road, Blackhawk Blvd. and Main Street.

This Comprehensive Plan strongly recommends preparation of a detailed Village Center District Master Plan for this area. That plan could include recommendations for redevelopment, historic preservation, building and site design guidelines, master plans for the development of both planned riverfront parks, streetscape recommendations, and a detailed program for implementing the plan.

f. Commercial Districts

The Community Opportunity Plan suggests that, in addition to Downtown Rockton, new community-scale commercial districts should be established in discrete areas near the intersections of Highways 2 and 75 on the Village’s north side, and Highway 2 and Wagon Wheel Road on the south side. (In the longer term, a third community commercial area at the intersection of Highway 2 and Roscoe Road may also be appropriate).

Community-scale commercial projects include retail and service uses generally in buildings of 50,000

square feet or less, except for sensitively designed multi-tenant buildings. Commercial developments should be oriented to the pedestrian as well as the automobile, particularly given the large number of residents that will be within walking distance of these districts. In general, providing safe and convenient pedestrian connections,



Desired development quality in commercial districts

breaking up larger parking lots into smaller pods, and locating parking lots behind and on the sides of buildings are recommended strategies to achieve human scale commercial development. More specifically, projects in new commercial districts should meet the design standards in Chapter II, Section D, Policy 4.2.

g. New Job Centers

The Community Opportunity Plan suggests the creation of three job centers in the Rockton area. These areas are generally appropriate for industrial, office, and supporting uses. New development in these areas should meet the design guidelines included in Chapter II, Section D, Policy 5.1 of this Comprehensive Plan. In each area, existing tree lines provide an appropriate buffer to surrounding residential lands. Each of these areas should be incorporated within the Village before being developed. They include:

- The area to the north of Woodward Governor site, which should be developed in a compatible business park campus manner.
- A large area southwest of the intersection of Wagon Wheel Road and Highway 2 which would be appropriate for a large industrial park and/or industries with significant space demands.
- An area near the Highway 251 interchange with Rockton Road. North of Rockton Road, substantial fill will be required to raise this extraction site. Lands adjacent to Rockton Road would be appropriate for low-impact, office uses. Lands further from Rockton Road could be reserved for industrial development.



View of Hwy 251/Rockton Road from north

h. Planned Neighborhoods

Map 4 identifies two large areas on the Village's south side for large new neighborhoods. These include one area generally between Highway 2, Roscoe Road, and the railroad tracks, and a second area between Freeport Road, North Rockton Avenue, Roscoe Road, Wagon Wheel Road, and Highway 2. The "pie" symbols on Map 4 suggest that these areas are appropriate for predominantly residential development, including mostly single family homes with some appropriately located two-family and multiple-family residences and senior living projects. These areas are also appropriate for neighborhood-scale parks, schools, retail, service, and office uses which do not impair the surrounding residential character.

This *Plan* advances the use of "conservation neighborhood design" in the planning and development of these Planned Neighborhoods. The following are guiding principles of "conservation neighborhood design":

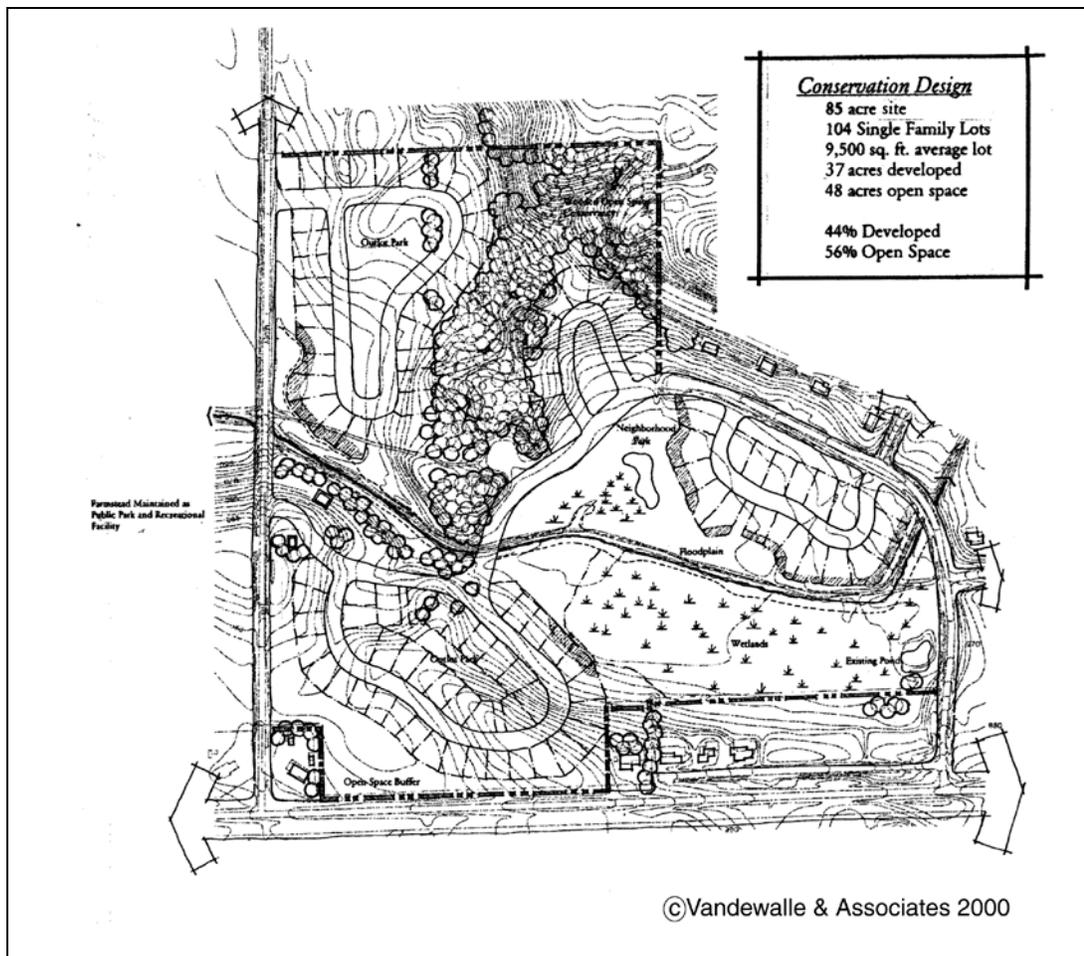
- Provide housing, parks and schools within walking distance of shops, services and jobs.
- Blend automobile convenience with the creation of safe, comfortable places to walk.
- Integrate a variety of housing types to accommodate a variety of lifestyles and age groups.
- Preserve and enhance natural systems that define, sustain, and connect neighborhoods.

Overall, the new model of conservation neighborhood design will create neighborhoods which are more livable, interactive, efficient, and protective of natural resources. Often, conservation subdivisions

preserve one-half or more of the land as permanent open space. If designed and developed correctly, each subdivision becomes part of a network of open space throughout the community. Allowing or encouraging decreases in lot sizes compared to conventional developments can enhance open space within neighborhoods.

“Cluster subdivisions” and “traditional neighborhoods” are specialized types of development that fall under the general umbrella of conservation neighborhood design. Cluster subdivisions are predominantly single family residential neighborhoods adjacent to sensitive environmental features or prime farmland. Homes are “clustered” on slightly smaller than usual lots in exchange for greater protection of environmental resources. Preserved common open space becomes an open space amenity, an active and passive recreational area, a trailway and gathering spot, and a flood control area. The common open space may be owned and managed by the public or a homeowners’ association. Figure 8 is an example of a “cluster subdivision”.

Figure 8: Sample “Cluster Subdivision” Layout



Traditional neighborhoods include a carefully planned mixture of land uses arranged in a traditional or curvilinear grid pattern. They include predominantly single-family residential development, combined with one or more of the following land use categories: townhouse and condominium, two-family residential, multi-family residential, neighborhood offices and businesses, civic uses which serve as neighborhood focal points, and parks or plazas. The resulting development pattern is reminiscent of the way neighborhoods were built before World War II (i.e., in the older parts of Rockton). Techniques such as small lots and modest setbacks are incorporated to promote neighborhood interaction. Other concepts embodied in the “Traditional Neighborhood Design” movement include:

- Reduced building setbacks that create a distinct sense of place and charming human scale by bringing buildings close to the sidewalk and street;
- Use of front porches and stoops to encourage social interaction between neighborhood residents and to create visual interest in building facades;
- Pulling back garages behind the front facade of the home as much as possible or placing the garage in the rear yard of the home with access from an alley, lane or parking court;
- Use of public plazas, greens and squares to provide focal points for the neighborhood, create visual interest, and generate highly prominent building sites.

i. Existing Neighborhoods

Map 4 also shows existing developed neighborhoods in the Village. Particularly for the historic neighborhoods north of downtown Rockton, rehabilitation of homes and infrastructure will be increasingly important over the planning period. There are large sections of these neighborhoods that are deficient with respect to active park space. This issue should be addressed in a community-wide Park and Open Space Plan. Increased traffic through these existing neighborhood areas should be addressed over the planning period.

j. Community Roadway Corridors

In addition to carrying significant amounts of traffic, the main community roadway corridors shown in Map 4 are important for defining the character of the community to residents and visitors. These community roadway corridors include Highway 75, Highway 2, Old River Road, Main Street, Hononegah Road, Rockton Road/Union Street, and Highway 251. The Village should protect and enhance the aesthetics and functionality of these corridors. In many cases, this will require cooperation with the Illinois Department of Transportation.

k. Main Bike/Ped Corridor

Map 4 shows a “main bike/ped corridor” through the Village. The community has already recognized the opportunity for a bicycle and pedestrian path along the riverfront. The Village should work with the County and other units of government to complete the trail link through the Village to the west. Map 4 also suggests obvious connections from this main “spine” bike/ped path. The “Transportation Plan” which follows present more detailed recommendations for a bicycle and pedestrian system through the community.

l. Railroad Line

The active north-south rail line creates opportunities for freight rail service to industry and potential passenger service in the future. The rail right-of-way may also be available for a bicycle/pedestrian path. Still, the rail line presents certain barriers for development and cross-access which should be overcome for successful implementation of this Comprehensive Plan.

B. LAND USE PLAN

1. Approach to Land Use Planning

This section of the Comprehensive Plan is intended to provide specific recommendations for the Village's land development over the next 25 years and beyond, based on the goals, objectives, and policies presented in Chapter II and the Community Opportunity Plan. Long-range land use planning allows municipalities to phase and guide development to maintain the character of the community, protect sensitive environmental features, and provide efficient urban services. Land use planning also enables the Village to identify lands well-suited for public purposes such as parks, schools, and drainage facilities.

Illinois Statutes specifically allow cities to prepare plans for lands both inside and currently outside municipal boundaries. To effectively manage growth, this Plan identifies desirable land use patterns within the existing Village limits and in unincorporated areas around the Village, including all lands within 1 ½ miles of the Village. Intergovernmental coordination and cooperation, therefore, will significantly aid many recommendations of this Plan.

This Plan does not assume that all lands within the extraterritorial jurisdiction will develop during the 25-year planning period. The Village advocates a land use pattern that directs growth to areas that can most efficiently be provided with urban services. This generally suggests compact, sequential development out from the existing Village limits.

The land use plan, included as Map 5 and described below, may be used as a basis to update the Village's regulatory tools, such as the zoning ordinance. It should also be used as a basis for all public and private sector development decisions. These include annexations, rezonings, conditional use permits, subdivisions, extension of municipal utilities, and other public or private investments.

However, the identification of growth areas or land use types does not imply that any area is immediately appropriate for rezoning or annexation. Given service demands and other factors, careful consideration to manageable development levels and timing is essential. Except for planned Rural Residential areas, all proposed development areas shown on Map 5 should be incorporated into the Village and provided with a full range of urban services, including public sewer and water services.

2. Planned Land Use by Category

The map categories used on Map 5 are described below. This Plan uses a detailed system of land use map categories that address both *use* and *community character* factors. Traditional land use classifications (such as agricultural, residential, commercial, and industrial) are combined with modern community character classifications (such as "neighborhood," "planned," and "general") to create a system of categories that provides for more detailed recommendations. Design recommendations for development in these areas are included within Chapter II, Part D and Chapter III, Part A.

a. Agriculture/Vacant

These areas are planned for agricultural uses, farmsteads, other open or vacant lands, and single-family residences at or below a density of one house per every 35 acres owned. Long-term farming areas are planned for lands northwest and southwest of the Village. The Village should work with the county and township to prevent more intensive development in these areas.

b. Rural Residential

These are areas planned for single-family residential development in rural subdivisions not served by public sewer and water, typically on lots between one and five acres in area. Lands along South Bluff Road, Freeport Road west of Macktown Forest Preserve, and near the intersection of Old River Road and Liddle Road are planned for Rural Residential uses.

c. Single Family Residential

These are areas planned for sewerred single-family residential development within the Village at densities up to five houses per acre. Senior housing communities and condominium developments may also be appropriate in these areas if (1) gross density is less than or equal to five housing units per acre and (2) the project is designed to harmonize with existing and planned single family residential development on surrounding lands. Large sections of the Village are planned for Single Family Residential uses, including existing developed neighborhoods and a majority of a future neighborhood near the new middle school site.

d. Two Family/Townhouse Residential

This category includes primarily two-family (duplex) residential development and condominiums and townhouses in buildings of up to four units each. Small-lot single family residences may also be appropriate in these areas. Regardless of housing type, densities should not exceed eight housing units per acre. New areas planned for Two Family/Townhouse Residential development include lands near the intersection of Highway 2 and Wagon Wheel Road and lands close to the new middle school site.

e. Mixed Residential

This category is designated for primarily multiple-family residential development at densities greater than five dwelling units per acre. Two-family/Townhouse and small-lot Single Family Residential uses may also be appropriate in these areas. Areas identified as appropriate for such uses include relatively small areas along Blackhawk Blvd., Freeport Road, Old River Road near the new Middle School, and east of the Highway 2/Wagon Wheel Road intersection.

f. Planned Neighborhood

The Planned Neighborhood category suggests locations appropriate for a carefully planned mixture of predominantly single family residential development, combined with one or more of the following land uses: two-family/townhouse residential, mixed residential, neighborhood business and office, institutional, and/or active recreation. Per the Village's historic housing mix, not less than 70% of all housing units within planned neighborhood areas should be single family residences, with a maximum of 15% two-family units and 15% multiple family units. The Village should prepare or require detailed Neighborhood Development Plans for each of the planned neighborhood areas in advance of development, showing the proposed arrangements of different land uses and roads.

Map 5: Planned Land Use

g. Planned Office

These areas are planned for high-quality office, institutional and office-support land uses with very generous landscaping and limited signage. The only area in Map 5 shown as a “pure” planned office area is along Rockton Road near Highway 251. However, office development would also be an appropriate land use in the Planned Industrial area along Highway 2 between Rockton Road and South Beloit and in the Central Mixed Use area.

h. Neighborhood Business

Neighborhood Business areas are appropriate for neighborhood-related commercial uses which preserve neighborhood residential character through small building scale, building appearance, landscaping, and signage. Small Neighborhood Business areas are planned for areas near the intersection of Freepport Road and Wagon Wheel Road, across from the new middle school site on Old River Road, and along Rockton Road west of Highway 251.

i. Planned Business

Planned Business areas are appropriate for high-quality indoor commercial, office, and institutional land uses, with generous landscaping and limited signage. All development in Planned Business districts should comply with detailed site, building, signage, and landscaping design standards described in Chapter II, Section D, Policy 4.2 of this Comprehensive Plan. In addition, building size should generally not exceed 50,000 square feet (about the size of a modern supermarket), except for sensitively designed multi-tenant centers.

j. Central Mixed Use

The Central Mixed Use planning district is mapped over Downtown Rockton. Pedestrian-orientated indoor commercial, office, institutional and residential uses with streetscaping and low-key signage typically associated with downtowns are appropriate in this district.

General recommendations for the Central Mixed Use District (as reproduced from policy statement 4.7 in Chapter II) are to preserve and enhance the historic downtown within Rockton by:

- Promoting the expansion, retention, and upgrading of specialty retail, restaurants, financial services, offices, neighborhood retail and services, and community uses.
- Considering investment and incentive strategies to encourage additional business development.
- Establishing incentives, such as a Façade Improvement Fund, to support property and business owners to renovate, rehabilitate, and improve facades and landscaping.



Aerial image of Downtown Rockton today

- Capitalizing on tourism activity by attracting new businesses that serve tourists and complement existing downtown businesses.
- Directing tourists to the downtown business district through a cooperative effort by the Chamber of Commerce, Village government, and other civic organizations and regional tourism groups.
- Establishing a comprehensive wayfinding signage system for the downtown.
- Encouraging new residential development and redevelopment nearby to provide a “built-in” market for goods and services and to increase foot traffic.
- Encouraging the establishment of consistent, regular business hours for downtown merchants, including evening and weekend hours and during events held downtown.
- Maximizing the usage of downtown by attracting new businesses that complement existing downtown merchants.
- Emphasizing the significant historic aspects of downtown in marketing campaigns.
- Beautifying the downtown through additional landscaping and pedestrian furniture.
- Providing adequate, accessible parking in and near the downtown.
- Supporting the establishment of commuter rail to Rockton, with a stop close to downtown.

To improve the health of Downtown Rockton, proactive, creative and coordinated planning and marketing will be required. Typically a market area’s ability to support downtown redevelopment and business recruitment is based on population, employment and income data. Rockton is strong in all areas, as expressed by the following indicators:

- Rockton has experienced significant and strong population growth in the past decade, up nearly 65% during the 1990s alone.
- The Rockton area is home to several large employers, including Taylor Company and Woodward Governor Company. Other employers are located in the nearby South Beloit Industrial Park.
- In 1990, the average income of Rockton residents in 1990 exceeded that of Winnebago County residents as a whole by 12%.

There is a good base of stable businesses, restaurants, and drinking establishments to build upon. The current anchors of the downtown include the civic buildings, such as the Village Hall and Post Office, the Rockton Inn, the Shopping Bag, and Macktown State Bank.

Retail sales statistics for Rockton, originating in large part from the downtown area, suggest that apparel, furniture, and general merchandise stores are underrepresented in Rockton. Further, locally-desired businesses for the downtown include office supply stores, clothing stores, a pharmacy, general merchandise stores, express parcel delivery services, more sit-down restaurants, and more youth-oriented activities. These are all reasonable types of businesses to target. Home furnishings and garden supplies are expanding business sectors that may also be appropriate for Downtown Rockton. Other businesses to consider are a locksmith, eyeglass store, dry cleaner, specialty bookstore, copy/print shop, perhaps another coffee shop, another bakery, more antique stores, and craft-oriented and art-related stores such as a picture framing store or art gallery. To attract younger patrons (particularly given the proximity of the high school), a bike shop and compact disc store may do well. In light of the three golf courses in the area, a retail golf equipment shop, which could also include other sport-oriented products, would be a natural choice.

To attract these new businesses, the Village should explore incentives such as low interest loan programs and grants. Developing and actively distributing marketing materials, such as the Rockton map and video created by the Chamber of Commerce, are important in this effort. Targeting businesses in Beloit and other neighboring communities that are successful, and may consider a second location in Rockton, would be an appropriate strategy.

Marketing efforts for both starting new businesses and attracting shopping Downtown should start with the residents of Rockton. The attitudes of Rockton residents bode well for the future of Downtown. Many Rockton residents desire to retain “small town atmosphere” in the community. Eight out of ten

residents in the community survey agreed with the statement that “Rockton should be a fairly diverse community with some shopping and job opportunities, but the emphasis should be on keeping the Village small.” Offering special and superior service to customers make downtowns different from chain stores, shopping malls, and “big box” retailers. Downtowns all over the state and country are competing with malls and chains; those that offer a unique “experience” survive. For many customers, service and selection are often more important in the long run than price. The historical charm of downtown Rockton also makes the central business district unique and greatly enhances small town character. The desire is for businesses to cluster or position themselves in areas close together to share the customer base. In order to fully realize these synergies, downtown businesses need to work together to develop shared business hours, which should include weekends and at least certain evenings.

Opportunities for tourist-oriented shopping will increase as the business mix improves, and as other activities and projects in the central part of the Village come to fruition. Projects which would benefit Downtown Rockton would include:

- Successful implementation of the Historic Macktown Settlement plan, and efforts to visually connect that area to the downtown via streetscape improvements.
- Acquisition and development of park space in the downtown area, including a riverfront park on the approximately 10 acre parcel between Blackhawk Blvd. and the railroad tracks. Outdoor community event space could be provided in this area.
- Creation of new special events (e.g., Farmers Market, parades, outdoor concerts, festivals, local youth group concerts) and capitalizing on existing events to get more people familiar with patronizing downtown. More traffic helps all of the businesses and is critical in retaining, recruiting, and growing businesses for the future.
- Establishment of wayfinding signage at the edges of the community, and perhaps even on the Interstate, to direct the traveling public to downtown. Once closer to downtown, directional signage to available parking would be appropriate.
- Provision of additional surface parking behind buildings and on lands near the railroad tracks.
- Support for commuter rail service into and from Rockford.
- Provision of additional housing in the downtown area to create a built-in market for downtown businesses. Senior citizen housing may be particularly desirable. Because there are few vacant downtown properties, such projects may require the redevelopment of currently developed land. If floodplain issues can be resolved (e.g., additional flood storage provided elsewhere on or near the site), the large property between Main Street, the Rock River, the railroad tracks, and Highway 2 may be appropriate for housing. In the long-term, the Sonoco site may also be appropriate for redevelopment (pending “brownfield” investigations).

To bring together and more fully develop the above ideas, the creation of a Downtown Redevelopment Plan and Design Guidelines are advised. (Such an effort could be a major component of a Village Center District Master Plan, as described in the “Community Opportunity Plan” section above.) Development of such a plan will assure desired character is maintained, appropriate uses and strategies for redevelopment of key sites are identified, historically and architecturally significant buildings are not destroyed in the name of redevelopment, and tools to promote redevelopment (e.g., TIF districts, sign ordinances, economic development master fund, membership in the Illinois Main Street program) are explored and implemented. It also appears that the Village and Chamber of Commerce will require ongoing, professional assistance to implement that plan.

k. Planned Industrial

Planned Industrial areas are appropriate for high-quality indoor manufacturing, assembly, and storage uses with generous landscaping and limited signage. Office uses may also be appropriate in these areas, where the impact of industrial uses on their operation will be negligible (e.g., noise, emissions, heavy trucking activity). All development in Planned Industrial Districts should comply with detailed site, building, signage, and landscaping design standards described in Chapter II, Section D, Policy 5.1 of this

Comprehensive Plan. There are three areas identified for Planned Industrial land uses on Map 5. They are the same areas as the “job centers” shown in Map 4, and include:

- The area to the north of Woodward Governor site, which should be developed in a compatible business park campus.
- A large area southwest of the intersection of Wagon Wheel Road and Highway 2, appropriate for a large industrial park and/or industries with significant space demands.
- An area near the Highway 251 interchange with Rockton Road, which would also be appropriate for office uses.

I. General Industrial

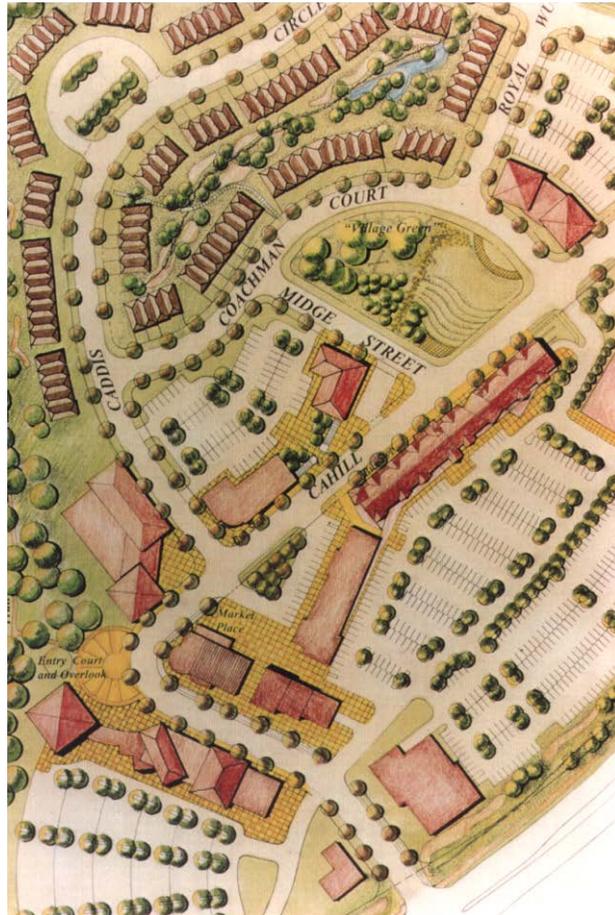
General Industrial areas are appropriate for manufacturing, assembly, contracting, and storage uses, with moderate landscaping and signage. These areas are generally isolated from residential uses. The General Industrial district is general mapped over properties with existing established industries, particularly on the north side of the Village. These properties benefit from direct rail access.

m. Planned Mixed Use

This category is designed to facilitate a carefully controlled mix of business, hospitality, office, and/or residential uses. Development approvals within these areas should only be granted after submittal and public review of detailed development plans. Planned unit development zoning is generally appropriate for these areas. Two parcels on Map 5 are identified as being appropriate for Planned Mixed Use development. Both would be redevelopment projects.

The first is the former Wagon Wheel property. This approximately 25 acre site would be appropriate for a mix of retail, office, and residential uses. It may also be appropriate for a small hotel to serve anticipated activity in the Village Center Activity District. Residential uses may include condominiums or row houses, particularly on the east and south (golf course) sides of the site. The Village may pursue proactive approaches for redeveloping the site, up to and including assuming ownership and issuing a “Request for Proposals” from developers to redevelop the site. This approach has been successful in other communities.

The second proposed Planned Mixed Use site is between Main Street and the Rock River, just east of Downtown. Unfortunately, most of this land is in mapped floodplain. If floodplain issues could be overcome, this site may be appropriate for mixed-use redevelopment with a residential emphasis.



Example of “Planned Mixed Use” project layout

n. Institutional

Institutional areas are designated for large-scale public buildings, large places of worship, hospitals, special-care facilities, and designated stormwater management basins. (Not all planned basins are shown on the map.) Small institutional uses, like day care or neighborhood churches, may be located in other land use categories.

o. Active Recreation

Designated Active Recreation areas include park and open space facilities generally devoted to playgrounds, play fields, play courts, golf courses, and related recreation activities. These lands may be publicly or privately owned. Recommended parklands are described more fully in the “Community Facilities and Utilities Plan” section which follows.

p. Environmental Corridors/Passive Recreation

Designated Environmental Corridors/Passive Recreation areas are existing or proposed open space areas which include officially designated wetlands and 100-year and 500-year floodplains. These areas are generally devoted to open space, wildlife habitat, stormwater management, trails, picnic areas, natural areas, and related low-impact recreation activities.

q. Treelines, Proposed Landscape Buffers, and Existing Forest Cover

Map 5 shows existing treelines and proposed landscape bufferyards. Both of these types of landscapes may be used to buffer incompatible uses from one another, and to separate residential development from main highways. Map 5 also shows lands which are currently covered by dense woods. Preservation of trees should be a priority when these areas develop.

3. Future Municipal Boundaries

As shown in Map 5, the land use recommendations of this Comprehensive Plan in certain locations extend beyond the Village’s extraterritorial planning jurisdiction. This is particularly the case where the extraterritorial planning jurisdictions of the Villages of Rockton and Roscoe would otherwise intersect. At the time of writing, the two villages were discussing the potential for an intergovernmental agreement which may solidify future planning and annexation boundaries. This Comprehensive Plan strongly supports such efforts. The Plan also encourages the involvement of the County in such efforts. The County has review authority over development proposals in the currently unincorporated areas between the two Villages.

Intergovernmental coordination and communication in this case will have the following benefits:

- Improve the predictability of development-related decisions,
- Increase the efficiency of public service and utility delivery,
- Ensure consistent and compatible development standards, and avoid the temptation for governments to reduce or waive their standards to attract development,
- Assure that the types of uses approved or considered by one jurisdiction are not at odds with logical, planned future urban development of the area, and
- Reduce the potential for development-based conflict and misunderstandings.

C. TRANSPORTATION PLAN

1. Reasons for the Transportation Plan

This transportation plan element of the Comprehensive Plan will facilitate the implementation of safe and efficient movement by:

- Supporting appropriate improvements to the existing roadway network,
- Recommending the location of future arterial and collector roads,
- Proposing a conceptual plan for a bikeway network in and around the Village,
- Suggesting a policy for developing and maintaining the Village's sidewalk system,
- Guiding land development into locations and arrangements which promote walking, biking, and shorter car trips.

Under State Statutes, municipalities can prepare Official Maps to reserve the rights-of-way of future streets, pedestrian/bicycle paths, schools, parks, drainageways and other public facilities—both within the municipal limits and its extraterritorial jurisdiction. The Village should prepare an Official Map to mark future roadway corridors, prevent land development in delineated roadway corridors, and obtain sufficient rights-of-way for roads when they are needed at no cost to the local taxpayers.

It is important to remember that actual construction or expansion of any road may not occur for many years, even after new or additional right-of-way is acquired. However, the Village should work to acquire corridors, through dedication or purchase of additional right-of-way width, well in advance of actual need. Recommended transportation improvements are shown in Map 6 and described below. Alignments of future roads will be subject to later refinement.

2. Major Arterial Roads and Highways

Highways 2, 75, and 251 through and near Rockton are the community's major arterial roads. Highways 2 and 251 are appropriately aligned and designed to carry significantly more traffic than is currently using these facilities. In the long term, Highway 2 may have to be widened to four lanes in the Roscoe Road area, especially as more new development occurs in this area. The Village should encourage or (where possible) require a road right-of-way of at least 100 feet in width for Highway 2 to assure that widening could occur in the future with minimal disruption.

The current alignment of Highway 75 is disruptive to the downtown and Rockton's historic neighborhoods. It also results in traffic congestion and an unsafe pedestrian environment near its Main Street intersection. The Village and State can expect traffic volumes to continue to increase along this highway. At a minimum, the Village should work with the State to re-route truck traffic out of the downtown.

In addition, the Transportation Plan advises the realignment of Highway 75 to coincide with Highway 2 from the current northern end of Blackhawk Blvd. to the southern end of Wagon Wheel Road. Wagon Wheel Road could be redesignated as Highway 75, and improved to meet state highway standards (see Map 6). This would require the acquisition of additional road right-of-way on the Wagon Wheel Road alignment (minimum of 100 feet recommended), plus substantial redesign/ reconstruction of the intersections of Freeport Road/Wagon Wheel Road and Wagon Wheel Road/Highway 2. (As an alternative, a new highway corridor could be established to the west of Wagon Wheel Road.) The advantages of the realignment would include (a) dramatic reductions in downtown/neighborhood impacts, (b) rerouting traffic to Highway 2 which has significant capacity, and (c) providing a quicker route for through traffic.

The Village should encourage the Illinois Department of Transportation to conduct a corridor study to fully analyze the implications of such improvements and jurisdictional transfers for Highway 75. Included in these discussions should be responsibilities for the future improvement of the Blackhawk Blvd. bridge, which would be costly.

Map 6 also reflects the potential alignment of the Wisconsin State Highway 81 south bypass over the Prairie Hill Road corridor. If constructed, that highway may have a positive impact on Rockton by attracting some of the traffic which currently uses Rockton Road/Union Street.

3. Minor Arterial and Collector Roads

The existing system of minor arterial and primary collector roads includes Rockton Road/Union Street, Hononegah Road, Main Street, Dorr Road, Old River Road, and Wagon Wheel Road. As recommended on Map 4, the Village should obtain additional right-of-way for these roads as adjacent lands develop. In general, rights-of-way for collector streets should be 80 feet in width (see Map 6). This right-of-way width would ultimately allow expansion of these roads to four lanes if future traffic dictates. Dramatic increases in traffic along Hononegah Road and Rockton Road/Union Street suggest that these roads may warrant expansion over the planning period.

As the Village expands, these existing collector roads should be extended and new collector roads should be added to provide a complete, interconnected roadway network (see Map 6). Again, most of these future collector roads should have a right-of-way width of 80 feet (although 70 feet may be sufficient in certain cases). As most future development within Rockton is anticipated on the south side of the community, proposed new collector roads are focused in this area on Map 6. The Village should work with developers to provide these collector road rights-of-way and build the streets to collector road standards as adjacent land develops. All collector roads should include sidewalks and street trees on both sides.

4. Local Roads

New local roads needed to serve development are not shown on Map 6, except where they provide key connections to arterial and collector roads. Local roads should be shown on detailed neighborhood development plans and subdivision plats as new neighborhoods develop.

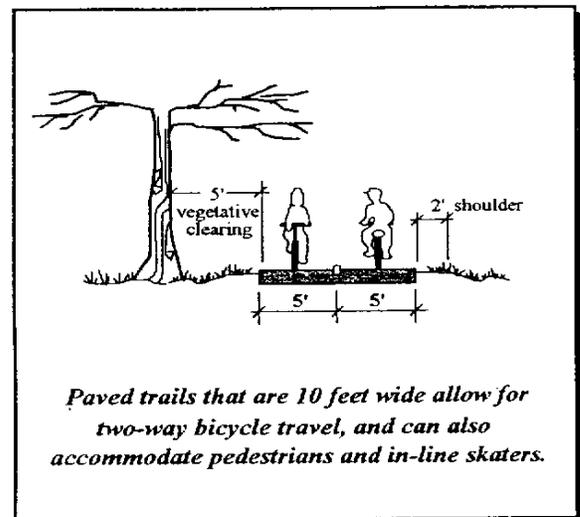
Local street connections should be timed so that they do not serve as collector or arterial streets by default until the actual collector or arterial road is constructed. Subdivisions and other developments should be interconnected, still, by local roads. Spreading traffic among several roads allows for the most efficient use of transportation dollars and minimizes traffic congestion on a few main roads. An interconnected system is also preferred for police and fire access, street maintenance, and snow plowing.

The Village should require a right-of-way width of 60 feet and roadway width of 32 feet (curb face to curb face) for local roads to achieve desired neighborhood character. (This would be a reduction from the 66 foot rights-of-way currently required by the Village.) Sidewalks should be constructed on at least one side of all local roads, and on both sides of local roads which provide key routes to schools, parks, and other community facilities. The Village should also begin to require the planting of street trees with the approval of new subdivision plats. In addition to neighborhood beautification, street trees have been demonstrated to slow traffic.

5. New Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities

Walking and biking are real transportation alternatives for communities of Rockton's size. Key job centers, shopping districts, parks, and schools are generally accessible to all residential areas. Further, there are increased levels of state and federal financial assistance to communities interested in developing bicycle and pedestrian networks.

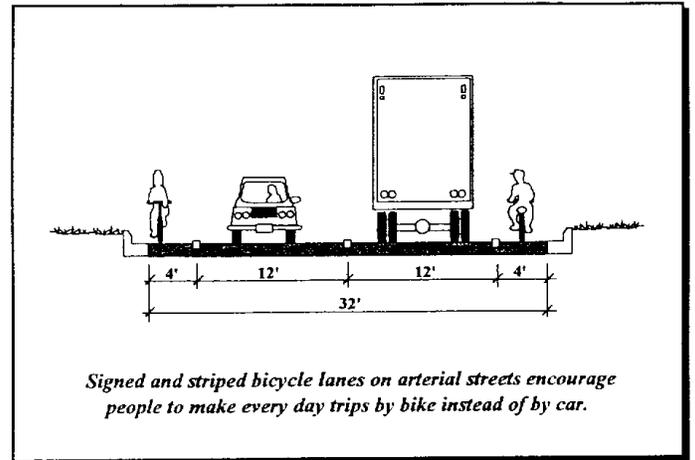
The Village should develop a sidewalk plan and policy which should (a) show all existing roads without sidewalks where sidewalks should be constructed with road reconstruction or new development and (b) provide a policy for construction of sidewalks along newly platted roads. When it completes such a plan and policy, the Village should then update its subdivision



ordinance to include that policy as a development standard for all new subdivisions. This Comprehensive Plan recommends sidewalks on:

- Both sides of all arterial and collector streets.
- Both sides of key routes to schools, parks, and other community facilities with heavy foot traffic.
- At least one side of all other local streets. (It is generally preferable from a pedestrian movement and fairness standpoint to include them on both sides of streets).

The Village should also develop a comprehensive bikeway system, which connects to the regional system being advanced at the County and State levels. In general, all new streets should be planned and developed with the expectation that they will be used to a certain extent by bicycles. When traffic volumes and vehicular speeds are low, on-road bike traffic is generally acceptable without extra street width or designated bike lanes. When volumes are higher, signed and striped bicycle lanes (4 to 5 feet wide) or off-street paths are the preferred option. Off-street bike paths are often preferred where recreational traffic is heavy, and where multiple uses (walking, skating) are anticipated or encouraged. Off-street paths are generally 10 feet in width, and should generally be constructed within a minimum 20 foot wide easement or right-of-way.



Map 6 includes a conceptual plan for an on- and off-street bikeway system. It is intended to be a starting point for bikeway planning and development in Rockton. As a first step, the Village should refine and incorporate the bikeway plan as part of its Parks and Open Space Plan, recommended below. The Village should also amend its subdivision ordinance to require the dedication of easements or rights-of-way for bikeways with the approval of new developments (even when actual construction may be years away). It should also budget funds for bikeway development, and seek state and federal grants.

The conceptual bikeway plan depicted in Map 6 features a system that connects the downtown area and surrounding parks and community facilities with outlying neighborhoods and shopping areas. The Plan also anticipates connections to regional trails and destination points. The Plan recommends off-street paths along riverfronts and existing and abandoned rail rights-of-way. Map 6 also suggests an off-street loop path system through a proposed park, the middle school site, planned commercial areas, planned neighborhoods, and the environmental corridor network in the south side growth area. Finally, two potential pathway river crossings in the central part of the Village are suggested for further consideration.

6. Public Transportation

The number of elderly people in the Village will continue to rise in the future. It will be important to provide alternative transportation for elderly people and others who are not able to drive due to physical disability. The Village should support county and regional transit alternatives. Passenger rail between the communities in the Southern Wisconsin-Northern Illinois region holds the promise of increased mobility and economic development opportunities at station areas. Map 6 suggests a general location for a future passenger rail station in Downtown Rockton, near the intersection of Main Street and the rail line.

Map 6: Transportation Plan

D. COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND UTILITIES PLAN

This element of the Comprehensive Plan is designed to summarize the implications of the recommended land use pattern and transportation network on community facilities and public utilities. More detailed planning will be required to refine these broad recommendations as opportunities or needs for community facilities arise.

1. Park and Recreation Facilities

Park and recreational facilities provide Rockton residents with both active and passive recreational opportunities, provide a connection to nature, serve as community focal points, increase surrounding property values, and enhance overall quality of life. However, the Village (and a designated park district) must plan for continued park and recreational facilities for these to be provided in adequate numbers, types, and locations to meet the demands of future growth.

Generally accepted park standards suggest that a community Rockton's size should have one community park of at least 25 acres in area. Community parks are designed to provide a wide variety of active and passive recreational opportunities for the entire Village. Desirable facilities in a community park include athletic fields; tennis, basketball, and/or volleyball courts; a central pavilion, shelter, or community center; picnic areas; playgrounds; nature and bike trails; and adequate off-street parking. This Comprehensive Plan recommends the acquisition and development of a 76 acre community park on the riverfront between Old River Road and Highway 2. The Village and County should cooperate on joint acquisition, master planning, and development of this community park.

Park standards also suggest the acquisition and development of neighborhood parks serving a radius of no greater than ½ mile from the park (1/4 mile radius preferred). Major roads in the vicinity of a neighborhood park may substantially reduce the effective radius. Neighborhood parks should each be five to ten acres in area, and should include facilities such as open play fields, playground equipment, court games, skating, and a picnic shelter. Some of the new neighborhoods on the Village's east side are very distant from the nearest neighborhood park. The Village should work to acquire a suitable park site near (but not on) the intersection of Dorr Road and Rockton Road (see Map 6 for one possible site). The historic neighborhood north of the downtown also appears to be deficient of neighborhood park space. Finally, Map 6 proposes a planned neighborhood park adjacent to the new middle school property.

The Village has recently established a committee to explore park and recreation issues in the community. This is a good start towards developing a comprehensive park system for the community. This Comprehensive Plan strongly recommends the following steps to further build on initial efforts:

- Officially establish a Park District under Illinois Statutes to acquire, develop, and manage parkland in the community. The Park District's service area could cover the entire Village plus other lands within the Village's extraterritorial jurisdiction.
- Prepare a Comprehensive Park and Open Space Plan for the Rockton area. A Park and Open Space Plan would include detailed recommendations for parkland acquisition and development. It could also provide the basis for new or revised park impact fees to help fund park acquisition and development.

2. Historic Resources

To honor its debt to history and its obligation to the future, Rockton must not only preserve its visible reminders of the past, but find ways to restore, for the benefit of ours and generations to come, the fascination of its beginnings. On a more practical level, Rockton's historic character can serve as a foundation for establishing the community as a regional tourist destination, spurring revitalization of the Village Center District, and serving as focal points along a community walking and bicycle path system.

Rockton has a very rich historical base, including the Rockton Historic District, Downtown Rockton (Main Street), and the emerging Macktown Settlement. Specific recommendations relative to historic preservation include the following:

- The Village should establish a standing Historic Commission to serve as the focal point for all educational, inventory, incentive, and regulatory programs associated with historic preservation in the community.
- The Village should create highly visual design guidelines for the rehabilitation and remodeling of structures in the Rockton Historic District and Downtown Rockton. These design guidelines could be incorporated into a Village Center District Master Plan, as recommended elsewhere in this Comprehensive Plan.
- The Village should consider establishing a Downtown façade grant program to assist property owners to improve and restore their buildings in accordance with the design guidelines.
- The Village should work with property owners to mark historically significant buildings with tasteful plaques to recognize their value to the community. This could reinforce community pride and encourage tourism activity.
- The Village should consider adopting overlay zoning districts for the Rockton Historic District and Downtown Rockton. Historic overlay districts are intended to implement design recommendations to preserve and enhance historic character. In such systems, the Historic Commission typically reviews and approves exterior remodeling plans before building permits are issued.
- The Village should support full implementation of the 1999 *Historic Macktown Settlement Master Plan* as both a historic preservation and economic development opportunity.

3. Municipal Facilities and Services

As the Village continues to grow, the demand for administrative and public safety facilities and services will also increase.

Fire Department space appears to be adequate to meet current demands. However, as significant growth occurs south of the Rock River, there will likely be a demand for a second fire station on the Village's south side. Map 6 suggests a general location for a "public safety" building on the Village's south side which would be central to anticipated future growth and close to existing and planned major streets. Of course, increased staffing levels would be necessary to house such a new facility.

This Comprehensive Plan did not include any type of evaluation of space needs for administrative, public works, or police services. A comprehensive evaluation of space needs should be conducted before any decisions are made regarding these services. In any event, municipal offices should remain in the Downtown area to reinforce activity levels there.

Given the Village's size, pace of development, and growing complexity of issues, the Village should strongly consider hiring a full-time, professional Village Administrator. Many communities of Rockton's size have such an administrator. This position would be in addition to Village Clerk and Village President positions. This individual could assist with planning and financial matters of the Village. The Village should also introduce capital budgeting and 5-year capital improvements programming for major expenditures. Such techniques are described more fully in Chapter IV.

The Talcott Free Library will continue to experience space pressure. However, some changes in technology, if they are embraced by the community, may relieve space problems. The library should remain Downtown.

4. Public School Facilities

This Comprehensive Plan supports the pending construction of a new middle school in the southern part of Rockton's growth area. It also appears that Hononegah High School will require expansion. The Village and School District should discuss opportunities to enhance that addition to serve as a true community center for the residents of all ages.

In the near future, the Rockton School District should begin exploring options for a future elementary school site within the southern growth area of the Village (i.e., in the vicinity of the new middle school site). The new middle school site is not sufficient in size to also accommodate an elementary school.

5. Public Utilities

This Comprehensive Plan studied public utility systems only superficially. Utility policies are included in Chapter II, Part D, Section 8 of this Comprehensive Plan. The Village should encourage the various utility districts to prepare and update utility system master plans in to respond to the growth recommendations of this Comprehensive Plan. Long-term Village growth may necessitate a water tower in the Village's southern growth area, expansions to the sewage treatment plant, and/or the addition of major interceptor lines.

It is also very important that the Village effectively communicate its land use and development policies to the utility districts. Otherwise, independent decisions of those districts may run contrary to the growth management objectives of this plan. The Village and Chamber of Commerce should also work with utility districts to promote and facilitate economic development and business retention in the community.

Stormwater management is becoming an increasingly important issue as flooding becomes an increasingly frequent occurrence. The Village should adopt a stormwater management ordinance to ensure that new development does not increase flooding potential "downstream" during storm events. Principles that should be embodied in such an ordinance include the following:

- To prevent increases in the extent of the existing regulatory floodplain, integrate stormwater storage into the design of all new development and redevelopment projects.
- In general, area-wide stormwater storage is preferred over individual on-site storage to provide lower flood elevations and provide amenities such as wildlife habitat and recreation.
- Reduce stormwater release quantities to pre-development rates, and produce water quality benefits that exceed typical standards.
- Encourage stormwater management treatment systems that focus on Best Management Practices (BMPs) rather than conventional engineering strategies. BMPs may include overland transfer, natural landscaping to increase infiltration and reduce runoff, bio-infiltration systems, residential roof runoff directed to pervious yard areas, maximum impervious surface ratios for development sites, and narrower street cross-sections.
- Minimize and localize soil disturbance during construction.
- Reduce the area that needs to be graded in any new project by maximizing passive open space.

IV. PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

A. IMPORTANCE OF PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Chapters II and III of this Plan include many recommendations for directing the growth and development of the Village of Rockton over the next 25 years. While some of these recommendations may be applied directly and immediately to certain decisions the Village can make, other recommendations will require subsequent Plan implementation activities. This section of the Plan summarizes these activities.

The following implementation steps are included directly in this Plan for two reasons. First, addressing these topics in the Plan will help establish their legal defensibility later. For example, changes to a zoning ordinance are far more defensible if they are designed in accordance with a comprehensive plan. Second, including implementation recommendations provides specific direction to the Village follow-up actions to fully realize the vision, objectives, and recommendations contained in this Plan. Where specific implementation steps are not pursued to forward the recommendations of this Plan, each new decision or development project will tend to take the Village *away* from Comprehensive Plan recommendations. Particularly in a place like Rockton, which currently enjoys an excellent balance between the quality of life and the cost of living, failure to implement this Comprehensive Plan will be missing a golden opportunity which cannot be cost-effectively corrected or overcome by public expenditures.

Table 3 summarizes the main recommendations outlined in this section.

B. PLAN ADOPTION AND AMENDMENTS

A first step in implementing the Comprehensive Plan is making sure it is adopted in a manner which supports its future use for more detailed decision making. The following is the recommended process to adopt this Comprehensive Plan. This process is in full compliance with Illinois Statutes.

1. Village Planning Commission holds a public hearing on the Plan, then recommends that the Village Board adopt the Plan.
2. Village Board holds a public hearing on the Plan, preceded by not less than 15 days notice of the hearing in the community newspaper
3. Following the public hearing, the Village Board adopts the Plan by resolution. The Comprehensive Plan becomes effective ten days after the Village Clerk files notice of its approval with the County Recorder.

Once adopted, the Village should provide copies of the Comprehensive Plans to all appropriate government agencies and districts. In general, all proposed development that follows should be made to conform to the adopted Plan. Where logical amendments to the Plan are proposed, the Plan should be amended prior to development approval following the procedure outlined above. Although more time consuming, this more rigorous approach will ensure that the Plan remains vital and meaningful.

The Village Planning Commission should annually gauge progress on plan implementation, and review Plan recommendations for logical amendments based on changes in conditions within the Village. A more detailed review and update of the Plan should be performed every five to ten years.

C. PLAN IMPLEMENTATION RECOMMENDATIONS

1. More Detailed Planning Efforts

By its very nature, this Comprehensive Plan is general in many of its recommendations. The Plan does, however, advise the preparation of more detailed plans over the next several years to provide more specific guidance in key areas. These plans are described in greater detail elsewhere in this report, but are summarized as follows:

- Prepare a Comprehensive Parks and Open Space Plan for the entire community to identify the desired location, improvements, and costs for planned Village parks and bicycle and pedestrian system improvements

- Prepare an Economic Development Action Plan for the Village, which would include (a) an identification and analysis of opportunities and constraints for economic development in the community; (b) specific recommendations for economic development projects, redevelopment opportunities, potential public/private partnerships, and incentives and funding initiatives; and (c) an implementation strategy.
- Prepare a Village Center District Master Plan including the following components: (a) downtown and riverfront master plan, (b) design guidelines for downtown and surrounding historic neighborhoods, (c) streetscape plan for the entire “Village Center” area, (d) master plans for the development of two riverfront parks, and (e) conceptual redevelopment plans for the former Wagon Wheel property.
- Prepare a Sidewalk Plan and Policy for the Village
- Prepare or require Neighborhood Development Plans for each of the planned neighborhood areas shown in Map 5.
- Support the update of utility master plans prepared by the various utility districts in a manner which reflects the recommendations of this Comprehensive Plan.

2. Regulations

a. Zoning Ordinance

Strategic amendments to the Village’s 1994 zoning ordinance should be pursued to implement the land use and community character recommendations of this Plan. In particular, the Village should incorporate the following changes to its zoning ordinance:

- Incorporate building design standards in the “Design Review” section of the zoning ordinance which reflect desired high-quality design and respect for the historic, small town character of the community. Use multiple-family housing, commercial, and industrial development policies in Chapter II of this Plan as a basis for these updated standards, and incorporate downtown design standards prepared as part of the Village Center District Master Plan.
- Institute modern landscaping, screening, and natural area preservation standards. The Village should consider implementing a tree protection ordinance as development occurs in and near wooded areas in the south side growth area.
- Realign uses and standards within various zoning districts and create new districts where necessary. Specifically, the Village should create a neighborhood commercial zoning district, and permit only small-scale, low impact uses in that district. The Village should also consider creating a small-lot single family zoning district (e.g., minimum lot size of 8,000 square feet) to permit the development of owner-occupied “traditional neighborhoods” in the community. Finally, the Village should make larger commercial buildings (over 50,000 square feet) and larger multiple family dwellings (over four units per building) conditional uses in the zoning districts in which they are permitted.
- Rezone properties where necessary to match the land use plan map recommendations.
- Consider a Downtown Design Overlay District and Entryway/Community Corridor Overlay District.
- Update site access, parking lot design, and lighting standards to reflect desired development character.

b. Subdivision Ordinance

This Comprehensive Plan recommends a complete update to the Village’s subdivision ordinance to implement this Comprehensive Plan. The Village’s current subdivision ordinance meets basic requirements, but often does not include modern, detailed standards for lot layout, street design, park dedication, and lots created in the Village’s extraterritorial review jurisdiction. In particular, the Village should incorporate the following changes to its land division ordinance:

- Require that subdividers conduct and submit detailed analyses of existing site conditions before submittal of tentative plats, including wetland and floodplain boundaries and locations of mature trees. This will assure that environmental protection, stormwater management, view protection, and other community character objectives of this Plan can be met.
- Include more specific parkland dedication requirements (e.g., required acreage, required public street frontage, condition of land at time of dedication) and perhaps institute a park *improvement* fee in addition to land dedication or fees in-lieu-of dedication.
- Update design standards to meet residential development policy recommendations included within Chapter II of this Comprehensive Plan and Map 5. Updated design standards should also have as their goal assuring continuity in the community's development pattern, rather than having each subdivision operate as its own isolated enclave.
- Require stormwater management practices which result in post-development stormwater run-off from the site being equal to or less than pre-development conditions, and meet other policy goals included in Chapter III, Section D of this Plan.
- Institute a street tree planting requirement.
- Adopt detailed language which clearly specifies procedures and responsibilities for installation of public improvements.
- Adopt standards for review and approval of lots within the Village's extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ). The Village may apply size, density, and layout standards specific to lots outside the Village limits. For example, the Village's subdivision ordinance could require that lots created in portions of the extraterritorial jurisdiction designated as *Agriculture/Vacant* on the land use plan not exceed an overall density of one lot per every 35 acres owned by the property owner. Alternatively, intergovernmental agreements could be entered to assure that Village objectives can be met without exercising the full ETJ authority.

c. Official Map Ordinance

The Village should prepare and enforce an Official Map. Planned new arterial and collector road rights-of-way, drainage facilities, and proposed park and utility locations should be included on the Official Map. All new development proposals would then have to comply with the recommendations of that Official Map.

d. Stormwater Management Ordinance

The Village should prepare a general stormwater management ordinance applicable to all public and private development proposals in the community.

3. Financing

The financial implications of planning are of increasing importance. This Plan establishes and reinforces the validity of public expenditures for streets, utilities, parks, and public buildings and sites. More importantly, mapping logical land use patterns, transportation systems, and recreation facilities will help the Village to more accurately predict costs and benefits of alternative public investment options and private development decisions. Finally, the Comprehensive Plan establishes a legally valid base level of analysis--the future land use and transportation pattern—for the imposition of impact fees. The following financial planning tools should be used and strengthened to help implement the recommendations of this Comprehensive Plan.

a. Capital Improvements Program (CIP)

The first component of a comprehensive municipal financing system is the Capital Improvements Program (CIP). The CIP is essentially a budget that allocates municipal funding to various projects over a three to ten year period. The recommendations of this Plan will assist the Village in identifying and prioritizing a list of possible capital projects. An intermediate level analysis which translates the Plan's

land use and transportation system recommendations into levels of facility demand, and then projected costs, will be necessary before accurate capital costs can be projected.

b. Impact Fees

The land use, transportation, and recreational facility recommendations of this Plan allow the Village to evaluate a number of different fee alternatives designed to ensure that the costs associated with providing service to a new development are borne by that development and not the general taxpayer. Illinois law validates the use of impact fees for a wide variety of facilities which concern municipalities. In particular, the Village of Rockton should explore the use of impact fees to fund at least part of the following capital projects: park improvements, off-site stormwater management systems, off-site road improvements, schools; and new and expanded municipal buildings (e.g., administrative, police, fire, library). The Village should work with surrounding municipalities and Winnebago County to promote relatively equal impact fees across communities.

c. Development Review Cost Recovery

Development review services in the Village are currently provided primarily by in-house Village staff and the Plan Commission, with occasional assistance from engineering and legal consultants. The Village has the ability to adopt regulations that ensure that the costs incurred by the Village to hire experts are reimbursed or pre-paid by the applicant whose project is initiating the cost. The Village should consider adopting such regulations to fund, at least in part, ongoing current planning assistance to the Plan Commission.

4. Intergovernmental Relations

The multi-jurisdictional environment in which this Plan is prepared entails, by necessity, a complex set of intergovernmental relationships which must be taken into account.

a. State Relations

The Illinois Department of Transportation and Illinois Environmental Protection Agency are actively involved in programs and policies which directly affect—and are affected by—local land use decisions. Local recognition and, where appropriate, promotion of the policies of these agencies is an imperative coordination tool. State policies are also implemented through aggressive promotion of “best practices” for the mitigation of the impacts which land use decisions have on transportation facilities and environmental resources (e.g., access control, stormwater management). Finally, controlled growth and compact development served by sanitary sewer facilities, as promoted through this Plan, will accommodate population pressures in a manner which minimizes adverse impacts on systems of Statewide importance.

Over the planning period, this Plan strongly recommends close coordination with State agencies on several specific issues. This includes cooperative efforts with Illinois DOT on issues related to Highway 75 and coordination with Illinois EPA on floodplain issues. The Rockton Sanitary District may wish to apply to the Illinois EPA to expand the boundaries of Rockton’s Facility Planning Area (FPA) to reflect planned community expansion. The limits of Rockton’s current FPA are depicted in Map 1 of this Plan.

b. County Relations

The Village of Rockton intends to work closely with Winnebago County to jointly implement shared planning objectives for the Greater Rockton area, and to identify and resolve any differences. The Village supports the County’s plans for farmland preservation in rural areas, and directing most growth to urban areas where a full range of urban services are available. Specific areas of cooperation should be

directed towards implementation of forest preserve and trail improvements, and in coming to mutual understanding on development goals and practices at the fringes of the Village.

c. Local Government Relations

The Rockton area is expected to grow as a result of many forces that are beyond the control of the Village. In order to ensure that this area will maintain its high quality of life, coordination of plans and development actions between the local jurisdictions in the area will be necessary. Such coordination can occur via one or more of the following methods.

(1). Extraterritorial (ETJ) Powers

This local power enables the Village to develop plans for lands within its ETJ, review and act on land divisions, and adopt official map requirements. Except under conditions of poor intergovernmental relations, the use of ETJ zoning and plat review authority is marginally effective at implementing Village objectives. Such use also results in a heightened level of intergovernmental tension.

(2). Intergovernmental Planning/Agreements

An alternative to the broad use of ETJ powers which often yields far superior short-term results, entails the use of informal intergovernmental planning. The Village should seize any opportunity for such informal planning with neighboring communities. In particular, this Plan recommends that the Villages of Rockton and Roscoe arrive at an intergovernmental agreement addressing future boundaries, community separation, and development practices. Intergovernmental planning with Machesney Park and the Township of Rockton will continue to be importance on areas of mutual concern.

d. Other Important Relations

The Village should work with the Hononegah High School District on the potential for incorporating into the proposed high school expansion project a true community center for residents of all ages. The Village should work with the Rockton School District on joint recreational facility development on and near the new middle school site, and on the future siting of a future elementary school in the south side Village growth area.

The Village should work in close coordination with the various independent districts providing community services and utilities to the Rockton area.

5. Village Procedures

The final key to successful plan implementation entails the processes used to review development proposals and take municipal actions. The most effective results are produced by proposal review systems which integrate plan recommendations, regulatory controls, professional staff recommendations, appointed body consideration, and elected official actions.

a. Role of Plans

This Comprehensive Plan and subsequent detailed planning efforts should guide review of typical development proposals and public investment actions. All private proposals, public policy proposals, and Village spending decisions related to land use and economic development must be reviewed by the Village Planning Commission prior to final Village Board approval. Such land use and economic development reviews should be based on *consistency* with this Comprehensive Plan.

b. Role of Regulations

This Plan advises the review and update of the Village's development regulations. Ideally, planning related regulations should provide a bridge between the recommendations of adopted plans and the proposed development review or public investment decision. Regulations are the "law of the village," and therefore should be abided in all cases. The village should not "negotiate away" its ordinances through pre-annexation agreements or other means.

c. Role of Village Staff

Municipal staff and hired consultants must assist applicants in following procedures, and provide officials with all information necessary to make informed decisions. Staff should help applicants refine their proposals to bring them into full consistency with established policies and standards of Village plans and ordinances. This Plan advises the professionalization of Village staff through the hiring of a Village Administrator.

d. Role of Advisory Boards and Commissions

Advisory boards and commissions should evaluate proposals from a substantive, rather than a political, point of view. As individuals and as a group, they are less constrained by political expediency. Therefore, they should feel comfortable challenging applicants and staff to make the best possible case for their proposals and recommendations. This Plan recommends the formation of a Park District Board and Historic Commission to manage activities related to these respective areas of interest.

e. Role of Elected Officials

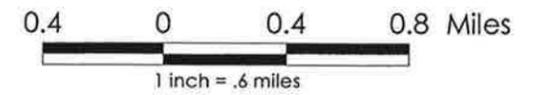
Elected officials must make their decisions from the standpoint of overall community impact—tempered by site-specific factors. They must balance plan recommendations, ordinance requirements, applicant objectives, staff advice, and recommendations of advisory boards with their own judgment.

Table 3: Major Recommended Plan Implementation Strategies

CATEGORY	STRATEGY
Detailed Planning	Prepare Community-wide Park and Open Space Plan Prepare a Community-wide Economic Development Strategy Prepare Village Center District Master Plan
Ordinances	Prepare strategic amendments to zoning ordinance Prepare full update to the subdivision ordinance Prepare an Official Map to reflect recommended roads, parks, and other facilities
Financing/ Administration	Incorporate recommendations of Plan into Capital Improvements Program Explore impact fees for parks and other community facilities Hire a Village Administrator to manage administrative, planning, finance Designate a Park District/Board and a Historic Commission
Intergovernmental	Work with IDOT on Highway 75 planning issues Work with the county, school districts, and utility districts on shared objectives Pursue intergovernmental boundary agreement with Villages of Roscoe and Machesney Park
Evaluation	Reference Plan maps and policies when making decisions on developments Conduct annual evaluation of progress in achieving Plan recommendations Update this Comprehensive Plan every five to ten years

Jurisdictional Boundaries

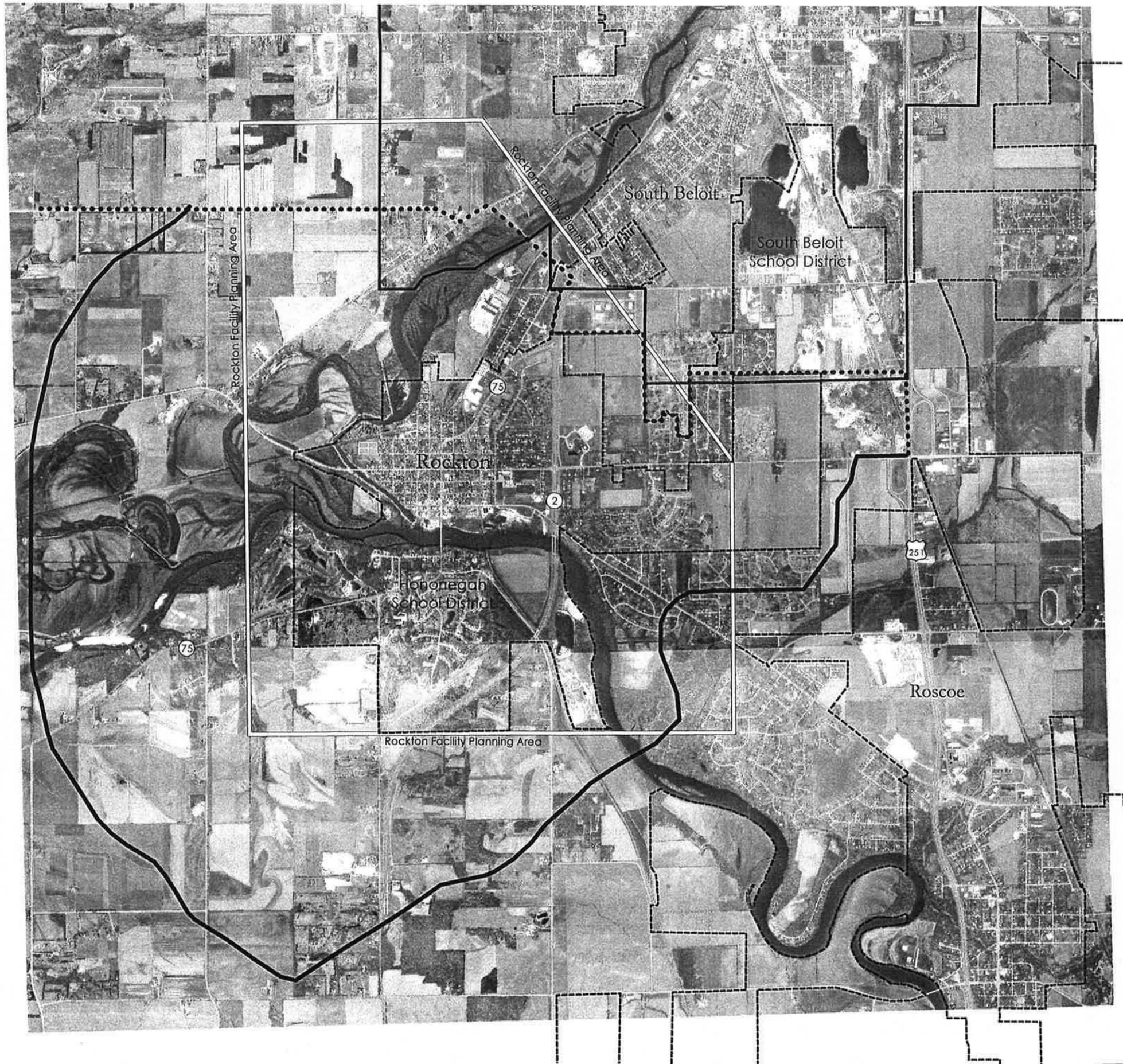
-  Extra-Territorial Jurisdictional Boundary
-  Adopted Boundary Agreement
-  City Limits
-  School District Boundary
-  Rockton Facility Planning Area



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Sources:
Aerial Photography: Winnebago County 1994.
Facility Planning Area: Illinois EPA-Bureau of Water 1994.
Governmental Boundaries: US Census Bureau 1995.

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Natural Features

-  Rockton Existing Village Boundaries
-  Other Municipal Boundaries
-  Watershed Boundaries
-  Treelines or Proposed Landscape Buffers
-  Wetlands
-  Existing Forest Cover

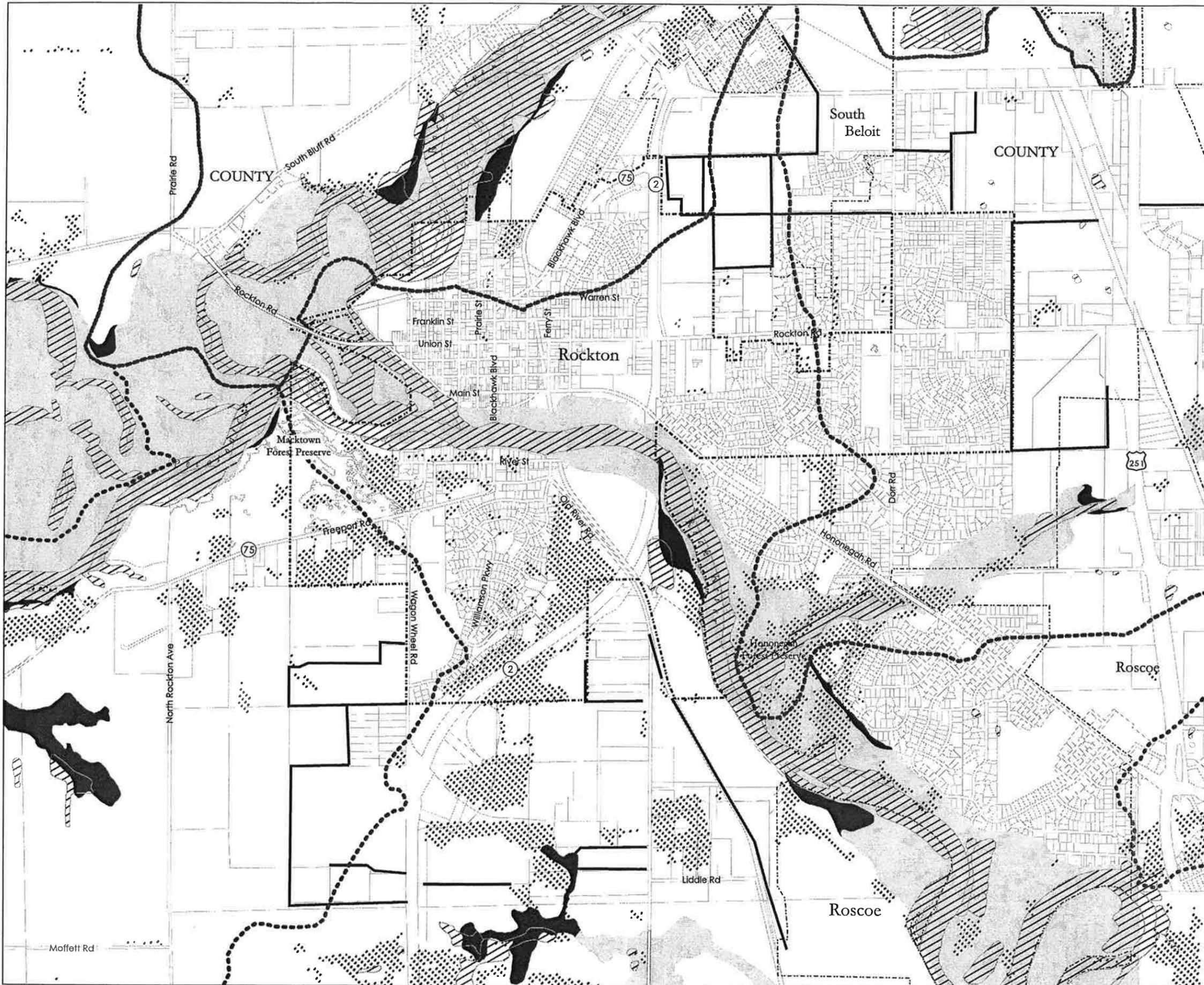
- Floodzones
-  100 year
 -  500 year



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Sources:
Parcels: Village of Rockton 1999.
Rail: Illinois Department of Natural Resources 1996.
Environmental Data: Illinois Department of Natural Resources 1996.

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Existing Land Use

-  Historic District
-  Treelines
-  Rail
-  Village Boundaries
- Existing Land Use
 -  Agriculture/Rural/Vacant
 -  Rural Residential
 -  Single Family Residential
 -  Two-Family Residential
 -  Mixed Residential
 -  Neighborhood Office
 -  Planned Office
 -  Neighborhood Business
 -  Planned Business
 -  General Business
 -  Central Mixed Use
 -  Planned Industrial
 -  General Industrial
 -  Institutional
 -  Active Recreation
 -  Passive Recreation
 -  Environmental Corridor
 -  Cemetery
 -  Extraction
 -  Surface Water
 -  Road Rights-of-Way
 -  Unbuilt Road Rights-of-Way



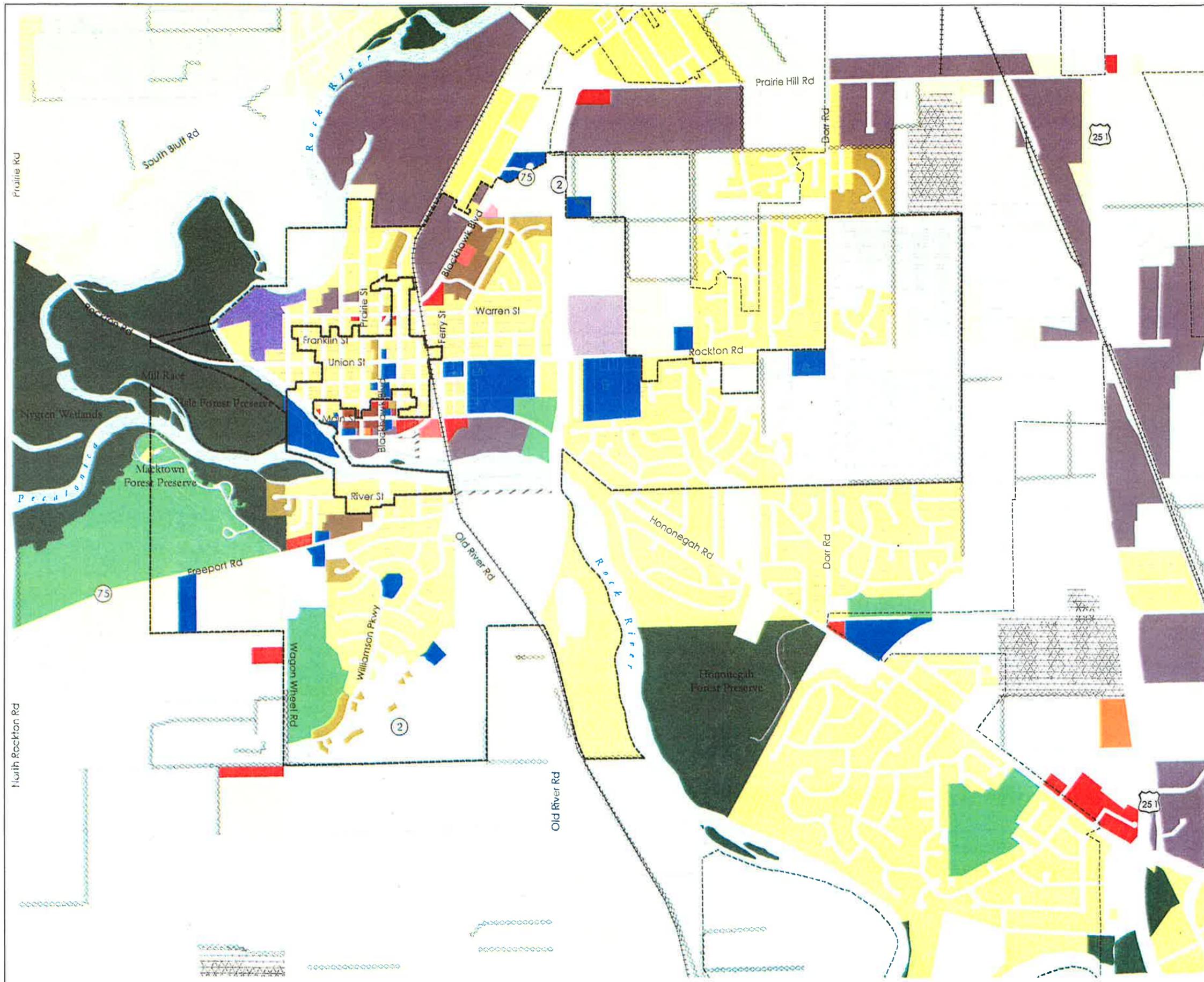
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Sources:

Parcels: Village of Rockton 1999.

Rail: Illinois Department of Natural Resources 1996.

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Community Opportunity Plan

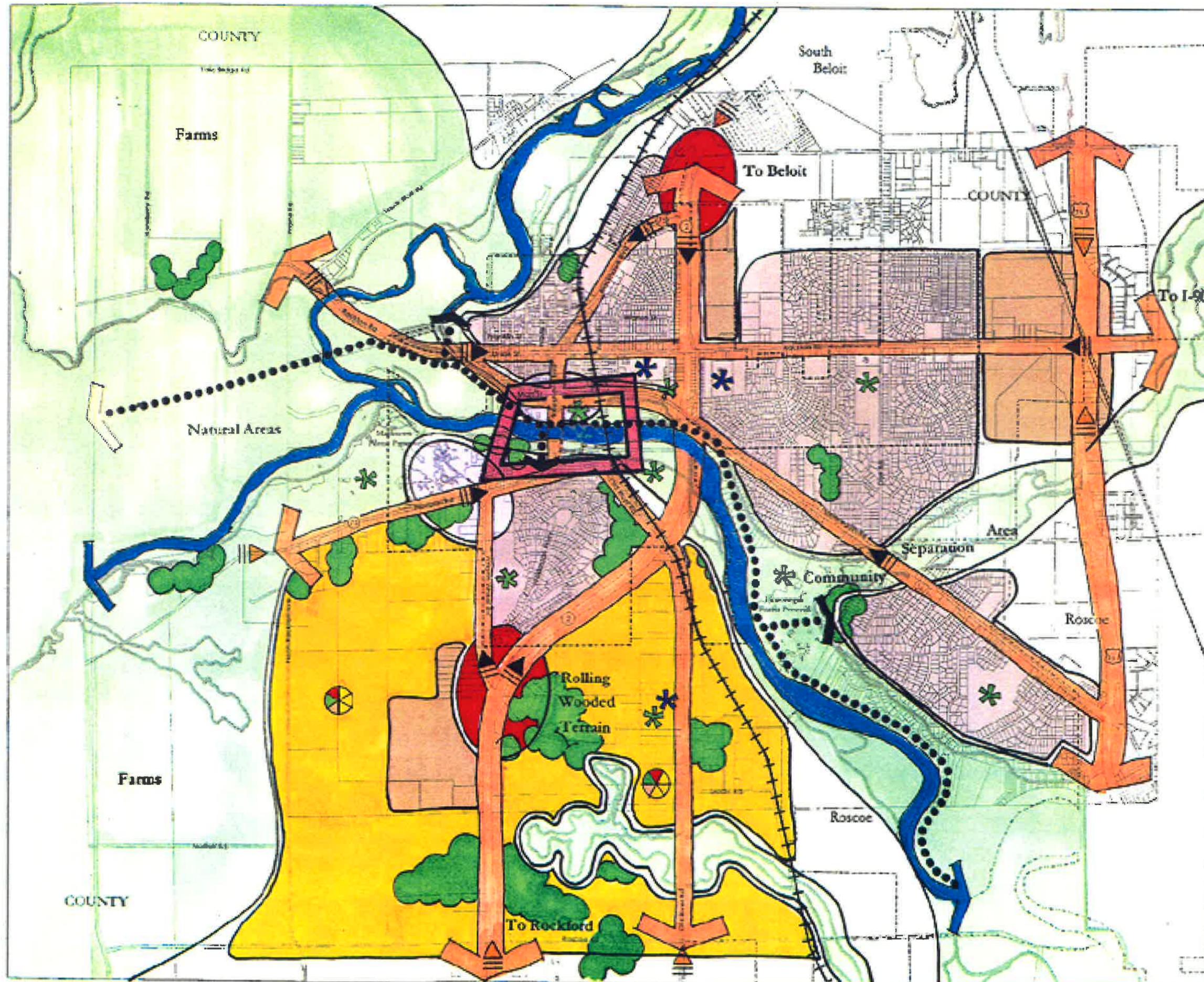
-  Existing and Planned Major Parks & Open Spaces
-  Existing and Planned Schools
-  Outer Community Edges
-  Inner Community Edges
-  Village Center Activity District
-  Commercial Districts
-  New Job Centers
-  Redevelopment/Restoration Districts
-  Planned Neighborhoods (Mixed Land uses)
-  Existing Neighborhoods
-  Green Corridors
-  Major Wooded Areas
-  Community Roadway Corridors
-  Main Bicycle/Pedestrian Corridor
-  Railroad Line



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Sources:
Parcel: Village of Rockton 1999.

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Planned Land Use

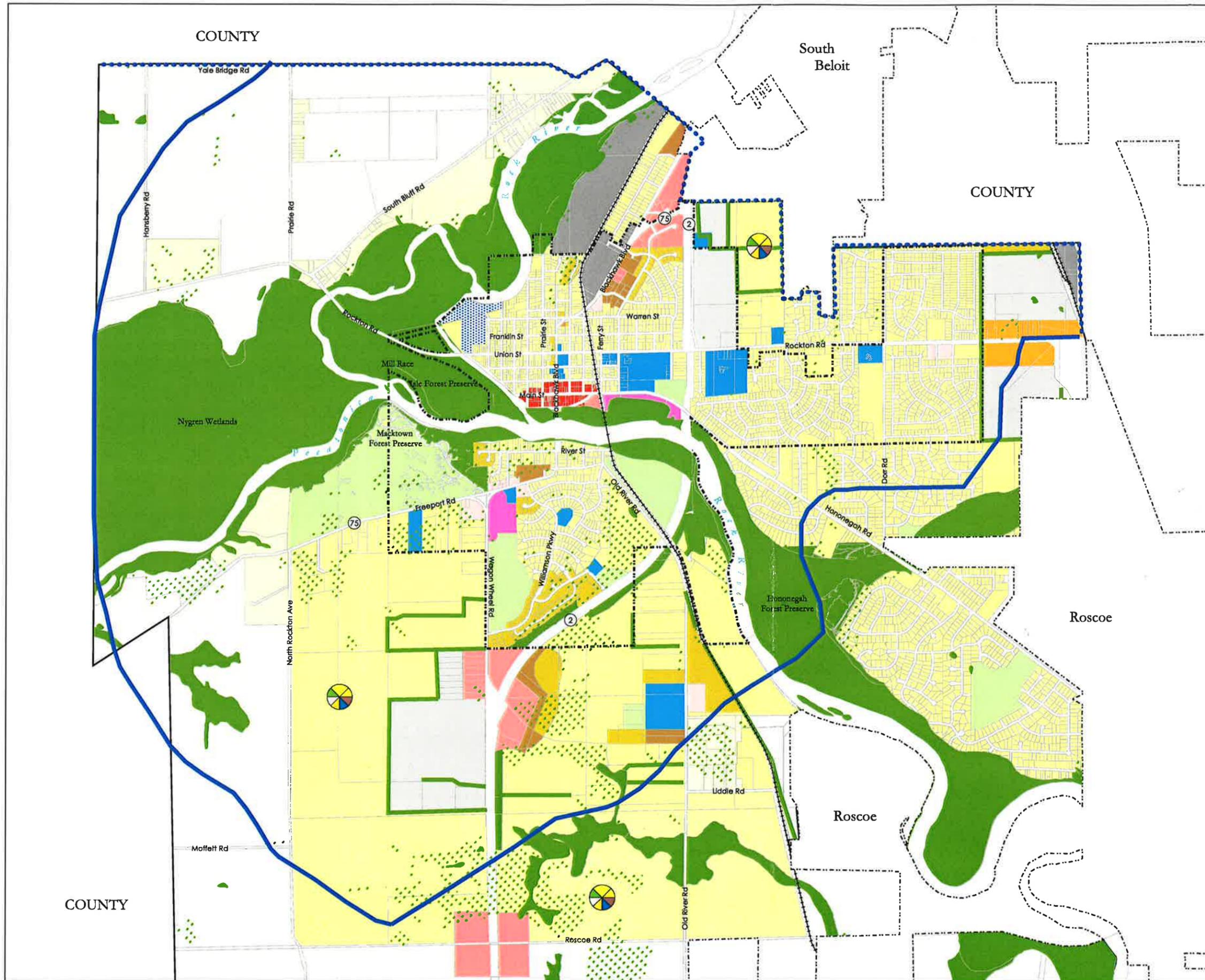


Note: Shapes on map represent general recommendations for future land use. Actual boundaries between different land use types and associated zoning districts may vary somewhat from representations on this map.



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 Sources:
 Parcels: Village of Rockton 1999.
 Rail: Illinois Department of Natural Resources 1996.
 Boundaries: Illinois Department of Natural Resources 1996.
 Environmental Data: Illinois Department of Natural Resources 1996.

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Transportation & Community Facilities Plan

Transportation Facilities

- Active Rail Lines
- Existing Roads
- Proposed Bike/Pedestrian Trails & Routes (Off & On Street)
- Existing Bike/Pedestrian Trails & Routes (Off & On Street)
- Proposed Bicycle/Pedestrian Crossings
- Recommended Intersection Improvements
- Potential Passenger Rail Station Site
- Continued Roadways
- Continued Bikeways

Planned Road Rights-of-Way Widths*

- 80 Feet (60 Feet where not labeled)
- 100 Feet

Community Facilities

- Existing Public Parks
- Proposed Public Parks
- Possible Public Safety Building Area
- New Middle School Site
- Municipal Boundaries

*Not all future roads shown on map. Additional local roads will be necessary to serve development.



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Sources:
Rail: Illinois Department of Natural Resources 1996.
Boundaries: Illinois Department of Natural Resources 1996.

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