

Downtown in the Comprehensive Plan 2010

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Kendig-Keast summaries of public input incorporated in the Comprehensive Plan

How should the future land use, recreation, and environmental needs be met?

- “Future expansion of the City needs to be concentrated and close to existing development as an environmental benefit. Keep leapfrog development to a minimum.”
- “Carbondale needs to create a character of its own versus having strip malls like every other town.”
- “We need a Downtown with more businesses and activities. There need to be more options for dining, shopping, and entertainment.”
- “Carbondale has the opportunity to be natural and urban together. However, there are few instances of recent development that do a good job of blending the two strategies together.”
- “The idea of infill is to preserve old structures rather than to tear them down and replace them with new buildings. We need to capitalize on our history and the significance of buildings.”
- “There are more incentives necessary for Downtown rather than standards and regulations only.”
- “The community needs more green space, trails, and better sidewalks.” What improvements are necessary for better mobility?
- “The Amtrak service is highly valued by students as a way to get in/out of town. Connections to Amtrak via the Saluki Express.”
- “There need to be ‘free-moving’ pedestrian corridors between the University and Downtown, and between Downtown and the hospital. Shopping and restaurants could be more accessible to students through a stronger connection.”
- “Stronger connections are needed between Downtown and nearby neighborhoods. Many residents bike and walk, or would like to do more so, but obstacles exist that prohibit safe mobility. Linkages are important to the viability of both the neighborhoods and Downtown.” How to address existing and future housing and neighborhoods?
- “The recent housing market has improved with the recent addition of new units. There are now more options, which have helped the housing situation. However, there is a concern as to the future of the older housing stock owned by individual owners. What happens to them now that there is a greater supply in the market?”
- “A general aim is to develop housing closer to amenities. Many workers commute to Carbondale from other places.” When asked why, ‘housing issues’ are a primary concern. How to maintain and improve the Carbondale atmosphere for business and job growth?
- “Carbondale is not a boomtown that rapidly rises and falls, but is representative of more steady growth. At the same time, there are strong connections to the University’s student population, which acts as a base for the community. The University’s influence (losing and gaining students) affects the community in many ways.”

- “The ‘brain drain’ issue is real and there is a need to introduce students to the opportunities available in the region before they leave for other areas.”
- “We must continue to think regionally and act locally. There is much strength in the larger region, within 50 miles. We must continue to work together through the Southern Illinois Leadership Group and others.”
- “Our natural environment is a major attraction to this area. This must be preserved and protected if it is to remain an asset.”
- “Economic development opportunities were viewed to be in the medical field as well as retirees (aging as an asset). However, senior services and mobility concerns loom as potential issues.”
- “Economic development potential exists both on the airport property as well as adjacent sites.” p. 1.14 Downtown
- To emphasize public and private improvements that help establish Downtown as a focal point for all Carbondale’s citizens.
- To maintain the character of the Downtown while continuing to serve a variety of local markets.

VISION section. 1.15

Carbondale will be home to one of the most vibrant downtowns in the region with many cultural activities, art studios and entertainment venues. In addition, the downtown will provide a variety of retail services, professional uses, and restaurants that attract residents at all times throughout the day. The availability and large variety of desirable student housing options, coupled with the University’s many educational, research, and sports opportunities, will attract an increasing number of students.

GOALS section. 2.2

Develop and redevelop Downtown to become a local and regional destination of culture, entertainment, and community gathering.

Focus Area 2.3: Downtown Renaissance

- Strategy 1: Strengthen Downtown as a viable place to conduct business.
- Strategy 2: Position Downtown as a unique local and regional destination.
- Strategy 3: Re-establish the traditional urban character of Downtown.
- Strategy 4: Improve connections to, through, and within Downtown and its surrounding neighborhoods.

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Parks

Another example of a park improvement that might involve the City, would be the addition of a park in the Downtown area. While this park may only involve City planning and guidance, it will still need to be a group effort from start to finish. While it was noted that the City has established a number of Plazas in the Downtown, it is lacking a traditional park for young families to gather and socialize. While the Town Square Pavilion serves as a focal point for the community and provides a venue for public events, a Downtown park could provide a greater variety of options. In addition, a skateboard park could provide another gathering spot for local youth, though a location Downtown may not be the best option. There has also been public support for a dog park in Carbondale. While many residents are able to utilize the existing parks for dog walking purposes, they do not have a dedicated dog area. A dog park should be considered in any future park improvement plans.

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Focus Area 2.3 - Downtown Renaissance

Downtown Carbondale was once the center of commerce and community activity. As in City centers across the country, the focus of Downtown has shifted away from its central retail activity to more offices, services, and government. The transition of Downtown has occurred over many years and is the result, among others, of the following key factors:

- An increased reliance on the automobile establishing a market for auto-oriented strip shopping centers and malls. This draws retail out of the core of the city and to the fringe of the community.
- The emergence of big box stores attracting fast food restaurants and small retailers to nearby sites away from Downtown.
- Specifically in Carbondale, perhaps the most significant influences were the Federal (U.S. 51) and State (IL 13) highway improvements creating one-way pairs through Downtown. This had the effect of increasing traffic and speeds and, in turn, deteriorating the pedestrian environment. (see Figure 2.11, Downtown Character).

Before the roadway widening and traffic improvements, Downtown had more of an urban character. Remnants of this pattern remain today, made visible by pedestrian-scaled block frontages along Illinois Avenue, on-street parking rather than large off-street surface parking lots, and mostly hidden rear parking and loading areas. While foot traffic remains, it is much less than it once was and less than what is most desired.

The major street projects have served to break the direct connections to the University and each of the nearby neighborhoods. This is due to major at-grade street crossings, deteriorating or missing sidewalks, and interruptions of pedestrian ways by driveways and parking lots. This has broken the ties and the natural synergies that underpin a sense of place and are common among successful downtowns.

There are great opportunities to repurpose Downtown. This is to say that it will not be what it once was, but it may be re-established as a destination for culture, entertainment, and community gathering, with a healthy compliment of local shops and eateries. Doing so will require a commitment to restore the market attraction and redesign the environment and reintroduce an urban fabric. This means a combination of economic initiatives and physical improvements to create a business-friendly environment that is both accessible and walkable.

A recent amendment to the zoning code now takes a step to preserve the streetscape and urban character. The Primary Business (BPR) district is intended to “protect the community created values by: encouraging uses serving primarily pedestrian oriented traffic; discouraging uses requiring large areas of land in proportion to pedestrian traffic generated; and encouraging intensive use of land.” This element of the zoning code advances several concepts that promote quality design; yet, there are additional changes to better equip the district to forge the desired character. An appropriate mix of uses is essential, including vertically integrated residential over retail uses, as well as higher-intensity attached-living integrated within or on the immediate fringes of Downtown. Moreover, the boundaries of the Downtown may warrant realignment and expansion.

The “community created values” generally articulated by residents and stakeholders through the initial public involvement process included, among others, the following statements regarding Downtown:

- “Downtown needs to be turned inside out and made more walkable and attractive to students.”
- “There need to be “free-moving” pedestrian corridors between the University and Downtown and within Downtown. Shopping and restaurants could be more accessible to students through a stronger connection.”
- “We need a Downtown with more businesses and activities. There need to be more options for dining, shopping, and entertainment.”
- “Carbondale’s Downtown needs a defined “district” and a single identity. Downtown needs to serve students, as well as the whole community.”
- “Downtown needs outdoor spaces together with a multitude of other activities and things to do. These spaces must be accessible and attractive..”

Therefore, it is apparent that the community seeks a renaissance of Downtown. The vision of Downtown and the general recommendations are expressed by this Plan.

Strategy 1: Strengthen Downtown as a viable place to conduct business.

Rationale

Presently, Downtown does not have an identity as a cohesive district. Rather, it has evolved as a collection of individual businesses without a strong synergy. As the renaissance of Downtown is initiated, the impediments for locating and operating long-standing and stable, economically viable businesses must be overcome. After all, there are many other possible choices that may offer better appeal for locating a business. There must be a reason for deliberately choosing Downtown, whether it is the dynamic of the University, hospital, or nearby neighborhoods; a draw to the heart and history of Carbondale; or attractive incentives. Other barriers may include land or lease rates, available floor space, obsolete buildings and code compliance issues, or access and parking, among others.

Actions and Initiatives

- a. Leverage the Enterprise Zone to create incentive packages to attract the identified target businesses to locate, or relocate within Downtown.*
- b. Continue to provide grants through the Downtown Façade Improvement Fund, as well as the grants offered through Carbondale Main Street including the Façade with Signage Grant, Architectural Design Assistance Grant, and Rear Entrance/Alleyway Grant. Seek sources of funding*

through foundations, fundraisers, or state-sponsored programs to increase these and potential other grant amounts.

- c. Seek tools and financing mechanisms to increase the amount of incentive that is available in Downtown, with a particular focus on those businesses interested in the adaptive reuse of existing buildings.*
- d. Consider forming a new tax increment financing (TIF) district or expand the existing district(see Insert Six). The funds generated by the district may help reduce the extra cost and risk that private development may face in Downtown, which may make it more competitive relative to locations outside of the district. These funds may also be used for improvement projects that provide direct benefit to the district.*
- e. Consider forming a Business Improvement District (BID) to organize Downtown businesses and for the purpose of funding improvements to the district's public realm. The BID would also oversee the management of the district and address issues of common concern to district owners.*
- f. Review and make warranted changes to the permitted use types within the BPR, Primary Business, district. Reconsider some of the currently permitted uses such as drive through services, repair services, and automotive sales and service. Integrate height and floor area incentives into the regulations for placing non-retail businesses on the second floor or above.*
- g. Collaborate with Memorial Hospital to establish a plan for their long-term expansion, as well as other associated medical offices and service-related uses. This plan should be an integral part of the Downtown master plan and carefully designed so as to complement one another.*
- h. Encourage shoppers to patronize Downtown businesses through a buy-local campaign.*
- i. Incorporate nighttime shopping events and programming that can bring life to Downtown after 5:00 p.m., thereby encouraging a vibrant "24/7" nightlife. This type of activity will be particularly attractive to students and young adults and families who seek such amenities and cultural attractions in their community.*

Strategy 2: Position Downtown as a unique local and regional destination.

Rationale

The circumstances of Downtown have changed dramatically over the years. The nature of business has shifted away from its traditional primary retail role to one of government, institutions, and offices, combined with a lesser amount of retail services. Since the retail focus has moved to the primary corridors, particularly in East Carbondale, Downtown must create a new identity that is solely unique to the community and region. It must position itself so as not to compete for the typical retail outlets, instead targeting a niche market with an orientation toward culture, entertainment, and community gathering. This will naturally attract complimentary retail uses such as restaurants, coffee shops, and unique local retailers.

Given its central location among the City's well established neighborhoods and its proximity to the University, Downtown is well-situated to cater both to residents and students, as well as regional visitors and tourists. The nature of businesses and the types of activities and attractions must appeal to all sectors.

Actions and Initiatives

- a. Perform a study to define the market potential of Downtown as to its regional economic capture, saleable/leasable square footage, and likely rate of absorption. Identify the range and preferred mixture of use types, along with a retention and attraction strategy and target marketing approach.*
- b. Solicit professional assistance in developing a brand identity for Downtown. This could include an advertising campaign and production of related media materials.*
- c. Through the course of the recommended master plan, identify a design theme for the Downtown district. This may include parameters of architecture, signage, lighting, streetscaping, and public art and amenities. The theme should allow individual expression while ensuring a semblance of design cohesiveness.*
- d. Prepare a multi-year implementation program to initiate the recommended strategies and improvements of the master plan and market, branding, and design studies. The program should outline implementation authorities and responsibilities, specific timelines, and the methods and means of funding for each individual project.*
- e. Based upon the design theme and branding studies, create new street signage that is unique for the Downtown district.*
- f. Design and install distinct monuments and gateway treatments at the primary entries to the Downtown district, along with unifying design elements like vegetated walls, decorative lighting, street and sidewalk patterns, and other unique design treatments.*
- g. Develop a public art program for Downtown that compliments the city-wide program. The program should implement the master plan recommendations as to the locations of art installations and the parameters of thematic design.*

Strategy 3: Re-establish the traditional urban character of Downtown.

Rationale

Over time, the pattern of buildings and parking lots has dramatically shifted the character of Downtown from an urban to an auto-urban character. This is caused by the placement of buildings relative to the street and the percent of highly valued Downtown property that is devoted to surface parking and accessways. As a result, the pedestrian orientation of Downtown has declined in favor of the automobile. If the City is to re-establish Downtown as a destination and seize its economic opportunities, it should reconsider the form and design of development and specifically how parking is handled and treated. Actions and Initiatives

- a. Prepare a Downtown master plan that is of sufficient detail to result in a regulating plan that illustrates the intended arrangement and form of development. This would include general lot and block arrangements, typical building footprints to reflect general character and scale, public spaces, and contextual relationships with existing uses and adjacent properties (see Figure 2.12, Downtown Urban Enhancement Concept, page 2.30).*
- b. Utilize the Downtown plan to amend the BPR, Primary Business, district to specify allowable parking configurations, such as mid-block only lots, as well as building form standards including building massing, height, building placement, allowable frontage types and conditions, and*

allowable encroachments. The use of such standards may allow more general use types with a greater emphasis placed on design.

- c. Integrate into the BPR, Primary Business, district floor area bonuses for vertical mixed use buildings, shared and/or structured parking, and LEED certified buildings. Also consider allowances and incentives for first floor retail and entertainment uses with upper floor office, institutional, and residential uses.*
- d. Include attached residential dwellings as a special use within the BPR, Primary Business, district. Additionally, consider rezoning the fringes of Downtown for more intensive urban residential uses. This may include housing for mature residents as a means for increasing the Downtown population while offering convenient access to community services and University activities.*
- e. In the interim, before the master plan and regulating plan are prepared, amend the BPR, Primary Business, district to require a site design study to evaluate alternative siting and configurations of parking, subject to the review and recommendation of a Downtown Advisory Board.*
- f. Appoint a Downtown Advisory Board for the purpose of overseeing the master plan process and to review and consider the appropriateness of development and redevelopment projects. The Board should include representatives of the Planning Commission, Preservation Commission, and Carbondale Main Street, as well as Downtown business and property owners and a design professional.*
- g. Develop design standards to guide the construction of new and improvement of existing buildings to ensure compatibility of the architecture and cohesiveness with the historic integrity of Downtown.*
- h. Conduct a Downtown parking study to evaluate the existing and planned use types² and their respective space requirements. Utilize the findings to determine the options to provide adequate parking. Study the alternatives and feasibility of public versus private and surface versus structured parking.*

Strategy 4: Improve connections to, through, and within Downtown and its surrounding neighborhoods.

Rationale

While there are existing street connections from the surrounding neighborhoods to Downtown, many of them lack adequate sidewalks and street crossings. Also, due to the current design, speeds, and volumes of traffic on U.S. 51/University Ave/Illinois Ave and IL 13/Main Street/Walnut Street, there are significant barriers of access for pedestrians and bicyclists. Therefore, to aid in the success of Downtown, there must be improved linkages that are both direct and safe. Additionally, the existing rights-of-way need to become complete streets, meaning they are redesigned to better serve pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit vehicles. These improvements are particularly warranted in Downtown as its function and character are intended to be pedestrian-oriented.

Actions and Initiatives

- a. Collaborate with the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) to identify alternatives and seek new solutions to improve the street cross-sections, pedestrian crossings, and streetscapes along U.S. 51 and IL 13. Also, coordinate with them in reviewing the Thoroughfare Plan (see Chapter 3, Community*

- 2 The planned use types would be based upon the recommended business use study. Mobility) as to possible alternatives to reroute tractor-trailer traffic out of Downtown. b. Perform a design study to evaluate the options to reduce the crossing widths of Downtown streets. In many instances, the current widths are 70 feet or more, making it difficult and unsafe for suitable pedestrian crossings.
- c. Use street trees, building canopies and awnings, covered walkways, and other design treatments as pedestrian shelter from inclement weather.
- d. Improve the pedestrian experience in Downtown with active storefront displays, informational and interactive kiosks, public seating, pedestriant scaled lighting, landscaped planters, public art displays, sidewalk cafes and displays, and points of historical references.
- e. Create a plan for pedestrian precincts and civic spaces within the Downtown district with connections to a city-wide network of sidewalks, bike lanes, pathways, and green ribbons.
- f. Reconnect each of the adjacent neighborhoods to Downtown by way of sidewalk maintenance, improvements, and/or construction; handicap accessibility improvements at intersections including curb cuts and ramps; pedestrian and bicycle actuated signal detectors; increased signal timing for pedestrian crossings; possible alleyway pathways; and on-street, striped bike lanes.
- g. Identify improvement projects to create better pedestrian and bicycle linkages between Downtown and the University. Such improvements may include crosswalk improvements along Mill Street with an improved and widened (as possible) esplanade on Mill Street to act as a refuge for pedestrian crossing.
- h. Provide adequate infrastructure and capital budget support for multimodal projects. An example of a strategic multimodal investment would be making the Washington Street corridor a “complete street,” which may include an onstreet bike lane, improved sidewalks, and streetscaping enhancements.
- i. Identify commercial and residential properties that are experiencing, or at risk for experiencing, disinvestment and decline. Special emphasis should be placed on the corridors and entrances to Downtown.
- j. Establish a targeted infrastructure improvement program with identified funding incentives and administrative assistance to aid in their redevelopment and aesthetic improvement.
- k. Adopt and enforce provisions that reduce blighting influences on corridors and in neighborhoods.

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Chapter 2. Land Use Character and Community Growth

Strategy 2: Redevelop Town Square

Rationale

Town Square is the site of the original town settled along the Illinois Central Railroad. Locally and historically significant buildings including The Dunaway Block and the F.A. Prickett Building, along with the Town Square Pavilion, remain (see Figure 2.13, Historic Properties). The recent demolition of the Tuscan Lodge changed – at least in the near term – the traditional fabric of this historically significant area. Near the same time, several other buildings on the east side of Washington Street, both north and south of E. Main Street, were removed, opening great new opportunities for returning Town Square to

its glory days. Its location serves as a gateway to Downtown and its proximity to the railroad affords great opportunity.

Actions and Initiatives

- a. *Conduct a small area plan for Town Square, with boundaries extending from Oak Street on the north to Walnut Street on the south and from Illinois Avenue to Marion Street on the west and east, respectively. The purpose of the plan is to conceptualize its redevelopment as means for drafting standards to ensure an urban character.*
- b. *Consider expansion of the Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district to supplement the incentives available through the Enterprise Zone.*
- c. *Evaluate the feasibility of installing permanent facilities necessary to support the operations of the farmer's market within the parking lot adjacent to the railroad and north of E. Main Street. An alternate site would be south of E. Main Street.*
- d. *Transition the redevelopment with the adjacent businesses and neighborhoods through extended public improvements, on-street parking restrictions, and standards for rear elevations, buffering of loading and service areas, and light and noise.*

p. 3.13 Chapter 3. Community Mobility –

In these more densely developed areas, there must be an increased level of attention to design features and treatments.

In 2008, the City submitted an application for the Illinois Green Streets Initiative. This funding request was for tree planting along Grand Avenue, Giant City Road, Walnut Street, Main Street, and portions of U.S. 51, and while this grant was not funded it may be used as a basis for future planning. This proposal was consistent with the objectives of the Forestry Management Division, the charges of the Keep Carbondale Beautiful and the Carbondale Park District, as well as the input of residents received during this planning process. This is among the many opportunities for corridor enhancement. Others include:

- Pavement texturing in strategic locations such as Downtown, around SIU, entrances to historic and other special districts, etc.
- Public art displays (e.g. sculptures, monuments, etc.) in the public right-of-way. • Pedestrian amenities like benches, trash receptacles, planters, low-level lighting, and interpretive displays.
- Preservation and/or enhancement of natural features such as woodlands, wetlands, prairielands, etc.
- Upgraded standards for light poles and fixtures, as well as signal poles and mast arms.
- Parallel facilities such as trails, green utility corridors, etc.

They suggest a streetscape master plan p. 3.17

Multi-modal project noted p. 3.21

there has been public dialogue as to the warrant for a multimodal transit center at (or near) the Downtown Amtrak Station. This would allow better coordination of routes, times, and providers, thereby potentially increasing ridership and generally improving local and regional mobility. It

could also serve as an impetus for a significant mixed use Downtown redevelopment project focused around a transit station. It could be a central hub for a citywide transit system with connections to the Amtrak Service to Chicago, Greyhound service to St. Louis and Chicago (and beyond), direct transfers to Jackson County Mass Transit (see Figure

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Actions and Initiatives

- a. Study the warrant for and feasibility of a multi-modal transportation center at or near the Amtrak Station in Downtown Carbondale. An expanded complex or entirely new facility should be contemplated near the existing station. Improvements will not only include expanded access, but can include aesthetic improvements as well. One current initiative displayed in Figure 3.15, Amtrak Station Improvements is the sound wall and art installation that serves as a sound buffer for adjacent residential units while offering a home for public art displays.*
- b. Seek to become actively involved in the state discussions concerning the improvement of Amtrak's Illinois routes (now operating between Chicago and Carbondale, St. Louis, and Quincy). While most current studies are focused on upgrading the Chicago to St. Louis route to 110- mile per hour service, there is interest in improving all the Midwest rail lines. Presumably, studies would be performed on the Carbondale route in the future to analyze the possibility of rail infrastructure improvements.*
- c. Coordinate with the officials of the Canadian National railroad to further improve safety conditions at all railroad crossings. The City may consider the designation of "quiet zones" whereby passing trains are prohibited from sounding their horns in order to decrease the noise level for nearby residential communities. The train horns can be silenced only when other safety measures compensate for the absence of the horns.*

Chapter 4 – Housing

p. 5.4

Focus Area 4.4 – Designing neighborhoods and developments as special places

- d. Continue to monitor investor interest in Downtown residential projects, including attached single-family, multi-family, and residential-over-retail opportunities. Work with private interests to pinpoint and remove or reduce barriers to new development and redevelopment in and around Downtown.*

Chapter 5 Economic Development p. 5.4

Focus Area 5.2: Maximize the potential of Southern Illinois Healthcare and Memorial Hospital of Carbondale as an economic development tool.

- Strategy 1: Encourage the future growth and expansion of Memorial Hospital of Carbondale.*
- Strategy 2: Develop a plan to link the Hospital with the downtown to integrate the hospital as a part of downtown.*
- Strategy 3: Provide assistance with the location of an extended stay facility or the development of urban housing options for employees of the hospital.*

Focus Area 5.4: Revitalize Downtown and connect the City's major downtown institutions.

- *Strategy 1: Redevelop the area connecting the downtown with the University, and Memorial Hospital. This includes, among other areas, "the Strip" and the Town Square.*
- *Strategy 2: Work to retain and expand existing storefront businesses and maximize adaptive reuse of upper floors for office and work / live lofts.*
- *Strategy 3: Expand the size and visibility of the City's arts, culture, and tourism markets.*
- *Strategy 4: Improve the physical appearance of the streetscape and infrastructure through adoption of development standards that will lead to a consistent identity.*
- *Strategy 5: Continue supporting Carbondale Main Street in programs and services provided to market downtown for new business investments.*

5.4 Plan Focus Areas and Strategic Recommendations

Focus Area 5.1 – Maximize and leverage the resources of SIU to expand and enhance the economic growth of Carbondale and the region.

Strategy 1: Partner closely with SIU to improve the physical setting surrounding the campus including new on/off campus housing and upgraded infrastructure.

Rationale:

Carbondale lacks a strong "college town" atmosphere where the campus is tightly knit into the fabric of the community. This partly has to do with the scale of campus buildings and the different periods and styles of development immediately adjacent to it. It also has to do with the fact that the campus grew up around the City rather than the other way around. The result is a campus in the City but not of the City.

Although aesthetics and the physical environment can sometimes be overemphasized in terms of what they mean for economic development, they do affect the community's overall place-quality and have strong implications for talent attraction. A stronger town-gown relationship manifested in buildings, streets, and land uses that relate to each other and visually connect the City to the campus, would help Carbondale seem more collegial and would likely improve the flow of people and commerce between them. It may also help the City better capture the expenditures resulting from visitations to the campus.

There is strong evidence suggesting that prospective students, as well as campus-bound retirees, select not just the school, but the whole community. Therefore, it seems plausible that a more integrated and unified urban environment with attractive and interconnected on-campus and off-campus districts would help attract more people to the community. As cited in Chapter 2, the Washington Street corridor is one opportunity area for connecting the University and Downtown (Figure 5.3, Town-Gown Connections). Additionally Illinois Avenue (known locally as "The Strip") lacks a unified identity and connectivity to the campus.

To create a stronger college town brand identity, the City and SIU must continue to work closely together on major development projects; particularly at the edges of campus. The goal would be to mesh boundaries, balance infrastructure needs, and ease movements between the campus and the

larger community. The ultimate goal is to help the campus realize its full potential as an economic driver, downtown redevelopment catalyst, and brand identifier for the City and region.

Actions and Initiatives

- a. Work collaboratively to redevelop the campus town area as a mixed-use, transit-served urban neighborhood facing Mill Street.*
- b. Seek ways for the City and University to “go green” together by coordinating: recycling programs, the bulk purchase of fleet vehicles, the sourcing of local products and services, co-investing in redundant, clean energy and cogeneration pilot projects, etc.*
- c. Adopt a policy allowing (solicit) broadband vendors to place fiber-optic conduit in streets during major roadwork and utility extension projects.*
- d. Seek State and Federal funding to establish a fully functioning downtown WIFI district.*
- e. Integrate the university’s transit service into all corners of downtown. Coordinate this service with other transit modes (existing and planned).*

5.9 Actions and Initiatives:

- a. Schedule regular recruitment visits to the business incubator to meet promising business owners; impress upon them that the City wishes to keep them in the City as they grow to scale; and advise them of the potential locations, incentives, and assistance available through the City.*
- b. Encourage entrepreneurship education/training at the high school and technical college levels.*
- c. Talk with SIU, arts groups, and private developers on the potential for an arts incubator in the city – preferably located Downtown.*
- d. Conduct regular dialogues with the Office of Regional and Economic Development on the need for business accelerator facilities to compliment the incubator. Work to locate sites and developers when the opportunities arise.*
- e. Aggressively assist SIU in expanding or creating newer phases of the University Research Park as demand warrants; including assistance with land assembly and infrastructure. Demonstrate leadership in regional initiatives, such as Connect SI, that seek to expand local broadband services.*
- f. Seek opportunities to joint-venture on shared City/campus cultural and recreational facilities.*
- g. Solicit the development of a downtown hotel and supporting commercial and residential uses to better serve visitors to SIU and Memorial Hospital, and maximize the capture of visitor spending.*

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Healthcare and Memorial Hospital of Carbondale as an economic development tool

Strategy 1: Encourage the future growth and expansion of Carbondale Memorial Hospital.

Rationale:

Since opening their doors in 1959 Memorial Hospital of Carbondale has become a dominate employer for the community and region and has continued to expand their facilities and healthcare services. Memorial Hospital, as depicted in Figure 5.4, Memorial Hospital, is part of the Southern Illinois

Healthcare System and is the largest facility in their system serving southern Illinois as a regional medical center. The Hospital is located on West Main Street just west of the downtown and is surrounded predominately by residential neighborhoods. As a major employer and healthcare provider for the region, and as a major generator of visits into the City, the Hospital is integral to the regional economy. Therefore, an ongoing dialogue with the Hospital administration and SIH management to discuss ways to enhance the hospital's plans to expand needs to be initiated as part of the City's own economic expansion plans.

Actions and Initiatives:

- a. Schedule periodic meetings (quarterly or semi-annually) with the Hospital Administration to develop strategies and initiatives that would mutually benefit the Hospital and the community.*
- b. Review the existing zoning and land uses of the area bordering the Hospital and identify areas that may be suitable for future expansion of facilities.*
- c. Consider infrastructure improvements in the area that would accommodate and support future Hospital expansion.*

Strategy 2: Develop a plan to link the Hospital with the downtown to integrate the hospital as a part of downtown.

Rationale:

Memorial Hospital is strategically located in the core area of Carbondale immediately west of the downtown area. The Hospital fronts along West Main and University Avenue providing easy vehicular access to the Hospital complex. However there is a perceived disconnect to the downtown due to the location along two major highways with heavy traffic volumes. The large daytime population at the Hospital, including employees and visitors, should warrant some efforts to improve the connectivity of the Hospital to the downtown.

Actions and Initiatives:

- a. As part of plans to improve the streetscape of downtown, ensure that improvements extend along West Main Street to the Hospital.*
- b. Improve street lighting to encourage walking and provide security.*
- c. Coordinate a "shop and eat downtown" campaign with Carbondale Main Street geared toward Hospital staff, employees and visitors.*
- d. Look at ways to enhance direct physical connections and linkages to the Hospital.*

Strategy 3: Provide assistance with the location of an extended stay facility or the development of urban housing options for employees of the hospital. Rationale:

The Hospital continues to add more professional medical staff and serves as a facility where doctors are completing their training in residency. As the hospital continues to grow, the demand for housing will grow as well. This demand will create opportunities to provide short term and long term housing options. Preferably such housing can be located in close proximity to the Hospital and the Downtown where essential services are easily accessible and many young professionals desire to live.

Actions and Initiatives:

- a. Form “task force” comprised of Hospital and City representatives to assess the needs for housing and explore options that could fill this need.*
- b. Research financial programs that could be blended together to develop a multiuse project.*
- c. Inventory and prioritize potential sites and locations*

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Focus Area 5.3

Strategy 2: Continue to support the Enterprise Zone and encourage the use of additional programs including TIF districts that would encourage new economic growth.

Rationale:

The City of Carbondale has a state designated Enterprise Zone that encompasses part of the downtown as well as other major business and industrial areas within the City. Through the Enterprise Zone, businesses that locate or expand their facilities are entitled to certain local and state tax related benefits. In addition to the Enterprise Zone, the City established a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District in 2004 that encompasses 31 acres of the downtown. The TIF provides direct financial benefits focusing on bringing new investments to the downtown. Both of these programs have been successful in stimulating new business investments and are important components of the City’s overall economic development program.

Actions and Initiatives:

- a. Develop guidelines for the redevelopment of properties owned by the City in the downtown and actively solicit developer proposals.*
- b. Explore the expansion of the TIF District to include areas that are suitable for development.*
- c. Consider forming public/private redevelopment organization with the authority to acquire property and advance projects.*

p. 5.13-5.16

Focus Area 5.4 – Revitalize Downtown and connect the City’s major downtown institutions

Strategy 1: Redevelop the area connecting the downtown with the University and Memorial Hospital. This includes, among other areas, “the Strip” and the Town Square.

Rationale:

As suggested elsewhere, Downtown Carbondale lacks a clear focal point and the kind of urban density that would make it truly active and explorable. The streets connecting its major features are thinly developed and carry high volumes of traffic, and most of the housing is of older stock and low value. All of this creates a downtown that is attractive and interesting in certain spots, but not in totality. There is also a lack of synergy and economic spillover between some of the important attractions located in and near downtown, including the University and Memorial Hospital, resulting in a likely loss of economic capture from the tens of thousands of visitations to these institutions each year. Many of the recommendations below overlap with, or reiterate those cited in Focus Area 1, and Chapter 2.

Actions and Initiatives:

- a. Create a redevelopment agency to lead the redevelopment of catalytic projects downtown, such as new urban (market-rate) housing and mixed-use projects. Redevelopment should be targeted to sites that are clearly blighted and those that help fuse together important centers of activity within close proximity to major employment nodes.*
- b. Work with Carbondale Main Street to put together an interactive database of downtown properties, their ownership, use, size, tax assessment, special features, and availability for rent or sale.*
- c. Conduct a developers'/brokers' roundtable to assess developer interest in downtown and the type of desired City or redevelopment authority support.*
- d. Identify potential sites and solicit interest in a new downtown hotel from developers and hotel operators.*
- e. Work on aggressive code enforcement downtown to eliminate eyesores and encourage repairs and rehabilitation of older historic buildings.*
- f. Expand or create a new TIF district, and look for opportunities to assemble larger redevelopment sites. Solicit developer interest in redeveloping larger parcels.*
- g. Experiment with a peak-time shuttle-loop service connecting SIU, Memorial Hospital, the Town Square, and the Civic Center.*

Strategy 2: Work to retain and expand existing storefront businesses and maximize adaptive reuse of upper floors for office and work / live lofts.**Rationale:**

An effective way to revitalize downtown is to help existing retail businesses prosper and recruit new businesses to provide a service not previously existing. Many downtown businesses are one-of-a-kind and exhibit a uniquely local flavor. Basic efforts to help these businesses stay alive, through “buy local” campaigns and outreach programs intended to extend technical and financial assistance, are sometimes forgotten in communities’ efforts to recruit new businesses. At the same time, upper floors are often under utilized and vacant . Adaptive reuse to apartments or office space can provide economic benefits to both the downtown and to those who own the building.

Actions and Initiatives:

- a. Work with Carbondale Main Street and the Carbondale Chamber of Commerce as a joint venture to encourage co-marketing and the promotion of special events, and to build support for a potential future Business Improvement District (BID).*
- b. Expand/promote the City’s façade loan program to include outright façade grants, and work to connect existing businesses to other available business development resources.*
- c. Work to encourage the launch of a “buy local” campaign with the Carbondale Main Street.*
- d. Highlight and recognize local businesses that choose to locate downtown.*
- e. Identify buildings with under utilized upper floor space that could be converted to apartments or other suitable uses and help owners understand the benefits. Strategy 3: Expand the size and visibility of the City’s arts, culture, and tourism markets.*

Rationale:

The presence of SIU infuses the City with a cultural atmosphere that is unusual for a City of its size. As the main talent center for the region, Carbondale has the opportunity to exploit the cultural vibe already present in the City to new business and tourism opportunities. Building the City's art and culture scene coincides with a focus on local entrepreneurship and is also an important piece of an overall talent attraction and retention strategy. A stronger arts presence would also strongly position Carbondale as the figurative "visitor center" for the region, supporting (and capitalizing on) its growing tourism and retiree markets.

Actions and Initiatives:

- a. Work with Carbondale Community Arts and other local arts groups to establish an arts guild. Determine interest in the formation of an arts co-op or arts incubator to be located in a visible downtown location.*
- b. Work with Carbondale Main Street to sponsor an art walk and gallery night event, and special public art installations. A recent public art installation can be found at Friendship Plaza, as depicted in Figure 5.5, Public Art Installation.*
- c. Support and promote the efforts of the Southern Illinois Music Festival in extending cultural music experiences to area residents of all ages and backgrounds. Encourage the use of venues throughout Carbondale and expand the tourism potential of this popular program.*
- d. Encourage the small business development center to develop a special entrepreneurship module specifically oriented to artist-run businesses.*
- e. Encourage local businesses to sponsor or commission special arts projects. Seek financing through local foundations, corporate sponsors, and TIF/BID revenues.*
- f. Solicit developer interest in creating affordable artist (live-work) housing downtown with ground-floor gallery space.*
- g. Consider public art displays to be exhibited on a rotating basis on the town square and other public places.*

Strategy 4: Improve the physical appearance of the streetscape and infrastructure through adoption of development standards that will lead to a consistent identity.**Rationale:**

The overall physical appearance of the downtown including streets, sidewalks, lighting and other public infrastructure is present appearance of the downtown infrastructure lacks uniformity.

Actions and Initiatives:

- a. Develop design guidelines for new projects including uniform streetscape design standards.*
- b. Prioritize streetscape improvements and seek funding programs to help cover the costs.*
- c. Continue to provide funding to businesses for façade improvements. Strategy 5: Continue to provide support to Carbondale Main Street in programs and services to market downtown for new business investments.*

Rationale:

Carbondale Main Street (CMS) is an organization recognized by the City to promote downtown redevelopment and revitalization. The organization receives funding from the City along with tax revenue from a Special Service Area and membership fees and donations. Besides recruiting businesses and promoting the downtown for new investments CMS also hosts events to attract residents downtown.

Actions and Initiatives:

- a. The City should continue annual financial support to maintain the operations of Carbondale Main Street.*
- b. Encourage City staff to participate by sitting on the Board of Directors and serve on active committees.*
- c. Support the extension and expansion of the Special Service Area as a means to finance the operations of CMS.*
- d. Continue the bi-annual downtown walk with City staff to help identify areas that require improvement.*

p. 5.19 - call-out

REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Unlike most TIF joint review boards, which are mainly involved in the technical aspects of district management and periodically responding to funding requests, a Redevelopment Authority is typically charged with actually leading the implementation of a downtown master plan. Working as an arm of City government, and with the assistance of City staff, they are actively involved in such things as: land development strategy, property acquisitions, deal structuring, loan underwriting, developer recruitment, and the negotiating of developer agreements. They are not building developers or property managers in the typical sense, but instead work on the land assembly and financing side of development. However, in cases where public buildings are planned, they may act as project developer of record. Most redevelopment authorities operate as an agent of the City and serve at the pleasure of the Mayor and City Council. In some cases, they have bonding and condemnation authority, although this is usually the exception and not the rule.

Board members consist of council members and other motivated advocates for Downtown who can contribute valuable knowledgeable in areas such as business planning and development, financial management, real estate development, construction management, legal, marketing and promotions. Redevelopment Authority boards generally serve under the aegis of the City Council and are supported by dedicated community development staff. Their funding typically comes from TIF revenues, block grants, and development fees. The advantage of redevelopment authorities is their power to act on behalf of (and sometimes with the full faith and credit of) the City and their dedicated funding streams. Disadvantages include their beholdeness to public process, which can prevent them from acting quickly or with confidentiality as opportunities arise, and can expose their dealings to City “politics”.

p. 5.22 – Call-out

DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Development Corporations are sometimes structured the same way as redevelopment authorities and can be involved in the same types of activities. The term “development corporation” however, usually connotes a higher degree of autonomy from City government and is often structured as a private or

public-private non-profit organization. They sometimes operate with a board that is independent of City government and rely more heavily on creating and managing their own sources of operating capital. It is also somewhat more common for corporations to be involved in activities other than just real estate development to include the administration of low-interest loan pools that support business and economic development. Operating capital often derives from the ownership and management of real estate assets, private donations, development and financing fees, and fees from tax exempt bonds and special taxes. The Carbondale Business Development Corporation (CBDC) is an example of a development corporation already established in Carbondale.

Advantages of development corporations generally include their ability to act with greater confidentiality and speed; especially when it comes to real estate deals where agility and privacy can be very important. When they are structured autonomously from City government, development corporations can also help take some of the politics out of public-private joint ventures and can operate more effectively in the tax credits markets where they can act as syndicators. They can also solicit tax deductible donations from foundations and other philanthropic entities whereas most purely public entities are prohibited from doing so. They are also frequently used as pass-through vehicles for tax exempt government bonds. Disadvantages of the typical development corporation structure include their self-supporting nature and frequent lack of dedicated public financing. This often means a precarious financial existence and sometimes a greater amount of time and energy spent raising money and managing overhead than actually doing deals. Finding solid leadership can also be a problem, especially in communities with a weak culture of community involvement and leadership outside of regular government channels. Some development corporations are off-shoots of existing organizations, such as special councils and chambers of commerce.

Chapter 6 – Implementation

6.7 Call-out

SETTING A DIRECTION FOR ACTION

A mock task prioritization exercise was completed with members of the City Council, Planning Commission, and Plan Review Committee prior to final consideration of the proposed Comprehensive Plan. Through this informal exercise, participants ended up rating a set of initiatives that originate from various sections of the Plan involving neighborhoods and Downtown, infrastructure, economic development, and housing conditions – all of which will require particular types of tasks to achieve, as discussed in this chapter.

This type of ranking exercise, and the ensuing workshop discussion of implementation opportunities and challenges, demonstrates the value of considering Plan implementation priorities among the City's leadership. It is essential that implementation priorities be revisited annually to recognize accomplishments, highlight areas where further attention and effort is needed, and determine whether some items have moved up or down on the priority list given changing circumstances and emerging needs. One should keep in mind that the early implementation of certain items, while perhaps not the highest priority, may be expedited by the availability of related grant opportunities by a State or federal mandate or the willingness of one or more partners to pursue an initiative with the City. On the other hand, some high-priority items may prove difficult to tackle in the near term due to budget constraints, the lack of an obvious lead entity or individual to carry the initiative forward, or by the community's readiness to take on a potentially controversial new program.