



Chapter seven

Unique Areas

Introduction

Unique areas exist throughout the City, which due to location, attributes or use have a special character that is not well defined by other sections of this plan. The City has three unique areas; Downtown, Virginia Street Corridor and Three Oaks Recreation Area and surrounding area. Additional areas can be added to this section as they require the need for unique goals, actions and indicators.

The first unique area is the Downtown. Downtown is the heart of Crystal Lake and has a certain character related to the diversity of businesses, location of the Metra train station and setting for numerous annual events. The second area is the Virginia Street Corridor. This is an older area primarily developed with retail and service uses. The uses are highly auto centric with numerous gas stations and businesses with individual surface parking lots. The City has established a TIF District for this area, which will improve the pedestrian environment and spur economic redevelopment through streetscape improvements. The third area is Three Oaks Recreation Area and the properties around the periphery. Three Oak Recreation Area (TORA) has been established as a multi-use recreational area by the City. TORA includes sand beach areas, multi-use paths, picnic areas, splash park and playground and boat rental facilities. The importance of this chapter is to establish goals and success indicators for each of these unique areas that enhance their characteristics.

Individual Unique Areas, Goals, Actions and Indicators

7.1 Downtown



Goal:

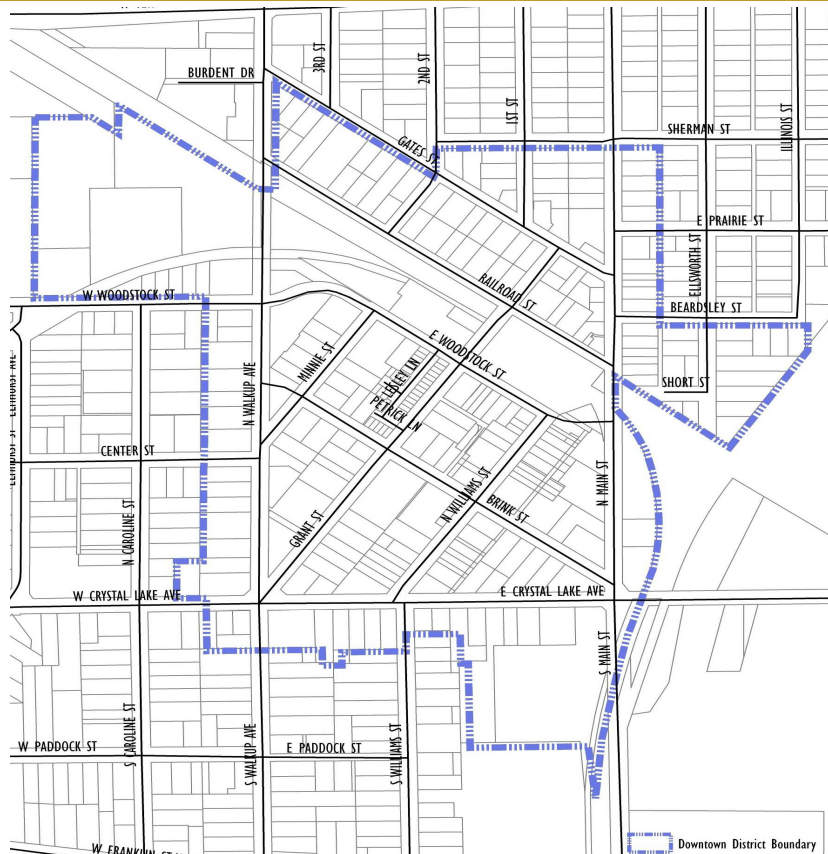
Promote the unique architectural, historical, and social aspects of the downtown to stimulate economic and social vitality.

Downtown is the most visible sign of our heritage. If the downtown is not active, then the City loses its focal point. The downtown district has been thriving the last several years. Vacancies are almost nonexistent and new independent businesses have opened. Many exciting promotional activities bring families from all over to the downtown area. These include the Johnny Appleseed Festival and Festival of Lights Parade. The Raue Performing Arts Center is a major draw in the already bustling downtown. The importance of the downtown district should be considered in relation to the surrounding uses.

The Downtown Comprehensive Plan, adopted in 1996, examines the existing conditions within the study area. Also, the land use section discusses zoning, use categories, building conditions and architectural and historic content. The transportation section reviews the street network, parking facilities, bike paths and bike accommodations, rail and other transportation modes. These components need to be balanced to ensure a thriving downtown.

The Main Street group are dedicated volunteers who strive to preserve and enhance the Historic Downtown district as the heart of Crystal Lake and provide for a successful business and residential environment that communicates a sense of community pride, heritage and small town wholeness as a lasting legacy for future generations. In addition, the Main Street Group has developed Design Guidelines to assist downtown property owners in appropriately renovating and restoring their buildings.

	Supporting Actions	Success Indicators
7.1a	Promote various activities downtown.	Growing attendance at various downtown events.
7.1b	Protect the rich architectural heritage of the downtown area so as to maintain its unique and desirable character.	Adoption of a Downtown Historic District. The number of grants awarded for historic renovations on Downtown historic properties.
7.1c	Strengthen the economic base of the downtown while diversifying it.	The number of new occupancies Downtown for “chain” stores. The number of new occupancies Downtown for “mom and pop” stores. The creation of cohesive marketing materials for visitors that identify historic themes.
7.1d	Support and maintain existing cultural facilities, programs and events.	Creation of a walking tour. Location of art clusters through the use of tools such as incentives and art incubators. Increased Raue Center events.
7.1e	Promote Downtown housing.	The identification of sites for housing. The approval of mixed use housing projects.



DOWNTOWN DISTRICT

Individual Unique Areas, Goals, Actions and Indicators

7.2 Virginia Street Corridor



Goal:

To promote and enhance the corridor as a viable commercial district, through encouraging aesthetic improvements and appropriate land uses, while maintaining the unique character of the corridor.

The Virginia Street Corridor (VSC) is a section of Route 14 that runs from Carpenter Street slightly past Linn Avenue. The VSC contains approximately 25 acres, with about 3,600 lineal feet of frontage on the east side and about 2,500 lineal feet on the west side. This section of Route 14 is one of the busiest state roads in McHenry County, which is excellent for the retail potential along this corridor. The corridor is within a Tax-Increment Financing District (TIF). This TIF District was established with the goal of enhancing the aesthetics, landscaping, streetscape, signage, shared parking and overall pedestrian environment within this corridor.

The area is an existing commercial corridor, but has numerous buildings and sites that are vacant or in need of redevelopment. The TIF will fund the initial streetscape improvements with the goal of jump starting the economic redevelopment of the area. In addition, through the Unified Development Ordinance, an overlay district for the VSC has been established. The overlay district outlines Design Standards that must be followed during renovation and redevelopment of buildings or properties within the corridor.

The City completed the VSC streetscape project in 2011. The pedestrian enhancements have made a dramatic difference in the appearance of this corridor.



	Supporting Actions	Success Indicators
7.2a	Ensure compliance with VSC Design Standards.	Number of variations from Design Standards.
7.2b	Encourage investment in private property.	Number of building permits issued for redevelopment or renovation on site. Number of properties with streetscape improvements on private property. Number of occupancy applications.
7.2c	Encourage livelier pedestrian environment through development and redevelopment.	Approval of attractive urban design elements such as outdoor seating and attractive storefronts. Parking areas located to the rear so as not to intrude on pedestrian activity.
7.2d	Encourage installation of public art in the corridor.	Establishment of a public art program.



McCormick Park Plaza

Individual Unique Areas, Goals, Actions and Indicators

7.3 Three Oaks Recreation Area and surrounding properties



Goal:

Maintain Three Oaks Recreation Area as a premier recreation asset and as a focal point for appropriate redevelopment along the Route 14 and Main Street corridors.

Previously mined for its sand and gravel, the 475-acre Three Oaks Recreation Area is located north of Rakow Road, south of Route 14, east of Main Street and west of Pingree Road. Containing two lakes, a beach, boat access, hiking trails, a bike path, and fish and wildlife habitats, the property is a tremendous natural and recreational asset to the citizens of Crystal Lake and a resource of regional significance, with two of the most pristine lakes in northern Illinois.

Properties along Route 14 north of the Three Oaks Recreation Area as well as within the Crystal Court Shopping Center represent an outstanding redevelopment opportunity and could provide a new gateway to the Three Oaks Recreation Area. These properties sit atop a massive stone plateau overlooking the lakes and offering excellent views of the water. The City's vision for this area includes a mixed-use commercial development that combines the traditional retail functions of a shopping mall but with leisure amenities and with a greater integration of residential, retail, and civic uses.

	Supporting Actions	Success Indicators
7.3a	Promote redevelopment and tenant occupation of the existing buildings.	Number of new occupancy permits for properties in this area. Redevelopment of the existing buildings.
7.3b	Encourage a variety of uses that can be self-sustaining and that attract people from and to the Three Oaks Recreation Area	Redevelopment of Crystal Court. Number of new occupancies for specialty recreation retailers. Number of new occupancies for restaurant or food places.



Crystal Court - Phase 2 - Proposed Site Improvements
City of Crystal Lake

LEGATARCHITECTS
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