



Iowa City Southeast District Plan

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Adopted April 5, 2011

Southeast District Plan

City of Iowa City, Iowa

Adopted April 5, 2011

City Council

Regenia Bailey
Connie Champion
Terry Dickens
Matthew Hayek
Susan Mims
Ross Wilburn
Michael Wright

Planning and Zoning Commission

Joshua Busard
Charles Eastham
Ann Freerks
Elizabeth Koppes
Michelle Payne
Wally Plahutnik
Tim Weitzel

City Manager

Tom Markus

Department of Planning and Community Development

Jeff Davidson, Director
Robert Miklo, Senior Planner
Karen Howard, Associate Planner
Christina Kuecker, Associate Planner
Sarah Walz, Associate Planner
Kay Irelan, Mapping
Lorin Ditsler, Planning Intern
Tabatha Ries-Miller, Planning Intern
Jake Rosenberg, Planning Intern

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Housing and Neighborhood Quality	7
Eastside Growth Area	17
Commercial Development	27
Industrial and Employment Areas	37
Parks, Trails, and Open Space	41
Streets and Transportation	51
Southeast District Plan Map	61

Introduction

The Southeast District is one of ten planning districts in Iowa City. As elements of the Comprehensive Plan, district plans are intended to promote patterns of land use, urban design, infrastructure, and services that encourage and contribute to the livability of Iowa City and its neighborhoods. These plans are advisory documents for directing and managing change over time and serve to guide decision-making, public deliberation, and investment.

The Southeast District Plan establishes planning principles, goals and objectives that relate specifically to the history and existing conditions of the southeast portion of Iowa City. The plan addresses issues of housing and quality of life, transportation, commercial development, and parks, trails and open space.

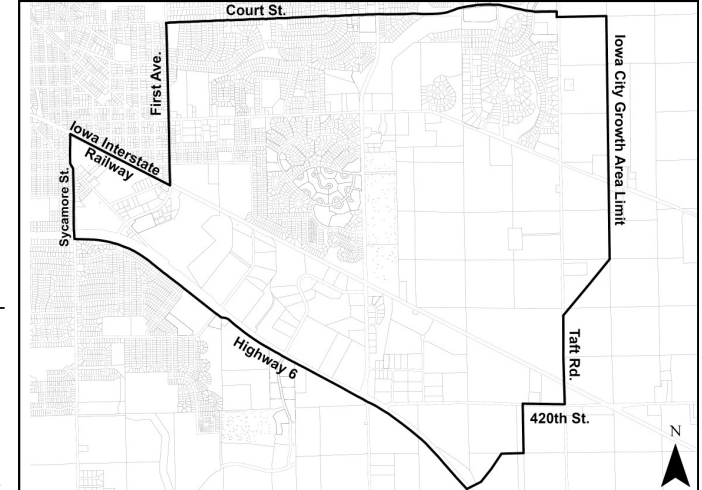
Public Participation

Public input is vital to any comprehensive planning effort. Residents, property owners, area businesses, community organizations, public service agencies, and other interested citizens helped formulate the goals and objectives for the Southeast District Plan through their participation in a series of community planning workshops and public forums.

To initiate the process a community workshop was held at Southeast Junior High School in April 2009 to gather information on what makes the Southeast District attractive and livable as well as what is most challenging about living, working, or doing business here. Workshop participants discussed how to build on the assets of the area and brainstormed solutions to problems. Those who were interested in discussing topics in more detail were encouraged to attend smaller focus group discussions held at City Hall and in the Towncrest Commercial area. The follow-up focus group sessions were well-attended, and discussion was lively. Topics included:

- Parks, Trails and Open Space
- Redevelopment of the Towncrest Commercial Area
- Future eastside development

Large property owners whose land is located outside the city limits but within the growth area were invited to discuss future plans for their property individually. From these workshops, community forums, and one-on-one discussions, common themes emerged. A final community-wide workshop in February, 2010, drew together the vision, goals, and objectives for the Southeast District Plan.



The map above shows the boundaries of the Southeast Planning District.



The kick-off workshop for the Southeast District Plan was held at Southeast Junior High on April 14, 2009. More than 120 citizens participated in the workshop.



Adopted in 2008, the Central District Plan called for redevelopment of an area later dubbed the Riverfront Crossing District. With this plan adopted, the City was better positioned to compete for additional grants to achieve the goals in the plan. The City subsequently received two planning grants from the U.S. EPA to further refine the plan. The image above is a draft concept from the EPA-funded planning effort that illustrates a riverfront park replacing the wastewater treatment plant and redevelopment of nearby areas to a mix of high density residential and commercial uses.



The South Central District Plan, adopted in 1997, identified a potential river trail and park around Sand Lake. About a decade later, the City of Iowa City purchased the lake and created the Terry Trueblood Recreation Area.

Plan Implementation

The Southeast District Plan will be used as a general guide to future development or redevelopment within the district and for preserving valuable assets already present within established neighborhoods. It will take the efforts of City officials, area residents, businesses, and community organizations to achieve the goals and objectives in the plan. Planning staff, the Planning and Zoning Commission, the Board of Adjustment, and the City Council will use the plan as a guide when reviewing development and rezoning requests. It will serve as a tool for neighborhood groups, community organizations, and other interested parties to advocate for improvements and form partnerships to make elements of the plan a reality. The City will refer to the plan when setting funding priorities for public projects, improvements to existing infrastructure, and public services. Property owners, business owners, and developers who are thinking of investing in the Southeast District will find the plan useful as a framework for their plans. The plan will also serve as a benchmark over time, and continued input from the public will ensure that the plan works equitably and reliably.

Iowa City Comprehensive Plan

Any effective planning effort must be grounded in reality—it must take into account the existing local conditions and any community-wide goals and policies that have already been agreed upon. The Iowa City Comprehensive Plan adopted in 1997 presents a vision for Iowa City, provides strategies for realizing that vision, and sets policies for the development and growth of the city. While each district plan addresses the unique characteristics of a specific area of the city, it must also meet the goals and policies adopted as a part of the larger Comprehensive Plan.

What follows is a set of general principles from the Comprehensive Plan for maintaining and building healthy neighborhoods. New development or redevelopment should adhere to these principles as well.

Preserve Historic Resources and Reinvest in Older Neighborhoods - Adopting strategies to assure the stability and livability of Iowa City's older neighborhoods helps to preserve the culture, history, and identity of Iowa City. Investing in the neighborhoods that are closest to major employers in the city provides options for people to live close to work, school and shopping, promotes walking and bicycling, and reduces vehicle miles traveled. In addition, older neighborhoods contain many affordable housing options where City services and infrastructure are already in place.

Diversity of Housing Types - A mix of housing types within a neighborhood provides residential opportunities for a variety of people, including singles, couples, young families, large families, and elderly persons. When diverse housing sizes and types are integrated throughout the community, it becomes easier for people to live in the same neighborhood through a variety of life stages. A rich mix of housing within a neighborhood may include single-family homes on small lots, townhouses, duplexes, small

apartment buildings, and zero-lot-line housing as well as large-lot, single-family residential development.

Affordable Housing – By allowing for a mix of housing types, moderately priced housing can be incorporated into a neighborhood, not segregated in one or two areas of the community. Small multi-family buildings can be incorporated on corner lots adjacent to arterial streets, and townhouses and duplex units can be mixed with single-family homes within a neighborhood. Apartments located above commercial businesses provide needed housing while increasing the revenue stream for commercial establishments.

Neighborhood Commercial Areas – Neighborhood commercial areas can provide a focal point and gathering place for a neighborhood. The businesses within a neighborhood commercial center should provide shopping opportunities within convenient walking distance for the residents in the immediate area. The design of the neighborhood commercial center should have a pedestrian orientation with the stores placed close to the street, but with sufficient open space to allow for outdoor cafes and patios or landscaping. Parking should be located to the rear and sides of stores with additional parking on the street. Incorporating apartments above shops and public open space may foster additional activity and vitality in a neighborhood commercial area.

Interconnected Street System - Grid street systems help to reduce congestion by dispersing traffic, since there are multiple routes to get from point A to point B. In addition, by providing more direct routes, interconnected streets can reduce the vehicle miles traveled each day within a neighborhood, provide more direct walking routes to neighborhood destinations, and reduce the cost of providing City services.

Streets as More than Pavement - Streets and the adjacent parkways and sidewalks can be enhanced and planned to encourage pedestrian activity. Street trees, benches, sidewalks, and attractive lighting along the street help create pleasant and safe public spaces for walking to neighborhood destinations and for socializing with neighbors. Streetscape amenities help give a sense of distinction, identity, and security within a neighborhood. Narrower street pavement widths slow traffic, reduce infrastructure costs, and allow for a more complete tree canopy over the street.

Reduced Front Yard Setbacks - Reduced setbacks allow homes to be placed closer to the street, which provides for more back yard space and room for garages and utilities if there is also an alley located behind the home. Reduced setbacks, combined with narrower street pavements, create a more intimate pedestrian-scaled public space along the street, which encourages walking and socializing.



The Comprehensive Plan calls for a mix of housing types in all neighborhoods. These duplexes are designed to mix seamlessly with the single-family homes in the neighborhood, providing a moderately priced option for residents.



A pedestrian-oriented commercial area, with the stores placed close to the street, but with sufficient sidewalk space to allow for landscaping to buffer pedestrian areas from the automobile traffic.



These single-family attached homes located in the Village Green Neighborhood show how narrower lot frontages and the use of alleys can result in attractive and affordable neighborhoods.



Preservation of natural features, such as stream corridors, woodlands, and slopes, is an important goal of the City's Comprehensive Plan.

Narrower Lot Frontages - More compact development consumes less land and makes it possible to provide public improvements, such as streets, sewers and water lines more efficiently. This factor combined with building on smaller lots allows the construction of more moderately priced housing.

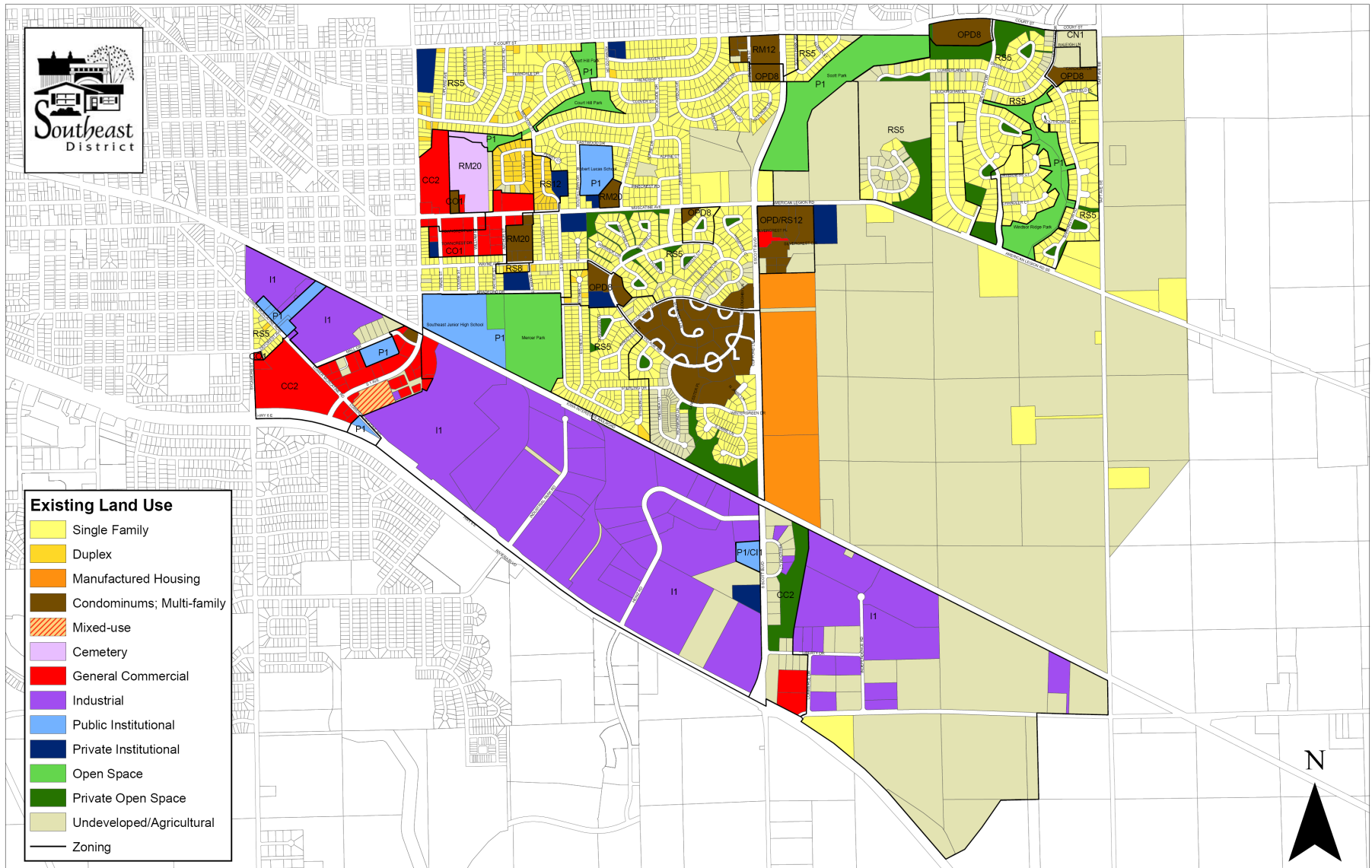
Use of Alleys - In neighborhoods with narrower lot frontages, providing an opportunity for parking off an alley is particularly advantageous. An alley or private rear lane allows utilities and the garage or parking area to be located behind the home, making it possible to achieve an appealing and pedestrian-friendly residential street even with the narrowest of home lots. Without the need for driveways and curb cuts along the street, there is more room for front yard landscaping, fewer interruptions to the sidewalk network, and more on-street parking available for visitors. In addition, when garages are accessed from alleys vehicular traffic and congestion on residential streets is reduced.

Pedestrian/Bikeway Connections - Important neighborhood destinations, such as parks, schools, bus stops, and neighborhood shopping centers should be accessible by pedestrians and bicyclists. A pleasant streetscape, continuous sidewalk system, and strategically located trails and bicycle routes make walking and biking easy and comfortable for neighborhood residents. Pedestrian and bike paths that intersect with key neighborhood destinations can be aligned along a grid street system, located along drainageways and constructed within major sanitary sewer easements.

Parks, Trails and Open Space - Ideally, neighborhood parks are small, three to seven acre open spaces that provide a focal point for informal gatherings and recreation within easy walking distance from homes in a neighborhood. Neighborhood parks are often located in the middle of a residential area, or situated adjacent to a school or a neighborhood shopping center. Neighborhood parks should be designed as an integral part of an interconnected system of open space. Ideally, trails or wide sidewalks should connect neighborhood parks with larger community and regional parks.

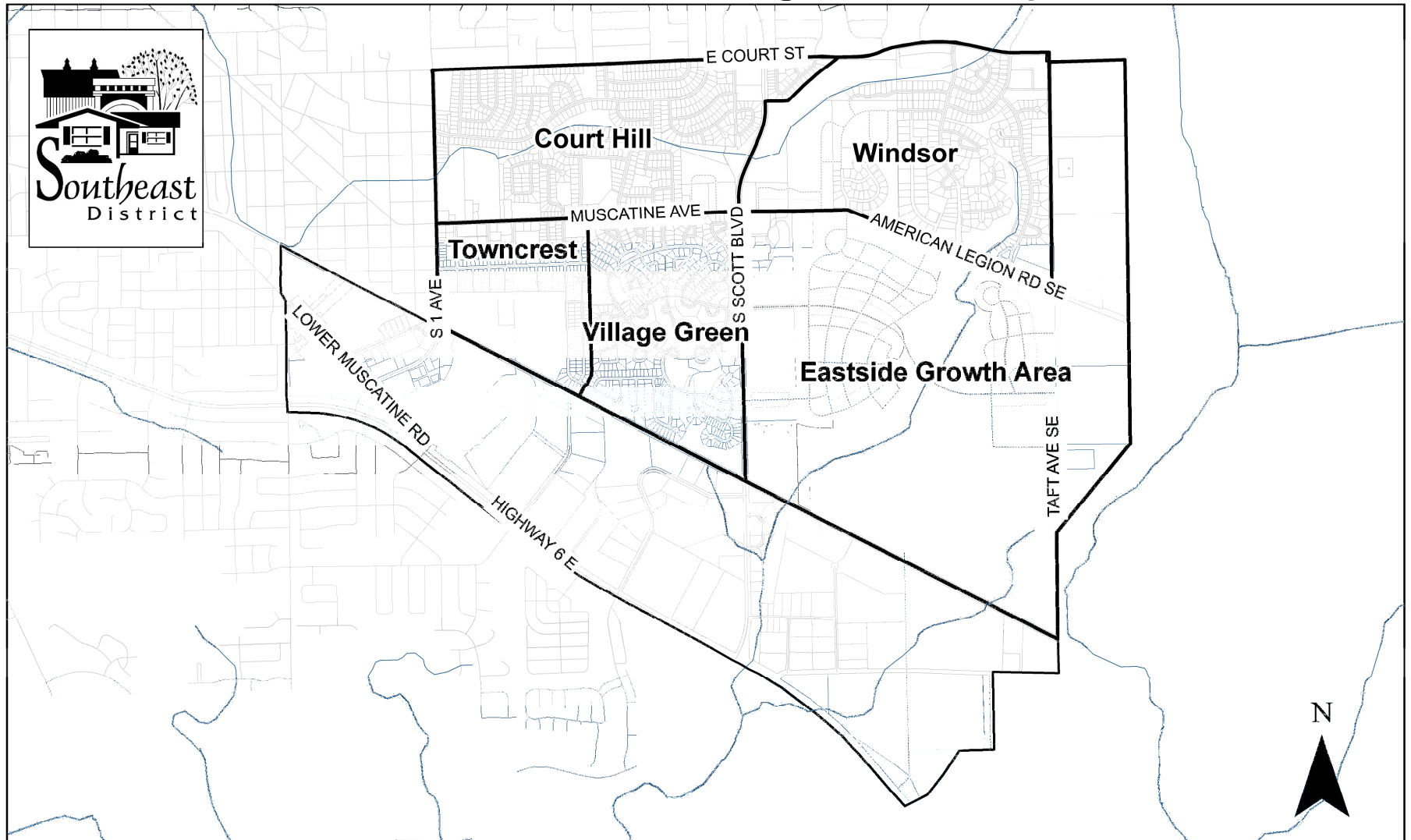
Preservation of sensitive areas, such as wetlands, woodlands, and stream corridors and their buffers, provides an opportunity to shape and enhance a neighborhood, while maintaining scenic and natural resources and wildlife habitat. Wherever possible, natural features, such as waterways, knolls and woodlands, should be incorporated as key amenities within parks and along trail systems.

Southeast Planning District - Existing Land Use



This map illustrates the pattern of development in the Southeast District in early 2009. The District Plan will help determine how this pattern will evolve over time.

Southeast District - Neighborhood Map



Housing and Neighborhood Quality

When asked what they like best about living in the Southeast District, participants in the planning workshops most often mentioned that everything they need for daily living is nearby: grocery stores, drug stores, clothing stores, gas stations, banks, restaurants, and medical offices. Entertainment and recreational opportunities are also convenient: parks, trails, fields and courts for many different sports, an indoor swimming pool, movie theaters, playgrounds, and even a dog park. An elementary school, junior high, high school and a community college are all within walking or biking distance of most residents of the district.

Participants also used adjectives such as family-friendly, safe, affordable, and walkable to describe their Southeast District neighborhoods. While most of the housing within the Southeast District is single-family, detached housing, there is considerable variety in home sizes, prices, and styles. Condominiums within multi-family buildings and attached single-family in the form of duplexes and townhouses are also popular, particularly for young couples, singles, and retirees. Two manufactured housing parks, located along Scott Boulevard just outside the current city limits, provide another affordable single-family option. Residential communities designed to meet the needs of the elderly and disabled are available in several locations within the district. Regardless of the type of housing, what seems most important to area residents is that neighborhoods are safe, friendly, and comfortable for walking and biking, with convenient access to services, shopping, and amenities.

While defining the boundaries of a “neighborhood” is somewhat subjective, for purposes of this planning effort, we describe the Southeast District as having four neighborhoods and one future neighborhood (see map on page 6).

The **Court Hill Neighborhood** - the area bounded by Court Street to the north, Muscatine Avenue to the south, 1st Avenue on the west and Scott Park on the east;

The **Village Green Neighborhood** - the neighborhood with the distinctive looping street pattern located west of Scott Boulevard, south of Muscatine Avenue, east of the Towncrest Neighborhood, and north of the Iowa Interstate Railroad;

The **Towncrest Neighborhood** - the area east of 1st Avenue and west of the Village Green Neighborhood and bounded by Southeast Junior High and Mercer Park to the south and Muscatine Avenue to the north;

The **Windsor Neighborhood**-located east of Scott Boulevard and Scott Park between Court Street and American Legion Road. There is still room for this neighborhood to grow west and fill in the land between Scott Boulevard and the Windsor West subdivision.



Tree lined streets make walking through the Court Hill neighborhood a pleasant experience and add to property values and quality of life for residents.



The Southeast District includes a number of residential developments for retired persons, including Legacy Pointe and Silvercrest (above), located east of Scott Boulevard.



Schools play a vital role in sustaining healthy neighborhoods. The Southeast District is home to schools ranging from elementary to college level: Robert Lucas Elementary (above), Willowwind School, Southeast Junior High, Elizabeth Tate High School, and Kirkwood Community College. City High School is located just beyond the district's north boundary. These schools not only offer a range of educational opportunities, they also act as focal points for their surrounding neighborhoods, providing a place for community gathering and civic functions as well as neighborhood open space and playgrounds.

Eastside Growth Area - The eastside growth area includes the area east of Scott Boulevard, west of Taft Avenue, south of American Legion Road and north of the Iowa Interstate Railroad. This neighborhood includes the Sunrise Village and Modern Manor manufactured home parks, the Legacy retirement community and a considerable amount of undeveloped farmland that is outside the city limits but within the city's growth area. (Refer to the *Eastside Growth Area* section of the Plan for more details about the vision, goals and objectives for this part of the Southeast District.)

Each of the following sections describes the neighborhoods in more detail, including the history, unique features, amenities, and the challenges and specific aspects that could be improved.

C o u r t H i l l N e i g h b o r h o o d

Until around 1950, First Avenue marked the eastern limit of Iowa City. Beyond this point historical maps and aerial photos show only a scattering of farms, churches, and rural schools. After World War II, residential neighborhoods rapidly spread east of First Avenue. Residential development occurred in a fairly logical pattern beginning in the 1950s with the Court Hill Subdivision, between Court and Friendship Streets, and the Towncrest Addition, located south of Muscatine Avenue. The Court Hill subdivision, with its curvilinear streets, long blocks, and ranch-style and split level houses with attached garages, typifies residential development during the postwar period, when automobiles became the transportation method of choice.

Sidewalks shaded by mature street trees make walking through the Court Hill neighborhood a pleasant experience. However, long blocks and limited north-south street connections across Ralston Creek, which bisects the neighborhood, make biking and walking to neighborhood destinations somewhat challenging. For this reason the extension of the new Court Hill Trail along Ralston Creek is a welcome addition to the neighborhood. Spanning the entire length of the neighborhood, this trail serves as a recreational amenity as well as an alternative transportation route to neighborhood destinations, such as shopping and services in Towncrest, Lucas Elementary School, and Court Hill Park. It also provides an important connection in the larger on-street and off-street trail and sidewalk network in east Iowa City, allowing area residents to walk and bike to destinations in the wider community, such as City High School, Creekside Park, Longfellow Elementary, downtown Iowa City, and the University of Iowa.

Though response to the trail has been very positive, one objective of the Southeast District Plan is to continue to enhance and improve the trail with better wayfinding signage, landscaping, and amenities, including improvements to Court Hill Park. In addition, there remains one segment of the trail east of Court Hill Park that relies on the sidewalk network along the neighborhood streets rather than following the creek. While better directional signage has recently been installed, the on-street connection be-

tween Brookside Drive and Beech Street is difficult to follow, so another objective of the plan is to explore the possibility of acquiring easements or land to extend the off-street trail along Ralston Creek from Court Hill Park all the way to Scott Park.

The Hy-Vee grocery store and a small strip of retail shops and restaurants are located at the southwest corner of this neighborhood at 1st and Muscatine. These businesses are a part of the larger Towncrest commercial area, which includes gas stations, banks, drug stores, medical and dental offices, and other small businesses that make daily shopping convenient for neighborhood residents. The Towncrest commercial area and its potential for redevelopment and revitalization are discussed in more detail in the *Commercial Development* section of the plan (page 32).

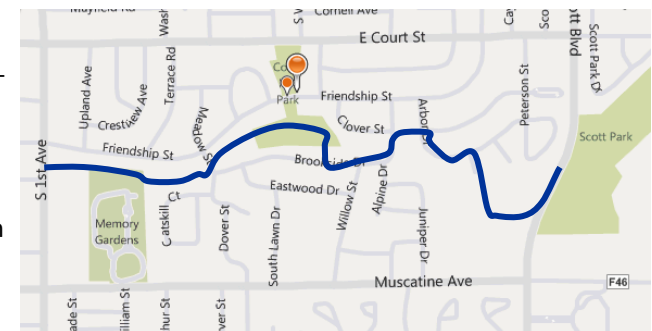
Approximately 15 acres of land at the corner of Muscatine Avenue and Scott Boulevard remain undeveloped. The street pattern of the established neighborhood to the west, along Juniper Drive, does not allow for a connection to any future subdivision on this undeveloped land. For new development to occur, a new street connection to Muscatine Avenue will be necessary. If this area is subdivided for residential lots, a loop street could provide two access points for the subdivision. Vehicular access points must be appropriately located to prevent traffic conflicts at the intersection of Muscatine Avenue and Scott Boulevard. Low to medium density, single-family residential development would be in character with the surrounding neighborhood, however low density, multi-family or high density, single-family attached units would be appropriate at the intersection of Muscatine Avenue and Scott Boulevard. The scale and design of multi-family or attached single-family units should be carefully considered to ensure buildings that are compatible with adjacent lower density residential development.

Flood Hazard Areas: While Ralston Creek is viewed as an asset and an amenity for the Court Hill Neighborhood, it is also prone to flash flooding, particularly during heavy local rain events. Residents and business owners with property along the creek should be aware of the dangers posed by flooding, not only to property, but to public safety.

Iowa City's floodplain management ordinance, intended to discourage and restrict new development in flood hazard areas, has been in place since 1977. However, in response to the devastating floods of 1993 and 2008, the City re-examined these regulations and expanded the definition of "flood hazard area" to include both the "100-year" and "500 year" floodplains. Almost all of the property along Ralston Creek in the Court Hill Neighborhood is developed. The floodplain management ordinance, which applies to those properties that are within defined flood hazard areas, establishes rules and restrictions for making improvements and/or additions to existing homes and businesses. Residents and business owners with property in a flood hazard area should review the history and pattern of flooding in their area and consult with their insurance carrier about obtaining flood insurance. Any new development along the creek should be designed to prevent detrimental effects to the stream corridor and its flood-carrying capacity.



Ralston Creek is a significant natural feature of the Court Hill District and has shaped the development of the street pattern and the layout of the home lots in the neighborhood.



The Court Hill Trail extends across the entire length of the Court Hill Neighborhood and generally follows the creek. A trail connection across Scott Park, to be completed in 2011, will provide a continuous trail from the Windsor Ridge Neighborhood to Creekside Park in the Central District.



The residential portion of Towncrest neighborhood is characterized by small to medium-sized, ranch-style homes located on streets arranged in a grid pattern of short, well-connected blocks similar to neighborhoods built prior to WWII. The neighborhood is conveniently located close to schools, parks, and commercial areas. The commercial properties at the intersection of First and Muscatine Avenues are part of the Towncrest Neighborhood.



Towncrest Neighborhood

Although it was developed at around the same time as the Court Hill neighborhood, the Towncrest neighborhood retained the pattern of short blocks and grid streets that typifies neighborhoods in the older parts of Iowa City. In addition to residential uses, the neighborhood includes a portion of the Towncrest Commercial Area, which is clustered around the intersection of 1st and Muscatine Avenues. The portion of the commercial area located south of Muscatine includes a mix of gas stations, banks, and other retailers and a variety of commercial offices clustered between Wade and Arthur Streets. Several institutional uses are also located in the neighborhood, most notably Mercer Recreation Center and Southeast Junior High. Most of the residential properties are small to medium-sized, ranch-style single-family homes, but the neighborhood also includes some multi-family housing, including an apartment complex between Arthur and Carver Streets.

Lack of maintenance and poor management of some multi-family properties is a concern for residents and property owners in this neighborhood. In some cases, poor building design has contributed to an unsafe environment for residents. Objectives of the plan include code enforcement, increased fines, and/or improved regulations for problem properties as well as redevelopment of properties that are unsafe or substandard.

As homes in the area age, maintenance costs go up for residents. The City's Housing Rehab Program provides no-interest and low-interest loan funds available for maintenance and rehabilitation for homeowners that fall under certain income thresholds. One objective of the plan is for the City to sponsor workshops and identify incentive programs that assist homeowners in making repairs, upgrades, or remodeling older homes. These programs could help increase home energy efficiency and reduce long-term costs for homeowners not only in the Southeast District but in other established neighborhoods throughout the city.

As the Towncrest commercial area redevelops, there may be opportunities to integrate new housing into the neighborhood. Townhomes, apartments above commercial storefronts, apartment buildings, including elder apartments, and other housing types that are consistent with the Towncrest Design Plan and that will function well in a mixed-use neighborhood are encouraged. If well designed and integrated into the area, higher density residential will provide a stable customer base for area businesses and add vitality to the area.

To attract a wider variety of households, including singles, families, and the elderly, the redevelopment plan or any new zoning designations for Towncrest should require or encourage private and semi-private outdoor spaces that are accessible and safe. Examples include private spaces such as forecourts, rooftop gardens/patios, open courtyards, and play yards as well as a public gathering space—a plaza or

neighborhood green—with features such as landscaping and shade trees, outdoor seating and dining areas, a unique water feature, playground, or public art that encourage visitors and neighborhood residents to linger .

Southeast Junior High and the adjacent Mercer Park and Aquatic Center occupy the entire southern half of this neighborhood. Area residents regard Mercer Park and Aquatic Center as a community center, and the school district uses many of its facilities. For example, Mercer Park is home to the City High swim and baseball teams, and Southeast Junior High uses the indoor pool for physical education classes. At the Southeast District planning workshops, which were held at Southeast Junior High, citizens mentioned how much they appreciated these public facilities, but also would like to see some improvements and additional services, such as upgrades to the playground equipment and park amenities and possibly satellite library services. Citizens also expressed support for the City and the School District to continue to work together and explore new ways to use these adjoining properties to improve educational and recreational services to the community.

Since Mercer Park and the Scanlon Gym are considered regional facilities and Southeast Junior High serves a large section of Iowa City and portions of unincorporated Johnson County, the neighborhood experiences a large volume of bus and automobile traffic at the beginning and end of the school day and during large events at Mercer Park. Traffic circulation through the school property is well-designed, funneling the majority of peak hour traffic from the 1st Avenue entrance through the lower parking lot and drop-off area, out the Bradford Avenue exit and back to 1st Avenue. Nevertheless, some spill-over traffic circulates through the residential neighborhood to the north and through the Towncrest commercial area. While the gridded street pattern and narrow street widths in the area discourage speeding and help to disperse traffic during busy times, the school district and the City should continue to monitor the situation and encourage drivers to use the designated route through the school's lower parking lot. Encouraging students that live nearby to walk, bike or ride the bus to school will help to reduce vehicle traffic. Improvements to bike and pedestrian facilities as well as a covered bus stop at the school, would help encourage alternative modes of transportation.

Village Green Neighborhood

Village Green stands out as a unique subdivision design for Iowa City. The original promotional brochure for Village Green from the early 1960s described the neighborhood as free of congestion, with homes located on “generous, open, tree-lined courts or looped streets rather than through-traffic streets.” Modeled on the “Green Belt” concept, Village Road circles through the neighborhood, providing a common street connection for numerous cul-de-sacs that terminate in a landscaped “green.” Many of these greens, which are the property of the homeowners association, are large enough to provide some usable open space for neighborhood residents.



Mixed-use development that integrates residential uses such as townhomes and apartments above commercial storefronts is a goal for the Towncrest redevelopment area. This photo of Harbor Town in Memphis, Tennessee is an example of a mixed use development.



Southeast Junior High is one of three junior high schools in the Iowa City Community School District, serving approximately 700 students from across the community.



History

In 1980, a large, turn-of-the-century barn that was once part of a farm owned by George Kranz was renovated into the five-unit Village Farm Condominiums by Nagle, Hartray & Associates of Chicago.

Though controversial at the time, the condominiums went on to be featured in *House Beautiful* in May, 1982, as an example of condominium development that broke the “cookie cutter” mold and blended into the surrounding neighborhood. The renovation relied on the barn structure as a frame and used wood reclaimed from the original farm house for the interiors.



A portion of Village Green was constructed on the site of an 80-acre farm located along Muscatine Avenue, and remnants of this agricultural past are still present in the neighborhood. For example, a large, turn-of-the-century barn that was once part of the farm was renovated into the Village Farm Condominiums (see sidebar). A second, smaller farm building, currently located on Village Farm Court, was re-adapted as a single-family house.

The original Village Green plan featured a recreational area and a pond at the center of the development, but that concept was never fully realized. In the 1990s the southern portion of the development was significantly modified from the original concept of single-family homes facing central greens, to include attached homes and condominiums with decks overlooking a series of backyard ponds.

The Iowa-Interstate Railroad forms the southern border of the neighborhood, separating residential uses located along Dover Street, Sterling Court, and Chelsea Court from industrial uses located south of the rail line. The close proximity of the industrial area to the southern portion of the Village Green neighborhood has created some conflicts. Ideally, two such incompatible uses would be separated by a wider buffer area or a more gradual transition from higher intensity uses to lower intensity uses. Although these solutions are difficult to achieve once development has occurred, the situation could be improved by planting additional trees, including some fast-growing species, within the privately owned shared open space located north of the rail line and south of Hannah Jo Court and Chelsea Court. Once mature, this landscaping would screen portions of the industrial area from view of the residential neighborhood and may help reduce noise and other negative aspects of the industrial uses.

Some residents of the Village Green neighborhood have expressed a desire to organize neighborhood residents to take better advantage of the village greens as neighborhood pocket parks, including the possibility of providing amenities such as benches and playground equipment. Since these are shared private open spaces, which are owned and maintained by private homeowners’ associations, rather than public parks, such improvements would be the responsibility of the respective homeowners’ association.

It may be advantageous for residents to form an official neighborhood association through the City’s Office of Neighborhood Services. A neighborhood association can be a useful tool for area residents to organize area-wide events, advocate for improvements, and explore issues that confront neighborhoods. A neighborhood association might facilitate communication between multiple homeowners’ associations that represent Village Green and would allow residents to advocate for interests that go beyond the boundaries of their individual homeowners’ association. Organizing as a neighborhood association also opens up the opportunity to apply for PIN grants (Projects to Improve Neighborhoods) from the City.

The Village Green Neighborhood is continuing to develop along the southern edge near the Iowa Interstate Railroad. Some of the newest homes in this neighborhood were built with assistance from the City's *Single Family New Construction Program*, which provides opportunities for area home builders to construct new homes in Iowa City to replace those lost during the 2008 flood. This program has not only provided homes that are affordable to low and moderate-income homebuyers, it has also created construction jobs and guaranteed sales for area homebuilders in a down economy. Homes constructed through this program must meet the *Iowa Green Streets Criteria*, which are intended to promote compact neighborhood design, healthy living environments, energy efficiency, water conservation, and sustainable building practices. The *Green Streets Criteria* are a good resource to guide future development in this neighborhood and for other new subdivisions throughout the city.

Windsor Neighborhood

In order to encourage new housing development on the east side of Iowa City, land for the Windsor Ridge subdivision was annexed in 1993, bringing development east of Scott Boulevard all the way to Taft Avenue. The subdivision (part of which extends north of the Southeast District boundary) was designed with an attractive mix of single-family, townhouse, and apartment homes surrounding a linear public park, which extends north from American Legion Road to Court Street. The public park provides a focal point for the neighborhood and includes a pedestrian/bicycle trail that links to the regional trail network. This trail link will become increasingly important as new neighborhoods develop in the growth area south of American Legion Road and as residential development fills in on the land between the Windsor Ridge subdivision and Scott Boulevard. As development occurs the trail will be extended south to Highway Six, eventually forming a loop system around the entire Southeast District (see the Parks, Trails and Open Space section on page 44).

In 2005 the Fairview Golf Course property, located west of the Windsor Ridge subdivision and Fairway Lane, was annexed into the City and subdivided into single-family home lots forming the Windsor West subdivision. Once built out, Windsor West will be connected to Windsor Ridge via Cumberland and Buckingham Lanes.

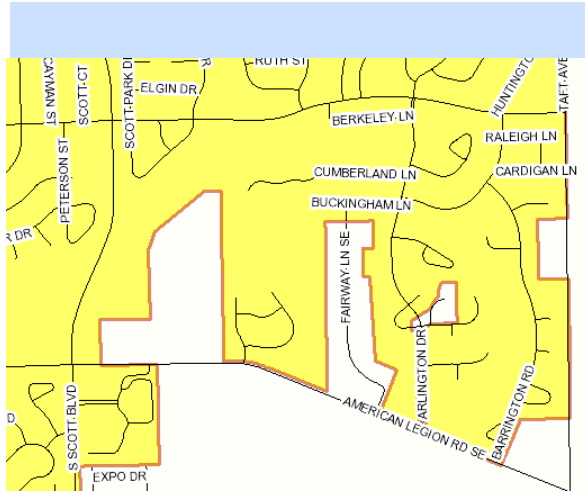
While Windsor Ridge and Windsor West are attractive neighborhoods with positive reputations, they lack connectivity with other neighborhoods in east Iowa City. This creates an impediment for walkers and bikers and is inefficient for providing City services such as bus, garbage, recycling, and snow removal. When land for these subdivisions was annexed into the city, it was not contiguous with the existing neighborhoods on the eastern edge of the city—essentially "leapfrogging" over undeveloped land, some of which remains in the county.



This single family home was recently built in the southern portion of the Village Green Neighborhood as a part of the City's *Single Family New Construction Program*. Homes constructed through this program were required to meet the *Iowa Green Streets Criteria* that promote compact neighborhood design and more sustainable building practices, which are also goals to strive for in future Southeast District neighborhoods.



According to Southeast District workshop participants, Windsor Ridge Park is a much appreciated amenity for residents of the surrounding neighborhood.



Leapfrog Development

The map above shows the “leapfrog” development that occurred in the Windsor Ridge Neighborhood. Areas shown in white represent land that remains in the county. These areas do not receive city services or city water and sewer. East of Scott Boulevard, American Legion Road remains a rural road, without sidewalks, curb or storm sewer. The Windsor Ridge neighborhood lacks east west street connections to other neighborhoods. This creates an impediment for pedestrians and bikers and inefficiency for provision of services such as bus service, garbage and recycling services, and snow removal.

Leapfrog development is more costly than building on land that is contiguous with existing neighborhoods because roads, utilities, and services have to be extended across undeveloped land in order to serve the new development—an expense that falls either to the developer and new residents of the neighborhood or to the general tax payer. In this instance, American Legion Road east of Scott Boulevard remains a rural road without curb and gutter, storm sewers or sidewalks, making it difficult for residents in portions of the neighborhood to walk or bike to destinations outside their immediate area. The cost of improving the road to urban standards continues to be weighed against other capital projects in the city as a whole. When the land west and south of Windsor Ridge and Windsor West is annexed into the city and begins to be developed for urban uses, those new developments will be required to contribute toward the improvement of American Legion Road, making it more cost effective to improve the road and construct sidewalks to serve this area.

As mentioned, a large parcel of unincorporated farmland located between the Windsor West subdivision and Scott Park and residential development along Fairway Lane and Owl Song Lane remain in unincorporated Johnson County. The undeveloped land east of Scott Park would be appropriate for low to medium density single family residential development similar to adjacent subdivisions. Development in the floodplain along Ralston Creek should be avoided. It will also be important to establish adequate east-west street and trail connections between the Windsor West subdivision and any new development that is proposed on this farmland. Trail connections to the Scott Park trail system will also be required if this land is developed. As illustrated on the Southeast District Plan Map, the property at the northeast corner of the intersection of Scott Boulevard and American Legion Road would be appropriate for low density, multi-family residential development or for high density single family development.

The residential properties along Fairway Lane and Owl Song Lane were not annexed at the time the land for Windsor Ridge was annexed. This may cause problems for any future annexations south of American Legion Road. State law will not allow islands of unincorporated land within a city, due to the confusion this causes for the provision of emergency and public services. These county properties will have to be annexed prior to or simultaneously with any annexation proposed for the land directly south of these developments.

At the far northeastern corner of the Windsor Neighborhood, an area has been reserved for a small neighborhood commercial center at the intersection of Court Street and Taft Avenue. This commercial area will need to be carefully designed so that it is compatible and accessible to area residents (See Commercial Development section for more information). If this location proves to be too remote to support traditional retail formats, mixed-use zoning may be appropriate. This zoning designation would allow live-work style units with space built to accommodate small businesses and residential living space within the same unit.

Housing and Neighborhood Quality — Goals and Objectives

The following goals and objectives for housing and quality of life were formulated with the help of citizens who participated in the Southeast District Plan workshops.

Goal 1: Improve and maintain housing stock in existing SE District neighborhoods.

- Promote programs and make funds available for housing maintenance and rehabilitation for those with limited means.
- Conduct workshops and identify incentive programs for residents on "green" remodeling programs and techniques to increase energy efficiency and reduce long term costs.
- Encourage improvement or redevelopment of substandard multi-family housing.
- Investigate options for improved code enforcement, increasing fines, and/or improving regulations for problem properties.

Goal 2: Increase diversity of housing options in the SE District.

- Encourage a mix of housing types within new neighborhoods, so there are options for households of all types and people of all income levels.
- Promote housing designs and features that will be attractive to a variety of household types, such as universal design, green building features, and usable, private open space, such as yards, patios, porches, courtyards, balconies, forecourts, or rooftop gardens.
- In new subdivisions, encourage good neighborhood design so that single family, two-family, and multi-family dwellings can all be integrated into the same neighborhood in a manner that promotes healthy and attractive living environments.
- Discourage monotonous streetscapes by promoting variety in architecture and design.

Goal 3: Establish and improve services and amenities that will improve the quality of life in Southeast District neighborhoods.

- Create new and improve existing public gathering places, such as neighborhood commercial areas, plazas, and parks that are accessible to residential neighborhoods.
- Provide sidewalk and trail links between homes and neighborhood destinations, such as schools, parks, and commercial areas to encourage walking and biking.



This Iowa City home was honored with the 2002 Governor's Best Accessible Design Award. The intent of universal house design is to simplify life for everyone by making housing functional and accessible to all persons, regardless of age or ability --throughout their lifespan.



In 2008, Iowa City received a "Commitment Award" as part of the EPA's Building Healthy Communities for Active Aging program. The award recognizes the City's efforts to improve the community's walking environment and to make walking a more viable choice for seniors and others through its policies, including the subdivision code.



Residents of eastside neighborhoods voiced the desire for more amenities in neighborhood commercial areas, such as Towncrest and Sycamore Mall. This illustration from the *Towncrest Urban Renewal Area Design Plan Manual* shows a public open space integrated into a neighborhood commercial area to create a focal point for community gathering and a distinct identity for attracting new customers.



Higher density housing should include usable private outdoor space for residents. For example, these townhomes include forecourts, which are semi-private open spaces located between the building entrance and the public sidewalk. A low fence or wall, often supplemented with landscaping, separates the private space within the forecourt from the public space along the street. Forecourts can accommodate a variety of features and functions, such as outdoor seating and dining, landscaping, or a small garden.

- c. Use compact neighborhood design to preserve natural features and protect flood plains from new development.
- d. Design neighborhoods with single loaded streets along park edges, so area residents have easy access to and views of neighborhood open space and trails.
- e. Partner with the Iowa City Community School District to realize the full potential of neighborhood schools as an important community resource.
- f. When the need arises, work with the school district to site new elementary school buildings in locations that will allow a significant number of children to walk or bike safely to school. Promote sites where facilities might be shared.
- g. Promote Mercer Recreation Center as a community center and explore opportunities to add or improve features, services, and amenities for residents.
- h. Support efforts of neighborhood associations to build capacity, increase involvement and advocate for needed neighborhood improvements and programs; assist interested groups in starting up new neighborhood associations in areas not currently represented.

Goal 4: Plan for a variety of housing options to meet housing demand.

- a. Identify and support infill development and redevelopment opportunities in areas where services and infrastructure are already in place.
- b. Integrate new housing options in the Towncrest redevelopment area, such as townhomes and apartments above commercial storefronts; include unique features and amenities that will attract a variety of household types, such as private and semi-private outdoor space, e.g. rooftop gardens, forecourts, courtyards, and play yards; and public gathering places, such as a plaza or neighborhood green.
- c. Promote sustainable neighborhoods, by concentrating new development in areas contiguous to existing neighborhoods where it is most cost effective to extend infrastructure and services.
- d. In growth areas, encourage compact, village-like neighborhoods that are contiguous and connected to adjacent neighborhoods and services.
- e. Promote "green" infrastructure and energy efficient building techniques in new neighborhoods.
- f. Ensure that new neighborhoods contain a balance and variety of housing types affordable to people of all income levels.

Eastside Growth Area

The Southeast District contains a considerable amount of undeveloped land that is within the City's growth area. The City's growth area limit extends approximately a quarter mile east of Taft Avenue, including properties directly east of the Windsor Ridge neighborhood along Taft Avenue. Most undeveloped land remains in productive agricultural use with several farmsteads scattered along Taft Avenue and American Legion Road. The largest undeveloped area is located east of Scott Boulevard, south of American Legion Road, and north of the Iowa Interstate Railroad.

An important goal of the City's Comprehensive Plan is to manage urban growth by encouraging compact and well planned neighborhoods. Compact development preserves farmland and natural areas for future generations and saves taxpayer money by reducing transportation and infrastructure costs, providing services such as garbage pick-up, snow removal, mail service and police and fire protection in a more efficient manner. Compact neighborhood design also creates village-like neighborhoods with housing for a diverse population, a mix of land uses, public space that is a focal point for the neighborhoods, integrated civic and commercial centers, accessible open space; and streets that are pleasant and safe for motorists, pedestrians and bicyclists. Residents have expressed a desire for neighborhoods that are convenient to their workplaces, where children can safely walk to school and goods and services are conveniently located nearby. This is possible when there is a high enough concentration of residential homes within any given area to create a healthy "market" for neighborhood businesses and institutions and when there is adequate land within the community that is reserved for large employers.

With these principles in mind, Southeast District workshop participants defined a vision for the eastside growth area and identified a number of important goals and objectives to achieve that vision. The concept plan on page 19 illustrates the important elements that should be considered as the city grows, including potential street network and locations for various housing types, institutions, parks, trails, office and industrial areas.



An aerial view of the Eastside Growth Area, east of Scott Boulevard. Most of this area is outside the city limits of Iowa City but is within the growth area boundary. A majority of the land is currently in agricultural production. An area adjacent to the Iowa Interstate Railroad was annexed and rezoned for industrial uses in 2009.

Sustainable neighborhoods are made up of more than just homes. Neighborhoods should be designed so important destinations, such as schools, parks, and daycare facilities are centrally located to reduce school and family transportation costs, provide places for community gathering, and encourage healthy lifestyles. For Willowwind School (shown below), a private elementary school, it was a high priority to find a central location within an established neighborhood. After an extensive search, the school decided to purchase and renovate an existing building in the Court Hill Neighborhood. The renovated building is a showcase of green building features achieving a LEED Gold Certification.



The impact of school location and size on land use patterns were the subject of a study completed in 2003 by the U.S. EPA, which states, "citizens, school administrators, and parents recognize that schools can and do have multiple roles and influences in the community. Schools can anchor neighborhoods, and be centers of learning and community. They drive home-buying decisions and traffic patterns. School size, location, and the design of the school's neighborhood affect most of these roles and influences."

- *Travel and Environmental Implications of School Siting*. U.S. EPA, October 2003.

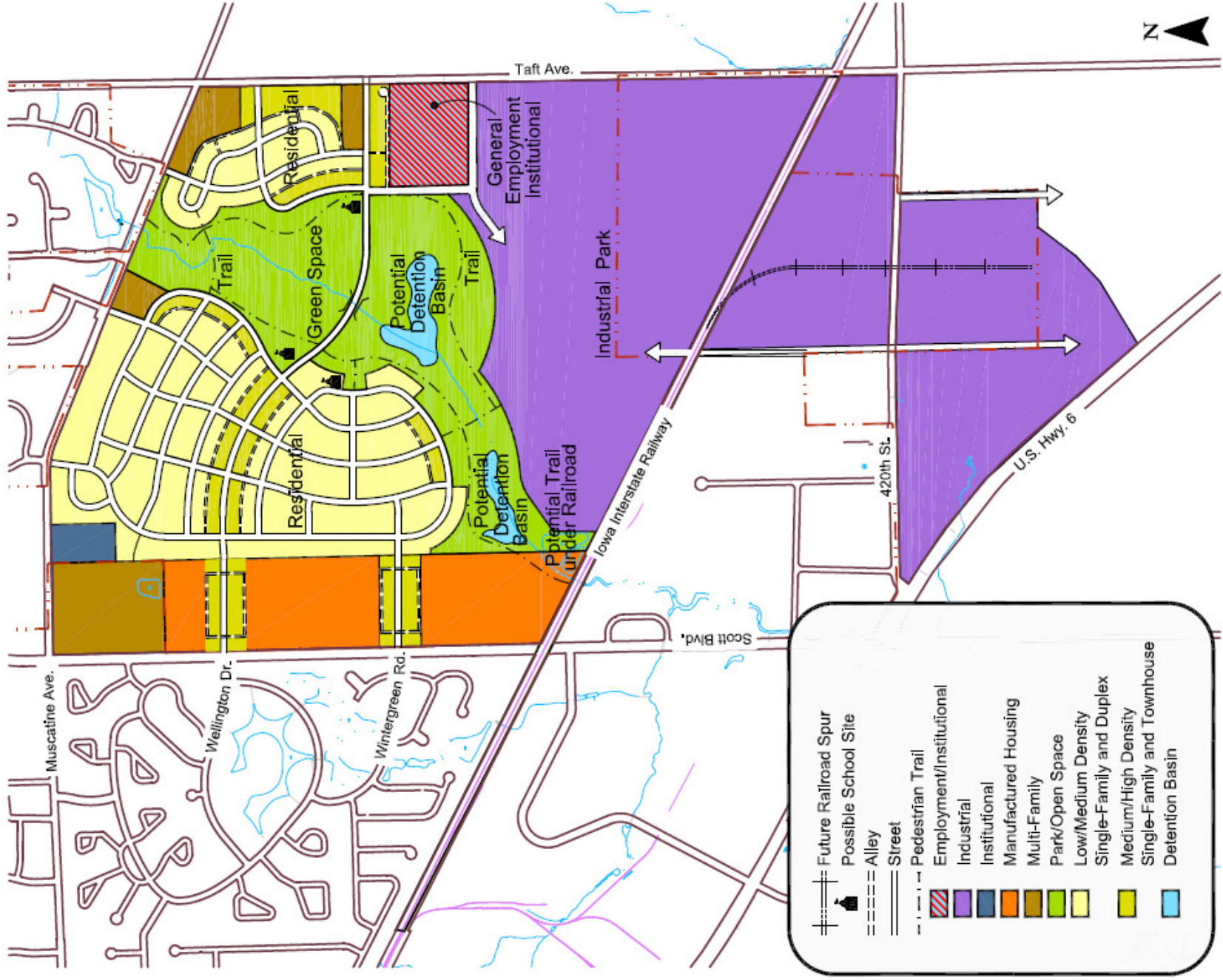
Sustainable, village-like residential neighborhoods

The northern portion of the growth area is an ideal location for future residential development. A variety of housing options should be included to meet the needs of a broad spectrum of household types and incomes, including single-family, duplexes, townhomes, and multi-family dwellings. On the concept plan, note that higher density single-family options, such as townhouses, as well as multi-family dwellings are shown in areas adjacent to collector and arterial streets and along single-loaded streets that border the park. These locations are particularly well-suited to higher density single-family and multi-family dwellings for several reasons:

- Single-loaded streets are encouraged along the edge of major parks in order to provide better visibility and public access to the park. Townhouses are listed as an appropriate future use along these single-loaded streets. Since townhouses can fit on lots as narrow as 20 feet, more than double the number of housing units can fit along a block face, allowing the opposite side of the street to remain as park space without a reduction in the number of housing units that can be achieved. The increased number of housing units that can be achieved in combination with the fact that developers can likely charge a premium for park-facing units, will help cover the expense of building a single located street.
- Garages and parking areas that serve townhouses and multi-family buildings are required to be located behind the buildings and accessed from rear alleys or drives. This reduces the number of driveways along collector and arterial street frontages and helps keep traffic moving smoothly and safely along roadways that are intended to carry more traffic;
- Higher density housing options, particularly multi-family developments, generate a larger volume of traffic, so should be located with good access to collector or arterial streets.

A sustainable neighborhood is made up of more than just homes. Workshop participants agreed that it is important to identify appropriate locations for institutions that serve the neighborhood, such as schools, churches, and daycare centers, and that these locations should be easily accessible by car, on foot or on bicycle. The City should work closely with the school district to monitor enrollment and capacity at area elementary schools and plan for and identify appropriate locations for new elementary schools that will be centrally located within neighborhoods rather than in isolated locations that would discourage walking and biking. In addition, locating schools near neighborhood destinations such as parks, trails, or other institutions, creates opportunities for sharing resources and facilities and may create unique and innovative learning environments for students and for the community at large. While a specific site for a future elementary school has not been identified, several locations that may be suitable are noted on the plan map. Note the proximity of these sites to the central collector street and the

Eastside Growth Area Concept Plan





The photo above shows a view from a residential neighborhood located just north of the industrial zone. The railroad right-of-way provides the only separation between these two zones. As new neighborhoods and the industrial area expand east of Scott Boulevard, it will be important to create a more substantial and effective buffer area between industrial and residential uses. The Eastside Growth Area map on page 19 shows a proposed regional park to provide separation between future industrial and residential areas.

park. Any of these locations would also be suitable for other neighborhood institutions, such as churches and daycare centers.

Extending infrastructure and providing services to remote subdivisions and institutions is costly for taxpayers. New subdivisions should be contiguous and connected to existing neighborhoods, such as Windsor Ridge, Windsor West, and the Sunset Village and Modern Manor manufactured housing parks, to create a seamless community of neighborhoods where area residents have easy access to and share roads, parks, trails, schools and neighborhood commercial areas. Sunset Village and Modern Manor are not currently within the city limits. If in the future this area is proposed for redevelopment, a wider variety of housing options could be provided, including small lot single family, duplexes, townhouses, and small multi-family buildings. A planned development may be a good option for achieving a good mix of housing and ensuring that any new development is integrated into the neighborhood with adequate street connections and infrastructure.

The southern portion of the growth area is identified as an ideal location for the expansion of the city's industrial and employment areas (see Industrial and Employment section on page 22). Some industrial uses include outdoor work or storage areas or have operations that generate noise, odors, or vibrations that disturb nearby residents. To minimize conflicts between these incompatible uses there must be an adequate buffer between new residential and industrial areas. A branch of Snyder Creek extends diagonally across the growth area from the southwest to the northeast, providing a natural location for a linear park that can serve as a significant neighborhood amenity as well as a physical and visual buffer from industrial uses located to the south. The Parks and Open Space section of the plan goes into more detail about how this park might be designed and used for the benefit of area residents and employees and as a resource for the larger community.

Street and trail connections

Establishing a logical and well-connected street pattern within and between neighborhoods helps to reduce the number of miles that area residents, employees, and visitors have to travel on a daily basis. This reduces transportation costs, air pollution, and the cost to taxpayers of providing public services (i.e. transit, garbage/recycling, snow removal). Establishing a pattern of shorter blocks within a neighborhood allows for multiple travel routes, distributing traffic more evenly and reducing bottlenecks and traffic congestion.

As illustrated on the concept plan for the growth area, it is important to provide an adequate number of east-west and north-south collector streets that will distribute neighborhood traffic to the arterial streets that form the boundaries of neighborhoods. Where possible, these collector streets should con-

nect with collector routes in adjacent neighborhoods. For example, a future east-west collector street between Scott Boulevard and Taft Avenue could line up with Wellington Drive to provide a connection to the Village Green neighborhood to the west. An additional connection at Scott Boulevard and Wintergreen Drive would help distribute neighborhood traffic, even though the stream corridor and industrial area to the south may prevent this street from connecting all the way to Taft Avenue. These connections would be contingent on redevelopment of a portion of the manufactured housing park and would require careful planning and design that is sensitive to the surrounding residents. Connections should also be made to the neighborhoods to the north. Logical connection points are Barrington Road, Redwing Road, and Buckingham Lane.

Any connections between residential areas and the employment/industrial area to the south should be carefully planned to discourage commercial or industrial traffic on local residential streets. Because industrial uses and large employers are often land-intensive, requiring larger tracts of land for their operations, the concept plan does not show a street pattern within the commercial and industrial area. A logical street pattern should be determined at the time of platting based on the needs of the specific business or industry locating there. Roads in this area should be designed to accommodate larger commercial vehicles and provide easy access to arterial streets that link to the interstate highway system. An important goal of the plan is to make improvements to Taft Avenue to meet the needs of the new industrial area and provide an alternative and more direct truck route to Interstate 80. Any new residential areas that are proposed along Taft Avenue should be designed with deeper lots, public green space, berms, more extensive landscaping, and/or other similar means to buffer homes from this future truck route.

Sidewalks and trails are an important part of a "complete street" network. Streets should be designed to accommodate and encourage walking and biking. Well maintained sidewalks and shorter block lengths along local and collector streets help to provide more direct travel routes between homes and neighborhood destinations, such as parks, schools, and commercial areas. In addition, shorter, more direct routes allow residents to visit their neighbors without getting in their cars.

The proposed linear park along Snyder Creek would provide the opportunity for trail links to Windsor Ridge Park to the north and Scott Boulevard to the west. Creating a regional trail network linking neighborhoods to parks, schools and employment centers was one of the objectives ranked highest by participants in the Southeast District planning process. This objective included a goal to create a loop trail system that would extend east along the Iowa Interstate Railway from Southeast Junior High/Mercer Park to Scott Boulevard, then running northeast along Snyder Creek to Windsor Ridge Park and finally west to Scott Park and the Court Hill Trail. In addition, as the eastern edge of the Southeast District develops, the City should explore trail links further south along Snyder Creek to destinations in the South District, such as the Sycamore Greenway Trail, the Kickers Soccer Park, and the Terry Trueblood Recreation Area (Sand Lake).



The City's subdivision regulations encourage an interconnected street pattern by requiring streets in new subdivisions to provide connections to future, as-yet-unplanned, subdivisions. Streets are required to be stubbed to the edge of the subdivision as shown above, so that any future development on adjacent land can connect into existing street networks.



Trails provide essential connections in areas where topography or existing development patterns limit street connections.



The area shown on the Eastside Growth Area Concept Plan as "General Employment/Institutional" is intended to provide an opportunity for a variety of businesses and institutions. The photos shown here are of business incubators that are uniquely situated to provide opportunities for start up businesses associated with the local economy. For example, the Calverton Business Incubator, shown above, is located on Long Island and is intended provide opportunities for agricultural, aquacultural and environmental industries associated with the area. The image below shows the Toronto Foods Business Incubator, a non-profit organization that provides facilities such as commercial kitchens and business support services for local food entrepreneurs.



New employment opportunities

The eastside growth area has a considerable amount of land that is relatively flat with good access to road and rail transportation networks, making it ideally suited for industrial firms and other large employers. Reserving larger tracts of land for such uses keeps the city positioned to attract new firms that expand the City's tax base and provide new employment opportunities for residents. The City has recently acquired approximately 180 acres of land east of the Scott-Six Industrial Park along 420th Street. The area includes land on both sides of the Iowa-Interstate Railroad near arterial streets with good access to the interstate highway system. The City is taking the necessary steps of making the site ready for development by subdividing the land and improving transportation links and other infrastructure. While the City is open to any industrial use that has a desire to locate or expand in the area, the City is positioning itself to take advantage of the nationwide growth in new technology businesses and "green" industry. (For a more detailed analysis and the goals and objectives for all the industrial areas within the Southeast District, see the Industry and Employment section beginning on page 37.)

Snyder Creek extends diagonally from southwest to northeast, so it will not provide a complete buffer between new residential areas and the industrial areas. Therefore, it will be necessary to provide for a transition in land uses from the intensity allowed in the industrial zones to the lower intensity of the residential zones on the far eastern edge of the district. The eastside growth area concept plan designates this transition area as suitable for lower intensity businesses that provide employment opportunities for the community, such as office, research, and light manufacturing that operate more like office uses and/or that operate within enclosed buildings with few externalities, and institutional uses, such as churches, daycare centers, and schools, including schools of specialized instruction that are more compatible with residential neighborhoods. This may also be a good location for incubator or cottage industries that are complementary to or associated with land uses nearby, such as small-scale processing and distribution centers for local food producers. On the map, this area is labeled "employment/institutional." Because this area is not at a major crossroads, it is not likely that it will support large retail uses that serve the wider community, but there may be limited opportunities to provide restaurants, goods and services for employees and residents of the area. Zoning designations that are compatible with this vision include Commercial Office, Office Research Park, Research Development Park and Mixed Use or a combination thereof. Alternatively, a commercial "planned development" may provide the necessary zoning flexibility to ensure that this area will be designed to serve as a buffer from more intense industrial uses to the south while providing a variety of employment opportunities, goods and services for employees and residents of the area.

Eastside Growth Area - Goals and Objectives

The following goals and objectives for housing and quality of life were formulated with the help of citizens who participated in the Southeast District Plan workshops.

Goal 1: Plan for sustainable, village-like residential neighborhoods

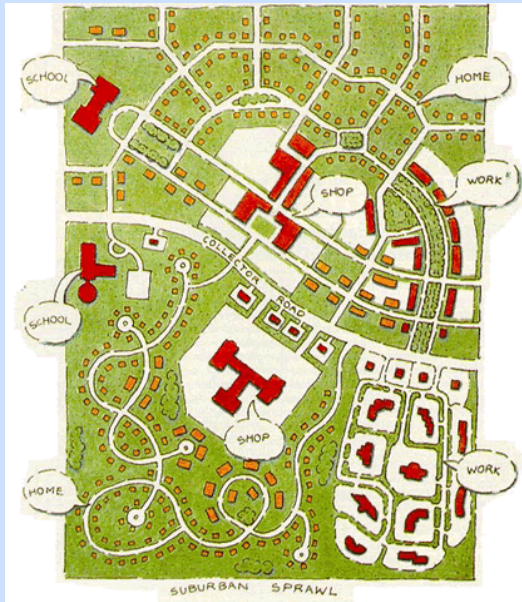
- a. Encourage compact, efficient development that is contiguous to existing neighborhoods to reduce the cost of extending infrastructure and preserve farmland at the edge of the city.
- b. Include a variety of housing options that meet the needs of a broad spectrum of household types and incomes, including single family, two-family, townhomes, and multi-family units.
- c. Plan for new residential neighborhoods east of Scott Boulevard and south of American Legion Road that are buffered from industrial and commercial areas located further south.
- d. As the area grows east to encompass Taft Avenue, ensure that any new residential areas are buffered from Taft Avenue, a planned industrial traffic route to Interstate 80.
- e. In new neighborhoods built north of Muscatine Avenue/American Legion Road provide for adequate street and trail connections to adjacent neighborhoods and to Scott Park.
- f. Encourage universal design and accessibility in new housing units.
- g. Explore options for green infrastructure and encourage green building techniques and energy efficiency in new construction.
- h. Identify appropriate locations for institutional uses, such as churches, schools, and daycare facilities, so that they are integrated into the neighborhood in a manner that allows nearby residents access by walking or biking, but also allows for adequate vehicular traffic circulation, particularly if the institution draws from the larger region.

Goal 2: Create a well-connected street network.

- a. Encourage short block lengths along residential streets to create a network of intersecting streets to shorten driving distances and encourage walking and biking.
- b. Include east-west collector streets between Scott Boulevard and Taft Avenue, e.g. consider extending Wellington Drive and Wintergreen Drive to facilitate traffic circulation in new neighborhoods east of Scott Boulevard.
- c. Consider options for north-south street connections that will not invite commercial or industrial traffic through residential neighborhoods.



Energy efficient housing and affordability are two housing goals highlighted in the Southeast District Plan. Is achieving both possible? The above photo is an example of a LEED certified, affordable home that is a prototype for next generation Habitat for Humanity homes, designed by Dominick Tringali Architects of Michigan. In addition to Energy Star windows, doors, and appliances, the home is built to standard sizes (the way materials are bought off the shelves), allowing for quick assembly, consistent building figures, and minimal waste.



The image above (from the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration) contrasts a well-planned neighborhood at the top with urban sprawl at the bottom. Compact and well-planned neighborhoods provide street connectivity to allow residents to move within neighborhoods and to nearby commercial or employment centers via alternative routes. These neighborhoods also allow the City to provide services in an efficient manner.

- d. Build "complete streets" in new neighborhoods with facilities for bicyclists, pedestrians, and vehicular traffic.
- e. Provide sidewalk and trail links between neighborhood destinations, such as schools, parks, and commercial areas to encourage walking and biking.
- f. Explore options for creating green buffer areas between residential areas and arterial streets, particularly Taft Avenue.

Goal 3: Create unique features and/or a focal point to create a distinct identity for new neighborhoods.

- a. Establish a linear park centered along the Snyder Creek corridor that will provide a central greenway to buffer new residential neighborhoods from future industrial and commercial uses planned for the southeastern portion of this growth area.
- b. When land is annexed and rezoned for urban development within the growth area, work with the property owners to secure land for this central linear park.
- c. When land is proposed for development along park edges, explore options to encourage single loaded streets to provide maximum public access and visibility for the park. Some options may include:
 - Allowing developers to cluster development at a higher density on one side of the street to make up for the loss of development potential along the park edge of the street. For example, allowing narrower single family lots or attached single family, such as townhouses, would help to make up for the loss of residential density along the park side of the street.
 - Public-private cost sharing for constructing significant single-loaded frontages along the edge of large regional parks.
- d. Continue trails through new neighborhoods to connect with other neighborhoods and to parks, schools, and other neighborhood destinations.
- e. Work with residents and other interested stakeholders to establish how new parkland will be used to serve the needs of the surrounding neighborhood and the city; consider options such as community gardens, community supported agriculture, native plantings, trails, stream and riparian corridor restoration projects, storm water management facilities, playground and picnic facilities, recreational fields, or other unique features of community interest.

- f. Create a trail along Snyder Creek that will provide a connection between the Windsor Ridge Trail and other trail networks to the south and west to further the goal of creating a regional eastside trail network.

Goal 4: Reserve land on either side of the Iowa Interstate Railroad for future employment and industrial uses.

- a. Establish a new industrial park along 420th Street and the Iowa Interstate Railway east of the Scott-Six Industrial Park.
- b. Reserve land south of Snyder Creek in the southeastern portion of the growth area for future businesses that will provide new employment opportunities and expand the tax base for the community; target uses such as office, research firms, light manufacturing, new technology businesses, green industry, and other similar uses.
- c. Improve streets, water and sewer infrastructure to serve the needs of this new employment center.



Single loaded streets are encouraged along park edges to provide maximum access and visibility to these public spaces. Providing opportunities for higher density housing along single-loaded streets, such as the multi-family buildings and townhouses that face onto Harvat Square in the Peninsula Neighborhood (above) and Frauenholtz-Miller Park on Lower West Branch Road (below) , allow the one side of the street to remain as park space without a reduction in the number of housing units that can be achieved in the development.



Commercial Development

The Southeast District contains two major commercial areas that serve the east side of Iowa City: the Towncrest Commercial Area and the Sycamore Mall / 1st Avenue Commercial Corridor. The District also contains a cluster of mainly intensive commercial uses along Scott Boulevard south of the Iowa Interstate Railroad. A small area at the far northeast corner of the district is planned as a neighborhood commercial or mixed use center. These areas are examined in more detail in the following sections of the plan.

Sycamore Mall / First Avenue Commercial Corridor

Sycamore Mall and the adjacent commercial properties along First Avenue offer a wide variety of retail goods and services. This area is zoned for general commercial uses, but also includes several major institutional uses: Kirkwood Community College, Elizabeth Tate Alternative High School, and Iowa City Fire Station #3. It is bordered on the northwest and the southeast by two of Iowa City's major manufacturing employers: Oral B Laboratories and Proctor and Gamble.

Several arterial streets — Lower Muscatine Road, First Avenue, and Highway 6 — converge in the area and serve as major travel corridors. In general, high traffic counts are good for business, however, significant traffic congestion may create a situation that encourages travelers to use alternative routes. One of the biggest concerns expressed at the planning workshops was the congestion caused by the at-grade train crossing at First Avenue and the high level of turning traffic associated with Kirkwood Community College on Lower Muscatine Avenue. The City has secured most of the funding to construct a railroad overpass at First Avenue in the near future. Improvements to Lower Muscatine Avenue to add a center turn lane and extend sidewalks along the eastern edge of the Sycamore Mall property are also scheduled.

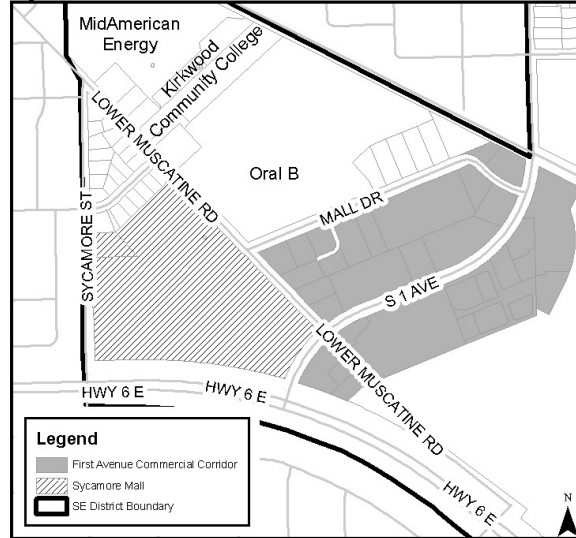
Sycamore Mall opened in 1969 and for many years was a major shopping destination for residents throughout Iowa City. The area experienced a reduction in sales and customer activity in the 1980's and 90's, due in large part to competition from new commercial areas with more modern retail formats including Old Capitol Mall in the 1980s and the Coral Ridge Mall in the late 1990s. More recently, the mall has experienced a resurgence in use, with façade and site improvements made possible, in part, by tax increment financing from the City. A number of new businesses and restaurants have located in the area, and it is busy with activity generated by a wider variety of retail shops, new movie theaters, restaurants, a fitness center, dance studio, and music school. Even with these improvements, competition



When Sycamore Mall opened in 1969 (top) it was a major shopping destination for residents throughout the city. Three decades later, the opening of the Coral Ridge Mall drew many national stores away from Sycamore Mall and downtown Iowa City. Recent façade and site improvements (bottom) and renewed marketing efforts have drawn new businesses and customers back to the Sycamore Mall. Southeast District residents expressed appreciation for the improvements and new shopping opportunities in the area and would like to see that positive trend continue. Additional enhancements and site amenities may be necessary to keep the mall competitive into the future.



Sycamore Mall/First Avenue Commercial Corridor



This mini-mall along First Avenue has a number of thriving businesses. However, the poor condition of the landscape screening and the lack of street trees reduce its attractiveness and make it an uncomfortable place for pedestrians.

from other commercial areas throughout the region will continue to be a challenge, and the Sycamore Mall will have to work to distinguish itself from other retail areas. While improvements have been made in recent years with additional landscaping and a defined central drive, the shopping center could benefit from a more cohesive pedestrian environment with additional outdoor site amenities that would effectively draw customers from the surrounding neighborhood, employment centers, and community college.

The adjacent First Avenue Commercial Corridor functions as an automobile-oriented commercial strip, but also includes Eastdale Plaza, an older enclosed mall with little connection or presence along the street frontage. With few windows, entrances that are difficult to find and convoluted traffic circulation, Eastdale Plaza has not been a successful format for retail businesses that need good access and visibility along the arterial street. In general the First Avenue Corridor suffers from a streetscape that is uncomfortable for pedestrians with an excessive number of driveways that create confusing and inefficient on-site traffic circulation and parking areas. A lack of street trees and other landscaping only diminish the appearance of the area. There is little outdoor green space or amenities for the few residential apartments located above the commercial businesses in the area. Redevelopment of some of the properties has brought new life into the corridor, but there is still room for improvement.

Despite these challenges, the commercial district that consists of the Sycamore Mall and the First Avenue Commercial Corridor is in a good location to position itself for the future. The area has begun to redefine itself to be a destination shopping center for east Iowa City, providing for everyday shopping needs, entertainment, and services. The surrounding residential neighborhoods create a ready source of clientele for area businesses, and demand will likely increase as residential areas continue growing east of Scott Boulevard. Given their close proximity, it may be worthwhile for businesses and property owners along First Avenue and in the mall to work together to create a more cohesive identity for the area—one that would help attract new customers and encourage existing customers to remain loyal.

What follows are a number of steps that might be taken to further improve the Sycamore Mall and First Avenue Commercial Corridor:

- Maintain and update existing buildings, landscaping, and other site elements to create a distinct identity and to be competitive with other commercial areas;
- Consider creating a larger outdoor gathering space, including areas for outdoor dining and play, on the mall property buffered from the traffic with trees and landscaping;
- Encourage redevelopment of outdated buildings along First Avenue - rezoning some of this area for mixed-use or multi-family residential may be appropriate;

- Adopt a building and streetscape plan for the entire commercial district that, as properties are redeveloped, will result in a more cohesive style and pattern of development with consistent building design, signage, streetscape elements, building setbacks and convenient and well-landscaped parking areas. Encourage mixed-use buildings with apartments above to provide additional vitality to the area and clientele for area businesses;
- Focus on unique attractors, such as niche marketing, new entertainment options, and uses, services and amenities that encourage customers to stay longer or patronize multiple businesses during their visit;
- Sponsor community festivals and events that foster a sense of pride and loyalty among area residents;
- More and more area residents are choosing to walk or bike to neighborhood destinations. Take advantage of this trend by creating a more cohesive pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly environment along streets and on the mall property;
- Form a business owners association in the area that will help to pool resources and create a distinct identity for the shopping district, such as signage, streetscape elements, shared public spaces, sponsorship of community events, etc.
- Work with the City to explore options for funding public and private improvements in the area or encouraging redevelopment, where appropriate.

Kirkwood Community College

Located on Lower Muscatine Avenue is the Iowa City Campus of Kirkwood Community College, one of Iowa's fastest growing colleges. While its student population is growing, there is little room to expand the campus, and parking is limited. The property is flanked by Oral B Laboratories and Mid-American Energy, and the frequent comings and goings of Kirkwood students creates traffic congestion along Lower Muscatine Avenue. The City is in the process of reconstructing Lower Muscatine Road in order to ease this congestion and improve the traffic flow.

As Kirkwood continues to grow, they will need to consider sites for expansion, particularly if abutting properties become available. Kirkwood could also be a key partner in the revitalization of the surrounding commercial areas. A large number of students in the area create patrons for the restaurants and businesses and possibly residents for any new residential units. There is also a possibility to integrate Kirkwood classroom space into any existing or future buildings in the area.



Eastdale Plaza, an enclosed mall along First Avenue, offers little visual connection or presence along the street frontage. Access and traffic circulation patterns around this mall are confusing for drivers and uncomfortable for pedestrians.



The Iowa City campus of Kirkwood Community College, located along Lower Muscatine Road, is one of Iowa's fastest growing colleges. Its proximity to Sycamore Mall provides a steady stream of potential customers for businesses located there, but traffic congestion and parking issues in the area have been a problem.



Improved landscaping along the Lower Muscatine Avenue entrance to Sycamore Mall (above) could serve as a starting point for establishing a theme for landscape improvements throughout the district. Distinctive signage, entranceway features, pedestrian-scale lighting, and unique pavement treatments at key intersections could also help to establish a more cohesive identity for the area.



At a minimum, screening parking areas with landscaping and planting street trees would help to define edges and provide separation between pedestrian and vehicle areas as shown above.

Sycamore Mall and First Avenue Commercial Corridor Goals and Objectives

The following goals and objectives for the Sycamore Mall and First Avenue Commercial Corridor were formulated with the help of citizens who participated in the Southeast District Plan workshops.

Goal 1: Preserve and promote Sycamore Mall/First Avenue Commercial Corridor as an integral part of southeast Iowa City.

- a. Establish policies and regulations that will improve the commercial character of the Sycamore Mall/First Avenue Commercial Corridor
- b. Encourage participation by area businesses and residents in events and activities that foster a sense of identity and create a vibrant level of commercial activity.
- c. Encourage partnerships between local businesses, area institutions, neighborhood associations, and the City to promote and strengthen the economic vitality of the Sycamore Mall/First Avenue Commercial Corridor.
- d. Encourage a variety of commercial uses, from small local business to national chains.
- e. Support the creation of a local business association.

Goal 2: Encourage activities and physical improvements that create a sense of identity and improve the economic vitality for the Sycamore Mall/First Avenue Commercial Corridor.

Short Term

- a. Create and implement a streetscape plan for the area, including elements such as decorative pavement, benches, landscaping, pedestrian lighting, public art, and pedestrian and bicycle facilities.
- b. Improve pedestrian and bicycle access to the area by creating sidewalk and trail connections between businesses and surrounding residential areas.
- c. Implement the planned grade separation for the First Avenue railroad crossing and explore a pedestrian underpass connecting Kirkwood Community College to the neighborhoods north of the railroad.
- d. Use signage or other branding and way-finding techniques to attract visitors/customers to the area, particularly from Hwy 218 and I-80.
- e. Encourage festivals and activities, such as farmers markets, art shows, music events, etc.

- f. Consider additional outdoor site amenities at the Sycamore Mall that will make the area into a distinctive destination, such as public gathering space, playground area, water feature, outdoor seating, and additional landscaping and pedestrian amenities.
- g. Use economic incentives to spur both public and private investment in the area

Long Term

- a. Encourage development and redevelopment that will improve the character and economic vitality of the Sycamore Mall/First Ave Commercial Corridor
- b. Develop a vision and redevelopment plan for the Sycamore Mall/First Ave Commercial Corridor to ensure that new development is attractive, cohesive, and pedestrian and bicycle-friendly.
- c. Establish policies and regulations that encourage mixed-use buildings with small apartments above commercial storefronts, and/or consider rezoning some parcels, particularly along the eastside of 1st Avenue or along Mall Drive, to high-density single family or multi-family to provide opportunities for a variety of residents. Ensure that any new residential development is carefully designed and provides for adequate open space and amenities for residents.
- d. Explore and implement initiatives for storefront improvements and property maintenance.
- e. As new development and redevelopment occurs, explore options for shared parking to preserve land for active building uses.
- f. Plan for the future growth of Kirkwood Community College to support and enhance this commercial area.
- g. Encourage the redevelopment of underutilized and incompatible parcels in the area.

Goal 3. Support the use of alternative modes of transportation.

- a. Explore options for bicycle lanes or designated routes to and through the area.
- b. Make improvements to the streetscape to create a comfortable and attractive environment for pedestrians.

Goal 4. Improve public safety.

- a. Explore ways to improve safety for pedestrians crossing Hwy 6 and 1st Avenue.
- b. Explore and implement initiatives to prevent crime.
- c. Install additional pedestrian-scale lighting where needed.



Gathering spaces and other public amenities help to create a unique identity for shopping centers and add to their vitality. Such spaces give people reasons to linger and create a sense of community. For example, a large but informal outdoor seating area planted with shade trees is a major attraction as well as a venue for art fairs and live music at the suburban Central Market in Austin, TX (above). At the Rochester Hills Mall in Detroit, MI, (below) a central commons area with seating and artwork acts as a meeting point and playground, and a spot to host festivals throughout the year.





The Design Plan Manual for the Towncrest Urban Renewal Area provides guidance on how existing buildings can be updated in a manner that will result in a more modern, cohesive redevelopment of the area.

In the short term, façade improvement programs will allow existing buildings to be updated, as shown above, while the long term vision for the area is for mixed-use buildings that will bring more residents into the area, as illustrated below.



Towncrest Commercial Area

The Towncrest commercial area, located near the intersection of 1st Avenue and Muscatine Avenue, was originally developed in the 1960s with an emphasis on medical offices. While medical offices and services are still located in the area, Towncrest also provides for the everyday shopping needs of surrounding residents, and includes a grocery store, several pharmacies, gas stations, banks and other services. Over the years, buildings and parking areas in the older portion of Towncrest have deteriorated, and there is now desire in the community to improve the area, giving it new life and a distinct identity.

Towncrest's role within the city has evolved over the past several decades. When the properties were initially developed, Towncrest was on the edge of the city's urbanized area. Its suburban location enjoyed plentiful parking and free-flowing traffic. What began as an area on the suburban fringe is now a well-integrated in-town location as Iowa City has grown to encompass Towncrest. It is now surrounded by well-connected, walkable neighborhoods with a diverse population.

Any successful strategy for repurposing Towncrest is likely to involve efforts to embrace and capitalize on the area's current urban context. While competing with outlying suburban areas is difficult because those areas often have lower land costs and less constrained building sites, Towncrest's chief selling point is proximity and connectivity to the city center, major employment areas, and dense residential neighborhoods. For this reason, the future of Towncrest should focus on creating the best urban, mixed-use, walkable neighborhood center possible. Emphasis should be on making new development compact, complete, and connected.

As the heart of the surrounding residential neighborhoods, new development in Towncrest should incorporate a diversity of uses, mixed both vertically within buildings (from lower to upper floors) and horizontally along a network of streets. Retail uses should be focused on the first floors of buildings near the intersection of First Avenue and Muscatine Avenue. A mix of office and residential uses should occur on properties that are located farther away from this busy intersection and would be appropriate as a transition to the detached single-family neighborhood surrounding Towncrest.

Careful consideration and planning of public spaces are critical to Towncrest's redevelopment. Public spaces should be designed as a cohesive environment to give the area a special unified image. This includes the streets and sidewalks in the area, as well as gathering spaces, such as squares, parks, or plazas. Entranceway features, wayfinding signage, lighting, street furniture, and other landscaping elements could all be designed to promote a new and distinct identity for Towncrest.

Transportation design in a redeveloped Towncrest should reflect the area's new identity as a mixed-use

center, making the most of multi-modal options including vehicular, bicycle, pedestrian, and transit. One way to accomplish this is to design streets so that they are right-sized for traffic calming. On-street parking, street trees, wide sidewalks, human-scaled street lighting, and other amenities essential for pedestrian comfort should be provided.

The existing auto-oriented configuration of the properties throughout Towncrest should be transitioned to pedestrian friendly formats over time. Street-oriented buildings located close to the sidewalk are critical for pedestrian comfort.

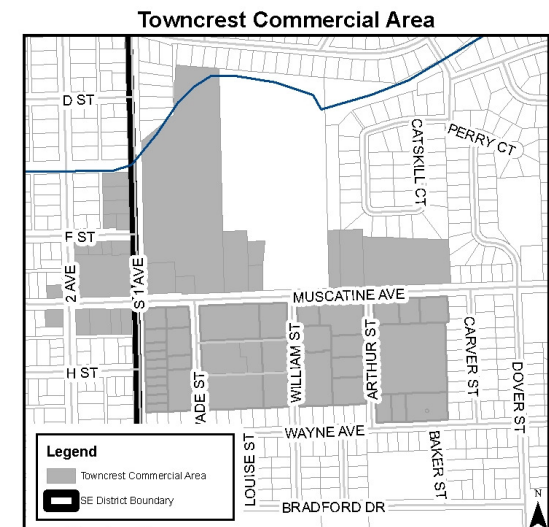
There is a great deal of interest on the part of property owners, business owners, and surrounding residents to revitalize Towncrest. Revitalization will require an effort on the part of private property owners in partnership with the City. Based on public input, the City has designated Towncrest an urban renewal area—this allows the City to offer tax and other financial incentives to encourage appropriate redevelopment in the area. Working with area businesses, property owners, and residents, the City has formulated a cohesive design plan for the area. The plan includes recommendations for improved streetscape elements, signage, entranceway features, landscaping, and architectural design guidelines for new buildings and for upgrading existing buildings. A design review overlay zoning district will help implement this revitalization plan.

While the short term goals for Towncrest involve upgrading streetscapes and building façades to create a new image for the area, the long term goal is to encourage redevelopment toward a denser, mixed-use neighborhood center with multi-story buildings that contain both commercial and residential options. A new mixed-use zoning designation will be necessary to encourage pedestrian-oriented street frontages with new buildings located closer to the street, ample on-street parking, and storefronts that are open and inviting to customers. An essential component to the plan, identified through public input, is a more welcoming streetscape along Towncrest Drive, which forms a central spine through the office area. Current business owners also indicated that a more coordinated and attractive streetscape along Towncrest Drive would project a new image that would attract new customers and clients.

Individual property owners are more likely to initiate new development if they know their investment will be part of a larger coordinated effort and that the coordinated whole will be more valuable than the sum of its parts. Coordination of phasing for redevelopment as well as the precise mix of uses is critical to achieving successful redevelopment. The City is committed to the long-term viability of Towncrest and will continue to commit resources to a redevelopment plan and will work in partnership with businesses and property owners to implement the plan.



The *Towncrest Design Plan Manual* also establishes a vision for distinctive entranceway features, wayfinding signage, and a more green and pedestrian-friendly streetscape. Public planning workshops were well-attended by area property owners, business owners, and residents, who helped craft the final vision for the redevelopment of the area. An urban renewal district and design review overlay zone (shown below) have been adopted that will provide guidance and financial assistance to area property owners and businesses.





The Towncrest Plan proposes on-street parking, improved pedestrian facilities, including crosswalks, street trees and other landscaping along Towncrest Drive that will transform what is currently a private vehicular drive into a street that can safely accommodate both cars and pedestrians. A bird's eye view of proposed streetscape improvements along Towncrest Drive is shown above, and a pedestrian perspective is illustrated below. Unique signage, stone markers and banners will help create a distinctive image for the area. Over time, as new buildings are built, the intent is to provide a more urban streetscape with the buildings constructed close to the sidewalk.



Towncrest Commercial Area

Goals and Objectives

The following goals and objectives for the Towncrest Commercial Area were formulated with the help of citizens who participated in the Southeast District and Towncrest workshops.

Goal 1: Improve traffic flow through the area.

- a. Improve the traffic circulation of the Towncrest area by converting Towncrest Drive into a public east-west street extending from 1st Avenue to Arthur Street.
- b. Explore the possibility of extending Towncrest Drive to the west to connect with First Avenue at H Street.
- c. Improve the functionality of Muscatine Avenue by limiting the number of access points and encouraging shared parking areas.
- d. Encourage more opportunities for safe bicycle and pedestrian travel through the area.

Goal 2: Support the economic vitality of this commercial area.

- a. Implement initiatives to create aesthetic improvements to the Towncrest Area, e.g., better landscaping, improved sidewalks, signage, entranceway features, etc.
- b. Explore zoning changes that will support and encourage mixed-use development throughout the Towncrest Area. This mixed-use development could combine retail, office, and residential uses.
- c. Work to establish a distinct character and identity for the area as an important commercial node in Iowa City.
- d. Explore the feasibility of a shared parking structure/system for the area.
- e. Continue to support the non-profit organizations and social services in the area.

Goal 3: Expand residential uses to the area to support and expand office and commercial uses in the area.

- a. Work to create a unique and diverse style of residential development in the area—focusing on affordable housing for those who currently live in the area and others who desire an urban living alternative to Downtown Iowa City.
- b. Encourage redevelopment of the Towncrest area to include urban scale mixed-use buildings with two to three stories of apartments above commercial storefronts.
- c. Encourage a stronger relationship between commercial property/business owners and the residential neighbors through a neighborhood association.

Goal 4: Encourage reinvestment and redevelopment.

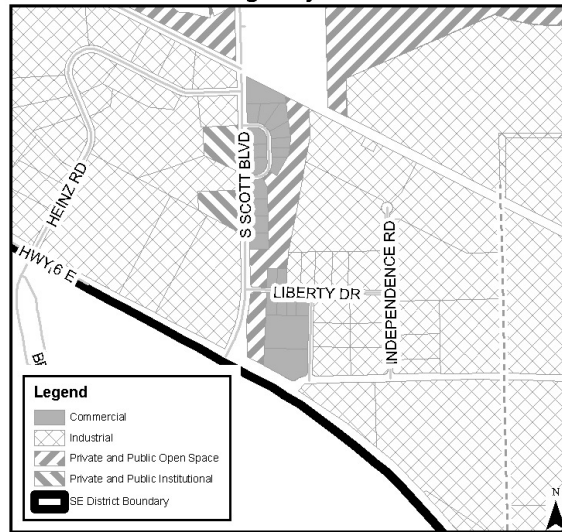
- a. Implement initiatives to create aesthetic improvements to the Towncrest Area. These improvements should help establish a distinct character and identity for the area.
- b. Implement an initiative to encourage private investment in the redevelopment of the Towncrest Area as an urban, mixed-use, mixed income neighborhood.
- c. Develop and implement a plan to address the declining condition and negative impressions of the apartment buildings in the area.
- d. Take advantage of nearby amenities (e.g., existing retail, schools, parks, trails, transportation, etc.) to make Towncrest an appealing place to live and do business.



Some multi-family properties in the Towncrest area are not well designed or maintained and have become a problem for the neighborhood. The only access to these apartments is provided by series of exterior “catwalks,” which have proven difficult to maintain and unsafe for residents.

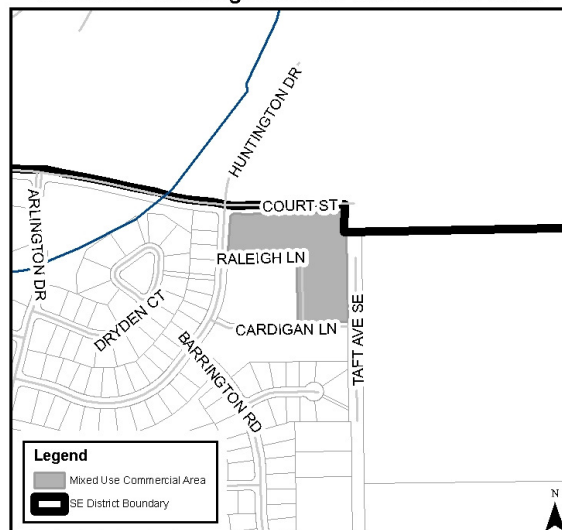


Live-work units, as shown above, would be consistent with the vision for the redevelopment of Towncrest. Live-work units provide an affordable option for people who want to run a small professional office, artist studio or other small business. The ground floor contains entrances at the sidewalk level and storefront windows that are inviting to customers, while private living space is provided in a loft apartment on the upper floors.

Scott Boulevard/Highway 6 Commercial Node

Scott Boulevard/Highway 6 Commercial Node

There is a strip of commercial development located along Scott Boulevard between the Iowa-Interstate Railroad and Highway 6. Current traffic counts along this segment of Scott Boulevard have not reached a level that is conducive to retail commercial development. However, intensive commercial and quasi-industrial businesses have located in the area to take advantage of the nearby industrial and employment areas and lower land prices. A grocery store, attracted by the lower land cost, was also allowed to locate in the area and relies on attracting customers from eastside residential areas. It is important to maintain areas within the city for intensive commercial, quasi-industrial, and land intensive businesses. Due to its proximity to an expanding industrial area, this node of commercially zoned property along Scott Boulevard is appropriate for such uses. The City will need to be careful not to dilute the demand for daily retail shopping by allowing too many retail commercial nodes on the eastside of Iowa City. If efforts to revitalize Towncrest and to maintain the viability of the Sycamore Mall and First Avenue Commercial Corridor are to be successful, the City will need to be cautious about zoning additional land along the edge of the city for retail and office development.

Court and Taft Neighborhood Commercial Node

Court and Taft Neighborhood Commercial Node

At the far northeastern corner of the Windsor Neighborhood, an area has been reserved for a small neighborhood commercial center at the intersection of Court Street and Taft Avenue. The future commercial area should be oriented such that stores or other businesses face onto the adjacent park to create a town square atmosphere. Mixed-use buildings with both commercial space and residential apartments or condominiums are encouraged. Creative parking solutions, such as on-street parking around the square or parking within buildings or between buildings, are essential in order to allow the park to be the central feature. This will allow easy access for residents living to the south and west, while also providing an attractive streetscape along Court Street. With careful planning, it may be possible to have additional storefronts face onto Court Street. Strategically placed pedestrian walkways and associated amenities should be incorporated to ensure safe and attractive access to the commercial area for residents living north of Court Street.

Industrial and Employment Areas

The Southeast District is home to the largest contiguous industrial area in Iowa City. Located generally east of 1st Avenue between the Iowa Interstate Railroad and U.S. Highway 6, the area is comprised of approximately forty-five industrial parcels, dominated by warehouses, food distribution, and manufacturers. Proctor & Gamble and its plastic suppliers make up most of the manufacturing sector. Ten of the Iowa City area's top 100 employers operate within the Southeast District industrial area, employing more than 4,700 workers.

Preserving and Expanding Industrial Areas

Industrial areas often constitute a large portion of a city's economic and employment base. They provide a place for large manufacturers and regional distribution facilities and also for industries that serve the local economy, such as utility companies, local distributors, construction yards, and various industrial and business services.

Industrial uses have fairly specific needs in terms of land and location. These requirements include level, well drained land; proximity to adequate services and utilities, and easy access to highways and rail service. In addition, industrial uses tend to be more land-intensive than other types of development, meaning that larger parcels of land are often necessary to accommodate manufacturing operations and machinery, warehouse and loading facilities, outdoor work and storage areas, and areas for loading and maneuvering large trucks and machinery.

The Southeast District is an ideal place to expand Iowa City's industrial base because it contains land with all of these favorable characteristics. However, because residential and commercial development tends to yield a more immediate return, there is often reluctance on the part of land owners to zone and reserve land for industrial development. Since the BDI and Scott-Six Industrial Parks are nearly built out, one important objective in planning for the Southeast District is to take steps to make additional land available for future industrial development. To that end, the City has recently purchased, annexed, zoned, and platted approximately 180 acres of land along 420th Street east of Scott Boulevard with the intent to reserve and market it for industrial development.

One of the most significant aspects of the Southeast District that makes it an ideal location for industrial development is access to the Iowa Interstate Railroad (IAIS). The IAIS is a regional railroad that connects Iowa City to the entire Class 1 railroad system. This connectivity enables industries with access to the IAIS to ship and receive goods to or from anywhere in North America. By ensuring that industrial land is reserved and zoned adjacent to the railroad, the City is able to provide existing and potential industries with competitive location and transportation options.



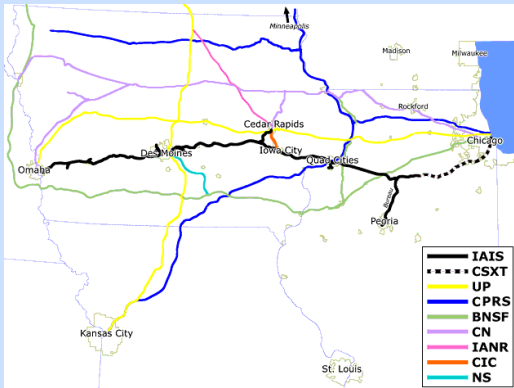
View of BDI industrial area c. 1960 taken from the east with Iowa City in the background.

History

In the mid 1950's, The Iowa City Chamber of Commerce created Business Development Inc. ("BDI"), in order to attract industrial development to the area between the Iowa Interstate Railway and Highway 6. Proctor & Gamble was the first industry to open in the park in 1956 with Oral B following in 1958. As BDI built out, additional land was annexed east of Scott Boulevard for the development of the Scott-Six Industrial Park, which contains a mix of quasi-industrial uses, repair businesses, and warehouse and distribution facilities.



Ready access to the Iowa Interstate Railroad (IAIS), Highway 6, and a main truck route to I-80, make the Southeast District's industrial area ideal for continued development. Improved arterial routes along 420th Street and Taft Avenue will serve the area and direct industrial traffic away from residential neighborhoods. Construction of new railroad spurs from the main IAIS line to the industrial development will provide transportation along national Class I rail routes (shown below).



Additional industrial development will require the expansion and improvement of necessary infrastructure and services. Currently consisting of chip seal and gravel, Taft Avenue forms part of the eastern boundary of Iowa City and the Southeast District. Improvement of this road to urban standards will be essential for more direct truck access between Interstate 80 and the existing and future industrial/employment areas in the Southeast District. The improvement of 420th Street and its intersection with Highway 6 is also necessary in order to provide access to the new industrial park located east of Scott Boulevard. Once improved, arterial routes along Taft and 420th will provide a more direct route to Interstate 80, which will likely divert a significant portion of the industrial truck traffic away from existing residential areas along Scott Boulevard. As new residential areas develop along Taft Avenue north of the industrial area, deeper lots and setbacks along with additional landscaping will be required in order to buffer homes from this anticipated truck route.

Minimizing Conflicts

As the city grows east of Scott Boulevard, land on both sides of the IAIS is intended for future industrial development. This is illustrated on the Eastside Growth Area Concept Plan on page 19. The northern portion of the growth area is more suitable for future residential development, since it is contiguous with existing neighborhoods such as Windsor Ridge, Windsor West to the north and Sunset Village and Modern Manor manufactured housing parks and the Village Green neighborhood to the west.

Because industrial uses are associated with noise, dust, truck traffic and other externalities that may diminish quality of life in nearby residential neighborhoods, it is necessary to separate and buffer new residential areas in the northern portion of the growth area from industrial areas that develop to the south. Since the rail line has never provided an adequate buffer between the industrial area west of Scott Boulevard and residential areas to the north, a more substantial buffer is called for as new neighborhoods develop to the east. The Snyder Creek stream corridor is in a good location to provide a natural separation between future residential and industrial areas. Citizens strongly supported development of a substantial linear park along the stream corridor that would restore a wildlife corridor, facilitate management of storm water run-off, provide open space and amenities for area residents and employees and also serve as a buffer between industrial and residential areas. Since Snyder Creek extends diagonally across the growth area from southwest to northeast, it will not provide a complete buffer between new residential areas to the north and industrial to the south. Therefore, an alternative strategy to separate incompatible uses is to provide a transition in zoning from more intense industrial areas to institutional uses, lower intensity commercial uses, or smaller incubator/cottage industries that are more compatible with residential neighborhoods. This buffer/transition strategy is explained in more detail in the Eastside Growth Area section of the plan (page 17).

Encouraging Green Development

There is public support for encouraging green development in future industrial areas. The first objective of this goal is to ensure that industrial areas with large numbers of employees are accessible by all modes of transportation including public transit and bicycle. By incorporating multimodal transit options into major employment areas, commuters will be given environmentally responsible, safe, and inexpensive access to jobs.

Another objective of encouraging green development is to recruit industries involved in alternative energy. By recruiting wind power and other alternative energy industries, the district could support a growing, sustainability-driven industrial base that would bring employment opportunities to the area.

A third aspect of green development includes green site and building design for industrial areas. Green buildings are designed to meet certain objectives such as using energy, water, and other resources more efficiently; and reducing the overall impact to the environment. Although a green building may cost more up front, it saves money through lower operating costs over the life of the building. More importantly, benefits, such as improving occupant health, comfort, and productivity, and reducing pollution and landfill waste are realized through green development. Encouraging green building techniques will help shape an industrial area that minimizes the impact on the city, environment, and area residents.

Goals and Objectives

The following goals and objectives for industrial and employment areas were formulated with the help of citizens who participated in the Southeast District Plan workshops.

Goal 1: Preserve and expand the industrial tax base.

- a. Protect designated industrial areas from incompatible uses, such as residential dwellings and retail and consumer services that would interfere with industrial operations.
- b. Reserve and zone land adjacent to the Iowa Interstate Railroad for future industrial development.



A number of companies involved in the wind power industry have offices or manufacturing facilities in Iowa. Blades for wind turbines are manufactured in Newton by TPI Composites and in Fort Madison by Siemens. Turbines are manufactured in Cedar Rapids by Clipper Windpower and in West Branch by Acciona. Annual wind power reports indicate that in 2009, Iowa became the first state to have more than 14% of its total generated electricity come from wind power, the highest of any state.



High-reflectance and high emissivity roofing can lower roof surface temperature by up to 100°F, decreasing the amount of heat transferred into a building. The above photo shows an Energy-Star compliant rooftop on an industrial building.



Poplar trees are a fast growing species that are ideal for providing a screen between incompatible uses. They are also known to actively absorb pollutants from the air. Additional tree planting between industrial and residential zones in the Southeast District may help to mitigate noise, dust, and other externalities related to industrial uses.

Goal 2: Support existing and future industrial development with necessary infrastructure and services.

- a. Complete the reconstruction of 420th Street to provide improved access to the new industrial park.
- b. Improve the intersection of 420th Street and Highway 6 to accommodate industrial traffic.
- c. Reconstruct Taft Avenue to provide access for industrial traffic between 420th Street and Interstate 80.
- d. Construct the Snyder Creek Trunk Sanitary Sewer.
- e. Work with the Iowa Interstate Railroad to develop railroad spurs from the main line to serve industrial development.

Goal 3. Minimize conflicts between industrial areas and nearby developments.

- a. Develop a better buffer between the residential areas located north of the Iowa Interstate Railroad and industrial uses located to the south. For example, trees, both fast-growing and slow-growing species, planted on both sides of the railroad could create a visual screen and a sound buffer.
- b. East of Scott Boulevard, develop a park along Snyder Creek to serve as a buffer between future residential neighborhoods and industrial development.

Goal 4. Encourage GREEN industrial development.

- a. Ensure that major employment areas are accessible by all modes of transportation including transit and bicycle.
- b. Recruit alternative energy-related industry.
- c. Encourage sustainable/green site and building design.

Parks, Trails, and Open Space

Existing Conditions

The Southeast District is home to four large public parks: Court Hill, Scott, Windsor Ridge, and Mercer Park and Recreation Center, which includes the Scanlon Gymnasium.

Mercer Park, which was established in 1966, is a regional park and recreation facility serving the entire Iowa City community. The present indoor aquatic center opened in 1988 as a cooperative project with the Iowa City Community School District, and the Scanlon Gymnasium was added in 1999. The baseball diamonds in Mercer Park are now home to the Babe Ruth League and the City High baseball team. The park also includes tennis courts and a large open space area with a picnic shelter, bathrooms, and playground equipment. Participants in the planning process regard Mercer Park as a community center vital to the district's identity and support extending the services and facilities at Mercer beyond traditional recreation uses. Ideas include a satellite branch of the public library, computer room, wireless service, and multi-purpose space for large gatherings or meetings.

Court Hill Park, located south of Court Street and north of Brookside Drive, was established in 1959. The 8.6 acres that comprise the park are divided into two nearly equal sections by Friendship Street. The park has a number of amenities typically found in parks intended for wider community use, including playground equipment, a basketball court, informal playing fields, and three large picnic shelters. However, the relative lack of visibility and access to the park and the absence of bathrooms has limited use of the park to residents of the immediate neighborhood, leaving many of the amenities underutilized. One of the problems is that the park is almost entirely surrounded by private property. With so little street frontage, many people are not even aware of the park's existence. Even for those who are aware of the park and would like to use it more frequently for family gatherings, community picnics or youth sports practice, there is no off-street parking and very little on-street parking available, and there are no trails or sidewalks that provide a connection from Court Street south into the park, making it difficult to use for anyone other than those whose properties are located adjacent to the park.

The recent completion of the **Court Hill Trail**, which runs along Ralston Creek through the southern half of the park and provides a connection to Scott Park to the east and Creekside Park in the Central Planning District, has greatly improved access to and community awareness of Court Hill Park, at least for bicyclists, walkers, and joggers. The trail has been popular with neighborhood residents as well as members of the larger community.

Scott Park, established in 1983 on the site of the original Parks Department tree nursery, encompasses 43 acres and includes a picnic shelter, play structure, open playing fields (often used for youth soccer practice), and Rita's Off-Leash Dog Park. A large portion of the park serves as a storm water detention



Named for Leroy S. Mercer, a former Iowa City mayor and owner of Bankers Advertising and Economy Printing (originally Mercer Printing), the original plan for the park was an ambitious one, with playgrounds, ball fields, tennis and basketball courts, and an outdoor pool. The outdoor pool (above) operated from 1968 until the 1980s, when it began to fail. The Mercer Aquatic Center (below) was built in 1988 as a cooperative effort with the Iowa City School District and serves as the home of the City High and Iowa City Eels swimming teams.





The Court Hill Trail has improved access to and increased public awareness of Court Hill Park, which contains a number of amenities including a playground and picnic shelters. The trail has also improved connectivity through the neighborhood.



facility to control flooding along the south branch of Ralston Creek. Due to the need to maintain storm-water detention capacity, there are certain restrictions on the type and size of built structures in the park. While the park has a considerable amount of street frontage along Scott Boulevard and Court Street, there is a relative lack of trails and available parking, particularly along the park's Court Street frontage.

To improve the situation, in 2011 a trail will be extended through Scott Park, linking the trails in Windsor Ridge Park to the Court Hill Trail. When completed, this trail system will provide pedestrians and bicyclists a nearly continuous off-road route from the far east side of Iowa City to Creekside Park in the Central District. From there, on-street bike routes link to the downtown and the University campus. The trail system will provide a vital link for the Windsor Neighborhood, which currently lacks connectivity with neighborhoods to the west.

Windsor Ridge Park was constructed by a private developer as part of a subdivision agreement and was dedicated to the City in 1999 as a public park. With its pond and network of trails, the 23-acre, linear park is a defining feature of the subdivision. Like Court Hill Park, Windsor Ridge Park is surrounded by private property, with little street frontage, and provides no off-street parking. Short trail links between lots or from the end of cul-de-sacs provide the primary access to the park. This sometimes leads to the misperception of the park as private open space. An absence of bathrooms or other recreational amenities, further limits park use to that of a neighborhood park. However, once the trail system is completed through Scott Park, the Windsor Ridge Trail network and Windsor Ridge Park will be more accessible to the larger community. One goal of the Southeast District Plan is to create a trail system running south from the Windsor Ridge Park along Snyder Creek to the Iowa Interstate Railroad and then west to Mercer Park and Southeast Junior High. Such a trail would be extended as development occurs in areas south of American Legion Road (see map on page 50).

A 2.8-acre green space located to the northeast of Windsor Ridge Park along Cardigan Lane was recently dedicated to the City for a public park. Townhouses face onto the yet-to-be-named park from the south, while undeveloped land to the north and east is intended for mix of neighborhood-serving commercial uses and additional residential. The small park will function as a town square, serving as a focal point for the adjacent neighborhood and an attractive transition between residential uses and future neighborhood-serving commercial uses.

In addition to public parkland, Southeast Junior High and Lucas Elementary provide open space for surrounding neighborhoods. Lucas Elementary has a playground that is open for neighborhood use during non-school hours, while the open space around Southeast is largely un-programmed. There are also a significant number of privately-owned green spaces integrated into the Village Green and Windsor

Ridge subdivisions. These spaces are controlled by various homeowners' associations. Most are maintained as green space but could be developed as privately maintained pocket parks at the discretion of the respective homeowners' associations.

Parks, open space, or trail needs

Many of the goals and objectives identified in the Southeast District planning process are also contained in the Parks and Recreation Department Master Plan. Completed in 2009, the Master Plan includes a community interest inventory for park and recreation facilities and services. The survey found that more than 60% of respondent households indicated a need for: walking and biking trails (79%), nature center and trails (68%), small neighborhood parks (68%), large community parks (66%), and wildlife and natural areas (64%). Not surprisingly, the input of Southeast District workshop participants echoed the findings in this survey.

Better Wayfinding and Connectivity

The off-street trail system, in particular the recently completed Court Hill Trail, is a highly valued feature of the Southeast District. With the completion of a trail connection through Scott Park in 2011, the city will achieve a nearly continuous off-street trail running from Windsor Ridge through Court Hill Park and then on to Creekside Park in the Central Planning District. Only two short sections of this trail are provided on-street, along Brookside and Arbor Drives—both low-volume, residential streets. While the trail system has been widely praised, citizens have also asked for better signage, maps, and other means for directing people to trails and parks in their area. This is particularly important for Court Hill Park and Windsor Ridge Park, which both lack visibility from surrounding streets. The desire to establish effective wayfinding and park signage to guide people to parks and trail access points was also identified during the Central District Planning workshops. As the park and trail system has grown and become more interconnected, it is vital that people be able to find their way to these amenities, not only within individual districts but across the city.

Participants in the Southeast District workshops also expressed interest in improved north-south trail connections throughout the district. Wide sidewalks along Scott Boulevard and First Avenue provide one means of addressing this need, but traffic levels and the number of curb cuts along First Avenue make this a less than ideal bike route. Below is a list of other potential trails and on-street routes as well as new trail connections. These are all shown on the Future Open Space Map on page 50.

- A trail stub between the Court Hill Trail and Catskill Court—this would provide an on-street connection to Dover Street, which runs south to Mercer Park. From there, explore the potential for an on-street route to direct cyclists and pedestrians south to Mercer.

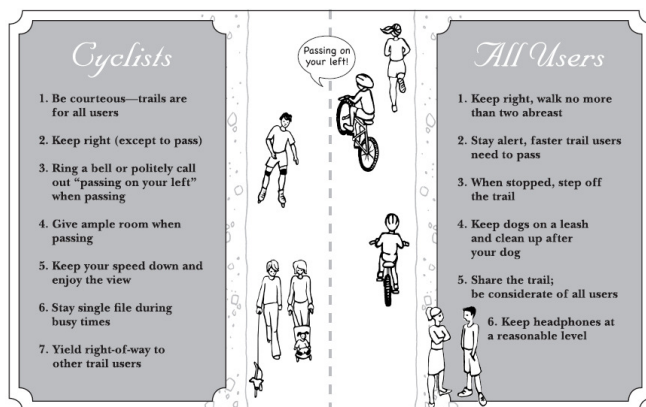


Homes in the Windsor Ridge subdivision back up to Windsor Ridge Park, which is a valuable amenity for neighborhood residents. However, because the park has little street frontage, the public must rely on trail links from nearby streets to provide public access to the park. Distinctive signs, maps, and other wayfinding measures are essential to guiding people to parks and trails throughout the district.





As trail usage increases, conflicts can occur between pedestrians and faster-moving bicyclists. Signage and educational programs and materials can be used to remind users to travel safely and be respectful of other trail users. The Iowa City Metropolitan Area Trails Map includes safety tips and trail etiquette rules. The Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia created a website, <http://www.bicyclecoalition.org/> which includes a downloadable brochure that illustrates and lists rules for good trail etiquette, one page of which is shown below.



- An off-street connection from the Court Hill Trail running to Court Street through the northern half of Court Hill Park.
- A wide sidewalk that runs from Muscatine Avenue to Wayne Avenue through Village Green just east of the River Community Church.
- Trail connections from Cumberland Lane to the new Scott Park trails. This will provide a pedestrian/bicycle connection from the Windsor West subdivision to Scott Park and other community destinations to the west along the Court Hill Trail.
- A trail from American Legion Road south along Snyder Creek to the Iowa Interstate Railroad to be constructed as development occurs in the area east of Scott Boulevard and south of American Legion Road.
- A trail along the north side of the Iowa Interstate Railroad from Scott Boulevard to Mercer Park.
- A wide sidewalk along American Legion Road to provide a pedestrian and bicycle connection to community destinations west of Scott Boulevard for residents living in the Windsor Neighborhood and future neighborhoods that develop in the Eastside Growth Area.

As more and more people use the trails and wide sidewalks for recreation and commuting, the potential for conflicts between cyclists and pedestrians will increase. A number of workshop participants mentioned this concern. While the width of wide sidewalks (8 ft) and trails (8+ feet) is intended to accommodate multiple users, it can invite bicyclists to speed, which can be intimidating and sometimes unsafe for pedestrians. Educational programs for trail users and additional visual cues along trails, such as warning signage or pavement markings, can be used to remind users that the trails are intended for many different types of travelers, including bicyclists, dog walkers, elderly people, joggers, and parents strolling with small children. Adequate and well-marked on-street bicycle facilities should be provided to accommodate cyclists that desire faster commuting routes. For off-street trails that are heavily used or that serve as main bicycle commuter routes, additional signage could be used to remind trail users to share the trail/sidewalk, travel at safe speeds, and use good trail etiquette.

Neighborhood Parks

Since the Southeast District has a number of large regional parks, there does not appear to be a deficit of parkland, however, some residential areas are not within walking distance of a public park. The City's Neighborhood Open Space Plan calls attention to the need for smaller parks designed to provide areas for quiet reflection, informal gathering, and small group recreation for nearby residents. Small neighborhood parks, including open space and playgrounds at elementary schools, often serve as focal points for neighborhood activity and social interaction. Identifying appropriate locations for centrally located

neighborhood or pocket parks and ensuring good access to existing or planned parks should be a priority as new subdivisions are planned or when areas redevelop.

The eastern portion of Village Green is one area considered beyond walking distance (more than a quarter mile) from a park. Central greens and other common spaces within Village Green were identified by residents from the neighborhood as a potential resource for creating neighborhood pocket parks or community gardens. However, these areas are privately owned and may be used as neighborhood park space only at the discretion of the appropriate homeowners' association—Village Green actually falls under the jurisdiction of multiple homeowners' associations.

Organizing as a neighborhood association with the City's Office of Neighborhood Services allows neighborhoods such as Village Green to receive assistance in setting up neighborhood meetings and distributing information of neighborhood interest. A neighborhood association can be a helpful vehicle for organizing neighborhood events and for starting a dialogue about or advocating for neighborhood improvements, which could include discussions about locations for neighborhood pocket parks or community gardens.

Future Open Space

Citizens who participated in the planning process strongly support the idea of developing a large park on the east side of the district to provide a transition and substantial buffer between future residential development and new industrial properties to the south. An area along Snyder Creek was identified as an appropriate space for a regional park with an opportunity to extend the trail system south. This park could also serve as a storm water detention facility. Workshop participants identified a potential loop trail running from Windsor Ridge southwest along the Creek and then westward along the Iowa Interstate Railroad to Mercer Park then north along First Avenue to the Court Hill Trail. Participants would like to see the creek returned to a more natural state with native vegetation and opportunities to foster wildlife habitat.

This sort of expansion of parkland, absent similar expansion in the Parks and Recreation Department budget, could present a substantial maintenance burden for the department. Park concepts that minimize the amount of routine maintenance should be investigated in order to reduce the demands on the Parks Department. Natural areas, such as restored prairie or wetland, may provide one way to minimize the maintenance demands associated with a large park.

Some participants and rural property owners in the district expressed concern over the loss of farmland that will occur as urban development spreads to the east. At the same time, interest in community gardens and support for local food production is growing. The City should explore the potential for setting



Photo of Sandhill Organic Farm, one of six organic farm operations in the Prairie Crossing subdivision.

A 2009 *New York Times* article described a national development trend that uses small scale farming to promote adjacent residential development. The idea is similar to the way golf courses have been used to sell housing developments in the past. A good example of this pairing of residential and agriculture use comes from right here in the Midwest. Prairie Crossing, a residential subdivision located in Gray's Lake, 45 miles from Chicago features trails, restored prairies and wetlands, and a 90-acre organic farm. The farm was one of the first features of the subdivision and, in addition to providing a source for fresh local food to the surrounding neighborhoods, the farm also provides educational outreach programs to the community.



Photo of the Iowa City Farmers Market.



The Court Hill Trail is a real asset for Southeast District neighborhoods. Citizens are very enthusiastic about expanding the multi-use trail network to provide for recreation and alternative transportation connections through and between neighborhoods.

aside areas within the proposed park for local food production. One concept would be to create a “local food incubator,” in which public land or land held in trust by a preservation agency could be leased to local producers under terms that ensure property is well-maintained and attractive for the surrounding residential development (see sidebar on page 45). Public-private partnerships to manage public land for agricultural uses is gathering support in other parts of the country—two good examples include the Klinger Farm in Oswego, Oregon, and the work of Growing Power, a non-profit organization that manages community gardens and small urban farms in Milwaukee and Chicago. In both cases, public land is managed by private organizations or farmers in order to enhance community access to locally grown foods. The “general employment/institutional” area, which is shown on the Eastside Growth Area Concept Plan map (on page 19) could provide opportunities for small-scale food processing, packaging and distribution businesses associated with nearby farms that supply food for the local market.

Parks, Trails, and Open Space Goals and Objectives

The following goals and objectives for Parks, Trails, and Open Space were formulated with the help of citizens who participated in the Southeast District Plan workshops.

Goal 1: Improve the trail system and overall access to parks and other facilities that serve the District.

- a. Create a system of bike and pedestrian connections/routes to parks via off-street trails or pedestrian-friendly public rights-of-way.
- b. Provide trail connections between Windsor Ridge Park, Scott Park, and the Court Hill trail system with appropriately located trail connections to adjacent subdivisions.
- c. Identify and plan for the development of trail connections as part of all new developments.
- d. Investigate ways to provide north-south connections or routes to trails, including a connection between the Court Hill Trail and Mercer/Southeast Junior High.
- e. Investigate a trail along the railroad tracks from Scott Boulevard to First Avenue to provide access to Mercer Park and Southeast Junior High as well as Towncrest and Sycamore Mall.
- f. Prioritize the design and implementation of a wayfinding system providing signage and maps to guide people to parks, park amenities, and connecting trails.
- g. Implement measures to ensure the safe shared use of trails and wide sidewalks for cyclists and pedestrians.

- h. Create trails leading to the dog park and picnic areas in Scott Park along with trail connections from the various subdivisions in the Windsor Neighborhood through Scott Park.
- i. Ensure that future parks have visibility and access from the street; avoid situations or development plans that have parks surrounded by private property.
- j. Ensure that future development adjacent to Scott Park provides visibility and access to the park from public streets.

Goal 2: Improve the amenities offered in existing parks and along trails.

- a. Re-assess existing amenities and facilities in the district's established parks in order to ensure adequate access and appropriate re-investment for anticipated use.
- b. Engage neighborhoods in a pro-active planning process as parks and park amenities are added, upgraded, or replaced.
- c. Incorporate play areas for small children in pocket parks and established parks throughout the district, and involve parents and children in the planning process and selection of playground equipment and other amenities.
- d. Identify appropriate locations for public restrooms, water, rest stations, small shelters, seating, lighting, waste bins and dog wastebags as part of the park and trail planning process.
- e. Provide pedestrian or trail connections to park amenities such as bathrooms, picnic shelters, playgrounds, and courts.
- f. Plan for active recreation spaces in district parks—explore opportunities and demand for ice skating, outdoor swim or splash facilities, skateboarding, bocce ball, frisbee golf, and basketball.
- g. Provide bike parking at all parks, including at more intensively used parks, such as Mercer.
- h. Improve the existing parking area and drive access to Scott Park.

Goal 3: Identify opportunities and work proactively to acquire land for the development of new parks.

- a. As the city grows east of Scott Boulevard, plan for adequate park land and trails to serve new development and to create trail connections between new and existing neighborhoods.
- b. Create a significant linear park along Snyder Creek in the Eastside Growth Area (see goal 5).



As new neighborhoods are developed in the Eastside Growth Area, Snyder Creek, which currently flows through farm fields, will need to be restored to a more natural, healthy state. These photos show before and after photos of stream restoration projects. Restoring stream banks and riparian habitat can be a community building activity for area residents.





Planting areas with native plants that require less maintenance, such as the prairie areas shown in these photos, can help reduce costs for the Parks Department.



- c. Identify land where parks are desirable before property is developed, with a focus on trail connections and preserving natural features.
- d. Investigate opportunities for pocket parks in established neighborhoods that lack parks.

Goal 4: Preserve and enhance natural green space in the district.

- a. Include space for native planting—prairies and stream banks—in new parks and along trails as well as in existing parks in those areas not used for active recreation activities.
- b. Restore native vegetation and a more natural stream corridor in the future park planned along Snyder Creek.
- c. Provide opportunities to access the creek for exploration and play.
- d. Plant more trees in parks and along trails to create shade, especially in those parks with playground equipment.

Goal 5: Plan for the development of a major regional park east of Scott Boulevard along Snyder Creek to provide a substantial buffer between residential development and industrial property north of the Iowa Interstate Railroad.

- a. Work proactively to ensure that sufficient land and space is incorporated into the park to provide a healthy transition between industrial uses and residential neighborhoods. The park should be of sufficient size to mitigate the impacts of noise, dust, vibration, and truck traffic associated with industrial uses.
- b. Preserve areas along Snyder Creek as natural open space and restore the stream to a more natural system with native vegetation.
- c. Plan and develop trail connections through the future park linking Windsor Ridge Trails south to Highway 6 and beyond in accord with the Metropolitan Planning Organization of Johnson County Council trail plan.
- d. Incorporate alternative uses or vegetation in the park that minimize the maintenance demands on park staff, such as wetlands, native prairie, and/or a local farm preserve where local food producers can lease land from the Parks Department as a local food incubator.
- e. Foster a collaboration between private developers and the parks department so that the park is viewed as a real amenity to the surrounding residential development.

Goal 6: Improve and update Mercer Park as a vital feature of the district.

- a. Work cooperatively with the neighborhood, especially parents, to improve or update playground and other facilities at Mercer Park.
- b. Consider adding outdoor basketball courts at Mercer or other active recreation space such as skateboard facilities or a jogging trail loop.
- c. Investigate opportunities to enhance Mercer as an eastside community center, including potential for library services, wireless service, etc.
- d. Explore opportunities to create a “destination playground” in Mercer Park in accordance with Goal 9 of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

Goal 7: Build partnerships within community organizations, including schools, to take advantage of existing facilities, share new facilities, and to expand programs and services to the community.

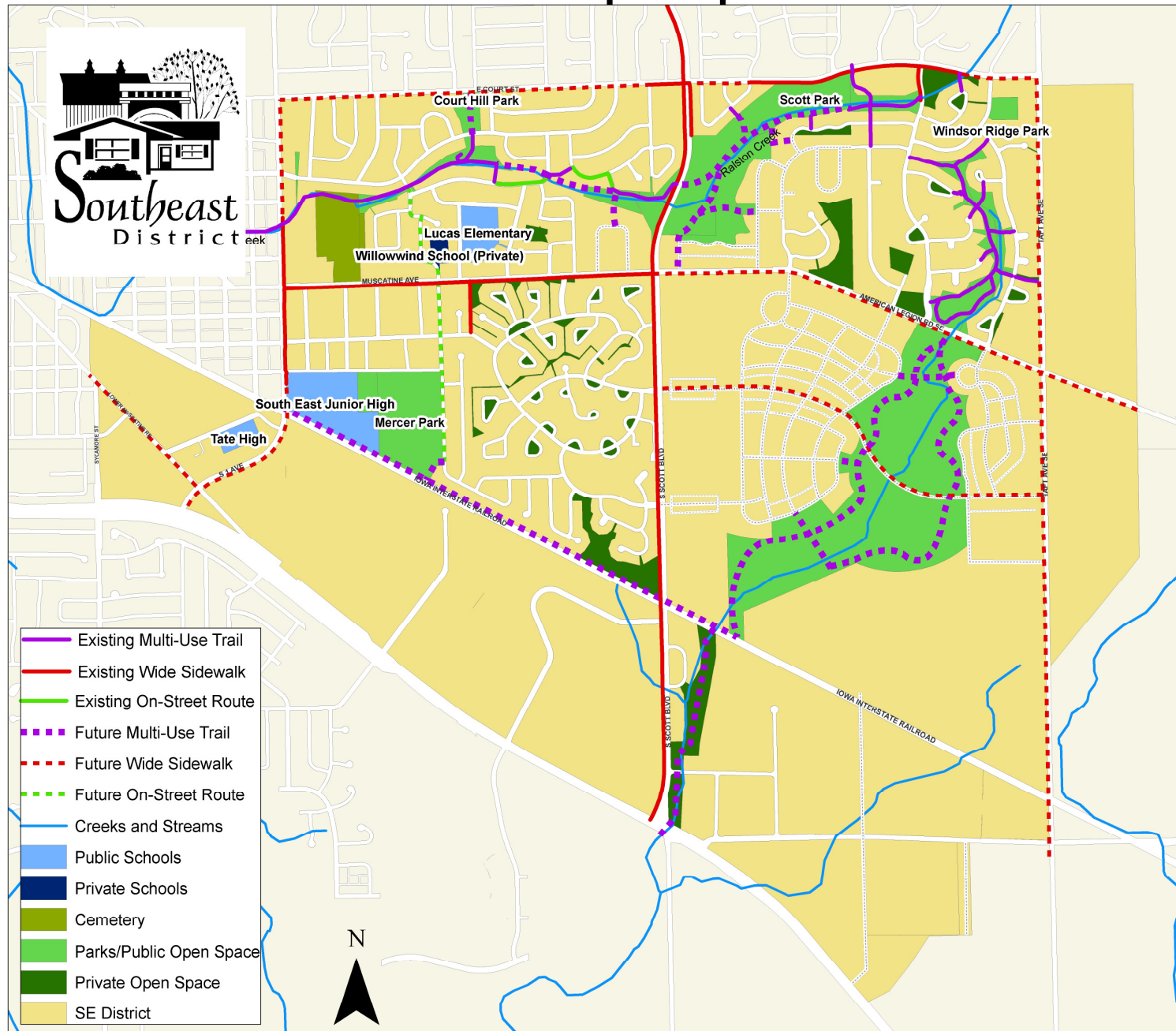
- a. Partner with the school district in developing school playgrounds that can also serve the surrounding neighborhood as parkland.
- b. Explore interest in establishing community garden plots in district parks, and work with local gardening or farming organizations to maintain gardens and expand access and awareness of gardening opportunities.
- c. Work with the Village Green homeowners’ associations to raise awareness of shared private open space within the neighborhood and to assess opportunities for developing these shared spaces as pocket parks.
- d. Organize and promote volunteer activities to maintain parks and trails and events to raise public awareness of the recreational facilities and park amenities in the district.



Natural playgrounds that invite exploration and more imaginative play are becoming more popular. A variety of options and ideas should be explored with parents and educators when installing new playgrounds in neighborhood parks.



Southeast District - Open Space and Trails



Streets and Transportation

Arterial Streets

Arterial streets are the main traffic corridors of the city, the primary function of which is to carry traffic through and between neighborhoods. In general, maintaining efficient traffic flow on arterial streets helps to prevent cut-through traffic on local residential streets. The Southeast District is served by a number of arterial streets:

- Court Street, a main east-west route, forms the northern boundary of the Southeast District;
- 1st Avenue and a small segment of Sycamore Street define the western edge of the District;
- U.S. Highway 6, a divided highway, extends along the District's southern border and joins with U.S. Highway 1 west of the Iowa River to form the major east-west arterial that serves the southern part of Iowa City and provides a route to neighboring towns and cities;
- Taft Avenue, once improved to City standards, will help to define the boundaries of future Southeast District neighborhoods located near the eastern growth area limit of the city and will serve as a truck route from the industrial area to Interstate 80;
- Lower Muscatine Avenue is a short diagonal arterial street that extends from the end of Kirkwood Avenue past Kirkwood Community College and the Sycamore Mall to its intersect with Highway 6;
- 420th Street is another short arterial that, once improved to city standards, will provide an important link between the industrial area and Scott Boulevard and Taft Avenue;
- The other two major arterial streets that serve the district extend north-south (Scott Boulevard) and east-west (Muscatine Avenue/American Legion Road) through the center of the district and define neighborhood edges (See Southeast District Neighborhood Map on page 6).

Modern arterial street design is intended to accommodate bicycles and pedestrians as well as motorized vehicles. Scott Boulevard is a good example of this design principle: extra-wide outside travel lanes allow for vehicles and bikes to share the same lane, and a wide sidewalk serves pedestrians as well as those cyclists who are not comfortable riding on the street. Trees and other landscaping in the right-of-way between the sidewalk and the street provide additional separation, creating a safer and more inviting environment for pedestrians. While the design of any specific arterial street frontage is dependent on its context and will vary depending on whether the area is a dense commercial area or a lower-density residential area, the basic principles remain the same—provide comfortable and safe sidewalk environments for pedestrians, design the right-of-way to accommodate bicycles, and provide context-sensitive travel and turn lanes to accommodate anticipated traffic volumes.



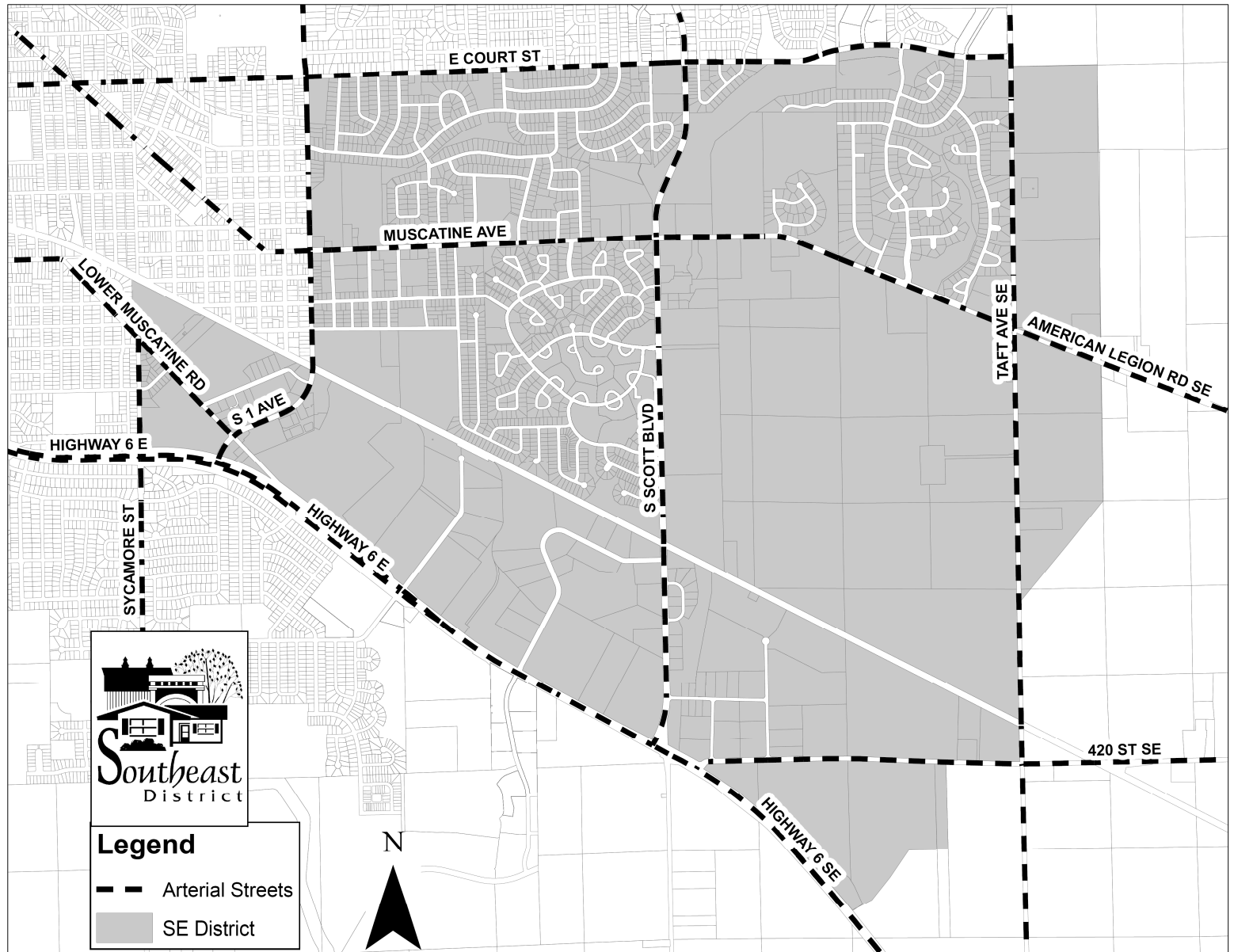
An unpaved rural Iowa road. (Photo courtesy Iowa DOT)

History

Until the middle of the twentieth century there were few paved roads east of Iowa City. Highway 6, which at the time was located partially on Muscatine Avenue, was the first paved road leading out of Iowa City, connecting west to the Iowa County line in 1926 and east to the Cedar County line in 1927. Though it was once part of the longest trans-continental road system, Highway 6 never served as a major cross-country traffic corridor because it was pieced together from several other routes. Highway 6 was eventually shifted south to its current location in an attempt to relieve traffic on Muscatine Avenue. As with many bypass strategies the new road simply attracted new development and expanded the city further southward.

Lower Muscatine Road was part of the River to River Road (Route 7), an unpaved route connecting Iowa City to Davenport (Mississippi River) and Council Bluffs (Missouri River). Other early roads, which were mostly unpaved, followed section lines rather than the terrain and thus passed through some low spots and drainage areas that were frequently submerged in mud. Some of those roads now serve as arterial streets for the Southeast District, including First Avenue, Court Street, Scott Boulevard and Taft Avenue.

Southeast District - Arterial Streets



Participants in the Southeast District workshops discussed their opinions about how well the arterial streets function throughout the district and listed a number of concerns ranging from traffic congestion to requests for better and safer access for bicycle and pedestrians. The City is already addressing a number of these issues through improvements planned for the near future. What follows is a list of major improvement projects planned for the Southeast District:

First Avenue IAIS Railroad Intersection: By far, the most requested street improvement identified by participants in the Southeast District workshops was establishing a railroad overpass at the First Avenue / Iowa Interstate Railroad crossing. Public concerns about this crossing have been increasing for some time. It is a significant obstacle for commuters, businesses, and students at Southeast Junior High. It can also pose difficulties for the provision of fire service, since trucks from Fire Station # 3 located on Lower Muscatine Avenue cannot travel north on 1st Avenue if a train is blocking traffic. The nearest alternative crossings are located approximately one mile in either direction. To remedy this situation, the City has scheduled the design and construction of the overpass into its capital improvements plan for FY2011-15. The intent is to fund the approximately \$6.5 million project with a combination of federal grants and local obligation bonds.

Lower Muscatine Road: Planned for 2011, the reconstruction of Lower Muscatine Road west of First Avenue will help relieve traffic congestion near Kirkwood Community College and also improve conditions for bicyclists and pedestrians. Lower Muscatine Road will be transformed from a four-lane street with a sidewalk on one side, to a three-lane street with wider travel lanes and sidewalks on both sides of the street where possible. The center turn lane will allow for more predictable turning movements by motorists, while wider travel lanes will accommodate on-street bicyclists. Additional sidewalks and better pedestrian crossings at the signalized intersections will improve pedestrian access between surrounding neighborhoods and Kirkwood Community College and the Sycamore Mall.

420th Street: Currently underway, the reconstruction of 420th Street east of Highway 6 will convert this rural road to a commercial/industrial street with public utilities, turn lanes, curb-and-gutter, and sidewalks. The new road will serve as the main access to the new industrial park east of the Scott-Six Industrial Park.

Muscatine Avenue/American Legion Road intersection with Scott Boulevard: Planned for fiscal year 2013-14, a traffic signal at this intersection will improve traffic flow in this part of the district.

Other planned improvements: While it is anticipated that American Legion Road and Taft Avenue will need to be improved to urban standards in the future, funds have not yet been budgeted for these road projects.

As population and traffic growth in the Southeast District increases, the need for these improvements will become more pronounced. Recognizing that it may be several years before American Legion Road



Between two and four trains per day block First Avenue, a major arterial street corridor in east Iowa City, with an average daily traffic (ADT) of 20,400 vehicles per day (2004 traffic count).



Simulation of the proposed railroad overpass at the First Avenue/Iowa Interstate Railroad crossing. The purpose of the railroad grade-separation project is three-fold: 1) to reduce traffic delay and vehicle emissions, 2) improve public safety, and 3) facilitate freight and passenger rail transportation.



The Court Hill Neighborhood has a more curvilinear street pattern and longer block lengths than older neighborhoods west of 1st Avenue. When this neighborhood was built the decision was made to limit the number of street crossings over Ralston Creek, which may have reduced the cost of the initial development, but has “cost” the neighborhood in terms of the efficiencies that would have been realized with a more connected street pattern.



Speed humps are raised areas of pavement installed at regular intervals along a street to prevent drivers from exceeding the speed limit.

is rebuilt, residents of the Windsor West subdivision have petitioned the City Council for an interim sidewalk connection to their neighborhood similar to what was built along Sycamore Street in the South District prior to that street being improved to urban standards. The cost of this temporary solution, however, will have to be weighed against the city’s other capitol improvement needs. Depending on how quickly the Windsor West subdivision builds out, a planned trail link from the northern part of the subdivision through Scott Park to the Court Hill Trail would provide an alternative pedestrian/bicycle route to destinations in the central part of the city until American Legion Road is reconstructed to include sidewalks.

There is also public support for the future improvement of Taft Avenue to serve as an additional arterial route to Interstate 80 to accommodate likely increases in heavy truck traffic from the industrial area as it expands east of Scott Boulevard. Improvements to Taft Avenue may also spur further development of residential neighborhoods within the city’s growth area limit. New residential subdivisions proposed along this arterial street should be designed with deeper lots and building setbacks and additional landscape screening to buffer residents from the heavier arterial street traffic.

Local Streets

The primary function of local streets is to provide access to individual properties and to facilitate traffic circulation within a neighborhood. Local streets in the western part of the Southeast District are generally arranged in a grid pattern of short blocks that provide multiple routes within and through the neighborhoods, assuring that no one street is overburdened with traffic. The streets in the central and eastern parts of the district are arranged in a more curvilinear pattern with longer block lengths and numerous cul-de-sacs. This type of street pattern relies on collector streets that “collect” the traffic from the cul-de-sacs and other local streets in a neighborhood and funnel it to the arterials. However, if not enough street connections are provided within a neighborhood, this type of street system can result in an inefficient transportation network that overburdens certain streets with traffic, discourages walking and biking and results in higher costs to provide services such as public transit, garbage collection, snow plowing, mail delivery, and emergency services. Recently adopted subdivision regulations ensure that future neighborhoods will be designed with better connectivity by establishing a limit on block lengths, discouraging cul-de-sacs, and requiring streets to be extended (stubbed) to the edge of a subdivision so that same network of streets can be continued as development occurs on adjacent land.

On local streets where the speed and or volume of traffic becomes excessive, the City’s Traffic Calming Program may be implemented. The program uses one or more approaches to reduce speeds or discourage cut-through traffic, including increased police enforcement, improved signage and other driver education techniques, and/or physical changes to the roadway such as speed humps and traffic circles. Planning workshop participants identified Dover Street, Friendship Street and Wayne Avenue as possible candidates for traffic calming. However, it is up to the residents along these streets to request that a

traffic calming study be conducted by the City. If based on a traffic study the subject street is identified as an appropriate candidate for traffic calming, a majority of residents along the street must agree to any proposed traffic calming strategies before they will be implemented.

Complete Streets

The City has adopted a “complete streets” policy. This means that new streets will be designed and constructed to accommodate all modes of transportation – cars, bicycles, pedestrians, and public transit. Southeast District workshop participants were overwhelmingly supportive of the effort to improve streets in the Southeast District to facilitate and encourage use of alternative modes of transportation.

The City of Iowa City partnered with the Metropolitan Planning Organization of Johnson County to draft the Metro Bicycle Master Plan, which outlines new strategies to create an accessible and coordinated bike network throughout Iowa City and the larger metropolitan area. The Metro Bicycle Master Plan identifies opportunities for on-street bike routes, including a signed bike route along Friendship Street to downtown Iowa City. To increase awareness and access to the network, the plan also recommends that way-finding signs be installed on area trails. As mentioned previously, it is an important objective of the Southeast District Plan to provide better wayfinding signage along all on-street and off-street trails, and along area streets that are designated as bike routes.

There are a number of streets in the Southeast District that were constructed at a time when sidewalks were not required, which, unfortunately, has resulted in gaps in the district’s sidewalk network. In addition, residential areas that were developed outside the city limits, such as the manufactured housing parks on Scott Boulevard, were not required by the County to put in sidewalks. Due to increasing public demand for a complete sidewalk network, the City Council established a sidewalk infill program, whereby gaps are identified and funds set aside each year to construct missing pieces of the sidewalk network. Priority is given to main pedestrian routes, such as routes to school and along arterial and collector streets. Subdivisions located in the County that are annexed into the city in the future would become eligible for this sidewalk infill program as well.

Improving pedestrian safety is also a priority. The City will continue to work with the school district to identify safe routes to school. To improve pedestrian safety, marked crosswalks are typically painted at signalized intersections, at official school route crossings, and at other high-volume intersections. Public requests for marked crosswalks in other locations are evaluated carefully. While well-designed crosswalks are important to pedestrian safety, marking crosswalks at locations where drivers do not expect them or where pedestrian traffic is only sporadic can actually reduce pedestrian safety by giving pedestrians a false sense of security when crossing the street. The City evaluates each proposed crosswalk to determine if it is warranted and safe.



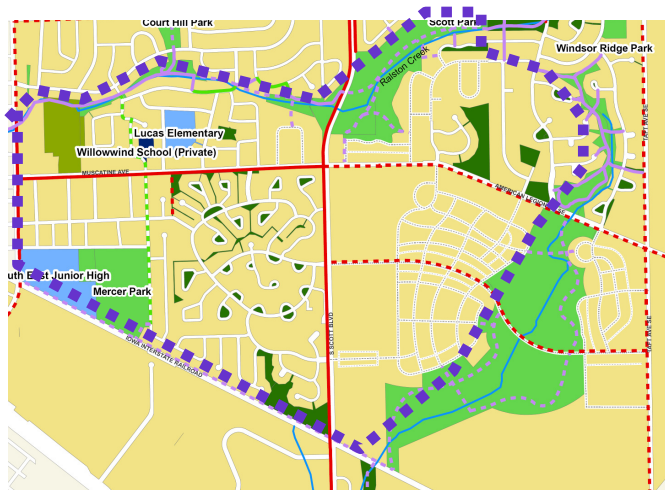
Iowa City has adopted a “complete streets” policy with the goal of accommodating all modes of transportation along area streets. This street in Iowa City has bicycle lanes, a bus stop, sidewalks buffered from the traffic lanes and signage that reminds drivers to “share the road.”



Crossing guards and well-marked cross walks make walking to school a safe option even for younger children.



The Mayor's Ride held during "Bike to Work Week" is one of the events that promotes bicycling as a fun and healthy way to get to work.



A main goal of the plan is to provide linkages between all trail routes. This image illustrates the concept of an "eastside loop" that would link the Court Hill Trail through Scott Park to the Windsor Ridge Trail, to a future trail route along Snyder Creek, and back along the Iowa-Interstate Railroad to connect to Mercer Park, Southeast Junior High and the commercial areas along 1st Avenue. (See larger map of trails and open space on page 50.)

Trails

Trails and wide sidewalks for shared use by pedestrians and bicyclists are an important part of the Southeast District's transportation system. In addition to providing recreational opportunities, the trail and sidewalk networks provide a low-cost and carbon-free means of transportation to school, employment, and shopping centers. Participants in the Southeast District planning workshops identified a number of needed improvements to the trail and sidewalk network.

The Court Hill Trail between Creekside Park and Court Hill Park was completed in 2008 and has already proven to be a popular trail for both recreation and commuting. It provides pleasant off-road pedestrian and bicycle access to many neighborhoods in eastern Iowa City.

The other significant trail system in the Southeast District is the Windsor Ridge Trail that extends the length of Windsor Ridge Park and will be linked in the near future to Scott Park and the Court Hill Trail. Since Windsor Ridge Park has very little street frontage and is largely located behind home lots, short trail links between lots or from the end of cul-de-sacs provide the primary means by which area residents and visitors gain access to the park and the larger regional trail system. As new neighborhoods develop, opportunities to connect them into this regional trail network should be explored and implemented. For example, the Windsor Ridge Trail should be extended south along Snyder Creek to provide a link through the eastside growth area and beyond to the Sycamore Greenway Trail in the South District. Workshop participants requested that the City also explore the possibility of looping the future Snyder Creek Trail to provide a trail link west along the north side of the Iowa-Interstate Railroad through the Village Green neighborhood to Mercer Park and Southeast Junior High.

When the grade of the railroad is raised at 1st Avenue it might also be possible to incorporate a pedestrian and bicycle tunnel under the tracks west of 1st Avenue to provide a connection between the Kirkwood Community College campus and the neighborhoods to the north and east and to the Towncrest mixed use center. However, a tunnel in this location is not likely to gain broad public support unless a public trail link is provided from Lower Muscatine Avenue through the Kirkwood campus or adjacent private industrial property to the tunnel so that it can also be used by residents of the surrounding neighborhoods.

Public Transit

There are several public transit routes in the Southeast District, including the Eastside Express and Court Hill routes that serve the Court Street corridor, the Towncrest route that serves the Muscatine Avenue corridor, and the Eastside Loop route that circulates through eastside neighborhoods and provides access to the commercial and industrial area around Sycamore Mall. Many students that attend Southeast Junior High also use this service to travel to and from school every day.

Citizens expressed a desire for improved signage and transit information at bus stops, and expanded hours of transit service (up to midnight), and service on Sundays. There was also support for loop routes that do not go downtown, but instead provide eastside residents with direct service to Sycamore Mall/K-Mart and other shopping/retail areas such as Hy-Vee and Fareway. There is a need for additional bus shelters in some locations in the Southeast District, including near the employment center along Scott Boulevard and at Southeast Junior High.

Iowa City Transit will be addressing many of these concerns as part of a comprehensive study of its current service. Items being investigated include the expansion of the Eastside Loop bus to create an eastside connection route. This route would not service downtown but would be a modified eastside loop that runs all day. Bus stops are being redesigned and “Nextbus” software will make route information and accurate arrival times accessible to the public by computer and smart phone. Wireless service is now available on all buses.

I o w a I n t e r s t a t e R a i l r o a d

The Iowa Interstate Railroad, which first reached Iowa City from the east in 1855 as the Mississippi and Missouri Railroad, later became part of the Rock Island Railroad. It was not until 1860 that a bridge crossing the Iowa River was completed. By 1867 the Rock Island Line would extend westward to Des Moines and by 1869 it reached Council Bluffs and the Missouri River. This rail line, now owned by the Iowa Interstate (IAIS) Railroad, is the only east-west railroad through Iowa City.

The location of the IAIS Railroad has made land in the Southeast District uniquely suited to and attractive for industrial development, because rail transport is often a more reliable and cost-effective method of shipping and receiving large or heavy loads of material or product. One of the main goals of the Southeast District Plan is to expand opportunities for industrial development along the Iowa-Interstate Railroad.

While the IAIS Railroad has been primarily a freight line, the City has been active in supporting state, regional, and federal efforts to establish regional Amtrak passenger service on this rail line. The proposed service would link Iowa City through the Quad Cities to Chicago and may also be extended west to Des Moines and Omaha.

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, the railroad crossing at First Avenue has been a significant obstacle for commuters, businesses, and students at Southeast Junior High. One of the most important transportation needs identified by citizens is establishing a railroad overpass at the First Ave / Iowa Interstate Railroad crossing. Similarly, the City should explore the cost-benefit and feasibility of a grade separation at the railroad crossing at Taft Avenue as plans are made to improve this arterial street in the future.



There are many creative ways to improve the quality of transit service. This solar-powered bus shelter, called an i-shelter, lights up with high efficiency LED lights immediately when someone walks inside, providing a cost-effective way to increase night time safety for transit riders and a visual cue to bus drivers that someone is waiting at the stop for service.



The IAIS rail line is a major east-west freight route important to Southeast District industrial firms and may one day carry Amtrak passenger service as well.



Traffic calming devices such as the speed table (above) and traffic circle (below) can help to slow traffic along local neighborhood streets. The speed table shown above helps improve safety along this route to school.



Goals and Objectives

The following goals and objectives for Streets and Transportation were formulated with the help of citizens who participated in the Southeast District Plan workshops.

Goal 1: Address congestion and other traffic safety issues along area streets.

- a. Investigate ways to provide better, more visible or controlled pedestrian crossings in appropriate locations along arterial streets in accordance with local and federal standards.
- b. Consolidate curb cuts (driveways) as new development or redevelopment occurs along Muscatine and First Avenues to improve traffic flow and reduce accidents.
- c. Continue to evaluate controlled/signalized intersections on a regular basis to ensure optimal traffic flow.
- d. If requested by residents, investigate traffic calming measures on Friendship and Dover Streets and Wayne Avenue.
- e. Improve American Legion Road to City standards, including sidewalks.

First Avenue

- a. Construct a railroad overpass for the Iowa-Interstate Railroad as it crosses First Avenue.
- b. Consider implementing a “road diet” on 1st Avenue south of Bradford Drive to decrease traffic delays and collisions. A road diet would reduce the roadway from four lanes to two travel lanes with a center turn lane.
- c. Improve the appearance and function of the First Avenue Commercial Corridor as private redevelopment or public investment occurs.
- d. Continue to work with the Iowa City School District to find solutions to school-related congestion in the area around Southeast Junior High, and identify and implement strategies to encourage students to walk, bike or take the bus to school.

Muscatine Avenue

- a. Explore the possibility of realigning the Hy-Vee grocery store driveway along Muscatine Avenue with Wade Street.
- b. Install a traffic signal at the intersection of Muscatine Avenue and Scott Blvd.

Lower Muscatine Road

- a. Complete planned street and sidewalk improvements to Lower Muscatine Road from Kirkwood Avenue to First Avenue.
- b. Work with Kirkwood Community College and adjacent property owners to improve driveway access or to construct alternative access to the college.

Taft Avenue

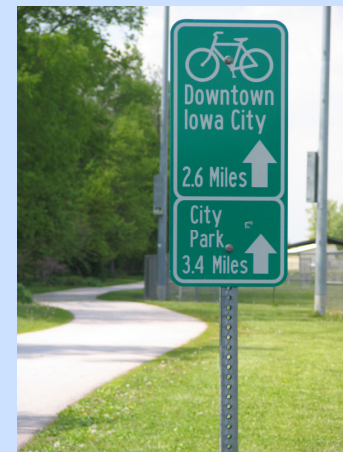
- a. Improve Taft Avenue to accommodate truck traffic anticipated with the further development of industrial areas in the district.
- b. Prior to improving Taft Avenue, explore the cost-benefit and feasibility of constructing a railroad overpass at the street's intersection with the IAIS Railroad.
- c. Ensure that deeper residential lots and landscaped buffers are provided between Taft Avenue and adjacent residential neighborhoods as development and road improvements occur.

Goal 2: Create an accessible and well-coordinated bike network.

- a. Establish bike routes and trail connections to allow cyclists to get from the Southeast District to downtown Iowa City and to connect schools, parks, and commercial and industrial areas within the district.
- b. Create a bike trail or on-street route to provide connections between the Sycamore Greenway Trail, the Court Hill Trail, and the Windsor Ridge Trail.
- c. Improve signage and wayfinding methods to help cyclists find bike routes and off-street trails.
- d. Establish better zoning and site development standards to ensure that adequate and well-maintained bike parking is provided at all commercial and public buildings, at parks and schools, and at major employment centers.
- e. Work with bike organizations to educate schools, businesses, and property owners, and create awareness of the needs of bikers in terms of access, safety, and bike parking.
- f. Wherever street widths permit, consider establishing or improving on-street bike facilities such as "sharrows," bike lanes, or bike boulevards, to increase safety for bicyclists and to separate pedestrians and cyclists.
- g. Develop and implement educational programs for cyclists and pedestrians to promote safety along shared trails, including signage or pavement markings.



Providing adequate and secure bike parking at neighborhood destinations is an important objective of the plan.



This sign located on an off-street trail orients bicyclists and helps them gauge how far it is to important destinations.



While this bus shelter is perhaps a bit too whimsical, creative bus shelter designs could be used to encourage more people, including school children, to ride the bus.

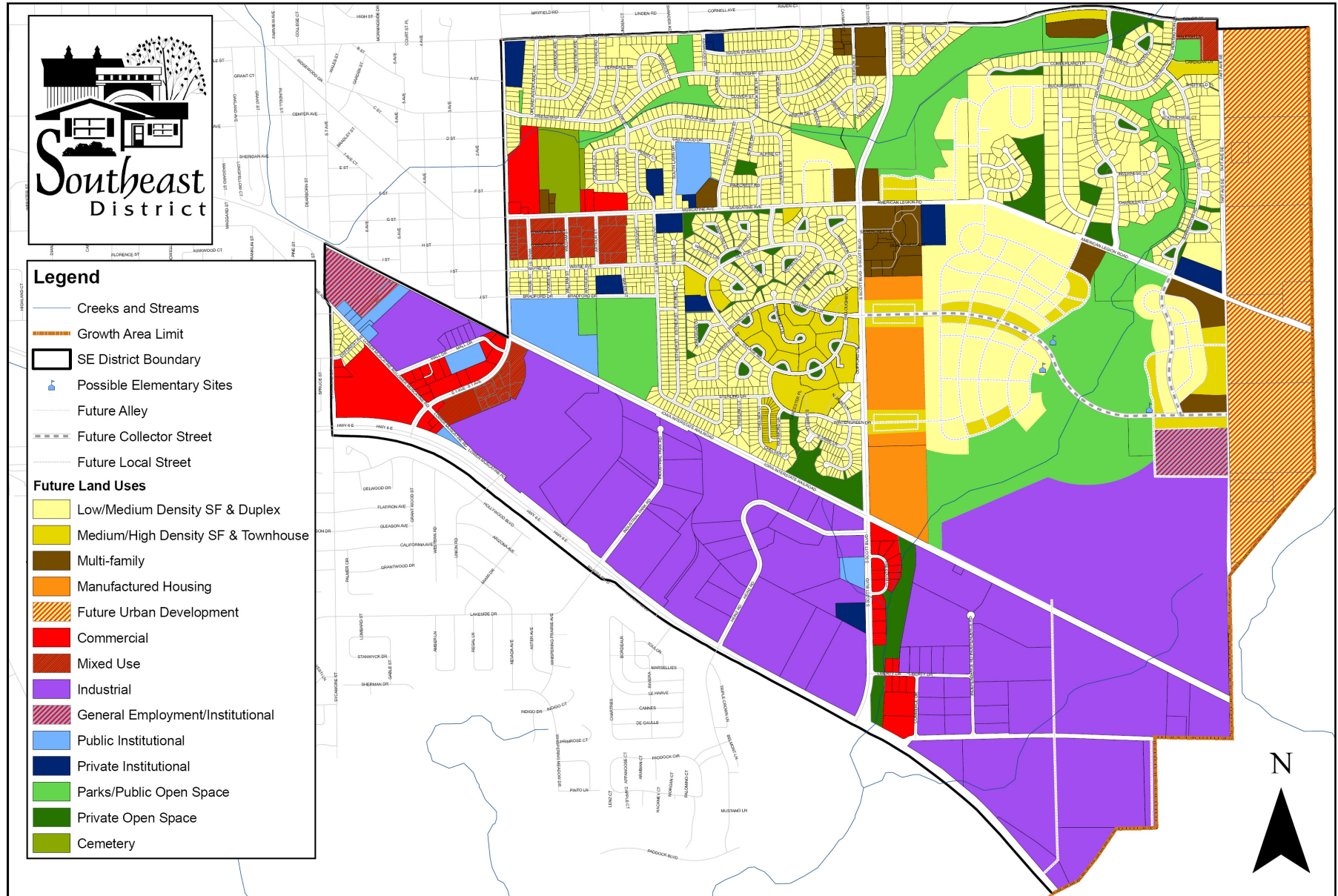
Goal 4: Improve pedestrian facilities.

- a. Fill in gaps in the sidewalk network, especially along arterial streets, such as Court Street, Muscatine Avenue, and American Legion Road.
- b. Ensure that established sidewalks are well-maintained throughout the year.
- c. Ensure that pedestrian facilities are addressed when intersections are improved.
- d. Investigate cost-benefit and feasibility of a pedestrian/bicycle tunnel under the Iowa Interstate Railroad between Kirkwood Community College and neighborhoods to the northeast.
- e. Provide well-marked crosswalks for schools.
- f. Provide count-down timers at high volume, higher speed intersections.
- g. Investigate establishing a leading walk phase at signalized intersections along major pedestrian routes.
- h. Work with the Iowa City Community School District to implement a Safe Routes to School program to ensure all schools are connected by sidewalks, trails and crosswalks.

Goal 5: Improve and expand transit service.

- a. Investigate the expansion and diversification of bus routes and stops to serve the district, including an eastside circular service to major commercial areas within and around the district.
- b. Raise awareness and improve access to transit service by providing well-marked bus stops with posted schedules.
- c. Explore the feasibility of a cooperative adopt-a-shelter program with the school district and commercial centers to provide and maintain attractive bus shelters.

Southeast District - Plan Map



The Southeast District Plan Map is intended to be used as a general guide to future land use and development in the Southeast District. The map is color-coded to indicate the type of land use or type of development or redevelopment appropriate for specific areas of the District. More detailed descriptions of the map designations are listed on the following pages.

Southeast District Plan Map Designations

Low/Medium Density SF & Duplex

Intended primarily for single family and duplex residential development at low to medium densities. Duplexes are allowed on corner lots in all single family zones. The residential density for a property should reflect the nature of the site and take into account sensitive environmental features, topographical constraints, street connectivity, and compatibility with historical development patterns. For infill sites compatibility with the surrounding neighborhood is important.

Development Density: 2-8 dwelling units/acre

Medium/High Density SF & Townhouse

Suitable for medium to high density single-family residential development, including zero lot line development, duplexes, townhouses, and narrow lot detached single-family housing. Suitable for sites where a single loaded street is desirable to provide visibility and access to public open space, or where clustering is desirable.

Development Density: 8-13 dwelling units/acre

Multi-Family

Intended for low to medium density multi-family housing. Suitable for areas with good access to city services and facilities. Higher density zoning designations may not be suitable for areas with topographical constraints or limited street access. For infill sites compatibility with the surrounding neighborhood is important.

Development Density: 16-24 dwelling units/acre

Manufactured Housing

Existing manufactured housing parks currently located outside Iowa City's corporate limit, but within the City's growth area limit. If the manufactured housing parks are annexed and redeveloped in the future, it would be suitable for a broader mix of housing, such as single family, duplex, townhouses, and low density multi-family that is integrated into the surrounding neighborhood. A planned development may be an appropriate tool to achieve redevelopment goals.

Development Density: 8-16 dwelling units/acre

Commercial

Areas intended to provide the opportunity for a large variety of commercial uses, particularly retail commercial uses, which serve a major segment of the community.

Industrial

Areas intended to provide the opportunity for a broad range of industrial and quasi-industrial uses. Appropriate buffers between industrial areas and adjacent residential should be established.

Mixed-Use

Areas intended for development that combines commercial and residential uses. Individual buildings may be mixed-use or single-use. An area may be primarily commercial in nature or may be primarily residential depending on the location and the surrounding neighborhood. Development is intended to be pedestrian-oriented, with buildings oriented to the street with sidewalks, street trees and other pedestrian amenities. Buildings

with residential uses should be designed to ensure a comfortable and functional environment for urban living in close proximity to commercial uses. The mix of uses allowed requires special consideration of building and site design.

General Employment/Institutional

Areas intended for uses that provide employment opportunities for the community, such as offices, research firms, and light manufacturing, cottage industries, or quasi-industrial uses that operate much like office uses and/or operate within enclosed buildings with few externalities, and institutional uses such as churches, daycare centers, and schools, including schools of specialized instruction.

Future Urban Development

Areas within the growth limit that are not yet served by City services and may not experience substantial development within the lifetime of this plan. Development in this area is not expected until Taft Avenue is improved to City standards. Development should be compatible with adjacent areas and areas across Taft Avenue. As development becomes imminent, the City will develop more detailed land use and street layout concepts to supplement the current plan. Topography and sensitive features will need to be studied to determine appropriate densities.

Public Institutional

Property that is publicly owned and used for a public purpose, including public schools, and City, County, State, and Federal offices or facilities. If the property is proposed to be sold to a private entity for a non-public use, then the land should be rezoned to be compatible with the surrounding neighborhood.

Private Institutional

Privately owned land being used for an institutional use, such as a church, community service use, daycare facility, private educational use or similar. Iowa City does not have a zone that designates private institutional uses as the primary, preferred land use. However, there are a number of zones where these uses are permitted or provisional uses. Development or redevelopment proposals are subject to the requirements of the underlying zoning designation.

Parks/Public Open Space

Indicates existing or potential public open space intended for the protection of sensitive natural features, storm water management, and/or to provide for passive, active, recreational or other public open space needs, and/or to protect the aesthetic values of the community.*

Private Open Space

Indicates existing or potential open space on private land that is important for the protection of sensitive natural features and/or to provide for storm water management, and/or for private, shared passive or recreational opportunities for adjacent properties, and/or to protect the aesthetic values of the community.*

*A public or private open space designation on land that is not currently designated as open space may indicate an area is largely unsuitable for development due to environmental or topographical constraints or may indicate that an opportunity to acquire needed open space is possible if current land uses are discontinued. While these areas are best reserved or acquired for open space, development may occur on privately held land if a proposal meets the underlying zoning requirements and the requirements of the Iowa City Sensitive Areas Ordinance.

Cemetery

Location of Memory Gardens, an existing cemetery.

