



# FOX RIVER CORRIDOR MASTER PLAN

ST. CHARLES, ILLINOIS 2015 UPDATE

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 Market & Feasibility Advisors – Market Economics  
 Wills Burke Kelsey Associates – Civil/Water Resource Engineering  
 S2O Design and Engineering – Active River Engineering

Support for this project has been provided by the Kane County Board, through its Office of Community Reinvestment, with funds from the Grand Victoria Riverboat Casino.

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# Executive Summary

Dear Community Leaders:

From the time that St. Charles was first settled, the Fox River has been one of its most important assets. Today, thanks to the vision of past leaders who recognized the importance of the river, St. Charles prospers and enjoys a sparkling regional reputation. The future of the Fox River and riverfront in St. Charles is extraordinary. Actively nurtured, the river corridor will feature a compelling package of natural and man-made assets that will define the community's environmental, cultural and economic prosperity for decades to come.

Building on a tradition of visionary planning, the 2002 River Corridor Master Plan illustrated the community's concept of a signature riverwalk along both sides of the river that would attract visitors, connect parks and neighborhoods to downtown, and stimulate downtown investment. The plan also recommended design guidelines and described an incremental implementation process. Spearheaded by the St. Charles River Corridor Foundation, the City of St. Charles and the St. Charles Park District have completed some key projects including the riverwalk between Prairie and Illinois Streets along the west bank of the river, named in honor of the late Bob Leonard, the 2002 Downtown St. Charles Partnership River Corridor Committee co-chairman. However, many of the master planned projects remain unrealized.

In 2015, led by the Active River Task Force of the River Corridor Foundation, the City of St. Charles, the St. Charles Park District and the Forest Preserve District of Kane County sponsored this master plan update. Consistent with the 2002 master planning process, the consultant team analyzed the multitude of existing resources and intriguing market conditions, and gathered valuable input from residents and dozens of civic, jurisdictional, business and special interest organizations. In addition, the team gave extra attention to the multi-dimensional characteristics of the river. This 2015 update describes the Exceptional Opportunity, Active River Strategy and Incremental Implementation Process that will enable the community to realize its goal to **“create a lively riverfront environment that is the centerpiece of the community.”**

## Exceptional Opportunity

Clearly, St. Charles is not the only town in the region with a downtown river. Every Fox River Valley town was settled along the river, and many other towns in the region have rivers flowing through their downtown. Some towns have begun to reverse decades of riverfront neglect caused by industrialization and cyclical flooding issues in order to leverage their riverfronts as recreational and cultural assets. Regionally, downtown Naperville has built its brand, in part, on the success of its riverwalk, and Chicago recently opened the first phase of its \$43 million Riverwalk. Nationally, countless communities have turned to their rivers to reinvigorate their downtowns. Four example communities are referenced in this plan. What, then, sets St. Charles apart from the crowd? As summarized in the Opportunity Analysis, the Fox River Corridor in St. Charles has an exceptional combination of desirable resources, attractive markets and market trends, and engaged stakeholders; all of which set the stage for success.

Almost four miles long, the St. Charles reach of the Fox River is uncommonly scenic, with much of the shoreline, particularly north and south of downtown, in public ownership and attractively improved for recreation. The impounded pool upstream of the dam is a beautiful and treasured asset for rowing and motorboat enthusiasts, and the Fox River Trail is an enormously successful regional bike trail that draws thousands to the vicinity. In addition to iconic commercial properties like the Baker Hotel, the 2013 Comprehensive Plan identified many properties, small and large, that could be redeveloped to take advantage of the river and riverfront improvements.

The local market is affluent and aging, with many more single adult and empty-nester households forecasted. Nationally and regionally those populations, along with the younger adults, are often seeking active urban and suburban lifestyles that support walking, cycling, canoeing, kayaking and rowing activities. St. Charles' domination of the local hotel market makes for an especially intriguing opportunity on the riverfront.

As can be expected, diverse Fox River Corridor stakeholders often have conflicting interests, but everyone seems to agree on the importance of the river and the need to manage it with great care. What, if anything, to do with the dam seems to be the topic that crystallizes the recreation vs. preservation, activation vs. restoration, and even old vs. new differences among those who love the river and their community. This debate is particularly important to the Fox River Study Group (FRSG), which includes representatives from state regulatory agencies, the City of St. Charles and other Fox River communities. The FRSG was formed to develop data-supported water quality recommendations for the Fox River, focusing primarily on discharge from sewage treatment plants, in lieu of an IEPA mandated phosphorous Total Maximum Daily Load requirement. The FRSG has studied the potential benefits of dam removal as one option to improve water quality of the Fox River. Dam removal proponents argue that the IDNR has indicated a willingness to contribute as much as \$2.5 million to remove the dam and that a complete removal of the dam will improve water quality and supplement the need for sewage treatment plant modifications. By comparison, dam retention advocates suggest that the current upstream pool is a priceless community asset and cannot be altered.

Given the abundant opportunities and daunting challenges, how can St. Charles best capitalize on its remarkable assets and attractive markets to distinguish itself in the Fox River Valley and achieve the community's heartfelt goal to be the centerpiece?

## Active River Strategy

The City of St. Charles, the St. Charles Park District, the Forest Preserve District of Kane County, business owners, property owners and all other partners who love this important river corridor need to embrace a long-term, multi-dimensional strategy to complete a package of seasonal and year-round river-centric attractions and complementary destinations; complete the river, riverwalk and trail connections; embellish the natural, cultural and recreational assets, refine and align brand communications; and act systematically and incrementally to gain and sustain momentum.

Each one of these five strategic dimensions supports and builds on existing assets, past achievements and important recommendations from the 2002 master plan. For instance, this 2015 Fox River Corridor Master Plan reinforces the need to complete a barrier-free, signature riverwalk and to improve and extend the Fox River and Great Western Trails. Both the riverwalk and trail improvements advance four strategic dimensions, simultaneously, as brand-defining magnet attractions, valuable connections and cultural/recreational assets.

Another brand-defining attraction, the spectacular multi-dimensional “River Park” featured in this 2015 update extends from Main Street to the railroad trestle along both sides of the river. River Park includes an expansive riverwalk, barrier-free trail extensions, a nature-based children’s play environment, naturalized shorelines, exciting pedestrian bridges, and a paddling course – all made possible by a major dam modification that is conceived to maintain the slow-moving, flat-water surface of the upstream impoundment that is ideal for rowing and power boating while creating a narrower, more natural, stepped river channel that allows wildlife passage and accommodates canoeists, kayakers and other river enthusiasts of all skill levels. In fact, River Park creates a connection between downtown and Pottawatomie Park and also creates an unmatched catalyst for the substantial redevelopment of relatively large tracts both east and west of the river.

Closely related ecological and infrastructure improvements at Boy Scout Island will improve water quality, wildlife habitat and boat launching while creating a distinctive water garden opportunity. Grade-separated and safer at-grade crossings will improve pedestrian and cyclist access to and along the riverfront, and dozens of smaller scale projects will embellish the natural, cultural and recreational features that will strengthen and define the St. Charles riverfront brand. In addition, all of the river and riverfront amenities will help attract much-needed smaller-scale residential, office and restaurant infill development. They will also promote private sector investment in seasonal recreation activities such as camping, cycling, boating, climbing and ropes courses.

This Active River Strategy will elevate St. Charles’ brand from good to great. When fully realized, the St. Charles river corridor will boast a package of extraordinary natural, cultural and recreational attractions, complimentary commercial and residential destinations, and vital connections that will appeal to an active and growing regional population. Other river towns may have some of these amenities, but St. Charles can have the most. Along the way, the river corridor partners – and the City of St. Charles, in particular, should craft a coordinated brand platform and communications around the river and the complete riverfront package.

The last dimension of the Active River Strategy, gaining and sustaining momentum, may be the most daunting. Like the 2002 plan, this update comes on the heels of a severe recession, and is compounded by unprecedented financial problems at the State of Illinois. Nonetheless, the long-term benefits are clear and compelling, the public is enthusiastic, and the process, when subdivided into small components, is manageable.

## Incremental Implementation Process

Led by the City of St. Charles, the river corridor partners should all adopt this plan and commit to incremental implementation of the Active River Strategy by systematically executing a series of correlated policy, capital and operational improvements. The City and its river corridor partners should, initially, concentrate on key public policies that will set the stage for future work, vigorously promote the strategy to all stakeholders, and coordinate public and private sector capital improvements-in-progress to align with the updated master plan.

## Policy Improvements

- Vigorously advocate the Active River Strategy with the FRSG to promote consideration of ecological, water quality and habitat improvements to supplement and offset conventional treatment plant improvements in their upcoming Fox River Improvement Plan that supports the “River Park” concept in this plan.
- Select river corridor improvements, including the Phase I study of the dam modification, for the 2016 and the 3 year Capital Improvement Plans (approx. \$4.1M).
- Seek funding through state and federal sources to complete the Phase I study of the dam modification. Confirm local match requirements.
- Assign someone to research grant funding and produce periodic memoranda to be shared and compared with other corridor partners. Identify the best opportunities and partnerships, and apply for/facilitate grant awards.
- Complete the Police Facility Study and determine the availability of this important site for redevelopment.

## Capital Improvements

- Align the Piano Factory Bridge rehabilitation, temporary city hall/police station bulkhead wall rehabilitation, and Fox River Trail sign improvement projects-in-process with the Active River Strategy.
- Align the First Street redevelopment project-in-process with the Active River Strategy.
- Commence the Preliminary Design/Engineering study of the dam modification (approx. \$1M).
- Complete the Preliminary Design/Engineering of the Riverside Drive Riverwalk (approx. \$50K).
- Complete the Preliminary Design/Engineering of selected shoreline improvements and Leonard Memorial Walkway pedestrian amenities and enhancements (approx. \$25K).





## Operational improvements

- Synchronize the 2016 City, Park District and County operational plans with other river corridor partners to prioritize the Active River Strategy.
- Continue to actively communicate and promote the Active River Strategy with all jurisdictional, organizational, commercial and residential stakeholders.

Timely community action is critical because the FRSG's Fox River Improvement Plan is due to be released at the end of 2015. Given the circumstances, if FRSG supports the Active River Strategy, then St. Charles is in a better position to obtain IDNR funding support for a dam modification.

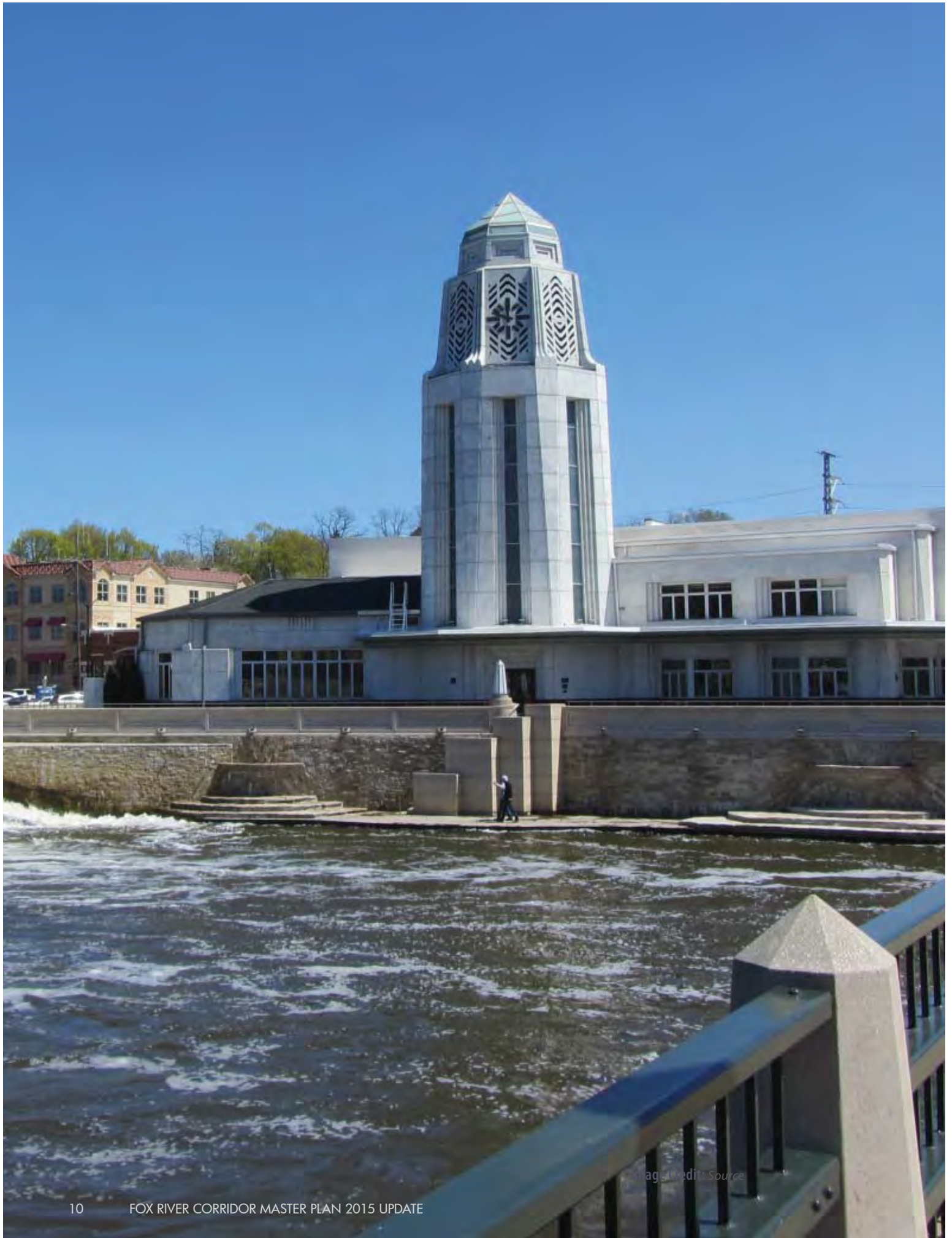
Yes, this is an ambitious vision. However, since St. Charles was first settled, visionary leaders have understood that the Fox River has been, is, and will continue to be central to the success of the community. With the focused support of community members and their leaders, the Fox River corridor in St. Charles will be **"a lively riverfront environment that is the centerpiece of the community."**

Thank you for allowing us to participate in this exciting Active River Strategy.

Sincerely,

Hitchcock Design Group, in association with  
Wills Burke Kelsey Associates, Ltd.  
S2O Design and Engineering  
Market and Feasibility Advisors





*Image Credit: Source*

# Introduction

## Purpose

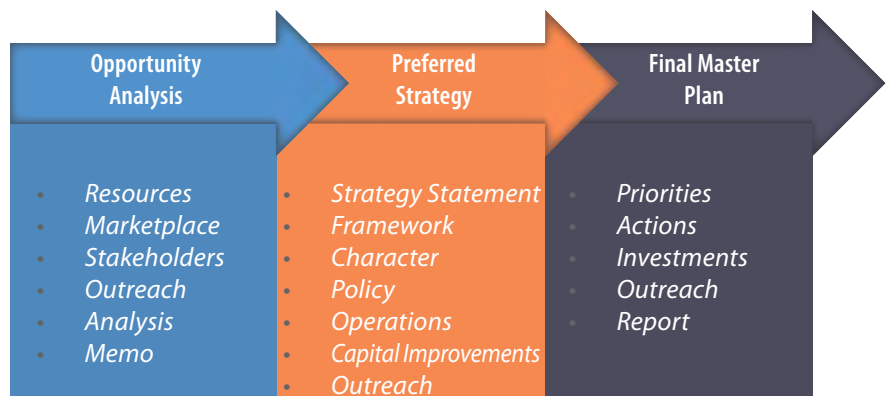
The purpose of this plan is to update the 2002 River Corridor Master Plan with an increased focus on active river recreation, economic development opportunities and ecological improvement initiatives. The plan will provide policy and resource guidance to leaders over the next several years.

## Study Area

The Study Area includes the extent of the Fox River within the City of St. Charles municipal boundaries from approximately Red Gate Road on the north to Division Street on the south, including the properties that border the river. Downtown St. Charles is located within the study area and is considered part of the River Corridor project area.

## Process

In January of 2015 the Active River Task Force selected the Hitchcock Design Group (HDG) team to complete the master plan update. During the Opportunity Analysis the team examined the existing resources, local and regional marketplace, and stakeholder behaviors and interests. Next, the team explored alternative strategies and established a Preferred Strategy for an integrated, market-supported series of policy, operational, and capital improvements. This report summarizes the recommendations and concludes the Final Master Plan update..



## Community Engagement

The team coordinated with the Active River Task Force throughout the duration of the study. The Active River Task Force consists of Park District, City, and Forest Preserve representatives, along with River Corridor Foundation members. The team also maintained a project website, conducted over 35 confidential stakeholder interviews, and facilitated a community workshop and a public open house. The team presented the preliminary recommendations to the River Corridor Foundation, and at a joint meeting of the Park District Board and the City Council during the Alternative Strategies phase. The Final Plan was presented to the Park District Board, City Council, Forest Preserve District Board and the River Corridor Foundation at the conclusion of the Final Master Plan.



Image Credit: Source

# Opportunity Analysis



## Context

The City of St. Charles is located 35 miles west of downtown Chicago. Along with Geneva and Batavia to the south, the area is often referred to as the tri-cities and has a reputation as a great place to live, work and play, along with being a shopping, dining and recreational destination. The Fox River Valley on a regional scale is a unique natural, cultural and recreational resource within the Chicago region and beyond. The St. Charles section of the river is particularly scenic, offering many active and passive recreational alternatives. St. Charles has an opportunity to capitalize not only on its own unique attributes, but in coordination with other Fox Valley communities, the region on whole can leverage their resources to improve and prosper.

## Resources

### Natural Resources

The 3.8 mile section of the Fox River within St. Charles is especially scenic and offers a variety of recreational opportunities due to the 18 acre upstream pool created by the dam and the 7 miles of unobstructed river until the next dam north located in South Elgin. Due to its popularity, the balance of multiple uses within the river can be a challenge at times.

The floodplain and floodway extend beyond the banks of the river in some locations and can be a source of periodic flooding and inconvenience. This impacts potential development/redevelopment sites and will require further study and permitting as specific site improvements are considered.

There are a number of preserved natural areas along the river through St. Charles including Forest Preserve, Park District, and City owned properties. On the whole, environmental quality is considered to be improving in the area and continues to be the focus of many regulatory and special interest groups, along with the community in general.

Water quality is of particular concern within the Fox Valley region. The general perception is that water quality has improved over the past several years, but current high phosphorus levels lead to algal blooms and low dissolved oxygen levels. The Fox River Study Group (FRSG) was formed to study the river relative to wastewater treatment plant discharge and to establish regulations based on water sampling and models. Representatives from local communities, including the City of St. Charles, make up the FRSG and are developing recommendations to improve water quality. The resulting Fox River Implementation Plan (FRIP) will include guidelines to improve water quality in lieu of mandated discharge levels as determined by the IEPA.



Fox River communities

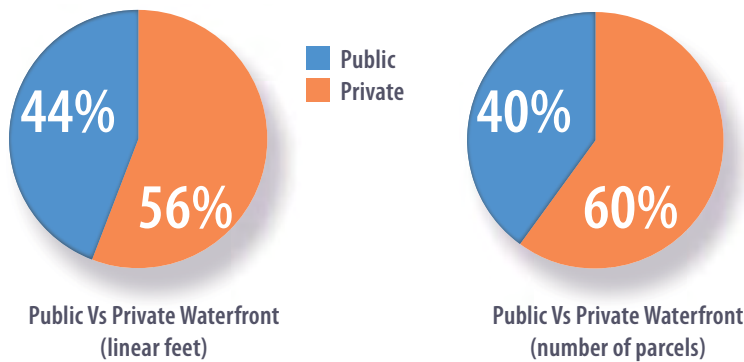
### St. Charles Dam

The St. Charles Dam is a subject of considerable recent study and debate. The dam was originally constructed for a grist mill and served an important function for the community. The dam is owned by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and currently is considered recreational in use, although for many, it serves a meaningful function in that it maintains the upstream pool, considered a priceless cultural and recreational asset for the community. To others the environmental benefits of complete dam removal including improved water quality, wildlife habitat, and safe passage offset the recreational and cultural benefits of maintaining the dam.

Any modification to the dam will be subject to regulatory permitting requirements involving considerable technical study of the hydraulics, water levels, sedimentation, flooding, and navigability of the river.

### Property Ownership

One of the most significant challenges to accomplishing public improvements is property ownership and gaining access to the riverfront. Fortunately, 44 percent of the 3.8 miles of the Fox River within the City of St. Charles is publicly controlled. This provides opportunities for public access to the water, along with opportunities for public uses to be located directly on the river. However, 40 percent of the private property along the river is single family residential, leaving few opportunities for economic development. The downtown area is the exception where there are commercial opportunities along the riverfront.

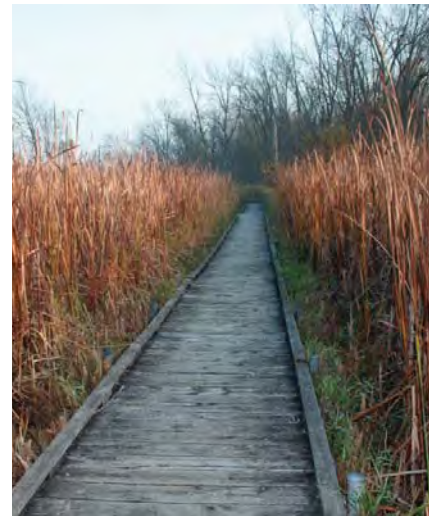


### Downtown St. Charles

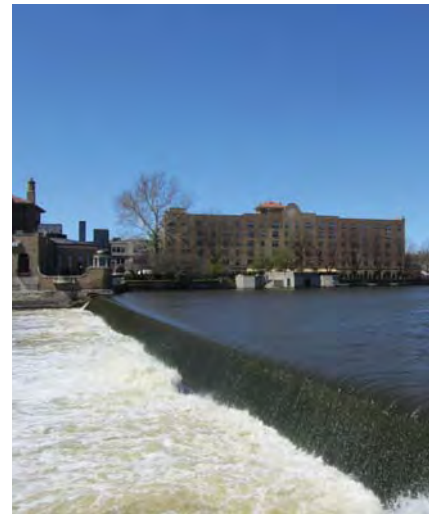
The City of St. Charles was founded along the banks of the Fox River and by the mid 1900's the community became known as a resort town, with tourism being a major component of the City's economy and identity. Today St. Charles is considered a desirable city in which to raise a family and is renowned for its high quality of life and natural beauty. Although growth has occurred both east and west of the downtown, the river has remained the center of the community and continues to influence its reputation as the Pride of the Fox.

### Infrastructure and Utilities

Public infrastructure and utilities are considered adequate within the corridor but any significant development would need to consider infrastructure and utility needs. There are utility crossings under the river that also need to be considered with any significant modification project.



Ferson Creek Fen



Dam on the Fox River in St Charles



First Street Redevelopment on the Fox River



Freedom Walk and Statue of Ekwabeta



Union Pacific Railroad Bridge



Red Gate Rd Pedestrian/Bike Bridge

## Access and mobility

St. Charles is accessible from major arterial roadways including Illinois Route 64 (Main Street) running east/west, Illinois Route 25 running north/south on the east side of the river, and Illinois Route 31 running north/south on the west side of the river. Kirk Road is the major north/south corridor on the east side of St. Charles and Randall Road is the major north/south corridor on the west side of St. Charles, both are Kane County highways.

St. Charles does not have direct access to interstate highways, but three interstates are located in close proximity; I-90 is located 9 miles to the north, I-88 7.5 miles to the south and I-355 11 miles to the east. St. Charles does not have commuter train access but the Geneva Metra station is located 1.5 miles to the south.

One of the corridor's most important assets is the regional trail system including the Fox River Trail (east and west sides of the river) and The Great Western Trail that heads west from downtown. These trail systems connect to an extensive regional trail system that extends throughout the Fox River valley and beyond. There are opportunities to improve the trail system by connecting gaps, especially through downtown along with adding clear signage, support facilities and amenities throughout.

Currently the St Charles dam prohibits water based users from passing through downtown. Dam modification would allow canoeists, kayakers, and other river users to travel the length of St Charles. Portage and safe passage routes would allow less experienced users to navigate the downtown, while improved docking facilities would allow water based visitors to more easily visit downtown.

Pedestrian and bicycle circulation is adequate but not especially noteworthy. The corridor would benefit from improved pedestrian crossings, traffic calming, and complete streets initiatives to improve the multi-modal experience within the corridor. Where possible, grade separated crossings either under or over roadways are preferred.

The railroad bridge located just north of Main Street is owned by the Union Pacific (UP) railroad and is no longer in service. The Park District, City and Forest Preserve District have approached UP to discuss future control of the bridge and the associated right-of-way. Discussions about purchasing or gaining rights to use the structure for a regional trail connection have been favorable, although funding is not currently available.

Parking is important to any viable development, downtown or corridor. Parking in downtown St. Charles is considered adequate although surface parking lots take up valuable land within the project area, especially along the riverfront. Two parking structures in the downtown provide increased parking per square foot of area and additional parking decks would be a benefit as additional development and programmed uses are added. Shared public and private parking within off-street lots is another way to leverage the limited space available for parking.

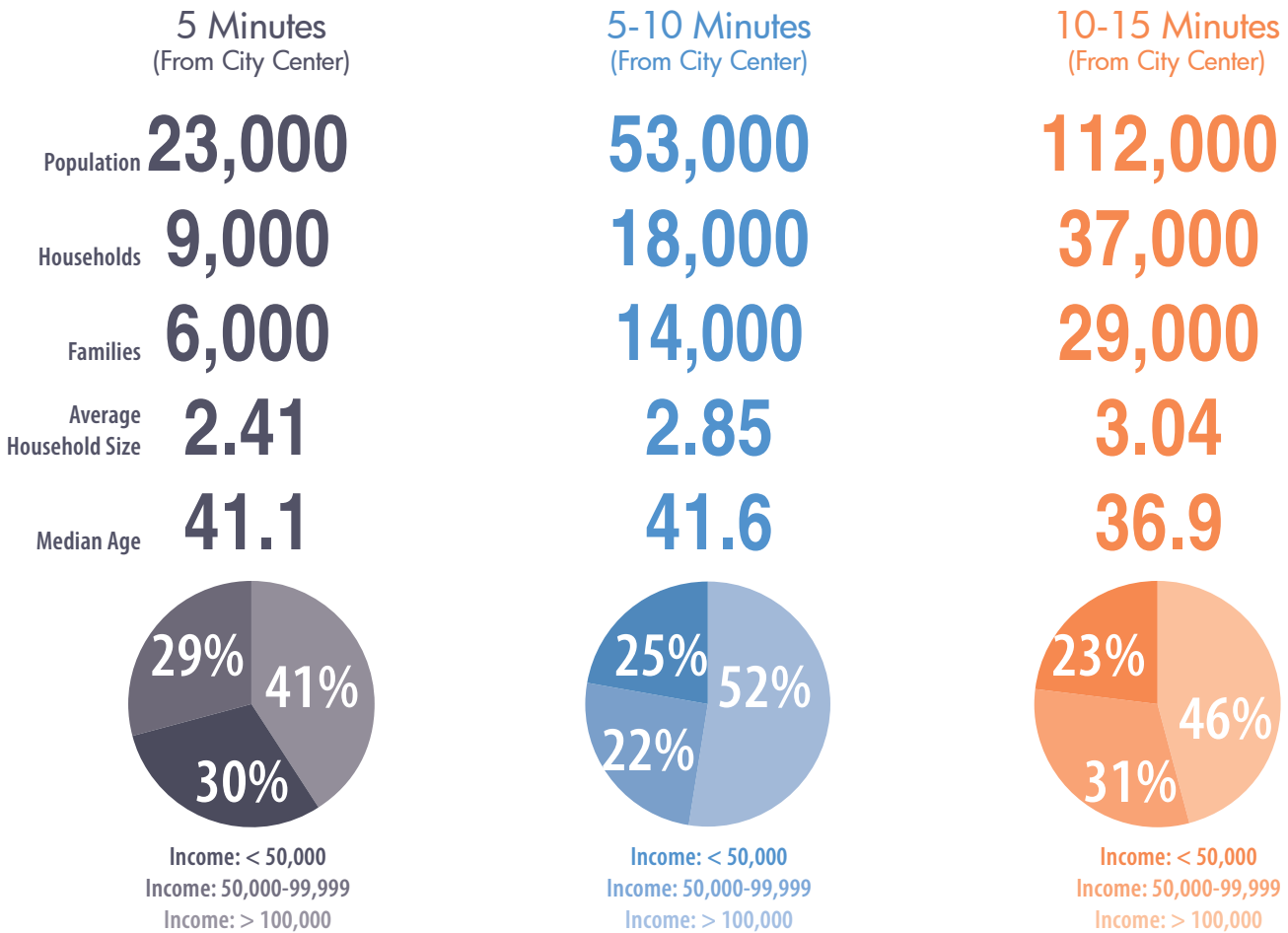
The City of St. Charles has gateway signage at the City limits along with wayfinding signs throughout the downtown. Other community groups and agencies have signage with various messages throughout the corridor. The community as a whole would benefit from a consistent image and messaging throughout the downtown and corridor.

# Market Profile

## Demographics

The City of St. Charles is known as a family oriented community and the majority of residential properties in town are single family homes. Similar to national trends, projections show that the population is aging and in the future many more households will consist of single adults, empty nesters and other non-traditional family types.

Within a 5 minute drive of downtown St. Charles there is a significant affluent population, many of which own their own home. Within a 5-10 minute drive time population and household size increase, while median age, income, and household size remain relatively consistent. Within a 10-15 minute drive from downtown the population increases substantially, while continuing to be affluent.



## Visitors

The St. Charles area is a surprisingly successful visitor destination with more than 2,500 hotel rooms. Even if the less fully utilized Q Center and its 1,000 rooms are deducted, St Charles houses as many as 440,000 overnight guests a year assuming a 62% occupancy rate.










**440,000**  
Yearly Overnight Visitors



## Active Lifestyle

Recently there is a national resurgence in the popularity of walkable, urban areas offering an active lifestyle, not only in major urban areas, but also in suburban communities. People want to live in vibrant, active communities that are easy to get around with lots of things to do. St. Charles has a unique situation with a strong local identity, affluent population, abundant natural resources and amenities that is part of a major metropolitan area.

Nationally, the most popular activity is walking followed closely by jogging and biking. Swimming, fishing, and power boating are also very popular activities, although power boating is declining in popularity while kayaking, canoeing and rowing are increasing in popularity. These trends also appear to be true in St. Charles.

	Yearly Experiences (Locally)	Yearly Participants (Locally)	Popularity Trend (Nationally)
Swimming	753,000	23,000	
Exercise Walking	315,000	54,000	
Freshwater Fishing	235,000	17,000	
Exercise Running	136,000	23,000	
Bicycling	125,000	21,000	
Power Boating	124,000	9,000	
Kayaking	29,000	5,000	
Canoeing	20,000	5,000	
Water Skiing	15,000	2,500	

## Conclusion

As St. Charles considers how to activate its riverfront it is apparent that there are great opportunities. Populations in affluent communities like St. Charles engage more often in athletic activities if the opportunity presents itself and is easily accessed. The river offers the ideal venue for activities including walking, bicycling, running and jogging all along the water’s edge and kayaking, canoeing, fishing and potentially swimming in the water.



Salida, Colorado



Columbus, Georgia



Greenville, South Carolina



Richmond, Virginia

# Comparable Communities

We profiled more than a dozen communities around the US that had successfully completed significant river enhancements, similar to those contemplated in St. Charles. Four were stronger examples than the others: Salida, Colorado; Columbus, Georgia; Greenville, South Carolina and Richmond, Virginia.

## Salida, Colorado

A kayaking course has been implemented in the river, as well as a waterplay area similar to the one envisioned for St. Charles. As a result the community has seen an increase in visitation from other parts of Colorado and adjacent redevelopment has turned the river into a community asset.

## Columbus, Georgia

Columbus, and its neighboring city Phenix City, Alabama benefitted from the removal of dams on the Chattahoochee River, the addition of a new bridge and improvements to an existing bridge. The river itself has been changed into a recreational environment with rafting, kayaking, canoeing, obstacle courses and waterplay in the river, and new paths for trail sports on the banks.

## Greenville, South Carolina

Unlike Columbus, Greenville took out a vehicular bridge and replaced it with a signature pedestrian bridge over natural water falls in the downtown. The city also significantly improved all of the river frontage, saving some historic structures. On the south bank significant new urban development followed, including a new hotel and new commercial and residential development.

## Richmond, Virginia

The James River in Richmond already had rapids that attracted kayakers, although the river was badly polluted and lined with industry. As that situation was reversed, the water quality improved as the industry moved away. Subsequently, there has been a considerable amount of development along the river banks and the river itself has been claimed by the local populace for constant use and a series of successful festivals each summer.

\* Refer to Appendix for more information, including images and statistics, on these comparable communities.

# Stakeholder Interests

The team, along with the Active River Task Force, gathered, evaluated and summarized input from a variety of stakeholders to help formulate strategies for the river corridor improvements.

Although stakeholders agree on many important factors, there are also competing interests for the use of the river and the riverfront properties. Preservationists would like to see riverfront properties remain natural and promote ecological restoration, while others support active recreation and riverfront development. Power boaters are sometimes in conflict with rowers, canoers and fishermen. Water quality proponents are in favor of complete dam removal while paddling enthusiasts support dam modification. The challenge is to balance these competing interests throughout the river corridor.

Downtown St. Charles and the riverfront have traditionally been the center of the community, but resources are now divided between the downtown and riverfront, the east gateway along Kirk Road, and the West gateway along Randall Road. Each area plays an important role in the community but also compete for limited resources.

The consensus is that the river is the most important community asset and should remain a priority for years to come.

There is also a disparity among stakeholders regarding the future of St. Charles and the role the river plays within it. Should St. Charles continue to improve and enhance the river corridor mainly for the benefit of the existing residents and community members, or should St. Charles implement changes to support economic development and an active, more urban lifestyle, that could be attractive to visitors and a younger population?

Regardless of the varied stakeholder interests, the consensus is that the river is the most important community asset and should remain a priority for years to come.

## COMPETING INTERESTS?



# Goal, Objectives and Standards

The analysis of the Resources, Market and Stakeholder interests concludes with a clearly stated Goal, supporting Objectives, and improvement Standards. The Goal is the long-term desired result for the river corridor, the Objectives are the specific items necessary to achieve the goal, and the Standards are the qualitative criteria to be considered for all proposed improvements.

The Goal, Objectives and Standards form the basis of the Strategy and will be the benchmark for which all improvement recommendations will be judged against.

## Goal

**“Create a lively riverfront environment that is the centerpiece of the community”**

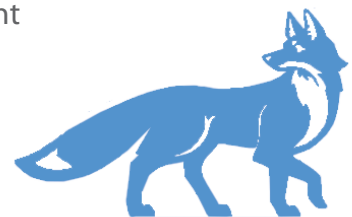
## Objectives

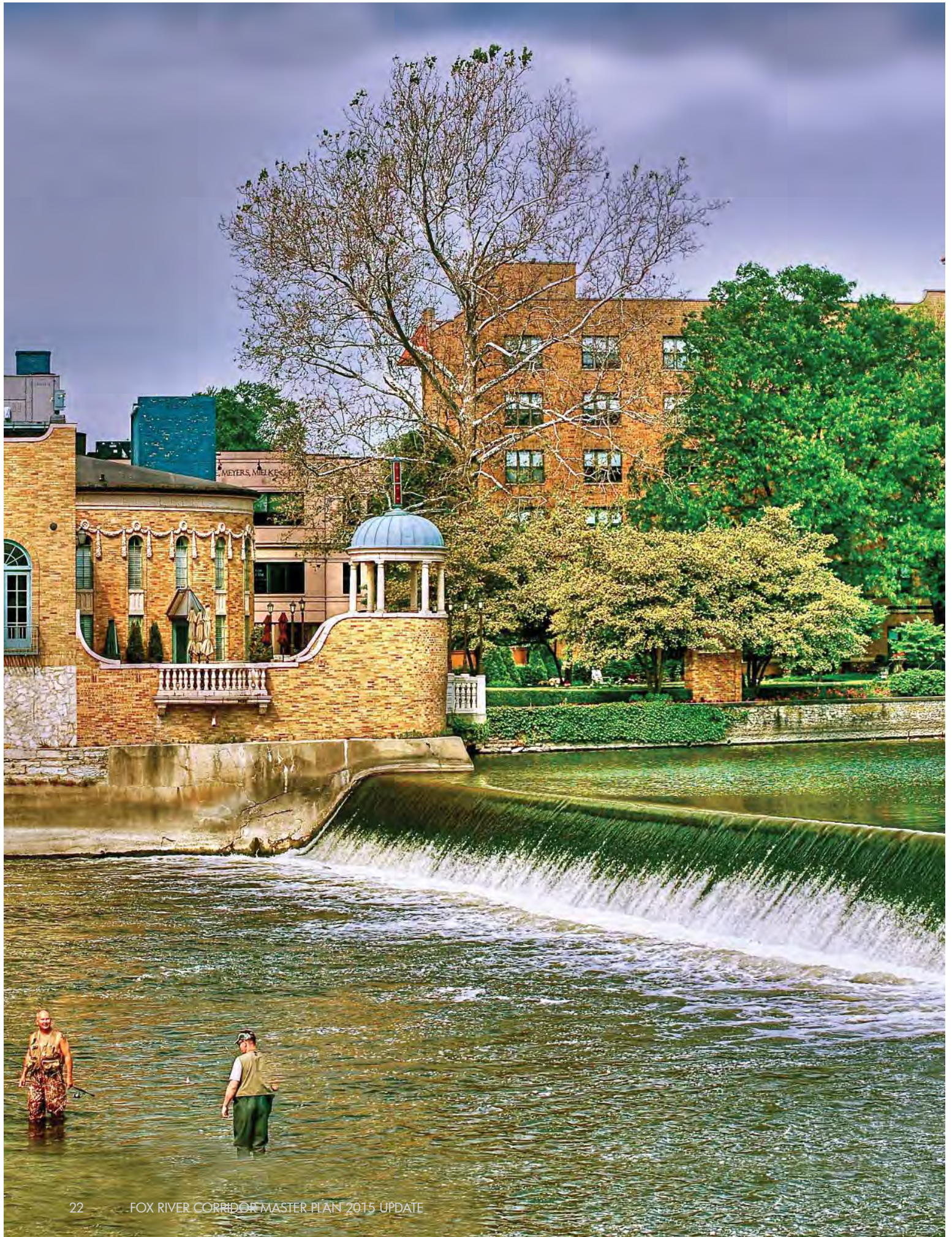
By 2025...

- **Brand:** St. Charles will be widely recognized for its exceptional river and riverfront as part of a regional Fox River experience
- **Economy and Land Use:** The marketplace will support a package of distinctive, public and private river corridor attractions and complimentary live/work/play/shop/dine/destinations
- **Mobility:** People will easily access and circulate along the river and between riverfront destinations using a variety of mobility options
- **Recreation:** The marketplace will support a variety of distinctive recreation attractions and complementary activities
- **Culture and Education:** People will enjoy the river corridor’s abundant natural and cultural assets, and learn about the community’s rich river-related heritage
- **Environment:** Water quality, wildlife passage and native habitat will be enhanced as the river flows through town

## Standards

- **Sustainable:** Consider the environmental, economic and cultural longevity of improvements
- **Multi-dimensional:** Improvements will be flexible with high return on investment
- **Healthy:** Provide an active, comfortable, clean and safe environment
- **Attractive:** Improvements will be engaging, stimulating and clean
- **Distinctive:** Differentiate the area from nearby towns
- **Respectful:** Respect for resources and stakeholders
- **Barrier-free:** Areas will be accessible by all





























# Strategy

In order to achieve the goal to **create a lively riverfront environment that is the centerpiece of the community**, and to meet the stated objectives and standards, the St. Charles River Corridor Strategy is to:

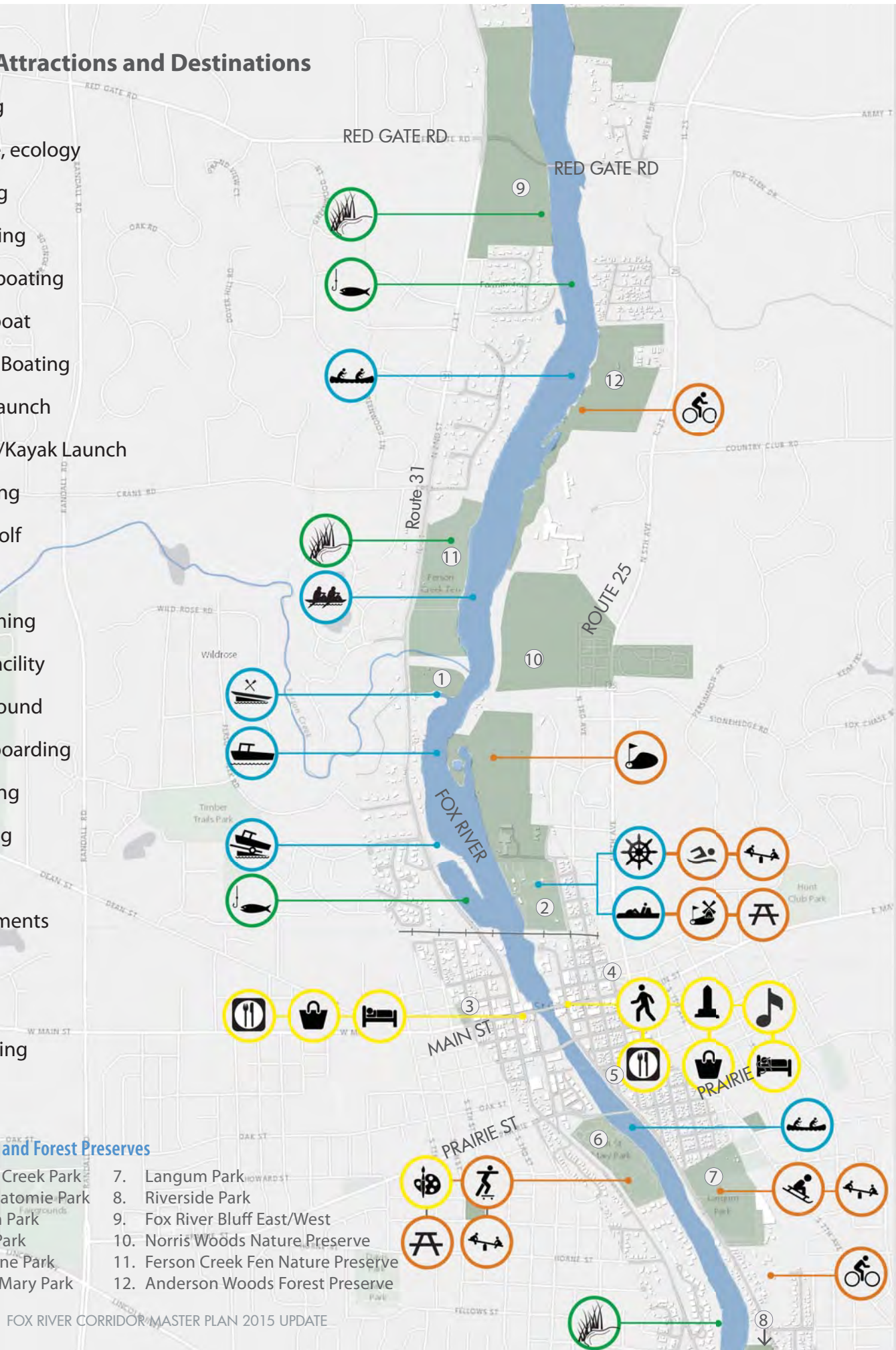
- Complete a package of seasonal and year round river-centric **attractions** and complementary **destinations**
- Complete the river, riverwalk and trail **connections**
- Embellish **natural, recreational , and cultural assets**
- Refine and align **brand** communications
- Act systematically and incrementally to gain and sustain **momentum**

## Existing Attractions and Destinations

-  Fishing
-  Nature, ecology
-  Rowing
-  Canoeing
-  Pedal boating
-  River boat
-  Power Boating
-  Boat Launch
-  Canoe/Kayak Launch
-  Bicycling
-  Mini Golf
-  Golf
-  Swimming
-  Park Facility
-  Playground
-  Skateboarding
-  Sledding
-  Walking
-  Music
-  Monuments
-  Dining
-  Hotel
-  Shopping
-  Art

## Existing Parks and Forest Preserves

- |                      |                                      |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Ferson Creek Park | 7. Langum Park                       |
| 2. Pottawatomie Park | 8. Riverside Park                    |
| 3. Lincoln Park      | 9. Fox River Bluff East/West         |
| 4. Baker Park        | 10. Norris Woods Nature Preserve     |
| 5. Hazeltine Park    | 11. Ferson Creek Fen Nature Preserve |
| 6. Mt. St. Mary Park | 12. Anderson Woods Forest Preserve   |





# Existing Attractions and Destinations

It is important to point out that there are many existing attractions and destinations located throughout the St. Charles section of the Fox River corridor that already support the overall strategy. Many of these will continue to function as they currently exist for the foreseeable future, while others will be modified or improved to advance the proposed strategy.



Boating on the Fox River



Rowing on the Fox River



Bob Leonard Memorial Walkway



Potowatomie Park



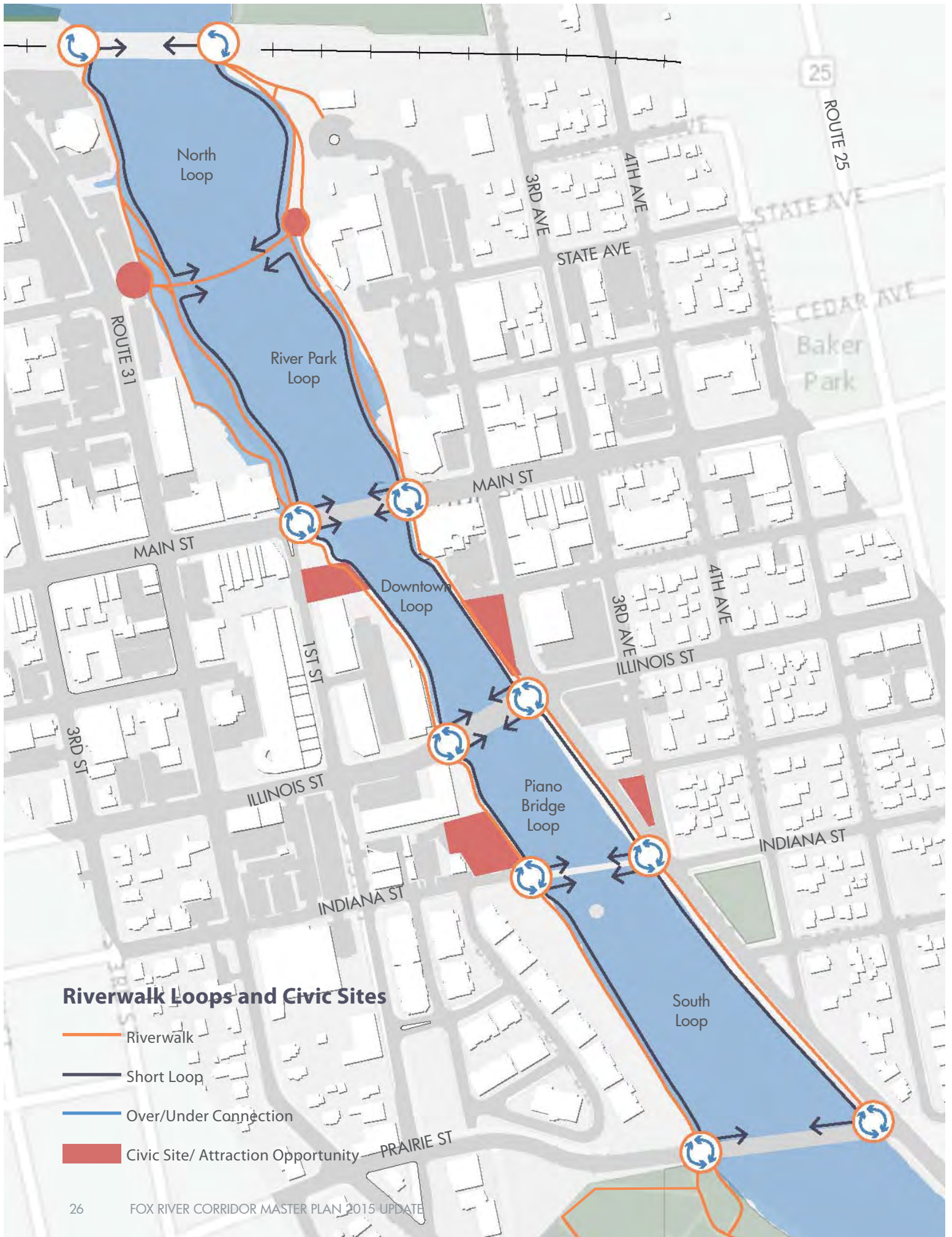
St Charles Riverfest Dragon Boat Race



St Charles Riverboat



Mt St Mary Park



# Attractions

Attractions are significant components that draw interest, provide entertainment and contribute to the overall liveliness and viability of the place. The outlined Attractions are the best opportunities to achieve the Goal, Objectives and Standards based on the results of the Opportunity Analysis.

*Support existing attractions, and:*

- Create "River Park"; Whitewater, Paddling course, Destination water-based play, Signature bridge
- Extend, complete the Riverwalk
- Extend the Regional Trails
- Create "Bridgeview" observation platform



Continuous Riverwalk



Regional Trail Connections



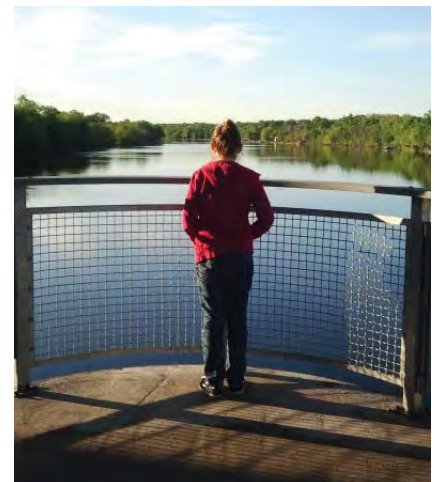
Whitewater Course



Destination Water-based Play



Signature Pedestrian Bridge



"Bridgeview" Overlook



POTTAWATOMIE  
PARK

ROUTE 31

Maintain  
Impoundment Pool

“Bridgeview” Observation  
Area

Childrens Stream and Play  
Area

Riverwalk

N RIVERSIDE AVE

STATE ST

Pedestrian Bridge and  
Plazas

Dam Modification

MAIN ST

“River Park”

# “River Park”



Childrens Stream and Play Area



Signature Pedestrian Bridge



Dam Modification



Riverwalk Observation Area

Momentum is growing to take action on the dam. Complete dam removal could improve water quality and wildlife passage, although it would result in reduction of the upstream impoundment pool, which is an undesirable result for the community. Modification of the dam is an alternative that would result in preservation of the impoundment pool while providing an opportunity to create a paddling course, a children’s exploration stream, and reclaimed land for construction of a continuous riverwalk. Add in a signature pedestrian bridge along with spectator observation areas and this area can become an incredibly unique “River Park” unlike anything else in the Fox Valley region.

## Recommendations

- Modify the dam to create a series of drops and rapids that will be attractive to whitewater kayaking enthusiasts
- Create a safe passage for experienced canoeists and convenient portage locations for novices
- Maintain the upstream impoundment pool water level to accommodate existing water based activities
- Create a children’s splash depth play stream and water based play environment
- Complete a continuous riverwalk with spectator observation areas
- Complete a signature bridge connecting State Street to the east side of the river

## Maintain Impoundment Pool

A drop structure located at the railroad bridge pier foundations will maintain the water elevation of the upstream impoundment pool and provide downstream safe passage for non-motorized boats. Provide transient boat tie-up access north of the railroad bridge along the Pottawatomie Park shoreline for power boater access to downtown.

## Children’s Stream and Play Area

Develop a low-flow side channel as a children’s play stream, with a nature/water based destination play area along the shoreline. Multiple locations will act as viewing areas for river based activities.

## Pedestrian Bridge and Plazas

Provide a signature pedestrian bridge for east/west access and river activity viewing. Civic plazas located at each end of the pedestrian bridge will include cultural and pedestrian amenities.

## Dam Modification

Remove the dam and provide multiple terraced drop structures to create a single flowing river channel. Develop various levels of experiences that will be attractive to users of all skill levels. Provide a safe passage route and easy to access put-in and take-out points.

## Riverwalk and Observation Areas

Continuous riverfront access is possible on reclaimed shoreline areas. Maintain the Freedom Trail access throughout the River Park and north to Pottawatomie Park. Provide overlook and observation areas at various locations throughout the River Park.





## “River Park”

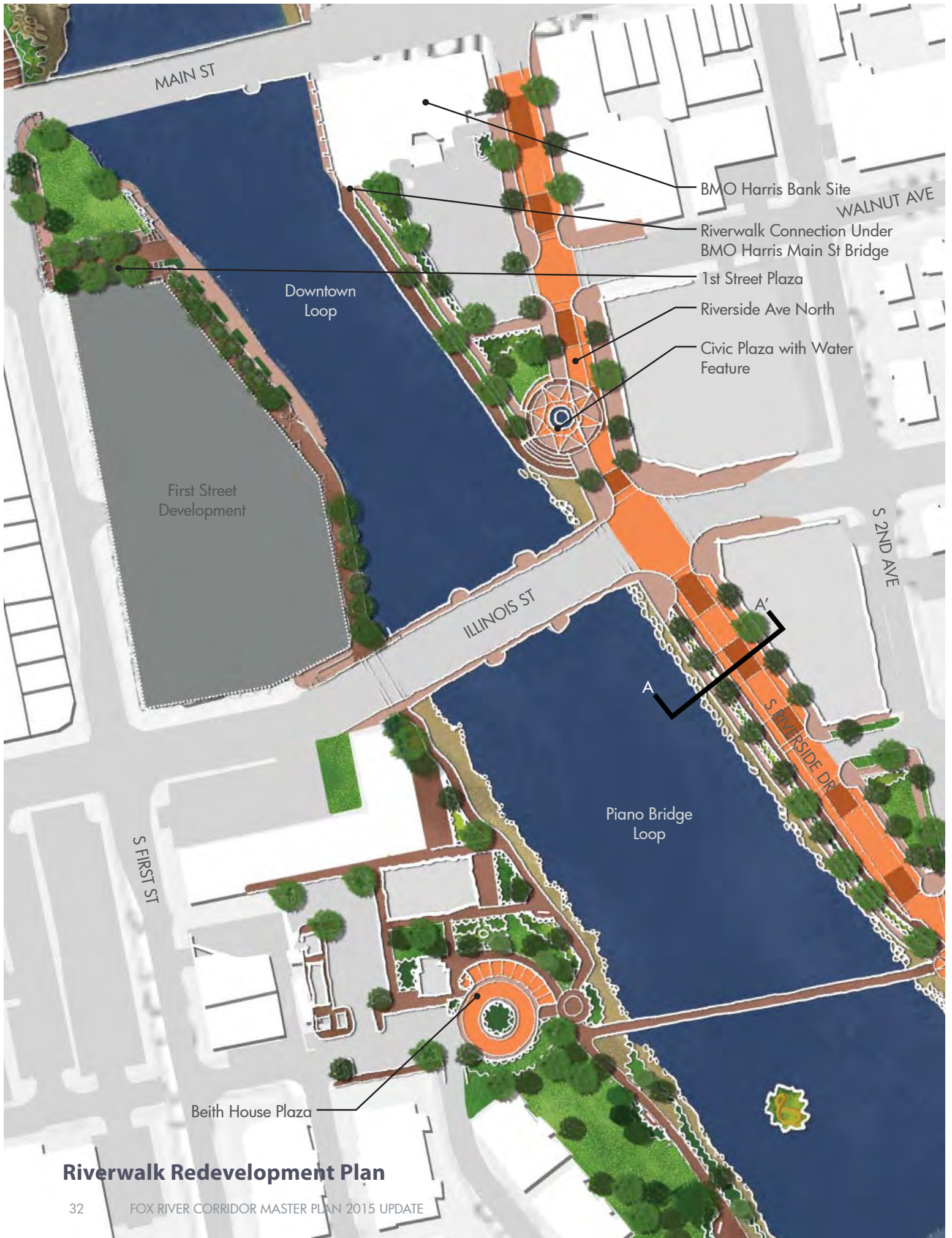
The River Park will begin at the Railroad Bridge and continue downstream of Main Street and will be a recreational environment that is designed for a variety of skill levels and user types including freestyle kayakers, river-runners, slalom kayakers, stand-up paddlers, boogie boarders, rafters, and tubers. The run will extend downstream from the railroad bridge to the existing dam structure and will be designed to maintain the existing water level of the upstream pool as a flat, slow moving impoundment ideal for flatwater rowing and paddling activities.

There will be a singular, natural flowing river channel designed with alternating, expanded river benches and terraced step drop structures that are designed to function at a variety of water levels. The design of the park mimics a natural river system with rapids, drop structures, rock clusters, and riparian vegetation. The banks of the river will be stabilized with natural stone terracing and bio engineering techniques. The park will have a riverside trail loop with an accessible put-ins and take-outs, as well as additional river access points along the course. The park will also have a children’s play stream and beach area which will provide a place for users to interact with the river.

The design will include 4 or 5 separate drop structures that will maintain the elevation of the existing upstream pool, facilitating current water based activities, and distribute the drop of the dam. The character and form of the drop structures will vary with some drops creating waves and hydraulics ideal for freestyle kayaking and boogie boards to play in while other drop structures will create chutes, eddies, wave trains, and pools ideal for freestyle kayaking, paddle boarders, slalom boaters, surfers, and boogie boarders.

The character of the river between drops will also vary. There will be areas of slow moving water containing big pools and eddies, areas of fast moving water with riffles and waves, and boulder garden areas where paddlers are able to navigate between rocks. The variety of river features will provide a “playground” for a variety of different river users.

The River Park experience will vary seasonally and is flow dependent. During high water events, the park will offer waves and holes that could be of national caliber. A park of this size will be able to host local as well as national level events in freestyle kayaking, paddle boarding and slalom. At medium and low water levels, the park will accommodate family friendly paddling experiences and will be ideal for instructional lessons, recreational paddling, family wading, and tubing.



MAIN ST

Downtown Loop

First Street Development

ILLINOIS ST

BMO Harris Bank Site

Riverwalk Connection Under BMO Harris Main St Bridge

1st Street Plaza

Riverside Ave North

Civic Plaza with Water Feature

WALNUT AVE

S 2ND AVE

A

A'

S RIVERSIDE DR

Piano Bridge Loop

S FIRST ST

Beith House Plaza

# Riverwalk Redevelopment Plan



# Riverwalk



Amenitized Riverwalk



Civic Gathering Spaces



First Street Development

A continuous riverwalk with large and small circulation loops, unique destinations and gathering spaces, constructed with distinctive materials and amenities, will be a significant attraction for the community. The Bob Leonard Memorial walkway is a great start to completing a continuous downtown riverwalk. Continue to develop the riverwalk as public agencies invest in the riverfront, and as riverfront properties redevelop.

## Recommendations

- Create a continuous riverfront circulation loop from the Union Pacific railroad bridge on the north to Prairie Street on the south
- Create a series of secondary circulation loops along both sides of the river and at each river crossing location
- Create a series of connected gathering spaces that transition into the downtown and neighborhoods
- Construct the riverwalk using distinctive materials and incorporate history, culture and art to create a unique identity
- Include ample furnishings, pedestrian amenities and lighting for user comfort and safety
- Segregate pedestrian and bicycle traffic
- Provide grade-separated crossings where possible, and safe at-grade crossings where necessary

## First Street Development

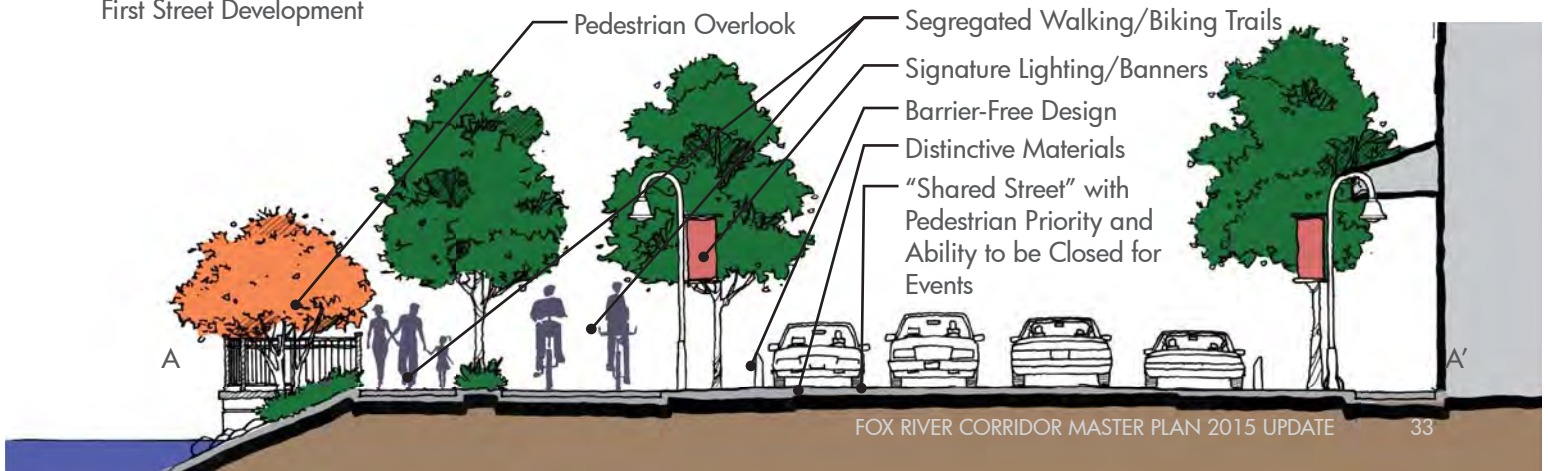
Provide continuous riverfront access along the future development. Include a civic plaza space between 1<sup>st</sup> Street and the river. Improve the at-grade pedestrian and bicycle crossings at Main Street and Illinois Street.

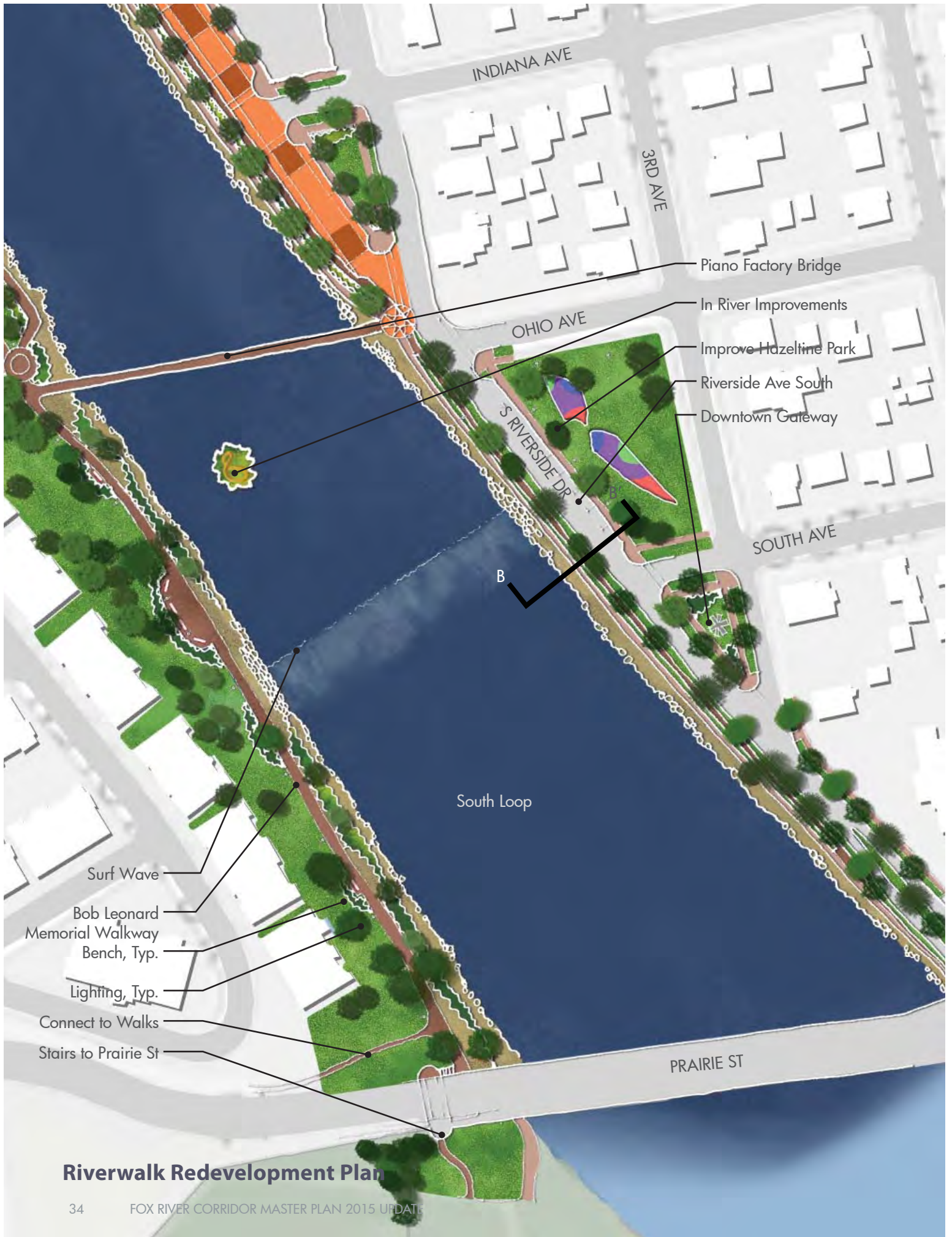
## Beith House Plaza

Provide a civic plaza with a sculpture or fountain amenity and pedestrian amenities and furnishings. Include parking and a vehicular drop-off. Encourage private redevelopment on the adjacent property that engages the riverwalk with patios and other outdoor dining experiences

## BMO Harris Bank Site

Provide a pedestrian connection along the river and under Main Street Bridge. Encourage private redevelopment of the existing property. Reorganize/reduce parking to provide pedestrian access along the riverfront and a Civic plaza with sculpture or fountain amenity. Restore/reconstruct the shoreline wall.





INDIANA AVE

3RD AVE

Piano Factory Bridge

OHIO AVE

In River Improvements

Improve Hazeltine Park

Riverside Ave South

Downtown Gateway

S RIVERSIDE DR

SOUTH AVE

B

South Loop

Surf Wave

Bob Leonard  
Memorial Walkway  
Bench, Typ.

Lighting, Typ.

Connect to Walks

Stairs to Prairie St

PRAIRIE ST

# Riverwalk Redevelopment Plan

# Riverwalk



Bob Leonard Memorial Walkway

### Bob Leonard Memorial Walkway

Add pedestrian and walkway lighting, furnishings and pedestrian amenities. Include cultural components representing art and local history. Add trees, plantings, naturalized shoreline buffer and improve at-grade pedestrian and bicycle crossings.



Shared Street

### Riverside Avenue North

Divert vehicular through-traffic along 2nd Avenue to provide a “shared street” with pedestrian priority, flexibility to be closed for public events and direct riverfront access along Riverside Avenue. Include streetscape improvements continuous to Main Street including paving, lighting, trees, landscape and amenities. Provide segregated pedestrian and bicycle circulation along the riverfront with the through circulation route clearly identified. Include a civic plaza with a sculpture or fountain amenity at the Piano Factory Bridge landing. Stabilize the shoreline with naturalized restoration techniques. Encourage private development on the adjacent property.

### Riverside Avenue South

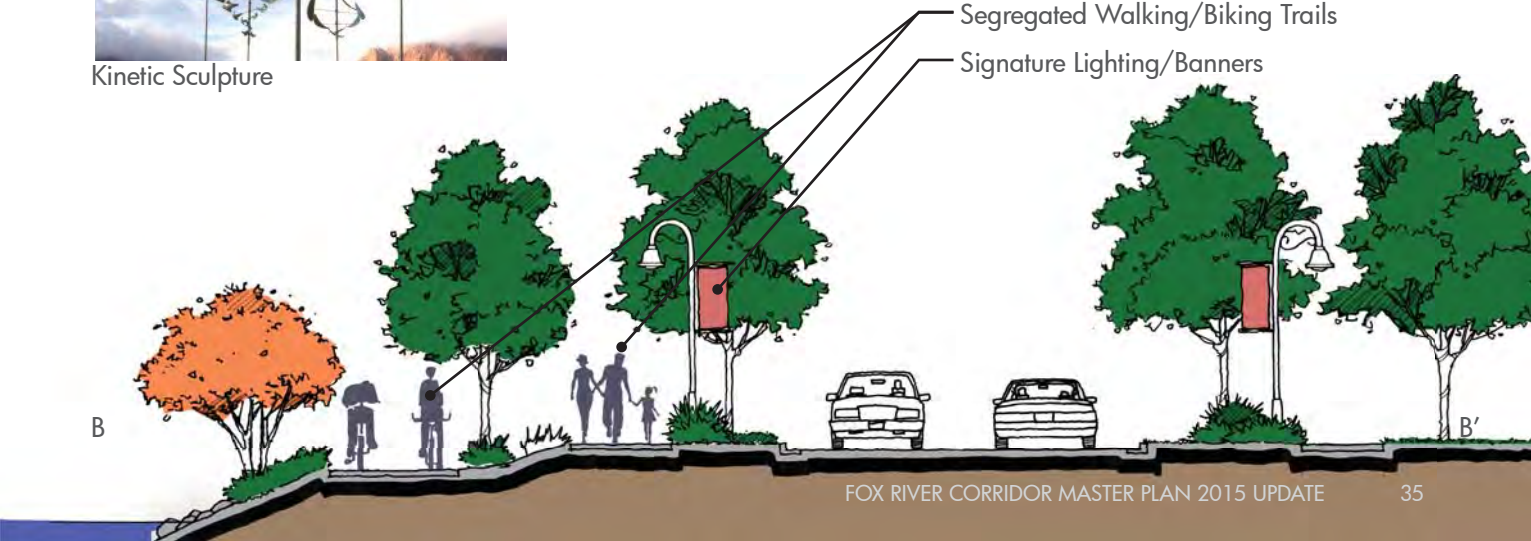
Segregate pedestrian and bicycle circulation along the riverfront and stabilize the shoreline with naturalized restoration techniques. Provide pedestrian overlook/gathering spaces in various locations. Improve Hazeltine Park as a destination play environment. Implement Streetscape improvements including lighting, trees and landscape.



Kinetic Sculpture

### “In River” Improvements

Study the condition of the Piano Factory Pedestrian Bridge and determine timeline for repairs or replacement. Develop a “surf wave” south of the Indiana Street Bridge. Install a kinetic sculpture and landscaping on the existing island south of the Piano Factory Bridge. Promote temporary Art Installations on the river between Main Street and Illinois Street. Stabilize the shoreline with naturalized restoration techniques throughout.



# Regional Trails

The Fox River Trail and the Great Western Trail connect to an extensive regional trail system that extends throughout the Fox River valley and beyond. The trails are already an attraction throughout the region and improvements to connect gaps, especially through downtown, along with adding clear signage, support facilities and amenities, will strengthen the system within the community and as a part of the regional system.

## Recommendations

- Utilize the Union Pacific railroad bridge to connect the Great Western Trail located west of downtown, to the Prairie Path located east of downtown
- Extend the west-side Fox River Trail north along the Route 31 right-of-way, taking care not to disturb Ferson Creek Fen.
- Improve the east-side Fox River Trail north connection by providing a more direct route along the east side of Pottawatomie Park and/or along the riverfront
- Connect trail gaps throughout the downtown and beyond
- Improve trail signage
- Provide support facilities and amenities



Clearly Delineated Trail System



Trail Signage and Crossing



Red Gate Rd Bridge Trail Connection



Dedicated On-Street Bike Lane

# “Bridgeview”

The Union Pacific railroad bridge offers fantastic views of the river. The proximity to the River Park presents an excellent opportunity to create an observation platform in combination with the regional trail connection as a unique attraction in the community.

## Recommendations

- Obtain the rights to use the existing railroad bridge and right-of-way
- Construct an observation platform in combination with the regional trail connection
- Provide pedestrian furnishings and amenities, and potentially vendor services



Unique Observation Platform



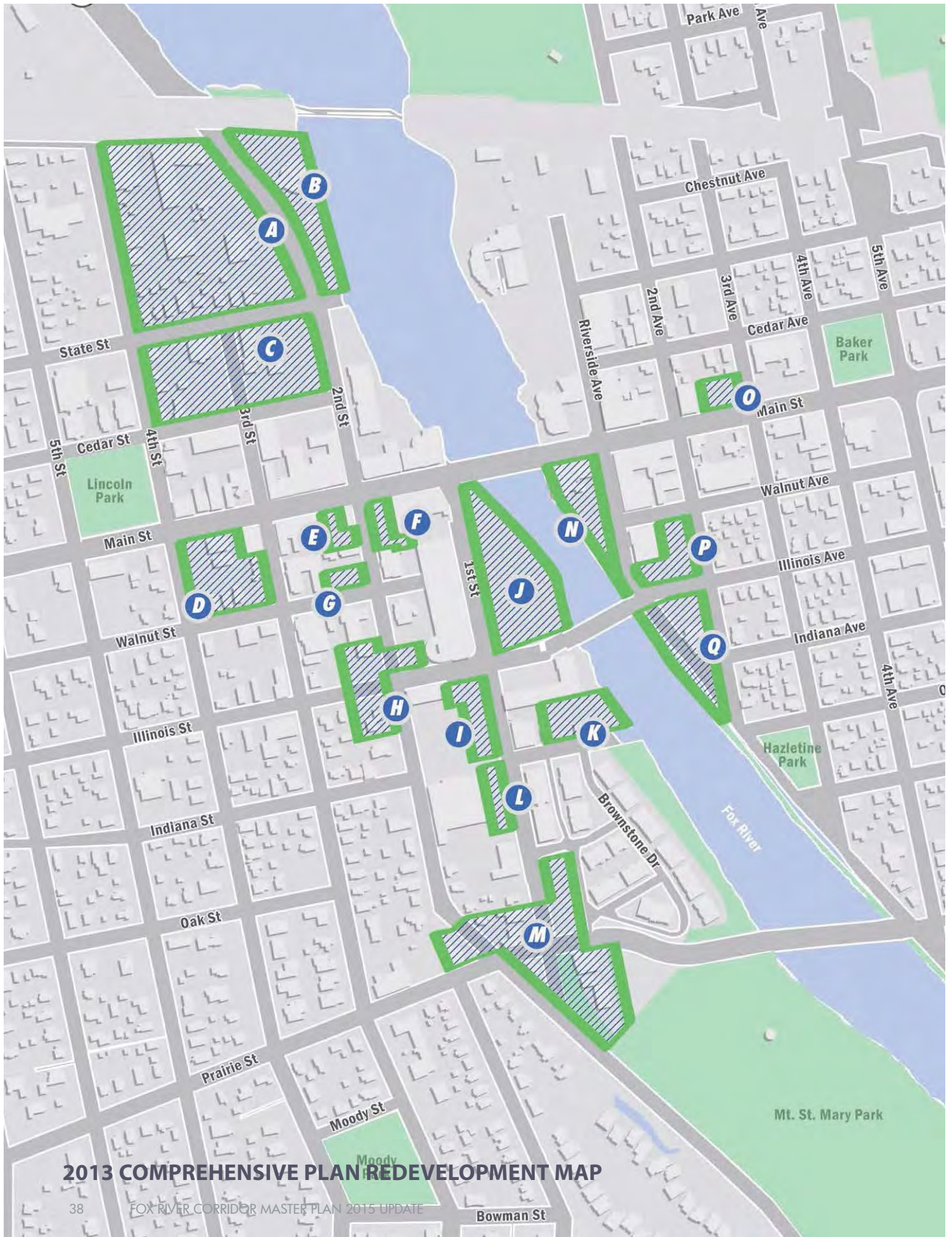
Private Vendor Services



Overlook Constructed on Existing Trestle



Iconic Overlook Structure



**2013 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN REDEVELOPMENT MAP**

# Destinations

Destinations are places that offer a unique experience and people will make a special trip to visit. There are many existing destinations throughout the corridor, although the proposed destinations are complimentary to the riverfront attractions.

*Promote complimentary destinations such as:*

- Residential, office, hotel, retail and dining infill
- Rowing training center
- Recreational activities (climbing/ropes/zip line courses)
- Camping
- Seasonal activities (food trucks, rentals, etc)
- Electric boats/public boat docks

## Residential, office, retail and dining infill

The proposed development of the river corridor is likely to trigger redevelopment for commercial real estate parcels in the downtown. Development is expected to happen in two-waves. The first will happen in sites with the greatest proximity to the river, while the second will happen throughout the downtown, dependant on the success of the first wave.

Success of the river redevelopment will hinge on both physical design and financial factors. Creating a pedestrian friendly and attractive downtown will attract more users, allowing for infill development to follow the initial wave of redevelopment. The scale of St Charles should also be respected so that projects will be large enough to produce financial returns without overwhelming the future demands for space.

The Police station parcel is the most attractive site for redevelopment as it will have direct access to the new river amenities. This parcel is attractive for a hotel and banquet facility as well as additional restaurants and retail.

The parcels along route 31 to the west are close enough to enjoy river views and have access to amenities but are adjacent to a residential neighborhood and are well suited for a residential product that wraps around a garage. A setback from Route 31 on the east end for a small parking lot would match the setbacks to the north and give the appearance of plenty of parking making the first floor appealing for retail.

Based on the 2013 Comprehensive Master Plan, sites "N", "P" and "Q" could be redeveloped as a small boutique hotel, with retail and restaurant uses. While not directly on the improved stretch of the river, unlike the other parcels in town, these parcels have direct access to the new amenities.

These developments, described in more detail in the appendix, could result in total investment value of almost \$210 million (preliminarily) and support more than 220 full-time-equivalent jobs in the downtown.



Riverfront Hotel



Riverfront Mixed Use Development

# Rowing Training Center

Rowing is increasing in popularity on a national level and the St. Charles section of the Fox River is particularly attractive for rowing. Three rowing clubs currently utilize the river; Row America, the St. Charles Rowing Club, and Wheaton College. A shared rowing training center can serve all users and become a destination for the larger regional rowing community.

## Recommendations

- Coordinate with the active rowing clubs to determine the desire and program for a community rowing training center
- Consider sites along the riverfront that could serve as a Rowing Training Center
- Establish a budget and process to advance the design, planning and construction of the Rowing Training Center



Open Air Rowing Shelter



Boat House, Community Center

# Camping

Camping is a complementary use for river and trail users. Similar to hotels, nearby overnight accommodations will become a destination. Interesting cabin facilities can also offer a unique nature experience for non-traditional users.

## Recommendations

- Evaluate riverfront sites to determine the feasibility to provide camping



Camping in Close Proximity to River



Unique Cabin Facilities



# Seasonal Activities

As active uses along the Riverfront gain in popularity, seasonal programs and activities become more economically feasible. Food trucks, vendors, equipment rentals and similar items contribute to the livelihood and popularity of the area.

## Recommendations

- Determine the economic feasibility of providing seasonal programs and activities
- Recruit private entities to operate seasonal programs and activities



Food Trucks Offer Seasonal Dining Opportunities



Equipment Rentals for River Related Uses

## Public Boat Docks, Electric Boats

Power boating continues to be a popular activity along the river. Stakeholders expressed the desire to dock in close proximity to the downtown on a temporary basis. Paddle boating is offered from Pottawatomie Park, but electric boats would offer a fun alternative for passive users to gain access to the water

## Recommendations

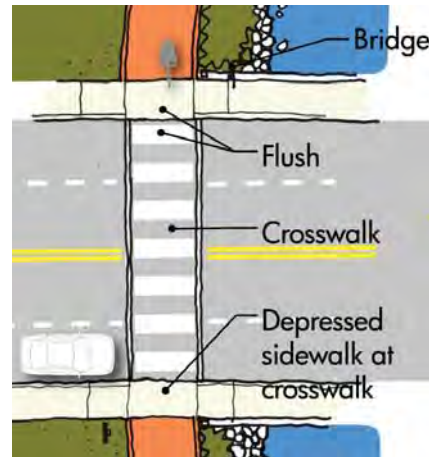
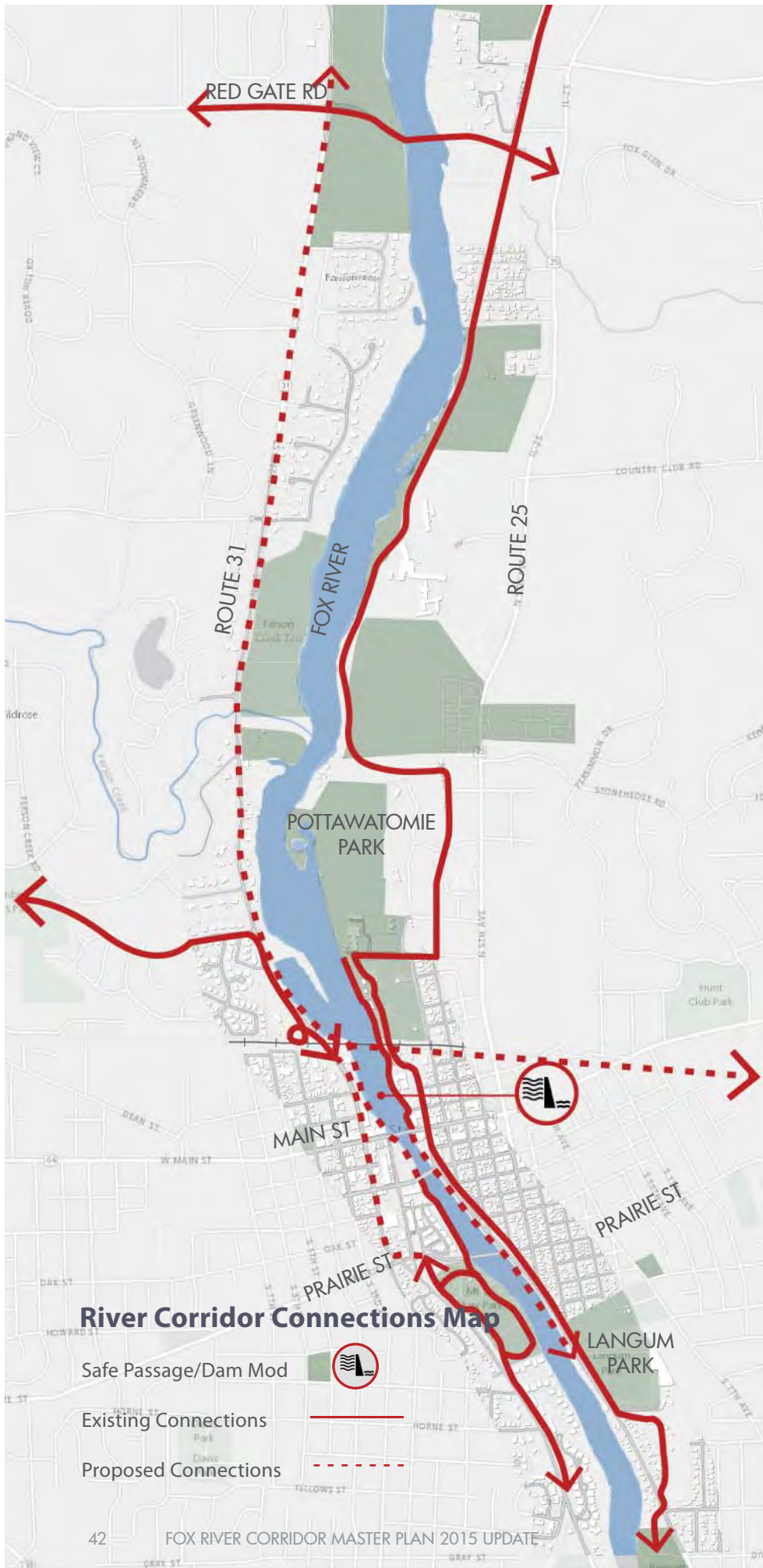
- Explore the possibility to provide docking facilities at Pottawatomie Park
- Explore the possibility to provide electric boats either through the Park District or as a private operator



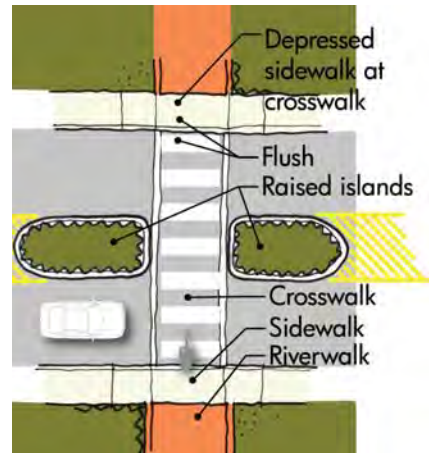
Accommodate Power Boat Access to Downtown



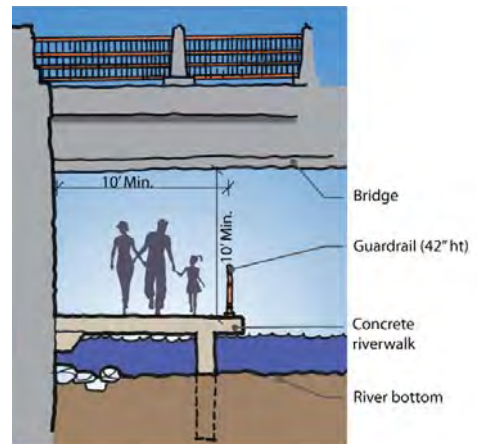
Electric Boat Rentals



Standard Crosswalk

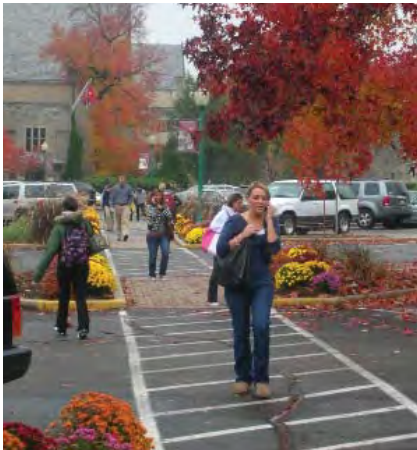


Standard Crosswalk with Pedestrian safe zone



Under Bridge Connection

# Connections



Delineated Crosswalk with Pedestrian Safe Zone



Under Bridge Connection



Gateway

Vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian connections are critical to the success of the corridor. Vehicular connections have traditionally taken precedence, although providing continuous pedestrian access, regional bicycle trail connections, and safe crossings are important factors to create a complete circulation system.

*Maintain existing connections, and:*

- Complete both sides of the Riverwalk
- Extend the Fox River Trail, both sides, north of RR
- Extend Great Western Trail
- Modify the dam, create a navigable route
- Signature bridge
- Grade separated where possible, safe at-grade where necessary
- Gateways and wayfinding

## **Complete both sides of the Riverwalk**

As described previously, the riverwalk can become an attraction in its own right, but it also provides important pedestrian connections along the riverfront and throughout the downtown.

## **Extend the Fox River Trail and Great Western Trail**

Similarly, the trail system is an attraction that can be extended to provide improved bicycle and pedestrian connectivity throughout the community and beyond.

## **Modify the dam, create a more navigable route**

We don't often think about the river as a connection, but currently the dam is an impediment to providing river connectivity. Modifying the dam and creating a navigable route completes a waterway connection that has been absent for many years. This would also allow this section of the river to become part of the National Water Trails System.

## **Signature bridge**

The northwest section of the downtown is somewhat disconnected from the riverfront and a signature pedestrian bridge would provide a direct connection to the river and the east bank in addition to becoming an iconic riverfront structure in the community.

## **Grade separated crossings where possible, safe at-grade crossings where necessary**

Separating pedestrians and bicycles from vehicular traffic at crossings is the most desirable solution to create a safe and comfortable environment. Wherever possible, provide grade separated crossings, but where impractical, improve at-grade crossings with traffic calming devices, signals, and signage.

## **Gateways and wayfinding**

Gateway components can define the limits of the community and provide a clear identity for the riverwalk. A comprehensive family of wayfinding signage can communicate the desired image while helping people navigate along the riverfront.



Fishing Station



Wildlife Habitat



Naturalized Shoreline Restoration

# Natural Assets



Permeable Paving/ Bioswales



Shoreline Stabilization



Tributary Restoration

Many of the natural areas within the project area have degraded to a certain degree and should be improved over time. Large scale projects and initiatives are identified that can have a significant positive impact on the river and environment. Although specific technical and scientific study is beyond the scope of this project, it is important to note that all new improvements should have a positive effect on the environment. The community does not have control over what happens upstream or on many private properties, but improving the natural environment with all initiatives sets a positive example.

## *Maintain, improve and embellish existing assets*

- [Modify the dam, manage sediment in upstream pool](#)
- [Modify Boy Scout Island](#)
- [Naturalize the shoreline](#)
- [Rehabilitate river tributaries](#)
- [Complete the Riverwalk amenities](#)
- [Incorporate stormwater best management practices](#)

## **Modify the dam, manage sediment in the upstream pool**

Dam modification will create a more natural environment with improved aeration, wildlife passage, and habitat restoration. Managing the sediment in the upstream pool will continue to be a challenge but will be improved from the existing condition. Further study will determine the specific impacts related to dam modification.

## **Modify Boy Scout Island**

Boy Scout Island was once an actual island. Currently it is a peninsula creating a stagnant bay of water that is challenging to maintain. Modify Boy Scout Island to return it to an island, improving water flow and allowing for creation of new wildlife habitat and ecological restoration. Provide a bridge to access the island and improve the power boat launch and parking lot

## **Naturalize the shoreline**

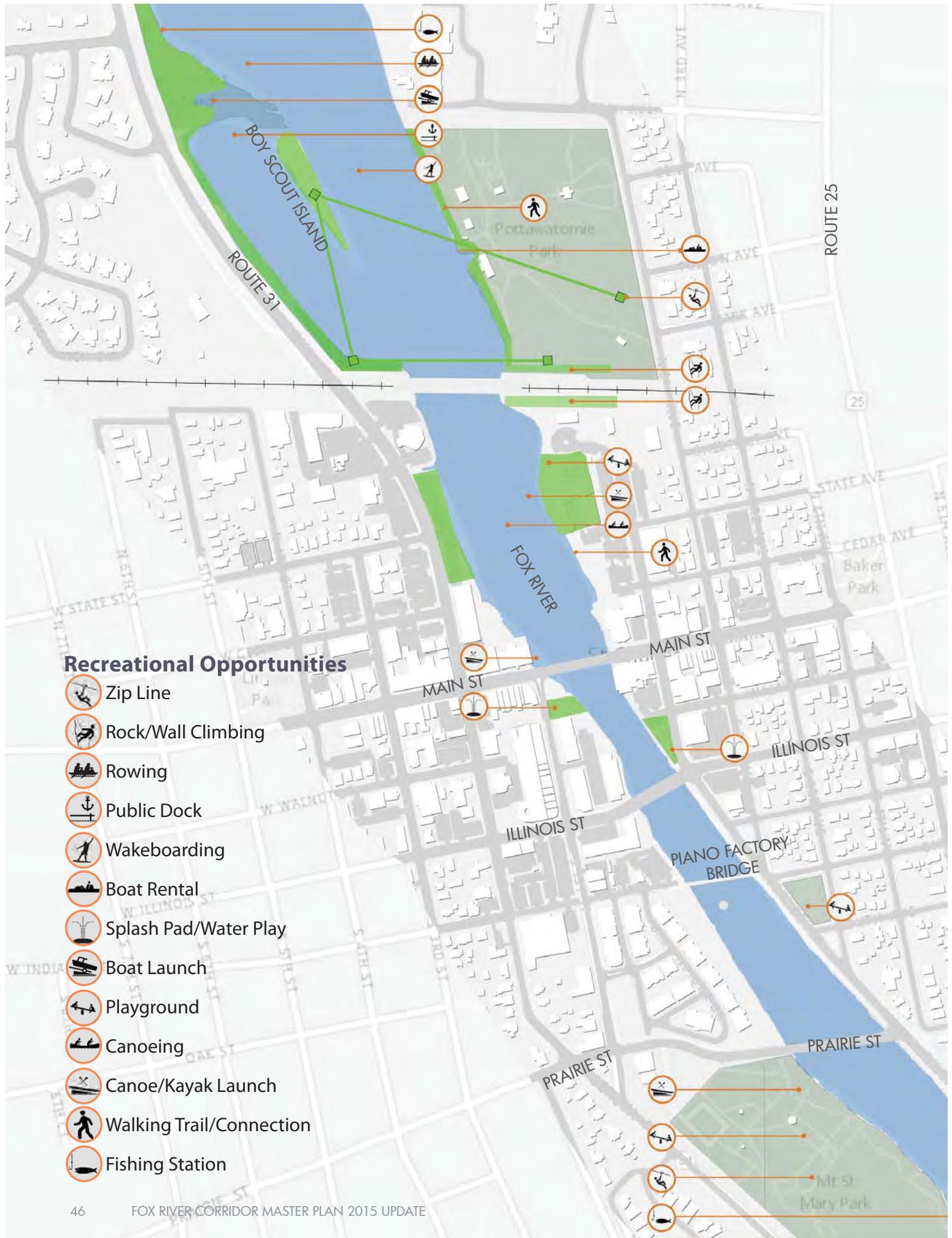
There are approx. 4 miles of shoreline within the St. Charles City limits. Much of the shoreline is natural, although erosion has degraded the shoreline in many locations. Stabilize and restore the shoreline to reduce sedimentation, improve water quality and provide wildlife habitat.

## **Rehabilitate river tributaries**














As development occurred adjacent to the Fox River, many tributaries were disrupted, piped or filled. Restore the river tributaries to a more natural state to improve water quality, wildlife habitat and the environment.

## **Incorporate Stormwater Best Management Practices**

Stormwater best management practices consist of requirements and actions to reduce the amount of stormwater runoff and ways to treat stormwater before it enters the river. Institute policies that require stormwater best management practices for both private and public developments to have a positive impact on the quality of the river.



**Recreational Opportunities**

-  Zip Line
-  Rock/Wall Climbing
-  Rowing
-  Public Dock
-  Wakeboarding
-  Boat Rental
-  Splash Pad/Water Play
-  Boat Launch
-  Playground
-  Canoeing
-  Canoe/Kayak Launch
-  Walking Trail/Connection
-  Fishing Station

# Recreational Assets

The St. Charles Park District already provides many recreational opportunities along the Fox River corridor. Improving the existing assets and taking advantage of the river as a natural resource by adding passive and active activities, along with encouraging private programs and activities, will further establish St. Charles as an active lifestyle community.

## *Maintain, improve and embellish existing recreational assets*

- Provide recreational activities such as splash pads and destination playgrounds along the riverwalk and in downtown plazas and open spaces
- Provide active outdoor recreational activities such as climbing walls, ropes courses and zip lines along the riverfront
- Improve passive recreational activities such as bird watching, fishing, hiking and walking
- Support and encourage private recreation such as rowing, canoeing, kayaking, biking, and power boating
- Provide accessible fishing facilities



Playground



Splash Pad



Zipline/Ropes Course

## **Provide downtown and riverwalk recreational activities**

The Park District supports programs and maintains neighborhood and regional parks throughout the community. Adding small recreational activities such as splash pads and destination play environments throughout the downtown and along the riverwalk will strengthen the riverfront overall.

## **Provide active outdoor recreational activities along the riverfront**

Active recreational activities such as climbing walls, ropes courses and zip lines along the riverfront will support an active lifestyle and help establish St. Charles as a recreational destination.

## **Improve passive recreational activities**

Recreational activities such as bird watching, hiking and walking are extremely popular. Providing convenient and interesting opportunities for people to experience the outdoors, riverfront, community and environment will support achieving the overall project goal.

## **Support and encourage private recreation**

Public agencies can provide support for private activities without providing specific organized programs. Activities such as rowing, canoeing, kayaking, biking, and power boating are all privately organized but can benefit from public support.

## **Provide fishing stations**

Fishing continues to be one of the most popular recreational activities along the Fox River. Provide convenient access to the river in popular fishing areas to support this popular recreational activity.

# Cultural Assets

Cultural assets are all of the various items that communicate the attitudes, customs and beliefs that make a community unique. Incorporate and support art, history, programs and events that represent the culture of St. Charles throughout the river corridor.

*Maintain, improve and embellish existing cultural assets*

- Incorporate Art along the riverfront and throughout downtown
- Represent the history of the community
- Support community festivals and programmed events (Riverfest, Scarecrow, Fine Arts, etc.)
- Complete the Riverwalk amenities

## **Incorporate Art along the riverfront and throughout downtown**

Sculpture, public art, performances and temporary installations all create interest and are attractions along the riverfront. Utilize the riverfront and the river itself for art displays and installations to create a unique riverfront experience.

## **Represent the history of the community**

The City of St. Charles has a rich and storied history. Communicate the history of the community through sculpture, displays, and events for future generations to come.

## **Support community festivals and programmed events**

The community hosts a number of events including Riverfest, the Scarecrow Festival and the Fine Arts festival within the downtown and along the riverfront. Support these community events along with other programs to continue to make St. Charles an attractive place to live and a regional destination.

## **Complete the Riverwalk amenities**

The existing riverwalk is a good start, but adding pedestrian amenities and other cultural assets will contribute to creating a riverwalk that is not just a walkway, but a regional attraction.



Local Lore and History



Local Events and Festivals



Memorial Sculptures



River Based Art Installations



Unique Cultural Attractions



# Brand

The image of St. Charles, “Pride of the Fox”, is closely aligned with the river. Further emphasis on the river by refining the platform, tools and communications will only strengthen the community’s position and create a more recognizable, authentic brand.

*Refine existing platform, tools, and communications*

- Emphasize the river (programming and communications)
- Emphasize the package (multi-dimensional, lifestyle and visitor appeal)
- Promote new features as they come on line (must be authentic)
- Target audience (local, regional)

## **Emphasize the river (programming and communications)**

The City of St. Charles is known as the “Pride of the Fox” and the identity of the community is closely tied to the river. Emphasize this fact through all programming and communications among the various, agencies, organizations, and groups to project a consistent, coordinated message.

## **Emphasize the package (multi-dimensional, lifestyle and visitor appeal)**

It’s all about the river but there’s more to it than just the river. Emphasize the community as a whole, its diversity, lifestyle and visitor appeal as an active river community.

## **Promote new features as they come on line (must be authentic)**

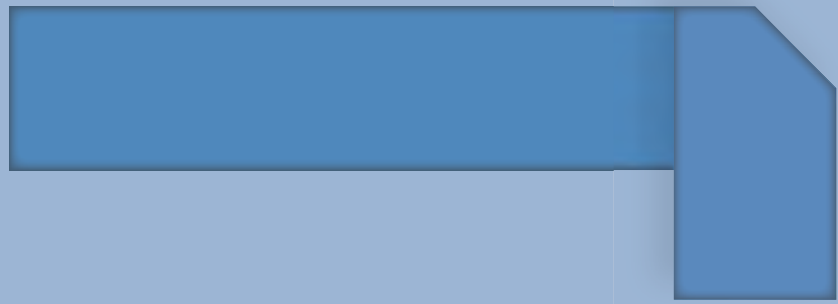
It is important to get the word out and promote new features as they come on line to create interest and attract users. Promotions must be authentic and not oversell an idea which could lead to a disappointing experience and loss of return visitors.

## **Target audience (local, regional)**

Riverfront improvements benefit the local community and economy, creating a better place for its citizens. Targeting a larger regional audience can strengthen the reputation of the community and lead to continued growth and prosperity.



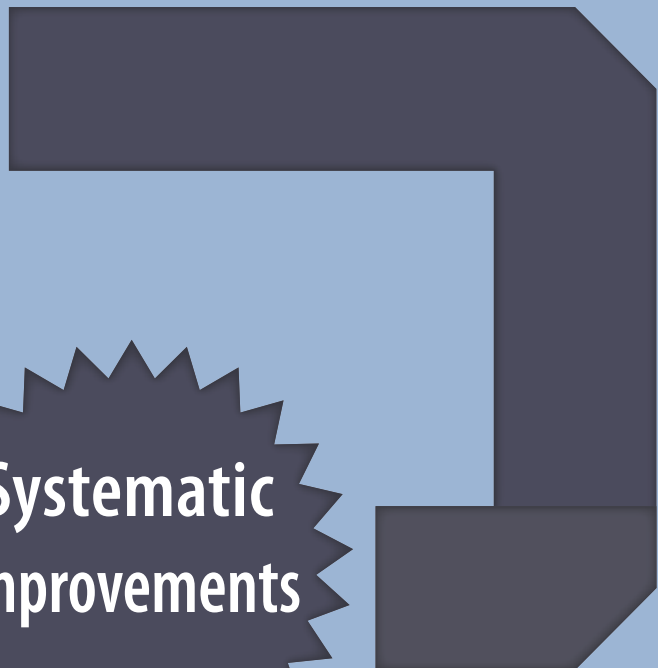
**Prioritize  
River**



**Align and  
Coordinate**



**Leverage  
Water  
Quality**



**Systematic  
Improvements**

# Momentum

The master plan outlines many improvement recommendations. It can be challenging to determine where to begin and how to accomplish meaningful improvements. By acting systematically and incrementally, the community can gain and sustain momentum to accomplish the project goals, objectives and standards.

## *Advocate the strategy*

- Prioritize river and riverfront across partner organizations
- Align and coordinate organizational initiatives
- Leverage water quality to facilitate dam modification
- Commit to systematic, incremental capital improvements

### **Prioritize the river and riverfront across partner organizations**

Various stakeholder agencies, organizations and groups have a number of competing interests to consider. Prioritizing these needs is not easy. The partner organizations must make the river and riverfront improvements a priority to gain and sustain momentum to meet the goals and objectives.

### **Align and coordinate organizational initiatives**

If organizations make the river a priority, the next step is to align and coordinate specific initiatives among the organizations. Each organization has their own interests, but by coordinating together, multiple agencies can align their priorities and leverage river related initiatives.

### **Leverage water quality to facilitate dam modification**

The time is now to align the City's interests with the pending water quality regulatory requirements. Coordination between the partner organizations and the regulatory agencies can lead to implementation of the recommendations as outlined in the master plan.

### **Commit to systematic, incremental capital improvements**

Some of the improvements such as the dam modification are complicated and expensive, and will take a number of years to complete. It is important to get started on these larger scale projects now, although it is just as important to commit to systematic, incremental advancement of a variety of smaller projects on a continuous basis.



# Implementation

The Fox River Corridor Master Plan includes dozens of important recommendations to “Create a lively riverfront environment that is the centerpiece of the community”. Fortunately, as detailed in the Opportunity Analysis, St. Charles has the critical natural, cultural and physical resources that enable community leaders to execute the strategy with confidence. However, the size of the study area, the number of improvement recommendations, and the multi-jurisdictional influences make rapid implementation a daunting task.

In this section, the recommendations are translated into specific, prioritized projects and actions that are organized as Public Policy Improvements, Operational Improvements, and Capital Improvements. Each project describes the type, potential cost, potential funding source, and the leaders and partners who are responsible for completing the project. Projects are prioritized based on their level of complication, potential cost, their catalytic potential and expected return on investment.

Both public and private sector leaders and property owners will be responsible for executing the actions outlined in this plan, often in close collaboration with each other. With the periodic assistance of legal, marketing and other business consultants, the Active River Task Force (ARTF) can accomplish many modest cost initiatives such as policy and operational changes, if members are willing to invest the time to work through the issues. By comparison, many of the larger capital improvements will require the assistance of design and engineering consultants and involve considerable City, Park District, and/or Forest Preserve leadership and investment because of their scale, complexity and cost. Since the construction of some of the new capital improvements will depend, in part, on outside grant funding, completion may extend beyond the outlined time horizon. Lastly, private redevelopment is heavily influenced by the market, investor and property owner circumstances that are difficult to forecast. Logically, redevelopment will likely follow and be influenced by the public policy and operational improvements.

# Policy Improvements

Park District, City, and Forest Preserve District leaders, property and business owners, and other stakeholders need to closely collaborate to update and refine certain policies that will help advance the strategy. The ARTF, made up of representatives from each of these groups, should continue to remain active to advance the priority policy improvements.

## Policy Improvements

	ACTION/DELIVERABLE	LEADERSHIP
<b>Codes, Ordinances and Studies</b>		
	Adopt this River Corridor Master Plan Update, review and update the priority actions and improvements annually	City of St. Charles (City) St. Charles Park District (SCPD) Forest Preserve District of Kane County (FPDKC)
	Complete Police Facility Study	City
	Continue negotiations with UPRR to purchase vacated RR bridge	City, SCPD, FPDKC
	Evaluate, incorporate, and require environmental best management practices in ordinances and policies	City, SCPD, FPDKC
<b>Agency Coordination</b>		
	Vigorously advocate the Active River Strategy with the Fox River Study Group	City, other Fox River cities
	Synchronize City, Park District and County policies to prioritize river corridor improvements	Active River Task Force/ River Corridor Foundation of St. Charles (ARTF), All River Corridor Partners
	Review the Strategy with regulatory Agencies to determine project related regulations and requirements	City, SCPD
	Continue to advocate for the improvements on behalf of all river corridor partners	ARTF
<b>Finance</b>		
	Select river corridor improvements and align with partner agency Capital Improvement Plans and all sources of revenue (include both simple-to-execute and complex projects like the Phase I study of the dam)	City, SCPD, FPDKC
	Assign someone to research grant funding and produce periodic memos shared/compared with other corridor partners. Identify best opportunities and partnerships, apply for/facilitate awards	All River Corridor Partners
	Seek funding through state and federal sources to complete a Phase I study of the dam modification, confirm local match(es)	City
	Seek corporate and individual donations	Active River Task Force/River Corridor Foundation of St. Charles (ARTF)

# Operational Improvements

The Park District, City, and Forest Preserve District are responsible for many day-to-day operational activities such as code enforcement, public property maintenance and programming, along with community outreach and advocacy. Additionally, private property and business owners are responsible for leasing, managing and maintaining their properties. Ideally, all public and private sector stakeholders will work closely together to improve the river corridor. Focusing on areas of common interest and defining how each entity can participate mitigates any potential overlap or competing interests in the work necessary to improve the river corridor. Once again, the ARTF can continue to play an important role in advancing the priority operational improvements.

## Operational Improvements

	ACTION/DELIVERABLE	LEADERSHIP
<b>Organization</b>		
	Synchronize 2016 City, Park District, County and organizational operations plans to prioritize river corridor promotion and programming	ARTF, All River Corridor Partners
	Prioritize operational plan improvements to advance future implementation items	ARTF, City, SCPD, FPDKC, KDOT, Downtown St. Charles Partnership, Inc St. Charles Convention and Visitor's Bureau
<b>Advocacy, Promotion and Marketing</b>		
	Continue to advance community outreach and advocacy with agencies, potential developers and the public	ARTF
	Actively encourage private recreational activities such as rowing, canoeing, kayaking, and bicycling programs and groups	ARTF, SCPD
	Explore the possibility for private vendors to provide specialized recreational activities such as climbing walls, ropes coursed and zip lines	ARTF, SCPD
	Continue to support and promote the arts and programmed events and activities throughout the river corridor	ARTF, St. Charles Arts Council (SCAC)
	Align the activities of partner agencies and stakeholders related to "brand" , emphasizing the river, promoting new features, and portraying an active lifestyle and visitor appeal	All River Corridor Partners
<b>Public Space</b>		
	Evaluate existing maintenance practices for improvements that will positively affect river ecology and water quality	City, SCPD, FPDKC
	Develop a plan for maintenance of future capital improvements	City, SCPD, FPDKC

# Capital Improvements

This plan identifies many capital improvements, some of which can be completed in a relatively short timeline. Others, because of cost and complexity, will take many years to implement. Park District, City and Forest Preserve District leaders should start with simple, high impact, modest cost projects, then budget for and initiate more complicated, high-investment/high impact projects, as funding allows, giving the highest priority to the most catalytic projects. Leaders should also link the master-planned capital improvements to significant private sector investment, whenever possible to leverage the impacts.

Capital improvement projects typically follow a three phase process: Preliminary Design and Engineering (Phase I), Final Design and Engineering (Phase II), and Construction (Phase III). Customarily, the cost of Phase I and Phase II services is 10 percent of the project value, and the cost of Phase III is typically 3-5 percent of the total project value. With more complex projects, leaders should initiate Phase I consulting services well in advance of the targeted construction date to accommodate sometimes lengthy outreach, design, engineering and multi-jurisdictional permitting timelines.

## Capital Improvements

	ACTION/DELIVERABLE	LEADERSHIP
<b>River Park</b>		
	Align temporary bulkhead wall (city hall-police station) rehabilitation with Active River Strategy	City
	Design, engineer, permit and construct the dam modification	City
	Design, engineer, permit and construct the children's play environment	City, SCPD
	Design, engineer, permit and construct the signature pedestrian bridge	City
	Design, engineer, permit and construct the Bridgeview observation area	City, SCPD
	Design, engineer, permit and construct the continuous riverfront walkway, water access, and observation areas	City, SCPD
<b>Riverwalk</b>		
	Create an enhancement plan for the Leonard Walkway for fundraising and construction	ARTF, City, SCPD
	Design, engineer, permit and construct the Riverside Avenue Riverwalk (North of Prairie)	City
	Design, engineer, permit and construct the Riverside Avenue (South of Prairie) Riverwalk	City
	Design, engineer, permit and construct the downtown loop civic plaza	City



	ACTION/DELIVERABLE	LEADERSHIP
<b>Riverwalk (cont.)</b>		
	Design, engineer, permit and construct the Beith House civic plaza	City
	Design, engineer, permit and construct the Hazletine Park destination play environment	City
	Explore the possibility to add a kinetic sculpture and plantings on the island	City, SCAC
	Align Piano Factory Bridge rehabilitation with the Active River Strategy	City
	Design, engineer, permit and construct surf wave south of Piano Factory Bridge	City
<b>Regional Trails and Connections</b>		
	Align Fox River Trail sign improvements with the Active River Strategy	Kane County Department of Transportation (KDOT)
	Design, engineer, permit and construct the Fox River Trail north extension	SCPD, FPDKC
	Design, engineer, permit and construct the Fox River Trail (east side) north extension	SCPD, FPDKC
	Design, engineer, permit and construct the Fox River Trail (west side) north extension	SCPD, FPDKC
	Design, engineer, permit and construct the east/west Great Western trail connection across the railroad bridge	SCPD, FPDKC
	Design, engineer, permit and construct grade separated and at-grade pedestrian and bike connections	SCPD, FPDKC
	Evaluate existing bike paths and determine areas in need of improvement	ARTF, SCPD, FPDKC
	Design, engineer, permit and construct priority bike path improvements	SCPD, FPDKC
	Design, engineer, permit and construct river corridor gateways	City, SCPD
<b>Private Development</b>		
	Align the First Street Redevelopment improvements with the Active River Strategy	ARTF, City
	Align future riverfront redevelopment projects with the Active River Strategy	ARTF, City
	Facilitate discussions with stakeholders regarding the potential for a rowing training center, camping and seasonal activities and rentals	ARTF, SCPD

	ACTION/DELIVERABLE	LEADERSHIP
<b>Natural Assets</b>		
	Design, engineer, permit and construct the Boy Scout Island modifications	SCPD, City
	Evaluate the shoreline to determine locations requiring shoreline restoration	ARTF, SCPD, City
	Design, engineer, permit and construct shoreline restoration improvements	SCPD, City
	Determine locations for fishing stations	ARTF, SCPD, City
	Design, engineer, permit and construct fishing stations	SCPD, City
	Evaluate river tributaries and determine locations requiring restoration	ARTF, SCPD, City
	Design, engineer, permit and construct tributary restoration improvements	SCPD, City
	Evaluate areas with poor drainage and flooding, and determine locations requiring improvement	SCPD, City
<b>Recreational Assets</b>		
	Evaluate locations throughout the river corridor to incorporate splash pads, destination playgrounds, and specialized recreation opportunities	ARTF, SCPD, City
	Design, engineer, permit and construct specialized recreational improvements	SCPD
	Evaluate passive recreational activities to determine potential improvements throughout the river corridor	ARTF, SCPD, City
	Design, engineer, permit and construct improvements to passive recreational activities throughout the river corridor	SCPD
<b>Cultural Assets</b>		
	Align the Active River Strategy with the St. Charles Arts Council and other affiliated organizations to promote cultural asset improvements throughout the river corridor	ARTF, City
	Fundraise and install art and historical components along the riverfront and throughout the river corridor	ARTF, SCAC

# Priority Actions and Improvements

Community leaders should use this prioritized list of actions and improvements to guide policy, capital and operational improvements over the next 3 years. They should update this list, annually, to review progress, re-order actions based on changed circumstances, and identify new actions related to emerging opportunities. Costs are uninflated 2015 dollars, and leadership roles are noted with the understanding that elected leaders in the partnering agencies must approve all policies and appropriations.

The recommended actions and improvements are prioritized based on:

- An appropriate return on investment (broadly defined as the use of valuable financial, physical and human resources to create community impacts in support of the River Corridor Strategy)
- Availability of adequate funding (from public or private sources)
- Appropriate control of or access to river and/or corridor property
- Complexity and time to complete (creating and sustaining momentum with a combination of small, large, simple and complex projects)
- Relationship to private sector development (desirable private development adjacent to the river should always advance the corridor strategy)
- Relationship to public sector infrastructure projects (public improvements adjacent to the river should always advance the corridor strategy)

# 2015

## Policy Improvements

Action/Deliverable	Leadership
Adopt this River Corridor Master Plan Update	City of St. Charles (City) St. Charles Park District (SCPD) Forest Preserve District of Kane County (FPDKC)
Vigorously advocate the Active River Strategy with the Fox River Study Group	City, other downstream cities
Select river corridor improvements for the 2016 and the 3-year Capital Improvement Plan (include both simple-to-execute and complex projects like the Phase I study of the dam)	City, SCPD, FPDKC
Seek funding through state and federal sources to complete a Phase I study of the dam modification. Confirm local match(es).	City
Assign someone to research grant funding and produce periodic memos shared/compared with other corridor partners. Identify best opportunities and partnerships, apply for/facilitate awards.	All River Corridor Partners
Complete Police Facility Study	City
Continue negotiations with UPRR to purchase vacated RR bridge	City, SCPD, FPDKC

## Priority Capital Improvements

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Cost	Action	Leadership
TBD	Align Piano Factory Bridge rehabilitation with the Active River Strategy	City
TBD	Align temporary bulkhead wall (city hall-police station) rehabilitation with Active River Strategy	City
TBD	Align Fox River Trail sign improvements with the Active River Strategy	Kane County Department of Transportation (KDOT)
TBD	Align First Street Redevelopment improvements with the Active River Strategy	City

## Priority Operational Improvements

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Cost	Action	Leadership
TBD	Synchronize 2016 City, Park District, County and organizational operations plans to prioritize river corridor promotion and programming	Active River Task Force/River Corridor Foundation of St. Charles (ARTF), All River Corridor Partners
TBD	Community outreach and advocacy	ARTF

# 2016

## Priority Policy Improvements

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Action	Leadership
Continue to advocate Active River Strategy with Fox River Study Group	City
Prioritize river corridor improvements for 2017 Capital Improvement Plans	City, SCPD, FPDKC
Continue to seek funding for dam modification	City, IEPA
Continue to monitor grant opportunities	All River Corridor Partners

## Priority Capital Improvements

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Cost	Action	Leadership
\$1,000,000	Start Preliminary Design/Engineering of the dam modification	City
\$50,000	Complete Preliminary Design/Engineering of Riverside Drive Riverwalk (Ohio-Prairie)	City
\$10,000	Create an enhancement plan for "Leonard" Riverwalk for fundraising, periodic completion	ARTF
\$15,000	Prepare Preliminary Design/Engineering for shoreline enhancements for Riverside Drive, south of Prairie	City
TBD	Design and construct a small project from simple-to-execute projects list	ARTF, City, SCPD

## Priority Operational Improvements

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Cost	Action	Leadership
TBD	Synchronize 2017 City, Park District, County and organizational operations plans to prioritize river corridor promotion and programming	ARTF, City, SCPD, FPDKC, KDOT, Downtown St. Charles Partnership, Inc St. Charles Convention and Visitor's Bureau
TBD	Community outreach and advocacy	ARTF

# 2017

## Priority Policy Improvements

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Action	Leadership
Continue to advance dam modification plans	City
Prioritize river corridor improvements for 2018 Capital Improvement Plans	City, SCPD, FPDKC

## Priority Capital Improvements

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Cost	Action	Leadership
TBD	Complete Preliminary Design/Engineering of dam modification; Continue funding/implementation strategy	City
\$200,000	Complete Final Design/Engineering of Riverside Drive Riverwalk (Ohio-Prairie)	City
\$25,000	Prepare Preliminary Design/Engineering for Fox River Trail at Golf Course	SCPD, FPDKC
\$100,000	Construct some enhancements on "Leonard" Riverwalk	City
\$60,000	Prepare Final Design/Engineering for selected shoreline enhancements along Riverside Drive, south of Prairie	City

## Priority Operational Improvements

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Cost	Action	Leadership
TBD	Synchronize 2018 City, Park District, County and organizational operations plans to prioritize river corridor promotion and programming	All River Corridor Partners
TBD	Community outreach and advocacy	ARTF

# 2018

## Priority Policy Improvements

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Action	Leadership
Continue to advance dam modification plans	City
Prioritize river corridor improvements for 2019 Capital Improvement Plans	City, SCPD, FPDKC

## Priority Capital Improvements

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Cost	Action	Leadership
\$2,500,000	Construct Riverside Drive Riverwalk (Ohio-Prairie)	City
\$100,000	Construct additional enhancements to "Leonard" Riverwalk	City

## Priority Operational Improvements

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Cost	Action	Leadership
TBD	Community outreach and advocacy	ARTF

