



CITY OF WILMINGTON, ILLINOIS

2024 COMPREHENSIVE CITY PLAN

DRAFT REVIEW PURPOSES ONLY

Last Revised: October 21, 2024

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The City of Wilmington is a small town with opportunities for growth, development, and preservation along the Kankakee River in southwest Will County. The community has a historic downtown, stable neighborhood core, small commercial areas, a growing industrial base, a strong network of schools, parks, and civic uses, and access to regional open spaces and nature preserves. With access to I-55 and recent residential, commercial, and industrial development, Wilmington has the opportunity to build upon these growth areas. An updated Comprehensive City Plan will guide the City's decisions as it navigates these opportunities and addresses any challenges along the way.

PURPOSE

A comprehensive plan is an inclusive approach that a municipality can utilize to prepare for future growth, potential development, and preservation efforts that impact the overall quality of life for the community. Serving as a blueprint to guide city decision making and allocation of resources, a comprehensive plan expresses the aspirations of residents and informs potential developers, businesses, and others regarding the types of uses and development suitable for Wilmington. The plan helps to shape how development proposals and future improvements best fit the City's vision.

The Wilmington Comprehensive City Plan should be treated as a dynamic resource, as it is a process as much as a document. As described in Chapter 2, a variety of community engagement activities enabled the community to contribute to the creation of the plan by sharing their thoughts and ideas regarding the future of Wilmington.

The plan focuses on the interrelationship between a range of community

topics, including land use, economic development, housing, access and mobility, community facilities and assets, natural resources, and infrastructure. As a guiding blueprint for the community, the plan includes recommendations for implementation, including strategies, suggested projects, and potential resources that will help guide City staff and officials as they work towards achieving the vision and goals defined in this document.

The Wilmington Comprehensive City Plan recognizes the community's expectations for maintaining its high quality of life, preserving its small town character, creating a balanced housing stock, enhancing its commercial base, and contributing to the region's growing industrial market. This includes reimagination of spaces that generates a balanced mix of uses that meet the evolving needs and expectations of residents, businesses, and future investment.



A CITY GUIDEBOOK
HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

The Comprehensive City Plan serves as a guiding document for City officials, staff, and their community partners to make informed decisions on a daily basis that will manage growth, development, and preservation in a sensible and sustainable manner. These decisions will help shape the future of Wilmington in terms of the City's housing stock, business districts, industrial market, transportation network, parks and recreation, natural resources, utilities, and other infrastructure.

By using this Comprehensive City Plan on a regular basis, the City can make these decisions through the following actions:

- Prioritizing targeted programs and expenditures through the City's annual budget process
- Financing major public improvements and land acquisitions through the general fund, grants, and other public finance mechanisms
- Reviewing and amending the City's Zoning Code to be consistent with plan strategies
- Referencing the Future Land Use Plan and other elements as part of the development application review process
- Building the annual work plans of City departments to judiciously allocate funds, resources, and staffing
- Allocating resources for ongoing planning and future studies to further advance elements of the plan
- Coordinating initiatives with other public and private partners to leverage resources and achieve collaborative successes for the City and region



PAST PLANNING EFFORTS

This Comprehensive City Plan is the first update to Wilmington's plan since the 2008 Comprehensive Plan. Since that time, the City and its partners have completed other planning efforts that lay the foundation for certain aspects of the Comprehensive City Plan. These past planning efforts are illustrated in the timeline in **Figure 1.1** below.

- **2008** Comprehensive Plan
- **2010** Ridgeport Logistics Center Intermodal Terminal Facility Area TIF District
- **2012** Water and Wastewater Assets and Operations Evaluation
- **2014** Island Parks Study
- **2014** Downtown Economic Vitality Study
- **2015** Wilmington Mill Race Study
- **2018** Downtown Plan
- **2020** Park District Master Plan
- **2022** Stakeholder SWOT Analysis
- **2024** Comprehensive City Plan
- **2024** Parks Master Plan

FIGURE 1.1
TIMELINE OF CITY PLANNING EFFORTS IN WILMINGTON

PLAN COMPONENTS

The 2024 Comprehensive City Plan include the following components:

CHAPTER 2
Community Perspectives

This chapter summarizes the thoughts, ideas, and other public feedback shared via the various community outreach means used during the planning process.

CHAPTER 3
Community Profile

This chapter serves as a snapshot of Wilmington, including its location in the region, history, demographics, and existing land use composition.

CHAPTER 4
Policy Framework

This chapter outlines the vision, goals, and objectives that form the policy framework underlying the strategies outlined in this plan.

CHAPTER 5
City Plan

This chapter represents the core piece of the plan providing the Future Land Use Plan and related plan elements that form the blueprint to guide future growth and development in Wilmington.

CHAPTER 6
Implementation

This chapter provides an Implementation Plan that activates this plan as a dynamic document that the City and its partners can consult on a regular basis.



CHAPTER 2

COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES

Community engagement was a prominent component of the project to engage residents, business and property owners, City staff and officials, and other stakeholders. As summarized on the graphic in **Figure 2.1**, the project obtained a multitude of community input through a multi-pronged approach to engage the community.

This feedback formed a solid foundation of community thoughts, ideas, and concerns to inform the preparation of long-range planning strategies to guide sensible growth, development, and preservation in Wilmington.

The timeline in **Figure 2.2** and graphics on the following pages highlight interactions and key takeaways from some of the outreach activities, including public open houses, a community survey, stakeholder engagement, a project website, and meetings with a project steering committee.



**FIGURE 2.1
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW**

BY THE NUMBERS

The statistics below provide a broad summary of the amount of community feedback received obtained via various outreach activities (see **Figure 2.2**) that were conducted throughout the planning process.

NOTE: Statistics as of September 16, 2024

1,381
Project website visits

167
Comment map contributions, including comments, upvotes, and downvotes, on the project website

137
Community survey responses

50+
Open house attendees

24+
Stakeholders engaged, including business and property owners, real estate professionals, local organizations, City staff and officials, and high school students

13
High school students engaged

**FIGURE 2.2
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TIMELINE**

- **OCTOBER 1, 2023**
Project Launch
- **OCTOBER 26, 2023**
Steering Committee Meeting #1
- **JANUARY 8 - MAY 3, 2024**
Community Survey
- **JANUARY 31, 2024**
Public Open House #1
- **FEBRUARY 1 - MARCH 31, 2024**
Stakeholder Engagement
:: Interviews w/ Businesses
:: Interviews w/ Real Estate Professionals
:: Meeting w/ Park District Board
:: Outreach w/ High School Interact Club
:: Conversations w/ City Staff and Officials
- **FEBRUARY 22, 2024**
Steering Committee Meeting #2
- **APRIL 17, 2024**
Public Open House #2
- **MAY 2, 2024**
Steering Committee Meeting #3
- **OCTOBER 17, 2024**
Steering Committee Meeting #4
- **TBD**
Public Open House #3
- **TBD**
Final City Review & Adoption
:: Planning & Zoning Commission
:: Public Hearing
:: City Council

PUBLIC OPEN HOUSES

Three public open houses were held to provide the community with opportunities to share their feedback at various points of the planning process. The intent of each open house is summarized below. The photos below represent the engagement that occurred at the open houses.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

In addition to broad outreach at the three public open houses, the consultant team engaged a diverse set of stakeholders across the Wilmington community through interviews and conversations at various points throughout the project. These stakeholders included business and property owners, real estate professionals, local organizations, City staff and officials, and high school students (see below).

Stakeholder feedback covered various aspects of the community, which help to inform the different components of the Comprehensive City Plan, particularly the topic-specific strategies in Chapter 5 and implementation strategies in Chapter 6.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

One key stakeholder group that was engaged was the Wilmington High School Interact Club. Over a dozen high school students participated in a quick but engaging activity on March 1, 2024, to learn about their perspectives of Wilmington as it is today and what they would like to see in the future. Findings from this high school engagement activity are summarized in the graphic on the next page.

PROJECT WEBSITE

The project website provided an ongoing option for community feedback and served as a one-stop shop for project information, details on outreach activities, and related project materials. Many ideas were shared via the Comment Map feature on the project website. The community survey, which is summarized on pages 6-8 was also available in electronic form on the project website.

LINK: <https://tinyurl.com/wilmington-cp>



Wilmington Comprehensive City Plan and Master Parks Plan
Planning for Wilmington's Future

Welcome to the project website for the City of Wilmington's process to update its Comprehensive City Plan and prepare a new Master Parks Plan. The current Comprehensive City Plan was last updated in 2008. This is a key opportunity to update the Comprehensive City Plan to provide a renewed vision, goals, and strategies regarding elements like growth, development, housing, businesses, industry, transportation, public and civic uses, utilities infrastructure, natural resources, and sustainability. The Master Parks Plan will provide strategies for Wilmington's park facilities, which will also be part of the Comprehensive City Plan.

Stay Engaged
There will be opportunities throughout the project to participate in the planning process. From web-based commenting features and a community survey to in-person open houses and other activities, there will be a range of ways to share your thoughts, ideas, and feedback.

Open Houses

- January 31, 2024**
Public Open House #1
Open House Flyer
Open House Exhibits
- April 17, 2024**
Public Open House #2
Open House Flyer
Open House Exhibits (Informational)
Open House Exhibits (Corridor Subareas)
- Public Open House #3**
Date TBD

Project Updates

Fri, May 3, 2024
Community Survey is Closed
The Community Survey is now closed. The survey was intended to ensure that the Comprehensive City Plan and Master Parks Plan reflect the preferences and perspectives of the local community. Four survey participants will be randomly selected to each win one of four gift cards. Winners will be emailed separately. Thank you to all who participated!

Fri, March 22, 2024
Take the Community Survey
Thank you to all who have taken the time to fill out the Community Survey. There is still time to take the survey; just click the **Start** button under the "Wilmington Community Survey" heading on this page. For your time and feedback, you may enter your name into a drawing for one of four gift cards. Winners of the gift cards will be notified after the survey closes on April 30, 2024. Thank you!

Document Library

- Open House #1 Exhibits PDF (9.24 MB)
- 2008 Wilmington Comprehensive Plan PDF (10.97 MB)

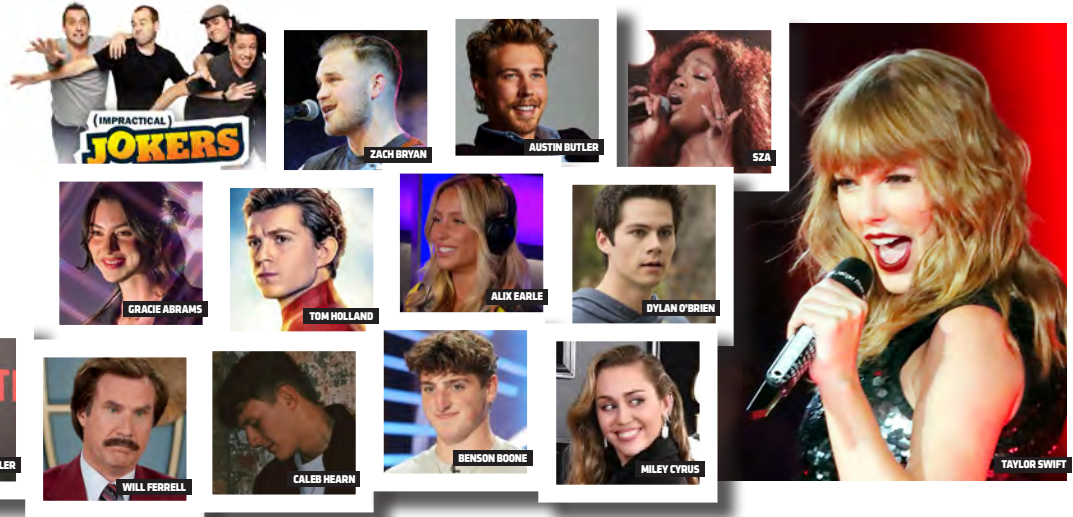


YOUTH VOICES

WILMINGTON HIGH SCHOOL INTERACT CLUB | March 1, 2024

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS: Thank you to Ms. Katie Francis, Wilmington High School, and the Interact Club students: Alaina C., Aubrey B., Austin D., Ava S., Brianna J., Ella H., Hannah B., Lily T., Logan V., Melia H., Molly S., Rianna S. (and others!)

My favorite celebrity is visiting Wilmington next month! I can't wait to meet them and show them around my hometown!



The celebrity wants to treat you and your friends to lunch in Wilmington. I will take them to:

- El Patrón (x13)
- New China (x2)
- AJ's Hotdogs
- Chick-A-Dee
- Haydens

If Wilmington had other restaurants, I would take them to one of the following:

- Texas Roadhouse (x4)
- Raising Canes (x2)
- WingStop (x2)
- Panera Bread
- Slim Chicken
- Starbucks
- White Castle
- Portillo's
- Chipotle

After lunch, the celebrity wants to hang out with me and my friends in Wilmington. We will go to:

- My house (x4)
- Riverfront Lanes (x3)
- My pool
- Mimi's Cafe
- The Mar
- Park
- Recreation Center
- A clothes store
- Antique shops

If Wilmington had other places or hangout spots, I would take them to one of the following:

- Target (x6)
- Starbucks (x3)
- Mall

The celebrity is donating \$10 million to help make improvements to Wilmington:

- Improve schools (x6)
- Better roads (x6)
- Restaurants (x6)
- Build a Starbucks (x4)
- Build a Target (x3)
- School auditorium (x2)
- Save Gemini Giant (x2)
- Better grocers (x2)
- Mall/stores (x2)
- Build a Wal-Mart
- Build an Aldi
- Better downtown
- Better school lunches
- Better school cafeteria
- Safer parks
- Roller rink
- Theater

Before they leave town, the celebrity wants to take one final selfie with you. The perfect spot in Wilmington for a photo is:

- Downtown (x6)
- Route 66 sign (x5)
- Gemini Giant (x5)
- Bridge by Nelly's (x3)
- McDonald's
- Riverfront

WHAT THESE RESPONSES INDICATE ABOUT YOUTH PERCEPTIONS OF WILMINGTON:

Youth have local favorite eateries in town, with El Patrón being highly popular.

Like anyone else, youth have their wish list of restaurants they would like to see in Wilmington.

As expected, youth seem to prefer activities that have a group component, such as shopping, recreation, and entertainment. They also have pride in their own homes.

Hangout spots like Target and a mall offer the group component but also enable youth to browse, snack, and have experiences that can be shared on social media.

Youth's list of things they would like to improve is similar to what adults seek. Youth also find value in retaining what makes Wilmington unique (e.g., saving the Gemini Giant).

Youth know better than anyone what makes a perfect selfie shot. While their choices align with what you would expect, they are places distinct to Wilmington.

GENERAL FINDINGS

COMMUNITY SURVEY

One of the core elements of the engagement process was a community survey designed to ensure the Comprehensive City Plan reflects the preferences and perspectives of the local community. All survey responses and identity of respondents are kept confidential.

A summary of community survey findings is provided on the following pages. In all cases, key takeaways reflect the viewpoints of survey respondents only and are not necessarily a reflection of the entire Wilmington community.

Complete community survey results are provided in the Appendix.

The first section of the survey asked two general questions about what people like and dislike about Wilmington, which has broad implications on many aspects of the Comprehensive City Plan.

GENERAL PERSPECTIVES

GENERAL SURVEY FINDINGS

The first and last sections of the survey focused on general perspectives and background information on survey respondents. Responses focused on general viewpoints about what people like and dislike about Wilmington, as well as respondent demographics.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

The demographics of survey respondents was quite diverse, indicating the survey reached various segments of the community with varying perspectives.

91.1%

Respondents who live in Wilmington

20.0%

Respondents who work in Wilmington

8.2%

Respondents who own a business in Wilmington

14.8%

Respondents who attend school in Wilmington

56.9%

Respondents who have lived in Wilmington for more than 20 years

24.0%

Respondents who have lived in Wilmington for 10 years or less

88.3%

Respondents who own their home

13.8%

Respondents who are age 65+

1.5%

Respondents who are age 18-24

91.1%

Respondents who feel informed or somewhat informed by the City regarding local services, programs, events, and other opportunities in Wilmington

PLACES & SPACES

GENERAL SURVEY FINDINGS

Placemaking relates to strengthening the connections between people and the places we share. It can refer to community design, public spaces, activities, land uses, and other elements that promote community health, vibrancy, and well-being.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Regarding the importance to include certain considerations in the **design of spaces** in Wilmington, these elements rated high (at least 60% or higher):

- Ease of mobility for all ages and abilities
- Interconnected sidewalks and trails
- Inviting and active streetscapes
- Street furnishings
- Environmentally friendly design
- Activities for all ages and abilities
- Outdoor spaces
- Access to parks, rec, and open spaces
- Access to patios, plazas, and other smaller shared community spaces
- Variety of shops and restaurants
- Public art, signage, gateways
- Inviting and functional alleys
- Wayfinding signage
- Building and site design standards

Regarding the importance for certain subareas to have **close access to community spaces** like parks, open spaces, plazas, etc. in Wilmington (at least 60% or higher):

- Residential neighborhoods
- Downtown area
- IL Route 53 corridor
- Water Street corridor
- *NOTE: Strip Mine Road corridor was close at 57.1%, while the Lorenzo Road and Arsenal Road corridors both rated much lower at 45.1%*

Regarding the importance for the community to enhance or explore the **arts and cultural opportunities** in Wilmington, these elements rated high (at least 60% or higher):

- Murals and public art
- Makerspaces
- Shared work/studio spaces
- Outdoor performance spaces
- Art and cultural spaces and activities
- Interactive sidewalk/patio elements
- Arts and cultural workshops
- Spaces for seasonal or pop-up arts or cultural experiences

HOUSING

GENERAL SURVEY FINDINGS

Neighborhoods and residences are the lifeblood of the community. Residents and home seekers should have access to a range of options that meet varying budgets, needs, life stages and lifestyles.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Regarding the **housing priorities** in Wilmington, these options rated high (at least 60% or higher):

- Maintaining existing housing
- Housing that fits existing neighborhood character
- Housing options for residents looking to downsize
- Starter homes
- More homeownership opportunities
- Affordable housing
- *NOTE: More rental housing was close at 58.4%; housing in or near downtown was moderately supported (51.4%); housing with small or no yards rated relatively low (41.9%); these three options were lower in priority but could still be pursued if appropriate*

Regarding the **housing types** that would be supported in Wilmington, these types rated high (at least 60% or higher):

- Single family houses
- Townhouses
- Duplexes
- Housing for older adults (independent living)
- Housing for older adults (assisted living)
- *NOTE: Housing types like condominiums (43.7%), apartments (35.3%), and accessory dwelling units (37.1%) all rated relatively lower in terms of support by the community; however, these types could still be pursued if appropriate*

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

GENERAL SURVEY FINDINGS

An economic development plan for Wilmington will focus on non-residential uses that provide a range of goods, services, and jobs to the community. The potential to boost tourism in Wilmington will also be explored.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Regarding the types of **commercial uses** that would be supported in Wilmington, these uses rated high (at least 60% or higher):

- Retail stores (small shops, locally owned)
- Retail stores (big box, national chains)
- Personal services (salons, animal care, etc.)
- Quick service restaurants (e.g., Chipotle)
- Full service restaurants (e.g., Chili's)
- Coffee, bakery, donut shops
- Gyms, yoga or pilate studios, indoor rec
- Entertainment
- *NOTE: All other commercial uses rated lower, including: financial and business services (56.2%); breweries, wineries, and bars (55.9%); hotels and other lodging (49.6%), and fast food restaurants (38.5%); however, these uses could still be pursued if appropriate*

Regarding the types of **office uses** that would be supported in Wilmington, these uses rated high (at least 60% or higher):

- Professional offices
- Healthcare
- Education
- Jobs and vocational skills training
- *NOTE: All other commercial uses rated lower, including: research and development (54.4%); coworking and shared work spaces (54.1%), and life sciences (48.5%); however, these uses could still be pursued if appropriate*

Regarding the types of **industrial uses** that would be supported in Wilmington, these uses rated high (at least 60% or higher):

- None of the industrial uses rated high
- *NOTE: While industrial uses like automotive (51.5%), data centers (46.3%), manufacturing (42.7%), warehousing/logistics (18.4%), and trucking (11.0%) rated low, these uses could still be pursued if appropriate, particularly in Wilmington's industrial growth areas along the Lorenzo Road, Arsenal Road, and Strip Mine Road corridors*

Regarding the types of **tourism opportunities** that would be supported in Wilmington, these uses rated high (at least 60% or higher):

- Antiquing
- Arts and culture
- History tour
- Historic Route 66
- River recreation
- Regional trails to downtown
- Scenic sites for special events

TRANSPORTATION

GENERAL SURVEY FINDINGS

Convenient access, safety, and a connected system of roads, paths, and trails are important parts of the transportation network. This is crucial to connect workers to jobs, students to school, and residents to businesses, services, civic uses, parks, and other amenities around town.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Regarding the transportation network elements that **need major improvements**, these elements rated high (at least 60% or higher):

- Roads
- Availability of bike paths and trails
- *NOTE: Other elements like existing sidewalks, ADA accessibility, and sidewalk and trail connections also rated high (above 45%)*

Regarding the factors that **discourage walking or biking more often**, these factors rated high (at least 60% or higher):

- Lack of sidewalks
- Lack of bike paths

63.2%

Respondents who are comfortable biking on low-traffic streets with low speeds

62.5%

Respondents who are comfortable biking on bikeways or trails separated from traffic

78.1%

Respondents who feel comfortable biking on Wilcat Court, which is the highest level of comfort on any road in Wilmington
Biking comfort was also relatively high (above 50%) on Kankakee Street, Joliet Street, and Kahler Road but low on all other major roads

73.0%

Respondents who viewed it important to expand transit options in Wilmington

Other key economic development findings:

47.8%

Respondents who work at home at some level

74.6%

Respondents who dine in or carry out from local restaurants 2 to 4 times per month

Majority

Of survey respondents seek shopping or services in other communities or online

COMMUNITY ASSETS

GENERAL SURVEY FINDINGS

A community’s assets range from city services, civic uses, and public utilities to schools, public safety, and community events. These advance the quality of life and vitality for current residents and businesses and help to attract new residents, businesses, and investment into the community.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Regarding **community facilities or services** in Wilmington, these aspects rated as being highly or slightly satisfactory (at least 50% or higher):

- Public library (87.5%)
- Schools (87.1%)
- Police and fire (86.7%)
- City services (55.9%)
- Internet service (51.5%)

• *NOTE: Aspects that were viewed as neutral or unsatisfactory (i.e., needing improvement) included: childcare, water and sewer utilities, stormwater management, and events and facilities for different age groups*

PARKS & OPEN SPACE

GENERAL SURVEY FINDINGS

Parks and open space provide the community with opportunities for active and passive recreation. In addition to the local park system, open spaces within and near the city offer a range of opportunities for residents. Your responses to this section will help inform strategies for both the Comprehensive City Plan and Master Parks Plan.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Key parks and open space findings:

62.7%

Respondents have children under age 18

74.5%

Respondents who visit a park in Wilmington at least once per month

54.4%

Respondents who visit a park, forest preserve, or other open space outside the city but near Wilmington at least once per month

87.6%

Respondents who find value in having a local parks system and dedicated park district (Wilmington Island Park District) to the overall quality of life in Wilmington

NOTE: A more in-depth summary of the parks and open space survey findings is provided in the 2024 Wilmington Parks Master Plan, which is a separate document and process conducted in conjunction with the Comprehensive City Plan.

SUSTAINABILITY

GENERAL SURVEY FINDINGS

Planning and design can advance sustainability and protect natural elements for present and future generations.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Key sustainability findings:

35.3%

Respondents who support infrastructure for electric vehicles

59.6%

Respondents who support infrastructure for wind energy

69.2%

Respondents who support infrastructure for solar energy

48.5%

Respondents who support infrastructure for geothermal energy

63.2%

Respondents who support infrastructure for hydropower

Regarding **efforts to advance sustainability** in Wilmington, these efforts rated as being important (at least 50% or higher):

- Open space preservation
- Agricultural land conservation
- River protection
- Stormwater management
- Water quality monitoring
- Water conservation
- Greenhouse gas reduction
- Tree planting and protection
- Local food production
- Composting
- Recycling and waste reduction

CHAPTER 3

COMMUNITY PROFILE

Located in the southwest section of Will County, Wilmington is a small city along the Kankakee River with strong potential for growth and development. Wilmington has superior regional access via I-55 and IL Route 53 within the fourth most populous county in Illinois and to a growing industrial market along the interstate. In addition, Wilmington encompasses a notable stretch of historic U.S. Route 66, which continues to serve as a pillar of the City's identity and local tourism.

The general planning area for Wilmington is defined as a 1½-mile radius around the City's current municipal boundary. Wilmington's planning area intersects with three neighboring municipalities: Symerton on the east and Braidwood and Diamond on the southwest. Other nearby municipalities include Elwood to the north and Channahon to the northwest.

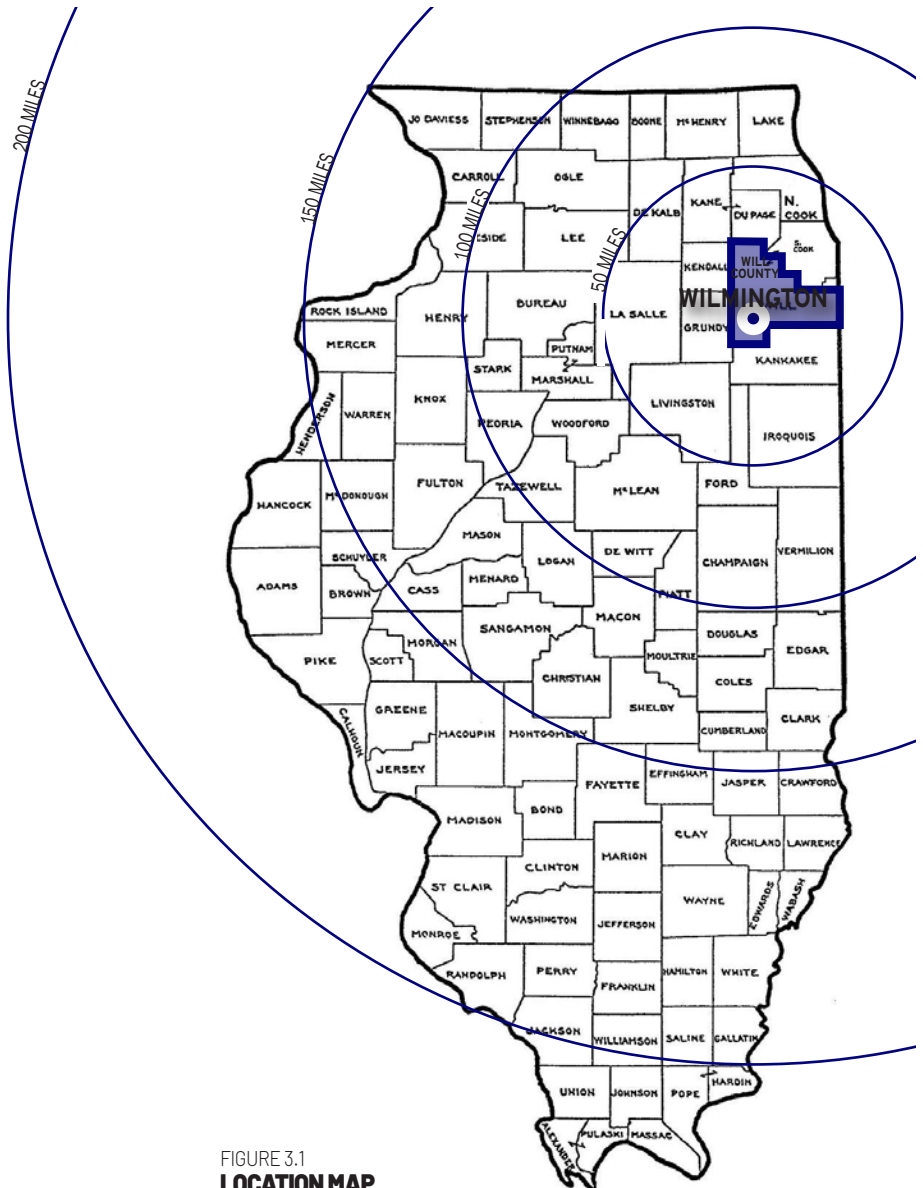


FIGURE 3.1
LOCATION MAP

WILMINGTON'S PAST CITY HISTORY

European settler Thomas Cox initially came to the land that eventually became the City of Wilmington around 1834. He purchased 400 acres of land, including the Island, two years later and sold subdivided parcels to create a village briefly called Winchester. Recognizing that there was another town in Illinois named Winchester, the village was renamed Wilmington in 1838. Other settlers included Henry Althouse, Henry and Elias Brown, A.J. McIntosh, and Peter Polly and Peter Stewart, whose home would later be recognized as the historic Stewart House. Established as a village in 1854, Wilmington was officially incorporated as a city in 1865.

Wilmington played an important role in the historic Underground Railroad, with properties like the Stewart House, the Exchange Hotel, and the McIntyre mansion being key safe houses along the secret route to freedom. The owners of these properties were among the many in Wilmington who actively aided in the local segments of the Underground Railroad.

Commerce and civic institutions established in Wilmington from the late 1830s through early 1900s, forming the historic core of Wilmington. The early settlers were primarily industrial in nature with a saw mill, grist mill, stone quarry, machinery and food production factories, and grain distribution to local farms. Strip mining began in the 1920s, with Wilmington producing some of the highest yield of coal across Illinois.

Wilmington once had a train depot that initially served stage coach before serving passenger rail by the 1850s and then switching to freight by the 1950s. The depot was demolished in 2012.

Operating on 40,000 acres of federal land, Joliet Arsenal operated from 1940 to the 1970s. As the arsenal was decommissioned, it made way for industrial parks and 20,000 acres devoted to the Midwin National Tallgrass Prairie.

Many of Wilmington's historical elements still make their mark today to preserve the City's storied history. From the downtown area and historic landmarks to its legacy of strong civic institutions like schools, churches, community organizations, and local media, Wilmington continues to honor its heritage as it continues to build to the future.

Source: Wilmington Public Library

DEMOGRAPHICS

The following insights about the community demographics that define Wilmington are taken from the market analysis conducted for the City as part of the planning process.

Wilmington Market Area

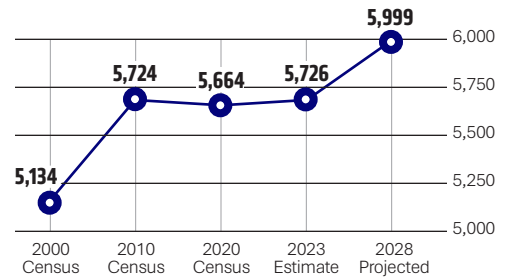
The larger Wilmington market area encompasses an area within a 15-minute drive, including Braidwood, Diamond, Coal City, Symerton, Elwood and portions of unincorporated Will County, as shown in the map in Figure 3.2. Its population is projected to grow by 0.5% over the next five years. Households grew by 3.7% since 2010 and are projected to increase by 2.5% by 2028.

Population

Wilmington's population, estimated at 5,700 in 2023, declined slightly since 2010, but is projected to increase by 4.8% to 6,000 over the next five years according to projections by demographic data vendor, Esri. Wilmington's population trends are illustrated in Figure 3.3.

FIGURE 3.3
POPULATION TRENDS
WILMINGTON & MARKET AREA

Source: Esri



TOTAL POPULATION IN WILMINGTON & MARKET AREA

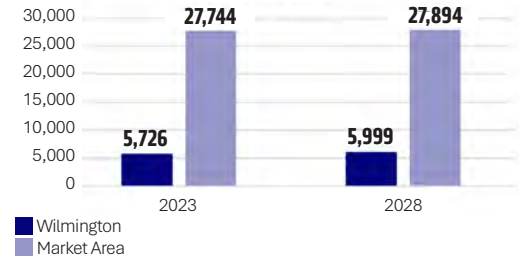
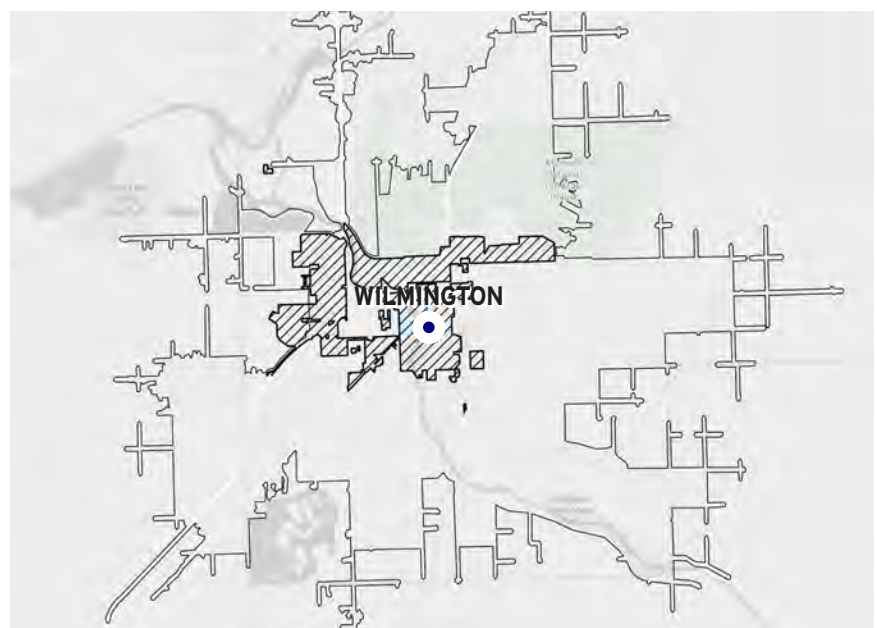


FIGURE 3.2
WILMINGTON MARKET AREA MAP

Source: Esri



Households

At the same time, the number of households increased by 2.5% between 2010 and 2023 to 2,300 and is projected to grow by another 6.6% or 153 by 2028, as shown in Figure 3.4. This will fuel the need for more housing.

About 30% of Wilmington's households are age 65+ now and their number is projected to increase by 15% or 100 over the next 5 years. The market area's senior share is slightly lower at 28%, but also is projected to increase significantly by almost 500. The largest increase in both the city and market area is projected in those age 75 and older.

The number of households under age 65 is projected to increase by 50 in Wilmington but decrease by almost 200 in the market area.

Consistent with an older-skewing population, Wilmington has a majority of households with 1-2 people (70%), and only 15% with 4 or more people.

Population by Age

Wilmington's population skews older with a median age of 42 years with 20% of residents age 65+. The market area has a slightly younger profile with 18% seniors. These population by age trends are provided in Figure 3.5.

FIGURE 3.5
POPULATION BY AGE
WILMINGTON & MARKET AREA
Source: Esri

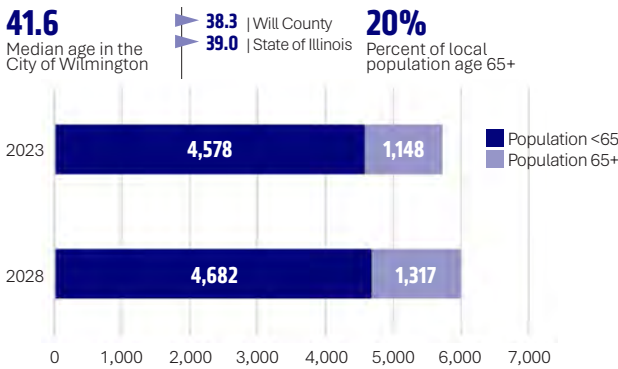
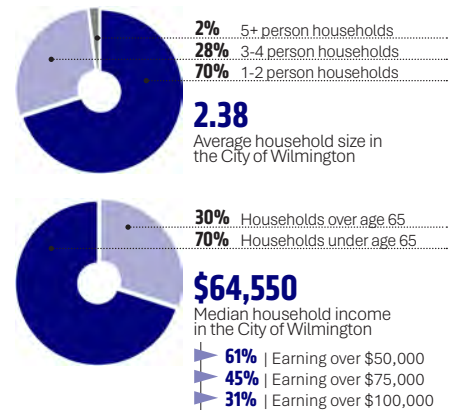
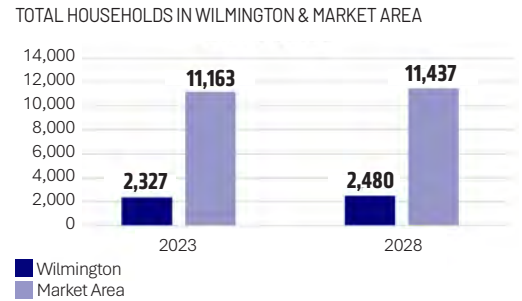


FIGURE 3.4
HOUSEHOLD TRENDS
WILMINGTON & MARKET AREA
Source: Esri



OVERVIEW LIVABILITY INDEX

AARP is increasingly becoming a leader in providing cities, towns, and neighborhoods with toolkits, analytical information, and other resources to guide them in planning for more livable communities with high quality of life for all ages and abilities. Many of these AARP resources are referenced in Chapter 6: Implementation to support recommended strategies.

One of these resources is AARP's Livability Index, which can be used to get a sense of overall conditions in a community, particularly how it compares to national conditions and other communities. Scores range from 0-100 with 50 being the median score nationwide.

As summarized below, Wilmington has an overall score of 50, which is at the national median (50) but slightly higher than the 2023 average city score (48). Wilmington scores at the median or higher in all categories except transportation, environment, and health. The strategies in this Comprehensive City Plan are able to help increase these lower than average scores and further strengthen the high than average scores for most the subject categories.

The Livability Index scores should generally be viewed as a baseline upon which the community can evaluate and enhance its own livability over time.



The AARP Livability Index scores neighborhoods and communities across the U.S. for the services and amenities that impact community members the most.

	Wilmington, Illinois	Braidwood, Illinois	Elwood, Illinois	Will County, Illinois
Overall Score	50	50	44	50
Housing	58	46	44	37
Neighborhood	52	49	47	57
Transportation	32	34	28	44
Environment	49	53	53	51
Health	44	44	47	47
Engagement	51	50	30	50
Opportunity	67	74	61	67

Income

The median household income in Wilmington is estimated at \$64,550, with almost 45% earning over \$75,000. The market area's median is 12% higher at \$72,400, with 49% earning over \$75,000. Over the next five years, the median income is projected to increase by 15% in Wilmington to \$74,300 and by 12% in the market area to \$81,400.

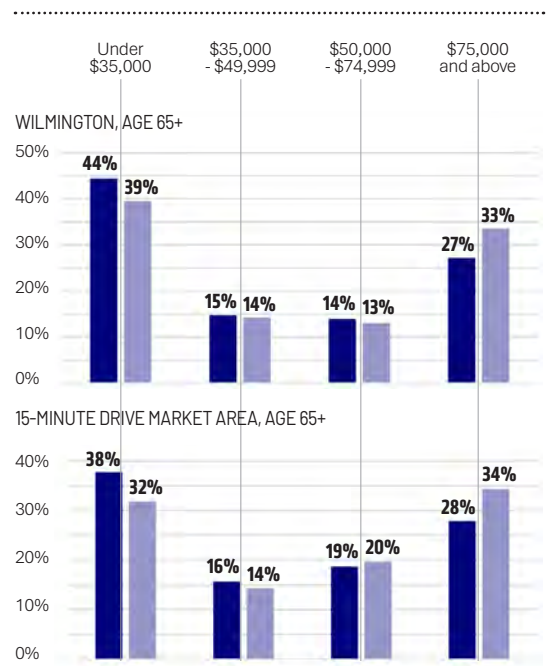
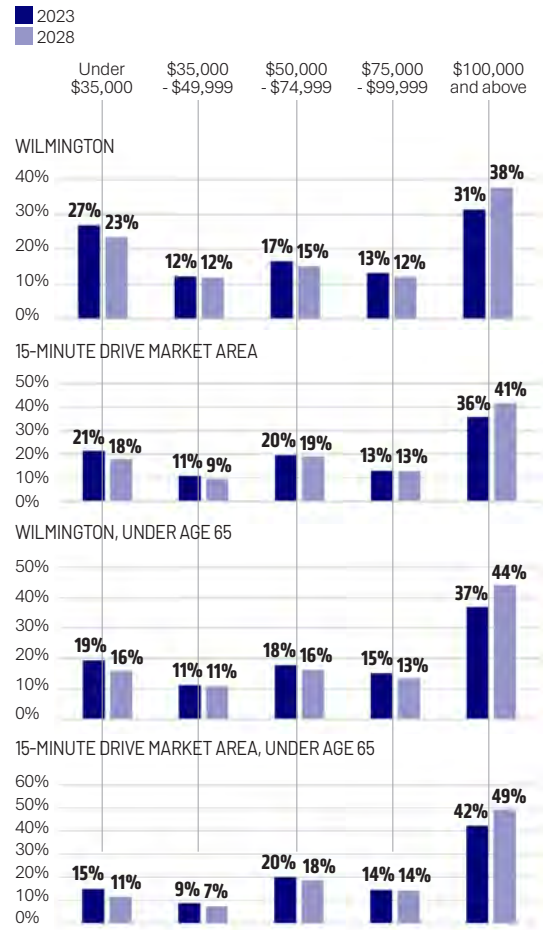
Over half (52%) of Wilmington's households under age 65 have incomes over \$75,000, while 30% have incomes less than \$50,000. Some of these households are living in low-income family housing. 56% of those under age 65 in the market area have incomes over \$75,000, while 24% earn less than \$50,000. Over the next five years, the number under 65 with incomes \$75,000 and over is projected to increase by 118 in Wilmington and 384 in the market area.

About 27% of Wilmington's households over 65 have incomes over \$75,000, and 41% have incomes over \$50,000. However, almost 60% have incomes less than \$50,000. The number with incomes \$50,000 and over is projected to increase by 86, while the number with low incomes is projected to remain virtually unchanged. In the market area, 28% of households over 65 have incomes over \$75,000 and 47% have incomes over \$50,000. The number with incomes \$50,000 and over is projected to increase by almost 500. Some of the households with incomes less than \$50,000 are living in low-income senior housing in Wilmington, Braidwood and Coal City. Generally, those with incomes over \$50,000 can afford market-rate apartments and houses.

The various charts in [Figure 3.6](#) summarize these income trends in Wilmington and market area.

FIGURE 3.6
HOUSEHOLD INCOME DISTRIBUTION TRENDS
WILMINGTON & MARKET AREA

Source: Esri



Employment Base

According to data from Esri, Wilmington has 255 businesses with 3,030 employees as of 2023. The largest employment sectors are retail trade (27%), health care and social assistance (13%), educational services (11%), and accommodation and food services (10%). Manufacturing, wholesale trade, and transportation and warehousing combined account for 13% of the total.

While not in Will County, the approved Gotion electric vehicle battery factory in Manteno (approximately 20 miles away) will have over 2,600 jobs. Some employees could be attracted to housing in Wilmington.

In addition, plans seem to be moving ahead with the South Suburban Airport in Peotone (28 miles away) for cargo, which would also add 15,000 jobs to south Will County in the longer term.

Residents of Wilmington are primarily employed in manufacturing and transportation/warehousing (18%), health care and social assistance (13%), retail trade (12%), construction (9%), and educational services (8%).

About 34% of Wilmington residents work in Wilmington and nearby communities, including Joliet, with 8% in Chicago. 35% of those employed in Wilmington live in the city and nearby communities.

FIGURE 3.7
WILMINGTON BUSINESS SUMMARY

Source: Esri

- 53 Retail trade
- 23 Food services
- 45 Real estate, finance, professional services
- 44 Other services, including auto repair
- 16 Health care
- 11 Construction
- 4 Manufacturing and wholesale trade
- 4 Transportation and warehousing

Industry (NAICS)	Number	Percent
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	0	0.0%
Mining	0	0.0%
Utilities	1	0.4%
Construction	11	4.3%
Manufacturing	3	1.2%
Wholesale Trade	5	2.0%
Retail Trade	53	20.8%
Transportation & Warehousing	6	2.4%
Information	4	1.6%
Finance & Insurance	14	5.5%
Real Estate, Rental & Leasing	10	3.9%
Professional, Scientific & Tech Services	21	8.2%
Management of Companies & Enterprises	0	0.0%
Administrative, Support & Waste Management Services	7	2.7%
Educational Services	8	3.1%
Health Care & Social Assistance	16	6.3%
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	6	2.4%
Accommodation & Food Services	25	9.8%
Other Services (except Public Administration)	44	17.3%
Public Administration	17	6.7%
Unclassified Establishments	4	1.6%
Total	255	100.0%

FIGURE 3.8
WILMINGTON EMPLOYMENT BASE

Source: Esri

MAJOR EMPLOYMENT SECTORS IN WILMINGTON

- 20% Retail
- 13% Other services, except public administration
- 12% Transportation and warehousing
- 11% Admin, support, waste management services
- 8% Education
- 8% Accommodations and food services

MAJOR EMPLOYMENT SECTORS OF WILMINGTON

- 13% Health care and social assistance
- 12% Retail trade
- 10% Manufacturing
- 9% Transportation and warehousing
- 8% Educational services

WHERE EMPLOYEES COME FROM OR GO FOR WORK

Where Wilmington Employees Live

- 15% Wilmington
- 10% Braidwood*
- 4% Joliet
- 4% Chicago

* Includes Coal City and Diamond



Where Wilmington Residents Work

- Wilmington 12%
- Other Areas 12%
- Joliet 11%
- Chicago 8%

8.6%

Increase in employment in Wilmington from 2021 to 2022

EXISTING LAND USE

Wilmington has primarily developed as a single family residential community with a historic downtown, riverfront access, a few commercial corridors, an evolving industrial base with interstate access, a strong network of civic institutions and parks, and extensive open spaces and nature preserves around the city.

As shown on the Existing Land Use Map in [Figure 3.9](#), Wilmington's existing land use composition provides a solid foundation to plan for future growth, development, and preservation. The map shows existing land use within the City's 1½-mile planning area.

The extensive network of open spaces and nature preserves around the community make up a majority of existing land use (60.9%), providing residents and visitors with natural green space, recreational opportunities, and a green buffer around the City to help prevent sprawl from neighboring communities.

Agricultural uses, which comprise the second highest amount of existing land use (21.0%), add to this green buffer and contribute to the economy with operating farms. In addition to vacant parcels (5.4%), some of the agricultural land provide opportunities for future growth and development.

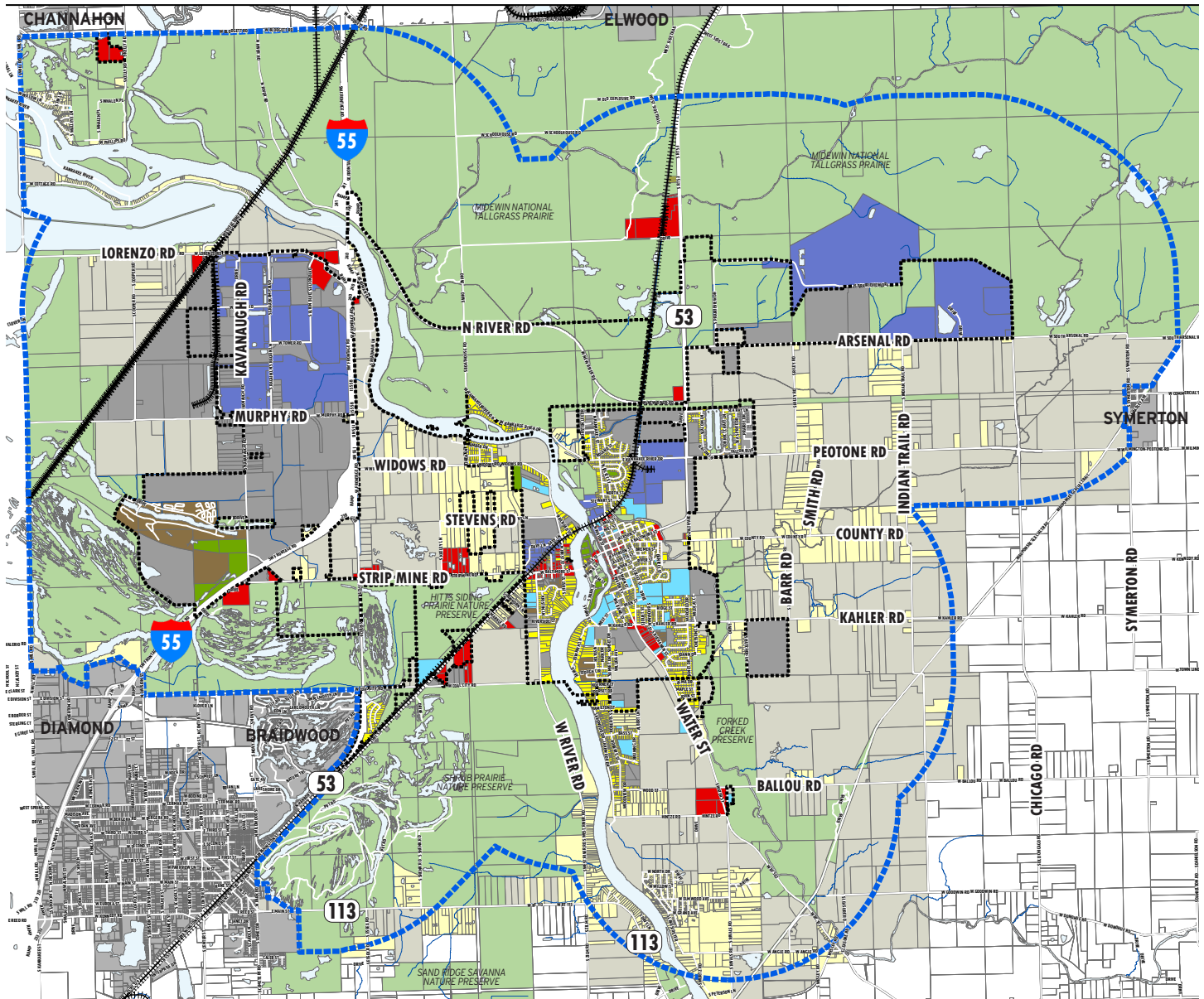
Residential uses encompass 7.9% of existing land use, with estate residential and single family residential making up a majority of the housing (7.2%). Two family residential and mutli family residential represent the rest at 0.7%, which help to diversify Wilmington's housing stock with duplexes, apartments, housing for older adults, and other options.

Commercial uses making up only 0.8%, with most of that centering around the downtown area and along IL Route 53 and Water Street. Access to I-55 and the growing industrial areas create opportunities to expand Wilmington's commercial base.

Industrial uses currently make up 3.4% of existing land use. This number is anticipated to increase as Wilmington's industrial areas continue to build up along Lorenzo Road, Arsenal Road, and Strip Mine Road.

Public/institutional uses comprise 0.4% of current land use, which includes schools, churches, cemeteries, government, and other civic uses. Parks and recreation make up 0.2%, which includes six parks and other recreational facilities.

FIGURE 3.9
EXISTING LAND USE MAP



LEGEND

- 5.6% Estate Residential
- 1.6% Single Family Residential
- 0.1% Two Family Residential
- 0.6% Multi Family Residential
- 0.8% Commercial
- 0.0% Light Industrial/Office/Research
- 3.4% Heavy Industrial/Manufacturing/Logistics
- 0.4% Public/Institutional
- 0.2% Parks and Recreation
- 60.9% Open Space
- 21.0% Agricultural
- 5.4% Vacant
- Municipal Boundary
- 1/2-Mile Planning Boundary

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CHAPTER 4

POLICY FRAMEWORK

The vision statement, goals, and objectives provided in this chapter form the policy framework intended to guide future growth, development, and preservation in Wilmington. Community input from the community survey, the project’s Steering Committee, and City officials helped shape the vision statement, goals, and objectives, particularly defining what the community aspires to be.

As the policy framework graphic on the right illustrates, the goals are achievable outcomes that advance the vision, while the objectives are measurable steps to achieve each of the goals. The objectives also serve as the foundation for the Implementation Plan in Chapter 6, which outlines strategies and projects that the City and its partners can undertake to achieve the vision.

The Implementation Plan activates the Wilmington Comprehensive City Plan, turning it into an actionable document that the City can build around and follow as a community blueprint for years to come.



VISION STATEMENT

Wilmington is a proud community that maintains its small town character while managing sustainable development that balances economic growth and high quality of life for its residents and businesses. The needs of the community are well met by maintaining a diverse housing stock, creating jobs for the local and regional workforce, encouraging innovation and entrepreneurship, providing spaces for recreation and civic engagement, offering a strong school system, preserving productive agricultural land, conserving natural resources, and making the community safe and accessible for all ages and abilities. Wilmington preserves its heritage through its historic downtown, place on Route 66, and strong community spirit.

POLICY FRAMEWORK

Goals and objectives are summarized in this chapter. Strategies for each objective are provided in Chapter 6: Implementation.

GOAL

An achievable outcome that supports a common vision.

» **OBJECTIVE**

A specific, measurable step to achieve a goal.

» **STRATEGY**

A project or action to meet the objective.

POLICY FRAMEWORK

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

GOAL 1 COMMUNITY GROWTH & PRESERVATION

Wilmington will take a managed approach to control growth and ensure development provides a balanced mix of land uses that enhance the community's quality of life and preserve its small town character.

OBJECTIVES

1. Invest in downtown to strengthen its place as the center of the community.
2. Provide for a balanced mix of uses that meet the diverse needs of residents, businesses, and workers.
3. Work with local farmers and the agricultural industry in the region to preserve productive farmland and enhance Wilmington's natural green buffers.
4. Coordinate local land use planning with regional development.
5. Ensure municipal codes and ordinances are consistent with the Comprehensive City Plan.
6. Preserve and honor Wilmington's historic sites and buildings.
7. Establish policies and guidelines to advance high quality development and city beautification.

GOAL 2 HOUSING

Wilmington will provide a diverse housing stock that protects community character, fosters city growth, enables people to age in place, and meets the different needs and incomes of all residents.

OBJECTIVES

1. Diversify the housing stock that meets the varying needs, incomes, and life stages.
2. Balance the maintenance of existing neighborhoods with new residential development.
3. Provide support to homeowners to maintain and improve their properties.
4. Pursue housing options for a growing senior population, including assisted living.
5. Modernize the housing stock by adding new or renovated owner- and renter-occupied units.
6. Remove barriers to affordable housing, including workforce and senior housing.
7. Encourage housing in or near downtown and Water Street to support businesses.
8. Evaluate effective steps to build up the market demand for new housing development.

GOAL 3 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Wilmington will advance local economic growth by capturing its share of regional development, supporting existing businesses and industries, and strengthening local draws that boost tourism.

OBJECTIVES

1. Evaluate steps to build up market demand for new retail and office uses.
2. Create a Visit Downtown Wilmington campaign to support local businesses, boost tourism, and coordinate programming with historic Route 66.
3. Integrate outdoor recreation as part of efforts to increase commercial growth and tourism.
4. Promote programs and policies that facilitate business growth.
5. Pursue industrial and commercial growth along the Lorenzo Road and Arsenal Road corridors.
6. Coordinate with current and future industrial businesses to pursue local workforce training facilities.
7. Pursue grants to support brownfield remediation that make sites available for redevelopment.
8. Continue to monitor regional development¹ that could generate jobs, spinoff enterprises, and housing opportunities for workers.
9. Encourage renovation and rehabilitation of buildings downtown and along Water Street and IL Route 53 for modern retail, commercial, and residential uses.

GOAL 4 TRANSPORTATION

Wilmington will be a well-connected community providing safe access and inclusive mobility for users of all ages, abilities, and transportation choices, while supporting an evolving economy.

OBJECTIVES

1. Evaluate and complete roadway improvements that provide for safe and efficient traffic flow.
2. Pursue truck traffic solutions in response to continued industrial growth.
3. Enhance connectivity by advancing an interconnected network of sidewalks, trails, and other pathways that provide safe access and mobility for people of all ages, abilities, and modes of transport.
4. Coordinate with local partners to connect with regional trails, including potential options to enhance access and trail usage along the Kankakee River and other local greenways.
5. Coordinate with local employers to consider van pools and shuttles that connect to regional transit.
6. Continue to monitor regional transportation projects relating to highways, transit, and the planned South Suburban Airport.

¹ Regional development includes the planned South Suburban Airport and projects in other communities with regional impact.

POLICY FRAMEWORK

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

GOAL 5 INFRASTRUCTURE

Wilmington will ensure utilities and other infrastructure efficiently meet the needs of the residents, businesses, and property owners, with potential for expansion to adapt to growth and developments.

OBJECTIVES

1. Coordinate the service levels and capacities of municipal water, sewer, and stormwater utilities infrastructure with community growth and development.
2. Assess ways to increase the efficiency and cost effectiveness of providing utilities infrastructure.
3. Monitor the tele-communications needs of local homes, businesses, schools, and others who rely on stable, high-speed internet and web-based connectivity.
4. Leverage TIF funding and other economic development incentives to support improvements to utilities, roadways, and other infrastructure.

GOAL 6 COMMUNITY FACILITIES & ASSETS

Wilmington will provide the community with safe and equitable access to high quality educational, recreational, and civic facilities and opportunities that meet local needs and interests.

OBJECTIVES

1. Coordinate community growth and development with the school district to properly plan for improvements or expansion of school facilities.
2. Continue to provide top level community safety through coordination with local police, fire, and emergency services.
3. Monitor the programs and services offered by local government and civic uses to properly plan for improvements or expansion.
4. Ensure the local park system offers safe facilities that are accessible to all ages and abilities and meet the recreational needs and interests of the community.
5. Coordinate the provision and upkeep of open space and recreational facilities with the Will County Forest Preserve and other third party providers.
6. Expand opportunities to support arts and culture in the community.

GOAL 7 SUSTAINABILITY

Wilmington will pursue initiatives that protect the Kankakee River, preserve natural resources, and advance sustainability practices that ensure current and future generations are able to experience and enjoy the natural environment.

OBJECTIVES

1. Establish a local river advocacy group to coordinate efforts regarding waterway protection, natural habitat conservation, educational programming, and recreational potential of the Kankakee River.
2. Adapt stormwater best practices to Wilmington to effectively protect the built and natural environment, particularly along the Kankakee River.
3. Work with providers of alternative energy sources to build up local resources in a way that is compatible with city and county policies, advances more sustainable development practices, and enhances the local economy.
4. Encourage electric vehicle infrastructure as part of parking improvements and new development.
5. Maintain and enhance the City's tree cover for ecological and city beautification purposes.
6. Create a Green Wilmington program that promotes recycling, energy efficient buildings, and other programs that support sustainability.

GOAL 8 COMMUNITY SPIRIT

Wilmington will elevate its strong community spirit and civic pride by creating spaces and opportunities for social interaction, community activities, and civic engagement for families and people of all ages and abilities.

OBJECTIVES

1. Ensure new developments include common spaces for social, educational, and recreational opportunities.
2. Continue to coordinate public outreach efforts between the City, school district, park district, library, and other organizations to engage the community through local events, newsletters, and social media.
3. Continue to advance opportunities to cultivate youth leadership.
4. Identify ways for local businesses to engage and give back to the community.

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CHAPTER 5

CITY PLAN

The City Plan is the core element of this entire document, as it represents a series of recommendations regarding a range of physical planning topics that impact the quality of life, character, and livability of Wilmington. The physical planning topics covered in this chapter include:

- Future Land Use
- Residential Development
- Commercial Development
- Office Development
- Industrial Development
- Transportation
- Infrastructure
- Community Facilities and Assets
- Natural Resources

These physical planning topics influence the entire community, the downtown area, and potential growth areas along Wilmington's five corridor subareas (IL Route 53, Strip Mine Road, Water Street, Lorenzo Road, and Arsenal Road). The recommendations provided in this chapter are further supported by strategies outlined in the Implementation Plan in Chapter 6, which support the goals and objectives provided in the Policy Framework in Chapter 4.



LAND USE VS. ZONING

It is important to note that the Future Land Use Plan is not a zoning map. Zoning regulates specific aspects of development, such as yard dimensions and building height, in addition to the location of certain types of uses within districts. Thus, zoning is a useful tool for protecting the use of property and community character, even if the zoning map does not exactly align with the land use map.

On the other hand, the Future Land Use Plan is intended to guide where certain types of development are to be located and is not intended to restrict the use of land. A land use plan indicates, in a general manner, the location of current and future uses of land for various types of development. It is meant to be a guide for establishing more finely-tuned regulations such as zoning and to guide decision making which may involve public or private investment in property development.

The degree to which a zoning map will conform to a land use map depends on two factors: (1) how finely-tuned the land use map is in terms of dividing land uses into those which conform to districts, and (2) how often the zoning map is amended. Once the updated Comprehensive Plan is approved by city officials, one of the first follow-up tasks is typically to update the city's zoning regulations and map to ensure they align with the land use and development policies outlined in the plan.

Typically, a land use map is changed much less frequently than a zoning map because it is intended to encompass a longer time frame, embody a broad community vision, and provide a more general guide for town growth and development.

OVERVIEW

LAND USE PLAN

The Future Land Use Plan considers a balanced mix of uses for Wilmington, as described below and illustrated in the map in [Figure 5.2](#). These broad land use categories are further defined by the development typologies on [pages X-Y](#).

RESIDENTIAL

Residential uses include a range of housing types to provide residents with options that meet varying needs, budgets, and life stages. Wilmington's housing stock provides a mix of options, including single family detached houses, duplexes, condominiums, apartments, and housing for older adults. Different residential typologies are summarized on the following pages to highlight diverse housing types that may be appropriate to further expand the local housing stock.



COMMERCIAL

Commercial uses provide retail goods and services with stores, restaurants, and businesses that serve the needs of residents and the daytime population generated by workers at local offices, industrial sites, and other employment generators. Commercial uses are primarily located along major roadways. Various commercial typologies are summarized on the following pages to show potential businesses and services that may be suitable to boost commerce in Wilmington.



EMPLOYMENT GENERATORS

Employment uses provide job opportunities for local residents, workers, and job seekers from around the region. Wilmington will continue to provide a range of employment generating uses, including offices, retail and service-oriented businesses, and a growing industrial/manufacturing/logistics base. Different employment generating typologies are summarized on the following pages to illustrate how Wilmington can not only expand its current industrial base but also supplement it with commercial uses that are increasingly becoming suitable in industrial areas. These emerging uses also help to reimagine how industrial areas are perceived and outfitted with different uses to serve different needs and purposes in the community.



COMMUNITY FACILITIES & ASSETS

These elements provide for a range of public and institutional uses like schools, religious institutions, and municipal facilities that provide services, programs, and opportunities that support day-to-day civic life in Wilmington. Other community assets include parks, recreational facilities, open space, and environmental features that help enhance the city's character and protect natural resources. Open spaces in particular are a critical asset in and around Wilmington, providing a range of opportunities and serving as a natural green buffer around much of the city.



FUTURE LAND USE PLAN

The Future Land Use Plan positions Wilmington to provide a balanced mix of housing choices, strengthen existing businesses, expand the industrial base, and attract new development that is compatible with the community. As the City considers new development and redevelopment opportunities, it is important to maintain the community's expectations to retain its small town character and preserve a high quality of life while adding to the housing stock, strengthening the local economy, and competitively positioning Wilmington in the region's industrial market.

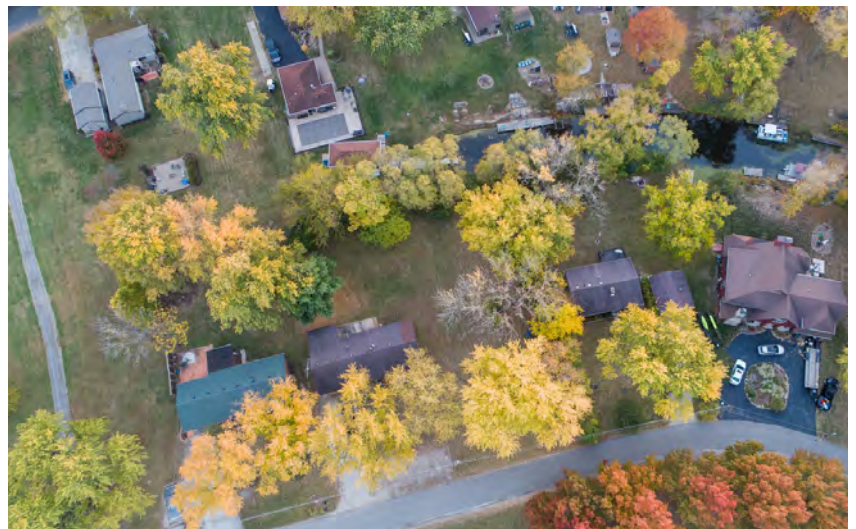
In addition, the Future Land Use Plan provides a measured response to local, regional, and national changes in residential, commercial, office, and industrial development, particularly in the past few years coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic. The intent is to bring stability to the housing, commercial, and industrial markets in Wilmington, as well as introduce new options into the marketplace to enhance the community's appeal, diversify the local economy, and differentiate Wilmington from the region. New uses that build upon Wilmington's assets and open up new opportunities for recreation, entertainment, and civic engagement will also enhance the community's vitality for residents, workers, and visitors.

While vacant and undeveloped land provide options for new development, redevelopment options could entail reimagining of underutilized properties that attract new uses and development concepts, which are described in the development typologies on [pages 38-57](#).

Development Patterns

Historically, Wilmington's development pattern was influenced by the Kankakee River and railroad. The downtown area and surrounding residential core all built up east of the river and south of the railroad, which is evident by the traditional grid street network. Residential growth extended north of the railroad and south towards and beyond Kahler Street, which is where the community's main school campus is located with three of the four local schools. Beyond the downtown area, commercial development has primarily located along major roadways, including IL Route 53 and Water Street.

While the City is strategically located along a major interstate with two interchanges, I-55 was built in 1956, which was over a century after Wilmington's initial establishment in 1836 and incorporation in 1854. The interstate has more recently started to impact local development patterns with the gradual buildout of the Elion 55 Logistics Industrial Park west of the interstate along Lorenzo Road.



The Future Land Use Plan accounts for this opportunity to expand industrial growth around the Lorenzo Road corridor to take advantage of the regional industrial market that defines this stretch of I-55.

Growth Areas

In addition to defining the physical layout of the community, Wilmington's development patterns lay the foundation for future growth areas. The Lorenzo Road corridor is one of two industrial growth areas, with the Arsenal Road corridor being the other. Strip Mine Road serves as another growth area, particularly with its strategic location off of one of the two I-55 interchanges. Residential growth areas generally emanate from existing neighborhoods, particularly extending to Wilmington's eastern and southern areas.

Many of these growth areas are described in more detail as part of the five corridor subarea plans, which are provided on [pages 27-37](#).

Future Land Use Plan Map

The map in [Figure 5.2](#) provides the Future Land Use Plan Map for Wilmington. A Future Land Use Plan Map typically exhibits land use designations for land within a planning area defined by a 1½-mile boundary around a community's current municipal limits. Wilmington's 1½-mile planning area is truncated in certain parts to account for municipalities located within this area: Symerton to the east and Braidwood and Diamond to the southwest.



Given the overlap in planning areas, the sidebar below describing annexations encourages Wilmington to coordinate with neighboring municipalities to establish or renew boundary agreements to establish a mutual understanding for future annexations and development.

In addition, new public uses like parks and schools are not specifically shown on the Future Land Use Plan, unless certain land is specifically earmarked for future park or school sites by any of the local park or school districts, respectively, serving Wilmington.

It is also important to understand the generalized nature of the map. Given the scale at which municipal comprehensive planning occurs, only broad areas of land use are indicated. Certain exceptions may be appropriate for specific parcels of land. For example, a small home-based office or business in a residential neighborhood may be permitted even though the Future Land Use Plan does not strictly indicate a commercial use in the neighborhood. Such exceptions should be addressed on a case-by-case basis in accordance with the City's Zoning Code.

Impact on City Planning

From a long range planning perspective, the Future Land Use Plan Map illustrates Wilmington's growth capacity. The map also serves as a blueprint for land use planning that city officials can use as a guide when reviewing proposed developments. The layout of the Future Land Use Plan Map is also influenced by the potential for the city to extend public utilities and other infrastructure to new development, including unincorporated land that may be considered for future annexation.

ANNEXATIONS

Wilmington's 1½-mile planning area includes multiple sections of land that is currently unincorporated. Some of the unincorporated land is developed, such as the Lakewood Shores neighborhood south of town along the eastern bank of the Kankakee River. However, much of the unincorporated land is either vacant, undeveloped, or agricultural in nature. Regardless of the current development state of unincorporated land, all hold potential for annexation into Wilmington.

As the City assesses opportunities for potential annexations, it should consider the possible impacts on aspects like utilities, school enrollments, park space, and the tax base, where applicable. Annexed properties should also be evaluated on the basis of how they may enhance the character of Wilmington.

Wilmington should confer with neighboring municipalities to ensure boundary agreements are honored and/or updated if necessary. These municipalities include Elwood to the north, Symerton to the east, and Braidwood and Diamond to the southwest.



Population Projections

The future trajectory of Wilmington’s population is generally dependent on key indicators like past population trends, development patterns, housing market conditions, and the economy. The Future Land Use Plan can also contribute to the projection of Wilmington’s capacity for future growth, particularly as each new residential development incrementally adds new housing units and increases the City’s population as it progresses towards full buildout of the plan.

Based on full buildout of the residential areas depicted on the Future Land Use Plan Map, the total population of Wilmington could increase from its current population of 5,726 residents to 44,724 residents. This value could be higher or lower, particularly depending on the actual number of housing units that are ultimately added by the four residential land use designations (Estate, Single Family, Two Family, and Multi Family Residential).

As shown in the bar charts in **Figure 5.1**, this full buildout population is compared to Wilmington’s historic population growth since 1930, as well as alternate population projections to the year 2050 based on different growth rates and population projections from the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP).

In particular, the various growth rates simulate past growth that Wilmington has experienced over certain ten-year periods in the past:

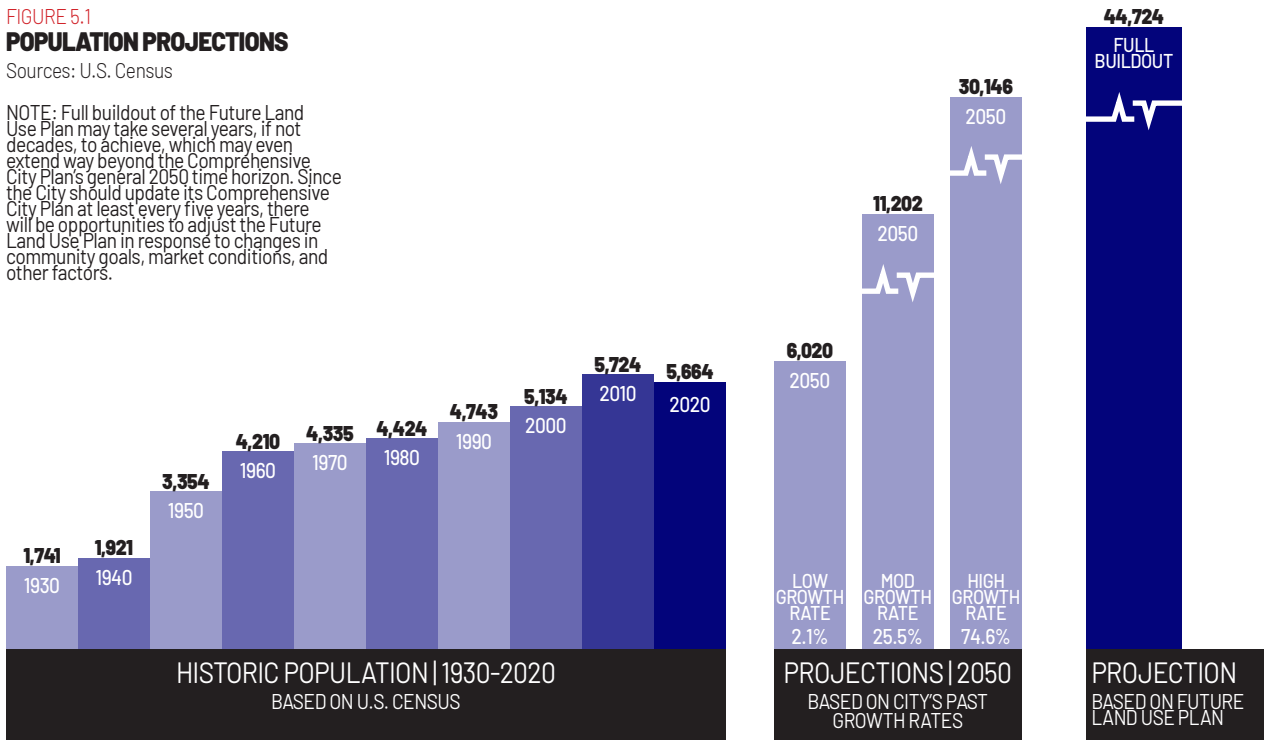
- **2.1%** Low Growth Rate [experienced in 1970-1980]
- **25.5%** Moderate Growth Rate [experienced in 1950-1960]
- **74.6%** High Growth Rate [experienced in 1940-1950]

As the bar charts illustrate, Wilmington has a wide range of potential outcomes for how its population will grow over time.

FIGURE 5.1
POPULATION PROJECTIONS

Sources: U.S. Census

NOTE: Full buildout of the Future Land Use Plan may take several years, if not decades, to achieve, which may even extend way beyond the Comprehensive City Plan’s general 2050 time horizon. Since the City should update its Comprehensive City Plan at least every five years, there will be opportunities to adjust the Future Land Use Plan in response to changes in community goals, market conditions, and other factors.



At one extreme, the City’s highest growth rate since 1930 of 74.6% would yield about 30,146 residents by 2050. This projection of 30,146 residents would still be lower than the 44,724 residents in the scenario that the Future Land Use Plan reaches full buildout, which may take several decades to achieve, even beyond the plan’s 2050 time horizon.

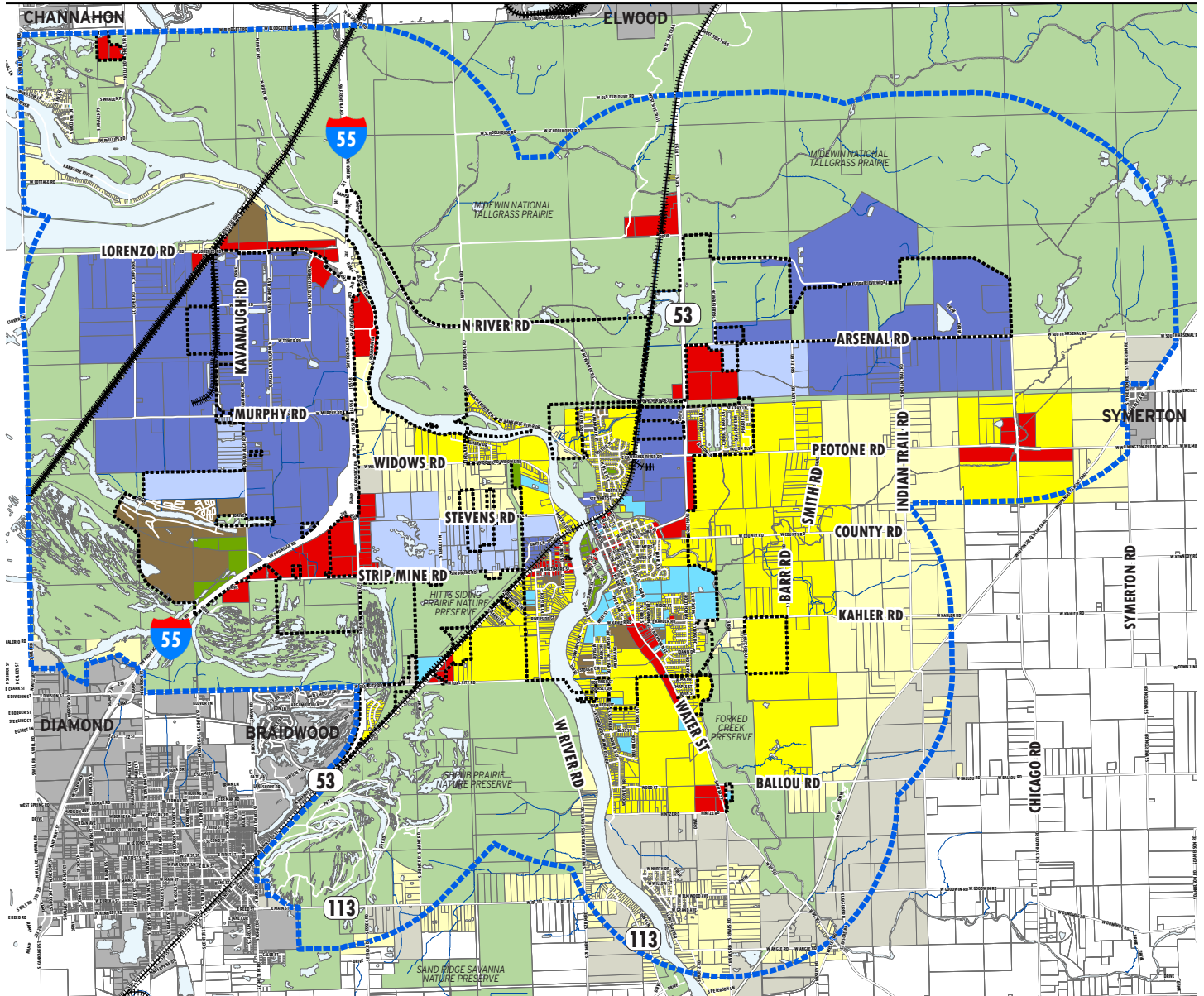
It is a challenge to pinpoint exactly how much the population will change over the long term. While the true outcome typically lies somewhere in the middle, the range of projections provides the city with an array of scenarios around which city officials can plan and allocate resources to ensure manageable growth and sustainable development.

The new residential uses shown on the Future Land Use Plan Map are meant to guide where the City believes development is most appropriate, even if such development doesn’t actually materialize as illustrated (or at all). The plan provides the City with greater guidance to communicate appropriate locations for future development as developers and property owners propose plans.

Population projections serve as a basis for determining the potential allocation of land, funds, and other resources to establish new schools, parks, and recreation areas, as well as expand trail systems, fire and police protection, and water and sewer utilities.

¹ These rates are approximate and meant for illustrative purposes only. It is also important to note that Wilmington experienced a slight population decrease from 2010-2020 (-1.0%). This negative rate is not considered since this population project analysis generally anticipates the population to either grow or remain steady (not decline).

FIGURE 5.2
FUTURE LAND USE PLAN MAP



LEGEND

- 9.4% Estate Residential
- 8.8% Single Family Residential
- 0.1% Two Family Residential
- 1.2% Multi Family Residential
- 2.0% Commercial
- 1.9% Light Industrial/Office/Research
- 9.8% Heavy Industrial/Manufacturing/Logistics
- 0.6% Public/Institutional
- 0.2% Parks and Recreation
- 61.1% Open Space
- 5.3% Agricultural
- Municipal Boundary
- 1/2-Mile Planning Boundary

DOWNTOWN WILMINGTON

Located east of the Kankakee River and at the heart of the community, Downtown Wilmington is a distinct area and one of the City's crown jewels in terms of its collection of assets and opportunities that make it an inviting place for residents, businesses, visitors, and future investment. In 2018 the City adopted the **Wilmington Downtown Plan** establishing a vision for the future of Wilmington's central business district. As a guide for elected officials, municipal staff, community residents, business owners, and potential investors, the Wilmington Downtown Plan provides them with a long-range framework for making informed decisions about future downtown development and reinvestment.

Since this plan is already in place to guide downtown planning, a separate subarea plan for Downtown Wilmington is not included in this Comprehensive City Plan in the same manner that five corridor subarea plans are provided for Wilmington's five primary corridors representing future growth areas (see [pages 27-37](#)). Instead, this page summarizes the key recommendations from the Downtown Wilmington Plan to ensure they are taken into consideration as part of land use planning and development review in conjunction with all other elements of the Comprehensive City Plan.

The Downtown Wilmington Plan should be consulted as needed for complete details and background information regarding the summary of recommendations on this page. Many of the recommendations below are also plugged into the Implementation Plan in Chapter 6.



DOWNTOWN PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

Land Use & Development:

- Support a range of uses along main corridors
- Evaluate the potential for a riverwalk along the millrace
- Focus redevelopment in key areas
- Improve aesthetics and uniformity along main corridors
- Update zoning ordinance

Image & Streetscape:

- Establish a public plaza along North Water Street
- Enhance street appeal
- Enhance commercial area appearance
- Increase visibility of the downtown
- Strengthen historic preservation

Local Economy:

- Establish a Business District
- Diversify the business mix
- Establish an interior build-out program
- Locate more institutional anchors in the downtown core
- Support and expand tourism

Transportation & Mobility:

- Address effects of regional freight traffic on the local community
- Improve key pedestrian crossings
- Strengthen local bicycle facilities
- Develop a parking management strategy

Natural Resources:

- Establish a plan for the long-term future of Wilmington Dam
- Replace the millrace dam with stone riffles
- Install a boat launch and canoe portage
- Stabilize the island's shoreline using native vegetation
- Consolidate and formalize parking
- Leverage the riverwalk project to enhance natural systems
- Increase the use of green infrastructure
- Update stream and wetland protection standards
- Move the City's emergency groundwater well to higher ground

CORRIDOR SUBAREA PLANS

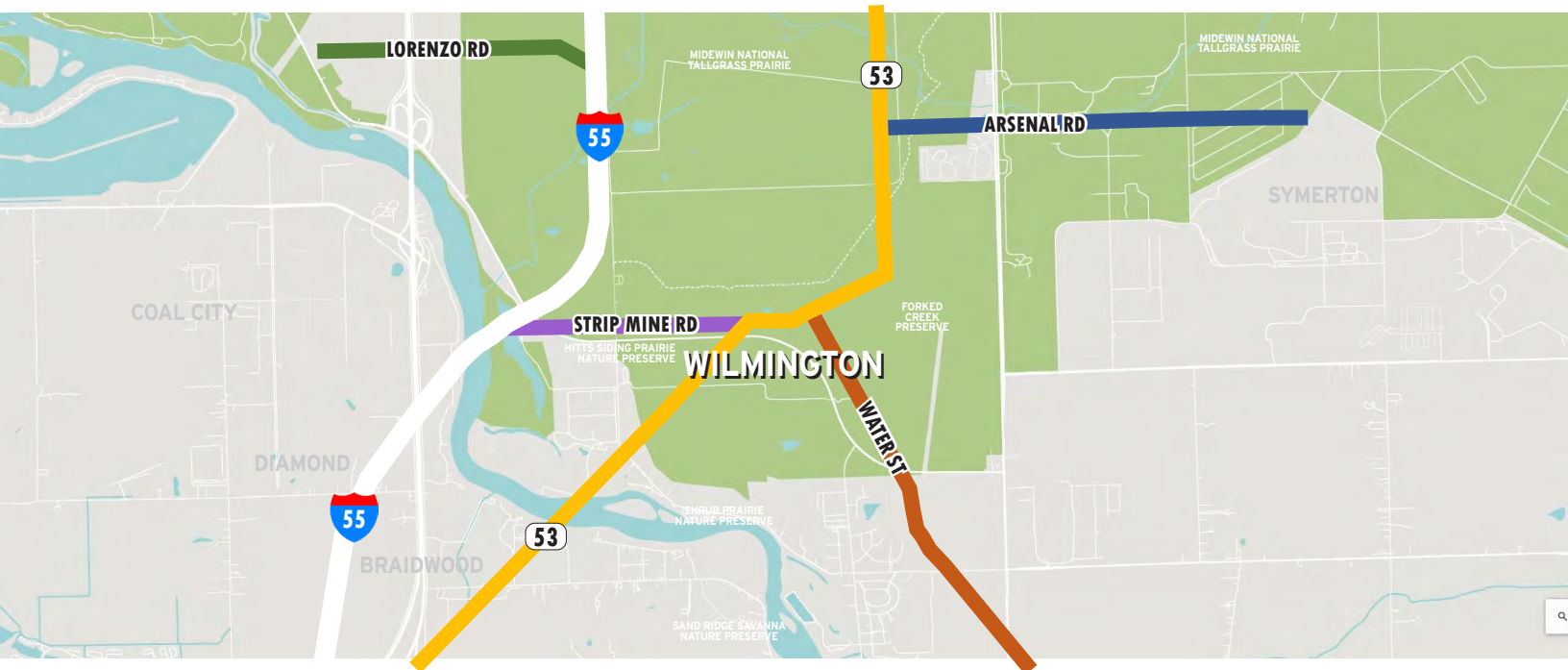
The Future Land Use Plan Map in [Figure 5.2](#) provides an overall depiction of the proposed land use composition for Wilmington's 1½-mile planning area. This map illustrates the stability of the City's existing land uses, particularly within established residential neighborhoods, commercial areas, public/institutional areas, and parks and open spaces. In addition, the map shows future growth areas that will experience much of the new development in Wilmington.

These future growth areas are generally characterized as a set of five corridor subareas, as listed below and depicted on the map in [Figure 5.3](#):

- IL Route 53 Corridor
- Strip Mine Road Corridor
- Water Street Corridor
- Lorenzo Road Corridor
- Arsenal Road Corridor

A Corridor Subarea Plan is provided on the following pages for each of the five subareas. Each Corridor Subarea Plan summarizes the current land use, zoning, and transportation elements that define the corridor, as well as presents a recommended corridor development profile to guide future growth, development, and infrastructure improvements.

FIGURE 5.3
CORRIDOR SUBAREAS MAP



CORRIDOR SUBAREA PLAN

IL ROUTE 53 CORRIDOR

The IL Route 53 corridor is Wilmington’s primary roadway that connects multiple parts of the community, including the City’s emerging industrial area along Arsenal Road to the north, the downtown area and residential core at the heart of town, and the Strip Mine Road corridor to the south. In addition, IL Route 53 links Wilmington to the region, including the growing industrial base in Elwood and Joliet, smaller towns to the south, Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie, and multiple nature preserves and recreational areas. Covering over six miles, the character of the corridor changes and is just as diverse as the uses that comprise the different areas along the route.

CURRENT CONDITIONS

Existing Land Use

The IL Route 53 corridor is characterized by a diverse land use mix. The downtown area is the most diverse, with a mix of residential, commercial, industrial, and park uses in proximity of the corridor. As the corridor runs north away from downtown, commercial and industrial uses are gradually making way in Wilmington’s northeast growth area, particularly close to the Arsenal Road corridor. Residential growth is also starting to take shape. On the southern end, current uses are less intense but just as diverse, with connectivity to the Strip Mine Road corridor.

Existing Zoning

Lands incorporated into Wilmington are defined by the City’s zoning districts noted below. Unincorporated land falls under Will County jurisdiction but would be controlled by City zoning if annexed into Wilmington

Commercial (B1, B2, B3): Current and future commercial districts

Industrial (I1, I2, I3): Current and future industrial districts

Residential (R1, R2, R3, R4, R5): Residential lots, particularly in downtown area

Agricultural (A1) and Open Space (OS) at northern and southern points of corridor

Transportation Network

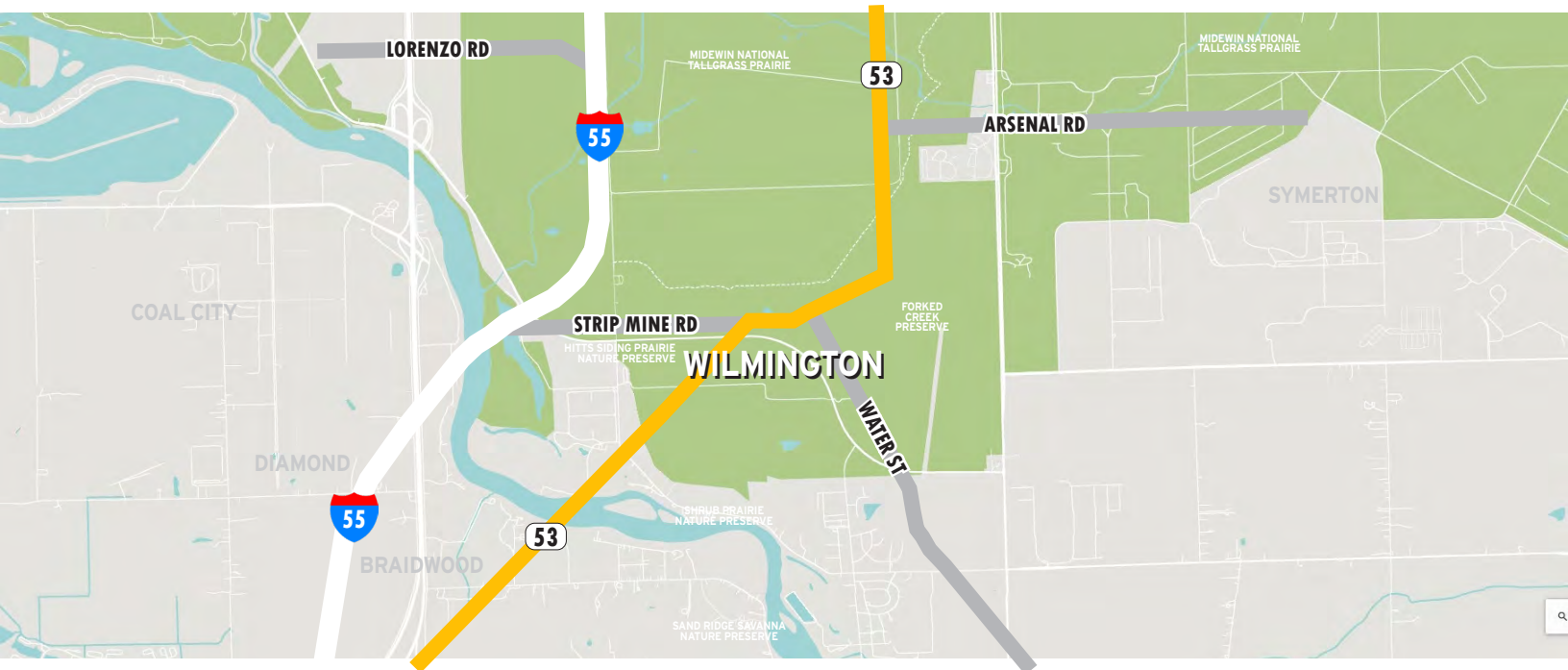
IL Route 53 is a major arterial road that connects to three of the other five corridor subareas (Arsenal Road, Water Street, and Strip Mine Road), which highlights its importance to Wilmington. Multiple collector and local roads also connect to IL Route 53, particularly in and around the downtown area.

Sidewalks are located along certain segments of IL Route 53, primarily in the downtown area and other commercial areas. While existing trails are fairly limited on IL Route 53, there are opportunities to contribute to a regional trail network.

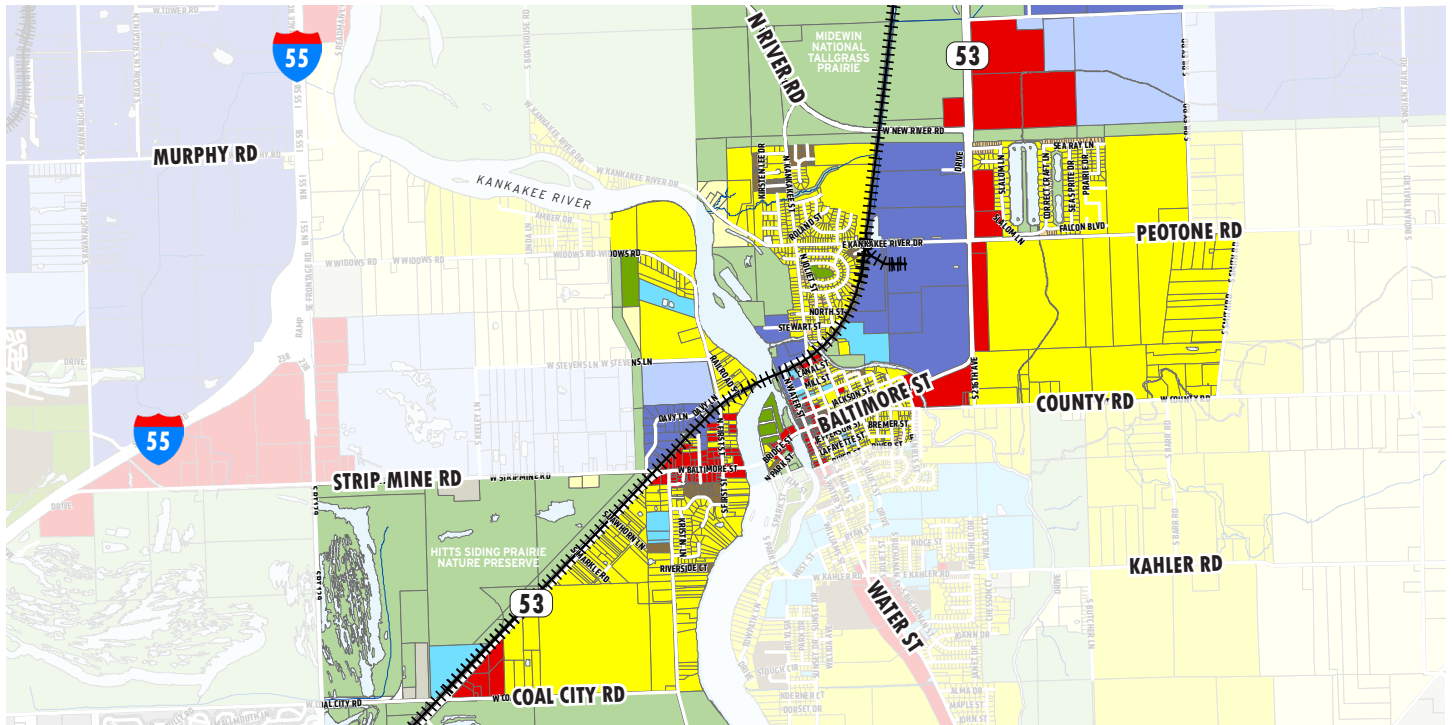
Other Features

IL Route 53 is the only roadway in Wilmington that crosses the Kankakee River, which further accentuates its critical role in Wilmington’s transportation network. By traversing Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie and multiple nature preserves, the corridor passes various natural features like wetlands, creeks, and the floodplain along the river.

The IL Route 53 corridor also runs along the historic Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway, which is a major tourism draw and adds to the unique character of Wilmington’s most prominent roadway.



CORRIDOR SUBAREA PLAN
IL ROUTE 53 CORRIDOR



¹ See Transportation Plan Map on page 61 for proposed trail system.

CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT

Future Land Use Plan

As shown in the excerpt of the Future Land Use Plan Map above, the IL Route 53 corridor will be comprised of the following land uses:

Commercial: Commercial development should build up new commercial districts at the northern and southern segments of the corridor to serve existing and future residents and workers. The 2018 Downtown Plan outlines specific strategies to boost economic development along the corridor.

Industrial: Since the corridor is connected to the Arsenal Road and Strip Mine Road corridors, future industrial growth in these two corridors will have an impact on IL Route 53. The west side of IL Route 53 between Arsenal Road and Forked Creek will also build up Wilmington's industrial base around the current Dupont and U.S. Cold Storage facilities.

Residential: New housing options should mostly occur in new growth areas to the northeast and southwest of downtown. Waters Edge Estates is the first mixed residential area that has jumpstarted the northeast growth area. The southwest growth area could increase housing options on the west side of Wilmington, particularly along River Road and the riverfront.

Parks and Open Space: New parks and open space opportunities should be integrated into new neighborhoods. Open spaces like landscaped buffers and conservation easements can help separate housing from adjacent commercial and industrial uses.

Annexation Potential

Certain lands at the northern and southern segments of the IL Route 53 corridor are unincorporated. As new developments are being considered, the City should evaluate the benefits of annexing land, including impacts on the tax base and municipal utility service.

Since IL Route 53 is a major arterial road connecting the region, boundary agreements with Elwood and Braidwood will help establish a mutual understanding for future annexations and development.

Utilities

Extension of water and sewer utilities will help properly serve new developments. Expansion of broadband may also help attract certain commercial and industrial uses that rely on stable internet access.

Access & Mobility

As specific sites are developed, internal street networks should be designed to improve access and mobility throughout the corridor. This includes providing sidewalks and trails where appropriate.

The Will County Connects 2040 Plan classifies IL Route 53 as a planned county bikeway corridor, which creates potential to build up the trail system¹. This includes potential trails along Route 66 supported by the Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) grant in the area south of downtown and the northern area near River Road.

Industrial development along Arsenal Road and Strip Mine Road will increase truck traffic, increasing the importance of minimizing truck traffic, impacts on neighborhoods, and cut-through traffic.

CORRIDOR SUBAREA PLAN

STRIP MINE ROAD CORRIDOR

The Strip Mine Road corridor serves as one of the two gateways into Wilmington from I-55. Strip Mine Road also links to IL Route 53 leading directly to the Island Parks and Downtown Wilmington. Of the five corridor subareas, the Strip Mine Road corridor presently has a fairly low level of development. However, it has notable growth potential for a mix of commercial, industrial, and residential uses, with the recognition that appropriate landscaping and other buffering techniques are utilized to protect existing natural areas, viable agricultural businesses, and estate residential lots.

CURRENT CONDITIONS

Existing Land Use

The land use mix along the corridor is currently low intensity, including estate residential lots north of Strip Mine Road and to the east towards IL Route 53 and the riverfront. Most existing commercial uses are small-scale businesses (e.g., mini storage, caterer, a bar and grill, pipe supplier) and farm-based businesses (e.g., Vilt's Greenhouse, Little Bit Farm horse breeder). The far eastern end of the corridor includes Davy Industrial Park. Other uses includes agricultural land, vacant properties, and open space (e.g., Hitts Siding Prairie Nature Preserve).

Existing Zoning

Lands incorporated into Wilmington are defined by the City's zoning districts noted below. Unincorporated land falls under Will County jurisdiction but would be controlled by City zoning if annexed into Wilmington

Industrial (I2): Davy Industrial Park and one smaller lot

Commercial (B3): Land near the I-55 interchange

Residential (ER, R1): A few residential lots

Agricultural (A1): Tameling RV Park and Campground, Hitts Siding Prairie Nature Preserve, and a few other lots

Transportation Network

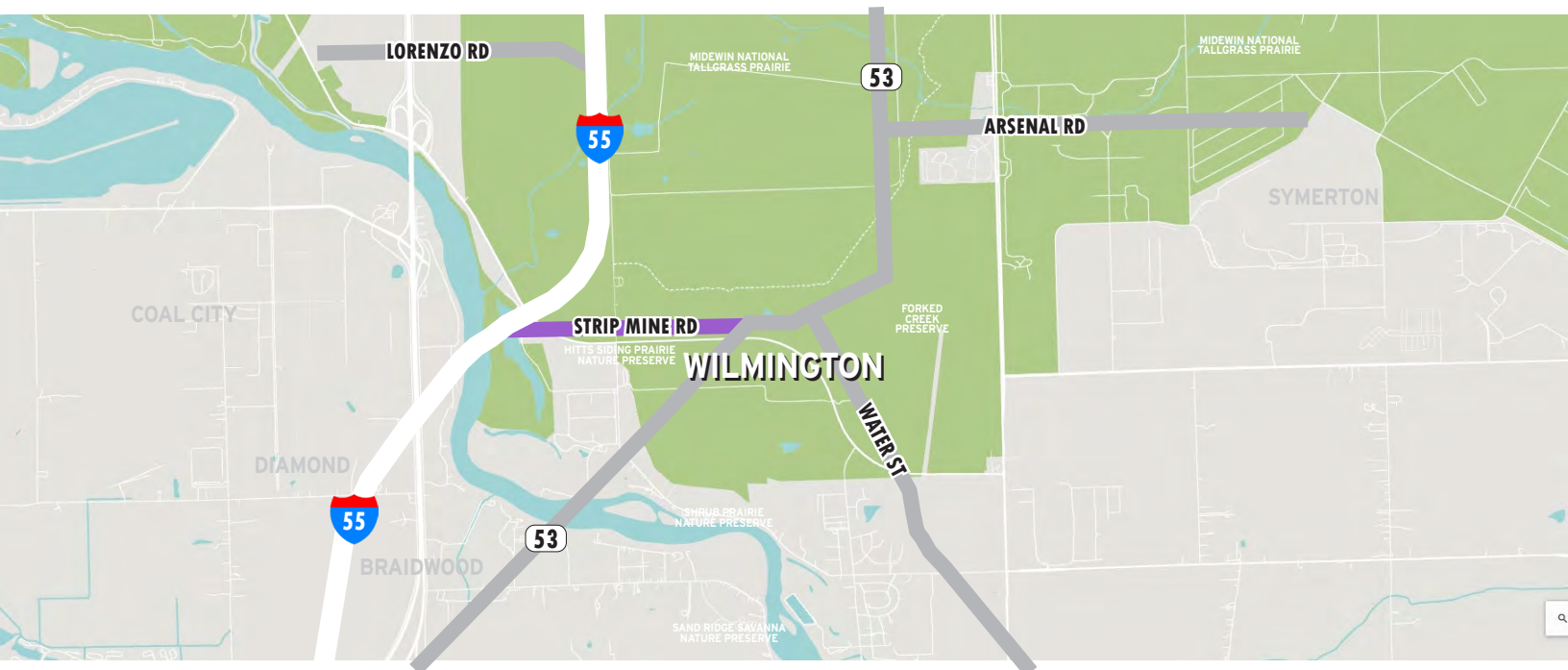
Strip Mine Road is currently classified as a minor arterial road, which could bump up to a major arterial like IL Route 129 and IL Route 53 as future development occurs. I-55 is the highest on the roadway hierarchy as an interstate highway. Connectivity to I-55 and IL Route 53 provides strong regional access for the Strip Mine Road corridor, including linkages to the Elion 55 Logistics Industrial Park, Island Parks, and Downtown Wilmington.

Sidewalks and trails are mostly nonexistent except for internal walking paths in the recreational properties.

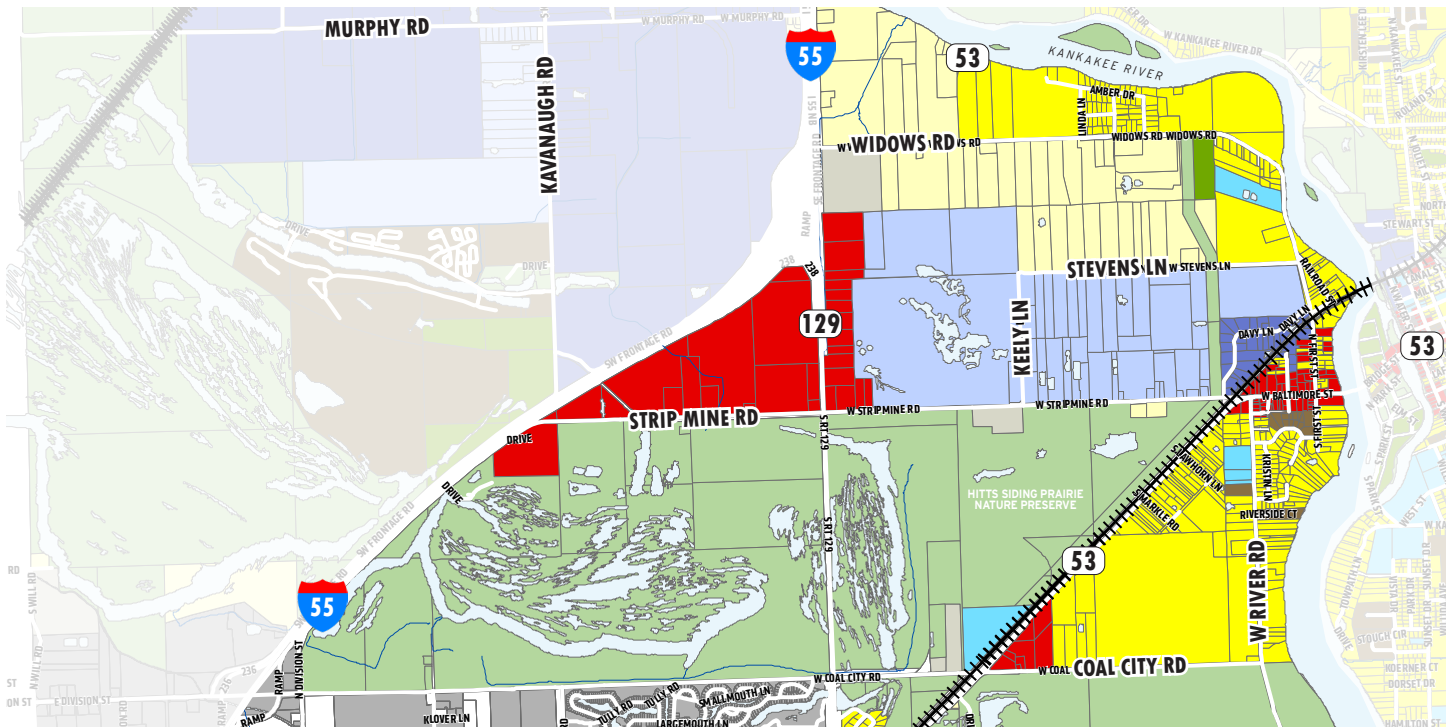
Other Features

Natural features primarily include water features, wetlands, and woodlands in the recreational properties and Hitts Siding Prairie Nature Preserve.

These existing natural features will have an impact on development potential on certain sites, including the possibility to integrate certain natural features into creative, sustainable site design.



CORRIDOR SUBAREA PLAN
STRIP MINE ROAD CORRIDOR



¹ See Transportation Plan Map on page 61 for proposed trail system.

CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT

Future Land Use Plan

As shown in the excerpt of the Future Land Use Plan Map above, the Strip Mine Road corridor will be comprised of the following land uses:

Industrial: With interchange access to I-55 and Davy Industrial Park at the far eastern end of the corridor, Strip Mine Road can aid in the expansion of Wilmington's industrial base. Given the proximity to residential neighborhoods, light industrial uses may be more appropriate, such as commercial storage, supply companies, offices, research, tech, healthcare, and maker or creative spaces.

Commercial: Commercial development should primarily locate along Strip Mine Road and IL Route 129 to link to the I-55 interchange. Businesses should cater not only to motorists on I-55 but also to the neighborhoods west of the river. Certain commercial uses like breweries, indoor

youth sports centers, gyms, trampoline parks, etc. are emerging in light industrial or office environments.

Residential: New housing options should build out north of the corridor towards Widows Road and along the riverfront.

Parks and Open Space: New parks and open space opportunities should be integrated into new neighborhoods. Open spaces like landscaped buffers and conservation easements can help separate housing from adjacent commercial and industrial uses.

Agricultural: Preservation of Little Bit Farm maintains this business as a unique activity generator for the corridor.

Annexation Potential

The corridor includes multiple properties that are currently unincorporated, particularly north of Strip Mine Road. As new developments are being considered, the City should evaluate the benefits of annexing land, including impacts on the tax base and municipal utility service.

Boundary agreements with Braidwood and Diamond will help establish a mutual understanding for future annexations and development.

Utilities

Extension of water and sewer utilities will help properly serve new developments. Expansion of broadband may also help attract certain commercial and industrial uses that rely on stable internet access.

Access & Mobility

As specific sites are developed, internal street networks should be designed to improve access and mobility throughout the corridor. This includes providing sidewalks and trails where appropriate.

The Will County Connects 2040 Plan classifies IL Route 53 as a planned county bikeway corridor, which opens up possibilities to create other trail linkages¹ around the Strip Mine Road corridor.

Industrial development along Strip Mine Road will increase truck traffic, particularly with close access to the I-55 interchange. This will necessitate the need to find solutions that minimize truck traffic, impacts on neighborhoods, and cut-through traffic east toward the downtown area.

CORRIDOR SUBAREA PLAN

WATER STREET CORRIDOR

The Water Street corridor is an important asset to the community as it serves as the southeastern entry into Wilmington, including regional access to and from Kankakee and the Bradley/Bourbonnais area. Also known as IL Route 102 south of IL Route 53, Water Street provides access to some of Wilmington’s more recent residential neighborhoods, including the ones close to the school campuses and City Hall civic area. While the existing businesses south of Kahler Road represent the only commercial area south of the downtown area, they also provide a foundation for future commercial and residential growth along the corridor.

CURRENT CONDITIONS

Existing Land Use

The Water Street corridor is characterized by a diverse land use mix. From the downtown area southward to the commercial area around Kahler Road, this segment primarily developed with residential neighborhoods and the three school campuses. That pattern continues south of Kahler Road, including the unincorporated Lakewood Shores neighborhood to the west between Water Street and the Kankakee River. The large swath of agricultural and vacant land in this area provides opportunities to build out commercial and residential growth.

Existing Zoning

Lands incorporated into Wilmington are defined by the City’s zoning districts noted below. Unincorporated land falls under Will County jurisdiction but would be controlled by City zoning if annexed into Wilmington

Commercial (B1, B2, B3): Land along Water Street

Residential (R1, R2, R3, R4, R5): Residential lots on both sides of Water Street

Agricultural (A1): Agricultural and vacant land south of Kahler Road

Transportation Network

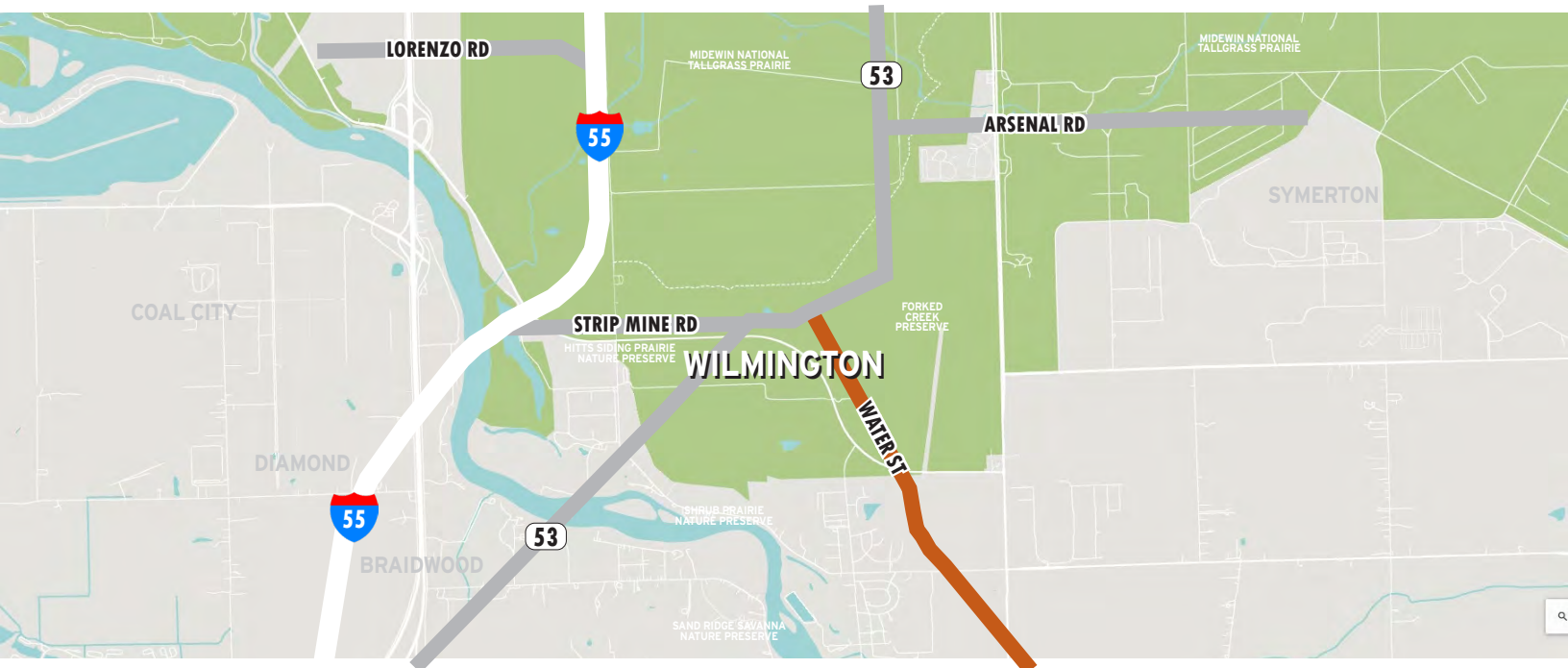
Water Street is the only major arterial road that runs south from Wilmington’s central core, which accentuates its importance to the city as a major road carrying traffic through town and into the region. The road network also includes Kahler Road (minor arterial), Ballou Road (collector), and multiple local roads.

Sidewalks are located along certain segments of Water Street and east/west connector streets. Existing trails are fairly limited with opportunities for the Water Street corridor to contribute to a regional trail network.

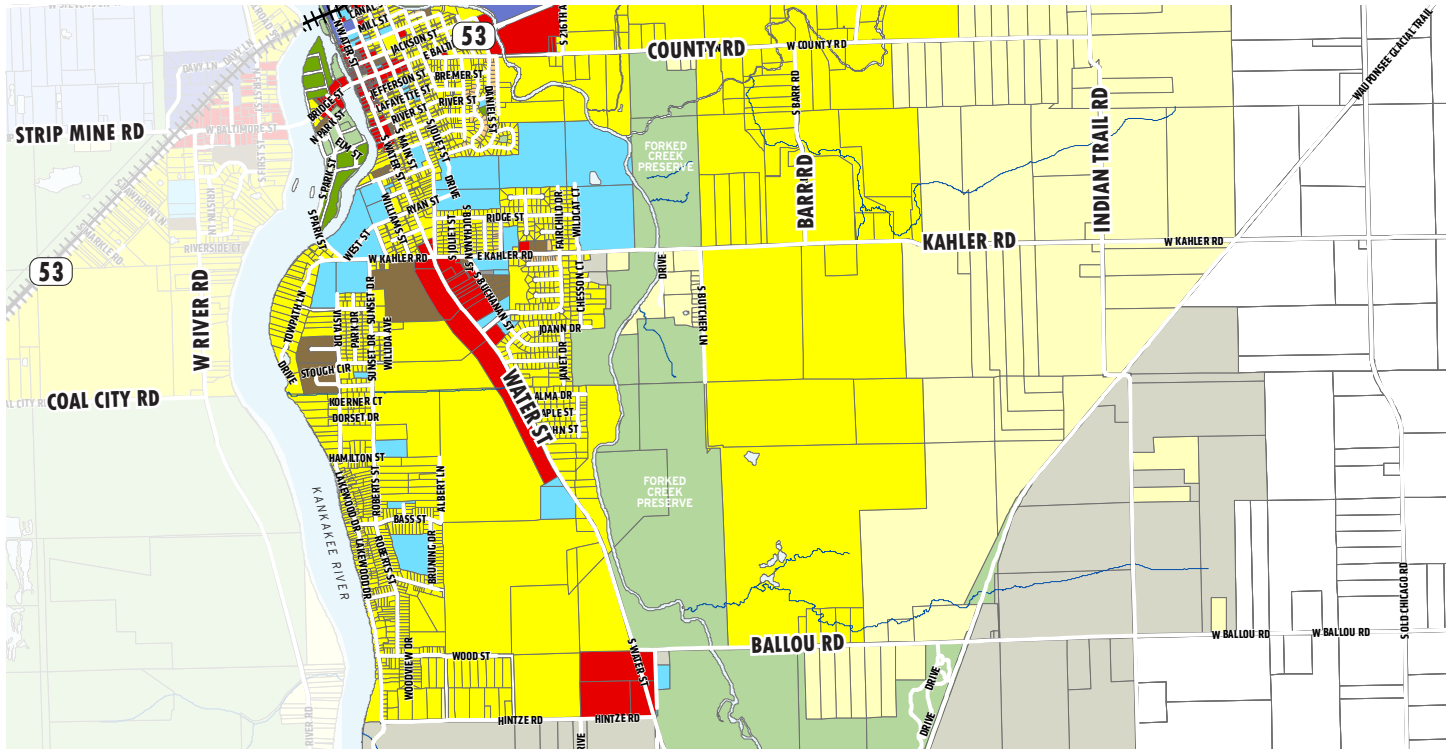
Other Features

The Water Street corridor has a wide array of natural features, including wetlands, Forked Creek, and floodplain and woodlands along the creek. Many of these features run through Forked Creek Preserve to the east of the corridor. Certain parts of the corridor also run close to the riverfront, particularly the north segment leading into the downtown area.

These existing natural features will have an impact on development potential on certain sites, including the possibility to integrate certain natural features into creative, sustainable site design.



CORRIDOR SUBAREA PLAN
WATER STREET CORRIDOR



¹ See Transportation Plan Map on page 61 for proposed trail system.

CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT

Future Land Use Plan

As shown in the excerpt of the Future Land Use Plan Map above, the Water Street corridor will be comprised of the following land uses:

Commercial: Commercial development should primarily expand the existing base, extending the commercial corridor south of Kahler Road to serve existing and future residential areas. Water Street should serve as the commercial area for Wilmington’s southern growth area.

Residential: New housing options should build out south of Kahler Road towards Hintze Road. Additional housing may extend east of Forked Creek Preserve. While most new housing will be single family detached units, multi family options may be appropriate close to commercial uses, and to build up housing options for a growing older adult population, particularly near Aperion Care.

Parks and Open Space: New parks and open space opportunities should be integrated into new neighborhoods. Open spaces like landscaped buffers and conservation easements can help separate housing from adjacent commercial uses, as well as provide potential connectivity to Forked Creek Preserve and the riverfront.

Agricultural: While many of the future residential sites will remain agricultural until they are approved for development, agricultural preservation will be focused south of Hintze Road and the southeast section of Wilmington’s planning area.

Annexation Potential

The land south of Prairie Lane is unincorporated, including Lakewood Shores. As new developments are being considered, the City should evaluate the benefits of annexing land, including impacts on the tax base and municipal utility service.

Although the corridor is located beyond the 1½-mile planning areas of adjacent towns, a boundary agreement with Braidwood may be advisable to help establish a mutual understanding for future annexations and development.

Utilities

Extension of water and sewer utilities will help properly serve new developments. Expansion of broadband may also help attract certain commercial uses that rely on stable internet access.

Access & Mobility

As specific sites are developed, internal street networks should be designed to improve access and mobility throughout the corridor. This includes providing sidewalks and trails where appropriate.

While existing trails are limited, there is potential to build up the local and regional trail system¹, including along Kahler Road to link up to the schools and through Lakewood Shores close to the lakefront. There is also opportunity to provide a trail connection to the regional Wauponsee Glacial Trail to the east, particularly at the southern end of Water Street as it intersects with Ballou Road and heads east to link to the existing trailhead by the Forked Creek Preserve parking lot and Will County Ballou Road Dog Park.

CORRIDOR SUBAREA PLAN

LORENZO ROAD CORRIDOR

The Lorenzo Road corridor serves as the primary entry to Wilmington’s western industrial growth area. Industrial development has continually taken root in this area, with the ELP 55 Logistics Industrial Park comprising a majority of the existing development. While there is still a considerable amount of space to fill out at Elion 55 and even more vacant land zoned for industrial, commercial uses are also getting established, including the Petro Travel Center. The Lorenzo Road corridor will continue to grow into an economic engine for Wilmington and the region.

CURRENT CONDITIONS

Existing Land Use

Industrial and commercial uses primarily make up the corridor’s current land use mix. With considerably more vacant land available for development, industrial and commercial uses will continue to define the character of the Lorenzo Road corridor. I-55 will serve as a physical delineation line between the intensive industrial/commercial character on the west and lower intensity uses east of the interstate along the Kankakee River.

Existing Zoning

Lands incorporated into Wilmington are defined by the City’s zoning districts noted below. Unincorporated land falls under Will County jurisdiction but would be controlled by City zoning if annexed into Wilmington

Industrial (I2, I5): ELP 55 Logistics Industrial Park, land south of Murphy Road

Commercial (B3): Land near the I-55 interchange

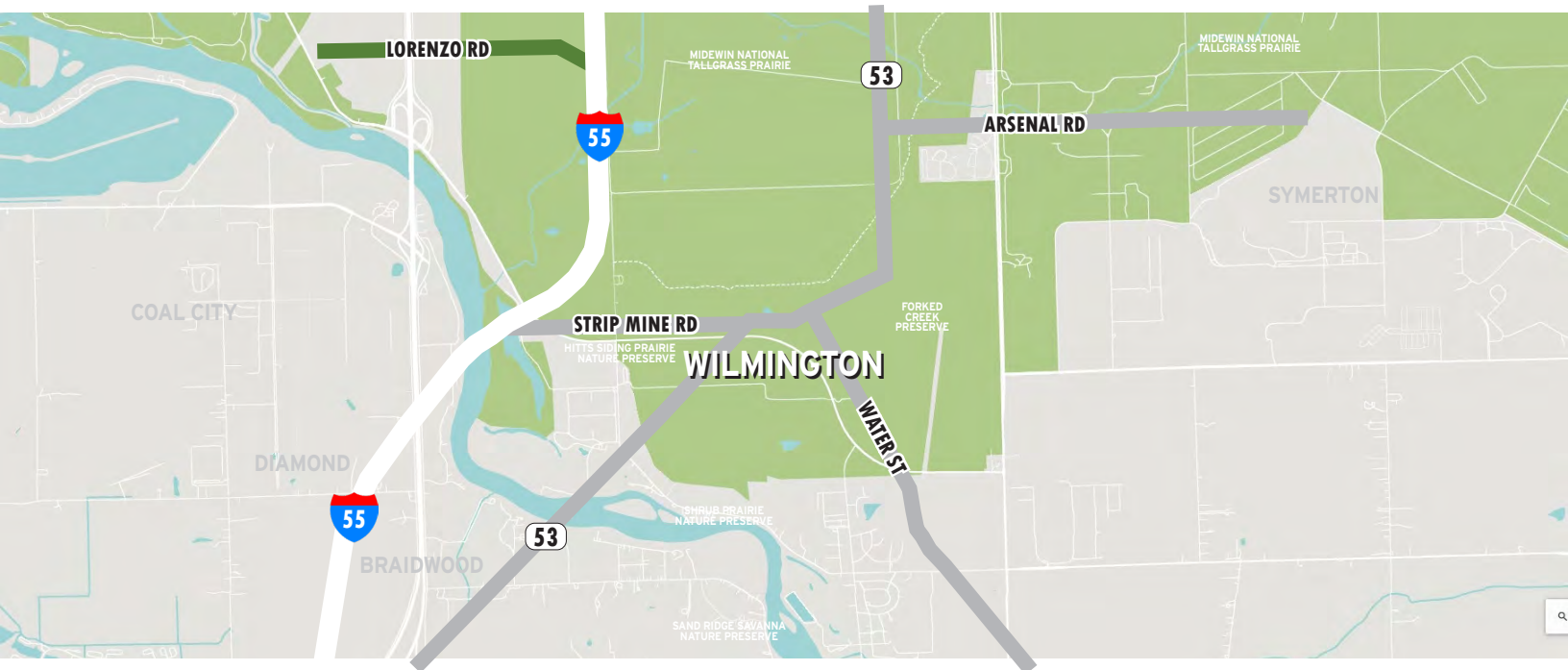
Transportation Network

Lorenzo Road is a major arterial with an interchange at I-55. Kavanaugh Road is a minor arterial and Murphy Road, Cooper Road, and Will County Line Road are collector roads, all of which will serve future growth. While the intent is to build up Wilmington’s presence in the regional industrial and employment markets, I-55 creates opportunities to build locational synergies with similar uses in Elwood and Joliet to the north.

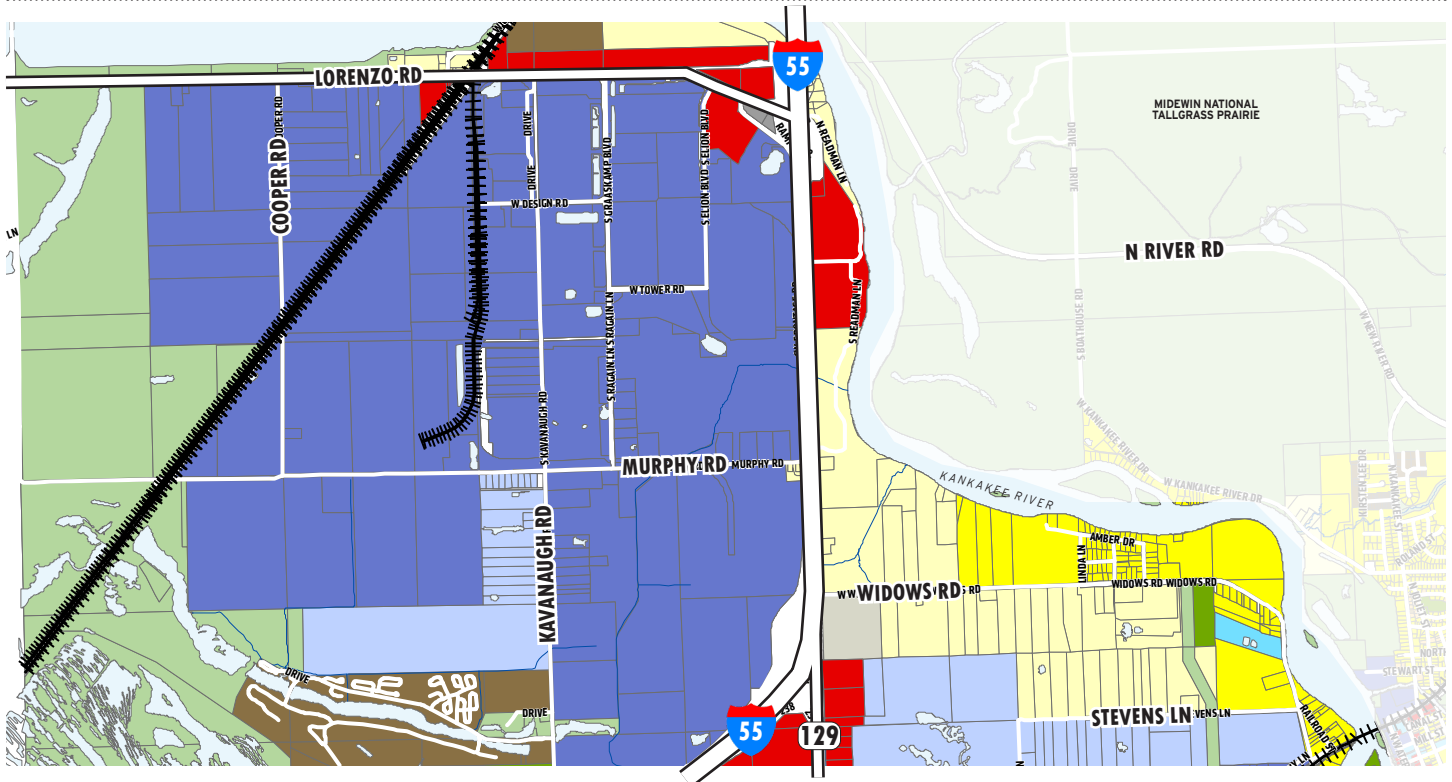
Given the nature of industrial uses and heavy truck traffic, sidewalks and trails are mostly nonexistent.

Other Features

Wetlands are the most notable natural features in the corridor area, which will have an impact on development potential on certain sites. Some sites could integrate wetland protection areas into creative, sustainable site design, including stormwater management features. The design of detention/retention ponds will also be important to minimize impacts on existing wetlands.



CORRIDOR SUBAREA PLAN
LORENZO ROAD CORRIDOR



CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT

Future Land Use Plan

As shown in the excerpt of the Future Land Use Plan Map above, the Lorenzo Road corridor will be comprised of the following land uses:

Industrial: Industrial uses in ELP 55 Logistics Industrial Park will continue to build out, which may take upwards of ten years to fully build out as planned. Further industrial development is slated south of Murphy Road. A pocket of lighter industrial uses may be appropriate just north of the Lakepoint site to minimize impacts on this multi-family residential area.

Commercial: Commercial uses should primarily develop around the I-55 interchange and along the north side of Lorenzo Road. Petro Travel Center and BP gas station are already laying the groundwork for future commercial development. The light industrial area may house certain commercial uses

like breweries, gyms, and indoor recreation that cater to industrial workers and the general population and are emerging as compatible uses in light industrial environments.

Residential: While residential isn't appropriate for the primarily industrial Lorenzo Road corridor, new housing options are more suitable on the east side of I-55 near Widows Road and along the riverfront.

Open Space: There are opportunities to establish open spaces like stormwater detention/retention areas, landscaped buffers, and conservation easements. These open spaces can also soften the hard surfaces of the industrial corridor.

Annexation Potential

Much of the land west of Kavanaugh Road is currently unincorporated. As further expansion of the industrial park is assessed, the City should evaluate the benefits of annexing land, including impacts on the tax base and municipal utility service.

Boundary agreements with Braidwood, Diamond, and Coal City will help establish a mutual understanding for future annexations and development in this highly critical industrial growth area in the region.

Utilities

Extension of water and sewer utilities will help properly serve new developments. Expansion of broadband may also help attract certain industrial and commercial uses that rely on stable internet access.

Access & Mobility

While the internal street network for the existing portion of ELP 55 is already established, internal street networks for future industrial development to the west and south should be designed to improve access and mobility throughout the corridor.

As industrial development is slated to increase in the Lorenzo Road corridor, truck traffic will also intensify, which will necessitate the need to find solutions that manage truck traffic

As described in the main transportation section on pages X-Y, IDOT is planning two major interchange improvements at Lorenzo Road and Strip Mine Road to improve access and safety. The latter includes a proposed flyover providing improved access between the east and west sides of I-55.

CORRIDOR SUBAREA PLAN

ARSENAL ROAD CORRIDOR

The Arsenal Road corridor represents one of Wilmington’s most prominent growth areas. Industrial and commercial development will continue to comprise much of the growth, particularly along the north side of Arsenal Road and along IL Route 53 at the corridor’s far western terminus. Residential options may be viable, with the Waters Edge Estates development south of Arsenal Road creating potential connectivity to new neighborhoods. In addition, proximity to Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie creates opportunities for additional open space and trail connections.

CURRENT CONDITIONS

Existing Land Use

The corridor is primarily comprised of vacant land and open space, including Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie to the north and west. Existing uses include Illinois Transport, ASIP Local 150, and Prairie View Landfill north of Arsenal Road, with Waters Edge Estates and scattered estate residential lots to the south. Commercial uses are presently limited to Loves Travel Stop, which is under construction to the south along IL Route 53.

Existing Zoning

Lands incorporated into Wilmington are defined by the City’s zoning districts noted below. Unincorporated land falls under Will County jurisdiction but would be controlled by City zoning if annexed into Wilmington.

Industrial (I1, I2, I4): Land north of Arsenal Road and portions south

Commercial (B2, B3): Land along IL Route 53

Residential (R1, R3): Waters Edge Estates

Agricultural (A1) and Open Space (OS): Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie

Transportation Network

Arsenal Road and IL Route 53 are both classified as major arterial roads. Riley Road and Indian Trail Road, which run south of Arsenal Road, are collector roads. The connection to IL Route 53 is particularly advantageous for the Arsenal Road corridor, as IL Route 53 leads to major industrial and employment centers north in Elwood and Joliet. Planned road improvements along Peotone Road will also enhance future growth potential.

Sidewalks are fairly scarce except in Waters Edge Estates. Henslow Trail runs along IL Route 53.

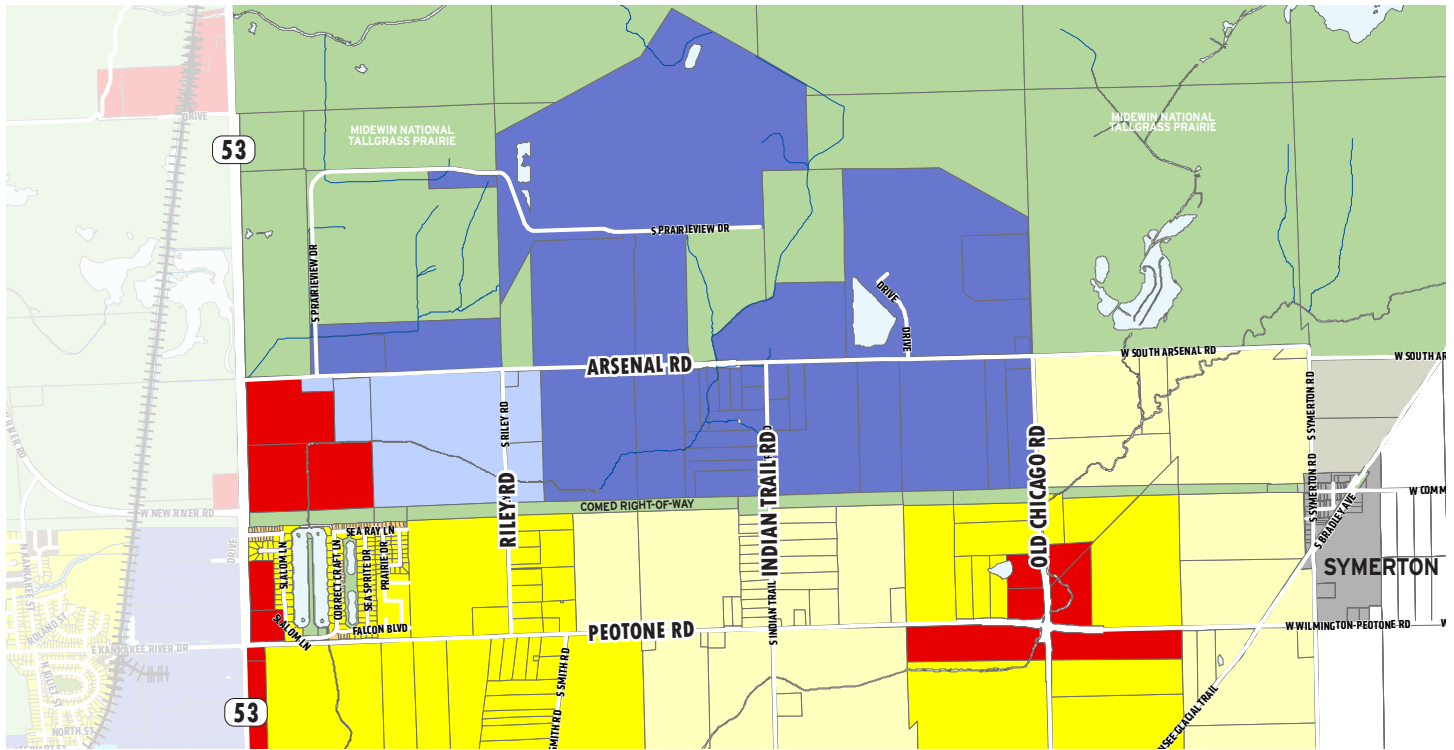
Other Features

The creeks that run through the corridor study area include floodplain coverage. There is also significant tree coverage on the north side of Arsenal Road and along the creeks.

These existing natural features will have an impact on development potential on certain sites, including the possibility to integrate certain natural features into creative, sustainable site design.



CORRIDOR SUBAREA PLAN
ARSENAL ROAD CORRIDOR



¹ See Transportation Plan Map on page 61 for proposed trail system.

CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT

Future Land Use Plan

As shown in the excerpt of the Future Land Use Plan Map above, the Arsenal Road corridor will be comprised of the following land uses:

Industrial: The north and south sides of Arsenal Road should continue the industrial buildout of the corridor. The southeast end of the corridor may be more appropriate for light industrial uses like offices and commercial spaces like gyms, breweries, and indoor recreation.

Commercial: Commercial development should primarily take place along IL Route 53. Additional commercial development is appropriate at key intersections along Peotone Road, which is slated for roadway improvements and potential long term development as future plans for the regional third airport solidify and take steps towards becoming a reality.

Residential: New housing options will primarily develop around Waters Edge Estates and along Peotone Road. Residential densities will likely decrease from west to east towards Symerton.

Parks and Open Space: New parks and open space opportunities should be integrated into new neighborhoods. Open spaces like landscaped buffers and conservation easements can help separate housing from adjacent industrial and commercial uses. The ComEd right-of-way also serves as an open space buffer.

Agricultural: Many future residential sites will remain agricultural until they are approved for development.

Annexation Potential

The corridor includes multiple properties that are currently unincorporated, particularly south of Arsenal Road. As further expansion of the industrial park is assessed, the City should evaluate the benefits of annexing land, including impacts on the tax base and municipal utility service.

A boundary agreement with Symerton will help establish a mutual understanding for future annexations and development.

Utilities

Extension of water and sewer utilities will help properly serve new developments. Expansion of broadband may also help attract certain industrial and commercial uses that rely on stable internet access.

Access & Mobility

As specific sites are developed, internal street networks should be designed to improve access and mobility throughout the corridor. This includes the potential to build up the local and regional trail system¹, including linkage to the existing Henslow Trail to the north and Wauponsee Glacial Trail to the east. In addition, the Will County Connects 2040 Plan classifies IL Route 53 as a planned county bikeway corridor.

Industrial growth will increase the amount of truck traffic along Arsenal Road, IL Route 53, and possibly Peotone Road in the future. This will necessitate the need to find solutions that minimize truck traffic and impacts on neighborhoods.

OVERVIEW

DEVELOPMENT TYPOLOGIES

Development typologies enable the community to evaluate potential development concepts relating to different housing options, business types, employment generators, and development approaches that may be appropriate for a community with a character and profile like Wilmington.

For example, recommending a concept that calls for businesses like a quick service restaurant or specialty grocer points more towards community support for these general use categories, as opposed to targeting specific businesses like a Potbelly or Trader Joe’s. Similarly, a concept that allows for an office area or business park may accommodate a range of uses, from professional offices, healthcare facilities, and tech hubs to coworking spaces, youth recreation gyms, and pickleball courts.

Typologies provide a general framework of development types that City staff and officials can consider regarding the types of development to pursue for Wilmington. This can include a range of enterprises from national brands and locally-owned businesses to corporate headquarters and satellite offices.

As provided on the following pages, the general description for each development typology highlights how each development type may influence future development or redevelopment in Wilmington.

- Residential
- Commercial
- Office
- Industrial

DEVELOPMENT TYPOLOGY OBJECTIVES

The development typologies provide for a more balanced mix of land uses that promote the following objectives:

- Diversify the local housing stock
- Expand the municipal tax base
- Revitalize vacant or underutilized spaces
- Enhance employment options
- Advance a more sustainable, resilient economy
- Support stewardship of the environment
- Account for adequate utilities capacity

DEVELOPMENT TYPOLOGIES RESIDENTIAL

Developed primarily as a single-family residential community, estate density and low density residential will continue to comprise the bulk of the housing stock in Wilmington, as shown on the Future Land Use Plan Map. Pockets of other residential types like apartments, condos, townhomes, housing for older adults, and mobile homes are also part of Wilmington’s housing stock. One of the core objectives of the Comprehensive City Plan is to advance a diverse housing stock with options that meet varying budgets, life stages, family structures, and housing needs.

MARKET ANALYSIS

The following insights about residential development in Wilmington are taken from the market analysis conducted for the City as part of the planning process.

Housing Stock Characteristics

According to Census data for 2017-2021, Wilmington’s housing stock is estimated at almost 2,500 units, of which 66% is owner-occupied. Occupancy is extremely high with the total and rental vacancy rates 4-5%, indicating a need for more housing. Older adults (age 65+) are primarily owners (72%), as are 63% of those under 65.

During the period 2017-2021, the median home value in Wilmington was \$171,700 with 25% of homes valued between \$150,000-200,000, and 38% over \$200,000, including 14% over \$300,000.

Owner-occupied housing is generally affordable. The median monthly owner cost is \$1,746 for those with a mortgage and \$649 for those without. 15% of those with a mortgage and 18% of those without a mortgage are paying more than 30% of their income for housing, typically considered the maximum for affordability.

There are only 800 renter-occupied units in the city and many of these are single-family homes. There are few modern apartments.

FIGURE 5.4
WILMINGTON HOUSING SUMMARY

Source: US Census, ACS 2017-2021

	Number	Percent
Housing Units and Vacancy		
Total housing units	2,478	
Vacant units	128	5.2%
Vacant units for rent	32	3.8%
Housing Tenure		
Occupied housing units	2,350	
Owner-occupied units	1,542	65.6%
Renter-occupied units	808	34.4%
Occupied Units (Households 15-64)		
Owner Occupied	994	62.7%
Renter Occupied	592	37.3%
Occupied Units (Households 65+)		
Owner Occupied	548	71.7%
Renter Occupied	216	28.3%



DEVELOPMENT TYPOLOGIES
RESIDENTIAL

Results from the online survey conducted for the Comprehensive Plan showed the most interest in maintaining existing housing, providing more homeownership opportunities, and affordable housing. There is strong support for more single-family homes, townhouses, duplexes and senior housing.

About 68% of housing units are single-family detached and 6% are single-family attached homes. There are only 296 units in buildings with 5 or more units, and 46 units are mobile homes. Housing is relatively old, with only 17% built since 2000.

Recent Housing Development

Over the past five years, Wilmington issued building permits for 27 units, averaging 5/year. This is well below the construction in Braidwood (62 units, averaging 12/year). Development was primarily single-family with some multifamily in buildings with 4 units each.

The most recent development includes 4-unit buildings on Stewart Court, and individual homes primarily on the north side of the city.

According to city officials, there are 439 platted undeveloped lots in Wilmington, though only one subdivision, Prairie Farms with 43 lots, is currently under construction. There is a need for more residential development to meet the projected growth in households in the coming years, and to accommodate move-ups and downsizing by existing residents.

FIGURE 5.6
WILMINGTON HOUSING STOCK

Source: US Census, ACS 2017-2021

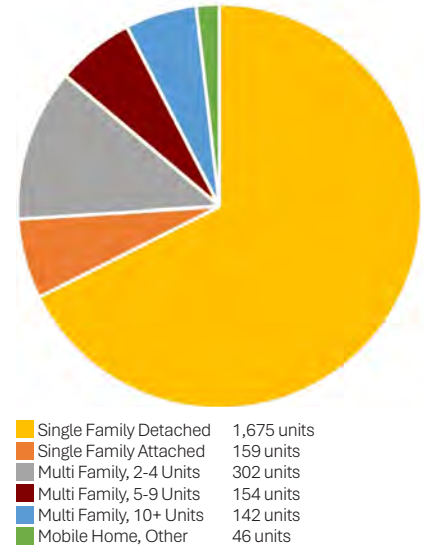


FIGURE 5.5
WILMINGTON NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

Source: Kretchmer Associates



DEVELOPMENT TYPOLOGIES
RESIDENTIAL

For-Sale Housing Market

In 2023, a total of 133 single-family detached homes sold in Wilmington through the Multiple Listing Service, at a median price of \$175,000 according to Midwest Real Estate Data. 28% were in the \$200,000-300,000 range, while 12% sold for \$300,000-500,000, and 3% sold for \$500,000-800,000. In comparison, only 6 single-family attached homes sold in 2023 at a median price of \$212,450.

Wilmington’s median single-family detached price was lower than Braidwood’s (\$254,900) and Joliet (\$245,000). However, Wilmington had more than twice the number of sales as Braidwood.

Local Realtors report interest in homes for sale, but the inventory is low, as it is throughout the Chicago metro area. Typical prices range from \$235,000-265,000 for three-bedroom homes built between 1960 and 1975, which are attractive for young families.

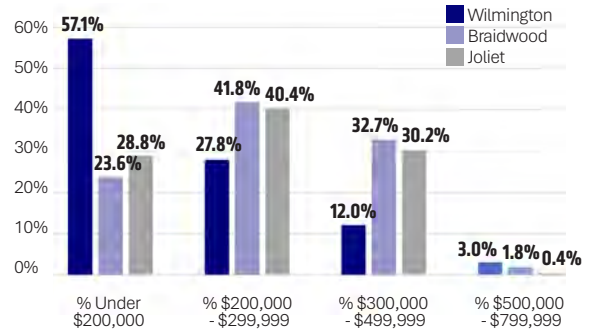
Newer homes are priced over \$300,000 up to \$475,000, particularly in the Waters Edge area at the northeast edge of the city.

The city is attracting buyers from communities further north of I-80 who are looking for more house for the money and lower real estate taxes.

One developer, Pro Builders, is building 43 new homes at Waters Edge. These are expected to be a mix of single-family ranches, 2-story homes and duplexes and will likely sell in the \$400,000 range.

There is a shortage of new product in Wilmington for families, as well as for those looking to downsize. Seniors would sell their homes if they had reasonable options. Two-bedroom ranches or duplexes in the \$225,000-250,000 range would be very marketable according to local Realtors.

FIGURE 5.7
SINGLE FAMILY DETACHED HOME SALES, 2023
WILMINGTON, BRAIDWOOD & JOLIET
Source: Midwest Real Estate Data (MRED)



DEVELOPMENT TYPOLOGIES

RESIDENTIAL

Rental Housing Market

Wilmington’s median gross rent (including tenant-paid utilities) was \$875 according to 2017-2021 Census data. 30% of rentals were more than \$1,000, while 32% were under \$750, including 150 units under \$500, primarily subsidized apartments for seniors and families.

Rental affordability is an issue in Wilmington, as 48% of renters (almost 400 households) were paying more than 30% of their income in rent.

There are few modern market-rate rental apartments in Wilmington or nearby communities. A small number of apartments were recently built on Stewart Court and they leased up well. A few more are under construction.

The closest better-quality market-rate apartments are in Channahon and Joliet. Mallard Point Apartments in Channahon, a large complex with 173 units and extensive amenities, but now 24 years old, has rents ranging from \$1,114-1,274 for one-bedroom and \$1,279-1,544 for two-bedrooms. New apartments on the south side of Joliet, Timber Pointe, have rents ranging from \$1,895-2,195 for two-bedrooms and \$2,595 for three-bedroom apartments in a series of 16- unit buildings. The property has no common area amenities.

There were also no single-family homes or townhouses listed for rent in Wilmington on any of the online real estate sites.

Affordable Apartments in Wilmington

There are two affordable apartments for seniors in Wilmington – Winchester Manor and Wilmington Senior Apartments – with 24 and 96 units each. These are restricted to tenants with incomes less than 60% of the Area Median Income (AMI), currently \$47,100 for one person and \$53,800 for two people. Both are fully occupied with waiting lists, with little turnover.

Developers report that there is demand for at least another 50 affordable senior apartments, given the interest in the two existing properties.



DEVELOPMENT TYPOLOGIES

RESIDENTIAL**Housing Demand**

There is slow but steady demand for more for-sale singlefamily detached housing, townhouses, and duplexes to serve the projected increase in households and to meet the needs of current residents looking to upgrade or downsize.

There is a strong need for different types of housing in the community, especially for seniors. There are few one-story duplexes that would be suitable for those wanting to downsize from an older two-story home. This includes those looking to buy as well as rent.

A portion of the demand will be for rental housing, as the offerings in Wilmington and neighboring communities are extremely limited. These would attract younger people working in the area, as well as some older adults looking to downsize.

There is also a need for more affordable senior rental housing, as evidenced by the waiting lists at the two affordable senior properties in the city. As the population ages, there is also a need for assisted living for those who need assistance with activities of daily living, but who don't need skilled nursing care.

Respondents to the community survey greatly support single family residential homes and housing for older adults. While survey results expressed varying support for other types of housing like townhouses, duplexes, condominiums, apartments, and accessory dwelling units (ADUs), these types of housing can still be integrated into Wilmington's overall housing mix in the future, particularly as a means to attract workers, support different household budgets, and enable people to age in place accommodating different life stages and needs.

The city's housing approach will partly focus on building out residential lots that have already been platted in unfinished subdivisions or infill sites. In addition, the city's housing approach allows for new residential development in other parts of Wilmington, including as part of the Strip Mine Road and Water Street corridor subareas and near the Arsenal Road corridor subarea.



DEVELOPMENT TYPOLOGIES

RESIDENTIAL

HOUSING TYPES

While Wilmington will always be a predominantly single-family residential community, the residential types described below and on the next page should also be considered to help diversify the local housing stock and meet varying budgets, life stages, family structures, and housing needs.

Townhouses

Townhomes provide single family residential units, typically in a compact arrangement with one or more units attached to each other and sharing common walls. Narrow townhomes arranged in a set of two or more are sometimes referred to as rowhouses. In terms of design, community members like townhomes with recessed front entries, side-/rear-facing garages, and strong curb appeal.

appropriate in certain instances, such as high quality building materials, attractive site design, and inclusion within mixed use developments along major road corridors. Existing condos and apartments in Wilmington include Foxtail Commons, Countryside River, Ellis Rental Apartments, and other properties along Elizabeth Street, Van Buren Street, 1st Street, and Hawk Trail near Deer Creek Estates.

Condominiums & Apartments

Condominium and apartment buildings can often take on the same physical form: typically a building of 2+ stories with multiple dwelling units with shared walls, parking, and common areas. Homeowners association (HOA) or renter fees help pay for lawn care, snow removal, community space, laundry, etc. A for-sale condo building may be converted into rental apartments, and vice versa. Multi-family housing in these two formats could be

Housing for Older Adults

In addition to single family homes, options like townhouses, condos, and apartments are common formats for older adults. These options generally include: independent living, assisted living, nursing homes, skilled nursing care, hospice care, memory care, continuing care, and age-restricted facilities (typically age 55+). Current senior living options include Wilmington Senior Apartments and Aperion Care Nursing Home.

Townhouses, condominiums, apartments, and housing for older adults are potential options to diversify the local housing stock and meet varying housing needs.



ACCESSORY DWELLING UNITS (ADUS)

Accessory dwelling units (ADUs) are increasingly becoming a viable approach to enhance a community's housing stock that fit varying budgets, household composition, and life stages. An ADU is typically a secondary dwelling unit that shares the same building or lot as the primary dwelling unit. Sometimes called a "granny flat" among other nicknames, an ADU can take various forms:

- An apartment over a garage
- A converted garage
- An apartment located in the basement (or other part of the house)
- A carriage house
- A smaller structure in the backyard or elsewhere on the property

ADUs may be a suitable approach for Wilmington, provided that the City's Zoning Code and other regulations support such uses.



DEVELOPMENT TYPOLOGIES RESIDENTIAL

MISSING MIDDLE HOUSING

As described below, “missing middle housing” is an emerging residential development approach that can help diversify the local housing stock while protecting the community’s single-family residential character. Similar to the options described on the previous page, missing middle housing helps to meet varying budgets, life stages, family structures, and housing needs.

Missing middle housing is an emerging housing concept that allows for single family lots to be split or merged to support duplex, triplex, or fourplex units. This approach provides additional dwelling units without significantly altering the character of the neighborhood. Missing middle housing also provides affordable units and enhances the ability for residents to age in place. In addition, this approach allows for infill development at a lot-by-lot basis in established neighborhoods, particularly enabling a single family lot to support a duplex. Combining two adjacent lots may accommodate a triplex or fourplex. Missing middle housing may also be built as new development, including townhomes, or integrated into mixed use development.

A primary intent of missing middle housing is to have designs that blend into existing single family residential neighborhoods: triplex (top left); duplex (top right and bottom).



Missing middle housing is an option that Wilmington may wish to consider in the future to help provide more housing options, with the understanding that the preservation of single family housing is the community’s higher priority.



Light purple buildings denote existing single family houses. Yellow buildings indicate missing middle housing options like duplexes, triplexes, and quadplexes. The top graphic illustrates an infill development approach in an established neighborhood; the bottom graphic shows a new development approach on a single block or site.

Source: Opticos Design, Inc.

MissingMiddleHousing.com is powered by Opticos Design, Inc. Illustration © 2015 Opticos Design, Inc.



DEVELOPMENT TYPOLOGIES
RESIDENTIAL

Recommended Residential Uses

The table below lists potential residential uses that may be appropriate in Wilmington, particularly noting the suitability in the downtown area and/or the five corridor subareas.

	Downtown Wilmington	IL Route 53 Corridor	Strip Mine Road Corridor	Water Street Corridor	Lorenzo Road Corridor	Arsenal Road Corridor	
● 1: Single family detached house	●	●	●	●	●	●	
● 2: Townhouse	●	●	●	●	●	●	
● 3: Duplex	●	●	●	●	●	●	
● 4: Condominiums	●	●	●	●	●	●	
● 5: Apartments	●	●	●	●	●	●	
● 6: Housing for older adults (independent living)	●	●	●	●	●	●	
● 7: Housing for older adults (assisted living)	●	●	●	●	●	●	
● 8: Accessory dwelling unit (ADU)	●	●	●	●	●	●	

NOTE: This list is not an exhaustive list of all possible residential uses; rather, it lists the most common uses that may be appropriate in Wilmington.

CASE STUDY

AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN THE REGION

Community feedback from the public open houses, community survey, and other stakeholder engagement indicate the need to provide affordable housing. In particular, about 79.4% of survey respondents characterized affordable housing as either a high or medium priority.

Affordable housing is a critical issue not only locally but also at the regional, state, and national levels. Fortunately, governmental agencies, non-profit organizations, and builders are placing greater emphasis on the production of quality affordable housing options. This also includes the role of municipalities to reduce barriers to affordable housing, particularly in their zoning and building codes.

In addition, affordable housing comes in many forms to cater to a range of residents: single family homes, accessory dwelling units (ADUs), housing for older adults, workers, veterans, and people with disabilities. Below is just a few examples of recent affordable housing developments in the region that could serve as models for Wilmington.

Regional Examples*

- Water's Edge, Joliet
- Autumn Ridge, Carol Stream
- Grace Terrace, Arlington Heights
- 1212 Larkin, Elgin
- Chelsea Senior Commons, Sugar Grove
- Heritage Woods Assisted Living, Plainfield

*NOTE: These examples are also referenced in the housing section of the Implementation Plan in Chapter 6, including website links to these examples.



DEVELOPMENT TYPOLOGIES
COMMERCIAL

Located at the heart of town, Downtown Wilmington is the City’s central business district with a mix of restaurants, shops, small offices, services, auto-oriented businesses, and civic uses. Commercial uses in Wilmington are also prominent within the island, along the stretch of IL Route 53 west of the river, and around the Water Street/Kahler Road intersection. and the eastern end of IL Route 72. More recent commercial development is starting to take shape near two of Wilmington’s industrial growth areas near Lorenzo Road and Arsenal Road.

The current business mix includes locally owned, regional, and national brands. While businesses in Wilmington generally cater to local residents and workers, they also attract visitors in town for special events, visits from family or friends, and local attractions like Historic Route 66 enthusiasts and antique hounds.

MARKET ANALYSIS

The following insights about commercial development in Wilmington are taken from the market analysis conducted for the City as part of the planning process.

Wilmington’s Retail Mix

According to Esri’s business summary shown in the pie chart in [Figure 5.8](#), there are 10 food and beverage stores, 5 clothing stores, 4 building materials and garden stores, 13 sporting goods, hobby, book and music stores, and 11 motor vehicle and parts dealers. However, two of the car dealers will be relocating in the next year to Braidwood.

Other than the two car dealers, the largest retailers are Berkot’s and Whitmore Ace Hardware. Specialty stores, including antique and gift shops are clustered downtown, as are a number of bars and restaurants.

The area south of downtown along Water Street has a mix of older stores, fast food restaurants, and a shopping center anchored by Whitmore, a small CVS pharmacy, local grocer Valle Produce, and restaurants.

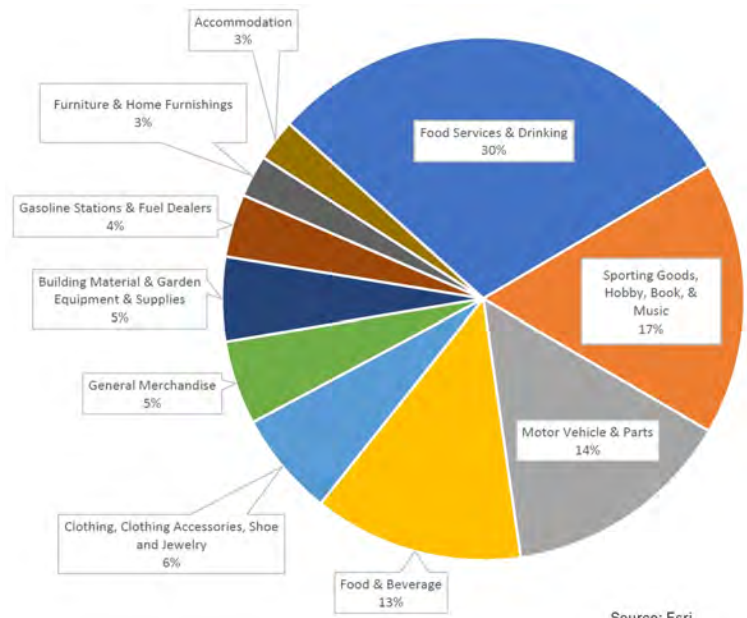
Berkot’s is expanding to better compete with a new Jewel under construction on Coal City Road west of I-55 in Diamond. This level of investment signals an ongoing commitment to Wilmington.

Expanding the Commercial Base

Expansion of Wilmington’s commercial base will enhance the local tax base, increase locally available goods and services, and boost tourism. The City should continue its proactive approach to attract the types of businesses that achieve these ends and match community priorities, particularly with respect to building up Wilmington’s corridor subareas ([see pages 27-37](#)).

The attraction of new businesses is typically influenced by market conditions, demographics, and local assets that make a community like Wilmington a more enticing location than other options. This also includes supporting locally owned businesses and nurturing entrepreneurs in the community, which many communities across the region are handling through business incubators ([see case study page 53](#)).

FIGURE 5.8
RETAIL BUSINESSES BY TYPE IN WILMINGTON
Source: Esri



Source: Esri

DEVELOPMENT TYPOLOGIES
COMMERCIAL

Increasing Retail Sales & Household Spending

According to data from Esri, Wilmington's households have on average \$21,000 to spend on major retail categories for a total of \$49 million. Within the 15-minute market area, average household spending is higher at \$24,000 due to a higher median household income, for a total of \$263 million.

In 2023, Wilmington's retail sales (based on the 1% sales tax it receives as reported by the Illinois Department of Revenue) totaled \$159 million, a 49% increase since 2019 and 8% increase over 2022's sales. Consumer retail sales, which exclude agriculture and manufacturing, totaled \$148 million, and increased by 7% over the prior year. The largest categories are automotive and filling stations (\$50 million), drugs and miscellaneous (\$47 million), food (\$28 million), and drinking and eating places (\$13 million). The large increase since 2019 is due in part to a new state law that went into effect in 2021 that requires out-of-state retailers, including e-commerce ones, to pay Illinois sales taxes where the purchaser is. This boosted municipal sales taxes.

The relocation of the city's two auto dealers to Braidwood will be a significant loss in sales tax revenue to the city. Automotive and filling stations account for 31% of total sales tax receipts, and the car dealers likely account for a very large share of this category.

Berkot's and Whitmore also have locations in most surrounding towns. They serve their local markets well and are important retail anchors.

Retail Sales & Spending Potential

On a per capita basis, Wilmington's consumer retail sales, based on data from sales tax receipts, averaged \$26,000, more than double that of Braidwood (\$11,000).

Visitors also contribute to local retail sales, especially those downtown. The extent to which Wilmington is attracting spending from outside of the community is evidenced by sales in a number of categories that exceed the spending potential of city residents, as estimated by Esri. For example, sales in eating and drinking (\$13 million) are almost double the potential spending of city residents (\$7 million), and food and alcoholic beverages (\$28 million) is double the local spending potential (\$14 million).

FIGURE 5.9
TOTAL CONSUMER RETAIL SALES
WILMINGTON & BRAIDWOOD, 2023
Sources: Illinois Department of Revenue; Esri

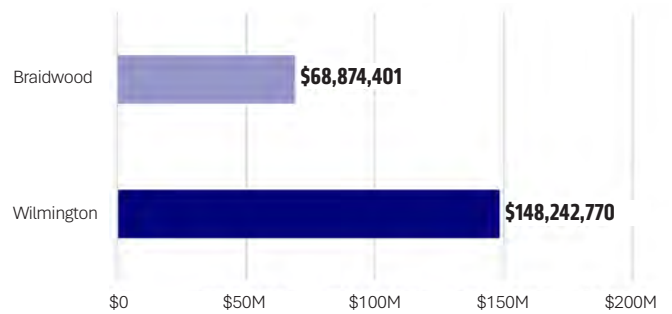


FIGURE 5.10
TOTAL PER CAPITA CONSUMER RETAIL SALES
WILMINGTON & BRAIDWOOD, 2023
Sources: Illinois Department of Revenue; Esri



DEVELOPMENT TYPOLOGIES **COMMERCIAL**

Resident Shopping Habits

Most Wilmington residents leave the community for their shopping needs. According to the online resident survey, most Wilmington residents do some of their shopping and dining locally, especially at downtown stores, restaurants and bars, and the two larger stores. Residents are also patronizing the local movie theater and bowling alley. However, they would like a more diverse mix of stores, restaurants and entertainment venues.

Given the lack of larger chains, residents leave the city for much of their shopping, heading to the Bradley/Bourbonnais area, Morris, Joliet and Shorewood which have a wide range of big box stores and a regional mall.

Jewel-Osco is under construction in Diamond and land for additional retail stores is being marketed adjacent to the grocery store. Land is also available across from Jewel for a strip center, though the owner/developer has not started construction or secured any tenants.

The Rock Run Collection, a new 500,000 square foot lifestyle center is planned in Joliet at the intersection of I-55 and I-80. It will be a major retail and entertainment destination at a highly visible location. This will be about 15-20 minutes' drive from Wilmington, closer than other big box stores in Joliet and Shorewood. It's likely to attract Wilmington residents, especially for restaurants, movie theaters, and specialty shops not found elsewhere.

These regional shopping areas are shown in the map in [Figure 5.11](#).

Retail Opportunities

Based on interviews with retail leasing brokers active in the Chicago metro area, Wilmington is not on their radar when it comes to seeking out sites for retailers. Downtown has a niche for antiques that is growing to include gifts and clothing. It is also home to several restaurants, bars and a coffee shop. Route 66 elicits a positive response from brokers and Wilmington has been successful in attracting out of towners to its downtown shops and restaurants. The Route 66 Centennial is in two years and there will be much attention paid to this. Wilmington needs to be part of this. The publicity about the Gemini Giant's future is an example of attention being paid to the community.

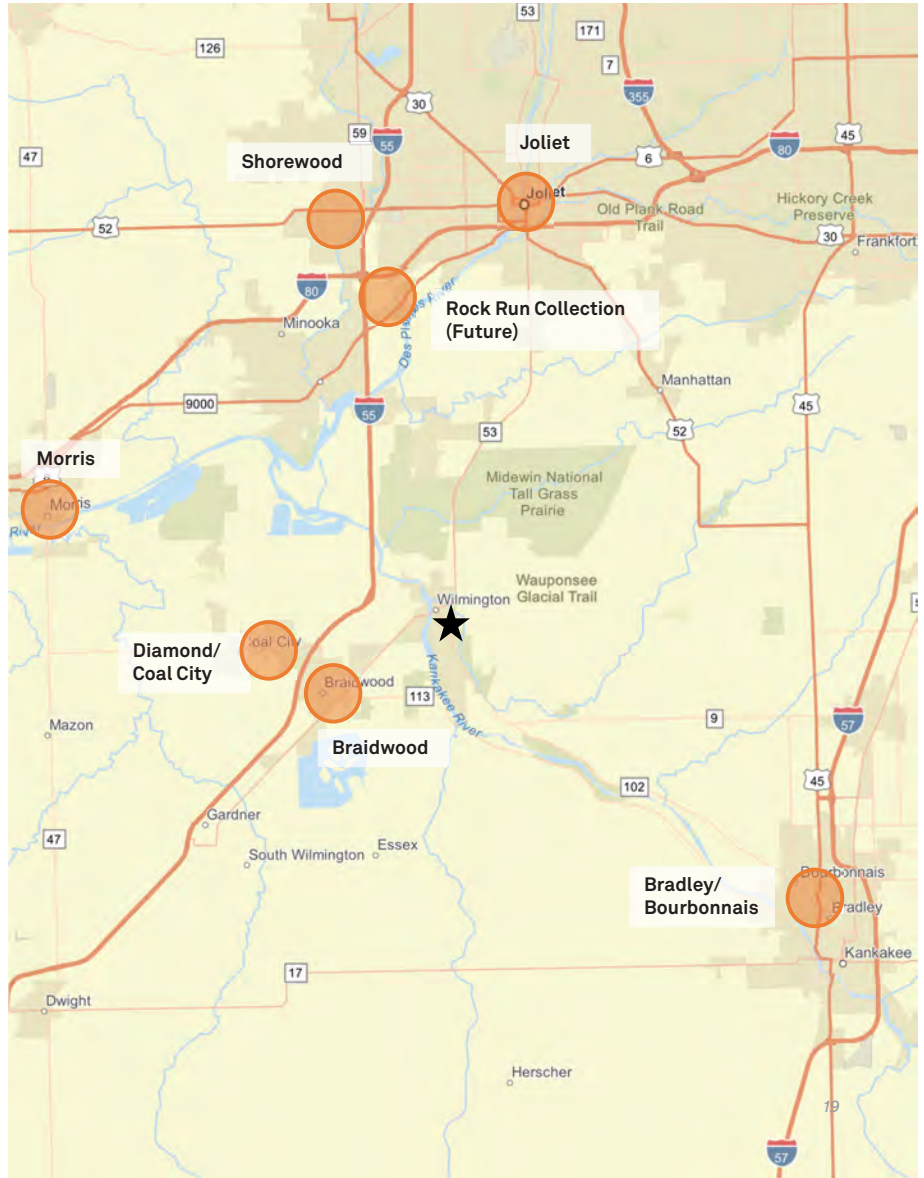


FIGURE 5.11
REGIONAL SHOPPING AREAS
Source: Esri

DEVELOPMENT TYPOLOGIES

COMMERCIAL

Most regional and national chains are looking for higher traffic counts and minimum density of 50,000 people within 3 miles. Wilmington's density and that of the 15-minute drive fall short of this. Nonetheless, individual retailers have their own requirements and new store decisions are based on the locations of their other stores, demographics, and competition. Outreach to desired retailers will determine whether Wilmington fits their criteria. Improvements to the I-55 interchange will be helpful in making it quicker to reach the heart of Wilmington, assuming signage is good.

Elion Logistics Park has plans for some retail and restaurant uses near the entrance to the park, but the intent is for businesses that will serve the employees at the park, rather than residents of the nearby area. However, with the reconfiguration of the I-55 interchange at Route 129, there could be opportunity for some highway-oriented retail. Love's is planning a truck stop with a convenience store and restaurant on Route 53 and Arsenal Road.

There is ample land available along Water Street and Route 53 for retail development. The shopping center on Water Street is underutilized and presents an opportunity for enhancement or redevelopment of a portion to meet modern retail standards.

Wilmington's river location, and its proximity to Midewin, forest preserves, lakes, and state parks provide excellent recreational opportunities. The City should try to build on these, with businesses that provide sporting and recreational goods and activities. The new kayak launch will be a wonderful addition. A possible riverwalk would also bring more activity and opportunities for outdoor dining downtown.

Locations for Future Commercial Development

Established commercial areas like Downtown Wilmington and the existing commercial areas along IL Route 53 and Water Street are the most logical places to locate future commercial development, which represent two of the City's five corridor subareas. This can occur as either new development sites or new businesses filling vacant properties.

By focusing commercial development in the downtown area and along IL Route 53 and Water Street, this approach will help Wilmington strengthen the quality of these areas and avoid a disconnected patchwork of commercial uses scattered all across the community, which would detract from community character and neighborhood stability. This approach will also reduce the cost of development since infrastructure and services will only need to be extended along major roadway corridors. In addition, transportation is a critical component to serve commercial centers and can be maximized in more focused areas.

Commercial uses can also occupy sites near Wilmington's industrial growth areas in the other three corridor subareas along Arsenal Road, Lorenzo Road, and Strip Mine Road. The Love's Travel Stop along IL Route 53 just south of Arsenal Road provides a foundation for future commercial development that may cater to the industrial uses along this corridor and nearby neighborhoods on Wilmington's eastern section. On the City's western section, commercial development can take advantage of I-55 access serving the industrial area along Lorenzo Road and a mixed use growth area along Strip Mine Road.

Recommended Commercial Uses

Based on community survey findings, respondents indicated strong support for more of the following types of commercial uses in Wilmington:

- Small retail shops
- Locally owned businesses
- Personal services (e.g., salons, animal care, etc.)
- Quick service restaurants (e.g., Panera, Jersey Mike's, etc.)
- Full service restaurants (e.g., Chili's, Olive Garden, etc.)
- Cafe, bakery, donut shop, etc.
- Entertainment
- Indoor recreation (e.g. gyms, yoga, pilates, youth sports, activity spaces for children, teens, and older adults, etc.)
- Other potential uses include children's soft play, pickleball, and climbing gym that would fill a void in the city as well as nearby communities
- Support for other commercial uses like big box retail stores, breweries, financial/business services, and lodging was lower but still notable

Examples of these types of uses are illustrated on the next two pages, along with identification of the corridor subareas in which such uses are most appropriate in Wilmington.



DEVELOPMENT TYPOLOGIES
COMMERCIAL



CASE STUDY

BUSINESS INCUBATORS

Most businesses will occupy their own space either in their own standalone structure or as a tenant in a multi-space development. However, there will be small business owners, entrepreneurs, home-based businesses, and fledgling restaurant or food concepts that may not be able to afford such a space at the early stage of operation.

That is when a business incubator can play a critical role in the community. Many municipalities across the region have established business incubator programs to provide temporary spaces for these small businesses to operate in a brick-and-mortar space to generate foot traffic, greater visibility, and local buzz as they gain a foothold in the marketplace.

Some of these businesses will find this crucial foothold and generate enough funds to find their own space to set up shop. Others may decide they are better off as a home- or web-based operation. Either way, a business incubator is an effective way for small towns like Wilmington to help such businesses with limited resources to find success.

Regional Examples

- McHenry Riverwalk Shoppes, McHenry
- The Rustic Fox, Carol Stream
- BoxCity, Chicago (Bronzeville)
- Picnic Ghost Kitchen, Chicago (Avondale)
- Berwyn Shops, Berwyn
- Batavia Boardwalk Shops, Batavia
- Batavia High School's INCubator Entrepreneurship Program, Batavia



DEVELOPMENT TYPOLOGIES

OFFICE

Offices uses in Wilmington are somewhat scattered across the community, including small medical and professional offices in the downtown area and along major roads like IL Route 53 and Water Street. Wilmington does not currently have a traditional office park with a concentration of offices in a single area. The office market is relatively low nationally and regionally; however, creative approaches to adding new office uses into the community can be explored as a means to diversify Wilmington's employment base and contributions to the regional office marketplace.

MARKET ANALYSIS

The following insights about office development in Wilmington are taken from the market analysis conducted for the City as part of the planning process. Findings from the community survey and other research also helped inform the following analysis.

Office Opportunities

While Wilmington is not likely to support a significant amount of new office space, there is an opportunity to provide space for co-working, professional, and small business offices. In addition, given the existing and growing senior population, another medical clinic, urgent care center, and allied health providers could be possible. Specialized care could also help make Wilmington a destination for center medical care and procedures that aren't presently available in the region. The City could reach out to hospitals in Joliet and New Lenox about the potential for expanding in Wilmington.

Unique Office Uses

Offices fit into a particular segment of a community's employment base and economic development strategy, particularly in the context of business districts and industrial areas. Office and business parks are increasingly making room for unique tenants beyond corporate headquarters, professional offices, and financial services. The examples illustrated in the **graphics on the right** can diversify the tenant mix of an office or business park, provide spaces for local entrepreneurs, and enhance the availability of employment opportunities.

Results from the community survey findings indicate support for professional offices, coworking and shared work spaces, research and development, healthcare, education,

and jobs and vocational skills training. Survey findings showed less support for life sciences.

Amenity-Rich Office Areas

These opportunities to grow the office market in Wilmington will help increase the local jobs base. In addition, office areas can enhance their attraction to the younger segment of the workforce by offering a range of amenities, as described in the case study on the **next page**.

Many of these office environments cater to entrepreneurship, creativity, and creation, which often thrive where similar or supportive businesses can collaborate in shared spaces and access shared amenities like conference rooms, printing and production supplies, private meeting spaces, kitchens with dining areas, and administrative support staff.

MARKET ANALYSIS

The following insights about office development in Wilmington are taken from the market analysis conducted for the City as part of the planning process.

Office Opportunities

While Wilmington is not likely to support a significant amount of new office space, there is an opportunity to provide space for co-working, professional, and small business offices. In addition, given the existing and growing senior population, another medical clinic, urgent care center, and allied health providers could be possible. Specialized care could also help make Wilmington a destination for center medical care and procedures that aren't presently available in the region. The City could reach out to hospitals in Joliet and New Lenox about the potential for expanding in Wilmington.



Coworking spaces and business incubators often serve as springboards for fledgling businesses and entrepreneurs to start small before branching out into larger spaces.



Healthcare, including clinics and training centers, may be attractive to serve a growing senior population, offer specialized services, and create competitive advantages in the region.



Makerspaces support creators and creative minds of all ages, from at-home hobbyists, amateur builders, and gamers to school STEM classes, robotics teams, and innovation labs.



Office parks are increasingly accommodating recreational spaces like youth swimming pools, gymnastics, indoor soccer, baseball/softball clinics, pickleball, climbing gyms, etc.



Nearby colleges and universities may seek to expand their footprint in unique office settings with academic programs and job skills training relating to local industries.



Tech startups, life sciences, and research and development uses often provide a suite of meeting spaces, resources, and amenities to recruit top-tier talent and like-minded businesses.

DEVELOPMENT TYPOLOGIES

OFFICE

Recommended Office Uses

The table below lists potential office uses that may be appropriate in Wilmington, particularly noting the suitability in the downtown area and/or the five corridor subareas.

	Downtown Wilmington	IL Route 53 Corridor	Strip Mine Road Corridor	Water Street Corridor	Lorenzo Road Corridor	Arsenal Road Corridor	
1: Medical offices or clinics	●	●	●	●	●	●	1: Medical offices or clinics
2: Urgent or immediate care	●	●	●	●	●	●	2: Urgent or immediate care
3: Allied health providers	●	●	●	●	●	●	3: Allied health providers
4: Specialized medical care	●	●	●	●	●	●	4: Specialized medical care
5: Coworking or share work spaces	●	●	●	●	●	●	5: Coworking or share work spaces
6: Business incubators	●	●	●	●	●	●	6: Business incubators
7: College/university satellite spaces	●	●	●	●	●	●	7: College/university satellite spaces
8: Makerspaces	●	●	●	●	●	●	8: Makerspaces
9: Innovation hubs	●	●	●	●	●	●	9: Innovation hubs
10: Yoga or pilates studio	●	●	●	●	●	●	10: Yoga or pilates studio
11: Gym or workout studio	●	●	●	●	●	●	11: Gym or workout studio
12: Indoor youth gymnastics	●	●	●	●	●	●	12: Indoor youth gymnastics
13: Indoor youth swimming	●	●	●	●	●	●	13: Indoor youth swimming
14: Trampoline or climbing gym	●	●	●	●	●	●	14: Trampoline or climbing gym
15: Mini golf and batting cages	●	●	●	●	●	●	15: Mini golf and batting cages
16: Indoor driving range	●	●	●	●	●	●	16: Indoor driving range
17: Pickleball	●	●	●	●	●	●	17: Pickleball
18: Café, bakery, or donut shop	●	●	●	●	●	●	18: Café, bakery, or donut shop
19: Food trucks	●	●	●	●	●	●	19: Food trucks

NOTE: This list is not an exhaustive list of all possible office uses; rather, it lists the most common uses that may be appropriate in Wilmington.

CASE STUDY

AMENITY-RICH OFFICE AREAS

Many offices in Wilmington will take the form of small formats, such as medical, dental, financial, or other small professional offices in a standalone building or as tenants in a multi-unit commercial strip mall. Some offices may occupy larger formats like an office park or area.

The office market at the local, regional, and national levels isn't as strong as it was before the COVID pandemic as more businesses shift to remote or hybrid remote/in-office models. However, a longer term vision for potential office growth in Wilmington should be prepared to design office areas in a more inviting manner to attract businesses and workforce talent. This can be accomplished by considering the integration of the following amenities:

- Plazas and green spaces
- Sidewalks and trail connections
- Collaborative spaces
- Outdoor work spaces
- Food truck hubs
- On-site childcare
- Fitness and wellness spaces
- Fast, reliable broadband internet
- Electric vehicle charging stations
- Shuttle or van service to key pickup points in the city or Metra stations in the region

National Example

Innovation Office Park, Irvine, CA: The Irvine Company designs unique and modern office parks across the country. One of their Innovation Office Parks provides space for small office users in an open-air, community-oriented setting with many of the amenities listed above (see image below).



DEVELOPMENT TYPOLOGIES

INDUSTRIAL

Wilmington’s industrial base evolved through a few different development trends over the City’s history. The initial industrial base took place adjacent to the downtown area to take advantage of the railroad and river access. Industrial uses expanded west of the river on both sides of the railroad tracks, particularly with the establishment of the Davy Industrial Park along Davy Lane linking 1st Street/Widows Drive to Strip Mine Road. The most recent industrial development is occurring in two of the five corridor subareas along Lorenzo Road and Arsenal Road, which will continue to be the primary focus of the growth in Wilmington’s industrial base. Strip Mine Road also presents opportunities to contribute to the industrial growth given its access to one of the City’s two interchanges onto I-55.

MARKET ANALYSIS

The following insights about industrial development in Wilmington are taken from the market analysis conducted for the City as part of the planning process.

Industrial Market Trends

Wilmington is in the Joliet sub-market of the Chicago metro area. As of year end 2023, the sub-market had 103 million square feet with a vacancy rate of 5.7%. This is higher than the regional vacancy rate of 3.7%, but nonetheless, reasonable. The submarket’s vacancy rate increased from 4.7% at the end of 2022 due to a significant increase in new construction.

Net absorption (the difference in the amount of space occupied from one period to another) was almost 5 million square feet in both 2022 and 2023, equal to 21% of the metro area total during the past two years. Absorption was down from the 2021 peak of 6.5 million square feet, but it is still slightly above the 9-year average. Asking rents in the Joliet sub-market range from \$6.15- \$7.35 per square foot on average, a 22% increase over the 2022 range.

Since 2020, the sub-market had record levels of new construction, with 2022 reaching almost 8 million square feet, the highest in the past 9 years. This contributed to the higher 2023 vacancy rate. Construction was still strong in 2023, with 4.2 million square feet under construction.

The metro area also experienced a very large increase in new construction, 29 million square feet in 2022, exceeding any prior year. However, the level dropped by more than half in 2023 to 13 million square feet as the market adjusts to the increase in interest rates and short-term oversupply.

The sub-market’s vacancy rate has decreased from a 2018-2019 peak of 11.4%, due in large part to the increased demand for large warehouse spaces for e-commerce during the pandemic.

The market is not as overheated as it was in 2021, during the pandemic, when demand for warehouse and distribution space was very high. However, this is still a very healthy industrial market, with interest from many businesses, including manufacturers, though warehouse and distribution dominates along I-55 and I-80.

FIGURE 5.12
INDUSTRIAL INVENTORY & VACANCY RATE
JOLIET AREA, 2015-2023

Source: CBRE



FIGURE 5.13
ANNUAL INDUSTRIAL NET ABSORPTION & CONSTRUCTION
JOLIET AREA, 2015-2023

Source: CBRE



DEVELOPMENT TYPOLOGIES **INDUSTRIAL**

Strong Industrial Base

Wilmington has a strong industrial base. Elion Park 55 at Lorenzo Road and I-55 is the largest industrial park in the city at 1,800 acres, with about 800 developed since 2012. Companies here include Amazon, Michelin, Post, General Mills, Wolf Products, Batory and Geodis. About 8 million square feet has been built to date in buildings ranging in size from 400,000 to 2 million square feet.

All but one of the buildings are owned by Elion and leased out. At completion, the park will have 21 million square feet which will likely take 9-10 more years. Elion is targeting large warehouse/logistics users, not manufacturing firms. Elion Park 55 is in a TIF district controlled by the developer, who can decide what incentives to grant to companies. The park is an enterprise zone, which is a competitive advantage.

Other major industrial employers in Wilmington include DuPont, Dow, United States Cold Storage, and Consolidated Pipe on the northeast side of the city. Davy Industrial Park along Davy Lane off 1st Street/Widows Drive caters to smaller industrial and service companies such as auto repair, cabinetry and self-storage.

Union Local 150 has a major training and skill improvement facility along Arsenal Road east of IL Route 53 and is considering expansion. Additional land is available along Arsenal Road for industrial development, but the increase in truck traffic is a significant concern for residents. As such, this needs to be addressed if more industrial facilities are to be built here.

Regional Industrial Market

To the south and west of Elion stretching into Grundy County, Burlington Northern has plans for a massive intermodal facility. Further south in Coal City, Inland Rail Park has 1,313 acres for industrial development at Reed Road and Broadway developed in conjunction with Union Pacific, but to date it has no users lined up or buildings under construction.

In addition to these projects, there is a substantial amount of industrially-zoned property in existing parks in Joliet and Channahon. These include Rock Run and Clarius Park in Joliet, several hundred acres at Centerpoint's intermodal facility, and 2,000 acres at Northpoint, the newest industrial park at the south end of Joliet (though not all of it is accessible at this time).

Brownfield Redevelopment

The industrial area around the north end of the downtown area offers opportunities for brownfield redevelopment, which is described in more detail on pages 58-59. While more needs to be evaluated and potentially remediated to make these brownfield sites available for possible redevelopment, they create distinct opportunities for Wilmington to increase the footprint of the downtown area and add a new mix of uses that enhance the attraction, character, and value of historic Downtown Wilmington.



DEVELOPMENT TYPOLOGIES

INDUSTRIAL**Future Industrial Development**

At the current average annual pace of 4-5 million square feet of space absorbed in the Joliet sub-market, land already zoned in industrial parks will last at least 15-20 years. Brokers commented that it can be more difficult to attract workers as far south as Wilmington as the potential workforce is much smaller than it is around Joliet. The lack of public transit is another factor making it more difficult to attract employees who don't live in the immediate area.

Future industrial development will occur along the Lorenzo Road and Arsenal Road corridors, primarily focused on heavy industrial, manufacturing, and logistics/trucking similar to existing industrial uses in these two areas. The Strip Mine Road corridor also presents opportunities for potential industrial development due to the corridor's access to I-55. Given the potential for housing, commercial uses, and open space along Strip Mine Road, the intensity of industrial development along this corridor may be less intense as the Lorenzo Road and Arsenal Road corridors.

Industrial sites can take a variety of forms and sizes. While industrial buildings will generally occupy a sizable footprint, they can be designed in such a way that adds positive value to the City's character and integrates natural features into their site design.



DEVELOPMENT TYPOLOGIES

INDUSTRIAL

Recommended Industrial Uses

The table below lists potential industrial uses that may be appropriate in Wilmington, particularly noting the suitability in the five corridor subareas.

Corridor	1: Manufacturing	2: Food production	3: Warehousing and distribution	4: Logistics	5: Storage	6: Offices	7: Factory store or related sales	8: Vocational skills training facilities	9: Automotive businesses	10: Gym or workout studio	11: Indoor youth gymnastics	12: Indoor youth swimming	13: Trampoline or climbing gym	14: Mini golf and batting cages	15: Brewery or winery	16: Food trucks
Downtown Wilmington	●															
IL Route 53 Corridor	●															
Strip Mine Road Corridor																
Water Street Corridor																
Lorenzo Road Corridor																
Arsenal Road Corridor																

NOTE: This list is not an exhaustive list of all possible industrial uses; rather, it lists the most common uses that may be appropriate in Wilmington. Industrial uses along IL Route 53 are most appropriate near Arsenal Road and Strip Mine Road, but not along other segments that run through the downtown area or existing neighborhoods (see Future Land Use Map for details).

CASE STUDY

COMMERCIAL IN INDUSTRIAL SPACES

Industrial parks are not just for industrial uses anymore. Commercial uses are increasingly becoming integrated into industrial parks. Some are standalone commercial uses like breweries, indoor youth gymnastics and swimming facilities, gyms, and trampoline parks, and climbing gyms.

Others take the form of a hybrid industrial/commercial enterprise, which are becoming more prominent by providing product creation, warehousing, and sales under a single roof. This model reduces transport and infrastructure costs, as well as attracts customers curious about the source and production of the items they purchase. The sales area or showroom typically occupies less than 20% of the building, with product creation and warehousing comprising the remaining floor area.

In particular, the WeatherTech Factory Store is known for providing a showroom for customers to view, test, and purchase car products, while the manufacturing and warehousing components are situated in the remainder of the building. Design of these hybrid enterprises depend on their footprint, truck and delivery needs, customer parking, and other aspects.

Regional Examples

- WeatherTech Factory Store, Bolingbrook
- Ashley Furniture HomeStore, Romeoville
- “Save”ty Yellow Products in St. Charles
- Two Brothers Tap House, Warrenville



OVERVIEW

BROWNFIELD REDEVELOPMENT

Brownfield redevelopment is the process of restoring previously unusable land for productive use. Remediation is often needed due to the presence or potential presence of hazardous substances, pollutants, or contaminants. While this may complicate the potential for expansion, redevelopment, or reuse, ambitious plans and proactive actions by property owners, developers, and municipal partners can make even the most daunting of brownfield sites ready for redevelopment.

In addition to restoration back to productive use, other benefits of brownfield redevelopment include reducing blight, boosting economic development, improving the environment, preserving green space, and providing better connectivity to adjacent neighborhoods or commercial areas.

Wilmington has multiple industrial sites that could be classified as brownfields. The most notable of Wilmington's potential brownfield sites are shown on the map in [Figure 5.14](#).³ The potential brownfield sites in Wilmington are primarily located north of the downtown area on both sides of the railroad. They offer opportunities to increase the downtown footprint and add a new mix of uses that enhance the attraction, character, and value of historic Downtown Wilmington.

³ This map is not meant to be a complete depiction of all brownfields in Wilmington, as additional sites could be identified with a more detailed analysis. Conversely, some sites may actually not be brownfields as officially defined by federal, state, and county agencies.



REMEDIATION

Many brownfield sites have former industrial uses that had significant impacts on the environment, including the soil and ground water below the site and natural elements like wetlands, trees, and floodplain. Environmental remediation — i.e., the process to restore the environment via the removal of contaminants or pollutants from soil, water, and other media — is typically required before a site is redeveloped to ensure the site is safe for reuse, particularly potential occupation by residents for developments with housing components.

MUNICIPAL STEPS

Wilmington can take certain steps to facilitate the brownfield redevelopment process, which may include (but not limited to):

- Engage property owners in continual conversation regarding potential redevelopment plans, site acquisition, site assembly, zoning procedures, remediation and redevelopment processes, etc.
- Pursue grants to help fund qualifying activities like remediation, site assembly, and redevelopment.
- Evaluate the potential to establish the City's second TIF district in the area including the potential brownfield sites.
- Provide support in the remediation process, such as coordination with Public Works and roadway jurisdictions.

- Host community meetings to keep the public informed and included in the redevelopment process.

FUNDING & RESOURCES

Grants and TIF funding can often be utilized to pay for different qualifying aspects of the brownfield redevelopment process, such as remediation, site assembly, and redevelopment.

Potential grants that support brownfield redevelopment are provided in the Implementation Plan in Chapter 6. One important resource in the region that offers brownfield support is the Will County Center for Economic Development (CED), such as the Will County Brownfield Assessment Grant Program in the case study provided below.

Regarding TIF funding support, the City presently has one TIF for the Ridgeport Logistics Center Intermodal Terminal Facility Area, which was created in 2010 and primarily covers the Elion 55 Industrial Park and vicinity west of I-55 in the Lorenzo Road corridor. While this Ridgeport TIF would not cover any of the City's potential brownfield sites shown on the map in [Figure 5.14](#), the City could establish a new TIF for this area for the purpose to support brownfield redevelopment and possibly other downtown development projects, depending on the extents of the TIF district boundaries.

CASE STUDY

WILL COUNTY BROWNFIELD ASSESSMENT GRANT

The Will County Center for Economic Development (CED) received a \$400,000 grant from the U.S. EPA to support brownfield assessments in three targeted areas (Joliet, Lockport, and Rockdale) and others that will be identified via community input. The intent of the Will County Brownfield Assessment Grant Program is to: (1) Minimize exposure to contamination to sensitive populations; (2) Increase productive site reuse of the targeted properties; and (3) Facilitate growth and quality of life improvement of the target areas.

The Will County CED intends to bring citizens, environmental regulatory agencies, and consultants together to find brownfield redevelopment solutions.



FIGURE 5.14
BROWNFIELDS MAP



LEGEND

- Potential Brownfield Sites

OVERVIEW

ACCESS & MOBILITY

Wilmington's transportation network is primarily defined by excellent interstate and regional access, which includes two interchanges off of I-55 and multiple arterials that provide general mobility for residents, workers, and visitors and serve as a key driver for economic development.

As illustrated on the Access and Mobility Plan Map in [Figure 5.16](#), the local transportation network presently serving Wilmington forms a solid foundation that can be reinforced with periodic improvements and strengthened connections to the regional transportation system. Given its strategic location, Wilmington is well positioned to leverage regional transportation options, including other roadways, transit, regional trails, and the potential for a regional airport.

A pedestrian- and bike-friendly community provides for safe access and mobility for people of all ages and abilities. This includes ADA-compliant facilities at crosswalks, parking lots, and entry points to buildings.

Collectively, all of these transportation elements help to make Wilmington an attractive destination to find a range of housing options, establish new businesses, contribute to the growing industrial market, and provide jobs for the region. They also add to the high quality of life enjoyed by current residents, workers, and businesses.



ROAD NETWORK

The roads making up Wilmington's road network are classified according to their function in the local circulation system, as shown on the map in [Figure 5.15](#). Proper roadway classifications ensure safe and efficient movement of vehicles to accommodate current traffic volumes and anticipate increases as new development occurs in Wilmington. It also helps to inform capital improvements programming and in the designation of specific roads for truck traffic.

The Wilmington area has active governmental studies at multiple locations, including along I-55 and IL Route 53, as illustrated in the graphics on [pages X-Y](#). Prior to advancing projects through a Capital Improvement Plan or Program, consideration should be made for these active assessments, studies, and design.

INTERSECTIONS

Signalized intersections within the City support the local, regional, and national roadway system. Wilmington is an urban area with controlled intersections, including signalized intersections at the following spots:

- IL Route 53/Peotone Road/ Kankakee River Drive
- IL Route 53/South Water Street
- IL Route 53/Strip Mine Road

Many intersections have needs for accessibility improvements to encourage safe pedestrian movement and activity. This may include ramp reconstruction with detectable warning tiles, sidewalk removal and replacement, ADA ramp construction, pavement markings, and signage. These are long term investments that carry value when combined with beautification. Suggested improvements include:

- IL Route 53/Kankakee Street - Update ADA ramps and crosswalks
- IL Route 53/North Water Street - Update ADA ramps and crosswalks
- Van Buren Street/North Water Street, including updated ADA ramps and crosswalks and USPS access from downtown

TRAVEL DEMAND ANALYSIS

Through the development of the Will County 2030 Transportation Plan, Wilmington is identified as a small subarea within the County that has a high instance of poorly performing roadways. Additionally, the subarea is a small contained system with limited access points.

Wilmington is within the Plan's Area of Concern 7 (AOC 7). AOC 7 encompasses Downtown Wilmington with access provided by I-55 and IL Route 53. Other major routes through the area are Water Street/IL Route 102 and Wilmington-Peotone Road. AOC 7 is moderately congested in downtown Wilmington and on IL Route 53 approaching the Kankakee River crossing. Projected growth by 2030 will increase congestion on I-55 north of the River Road exit and traffic congestion is expected to increase in Downtown Wilmington.

Analysis of travel patterns shows that traffic on Baltimore Street in Wilmington tends to show more use of state routes and Peotone Road rather than the interstate. It also demonstrates that the predominant travel demand in this area is oriented north-south. This pattern indicates a need for additional regional connectivity to the Center Point Distribution Facility, the City of Wilmington, and nearby centers of population and employment growth.

SIDEWALKS & TRAILS

Sidewalks are provided in most neighborhoods and commercial areas in Wilmington. However, sidewalks are noticeably absent in certain areas like the Davy Industrial Park, certain segments of IL Route 53, and even the Island Parks. While residential areas that have limited sidewalks are relatively friendly to pedestrians and bicyclists, commercial and industrial areas with disjointed or no sidewalks are less friendly. These areas provide opportunities to fill in sidewalk gaps, provide linkages, and improve crosswalk safety where feasible.

The trail network serving Wilmington is also fairly limited. Waupeonsee Glacial Trail is the most prominent regional trail, which is located on the far eastern edge of Wilmington's

planning area. Henslow Trail is another existing trail located along the far northern segment of IL Route 53 around Midwin National Tallgrass Prairie. The Millrace Foot Bridge is also a major trail feature linking Island Park North to the downtown area at Jackson Street.

New trails should be built as new developments create opportunities to link neighborhoods to parks, open space, schools, commercial areas, and other amenities. Potential trails are shown on the map in Figure 5.16. Trails can be designed as off- or on-street facilities, depending on the feasibility of retrofitting new trails to existing road rights-of-way (ROWs).

The ComEd ROW presents another opportunity to create trail connections with proper coordination with the utility provider.

TRANSIT

Wilmington is not presently served by Pace bus routes or Metra commuter rail within city limits. However, transit options are available to community members. Pace offers dial-a-ride service via its Access Will County, with passengers limited to people who are age 60+ or have a disability. Regarding Metra, Wilmington residents typically access stations in Joliet (Rock Island Line; 17 miles to the north) and Manhattan (SouthWest Service Line; 15 miles to the northwest).

Industrial parks and major employers can explore the potential to serve as focused transit sources. In particular, they may provide shuttle service between a Metra station or park-and-ride facility in nearby communities to industrial, office, and employment sites in Wilmington. The

City could also explore the potential to build a park-and-ride facility in town to access the Metra stations in Joliet and Manhattan.

Another option is microtransit, which is an emerging on-demand shuttle service inspired by ride share platforms like Uber and Lyft.

AIRPORT ACCESS

Wilmington is accessible to a few regional airports in Joliet (18 miles), Morris (23 miles), and Kankakee (26 miles). Larger international airports like Midway and O'Hare Airports are located 53 miles and 60 miles, respectively, from Wilmington. The planned third regional south suburban airport is 25 miles away in Peotone, creating another air travel option and generate potential economic development for Wilmington.

FIGURE 5.15
WILMINGTON ROAD NETWORK MAP

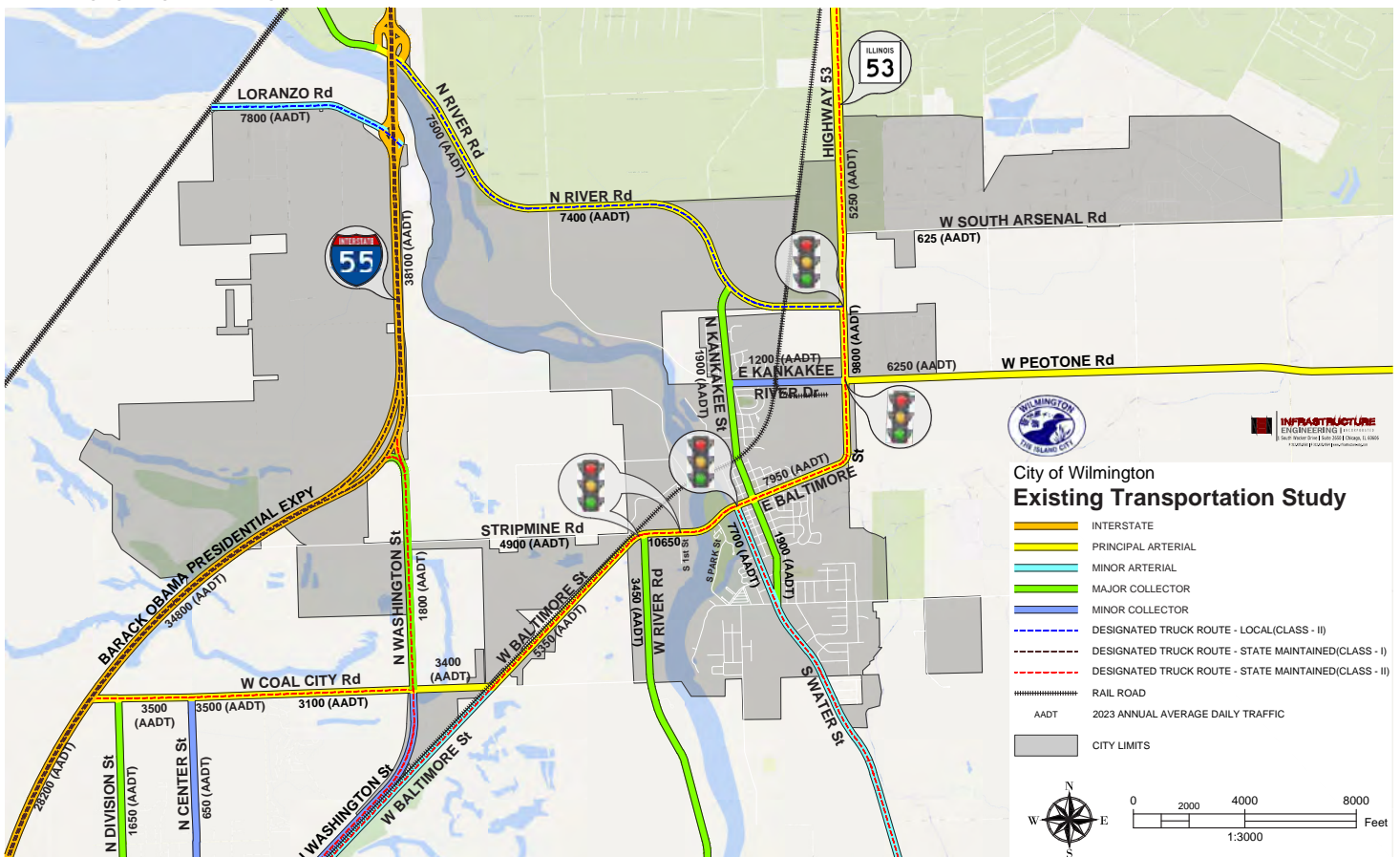
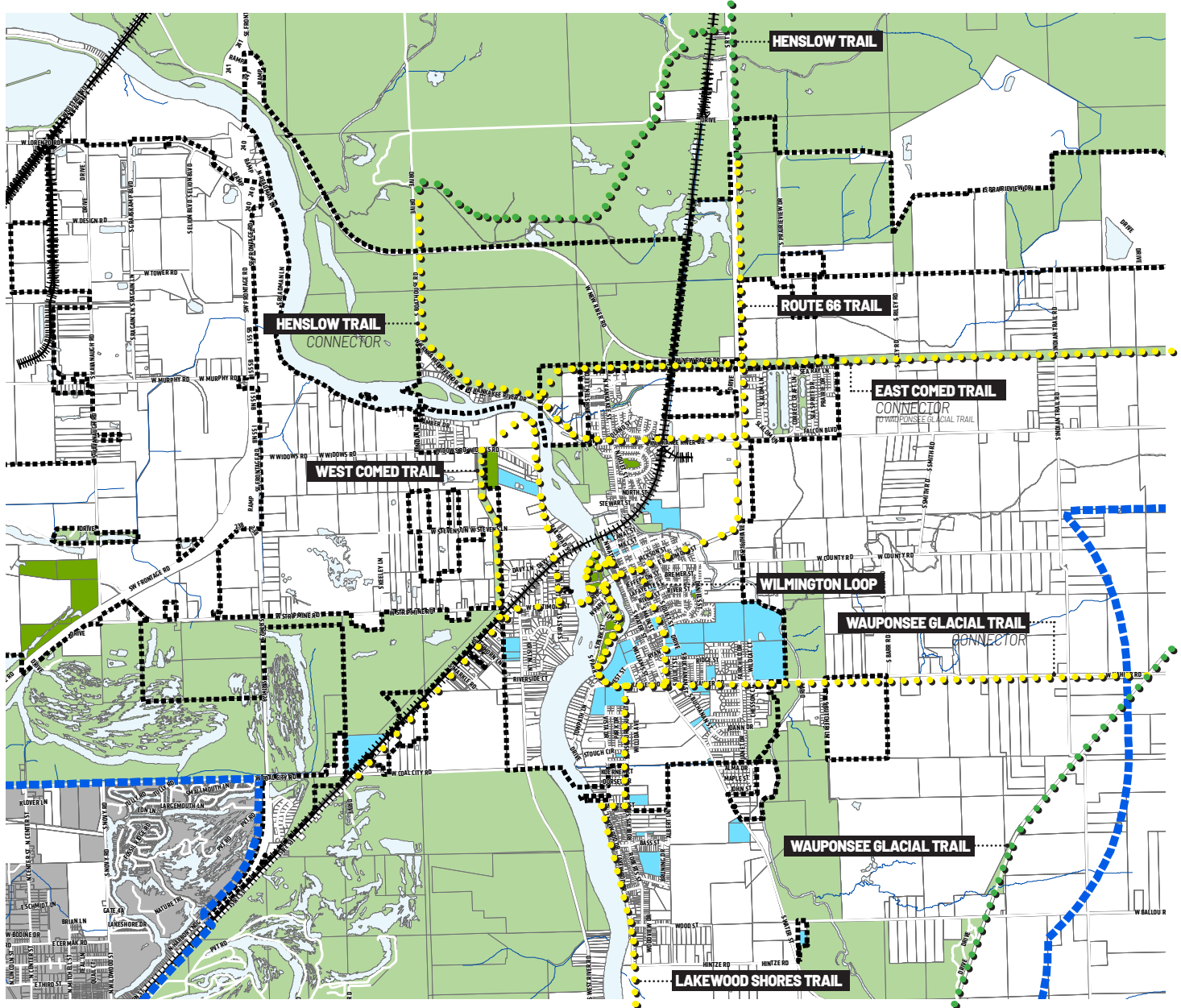


FIGURE 5.16
TRANSPORTATION PLAN MAP

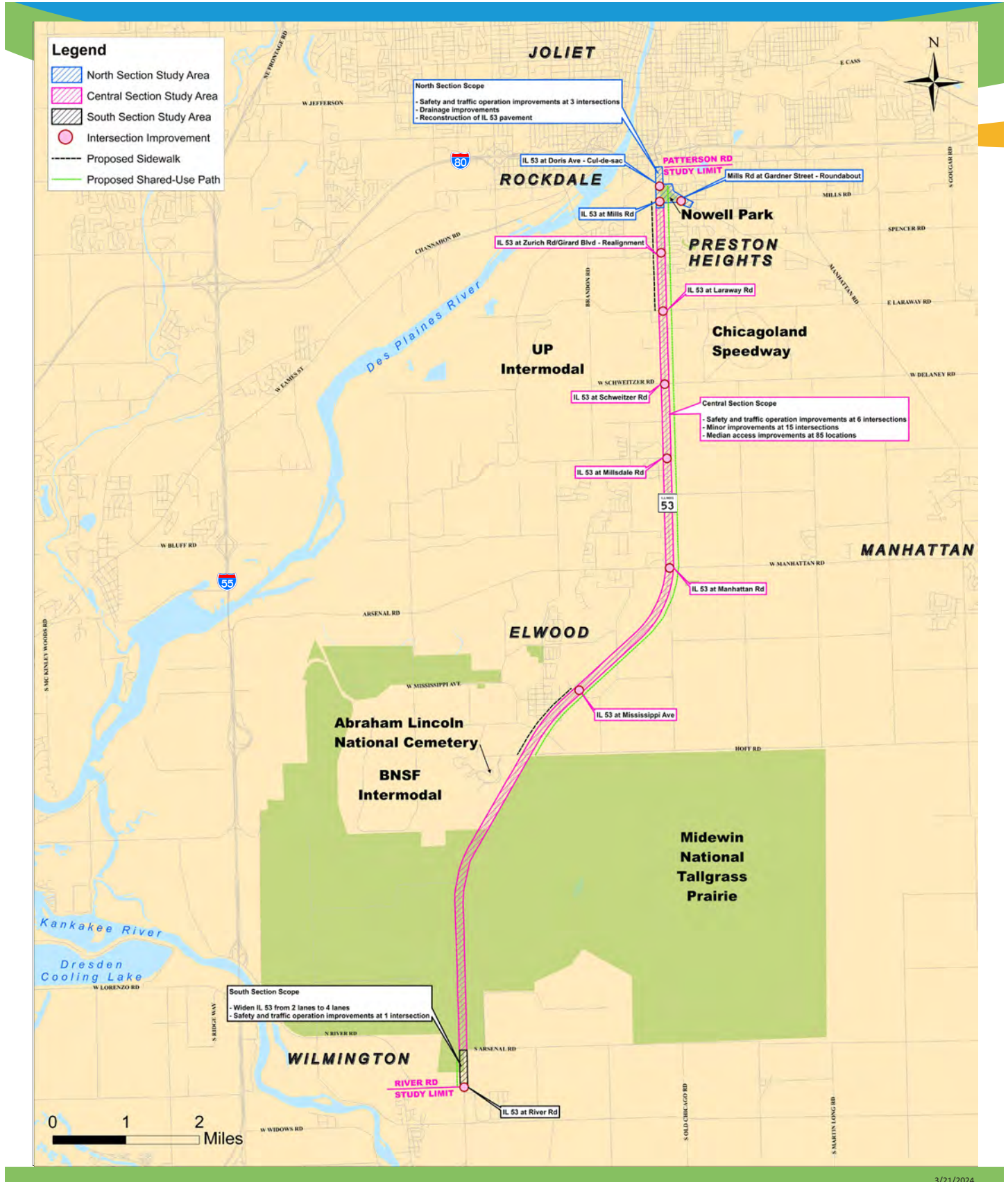


LEGEND

- Public/Institutional
- Parks and Recreation
- Open Space
- Municipal Boundary
- 1/2-Mile Planning Boundary
- Interstates
- Arterial Roads
- Collector Roads
- Existing Trails
- Potential Trails

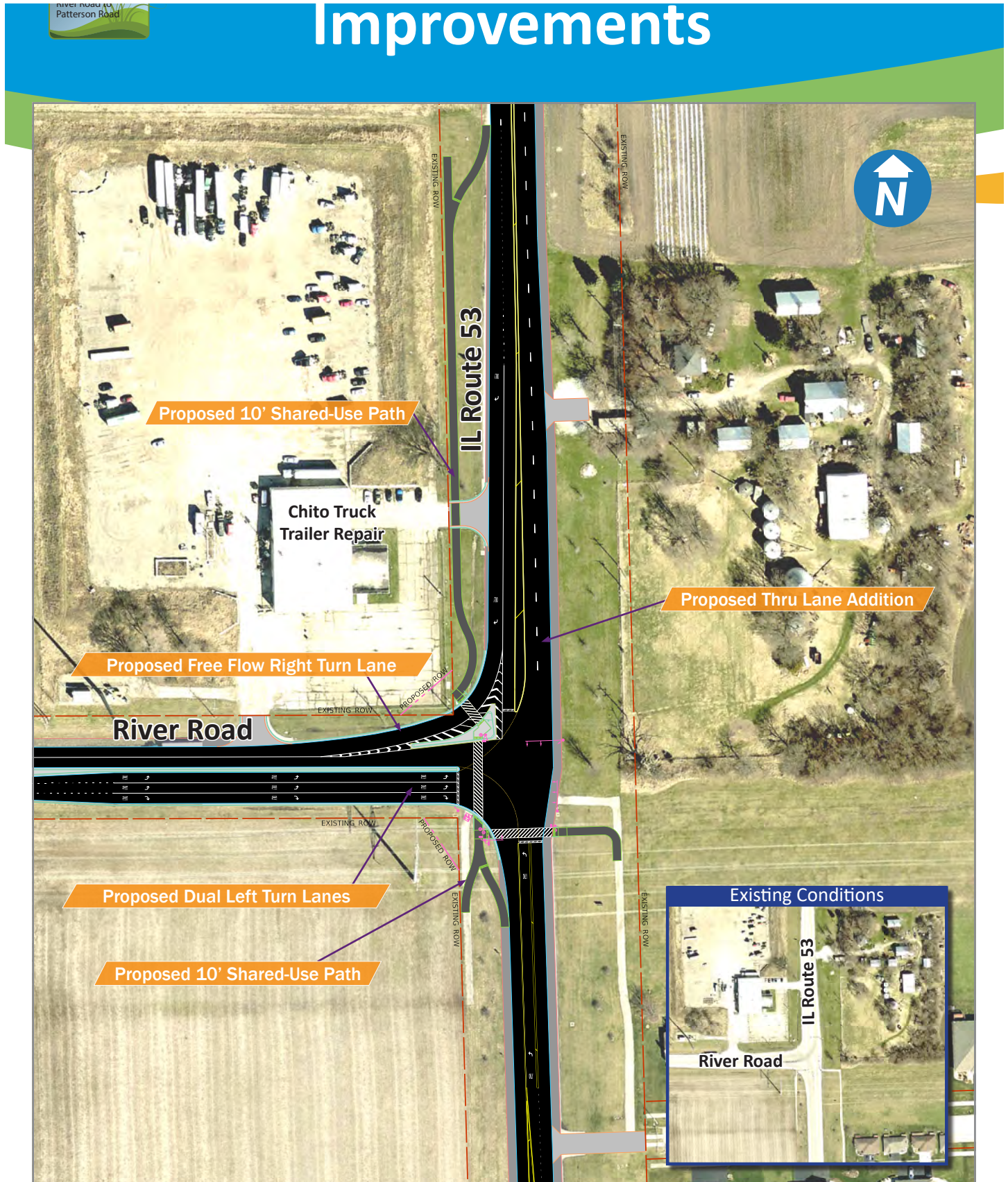
- EXISTING TRAILS** ●●●
- Wauponsee Glacial Trail
 - Henslow Trail
- POTENTIAL TRAILS** ●●●
- Wauponsee Glacial Trail Connector
 - Henslow Trail Connector
 - Lakewood Shores Trail
 - Wilmington Loop Trail
 - Route 66 Trail
 - East ComEd Trail
 - West ComEd Trail

FIGURE 5.17A
IL ROUTE 53 PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS | STUDY AREA



3/21/2024

FIGURE 5.17B
IL ROUTE 53 PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS | STUDY AREA



WATER & WASTEWATER

The City of Wilmington maintains its own fresh drinking water supply from the Kankakee River. Water is drawn from the river to the City's own Water Treatment facility and is distributed to customers of the utility.

The City also maintains a wastewater collection system and wastewater treatment facility. It is noted that there have been discussions about the potential for a new wastewater treatment plant, though this was noted as unnecessary due to projected load data generated by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) between January and June 2012 with comparison to the CMAP 2040 Population Projection.

Facilities for potable water and wastewater collection and treatment are advantages when discussing future demand. Much of the necessary infrastructure is in place for new development. It should be anticipated that future demand may present a need for utility renovations or new construction. In the event of that need, booster stations may be necessary for effective distribution of the water supply and sewage pumping stations should be anticipated in the event a gravity sewer is not available.

As is typical with aging infrastructure, unaccountable water loss in the distribution system (and often in the collection system) is a problem. Water loss in the system is often related to:

- Underground leakage
- Unauthorized use
- Unavoidable leakage
- Inaccurate master, industrial, commercial, and domestic meters

STORMWATER

Stormwater detention/retention ponds are typically included as part of major development sites that cover a significant amount of land. These detention/retention ponds contribute to the City's overall stormwater management system.

Wilmington should continue to promote best management practices (BMPs) for stormwater management, such as native plantings, bioswales, rain gardens, and other methods. In addition to decreasing stormwater

runoff, BMPs help to improve water quality in bodies of water, reduce long-term maintenance costs, and minimize harmful impacts on environmentally sensitive areas. Reduction of stormwater runoff is also critical to minimizing impacts on the floodplain and riverfront.

Native plantings are encouraged in detention/retention ponds to further enhance their capacity for stormwater management. They are also encouraged on private properties and in public areas like open spaces, utility corridors, and rights-of-way to provide for natural water filtration, reduced water consumption, wildlife habitats, and community beautification.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

A strong telecommunications system has progressively become a critical component of a community's infrastructure. This is increasingly apparent with more people working and learning from home, which requires reliable internet service to ensure residents, workers, and students can interact and access resources.

From an economic development perspective, internet service is an important infrastructure element that supports existing businesses and employers, as well as attracts new ones, to support their day-to-day activities and steadfast commerce. Stable and reliable internet service is crucial for on-site business operations that enable them to connect with clients, suppliers, customers, and third party web-based services.

According to the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO), Wilmington's 1/2-mile planning area is presently served by strong internet service from different providers. Internet service generally comes in the form of varying broadband infrastructure, including fixed and wireline, fiber, cable, DSL, and fixed wireless.

The overall strength of internet service across the region, particularly serving a growing industrial market, is an indicator that the network can boost any pockets of low service levels in less urbanized parts of Wilmington's planning area.

OVERVIEW

UTILITIES & INFRASTRUCTURE

As an established community with considerable room for new development and growth, Wilmington is generally well served by water, sewer, and wastewater utilities, which will need to be continually monitored as the City evaluates new development or redevelopment of existing properties. Improvement or replacement of current utilities infrastructure may be needed to ensure reliable service and adequate capacity.

Stormwater management is also critical to a river community like Wilmington. This was made even more crucial with the major flooding event that occurred in Winter 2023, which accentuates the potential for other significant flooding events. The City continues to make substantial strides to help minimize and manage future flooding events, underscoring the importance of having key infrastructure in place.

Often referred to as the fifth utility, a stable and modern telecommunications network is increasingly becoming a strategic factor that existing and new businesses seek in a place to set up shop. A reliable telecommunications network is also valuable to residents, students, and home- or web-based businesses.



OVERVIEW

COMMUNITY FACILITIES & ASSETS

Community facilities and assets form the cornerstones of a municipality, providing essential services, functions, and spaces to the community. Such elements generally include services, resources, and institutions that meet the civic, cultural, social, recreational, educational, spiritual, and health needs of the community, which are summarized on the Community Facilities and Assets Plan Map in [Figure 5.19](#). These community facilities and assets are maintained and operated by a range of municipal, public, quasi-public, and private entities, as described on the right.

As Wilmington manages the growth and development of the community, the City and its partners will continue to evaluate potential improvements and expansion to these services and functions to ensure they have sufficient capacity, are well-maintained, and are distributed equitably. This is particularly crucial to a municipality like Wilmington that has ample room for growth and development with its potential growth areas along its subarea corridors.



SCHOOLS

Wilmington School District #209-U serves local students at the following four schools:

- Bruning Elementary School [PreK-1]
- Stevens Intermediate School [2-5]
- Wilmington Middle School [6-8]
- Wilmington High School [9-12]

Higher learning opportunities in the immediate region include Olivet Nazarene University in Bourbonnais and University of St. Francis and Joliet Junior College in Joliet.

The current school system generally serves Wilmington well. Changes in the city and student populations will need to be monitored to assess future space and programming needs with proper coordination with the school district and other educational opportunities in the community.

PARKS & RECREATION

Wilmington is served by six parks:

- North Island Park
- South Island Park
- North Crest Park
- Claire’s Corner Park
- Brookside Park
- Veterans’ Memorial Park

North and South Island Parks are classified as community parks, while the other four parks are categorized as neighborhood parks.

Residents are also served by Water Street Fitness, which is located in the Wilmington Island Park District building. The schools also provide sports fields and gymnasiums.

All parks and recreational facilities located within city limits are located east of the Kankakee River, except for the North and South Island Parks that are in the river. This skewed distribution is expected given how a majority of Wilmington’s neighborhoods are located on that side of the river.

Specific strategies for parks and recreation identified in the Implementation Plan in Chapter 6 primarily mirror the strategies provided in the 2024 Wilmington Parks Master Plan, which was created concurrently with this Comprehensive Plan.

Cinder Ridge Golf Course is located outside city limits but within Wilmington’s planning area. Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie and other nearby nature preserves and regional open spaces provide opportunities for passive recreation (see [pages 70-71](#) for more information).

Population growth will generate demand for more park space and recreational opportunities. Even as the Future Land Use Plan shows a majority of the residential growth east of the river, a more balanced distribution of parks and recreation facilities on both sides of the river should be pursued as best as possible to best serve all residents.

CIVIC USES

City Hall and Police Department are located across from each other along Water Street providing long term capacity for city services and programs. In addition to general city administration, City Hall houses the departments for buildings, zoning, and public works.

Public safety is handled by the Police Department, Wilmington Fire Protection District (FPD), and Wilmington Emergency Services Disaster Agency (ESDA). Wilmington FPD operates out of their downtown fire station, with their firefighters also trained as EMTs and paramedics.

Located on the edge of downtown, Wilmington Public Library provides library services and other learning opportunities to the community.

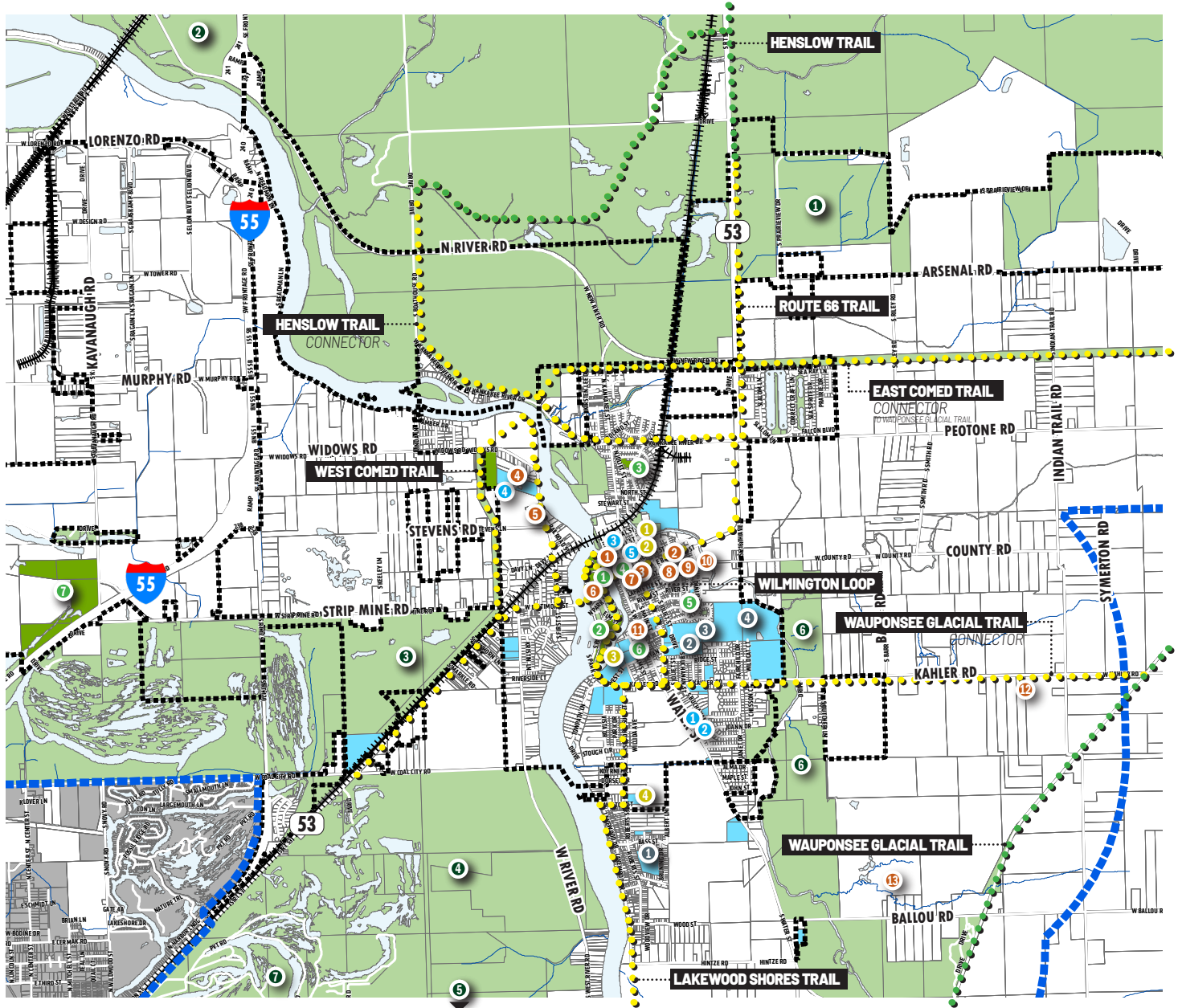
OTHER ASSETS

Wilmington is served by other assets that add to the City’s quality of life, provide spaces for civic engagement, and support tourism:

- Historic Downtown
- Historic Route 66
- Multiple historic landmarks*
- Wilmington Historical Society
- Gemini Giant
- Mar Theatre
- Mt. Olivet Cemetery
- Oakwood Sunset Cemetery
- Multiple churches*
- Multiple social fraternities*

*SEE COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND ASSETS PLAN MAP FOR COMPLETE LIST

FIGURE 5.19
COMMUNITY FACILITIES & ASSETS MAP



LEGEND

- Public/Institutional
- Parks and Recreation
- Open Space
- Municipal Boundary
- 1/2-Mile Planning Boundary
- Existing Trails
- Potential Trails

CIVIC USES

- 1 City Hall
- 2 Police Department
- 3 Fire Department
- 4 Public Works Department
- 5 Public Library

SCHOOLS

- 1 Bruning Elementary School
- 2 Stevens Intermediate School
- 3 Wilmington Middle School
- 4 Wilmington High School

OTHER ASSETS

- 1 Gemini Giant
- 2 Mar Theatre
- 3 Mt. Olivet Cemetery
- 4 Oakwood Sunset Cemetery

PARKS & RECREATION

- 1 North Island Park
- 2 South Island Park
- 3 North Crest Park
- 4 Claire's Corner Park
- 5 Brookside Park
- 6 Veterans' Memorial Park
- 7 Cinder Ridge Golf Course

OPEN SPACE

- 1 Midwin National Tallgrass Prairie
- 2 Des Plaines Prairies Land and Water Preserve
- 3 Hitts Siding Prairie Nature Preserve
- 4 Wilmington Shrub Prairie Nature Preserve
- 5 Sand Ridge Savanna Nature Preserve
- 6 Forked Creek Nature Preserve
- 7 Braidwood Dunes and Savanna Nature Preserve

HISTORIC ASSETS

- 1 Historic Downtown
- 2 Historic Route 66
- 3 Wilmington Historical Society
- 4 Soldier's Widow's Laundry
- 5 Bowen-Tyrakowski House
- 6 North Island City Memorial Flagpole
- 7 Old City Hall
- 8 Willard House
- 9 McGinnis-Kahler-Hackett House
- 10 Small-Towle House
- 11 Aldrich-Schutten House
- 12 Lovell Farmstead
- 13 Gooding Issert Farmstead

OVERVIEW

NATURAL RESOURCES

The Wilmington area is rich in natural elements that enhance the community in multiple ways, particularly adding to local character, supporting stormwater management, and providing habitats for native wildlife. As shown in the graphic below, Wilmington receives a NatureScore of 80.2, which is in the highest percentile range of 80-100 characterized as a "Nature Utopia."

Local stewardship of the natural environment is encouraged to elevate the community's commitment to protect environmental features, conserve open space, and engage community members.

Protection of natural resources plays an important role in preserving the small community feel of Wilmington. In addition, resource conservation relates to the exploration of renewable energy sources, as summarized on the right.



OPEN SPACE

In addition to local parks, Wilmington is surrounded by a notable network of regional open spaces. Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie and the other nearby nature preserves

With such a rich system of open spaces, conservation of such spaces is paramount to protect these natural resources. Open space conservation enables Wilmington to protect the natural ecosystem, soften the hardscapes of development, and provide opportunities for trails and other recreation.

Stormwater management facilities like bioswales, detention/retention ponds, and rain gardens add to the city's open space system. This is prominent in industrial areas like Elion 55 Logistics Industrial Park and newer neighborhoods like Waters Edge Estates.

Conservation and utility easements also contribute to open space. For example, the ComEd right-of-way (ROW) runs through many of the future residential growth areas, serving as a buffer to adjacent non-residential uses and creating potential opportunities for trails along the utility ROW.

In addition to natural open spaces, constructed open spaces like civic squares, plazas, etc. are considered part of the open space system. While these types of spaces are typically open to the general public, they may be located on either public or private property. Such spaces are becoming more prevalent providing opportunities for civic engagement, community events, and light recreation like outdoor yoga.

ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES

The Kankakee River is the most prominent environmental feature in Wilmington contributing to natural stormwater management, wildlife habitats, tourism, and recreational opportunities. Other waterways include Forked Creek, Jordan Creek, and Prairie Creek.

Wetlands and other smaller bodies of water are located across Wilmington's planning area, particularly in the regional open spaces. The river and creeks are mostly lined by trees, which add to the extensive tree coverage that characterizes the regional open spaces.

With a system rich with sensitive environmental features, future development should prioritize protection of these elements. Where appropriate, certain environmental features can be carefully integrated into the site designs of future developments.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Environmentally responsible energy generation and consumption should be considered as Wilmington evaluates sustainable approaches to development. A commitment to renewable energy may include the potential to update the Zoning Code to provide standards for renewable energy elements described below.

While renewable energy approaches can be incorporated at a larger community scale, they also enable individual property owners to play a role in being energy conservation stewards, making their own properties more sustainable, and garnering cost savings.



Wind Energy

Many communities are providing wind energy standards in their zoning codes. While this can include wind farms of varying sizes, small scale wind turbines are often found in industrial and office parks to provide localized sustainable energy sources.

Solar Energy

Similar to wind energy, many communities regulate solar energy systems of varying sizes by establishing zoning standards. Small scale solar energy systems often take the form of solar panels on residential and commercial rooftops and on industrial properties.

Electric Vehicles

In addition to updating their codes to regulate electric vehicle (EV) charging stations, communities are finding ways to utilize EV charging stations as a means to support economic development by attracting EV drivers to visit local businesses as they wait for their vehicles to charge.