



Overview

South Main Street is considered one of Rockford's most important transportation corridors linking Downtown and surrounding neighborhoods to U.S. Highway 20 and the Chicago Rockford International Airport. Historically, South Main Street, in an area between the Rock River, Chestnut Street to the north and Kent Street to the south, was once Rockford's economic center as textile mills, metal fabricating, furniture-making and other industries were first established. The construction of the first permanent dam along the Rock River in 1856 and the arrival of the Galena and Chicago Railroad in 1857 further fueled the growth of additional industries and adjacent residential areas along South Main for several decades well into the 1900s.

The height of South Main's industrial dominance came with the construction of the Barber-Colman twenty-building factory complex from the 1900s to the 1950s. South Main's first residential subdivision was platted in 1852 and many of the street's first commercial buildings were later constructed during the 1880s as Italian immigrants settled in Southwest Rockford. Today, the industrial, commercial and residential land uses that remain along this part the Corridor are testament to South Main's economic, social and historic importance to the City of Rockford.

Currently, South Main Street is one of three primary routes into Downtown Rockford from the interstate system and a key gateway to both the City and Airport. It runs parallel to Kishwaukee Street which also provides access to Downtown from U.S. 20. However, unlike Kishwaukee Street, which is characterized by more industrial and commercial development, South Main Street has numerous personalities, or Character Zones, along its route to Downtown. In addition, IDOT has proposed major roadway improvements to the South Main Corridor, which will transform it into an even more significant gateway for the City.

The South Main Street Corridor study area extends approximately 4.3 miles from the Airport on the south to Cedar Street on the north, connecting to Downtown (also see **Figure 2.1: Regional Transportation Context** and **Figure 2.2: Study Area Context**). The land use character shifts from rural/agricultural on the south to a more urban context on the north. The Corridor contains a wide range of land uses, including commercial, residential, industrial, educational and institutional. For the purposes of this report, the Corridor was broken down into four Character Zones:

Character Zone A: Cedar St. to Michigan Ave. (Figure 2.4)

Character Zone B: Michigan Ave. to Harrison Ave. (Figure 2.5)

Character Zone C: Harrison Ave. to U.S. Highway 20 (Figure 2.6)

Character Zone D: U.S. Highway 20 to the Airport (Figure 2.7)



Graham-Ginestra House



Capitol Theater



*South Main Street and Kent Street
(Source for images: 1974 Illinois
Historic Landmarks Survey)*

Land Use



The key commercial and retail core on South Main Street extends from Kent Creek to Salter Avenue.

The Character Zones described herein start on the northern portion of the study area at Downtown and work south to the Airport (also see **Figure 2.3: Corridor Character Zones**).

CHARACTER ZONE A: CEDAR TO MICHIGAN (FIGURE 2.4)

Zone A, bounded by Cedar Street on the north, the Rock River to the east, Winnebago/Court/West Streets on the west and Michigan Avenue on the south, contains a wide variety of land uses, including residential, industrial, commercial and institutional. A large portion of Zone A is comprised of traditional urban neighborhoods with a mix of single-family homes and multi-family residential buildings. The core “neighborhood” services/shopping and commercial district within the Corridor is found primarily from Kent Creek to Salter Avenue, although other more auto-oriented commercial is found further to the south along South Main. This two to three block area retains some vestiges of a traditional urban commercial “main street” character, highlighted by unique architecture and narrow but walkable streetscape areas.

Most of the east portion between South Main and the Rock River consists of large industrial buildings and former industrial sites. Many of these are vacant “brownfield” sites, defined by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as “real property, the expansion, redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant.” Despite the brownfield designation, this area clearly represents the epicenter of Rockford’s industrial past. Current active industrial/manufacturing users include W.A. Whitney, Rockford Bolt & Steel, Grafcor Packaging and Rockford Foundries.

Commercial

The key commercial and retail core from Kent Creek to Salter Avenue includes a variety of services and shops such as convenience stores, small restaurants, a barber shop, drinking establishments, automobile repair centers, a laundromat and other neighborhood services. With the exception of Family Dollar, the area is comprised of businesses that are locally owned and operated. Currently, many of the storefronts are boarded up and/or appear vacant. There are vacant properties that create gaps in the building street frontage, which has contributed to a lack of a real neighborhood shopping environment.



Vacant La Familia market

A significant stretch (1200 lineal feet) of vacant commercial frontage is found between Loomis Street and Lane Street, one block east to Rock Street. Within this stretch of street frontage is the recently vacant La Familia grocery store and the still active Family Dollar to the south. These buildings are set back a great distance from South Main Street and do not contribute to the traditional commercial streetwall formed

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by the older buildings to the north. This property was developed in a more suburban “big box” approach, thus leaving the street frontages for future individual “outlot” commercial development not consistent with restoring a traditional retail character.

Other commercial properties are scattered south of Lincoln Avenue on both sides of South Main, including a florist, gas station, liquor store and bar/night club. These businesses are interspersed between small single-family residential properties and vacant buildings and do not form a continuous, cohesive commercial “district.” Many of the properties in this area between Lincoln Avenue and Marchesano Drive on the east have been purchased by the State for the new realignment of South Main Street.

Industrial

A large portion of the land from Cedar Street to Kent Creek west of South Main Street is comprised of a rail yard. This area of approximately 27 acres stretches to Winnebago Street on the west and contains numerous rights-of-way owned by multiple railroads. Currently, the property is largely undeveloped and contains only two 2 to 3 story buildings on the frontage of South Main Street and an old, deteriorating train station (demolished, April 2011). This conglomeration of rail properties is located in a prime position immediately adjacent to Downtown Rockford and a future Amtrak station. New development at this catalytic site could be instrumental in bridging the physical gap from Downtown to Southwest Rockford and the rest of South Main Street. Because the rail yard is a brownfield area, environmental assessments and cleanups are anticipated prior to redevelopment.

East of South Main Street, the north portion of the Corridor study area contains approximately 61 acres of industrial/manufacturing property. Some of the buildings contain active users, but a significant portion is comprised of brownfields, abandoned buildings and/or vacant lots, including the Barber-Colman complex. The Barber-Colman site, over the last nine years, has been the subject of many redevelopment/reuse concepts and scenarios. Available redevelopment sites, sizes and conditions vary greatly in this area. Generally, planning strategies will need to be created that allow for a more compatible and transitional land use/urban design pattern between the active industrial/manufacturing district and the smaller, traditional neighborhood residential and commercial areas.

New development at the catalytic rail yard site could be instrumental in bridging the physical gap from Downtown to Southwest Rockford and the rest of South Main Street.



W.A. Whitney is an active industrial use on South Main.



Vacant industrial building



The old depot is found on a portion of the vacant rail yard site immediately south of Downtown. This passenger platform and depot were demolished in April 2011.



Single-Family homes along Main Street



Residences on the east between Lincoln and Michigan Avenues



Tinker Park



The Ethnic Heritage Museum

Residential

West of South Main Street and south of the Tinker Swiss Cottage Museum is predominantly comprised of traditional single-family neighborhoods on small lots. There are a variety of multi-family apartment buildings, as well as several single-family homes that have been converted to 2 and 3 flat apartments. Extending south in Zone A, South Main Street is fronted by individual residential properties interspersed between commercial and institutional uses. Building conditions here vary from poor to good.

Additionally, many of the commercial buildings/properties along South Main contain residential apartment units on the upper floors. These residential units are found primarily north of Loomis Street in older 2 and 3 story buildings.

Institutional

A number of key institutions, landmarks and culturally significant uses are found in this Character Zone. These include: Tinker Swiss Cottage Museum, Booker Washington Community Center, the Ethnic Heritage Museum, King Elementary School, the Montague Branch Library, St. Elizabeth Community Center and a number of churches. These cultural and historic resources anchor the neighborhood, attract people to the area and are important cornerstones from which to build as the area undergoes future redevelopment. It is critical that these institutions are recognized and made active partners in the implementation process.



St. Elizabeth Community Center

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Open Space

Zone A contains three primary public open spaces, including Davis Park, Tinker Park/Booker Park and South Park. Davis Park, located along the Rock River frontage, functions as one of the prominent Citywide gathering spaces and is the location for outdoor concerts during warmer months and ice skating in the winter. Tinker Park and Booker Park essentially combine into one large open space containing not only the museum campus and passive recreation, but also two playgrounds, full court basketball and two tennis courts. South Park contains active recreation opportunities including 2 softball/baseball fields, a playground and basketball courts and canoe launch access, as well as direct access to the Rock River.



South Park provides a variety of active recreation options.

CHARACTER ZONE B: MICHIGAN AVENUE TO HARRISON AVENUE (FIGURE 2.5)

Zone B extends from Michigan Avenue to Harrison Avenue and is bounded by the river on the east and Clifton/Clover on the west. A large portion of the property south of Klehm Arboretum is located in unincorporated Winnebago County, with the exception of the parcels on the southeast corner of Harrison Avenue and South Main and the parcels bounded by Prairie Road, Springfield Avenue and South Main. Much of this portion of the Corridor has a more open natural character, highlighted by Klehm Arboretum on the west and generally low-density housing adjacent to the river on the east.

Commercial

Primary commercial/shopping in this area is provided by a corner strip center development located west of South Main Street on Marchesano Drive. This area contains a well-visited Mexican restaurant, convenience retail store, small grocery/market, beauty supply store and a bakery. Other sporadic vacant businesses and commercial properties are found between Blackhawk Avenue and Pond Street along South Main Street.



Strip center development on Marchesano Drive and South Main Street



A gas station is located adjacent to a vacant commercial parcel at the Harrison and South Main intersection (Source: Google Images).

A large vacant shopping center is found south of Marchesano Drive west of South Main Street. This 4-acre parcel consists of abandoned retail buildings and a deteriorated surface parking lot. It has been previously noted as a prime redevelopment opportunity site.

Further south at the Harrison Avenue intersection, a gas station/convenience store is located on the east side of the street, adjacent to a vacant parcel that immediately fronts South Main. The vacant parcel was recently proposed for strip commercial development, but currently the project remains on hold.



The 4-acre vacant shopping center south of Marchesano Drive has been noted as a prime redevelopment opportunity site.



Well-maintained homes west of South Main

Residential

Zone B contains a wide variety of housing types. The blocks between Cole Avenue and Pond Street west of South Main Street, as well as Parkview Terrace on the east, are made up of consistently uniform and well-maintained single-family homes. On the east, a new partially completed condominium development is located adjacent to the Rock River. Further south, a mobile home development is found on approximately 18 acres of property along the river in a flood prone area.



Mobile home park adjacent to the river

Institutional

Two notable institutional uses found in or around this zone of the Corridor include Poor Clares Corpus Christi Monastery between Cole Avenue and Marchesano Drive and Julia Lathrop Elementary, located west of the South Main off Ogilby Road. Although the Monastery does not generate activity for the Corridor, it provides a clean and green landmark gateway to South Main at a very visible intersection.

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Open Space

Klehm Arboretum and Botanic Garden is a major regional activity generator located in the Corridor. It attracts visitors from around the greater tri-state region. Klehm's frontage was recently consolidated and reorganized with the reconfiguration of the Clifton Avenue intersection. This created a large open space bounded by South Main, Pond Street and Clifton Avenue and has been identified as a potential major gateway for the Corridor's south entry.

The Klehm site is approximately 155 acres and includes an education center, demonstration gardens and a special events garden with performance stage. It attracts about 30,000 visitors per year and is part of a six garden coalition, Great Gardens of Rockford, which markets other key garden destinations in the area, such as Tinker Swiss Cottage Museum and Gardens, Anderson Japanese Gardens and LaPaloma Gardens. Klehm also has the capacity to host gatherings of approximately 200 people, which can be seen as a positive for the Corridor.

Outside of the Corridor study area east of the Rock River, Blackhawk Park and Marinelli Stadium provide the City with a number of active and passive recreational activities. This attractive riverfront park includes playgrounds, baseball/softball fields, a rugby field and a large natural riverfront space with a shelter and hiking paths. Some participants in stakeholder interviews noted that Blackhawk Park is underutilized and could be used for larger festivals and gatherings and should be considered an asset for the community due to its relatively close location and access to the Corridor.



River view from Blackhawk Park



Klehm Arboretum and Botanic Garden is a major regional draw for the area.

CHARACTER ZONE C: HARRISON AVENUE TO U.S. HIGHWAY 20 (FIGURE 2.6)



Bing's Drive-In (Source: Google Images)



Mobil gas station at Southrock Drive



Multi-family apartment complex set back from South Main Street

Zone C consists of a mix of residential, industrial, recreation and commercial land uses. A significant portion of this segment of the study area is in Winnebago County, including the large parcels surrounding the U.S. Highway 20 interchange. This section of the Corridor has a decidedly more rural character with large wooded areas, low density housing, fewer streets accessing South Main and very few commercial land uses.

Commercial

This zone currently contains very few commercial land uses. Due to the lack of dense residential development in the area, the commercial uses are more auto-oriented. Notable uses include Bing's Drive-In restaurant north of Sauk Lane and a newer Mobil gas station accessed from Southrock Drive.

Residential

Much of the South Main Street frontage on both sides of the street is comprised of deep lots containing larger single-family homes, although an older 2-story multi-family apartment complex is set back from South Main about ¼-mile south of Harrison Avenue. An older, more traditional single-family neighborhood is located off Iroquois and Seminole Avenues. This neighborhood consists of primarily 1970s/1980s ranch-style homes generally in fair condition. A small mobile home park is also located on the west side of the South Main south of Springfield Avenue.



An older single-family neighborhood is accessed from Iroquois and Seminole Avenues.

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Industrial

Southrock Industrial Park is located off Southrock Drive on the west side of South Main Street. This modern industrial park contains a variety of manufacturing, warehousing and distribution facilities, such as Jackson Warehouse Company and FedEx. Its proximate location to the Airport and easy access to U.S. Highway 20 make it an ideal employment center for the neighborhood and the City. Generally, the park is well maintained with good access and an interconnected grid street system.



FedEx distribution facility

Additionally, two other active industrial users, Rock River Disposal (a waste management/disposal/recycling facility) and Galger Engineering are located in this area adjacent to the Black Hawk Fire Station.

Open Space/Recreation

Rocky Glen ATV, a 120-acre off-road ATV facility abuts U.S. Highway 20, South Main Street and the Rock River. This property contains large areas of undeveloped land functioning as trails, a lake, a small administrative building and parking facility.



Southrock Industrial Park has a low vacancy rate and is an important employment center.

CHARACTER ZONE D: U.S. HIGHWAY 20 TO AIRPORT (FIGURE 2.7)



Tractor sales retail center



Mobile home park on the south end of the Corridor



Chicago Rockford International Airport

Zone D contains a large amount of agricultural and undeveloped property, a small amount of residential land, a church and limited commercial property. With the exception of the Airport at the southern end of the South Main Corridor, the character of the area is more rural than further north along the Corridor.

Commercial

Zone D contains a few auto-oriented commercial businesses close to the Airport. These include a storage facility and gas station/convenience store south of Aquamarine Drive. A tractor sales retail center is located on the west side of South Main.

Residential

A large mobile home neighborhood approximately 78 acres in size is located on the east side of South Main Street in this zone. Pelley Road, Onyx Parkway and Aquamarine Drive provide access to this neighborhood from the west. The condition of the homes ranges from poor to fair.

A range of single-family homes are found on large lots fronting South Main and Pelley Road in this area.

Industrial

The Chicago Rockford International Airport is a general aviation and commercial airport. It is home to the second-largest air hub sorting facility in United Parcel Service's system, while also providing a home to smaller DHL and BAX Global facilities. With 78,000 passengers a year, it focuses on providing vacation charters to popular non-stop seasonal destinations, but has also provides non-stop services to such commercial airline destinations as Las Vegas, Phoenix, Cancun and a number of Florida cities.

Institutional

The Faith Center Church has multiple facilities on the west side of South Main, including a church, school and youth center. Construction began for a new 2000-seat church facility in 2008, but has since stalled due to credit issues.

Open Space

Gem Field Park is an older park facility with access from Aquamarine Drive on the east of South Main. It contains a playground, softball field, a lodge and has access to the Rock River. The facility appears dated and a portion of the park was surrounded by a chain link fence with a locked gate and did not appear to be open to the public.

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Physical Conditions

Overview

The physical appearance of South Main Street is critical to maintaining and reestablishing commercial, office and residential property values, fostering an active pedestrian-oriented environment, attracting new businesses and providing a high quality of life for residents. In short, the physical conditions affect the “curb appeal,” as well as foster the wrong perceptions of Southwest Rockford. These physical conditions address buildings, sidewalks, streets, parking areas, landscape, streetscape and signage.

Overall the South Main Street Corridor, including the surrounding context, has areas in need of significant improvement to features such as building facades, deteriorating sidewalks and streets, signage, alleys and parking lots. However, as previously discussed, there are several “highlight areas” to build upon along South Main, such as Klehm Arboretum and riverfront views and access. The following is a brief description of the physical conditions by zone.

Building and Property Conditions

CHARACTER ZONE A: CEDAR TO MICHIGAN (FIGURE 2.4)

The predominant “neighborhood” commercial core of South Main Street is found between Kent Creek on the north and Salter Avenue on the south. This commercial district consists primarily of early 20th century 1 to 3 story commercial/mixed-use buildings with generally consistent setbacks that form a solid “streetwall.” While many buildings along South Main Street in this area appear to be in fair to good structural condition, several buildings are unattractive and show signs of deterioration. Many of these buildings have been modified from their original architecture with low-quality materials and are in need of façade enhancements. Other buildings have large, brightly colored signs or sign clutter, boarded up or broken windows and/or old, faded awnings. These properties negatively impact the area, add to poor perceptions of South Main Street and the surrounding neighborhood and create the feel of a nonexistent retail district.

For a more detailed discussion on notable historic buildings in the area, see the following sub-section, **Historic Resources**.

In addition to the older commercial blocks, large, vacant industrial buildings and sites and brownfields contribute to creating an appearance of decay and inactivity. This condition also creates areas that are difficult to police and maintain. As previously discussed, the north portion of the Corridor contains a significant amount of vacant properties, including the rail yard, as well as abandoned industrial buildings. It should be noted that there are several existing active industrial uses weaved into these vacant or abandoned block conditions.

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Examples of storefronts in the main “neighborhood” commercial core of the Corridor.



Examples of physical conditions found within the industrial portion of the Corridor study area.



The vacant rail yard property just south of Downtown (Source: Google Images).



Current conditions at the rail yard site (both images above).

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While some of the properties are generally in good condition, such as W.A. Whitney, many of the buildings and sites are deteriorating and several area streets, drives, curbs and sidewalks are not well maintained. In many cases, service, loading and storage areas are unscreened, site parking is disorganized and little to no open or green space exists.

In an effort to improve these deteriorating conditions, the City and other organizations have been actively acquiring a number of the older industrial properties and/or buildings and have targeted plans to demolish, reuse or clear many sites in the north portion of the Corridor. Environmental cleanup is an important component of many of these redevelopment plans. Key targeted properties include:

- **The Barber-Colman complex:** Demolition of some of these old industrial buildings has begun. Several key buildings are being preserved in a concerted effort to attract future adaptive reuse. Multiple plans and redevelopment scenarios or uses have been proposed for this area over the years. Today, it still remains a large key catalytic site within the Corridor study area. Much of the environmental cleanup for this site has been completed.
- **Amerock Building:** While the City targeted this older multi-story facility for demolition, local preservationists have requested the demolition be put on hold to provide for a defined time line to seek a reuse for this facility. The Illinois Historic Preservation Agency is reviewing an application for placing the building on the National Register of Historic Places. Depending on the outcome of this review, the building could either be converted to another use (should a private investor come forth) or the property could become an extension of Davis Park as part of a larger riverfront master planning effort and rebirth.



Barber-Colman complex



Amerock Building (right) and Tapco (left)



Nelson Knitting Company (Source: Google Images)



A number of buildings have been or will be demolished as part of the Morgan Street Bridge project, creating opportunities for better access to the river. These buildings are shown in red above.



Cleared site at the river south of the Morgan Street Bridge

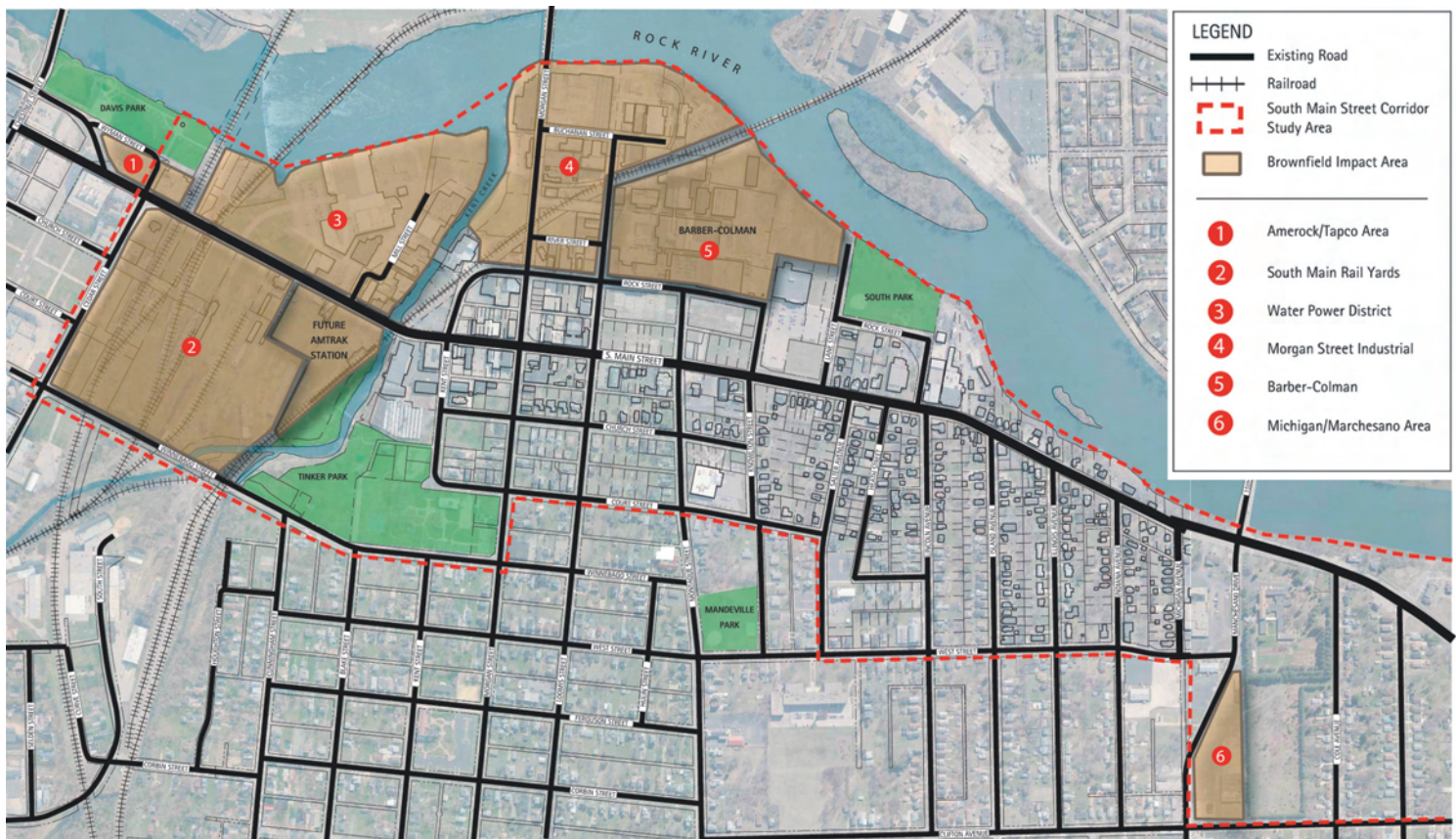
- **Tapco Building:** In November of 2010, the City voted to purchase the Tapco building for demolition scheduled in the Summer of 2011. The property will be cleared and graded and used as expansion land to Davis Park/riverfront improvements.
- **Nelson Knitting Company:** The Tinker Swiss Cottage Museum is currently in the process of acquiring the old factory contiguous with their property and will engage in a study to determine potential reuses for the building, including exhibit space, a banquet hall, restaurant and/or a museum shop.
- **River Frontage:** The City purchased and cleared/graded a large portion of these riverfront parcels south of the Morgan Street Bridge as part of the bridge's reconstruction, which will ultimately provide access to an interconnected bike path system along this beautiful stretch of the river (also see graphic to the left). See the **Transportation + Infrastructure Section** for further discussion regarding the bike and greenway plan.

Also within this portion of the Corridor, the City has identified six Brownfield Impact Areas that have been used in grant applications for clean-up and redevelopment planning funds. These Brownfield Impact Areas include many of the sites listed above. Preparing these areas for redevelopment involves multiple phases of environmental assessment and clean-up of potential contaminants before developers can be attracted to the sites. These Brownfield Impact Areas include:

- **Amerock/Tapco Area:** A Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) has been prepared for both of these sites. Phase II is 75% complete for the Amerock site and 50% for the Tapco site. Both sites were acquired by the City during 2010.
- **South Main Rail Yards:** A Phase I ESA has been completed for this 5-acre City-owned site with Phase II 80% complete. Demolition of the two structures on the site is 90% complete. The City's Comprehensive Plan envisions only the northern- and southern-most rail corridors will be remaining within the next five years, leaving the remainder of the site as a redevelopment opportunity.
- **Water Power District:** No Phase I or II ESA's have been performed within this area, although there is a serious need to address the vacant and blighted industrial properties that surround W.A. Whitney.

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- **Morgan Street Industrial Corridor:** A Desktop Phase I was performed for this area and it is recommended that a full Phase I ESA be performed for each parcel in the area. It is unknown what the extent of “cleanup” will be needed in the area.
- **Barber-Colman:** Both Phase I and Phase II ESA’s have been performed and Cleanup is 90% complete. The City is currently investigating reuse opportunities for the remaining 11 buildings and site.
- **Michigan/Marchesano Area:** This area has not yet been assessed and is in need of an initial Desktop Phase I. Some sites may be petroleum sites that are not known at this time.
- **Other smaller parcels:** A number of smaller parcels are contained within the Corridor. These may include former industrial, manufacturing, gas station and dry cleaner sites. No ESA’s have been performed at this time.



Brownfield Impact Areas as defined by the City

West of South Main Street, the neighborhood is predominantly traditional 1 and 2 story single-family homes ranging from poor to good condition. Many former single-family homes have been converted to 2 to 3 flat multi-family residences in these blocks. There are a number of vacant parcels interspersed in the neighborhood. Many of the single-family homes immediately fronting South Main (between Lincoln and Illinois Avenues) are in poor condition and appear to be vacant.



Many businesses have multiple curb cuts and lack parking lot screening.

Within this zone of the Corridor, there are a number of surface parking lots abutting the public sidewalk. They generally lack any screening, buffering and/or landscaping. Some of these lots have multiple curb cuts or driveways onto to South Main that create pedestrian/vehicular conflicts. Currently, based on field observations, there appears to be ample surface parking (including on-street and off-street parking combined) serving the existing core commercial district. However, the IDOT reconstruction of South Main will remove all on-street parking to accommodate a new road configuration, new pedestrian sidewalk areas and better turning movements. Therefore, it is important to consider strategies for shared off-street public surface parking lots that are strategically located and ensure the area has the proper amount of parking for any future redevelopment.

The existing alley and service areas for commercial and industrial buildings are not well maintained and lack screening and landscaping. The areas on the east of South Main are visible from Kent, Morgan and Loomis Streets and have deteriorating, unattractive rear building and street conditions. The alleys also in poor condition on the west of South Main are often shared with residences and should be brought up to a better level of maintenance.



The existing alley and service areas for many buildings are not well maintained.

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CHARACTER ZONE B: MICHIGAN TO HARRISON (FIGURE 2.5)

The commercial buildings located between Michigan Avenue and Marchesano Drive are generally 1-story structures set back from the street. The buildings lack the same “main street” architectural detail and definition of the core commercial area to the north. Most of these businesses have small parking areas in front of the building with multiple curb cuts. The frontages of these properties lack any buffering, screening and/or landscaping. Stakeholders at the Open House and focus groups indicated that this type of “strip” development does not represent the desired character of the neighborhood and expressed the desire for this area to be “cleaned up.” As previously mentioned, a large vacant shopping center south of Marchesano Drive also detracts from the visual character of the area, as do a number of other vacant buildings and sites on the west side of South Main between Cole Avenue and Pond Street.

Generally, the single-family homes in this portion of the study area, including those on Cole, Ogilby, Blackhawk and Clifton Avenues (west) and Parkview Terrace (east), are very well maintained. These streets have curbs, gutters, lawn parkways, sidewalks and some mature street trees. The newer townhome condominium development on the east side of the street also significantly contributes positively to the area’s appearance. This new development provides a stretch of new multi-use path and brick and metal fence along South Main Street and a clean loop drive with sidewalks and open views to the river. This development exemplifies some of the new level of “detail” and design standard needed in future development along South Main Street.

The condition of the mobile home development between Parkview Terrace and Harrison Avenue is generally poor. Many of the homes in this floodplain area are in disrepair and/or are not well maintained. Streets in this unorganized subdivision are not paved. Focus group participants expressed the desire to see this property redeveloped due to its proximity and access to the river, as well as its general appearance, negative impact on the Corridor’s character and poor physical conditions.

The Springfield/Harrison Avenue intersection has a portion of undeveloped land along the frontage of South Main. The property from Springfield Avenue to Prairie Road is currently vacant. As a result of these two vacant parcels on South Main, the equipment inventory of the adjacent property is visible from South Main. This unattractive appearance at a “key character gateway zone” detracts from establishing the South Main Street Corridor’s identity or brand.



The new condominium development east of South Main contributes positively to the Corridor.



The mobile home development east of Clifton/South Main lies within the 100-year floodplain.



The tractor sales display area lacks screening.

CHARACTER ZONE C: HARRISON TO U.S. HIGHWAY 20 (FIGURE 2.6)



The older residential neighborhood in Zone C lacks curbs, gutters and sidewalks.



A chain link fence surrounds Rock River Disposal's property, which detracts from its appearance.



Well maintained landscape perimeter at the Mobil gas station.



The storage facility has a large unscreened paved area fronting South Main (Source: Google Images).

Overall, due to the relatively more rural, undeveloped character of this portion of the Corridor, there are fewer buildings along the frontage of South Main Street. This zone of the Corridor contains large swaths of wooded areas that enhance the character and feel of the roadway and approach into Downtown urban areas.

The larger single-family homes fronting South Main Street are generally 1 to 2 story structures ranging in condition from fair to good. The larger single-family residential neighborhood to the east (located within Winnebago County) consists of older ranch homes in fair condition. The neighborhood street system lacks curbs, gutters and sidewalks.

As previously noted in the Land Use Section, Southrock Industrial Park generally has a clean appearance with attractive gateway signage and landscaping, well-maintained buildings, facilities and streets. Building service areas are generally not visible from the primary street frontages and the buildings and parking lots are well situated and oriented. The development still has a few vacant parcels, but these appear clean and well managed.

Rock River Disposal has landscaped berm screening for a portion of the facility's service yard. However, a chain link fence with razor wire also surrounds the entire property, which detracts from the Corridor character and appearance. In addition, there is no screening for the remaining parking lot to the south where large trucks and service vehicles are parked. Galger Engineering, located further north, also has a large unscreened parking lot adjacent to the South Main right-of-way.

The Mobil gas station appears well maintained with a landscaped perimeter that includes trees and a shrub hedge. Access for the gas station is located from Southrock Drive (within the City of Rockford) and there are not curb cuts from South Main, which helps establish a better overall appearance.

CHARACTER ZONE D: U.S. HIGHWAY 20 TO AIRPORT (FIGURE 2.7)

The mobile homes in the northern portion of this zone range in condition from poor to fair with many of the homes showing signs of deterioration. Many of the properties in this development appear unkempt and have accumulated trash and outside storage on their lots. The streets are paved and have curbs, but lack sidewalks and roadway lighting. Additionally, there appear to be a number of vacancies found within the neighborhood. Many participants in focus groups and the Community Open House discussed the possibility of redeveloping this area due to its deteriorated condition and proximity to the Airport and access to South Main and U.S. Highway 20. Many feel this area would be better suited for industrial uses.

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The public storage facility on the east of South Main has a significant amount of unscreened paved area and an unattractive chain link fence surrounding the property. The adjacent Road Ranger gas station immediately to the south lacks trees and landscaping along the perimeter of the parking lot. Across the street (west), the tractor sales stores and displays large vehicles outside around the building, which appears haphazard and deters from establishing a consistent Corridor character. These properties, including the mobile home development, are all located within unincorporated Winnebago County.

Streetscape

The conditions of the South Main Street streetscape, as well as those of local streets serving the neighborhoods, play an important role in defining the Corridor as a prominent gateway into Downtown Rockford. They will also play a large part in distinguishing Southwest Rockford as a viable, pedestrian-oriented “district” and/or destination. Key streetscape elements that were evaluated include:

- Street width and condition
- Crosswalk placement, marking and condition
- Sidewalk width, condition, material and uniformity
- Outdoor public/private spaces and plazas
- Pedestrian and street lighting type and placement
- Street furniture condition and placement
- Landscaping condition and maintenance
- Signage condition and location

The following is a brief description of the current streetscape conditions found throughout the area. Further discussion regarding existing conditions, as well as IDOT planned improvements can be found in the **Transportation + Infrastructure Section**.

In general South Main Street currently lacks a consistent, unified and attractive Corridor streetscape appearance. Small portions of the street have seen improvements in recent years, such as the frontage along Klehm Arboretum at Clifton Avenue and a stretch of new roadway construction on the far south end of the Corridor. However, overall the condition of much of the roadway is poor, particularly on the north, with potholes, broken asphalt and many sidewalks in disrepair. Little to no accessibility improvements are provided at intersections and street crossings.



Typical roadway conditions on the north include potholes and broken sidewalks.



Narrow sidewalk in the north zone of the Corridor



The frontage at Klehm was recently improved.



Existing sidewalk conditions are not conducive to a safe, accessible pedestrian environment.

At the northern end of the study area, the streetscape takes on a more urban character, with concrete sidewalks ranging in width from 8 to 15 feet adjacent to the buildings, a limited number of trees in grates and a few scattered moveable planters. The sidewalk narrows in some areas to less than 5 feet, such as the block between Morgan and Loomis Streets. With overhead street light poles, signs and other obstructions, these narrow widths are not conducive to creating a safe pedestrian-oriented environment. The street generally lacks any consistent street trees. Benches, bike racks, planters, trash cans and landscaping are for the most part nonexistent. Additionally, there are not defined bus shelters or waiting areas or other transit amenities. Many stakeholders in discussions also noted the lack of gathering spaces, such as pocket parks and plazas within the core commercial district.

Currently, South Main Street lacks a single standard lighting style. A mixture of taller “cobra” style roadway lighting and smaller scale pedestrian lighting is used to light various street areas and intersections closer to the north commercial core. However, stakeholders noted that this area still appears dark, which adds to a feeling that the area lacks safety, creates an environment that fosters crime and does not provide security for businesses and residents of Southwest Rockford. The feeling and general response from users outside of the Corridor supports this perception.

On the southern end of the Corridor, the roadway conditions and surface quality are better. There are still many stretches of South Main that do not have sidewalks or defined crossings at intersections. With the reconstruction of the roadway, new 5-foot (minimum) wide sidewalks are planned for much of the Corridor, as well as shared multi-use paths in many areas. The wooded landscape character for the southern portions of the Corridor defines Character Zones C and D by providing a significant green edge for large segments of the roadway. This character should be maintained and built upon as the IDOT streetscape improvements and plans are being finalized.

Signage

Stakeholders also discussed the lack of consistency in building signage, as well as the ineffectiveness of the existing directional signage and lack of gateway signs. Several area businesses have unattractive signs that detract from the streetscape. Some business signs also need maintenance and repair. Well-designed signs can add to the variety and interest of a commercial streetscape, as well as facilitate access to stores for pedestrians and motorists. Signage located at the rear of a building can also facilitate movement of pedestrians from parking areas located within a block or behind a commercial building. Business signage should be looked at simultaneously with façade improvements.

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The Corridor also lacks gateway, identity and effective wayfinding signs that identify it as a unique place and facilitate access to key locations, institutions and parking. Other major arterial roadways in the City, such as State Street, have gateway or identity signs that signify the entrance or arrival to Rockford or a particular district.



Business signage should be examined simultaneously with facade improvements to help establish a unified district.

Unified District

Overall, there is a need to define the South Main Street as an important, unified corridor, including identifying Southwest Rockford and commercial areas as unique districts. A cohesive streetscape and signage design, along with improved business signage and facade enhancements would signify a positive change and provide a more attractive front door to the community, neighborhood and Downtown. The Corridor's Character Zones, or personalities, should help determine a unified, yet transitional approach to a new streetscape character. District or area gateway opportunities exist, which should help define the South Main Corridor and Southwest Rockford.

Historic Resources

The South Main Corridor has a number of historically and architecturally significant properties several of which are listed in the National Register of Historic Places and designated as official City of Rockford Landmarks. The National Register of Historic Places is this nation's official list of historic buildings, structures and places worthy of preservation. City Landmark designation, whether individually or as part of a local historic district, is administered by the City's Historic Preservation Commission. To be listed in the National Register of Historic Places, an individual property or group of properties that may comprise a district must meet one of the following criteria for historic and architectural significance:

- A. Properties associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Properties associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
- C. That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- D. That has yielded, or may likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

National Register listing provides protection only for impacts related to federally or state funded, licensed or permitted actions. Commercial and income-producing properties, however, are eligible to receive federal Historic Preservation Tax Credits for qualified rehabilitation expenditures. The Historic Preservation Tax Credit Program is administered by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency (IHPA) and the National Park Service. City of Rockford Landmark Designation Criteria, for individual properties include the following:

- A. Building or structure that predates 1860.
- B. Exceptional example of a historic or vernacular style, or one of the few remaining in the City of Rockford.
- C. Extraordinary curiosity or picturesque work.
- D. Work of a nationally known architect
- E. Outstanding or the only known example of work by a locally well known architect or master builder.
- F. The property most closely associated with the life or activities of a major historic person, organization or group (including ethnic groups)

Section 2: Land Use + Physical Conditions

- G. The property most closely associated with a notable historic event.
- H. Of a type associated with a use once common but now rare.
- I. Site has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important to the prehistory or history
- J. By virtue of its location or activities held there is a current or formal focal point of life in the City of Rockford.



Tinker Swiss Cottage (1974)

A separate set of criteria exist for designating local historic districts. These criteria include:

- A. The geographic area which is the subject of the petition has definable boundaries in the form of natural features or existing physical improvements; or
- B. A visual sense of history exists within the proposed boundaries; and,
- C. The buildings, places or areas within the proposed district, by their inclusion therein, are of sufficient historic significance to be worthy of rehabilitation, restoration and preservation because either:
 - 1. The proposed district contains, within definable geographic boundaries, one or more landmarks along with such other buildings, places or areas, which, while not of such historic significance to be designated as landmarks, nevertheless contribute to the overall visual characteristics of the landmark located within the district; or
 - 2. The proposed district contains, within definable geographic boundaries, such buildings, places or areas that, while not of such individual significance to be designated as landmarks, nevertheless, as an aggregate, possess historic significance for the city in:
 - (i) Establishing a sense of time and place unique to the city; and/or
 - (ii) Exemplifying or reflecting the cultural, social, economic, political or architectural history of the nation, the state or the city; and/or
 - (iii) Representing distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type which is inherently valuable for studying a period, style, method of construction, indigenous materials or unique craftsmanship.



Graham-Ginestra (1974)

(Source for images: 1974 Illinois Historic Landmarks Survey)

Two-thirds of property owners in a proposed historic district must approve a petition for local district designation. There are additional criteria for adding and subtracting properties for designated historic districts as well as dissolving local district designation.

The City of Rockford Historic Preservation Commission administers the process for designating local landmarks and historic districts. City landmark and district designation provides a higher level of protection than National Register listing and requires property owners to seek a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Historic Preservation Commission for exterior rehabilitation projects, new additions and construction or to demolish landmarks or properties within designated historic districts. In 1985, the City was granted Certified Local Government (CLG) status by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency. The Certified Local Government Program, established by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1980 and managed by IHPA, provides Illinois municipalities and counties opportunities to apply for matching grants for survey and other preservation planning activities.

The condition of existing historic resources along the South Main Corridor varies greatly with several properties maintaining a good to moderate level of integrity while others have been significantly altered. Two properties, the Tinker Swiss Cottage and the Graham-Ginestra House, are both listed in the National Register and designated as City Landmarks. Buildings that were constructed less than 50 years ago were generally not considered as historic resources for the purposes of this study.

A field observation was conducted to examine the condition of existing historic buildings along the South Main Corridor. In addition to the field work, the following documents were referenced:

- 1971 – 1975 Illinois Historic Structures Survey
- 1972 Tinker Swiss Cottage National Register Nomination
- 1974 Illinois Historic Landmarks Survey
- 1979 Graham-Ginestra House National Register Nomination.
- 1980 Illinois Historic Bridge Survey
- 1981 City of Rockford Historical Property Survey
- 1985 City of Rockford Survey, Rockford Historic Preservation Commission.
- 1997: Survey of Structures in the 1000 through 1200 Blocks of South Main Street, Rockford Historic Preservation Commission
- 2005 Survey Update, Granacki Historic Consultants (for the City)

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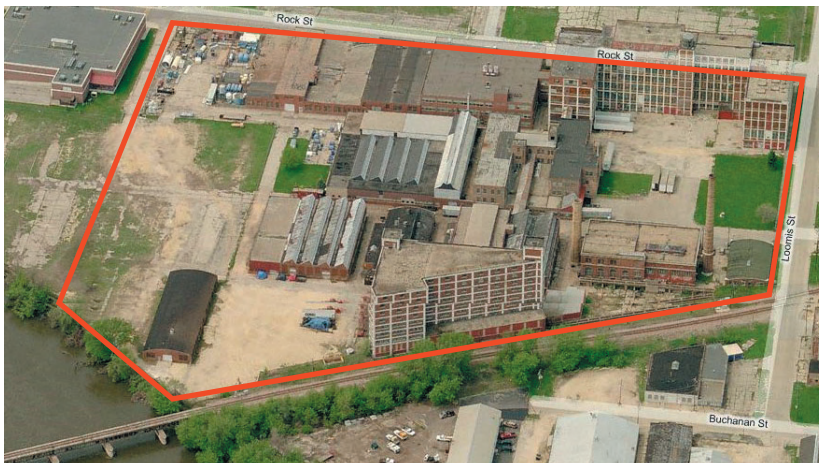
- 2006 Barber-Colman National Register Historic District Nomination

It should be noted that only the 1997 and 2005 surveys covered every structure within the survey boundaries. For example, the Illinois Historic Structures and Landmark Surveys only documented properties that are of historic, cultural or architectural importance and are not accorded any level of protection. In addition, since these surveys were conducted more than 35 years ago, the condition of inventoried buildings may have changed greatly while others may have been restored, rehabilitated or demolished.

Within the South Main Corridor study area, there are currently two properties individually listed in the National of Historic Places and one National Register Historic District, the Barber-Colman industrial complex. The two National Register properties are also designated as individual City of Rockford landmarks. Currently, there is no City Local Historic District within the South Main Corridor Study Area. The National Register and City Landmark properties represent a diversity of building forms and architectural styles ranging from Queen Anne homes and vernacular commercial brickfronts, to large loft industrial buildings that once housed Rockford's important textile and manufacturing industries.

National Register and City Landmark buildings in the South Main Corridor include (also see **Figures 2.8 and 2.9: Historic Resources** for landmark and notable historic resources in the area):

- **Tinker Swiss Cottage Museum, 411 Kent Street.** Listed in the National Register in 1972 and landmarked by the City of Rockford, the Tinker Swiss Cottage, designed in the Swiss



Barber-Colman Company National Register Historic District (Source: Google Images).



Tinker Swiss Cottage (2011)



Graham-Ginestra (2011)

Chalet style, was constructed overlooking Kent Creek in 1865 by Rockford businessman Robert Hall Tinker. Elaborate gardens were installed by Tinker in 1906. The Cottage is owned by the Rockford Park District with the Museum and Gardens managed by a separate non-profit organization with three staff and a thirteen- member board of directors.

- **Graham-Ginestra House, 1115 South Main Street.** Listed in the National Register in 1979 and landmarked by the City of Rockford, the Graham-Ginestra House was constructed in 1857 by Freeman Graham Sr., another prominent businessman and merchant during Rockford's early period of settlement and growth. Designed in a gabled-fronted Italianate style, the House also has several secondary structures, including a stable and carriage house.
- **Barber-Colman Company National Register Historic District, 102 South Loomis, 1202-1322 Rock Street.** The Barber-Colman Company complex was listed in the National Register as a district in 2006 and comprises eleven buildings that housed one of Rockford's largest machine tool design and manufacturing companies. At the height of the Company's operation, the complex contained twenty 'sections' or buildings. Seven of the remaining buildings are considered architecturally significant due to their reinforced concrete and steel skeletal industrial loft construction. All buildings on the site are considered contributing to the historic district and would therefore qualify for the 20% federal income tax credit for historic preservation. The complex is not currently designated as a City Local Historic District.

Eligible/Pending National Register Listing:

- **Ziock-Amerock Building, 416 South Main Street.** National Register listing is pending for the Ziock-Amerock Building, a 13-story industrial facility constructed in 1919 by William H. Ziock, the founder and owner of an important Rockford textile manufacturing conglomerate.
- **Kent Creek Bridge.** The bridge carrying South Main Street over Kent Creek was constructed in 1905 and is considered eligible for listing as a structure in the National Register of Historic Places.



Ziock-Amerock Building (right)

Notable buildings and structures documented in previous historic resource surveys are listed below. These buildings have varying levels of historic and architectural integrity, as well as varying roles in Rockford's history. These buildings need to be evaluated to determine current eligibility for either local or National Register designation, whether it be for individual structures or for a district. Possibilities for such designations are noted in the individual property descriptions that follow.

Section 2: Land Use + Physical Conditions



1016 and 1018 South Main Street.



1016 South Main Street (1974)

- **Rock River Ford Monument Marker, 600 South Main Street.** A large boulder and plaque marks the location where the Chicago-Galena Stagecoach crossed the Rock River, hence the name “Rock Ford.” At some point in the recent past the plaque was removed from the boulder. This segment of the South Main Corridor should receive consideration as a significant cultural landscape for the City of Rockford.
- **911-917 South Main Street.** A three-story brick industrial loft-style building constructed in 1910 with several commercial storefront bays that have been modified and enclosed.
- **1007 South Main Street.** A two-story vernacular brickfront commercial building constructed circa 1920 with two enclosed and modified storefronts.
- **1010 South Main Street.** This building was constructed in 1926 as a two-story vernacular brickfront with a traditional commercial storefront. This building maintains a good level of integrity and may be eligible for local landmark status.
- **1016 South Main Street.** This building was constructed circa 1900s and is a two story vernacular brickfront with a traditional commercial storefront and a distinctive metal cornice feature. This building has limited integrity following major renovation in 1991.
- **1018 South Main Street.** This building was constructed circa 1920s as a two-story vernacular brickfront with a distinctive stone storefront cornice band with “Liberty Market” carved in relief. This building has a moderate level of integrity.



1018 South Main Street (1974)

(Source for images: 1974 Illinois Historic Landmarks Survey)



Northwest Corner of South Main and Kent Streets.



1010 South Main Street.



Culhane Block, 1025 South Main Street



1032 South Main Street

- **1020-1022 South Main Street.** Constructed in 1908, this two-story building has a distinctive brick pattern with two modified storefronts. This building has a moderate level of integrity could be potentially contributing to a local historic district.
- **Culhane Block, 1025 South Main Street.** Constructed in 1910, this three-story brick building has a dominate presence along South Main Street and contains commercial storefronts on the first floor with office space above. This building maintains a moderate level of integrity.
- **W.F. Hudler Building, 1030-1032 South Main Street.** Constructed circa 1898, this three-story building, with commercial storefronts on the first floor and office space above, was designed in a distinctive late Italianate/Victorian style with corbelled cornice and arched windows on the third floor. This building maintains a moderate level of integrity.
- **Capitol Theater, 1120-1126 South Main Street.** Constructed circa 1920s, the building once housed the Capitol Theater. Designed in a rich Spanish Colonial/Revival style, the building has been modified over time with commercial storefronts enclosed and modified and the loss of its central pediment. The building retains a moderate level of integrity and would be considered a contributing building to a potential National Register District.



W.F Hudler Building, 1032 South Main Street

Section 2: Land Use + Physical Conditions



1120-1026 South Main Street.



Capitol Theater (1974)

(Source: 1974 Illinois Historic Landmarks Survey)

- **1128 South Main Street.** A two-story vernacular Brickfront constructed in 1918 with modified storefronts and moderate architectural integrity. This building could potentially contribute to a National Register district.
- **1213 South Main Street.** A Queen Anne styled house with Gothic Revival elements constructed circa 1885. The house is in poor condition, although, according to the SWIFTT South Rockford Neighborhood Action Plan Survey Update, it is considered eligible as a contributing building in a potential National Register District.
- **416 West Morgan Street.** Constructed circa 1880s to 1890s this building is a gabled-fronted Italianate/Victorian single-family house with a moderate level of integrity.
- **1321 South Main Street.** Constructed circa 1950's, this one-story commercial building was designed in a late Art Moderne style. The building has a good level of integrity and is considered potentially eligible as a contributing building in a National Register Historic District if one existed.
- **1323-1325 South Main Street.** Constructed circa 1870s, this vernacular "upright and wing" farm home is one of the oldest homes in this segment of the South Main Corridor and could be considered a contributing building to a potential National Register Historic District. Although, the home retains its original form, it has a low level of architectural integrity.
- **1413 South Main Street.** A two story Colonial Revival home constructed circa 1930 that is considered a potential contributing building to a National Register District. It retains a low to moderate level of integrity.



416 West Morgan Street.



*309 West Knowlton Street.
(Source: 1974 Illinois Historic Landmarks Survey)*

- **1429 South Main Street.** Vernacular “l-form” home that has been rated as a potentially contributing building to a National Register Historic District, according to the SWIFT South Rockford Neighborhood Action Plan Survey Update, retains a moderate to low level of architectural integrity.
- **1437 South Main Street.** Constructed circa 1880, this cross-gabled Queen Anne home retains a high level of architectural integrity. It is considered potentially contributing building to a National Register Historic District.
- **1441 South Main Street.** A two-story vernacular brickfront commercial building constructed circa 1990. It is considered a potential contributing property to a National Register Historic District but has a moderate to low level of architectural integrity.
- **1510 South Main Street.** Constructed circa 1880s, this home is a simple gable fronted Victorian home with a moderate level of architectural integrity.
- **1520 South Main Street.** Rockford Fire Station #3 was constructed in 1953 and was designed with Mid Century Modernistic influences. It is considered a contributing property to a potential National Register Historic District and has a good level of architectural integrity.
- **1525 South Main Street.** A vernacular L-form Queen Anne home with a moderate level of architectural integrity. It is considered a contributing property to a potential National Register Historic District.
- **1531 South Main Street.** A vernacular T-Plan home constructed circa 1880 with a good level of architectural integrity. It is considered a contributing property to a potential National Register Historic District.
- **309 West Knowlton Street.** Constructed circa 1880’s to 1890’s, this building is a two-flat Victorian home missing its original two-story portico. This building has a low level of architectural integrity.
- **325 West Knowlton Street.** A late Victorian home, circa 1880’s to 1890’s, that has been significantly altered over time. This building has a low level of integrity.
- **2111 South Main Street, Poor Clares Corpus Christi Monastery and Convent.** The Monastery and Convent was constructed in 1924 in a Gothic Revival Style. The Monastery and Convent have a high level of architectural integrity.

Section 2: Land Use + Physical Conditions

- **2318 South Main Street.** A late Victorian home constructed most likely before the turn of the last century. It retains a moderate level of integrity.
- **158 Parkview Terrace.** Constructed circa 1910s to 1920s, this single-family residence was designed in the Tudor Revival style and retains a high level of integrity.

A majority of historic resources along the South Main Corridor are located at its northern end adjacent to Downtown, the older neighborhood to the west and the industrial complexes located along the Rock River and Kent Creek. Preservation and building reuse efforts should be concentrated on these properties that have been identified as having architectural and historical significance and that contribute to the overall design and visual character of the Corridor.

Additional investigation may also be needed to determine if any of the identified surveyed properties may be eligible for individual listing in the National Register or designation as a City Landmark. National Register listing would qualify a building for the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Credit, which can be a significant incentive in encouraging building rehabilitation and reuse along the 1000 and 1100 blocks of South Main Street in particular. Consideration should also be given to preserving and interpreting the Rock River Ford area as an important cultural landscape for the citizens of Rockford.



2111 South Main Street.



158 Parkview Terrace.

Existing Zoning

10 City and 9 Winnebago County zoning districts are found within the South Main Street Corridor (also see **Figures 2.10 through 2.13: Existing Zoning**). These districts include:

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- **C-1:** Limited Office District
- **C-2:** Limited Commercial
- **C-3:** General Commercial
- **C-4:** Urban Mixed Use District
- **I-1:** Light Industrial
- **I-2:** General Industrial
- **R-1:** Single-Family
- **R-2:** Two-Family
- **R-3:** Multifamily Residential
- **R-E:** Rural Estate

WINNEBAGO COUNTY

- **CC:** Commercial Community District
- **CG:** Commercial General District
- **IL:** Light Industrial
- **RR:** Rural Residential
- **R1:** One-Family Residential
- **R2:** Two-Family Residential
- **R3:** Multiple-Family Residential
- **MH:** Mobile Home District
- **AG:** Agricultural Priority District

Section 2: Land Use + Physical Conditions

Commercial Zoning

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For all “C” Districts within the City of Rockford, with the exception of C-4, a front building setback of 15 feet is required and parking setbacks must be a minimum of 20 feet from the property line. Rear yard building setbacks must be 20 feet and a 6-foot side yard building setback is required. Residential development is allowed within commercially zoned areas, as long as it complies with character standards described within the Rockford Zoning Ordinance, which includes standards for blank walls, driveway and garage widths and garage setbacks. The permitted residential uses are limited to dwelling units above ground floors, although special uses include single-family, attached homes and apartments/condominiums. Parking requirements range depending on the type of business use, up to 13.3 spaces per 1000 square feet for a free-standing, full service restaurant.

C-1: Limited Office District

The C-1 District is designed to accommodate low-intensity office development close to residential districts and provide a transition buffer between commercial districts and residential neighborhoods. The district permits limited business service uses, as well as offices, as long as they are low traffic generators and are contained within an enclosed building. Examples include business support services, financial services and small entertainment venues. C-1 also allows for the conversion of residential uses into limited office uses.

Building heights are restricted to 35 feet within C-1.

C-2: Limited Commercial District

The C-2 District provides for a variety of development land use options for retail goods and professional and commercial services. Examples of permitted uses include eating and drinking establishments, food and beverage sales, medical and dental clinics, general retail sales and light equipment sales rental. The district limits uses that may cause traffic congestion or have a negative impact on adjacent properties. Outdoor storage is not permitted within C-2 districts.

Building heights are limited to 50 feet in the C-2 district.

C-3: General Commercial District

The C-3 District allows the highest number and most intense commercial uses, including most types of business, service or commercial use, even those involving outdoor operations and storage. Generally, the C-3 District allows more intensive auto-oriented uses. These include eating and drinking establishments, funeral and interment service, coin-



Examples of C-3 District zoning within the study area

operated laundry, vehicle storage and towing and limited manufacturing, production and industrial services. The C-3 District is intended to be applied to large sites that have primary access to major arterial streets.

Building heights are not limited, but the maximum floor area ratio is 4:1, as defined by the Rockford Zoning Ordinance.

C-4: Urban Mixed-Use District

The intention of the C-4 District is a focus on promoting pedestrian-oriented, compact development with a diverse mix of uses, including residential, office, business, cultural and entertainment. In addition, this zoning district is intended to encourage a wide variety of housing types, such as lofts, townhomes and condominiums, while promoting walkable environments and higher density living. The district specifically addresses the goal of the continued use or redevelopment of historically significant buildings or older character contributing buildings.

The maximum floor area ratio for the C-4 District is 4.0 and no front, side or rear setbacks are required. The minimum lot area per dwelling unit is 1000 square feet per dwelling and the maximum density is 40 units per acre.

In addition, parking lots are required to be located behind a building when there is an existing alley, or to the side of the building where alleys do not exist. However, no parking is required in the C-4 District except for certain public assembly uses and sexually-oriented businesses.



The Barber-Colman site, including South Main frontage is zoned C-4.

WINNEBAGO COUNTY

CC: Commercial Community District

The CC District is meant to accommodate a wide variety of goods and services, including businesses that serve a larger segment of the county, such as sub-regional shopping centers. Examples of permitted uses include bowling alleys, catering establishments, monument sales (within a building), pet shops, garden supply and feed stores, indoor theaters and toy stores. The height limit is 45 feet or 3.5 stories. Front yard setbacks of at least 30 feet are required, as well as 5 foot side yard and 25 foot rear yard setbacks.

CG: Commercial General District

The CG Commercial District allows a greater variety of goods and services than permitted within CC Districts, including uses that are incompatible with other commercial uses. These include liquor stores or taverns, automobile sales and services, agricultural sales and services, drive-in restaurants and monument sales on open lots. The height and setback requirements are the same as those for the CC District.



An example of development patterns meeting CG zoning requirements (Source: Google Images).

Section 2: Land Use + Physical Conditions

Commercial Zoning Analysis

The City of Rockford C-1, C-2 and C-4 Districts are generally appropriate zoning classifications for the South Main Street Corridor. These Districts provide for a range of neighborhood commercial and professional office/service uses that would be attractive to local residents, as well as support future redevelopment. Generally, the physical development standards required within each of these Districts allow for a desired urban form that would result in a more compact, walkable shopping and business environment. However, the 15 foot required front building setback does not match the existing building setbacks within the core commercial area between Kent Creek and Salter Avenue. These standards could result in inconsistencies in creating, enhancing or maintaining the existing building “streetwall.”

The C-4 District takes a more holistic approach to creating a “New Urbanist” style district by addressing and respecting the existing urban corridor context. This zoning classification or similar could be applied to more of the Corridor north of Salter Avenue as a strategy for preserving and reusing existing buildings, creating a shared parking system and fostering an active, pedestrian-oriented/transit-supported environment.

The C-3 District has provided for a more auto-oriented character along South Main Street, as seen in areas such as the Marchesano Drive intersection. It allows strip shopping centers and fosters vehicle-oriented site design. The nature of the allowable uses in this District has resulted in development of more surface parking, curb cuts and vehicular space, which breaks up continuous building frontages. It creates more “gaps” along the street, significantly changing the character and function of the Corridor. It may be appropriate to limit C-3 to those areas near the U.S. 20 interchange, Southrock Industrial Park and close to the Airport and avoid allowing it to become the principal driver of the Corridor’s character.

County CC and CG zoning districts are only found south of Harrison/Springfield Avenue along the Corridor. A strategy for the locations of these districts along the Corridor should be developed to avoid an overabundance of auto-oriented uses spread out along the street, which would create a series of disjointed strip developments along South Main Street. The CG District should be coordinated with long-term future land use policies in order to avoid incompatible uses being located adjacent to potential future residential areas.

The C-4 zoning classification or similar could be applied to more of the Corridor north of Salter Avenue as a strategy for preserving and reusing existing buildings, creating a shared parking systems and fostering an active, pedestrian-oriented environment.

Industrial Zoning



Example of I-1 District zoning for the City of Rockford

CITY OF ROCKFORD

I-1: Light Industrial

The I-1 District accommodates low-impact light industrial activities that occur within enclosed buildings. The uses include manufacturing, wholesaling, warehousing and distribution. Examples include high tech industry, indoor recycling facilities and storage warehouses. Building heights are limited to 45 feet in I-1 Districts.

All buildings and structures in all “I” districts have required front yard setbacks of 30 feet and rear and side yard setbacks of 10 feet, unless located adjacent to residential property. Parking must be located 10 feet from the front property line. All “I” districts are also subject to screening requirements from adjacent “R” (residential) and “C” (commercial) districts and from public streets. Parking requirements for the “I” districts vary by the type of use as determined in the Rockford Zoning Ordinance.

I-2: General Industrial

The I-2 District allows higher intensity industrial activities, including storage and work-related activities located outside. Examples of permitted uses include inter-modal cargo transfer facilities, motor vehicle repair shops and intensive manufacturing. I-2 allows for building heights up to 75 feet.

I-3: Airport Industrial

The I-3 District is not currently found within the Corridor study area, but it could potentially play a role depending on future redevelopment scenarios on the south end of the Corridor. The I-3 District is meant to accommodate businesses and industries that benefit from being in close proximity to the Airport, such as shipping/distribution facilities, warehousing, cargo handling and car/truck rental businesses. The I-3 District allows building heights up to 75 feet.

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IL: Light Industrial

The IL District is intended to allow light industrial, research and wholesale establishments. It can be located close to residential because of its limited nature. Permitted uses include wholesaling and warehousing, public and community services such as bus terminals and parking lots, and indoor processing and servicing facilities.

The front yard setback is a minimum of 30 feet, with side yards a minimum of 10 feet and rear yards 20 feet. Building heights can be up to 45 feet in the IL District.

Section 2: Land Use + Physical Conditions

Industrial Zoning Analysis

Both the City and County should develop consistent policies regarding the optimal locations and types of industrial uses. By and large, consolidated industrial/business parks or development zones create better quality/controlled environments for the businesses within them, as well as the Corridor as a whole. Some of the smaller, less intense industries found in the I-1 District are compatible with commercial and nearby residential uses on the far north end of the Corridor. However, allowing new outdoor storage and high intensity manufacturing will foster more truck traffic on South Main and may impact future efforts to attract new residential and/or mixed-use development.

Some focus group participants noted the desire to see industrial uses focused south of Harrison/Springfield Avenue, which appears to be consistent with the City and County Future Land Use Plans.

Residential Zoning

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R-1: Single-Family

The R-1 District allows detached single-family homes, community-based housing, parks and schools, among other uses. The minimum lot area permitted is 7,700 square feet with a 70 foot minimum lot width at the building setback and a maximum building height of 35 feet.

R-1U: Single-Family Residential, Urban

The R-1U District is similar to R1, although it allows slightly higher densities, with a minimum lot area of 6,600 square feet and a 50 foot minimum lot width at the building set back. The maximum building height is 35 feet. Currently, no areas in the Corridor are zoned R-1U. However, this zoning category may be appropriate for future redevelopment to allow for smaller lot, higher density single-family neighborhoods.

R-2: Two-Family

The R-2 District permits detached houses, townhomes, two-unit houses and community-based houses. The minimum lot area is 8,800 square feet with a minimum setback at the building of 80 feet. The minimum lot area per unit is 3,850 square feet with a maximum building height of 35 feet.

R-3: Multifamily Residential

The R-3 District allows the same residential development standards as the R-2 District, but also allow multifamily, larger community-based housing and assisted living facilities. The minimum lot area is also 8,800 square feet, with an 80-foot minimum lot width. The minimum lot area per unit is 2,900 square feet. Building heights can be a maximum of 40 feet in this district.



R-1: Single-Family zoning



R-2: Two-Family zoning

RE: Rural Estate

The Rural Estate District allows detached homes, parks, community-based housing of fewer than 6 people, and certain institutional uses. The minimum lot area is 21,780 square feet and the minimum lot width at the building line is 125 feet. The height limit is 35 feet.

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RR: Rural Residential

The RR District accommodates single-family development on lots of 25,000 square feet with lot widths of 100 feet. Front yard setbacks are a minimum of 30 feet with side yards a minimum of 10 feet and rear yards at 60 feet. Height restrictions in this District are 35 feet or 2.5 stories.



Example of Winnebago County R3 zoning, which allows multi-family residential.

R1: One-Family Residential

The R1 District generally permits single-family residential on a minimum lot of 6,600 square feet with 60 foot minimum lot widths. Front yards must be set back 30 feet, side yards at 6 feet and rear yards a minimum of 30 feet. The height limits are the same as those for RR Districts.

R2: Two-Family Residential

The R2 District allows single and two-family dwellings with a lot area not less than 4,400 square feet per unit. The setbacks and heights are the same as the R1 District requirements.

R3: Multiple-Family Residential

The R3 District permits single-family, two-family and multi-family residential uses, including apartments and rowhomes. Each dwelling unit must have a minimum lot area of 2,900 square feet. Setbacks are limited by lot size and heights cannot exceed 40 feet or 3 stories. Maximum impervious site coverage allowed cannot exceed 40 percent of the lot area.



The mobile home park near the Airport is zoned MH.

MH: Mobile Home District

The MH District sets standards and limitations for areas developed as mobile home neighborhoods. Per the zoning code, no mobile home park shall be less than 300,000 square feet and there shall be a minimum lot area of 6,000 square feet per home. An overall development plan delineating the street system, home sites, parking areas and utility easements must be submitted to County zoning for approval.

AG: Agricultural Priority District

The AG District is designed to protect the farming industry and rural character, while also allowing non-farm residential uses in rural areas. The District allows uses classified as agricultural, as well as one single-family residential unit per vacant quarter section, as defined by the Winnebago County zoning ordinance.

Section 2: Land Use + Physical Conditions

Residential Zoning Analysis

The residential zoning districts found in the Corridor study area appear consistent with current land use conditions, densities and character. However, both the City of Rockford 2020 Plan and the Winnebago County Future Land Use Plan have outlined areas south of Harrison/Springfield Avenue on both sides of South Main for medium density residential development, which would be a change from existing zoning. This long-term planning and land use goal appears to remove the less intense/dense residential districts (RE, RR and AG) and envisions a mix of more modest or suburban character single- and multi-family residential development. With a large amount of open and undeveloped land with proximity to good transportation networks along South Main, U.S. 20, the Airport and future rail service, alternative land use policies should be explored.