

# Town of Lowell

# Comprehensive Plan



Town of Lowell  
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Prepared for the Town of Lowell  
by Ball State University:  
Community Based Projects

# Town of Lowell Comprehensive Plan



*Town of Lowell*



*Lake County, Indiana*



*Ball State University  
Community Based Projects*

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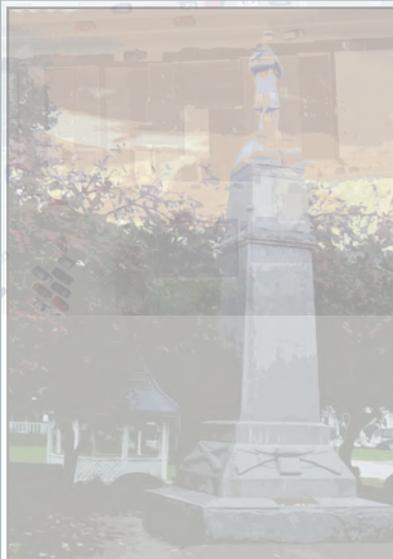




# Town of Lowell Comprehensive Plan



## Community Profile



## Introduction



## Preface

Community planning is an integral part of Lowell’s preparation for future change, its efforts to improve the quality of life for its residents, and the preservation of its community assets and culture. In response to a variety of issues facing Lowell, community planning efforts have been undertaken to prepare this document, The Town of Lowell Comprehensive Plan. Throughout the course of this endeavor, a team from Ball State University’s Community Based Projects worked closely with citizens, community groups, civic officials, and business leaders to examine and analyze the current critical issues and trends facing Lowell, IN. This plan was then prepared with the aim of guiding growth and development and informing the decisions behind the public action that will shape the future of the Lowell area. The plan presents a series of strategies and recommendations, including specific development projects, to achieve responsible and desirable development within the area. This plan is intended to be a “living” document within an ongoing planning and development process. The plan, like all plans, may, and likely should, be amended as Lowell continues to grow and change.

## How This Document Is Organized

The document has been organized to answer the following questions, “Who are we?” “Where are we going?” “What do we want?” “How do we get there?” and “Are we there yet?” This is a simple, straightforward way to organize and refer to the comprehensive planning process by describing the community, identifying issues, formulating community goals, establishing policies and strategies to meet these goals, and evaluating progress.

The first section of this document is the Community Profile, intended to answer the questions, “Who are we?” and “Where are we going?” The answers to these questions will provide a starting point from which the planning efforts of the community visioning group can begin. The Community Profile will identify major issues facing the community, existing community assets that need to be preserved, and describe the people of Lowell, for which the document is being prepared.



**Community Profile**  
Who Are We?  
Where Are We Going?



Identification of Issues and Goals  
Where Do We Want To Go?

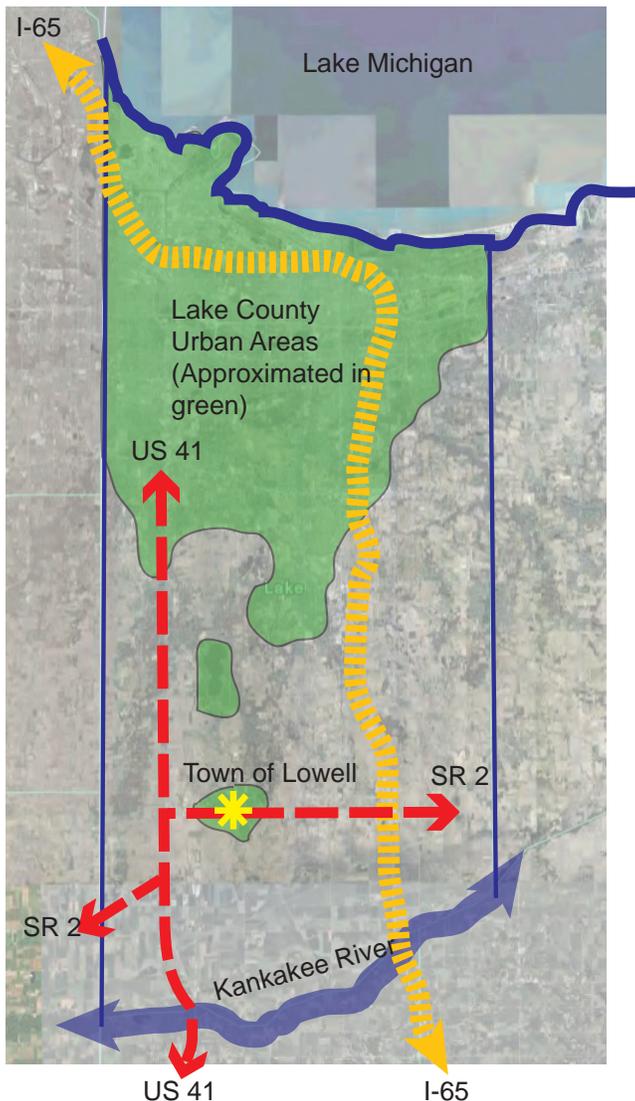
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History

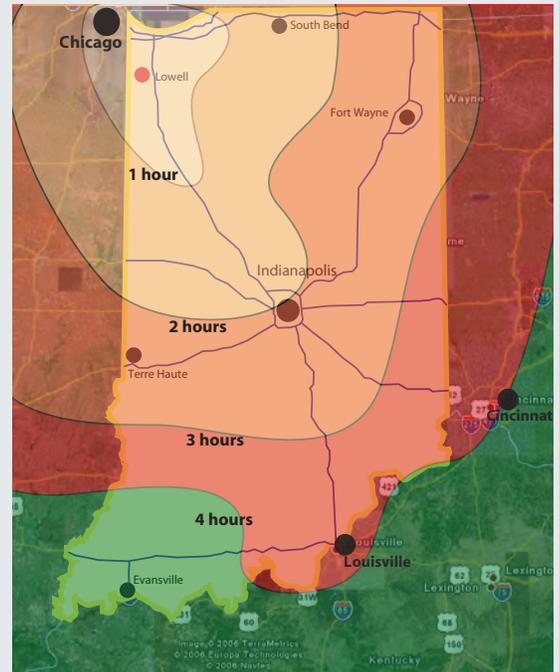
Physical Characteristics

## Lowell Context

Lowell is a small town of 7,759 located in the southern portion of Lake County, Indiana. It is approximately 50 miles south of downtown Chicago and is near the I-65 corridor. As part of the Chicago urban area, it is facing significant growth pressure and is one of the fastest growing regions in the state and the Midwest. Despite this pressure, Lowell's immediate surroundings remain mostly rural. Because of Lowell's location within an immediate growth area and near several major thoroughfares, growth pressure is a significant issue that is in large part a motivation for the creation of this plan. Chicago's expansion into Northeastern Indiana continues to play a significant role in the growth of the city of Lowell. It is therefore a great motivation for the creation of this plan.



## Approximate Driving Radii



Many major interstates, as well as the larger cities of Chicago, Indianapolis, and Fort Wayne are in close proximity to Lowell. Cincinnati and Louisville are both located about 4 hours away. The Chicago area is one of the biggest influences upon the town of Lowell in terms of transportation, employment, and growth pressure issues.

## History



1910 Union Hotel

### Monon Depot 1890's



### Mill 1906



### Lowell National Bank 1903



## 1800

- 1835 – Samuel Halstead made claim to the area at Timber and Mill seat. His cabin was the first building in Lowell
- 1843 – First outlet post office was established near Lowell High School
- 1848 – M.A. Halstead erects a saw mill on the property known as “Mill Seat”
- 1852 – First grade school building constructed; also doubled as a church (located at the intersection of Clark St. and Commercial Ave.)
- 1852 – Jonah Thorn opens the first business, a small hotel, general store, and tavern in Lowell
- 1853 – M. A. Halstead constructs a flour mill (located on Jefferson Street); the mill was powered by water from the dam located on Main Street and was in use for approximately fifteen years.
- 1855 – A clothing and general store was opened on Commercial Ave.
- 1860 – Perry Clark opened a brickyard on the north side of Main Street.
- 1861 – The “Union House” hotel was opened in old school house
- 1862 – Brick school house constructed at the intersection of Main and Union streets (cost \$8,000); the school was considered the largest and best school in the county
- 1864 – Lowell begins its first daily mail service
- 1864 – Stagecoach routes between Lowell and Crown Point started
- 1868 – The largest building was erected; three stories high, it served as a wool mill and later a grist mill (cost \$8,000)
- 1869 – First Town Marshall was appointed.
- 1872 – The *Lowell Star* was published by E.R. Beebe (or Beebie)
- 1880 – The Monon Rail line constructed through Lowell and connected the city to Louisville, New Albany, and Chicago
- 1881 – A grain elevator and grist mill constructed across from the depot
- 1885 – The *Lowell Tribune* established



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- 1896 – In November, the men of Lowell organized a cooperative group to protect their properties in the event of a fire
- 1898 – On October 4th a fire destroyed many Lowell businesses on the north side of Commercial Ave.
- 1898 – Town Marshall begins day and night watches for fire protection in the business district

## 1900

- 1904 – First state charter received for Volunteer Fire Department
- 1904 – Small library contains 500 books
- 1915 – High school built on Oakley Street (now part of middle school)
- 1916 – First fire truck purchased
- 1917 – Lowell Library organized
- 1920 – The first public library was established and a Carnegie library building was built on the town square
- 1952 – Monon Railroad accident, six alcohol cars derailed and exploded
- 1965 – Consolidation of schools into a single system (Lake County's three most southern townships)
- 1972 – Metropolitan Police System went into effect

Source: "History of Lowell Indiana." 27 Sept. 2006. Lowell Public Library. 19 Oct. 2006 <<http://www.lowellpl.lib.in.us/history.htm>>.

**Lowell Firemen**



**Historic Home**



**Comm. Avenue 1894**



**1867 School**



## Physical Characteristics

### Transportation

Traffic congestion is a growing problem for Lake County. Because there are limited thoroughfares, vehicular traffic is forced onto a minimum number of roads. This is particularly true in southern Lake County. State Road 2 is the only east/west thoroughfare in “South County,” and consequently concentrates a large traffic volume through downtown Lowell. As a result, the downtown lacks a pedestrian-friendly environment. Traffic prevents pedestrians from easily crossing streets and from parking along State Road 2. In addition to State Road 2, traffic is heavy along U.S. 41, the main north/south thoroughfare through the county.

The possibility of a potential “South Shore” commuter rail extension through Lake County exists. This would presumably alleviate congestion on north/south routes and impact the pattern of development within Lake County and the city of Lowell. The implications of such an extension are discussed at length later in the Issues and Goals section of this document.

The concentration of east/west traffic on State Road 2 is one of the most pressing issues facing Lowell. Because the narrow streets and character of Downtown were not designed to accommodate large amounts of traffic, the pedestrian character and safety of the downtown suffers. The enlargement above illustrates the approximate daily volume of traffic that passes through downtown Lowell. Of the approximately 17,400 vehicles that pass through downtown Lowell each day, some is local traffic, but a large portion, between 10,000 and 14,000 vehicles per day, use SR 2 to travel across Lake County. These trips originate and terminate in locations other than Lowell, but are concentrated through Lowell’s downtown due to of a lack of alternatives. The Illiana Expressway is a major east/west route that is planned to be built through Lake County in the vicinity of



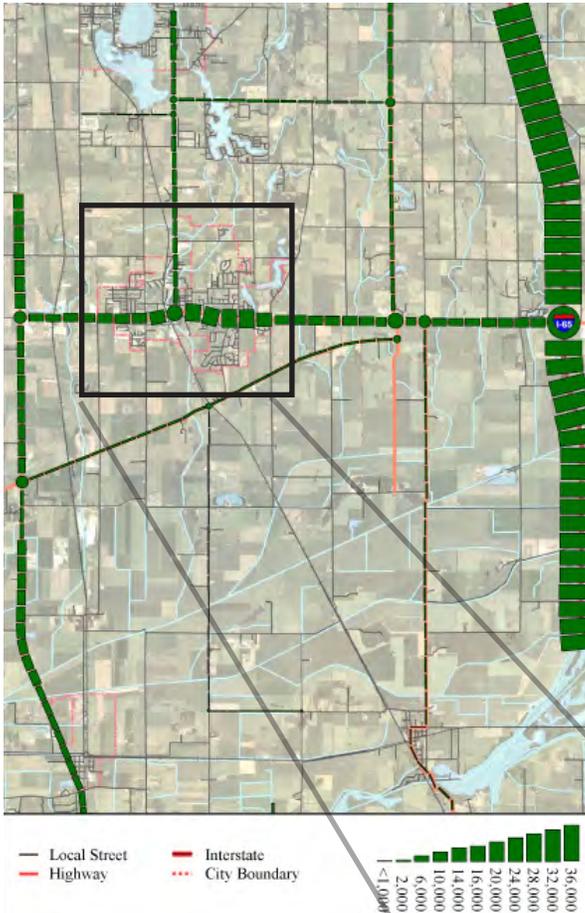
**Community Profile**  
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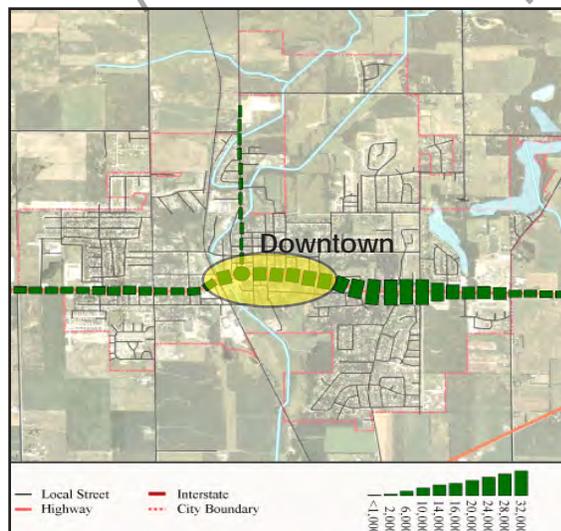
Identification of Issues and Goals  
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Lowell, but a specific route has not yet been identified and the actual construction of this expressway may not take place for 10 years or more. A potential “South Shore” extension may also be developed, but this would be many years in the future as well. In the meantime, “South County” should continue to investigate alternative routes for east/west traffic.



**Lake County Traffic Volume Map**



**Downtown Lowell Traffic Volume Map**

## Downtown Lowell

Lowell boasts a unique downtown with many historic buildings and structures. Most are in good condition, but some are in need of renovation. There are few downtown vacancies compared to similar Midwestern towns. Unfortunately, much of the downtown traffic is dominated by semi-trucks utilizing the SR 2 corridor to travel East/West across Lake County. This traffic causes noise, congestion, and unsafe conditions for pedestrians, all of which discourage people from coming downtown.

Downtown commercial uses include a variety of restaurants, gift shops, retail stores, and professional offices. The second stories of many downtown buildings have the potential to be used as residential space.



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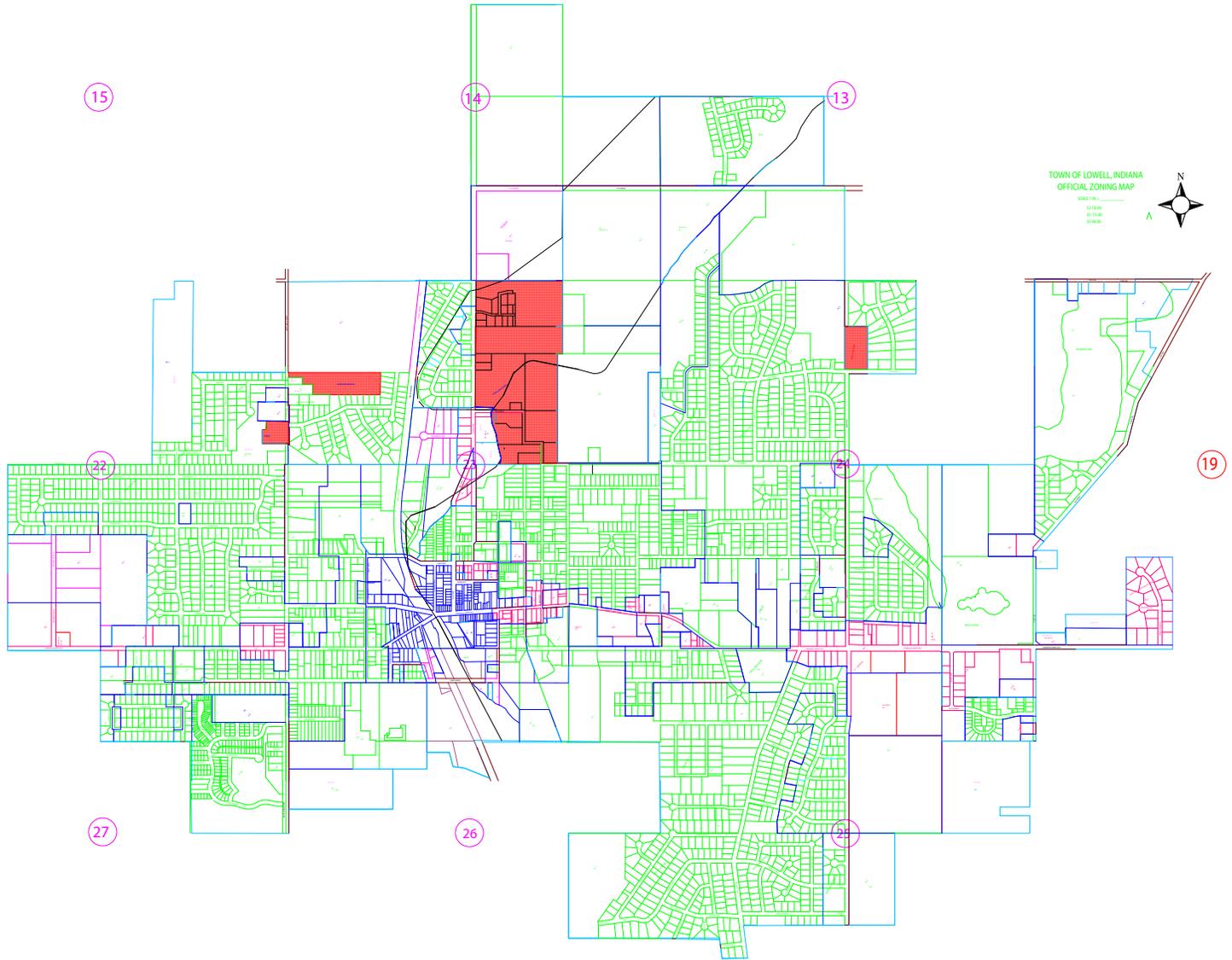
Physical  
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The images at left illustrate the historic character of Downtown Lowell. The vantage points from which each image was taken is indicated on the context map below.

# Town of Lowell Comprehensive Plan

## Zoning



Lowell Zoning Map



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Lowell's current zoning ordinance does not reflect the growth of knowledge and expansion of ideas within the planning profession over the past two decades. Therefore, an update to the zoning ordinance is needed in order to modernize the city of Lowell and to serve the goals of this comprehensive plan. The following points summarize some of the major problems with the current zoning ordinance, and suggest new zoning and standards that should be addressed.

## Current Problems

### 1. Not user friendly

- a. The zoning ordinance is difficult to navigate and understand due to its length and lack of bullet points, matrices, or diagrams.

### 2. Lacks flexibility

- a. The zoning ordinance constrains lot and housing dimensions. This limits the ability to densify or evolve over time in response to changing economic conditions.
- b. The zoning ordinance mandates that parking be provided on site or within 300 feet of a building. This reduces the ability of the downtown to revitalize or rehabilitate through infill development and creates a competitive disadvantage compared to new development.
- c. Parking is allowed to be placed in front of buildings. This weakens the pedestrian environment of a street and visually blights neighborhoods.

### 3. Excessive parking requirements

- a. The zoning ordinance requires unnecessary parking in new areas and forces developers to consume more land than needed. It reduces the buildable area and density of a site, inducing residents to drive more than they may otherwise.
- b. The code does not provide a provision for parking sharing by two or more dissimilar uses whose demand for parking varies by time of day or day of the week. As a result, many parking lots sit idle throughout the day or week and are not efficiently used.

## 4. Prohibits density

a. The zoning code excessively prohibits density, reducing the affordability of housing, office space, and commercial space.

## 5. Prohibits alleys in residential areas

- a. This provision requires more impervious surface per lot, increasing runoff.
- b. This provision decreases the number of on street parking spaces available.
- c. The pedestrian quality of streets is reduced by creating several potential points of contact between pedestrians and automobiles.

## 6. Bureaucracy

a. The document focuses on many minor details. As a result, the document is large and extensive and becomes difficult for developers to adequately follow.

## 7. Difficult to administer effectively

a. The document covers much material in such detail that is nearly impossible for a small administrative body to effectively enforce.

## 8. Street and block standards not pedestrian friendly

- a. The street widths are large and encourage high speeds. This increases the severity of accidents and also reduces a pedestrian's perception of safety.
- b. Because the block sizes are large, traffic is not distributed adequately. As a result, roads are forced to carry more traffic than desired. Limited travel path options for pedestrians reduce the walkability of a neighborhood. Large blocks also encourage traffic concentration in certain areas. This increases the separation of land uses as commercial establishments locate adjacent to roads with high traffic volumes.

## 9. Street and block standards do not encourage or require connectivity

- a. Large street and block standards minimize the travel paths for automobiles and pedestrians. As a result, traffic becomes concentrated on a few major roads, leading to arterialization, increased traffic congestion, and the need for widening of arterial roads.



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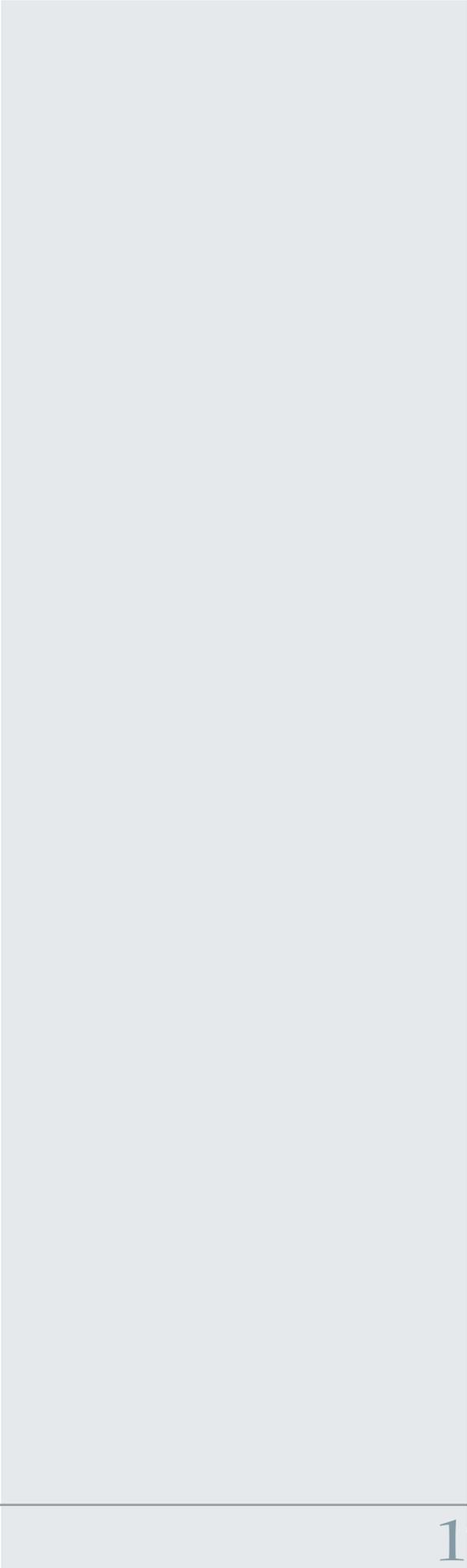
Identification of Issues and Goals  
*Where Do We Want To Go?*

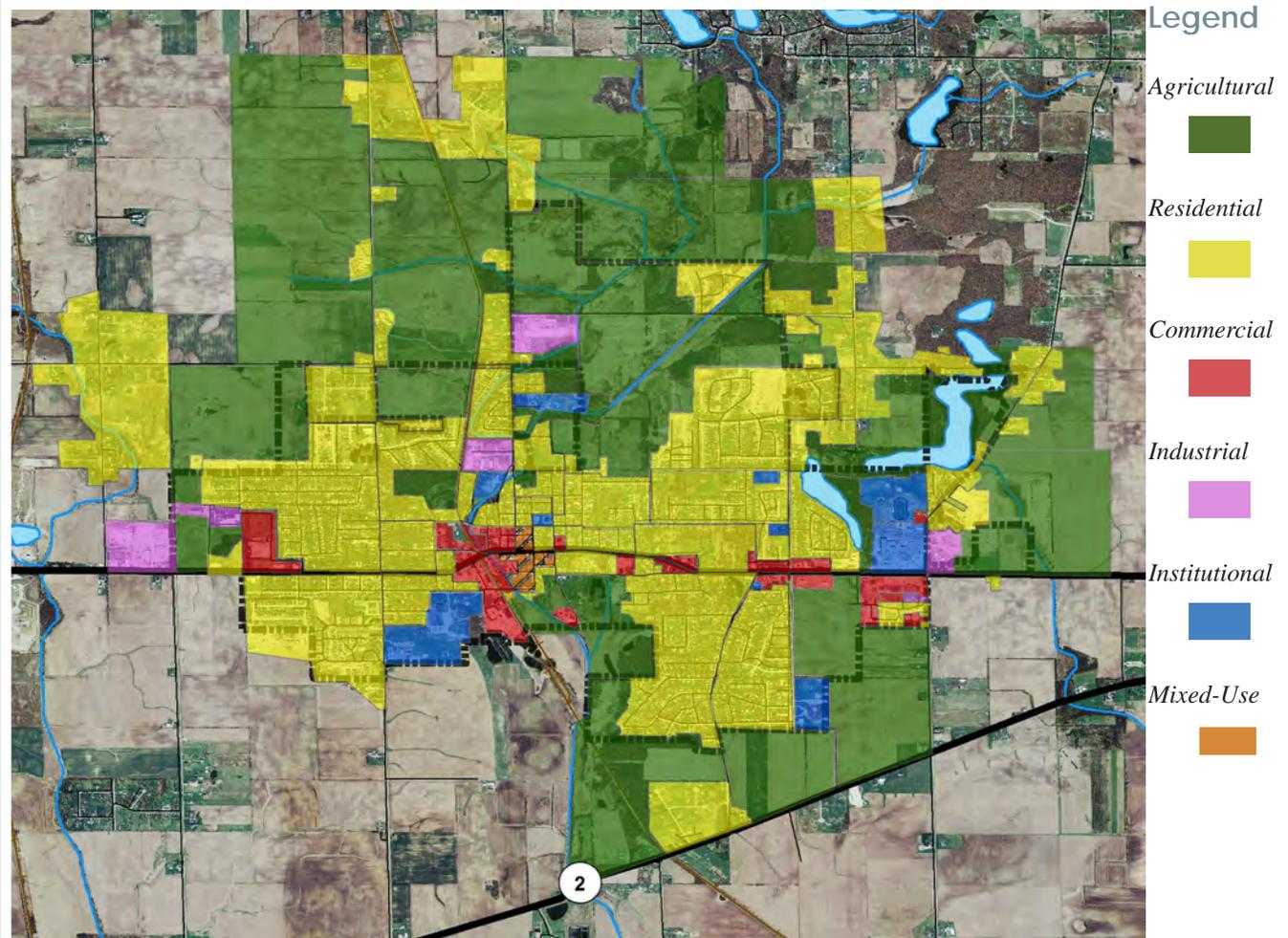




## 10. Separation of land uses

- a. Restrictions on permitted land uses of each zone prevent the mixing of land uses. As a result, pedestrian accessibility is lost. Society is forced to rely on automobiles, requiring more roads, more parking lots, increased taxes, and additional land. It also generates more air pollution and runoff, and contributes to the physical inactivity of residents.





Current Land Use Map

### Analysis

Lowell's commuting and employment patterns suggest that it is a bedroom community, with many residents employed in North County and Chicago. This is demonstrated in Lowell's land use patterns, which are dominated by agricultural and residential uses. Institutional uses exceed both the industrial and commercial presence in terms of land area. As Lowell continues to grow, the development of additional local employment opportunities will be a focus for the community.



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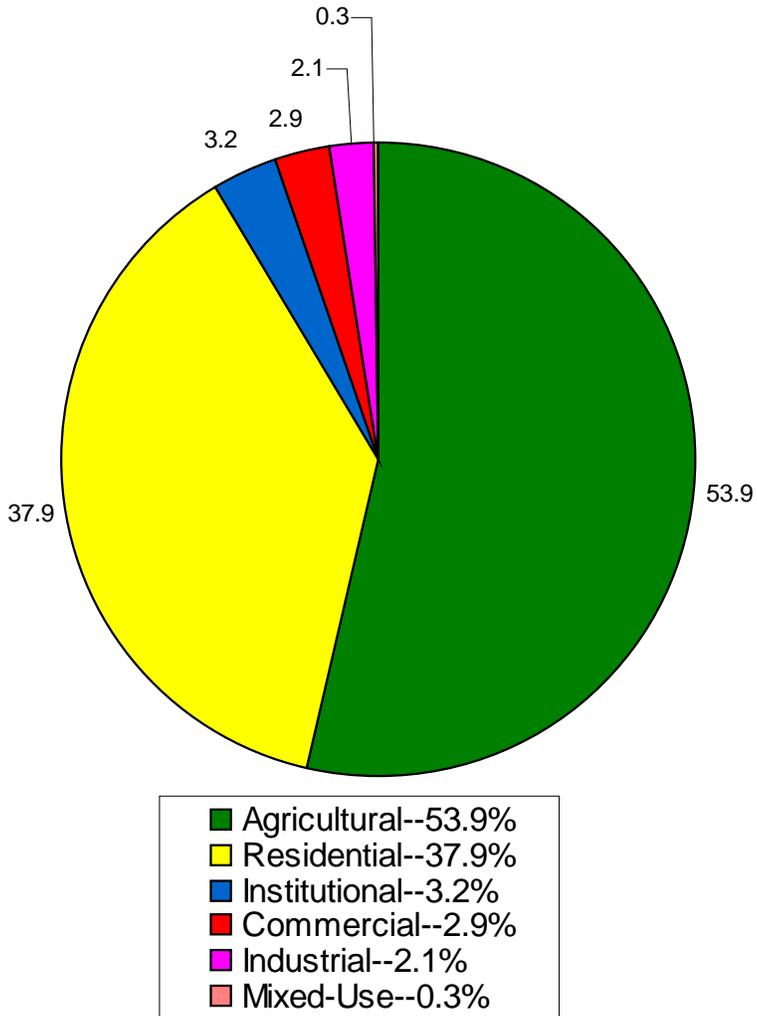
History



Physical Characteristics



### Land Use by Percentage



# Town of Lowell Comprehensive Plan

## Parks and Recreation

### Evergreen Park



### Liberty Park



### Moose Park



### Reservation Park



The Lowell Parks and Recreation Department provides the community with a variety of outdoor leisure and recreational opportunities. The department works to create partnerships with businesses and organizations to gain support for park and recreation programs. The Lowell parks system consists of ten parks, including Evergreen, Liberty, Moose, Reservation, Olde Towne Square, Legion, Freedom, Oakland, Triangle, and the Bonnie Lake/Redwing Lake area.

#### Evergreen Park

Evergreen Park is a highly visible recreation facility located on Commercial Avenue (State Road 2) in Lowell. A two and a half acre fishing pond with an active summer fountain is a draw for many visitors. Also found in the park is a walking path, sand volleyball, playground equipment, basketball courts, and picnic shelters. This is the most popular park in the town and is used by all ages for numerous activities and events.

#### Liberty Park

Liberty Park is located on a four acre parcel in the downtown area. Recreation facilities located within this park include basketball and tennis courts, playground equipment, a hill for sledding, and picnic shelters. Summer activities that occur in this park are water games, a water slide, and summer camps.

#### Moose Park

Moose Park, formerly Library Park, is a passive one acre neighborhood park. Benches, picnic tables, and minimal playground equipment are situated in the park. The park's open space is used for wiffle ball, soccer, and football. The parking lot is also used by the town hall.

#### Reservation Park

Reservation Park is a small neighborhood park located in the Indian Heights Subdivision. It is fenced and includes a basketball court, shelter with grill, and playground equipment. The northern part of the park is open area used for sports.

#### Olde Towne Square

Olde Towne Square, formerly Senior Citizens Park, is located on the site of the historic town square. Adjacent to downtown Lowell, this park features a Civil War Monument, a gazebo, benches, and scenic landscaping. This park also gets decorated each holiday season.



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**Legion Park**

Legion Park is located in the downtown area adjacent to Cedar Creek. It was added to the Lowell Parks System in 2001 as part of the 2001 legal Municipal Easement Agreement. This agreement is between the Town of Lowell and the American Legion Post 101 and is effective for ninety-nine years. This park has added beauty to the downtown and offers a centralized sidewalk, benches, and flagpoles, which honor those who have served the United States.

**Oakland Park**

Oakland Park is located south of downtown near the Lowell Middle School. It has playground equipment, a basketball court, baseball diamond, and bleachers for spectators.

**Triangle Park**

Triangle Park is appropriately named, being that it is a small triangular park situated between Washington Street, Commercial Avenue (SR2), and the railroad tracks. The park is downtown, across the street from Legion Park. Triangle Park is very passive with only a bench and trees on site, but is located near a busy intersection.

**Freedom Park**

Freedom Park is located in the northwest corner of Lowell’s city limits. This 114 acre property is currently under development through the cooperation of Lowell Park/Town of Lowell, Cedar Creek Township, and West Creek Township. Currently, a state-of-the-art skate park exists. Future growth and development depends on community contributions and tax dollars.

**Bonnie/Redwing Lake Area**

The Bonnie Lake Area in Lowell, immediately adjacent to Lowell High School, has been discussed as an appropriate site for further park development. The area has a desirable location in terms of proximity/access and natural features that offer great recreational opportunities. Overall, the site has significant potential to be developed as a natural park attraction for Southern Lake County and a future asset for the Town of Lowell.

**Olde Towne Square**



**Legion Park**

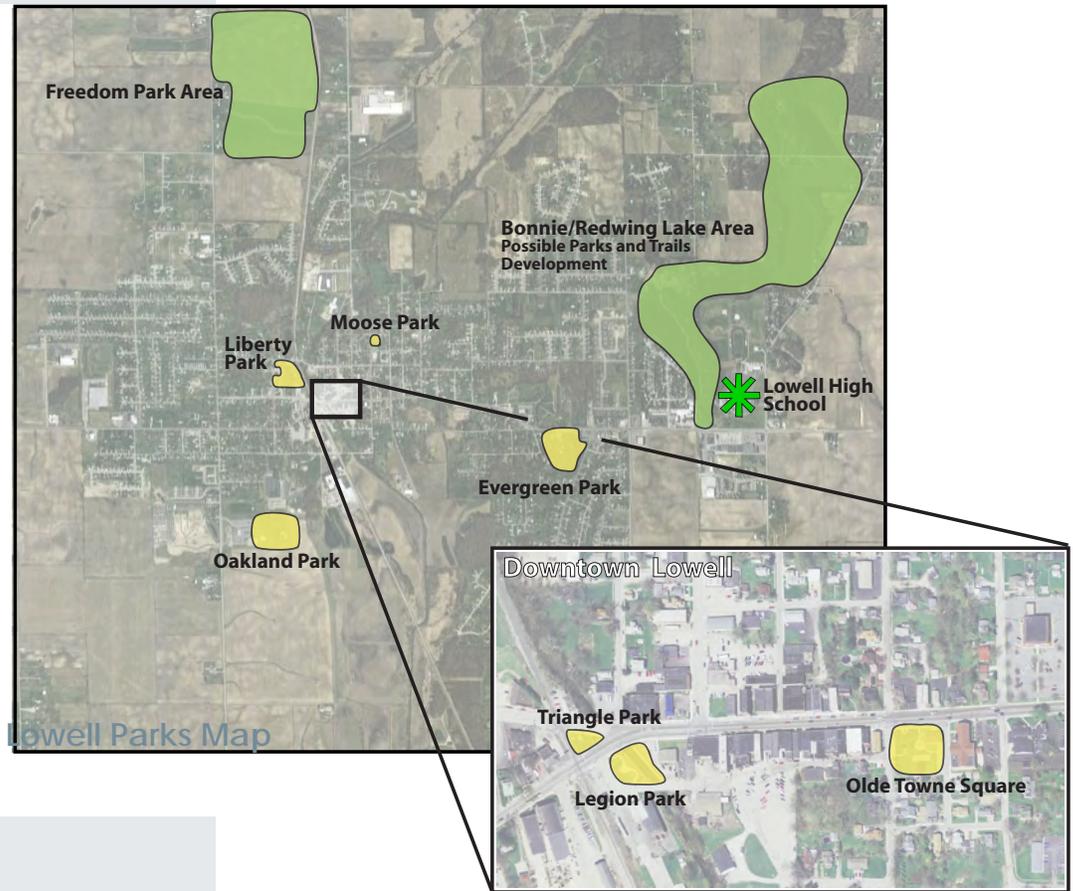


**Oakland Park**



## Definition

These figures provide a geographical context and physical inventory of the Lowell Parks System.



## Analysis

Lowell boasts an excellent parks system for its size. There is still desire and potential however, to expand the existing system and make significant improvements. The growth pressure facing Lowell will be an asset in the development of future park and recreation opportunities. If Lowell is able to utilize development guidelines and regulations, and actively involve the Plan Commission in the development design process, this future park development will occur.

Note - Freedom Park and the Bonnie Lake Area are not complete and have not been included in the inventory



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## Lowell Parks Inventory

	Evergreen Park	Liberty Park	Moose Park	Reservation Park	Olde Towne Square	Legion Park	Oakland Park	Triangle Park
Acres	9.2	3.8	1	1	1	1	11.4	0.16
Baseball Fields							1	
Basketball Court	2	1.5		1			1	
Benches	14		1		2	3	3	1
Bicycle Racks		1		1				
Bleachers	1						2	
Drinking Fountain	1			1				
Flagpole						3		
Gazebo					1			
Grills				1				
Mailbox					1			
Parking	Parking Lots	Parking Lot	Street Parking	Parking Lot	None	Parking Lot	Parking Lot	None
Picnic Shelter	2	1	1	1				
Picnic Tables	15	11	2	6				
Planter						6		
Playground Equipment	1 set	2 sets	1 set	1 set			1 set	
Pond w/Fishing	1							
Restrooms	1	1						
Sand Volleyball	1							
Soccer Fields								
Soda Machines	3	1						
Statue					1			
Tennis Courts		1						
Trash Cans	10	4	1		2	3		
Walking Path	1	1			1	1		

## Demographic Data

### Demographic Snapshot

Source: Census 2000 United States Census,  
[www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)

Population:  
7,505

Male:  
3,685

Female:  
3,820

Per Capita Income:  
\$19,752

Median Household Income:  
\$49,173

Median Value Single Family  
Homes:  
\$112,800

Average Household Size:  
2.74

Average Family Size:  
3.19

Race:  
97.3% White Non-Hispanic

Families Below Poverty Level:  
5.6%

High School Degree or  
Higher:  
87.2%

Bachelor's Degree or Higher:  
14.8%

In order to identify and fully understand the community issues specific to Lowell, an assessment of demographic information for the town has been compiled. Demographic data sets from the 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census and information gathered from other sources were used to compare and contrast the Town of Lowell with Lake County and Indiana. The data was interpreted to identify patterns and trends of the Lowell population.

### Population

Lowell is experiencing a significant amount of growth. The growth rate of 16.7% between the years of 1990 and 2000 is well above the national growth rate of 13.2%. This makes Lowell the fastest growing community in Southern Lake County. As the population pyramids indicate, there is a recess in the population of 20-24 year olds as well as people 60 years and older. This can be explained by many 20-24 year olds leaving Lowell to pursue higher education (about 72%), and the likelihood of the older population to move elsewhere in search of retirement communities and more convenient health services.

### Diversity

Lowell is an extremely homogenous town. 97% of Lowell's residents are of Caucasian descent. This is comparable to Schneider and the unincorporated parts of Southern Lake County, but dramatically higher than the same ratio across the United States. Interestingly, the composition of the minority population in Lowell is much different than that of the surrounding regions. While the county and nation have minority populations consisting mostly of African Americans, Lowell has fewer African Americans and more Native Americans. Due to the small number of minority residents in Lowell, this difference is statistically insignificant. As growth pressure continues to influence Lowell the population is likely to become increasingly diverse. This will especially be true if Lowell makes an effort to provide affordable housing and offer a variety of housing choices that cater to multiple groups of people.

### Education:

The biggest issue facing the Tri-Creek school corporation in the coming years will be increased enrollment. The school corporation will need to work with the city of Lowell to ensure that adequate facilities for students are maintained. The construction of the planned new middle school will be an important first step in this effort. Lowell needs to ensure that increasing enrollment does not threaten the current quality of its schools, and should work to improve its impressive record compared to other Indiana and national averages.



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## Economics:

The Town of Lowell demonstrates a positive trend economically. Although Lowell's per capita income of \$19,752 is slightly less than the national figure of \$21,587, its cost of living is lower than the U.S. average. Additionally, Lowell's median household income of \$49,173 is significantly more than the United States' figure of \$41,994. The national poverty rate of 12.4% is almost twice Lowell's rate of 6.5%. These statistics suggest that Lowell is in an economically stable position for the future. This positive economic pressure will likely serve as a catalyst for the creation of a development policy that guards against sprawl and focuses on the utilization of current infrastructure and range of service. This strategy will generate more tax revenue at little cost to the town. The lack of performance in retail and entertainment suggests a need for focus on downtown redevelopment.

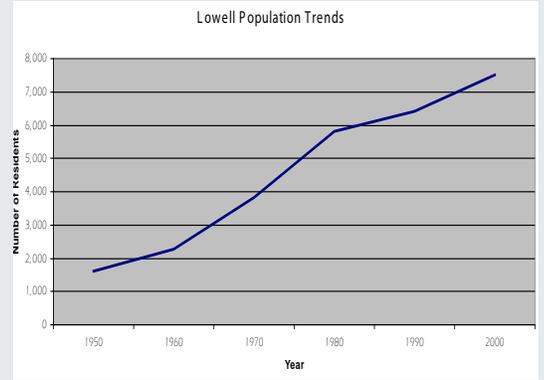
## Housing:

Housing statistics indicate that Lowell has slightly lower home values, \$112,800 median, compared to the national value of \$119,600. Growth pressure from North County may cause an increase in real estate prices, and Lowell will need to provide affordable housing options. Lowell's median rent is equal to the national median of \$602 per month. These numbers, coupled with a density of 1,839.2 people per square mile indicate a healthy housing pattern for a town in a rural area such as Southern Lake County. Currently, Lowell's housing is not a problem with plenty of options available. In the future, subdivision development and a range of housing options will become important in handling increasing growth.

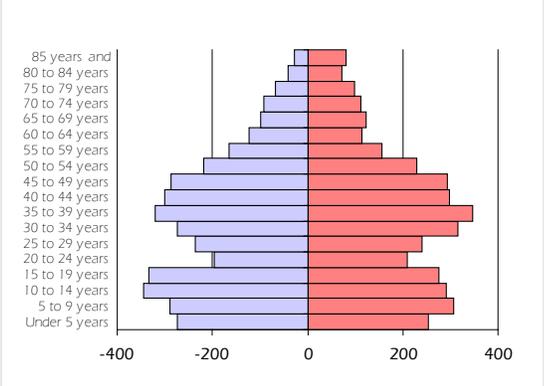
## Overall Analysis:

Currently Lowell is a community with many positive patterns and trends, including a stable economic base, an extensive parks system, and quality education. Overall, the most important issues facing Lowell, are downtown redevelopment and growth management. If care is taken to approach growth from a responsible policy standpoint, Lowell is capable of managing the rapid growth it will likely endure. Potential concerns are a lack of diverse and efficient retail and entertainment sectors of the community. Despite these issues, Lowell's preparation for the growth that it will encounter over the next 20 years will be the most important consideration for the town's leaders. With added incentives for diversity, various housing options, local employment opportunities, and a focus on downtown redevelopment, Lowell will continue to be a desirable place to reside.

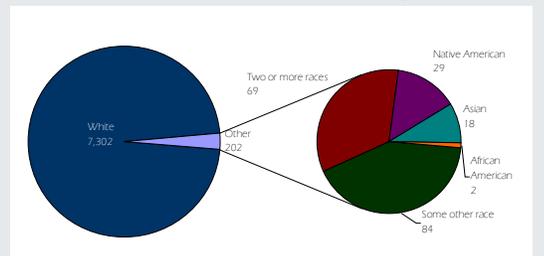
## Lowell Population Trend



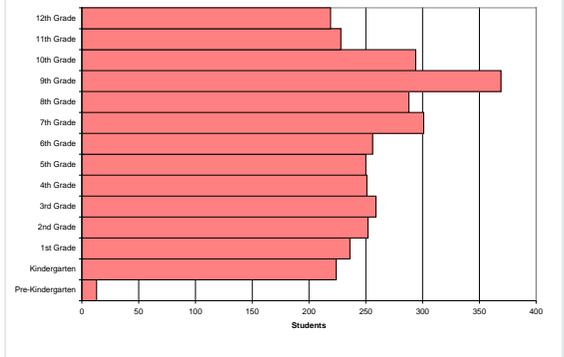
## Population Pyramid



## Racial Composition



## Public School Enrollment



## L.A.N.D. Analysis



As part of The Lowell Planning & Design Studies, public input was sought through town meetings and charrettes. Public input is a valuable resource in the identification of community issues and needs and is a significant consideration within the preliminary planning process. Community participation within the early stages of developing a community vision plan guides the efforts of the planning group and adds a human perspective in answering the questions “Who are we?” and “Where are we going?” Public input was a primary consideration in the development of the following “L.A.N.D.” analysis. In this section, community input and analysis of demographics and physical characteristics have been combined to identify the fundamental Liabilities, Assets, Needs, and Desires of the community. The identification of these issues will segue into the subsequent sections of the plan and will guide the creation of goals and strategies to answer the question “Where do we want to go?”



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Introduction



History



Physical Characteristics



## Liabilities:

- Traffic in Downtown (Semis)
- Limited capacity for wastewater
- Need for redundancy in wastewater/freshwater system
- Poor Connectivity
- Perception of lack of parking
- Growth pressure from North County/Chicago
- Landfill

## Assets:

- Historic downtown without “missing teeth”
- “Small-town” character
- Service boundary
- Housing Variety
- Community attitude
- Thoroughfare access
- Proximity to city amenities
- Schools
- Parks
- Access to South Shore

## Needs:

- Reduced traffic through downtown, mainly semis
- Gateways on SR 2 corridor
- Viable location for new middle school
- Improved connectivity
- Wayfinding
- Pedestrian amenities in downtown
- Capital improvements
- Improved water infrastructure
- Farmland preservation

## Desires:

- Downtown revitalization
- Control of development (design guidelines, preserve small-town character)
- SR 2 / US 41 Development Area
- Commuter rail connection
- Architectural review board
- Trail network
- 2 mile planning jurisdiction
- Broader diversity of uses downtown
- Youth programs
- Development of “Bonnie Lake Park”
- Swimming pool
- Movie theatre
- Golf course



## Downtown Traffic:

The most pressing issues facing the Town of Lowell are downtown traffic, growth pressure from Chicago and North County, and the need for infrastructure improvements, especially in the water systems. Traffic on SR 2 through downtown Lowell, specifically semi truck traffic, has been identified as a concern for the people of Lowell. SR 2 is a primary thoroughfare in South County between I-65 and US 41 and brings heavy traffic through downtown Lowell. This heavy traffic through the historic downtown stifles an otherwise healthy and attractive downtown. Downtown Lowell boasts attractive buildings, few vacancies, a historic small-town character, and appears to be functioning better than most small-town centers throughout Indiana.

The heavy semi traffic however, disrupts the desired pedestrian atmosphere, is a nuisance to local property owners, and will likely become a barrier as Lowell attempts to improve its downtown area. There is a definite need to develop alternate East-West routes through Lowell for heavy traffic and investigate corridor improvement options along SR 2 that will support the development of Downtown Lowell as an active pedestrian area.

## Growth Pressure

Growth pressure is a broad issue facing all of Southern Lake County, Lowell being no exception. As development continues to creep southward, Lowell needs to be prepared to face this pressure in terms of infrastructure capacity and development regulation. Growth considerations include the development of a Design Guidelines Ordinance, the establishment of an Architectural Review Board, control of development along the SR 2 corridor east to the I-65 interchange and west to the US 41 intersection, and most importantly, improvement and expansion of lacking water infrastructure. Currently the Town of Lowell is operating with wastewater and freshwater systems that do not incorporate any kind of redundancy. This creates a considerable risk of widespread system failure due to the lack of redundant loops. Preparation for this growth also includes the location of a suitable site for the proposed new middle school. Currently, a site on the western edge of Lowell near the Lake County C & D landfill site has been considered for the middle school, but there are some concerns that accompany this option.



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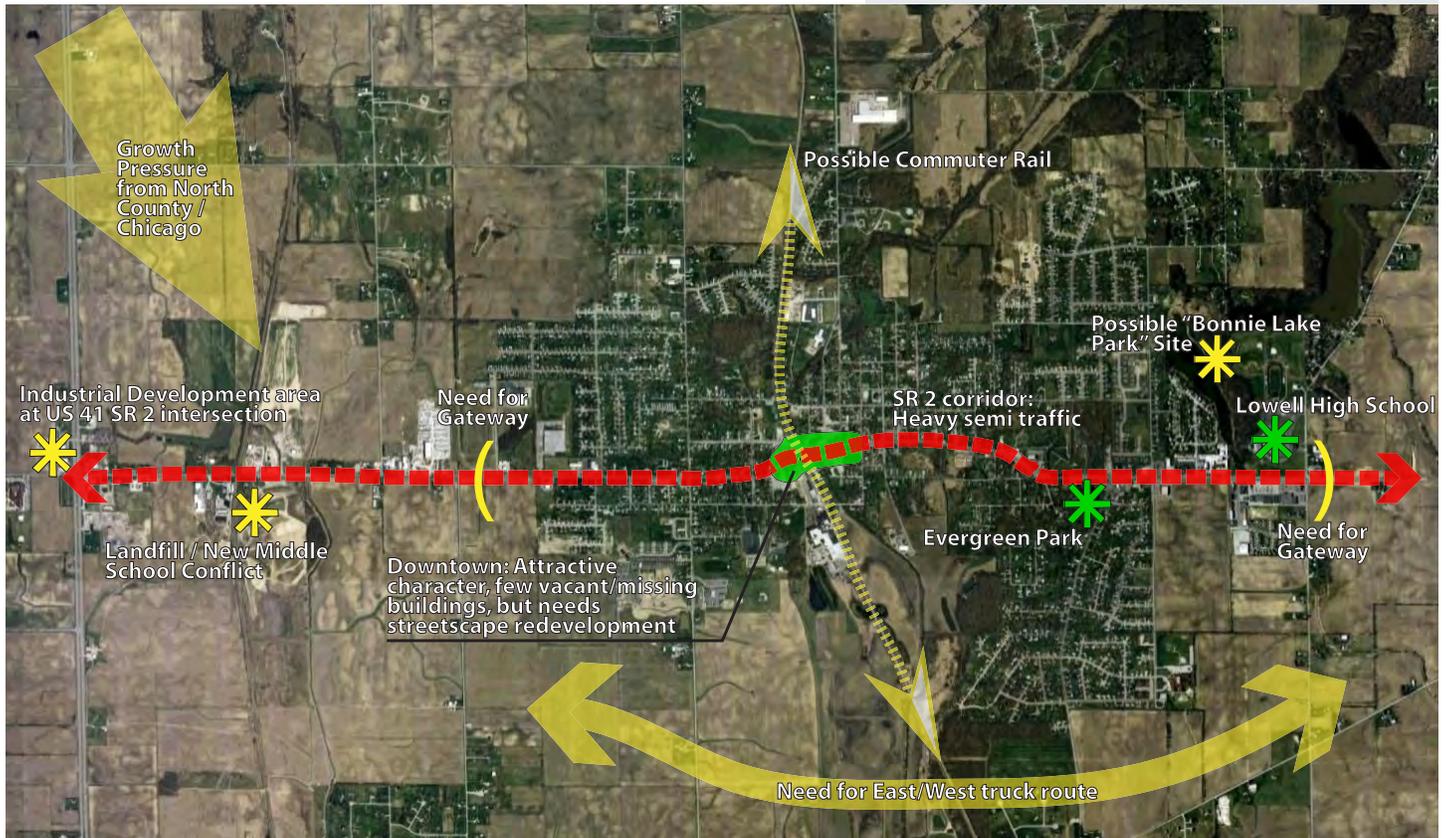


Identifi... Issues and Goals  
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**Assets:**

Assets that Lowell can build upon include its progressive community attitude toward planning implementation, its successful parks and school systems, and its proximity to the amenities in North County and Chicago. Future desires and possibilities include the creation of an SR 2 / US 41 intersection development area, a possible commuter rail extension to serve South County and Lowell, the development of a Bonnie Lake park and wildlife area, and the incorporation of larger market uses in and around Downtown Lowell (such as a theatre, swimming pool, golf course, etc.)



The L.A.N.D. Reference Map indicates the locations of the issues mentioned in the L.A.N.D. analysis. The purpose of the map is to give geographic perspective for those L.A.N.D. issues which are location-sensitive.



# Town of Lowell Comprehensive Plan

## Issues and Goals



## Introduction



**Input from Lowell residents and town officials during town meetings was a critical part of the creation of the Lowell Comprehensive Plan**

The purpose of the Community Profile and public input process was to identify major issues facing the Town of Lowell. These issues and the goals devised to deal with them, will formulate a clearer answers to “Where do we want to go?” in this section of the Comprehensive Plan document. The identified issues and goals will be dealt with through specific strategies and recommendations in the following section of the document.

Public input from town meetings and character preference surveys portrayed a unified vision for Lowell. Widespread agreement among the residents of Lowell helped to pinpoint the most pressing issues facing the community, and implied a strong community relationship within the Town of Lowell. This unity is an asset that will serve the town well during the implementation of this plan.

## Town Meetings

During town meetings residents consistently expressed concerns regarding Lowell’s downtown. Residents brought up issues of heavy traffic through downtown, little activity taking place in the downtown core, problems with parking, and a desire for a clearer downtown character and identity. Perhaps the second most discussed issue was the way the Town of Lowell will face the growth pressure from North County/Chicago. The largest concern in this regard was Lowell’s ability to benefit from growth pressure by expanding its tax base, filling downtown vacancies, allowing new development, and encouraging specific identified land use desires, while still maintaining the small-town character that the town enjoys.



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# ✦ Issues and Goals

## Character Preference Surveys

The character preference surveys were an indication of the community's preference for a traditional, small-town aesthetic. These surveys expressed a desire to build upon the character of Lowell's existing downtown core, and suggested a strong preference for pedestrian friendly, walkable streets. The community planning team, as well as town residents, quickly came to understand that the SR 2 corridor through Lowell will be the single most important factor in the development of this aesthetic. In order to protect and promote the kind of visual character that the residents of Lowell want to maintain, and to prepare for the increasing growth pressure facing the town, it will be necessary to formulate specific goals to represent the interests of Lowell residents and strive for responsible development practices.

## Identification of Issues and Goals

The following pages highlight issues facing the Town of Lowell identified by community residents and the community planning team. The issues are presented in a bulleted list format without regard to priority. Each issue is outlined along primary causes, a basic goal to address it, possible initial responses (as suggested by the community and/or devised by the community planning team), formidable obstacles, and other issues that are closely related. A goals analysis that identifies each primary goal and the potential available strategies to accomplish it follows.

**In the Character Preference Surveys Lowell residents indicated a preference for development resembling traditional neighborhood and downtown character (above) as opposed to large tract subdivisions and sprawling corridor development.**



Issues and Goals



Semi-truck traffic through downtown is a significant issue for Lowell.

- Issue:** *Heavy semi-truck traffic through downtown*
- Cause:** Trucks avoiding toll road
- Cause:** SR-2 is only East-West route across South County
- Goal:** Redirect heavy traffic while maintaining healthy circulation and fostering a pedestrian environment (i.e. don't let downtown move to a bypass)
- Response:** Traffic Circles as gateways into downtown
- Response:** Scales and tolls on SR 2 on either side of downtown
- Response:** Semi-truck Bypass
- Obstacles:** INDOT control of SR 2 through downtown
- Associated Issue:** Economic development and downtown business environment
- Associated Issue:** Lack of pedestrian character downtown

- Issue:** *Possible South Shore Line extension to Lowell*
- Goal:** Fully utilize and manage any growth as a result of a South Shore Line extension
- Response:** Update Zoning
- Associated Issue:** Economic development
- Associated Issue:** Transit-oriented development
- Associated Issue:** Illiana Expressway
- Associated Issue:** Growth pressure

- Issue:** *Downtown Parking*
- Cause:** Perception of lack of parking downtown
- Cause:** Lack of wayfinding and signage to indicate parking areas
- Cause:** Poor connectivity from lots to SR-2
- Cause:** Lack of pedestrian connectivity between downtown and neighborhoods to encourage walking
- Goal:** Accommodate parking needs downtown to attract business and activity
- Goal:** Manage parking downtown more efficiently
- Response:** Angled parking along SR-2 in downtown
- Response:** Utilize alleys as parking access
- Response:** Clearer, unified, bilingual signage
- Response:** Downtown Merchant's Association (shared parking in rear)
- Response:** Parking meters



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Environmental Issues

**Issue:** *Air and ground pollution*

**Cause:** Landfill on the west side of town

**Goal:** Clean-up and prevent future problems

**Response:** Cooperate with state and federal agencies to clean site

**Associated Issue:** Pollution transported South toward Schneider

**Associated Issue:** Conflict with proposed new middle school location

**Feddeler Landfill Site**



Image taken from Google Earth. Google Earth Community.

The landfill site poses significant health risks to its immediate surroundings. Several cases of cancer have already been reported.

Housing Issues

**Issue:** *Very affordable compared to North County*

**Asset:** Housing prices as a draw for growth

**Goal:** Keep housing prices affordable despite growth pressure

**Need:** Additional quality affordable housing

**Response:** Updated Zoning

**Response:** Affordable and low-income housing requirements for new development

**Associated Issue:** Growth pressure

**Issue:** *Mix of housing*

**Goal:** Create a variety of housing types (mix of old vs. new, mix of lot sizes and densities)

**Response:** Architectural Review Board

**Response:** Residential design guidelines

**Response:** Direct growth using infrastructure

**Lowell Housing**



Existing housing in Lowell (above). Lowell needs to prepare for the residential market changes that growth pressure will bring.

Educational Issues

**Issue:** *Location of new middle school*

**Goal:** Locate to avoid conflict with pollution sources

**Goal:** Locate to avoid generating traffic problems

**Response:** Site North of Town Hall

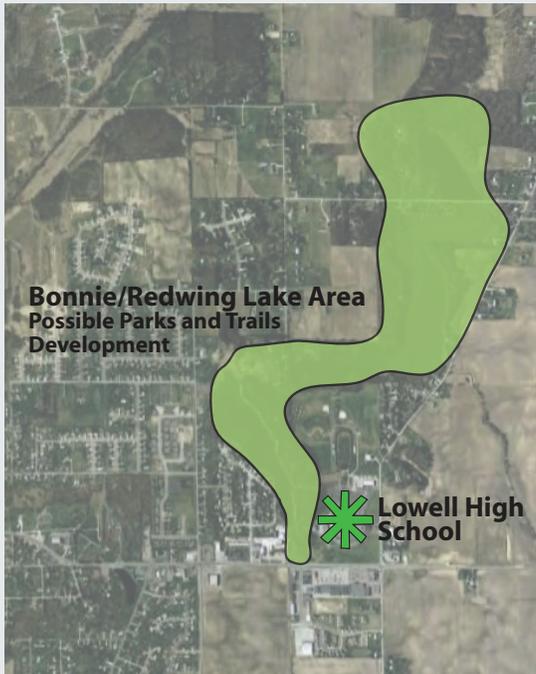
## Lowell Wastewater Issues



Marion County Stormwater Management Program.  
<http://publicworks.co.marion.or.us/Es/stormwater/Index.asp>

Alternative methods of handling stormwater are viable solutions to lessen the impact of further development upon Lowell's existing infrastructure.

## Lowell Parks



The Bonnie/Redwing Lake area has great potential for parks and trails development.

## Demographic Issues

- Issue:** *Favorable demographic conditions for growth*
- Cause:** Low poverty, low crime, relatively high education levels, etc.
- Goal:** Utilize these attractions to attract growth
- Goal:** Manage growth effectively
- Response:** Architectural review board
- Response:** Design guidelines for residential development
- Response:** Use infrastructure to direct growth
- Response:** Updated zoning and ordinances
- Associated Issues:** Growth pressure
- Associated Issues:** Housing

## Infrastructure Issues

- Issue:** *Inadequate wastewater infrastructure*
- Goal:** Improve wastewater infrastructure
- Response:** Capital improvements plan
- Obstacle:** Financing
  
- Issue:** *Use of infrastructure to direct growth*
- Goal:** Expand infrastructure to accommodate needed capacity while managing permitted growth areas
- Response:** Capital improvements plan
- Obstacle:** Financing

## Parks and Recreation

- Issue:** *Desire for more parks and recreation*
- Desire:** Bonnie Lake Park
- Desire:** Trail Network
- Desire:** Golf course
- Desire:** Swimming pool
- Desire:** Conservation areas
- Desire:** Youth Programs
- Response:** Updated parks plan
- Obstacle:** Financing



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Character and Identity

**Issue:** *Downtown streetscape lacks pedestrian scale*

**Cause:** Lack of pedestrian amenities

**Cause:** Heavy semi traffic through downtown

**Cause:** Lack of gateways

**Response:** Implementation of traffic calming strategies

**Response:** Introduce pedestrian amenities (more trees, seating, waste disposal, lighting, signage, etc.)

**Response:** Allow indoor uses to occupy streetscape space (outdoor displays, outdoor dining, etc.)

**Response:** Development of SR-2 gateways on either end of downtown

**Response:** Development of functional alleys

**Obstacle:** INDOT

**Obstacle:** Financing

**Associated Issue:** Traffic through downtown

**Associated Issue:** Downtown economic development

**Issue:** *Downtown buildings*

**Asset:** Historic buildings in downtown

**Asset:** Very few vacancies

**Response:** Facade easements

**Response:** Utilize downtown character to promote active pedestrian environment

**Associated Issue:** Downtown business environment

**Issue:** *Small-town character*

**Goal:** Accommodate growth to improve tax base and drive commercial and industrial investment while maintaining a small town character

**Response:** Updated zoning

**Response:** Corridor and design guidelines

**Response:** Creation of Architectural Review Board

Lowell Downtown Character

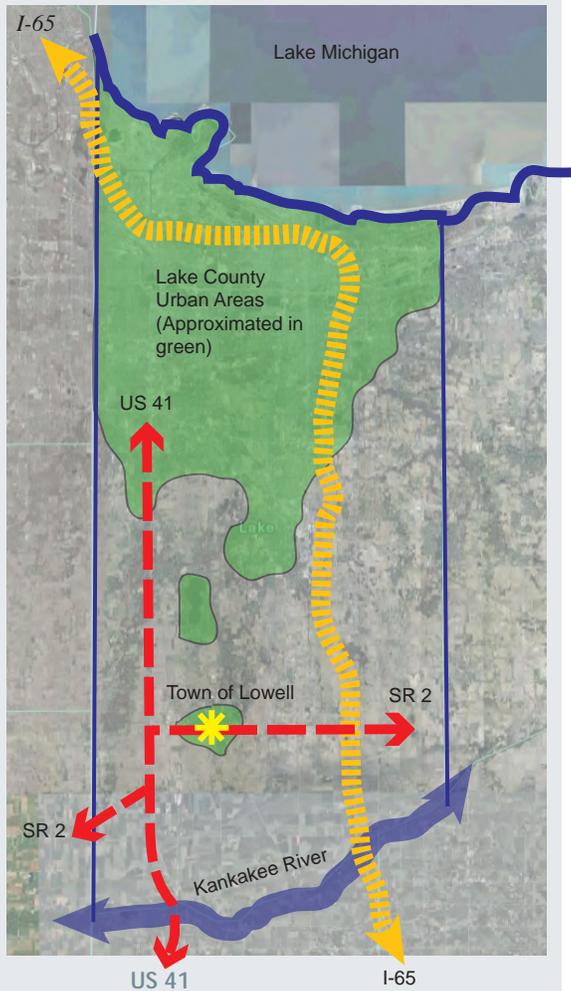


Lowell’s historic downtown boasts a continuous streetscape with attractive architecture, but few other elements that lend a pedestrian scale or create an active environment.



Improved wayfinding and attractive signage are among several pedestrian amenities that would help create a pedestrian-friendly atmosphere in downtown Lowell.

Lake County Context Map



Growth pressure from urban Lake County in the north is quickly approaching Lowell along US 41 and other thoroughfares.

**Issue:** *Growth Pressure from North County*

**Trend:** Growth in Lowell is high; outpaces nation and state growth

**Trend:** Commuting and employment patterns suggest that Lowell is a bedroom community

**Cause:** Affordable housing prices

**Cause:** Proximity to North County/Chicago

**Cause:** Access to major thoroughfares (SR-2, US-41, I-65)

**Response:** Architectural review board

**Response:** Design guidelines for residential development

**Response:** Use infrastructure to direct growth

**Asset:** Service boundary

**Associated Issue:** Infrastructure

**Associated Issue:** Schools

**Associated Issue:** Illiana Expressway



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Economic Development Issues

**Issue:** *SR-2 & US-41 Intersection*

**Goal:** Develop intersection as an identified industrial park area and prevent the typical character of sprawl

**Response:** Annexation and zoning of area

**Response:** Corridor guidelines

**Associated Issue:** Illiana Expressway

**Associated Issue:** Growth pressure

**Issue:** *Downtown*

**Goal:** Promote healthy business environment downtown

**Goal:** Fill downtown vacancies with viable businesses

**Desire:** Downtown theatre

**Desire:** More arts and crafts (niche) stores downtown

**Associated Issue:** Traffic in downtown

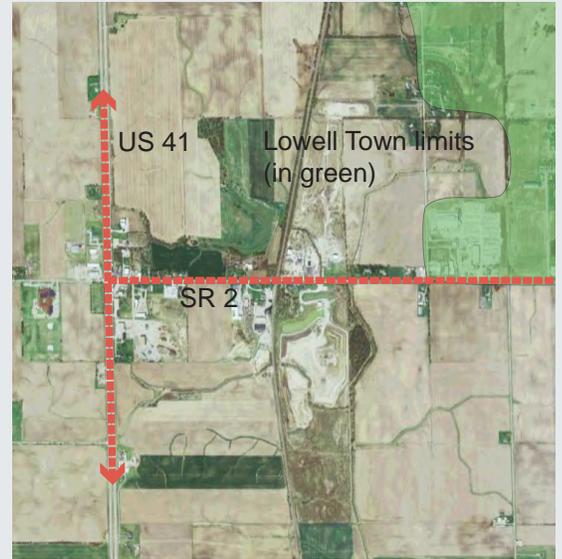
**Associated Issue:** Lack of pedestrian scale downtown

**Associated Issue:** Buildings in downtown

**Associated Issue:** Downtown Merchant’s Association

The next step in the Issue and Goals section of the document is to refine the goals and responses from the bulleted list to offer specific strategies and recommendations that will begin to answer to the question “How do we get there?” The following pages are divided into categories and contain discussions of individual goals for the town. The Strategies and Ordinances section of the document will discuss the ramifications and implementation of each strategy in more depth.

Lowell Economic Development Areas



The intersection of US 41 and SR 2 (above), and downtown Lowell (below) are two significant economic development areas within the Lowell area and have significant potential to bring economic growth to the town.



## Transportation

### Goal:

- Redirect heavy traffic on SR 2 through downtown Lowell while maintaining healthy circulation and fostering a pedestrian environment.

### Strategies:

- Develop a truck bypass around the downtown area.
  - - Build roundabouts on either side of downtown to discourage truck use.
- Impose a weight limit for traffic through downtown Lowell.
- Use scales and tolls to provide a financial disincentive for trucks moving through downtown.
- Impose a Connectivity Ordinance for new development to limit further congestion on SR 2.
- Develop pedestrian infrastructure in downtown and throughout Lowell to encourage fewer auto trips and provide a pedestrian atmosphere.

Economic analysis has indicated that Lowell’s downtown is underutilized and retail and entertainment are weak economic areas. This is largely a result of disruptions of pedestrian activity by heavy semi truck traffic on SR 2. Lowell needs to address this problem to devise a scheme to alleviate traffic congestion through downtown.

Currently the Departments of Transportation in Illinois and Indiana are working in conjunction with the federal government to develop what will be known as the Illiana Expressway. This will be a major east/west thoroughfare that may pass near the town of Lowell. This represents a long-term solution to Lowell’s downtown traffic problem as it will become the primary thoroughfare for east/west traffic currently utilizing SR 2. The expressway, however, is currently a “hot button” issue within Lake County and other areas, and the controversy surrounding the proposed route of the Illiana Expressway may delay the construction of this thoroughfare for up to 20 years. Consequently, the Town of Lowell should employ its own measures to address the problem in the short term. The strategies listed above are the most viable options that Lowell can implement to redirect traffic, creating disincentives for semis to go through downtown and providing desirable alternate routes.

The heavy semi traffic through Lowell is a by product of two factors. First, SR 2 is the only major east/west thoroughfare in South County. Second, trucks find SR 2 to be a convenient, toll-free alternative to using the Indiana State Toll Road. Deterring trucks from downtown will



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help redirect traffic back to the toll road. One strategy is the use of scales and tolls for trucks traveling into downtown. This would decrease traffic and generate revenue for the town/state. The enforceability of such a procedure is questionable because INDOT has jurisdiction over SR 2 and may not consent to such a strategy. An alternative way to deter semi-truck traffic is to make downtown navigation more cumbersome for large vehicles. Implementation techniques for this strategy include the use of traffic calming techniques, roundabouts as gateways, and additional stop lights (especially pedestrian controlled) and stop signs. All of these strategies require that the Town of Lowell work with INDOT because no alterations to a state highway can be made without INDOT approval. In order to implement these changes INDOT would likely require an alternate semi-truck route (i.e. “Business Route 2”) to be developed (see diagrams). Belshaw Road is a likely candidate for a “Business Route 2” bypass. If Belshaw Rd. is offered as an alternative and enough emphasis downtown is placed upon pedestrian use rather than auto circulation through the use of traffic calming elements, trucks would likely avoid downtown and weight limits/tolls would not need to be implemented.

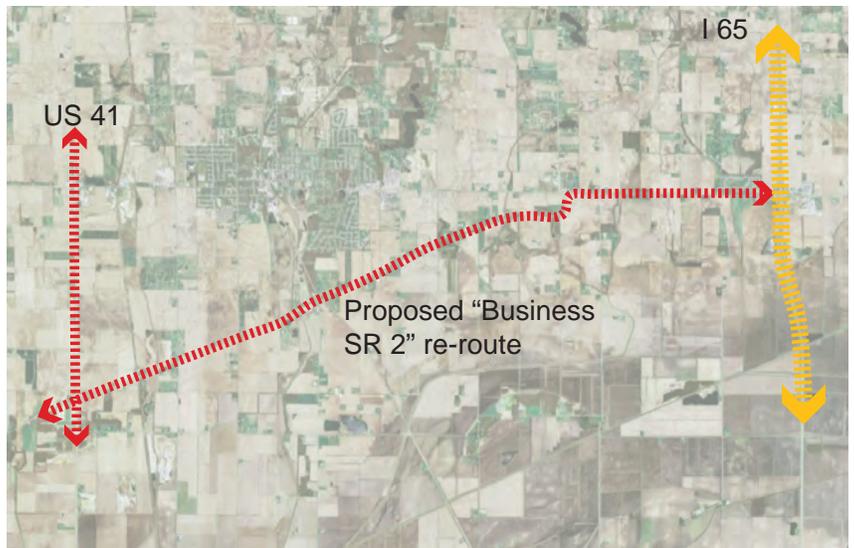
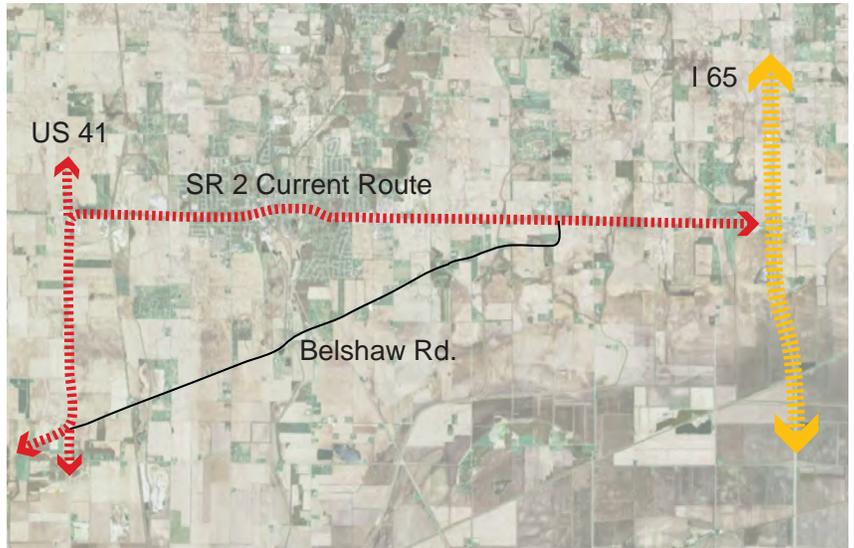
### Critical Techniques

Belshaw Road Improvement

Traffic Calming Downtown especially:

- Roundabouts as Gateways
- Pedestrian Controlled Crosswalks
- Raised Crosswalks or Street Tables
- Angled On-Street Parking with Neckdowns

"Business Route 2" Re-Route Potential



**A potential short-term solution until the construction of the Illiana Expressway is re-routing semi-truck traffic south of downtown along Belshaw Rd. This would require cooperation with INDOT to designate the proposed route as something akin to "Business Route 2."**



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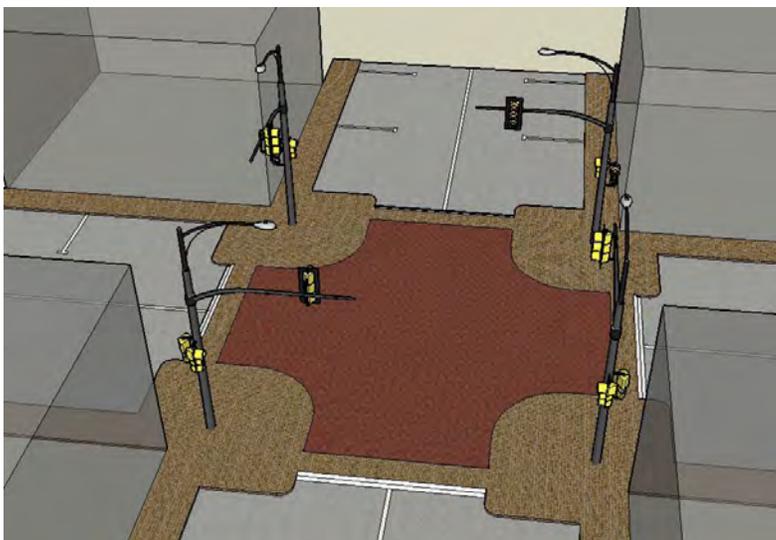
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## Traffic Circles as Gateways



Image taken from: Clough Harbor & Associates.  
<http://www.cha-llp.com/go/project/route-62-photosimulations>

## Traffic Calming Techniques



The use of traffic circles on SR 2 on either side of the downtown area (above) will provide an attractive gateway feature into downtown, and create a disincentive for traffic searching for a quick way across South County. Major road alterations like traffic circles however, will require the town of Lowell to obtain approval from INDOT to make accommodations for heavy semi traffic.

Using traffic calming techniques will discourage through-traffic in downtown (like semi-trucks) looking for a quick route across South County, and help to foster a pedestrian atmosphere that will contribute to downtown revitalization. Some techniques include using street tables (top), alternative paving crosswalks (bottom), speed humps, bulb outs, and on-street parking.

Transportation

Goal:

- Accommodate parking needs and efficiently manage parking in downtown to attract business and activity.

Strategies:

- Develop pedestrian infrastructure in downtown and throughout Lowell to encourage fewer auto trips and provide a pedestrian atmosphere.
- Update zoning to include shared parking standards.
- Use signage and alleys to provide clear access to rear parking and combat perception of lack of parking in downtown Lowell.
- Make parking requirements flexible to allow for parking within a certain distance of use rather than mandating on-site parking.
- Develop diagonal parking on SR 2 through downtown Lowell.
- Create a Parking Benefit District.
- Plan for potential “South Shore” connection to be located near downtown.
- Develop a public parking area/garage to be shared among downtown uses and to serve as a “park and ride” lot for a potential South Shore Line connection.

In town meetings, residents expressed a concern of a lack of parking downtown. Upon further analysis, the community planning group discovered that there is a multitude of parking in the downtown area both on-street and off, which is never used to full capacity. Much of this parking is behind buildings or parallel along SR 2. The on-street parking along SR-2, although visible and readily accessible, is not a desirable option for many people due to the amount of traffic on SR 2 through downtown. The amount of traffic, particularly semi-trucks, has been mentioned as a problem for downtown and this is another example of that reality. Most additional parking is not visible from SR 2, which in terms of streetscape character, is a good thing.

The lack of parking as expressed by the residents is an issue of perception rather than an issue of physical parking spaces. In order to combat this problem, the Town Lowell should invest in streetscape improvements, particularly signage and wayfinding, to direct travelers to downtown to parking locations. Also, Lowell should make an effort to encourage all uses near downtown to share parking. In terms of increased traffic and business, this will likely benefit all parties involved. If growth pressures create the need for additional parking downtown the town should investigate a shared parking garage to be constructed through a public/private partnership. The garage could be a part of larger revitalization effort including the construction of a commuter



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rail station, a downtown park/plaza, streetscape revitalization, and the need for a “park and ride” facility to serve the commuter market.

One way that existing parking can be managed more efficiently is the implementation of a parking benefit district in which an entity, such as a Downtown Development Association or a Merchant’s Association, would install parking meters and use the revenue generated from the meters to invest in downtown improvements. This would help regulate on-street parking and contribute to downtown redevelopment.

**Improved wayfinding and abundant signage will help direct traffic in downtown Lowell to desired parking areas, and provide a nice pedestrian scale element within the streetscape.**

### Parking Benefit District Potential

Given 49 Parking a downtown parking benefit could generate:

**Assuming \$.25 per meter per day**  
= \$4,471.25 per year

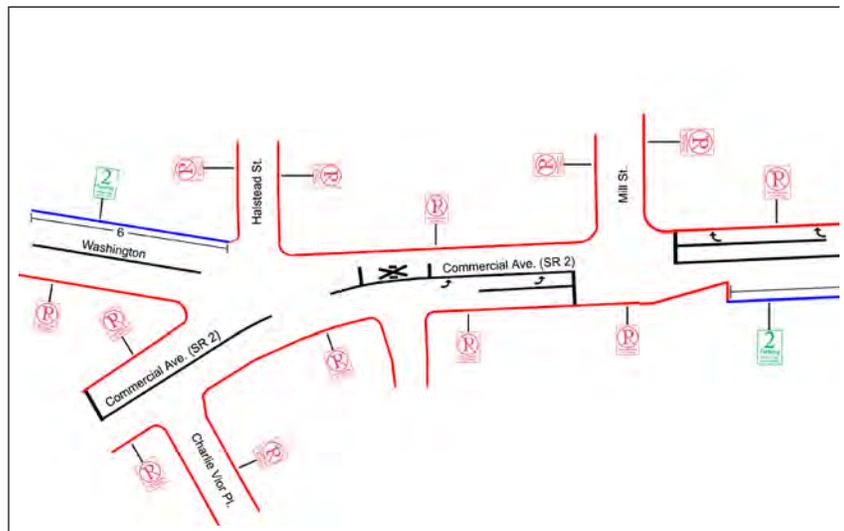
**Assuming \$.50 per meter per day**  
= \$8,942.50 per year

**Assuming \$.75 per meter per day**  
= \$13,413.75 per year

**Assuming \$1.00 per meter a day**  
= \$17,885.00 per year

These funds could be used to replace between 40 and 160 linear feet of sidewalk each year. Overall, nearly all of the sidewalks in downtown could be replaced with attractive traffic calming paving in just over 7 years. For a more detailed analysis of parking benefit potential, as well as a more detailed explanation of its implementation, refer to the Strategies and Ordinances section of this document.

### Downtown On-Street Parking SR 2 (Commercial Avenue)



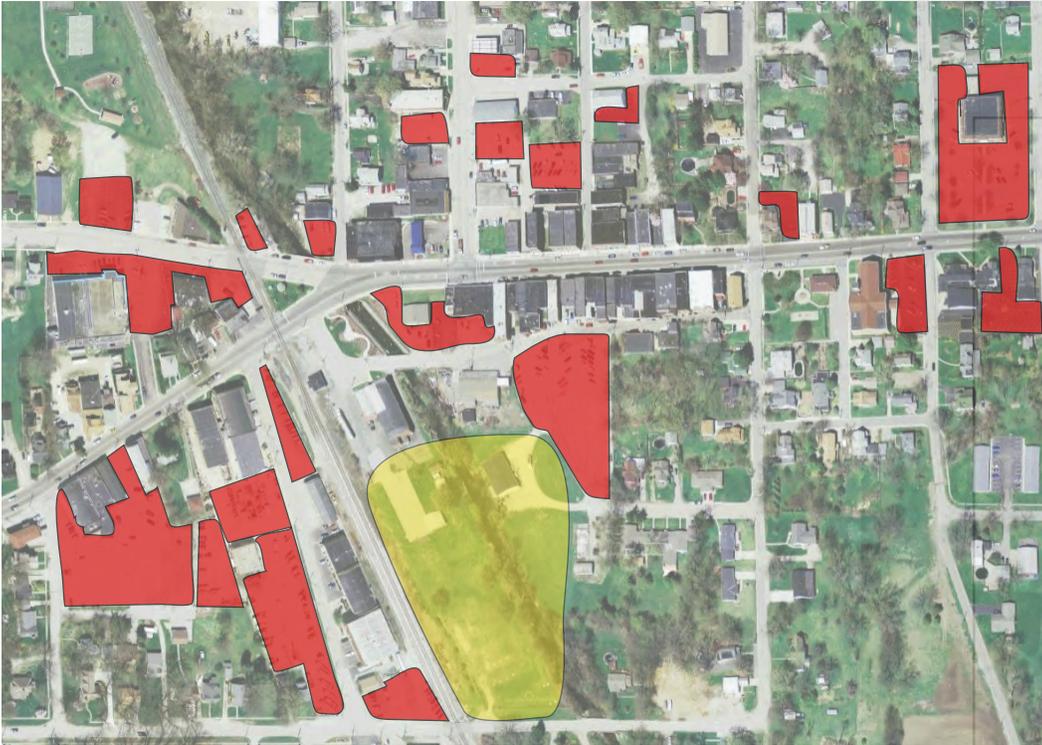
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# Issues and Goals

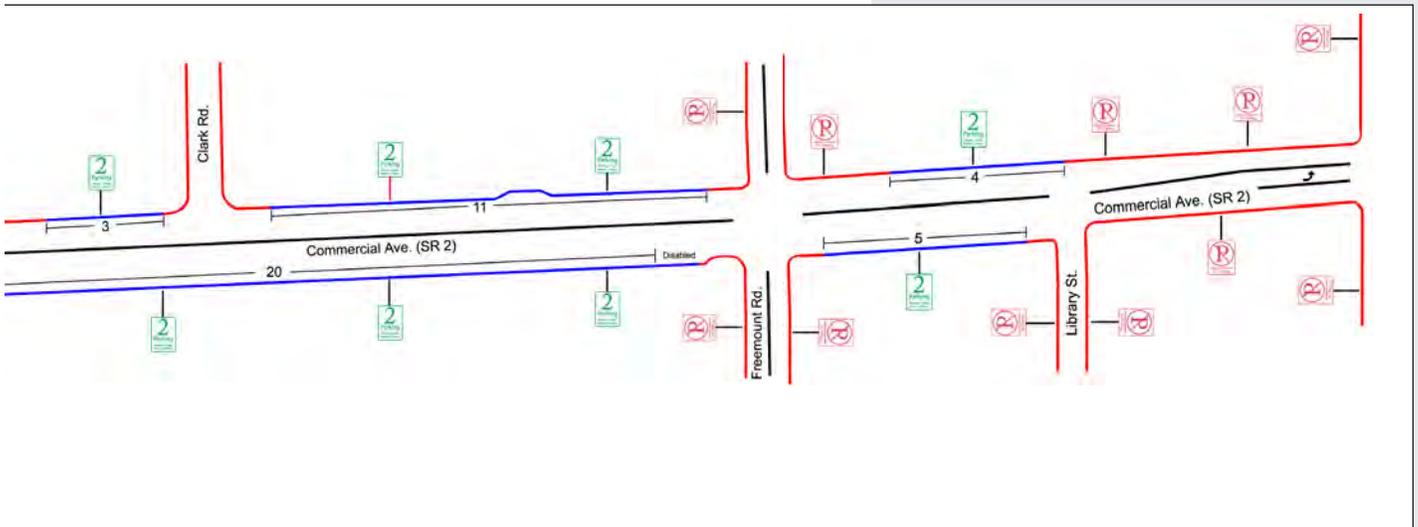
## Downtown Off-Street Parking



Off-Street Parking  
(in red)

Potential shared lot/  
South Shore Line  
extension area  
(in yellow)

Evidence suggests that there is ample parking in the downtown area to meet current demand. The diagram above illustrates off-street parking areas, while the diagram below shows on-street parking in the downtown core. Perception of lack of parking is a function of an auto-oriented downtown environment and a lack of proper wayfinding and signage.



49 total existing spots in the downtown core

## Transportation

### Goal:

- Fully utilize and manage any growth resulting from a potential South Shore Line extension.

### Strategies:

- Encourage Transit Oriented Development by updating Lowell’s zoning and development standards to allow for mixed use near any proposed transit station.
- Encourage Transit Oriented Development by developing pedestrian infrastructure between any transit station, downtown Lowell, and Lowell’s neighborhoods to improve mobility and reduce auto-dependency.
- Plan for any potential South Shore Line connection to be located near downtown in order to catalyze further economic growth.
- Develop a public parking area/garage to be shared among downtown uses and serve as a “park and ride” lot for a potential South Shore Line connection.

Transit oriented development can be an important technique for guiding growth in Lowell. An extension of the regional South Shore rail transit system into Lowell could lead to an economic boom for the town, raising property values, increasing mobility, reducing dependence on automobiles, and emphasizing Lowell’s position as the most significant economic and transportation center in South County. Lowell should do everything in its power to encourage the development of a South Shore rail extension into the town. The extension of a regional commuter rail brings significant growth pressure and a wealth of opportunity. In the case of Lowell, the South Shore extension would provide an attractive alternative to the car for commuting into North County/Chicago. This may attract more residents to Lowell that work in northern areas. Regional transit may be an ideal solution to for young families who work in North County/Chicago but want their kids to attend Lowell schools.

Mixed-use villages often center around transit stops because of their desirability to commuters and satellite businesses. For this reason any proposed South Shore extension should be located near downtown. This would further catalyze downtown redevelopment efforts and encourage the development of downtown residential, retail, and entertainment sectors. Updating zoning to encourage mixed-use development near downtown and a proposed transit stop will be an important step towards embracing this growth. Lowell should investigate the possibility of constructing a common parking garage for downtown to be shared among downtown uses and as a “park and ride” location for regional commuters.



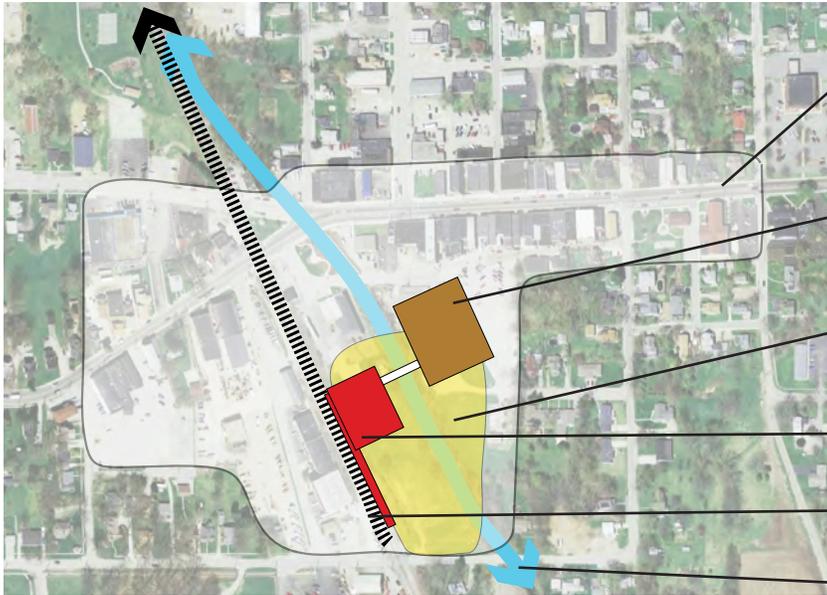
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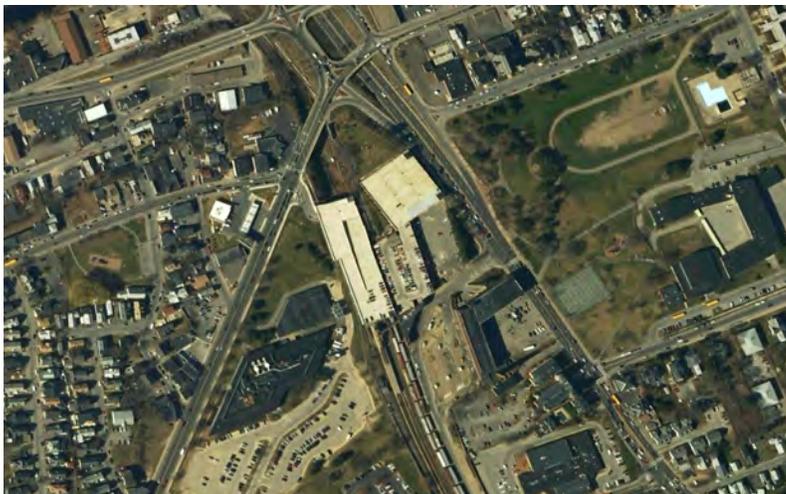
South Shore Extension Development Proposal



- Downtown area (in white)
- Shared Parking Facility for Downtown Business and “Park and Ride” for South Shore (in brown)
- Proposed South Shore Extension Development Area (in yellow)
- South Shore Commuter Rail Depot (in red)
- Existing Rail Line (black)
- Cedar Creek (blue)

The addition of a South Shore Line extension to the downtown area would be an economic boon for the area and provide greater mobility to Lowell’s residents. The incorporation of a “Park and Ride” facility that could also serve as shared facility for downtown businesses would generate revenue, put an end to any concerns regarding downtown parking, and make living in Lowell an attractive option for those people that work in Chicago. The development of this project around a downtown park or plaza, and incorporating some mixed-use buildings will add a vital anchor to the south of downtown and likely spur further development within the downtown core. These goals however, need to be supported with appropriate inwardly focused zoning and development standards in order to be accomplished.

Park and Ride Commuter Rail Facility



This park and ride facility in Lowell, MA serves a large commuter population for Boston. The facility provides increased mobility and employment options for residents of Lowell, MA making the city an attractive option for those that want to work in Lowell but want to avoid traffic congestion and high housing costs associated with Boston. The town of Lowell, IN could be a similarly viable outlet for the Chicago area.



Before



After



Before



After



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The images on these pages show what a train station for the proposed South Shore line could look like. The train station could embody the sense of community pride found in Lowell. The station would have parking for those who drive to the train. A drop-off area for passengers would also be essential. If a bus route was to be implemented in Lowell in the future, the station could erect a waiting area for passengers, thus encouraging the use of multiple modes of transportation for commuters. The station would give train riders and visitors to Lowell a positive first impression of the community and would serve as a gateway into the town for those disembarking the train.

## Growth Pressure

### Goal:

- Utilize growth conditions to expand Lowell's tax base, attract responsible growth, and manage growth effectively.

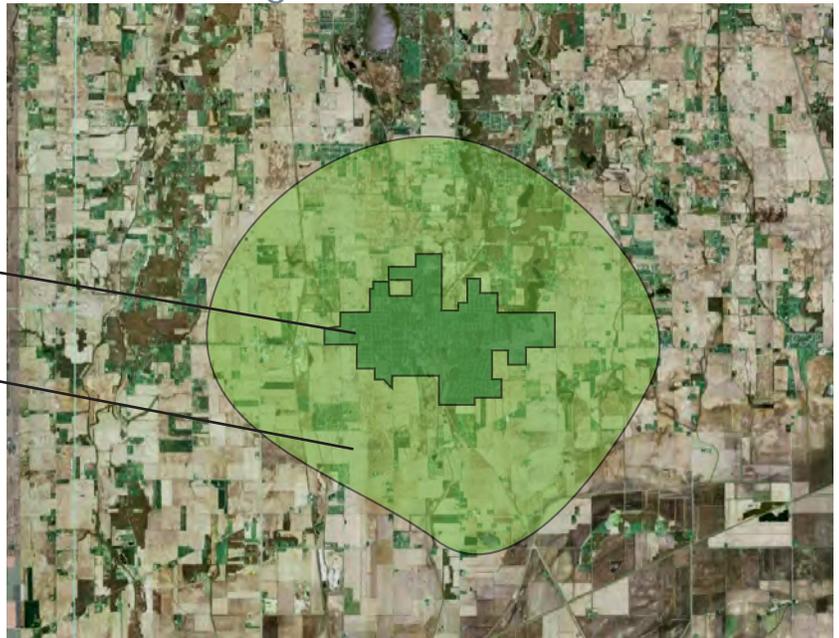
### Strategies:

- Update Lowell's zoning and development standards to allow for mixed use, higher density, affordable housing options, and more flexibility.
- Encourage the use of Transfer of Development Rights to preserve open space in and around Lowell.
- Offer density bonuses and/or other incentives for developers that contribute parks, trails, pedestrian infrastructure, public funding, etc. to the town.
- Claim 2-mile jurisdictional fringe and work with county to regulate development in and around Lowell and preserve surrounding farmland.
- Implement a general service boundary to concentrate development near existing infrastructure.
- Adopt impact fees to require developers to pay for any costs to the Town of Lowell associated with new development.
- Create a growth plan to identify preferred growth areas and use zoning and infrastructure to concentrate growth here
- Implement Development Design Guidelines and Standards..
- Establish an Architectural Review Board to aid the Plan Commission in enforcing standards and guidelines.
- Promote cluster development within development standards in new growth areas.
- Utilize growth pressure to make Lowell "fill in" before it builds out.

Lowell town limits  
(approximated in dark green)

Lowell 2 mile jurisdictional fringe  
(approximated in light green)

Lowell 2 Mile Fringe



Claiming a 2 mile jurisdictional fringe will enable Lowell to effectively direct and influence growth within its immediate area.



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Effective growth management is a broad mission with a host of aims and strategies that can be applied to various situations. In Lowell, the intent of this goal is to encourage development near the center of town and in areas with existing infrastructure, prevent typical sprawl development along SR 2 and US 41, preserve the small-town character of Lowell, protect South County’s agricultural resources, and utilize growth pressure to fill existing vacancies and improve Lowell’s economic health. The strategies listed above are all techniques that will be important for the Town of Lowell to utilize in an effort to embrace growth pressure.

The town should create a growth plan identifying preferred growth areas and apply this plan to its growth management efforts. The identification of desired growth areas will provide further direction for the town as it continues to grow. Downtown Lowell should be one of these growth areas as the town strives to revitalize its downtown with retail, entertainment, and residential development. Updated zoning based on this growth plan will allow the town to direct growth and encourage mixed-use and higher densities in appropriate areas. Zoning will influence the location and type of development that occurs in Lowell. An urban service boundary will use infrastructure to direct growth inward where existing systems are in place to effectively support growth with minimal cost to the town. In addition to directing the general location of growth within Lowell, these strategies will allow the town to influence the aesthetic character that contributes to Lowell’s overall quality of place. Guidelines and density incentives will influence developers to create the kind of neighborhoods and developments that Lowell desires.

## Infrastructure

### Goal:

- Improve Lowell's wastewater infrastructure.

### Strategies:

- Create and adopt a Capital Improvements Plan.
- Create and adopt Stormwater Management Standards
- Explore and utilize a variety of resources to fund improvements including Tax Increment Financing, Parking Benefit Districts, Redevelopment/Improvement Districts, Property taxes, Sales taxes, Food and Hotel taxes, Impact fees for new development, State and Federal aid, etc.
- Utilize growth pressure to "fill in" before building out to avoid the need for new infrastructure.
- Adopt impact fees to require developers to pay any costs to the Town of Lowell associated with new development.
- Use planned infrastructure expansion to manage growth.
- Update zoning to allow for more density and mixed use to decrease infrastructure costs per capita.

**Alternative stormwater management strategies such as natural infiltration retention ponds (below), street side bio-swales (opposite), and the use of permeable paving will allow Lowell to accommodate further growth with minimal impact on existing systems. Lowell should adopt Stormwater Management Standards mandating the use of these low impact techniques in new development in order to achieve this goal.**



*Marion County Stormwater Management Program.  
<http://publicworks.co.marion.or.us/Es/stormwater/Index.asp>*



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## ✦ Issues and Goals

In town meetings, community leaders indicated that Lowell's current wastewater infrastructure is in need of attention in two ways. First, the current system is nearing capacity. Second, Lowell's existing wastewater system is a combined sewer system and is in need of major repair in some areas.

To address these problems, the town can implement several strategies, listed earlier. First and foremost, responsible development, focused in areas where existing infrastructure is in place, will reduce the need for system extensions. Lowell should avoid extending its system unless absolutely necessary, creating a service boundary that directs growth inward. In addition, Lowell should adopt Stormwater Management Standards mandating the use of low-impact development and natural infiltration techniques. These techniques use stormwater systems that handle stormwater runoff on-site by storing and allowing it to naturally percolate into the ground, conveying minimal amounts to wastewater systems. In this way, Lowell will be able to accommodate new development without increasing the strain on its existing wastewater systems.

The most difficult tasks that the town will face will be infrastructure improvements. The first step should be to prepare a Capital Improvements Plan to identify the areas that are in the greatest need of help, and provide direction for infrastructure improvement efforts. The next, and most difficult, step is to acquire funding to pay for the improvements. In addition to tax increases, the town may want to explore the viability of Parking Benefit Districts, Redevelopment Districts, impact fees, and state aid, as well as others to help fund these efforts.



*Stormwater Runoff.*

<http://www.rivanna-stormwater.org/stormwater.htm>

## Character and Identity

**Goal:**

- Develop downtown Lowell as a pedestrian environment.

**Strategies:**

- Redirect heavy semi-truck traffic from downtown
- Create a Downtown Redevelopment Authority with the power to create a self-taxing Redevelopment District/Improvement District and a Parking Benefit District to finance improvements
- Utilize value-capture and Tax Increment Financing strategies to finance improvements
- Redevelop downtown Lowell with pedestrians as a primary consideration rather than automobiles by calming traffic and providing pedestrian amenities
- Allow indoor uses to spill outside onto the streetfront
- Update Lowell’s zoning and development standards to allow for mixed-use and promote downtown residential use
- Encourage shared parking areas located in the rear of buildings
- Create “functional” alleys
- Implement Corridor Guidelines for SR 2
- Implement Downtown Design Guidelines and Development Standards
- Plan for any potential “South Shore” connection to be located near downtown
- Develop gateways on SR 2 along with coherent and attractive wayfinding and signage
- Establish an Architectural Review Board to aid the Plan Commission in enforcing standards and guidelines

Downtown Lowell boasts excellent architectural character, few vacant lots, a continuous streetscape, and close proximity to many residential neighborhoods. Despite these advantages Lowell’s downtown is not a successful pedestrian environment, and does not create a vibrant sense of place. Downtown Lowell’s vast potential is being stifled by several: the effect of heavy traffic on SR 2; the lack of pedestrian infrastructure and amenities in the downtown area; and an underdeveloped retail and entertainment presence in the downtown.

The need to re-route heavy semi traffic around downtown has already been discussed at length as a necessary step in revitalizing Lowell’s downtown. In addition, there are many other strategies that Lowell should apply to foster an active pedestrian environment. The creation of a Downtown Redevelopment Authority with self-taxing power, composed of downtown business owners and town officials is one way that Lowell can generate revenue dedicated for downtown improvements. Tax-increment financing for new public projects, and the creation of a Parking Benefit District are other ways that Lowell may attempt to finance redevelopment efforts.



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Downtown Lowell Revitalization (Artist's Conception)



After

From a policy standpoint, Lowell should update its zoning ordinance to allow for mixed-use and to encourage downtown residential development. Lowell should adopt downtown development guidelines that shift the focus from the automobile to the pedestrian. Lowell should also encourage cooperation among businesses downtown in an effort to help the business environment. Utilizing downtown as a site for festivals and community gatherings will also help emphasize downtown as a pedestrian friendly environment.

Additional strategies include: widening sidewalks and allowing outdoor uses to “spill” into the street front, implementing downtown design guidelines for infill buildings, providing plentiful and attractive wayfinding and signage elements, constructing gateway elements at either end of downtown, encouraging the use of alleys as functional space with storefronts and outdoor seating, and the construction of pedestrian amenities such as planters, trees, seating, lighting, banners, drinking fountains, trash receptacles, etc.



Before



Improved wayfinding and attractive signage are among several pedestrian amenities that would help create a pedestrian-friendly atmosphere in downtown Lowell.

## Character and Identity

### Downtown Lowell Revitalization (Artist's Conceptions)

Issues and Goals



Before



After



Before



img\_2696

After



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After



Before

The artist's renderings on these pages illustrate the concept of beautifying the streetscape. The streetscape includes sidewalks as well as the street itself - everything that pedestrians or drivers see as they are going along the street. As can be seen in the pictures, planting trees does much to enhance the streetscape. Not only do trees help to better the environment, they also provide shade for pedestrians. This will become more important in the future as the sun becomes increasingly more dangerous to people's health. Planters for flowers, railings, and benches are other small touches that make the streetscape more pleasant for pedestrians.

## Character and Identity

### Goal:

- Maintain the small-town appeal and charm of Lowell.

### Strategies:

- Use pedestrian infrastructure and amenities to develop downtown Lowell as a pedestrian destination area.
- Use facade easements to protect downtown buildings.
- Organize historic preservation efforts to restore and maintain historic buildings and sites in Lowell.
- Stage festivals and community gatherings in downtown on a regular basis.
- Claim 2-mile jurisdictional fringe and work with Lake County to regulate development in and around Lowell to preserve surrounding farmland.
- Create a growth plan identifying preferred growth areas, with the use of zoning and infrastructure to concentrate growth in these areas.
- Implement Development Design Guidelines and Standards.
- Establish an Architectural Review Board to aid the Plan Commission in enforcing standards and guidelines.
- Promote cluster development within development standards in new growth areas.
- Utilize growth pressure to force Lowell to “fill in” before it builds out.

One of the greatest concerns expressed by residents regarding growth pressure, was maintaining the “small-town feel” of Lowell. This friendly small-town atmosphere is exhibited largely through its architectural character, historic downtown, and the form of its development. Lowell is a town without uninspiring, sprawling corridor development that can be found in cities like Merrillville. Preventing this kind of development, while focusing on inwardly oriented, traditional neighborhood growth will allow Lowell to embrace this growth pressure without threatening its character. To accomplish this, Lowell should claim its 2 mile jurisdictional fringe, create a growth plan with targeted and defined growth areas, update current zoning to allow for more mixed-use and higher densities, and adopt guidelines and development standards for various zones/areas. These will help prevent Lowell from growing in the typical sprawling manner.

In addition, downtown revitalization will help reinforce the small-town appeal of Lowell. Historic preservation efforts and façade easements should be used in conjunction with streetscape improvement efforts to develop a small-town, pedestrian atmosphere.



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### Lowell Small Town Character



Supplementing Lowell’s existing downtown character with traffic calming elements and pedestrian amenities will help reinforce the small town appeal of Lowell. The use of facade easements to protect the existing downtown character should also be examined.



The Town of Lowell should protect the character of its existing historic housing through historic preservation efforts, and ensure the quality of future housing and development by implementing Development Design Guidelines and Standards.



Preserving and restoring the character of the historic architecture in buildings downtown and throughout the community will help Lowell to maintain its heritage and small town appeal.

## Character and Identity

### Downtown Lowell Revitalization (Artist's Conceptions)



Before



After



Before



After

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After



Before

On these pages are more scenarios of what downtown Lowell could look like. Empty lots could be filled in with new building that match the character of the surrounding area, as shown in the top picture on the opposite page. This helps to fill in “missing teeth” in the streetscape and provides more space for residential and commercial use in the downtown area, thus limiting sprawl. Renovating the facades of existing buildings is another way to greatly improve the look and feel of downtown. The bottom picture on the opposite page rearranges elements found in the current facade to eliminate visual clutter and to give cohesiveness to the building. The top picture on this page updates the current facades by cleaning the masonry, highlighting architectural features, and by adding an awning to the building in the center, thus making it more welcoming to visitors.

## Character and Identity

### Goal

Make downtown a unique cultural center that residents and visitors can enjoy.

### Strategies

- Design gateways that identify downtown as the center of arts and culture.
- Beautify the streetscape by adding trees, landscaping elements, and street furniture.
- Construct a movie theater downtown, either by using an existing building or by erecting a building that blends in with the surrounding context.
- Seek funding for streetscape improvement projects through INDOT, TEA-21 funds, or by creating a TIF (Tax Increment Financing) District, or by developing a city-wide fundraising approach such as encouraging local community members to “adopt” a tree to be planted downtown.
- Provide incentives for artists and arts organizations to locate downtown.
- Re-use the former high school as a community arts and recreation center.



Tables, lighting, and trees make for an attractive streetscape.

Photo by Christopher D. Eaton

A community’s culture and heritage are what make it unique. Community heritage, expressed in the form of buildings, artifacts, traditional art, history, and storytelling all help to give residents and visitors a sense of its past. Community cultural projects and events express the community’s sense of where it is now and where it will go in the future. Every community should seek to find and express its unique culture and traditions. The initiatives and goals discussed in this section can help community members to build bridges between different groups of residents, community members and their governing body, and between Lowell and the outside world.

Culture and heritage initiatives do not have to be expensive, and many of the projects will have a high degree of visibility within the community. Such projects help to raise the total quality of life for community residents and can contribute to economic development in the community by creating an aesthetically pleasing built environment, developing cultural activities, and by generating revenue for arts-related organizations and businesses. These initiatives focus on the community building process and serve to instill a sense of pride among residents in their community.

The initiatives and goals above intend to provide a starting point for possible cultural projects that Lowell can undertake. They are intended to have collaboration between community leaders, citizens, and outside experts where appropriate. The initiatives provided herein are only a starting point; community leaders should continue to solicit ideas from the community on other projects that residents are interested in completing.



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Lowell has an attractive downtown that could easily become a cultural district for the community. Residents desire a movie theater; this is something that could easily be incorporated into the existing downtown infrastructure. Lowell also needs more parks and recreational areas; this need presents an opportunity to create ties between the arts, community heritage, and the surrounding landscape. A boarded-up former high school currently sits in the middle of downtown; the building would be ideal for use as a community arts/recreation center. Focusing on downtown as the community's main cultural and economic center will provide entertainment opportunities for residents and could attract more tourists to the community. It will also give Lowell's residents a unique sense of place.

The initiatives outlined above can be implemented in ways that do not involve collecting additional taxes from residents. INDOT or TEA-21 funding can be used to enhance the streetscape, including providing landscape elements or street furniture, widening sidewalks, or installing public art. The Indiana Arts Commission may also have funds available for cultural projects; consult with South Shore Arts, Lowell's Regional Arts Partner, to determine what funding might be available. Seek private donations from local businesses and residents. Finally, some projects can be self supporting. For instance, if the former high school is re-used as a community arts center, local artists and arts organizations, the rent that artists and arts organizations pay for space in the building can help offset the costs of renovating and maintaining the building.

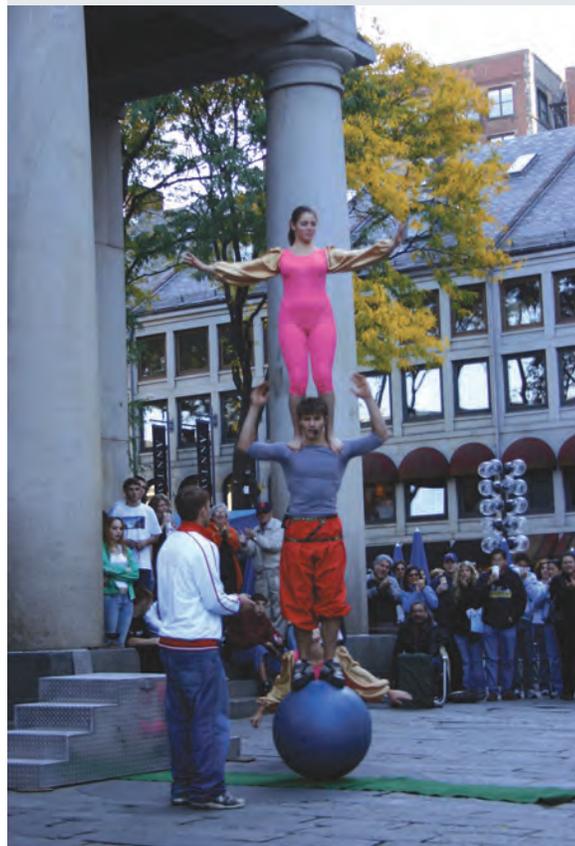


The first two floors of the Masonic Temple building in Muncie are now home to Cornerstone Center for the Arts.  
Photo from <http://www.b-levi.com>



Signage directs residents and visitors to cultural amenities.

Photo by Emily Rosendall



Street performers liven up any downtown area.

Photo by Christopher D. Eaton

# Housing

**Goal:**

- Provide a variety of housing in Lowell and develop and maintain quality affordable housing despite growth pressure

**Strategies:**

- Update Lowell’s zoning and development standards to allow for mixed use, higher density, affordable housing options, and more flexibility.
- Eliminate minimum lot size and minimum living area requirements.
- Allow for increased density in certain areas.
- Increase supply of affordable housing by allowing ancillary and secondary units.
- Encourage the use of Transfer of Development Rights to preserve open space in and around Lowell, and allow for higher densities in certain areas.
- Offer density bonuses and/or other incentives for developers that contribute parks, trails, pedestrian infrastructure, public funding, etc. to the town.
- Claim 2-mile jurisdictional fringe and work with Lake County to regulate development in and around Lowell to preserve surrounding farmland.
- Utilize growth pressure to force Lowell to “fill in” before it builds out.
- Implement affordable housing requirements for new developments with development guidelines.
- Implement Residential Design Guidelines.

Lowell is facing significant growth pressure, because, despite it’s proximity to the Chicago area, its real estate values remain very affordable. Future growth pressure will continue to drive the demand for homes in Lowell, increasing real estate values. Downtown revitalization, as well a South Shore Line extension, will likely increase home values further. While these are all positive things, Lowell should strive to maintain a socially diverse mix of housing in terms of type and affordability. One way to address this is to update Lowell’s zoning to allow for more flexibility, higher densities, and affordable housing options like ancillary units. This will enable the town to meet the increasing demand for housing without sprawling outward, necessitating an extension of infrastructure. Lowell can also use zoning to encourage multifamily structures and quality rental housing in certain areas in order to promote a greater variety of housing options.

The implementation of Residential Design Guidelines will be a key factor in ensuring that housing development is of high quality and includes affordability measures. Using these guidelines to offer density bonuses to developers who include certain amounts affordable housing or contribute high quality development will help reach this goal. Mandating affordable housing requirements is not a preferred technique when housing affordability can be encouraged through zoning and guidelines.



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Lowell Housing Variety



Lowell has a diverse housing stock (images at left and below), but there are not many rental units within the area. The median home value is \$112,800 which is about \$7,000 less than the national average. Real estate in Lowell tends to be some of the most affordable in the Chicago Metropolitan Region. This will continue to drive growth in the Lowell area. Maintaining quality affordable housing and encouraging a diverse mix of housing types through policy and zoning will help the Lowell area to maintain a vital and diverse market, appealing to potential residents.



Below: Landscaping elements make second-story apartments feel more like home to residents. Rooftops can be used as patio spaces.

Before



After

# Environment

Goal:

- Clean landfill, mitigate problems associated with leakage, and prevent future problems.

Strategies:

- Work with the state and county to coordinate cleanup efforts.
- Claim 2-mile jurisdictional fringe and force future landfills outside of this area.
- Take caution with zoning to find appropriate uses for sites adjacent to existing landfill areas.

The landfill site to the west of Lowell on SR 2 has been a large concern for Lowell residents and officials for some time. Although leakage from the waste site does not affect Lowell’s groundwater supply, it threatens the immediate area and may pose a threat to residents of South County and Schneider. The site has been designated as a Superfund site and is now under the authority of the state and federal governments. Consequently, Lowell has no direct responsibility or influence over the process of cleanup and mitigation. Because of the proximity to the town of Lowell, it is in the town’s best interests to ensure that cleanup efforts in and around the site are carried out as quickly and effectively as possible. To accomplish this, Lowell officials need to be aware and responsive to the needs of the agencies conducting the site cleanup. Lowell, although not financially liable, should be ready and willing to cooperate and make any necessary accommodations to see that this process is completed thoroughly and as soon as possible. Lowell officials should be in continual contact with the EPA and other agencies involved in the cleanup effort.

To address the landfill issue in the future Lowell needs to claim its 2 mile jurisdictional fringe to extend planning authority over the area. After this has been accomplished, Lowell will be able to ensure that any development near the site is compatible with the site’s history. Residential and institutional uses, for example, should be guarded from locations near the landfill. In addition, the 2 mile fringe will allow Lowell to influence the location of future waste sites or polluting industry uses. This will enable the town to exclude potentially hazardous development from its immediate surroundings.



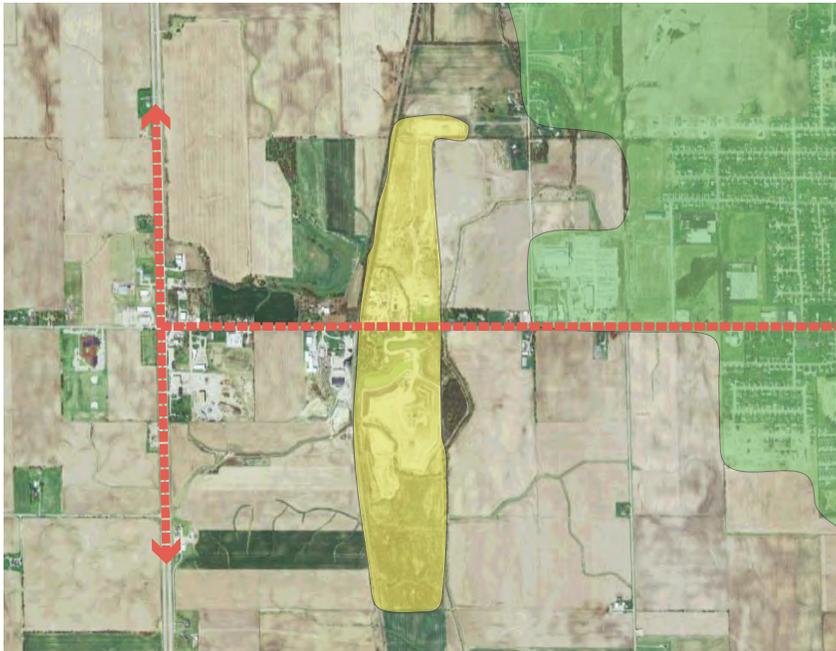
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### Feddeler Landfill Site



The landfill site poses significant health risks to its immediate surroundings. Several cases of cancer have already been reported.



Image taken from Google Earth. Google Earth Community.

# Education

### Goal:

- Locate new middle school to avoid traffic problems and conflict with adjacent land uses.

### Strategies:

- Locate school within/near town and develop appropriate pedestrian infrastructure so children are able to safely walk to school.
- Do not locate schools adjacent to incompatible land uses such as landfills, heavy industry, hazardous sites, etc.
- Perform site analyses on a several possible sites, evaluating proximity to neighborhoods, compatibility of adjacent land uses, availability of necessary support infrastructure, etc.

A primary concern in siting a new school is getting children to and from school safely. To allow children to safely walk to school, and to avoid traffic backups on roads that serve as the only access, schools should locate in town near existing neighborhoods. Currently, two primary alternatives exist for the siting of new middle school. The first is adjacent to the compromised landfill west of town on SR 2. The second, as proposed by the community planning team, is north of the town hall and south of the VFW. The second alternative is a preferred choice for several reasons. First, locating a school next to an incompatible land use with the severity of a leaking landfill is a poor decision for obvious reasons. The remainder of the reasons in support of site two deal with proximity to Lowell’s existing neighborhoods. This site will allow children to walk school, avoid traffic backups, afford the utilization of Lowell’s existing resources as educational opportunities, and reemphasize the need for Lowell’s focus on inward development before outward expansion. The second site may not have all the answers or be the most attractive fit for the Tri-Creek School Corporation, but the first site is an inappropriate choice. Tri-Creek School Corporation should make an effort to search for potential sites located within or near Lowell’s existing neighborhoods, and perform a thorough site analysis comparing a variety of important factors (proximity, adjacent land use, access, etc) to determine the best site.



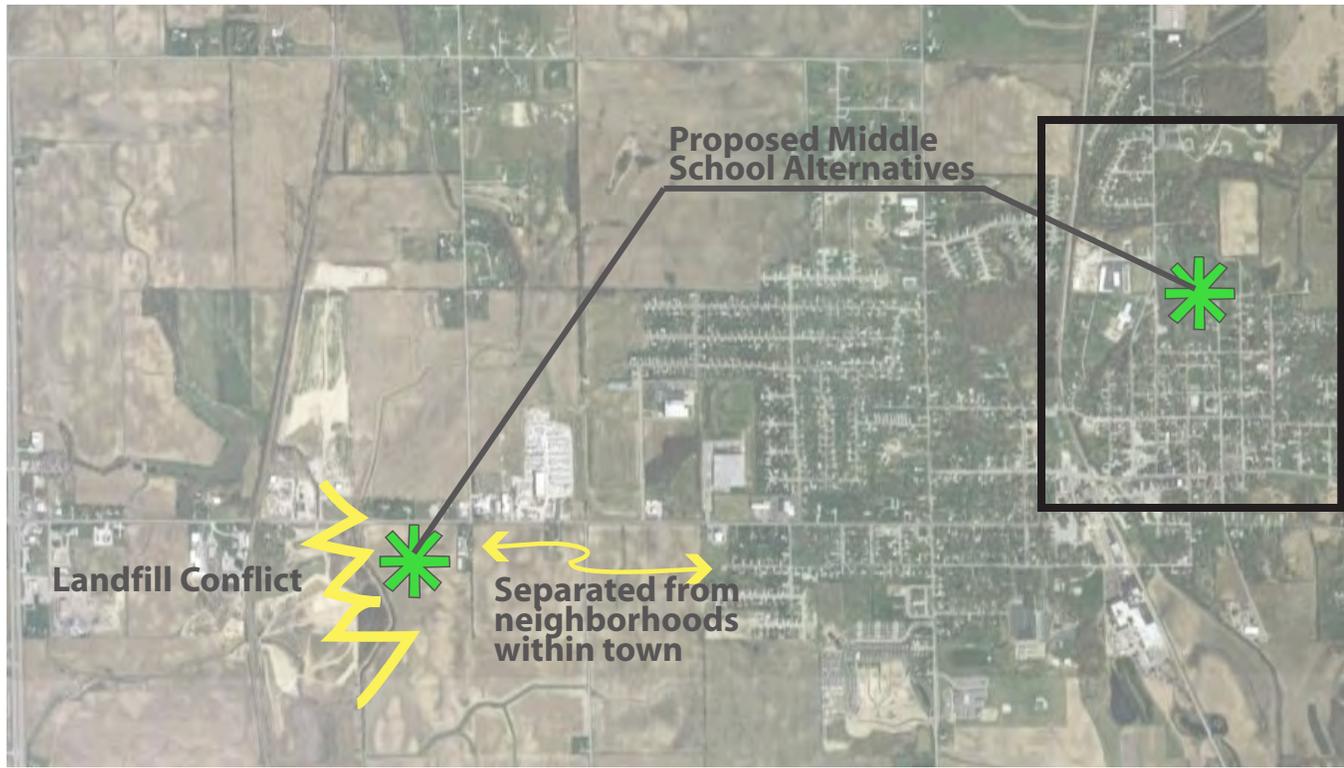
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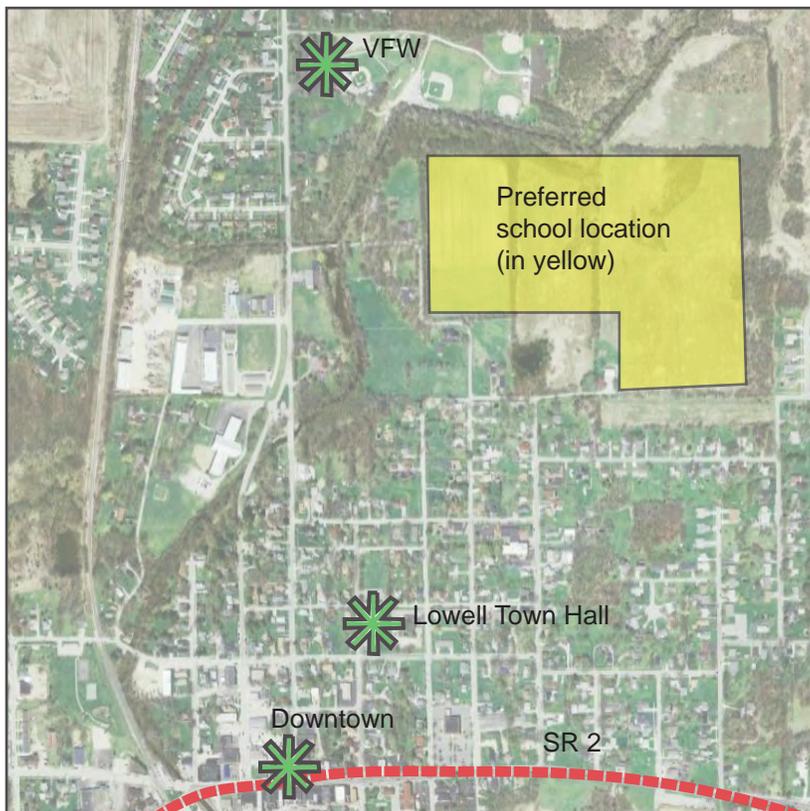
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Proposed Locations for Middle School Site



Preferred Alternative (inset from above)



The site south of Lowell’s VFW (left) is the preferred site of the two locations identified. Other than potential health risks associated with proximity to a leaking landfill, the second site will allow children to walk to school, prevent traffic jams on arterial roads outside of town, and offer potential educational benefits through closer proximity to Lowell’s resources. The site is roughly 40 acres in size, big enough to accommodate the middle school within the context of several different site designs. Improved access to the site for buses will likely be needed. The Tri-Creek School corporation should perform a site analysis on several sites to determine the best to suit its needs. The analysis should be limited to sites within Lowell town limits.

## Economic Development

### Goal:

- Promote a healthy business environment in Downtown Lowell.

### Strategies:

- Develop downtown Lowell as a pedestrian environment.
- Create a Downtown Redevelopment Authority, Merchant’s Association, and/or Economic Development entity to organize businesses, start a small business incubator, and provide a focused vision for downtown.
- Utilize value-capture, self-taxing districts, and Tax Increment Financing strategies to finance improvements.
- Provide “nodes” to serve as anchors for downtown.
- Allow indoor uses to spill outside onto the streetfront.
- Update Lowell’s zoning and development standards to allow for mixed use and promote downtown residential development.
- Develop pedestrian infrastructure in downtown Lowell to create an active pedestrian atmosphere and foster economic growth.
- Implement Corridor Guidelines for SR 2.
- Implement Downtown Design Guidelines and Development Standards.
- Plan for any potential “South Shore” connection to be located near downtown.
- Develop gateways on SR 2 along with coherent and attractive wayfinding and signage.
- Utilize growth pressure to force Lowell to “fill in” before it builds out.
- Promote specific downtown uses to enhance the attraction of the area.
- Stage festivals and community gatherings in downtown on a regular basis.

The promotion of a healthy business environment in downtown will depend heavily on the character and appeal of the environment, and cooperation among downtown businesses. The strategies for accomplishing these goals are shared in common with the goals of retaining the small-town charm of Lowell, and the development of downtown Lowell as an attractive pedestrian environment. Creating an active pedestrian environment and an attractive sense of place will be the primary methods by which Lowell’s downtown business environment will be able to thrive. The formation of a Downtown Redevelopment Authority and a small business incubator will help promote business expansion. Downtown Development Guidelines, streetscape improvements, community festivals, and re-routing heavy semi traffic from SR 2 will help revitalize the pedestrian character of downtown and attract people to the area to support further business expansion.

In town meetings, residents expressed a desire for specific uses downtown, including a movie theatre, additional antique/



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Downtown Rendering



This basic 3D rendering of downtown Lowell illustrates the continuity of its streetscape, especially between Halsted St. and North Freemont St. Lowell has few vacant lots within downtown compared to typical midwestern towns of its size. There are several rental vacancies within buildings, but the physical streetscape within the immediate downtown core area is continuous and intact. Filling the building vacancies and the few vacant lots in downtown will be an important part of revitalizing downtown Lowell. This can be accomplished by developing Lowell as an active pedestrian environment, and by implementing policies that focus growth inward instead of on the periphery along arterials.

Downtown Lowell Revitlization (Artist's Conception)



*After* The development of “functional alleys” with outdoor dining and storefronts is one way to focus on the pedestrian and make an efficient and unique use of space to support the development of healthy business climate within downtown Lowell.

niche retail businesses, and more dining opportunities. Lowell should strive to attract these uses through public investment in the downtown environment. Value-capture strategies like Tax-increment financing may be a viable option. Effective growth management through updated zoning and inwardly focused growth will be a significant help in improving the downtown business climate.



*Before*

## Economic Development

### Goal:

- Utilize US 41 and SR 2 intersection as an economic development area and develop these corridors while avoiding the typical character of sprawling development.

### Strategies:

- Implement Corridor Guidelines along both the SR 2 and US 41 Corridors.
- Claim 2-mile jurisdictional fringe to gain planning control of area.
- Annex the area from the county.
- Adopt appropriate zoning and development standards at the intersection to create a business/industrial park that will bring quality development and jobs to the Lowell area.
- Promote cluster development within development standards in new growth areas.
- Promote value-capture strategies such as Tax Increment Financing to benefit from new growth projects.

Public development of business/industrial park facilities in greenfields at significant crossroads is not an uncommon occurrence in Indiana. The economic growth in terms of local jobs and new taxes, and the opportunity to fund projects through tax-increment financing, makes this kind of project practical and a socially beneficial public investment. When the town takes the initiative, it has the freedom to act as the developer, ensuring that the quality and character of development is compatible with the desires of the town. Cooperation with the county to implement Corridor Guidelines will help to further guard against sprawling development patterns.

US 41 & SR 2 Intersection



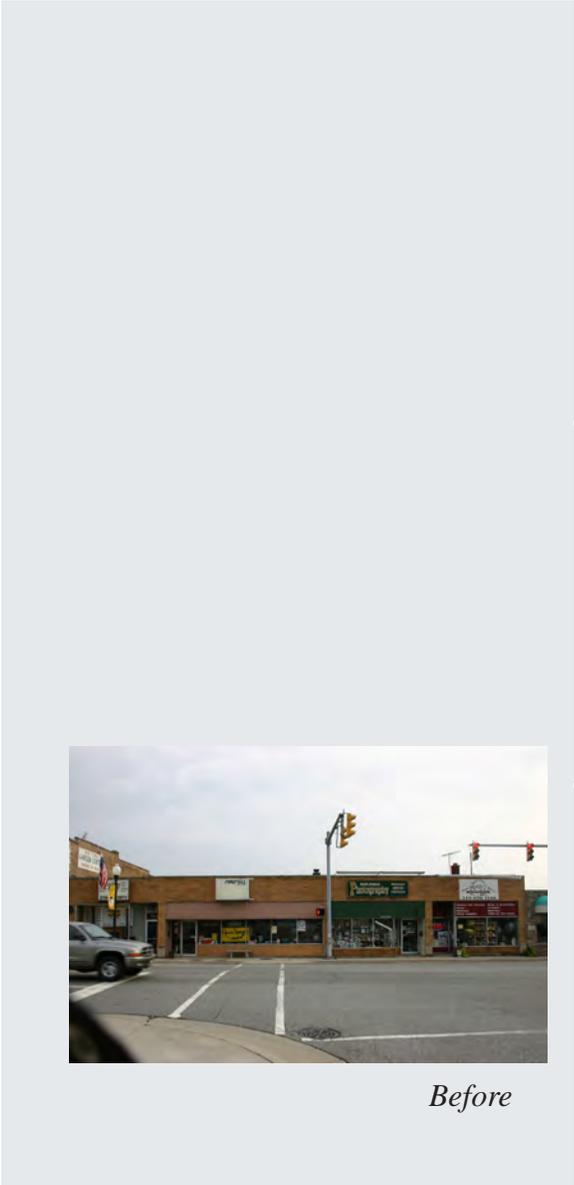
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Other than I 65, US 41 and SR 2 are the primary automobile arteries within Southern Lake County. Historically, patterns of growth tend to creep along local thoroughfares due to the access and visibility they provide. South County is no exception as growth pressure from the North County/Chicago region quickly makes its way south along US 41 towards the Lowell area. To prevent inefficient land use practices and uninspiring, sprawling development, Lowell should work with Lake County to manage growth along these corridors. Both entities should adopt corridor guidelines and updated zoning ordinances to protect the character of development along the thoroughfares.

The intersection of these two thoroughfares west of Lowell has the potential to become a significant economic development area. In town meetings, Lowell officials and residents expressed their desire to see a business park developed in this area to bring more jobs to the Lowell community. Appropriate ways to address this desire are to claim its 2 mile jurisdictional fringe, or annex the area from the county, depending on how aggressively the town wants to influence the development. Regardless, this will give Lowell the opportunity to adopt zoning and development standards to ensure quality development at the intersection. Lowell needs to identify the market of potential businesses and industries interested in locating in such an area. Then the town can assemble a plan for the development of a business park to attract interested parties. In the development of this area, city officials need to prohibit uses that would compete with the goal of downtown revitalization within Lowell. In reality, the development of the US 41/SR 2 intersection should cater to those uses that want direct access to both thoroughfares. Any other development (retail, residential, etc.) should not be allowed in an effort to focus growth inward. As with other public investment projects, the town may attempt to finance the development of the area through tax-increment financing strategies.



*Before*



*After*

## Parks and Recreation

**Goal:**

- Improve existing parks and trails in Lowell and provide more parks and recreational opportunities.

**Strategies:**

- Offer incentives for developers to provide or fund parks.
- Implement Residential Design Guidelines requiring developments exceeding a specific size to provide concentrated park space.
- Update the Lowell Parks and Recreation Master Plan.
- Develop the “Bonnie Lake” site as a park with both passive and active recreation opportunities.
- Expand Lowell’s parks and recreation programs (i.e. childcare, sports clinics) to help fund park maintenance and new park construction.
- Explore and utilize a variety of resources to fund improvements including Tax Increment Financing, Parking Benefit Districts, Redevelopment/Improvement Districts, Property taxes, Sales taxes, Food and Hotel taxes, Impact fees for new development, State and Federal aid, etc.
- Work with Lake County to provide connections to existing regional greenways, bikeways, and other trails.
- Develop pedestrian infrastructure throughout Lowell to encourage use and provide improved access to all parks.

Lowell’s existing parks system is extensive and impressive for a town its size. Lowell enjoys a large number of quality parks with a variety of sizes and uses, both active and passive. This does not, however, prevent Lowell residents however, from wanting more. A desire for additional and improved parks and recreation opportunities was strongly expressed by Lowell residents during town meetings. Specifically, residents mentioned the development of the Bonnie/Redwing Lake area as a natural park with trails, shelters, and educational opportunities. The Bonnie/Redwing Lake area is a 175 acre portion of land north and east of Lowell High School, containing two large bodies of water. Because this area is near Lowell High School, the Tri-Creek School Corporation may benefit from the development of the Bonnie/Redwing Lake area. Exploring a partnership with the school corporation for development of the park as an educational tool may be a beneficial strategy for several parties.

In addition to the Bonnie/Redwing Lake area, there are other potential opportunities for parks development within Lowell. One portion of land has the potential to be developed as a downtown park/plaza area. Just south of downtown there is a parcel of land adjacent to the rail corridor, straddling Cedar Creek. If Lowell is able to attract a South Shore Line extension this parcel of

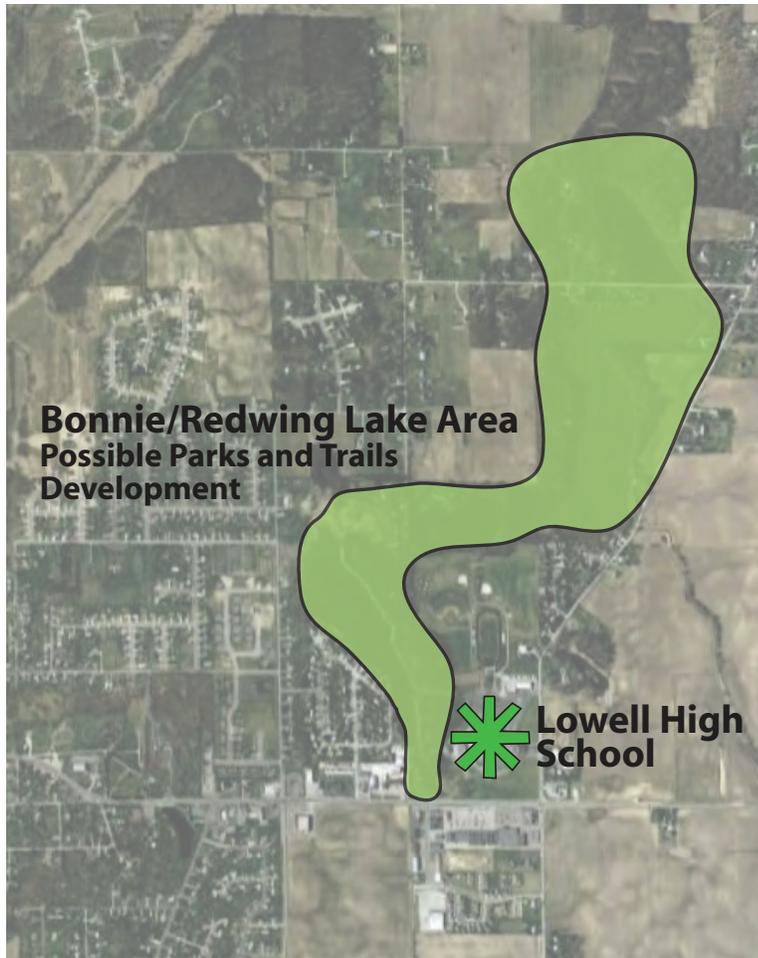


Community Profile  
Who Are We?  
Where Are We Going?



Issues and Goals  
Where Do We Want To Go?





Currently, trails exist in the southern portion of the Bonnie/Redwing Lake area. The development of additional trails and shelters, particularly with an educational emphasis, could be a terrific asset for the Lowell community. The site lends itself well to such parks development and should be explored by the Lowell Parks Department.

land has incredible potential to be developed as a commuter rail station plaza area, including a “park and ride” shared garage and a downtown park/plaza.

Lowell must ensure that parks are built to meet the demand of a growing population by implementing Residential Design Guidelines that mandate concentrated open space in new developments. Lowell should also investigate the possibility of expanding the parks and recreation program to provide more youth oriented services like childcare and sports clinics.

**Below: An artist’s rendering of a soccer field proposed for the community.**

