

# Naperville

## Downtown2030

*Planning the Downtown Experience*





Jefferson Avenue (Left)  
Photo by City of Naperville

"Naperville Riverwalk" (Center)  
Photo by Chuck Mowll

"Millennium Carillon" (Right)  
Photo by Mary Emily Binder

### Cover Photos for Naperville Downtown2030

*In May 2009 the City of Naperville held a photo contest for Naperville Downtown2030. More than 50 photo entries were submitted that captured the atmosphere, activity, and culture of downtown Naperville. The photo featured on the cover, "Naperville at Dawn" was submitted by Jerry Negele, who was awarded 1st Place in the Adult Category. Of the photos featured on the back cover "The Loop" (pictured in the bottom right corner) was submitted by Maddie Blecha, who was awarded 1st Place in the Youth Category, "Mural in an Alley" (pictured on the top right corner) was submitted by Alicia Ladao, who contributed to the photo contest, and "Fall Reflections" (pictured to the left) was submitted by John Sather, People's Choice Winner. Other contest participant photos are located throughout the document. All other photos featured on the back cover were provided by the City of Naperville.*

*The city wishes to thank all of those that have contributed to the illustrations and photos provided in the document.*

# Naperville

## Downtown2030

*Planning the Downtown Experience*

*Presented by the Downtown Advisory Commission*

Naperville is among the leading sales tax generating communities in the State of Illinois. The economic heart of this commercial success story is the Downtown Core. With a compact 12 block area of offices, businesses and retail surrounded by vibrant neighborhoods, parks, and cultural destinations, it has weathered economic cycles and continues to progress. Half of the visitors to its downtown come from outside the City of Naperville, a testimony to the destination attraction called 'Downtown Naperville'.

Naperville's modern day downtown is a work in progress. It is often visited and studied as a success story. . . but not duplicated. Visitors and residents' experience of downtown Naperville includes an eclectic collection of natural, historic, cultural, lifestyle and commercial features and buildings, including: the Riverwalk, Centennial Beach, Naper Settlement, Millennium Carillon, DuPage Children's Museum, North Central College and a vibrant mix of offices and local and national retail stores, and dining and entertainment options that make it a destination for all ages and interests.

But what makes Naperville successful where others languish? Others offer shopping and dining and many have natural beauty. The answer lies in the cloth of a "can do spirit and cooperation" that has been more than 40 years in the making. In the early 70s, faced with competition from a new regional mall and fear of downtown disinvestment, business, civic and government leaders formed an organization called Central Area Naperville Development Organization (CAN-DO). The group worked on a wide range of projects, policies and improvements to make Naperville's downtown a destination. It was a concept of stakeholder teamwork that was far ahead of its time.

The next 20 years followed with other cooperative partnership organizations supplementing these early efforts. The Naperville Development Partnership (NDP), Naperville's economic development arm, is funded partly by business and partly by government. Together this partnership actively seeks to bring businesses to Naperville. The Downtown Naperville Alliance (DNA) (an arm of the Naperville Area Chamber of Commerce), is an organization of merchants who have banded together to market the downtown and promote policies and practices that create a successful business climate. Special taxes are levied and supported by the property owners to provide parking, fund marketing and advertising, and pay for maintenance. These groups continue to this day.

To complement the efforts of CAN-DO, NDP, and DNA, in the 1970's, the East Central Homeowners Organization (ECHO) was formed to preserve the community atmosphere and character of the residential areas located east of Downtown Naperville, including the local historic district. Later, in 1998, the Westside Home Owners Association (WHOA) was formed with a similar purpose for the residential neighborhoods located west of downtown. Today, ECHO and WHOA representatives continue to partner with the City and its organizations to ensure that a critical balance is maintained between the preservation of the downtown residential neighborhoods and the prosperity of the downtown commercial districts.



Even with cooperation, a city needs a long term plan - a vision - for its future. How will future generations experience the downtown? The planning effort started in 1974 when CAN-DO, in concert with the City of Naperville, paved the way for downtown success by overseeing the completion of the Central District Urban Design Plan (1974), often referred to as the Brown Heldt Plan. That document painted a picture of a compact, walkable downtown core with convenient, shared parking. Unlike planning themes of the day that supported sprawling development with abundant supplies of surface parking, the downtown Naperville approach was a generation ahead of its time.

Most recently in 2000, a ten year plan for downtown Naperville was completed and adopted by the City Council. Members of the stakeholder steering committee, who helped craft the 2000 plan, were eager to work toward its completion. Out of this steering committee, the city established a Downtown Plan Implementation Committee (DPIC) that became the owner of the plan and the guiding force to see that the journey of our successful downtown continued. As needed, the DPIC would bring together small ad-hoc committees of public and private experts to tackle special issues. New zoning districts to support the plan's walkable core and transition to outlying residential neighborhoods, streetscape designs, parking management strategies, expansion of the downtown south of the West Branch of the DuPage River (Water Street) and a host of other issues were incorporated into a task list reviewed annually by the DPIC. Once again business, government, civic and resident leaders pulled together to make the plan and its implementation strategies a reality.

By 2009, nearly every task identified in the 2000 plan was completed. Continuing to look ahead, this monumental accomplishment was viewed only as a chapter in the downtown success story, not a conclusion. Appreciating how far the downtown has come, city leaders believed that to remain a dynamic, vibrant destination, planning for the future successful downtown experience was imperative. A new plan was needed to continue the legacy established by earlier plans. A new commission, comprised of members of the DPIC, representatives from NDP, DNA, resident, property and business owners was also established in 2009. The Downtown Advisory Commission (DAC) carries on where the DPIC left off with a larger group, but the same business, resident, civic and government cooperative focus.

The resulting Naperville Downtown2030 Plan is a continuation of the "never ending story" of vision, cooperation, and economic development for Naperville's downtown. It is a testament to the success that can be enjoyed when public and private interests are merged for the benefit of the community. Naperville has captured the essence of human commitment and married it with brick and mortar to spell success. It is a model for any city. Naperville's downtown journey continues and NapervilleDowntown2030: Planning the Downtown Experience will be the roadmap to carry us forward.

***Approved by the Naperville City Council on April 6, 2011 (Ord. 11-055)***

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Downtown Naperville is a special place – a destination that stands apart from other communities in the region. *Naperville Downtown2030* builds upon the history and success of previous downtown plans and draws upon these ideas to establish a culture and vision which serve as the foundation of the plan. The fundamental themes carried over from the *Downtown Plan (2000)* include:

- Maintaining a compact downtown that includes a mix of uses located within a distinct Downtown Core, Secondary Downtown, and Transitional Use area;
- Valuing the existing residential neighborhoods surrounding the downtown;
- Preserving downtown’s small town character through traditional building design constructed at a pedestrian scale;
- Offering free and conveniently located public parking that is optimized through parking management strategies; and
- Focusing on pedestrian comfort and safety in and around the downtown.

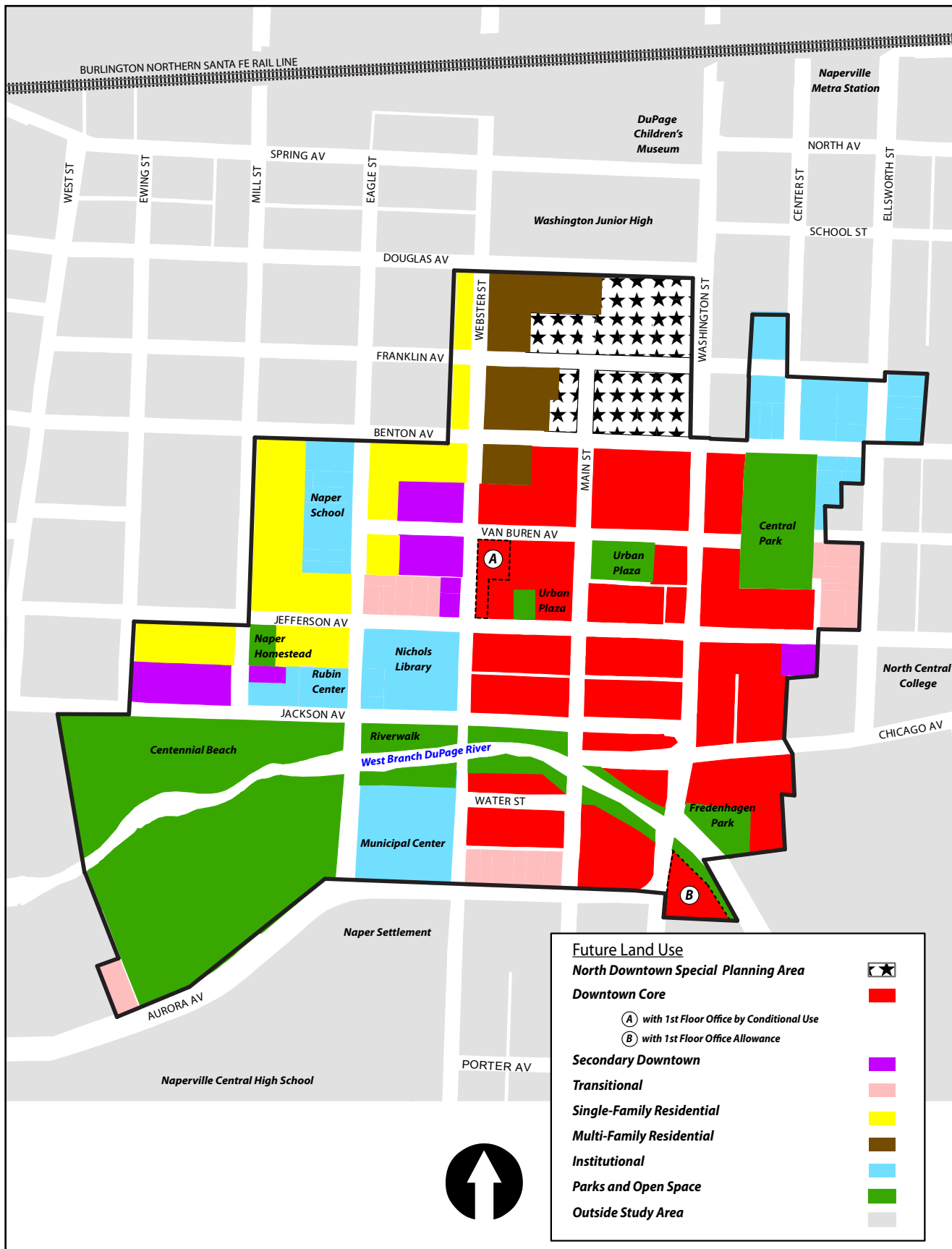
In addition, *Naperville Downtown2030* offers new forward-thinking recommendations that will help to maintain the vibrancy of downtown and further enhance its desired culture. Provided below is a snapshot highlighting some of the new recommendations for the downtown through 2030.

### New Ideas for 2030

**Zoning Amendments** In response to changing land use policies and market trends, several amendments are recommended to the zoning districts governing the Downtown Core, Secondary Downtown, and Transitional Use areas. These amendments include new use restrictions/allowances, setback and parking requirements, and the establishment of a maximum height limitation to distinguish between these areas consistent with the intent of each district established in 2000. Unlike the *Downtown Plan (2000)*, the City will not initiate the rezoning of any downtown property for compliance with the Future Land Use Map (see *Map 1: Overall Future Land Use Map*).



Map 1: Overall Future Land Use Map



**North Downtown Special Planning Area** Recognizing the market pressures on downtown, objectives have been developed for the North Downtown Special Planning Area, which is an area bordered by Douglas Avenue on the north, Washington Street on the east, Benton Avenue on the south, and Webster Street on the west. This area merits special planning attention due to its ability, if redeveloped, to impact the downtown environment and culture, impact on nearby institutional uses such as Washington Junior High and the DuPage Children’s Museum, as well as serve the northern gateway into downtown Naperville. Should development occur in this area, it should be meaningful and result in the creation of a special place.



**Bicycling** Where previous plans have focused almost exclusively on the pedestrian environment and the walkable downtown core, *Naperville Downtown2030* offers a new additional emphasis on bicycling. The plan recommends routes and amenities to safely accommodate bicyclists in harmony with the strong pedestrian environment.



**Downtown Amenities** Since the Riverwalk was established in 1981, Naperville has been a leader in providing top quality urban amenities and gathering places that draw not only residents and customers, but thousands of visitors each year. *Naperville Downtown2030* seeks to build upon this legacy by:

- Creating new urban plazas to offer flexible central downtown gathering places to complement the Riverwalk and Central Park;
- Offering a festival streetscape design in certain areas to host special events;
- Recognizing and seeking to enhance terminated vistas which capture pedestrian interest and attract visitors to exciting cultural, recreational and shopping destinations; and
- Maintaining a commitment to well designed, amenity-rich pedestrian streetscapes that are very well maintained and offer space to accommodate a high quality walkable environment for shopping, strolling and dining.



**Downtown Building Design Standards** To respect Naperville’s unique culture, design and style, standards for new construction, additions and modifications to buildings have been established in a companion document, *Downtown Building Design Standards*. Recommendations are also made regarding buildings of historic interest in *Naperville Downtown2030*.

**Implementation Action Plan** Key to achieving the vision of *Naperville Downtown2030* is the implementation of the numerous recommendations made throughout the plan. The action agenda lists several implementation items in an effort to assist the Downtown Advisory Commission develop their work program and prioritize objectives for the downtown each year.

*Naperville Downtown2030* replaces the *Downtown Plan (2000)* and will serve as the guiding document for downtown Naperville for the 20-year planning period. As this plan reaches its sunset in 2030, Naperville will be on the cusp of its 200th anniversary. *Naperville Downtown2030* offers a vision for maintaining downtown Naperville’s status as a vibrant, dynamic focal point as the city reaches this major milestone.

## **Conclusion**

Through 2030 and beyond, downtown Naperville will offer a lively mix of places to live, work and play. From award-winning cultural landmarks, like Nichols Library, the Riverwalk, DuPage Children’s Museum, Naper Settlement and North Central College’s Fine Arts Center/Wentz Concert Hall and the surrounding theater district, to outstanding dining options and unique shopping opportunities, downtown Naperville will continue to cater to a wide audience. *Naperville Downtown2030* sets the standard for downtown excellence by offering the vision, objectives and actions necessary to accomplish this superior mission.



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## City Council

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## Special Additional Thanks To:

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Downtown Naperville Alliance  
DuPage Children’s Museum  
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Naperville Area Chamber of Commerce  
Naperville Area Homeowners Confederation  
Naperville Development Partnership (NDP)  
Naperville Heritage Society  
North Central College  
Solomon Cordwell Buenz  
School District 203 Administrators, Staff, & Students  
Westside Home Owners Association (WHOA)  
Property Owners and Residents



Various Downtown Businesses  
Photos by City of Naperville

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Informational boxes for **definitions** and **spotlights** are found throughout *Naperville Downtown2030*. Definition boxes are intended to explain new or unfamiliar terminology. Spotlights provide additional information helpful to understand topics featured in the plan or highlight best practices conducted by the City of Naperville. Recommendations resulting from the **pedestrian gap analysis** (see pages 52-53) are also highlighted in the plan. Watch for definition, spotlights and Pedestrian Gap recommendations, as shown to the right, located throughout *Naperville Downtown2030*.

**NAPERVILLE DOWNTOWN2030 SPOTLIGHTS**

**DEFINITIONS**

**PED GAP**

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