

# Washington-Hillside Small Area Study



City of Naperville  
Planning Services Team  
March 1, 2004



**PRELIMINARY REPORT**

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## Executive Summary

The Downtown Plan, adopted by City Council in August 2000, strives to articulate the community's vision for downtown Naperville over the next 10 to 15 years. To achieve this vision, the Plan identifies an implementation agenda, which highlights actions to be undertaken to implement this plan. The Downtown Plan Implementation Committee that was appointed by the Mayor in August 2001 oversees and directs these implementation activities. Included in the implementation agenda is to conduct "a land use and development study in the area south of Downtown between Aurora Avenue and Hillside Avenue." This is identified as a "Priority 1" (to be implemented in 0-5 Years) within the Downtown Plan.

This small area study focuses on broad land use and zoning issues and opportunities within the Washington-Hillside area. Its objective is to provide analysis of existing conditions and guidance on future development and land use policies for this area. Recommendations were identified based on land use analysis and information and guidance from community participation meetings, the Downtown Plan, the Downtown Plan Implementation Committee, and the City of Naperville.

The Washington-Hillside area is bounded by Aurora Avenue on the north, Hillside Road on the south, Webster Street on the west, and Washington Street to the river on the east. For ease of analysis and discussion, the study area has been divided into four sub-areas within this report. These sub-areas are as follows:

- Area 1: South Side of Aurora Avenue between Webster Street and Main Street;
- Area 2: West side of Washington Street between Aurora Avenue and Hillside Road;
- Area 3: East Side of Webster Street and East and West Sides of Main Street between Aurora Avenue and Hillside Road; and
- Area 4: East Side of Washington Street between Aurora Avenue and Hillside Road.

Discussion on existing conditions, issues and opportunities, and recommendations for future actions are contained within each sub-area section.

This report is organized as follows:

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## Goals of the Washington-Hillside Small Area Study

The scope of this study includes conducting a broad land use/zoning study of this area. The goals, objectives and policies contained in this study will provide guidance on future development and land use policies in the Washington-Hillside area. They have been established using information and guidance from community participation meetings, the Downtown Plan, the Downtown Plan Implementation Committee, and the City of Naperville.

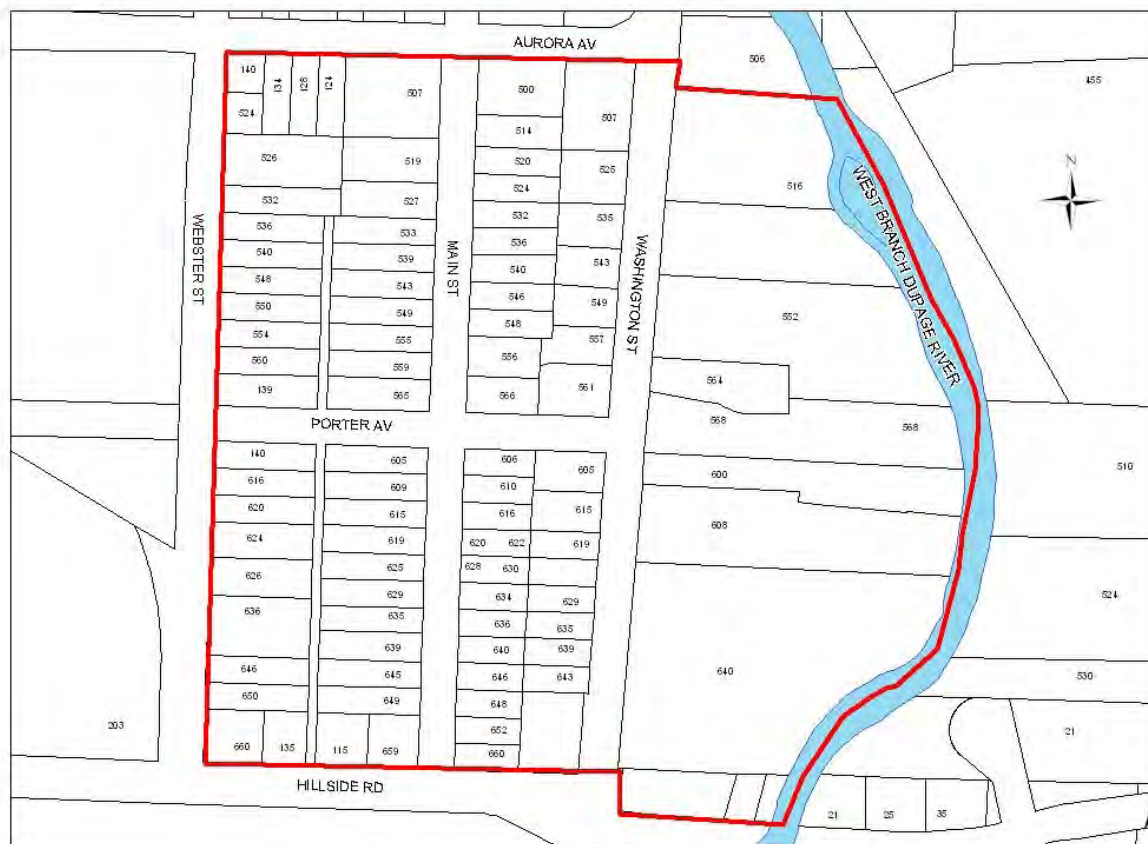
Overall, this study seeks to respond to the following issues:

- What types of land uses are appropriate given the current and anticipated future conditions? How can these work to promote appropriate reinvestment in the area? What special conditions need to be applied to ensure that the residential neighborhood is protected and promoted?
- What are the appropriate building heights and densities of properties on Washington and Aurora that bound this neighborhood?
- How can we best facilitate access and circulation within this area?

Due to the broad nature of this study, site-specific redevelopment options are not considered within this report. This study will serve as an update to the South Washington Street Guidelines (Ord. # 77-117) and the South Aurora Avenue Study (Ord. # 89-90). Please note that, though adopted by ordinance, neither of these previous studies are currently listed as controlling master plans within the City's Municipal Code.

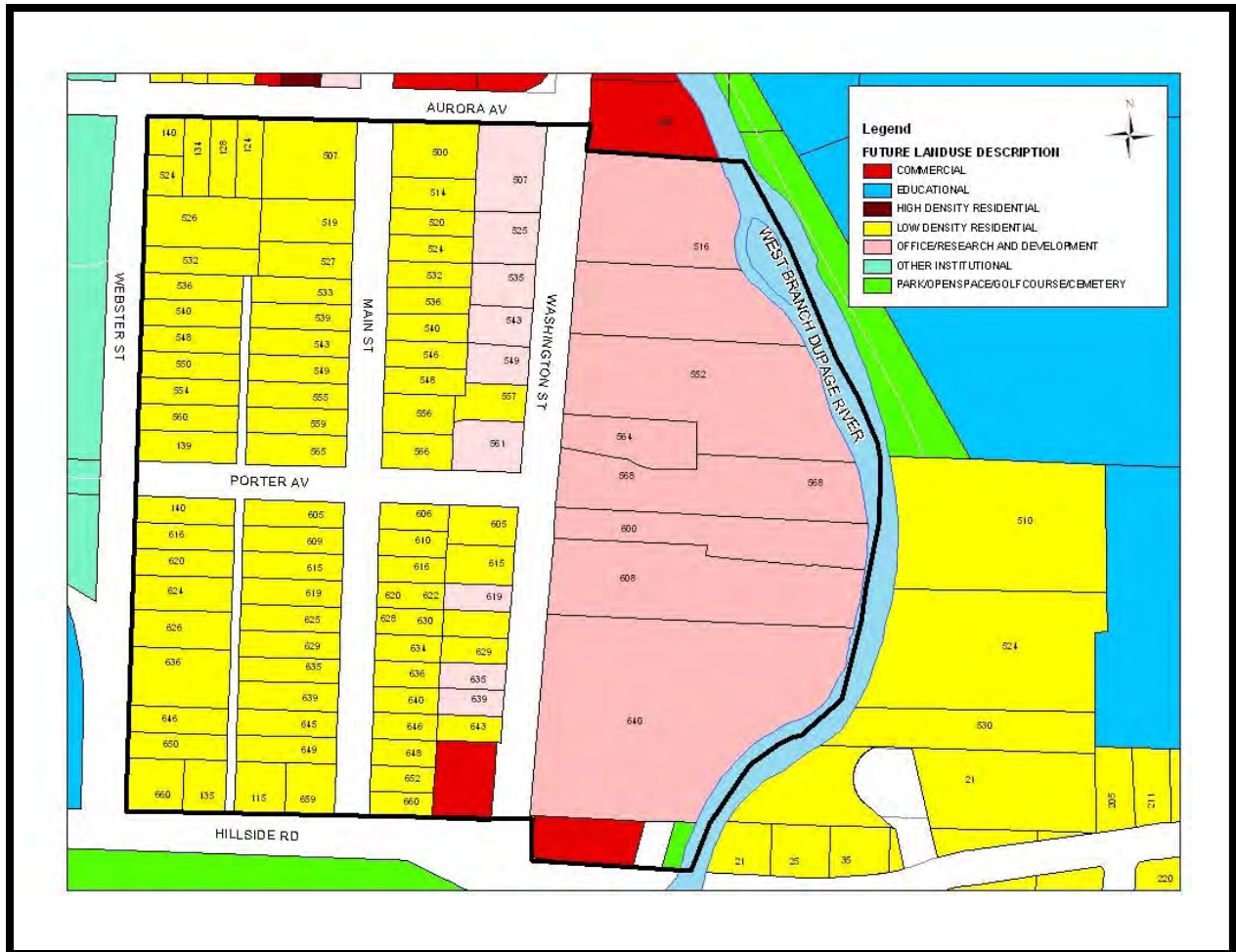
## Introduction

The Washington Hillside area is bounded by Aurora Avenue on the north, Hillside Road on the south, Webster Street on the west, and Washington Street to the river on the east. It is located directly south of Naperville's downtown and possesses a unique character that makes it distinct from other areas of Naperville. This area has a variety of land uses including four blocks of residential surrounded by office, institutional, service, and small-scale commercial uses. Major roadways bound the area on both the east (Washington Street – major arterial) and on the north (Aurora Avenue - minor arterial), both serving as “gateways” to the downtown area. A map of the study area is shown below:



**Figure 1: Study Area**

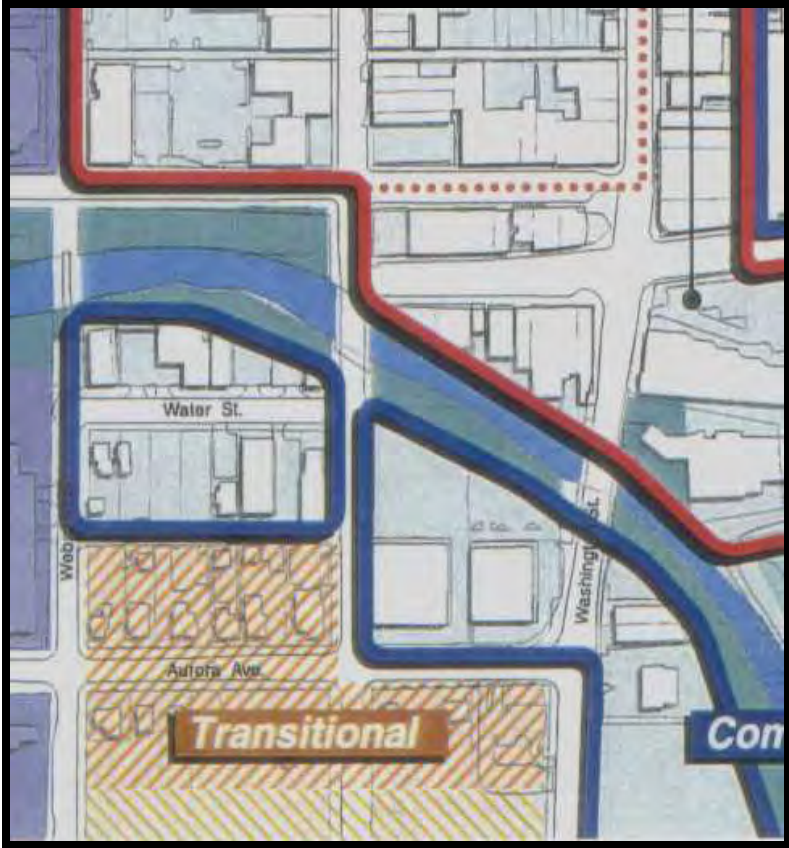
The East Sector Future Land Use Map identifies desired patterns and appropriate locations of specified land use activities as adopted by the City in 1998. The goal is to promote compatible land uses--whether residential, commercial, or office while maintaining the integrity of the Community. As shown below, the future land use plan for this area is comprised primarily of office and residential land uses, and reflects current development patterns. Additionally, the Downtown Plan adopted in 2000 covers a small portion of this area - the south side of Aurora Avenue between Washington Street and Webster Street. The Downtown Plan identifies this area with a "transitional use" designation, which was established in other areas surrounding the Downtown through map amendments and the development of the Transitional Use zoning district in January 2003.



**Figure 2: 1998 East Sector Comprehensive Master Plan (Map Section)**



The south side of Aurora Avenue was included in the Downtown Plan. This area was designated as “Transitional” use.



**Figure 3: Downtown Plan (Map Section)**

The Washington-Hillside area consists of approximately 34.4 acres of land. Residential development makes up approximately 76 percent of the land uses. Home-to-office conversions and office developments comprise 20 percent of the land, and 4 percent are commercial land uses.

The residential neighborhood within the study area is primarily comprised of single-family and two-family homes that are diverse in age with homes dating from 1858 to 2003, as well as some current construction activity. It is a compact yet stable residential neighborhood, with trends of reinvestment in the properties, located within walking distance of the downtown area.

The majority of properties fronting the south side of Aurora Avenue and the west side of Washington Street are zoned residentially, but are eligible to convert from single-family homes to office uses through the conditional use process so long as the existing house is preserved. The majority of the homes in these locations have done so, though a limited number of residential properties still do exist. These structures are also diverse in age with construction dates between 1895 and 1971. Only one new structure has been constructed on either of these street frontages since 1971.

Properties on the east side of Washington are more intensely developed than others in the study area. Lot sizes are larger and the zoning allows for office and services uses by right, as well as retail and residential development through the conditional use process. These lots front Washington Street and are adjacent to the DuPage River. The age of the structures are not as diverse as in other areas of the study, with construction dates ranging from 1962-1989. There is a trend of redevelopment in this area, including one recently approved project for a seven-story residential condominium building.

The study area includes the R2, OCl, B5 and B3 zoning districts.

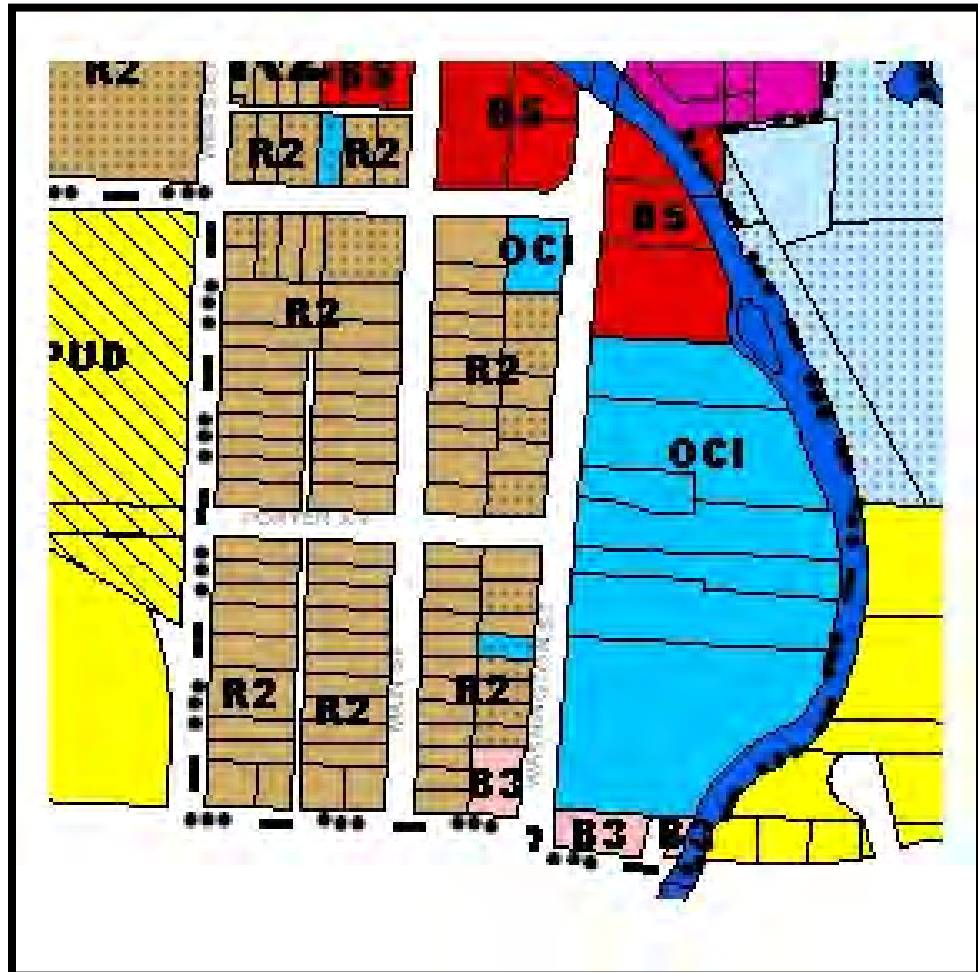
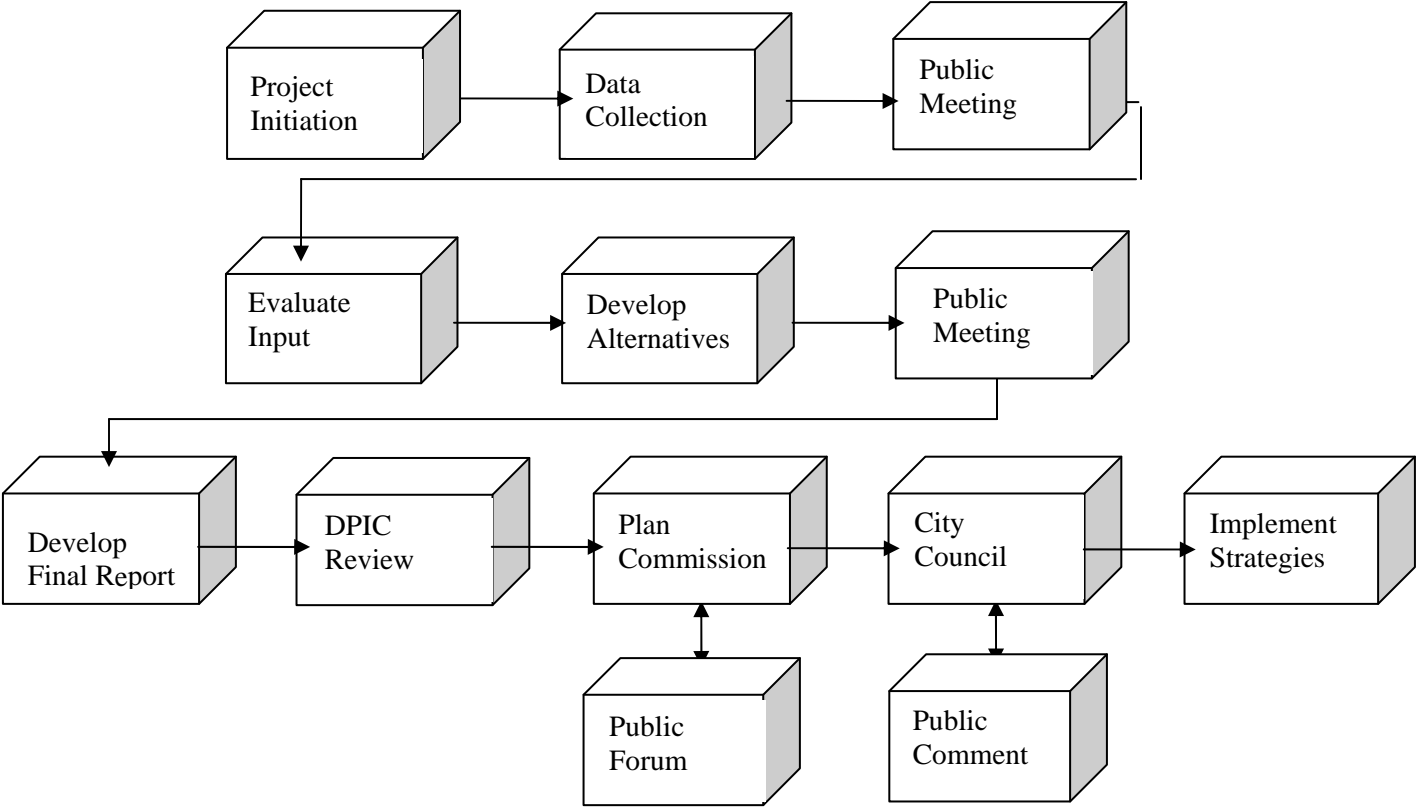


Figure 4: Existing Zoning (Map Section)

# Planning Process and Community Participation

The planning process for the development of this study included data collection, analysis of alternatives, and public involvement. A flow-chart of the process for the development of this Study is provided below:



**Figure 5: Planning Process and Community Participation**

Community participation in the planning process was an important element of the development of this study. This participation provided insight into community perceptions and attitudes regarding planning issues while adding valuable input to the development of the study. Two public meetings were held during the planning process, the first of which was with property owners within the study area. The purpose was to solicit and receive comments from those who live and work in this area on a daily basis. This included a brainstorming session of issues and concerns and a walking tour of the study area, which allowed for additional on-site discussion. Issues that were raised at this meeting by community participants are summarized in Attachment 1. The second public meeting was open to the entire community to provide feedback on preliminary recommendations and alternatives that had been developed by the Planning Services Team. Issues that were raised at this meeting by community participants are also summarized in Attachment 1.

The feedback received from the public meetings was varied in viewpoint depending on the interest represented, without a clear consensus on future action. As such, planning goals and strategies contained in this study may not always be consistent with all citizen directives.



However, the staff has strived to respond to as many issues as possible. Continued research and strategy formulation may also reveal more appropriate methods of responding to desired goals.

The City of Naperville is constantly changing, as are the processes that create the City's form. In determining future action, local interest must be blended with the interest of city-wide policies and concerns. Additionally, future development of this area must be considered in the context both of the immediate vicinity covered within this study, as well as the broader good of the City of Naperville in order to result both in harmonious development and land use patterns.

## Land Use Analysis and Recommendations

As previously described, the Washington-Hillside area is comprised of a variety of land uses. For ease of analysis and discussion, the study area has been divided into four sub-areas. These sub-areas are as follows:

- Area 1: South Side of Aurora Avenue between Webster Street and Main Street;
- Area 2: West side of Washington Street between Aurora Avenue and Hillside Road;
- Area 3: East Side of Webster Street and East and West Sides of Main Street between Aurora Avenue and Hillside Road; and
- Area 4: East Side of Washington Street between Aurora Avenue and Hillside Road.

A map graphically depicting these areas is provided below:

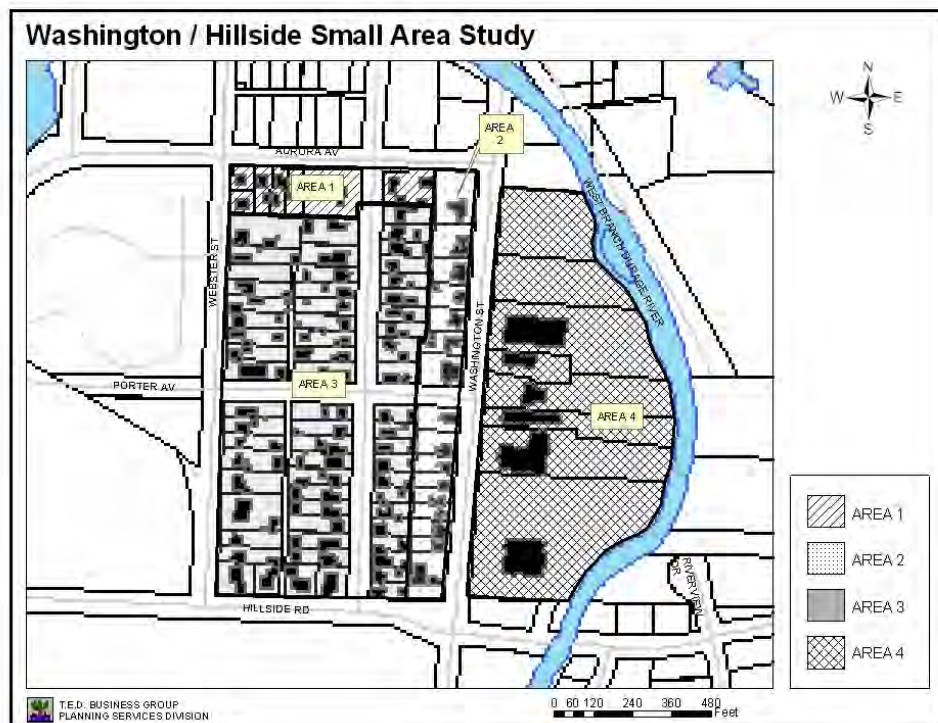


Figure 6: Study Areas

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## Area 1 and Area 2: Transitional Areas

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### Analysis of Existing Conditions

Properties within Area 1 and Area 2 face onto major roadways (Aurora Avenue – minor arterial and Washington Street – major arterial) and abut a residential neighborhood. The south side of Aurora Avenue (Area 1) presently consists of four (4) residential homes (photo at right). The Downtown Plan adopted in August 2000 identifies Area 1 as “Transitional Use.” Along the west side of Washington Avenue (Area 2), the majority of the structures along the west side of Washington Street have



converted to office uses as allowed by conditional use under the existing zoning. Other land uses along this corridor include a bank, a gas station, and three (3) residential homes. The majority of the properties are zoned residentially (R2) and all are within the eligible boundary to be converted from homes to offices within the existing R2 zoning designation. Two structures are zoned OCI. As previously noted, structures within these areas are diverse in age with construction dates between 1895 and 1971. Only one new structure has been constructed in

these areas since 1971.

### Land Use Goals

- Encourage properly regulated new growth in areas of anticipated development along Washington Street and Aurora Avenue.
- Evaluate land use patterns and options that maximize property potential and minimize land use conflicts.
- Identify policies and practices that preserve and protect the existing character and related land use patterns in the residential area of the Washington-Hillside area.

### Issues and Opportunities

#### Land Use and Zoning

The predominate land use in the areas are home to office conversions and single-family homes. Most properties, with the exception of the gas station (659 S. Washington) zoned B3, the bank (507 S. Washington) zoned OCI and a hair salon zoned OCI, are zoned residentially (R2) and all properties are within a boundary identified to allow for home-to-office conversions through the conditional use process. When a home is converted to an office within these boundaries, the zoning requires that the existing house be maintained, allowing for only a 25% demolition or expansion. Additionally, the ability to retrofit the existing home to meet current ADA

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accessibility standards, parking requirements for office uses, and stormwater detention requirements for new impervious surface are also required.

Office development along this corridor is an appropriate land use given its location along a major arterial roadway, proximity to downtown, and relatively small lot sizes. However, there are both benefits and challenges to the home to office conversion designation and requirements. As a benefit, once converted, these areas provide space for small office uses within walking distance of the downtown area. Particularly for owner-occupied office space, this is a niche that is not often served in areas with more intensive zoning designations. Additionally, it guarantees that the residential character of the home is maintained and the size of the structure is controlled, reducing the potential impact on adjacent residential uses. Finally, the conditional use process allows for public review and input of proposals to convert residential structures from homes to offices.

As a challenge, however, structures that are relatively small in size are somewhat restricted given the 25% limitation for expansion. Additionally, applying current day commercial building code requirements to existing residential structures can be difficult and costly, resulting in project costs beyond what was originally contemplated by property owners. Finally, as evidenced by the fact that only one new structure has been built since 1971 in these areas, re-investment beyond interior renovations is not common. In the event that a property owner did want to construct a new building on one of these properties for anything other than the permitted single-family or two-family residential use, a variance would be needed from the requirement that allows for only a 25% demolition and a hardship would be required to be demonstrated.

The fact that the properties are zoned residentially is an issue to be explored. This zoning allows by right single-family and two-family homes. Though there are currently plans pending for a two-family home on the Washington Street frontage, this will be the first residential structure to be developed in the past 25 years on these properties. As such, it is evident that the location has not been preferable for residential development. Low-intensity office use, however, is appropriate and desirable in this location, however an extensive review process is required and as previously discussed, a number of restrictions are applied. This results in a more difficult review process for the more preferable land use (office) than the less preferable land use (residential).

The intent of the home-to-office conversion district is to maintain the residential appearance of an office use, thereby lessening its impact on adjacent properties. As discussed later in this section, an opportunity for future action would be to apply the Transitional Use zoning designation, and to include appropriate restrictions to ensure that the adjacent residential neighborhood is protected from the impacts of any new development. The intent of the transitional use district is to serve as a mixed-use transitional area between the downtown commercial areas and the adjoining residential neighborhoods. The land-uses in this district are intended to be uses that are compatible with both the commercial areas and the residential districts that they are adjacent to. While the home-to-office conversion district plays a similar role, the limitation placed on properties with this designation that expansion or demolition of the property cannot exceed 25% of the structure makes redevelopment difficult, particularly for the areas surrounding the downtown where the size of many of the existing structures are relatively small and many of the existing structures are relatively older in age. A chart summarizing the regulations of R2, TU, and OCI zoning is included as Attachment 2 to this report.

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Comments expressed during the public meetings as well as during the public process for the downtown zoning amendments in 2002 suggested that the Transitional Use district boundary should be in the middle of Aurora Avenue and should not cross over to the south side of Aurora Avenue. Unlike traditional subdivisions where streets are a natural boundary, the Downtown Plan strives to create gateways and corridors by placing like-type uses across from one another. Aurora Avenue is one of these important gateways to the downtown area.

In order to mitigate these concerns, potential restrictions could be applied to the Transitional Use zoning designation in this area including requirements that new developments be residentially styled. Design guidelines similar to what is established for the central business district within the Downtown Plan could be developed and adopted for the Transitional Use zoning district to further define the style of future development. These design guidelines could address items such as building bulk and proportion, building placement and orientation, architectural style, building materials, rear yards and facades, rooflines, lighting, signs, and parking facilities. Additionally, application of the City's existing photometric requirements (which can be applied to new construction or significant remodels) will help to minimize lighting impacts. An increase in fence height requirements could be considered to further screen properties from adjacent residential uses.

These provisions may serve as opportunities to promote appropriate reinvestment in these areas, while protecting the integrity of the adjacent residential area.

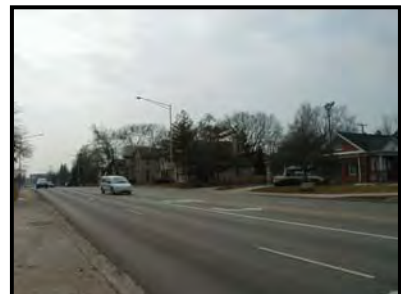
### **Building Height**

During the public meetings, there was concern expressed by adjacent residential property owners over the height of future development. The existing building heights in Areas 1 and 2 are primarily one and two stories, with a height restriction in the R2 zoning district of three stories not to exceed 40 feet. Given that the adjacent residential neighborhood has this same height requirement, it is recommended that the 40-foot height restriction be maintained, regardless of zoning on the property.

The maximum height in the Transitional Use district is also 40 feet. Though both have a height restriction of 40 feet, the difference between the Transitional Use and R2 zoning district regulations with relation to allowable building height is that Transitional Use is not proposed to have a story restriction while properties in the R2 zoning district cannot exceed 3 stories, though both districts adhere to the 40-foot maximum. The 40-foot height restriction was intentionally applied to the Transitional Use district in order to maintain a consistency with the adjacent residential neighborhoods while still allowing for flexibility through ceiling heights, etc. on the total number of stories.

### **Major Arterial Setback for Buildings and Parking Lots**

Washington Street is identified as a major arterial roadway in the City's Master Thoroughfare Plan. The zoning code requires special setbacks for properties located along major arterial roadways of 70 feet from the centerline of the roadway, or 20 feet from the edge of the right-of-way, whichever is greater. In the case of the properties fronting Washington Street in this area, the 70-foot requirement would be greater and would therefore apply. As these properties were platted prior to this requirement





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being in place, the existing right-of-way of Washington Street in this location does not match ordinance standards for major arterial roadway width. Additionally, as Washington Street bisects the downtown just north of the study area, future roadway expansion to the established ordinance standards for major arterial roadways (120 feet) is unrealistic. Expansion of the right-of-way to a lesser extent (likely to a width of 90 feet) may be necessary, however, to accommodate parkway improvements and to move sidewalks away from the curb of the 5-lane major arterial. As such, consideration needs to be given to appropriate building setbacks along Washington, taking into account these future scenarios.

Along the West side of Washington Street in this area, staff is recommending that a 25-foot setback from the property line be established to accommodate an additional 10 feet of right-of-way on this half of Washington Street and a 15-foot front yard setback consistent with the Transitional Use zoning district. On the east side of Washington Street, staff is recommending a 30-foot setback from the property line be established to accommodate an additional 10 feet of right-of-way on this half of Washington Street and a 20-foot front yard setback consistent with the OCI zoning district. Staff would recommend that an amendment be made to the section 6-2-14 of the zoning code (Major Arterial Setback Requirements) to formally adopt these requirements for this section of Washington Street.

### **Vehicular Access and Circulation**

Properties within Area 1 all have individual access points onto Aurora Avenue. As these properties are currently used residentially, the traffic impacts of these access points are not significant. However, at such time that these properties are converted or developed more intensively (i.e. office, multi-family, etc.), consolidation of these access points will be important. In 1989, the City adopted the South Aurora Avenue Study (Ord. #89-90), which identified a plan for access point consolidation and cross-access between properties as redevelopment occurred. As these properties have not been redeveloped to date, this plan has not been implemented. Please note that the South Aurora Avenue Study, though approved by ordinance, is not listed as a controlling master plan within the City's Municipal Code.



Properties within Area 2 have numerous access points onto Washington Street. Multiple access points pose a challenge for vehicular ingress and egress and are a safety concern. The Washington Street Corridor Plan, adopted in 1981, recognized this need and recommended that rear parking lots be connected together in this area through easements, forming a common exit-way onto Porter Avenue. To implement this, the City has



historically requested that property owners provide cross-access between adjoining parcels as new development or redevelopment is approved and that access points are consolidated wherever possible. The majority of the parking lots are now connected with the exception of the remaining residential structures. Overall, the goal is to consolidate the number of access points to better control ingress and egress,





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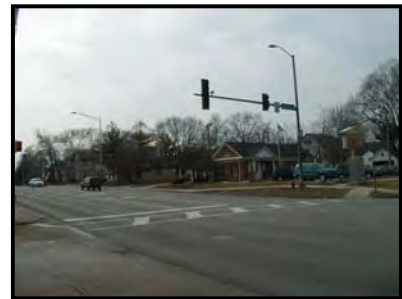
thereby improving safety. There is an ongoing opportunity to continue this standard practice in the future as well as an opportunity to formalize this standard practice into ordinance requirements. Staff would recommend that where feasible, the parking lots and cross-access be located a minimum of five feet off the property line to allow for appropriate screening for any adjacent residential properties.

### **Stormwater Management**

Many of the properties within Areas 1 and 2 were developed prior to existing stormwater management ordinances and a regional stormwater management facility was not provided for them. Therefore, new development and redevelopment of property within Areas 1 and 2 must comply with the City of Naperville and DuPage County Stormwater Ordinance requirements. Due to the small lot sizes, providing on-site stormwater management is challenging however can be achieved through alternatives to traditional basins through such designs as underground chambers and storage in parking areas. In the case of home-to-office conversions, stormwater management is only required for the new impervious surface area. For new development, stormwater management is required for all impervious surfaces, which captures the stormwater run-off from these properties and controls the release rate to the DuPage River.

### **Gateway to Downtown Naperville**

The intersection of Washington Street and Hillside Road, and Aurora Avenue and Webster Street can be considered as one of the entrances or “gateways” into the Downtown. The Downtown Plan acknowledges the importance of the Washington Street Corridor by stating, “Improvements within this area should enhance the image and appearance of Washington Street as a major entranceway to Downtown...” Additionally, the Downtown Plan identifies Aurora Avenue for a boulevard streetscape to help establish this area as an entryway to downtown. The boulevard streetscape has been defined through the City of Naperville Streetscape standards adopted in 2003 and has most recently been applied to Van Buren Avenue downtown.



When considering new development, the City has an opportunity to work with property owners and developers to design and construct buildings that reflect consistent and sensitive design. Additionally, issues relating to traffic movement and signage should be considered to further enhance this area as a gateway to the downtown.

## **Options for Future Action**

Staff presents the following options for future action in Area 1 and Area 2:

- Consistent with the Downtown Plan, initiate a zoning amendment to rezone the properties currently zoned R2 within this area to Transitional Use (TU) including a requirement that the properties be residentially styled (as defined by design guidelines – see below), and that appropriate landscaping be provided in excess of the City’s requirements if necessary to maintain the residential character and to fit harmoniously with adjacent residential properties.

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- Develop and adopt design guidelines for the Transitional Use district (including items such as building bulk and proportion, building placement and orientation, architectural style, building materials, rear yards setbacks, façade modulation, rooflines, lighting, signs, and parking facilities).
  - Initiate a zoning amendment to the Transitional Use zoning district and/or the fence provisions (6-2-12) to allow an increase in fence heights of up to eight (8) feet for rear property lines adjacent to properties zoned and utilized for a residential use.
  - Develop an ordinance requirement for cross-access and consolidated access points along Washington Street and Aurora Avenue to formalize this standard practice.
  - Initiate a zoning amendment to section 6-2-14 of the zoning code (Major Arterial Setback Requirements) to formally adopt a requirement for a 30-foot setback from the property line for the east side of Washington Street and a 25-foot setback from the property line for the west side of Washington Street (from Hillside to Aurora Avenue).
  - Evaluate signage and traffic movement improvements for the gateway locations into the downtown as identified.

### **Area 3: Residential Neighborhood**

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#### **Analysis of Existing Conditions**

Area 3 represents a stable residential neighborhood that is comprised of single-family and two-family homes. The area is zoned R2 (Low Density Single-Family and Medium-Density Multiple Family Residence District) and is designated for low-density residential use in the East Sector Future Land Use Plan. Both the existing zoning and existing land uses are consistent with the future land use designation of the subject property.



There are 62 existing lots within Area 3, with an average lot size of approximately 9,450 square feet and an average home size of approximately 1,612 square feet. Homes within Area 3 vary in age, with construction dates ranging from 1858 to 2003. The average residential home in this area is approximately 70 years old. Access to these homes is provided from the residential streets, with a few homes having additional or alternate access from a rear alley.



Since 2000, Area 3 has experienced trends of reinvestment with the construction of at least six demolition/new single-family construction projects (i.e., “teardowns”). Of the new homes constructed, the average home size is approximately 2,198 square feet.

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## Land Use Goals

- Evaluate land use patterns and options that maximize property potential and minimize land use conflicts.
- Identify policies and practices that will preserve and protect the existing character, promoting stability within Area 3.

## Issues and Opportunities

### Land Use

Currently within this area, there is a mix of single-family and two-family residential dwellings. The neighborhood is stable with multiple examples of re-investment in renovating existing homes and new construction. While the neighborhood is geographically small, its location is within walking distance of the downtown area, which is both attractive to residents of the area as well as adding stability to the downtown area. Given these issues, staff is not recommending any change to the existing zoning of R2. Rather, staff recommends that options be explored as defined in Area 1 and 2 to protect and promote this area for residential use, particularly to minimize the impacts of the transitional properties along Washington and Aurora of this neighborhood.

### Historic Interest

As the age of construction of some of the homes within this area range from 1858-2003, staff believes there may be some homes of historic interest. While the entire neighborhood does not lend itself to the creation of a historic district, staff would recommend that the property owners within this area be educated in opportunities for voluntary landmark status that is available through the Historic Sites Commission and the City of Naperville. Property owners with an interest in pursuing this can work with City of Naperville staff to determine if their property is eligible for landmark designation. Additionally, as is current practice, staff will continue to notify Naper Settlement of any residential demolitions, in order to document and/or salvage any historically or architecturally significant items or structures within this neighborhood.

### Traffic

Neighborhood residents had mixed feedback on whether they felt traffic was a major concern in the neighborhood. At the public meeting, staff encouraged the residents to participate in the City's Friendly Streets program if it is determined to be a concern for the majority of residents. This program is set up to assess, prioritize, and address specific traffic issues within Naperville. Use of the program is voluntary and is initiated by neighborhood residents.

A request was made during the public meeting to consider a stop sign at Porter Avenue and Main Street. The Transportation, Engineering, and Development Business Group performed an all-way stop study for the intersection of Porter Avenue and Main Street in 2003. The study falls under the City of Naperville's Residential All-Way Stop Program. An intersection must meet warrants to justify the installation of an all-way stop based on traffic volumes and intersection layout. The intersection of Porter Avenue and Main Street only received less than half of the points required to meet warrants when evaluated (scoring 203 out of a necessary 500 points);

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therefore, an all-way stop was not determined to be warranted. Factors that were included in making this determination include that the current two-way stop has crosswalks, stop bars, and “Cross Traffic Does Not Stop Signs” on Porter Avenue. In addition, the intersection does not have any sight distance obstructions.

Staff will continue to work with the residents as traffic issues arise. We are not, however, recommending any changes to the existing two-way streets, on-street parking locations or restrictions, or access be made at this time.

### **Pedestrian Circulation**

Currently there are no sidewalks on the east side of Webster Street and on the south side of Porter Avenue (west of Main Street). Staff would recommend that sidewalks be installed in these locations as redevelopment occurs, per the City’s sidewalk policy.



### **Stormwater Management**

Many of the properties within Areas 3 were developed prior to existing stormwater management ordinances and a regional stormwater management facility was not provided for them. Therefore, new development and redevelopment of property within Areas 3 must comply with the City of Naperville and DuPage County Stormwater Ordinance requirements. The City of Naperville’s Ordinance 01-14 requires a detailed grading plan to be submitted and approved for issuance of a building permit for a new home or addition, as this area does not have a corresponding master grading plan.

## **Options for Future Action**

Staff presents the following options for future action in Area 3 as identified:

- Continue to work with Area 3 residents to evaluate traffic-related concerns on a case-by-case basis. Encourage residents to participate in the established City’s Friendly Streets Program.
- Develop an action plan to educate property owners of voluntary opportunities to landmark structures of historical or architectural significance.
- Continue to notify Naper Settlement of any residential demolitions, in order to document and/or salvage any historically or architecturally significant items or structures.
- As teardowns occur, encourage the use of sensitive infill development strategies (such as utilizing Community First’s “Workbook for Successful Redevelopment”).

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## Area 4: Office/Commercial Corridor

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### Analysis of Existing Conditions

Area 4 is located on the east side of Washington Street, between Aurora Avenue and Hillside Road, and abuts the DuPage River. Properties located within Area 4 are used for office and commercial purposes under the existing B5, OCI and B3 zoning classifications. There are ten existing buildings in Area 4, dating from 1962 through 1993. As mentioned previously in this report, properties on the east side of Washington are more intensely developed than other areas of the study, with larger lot sizes and zoning allowing for office and commercial uses by



right, as well as retail and residential development through the conditional use process. There is evidence of development and reinvestment in this area, including one recently approved project for a seven-story residential condominium. Lastly, most of the properties in Area 4 have direct access to the Riverwalk, which is located along the west bank of the DuPage River. This close proximity provides a neighborhood amenity and unique opportunities for future development and redevelopment.

### Land Use Goals

- Encourage properly regulated new growth in areas of anticipated development and redevelopment along Washington Street.
- Evaluate land use patterns and options that will maximize property potential and minimize land use conflicts.
- Identify policies and practices that will enhance and protect the existing character and related land use patterns in Area 4.
- Encourage continued focus on maintaining pedestrian connections between these properties and the Riverwalk.

### Issues and Opportunities

#### Land Use

The predominant land use in this area is office space, including general and medical offices. Other uses include two fast food restaurants, a funeral home, and a proposed mid-rise (7-story) residential condominium building that was recently approved as a conditional use in the underlying OCI zoning district (though construction has not begun as of the date of this report). The City needs to carefully consider future land use decisions for Area 4 so that there is a balance of residential and non-residential uses. The Downtown Plan designates Area 4 as a “Secondary Commercial Area”, stating that the primary intent is to “provide sites for a mix of



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retail, office and service uses, as well as parking facilities to support the adjacent [Downtown] Core area”.

In looking at the recently approved residential condominium at 520 S. Washington Street, and other examples of medium to high density multi-family projects either planned or proposed in and around the Downtown Core, it appears that there is a demand and trend for more residential opportunities in downtown Naperville. While these land use considerations pose a challenge for the City to appropriately locate such uses, they also present an opportunity to increase the vitality of the downtown area and surrounding neighborhoods by generating pedestrian activity in close proximity to existing businesses.



### **Building Height**

The existing buildings in Area 4 range from one to three stories to an estimated maximum height of 45 feet. The existing B5, OCI and B3 zoning classifications establish a maximum height through a maximum floor area ratio (F.A.R.). The Downtown Plan does not reference a specific height limitation for this area.

Once constructed, the recently approved Washington Street Condos project at 520 S. Washington Street will have seven stories and a maximum height of 76.8 feet. This is substantially higher than other buildings in the neighborhood, even though it satisfies the F.A.R. requirements of the OCI zoning district. Based on staff’s review of existing building heights and surrounding land uses in this area, staff recommends establishing a maximum height of five stories not to exceed 50 feet for those properties that are zoned OCI and are located within the designated boundaries of this area. This is consistent with staff’s recommendation that was provided to City Council for the condominium building at 520 S. Washington Street. This would require a text amendment to the OCI District, something which can be explored and potentially folded into the pending conditional use text amendments, which we anticipate will be scheduled for Plan Commission and City Council consideration in mid-2004.

### **Access points along Washington Street**

Properties within Area 4 have numerous access points along Washington Street. This poses a challenge for vehicular ingress and egress and is a safety concern. To address this situation, the City has required property owners to provide cross-access between adjoining parcels as new development or redevelopment is approved. The City’s goal is to consolidate the number of access points to better control ingress and egress, thereby improving safety. There is an ongoing opportunity to continue this standard practice in the future.

### **Parking Placement**

A majority of the properties in Area 4 have parking lots in which the most of the parking spaces are located behind or on the side of the buildings. This existing condition is generally consistent with the Downtown Plan that states, “In general, parking lots should be located behind buildings or in mid-block locations; parking lots in front of buildings and at corner sites should be avoided if possible.” There are a few exceptions to this condition. Many of the properties in Area 4 have a limited amount of parking in front of the building. Examples include the office building at 568 S. Washington, the Naperville Medical Center Building, and the Brown’s Chicken and Pasta. It

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should be noted, however, that when parking is placed in the rear of these properties, it is then visible from the Riverwalk. As an option for future action, staff is recommending that additional standards be developed (above and beyond the minimum requirements of the Landscape Ordinance) for screening of parking in the rear of these properties. New standards will help ensure consistent and appropriate screening of parking areas that are adjacent to the Riverwalk, which is an important community amenity.

### **Pedestrian Connectivity**

Pedestrian connectivity to the Riverwalk should be a prime consideration in redevelopment plans. Public access should be promoted along this corridor to both the Riverwalk as well as the adjacent Fredenhagen Park. Staff believes that as properties in this block are redeveloped, there is a potential to develop a mid-block public access easement (running east-west), which would allow for a pedestrian connection between the sidewalk along Washington Street and the Riverwalk.



### **Major Arterial Setback for Buildings and Parking Lots**

As stated previously in this report, staff is recommending that no less than a 30-foot building setback be maintained from the front property line for properties in Area 4 to accommodate an additional 10 feet of roadway on the east half of Washington Street and a 20-foot front yard setback consistent with the OCI zoning district. The additional right-of-way could accommodate parkway improvements and move sidewalks away from the curb of the 5-lane major arterial. Staff would recommend that an amendment be made to the section 6-2-14 of the zoning code (Major Arterial Setback Requirements) to formally adopt these requirements for this section of Washington Street.

### **Stormwater Management**

New development and redevelopment on the properties that are located within Area 4 must satisfy the City of Naperville and DuPage County Stormwater Ordinance requirements. Although the eastern property lines of these lots extend to DuPage River, much of this area is encumbered by floodway and floodplain. Properties that have recently redeveloped have been able to comply with these ordinances, while maximizing their buildable area by designing underground chambers for stormwater storage, which can also provide for floodplain compensatory storage where applicable. The City should continue to enforce current regulations with new development and redevelopment of properties as it provides an opportunity to improve the existing stormwater management situation in this area.

### **Floodplain/Floodway Constraints**

Redevelopment of properties that are located within Area 4 can be complicated due to the floodway and floodplain that encumbers the eastern portions of each parcel. The buildable area is limited by these designations and additional permitting is required due to local, state, and federal requirements.



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### **Gateway to Downtown Naperville**

Staff considers the intersection of Washington Street and Hillside Road as one of the entrances or “gateways” into the Downtown. The Downtown Plan acknowledges the importance of the Washington Street Corridor by stating, “Improvements within this area should enhance the image and appearance of Washington Street as a major entranceway to Downtown...”. When considering new development, the City has an opportunity to work with property owners and developers to design and construct buildings that reflect the design guidelines that are presented in the Downtown Plan. Such building design guidelines focus on height, bulk, placement/orientation, architectural style, materials, doors/entrances, windows, rear yards, facades, rooflines/parapets, paint/color, awnings/canopies, lighting, signs, and parking facilities. Additionally, issues such as signage and traffic movement should be explored to further denote this area as a gateway to downtown Naperville.



### **Options for Future Action**

- Develop standards for appropriate screening of rear parking areas adjacent to the Riverwalk.
- Develop a policy for cross-access and consolidated access points along Washington Street to formalize this recommended practice.
- Evaluate signage and traffic movement improvements for gateway locations into the Downtown as identified.

## Summary of Options for Future Action

The successful implementation of the goals identified within the Washington-Hillside Study Small Area Study depends on the efforts of neighborhood residents, elected officials, City staff, and private developers/property owners. Through a combined effort, the goals can be realized.

The following chart provides a summary of future actions as recommended in the Washington-Hillside Small Area Study:

Proposed Action	Item #	Area	Initiator	Endorsed by DPIC	Endorsed by Plan Commission	Endorsed by City Council
Initiate a zoning amendment to rezone the properties currently zoned R2 to Transitional Use (TU) including a requirement that the properties be residentially styled, (as defined by design guidelines – see below), and that appropriate landscaping be provided in excess of the City’s requirements if necessary to maintain the residential character and to fit harmoniously with adjacent residential properties.	1	1 and 2	City Council	X	Tabled, pending outcome and finalization of Item 2.	
Develop and adopt design guidelines for the Transitional Use district (including items such as building bulk and proportion, building placement and orientation, architectural style, building materials, rear yards and facades, rooflines, lighting, signs, and parking facilities).	2	1 and 2	City Council	X	X	
Initiate a zoning amendment to the Transitional Use zoning district to allow an increase in fence heights of up to eight (8) feet for rear property lines adjacent to properties zoned and utilized for a residential use.	3	1 and 2	City Council	X	X	
Develop an ordinance requirement for cross-access and consolidated access points along Washington Street and Aurora Avenue to formalize this standard practice.	4	1, 2, and 4	City Council	X	X	

Municipal Code Text Changes Requiring Initiation/Adoption by Council

	<b>Proposed Action</b>	<b>Item #</b>	<b>Area</b>	<b>Initiator</b>	<b>Endorsed by DPIC</b>	<b>Endorsed by Plan Commission</b>	<b>Endorsed by City Council</b>
	Develop standards for appropriate screening of rear parking areas and public access adjacent to the Riverwalk.	5	4	City Staff/City Council	X	X	
<b>Municipal Code Text Changes. Continued</b>	Initiate a zoning amendment to section 6-2-14 of the zoning code (Major Arterial Setback Requirements) to formally adopt a requirement for a 30-foot setback from the property line for the east side of Washington Street and a 25-foot setback from the property line for the west side of Washington Street (from Hillside to Aurora Avenue).	6	2	City Council	X	X	
<b>Administrative Actions</b>	Evaluate signage and traffic movement improvements for the gateway locations into the downtown as identified.	7	1, 2, and 4	City Staff/City Council	X	X	
	Develop an action plan to educate property owners of voluntary opportunities to landmark structures of historical or architectural significance.	8	3	City Staff/ City Council/ Residents	X	X	
<b>Ongoing Activities – No Action Required</b>	Continue to notify Naper Settlement of any residential demolitions, in order to document and/or salvage any historically or architecturally significant items or structures.	9	3	City Staff	Identified as ongoing	Identified as ongoing	
	As teardowns occur, encourage the use of sensitive infill development strategies (such as utilizing Community First’s “Workbook for Successful Redevelopment”).	10	3	City Staff	Identified as ongoing	Identified as ongoing	
	Continue to work with residents to evaluate traffic-related concerns on a case-by-case basis. Encourage residents to participate in the established City’s Friendly Streets Program to resolve traffic-related issues.	11	3	Residents	Identified as ongoing	Identified as ongoing	





## SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENT RECEIVED

### **Issues & Discussion Topics at the October 11 Neighborhood Meeting**

The following list is a **summary** of discussion topics raised by property owners at the October 11 neighborhood meeting. The order does not imply any particular ranking or assignment of importance.

- The value of the residential area and the need to protect this area from the impacts of commercial development;
- The appropriateness of the existing home-to-office conversion district on Aurora Avenue and Washington Street;
- Impact of sign restrictions on home to office conversions to maintain residential character;
- Issues associated with redevelopment of properties along Washington and Aurora Avenue (including density, parking, and traffic).
- Cross-access along Washington Street properties;
- Cut-through traffic in the residential area;
- The need for a 4-way stop at Main and Porter;
- Impacts of stormwater management and the need for improvements to existing stormwater facilities;
- Age, size, and condition of existing buildings on Washington and Aurora;
- Trend of reinvestment (teardowns) in residential area;
- Impact of approved 7-story condo building on the existing and future fabric of Washington Street;
- Parking locations in rear of properties facing Washington Street;
- Importance of the “quaintness” of downtown;
- The need for residents to help “direct” the change instead of “reacting” to the changes;
- Potential for reserving on-street parking for residents of the area;
- Opportunities for traffic calming in the residential area; and
- Need for compatibility of residential and non-residential land uses.

### **Written and Verbal Public Comments at the December 4 Public Meeting**

The following list is a **verbatim** listing of comments provided at the December 4 public meeting. Again, the order does not imply any particular ranking or assignment of importance.

- Area 1 (South Side of Aurora Avenue) should remain residential and should not have any home-to-office conversions.
- Speed limit and crosswalks should be enforced.
- Trash removal should take place in alleys.
- No change to the South side of Aurora Avenue. The dividing line should be down the middle of Aurora Avenue. The conditional use process better protects residents abutting them.
- It is unfair to the owner-occupied residents who had to fight to establish the R2g conditional use and still live in their homes to have to fight a zoning change again.
- TU should maintain signage restriction as currently exists in R2g.
- Setbacks and screening need to be improved to minimize impacts of TU district.

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## ATTACHMENT 1

- Concern about lighting from parking areas in rear of buildings on abutting residential property.
- Home-to-office conversion district should never have come to the south side of the Aurora but since it is, there should be no further change to the land use and the conditional home to office zoning category should remain in place. The south side of Aurora Avenue should have never been part of the Downtown Plan.
- A change in zoning will add to vehicular traffic in the area. Aurora Avenue cannot support egress to these businesses. The question is where does the traffic go? It appears non-feasible to change the zoning in area 1 (south side of Aurora).
- Residential area should remain as-is. At this time there are 3 teardown projects underway on main Street, 2 additions and remodeling underway, and 2 proposed teardown projects, all of which are single-family.
- Main concern – preserve the residential quality of this small neighborhood - we've been here 22 years and have no intention of selling/leaving.
- Through traffic is a concern, especially with greater development of the transitional area.
- Although teardown reinvestment in this area has not been extreme, there should be monitoring of this to make sure the character of the neighborhood does not change.
- My grandfather built my house in 1896. I do not want to be forced out busy or noisy businesses. Noise is a big concern. Bright lights in parking lots. Type of clientele some businesses would bring to area. I do not want antenna towers. Multiple family use is not good for families with small children (too much traffic).
- Any change in the height of structures allowed on the west side of Washington should be limited so as not to “tower” over the residences that line the east side of Main Street. Lighting needs to be muted as there really is quite a bit of light pollution.
- The middle of Aurora Avenue is the only logical dividing line between downtown and the residential neighborhood (Area 3). Area 2 is only a gift to future commercial interests. Area 2 only serves to make Area 3 a little bit pregnant; there is no such thing. Build a large berm or concrete wall between Washington Street and Main Street, then do whatever you want on Washington Street. Do not change zoning in Area 2 or 3.
- Prefer single-family zoning over R2.
- Need better setbacks on non-residential property with landscaping.
- Landscaping should be on residential side of a fence, not the business side.
- Concerned about the timing of traffic lights along Aurora.
- New residential construction should only have access to alley, not the street.
- Front loaded garages should not be allowed for homes with access to an alley.
- Home to office conversions should not extend to Main and Webster.
- The buildings on Washington and Aurora are too small to be converted. Zoning should be changed to allow for demolition.
- Process of home to office conversion is too difficult to understand by property owners...it makes investing in your property cumbersome.
- The 25% expansion/demolition rule of the home to office conversion district is too limiting.
- Incentives for cross-access should be included.
- Cross access and shared driveway work and should be promoted.
- Height limit for east side of Washington is a good idea. The approved condo building is too tall for this area.

Washington – Hillside Study Zoning Option Comparison

	Transitional Use	OCI	R2
Permitted Uses	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Single-family detached dwellings constructed prior to February 4, 2003.</li> <li>2. Two-family dwellings and duplexes constructed prior to February 4, 2003.</li> <li>3. Single-family attached dwellings.</li> <li>4. Multiple-family dwellings.</li> <li>5. Residential units in conjunction with any permitted or conditional use in the transitional use district, second floor or above.</li> <li>6. Offices - business or professional; medical or dental.</li> <li>7. Services including, but not limited to, barbershops, beauty shops, dry cleaning, shoe repair, tailor shops, and similar stores or shops which sell services on site.</li> <li>8. Retail uses accessory to any permitted or conditional use in this district.</li> <li>9. Parks and playgrounds.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Banks and financial institutions.</li> <li>2. Civic buildings.</li> <li>3. Cultural institutions.</li> <li>4. Hospitals and sanitariums.</li> <li>5. Nursery schools, preschools and daycare centers.</li> <li>6. Offices - business or professional; medical or dental.</li> <li>7. Parks, playgrounds and forest preserves.</li> <li>8. Religious institutions.</li> <li>9. Schools</li> <li>10. Veterinary offices.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Elementary schools, junior high schools, and senior high schools</li> <li>2. Golf courses.</li> <li>3. Parks, playgrounds, and forest preserves.</li> <li>4. Single-family detached dwellings.</li> <li>5. Residential-care homes.</li> <li>6. Two-family dwellings and duplexes</li> </ol>
Conditional Uses	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Single-family detached dwellings constructed after February 4, 2003.</li> <li>2. Two-family dwellings constructed after February 4, 2003.</li> <li>3. Residential care homes.</li> <li>4. Civic buildings.</li> <li>5. Religious institutions.</li> <li>6. Bed and breakfast inns.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Convalescent and nursing homes.</li> <li>2. Dwelling units.</li> <li>3. General retail.</li> <li>4. Parking lots or garages, principal.</li> <li>5. Planned unit developments.</li> <li>6. Public and private utility facilities.</li> <li>7. Services</li> <li>8. Antenna towers in excess of sixty feet (60')</li> <li>9. Kennels. (Ord. 95-171, 8-15-1995)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Civic buildings.</li> <li>2. Nursery schools, preschools and day care centers.</li> <li>3. Planned unit developments.</li> <li>4. Public and private utility facilities.</li> <li>5. Religious institutions.</li> <li>6. Swim and/or tennis clubs not for profit.</li> <li>7. Limited office (limitations apply, see below)</li> <li>8. Single-family attached dwellings</li> <li>9. Undertaking establishments and funeral parlors</li> <li>10. Boarding, lodging and rooming houses.</li> <li>11. Clubs, lodges, and meeting places for organizations, not including any use that is customarily conducted as a gainful business.</li> </ol>

Washington – Hillside Study Zoning Option Comparison

ATTACHMENT 2

	Transitional Use	OCI	R2
Stormwater Management	New development is subject to full detention requirements.	New development is subject to full detention requirements.	Conversion of residential house to office requires detention for new impervious area only
Maximum Building Height	40 feet	1.5 Floor Area Ratio	40 feet
Setback Requirements	Front: 15 feet Back: 25 feet Int. Side: 6 feet (pre-1989), 16 total, 6 minimum (post-1989) Corner Side: 10 feet	Front: 20 feet Back: none if abutting a property zoned for business use; 15 feet if adjacent to R1A, E1, E2, AG; 12 feet if adjacent to R1B, R2, R3, R4, R5 Int. Side: 10 feet Corner Side: 20 feet	Front: 25 ft. Back: 25 ft. Int. Side: 6 feet (pre-1989), 16 total, 6 minimum (post-1989) Corner Side: 15 ft.
Landscaping Requirements	Additional landscape requirements for properties adjacent to residentially zoned property apply (5-10-3:4)	Per Landscape Ordinance	Per Landscape Ordinance
Required Approvals for office development	None	None	Conditional use, site plan, landscape plan, building elevations
Parking requirements for office development	3.3 parking spaces per 1000 square feet of gross floor area; All parking must be located to the rear of the principal building or structure.	3.3 parking spaces per 1000 square feet of gross floor area	3.3 parking spaces per 1000 square feet of gross floor area
Building Code & Accessibility Related Issues	Accessible route must be provided into the building and an accessible bathroom must be located on the 1 <sup>st</sup> floor Sprinklers must be provided for combustible (wood frame) buildings in excess of 5,000 square feet and non-combustible buildings in excess of 7,500 square feet Fire alarms are required Elevators must be provided for buildings where the 2 <sup>nd</sup> floor exceeds 1,000 square feet in usable space Exit doors, exit lighting, and emergency lighting must be provided	Same	Same. These items are required upon conversion of a home to an office or business use. The features of the residential structure cannot be grandfathered with the change of use – all accessible and fire safety requirements must be met within the existing structure at the time of conversion.
Other Limitations	None	None	Must maintain the existing building; Cannot expand or demolish the existing building more than 25%