



Village of Utica, Illinois  
**2016 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**  
***PUBLIC HEARING DRAFT***  
*December 2015*



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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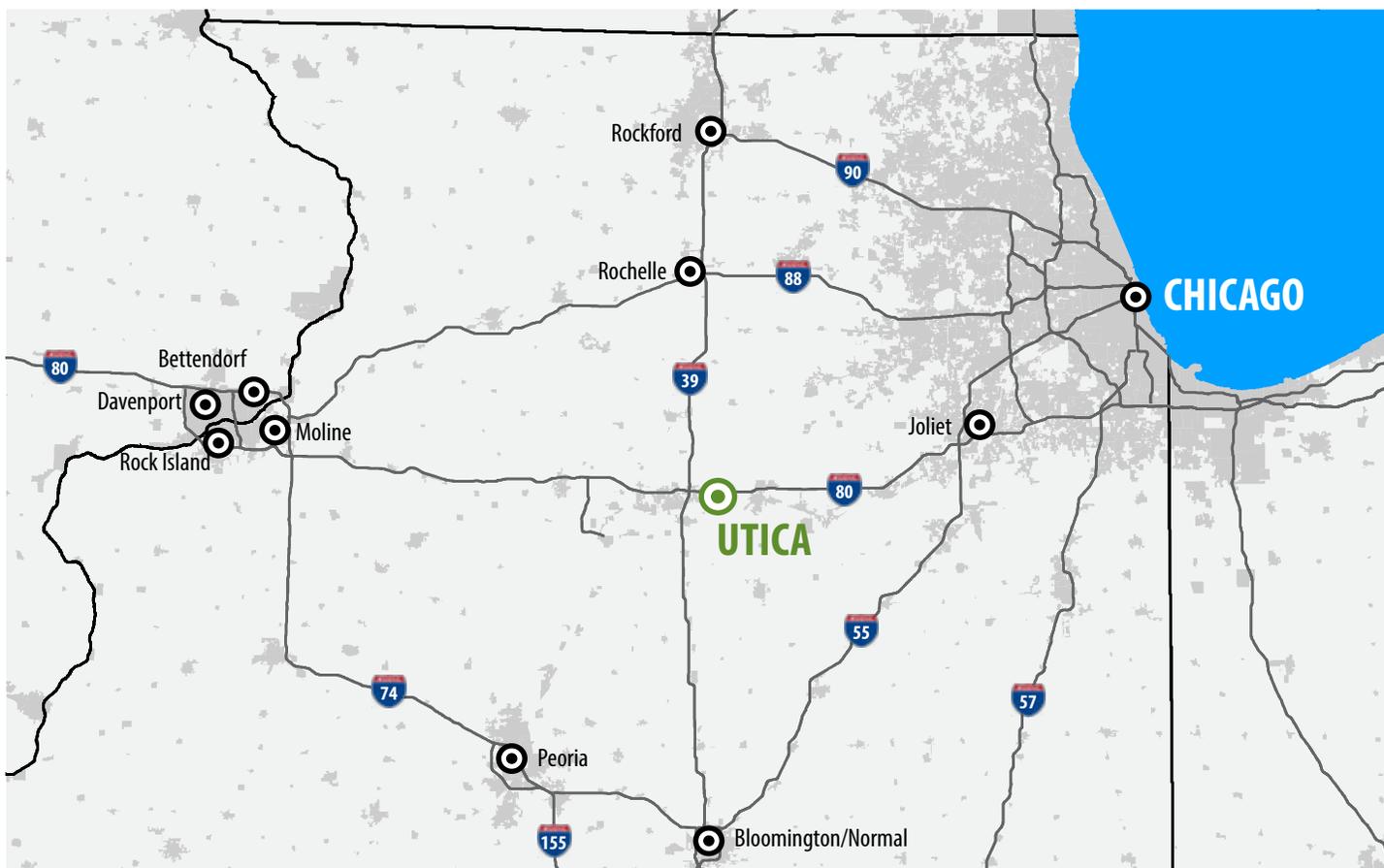
# INTRODUCTION

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A Comprehensive Plan is like a guide book. It identifies the strengths and challenges of the community and suggests a course of action to direct future growth and development. It is based on facts – physical factors like location, topography, access, etc. It is also based on opinion – in this case the desires of the community based on public workshops and hearings. And finally, it is based on professional guidance and direction offered by the consulting team retained by the Village of North Utica (referred to as simply Utica throughout this document) to assist in the planning effort.

The Plan will be used by the Village to guide future land use and zoning decisions. It will be used to plan future capital improvements. It will be used to promote economic development, and it will be used to attract funding for needed improvements through available grants and other sources.



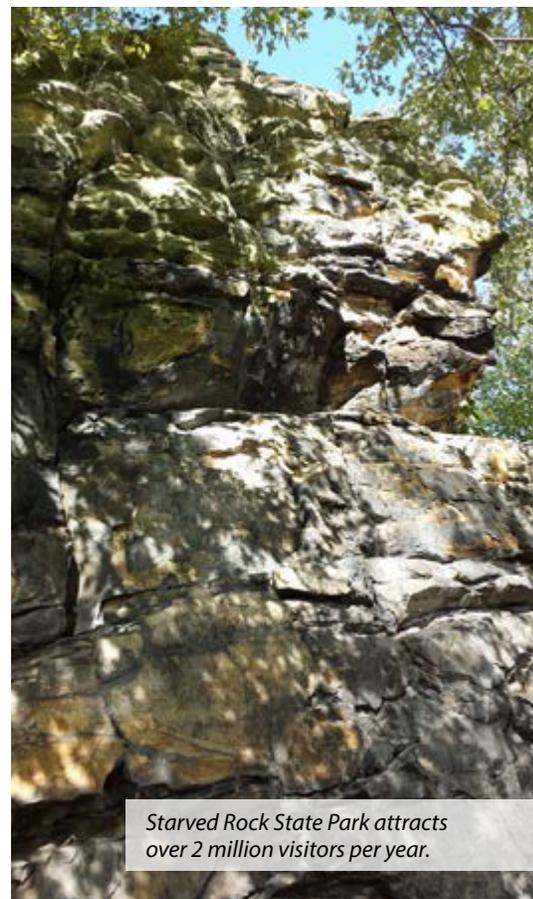


## UNIQUELY UTICA

A town of approximately 1,300 residents, Utica's regional location makes it unique. The community is located along Interstate 80, which extends from New York City on the east coast to San Francisco on the west coast. Interstate 39 is just to the west of the Village. Utica is located on the Illinois River, which extends from just southwest of Chicago to near St. Louis where it flows into the Mississippi River. It is also located on the CSX Railway (New Rock Subdivision) which provides rail connectivity throughout the United States. This exceptional access to transportation resources alone makes Utica unique.

However, the Village's major claim to fame lies in its natural resources – both above and below ground. Starved Rock State Park is immediately adjacent to the Village, and attracts over 2 million visitors a year to the area. When combined with other recreational facilities in the region including Matthiessen State Park, Buffalo Rock State Park, the Starved Rock Lock and Dam, and the Illinois River – Utica is at the center of a wonderful natural environment that is unique in Illinois, if not in the nation. In addition to these publicly preserved open space areas, the Utica area also is home to some significant private environmental resources like Clark's Run Creek that should be protected and preserved for future generations.

Below ground, the area's natural resources of clay, hydraulic lime, sandstone, and more recently silica (fracking) sand have provided both building materials and jobs and were a significant driver, along with the construction of the Illinois and Michigan Canal, in the original settlement of the Village.



*Starved Rock State Park attracts over 2 million visitors per year.*

## VILLAGE HISTORY

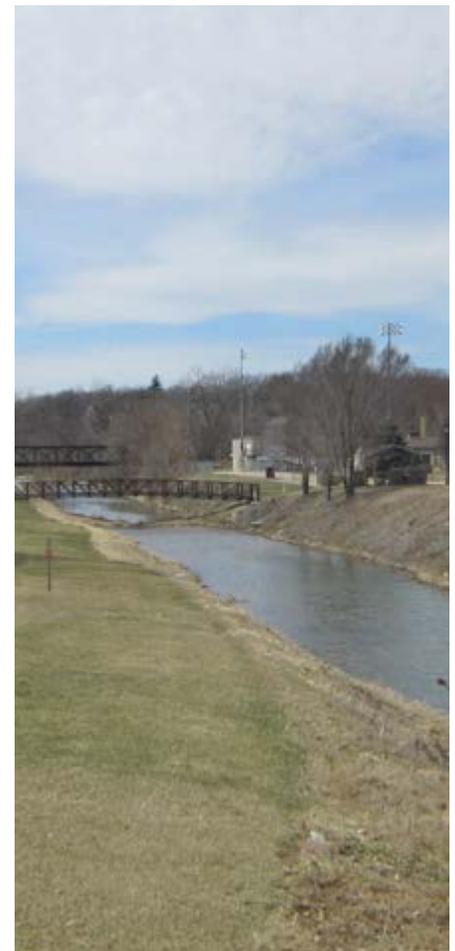
The town of Utica is located in LaSalle County, just north of the Illinois River. The original settlement was located along the bottomlands of the Illinois River. Plans for the development of the I&M Canal between 1822 and 1836 made the area attractive for settlement. In the 1827 canal survey, Utica had been designated the terminus for the canal. However, an updated survey nine years later moved the canal terminus from Utica to Peru and then later to LaSalle. The relocation of the canal terminus away from Utica not only limited water and rail transportation but also the general growth of the community.

In 1834, Simon Crosiar, a native of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, opened a warehouse, store, and dock for transporting commodities along the banks of the Illinois River. Two years later, in November of 1836, the Deputy County Surveyor filed a plat map for Utica at the recorder's office in LaSalle County.

The start of construction of the I&M Canal began in 1836. Laborers, mostly of Irish decent, arrived and set up lodging one mile north of the original settlement (hence North Utica). Access to the I&M Canal and the regular flooding of the Illinois River were the likely explanations for the slight move north. Construction of the Canal was completed in 1848. Discovery of hydraulic lime and the production of cement were the impetus for further development of Utica. The village was organized in 1850, and County Surveyor JJ Wagner laid out the Village in 1852. It was officially incorporated in 1867.

Utica had its first grain elevator, feed mill complex, Rock Island Pacific Railroad, lumber store, and grain stores in the 1850s. In the 1860s simple frame structures were built to house necessity-oriented stores on Clark and Canal streets. The commercial core on Mill Street began in 1870 and was oriented towards industry and services. The Utica Fire-Brick Company was established in 1882 (operating until 1928) to manufacture bricks. Further development on Mill Street took place between 1800 and 1900 with construction of most of the brick and stone structures.

By 1900 Utica had reached a population of 1,000. By 1914, the railroad replaced the canal as a transportation route. Further development and construction generally came to a halt after the 1920's, and has been continual but slow since that time.



***The start of construction of the I&M canal began in 1836.... Construction of the Canal was completed in 1848.***



*On April 20, 2004 an F3 tornado hit downtown Utica, resulting in the loss of 9 lives. The tornado destroyed or significantly damaging 91 structures creating a loss of well over 3 million dollars, including most of an entire block on the north end of the business district along Mill Street. The Village erected a memorial of this event at the northwest corner of Mill and Church Streets.*

Several properties in and around Utica are listed in the National Register of Historic Places. These are summarized in the following table.

National Register Sites			Year Placed on Register
Site	Location	Significance	
Old (Grand) Kaskaskia Village, National Historic Landmark	Between Dee Benet Rd. and the Illinois River, west of the marina	Once the largest encampment of Native Americans in the continental United States, believed to have been home to 10,000 people. It was the place of first contact of French explorers Louis Jolliet and Jacques Marquette during their historic 1673 expedition.	1966
Spring Valley House/Sulphur Springs Hotel	South side of Dee Benet Rd, between Buffalo Rock State Park and Route 178	Built in 1852, this five-store pre-Civil War structure was built as a resort after he heard tales of health benefits of nearby sulfur springs. The building is commonly known as the "Halfway House" based on historic use. The property is currently in need of major renovation, and is owned by the State of Illinois	1987
Starved Rock Lock and Dam Historic District	Dee Bennett Road on Illinois River	The lock and dam was constructed between 1926 and 1933 to help create a navigable waterway along the Illinois River.	2004
Starved Rock State Park, National Historic Landmark	Starved Rock State Park	Site of former Fort Saint Louis du Rocher, built in 1682 by early French explorers led by Rene-Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle.	1966
Starved Rock State Park Lodge and Cabins	Starved Rock State Park	The lodge and many of the surrounding cabins were constructed in 1933 as a Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) project.	1985
Corbin Farm Site	Starved Rock State Park	A site of archaeological significance, with pottery discovered from the Late Woodland Period (500 to 1000AD). It was also the location of a farmstead from 1870 – 1940, and is now a picnic area.	1998
Hotel Plaza Site	Starved Rock State Park	Another archaeological site, believed to have been the site of a large Native American village. In more modern times, it was the site of a hotel with the State Park.	1998
Little Beaver Site	Starved Rock State Park	An archaeological site that has been the location of multiple settlements from various time periods.	1998
Shakey Shelter Site	Starved Rock State Park	The location of a prehistoric rock shelter at the base of the sandstone bluff in Kaskaskia Canyon.	1998



## PLANNING HISTORY

The Village of North Utica completed their first Comprehensive Plan in 2002. That Plan was developed jointly between the Utica Planning Commission and the North Central Illinois Council of Governments. It has served the community well, with many of the major recommendations having been accomplished such as:

- Re-routing of 178 through downtown, including significant new signs and landscape enhancements
- Reducing the time Route 178 is blocked by trains (improvements nearing completion on a train storage yard).
- Laying the infrastructure for a business/industrial park along I-80 and annexation of additional area for business development
- Updating of the Zoning and subdivision ordinances
- Preparing an Economic Development and Tourism Strategy (2005)

## PLANNING PROCESS

The development of this Comprehensive Plan began in the fall of 2015 with a series of public workshops designed to identify and address key issues facing Utica. These sessions included:

- A community workshop on September 10th, 2015;
- An Open House on the preliminary Land Use & Transportation Plans on October 1st, 2015;
- A Tourism Workshop on October 19th, 2015;
- A Review of the Draft Comprehensive Plan at the December 3rd, 2015 Planning Commission meeting;
- A Public Hearing on January 7th, 2016; and
- Review and Approval by the Village Board at their January 26th and February 9th, 2016 meetings.

## COMMUNITY WORKSHOP

The workshop held on September 10th, 2015 gave residents the opportunity to voice their opinions about their community. There were several participatory activities held to help the consultants and the Village understand the strengths and challenges within the community. The following activities were conducted:

### *HEADLINE NEWS*

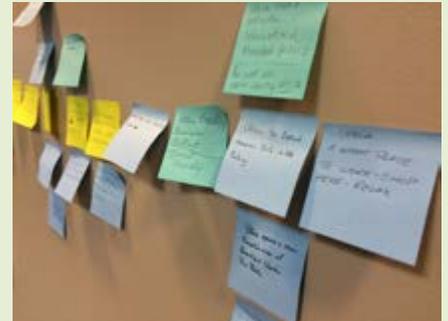
Audience members were asked to write down a headline they would like to see in five years and post it on the wall. These headlines were organized by theme to see which topics were the most important. Some of the most important themes involved promoting tourism and business, increasing recreational opportunities, and restoring the I&M Canal.

### *GROUP DISCUSSIONS*

The consultant team divided the audience into smaller groups to discuss three separate core topics including Downtown & Urban Design, Economic Development & Land Use, and Environment & Services. Through these discussions eight key issues were selected as major challenges facing the community.

### *INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES*

With the eight key issues determined in the group discussions, the next step was to prioritize the list. Audience members were given \$15,000 in "Utica Dollars" to spend on each issue. The money could be divided between projects or put all towards one. The top three issues which residents wanted addressed were I&M Canal restoration, mitigating flooding issues, and creating a new or expanded school.



# UTICA TODAY

To plan for future growth and development in Utica, it is important to understand what issues the community presently faces and how the Village has changed over time. This section assess the Village's demographics, existing environmental characteristics, and neighboring communities' planning efforts.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

Analyzing past and present demographics illustrates trends within the Village and will inform future decisions with regards to specific types of land uses.

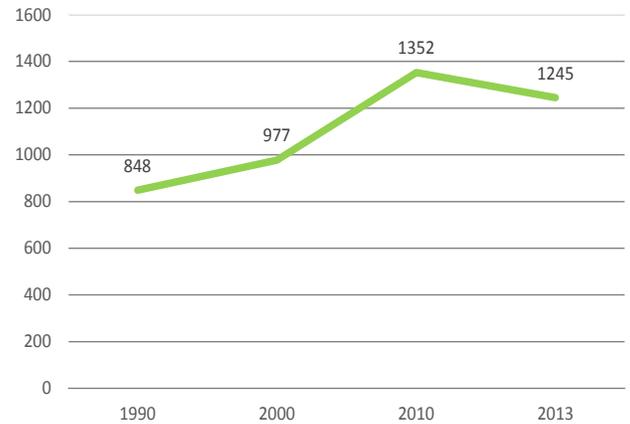
### POPULATION

The Village of Utica is a small rural community and has seen slow but steady growth over the past 25 years. Since 1990, the population has increased from 848 residents to its current estimated population of 1,245 residents. While this increase marks a 46% increase in total population over the past 25 years, the Village remains a small and close-knit community.

### AGE

Understanding the age of residents is important for projecting future amenities and services needed in the area. The age of Utica residents has been getting older over the past 15 years. In 2000, the median age of the Village's residents was 38.8 and currently the median age of its residents is 46.0 years old. This is older than both the median ages in LaSalle County (41.3) and Illinois (36.8). When evaluating the ages by age group, there has been an increase in the population for the "5 to 14 year" age group but the larger growth in the age groups between 45 to 74 years of age have overshadowed this increase and has caused the overall median population to increase.

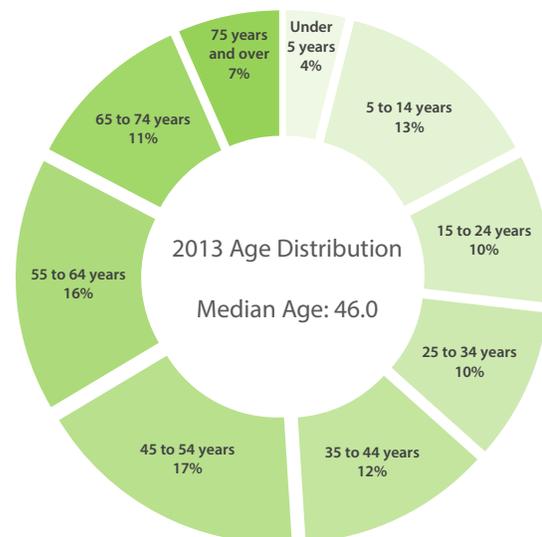
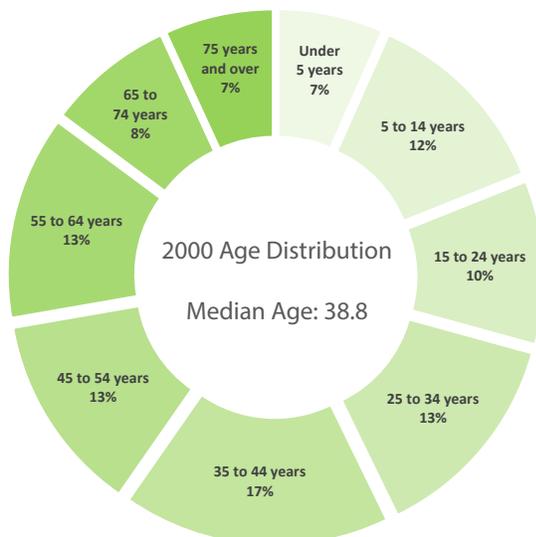
### Utica Population Trend



Populations	
Village of Utica	1,245
City of LaSalle	9,551
City of Ottawa	19,116
City of Oglesby	3,632
LaSalle County	113,295

2013 American Community Survey 5-year estimates

### Utica Age Distribution



2000 U.S. Census; 2013 American Community Survey 5-year estimates

## EDUCATION

The education levels of a population affects the types of jobs and companies located in the area. A majority of Utica adults have attained at least a high school diploma (93%). Many have also completed some college coursework (33.4%), and about 25% of the adult population has an Associate's Degree or higher level college degree.

## HOUSEHOLDS

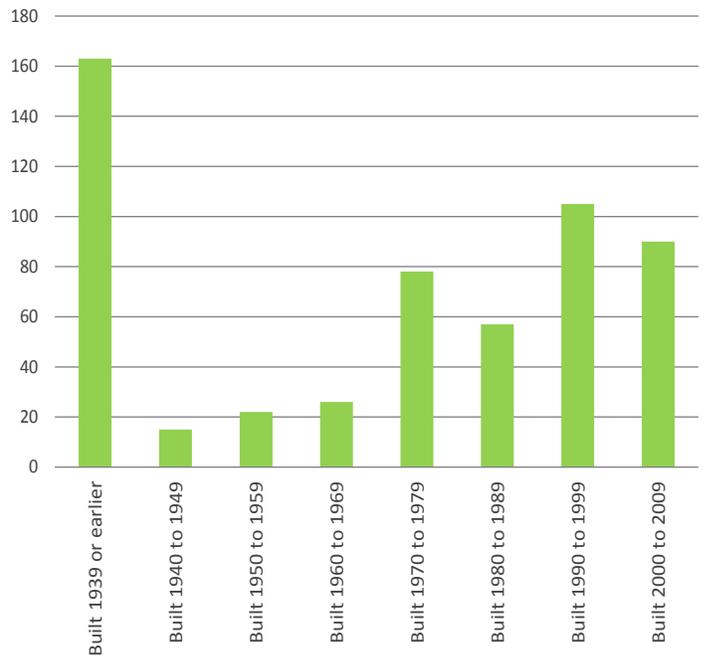
An understanding of the types of housing options is important when determining what changes are appropriate for the community. The Village consists mainly of single-family detached homes. Overall, a majority of households within Utica are owned by their occupants (88%) while a small amount of residents rent their living space (12%). With respect to housing age, the housing stock is older with 65% of the homes being built before 1990. A large portion of the homes (29%) were built before 1940 and are located near the original core/downtown Utica. Some of the newer homes are located on the west side of town along N 2853rd Road. The median household value within Utica was \$144,500 in 2013.

## EMPLOYMENT

Where people work and what they do assists in forming decisions for future transportation and land use needs. According to the U.S. Census Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics a majority of residents work outside the community and a majority of jobs offered within the community are worked by people outside the Village. The top municipalities where Utica residents work are Ottawa, Peru, and LaSalle. These cities are also the top places where those employed in Utica reside.

In terms of the type of industry, a majority of residents over the age of 16 work in the educational and healthcare services, transportation and warehousing, and manufacturing industries. In terms of occupations within these industries, most employees work in management, business, science, and arts occupations as well as sales and office occupations. This blend of industries and occupations illustrates Utica and the region provides a variety of employment opportunities for their residents.

## Housing Age



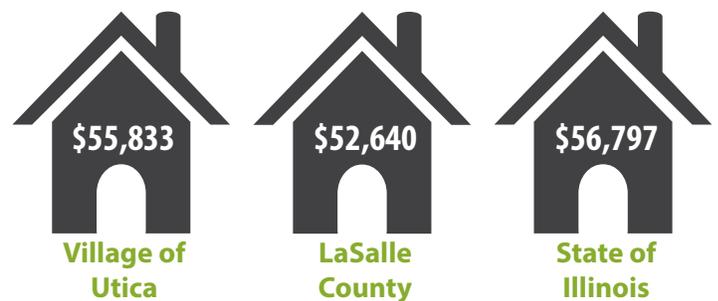
2013 American Community Survey 5-year estimates

## Median Home Value



2013 American Community Survey 5-year estimates

## Median Household Income



2013 American Community Survey 5-year estimates

## ENVIRONMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS

With its location along the Illinois River, proximity to natural land features, and its rich mineral resources, the environment is a major defining factor in Utica's character. Understanding the influence the environment has on the Village will help shape future growth and development plans.

### WOODLANDS & TOPOGRAPHY

Utica is enveloped by natural features including the adjacent State Parks, Clark's Run Creek, and the topographically changing elevations highlighting natural sandstone rock formations. These amenities provide residents and tourists with a unique and beautiful place to live and visit. While these natural features provide distinctive beauty, there are challenges associated with the dynamic landscape. There is a large elevation change between downtown (low elevation) and the areas north of the train tracks (high elevation). This separates the population living north of "the hill" from the people and businesses downtown. Additionally, there are very steep slopes, exposed sandstone bluffs, extensive woodlands, and even a waterfall along Clarks Run Creek which suggests this area should be preserved as open space and not developed. Overall, the woodlands and topography of the area create a unique atmosphere which should be preserved.

### AGRICULTURE

Utica is surrounded by a significant amount of farmland which adds to the rural character of the community. A majority of the farmed land is located north and east of the Village within the 1 ½ mile planning boundary. These agricultural fields capitalize on the areas excellent soils, primarily growing corn and soy bean crops.

### FLOODING

While Utica's location along the Illinois River provides the area with natural beauty, recreational activities, and a mode of transportation, when it rains heavily (particularly up-river in the Chicago area) the flooding which ensues can have a very negative impact on the community. There are several areas within the community which have experienced significant flooding in recent years, primarily along Route 178 from the Willows Hotel to the River.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has identified and mapped the areas where flooding will likely occur after heavy storms. The "Floodway and Flood Zone Map" illustrates the three different types of flooding zones which impact the Village. All three of these flood zone areas require mandatory flood insurance and floodplain management standards when development occurs.

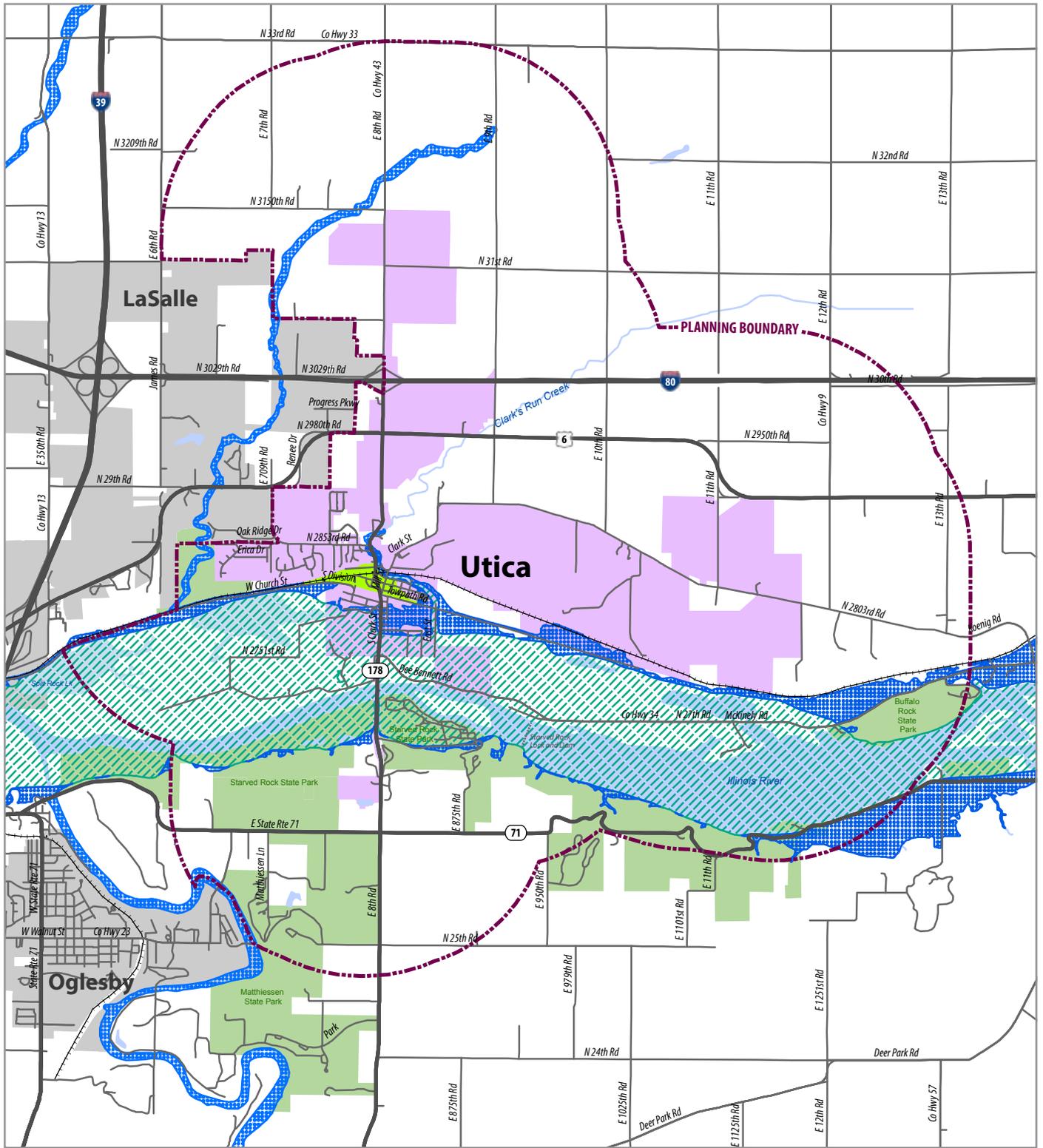
**Floodway** - A "Regulatory Floodway" means the channel of a river or other watercourse and the adjacent land areas that must be reserved in order to discharge the base flood without cumulatively increasing the water surface elevation more than a designated height. Communities must regulate development in these floodways to ensure that there are no increases in upstream flood elevations.

**100 Year Flood Zone** - Areas subject to inundation by the 1-percent-annual-chance flood event.

**100 Year Flood Zone (shallow)** - Areas subject to inundation by 1-percent-annual-chance shallow flooding (usually sheet flow on sloping terrain) where average depths are between one and three feet.

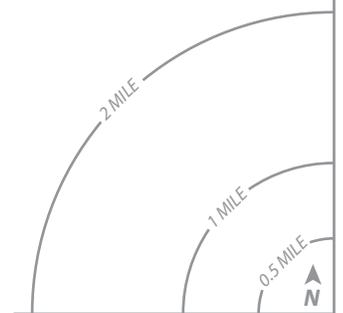


*The woodlands and topography create a unique atmosphere.*



## Village of Utica Comprehensive Plan Floodway and Flood Zone Map

- Village of Utica
- State Park
- Floodway
- Water
- 100 Year Flood Zone
- 100 Year Flood Zone (shallow)



*Silica sand has become an increasingly sought after mineral resource in Utica and LaSalle County.*



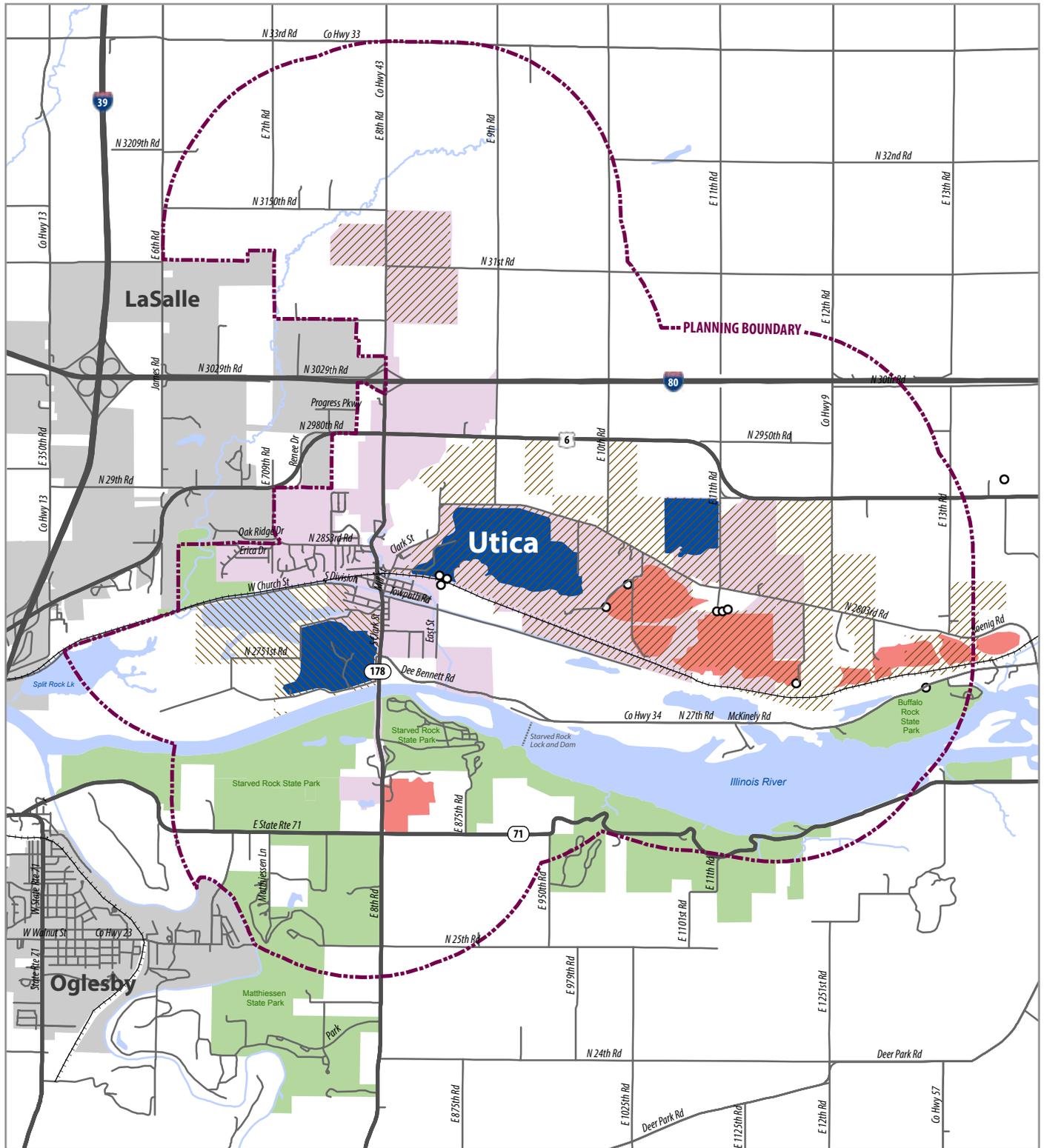
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## **MINERAL RESOURCES**

The geology of LaSalle County lends itself to a plethora of mineral deposits and many of these resources are found within Utica and the planning area. Some of the main resources found within the area include limestone and silica sand. There is an existing limestone quarry located to the southwest of downtown Utica which is used for agricultural uses and concrete aggregate.

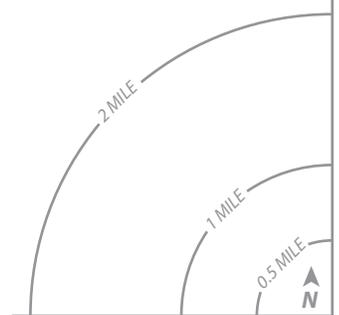
While the limestone quarry has been in operation for many years, silica sand has become an increasingly sought after mineral resource in Utica and LaSalle County. LaSalle County is only one of a handful of locations in the world that can easily access the St. Peter Sandstone formation which provides silica sand. This unique sand is utilized for a number of commercial uses including glass making, filtering and molding, abrasives, and most recently it is heavily used in the oil fracking industry. The consistency in grain size and shape, as well as its resilience to heat and pressure makes the sand very valuable for such commercial uses.

In recent years, many sand mining companies have purchased and annexed a sizeable amount of properties for future sand extraction. As illustrated on the "Mining and Mineral Resources Map," the properties owned by such companies are located to the north of Interstate 80 and to the east of the Village's residential areas extending to Buffalo Rock State Park. An existing 570 acre sand mine, owned by Unimim Corporation, is located to the east of Clark Street and north of I&M Canal and the company owns a majority of the agricultural land around their existing mine.



## Village of Utica Comprehensive Plan Mining and Mineral Resources Map

- |                                 |                          |                      |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|
| Active Surface Mines            | Village of Utica         | Historic Coal Shafts |
| Abandoned Surface Mines         | Neighboring Municipality |                      |
| Limestone Industry Owned Land   | State Park               |                      |
| Sand Mining Industry Owned Land | Water                    |                      |





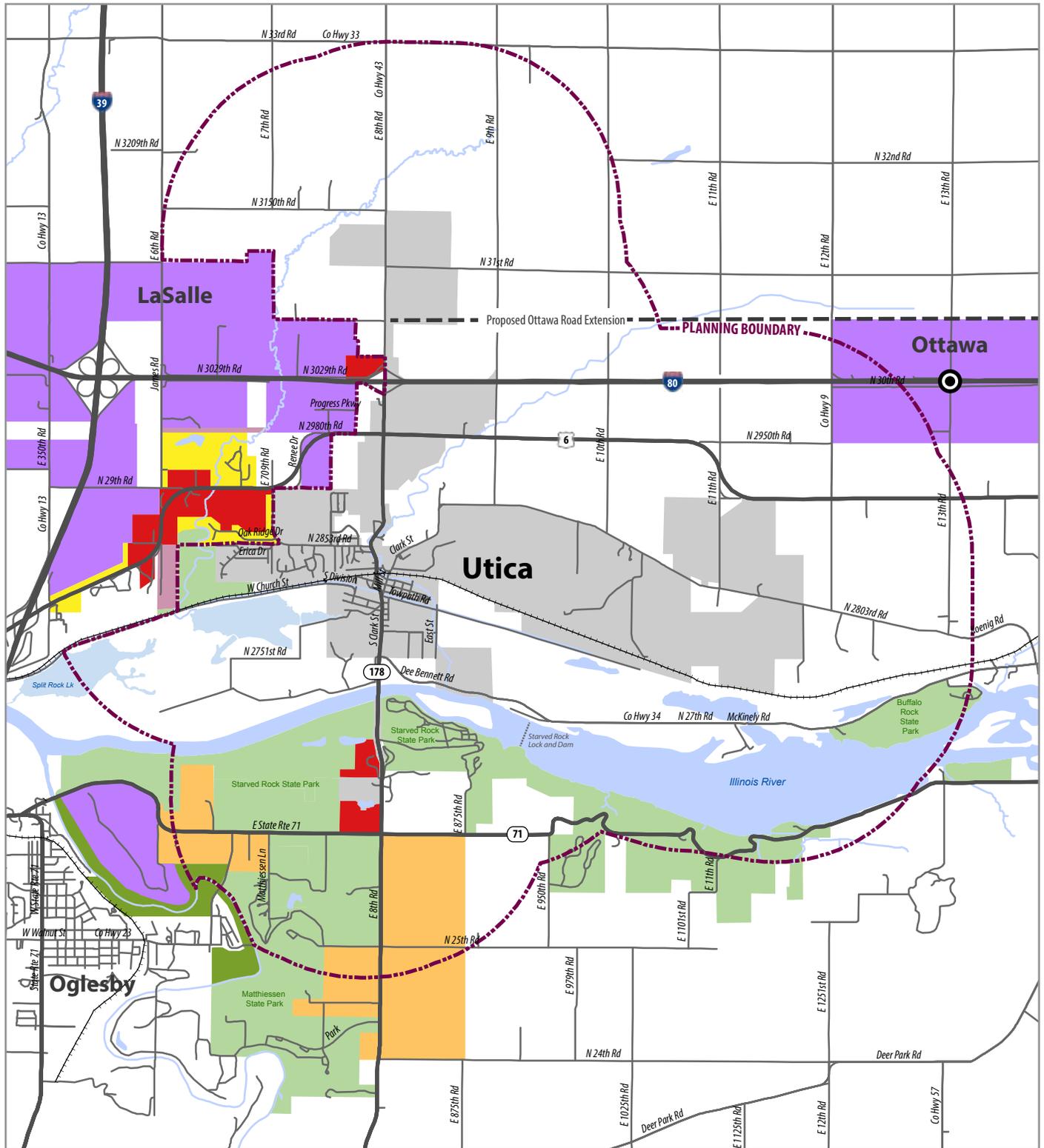
## NEIGHBORING COMMUNITIES

Utica has three nearby neighbors (LaSalle, Ottawa, and Oglesby) which contribute to how the area functions as a region. Knowing what each municipality has planned for the future will inform future land use and transportation decisions.

LaSalle has planned for most of the land around Interstate 80 and Interstate 39 intersection to be designated for a variety of industrial uses with a small amount of commercial uses near the access point along 8th Road. Additionally, LaSalle plans for commercial and residential uses along Route 6 adjacent to Utica's existing western boundary.

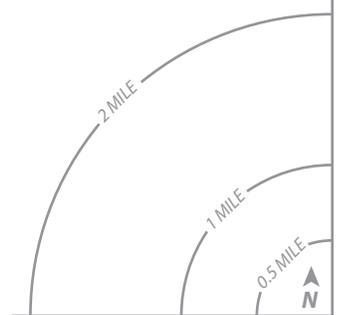
While Ottawa is several miles to the east, their plans for future land uses extends out to 12th Road which is within Utica's one and a half mile planning boundary. Ottawa has designated the land along Interstate 80 to be used for future industrial uses. Potentially, if developed, the addition of an Interstate access point at 13th Road and a road extension a half mile north of the Interstate may be necessary to handle additional traffic.

Oglesby has planned for future land uses within Utica's planning boundary but due to the amount of land occupied by State Parks, the City's future plans do not show any significant changes to the existing land uses in the area.



## Village of Utica Comprehensive Plan Neighboring Communities Planning Map

- Residential Land Use
- Commercial Land Use
- Industrial Land Use
- Agricultural Land Use
- Open Space
- State Park
- Water
- Possible Future Interchange



# TRANSPORTATION

This section summarizes the variety of transportation options within the planning area including roads, railways, waterways, air travel, non-motorized and public transportation. Additionally, future goals and objectives with regards to transportation are outlined.

## ROADS

Roadways and streets are the most integral component of Utica's transportation network. Roadway users include residents traveling to and from work, tourists traveling to Starved Rock and other State Parks, and industries transporting their goods via trucks. An understanding of how the road system currently operates and what can be done to alleviate some of the challenges will help improve the quality of life of Utica residents.

## CLASSIFICATION

Roads and streets may be classified based on the type of service they are intended to provide. The following roadway classifications, which are illustrated on the "Future Transportation Map," are found within the planning area:

### Interstate (Interstate 80; Interstate 39)

Carries the highest traffic volumes, accommodates the greatest trip lengths, and is constructed for higher speeds. Interstates are typically federal highways.

### Major Arterial (Route 178; Route 6; Route 71)

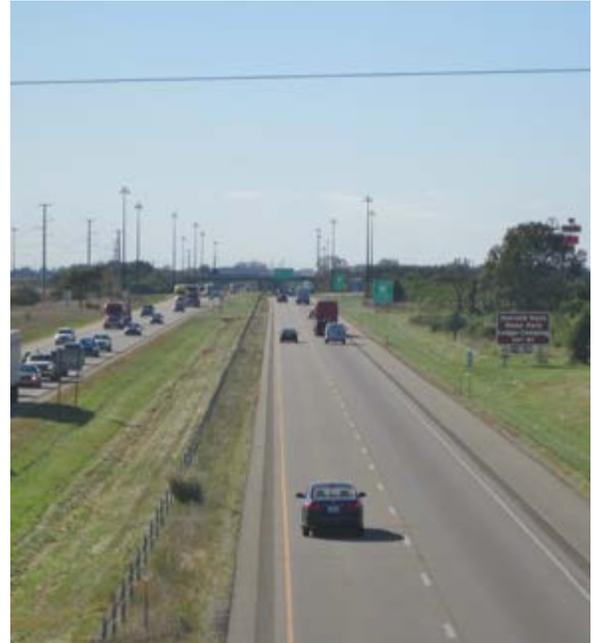
Provides service to, through, or around communities and serves long distance traffic within a city by connecting major regional centers. Major arterial roadways are typically controlled by the State (Illinois Department of Transportation – IDOT).

### Major Collector (Dee Bennett Road; 33rd Road; 12th Road)

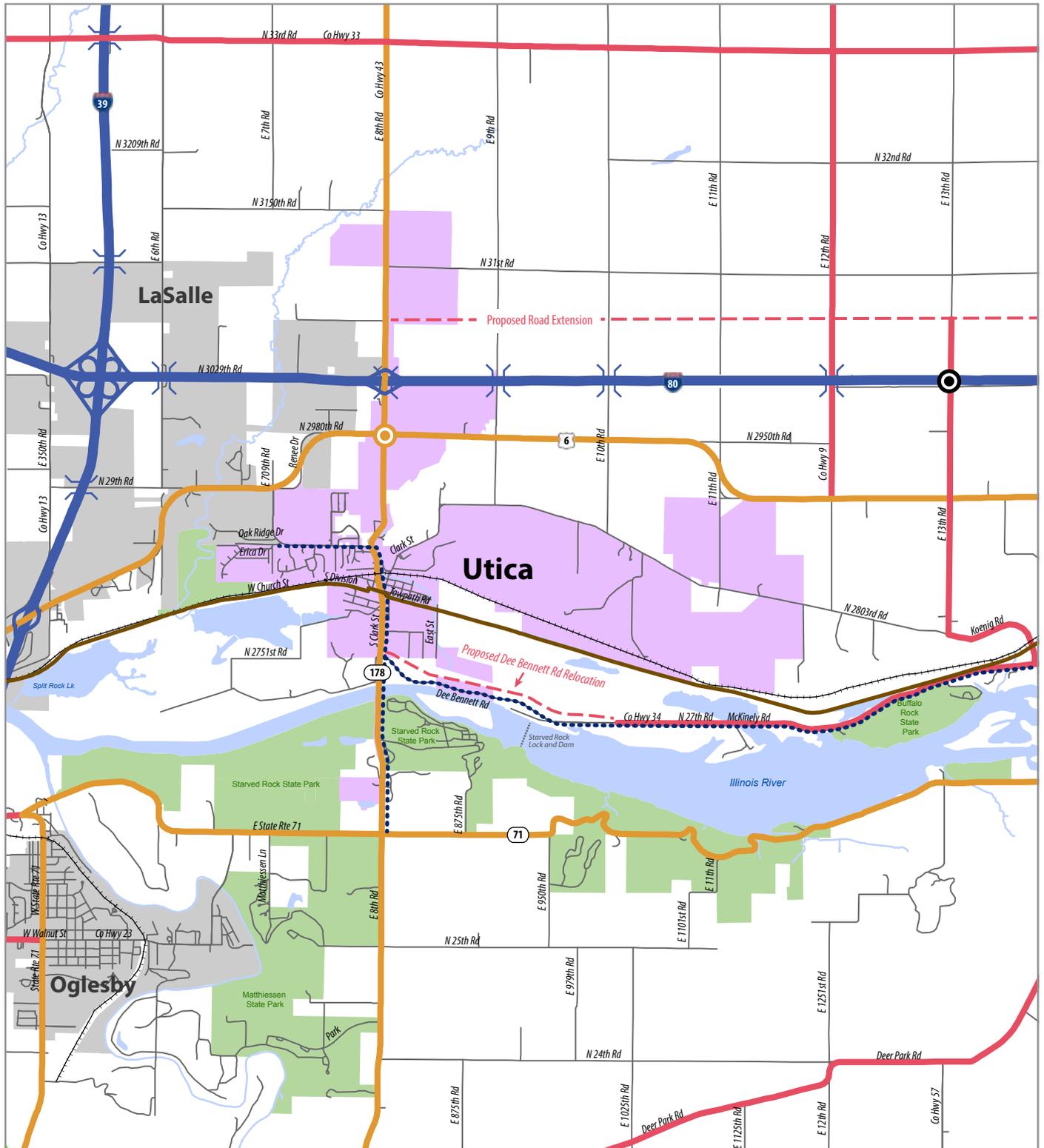
Provides both access and traffic circulation to residential neighborhoods, commercial, and industrial areas. Within Utica, major collector roads are controlled by LaSalle County.

### Local Streets

All other roadways and streets are deemed to be local roads. These roads provide the highest amount of access to adjacent parcels and contain lower speed limits. Local streets are controlled by the Village if within the corporate limits or the township if outside of municipal boundaries (unless the street is a private street).

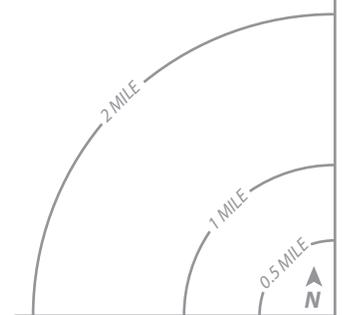


*The Interstates carry the highest amount of traffic volumes and bring in the majority of tourists from the region. The major arterials, such as Route 6, serve much of the industrial traffic within the planning area.*



## Village of Utica Comprehensive Plan Future Transportation Map

- |                 |                    |                  |                                 |
|-----------------|--------------------|------------------|---------------------------------|
| Interstate      | I&M Trail          | Village of Utica | Possible Future Interchange     |
| Major Arterial  | Future Shared Path | State Park       | Future Intersection Improvement |
| Major Collector | Railroad           | Water            | Interstate Overpass             |

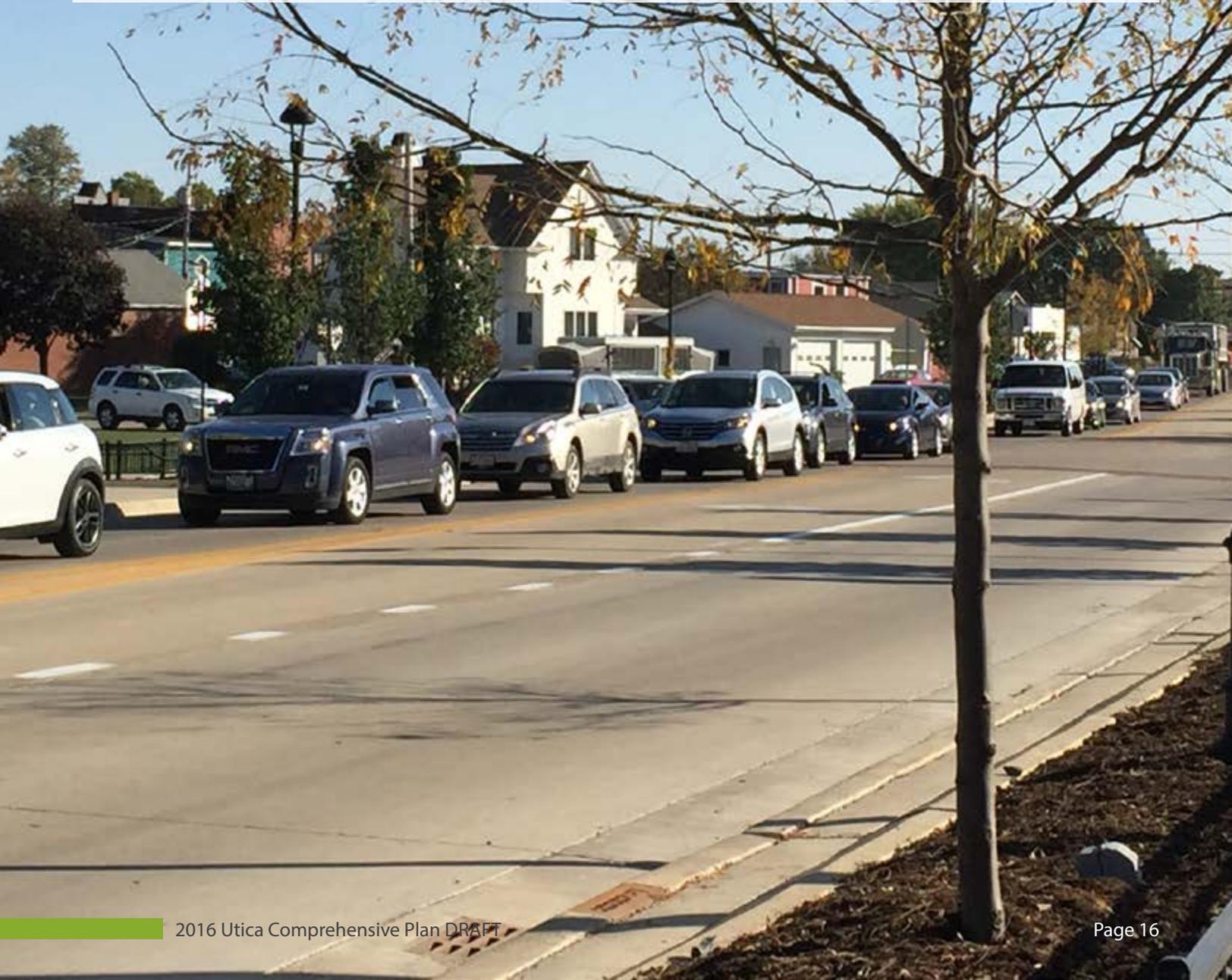


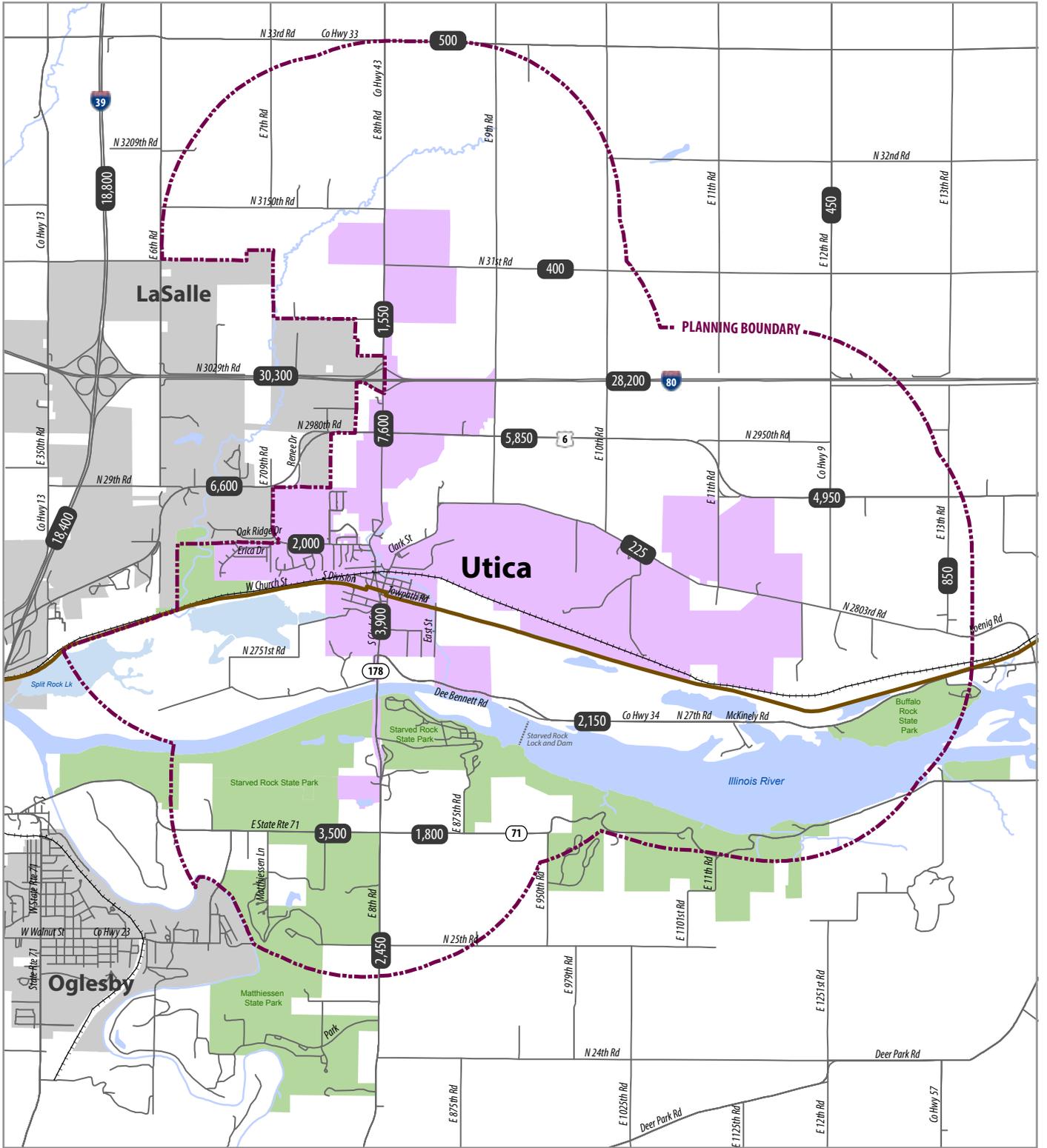
## TRAFFIC COUNTS

Evaluating traffic volumes assists in determining traffic flow, which areas have the most exposure to automobile traffic, and whether additional improvements need to be made to accommodate the traffic. As illustrated in the "Traffic Count Map," the average daily traffic counts are listed for the major thoroughfares traveling through the planning area (source: Illinois Department of Transportation, 2015).

The highest amounts of traffic can be found on the two Interstates which traverse through the region with traffic counts between about 18,000 and 30,000. When assessing roadways within Utica's current boundary, the most traffic is found near the Route 178 and Route 6 intersection with a modest amount of traffic (3,900) traveling through the downtown along Route 178. The traffic near the intersection is likely do to industrial truck traffic accessing Interstate 80 and the traffic downtown is likely due to tourists traveling to Starved Rock through downtown Utica.

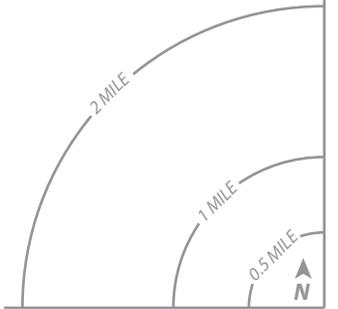
While the illustrated traffic counts are not excessively high, it is important to note that this data is shown for average daily use, which means that weekend traffic is not accounted for. The weekends are when the Village sees the most amount of traffic, especially during special events such as the Burgoo Festival. It has been reported by residents as well as witnessed during this planning process that there is heavy traffic congestion along Route 178 during weekends and special events. These traffic backups can cause bumper to bumper traffic from downtown all the way north onto Interstate 80 and from the Interstate ramps to the Route 178/Route 6 intersection

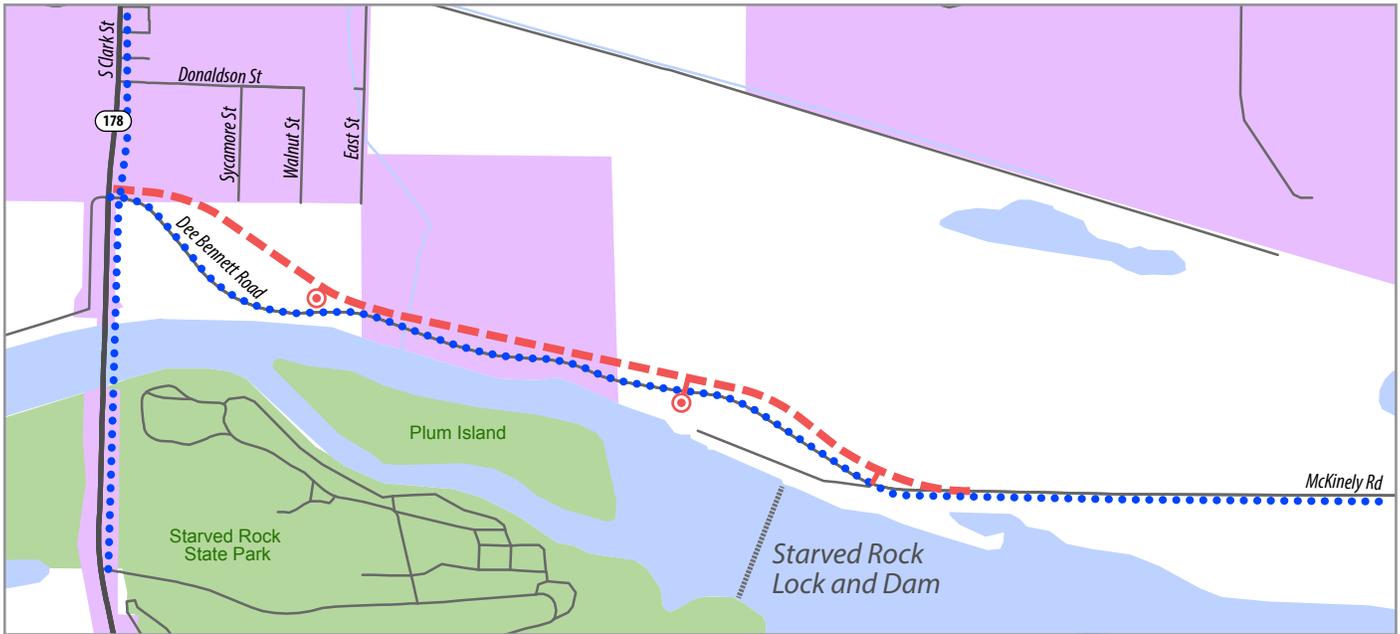




# Village of Utica Comprehensive Plan Traffic Count Map

- ### Average Daily Traffic Count
- I&M Trail
- Railroad
- Village of Utica
- State Park
- Water

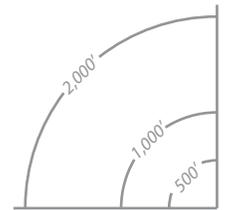




Source: LaSalle County Highway Department

## Village of Utica Comprehensive Plan Dee Bennett Road Relocation Concept Plan

- Dee Bennett Road Relocation
- ..... New Shared Multiuse Path
- Road
- ⊙ Proposed Parking Lot
- Village of Utica
- State Park
- Water



### PENDING IMPROVEMENTS

There are several pending street improvements which will be completed in the upcoming years. The following projects are planned by the LaSalle County Highway Department and the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT):

#### Dee Bennett Road Relocation

The LaSalle County Highway Department was awarded a Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) Grant to relocate and raise Dee Bennett Road to avoid the continual flooding of the roadway. As illustrated in “Dee Bennett Road Relocation Concept Plan,” this project involves relocating 1.9 miles of Dee Bennett Road north of its current location and utilizing the existing roadway as a shared used path along the Illinois River. The path will access the Illinois Waterway Visitor Center at the Starved Rock Lock and Dam. Additionally, there will be parking areas provided along the path and new road. The benefits of this project include providing safe access to Starved Rock Lock and Dam during flood events, removing bicyclists and pedestrians from the roadway, and increasing access for truck traffic and equipment to maneuver near the lock and dam. The County plans on acquiring right-of-ways and clearing for construction by 2018 with construction beginning in 2020.

#### Route 178 Bridge Replacement

In 2011, IDOT determined the Route 178 bridge over the Illinois River was not sufficient for the traffic it was observing. IDOT has since designed plans for a new bridge to be constructed and it plans bid letting in 2016 with construction starting in 2017. The proposed project will be a four step process. First, IDOT will construct a replacement bridge just east of the existing bridge while regular traffic will be maintained on the existing bridge. Next, Route 178 will be re-aligned to connect to the new bridge. Then, a shared-use path along the east side of Route 178 from Donaldson Street to Starved Rock Road will be built. Finally, once the bridge, road realignment, and shared use path are complete, the existing bridge will be removed.

#### Road Resurfacing

IDOT has planned for some road resurfacing projects within the planning area over the next five years (2016-2021). Route 6 is going to be resurfaced between Route 178 and the Little Vermillion River in LaSalle. The portion of Starved Rock Road which is located within the park itself will also be resurfaced.

## POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS

There are a few potential major roadway improvements which would increase traffic flow and provide better access to developing areas. The following improvements are recommended to increase the quality of life for residents, businesses, and industries:

### Intersection Improvement at Route 178 and Route 6

The intersection of Route 178 and Route 6 currently has a four way stop sign controlling traffic flow. During the week this is generally adequate for circulation, but on the weekends and during special events most of the automobile traffic is traveling north and south from Interstate 80 along Route 178 and causes significant traffic delays. This congestion can even back up onto the Interstate causing traffic delays and frustrated motorists in both directions. From an economic development, and an environmental stand point, it is critical to Utica's future to improve the flow of traffic through this key intersection. Further study is required to determine the best solution, but options to consider would be a traditional stop light or a roundabout. Since most of the traffic is going south (and at the end of the day north) along Route 178, having a four way stop sign impedes this flow as users must stop even though there is little east-west traffic on Route 6 during these peak periods. A roundabout may be a great way to keep traffic flowing without the need for vehicles to make stops which should help alleviate the traffic on busy weekends. A roundabout would also provide an opportunity for an attractive gateway feature at this key intersection within the center island and reduce pollution by reducing car idling while waiting for a stop sign or stop light. If a roundabout is determined to be unfeasible or unwanted

by the community, the intersection should be upgraded to a timed signalized intersection allowing for a better flow of traffic along Route 178. **Improvement of this intersection within the next 5 years is a major goal of this Comprehensive Plan.**

### Additional Interchange

Ottawa's Comprehensive Plan suggests a future interchange with Interstate 80 at 13th Road. If there is an increase in mining and industrial activities between Utica and Ottawa, the addition of an access point for the increased traffic will deter truck traffic through both towns. Additionally, if a new interchange is developed at 13th Road, it is possible this will spur interest in commercial and industrial development adjacent to the interchange. These types of interchange projects take a long time to plan and fund. For the new Brisbin Road interchange and roadway improvements along Brisbin Road in Grundy County (between Morris and Minooka), a cost sharing system was created (value capture) whereby property owners in the area that would benefit from the improvements shared in the cost of the roadway/interchange construction.

### Industrial Road Extension

In addition to a new interchange, if industrial or commercial uses start to develop along the Interstate 80 corridor, the creation of a new access road approximately one-half mile north of the Interstate would be ideal for traffic circulation and access. This proposed road would ultimately extend from N 3050th Road in Ottawa to Route 178 in Utica.



*A potential roundabout or traffic signal at the Route 178 and Route 6 interchange would help alleviate traffic.*

IDOT is conducting a study on the effects of agricultural, manufacturing, mining and other industrial operations in 10 north central Illinois Counties including LaSalle County. This study is scheduled to be submitted to state lawmakers by January 1, 2017. Local concern has been expressed on the impact of expanding mining operations in and around Utica, so this study may provide some insights into potential solutions. The Village should monitor plan development closely, and participate in IDOT efforts to understand and plan for future road impacts.



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## **RAILWAYS**

There are two rail lines that follow the Illinois & Michigan Canal running east to west through Utica's downtown. These rail lines are operated by CSX Transportation and they are for industrial freight purposes. One of the rail lines which CSX operates travels from Utica to Blue Island. While still operated by CSX, Iowa Interstate Railroad has trackage rights to one of the lines which travels from Chicago, Illinois to Omaha, Nebraska. Unimin Corporation has recently constructed 6,800 feet of new track to connect their silica sand mines with the existing lines. This improvement included 7 new yard tracks with 9 new turnouts and 2 new crossovers.

The use of these rail lines for commuter purposes, with connection to Joliet and ultimately Chicago, has been explored. The Illinois Valley Commuter Rail (IVCR) Feasibility Study was led by a Steering Committee comprised of ten municipalities, three counties, the Illinois Department of Transportation Division of Public Transportation (IDOT-DPT), and a consultant team comprised of CTE Engineers, Inc. and LTK Engineering Services, hereafter referred to as the Study Team. The proposed service would extend between LaSalle/Peru and Joliet. The study suggested there is some potential for the route, but significant study would be needed, and ultimately significant funding would be required. There is currently no timeline on the extension of this service.

## **WATERWAYS**

The Illinois River runs east-west along the Village's south boundary. The river is navigable and maintains a nine-foot navigation channel between its eight locks and dams. Barge traffic is extensive on the river throughout the year. The Illinois River is a primary connection between Lake Michigan and the Mississippi River. Utica's inherent location near the Illinois River allows for the capability of shipping bulk goods via barge, which appeals to heavy manufacturing industries. Utica's location is somewhat unique, in that there are no dams between Utica and Peoria – making for a long and uninterrupted transportation and recreational corridor.

The Illinois & Michigan Canal travels east-west directly through downtown Utica. The canal runs between LaSalle and Chicago. It was originally used in the 19th Century by barge traffic. Later shipping demands declared the canal too slow and railroads became the predominate means of moving goods and people.

## **POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS**

The section of the I&M Canal which runs through downtown Utica is stagnant, shallow, and is oversaturated with algae. While the canal should be a point of beauty, history and pride for the community its current condition is more a detriment than an asset. If the canal is properly dredged and restored, it could become a focal point of the community again and be used as a major recreational and tourist attraction. The Village should continue to work with the State to enhance the canal and make it usable once again.



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## AIR TRAVEL

There are no commercial air facilities in the Village of Utica. Illinois Valley Regional Airport in Peru is within 10 miles of Utica. The airport does not offer scheduled passenger carrier service. It is primarily used for corporate, private, and charter flights. The Illinois Valley Regional Airport has a 6,000 foot-long paved, lighted runway. Thirty-nine aircraft are based there with 22,000 annual operations.

Primary commercial airports of O'Hare and Midway in Chicago are located approximately 100 miles from the Village. Other primary commercial airports within 100 miles of Utica are in Bloomington, Peoria, the Quad Cities, and Rockford.

## PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

North Central Area Transit (NCAT) provides on-demand public transit service to LaSalle County. NCAT will provide transportation to those who are either not able to drive or have no means of transportation. The service allows residents access to doctor's offices, a grocery store, banks, and any other amenity within LaSalle County.



## NON-MOTORIZED TRANSPORTATION

Pedestrian and bicycle routes can be used for either transportation or recreation. Encouraging walking and bicycling can ease traffic congestion and help promote a healthier lifestyle for a community's residents.

### EXISTING NETWORK

The existing pedestrian and bicycle network includes local sidewalks and the I&M Trail. Downtown Utica has many sidewalks and several marked and improved intersections. With the exception of a few places, the sidewalk connectivity throughout downtown is excellent. There is a sidewalk which travels north on the west side of Route 178 and then travels west along the south end of N 2853rd Road. This sidewalk connects downtown to Utica's residential subdivisions.

The other residential areas of the community do not have sidewalks throughout their respective subdivisions. While these areas have no dedicated walkways, the roads see minimal activity and residents feel comfortable walking to the sidewalk located along 2853rd Road.

In terms of bicycle paths, the I&M Trail is a regional trail that connects Utica with its neighbors. Many residents expressed their enjoyment of the trail and their ability to access it. The main issue with the trail is approximately 2 miles east of downtown Utica, the trail has been "washed out" and is not able to be used. This disconnection has significantly reduced the use of the trail, and made travel by bike to Ottawa and beyond difficult, if not impossible.

## PENDING IMPROVEMENTS

The proposed Dee Bennett Road shared use path will travel east to Ottawa and connect with the I&M Trail in Ottawa to create a 17 mile loop along the north end of the Illinois River. Additionally, the new Route 178 bridge will have a shared use path connecting Donaldson Road with Starved Rock State Park. This will allow Utica, Ottawa and LaSalle residents the opportunity to visit Starved Rock by bicycle.

## POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS

The following are a list of potential improvements which will help to increase non-motorized connectivity and promote a sustainable lifestyle:

### Route 178 Shared Use Path

With the construction of the new Route 178 bridge and it's shared use path along the east side of the street, it is advisable to connect this path to the downtown by extending it up to the I&M Canal. Additionally, there should either be a dedicated bike lane or upgrade of the existing sidewalk along Route 178 north of the railroad track to encourage connectivity throughout all of Utica's residential areas.

### Route 178 West Side Sidewalk

While most of downtown boasts excellent pedestrian connections, the west side of Route 178 from Village Hall to the I&M Canal lacks a sidewalk and discourages foot traffic to the businesses along that side of the road. Installation of a sidewalk on the west side of Route 178 is a major plan recommendation, along with appropriate crosswalks at key intersections.

### Repairing the I&M Trail

The I&M Trail is a major asset to the community and could provide for additional tourists to visit Utica if the trail was completely open. As with the I&M Canal, the Village and residents should continue to work with the State of Illinois to improve and fix the path.

### Future Residential and Commercial Sidewalks

If the Village grows and expands its residential land uses, Utica should encourage sidewalks and bike trails be added to new subdivisions. This includes any future commercial uses along Route 178. It will allow residents to walk a bike to their favorite shops and provide a boost to those businesses who tend to depend on automobile traffic.



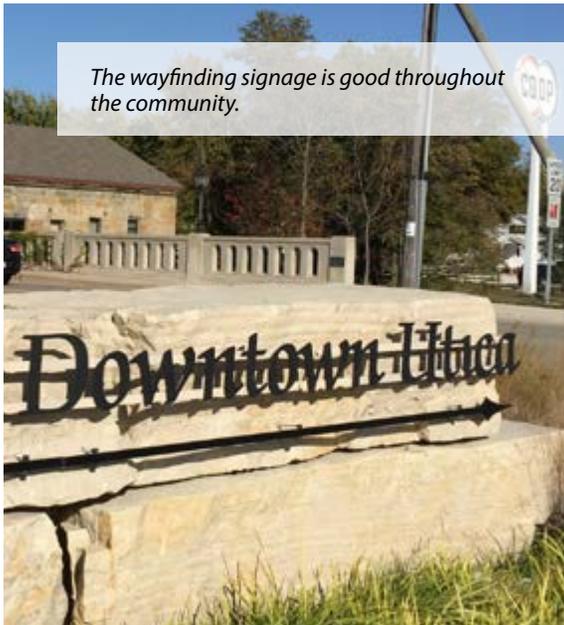
*The I&M Trail is a prized community asset for Utica residents and for tourists.*

## PRIMARY TRANSPORTATION OBJECTIVES

- Improve the traffic congestion at the Route 178 and Route 6 intersection by either adding a Roundabout or signalized intersection;
- Focus on restoring the I&M Canal to its original beauty and possibly use it for recreational purposes (kayaks, paddle boats, etc.);
- Promote the creation of shared use paths within Utica including along Route 178 and near residential subdivisions to connect the downtown with residents;
- Connect all amenities with the sidewalk system in downtown Utica;
- Repair the I&M Trail to provide better bicycling opportunities for residents and a way to bring in more tourists; and
- Provide a sidewalk, and appropriate crosswalks, along Route 178 between Village Hall and the I&M Canal.

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

At the core of a vibrant community is a sound economic base. Good paying local jobs, access to goods and services desired by residents, and a strong tax base (both property and sales tax) are all key ingredients to the health and vitality of Utica. The following section focuses on ways Utica can retain and expand a strong economy.



*The wayfinding signage is good throughout the community.*



*Traffic congestion on and off the Interstate can make travel times triple.*

## TOURISM

With the exception of Las Vegas and Orlando, successful, sustainable communities are designed for residents. However, keeping the future visitor in mind during each policy and development decision will ensure that a community will prosper at a much more rapid rate than those that turn a blind eye to anything but its residents.

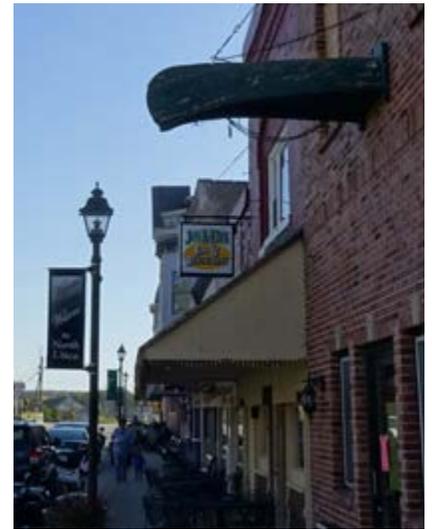
And, it's more than just the increased spending that visitors bring to a destination but the ability to generate non-resident sales taxes, increase job opportunities and pave the way for entrepreneurial business start-ups. A recent study by Longwoods International indicates that people who visit a community have, on average, a 96% higher opinion of that community as a potential future place to live and start a business. Thus, a tourism strategy works for a community on several levels.

As part of its overall Economic Development work with Utica, Teska Associates, Inc. engaged DMOproz, a firm with over 20 years working with destinations across North America, to perform a Destination Assessment. DMOproz fielded a three person team (Boomer Male, GenX Mother and a Millennial Experiential) to visit North Utica in October of 2015. Their mission was to experience the community as first time visitors, recording their initial impressions and developing a set of recommendations to make the community more attractive to visitors. The following summary details their experience.

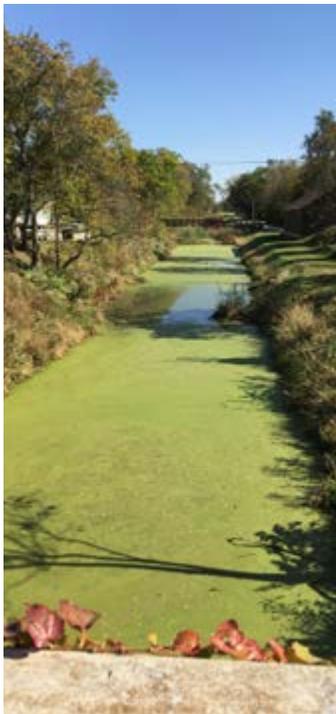


### ARRIVING IN UTICA

- Wayfinding signage is generally very good on the approach to and throughout the community.
  - \* State signage is good.
  - \* Local signage is well conceived and placed.
  - \* Signage to parking options, however, is virtually nonexistent.
- Welcome sign installations are very attractive, but difficult to read.
- Light pole banners are attractive and provide a welcoming feel for visitors.
- Traffic off and onto the Interstate can make a five minute drive into twenty.



*The blade signs in downtown and 2004 Tornado waterfall memorial give the downtown a unique atmosphere. The LaSalle County Historical Campus offers a wide range of attractions both north and south of the I&M Canal.*



*Some of the challenges facing the downtown and tourist attractions includes the poor condition of the I&M Canal and the lack of effective operating hours at the blacksmith shop. Restoring the canal and promoting activities at the shop will assist in improving the enjoyability of the downtown.*



## THE DOWNTOWN

- Retail, dining/nightlife and attractions in the central core are all walkable.
  - \* Walkability becomes more difficult with the lack of a sidewalk on the west side of South Clark Street (Route 178) south of West Johnson Street.
- Several retailers make effective use of blade signs to attract consumers on foot.
  - \* The canoe protruding from the second floor of the old popcorn store adds a unique touch of whimsy to the downtown.
- Storefront facades, with a few notable exceptions, need upgrading.
- The waterfall commemorating those lost in the 2004 Tornado is exceptionally well done.



## ATTRACTIONS

- The LaSalle County Historical Society Museum Campus is a fabulous asset.
  - \* Two locations (north and south of Canal) expands offerings.
  - \* Interpretation needs to improve to remain relevant to younger consumers.
- The I&M Canal is in deplorable shape.
  - \* The bike and pedestrian path is a nice asset for the community, but does not have the requisite design features to be a magnet for visitors. The new bike repair station is a nice addition.
  - \* The canal is stagnant and unnavigable.
- The Blacksmith Shop is well preserved, but lacks effective hours of operation and sufficient activities with which to be a promotable asset.



## LODGING

- Lodging options run the gamut from guest cabins to an indoor water park resort.
  - \* While additional diversity in lodging is desired, current occupancy rates do not appear to support such development, despite the popularity of Starved Rock State Park. The exception to this might be a chain-type hotel located along Interstate 80. There are clusters of these types of facilities already located both east (Ottawa) and west (LaSalle/Peru) of Utica. Additional market research would be required to determine if sufficient demand exists to support additional lodging facilities.



## DINING

- Culinary options are surprisingly good for a community of this size.
  - \* Most eateries are independent, which is attractive to most tourists.
  - \* Several are sourcing their ingredients from regional farms, capitalizing on Farm to Fork and Healthy Living trends.
  - \* Sidewalk dining is permitted downtown, providing not only an outdoor experience but the ability to make downtown look active in the evenings.





*There is a diverse range of offerings at the shops and restaurants in Utica*



*New downtown visitor kiosk.*



*New facilities encourage biking on the I&M Trail.*



## RETAIL

- Shopping options are fairly limited but selection is unique.
  - \* Nice diversity of content from high end gifts to antiques to motorcycle gear.
  - \* The absence of national chains is plus for a small community's brand.
  - \* August Hill Winery tasting room is a destination magnet.
- Hours of operation through the community are not uniform, with many stores closing by 5 or 6pm.



## OUTDOOR RECREATION

- Currently limited by the sheer size and topography of the community.
  - \* The I&M Trail is flat and linear, causing it to lack destination magnetism – particularly with current wash-out of the trail between Utica and Ottawa.
  - \* I&M Canal is unusable for canoe or kayak.



## VISITOR SERVICES

- The Heritage Corridor Visitor Center is well signed and located to serve tourists.
  - \* The exterior of the Center could use some cosmetic attention.
  - \* Utica attractions do not receive primary placement in brochure racks.
- A fishing guide service exists in Utica, but more outfitters could maximize Utica's claim as the "Gateway to Starved Rock."
- The new visitor kiosk is a nice addition.

## REGIONAL TOURISM ORGANIZATIONS

Given the unique natural environment of Utica, several regional tourism organizations include Utica and Starved Rock in their geographic area. Some the Village currently partners with, some it does not.

### Illinois River Road

The Illinois River Road National Scenic Byway promotes the natural beauty and economy of the Illinois River corridor between Ottawa and Havana. The organization is headquartered in Ottawa, and offers travel, history, and other information for visitors to the area. In particular, they have a smart-phone friendly mobile tour including maps and visitor information. While this information is focused on participating Byway communities (Utica is not currently a participant), it does list several Utica-based businesses such as August Hill Winery, Grizzly Jacks Resort, and the LaSalle County Historical Society. Unfortunately, it lists these attractions under Ottawa in their directory.

More information about the Byway can be found here:

<http://www.illinoisriverroad.org>

### Heritage Corridor Convention and Tourism Bureau

The Heritage Corridor Convention and Tourism Bureau promotes a corridor along the I&M Canal extending from suburban Chicago (Berwyn) to Peru. Utica is a member of the Heritage Corridor, and they have a Visitors Information Center located at the intersection of Route 178 and Route 6 in Utica. They have an interactive web site that provides extensive travel information, and produce an excellent brochure featuring attractions throughout the corridor and a calendar of events.

More information about them can be found here:

<http://www.heritagecorridorcvb.com>

### LaSalle County Tourism Coalition

Funded primarily from hotel and motel taxes (much of which comes from Starved Rock), LaSalle County promotes regional tourism within the County through an attractive color brochure, and interactive web site, and a series of short videos of area attractions.

More information about the LaSalle County Tourism can be found here:

<http://www.enjoylasallecounty.com>



## POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS

The DMOProz Assessment Team was captured by the charm of Utica. The team was impressed with the diversity and quality of food and retail and was very impressed with the August Hill Winery Tasting Room as a magnet for the downtown. There are several improvements which could enhance the already excellent tourism atmosphere.

### Destination Marketing

The most important thing Utica can do is to invest in destination marketing. The Village's website is colorful and comprehensive and its Facebook presence is strong but prospective visitors will visit neither if there is not a marketing strategy to encourage them. The Village's continued investment of room tax revenues into the Heritage Corridor Convention and Tourism Bureau is appropriate, but it needs to do more if it expects to effectively compete for visitors in the months and years ahead.

The Village should view any investment in attracting visitors as a significant part of its overall economic development strategy. More visitors will encourage more entrepreneurs to create businesses in downtown. More entrepreneurs will result in additional residents. Therefore it is recommended that the Village budget \$100,000 a year in destination marketing as an investment in Utica's future.

### Signage and Infrastructure

The following is a list of recommendations with regards to tourism signage and infrastructure:

- Upgrade the welcome sign to include thicker, more readable font and backlighting;
- Identify a more elegant way to discourage climbing and sitting on the Tornado Memorial;

- Install lighting to improve the evening aesthetics of the Memorial waterfall;
- Work to redevelop the block behind (north of) the Tornado Memorial;
- Expand the Downtown Business District by encouraging additional businesses on Church, Canal and Division Streets and installing a sidewalk on the west side of South Clark Street south of West Johnson Street to improve walkability;
- Encourage the Heritage Corridor CVB to upgrade the facade of the Visitors Center and provide more prominent visibility for the Village's offerings;
- Install a traffic light or roundabout at the intersection of Routes 6 and 178 to alleviate congestion;
- Analyze opportunities to add visitor related businesses at the intersection of Routes 6 and 178 to capture the attention of those traveling to State Parks;
- Install more signs directing visitors to Village parking lots; and
- Increase promotional messaging on the approach to and from Starved Rock State Park.

### Attractions

The following is a list of recommendations with regards to attractions:

- Strive to expand hours of operation at all Heritage sites; and
- Continually invest in upgrading the interpretation of the Utica story at Heritage sites, through technology and personal experts.





### Outdoor Recreation

The following is a list of recommendations with regards to outdoor recreation:

- Clean up, restore and program the I&M Canal;
- Install better directional signage to attract visitors to the I&M Trail;
- Look for opportunities to build more challenging loops off the I&M Trail to provide a more varied experience;
- Investigate opportunities to connect trails with the State Parks;
- Encourage outfitters to provide equipment rentals (bicycle, canoe, etc.); and
- Brainstorm opportunities to offer those recreational activities within the destination footprint that the State Parks do not allow (rock climbing, biking, hunting, etc.).

### Retail

The following is a list of recommendations with regards to retail:

- Encourage businesses to coordinate and extend hours of operation to create a more complete destination experience; and
- Develop a loan/grant program to encourage facade renovation.

### Enhanced Collaboration

The following is a list of recommendations with regards to collaboration:

- Work with Starved Rock State Park and other LaSalle County communities to coordinate, cross promote and complement events and attractions; and
- Investigate opportunities to help alleviate Starved Rock State Park's parking issues by providing parking and a shuttle service from North Utica.

## COMMERCIAL

Given the Village's location at the front door to Starved Rock State Park (2 million plus visitors per year) and Interstate 80 (Average Daily Traffic of over 30,000 vehicles per day), Utica is a unique market for commercial businesses. There are several ways to evaluate demand for additional commercial activity which are highlighted below.

### GAP ANALYSIS

Due to this substantial additional tourism traffic, a traditional Gap Analysis – comparing the demand for retail (based on population and income) vs. supply would underestimate potential demand. However, such analysis may still be helpful in identifying some opportunities. A Retail Market Potential report was prepared for North Utica based on data provided by ESRI in November, 2015. Highlights of this analysis include:

- Overall demand for retail, food and drink in Utica is approximately \$24.5 million dollars, with a supply of \$20.2 million, resulting in a leakage of 9.5%. This is a surprisingly low value given the limited retail offerings in the Village. When separated, the leakage factor for retail is 15% while the food and drink category actually shows a surplus supply of about 25%. However, as noted, these statistics do a poor job of taking into consideration the significant businesses generated by tourists to the area.

- Major ‘gaps’ in available services are in predictable areas like automobile dealers, building materials, grocery stores, and general merchandise (department stores). With the exception of a small grocery in downtown, Utica residents have to travel outside the community to buy these products. Despite these gaps, it will be difficult to attract such businesses to the area today given the current population.
- Significant surplus or over-supply is identified in gasoline stations and food services and drinking establishments. As noted previously, these numbers are misleading, as they do not take into consideration the substantial demand for these services generated by the tourism draw of Starved Rock and other area attractions.

## STATE OF ILLINOIS SALES TAX DATA

The State of Illinois collects and monitors sales tax and makes available reports by industry category. The following table summarizes statistics for Utica and some surrounding communities. In reviewing the table, it is important to note that the State does not report sales if there are less than 4 businesses in a particular category (although all businesses are counted in the total).

2014 Municipal Sales Tax Revenue				
	Utica	Seneca	Oglesby	LaSalle
General Merchandise*	-	-	-	-
Food	\$85,665	-	\$68,598	\$131,705
Drinking and Eating Places	\$8,989	10,390	\$66,247	\$114,062
Apparel	\$2,927	-	-	-
Furniture & H.H. & Radio	\$2,032	-	\$ 21,931	\$24,687
Lumber, Building & Hardware	-	-	\$3,407	\$53,461
Automotive & Filling Stations	\$8,232	\$137,697	\$83,487	\$291,483
Drugs & Misc. Retail	\$18,495	\$4,045	\$22,749	\$93,204
Agriculture & All Others	\$66,158	\$42,409	\$85,374	\$147,153
Manufacturers	-	\$770	-	\$76,395
Non-Categorized*	\$7,698	\$ 45,015	\$2,319	\$13,484
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$260,196</b>	<b>\$240,326</b>	<b>\$354,112</b>	<b>\$945,634</b>
Population	1,356	\$2,306	3,676	9,328
Local Sales Tax Per Person	\$191.88	\$104.22	\$96.33	\$101.38
2009 Total	\$186,049	\$284,682	\$295,085	\$1,127,137
Increase (decrease) 2009 to 2014	\$74,147	\$(44,356)	\$59,027	\$(181,503)
<b>Percent Change</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>-16%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>-16%</b>
Notes:				
* Categories with less than 4 businesses not reported in categories, but included in total				
Figures above reflect only the typical 1% sales tax reimbursed to municipalities. The City of LaSalle also has an additional .5% non-home rule sales tax that is not included in these calculations (LaSalle's total sales tax rate is 7% compared with 6.5% in Utica)				

Observations from this comparison include:

- Utica is doing significantly better both on a per capita basis (\$192 per person) and a percentage increase (40%) than neighboring communities in terms of generating sales tax revenue. Much of this revenue is likely generated from tourists or other visitors shopping or dining locally when visiting area attractions.
- Overall Utica exhibits a good balance from a variety of different categories
- While overall sales tax revenue increased between 2009 and 2014 in Utica, sales in the drinking and eating category declined about \$8,500 which was a bit surprising given a number of fairly strong restaurants in town. The largest increase in sales tax revenue during this time period was in the “Agriculture & All Other” category, with an increase of \$54,000.
- The category that seems surprisingly low in Utica is the “Automotive & Filling Station” category – given the volume of tourist traffic through the community, the potential for another gas station/convenience store might be a potential marketing target.

## POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS

Based on the above analysis, the following may be appropriate targets for recruitment of additional commercial businesses within Utica. Most of these recommendations are based not on the community's population, but on the large number of tourists/visitors drawn to the area by regional attractions such as Starved Rock.

- Highway oriented/service businesses near the I-80 interchange with Route 178. Fast food or other chain restaurants, a chain hotel, and a gas station/convenience store would help in meeting the needs of visitors and other motorists traveling along the Interstate.
- Additional downtown businesses that take advantage of the major tourism draw of the area, including additional unique restaurants, gift shops – particularly those featuring art or artist studios, and perhaps an outdoor/recreational outfitter (bikes, hiking and camping gear, fishing supplies, etc.).

## INDUSTRIAL

The Northern Illinois University (NIU) Center for Governmental Studies completed a North Central Illinois Regional Industry Cluster Analysis in December, 2014. This effort analyzed demographic, business trends and workforce characteristics to identify industry clusters with the potential to drive future economic growth. While expected job growth will vary by industry, the study notes that replacement demands for retiring workers will be the greatest source of job openings. The study identified five high potential industry clusters, including:

- Agribusiness, Food Processing and Technology
- Energy (Conventional and Renewable)
- Machinery Manufacturing
- Mining
- Transportation and Logistics

Utica has a history of strength in several of these industry clusters. The area has historically had a strong mining industry, from clay and coal in earlier years to limestone and silica sand today. Companies like Unimin (Silica Sand) and LaFarge (limestone) have operated in Utica for a number of years. Other area mining operations include two silica sand operations, Northern White Sand which operates on the far eastern edge of Utica and an approved but not yet operating mine north of I-80 proposed by Aramoni, LLC. The large Pioneer Seed facility just north of Utica in LaSalle is an example of an area agribusiness, as is the Northern Partners Cooperative grain elevators in downtown Utica.

Utica, along with a private developer, created a logistics park between I-80 and Route 6 around 2007. This park was designed to capitalize on the excellent regional and national connectivity offered by I-80 and nearby I-39. One of the region's largest employers, J.C. Whitney, is a transportation and logistics company located in LaSalle just west of route 178. Unfortunately, the timing of the creation of the Utica Logistics Park, and the on-set of a recession, slowed development of the area. However, the I-80 corridor remains a strong draw for this type of industry and Utica's Future Land Use Plan provides for significant expansion of this type of industrial use.





Utica is a member of the **Illinois Valley Area Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development (IVAC)**. This non-profit organization strives to retain existing business and industry and attract new business and industry, as well as advocate for the improvement of transportation facilities and infrastructure and promote area tourism and regional cooperation. Based in Peru, this group promotes economic development within 23 communities along the Illinois River in LaSalle, Bureau and Putnam Counties.

## RESIDENTIAL

Housing in Utica is generally considered affordable, with approximately 52% of the Village's housing meeting affordable housing standards established by the State of Illinois. In the case of owner-occupied dwelling units, housing that is affordable means housing in which mortgage, amortization, taxes, insurance, and condominium or association fees, if any, constitute no more than 30% of the gross annual household income for a household of the size that may occupy the unit.

New residential development has been slow to non-existent in recent years, with only a handful of new homes built in the past five years. Existing subdivisions have available lots for new single-family home construction. However, several factors suggest that Utica offers a high quality of life that could be appealing to a number of market segments, including:

- Senior Housing – With a beautiful natural environment, good restaurants, and access to quality health care in neighboring communities, Utica is an appealing

environment for active retirees. The Village's aging population also suggests a growing market for senior housing, including ranch homes, assisted living, and skilled care facilities.

- Vacation Homes – To date, there has been limited housing developed exclusively for vacation homes in Utica. The townhomes at Grand Bear Lodge are probably the best local example. Given the location on the Illinois River, wonderful State Parks, the I&M Trail, and other natural assets – combined with proximity to the Chicago metropolitan area – Utica would seem an excellent location for the vacation home market. Recent projects such as Heritage Harbor in Ottawa have shown some demand for this type of housing.
- Young Families – With good local schools, parks, a low crime rate, and a wonderful small town feel, Utica has much to offer young families. Good jobs are available both in Utica and in neighboring communities in the Illinois Valley area. While shopping options are somewhat limited in Utica, extensive offerings are available within a 15 minute drive to the east in Ottawa or the west in the LaSalle/Peru area.

New housing is recommended primarily north of downtown and south of Route 6. In particular, housing along a proposed greenway along Clark Run Creek could be very appealing – with easy regional access via I-80 and a wonderful natural environment. This area generally has access to utilities, or they can easily be extended to these areas. The Future Land Use Plan also suggests opportunities for housing near Starved Rock along Route 71. However, one challenge of housing in this area will be provision of utilities as there is limited availability in the area.



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TOOLS

The Village has a solid history of partnering with the private sector to promote development. While the State of Illinois allows very limited opportunities in this regard, Utica has taken advantage of the two primary tools – Tax Increment Financing and Enterprise Zones.

### TAX INCREMENT FINANCING DISTRICTS

The Village of Utica has five Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Districts to promote public/private partnerships and economic development. TIF funds can be used for a variety of eligible applications as defined in State Statutes, including public infrastructure, rehabilitation of structures, and land assembly. The following table and map summarize these Districts.

Several relevant observations:

- Three of the Village's TIF Districts (TIF 1, TIF 2, and the Love's Travel Stop) have shown significant growth in EAV and generated significant incremental revenue which has been used to complete public improvements and incentivize private development.
- Two of the Village's TIF Districts (Starved Rock Commons and the Industrial TIF) were created just as the economy was moving into recession. To date development has not occurred in these areas. However, having the TIF Districts in place will be an important tool to partner with future developers to accomplish redevelopment goals.
- TIF 1 will expire in 2018, leaving little time to promote new redevelopment in this key portion of the community (downtown).



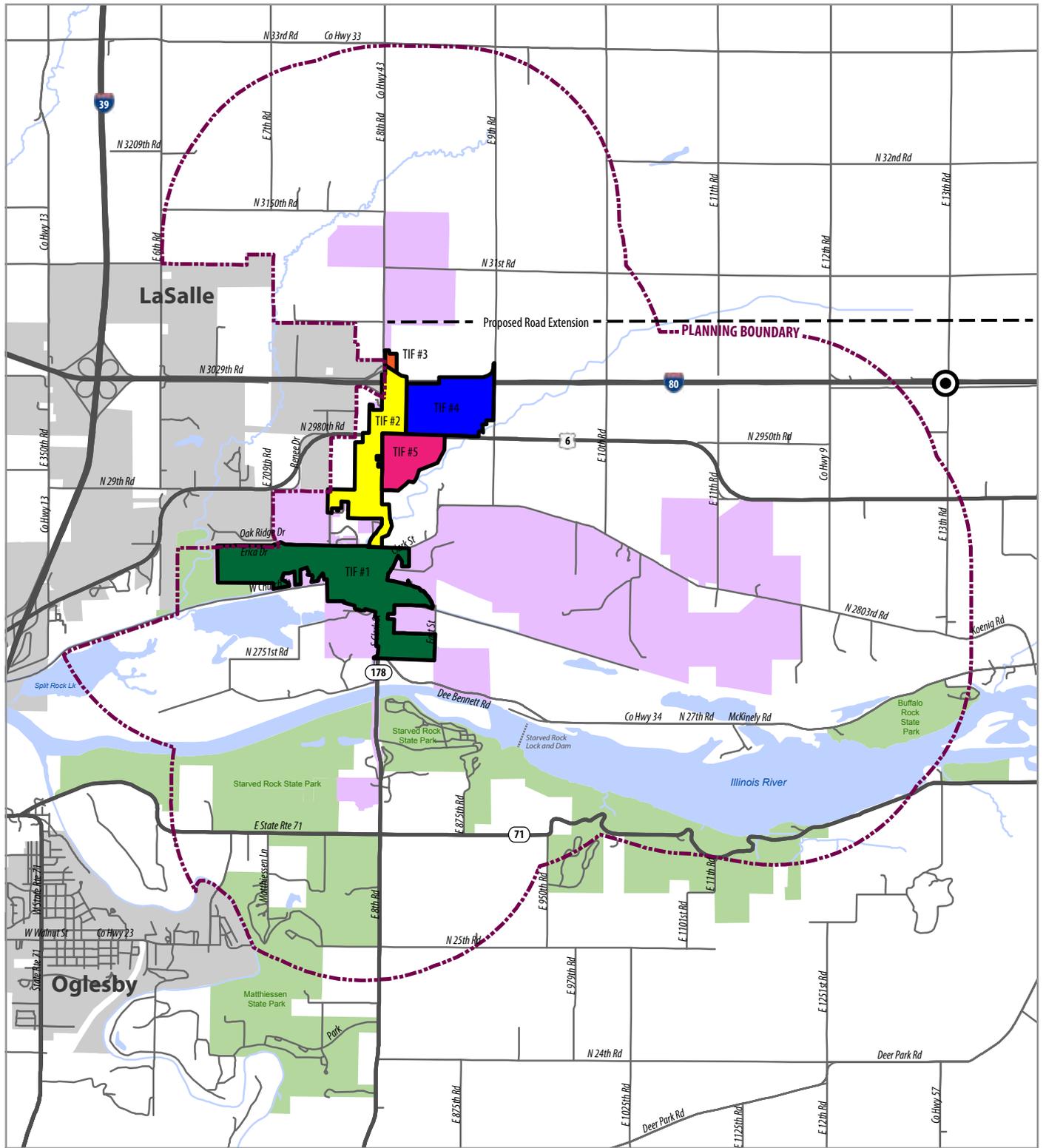
***The Village of Utica has five Tax Increment Financing Districts to promote public/private partnerships including the Love's Travel Shop.***

### ENTERPRISE ZONE

Enterprise Zones allow communities to partner with the private sector to attract and retain jobs. Utica has been a part of a regional Enterprise Zone. The North Central Illinois Council of Governments (NCICG) administers the Illinois Valley Area Enterprise Zone. This zone covers parts of the communities of LaSalle, Peru, Oglesby, North Utica and LaSalle County. The enterprise zone targets growing industries by providing assistance along with state and local incentives. The district is expandable to include growing companies wishing to participate in this successful incentive program. While a number of incentives are possible in an Enterprise Zone, the primary benefit is an exemption from sales tax on construction materials, which can be significant for larger projects. The Love's Truck Stop in Utica is an example of a local business which benefited from its location within the Illinois Valley Area Enterprise Zone. More information on the existing zone is available here:

<http://www.ncicg.org/content/enterprise-zone-illinois-valley-9162013125435pm.aspx>

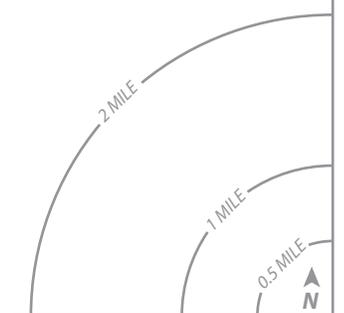
The existing Enterprise Zone is set to expire in 2016. It is recommended that Utica work with surrounding communities to create a new Zone – or renew the existing zone, to be able to continue to offer this incentive to prospective businesses. This will be particularly important in efforts to attract industrial uses.



## Village of Utica Comprehensive Plan Tax Increment Financing Districts

- TIF 1
- TIF 2
- TIF 3
- TIF 4
- TIF 5
- Village of Utica
- State Park/Preserve
- Water

Note: All boundaries are approximate - see actual TIF plan for exact boundaries



# LAND USE

This section addresses the use of land (existing and future) within the planning area as well as future priorities regarding land use.

## EXISTING LAND USE

The following descriptions are a brief overview of the types of land uses found within the Village and planning area. The arrangement and layout of these land use categories may be found on the “Existing Land Use Map” and the “Downtown Existing Land Use Map.”



### RESIDENTIAL

The majority of residential properties within the planning area are detached single-family homes. The main residential land uses are located in downtown Utica, the subdivisions in the northwestern part of town, and the farm homes scattered throughout the planning area.



### COMMERCIAL

The commercial properties within the planning area include a variety of uses including small retail and services shops, downtown restaurants, hotels, and Starved Rock Marina. The commercial uses are spread throughout the planning area but are typically located near major thoroughfares including Route 178, Route 6, and Route 71.



### INDUSTRIAL

Most of the industrial uses within the planning area are utilized for mineral extraction purposes including the sand mines to the east along 2803rd Road and the limestone quarries to the west of Route 178. There are a few light manufacturing uses within the area such as the Pioneer Plant on Route 178 north of Interstate 80.

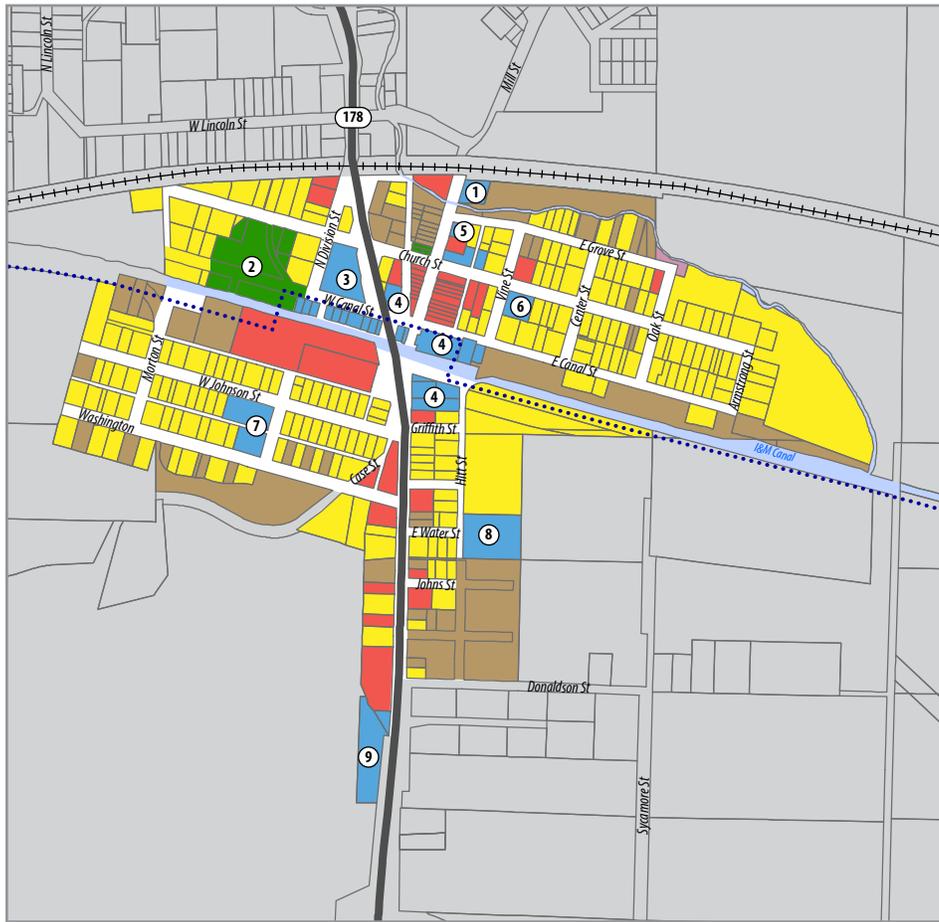


### AGRICULTURAL

Agricultural land use category includes all farming activities within the planning area. Other than the mining and State Parks, almost all of the land outside of the Village’s current boundaries is being used for farming purposes.



# Village of Utica Comprehensive Plan Downtown Existing Land Use Map



- Residential Land Use
- Commercial Land Use
- Industrial Land Use
- Institutional Land Use
- Recreational Land Use
- Unimproved/Vacant Land
- Water
- I&M Trail
- Railroad

- ① Utica Post Office
- ② Carey Memorial Park
- ③ Waltham School (South)
- ④ LaSalle County Historical Campus
- ⑤ Utica Public Library
- ⑥ Utica Baptist Church
- ⑦ St. Mary's Parish
- ⑧ Knights of Columbus
- ⑨ Utica Village Hall



## INSTITUTIONAL

The institutional uses include all public buildings, churches, historical society structures, and utilities. These uses usually do not utilize a large amount of land area and are dispersed throughout the planning area.



## RECREATIONAL

The recreational land use category includes all designated park land and recreational facilities within the planning area. This includes Carey Memorial Park, Neighbor's Park, and Deer Park Country Club.



## OPEN SPACE

The open space land use category designates land which is not developed but is being used as preserved land near natural surroundings. The open spaces within the planning area are located along the Illinois River and other bodies of water such as along Clark Run Creek.



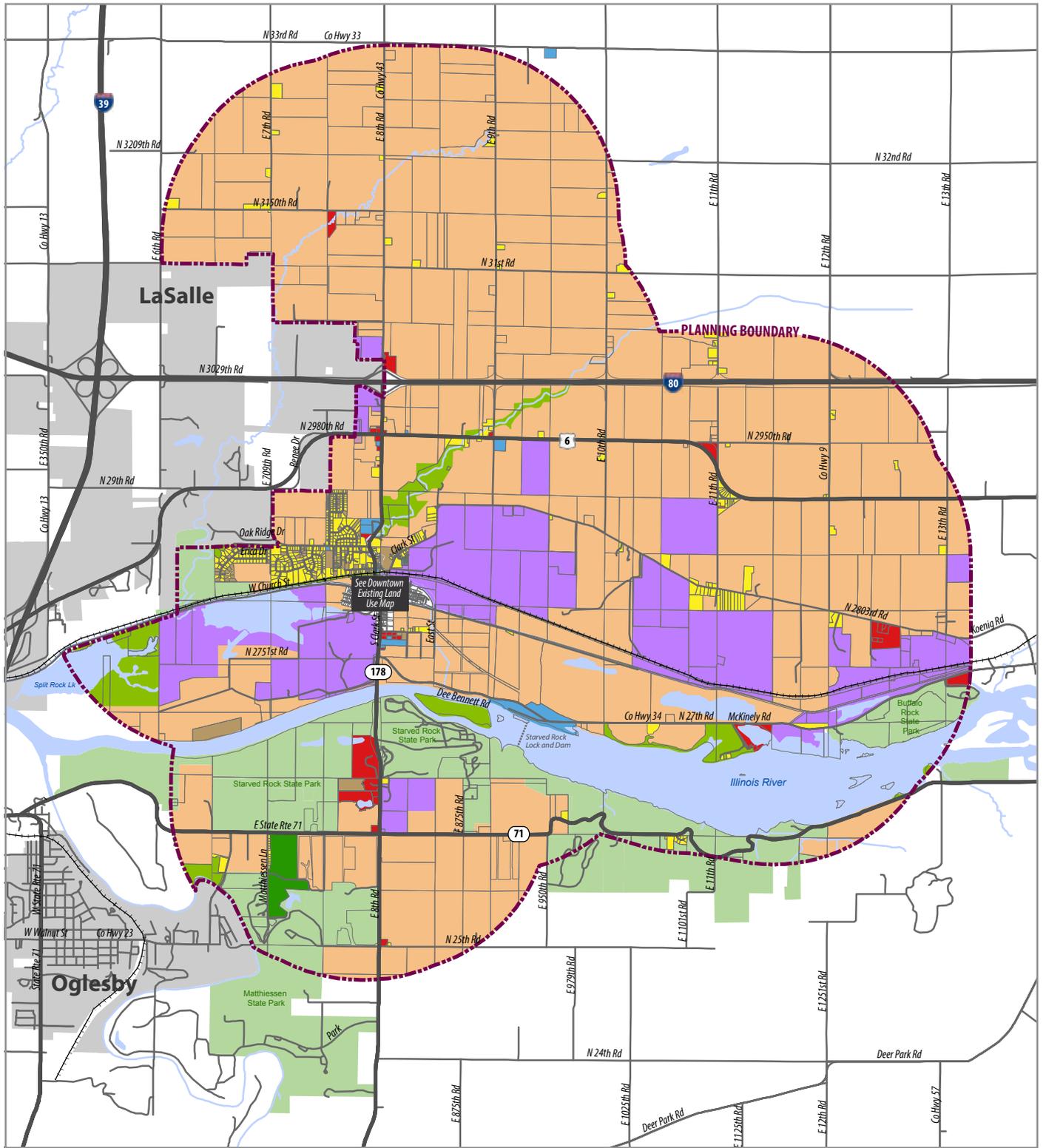
## UNIMPROVED/VACANT

This category includes all properties which are undeveloped and are not being utilized for any purpose. Most of the unimproved parcels are located within the residential subdivisions where single-family lots have not yet been developed.



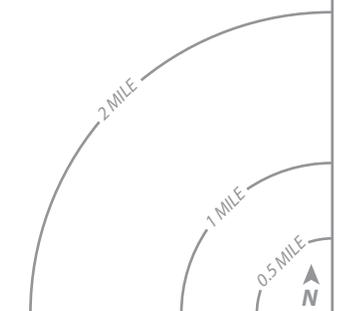
## STATE PARK

The State Park category includes Starved Rock State Park, Buffalo Rock State Park, and Matthiessen State Park. All of these parks are under the jurisdiction of the State of Illinois and are being conserved for their natural beauty and recreational activities.



## Village of Utica Comprehensive Plan Existing Land Use Map

- |                       |                        |                        |
|-----------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Residential Land Use  | Institutional Land Use | Unimproved/Vacant Land |
| Commercial Land Use   | Recreational Land Use  | State Park             |
| Industrial Land Use   | Open Space             | Water                  |
| Agricultural Land Use |                        |                        |



## FUTURE LAND USE

The following description provides a brief overview of the types of land uses desired within the Village and planning area. The arrangement and layout of these land use categories may be found on the “Future Land Use Map” and the “Downtown Future Land Use Map.”



### RESIDENTIAL

The residential land use category is designed to accommodate all residential land uses. A majority of these residential land uses will be consistent with the existing detached single-family homes found within Utica. While it is probable that most residential development will be single-family detached housing, the Village should consider the possibility of adding denser attached residential options such as townhome units or senior apartments and/or assisted living.



### COMMERCIAL

The commercial land use category is designed to accommodate retail and service businesses. It is expected that smaller scale commercial uses will be located near downtown Utica with the opportunity for larger scale developments located at the northern part of town along Route 178 and Route 6. Also, there may be additional commercial opportunities near the existing Grand Bear Lodge next to Starved Rock State Park. This area could see either small or large scale development depending on market demands at the time of development.



### INDUSTRIAL

The industrial land use category is designed to accommodate industrial, manufacturing, mining, and warehousing uses. Some of the largest future industrial land uses are located adjacent to Interstate 80 north of Route 6. These areas should focus manufacturing and warehousing industrial parks which can take advantage of the nearby transportation access.



### MINING

The mining land use category is designed to accommodate all future mineral extraction uses. This includes all existing quarries and mines, and all properties currently authorized for mining by a special use permit.



### MIXED USE

The mixed use land use category is designed to accommodate a mix of residential, commercial, office, recreational, and parking uses. The purpose of this category is to have people live, shop, and work in close proximity to one another. The mixed use designations may be found in downtown Utica where this type of sustainable living is ideal. Additionally, the Village should consider vertical mixed use developments within the downtown area where there are commercial or office uses on the first floor with residential dwelling units located above.



### AGRICULTURAL

The agricultural land use category is designed to accommodate all farming activities. This category proposes that existing farmland which is not expected to develop is to remain as an agricultural use.



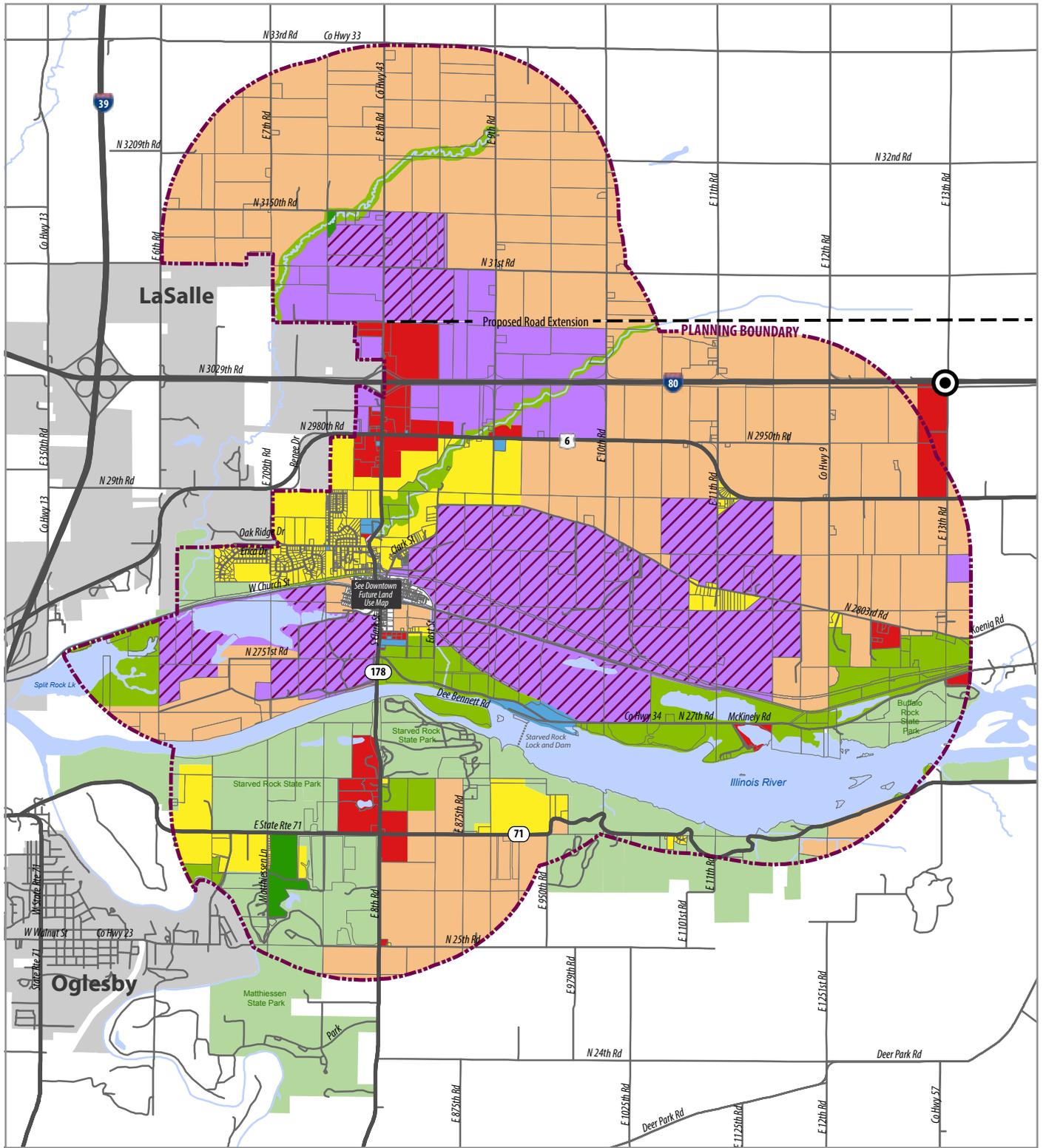
### INSTITUTIONAL

The institutional land use category is designed to accommodate all public uses including churches, cemeteries, utilities, and other public services.



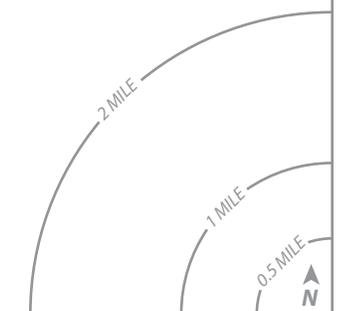
### RECREATIONAL

The recreational land use category is designed to accommodate parks and recreational spaces. While the “Future Land Use Map” does not show any additional recreation land use designations, the Village should encourage parks to be developed with any new residential subdivision developments.

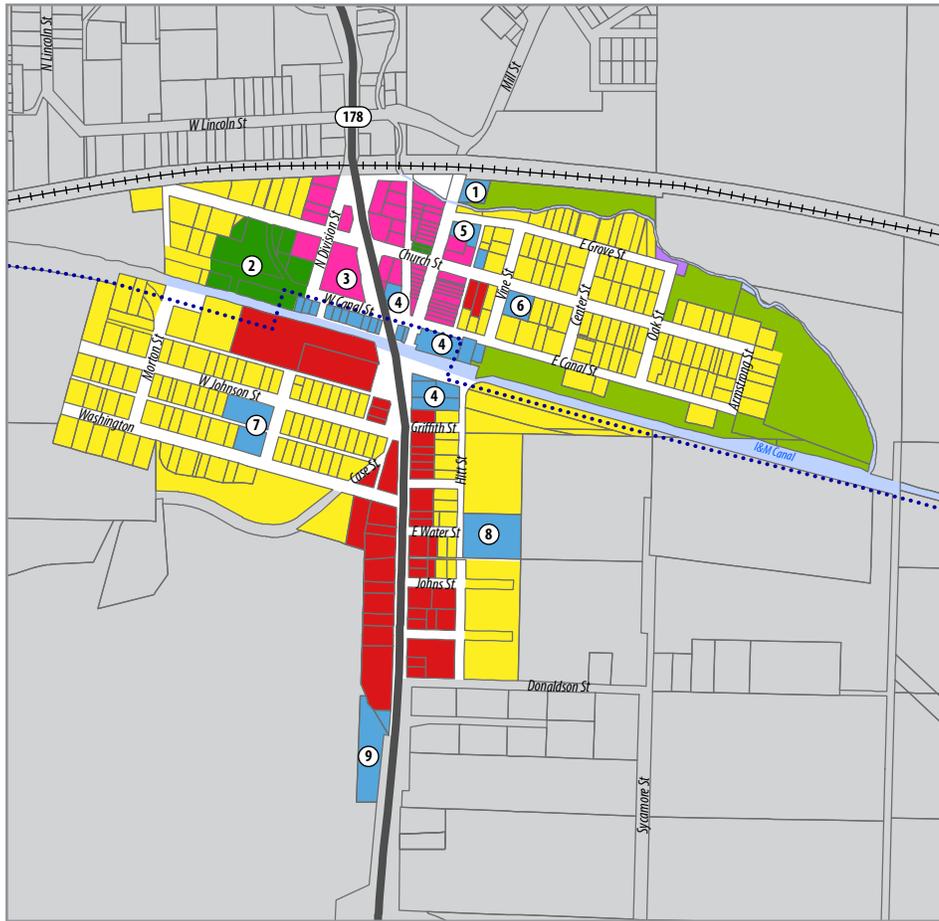


## Village of Utica Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map

- |                       |                        |                             |
|-----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Residential Land Use  | Institutional Land Use | State Park/Preserve         |
| Commercial Land Use   | Recreational Land Use  | Water                       |
| Industrial Land Use   | Open Space             | Possible Future Interchange |
| Agricultural Land Use | Mining                 |                             |

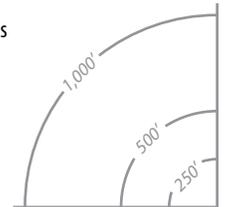


# Village of Utica Comprehensive Plan Downtown Future Land Use Map



- Residential Land Use
- Commercial Land Use
- Industrial Land Use
- Institutional Land Use
- Mixed Use
- Recreational Land Use
- Open Space
- Water
- I&M Trail
- Railroad

- ① Utica Post Office
- ② Carey Memorial Park
- ③ Waltham School (South)
- ④ LaSalle County Historical Campus
- ⑤ Utica Public Library
- ⑥ Utica Baptist Church
- ⑦ St. Mary's Parish
- ⑧ Knights of Columbus
- ⑨ Utica Village Hall



## OPEN SPACE

The open space land use category is designed to accommodate land which should be preserved to sustain the environmental beauty of the area. This includes greenways along the major and minor waterways within the planning area as well as areas which are in the floodway. These open spaces can be either public or private.



## STATE PARK

The State Park land use category is designed to accommodate land which is under the jurisdiction of the State of Illinois and is a registered State Park.

## LAND USE OBJECTIVES

- Create a diverse mix of land uses to encourage a sustainable economy and high quality of life for Utica residents;
- Encourage mixed use developments in the downtown to promote walkability and viability of downtown businesses;
- Support residential development near Clark's Run Creek to create a unique living area while maintaining the area's natural beauty;
- Allow for appropriate mineral extraction while ensuring the sustainability of the surrounding natural areas;
- Promote land uses which take advantage of the nearby State Parks and recreational opportunities; and
- Maintain the agricultural and rural feel of the community while fostering growth and development.

## FUTURE LAND USAGE

The following table indicates the amount of land designated to each future land use category (excluding State Parks) within the planning area:

Future Land Use Category	Acres	Percentage
Residential	1,707	8.2%
Commercial	750	3.6%
Industrial	1,521	7.3%
Mining (Industrial)	4,242	20.4%
Mixed Use	7	0.0%
Agricultural	10,532	50.5%
Institutional	97	0.5%
Recreational (including Deer Park Country Club)	123	0.6%
Open Space	1,855	8.9%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20,834</b>	<b>100.0%</b>



*The future residential land uses designated in the “Future Land Use Map” and “Downtown Future Land Use Map” could accommodate a population up to 7,500 residents.*



# COMMUNITY FACILITIES

This section addresses the variety of community facilities and services provided to existing and future Utica residents.

## PARKS AND RECREATION

Within the Utica planning area, there are a variety of recreational opportunities for residents and visitors to relax, play, and explore. These Village and State promote an active lifestyle and enhance Utica's community character.

### Existing Recreation

The following amenities exist within the planning boundary:

#### Carey Memorial Park

Carey Memorial Park, formerly Ball Diamond Park, is located just north of the I&M Canal in downtown Utica. This small community park includes a lighted baseball field, playground equipment, concession stand, restrooms, and a large pavilion. The baseball field at Carey Memorial Park hosts little league baseball games throughout the spring, summer, and fall. It is a very well maintained field, it is capable of hosting tournaments. Additionally, this park has a war memorial dedicated to Utica residents who have served in the United States Military. The north end of the park, along Church Street, has some undeveloped open space.

#### Neighbor's Park

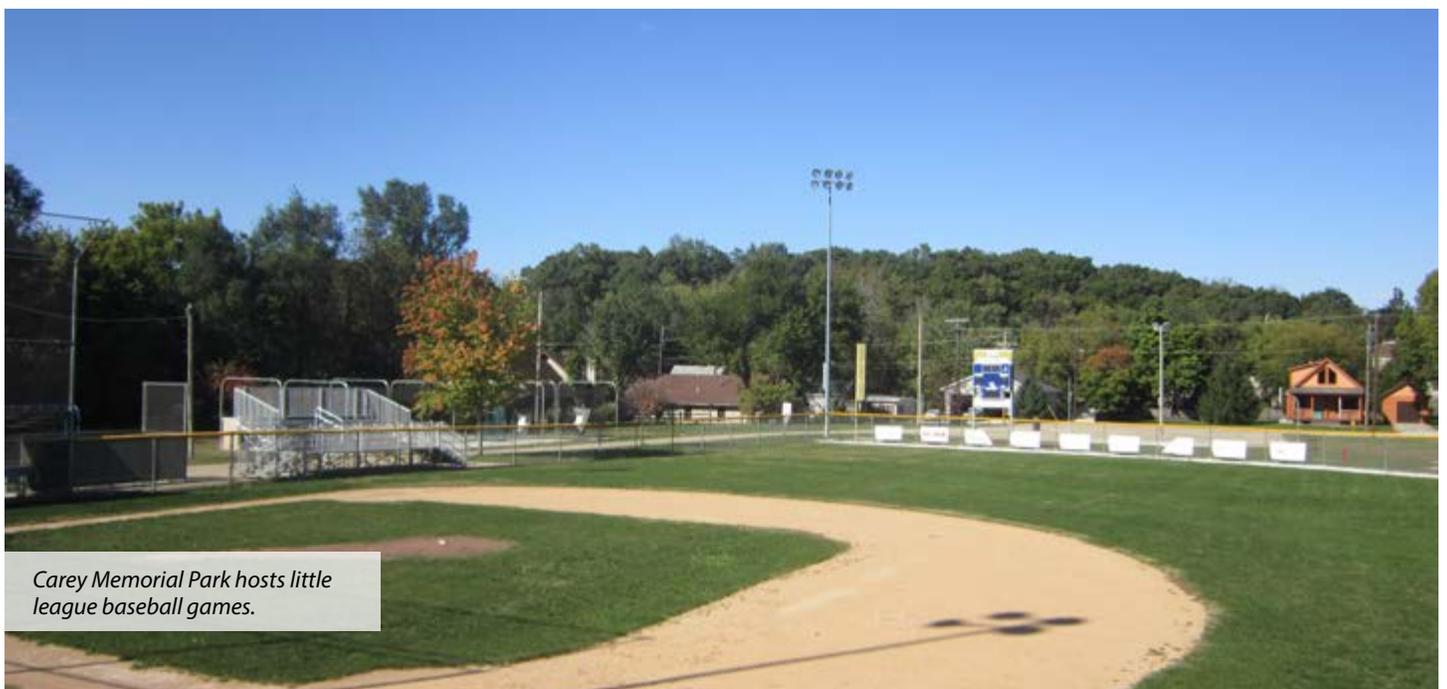
Neighbor's Park is located on top of the hill, along Mill Street, next to a Utica water tower. This park is home to Utica's softball field (unlit) and some small playground equipment.

#### Magnuson Park

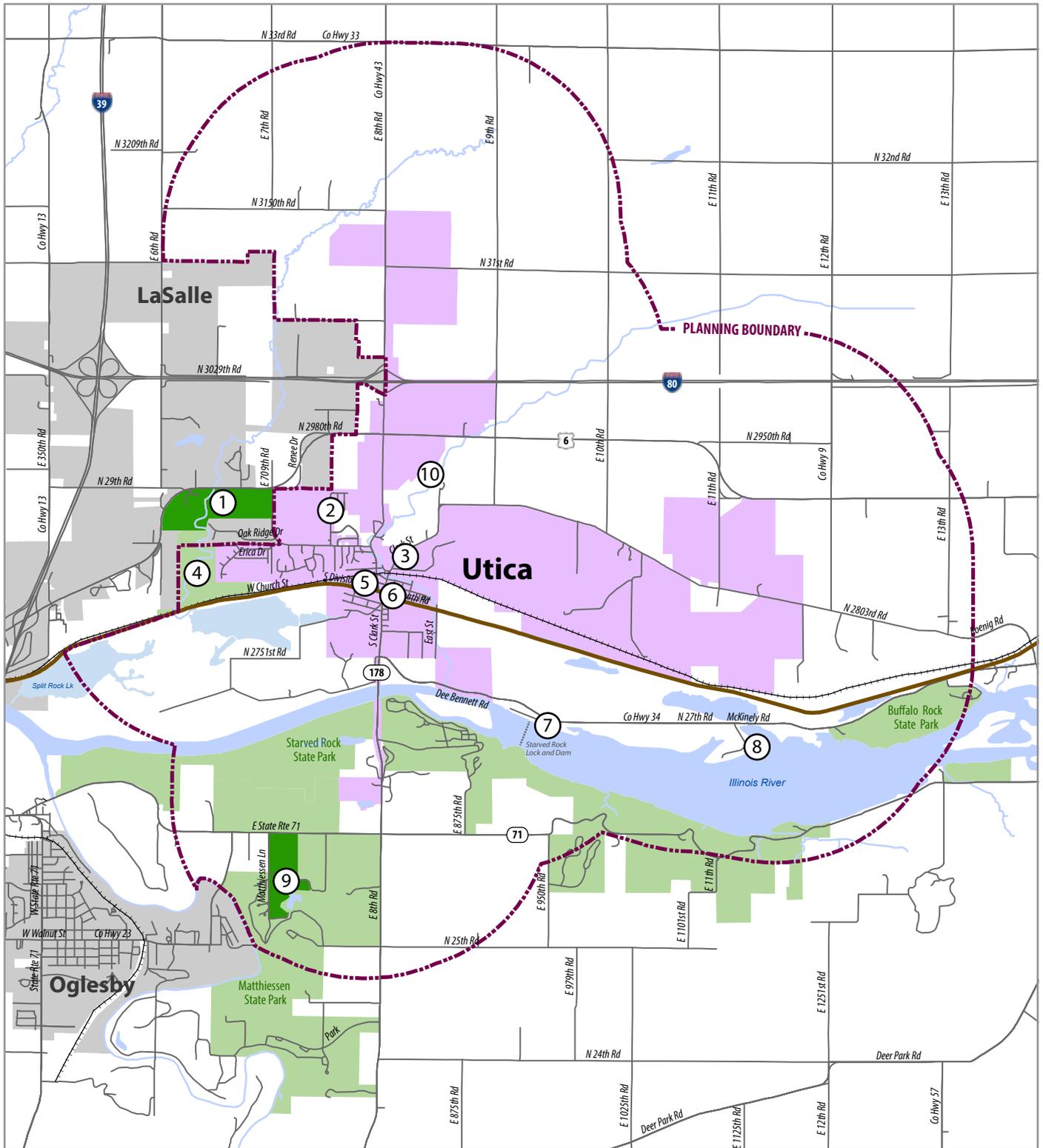
This small park is located in the Seneca Manor Subdivision. Although currently undeveloped, it is planned to provide a playground and convenient, walk-to recreational space for residents of this neighborhood. Installation of playground equipment is planned for 2016.

#### Illinois Waterway Visitor Center

The Illinois Waterway Visitor Center is located at the Starved Rock Lock and Dam and is operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The facility offers indoor and outdoor observation areas to view the lock and dams operation. There are several displays within the Center which cover topics including the I&M Canal's history and modern lock and dam structures. The Center is an excellent location for bald eagle watching during the winter. The bald eagles come to the area during the winter and nest on Plum Island.

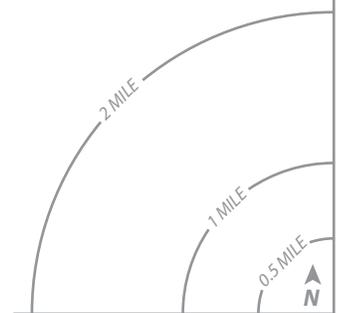


*Carey Memorial Park hosts little league baseball games.*



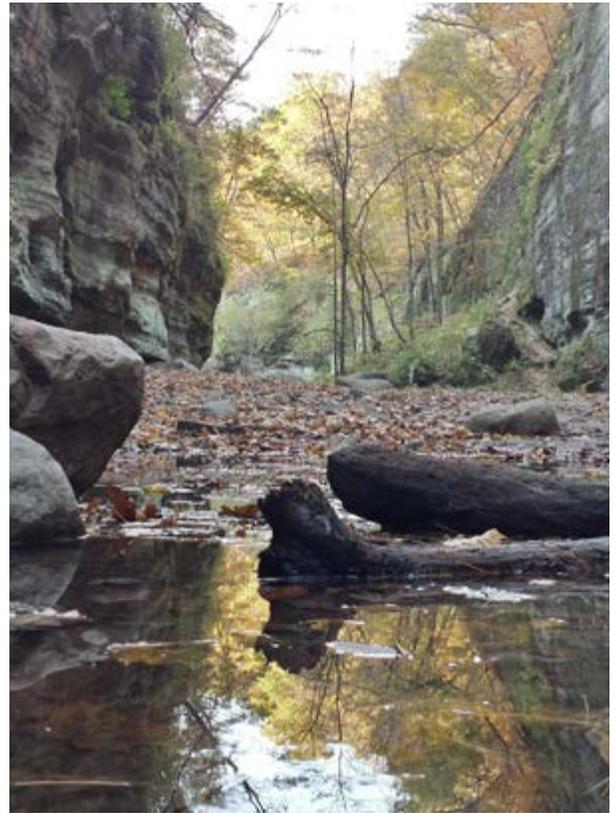
## Village of Utica Comprehensive Plan Parks and Recreation Map

- |                                       |                                      |                    |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------|
| ① Senica Oak Ridge Golf Club          | ⑥ LaSalle County Historical Campus   | ■ Village of Utica |
| ② Magnuson Park                       | ⑦ Illinois Waterway Visitor's Center | ■ State Park       |
| ③ Neighbor's Park                     | ⑧ Starved Rock Marina                | ■ Water            |
| ④ Pecumsaugan Creek - Blackball Mines | ⑨ Deer Park Country Club             | — I&M Trail        |
| ⑤ Carey Memorial Park                 | ⑩ Potential Clark's Run Greenway     | — Railroad         |



## STARVED ROCK STATE PARK

Starved Rock State Park is located just south of the Illinois River and directly south of downtown Utica. The park offers a wide variety of recreational activities including hiking, fishing, boating, picnicking, horseback riding, and camping. The park is best known for its fascinating rock formations, primarily St. Peter sandstone laid down in a huge shallow inland sea more than 425 million years ago. The park has a visitor center which offers displays and exhibits explaining the park's cultural and natural history. Additionally, Starved Rock has a wonderful lodge which is on the National Register of Historic Places. The lodge is often completely booked on weekends, particular in peak fall and spring seasons. Situated on a high bluff, the lodge was built in part by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s. The lodge has been refurbished, but still reflects the peaceful atmosphere of yesteryear. A new hotel wing has been added and features a registration lobby, an indoor swimming pool, children's pool, whirlpool, saunas and an outdoor sunning patio. The lodge offers 72 luxury hotel rooms and 22 comfortable cabin rooms. The original Great Room is furnished with decorative rugs and art and is centered around a massive stone fireplace. It is estimated that the park draws in nearly 2 million visitors annually – many of whom travel out from the Chicago area for a day of hiking.



### Buffalo Rock State Park

Buffalo Rock State Park is located between Utica and Ottawa along Dee Bennett Road. The park is on a bluff which was once an island in the Illinois River. This 298 acre park is just across the street from the I&M Trail which makes it easily accessible by hikers and bikers. The park includes hiking trails, areas for picnicking, a playground, camping areas, pavilions, and a baseball field. The park is well known for its natural earth art titled "Effigy Tumuli." This unique art depicts five sculptures native to the Illinois River including a snake, turtle, catfish, frog, and water strider. The park is also home for two American bison that have their own pen and grazing area near the baseball field.

### Mattheissen State Park

Mattheissen State Park is located south of the Illinois River between Utica and Oglesby. The original 176 acre park was a private park (Deer Park) which was eventually donated to the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. Mattheissen State Park, named after the former owner, opened its doors to the public in 1943. The park now consists of 1,938 acres of canyons, streams, prairies, and forests. The park offers extensive hiking and equestrian trails, picnic areas, an archery range, and a remote controlled model airplane field.

### Pecumsaugan Creek – Blackball Mines Preserve

The Pecumsaugan Creek – Blackball Mine Preserve is located north of the I&M Canal outside the western border of Utica. The Pecumsaugan Creek traverses through the preserved area of dolomite cliffs, prairies, and upland forests. The preserve is best known for the abandoned limestone mine and its colonies of bats. The mine is one of the largest hibernation areas for bats in Illinois. The preserve also provides habitats for threatened and endangered plants species. Visitor can see many of the preserve's unique features from the I&M Trail but to enter the preserve requires a permit.

### I&M Canal & Trail

The I&M Canal and Trail run through the heart of downtown Utica. The canal, which was constructed to move goods from Chicago to the Illinois River, is now unused within Utica due to environmental deterioration. The old tow path road which parallels the canal is now the I&M Trail which is part of the Grand Illinois trail. As explained previously in this plan, both the canal and trail are currently not completely usable and future remediation will be needed in order to bring these recreational assets to full functionality.

## PARK LAND & RECREATIONAL FACILITIES INVENTORY

The following table is an inventory of park land within Utica:

	Acres	NRPA Standard (Ac./1,000)	Recommended Acres	Acres Surplus/Deficit
<b>Community Parks</b>				
Carey Memorial	3.9			
Subtotal	3.9	7.5	9.75	-5.9
<b>Neighborhood Parks</b>				
Neighbor's Park	1.9			
Magnuson Park	0.4			
Subtotal	2.2	2.5	3.25	-1.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>-6.9</b>

Estimated Population: 1,300

The following table is an inventory of recreational facilities within Utica:

Facility	Average Number in Illinois per 1,000 population (1)	Facilities Needed in Utica to Match State Averages	Number in Utica	Surplus/Deficit
<b>Water-Based Facilities</b>				
Fishing Piers & Docks	0.0408	0.05304	0	-0.05304
Aquatic Centers/ Pools	0.0282	0.03666	0	<b>-0.03666</b>
Spray Grounds	0.0292	0.03796	0	<b>-0.03796</b>
<b>Trails</b>				
Trails (Miles)	0.163	0.2119	5.50	5.2881
Bike Trails (Miles)	0.1058	0.13754	0	-0.13754
Nature Trails (Miles)	0.0547	0.07111	0	-0.07111
<b>Sports Facilities</b>				
Baseball Fields	0.2552	0.33176	1	0.66824
Softball Fields	0.1425	0.18525	1	0.81475
Basketball Courts	0.25	0.325	1	0.675
Soccer Fields	0.1779	0.23127	0	-0.23127
Skate Parks	0.0163	0.02119	0	-0.02119
Golf Course (18 holes)	0.0081	0.01053	2	1.98947
Golf Course (9 holes)	0.0051	0.00663	0	-0.00663
Golf Course (disk or frisbee)	0.008	0.0104	0	-0.0104
Tennis Courts	0.87	1.131	0	<b>-1.131</b>
Volleyball Courts	0.19	0.247	1	0.753
<b>Day-Use Facilities</b>				
Picnic Shelters	0.206	0.2678	2	1.7322
Playgrounds	0.4035	0.52455	2	1.47545
Dog Parks	0.0074	0.00962	0	-0.00962

(1) Source: Illinois Recreational Facilities Inventory, 2008, except Tennis & Volleyball Court Standards which are from 1994 Inventory

(2) Approx. population of 1,300

### **LaSalle County Historical Campus**

The museum campus is located on the banks of the I&M Canal in downtown Utica. The LaSalle County Museum was built in 1848 and was originally a general store serving early pioneers and canal travelers. The campus consists of four buildings including the museum, a one-room school house, a post-beam barn, and blacksmith shop. The museum campus offers visitors a unique impression of life in the late 19th century.

### **Starved Rock Marina**

The private Starved Rock Marina is located along the north side of the Illinois River next to Buffalo Rock State Park and across the river from Starved Rock State Park. The marina was established in 1957 and is a full service marina which offers over 200 boat slips for both seasonal customers and passing travelers. The marina also contains a restaurant, boutique shop, fuel station, launch ramps, and boat storage.

### **Golf Courses**

There are two private eighteen-hole golf courses within the planning area. The Seneca Oak Ridge Golf Club is in LaSalle, but is adjacent to homes in Utica along N 2853rd Road. The other golf course is Deer Park Country Club located along Route 71 south of Starved Rock State Park.

## **POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS**

While Utica and the region boast a plethora of recreational options, there are some improvements which could increase the beauty and appeal of the area.

### **Repairing the I&M Canal and Trail**

As previously expressed in this plan, the I&M Canal and Trail are both major assets to the community and returning them to their full functionality will add to the attractiveness of Utica for future residents and tourists.

### **New Neighborhood Parks**

Existing parks in Utica area well located and generally within a reasonable walking distance to most residential areas. As the community grows, it will be important to provide additional park space to meet growing recreational demand. Two potential areas are suggested – one adjacent to Clark’s Run Creek and the proposed greenway (see below) and the other would be adjacent to or in association with a new school (suggested in this plan in the areas planned for future residential use generally south of Route 6, west of Clark’s Run Creek, and west of the LaSalle/Utica border, and north of 2835th Road).

### **Clark’s Run Creek Greenway**

Clark’s Run Creek is a beautiful, privately owned natural area that includes many amenities worthy of preservation included a beautiful waterfall, sandstone rock outcroppings, and mature woodlands. While the area is not formally protected, to-date private property owners in the area have been good stewards of this resource and have preserved the areas abundant natural beauty. As development begins to occur in the area, It is recommended that more permanent protection measures be explored – either through protection of natural areas under private ownership through techniques such as conservation easements or designation as an Illinois Nature Preserve, or through future public acquisition.

## **EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES**

Utica is served by two elementary schools, two high schools, and the Utica Public Library.

### **ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS**

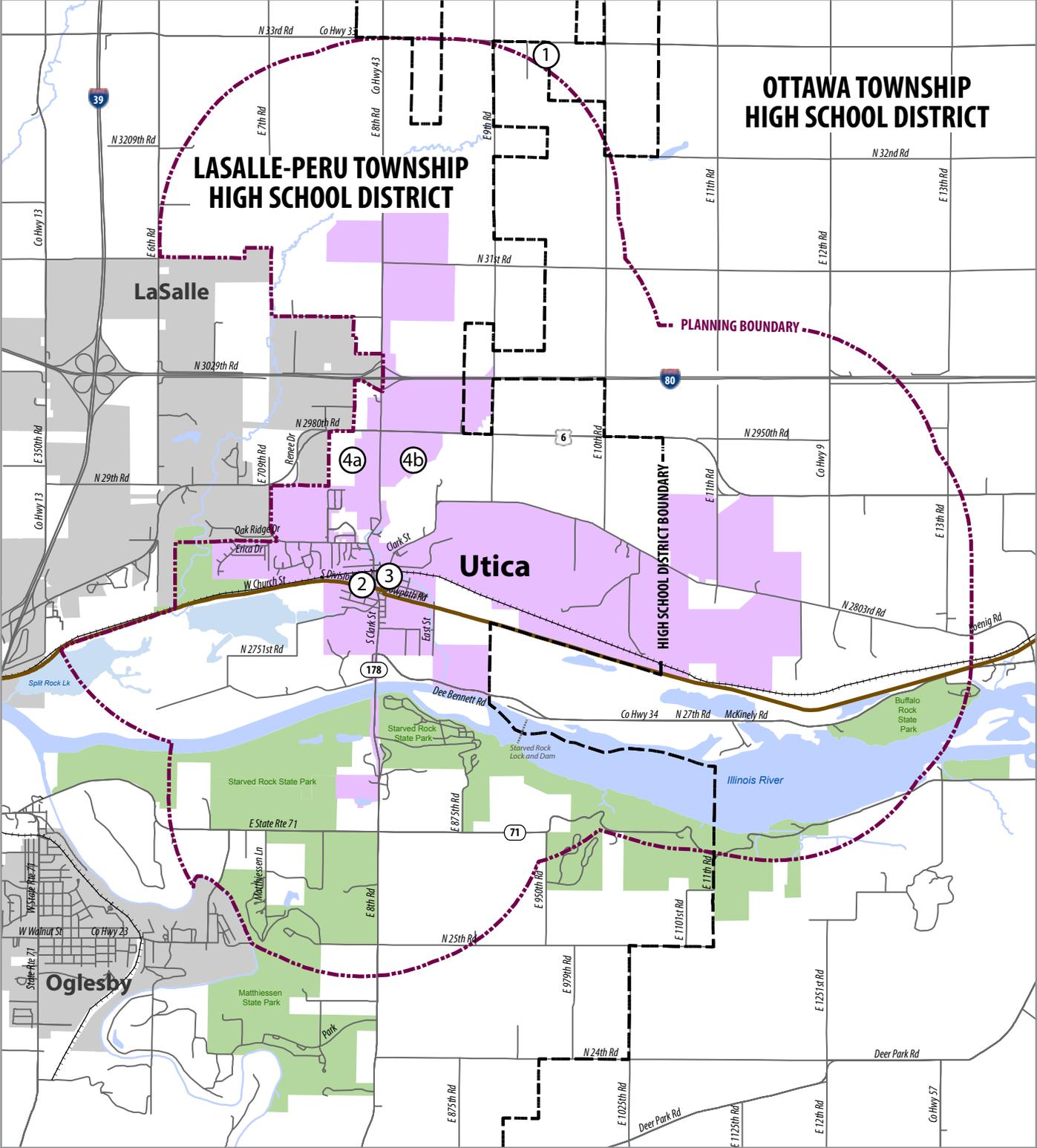
Utica is located within Waltham Elementary School District #185. The District currently operates two schools. Waltham Elementary School North teaches grade 3 to 8 and is located along N 33rd Road east of 9th Road. Waltham Elementary School South teaches kindergarten to 2nd grade and is located in downtown Utica. As of 2015, there are a total of 218 students split between the two schools.

There are several functional problems that arise within the current elementary schools. First, the Utica area is considered by the State to be an unsafe area for children to walk to school due to the major State Routes travelling through the region. This means that all students must be bussed or driven to school even if they are within walking distance of one of the schools. This can cause a student to take a 30 minute bus ride to a facility which is down the street from their home. Additionally, many families have students at both schools and this can cause many scheduling conflicts when trying to get children to both schools.

While the location and access to each school provides challenges, the physical facilities vary but are in good condition. For example, Waltham Elementary South has a bigger gym than the northern school so all 3rd to 8th grade activities requiring a gym are held at the southern school. This again causes scheduling problems for families trying to get their children from one location to another. It also is a hassle for the school district to maintain two separate buildings and transport shared equipment and supplies.

# OTTAWA TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

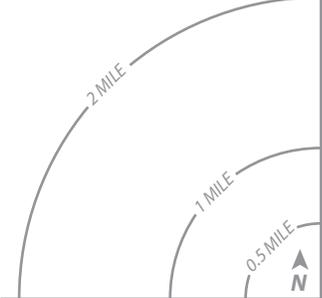
## LASALLE-PERU TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT



### Village of Utica Comprehensive Plan Educational Facilities Map

- ① Waltham School (North)
- ② Waltham School (South)
- ③ Utica Public Library
- ④a Potential Area for New Unified School
- ④b Potential Area for New Unified School

- Village of Utica
- State Park
- Water
- I&M Trail
- Railroad





Finally, due to the flooding which occurs downtown, Waltham School South does flood during heavy rain storms. It costs the school district time and money to make repairs after a flooding incident and typically children must be relocated to the northern school where there is not enough room for everyone. The school district faces many functional challenges but has a strong reputation for being an excellent educational provider and receives lots of support and volunteer assistance from Utica residents.

The District went for a referendum in spring of 2015 to apply for a grant to expand the north school, but that referendum failed. The District is currently surveying families to explore other alternatives to improve efficiency and enhance overall service to the community.

### **HIGH SCHOOLS AND HIGHER EDUCATION**

After finishing 8th grade, Utica students attend LaSalle Peru Township High School. A portion of the Utica Planning area is also within the Ottawa Township High School District. In terms of higher education, the Illinois Valley Community College is located a few miles away in Oglesby.

### **UTICA PUBLIC LIBRARY**

The Utica Public Library District serves nearly 30,000 people within Utica Township, Deer Park Township, and Waltham Township. Originally, the Utica library was located in the former one-room schoolhouse along Canal Street but was relocated in 1973 to a newly constructed building along Mill Street where it still stands today. The library was expanded in 1988 when it became a library district serving the surrounding townships and again in 1996. The library offers a wide variety of books, magazines, newspapers, DVDs, audiobooks, and e-books. The library also provides a diverse range of activities for the community including story hours and reading clubs and programs.

The Utica Public Library has recently acquired an adjacent parcel and is planning for an expansion. The new Library expansion will include additional parking, expanded children's services, and a meeting space. This project is estimated to assist the library with serving the growing regional population over the next 10 to 20 years.

### **POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS**

The many challenges facing the elementary schools and its students needs a solution soon. To solve many of the present issues with each school and the functionality between them, it is recommended that the Village and Waltham Elementary School District work cooperatively to develop a new site within Utica for a unified kindergarten to 8th grade school. The Educational Facilities Map shows one potential location for such a school site, generally west of Route 178 and south of Route 6 near existing and potential future residential areas. An alternative location would be on the east side of Route 178 south of Route 6. In either case, it is recommended that the school be located within these future residential areas rather than directly on either of these state routes.

A unified school would solve many of the problems the District is experiencing. Most of the students attending the Waltham schools reside in Utica and it will make for much shorter bus trips for students. The new facility will be able to support all elementary grades and won't divide households between two schools. A new consolidated facility could host all after school programs in one location, allowing the District to have transportation costs. Finally, this facility could be built to modern life-safety requirements and would be located outside the flood zone. A new facility near the residents who utilize the school and a unified facility will assist in enhancing the quality of life for both students and their parents.

## POLICE DEPARTMENT

The police department staff operates part-time and primarily with officers from other departments. Typically, staffing for the department is between 18 to 20 hours per day. In case of emergencies, the department receives back-up assistance from LaSalle County and the State of Illinois. In terms of equipment the department has 3 police vehicles and 1 speed trailer. The highest volume of calls are received from the Grand Bear Lodge involving mostly domestic and civil matters (Starved Rock State Park is outside of the Village's jurisdiction). The police department is community focused and has a major presence at community events. Additionally, due to the large amount of visitors within the community, the department has experience cooperating with outside agencies including IDOT and the Department of Natural Resources/State Parks.

## FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

The Utica Fire Protection District serves Utica and other nearby areas. It operates independently of the Village. The District covers 82 square miles of land including properties up to Route 52 in the north, about 5 miles south of the Illinois River, and east of Interstate 39. This area includes most of the Interstate highways and all three State Parks. In terms of equipment the fire district has 2 ALS ambulances, 2 fire engines, 1 water tanker, 1 rescue truck, 1 all-terrain vehicle, 1 mobile command trailer, 1 pickup truck, and an inflatable raft. The district has 42 members who are called on a volunteer basis. The district has an excellent relationship with the community and especially the schools. The district offers in school programs to educate children on fire safety and fire science. The District's new station on Route 178, just south of Route 6 is in an excellent location to serve existing and future growth within Utica.

## POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS

To enhance firefighting capabilities, the Fire District would like to see improvements to some of the water mains within Utica. South of the I&M Canal there is only a single water main going through the area. If there is a fire in this area and the water main breaks or does not function properly, the fire district will not be able to put out a fire. The Village should explore the possibility of "looping" the water main south of the canal to increase the safety for residents in this area.

## MUNICIPAL FACILITIES

The following municipal facilities and services are located within Utica:

### WATER

The Village currently has sufficient water capacity to support significant additional growth. The aquifer that is used for the water supply has no major radium issues. The Village has two water towers, one built around 2007 along Route 6 east of Route 178 and one in Neighbor's Park along Clark Street.

### SANITARY SEWER SYSTEM

Unlike the water system, the Village's sanitary sewer treatment facility does not have a lot of excess capacity. They system has a capacity of 300,000 gallons per day, and typically runs at from 200,000 to 250,000 gallons per day. A lagoon system is currently used for treatment. When the Village looks to upgrade and



*The Village has two water towers, one along Route 6 and one in Neighbor's Park along Clark Street.*

expand the system, the EPA will likely mandate a switch to a mechanical system. The Village should have sufficient land to accommodate a future expansion.

## **STORMWATER MANAGEMENT**

As noted earlier in the plan, flooding has been a major community concern with several floods in the past 10 years. Two major areas of flooding impact the Village. Flooding of the Illinois River has been a significant issue, particularly between the River and Washington Street. Base flood elevations have been increased in this area by FEMA in recent years. The other major flooding issue is with Clarks Run Creek, which impacts the downtown area. Clarks Run Creek has a relatively steep creek, and can result in flash flooding issues during major storms.

The Village has adopted appropriate stormwater management requirements for new development to avoid future problems. However, existing flooding issues warrant additional study and remediation – without which future development in the core commercial area in downtown and extending to Village Hall will be a challenge.

## **POTENTIAL IMPROVEMENTS**

### **Water System Improvements**

- Replacement of older lines, particularly in front of Village Hall
- Install pressure reducing valves for downtown so that system pressure can be increased elsewhere.

## **Sanitary Sewer Improvements**

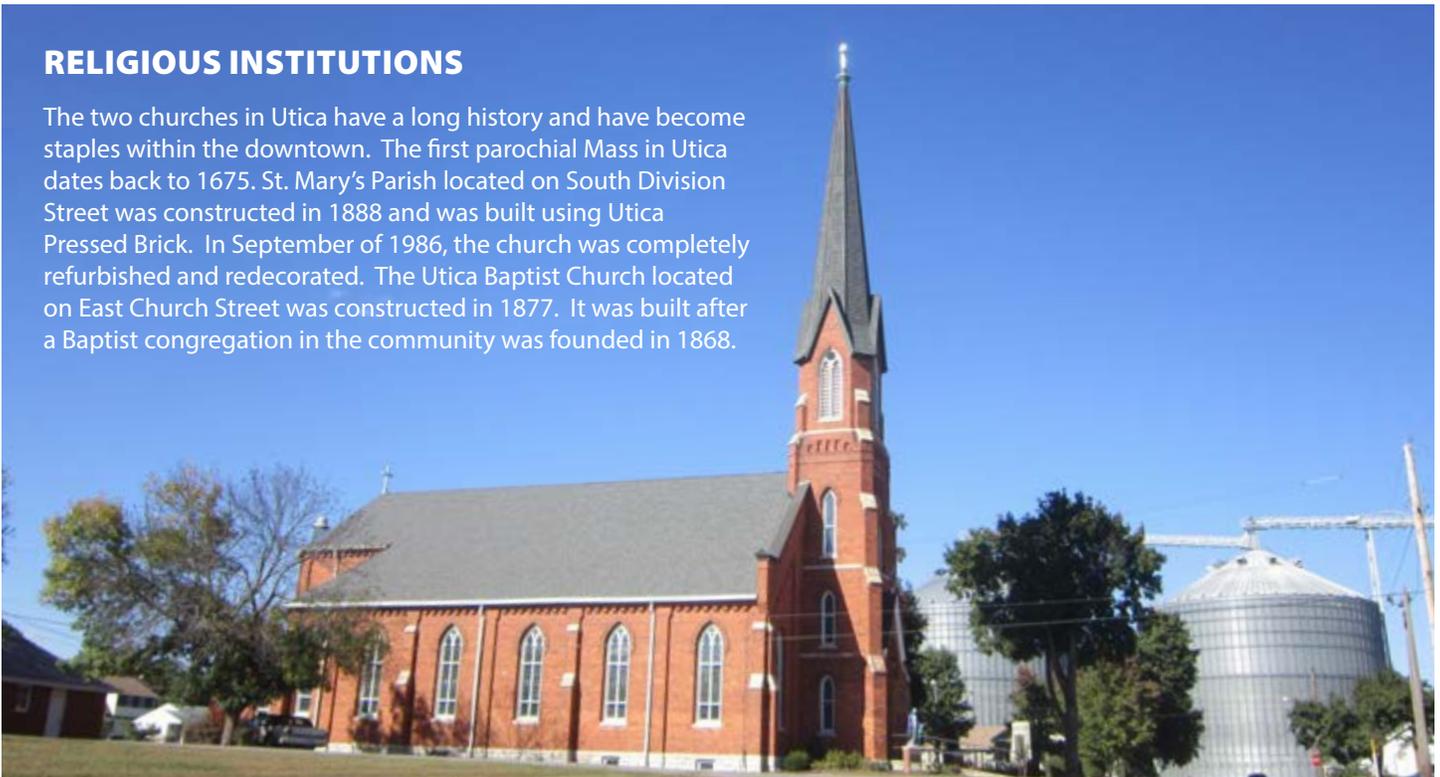
- Install a new discharge, with a higher capacity, to the Illinois River in conjunction with IDOT bridge improvements
- Complete preliminary engineering and cost estimates for a plant expansion/conversion. The engineering work should include determination of appropriate expansion size.
- Seek funding and complete a plant expansion/conversion.

## **Stormwater Management Improvements**

Recommended stormwater management strategies include development of a Hazard Mitigation Plan which will examine alternatives to address the flooding problems, including the potential for a dyke to address Illinois River flooding and an underground diversion channel to handle peak surges of flow along Clark's Run Creek. This study should also address when flood warnings are issued.

## **RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS**

The two churches in Utica have a long history and have become staples within the downtown. The first parochial Mass in Utica dates back to 1675. St. Mary's Parish located on South Division Street was constructed in 1888 and was built using Utica Pressed Brick. In September of 1986, the church was completely refurbished and redecorated. The Utica Baptist Church located on East Church Street was constructed in 1877. It was built after a Baptist congregation in the community was founded in 1868.





# SPECIAL AREA PLANS

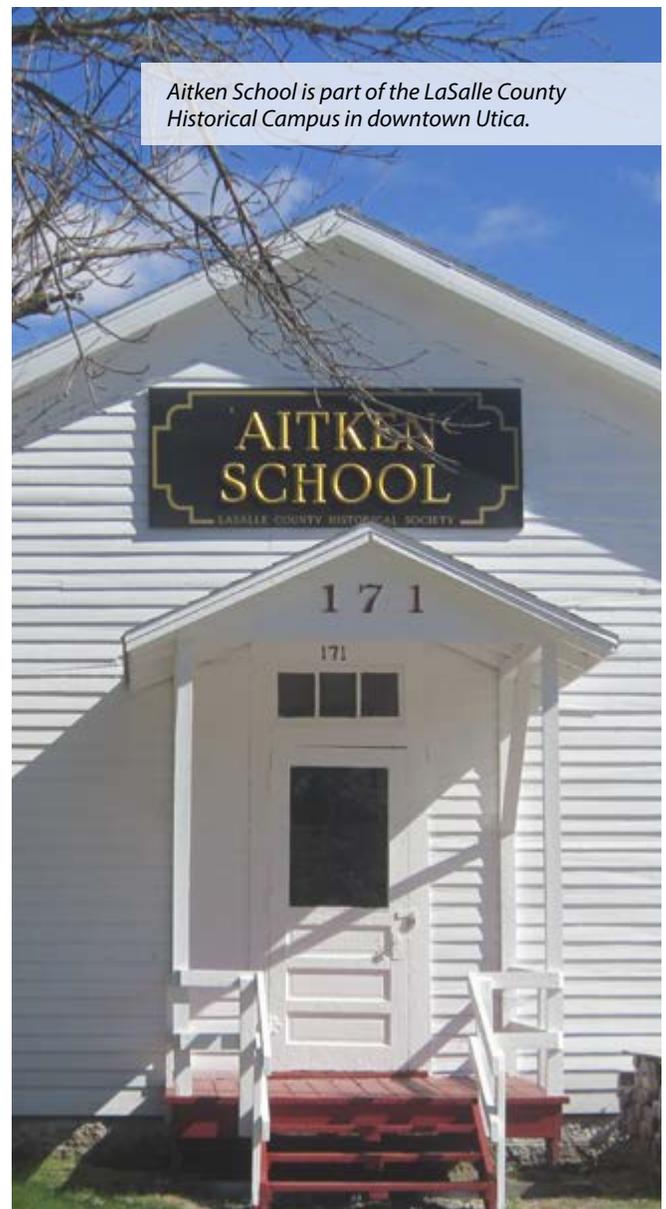
There are two specific areas within Utica which will be focal points for future economic development: the downtown and the Interstate 80 interchange. This section examines those areas and recommended future improvements.

## DOWNTOWN

Utica has a wonderful, small, walkable downtown that serves both as a focal point for community life and as a tourist draw. The downtown has changed dramatically since completion of the 2002 Village Comprehensive Plan. The 2004 tornado caused significant damage to the area, including destruction of the majority of the block north of Church Street and west of Mill Street. On the positive side, the re-alignment of Route 178 through downtown significantly improved traffic flow.

This area also offers significant economic development opportunities for the Village. The following SWOT Analysis – Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats provides a summary of existing conditions in the area.

STRENGTHS	LaSalle County Historical Society complex
	Compact downtown cluster with several attractive restaurants/bars and the August Hill Winery Tasting Room
	Location directly on the I&M Canal Trail
	Attractive gateway signs/streetscape along Route 178
	Many events held in the downtown which draw visitors and celebrate local heritage
Baseball field is well maintained and tournament-ready	
WEAKNESSES	Appearance of I&M Canal – biggest problem is shallow depth and stagnant water resulting in algae. Lack of attractive landscape on the west side of 178 also a concern
	Lack of sidewalks on the west side of Clark Street/Route 178 between the Canal and Village Hall
	Limited public parking is a concern, particularly on busy weekends
OPPORTUNITIES	Downtown is easy to miss when entering from the north
	No pedestrian crosswalks south of the canal
	Key downtown block (north side of Church between Mill and 178) available for redevelopment
	Planned bike path from Starved Rock will enhance access
THREATS	Enhancing alleys to make them friendly and appealing to both motorists and pedestrians
	If Waltham School South is relocated, site would offer significant redevelopment opportunities in highly visible and accessible downtown location
	Key downtown block noted as opportunity has multiple owners
	Area is in a flood plain, and flash flooding from Clark Run Creek is a challenge
	Illinois Department of Natural Resources controls I&M Canal – but has limited resources to maintain and repair





# Village of Utica Comprehensive Plan Downtown Plan

- Existing Bike Path Connection
- ⇄ Proposed Bike Path Connection
- - - Sidewalk Connection
- Alleyway Improvement
- Site Improvements
- I Intersection Improvement
- ⚙️ Iconic Gateway Feature
- Future Streetscape Enhancement
- O Public Art





The flooding issue is a critical issue in the potential success of downtown redevelopment. This topic needs additional study and analysis to determine the most cost effective solutions. Some alternatives to consider include:

- Providing an underground diversion pipe to redirect storm flow coming down Clark Run Creek directly to the Illinois River.
- Explore the potential for a dyke around the downtown area. It is recommended that the Village work with LaSalle County on the Dee Bennet Road improvements as the proposed raised nature of this new roadway may be able to incorporate some flood protection.
- Creating combined development sites on fill south of the canal, such as the site illustrated at the northwest corner of 178 and Donaldson. Given current conditions, it is estimated that approximately six feet of fill will be required to elevate structures above the flood plain.
- Consider areas for detention along Clark Run Creek to handle some of the peak storm flow and allow for a more gradual release.

Key Recommendations for improvements to this area are illustrated on the “Downtown Map” and include:

## TRANSPORTATION

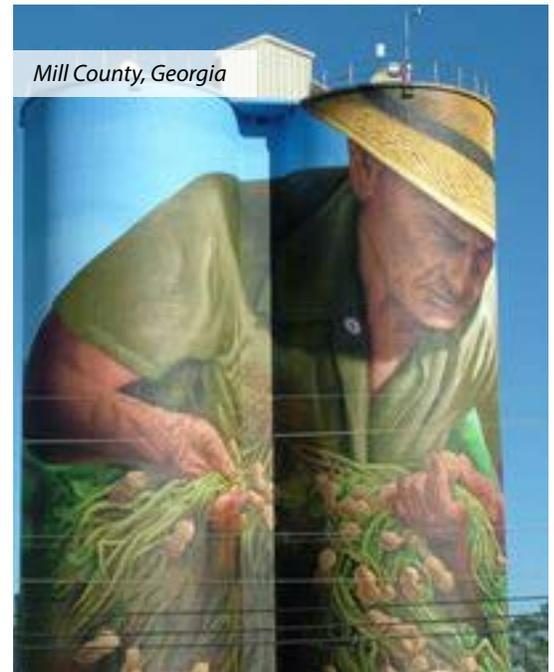
- Focus on making the area more pedestrian and bike friendly, including:
  - \* Crosswalks at key intersections between the Canal and Village Hall
  - \* Installation of a sidewalk on the west side of Clark Street/Route 178
  - \* Work closely with the IDOT on new bridge/bike path improvements and with LaSalle County on Dee Bennet Road realignment and new trail

- Develop additional downtown public parking opportunities and enhance wayfinding signs to direct visitors to parking. Opportunities for an additional parking lot include the area just east of the Post Office and additional on-street parking, particularly along Grove Street and Canal Street
- Work with Starved Rock and Grand Bear Lodge to develop a circulating Trolley that would connect these major lodging facilities to downtown.

## LAND USE

See plan for specific recommendations, but overall land use goals for the area include:

- Redevelop key block at north end of downtown. Action steps include:
  - \* Consolidation ownership
  - \* Consider conversion to temporary event space and/or use as temporary parking
  - \* Solicit developer to create a mixed use project with ground floor retail/restaurant space and upper story office or residential use. Site should accommodate parking in the interior of the site, with buildings oriented to the streets. A greenway with extensive landscaping and paths should be created along Clarks Run Creek.
- Work closely with the Waltham School District on the eventual relocation of the school and redevelopment of the property for commercial use
- Encourage conversion of existing homes (or redevelopment) for commercial use along Division Street and along Route 178, especially the home at the southeast corner of Route 178 and Church Street.
- Continue efforts to remove/demolish abandoned structures, including along Water Street and Grove Street.



Mill County, Georgia

*Utica should consider incorporating additional public art and encourage fun and whimsy.*



Midland, Ontario



Western Australia

## URBAN DESIGN

- Enhance streetscape along Mill Street, with a focus on pedestrian character with landscaping, sidewalks wide enough to accommodate outdoor dining, attractive lighting, etc. while maintaining on-street parking. Effort should be made to make all buildings handicap accessible.
- Work closely with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources to improve the I&M Canal and Trail through Utica, including:
  - \* Repairing the trail wash-out between Ottawa and Utica
  - \* Dredging the Canal through downtown to provide additional depth to allow for kayak or paddle boat rental and remove restrictions/restore water flow to eliminate algae problems.
  - \* Enhance the canal bank landscape between Route 178 and Carey Field with low maintenance plantings
- Work with owner to create a mural celebrating Utica's unique history on the grain elevator just south of the Canal
- Enhance the alleys between Church Street and Canal Street to make them more pedestrian friendly and enhance building facades
- Create parking plaza on the small parcel located between the Canal, Canal Street, Mill Street and 178 that can be used for parking during the week and for pop-up shops or food trucks and special events on weekends
- Incorporate additional public art and encourage fun and whimsy
- Develop a pedestrian-scale downtown sign program that celebrates Utica's history and tells its unique story.

## INTERSTATE 80 INTERCHANGE

Utica is fortunate to have an interchange on I-80, which provides east-west connectivity from coast to coast throughout the United States and easy access to and from the Chicago metropolitan area. This area offers significant economic development opportunities for the Village.

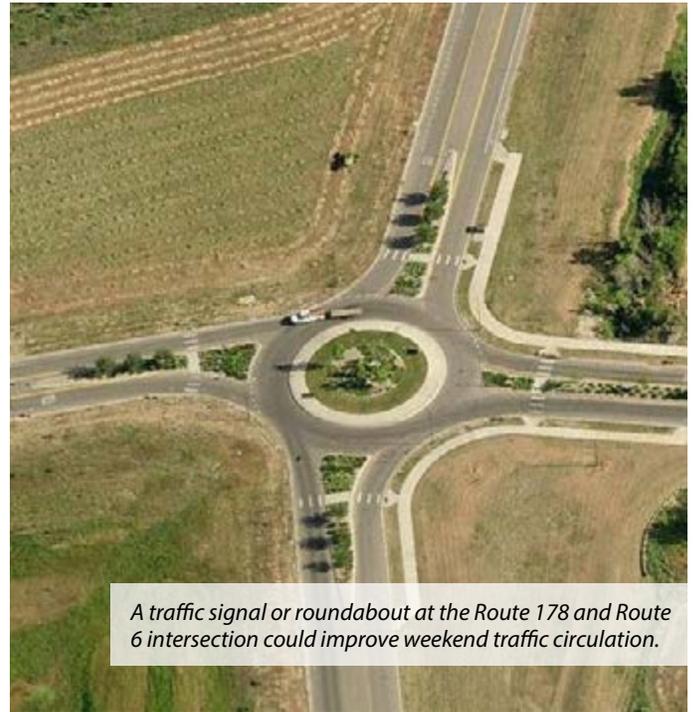
The following SWOT Analysis – Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats provides a summary of existing conditions in the area.

<b>STRENGTHS</b>	Love's Travel Stop
	Visitor's Bureau
	Starved Rock Market Place
	Illinois River Winery
	Interchange provides excellent accessibility for all types of vehicular traffic
	Availability of sewer and water utilities
	Significant vacant developable land
TIF and Enterprise Zone in place	
<b>WEAKNESSES</b>	Appearance of asphalt plant at S.W. corner of interchange
	Weekend traffic back-up at Route 6/178 intersection
	Low north-south weekday traffic counts
	Exterior appearance of visitor's center
<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b>	Attraction of a hotel, restaurant(s), and other highway oriented businesses
	Enhanced gateway/streetscape
	Improved pedestrian circulation
	Expansion of industrial activities both north and south of I-80, including within proposed Utica Logistics Park
<b>THREATS</b>	IDOT control of roads
	LaSalle annexation of part of the interchange
	Possible loss of Enterprise Zone

Key Recommendations for improvements to this area include:

### TRANSPORTATION

- Working closely with IDOT to improve weekend traffic flow, including creation of a roundabout or signal at the Route 178/Route 6 intersection.



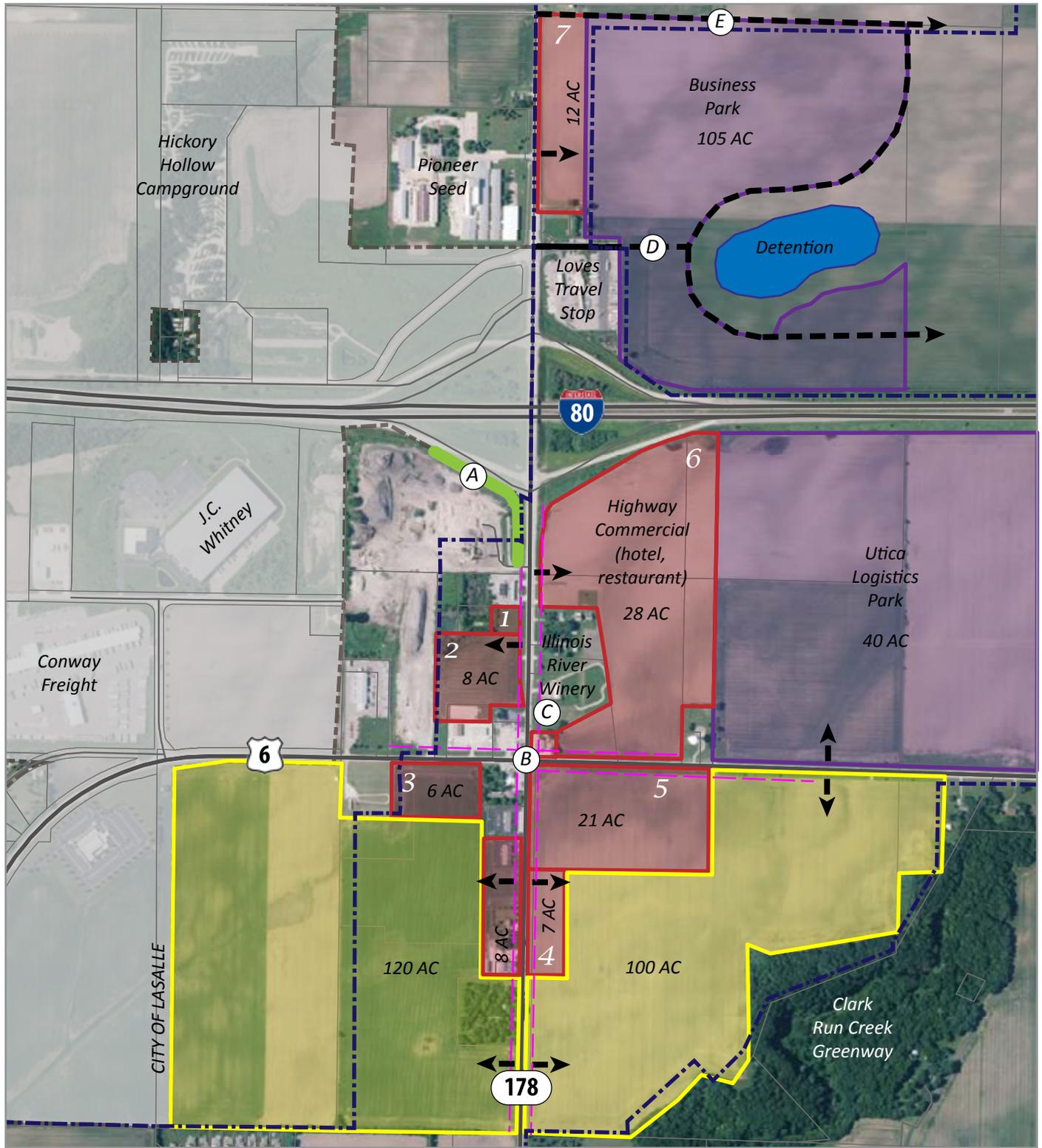
*A traffic signal or roundabout at the Route 178 and Route 6 intersection could improve weekend traffic circulation.*

- Promoting cross access between properties along Route 178 and limiting curb cuts to improve north-south traffic flow
- Aligning major access points along Route 178 and Route 6, generally at a ¼ mile spacing from Route 6.
- Provide sidewalks to allow for pedestrian circulation within a ¼ mile of the Route 178/Route 6 intersection in all directions, with sidewalks extending to the south along 178 to the crest of the hill as development occurs.
- Extension of the road on the north side of Love's Travel Stop to provide access to future commercial and industrial development
- Future construction of an east-west industrial collector approximately ½ mile north of Interstate 80, extending to the east to eventually connect with a similar planned roadway in Ottawa.

### LAND USE

See plan for specific recommendations, but overall land use goals for the area include:

- Highway oriented commercial development near the interchange
- Industrial/Logistics/Business Parks along Interstate 80 behind the commercial development both north and south of the Interstate.
- Residential development to the south of Route 6, and east and west of the proposed commercial frontage along Route 178.



## Village of Utica Comprehensive Plan Route 178 and Route 6 Corridor

-  Shared Access
-  Future Collector Road
-  Sidewalk
-  Proposed Commercial Development Sites
-  Provide Evergreen Tree Buffer Around Asphalt Plant
-  Install Traffic Signal/Circle and Create New Gateway Feature
-  Facade Renovation to Visitors Center
-  Future Roadway in Industrial Park
-  Future Regional Collector Road





## URBAN DESIGN

- Work with the Heritage Corridor Tourism and Convention Bureau to enhance the exterior appearance of the visitor's center – or relocate the center to a more attractive building.
- Creation of identity/gateway bridge treatment on the 9th Road overpass including attractive railings and columns (provide photo example – Burr Ridge, Champagin, etc.)
- Work with LaSalle and the Asphalt Plant to provide landscape screening (tall evergreen trees recommended) at the southwest corner of the Route 178/I-80 interchange.
- Along with roadway intersection improvements, work with IDOT to create an attractive community gateway at the Route 6/Route 178 intersection including attractive landscaping, wayfinding and welcoming signage, and decorative lighting. A scaled down version of this uniquely Utica design elements should also be taken at the ¼ mile intersections noted above under transportation.
- Design guidelines should be developed for new commercial development in this key corridor to ensure that new development fits with and strengthens the character of Utica at this important community gateway.

***The creation of gateway bridge treatments on the 9th Road overpass including attractive railings and columns could assist in improving Utica's identity. An example of this can be seen in Burr Ridge, Illinois.***

# IMPLEMENTATION

## ACTION PLAN

The Comprehensive Plan has specific implementation recommendations throughout the document. The following table summarizes these recommendations in one location for ease of tracking and follow-up. For each action step, phasing, potential municipal partners, priority, relative cost, and potential funding sources are identified. Phasing refers to the timing of the action step, with recognition that many more expensive items will take more time to raise the required capital and plan for the improvement. Priority refers to the importance of each action step in relationship to other items in that category. For example, adoption of a boundary agreement with LaSalle was identified as the highest priority among the general action steps. Priorities were determined through discussion with the Village Board and Plan Commission. If no funding source is listed, it can be assumed that general municipal revenue will be the most likely source of funds. The following table summarizes the categories assigned to phasing, priority and relative cost.

Phasing	Priority	Relative Cost
A. Short-Term (2016-2017)	1 = highest priority based on informal voting of Village Board and Plan Commission on December 9, 2015	1 – Less than \$10,000
B. Mid-Term (2018-2020)		2- \$10,001 to \$100,000
C. Long-Term (2021 and beyond)		3 - \$100,001 to \$1,000,000 4 - over \$1,000,000

General					
Action Step	Phasing	Partners	Priority	Relative Cost	Potential Funding Sources
Officially change the name of the Village to Utica	B	Residents and Businesses, Post Office, Secretary of State	3	2	
Create a boundary agreement with LaSalle	A	City of LaSalle	1	1	
Create a boundary agreement with Ottawa	B	City of Ottawa	2	1	
Create a boundary agreement with Oglesby	B	City of Oglesby	4	1	

Transportation					
Action Step	Phasing	Partners	Priority	Relative Cost	Potential Funding Sources
Improve Route 178/Route 6 Intersection	B	IDOT, Property Owners	1	4	IDOT, Property Owners
Relocate Dee Bennett Road and develop new trail	C	LaSalle Co. Highway Dept., Property owners	3	4	LaSalle County, IDOT
Extend Bike Path from Starved Rock to the I&M Canal	C	Business Association	6	3	TIF, IDNR Grant
Create an East/West Collector parallel and north of I-80	C	Property Owners	4	4	Property Owners/Developers
Install sidewalks on the west side of Route 178 between Village Hall and the I&M Canal	B	IDOT, Property Owners	5	2	IDOT, Special Service Area (SSA)
Install crosswalks on Route 178 between Village Hall and the I&M Canal	B	IDOT	5	2	IDOT
Re-Open I&M Trail between Utica and Ottawa	A	IDNR, Local Contractors	2	1 to 3	IDNR, Local Contractors
Promote new I-80 Interchange at 13th Road	C	Ottawa, LaSalle County, IDOT	7	4	IDOT, Benefiting Property Owners

## Economic Development

Action Step	Phasing	Partners	Priority	Relative Cost	Potential Funding Sources
Add new lighting to downtown gateway signs	B	Business Association	10	1	TIF
Create additional public parking	B	Business Association, Property owners	7	3 to 4	TIF, SSA
Marketing/Tourism Staffing	A	Business Association, Starved Rock, Grand Bear	6	2	Hotel/Motel Tax
Create a downtown history walk	B	Business Association, LaSalle County Historical Society	9	1	Hotel/Motel Tax
Seek a developer for memorial block	B	Property owner(s)	1	2	TIF
Seek a developer for property at northeast corner of Route 178 and Donaldson	B	Property owner(s)	15	3	TIF
Develop plan to address downtown flooding	A	Village Engineer, Army Corps	4	3	TIF, FEMA
Install mural on downtown grain elevator	C	Northern Partners Cooperative, Wall Dogs/Mural Artist	8	2	
Enhance alleys in downtown	C	Property Owners, Business Association	16	2 to 3	TIF, SSA
Develop public art plan for downtown	B	Business Association	5	1 to 2	Illinois Arts Council <a href="http://www.arts.illinois.gov/grants-programs/overview">http://www.arts.illinois.gov/grants-programs/overview</a>
Work with businesses to enhance downtown facades	B	Property Owners	13	2	TIF
Create gateway feature at I-80 and 9th Road	C	IDOT	17	4	
Create landscape buffer around asphalt plant (I-80 and Route 178)	B	Property Owner, IDOT	14	2	
Enhance façade of Heritage Corridor Visitors Center	A	Heritage Corridor	11	2 to 3	TIF
Attract industrial/logistics development to Logistics Park	A	IVAC, property owner	2	1 to 2	TIF
Attract highway commercial development	B	IVAC, property owner	12	1 to 2	TIF
Enhance Streetscape along Mill Street	A	Business Association	3	4	TIF, SSA

## Community Facilities

Action Step	Phasing	Partners	Priority	Relative Cost	Potential Funding Sources
Acquire additional local park land	C	Residential Developers, Property Owners	10	2 to 4	IDNR (OSLAD)
Develop spray park at Carey Memorial Park	B	Civic organizations	6	2 to 3	IDNR (OSLAD)
Dredge and re-water I&M Canal	B	IDNR, Local Contractors	2	2 to 4	IDNR, Local Contractors
Develop new K-8 school in Utica	B	School Dist. 185, residents	1	4	
Create Clark's Run Greenway	B-C	Property Owners, IDNR, Conservation Foundation	5	4	Property Owners, IDNR
Complete preliminary engineering and cost estimate for Sanitary Sewer plant expansion/conversion	A	Village Engineer, Illinois EPA	3	2	DCEO, USDA
Enhance and expand Sanitary Sewer Plant	B	Village Engineer, Illinois EPA	4	4	DCEO, USDA
Develop a Hazard Mitigation Plan	A	Village Engineer	7	2	
Install pressure reducing valves in water system	C	Village Engineer	9	3	DCEO, USDA
Replace older water lines along Route 178 south of downtown	B	Village Engineer	8	3 to 4	DCEO, USDA

## **BOUNDARY AGREEMENTS**

Illinois Statutes allow municipalities to enter into boundary agreements with neighboring communities. Such agreements define an ultimate boundary between municipalities. As property is annexed, each community can annex property up to the boundary line, but not beyond. This approach allows each community to plan for future infrastructure improvements. It also promotes good planning by eliminating potential competition between communities, whereby a developer could play one community off the other to get “the best deal” – which likely would not be the best deal for either municipality. Boundary agreements clarify which community will have jurisdiction should a property owner wish to annex and develop their property.

Utica currently abuts or is near to three neighboring communities – LaSalle, Oglesby, and Ottawa. As LaSalle and Utica currently have coterminous boundaries in some areas, developing a boundary agreement in this area would be the highest priority. The two communities have a partial boundary agreement in place (Illinois Route 178 north of I-80), but that agreement expires in 2016. Establishing a new boundary agreement between the communities which extends from the railroad to County Highway 33/N. 3rd Street is recommended.

Oglesby is the next closest community to Utica, located south and west of the current Utica borders. Starved Rock and Matthiessen State Parks currently separate the communities, and would seem to form a logical boundary that could be formalized in a future agreement.

Ottawa is still several miles east of Utica, although the 1 ½ mile planning jurisdictions of the municipalities nearly touch as of 2015. As both communities suggest a future interchange on I-80 at 13th Road, that would seem to be a logical boundary for future growth for each town. While development in this area is not likely for a number of years, creation of a boundary agreement between Utica and Ottawa will be important in the future and may be easier to establish in the near term when there are not any specific development proposals on the table.

## **VILLAGE NAME**

As noted in the Village History on page 3, Utica was originally located closer to the Illinois River and when it shifted north due to flooding issues the name was changed to North Utica. However, local residents and visitors alike generally refer to the community as simply “Utica.” To improve consistency and improve the branding of the community, it is suggested that a name change back to the original

Utica be considered. The Illinois Municipal Code has a clear process that a community must follow to change a name (65 ILCS 5/Article 2, Division 4). This process includes:

- Residents present a petition signed by at least one-half of those who voted for the Village officers therein at the last election
- The Village files with the Illinois Secretary of State to verify that the name is not already in use within the State
- The Village Board shall hold a properly noticed public hearing on the name change, and adopt the new name
- The Village again files with the Illinois Secretary of State who will publish a notice in the newspaper about the name change

While there would be some initial cost for residents and businesses required to adjust their mailing address on letterheads, etc. – the simplicity and consistency of a change to Utica may be of sufficient long-term benefit to justify the effort.

## **COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATES**

This Comprehensive Plan is based on currently available information including market and other conditions. Overtime, it will be important for the Village to reevaluate plan recommendations in light of current economic conditions, desires of the community, and progress towards identified goals. It is recommended that the Plan Commission review the plan at least every five years, and update as needed (at least every 10 years).

## **DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS**

The Village of Utica has building, zoning, and subdivision regulations in place to protect the health, safety and welfare of its residents. It is important for the Village to periodically update these regulations to accommodate new types of development and the latest in engineering design and construction techniques.

The Village’s zoning regulations apply to both areas within the Village limits and areas within 1 ½ miles outside the Village limits since LaSalle County currently has no Zoning. The regulations have been updated periodically, and should serve the community well in implementing the vision outlined in the Comprehensive Plan. It is recommend that the ordinance be reviewed by the Plan Commission every 5 years, or as needed, to address new land uses, building types, and modern design standards.

## GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

### PARKS, OPEN SPACE, ENVIRONMENT, AND TRAILS

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) administers a number of grant programs that may be helpful in implementing plan recommendations. In particular, the Open Space Land Acquisition and Development (OSLAD) program has been used by many communities to acquire and develop parks. However, given the current budget crisis in Illinois funding for future grant cycles is uncertain. This link provides general details on existing programs:

<http://www.dnr.illinois.gov/grants/Pages/default.aspx>

IDNR staff should be contracted to determine if and when any programs are open for new applications.

### INFRASTRUCTURE, TOURISM, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) administers many programs that can assist in plan implementation. Among these programs, the Illinois Community Development Assistance Program (CDAP) is one of the better known and more focused programs available to assist smaller communities like Utica. Funding is focused on improving public infrastructure, and comes from a pass-through from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). A link to various programs offered by DCEO is found here:

<http://www.illinois.gov/dceo/ServicesGuide/SitePages/Search.aspx>

As with other programs funded by the State of Illinois, the current budget crisis makes it difficult to know which programs will or will not have funding in future years.

The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) also administers several programs which may provide assistance to Utica. The most significant of which are revolving loan programs designed to assist local governments in the improvement of water supplies (Public Water Supply Loan Program) and the construction of wastewater facilities (Water Pollution Control Loan Program). While many of the IEPA programs are under review given state budget issues, these programs have a more permanent source of funding as they are loans rather than grants. More information on IEPA programs can be found here:

<http://www.epa.illinois.gov/topics/grants-loans/index>

The United States Department of Agriculture – Rural Development (RD) provides financial assistance through loans and some grants to individuals, public bodies, and nonprofits in rural areas. In Illinois, they have an outstanding loan portfolio of over \$2.25 billion. They offer programs that focus on housing, water and wastewater loans and grants, community facilities, and renewable energy and energy efficiency in rural areas. Information on their programs in Illinois can be found here:

<http://www.rd.usda.gov/il>

### TRANSPORTATION

The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) is responsible for operating and maintaining the major roadways in Utica, including I-80, U.S. Route 6 and State Routes 178 and 71. Improvements to roads in and around Utica compete with funding for other roadway enhancements throughout the State of Illinois. Given limited funding, IDOT often requires private development to fund roadway and intersection improvements adjacent to their property for items like turn lanes and traffic signals. IDOT does have several programs designed to assist with economic development, including programs to assist with rail enhancements (Railway Freight Program), road improvements needed to spur economic development (Economic Development Program), and truck access (Truck Access Route Program). More information on these programs can be found here:

<http://www.illinois.gov/dceo/ExpandRelocate/Incentives/grants/Pages/Biz-Idot.aspx>

IDOT also administers a Safe Routes to Schools Program (SRTS) designed to make bike and pedestrian improvements to improve accessibility. More information on this program is available here:

<http://www.idot.illinois.gov/transportation-system/local-transportation-partners/county-engineers-and-local-public-agencies/safe-routes-to-school/index>