

City of Sterling • Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan

Visioning Workshop Summary

January 11, 2011

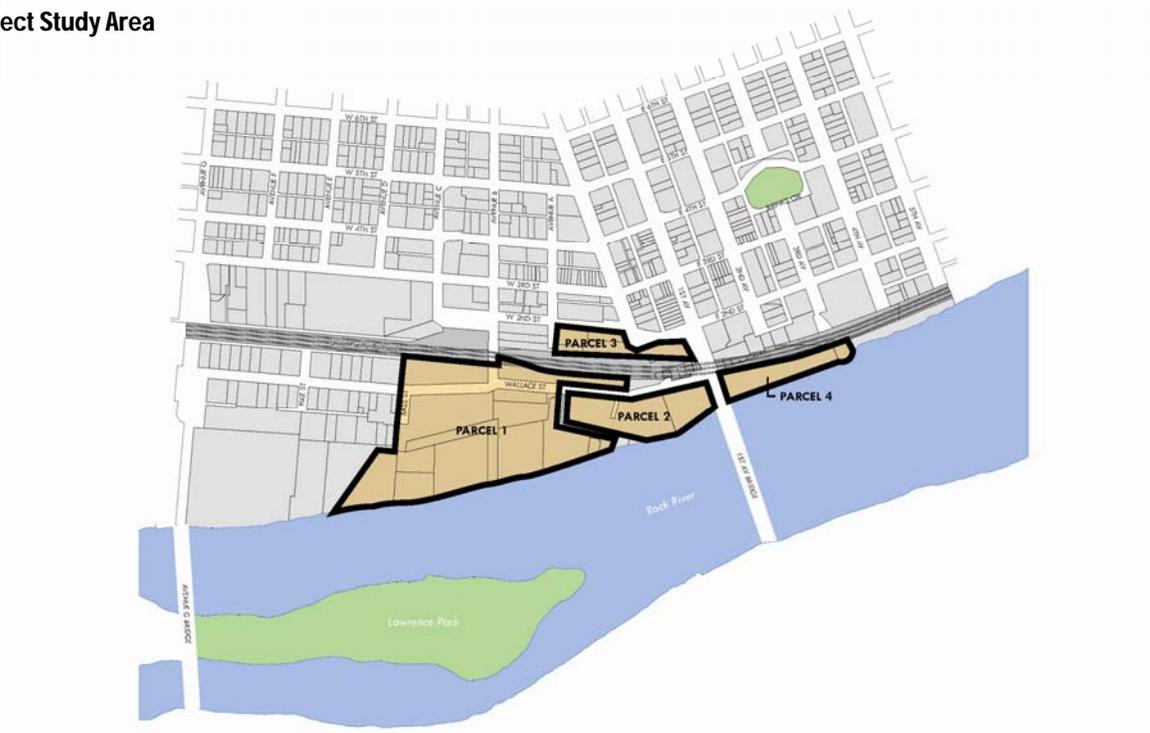
A visioning workshop was held with the Sterling community on January 11, 2011 at the Woodlawn Arts Academy. Approximately 30 people were in attendance and participated in the workshop.

The structure of the visioning workshop allowed for residents, business owners, elected and appointed officials and others to work together in creating a vision for the future of Sterling's Downtown and Riverfront areas. Attendees were divided into eight (8) breakout groups to create their visions. Each group was given a base map of the project study area, along with materials to help focus their discussions. The exercise encouraged groups to envision what could occur along the Riverfront and Downtown. Using the worksheets and suggested topic areas as guides, each group worked together to create their vision for what Sterling's Riverfront could become in the next 10-15 years. Each group's vision is summarized on the following pages.

Next Steps

Based upon the information obtained from this workshop and the results of previous public outreach activities and analysis, a vision will be written for Sterling's Riverfront area. Using this vision, specific goals and objectives will then be created for the City of Sterling Downtown Riverfront Redevelopment Plan.

Project Study Area





Group 1

Group 1 envisioned the riverfront to have a diverse mix of uses. Utilizing each of the materials provided at the workshop, the group identified park space, trails, residential, restaurants, public facilities and professional office space as desirable types of development with a two (2) story height limit. Heavy industrial uses and flea markets were identified as undesirable land uses.

On the former Lawrence Brothers, Inc. site, *Group 1* imagined multi-family residential with a trail along the Rock River. The trail was envisioned to continue east beyond the project study area, and west to the western edge of the Riverfront Redevelopment Sites. At this western edge, the group envisioned a bridge that would connect the trail to Lawrence Park. The group envisioned a second bridge to connect the park to Rock Falls on the south side of the river.

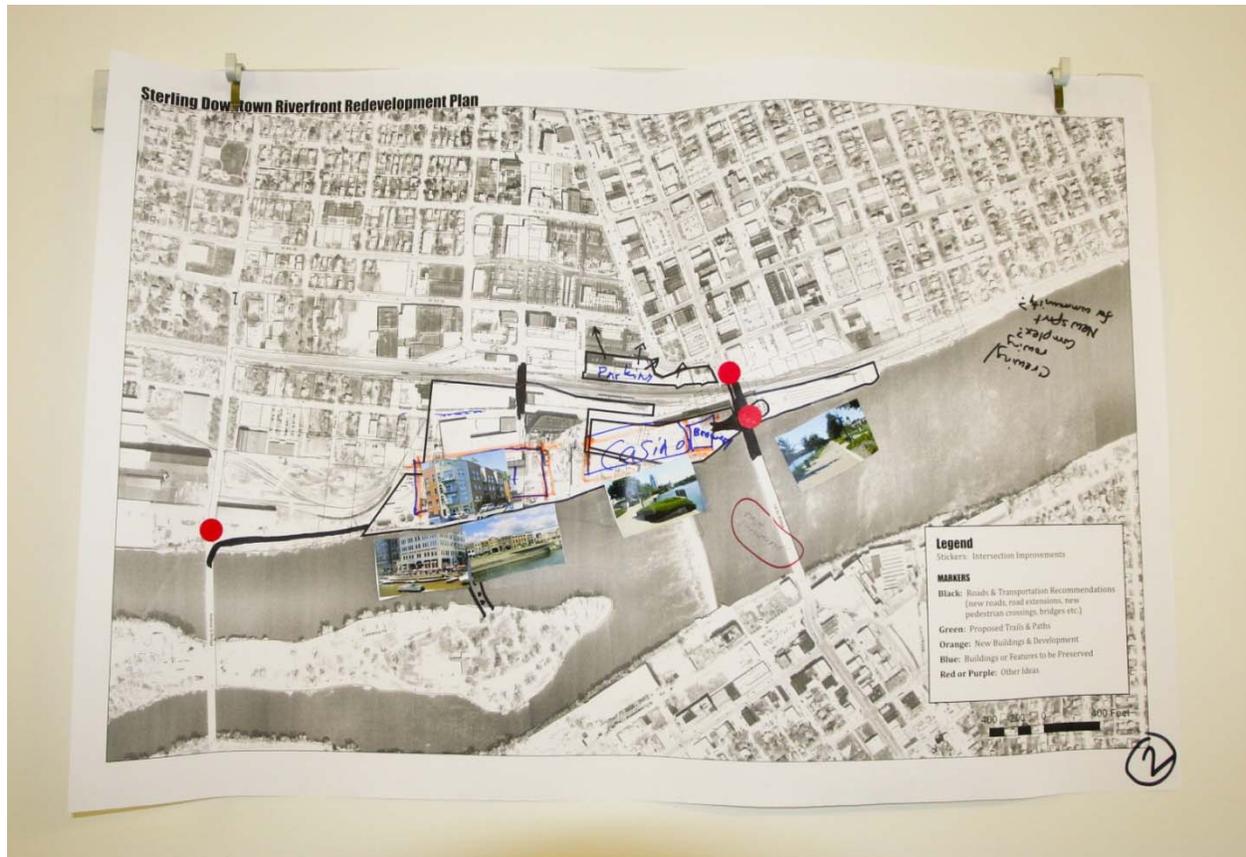
On Parcel 3, rebuilding the former train station was recommended in combination with constructing a new pedestrian bridge over the Union Pacific Railroad. Parking for the train station would be provided south of the tracks, requiring riders to utilize the new bridge if they parked in the designated lot.

On Parcel 2, *Group 1* envisioned preserving a portion of the National Manufacturing building and incorporating it into a mixed-use development with office space, restaurants, retail shops, condos and a brewery oriented towards both the riverfront and the 1st Avenue Bridge. These uses would be complemented with outdoor dining and a riverwalk.

Parcel 1 incorporated a variety of public uses including recreational amenities such as park space, a canoe/ kayak launch and a boardwalk with fishing piers. Public parking areas and a public stadium for sporting events and concerts were envisioned to occupy the majority of the site.

With regard to built form, *Group 1* appeared to desire a continuous building streetwall oriented towards the river, with attractive streetscaping and pedestrian amenities to enhance the character of the area.

Key improvements envisioned adjacent to the Riverfront Redevelopment Sites included converting Lawrence Park to a nature preserve, relocating the railroad facility to the west end of the redevelopment sites, and improving the back of Masonic Row. The intersections of 1st Avenue and Wallace Street, and Avenue B and the Union Pacific Railroad were identified for intersection improvements.



Group 2

Group 2 envisioned the future of Sterling's riverfront to be geared towards dining and entertainment. A casino, niche restaurants and a microbrewery were identified as desirable types of development, while tattoo parlors were identified as an undesirable use along the river.

Parcel 1 was identified for substantial redevelopment that involved removing all existing structures and building multi-story, mixed-use buildings with condos on upper floors and retail at the ground level. New development would maintain a continuous streetwall and be oriented towards the Rock River. Boat slips and or facilities for crew/rowing were recommended to further enhance the riverfront. In addition, a new pedestrian bridge connecting the site to Lawrence Park was identified. Furthermore, *Group 2* desired a new east-west road that would connect the site to Avenue G, as well as improvements to Avenue B where it crosses the railroad tracks.

Group 2 anticipated redevelopment on Parcel 2 to accommodate a microbrewery and a casino fronting the Rock River. Both uses would be visible from the 1st Avenue Bridge and the Rock River. In front of these uses and immediately adjacent to the river, the group envisioned a built-up riverwalk and retaining wall with landscaping and other streetscape amenities to create a pedestrian-oriented atmosphere.

The group identified parking as the predominant use for Parcel 3, and proposed replacing the Lawrence Brothers building on Parcel 4 with a riverwalk and park space.

Group 2 identified the intersections of 1st Avenue and Wallace Street, and 1st Avenue and Locust Street as priority locations for intersection improvements. Additionally, the group envisioned a new intersection on Avenue G just north of the shoreline. The group expressed interest in including additional pedestrian and bicycle amenities on the 1st Avenue Bridge as well.



Group 3

Group 3 expressed a desire for “white table cloth” restaurants, entertainment facilities, a festival area, and a Veterans Memorial on the Riverfront Redevelopment Sites. A continuous bike trail and lighted riverwalk were envisioned to extend along the length of riverfront as well.

Specifically, Group 3 identified Parcel 1 as a desirable location for usable park space. This park space would provide a venue for community festivals and a Veterans Memorial or statue garden. On the northern portion of the site, adjacent to the Union Pacific Railroad, the group expressed an interest in an office/business park with a campus-like setting.

Parcel 2 was planned to redevelop with multiple restaurants and bars with outdoor dining and a ferry that would bring riverfront patrons from these businesses to Lawrence Park and back again. The group identified a railroad and industry museum to be located on Parcel 3, and condos for young professionals on Parcel 4.

Priority intersections to be improved included 1st Avenue and Wallace Street, 1st Avenue and Locust Street, and Avenue B and the Union Pacific Railroad.

Lastly, Group 3 expressed a desire for a boutique hotel to be constructed on Lawrence Park, with an improved trail system around its perimeter.



Group 4

Group 4 identified a variety of uses believed to be desirable on Sterling's riverfront, including: sandwich/ice cream shops; small hotel with meeting rooms; something to recognize the City's industrial past, the significance of water power and the Union Pacific Railroad; adaptive reuse of existing buildings; and, a continuous multi-use trail system. The group identified fast food restaurants, manufacturing and athletic fields as undesirable uses.

Using the materials provided, *Group 4* outlined a vision for multi-family residential with an urban character on Parcel 2 and mixed-use development on Parcel 1. These developments would be complemented by a continuous riverwalk with pedestrian amenities and decorative landscaping extending westward from the 1st Avenue Bridge to the western border of the Riverfront Redevelopment Sites. A pedestrian bridge was identified to connect the riverwalk to Lawrence Park as well. In close proximity to the bridge, the group envisioned an improved canoe/kayak/paddle boat launch.

Group 4 identified the intersection of IL Route 40 and Wallace Street, and Avenue B as priority locations for infrastructure improvements. Additionally, a desire to preserve a portion of the National building where it fronts the Rock River was expressed.



Group 5

Group 5 identified the following uses as desirable riverfront developments: boutique hotel with a conference area; mixed-use buildings with residential units above commercial businesses, or dining establishments above commercial businesses; year-round park space with water amenities in the summer and an ice rink in the winter; a botanical/community garden; and, a central plaza surrounded by a museum “green” manufacturing to the west, residential and commercial to the east, and an open trail along the river. Group 5 indicated that an amphitheater and national retailers would be undesirable on the redevelopment sites.

In terms of transportation and infrastructure improvements, the group envisioned the installation of a new pedestrian bridge connecting the north shore of the Rock River to Lawrence Park, and a grade-separated pedestrian crossing across the railroad tracks at Avenue A. Improvements to the intersection of 1st Avenue and Wallace Street were recommended, in addition to improved access to Parcel 4.

In Group 5’s vision, a part of the Lawrence Brothers, Inc. building and a part of the National Manufacturing building were envisioned to remain, as well as the farmer’s market building on Parcel 3. A botanical/community garden was envisioned to take up the remaining available land on Parcel 3 to be in close proximity to Sterling’s Farmers Market.

Group 5 identified multiple underlying “themes” to be kept in mind as redevelopment occurs on the Riverfront Redevelopment Sites. Notable themes include: tying in old manufacturing buildings with new, unique boutiques; creating a “family-friendly” atmosphere with activities for people of all ages; incorporating water activities and recreation into the development; and, creating a “day or night” destination with jobs, public gathering places, outdoor dining, pedestrian amenities and an interactive museum. Specific elements from Group 5’s vision included using the National Manufacturing building and Lawrence Brothers building for upscale condos or event space, reserving space between new development and the Rock River for pedestrians (i.e. no parking lots fronting the river), and incorporating a boutique hotel into redevelopment on the National Manufacturing site.



Group 6

Group 6 developed a list of desirable development within Sterling’s Riverfront and Downtown areas, including: entertainment venues; fine arts facilities; destination retail; educational facilities; sit-down restaurants with riverfront dining; senior housing; and, mixed-use buildings. Fast food restaurants and high-tension power lines were identified as undesirable uses in the area. One of *Group 6*’s long-range recommendations was the construction of a passenger terminal at the southwest corner of Locust Street and 1st Avenue where Chicago Northwestern used to stop. In the interim, the site was envisioned to be maintained as park space.

Group 6 envisioned preserving both the Lawrence building and the National Manufacturing building, and converting them to mixed-use developments through adaptive reuse. Civic and educational facilities with complementary retail were recommended for the first and second floors, with condos or apartments located on upper floors.

Group 6 believed that a key component of Riverfront redevelopment should be improving vehicular and pedestrian circulation in the area by converting one-way streets to two-way streets. The group also desired improving north-south movement on Avenue B so that the Riverfront Redevelopment Sites are more easily accessible to vehicles. They envisioned Wallace Street as a “complete street” that is pedestrian, bicycle and vehicle friendly, and a grade-separated pedestrian crossing at Avenue B. Additionally, *Group 6* envisioned widening the 1st Avenue underpass as it travels below the Union Pacific Railroad.

Group 6 proposed a continuous multi-use trail to connect the Riverfront Redevelopment Sites to the Sinnissippi Dam on the east, and extend westward to Avenue G. The group recommended preserving the Lawrence Brothers building and tunneling the trail through the building to create an enclosed pedestrian arcade.

Key recommendations adjacent to the Riverfront Redevelopment Sites included constructing a high rise, age-restricted condo building on the northeast corner of West 2nd Street and Avenue B, and constructing a parking structure at the southwest corner of 2nd Avenue and 2nd Street. Grade-separated pedestrian crossings were recommended adjacent to each of these developments to allow pedestrians to cross the Union Pacific Railroad safely.



Group 7

Group 7 developed a list of desirable development within Sterling's Riverfront and Downtown areas that included: walkways and bike paths; multi-family residential; parks and open space; recreational amenities; amphitheater; children's museum/learning center; organic grocery store; butcher shop; coffee shop; and, specialty restaurants. The group felt the following types of development would be inappropriate on the riverfront: manufacturing; big box retail; large parking ramps; high-rise buildings; and, fast food restaurants.

Group 7 envisioned redevelopment of Parcel 4 to include a children's museum, restaurant and townhomes, and redevelopment of Parcel 3 to include a specialty grocer. The Farmer's Market building that currently exists on Parcel 3 is envisioned to remain. On Parcel 2, the group imagined a splash pad, coffee shops and historical museum with an area designated for boat rides and water activities. Parcel 1 is recommended to undergo substantial redevelopment as well, to allow for the construction of an outdoor amphitheater with open space around it, multiple restaurants and a nature center.

With regard to transportation and circulation, *Group 7* recommended the improvement of several intersections, and extending three Downtown streets into the Riverfront area. Intersections to be improved included: Wallace Street and 1st Avenue; 2nd Street and 1st Avenue; 3rd Street and Locust Street; 4th Street and Locust Street; and, 5th Street and Locust Street. Avenue C, Avenue A and 2nd Avenue were identified as new streets that should extend south over the Union Pacific Railroad, providing direct access to the Riverfront Redevelopment Sites.

Group 7 also envisioned a continuous multi-use trail and retaining wall along the entire length of the Rock River riverfront with a bridge connecting the redevelopment sites to Lawrence Park.

