TOWN OF NORMAL
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2040


Prepared by

115 East Washington Street, #M103
Bloomington, Illinois 61701

In cooperation with the

Town of
Normal

The preparation of this report was financed in part through a planning grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation: Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration.
Letter from the City Manager

To: Residents, Businesses, Employees, Visitors, and other Town of Normal Stakeholders
From: City Manager Mark Peterson
RE: Town of Normal Comprehensive Plan

10/2/2017

The document you are about to read is unlike anything I have seen in a municipal government career spanning more than 35 years, almost 30 of those years in the Administration of the Town of Normal.

The Town of Normal Comprehensive Plan 2040 is an exhaustive analysis of the current state of Normal, our identity, priorities, challenges, opportunities, and hopes for the future.

This robust document goes far beyond the traditional topics of “comp plans,” usually confined to strategies for land use, transportation, and the development of infrastructure. It does, I believe, an effective job of envisioning Normal in the year 2040, identifying the paths to that vision, and the potential problems we may encounter making the journey to it.

Such a comprehensive roadmap requires comprehensive outreach to the community’s stakeholders and we owe an enormous debt to those people whose names appear as members of our advisory groups on the first few pages. Their input and hard work has been invaluable.

They have mapped a journey to a future Normal that endeavors to create a Complete, Connected, yet Compact community:

- **Complete** in that it includes diverse and inclusive neighborhoods, streets, centers, and destinations of every kind.
- **Connected** physically, socially, and technologically in ways that ensure constant and multiple interactions within Normal and with our global society.
- **Compact** with a wide variety of all uses contained in a contiguous community with a minimum of sprawl.

I hope your consumption of the material herein stirs your passions as it has mine. I will be so very proud to see this plan adopted, pursued, and achieved.

Mark Peterson
City Manager
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ADVISORY GROUPS

Housing

Consulted with:
Regional Housing Study Steering Committee

Economic Vitality

Joe Cleary, Unit 5 Board, Vision Committee, and ISU
Mercy Davison, Town of Normal Planner
Mark DeKeersgieter, CIRBN Executive Director
Sally Heffernan, Economic Development Director
Andrew Huhn, Town of Normal Director of Finance
Dan Irvin, Town of Normal Director of Communications
Teri Legner, Town of Normal Director of IT
Kevin McCarthy, Council Member and PATH Performance Owner/President
Dimple Patel, Vision Committee
Mike Straza, Entrepreneur
Jennifer Swartout, Vision Committee

Consulted with:
Bob Broad, Normandy Village Owner
Bill Davison, U of I Extension
Sabrina Gosnell, CTC Senior Analyst and Technical Writer
Julie Hile, Normandy Village Owner
James Jones, ISU
Colleen Kannaday, Advocate BroMenn CEO/President
Dr. Peter Kaufman, ISU
Zina Murray, Logan Square Kitchen Incubator Owner/Operator
Melissa Nergard, ISU
Kathy Nyquist, New Ventures Advisors LLC Founder/Principal

Health

Holly Ambuehl, United Way
Kim Anderson, McLean County Wellness Coalition
Kim Barman, McLean County Health Department
Laura Beavers, McLean County Health Department
Tracy Bovee, Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor
Dale Brown, McLean County Wellness Coalition
Dayna Brown, Unit 5
Kerri Calvert, ISU
Cathy Coverston-Anderson, McLean County Health Department
Douglas Damery, Town of Normal Director of Parks and Recreation
Bill Davison, U of I Extension
Mercy Davison, Town of Normal Planner
Sally Gambacorta, Advocate BroMenn Medical Center
Daniel Handel, MCRPC Assistant Planner
Erin Kennedy, OSF Health Care
Brandi Kimball, Four Seasons Health Club
Jacqueline Lanier, ISU
Taylor Long, Town of Normal Associate Planner
Kimberly McClintic, OSF Health Care
Julie McCoy, District B7
Meredith Nelson, OSF Health Care
Vasu Pinnamaraju, MCRPC Executive Director
Karen Stipp, Vision Committee and ISU

Sustainability

Meg Anderson, Friends of the Constitution Trail
Joan Brehm, ISU
Gene Brown, Town of Normal Engineer
Michael Brown, EAC
Douglas Damery, Town of Normal Director of Parks and Recreation
Mercy Davison, Town of Normal Planner
Philip Dick, McLean County Director of Planning and Zoning
Ellen Dietz, Citizen
Melissa Dougherty-O’Hara, McLean County Planner
Patrick Dullard, Friends of the Constitution Trail
George Farnsworth, The Nature Conservancy Board of Trustees
Mike Hall, Citizen
Tom Haynes, ISU
Luke Hohulin, McLean County Assistant County Engineer
Taylor Long, Associate Planner
Mike McCurdy, Connect Transit Board of Trustees Chairman
Gretchen Monti, Greenways Committee
Jeanne Moonan, Greenways Committee
Nick Pershey, ISU
Vasu Pinnamaraju, MCRPC Executive Planner
Katie Simpson, City of Bloomington Planner
Michael Steffa, McLean County Director of Parks and Recreation
Randy Stein, BNWRD Executive Director
Drake Zimmerman, First Allied Financial Planner

Consulted with:
Jacqueline Kraft, McLean County SWCD
Melissa Nergard, ISU
ADVISORY GROUPS

Infrastructure

Consulted with:
Wayne Aldrich, Town of Normal Director of Public Works
Gene Brown, Town of Normal Engineer
John Burkhart, Town of Normal Director of Water
Mark DeKeersgieter, CIRBN Executive Director
Mick Humer, Town of Normal Fire Chief
Greg Troemel, Town of Normal Director of Inspections

Humanitarian and Social Aspects

Rickielee Benecke, LIFE CIL Advocacy and Advancement Director
Rick Bleichner, Town of Normal Chief of Police
Aidan Bovee, University High School Student
Jennifer Carrillo, YWCA
Brian Chase, Normal Public Library Director
Quincy Cummings, NAACP President
Mercy Davison, Town of Normal Planner
Laura DiMascio, North Normal Neighborhood Association
Lynda Duke, Vision Committee and ISU
George Gramm, Young America Realty Asset Manager
Phil Grizzard, Campus Religious Center Director
Marcia Hirst, University Influence Neighborhood
Vance Laine, Lincoln College
Carrie Mack, MCRPC Intern
Jennifer McDade, Vision Committee and State Farm
Vasudha Pinnamaraju, MCRPC Executive Director
Harriett Steinbach, ISU
Mary Strack, Jimmy John’s
Greg Troemel, Town of Normal Director of Inspections
Heather Wagner, Town of Normal
Tracy Widgren, Vision Committee

Consulted with:
John Davenport, ISU
Kelli Hill, HCC
Jim Hubbard, HCC
Amy Humphreys, HCC
Levester Johnson, ISU
Doug Minter, HCC
Janet Paterson, ISU
Rick Pierce, HCC
Padriac Shinville, HCC
Rob Widmer, HCC

Town and Gown

Mercy Davison, Town of Normal Planner
Laura DiMascio, North Normal Neighborhood Association
Lynda Duke, Vision Committee and ISU
George Gramm, Young America Realty Asset Manager
Phil Grizzard, Campus Religious Center Director
Marcia Hirst, University Influence Neighborhood
Vance Laine, Lincoln College
Carrie Mack, MCRPC Intern
Jennifer McDade, Vision Committee and State Farm
Vasudha Pinnamaraju, MCRPC Executive Director
Harriett Steinbach, ISU
Mary Strack, Jimmy John’s
Greg Troemel, Town of Normal Director of Inspections
Heather Wagner, Town of Normal
Tracy Widgren, Vision Committee

Consulted with:
Mike Mateja, “Not in our Town”
Marcos Mendez, Vision Committee and Conexiones Latinas
Dave Shields, Vision Committee
Kathy Steadman, Vision Committee
Karen Stipp, Vision Committee and ISU
Diane Zosky, ISU

Community Identity and Public Places

Joe Adelman, Unit 5
Wayne Aldrich, Town of Normal Director of Public Works
Shelleigh Birlingmair, Children’s Discovery Museum
Brian Chase, Normal Public Library Director
Quincy Cummings, NAACP President
Douglas Damery, Town of Normal Director of Parks and Recreation
Lynda Duke, Vision Committee and ISU
Patrick Dullard, Friends of the Constitution Trail
Cheryl Gaines, Collaborative Solutions Institute
Kyle Glandon, Workbench Architects
Paul Holsinger, Citizen
Crystal Howard, Bloomington-Normal Area Convention & Visitors Bureau
Jim Hubbard, HCC
Taylor Long, Town of Normal Associate Planner
Preethy Mathew, Citizen
Marcos Mendez, Vision Committee and Conexiones Latinas
Kari Sandhaas, Autism McLean
Chuck Scott, ISU
Dave Shields, Vision Committee
Joe Tulley, Uptown Normal
Introduction and Executive Summary
“We plan our work and we work our plan.”

—Mayor Chris Koos
Welcome to the Town of Normal Comprehensive Plan!

A Comprehensive Plan is a community’s core statement of development policy and principle. It establishes a vision for growth and development and addresses housing, infrastructure, recreation, transportation, and other topics that influence land use. In other words, the Comprehensive Plan helps us decide what we want our community to be in the future and figure out how to make it happen!

Beyond the straightforward aspects of a Comprehensive Plan—what land uses do we want in which locations—The Town of Normal Comprehensive Plan considers cultural needs, social equity, public health, resource efficiency, and the changing state of technology. This holistic approach is a direct result of feedback from community members, expressed during the outreach phase of the planning process, and a bold vision set forth by the mayor-appointed Vision Committee. With the commitment of Town leadership and a can-do community attitude, the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan will ensure that Normal remains a vibrant and vital place for future generations to call home.
Planning Context

Normal begins implementation of this comprehensive plan at a moment of uncertainty across social, political, and environmental backdrops. This uncertainty is found at multiple levels of society.

Nationally, the United States is experiencing social, economic and political divisions resulting from profoundly divergent views of governing. Clashes on fiscal policy stymie progress on infrastructure, regulatory enforcement and resource allocation. Environmental policy vital to the national interest is also affected by these divisions. Formerly stable government programs have ended or been radically altered.

In the wake of two years of budget crisis, State of Illinois obligations to local governments, social services, and the public remain unmet, and the state’s fragile financial condition is an ongoing challenge. Local government cannot rely on state funding, and must seek alternatives. The state’s financial situation damages the reputation of Illinois and hampers economic development initiatives.

In McLean County, local governments, educational institutions, not-for-profit organizations, and regional corporate and industrial enterprise are negatively affected by the state’s precarious finances. The challenges are compounded due to employment loss as a result of downsizing by one major employer and closure of another, as well as slowing of population growth and the housing market in the aftermath of the recession. In recognition of these challenges, a wide variety of public and private stakeholders, including area businesses, economic development organizations, and local governments, band together as BN Advantage to lay out a road map for economic development and identify target industry sectors most suited to the community.

The Town of Normal has a solid foundation for advancing Smart Growth policies and a national reputation for bold and innovative community development. This work continues with the full sanction of Town policy makers and under the capable guidance of Town staff. Normal is primed to benefit from the example of communities nationwide which, realizing that local resources must deliver more, have gained passage of referenda generating local revenue support for municipal services and capital investments. While the Town’s fiscal status continues in a recessionary pattern with reduced tax and utility revenues, the Town Council and staff pursue balanced solutions.
## COMMUNITY QUICK FACTS

### Demographic Profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Population in 2015</td>
<td>54,902</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Family Income</td>
<td>$85,643</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Age</td>
<td>23.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree</td>
<td>50.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Household Income</td>
<td>$52,102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>85.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Population doubled since 1970**

**Population is expected to grow by 13,800 people by 2040**

**Growth rate expected to be slower compared to previous decades**

### Housing Profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Housing Units</td>
<td>20,915</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Rent</td>
<td>$827</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg. Sale Price of a New Home</td>
<td>$304,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Ownership</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Home Value</td>
<td>$162,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Household Size</td>
<td>2.57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**5,500 more housing units will be needed to accommodate the new growth.**

**Normal has a potential to add nearly 4,000 new residential units through already-approved annexation agreements.**

### Other Facts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corporate Area in Square Miles</td>
<td>18.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lane Miles of Street</td>
<td>425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth in Area Since 1970</td>
<td>2.5 times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People per Square Mile</td>
<td>2,861</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miles of Constitution Trail</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fewer People per Square Mile Compared to 1970</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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1. U.S. Census Bureau 2010 Census
2. 2011–2015 American Community Survey
3. Bloomington-Normal Realtors Association 2016 data
4. Projections as published in the Town of Normal Community Snapshot and Outreach Report
5. Town of Normal Community Snapshot and Outreach Report

INTRODUCTION & EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 3
Planning Process

To succeed, a comprehensive plan needs:

- A **vision** generated by the people in the community and rooted in careful analysis of existing conditions, and
- A **clear course of action** to show how best to achieve the community’s vision.

This 24-month-long process involved three distinct phases as outlined in Figure 1. The *Community Snapshot and Outreach Report* and the *2040 Vision Report*, summarizing phase 1 and phase 2 respectively, were published in 2016. These documents are available on the plan website (www.planitnormal.com), Town of Normal website (www.normal.org) and the McLean County Regional Planning Commission’s website (www.mcplan.org).

Work conducted during the first two phases became the basis for phase 3. Several Advisory Groups met to identify goals, strategies, and actions pertinent to the *Vision Plan*. This phase ended with the creation of the *Comprehensive Plan*, which provides a clear course of action. Keep in mind that comprehensive plans are advisory in nature, and are implemented through the adoption of a zoning ordinance and map and other municipal codes conforming to this plan. However, by adopting a Comprehensive Plan, the Town is making a statement of official public policy and should therefore use the plan to guide development decisions.

**FIGURE 1: Phases of the Comprehensive Plan**

- **Phase 1**: Report titled *Community Snapshot and Outreach* published in April 2016
- **Phase 2**: Report titled *Town of Normal 2040 Vision* published in November 2016
- **Phase 3**: Report titled *Town of Normal Comprehensive Plan* (the current report) published October 2017

The plan is designed to be an action-oriented, living and breathing document. The three-ring binder format and the individualized alphanumeric page numbers for each chapter are designed to facilitate necessary amendments or additions to the document throughout its implementation.
Many members of the community contributed their voices, time, and talent to shape this Plan. The information below provides a quick snapshot of community involvement at various stages of the planning process.

**Community Outreach  JULY TO DECEMBER 2015**

Extensive outreach efforts, using both traditional and non-traditional methods and conducted over a period of 6 months, captured the voices of a diverse cross-section of the community. Many stakeholders, including several groups working with underrepresented or vulnerable demographics such as renters, low-income populations, and seniors, were interviewed to gain a holistic perspective of community issues.

- 1,718 Community Voices
- 27 Community Partners
- 12 Outreach Events
- 40 Stakeholder Interviews
- Many Public Presentations & News Articles

**Vision Committee  APRIL TO OCTOBER 2016**

The Town’s longstanding tradition of establishing a Vision Committee every five years was integrated into the comprehensive planning process. The Vision Committee appointed by Mayor Koos consisted of residents, entrepreneurs, community leaders, students, and other members of the workforce and the community at large who brought a range of perspectives and experiences. This group accepted the Community Snapshot and Outreach Report as their initial input, conducted additional surveys, and gathered additional data to establish a shared vision, core community values, and critical frameworks upon which to build. Their report, the Town of Normal 2040 Vision, was accepted by the Town Council in November 2016.

- 7 Meetings
- 25-Member Committee Appointed by the Mayor

**Advisory Groups  JANUARY TO JUNE 2017**

Many members of the community, including Vision Committee members, subject matter experts, and other interested individuals, participated in the Advisory Groups. The goals, strategies, and actions outlined in the Economic Vitality, Community Identity & Public Places, Town & Gown, Humanitarian & Social Aspects, and Health & Sustainability Elements were developed and vetted by these groups. The feedback provided by the Regional Housing Study Steering Committee was used to create the Housing Element, and Town staff with subject matter expertise in various infrastructure systems contributed their time and talent to inform the Infrastructure Element.

- 78 Advisors
- 7 Advisory Groups
- 21 Meetings
Foundations for Normal’s Future

The Town of Normal enjoys advantages not available to all communities. Key among these advantages is that there are few or no significant problems that must be addressed immediately. Thanks to this solid foundation, projects for the future involve building on its strengths and guiding future growth.

Normal’s current strategic advantages include:

- **Strong and appealing community identity**: Normal is often described as having a small-town feel with big-city amenities.

- **Solid community anchor in Illinois State University**: The university is the Town’s largest employer; the source of many of the Town’s residents, customers, and visitors; and a driver of innovation and economic development in the region.

- **Relatively young, well-educated population**: A relatively high percentage of ISU graduates choose to stay in the area as adult residents, and Normal also draws non-ISU-affiliated young talent from across the nation and the world.

- **History of economic stability**: Thanks to major employers and industries (e.g., education, healthcare, agriculture, and manufacturing), the Town has a history of economic strength even during difficult times.

- **History of rational, forward-thinking leadership rooted in careful planning and bold policymaking**: Multiple “generations” of Town mayors, Council members, city managers, staff, and others have negotiated, nurtured, and implemented a shared vision of what the Town could and should be while maintaining carefully balanced fiscal policies.

Like every community, the Town of Normal also faces serious challenges, both current and future. These include:

- **Changing fiscal fundamentals**
  - Declining revenues from sources like sales and utility taxes
  - Unstable state and federal support
  - Need to diversify the local economy rather than relying on a few major employers

- **Rapid technological developments**, which have so far largely left the public sector behind

- **Global environmental crises** like climate change

- **Changing demographics and social conditions**
Vision and Values

Guiding the Town’s planning efforts are several key commitments and values laid out in the Town of Normal 2040 Vision report. The report’s overall vision statement is: **We have a place for you in our vibrant, prosperous, and connected community.** Two major themes underpin the vision: **sustainability and technology.**

Vision 2040 identifies all three legs of sustainability—fiscal, social, and environmental—as critical aspects for the Town’s future. To achieve fiscal sustainability, the Town will continue to focus on infill and redevelopment, maintain existing assets in good condition, and seek innovative funding and financing mechanisms for governance. In pursuit of social sustainability, the Town will strive to be a great place to live, work, and play for residents of all backgrounds, income levels, and abilities. To maintain environmental sustainability, the Town will continue to be a leader in responding to climate change and working with, not against, our natural environment.

In the area of technology, the Vision Committee notes that while the direction of technological process is impossible to predict in granular detail, it is possible to identify several important themes with respect to how our society is currently changing and likely to continue changing over the coming years. Our lives will continue to become increasingly interconnected, affecting everything from personal telecommunications and entertainment to essential systems like transportation, education, and healthcare. As a society—and this is especially true of the public sector—we are still trying to understand and respond to the complex effects of these changes.

Vision 2040 positions the challenges and opportunities of technology and sustainability as positive rather than negative. Technological progress is inevitable and accelerating; local governments (and governments at all levels) are adapting to new fiscal realities; social systems are being re-examined, both for good and ill; and communities like Normal continue to lead in acknowledging the reality of climate change and other sweeping environmental shifts. We can either plan for these changes and determine how to take advantage of them, or we can allow them to overwhelm us, forcing us into a cycle of reactivity rather than proactivity. This report recognizes the coming challenges and presents plans to address them efficiently.
THE VISION for 2040

We have a place for you in our vibrant, prosperous, and connected community.

We aspire to go above and beyond Normal in:

1. **Engagement.** Ours is a resourceful and collaborative community that fuels civic engagement and inspires meaningful and generous contributions from residents of all walks of life.

2. **Economy.** Ours is an innovative and diverse economy in 2040 that has grown from what it was in 2016.

3. **Spaces.** Ours is an inter-related community visible through safe and accessible spaces that people love.

4. **Social equity.** Ours is a compassionate community that strives for social consciousness, responsiveness, and justice.

5. **Multiculturalism.** Ours is an inclusive and welcoming community that celebrates our unique and diverse backgrounds, identities, cultures, and talents.

6. **Lifelong learning.** Ours is an engaged and inquisitive community that encourages growth and supports lifelong learning.

7. **Creativity.** Ours is a creative community that promotes art and artists as an essential infrastructure and values art as a powerful process for bringing people—and ideas—together.

8. **Well-being.** Ours is an equitable health and wellness system, ensuring the healthy choice is the easy choice.
Planning Elements

The themes of sustainability (fiscal, social, and environmental) and technological advancement run through the seven planning “Elements” of this Comprehensive Plan. The key concepts of each of these Elements are summarized below.

Housing

Normal (like the surrounding region) is generally overbuilt and has more housing units than can be absorbed by 2020. Making matters more complicated is Normal’s potential to add nearly 4,000 new residential units through already-approved annexation agreements. These developments may add to the oversupply of single-family detached housing while increasing sprawl and associated infrastructure costs. Another potential challenge is affordability. Normal’s housing stock is reasonably priced for most people, but affordability remains a concern for certain populations, including recent graduates, young professionals, seniors on fixed incomes, people with disabilities, and low- to moderate-income households. The Town needs to close gaps between housing demand and supply by responding to changing demographics and through a commitment to smart growth. Core strategies include:

- Address a lack of housing that appeals to young professionals and empty nesters by ensuring that Town policies are set up to allow and encourage developers to respond adequately to the changing demands.
- Use regulations, incentives, and collaborative programming to help preserve and repurpose the existing housing stock, and to add affordable and supportive housing to the inventory.
- Support aging in place.

Health & Sustainability

Recognizing the ways in which the health of individuals and the natural environment are intertwined—and taking actions to improve both—has become one of the defining challenges not only for Normal, but for the entire global community.

This Element pushes the Town of Normal to consider health in all policies and continue to be a regional leader in environmental stewardship. These policies are driven by several key principles: a commitment to smart growth and sustainability; the value of a vibrant local food system; responsible stewardship of our natural resources; and fiscal sustainability. Key strategies in line with these principles include:
Encouraging compact infill development that places less strain on the natural environment and puts active modes of transportation on equal footing with driving.

Facilitating a vibrant local food system that takes advantage of Normal’s location in Central Illinois, one of the most productive agricultural regions in the world. A local food economy that produces fresh, healthy food and supports a network of businesses that tap into that resource and be an asset in reducing the region’s high obesity rate.

Protecting and enhancing open and green spaces to provide healthy recreation opportunities and make a positive environmental impact.

Promoting environmental sustainability in the built environment.

**Economic Vitality**

This Element outlines policies that position Normal to complement, and where appropriate to lead, economic development efforts in the spirit of BN Advantage. Vision 2040 notes that technology should be central to Normal’s approach to governance. To embrace innovation and build a stronger, more diverse economy, Normal should foster a rich entrepreneurial ecosystem rooted in the creative economy, small and local businesses, and a strong local food system.

As technology redefines every aspect of our society, Normal should:

- Become a Smart City with a thriving Information Communications and Technology (ICT) sector and an open, proactive acceptance of disruptive innovation; modernize its operations and services through smart urban systems; and enable community-wide connectivity through high-quality technology infrastructure.

It calls for the Town to play a key role in the development of an Innovation District centered on Illinois State University (ISU), Uptown Normal, and Advocate BroMenn, bolstered by major regional actors such as State Farm. As an exemplar of place-based economic development, this district would serve as a regional hub for the entrepreneurial community and a proving ground for civic technologies and innovation.

- Rethink its approach to planning and land use for its economic centers.

- Deploy sensible growth policies, tax and fee structures that are aligned with the Vision, more efficient service delivery, and innovative funding and financing mechanisms.
Community Identity & Public Places

Normal’s identity is defined by a culture of lifelong learning; agricultural roots; family-friendly neighborhoods; a wealth of arts and entertainment amenities; a forward-thinking and sustainable approach to community development; and a vibrant and prosperous twin city. This Element calls for the Town to celebrate its culture and history and use its public spaces as canvas to preserve and enhance its sense of place.

Key strategies include:

■ Protect and promote Normal’s rich history.
■ Encourage compact, mixed-use development, thoughtful and distinctive architecture, human-focused design, and the incorporation of public art, to create multifunctional public spaces with a strong sense of place.
■ Embrace and celebrate cultural diversity through events and programming and urban design in the public realm.
■ Foster community engagement and leadership.

Humanitarian & Social Aspects

In an age of increasing diversity and rising inequality, the Town must reaffirm its commitment to the core values, established in Vision 2040, of social equity and multiculturalism. This Element attempts to translate that commitment into policy.

The Town of Normal can take a number of steps to ensure equal opportunity for all of its residents. It can effect change directly through internal policies, local ordinances, public-private partnerships, and intergovernmental agreements; or pursue less direct means of influence such as education and advocacy and facilitating collaboration among third parties such as human service nonprofits, higher education institutions, Unit 5 schools, and other local governments. This Element proposes:

■ Building awareness, understanding, and empathy for people of all backgrounds, circumstances, and abilities.
■ Fostering informal multicultural interactions.
■ Considering the needs of all residents when designing public places and programming.
■ Achieving equitable outcomes in law enforcement and the legal system.
■ Reducing economic inequality and promoting opportunity for all residents through inclusive economic development efforts, support for public and private human service providers in Bloomington-Normal, provision of a greater supply of affordable and supportive housing, support for equitable transportation options, and pursuit of “Compassionate City” initiatives that use technology to address social disparities.
Normal is a college town. Higher education institutions shape Normal’s economy and culture in myriad ways, both direct and indirect. Likewise, the desirability of the Town, is an important factor in the success of these institutions.

Normal and its higher education institutions have a long history of working together. Both Town & Gown can and should expand their coordinated efforts. This plan calls for:

- Enhanced policy- and staff-level cooperation with respect to workforce and economic development, fostering innovation and entrepreneurship, and improving community engagement on Town-Gown issues.

- Increased collaboration in land use planning and development, particularly in the area in and around ISU’s campus—referred to here as the University Influence Zone (UIZ)—where the university has its greatest impact on land use.

The UIZ, defined for the first time in this plan, encompasses ISU’s campus and properties, the portion of the Main Street corridor that runs along the campus; and the neighborhoods adjacent to the campus. This plan calls for the Town and ISU to work together in the UIZ to enhance the public realm, promote smart growth, and strike a balance between supporting the student population and protecting the traditional character of the neighborhoods surrounding the campus.

The Town of Normal has largely kept ahead of the national curve in keeping its infrastructure in good condition. However, the Town faces many of the same difficulties as other communities, including rising costs; decreasing physical space for infrastructure in all three dimensions; large ongoing maintenance commitments resulting from decades of sprawl; and the disruptive effects of new technologies.

The Town must be prepared to meet these challenges by:

- Preserving existing systems in good condition. Future growth must be prioritized by infrastructure availability. This is the key principle for long-term fiscal sustainability of the community.

- Maintaining and developing systems at a high standard, giving special attention to connectivity, both technologically and multi-modally.

- Increasing coordination between a complex web of public and private entities that own and operate infrastructure systems and the agencies that manage them, and anticipating changes on multiple fronts.

- Anticipating and managing change.
Planning Framework

The Planning Framework is a new approach to land use planning. In recent years, Normal has earned a distinctive reputation based on its embrace and pursuit of sustainable strategies for growth. Based on the bold vision set forth by the 2040 Vision Report and the goals established in the seven planning Elements described above, the Planning Framework calls for development and land use that moves the Town of Normal closer to being a complete, connected, and compact community.

**Complete . . .**

- With **neighborhoods** that provide a variety of housing choices, at various price points, to welcome residents of all backgrounds.
- With **streets** that support healthy and active lifestyles by promoting walking, biking and transit. Street vistas will capitalize on building design, scale, architecture, and proportionality to create interesting visual experiences and make every place unique and enjoyable.
- With vibrant and thriving **centers** of all sizes that serve as neighborhood destinations and employment nodes.

**Connected . . .**

- **Physically**, with neighborhoods connected to each other and to centers, providing convenient access to grocery stores, quality public schools, parks, and neighborhood commercial areas. An interconnected network of streets, sidewalks, and trails will make walking, biking and access to transit easy for all people.
- **Socially**, with gathering places—like streets, parks, front porches, coffee shops, ice cream parlors—that create informal opportunities to meet, get together, and socialize with neighbors.
- **Technologically**, with connected urban systems that deliver services more efficiently to the Town’s neighborhoods and centers. Ubiquitous access to high speed, affordable and secure broadband will empower our residents, businesses, and institutions to thrive in this 21st century economy.

**Compact . . .**

- With **dense development and a mix of uses** that support safe and convenient access to a variety of destinations by any mode of transportation, while contributing positively to fiscal and environmental sustainability.
The Planning Framework represents a slightly different approach to land use planning by grouping Normal’s geographies into three broad categories—Neighborhoods, Centers, and Corridors. These are further broken down into smaller places types. Neighborhood place types are distinguished according to when they were built—Old, Early Suburban, New/Future Neighborhoods or the influence on them—University Influence Neighborhoods; Centers are classified according to their scale and the geographic area they serve—Neighborhood, Local, Regional and Town Center; and Corridors are sorted according to functions—Transportation, Cultural, or Natural Corridors.

This approach is a deviation from the past where land was divided by individual use, such as low-density residential, medium-density residential etc. This new approach allows the Town to take into account unique characteristics, needs, and assets of each “Place Type” and provides a more intuitive, flexible rubric by which to shape future development. This Framework is further supported by a growth prioritization map that takes into account the availability of existing infrastructure and the goals outlined in the Elements Section to prioritize land developments into three tiers—1, 2, and 3.

The Planning Framework also provides a system for quantifying the status quo and moving methodically toward the goals of the Plan. This approach makes the new Plan a more intuitive, more flexible resource than past comprehensive plans, while also maintaining clear, firm principles to guide future planning.
Implementation

A great deal of time, effort, and expertise went into developing the Town of Normal Comprehensive Plan. Putting the plan into action will take even more time, resources and effort.

We urge readers to keep this in mind as they read and work from the Plan: The Plan is intended to serve the Town for twenty years. The Town—both its leaders and its citizens—should approach the Plan in five-year “blocks.” The Plan sequences and prioritizes actions and geographies for Town decisions based on the vision and the goals set forth in the Plan. For example, areas designated as Future Neighborhoods or Centers should further be read in conjunction with the growth priorities map, Map 2, that takes into account available infrastructure and annexation status. Several actions are denoted with a “(Q)” at the end to indicate that they are quick wins.

It is also worth noting that while the Plan is comprehensive in its scope, it is inherently limited in its specificity. In many cases, further prioritization and planning on specific topics or geographies will be necessary to carry out this plan’s general recommendations. The Town should integrate the recommendations of this plan into planning, budgeting, and capital improvement process of all its departments. The Town should work towards aligning regulations and incentives to move the goals of this plan forward.

The vision and aspirations of this plan are far bigger and deeper than what the Town government can accomplish alone. The Town should invite everyone—other public agencies, educational institutions, not-for-profit organizations, the private sector, and citizens—to be partners in realizing the plan. Planning and collaborating with these other organizations will be critical not just for this plan but for the success of regional economic development efforts like BN Advantage that are heavily reliant on the quality of place.

The recommendations in this Plan depend upon and result from extensive data gathering. Likewise, many of the strategies and actions recommended here emphasize the importance of collecting even more high-quality data to track progress and guide future decisions.

The planning values of sustainability, diversity, and responsibility are old-fashioned, conservative values applied through fresh thinking and bold policy. These are the values and strategies that will provide sound, smart growth to the Town of Normal to the benefit of current and future generations.
Tier 1
- Annexed - Vacant Parcels (~1,600 Acres)
- Annexed - Redevelopment Opportunities
- Unincorporated Area With Existing Services (~900 Acres)

Tier 2 (~350 Acres)

Tier 3 (~1000 Acres)

Future

East Side Highway

MAP 2: Growth Priorities