



# Chapter 6

## Environment and Design

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The City of Elkhart has many different features that have shaped how it has developed over time. Most of these features have a positive impact on the City and have been areas of strengths the City has built upon. Many of these features can be categorized as “environmental” in nature and would include brownfield sites, historic districts, parks, floodplains, and landfills. Features such as brownfield sites, historic districts and other open or green space and vacant lots within the City offer the community the ability to shape a design framework that focuses redevelopment to the core of the city.

The focus of this chapter is to highlight the strategies for using key environmental assets to promote economic development and encourage redevelopment of brownfield sites, propose a strategy for additional greening and open space within the city and provide a framework for future urban design in the City.

## Existing Conditions

The City has many assets that will continue to play a part in the growth management and redevelopment of key areas of the City. In some places, these environmental assets have limited development while others have been strengths to spur on redevelopment. What is apparent over time is that the growth trend of the city has continued to expand outwardly while the population and job base has shrunk during one of the greatest economic recessions. Therefore, the City of Elkhart must have a strategy that incorporates its environmental strengths to stabilize the City and provide opportunities for redevelopment. The environmental and design strengths in the City are both organic and policy based decisions. These include parks, rivers, riverwalk, historic districts and structure, education, and cultural activities. Each of these elements will play a role in future economic development.

## Parks

The City of Elkhart has a Parks Department which manages the City's more than 30 park facilities that range in size from small pocket-parks to regionally serving recreation attractions. A five year park master plan exists for the City for the period of 2009 to 2013. The existing park system offers residents and visitors a wide variety of activities including passive recreation opportunities such as walking trails/paths, fishing, picnicking and horseshoe courts. Active recreational opportunities include multiple playgrounds, basketball courts, ball diamonds, soccer fields, a water park, and ice skating. Within the city limits the current inventory of park land covers approximately 300 acres. The City has a population of approximately 51,000 people in 2010 and based on the National Recreation and Parks Association's standard of approximately 10 acres of park land per 1,000 people, the City of Elkhart is deficient

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in park space. However, as shown on the corresponding map, the parks are well dispersed throughout the City to serve the population. Some of the major parks and their facilities include:

### American Park

American Park is a 13-acre area located on the banks of the Elkhart River. The park is located near the central business district and offers fishing, picnic tables, grills, benches and an outdoor picnic shelter. This partially wooded area is very popular for family picnicking and fishing. Since the facility is located adjacent to Elkhart Central High School, it is also a popular area for high school students after school.

### Baker Park

Baker Park is a 10-acre facility on the Elkhart River across from Studebaker Park. While Baker Park is a fairly passive wooded facility, it has one ball diamond and playground. Picnic facilities and fishing are the most popular activities in the park. During the high

Elkhart Parks	
1.	American Park
2.	Baker Park
3.	Beardsley Park
4.	Boot Lake
5.	Bristol St Park (future)
6.	Burton-Upon-Trent
7.	Edgewater Park
8.	Central Park
9.	Environmental Center
10.	Franklin St Landing
11.	FOP Youth Park
12.	Gans Park
13.	Hayden Park
14.	High Dive Park
15.	Ideal Beach
16.	Island Park
17.	Langle Park
18.	Lundquist-Bicentennial Park
19.	Martin's Landing
20.	McNaughton Park
21.	Pierre Moran Park
22.	Pinewood Park
23.	Pulaski Park
24.	Riverwalk
25.	River Greenway
26.	Riverview Park
27.	Stiver Park
28.	Studebaker Park
29.	Tolson Park
30.	Ullery Park
31.	Walker Park
32.	Weston Park
33.	Willowdale Park
34.	Woodlawn Park
35.	Kardzhali Park
36.	Wellfield Trails

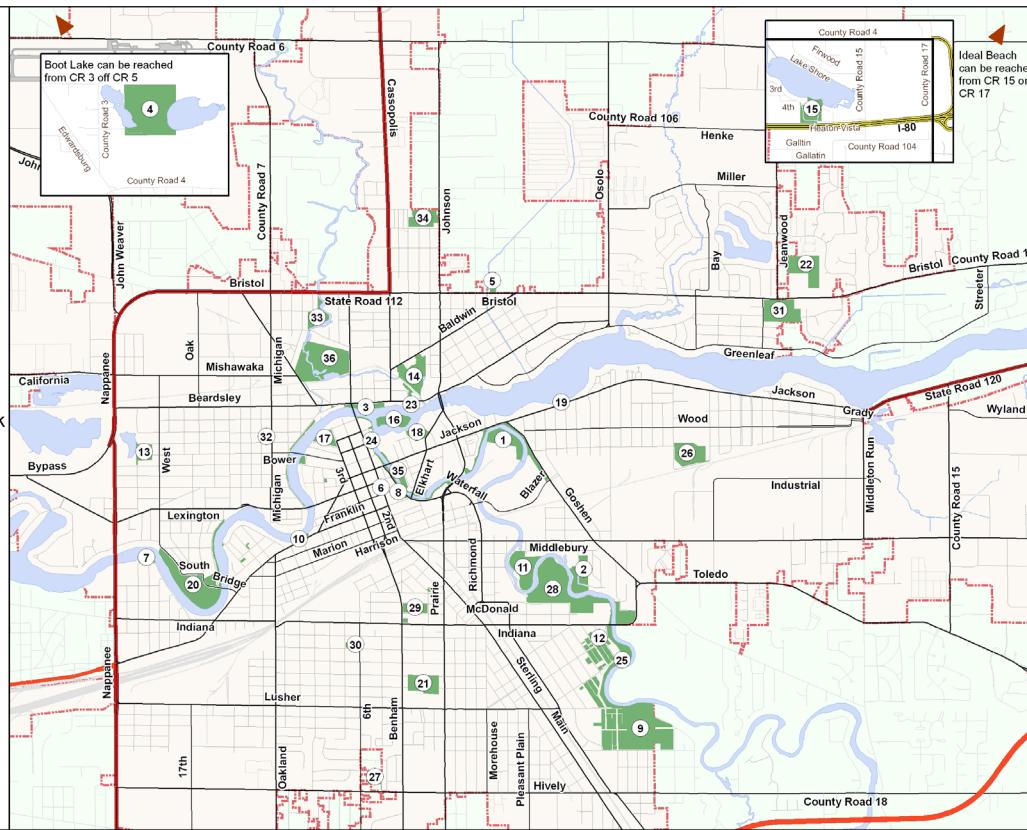


Figure 6.1: Elkhart Parks

water periods of the year, a great deal of the park is under water; therefore, major facility construction is not advisable.

### **Edgewater Park**

An anonymous donor donated this one-acre site on the St. Joseph River to the Department. The park includes a boat launch area, parking and accessible fishing platforms.

### **Elliot Park**

This park is currently closed. The City is in the process of determining the future use of this property. Although it is outside of the City corporate boundary, this property could be a key redevelopment opportunity.

### **Hayden Park**

Hayden Park is a 9-acre park site located in a municipal water department pumping site. It is one of the first areas to be jointly utilized by two city departments. A gazebo and accessible fishing pier are available for use.

### **High Dive Park**

High Dive Park is a 14.6-acre site located on Christiana Creek. It is one of the most unique facilities in the system. In the mid 1900's, it was developed as a private facility which included swimming and other amusements such as a museum, zoo, water toboggan, concessions and a giant windmill. The site contains three ponds which are no longer open for swimming. The Elkhart Art League and the Park Department utilize the buildings on the site. Currently, the facilities located in the park include: four lighted tennis courts, Elkhart Art League facilities, playground area, picnic area, lookout tower and abundant fishing in the site's three ponds.

### **Island Park**

Island Park is Elkhart's oldest and most scenic park. The 7-acre island is located in the downtown area at the junction of the Elkhart and St. Joseph Rivers. The island is accessible by three footbridges. Island Park is the central park in the downtown development area. Facilities available in this park include: playground area, bandstand, open air shelter, trail, exercise course, artisan well, picnic area and fishing at any point around the island. Rhapsody in Green and Island of Blues Festivals occur during June and August in Island Park.

### **Ideal Beach Family Water Park**

This 14-acre parcel on Heaton Lake is accessible via Heaton Vista Road and County Road 15, one mile west of the County Road 17 Toll Road interchange. The Ideal Beach Family Water Park has a large double water slide, a wading pool for toddlers, a miniature golf course, horseshoe courts, sand volleyball courts, a concession

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building, a changing building, numerous picnic tables, ample parking and playground equipment. It is outside of the City corporate boundary.

#### **Langle Park**

Langle Park is a 5-acre site which was originally purchased and developed by the City's Community Development Department. After the site was developed, the property was given to the Park and Recreation Department. The site features two tennis courts, playground, basketball court, and rest rooms.

#### **Lundquist-Bicentennial Park**

Located on the south bank of the St. Joseph River, this 5.6- acre park site has developed into a very popular segment of the Elkhart Park System. Footbridges that connect Lundquist-Bicentennial, Pulaski, High Drive and Island Parks have led to the area's increased popularity. Facilities available include rest rooms, picnic facilities, walking/ jogging trails, and fishing. The annual city festival, "Rhapsody in Green," is held each June at Lundquist Bicentennial, High Dive and on the island. Approximately 50,000 people attend the three-day event each year. The Elkhart YMCA complex is adjacent to the park, which has helped develop this area and Riverwalk into the most popular jogging area in the community. Lundquist Bicentennial Park is a fully irrigated facility making its lawn areas and flower beds very scenic throughout the summer and early fall.

#### **McNaughton Park**

McNaughton Park is a 25-acre site located on the St. Joseph River. McNaughton Park is the city's most popular park. Facilities in this park include: six lighted tennis courts, picnic areas, lighted horseshoe courts, lighted softball diamond, two boat launches, spray park, indoor pavilion and a bandshell. The spray park is the most recent addition which opened in 2007. The bandshell is home to the Elkhart Municipal Band on Tuesday nights from June to August. The bandshell and pavilion are available for rental year round. Band concerts are performed throughout the summer at the bandshell. The Department operates a playground program each summer for seven weeks.

McNaughton Park is located adjacent to Elkhart General Hospital which utilizes the facility throughout the year. In the event that an emergency patient from the hospital needs fast transportation to another facility, the lighted ball diamond serves as a landing pad for helicopters. Patients visit the park facilities on a regular basis. The facilities in the park are fully accessible.

## NIBCO Water & Ice Park

Nibco Water & Ice Park opened in 2007, adjacent to the Riverwalk. The facility includes ice-skating in the winter time and open green space and a spray park for youth throughout the rest of the year. Concessions and a restroom building augment the ice skating rink facility.

## Pierre Moran Park

Pierre Moran Park is a 9-acre site offering a wide variety of recreational opportunities. Located in the south central section of the city, this park provides service to the most heavily populated area of the city. The park is adjacent to the Pierre Moran Middle School and Roosevelt Elementary, which allows the schools to utilize the park facilities for many of the physical education classes throughout the year.

Facilities available at Pierre Moran Park include: a new pool with a water slide and zero depth entry, renovated restrooms and concessions, two lighted softball diamonds, skateboard park, indoor pavilion utilized park in the community. All areas of the park are fully accessible. The new pool opened in the summer of 2008.

## Pinewood Park

Pinewood Park is a 16-acre school park site adjacent to Pinewood Elementary School on the northeast side of the city. The site features a trail system, wooded areas, four tennis courts and shared school playground.

## RiverWalk

The Riverwalk is the hub of the trail system that meanders along the Elkhart River to the St. Joseph River connecting various parks, green spaces, and rivers. The Riverwalk incorporates various scenic footbridges, overlooks, a memorial, art, wi-fi and interpretive signage to provide a variety of experiences along this trail'.

## Riverview Park & Softball Complex

Riverview Park is a 15- acre school park site which contains rest rooms, concession stand, and playground area. Riverview is the location of one of the ten yearly playground sites operated by the Department. The Martin Skate Park has been very successful. The sports complex which has four lighted softball fields is home to several tournaments throughout the spring, summer and fall months.

**Studebaker Park**

Studebaker Park is a 39-acre site featuring a softball diamond, two tennis courts, playground area, indoor pavilion, picnic area, soccer field, and river trails. Fishing in the Elkhart River, which runs between Studebaker and Baker Parks, offers excellent opportunities. Studebaker Park is adjacent to Mary Beck Grade School, which uses the park facilities throughout the year. The City's maintenance and ground's complex is located-in this park.

**Tolson Park**

Tolson Park is 5.37-acres and located along Benham Avenue. Tolson Park is also home to Tolson Center. The park has six lighted basketball courts, volleyball court, baseball diamond, youth soccer field and indoor gymnasium. Tolson Center continues to be a major hub of educational and recreational activity in the south-central part of Elkhart.

**Walker Park**

Located on the far northeast side of the city, Walker Park has added much needed acreage to the system in an area where additional park facilities are currently at a minimum. The park has been developed to include a walking trail, play area and parking. This park is recognized by the Department as having the most of use for a passive park in Elkhart.

**Weston Park**

Weston Park is a 1.63-acre park located on Michigan Avenue. Facilities include gazebo, playground and picnic benches. The park was developed on the site of the old Weston School building.

**Willowdale Park**

Willowdale Park is a 6.5-acre site located on Christiana Creek on the north central side of the community. Facilities available in the park include an indoor pavilion, restrooms, softball diamond, fishing and basketball. This park has one of the department's most popular supervised playground locations in the city which is a part of the summer program. All of the facilities in the park are fully accessible.

**Woodlawn Park**

Woodlawn Park is a 10-acre facility located on the northeast side of the community. The site features a large wooded area with a trail system and a year-round nature center. The park is utilized as an educational center for scouting and school groups. Volunteers provide all programming and activities at the Center.

## Other Recreation Facilities

In addition to the above mention parks, the City of Elkhart's recreational needs are met through a variety of additional groups and facilities. Citizens may utilize programs and facilities offered by the City and Elkhart County's Park's Department. Some of these other facilities include:

- Beardsley Park
- Boot Lake Nature Preserve
- Bristol St. Park (Future)
- Burton-upon-Trent Park
- Environmental Center
- Franklin Street Landing
- F.O.P. Park
- Gans Park
- Martin's Landing
- Pulaski Park
- River Greenway
- Ullery Park

## Rivers & Floodplain

The City of Elkhart has two rivers that intersect downtown. The St. Joseph and Elkhart rivers provide opportunities for transportation, active and passive water recreation, riverfront development, and unique aesthetic features. The St. Joseph River is a navigable waterway that extends between Baw Beese Lake in Hillsdale, Michigan, and Lake Michigan near St. Joseph and Benton Harbor, Michigan. The Elkhart River is a slow-moving waterway that is largely not navigable and extends between Noble/LaGrange County and Elkhart, where it empties into the St. Joseph River. In addition to commercial and residential development, riverfront park and open space featuring recreation and public access to the water is common along both rivers throughout Elkhart.

As shown on the "Existing Environmental and Design Conditions" map, the larger of the two rivers is the St. Joseph River which flows from east to west through the downtown. Residential properties along the St. Joseph remain highly sought after whether as ordinary resales or as sites destined for teardown of aging homes and construction of larger homes. The smaller is the Elkhart River which flows from the southeast into downtown and intersects

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with the St. Joseph River at the north end of downtown. Over the past ten years much redevelopment has occurred along the Elkhart River; new office buildings, restaurants, the RiverWalk, and the NIBCO Water and Ice Park are examples of recent projects.

There are a number of small tributaries that flow into the St. Joseph River. Cobus Creek, Christiana Creek, Baugo Creek, Yellow Creek, Pine Creek, and Puterbaugh Creek all flow into the St. Joseph River. Many of these water bodies provide desirable settings for both residential and commercial development.

Adjacent to many of the waterways are floodplains as delineated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). These floodplains serve several functions. For example they store flood waters during flood events, recharge groundwater aquifers, and act as a habitat for wildlife. The current boundaries of the local floodplains have been delineated by new maps that the City adopted in August 2011. Two neighborhoods partially situated in a floodplain are a northwest area including portions of streets Jefferson, Moody, North Fifth, North Sixth and a southeast area including portions of streets Arch, Folsom, Elgin, York and Huron.

#### **RiverWalk**

The RiverWalk, which is part of the greater Elkhart park system links many downtown amenities. The RiverWalk begins on the north at Pottawattomie Drive adjacent to the Elkhart River and proceeds south past the intersection of Elkhart Avenue. This project has spurred interest in redevelopment along the river and offers pedestrians a chance to experience the river through various outlook points and footbridges. The RiverWalk also acts as a connector to the county wide trail system that offers a multi-use path for pedestrians and bicyclists.

#### **Overlay Districts**

Currently the zoning ordinance prescribes seven overlay districts that may have a major impact on the visual, physical and functional character of the City. The established districts are Cassopolis Street from Bristol Street to the north city limits, Main Street from Lusher Avenue to the south city limits, Nappanee Street from Bristol Street to the south city limits, Bristol Street from Nappanee Street to 600 feet east of Osolo Road, County Road 6 between the east and west city limits, Johnson Street from the St. Joseph River to Bristol Street, County Road 17 between the north and south city limits, and the Riverwalk overlay district. The City has developed specific zoning requirements that regulate land uses and provide for higher design standards. With these overlay districts, a greater level of review is needed regarding specific site elements as well as façade and roof design elements for the structure.

## Historic Districts & Structures

Elkhart has three districts listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The State-Division Historic District, the Elkhart Downtown Commercial District and the Beardsley Avenue Historic District. There are also 10 individual structures listed on the National Register.

*State – Division Street Historic District.* The State – Division Street Historic District is located southeast of downtown. The district is bounded generally by Main Street to the west, the Norfolk Southern Rail Road to the south, Waterfall Drive to the north and Monroe Street to the east. The majority of the homes were built between the 1860's through the 1930's with a mix of architectural styles ranging from Italianate and Italianate influenced vernacular dwellings, a variety of Queen Anne derived houses, to Craftsman influenced Foursquares and bungalows. The majority of structures are frame construction with a number of brick dwellings. This neighborhood still retains its brick streets with some original limestone curbing.

*Elkhart Downtown Commercial District.* The Elkhart Downtown Commercial runs the length of Main Street from Jackson Boulevard to the Norfolk Southern Rail Road south of State Street at Main Street. The structures were built from approximately 1868 to the 1930's with most buildings built to a height of three stories. The styles of architecture found here range from Italianate, Queen Anne and Classic Revival with many of the buildings retaining the original limestone facade. Many of the buildings have a modernized first floor but many have retained the original detail stone work and period window design on the upper floors. The district boasts the Lerner Theatre, which is also a local historic landmark. The district also contains two buildings designed by local architect E. Hill Turnock; the former YWCA located on West Lexington Avenue and the former Water Company Building located on South Main Street.

*Beardsley Avenue Historic District.* The Beardsley Avenue Historic District is north of downtown. The district, which includes homes fronting along Beardsley Avenue, is bounded approximately by Edwardsburg Avenue to the west and Montessori Drive at the east. The district also includes two city parks which rest along the St. Joseph River; Island and Beardsley Parks. The district contains some 43 structures which were built from the 1840's through the 1940's. Many of the homes are of the Prairie Style with Mediterranean and Neoclassical elements. Other homes in the district are Queen Anne and Gothic Revival style. The district is named after Havilah Beardsley, the founder of Elkhart. His home is located within the district and is designed in the Italianate style. The district also contains a magnificent home that is locally and Nationally Registered known as Ruthmere. This Beaux Arts styled

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home was once owned by the descendants of Havilah Beardsley and is now preserved as a house museum.

Historic resources are significant to the identity of any community. Keeping historic resources eligible for listing is important to the character of the community. Many other structures and potentially other districts within the city may be eligible for the National Register. Currently, there are no local guidelines for two of the three districts, only the State – Division District has guidelines because of its local landmark designation status. Consideration should be given to the development of guidelines to preserve the character of the structures within these districts.

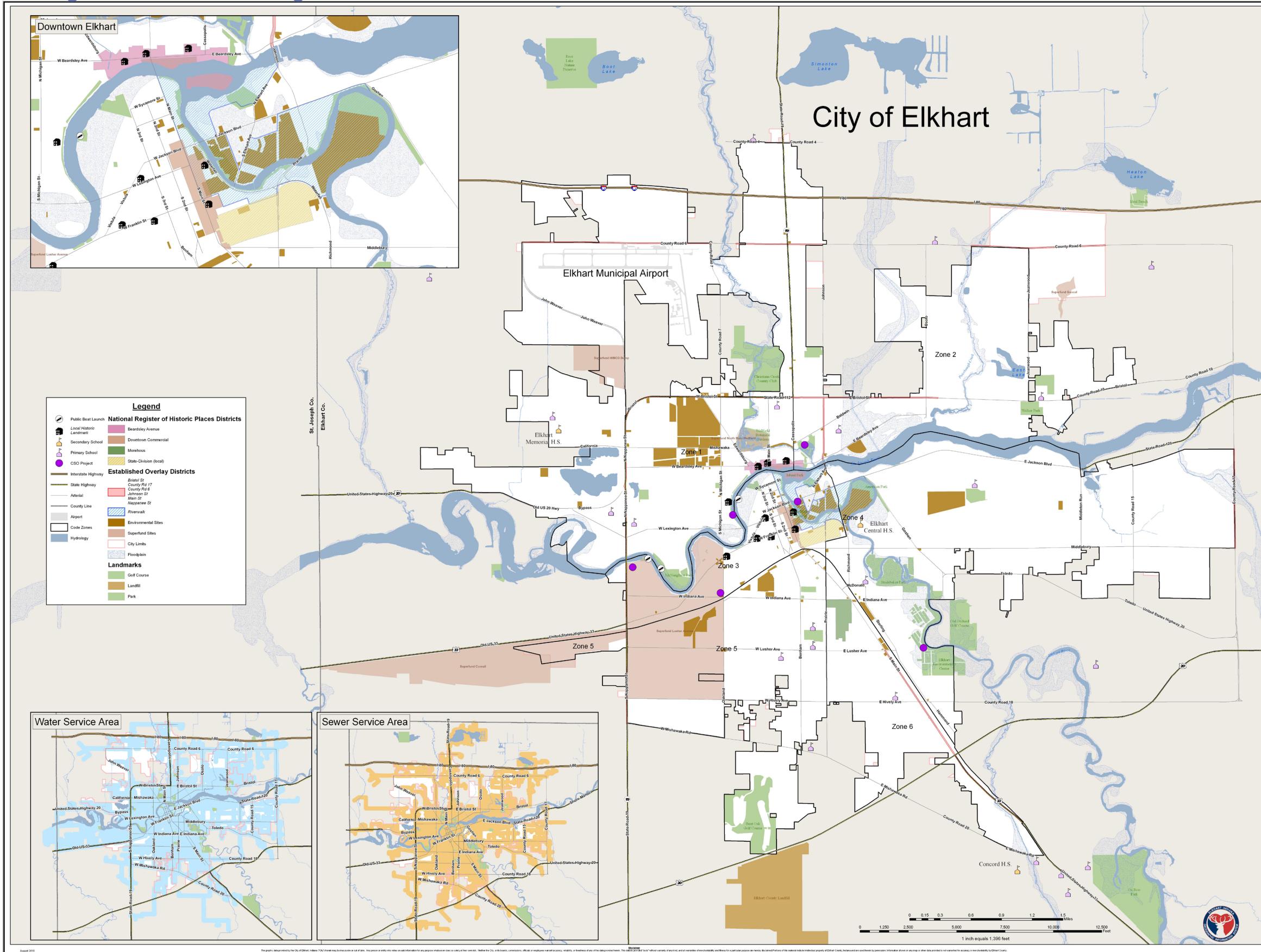
*National Historic Sites.* There are 10 National Historic Places located throughout Elkhart. Most, but not all, of the structures are located outside of the State – Division and Beardsley Historic Districts. The local sites are:

- Albert R. Beardsley House (aka Ruthmere, listed 1978)  
302 E. Beardsley Ave., Elkhart
- Dr. Havilah Beardsley House (aka Havilah Beardsley Mansion, listed 2000)  
102 W. Beardsley Ave., Elkhart
- Emmanuel C. Bickel House (listed 1979)  
614 Bower St., Elkhart
- Bucklen Theatre (aka Elkhart Opera House, listed 1986).  
*Demolished.*  
S. Main and Harrison Sts., Elkhart
- Buescher Band Instrument Company Building (aka The Buescher Building, listed 1996).  
*Demolished.*  
225 E. Jackson Ave., Elkhart
- Green Block (aka Smith Frye Building, listed 1980)  
109-115 E. Lexington, Elkhart
- Lerner Theatre (aka Elco Theatre, listed 1980)  
401 S. Main St., Elkhart
- Mark L. & Harriet E. Monteith House (listed 1985)  
871 E. Beardsley Ave., Elkhart
- Joseph and Sarah Puterbaugh Farm (aka Puterbaugh-Haines House, listed 1995)  
59123 Co. Rd. 9, Elkhart
- Young Women's Christian Association (aka Elkhart YWCA; Lexington House, listed 1991)  
120 W. Lexington Ave., Elkhart

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## **Existing Environmental and Design Conditions**





*Local Historic Sites.* The city also has ten single site local landmark districts. They are the Ruthmere house museum located in the Beardsley Avenue National Historic District, the Lerner Theatre located in the Main Street Commercial National Historic District, the Samuel Strong School on West Lexington Avenue, the Dr. Havilah Beardsley Memorial located at the intersection of Riverside Drive and West Beardsley Avenue, the Dr. Havilah Beardsley home located in the Beardsley Avenue National Historic District at the intersection of Main Street and Beardsley Avenue, the Ambrose Bierce House located on West Franklin Street, the 1897 Simpson Love House and the 1912 Snader Welling House both located on West Franklin Street, the 1894/95 National Paper and Supply Company located on East Lexington Avenue and the Charles Isbell House on North Riverside Drive.

- National Paper and Supply Company (125 East Lexington Avenue);
- Simpson-Love House (329 West Franklin Street);
- Snader-Welling House (931 West Franklin Street);
- Ruthmere house museum (302 East Beardsley Avenue);
- Lerner Theatre (410 South Main Street);
- Samuel Strong School (330 West Lexington Avenue);
- Havilah Beardsley Memorial (intersection of Riverside Drive and West Beardsley Avenue);
- Ambrose Bierce House (518 West Franklin Street);
- Dr. Havilah Beardsley Home (102 West Beardsley Avenue);
- Charles Isbell House (227 North Riverside Drive).

## Brownfield Sites

The City of Elkhart was an industrialized City that developed with heavy manufacturing to support industries related to the development of recreational vehicles and musical instruments. However, as certain industries wound down many sites in Elkhart were contaminated and have been identified as superfund sites. Superfund sites are those sites identified by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in order to facilitate the cleanup of abandoned hazardous wastes. The EPA established the Superfund cleanup process in order to take sites from a hazardous state to one that adds to the community years into the future. As noted on the Existing Environmental & Design Conditions map, these superfund sites include:

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- Conrail Site – located west of the City and just south of Old US 33. This site is a 2,500 acre site that includes contamination from a rail yard, drag strip and other light industrial activities. The rail yard is an electronically controlled hump yard operated by Norfolk Southern Corporation and serves as a classification distribution yard for freight cars. The Osceola Dragway is a commercial drag racing facility. All of these sites contain chemical contaminants. Cleanup is scheduled for these sites. These properties are still operational with these uses.
- HIMCO Site – This site is located north of Bristol Street just west of John Weaver and south from the airport. It was an unlicensed, unlined 60-acre landfill. The dump was privately operated by Himco Waste-Away Services, which collected and received commercial, industrial and medical waste and general refuse from 1960 until 1976. The site is currently in the cleanup process under a federal consent decree that was effective November 28, 2007. A reuse strategy was developed in 2004 and would include the following uses: active recreation areas, passive recreation and leisure areas, ecological zones, environmental education center, and/or a Himco recreational vehicle park.
- Lane Street Ground Water Contamination Site. This site is located at the edge of the City on the northeast side. This site includes a plume of contaminated groundwater that extends toward the south from the industrial park to an area of homes located along Lane Street. At this time the source of this contamination has not been identified. Water filtration systems have been provided to 13 homes in the area. Further investigation of the source and extent of contamination is ongoing.
- Lusher Avenue Site. This area is bounded on the north by the St. Joseph River, on the west by Nappanee Street, on the south by Hively Avenue, and on the east by Oakland Avenue. This site includes a plume of contaminated groundwater. This contamination comes from processes involved in making adhesives, synthetic fibers, refrigerants, food packaging, and coating resins. The EPA installed point-of-use carbon filters in 25 residences and businesses to reduce contamination concentrations below the acceptable safe drinking water standards. Additionally seven residences and businesses were converted to municipal water. Currently additional monitoring and field investigation is on-going.

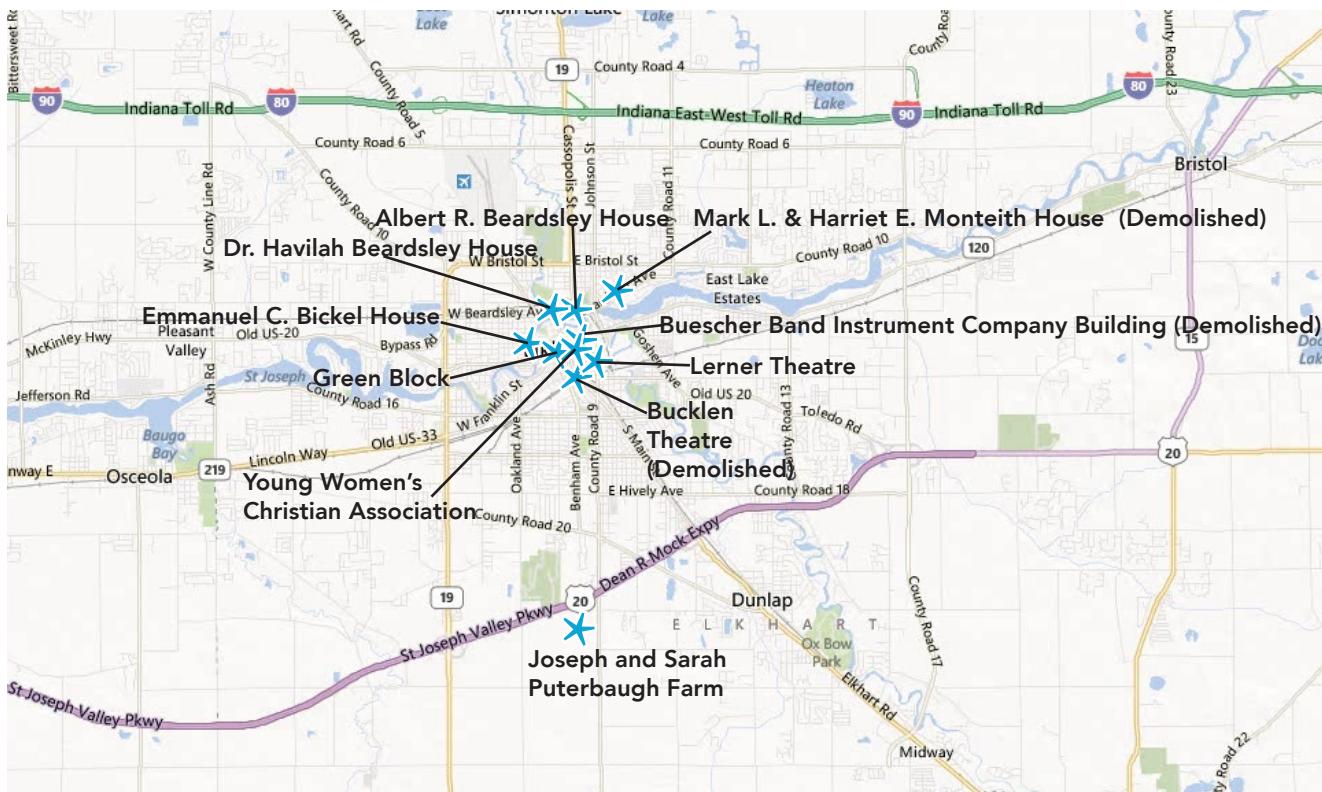


Figure 6.2: National Historic Sites

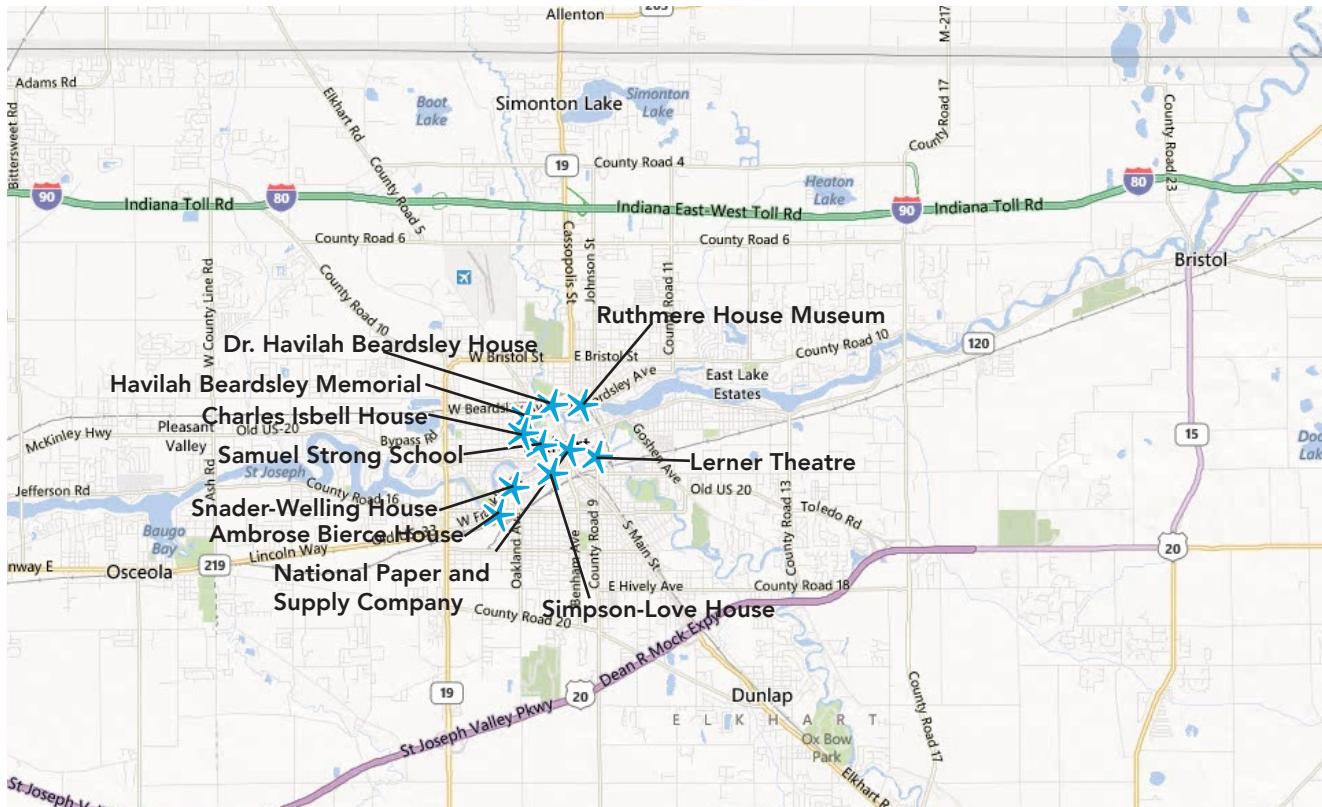


Figure 6.3: Local Historic Sites

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- Main Street Well Field. This site is one of the largest of three well fields owned by the City of Elkhart. This well field consists of 15 wells on 10 acres of land and supplies approximately 70 percent of the drinking water for the City. The groundwater has found to be contaminated with volatile organic compounds (VOCs). A solution has been put in place with the construction of an air stripper in 1987 and the construction of a soil vapor extraction system in 1995. Groundwater is continuously monitored by the EPA. The last review was completed in June 2012

Source: Environmental Protection Agency Superfund Website ([www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov))

## **Future Environment and Design Framework**

### **Key Findings/Conclusions**

As noted above, the City has several assets including historic structures and districts, waterways, RiverWalk, and numerous parks. These assets have increased the quality of life of residents and are strengths in attracting new businesses. The City needs to continue to build upon these assets and develop mechanisms to mitigate the weaknesses.

While the St. Joseph River is certainly an asset in the community, the floodplain that surrounds it has caused problems for residents who live near the river. The City must limit redevelopment in areas of known flooding or ensure that new development is designed to minimize the impact of flooding. This may include parking on the first floor and/or raising the structures. Additionally, in the River Vista neighborhood where flooding has significantly impacted structures, the City must determine if it should and can get additional Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funds to purchase these homes and relocate families in this area.

Due to the industrialization within the City, there are multiple environmental and brownfield sites. This has left several sites within the City as currently undevelopable. The EPA is working with property owners to clean up the sites. For the future, the City needs to put additional environmental standards in place for heavy industry in order to safeguard the City.

### **General Overview**

The overall concept of the proposed future environment and design framework includes three components: 1) focus on and improve first impression areas such as entry points into the City and along key transportation routes to enhance the visual perception of Elkhart; 2) capitalize on natural features for economic and environmental sustainability; and 3) set a higher standard for design within the community.

As illustrated on the framework diagram, eight key entry points into the City are highlighted for aesthetic enhancement. The Riverwalk is proposed to expand outside of the downtown district. A new blue line trail connects parks, natural habitat areas, and other waterfront amenities along the St. Joseph River. Additionally, an expanded South Main Street District as defined in the *Downtown Action Agenda* enhances the economic and physical environment of the City's southern gateway. Expanded overlay district boundaries to include the Main Street corridor south of downtown, and reinforced overlay district parameters to distinguish appropriate design and development in an urban context and suburban context will help ensure enhanced aesthetics.

**Gateways:** Gateways are key entrances into a community. They contain special markers which signify that the area is a special area. Special markers could include regulation of land use, special signage, aesthetic treatments, etc. Eight key entry points into the City identified for aesthetic enhancement. What should be noted is that not all gateway points should be addressed in an identical manner. The special markers and treatments should correspond with the established corridor typologies identified in Chapter 8, Corridor Character.

**Riverwalk Expansion:** The City has spent considerable resources to develop the Riverwalk along the Elkhart River in downtown. The Riverwalk has spurred economic development and revitalization within the downtown. The plan recommends that the City should continue to build upon the Riverwalk by expanding it along the Elkhart River, outside of the downtown districts. The City should focus on expanding it to the west along the St. Joseph River. Besides connecting the existing Riverwalk, it would connect to Langle Park, Franklin City Landing, and McNaughton Park. This Riverwalk would connect to a blue line trail. The eastern connection would run along the Elkhart River south. This Riverwalk expansion would connect American Park, Baker Park, FOP Park, Studebaker Park, Gans Park, River Greenway and the Environmental Center.

**St. Joseph River amenities & opportunities:** As noted above, the St. Joseph River is a strength within the City. In the Northwest Gateway Study, Elkhart County designated a blue line trail along the St. Joseph River. The City should designate its own blue line trail along the St. Joseph to connect to the portion in Elkhart County. The City should highlight the water route with wayfinding and marked accessible put-in and take-out locations. The blue line trial could connect the parks, natural habitat areas, and other waterfront amenities for boaters along the St. Joseph River. Additionally the City should investigate installing a public boat launch at downtown or near downtown park.

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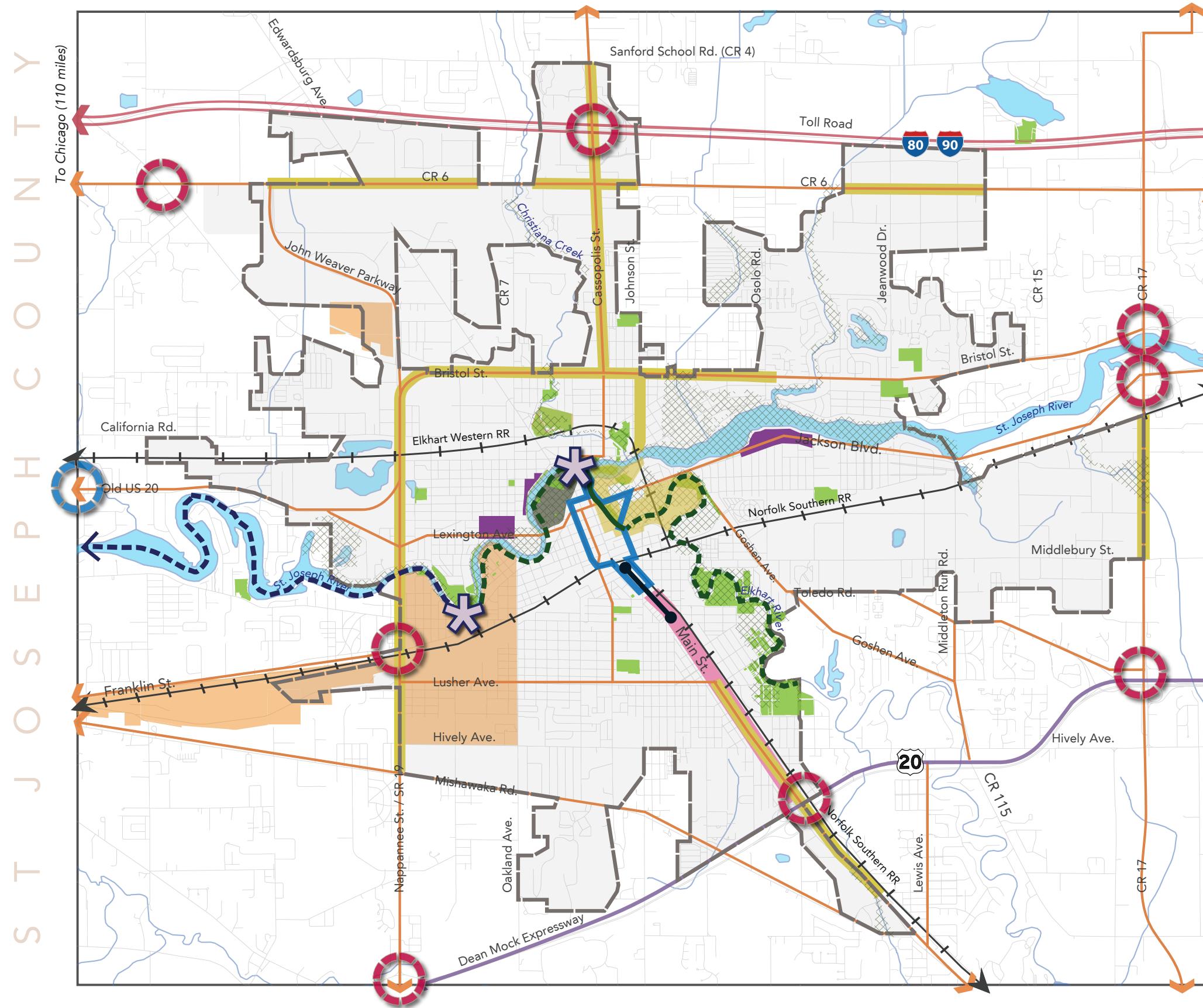
*Expanded South Main Street District & overlay district:* The City has an established district just south of downtown. The plan recommends the expansion of the South Main Street District as defined in the Downtown Action Agenda in order to enhance the economic and physical environment of the City's southern gateway and promote redevelopment of the entire south Main Street. With the expansion of the South Main Street District, an updated redevelopment plan should be created. As an implementation phase of both the comprehensive plan and the updated redevelopment plan, the overlay district for the South Main Street area should be expanded to include this new area. Additional standards for design, uses, parking and landscaping should be considered as part of this update.

Finally, the City should review all overlay districts for the City to determine what updates would be required to each district to implement the vision in this plan. The City should determine how to reinforce the overlay district parameters to distinguish appropriate design and development in an urban context and suburban context.

*Deteriorating Properties.* As Elkhart continues to recover from the effects of the recession on its local economy and the increased vacancy in buildings and land due to the closing of businesses, the City will need to assess and address deteriorating properties. These properties could be considered "eyesores" within the community and could negatively impact the success of economic development efforts. There are a few action steps that the City could undertake to mitigate any potential "community eyesores." These action steps include the following:

- Create and Adopt a Design and Aesthetics Overlay Ordinance.
- Create a formalized list of unsafe buildings, under utilized properties and key properties for redevelopment.
- The City should develop a more formalized pursuit of non-conformities and obsolete uses.

# MICHIGAN



## City of Elkhart Comprehensive Plan Update Future Environment & Design Framework

### Key

↔	Indiana Toll Road	—	Existing Riverwalk
↔	US 20 Bypass	- - -	Proposed Greenway
↔	Major Arterial	—	Proposed Blue Line
↔	Rail Line	—	Existing Overlay District
—	Elkhart City Boundary	—	Superfund Mitigation Area
—	Proposed Downtown South Main District Extension	—	City Park
■	State Identified Potential Historic District	—	Proposed Major Gateway
—	Floodway Mitigation Area	—	Proposed Minor Gateway
▨	Floodplain (development limitations &/or restrictions)	—	Public Boat Launch Enhancement
●	Proposed Overlay District	—	

### Downtown Districts Inset Map

