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CRITICAL ISSUES

SECTION 2.1 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

The following is a summary of the issues raised during workshops, stakeholder interviews, citizen survey responses, and meetings with the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission served as the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee and directed the development of the Plan. The Planning Commission meetings were open to the public and took place throughout the preparation of the Comprehensive Plan.

The City recognizes that public participation is a key component of effective planning. It is essential that the community has a voice in how the City plans its future, so the engagement of stakeholders and receiving input and feedback from the public was a central component of the process to updating the City's Comprehensive Plan. The public engagement process completed in updating the Comprehensive Plan can be characterized by three principles: outreach, engage, and sustain. Stakeholders were identified to provide broader perspectives of current issues and the future of growth and develop in Collinsville. The public was invited to attend 2 planning workshops and complete a community survey to share their input on a number of issues and opportunities in Collinsville. Both stakeholders and the public were provided notice of opportunities to engage in the planning process. Throughout the process participants were educated on how their input would be used and next steps in the process. Most importantly, participants were provided the opportunity to share and listen to ideas and feedback in a welcoming environment. Throughout the completion of the public engagement process Staff and the Planning Commission sustained relations with participants by providing updates and responding to inquiries on the planning process.

SECTION 2.2 PLANNING WORKSHOP

The Comprehensive Planning Workshops were held on January 9th, January 13th, and March 15th of 2018 at the Collinsville Public Library. The workshops included over 35 participants (at the first two workshops) including City Officials, business owners, and concerned citizens. During the Workshop, the participants discussed several prepared topics relating to the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing the City of Collinsville. Staff recorded notes throughout the workshop to be included in this summary. The summarized results of the Comprehensive Planning Workshop are included in the following sections.

SECTION 2.3 STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

The public engagement process included meetings with stakeholders from the community. Stakeholders ranged from individuals knowledgeable of the community to entire organizations based in Collinsville. Stakeholder organizations included the Collinsville Community Unit School District 10, individual City Council members, City public works and administrative staff, the Economic Development Commission, the Collinsville Police Department, the Collinsville Fire Department, the Collinsville Memorial Public Library, the Gateway Center, the Cahokia Mounds Museum Society, the Collinsville Chamber of Commerce, Ameren Illinois, Barber Murphy Group, Lindenwood University, the Metro East Park and Recreation District, and the Collinsville Area Recreation District. The summarized results of the Stakeholder Interviews are included in the following sections.

1. Quality of Life

Location, Access, and Proximity

Collinsville is centrally located within the St. Louis Metro East Region. The City's position at the center of the region's major interstate transportation hub offers residents, businesses, and

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visitors convenient access to three major interstates: I-55, I-70, and I-255. The City's central location and convenient access makes Collinsville a great place to live for commuters who work throughout the greater St. Louis Metropolitan Region; a great place to do business and attract consumers; and a great place for local and regional visitors to stay, eat, shop, and play. Collinsville's close proximity to St. Louis offers residents a unique and welcoming community with a "small town" feel and all of the amenities of a big city. "Collinsville is the Gateway to St. Louis" [and] "the Crossroads to everywhere we need to be."

Community

Collinsville has many strengths which enhance the quality of life for residents who choose to call Collinsville their home. Beyond the City's central location, convenient interstate access, proximity St. Louis, and housing affordability, six other community strengths were emphatically identified as reasons residents choose to live in Collinsville: a job opportunity; family ties and marriage; the quality of the Collinsville School District; a great place to raise a family; safe neighborhoods; and the fact that Collinsville is just "home" for many lifelong residents. Residents enjoy the community's diversity and welcoming environment.

Collinsville's strong sense of community is displayed through residents' community involvement in all aspects of civic sphere from volunteering at annual festivals to serving on local boards and commissions. Residents and businesses value the opportunity to actively participate in local decision-making; however the politicized atmosphere negatively influences the perception of the community and misrepresents the City's progressive leadership.

Community Engagement

Collinsville residents and businesses enjoy being informed about the latest happenings. However, the community recognizes that there is a lack of a cohesive message, brand or image of who Collinsville is as a community. Moreover, the community must do a better job of "telling our story" and developing social pride. These shortcomings negatively impact the outside perception of the community. Correcting the perception issue is a shared responsibility of the City, residents, businesses, school district, and other local agencies and organization. Great and many stories of triumph, perseverance, and groundbreaking achievements from residents, businesses, organizations and even Collinsville students are largely unobserved. Collinsville must tell Collinsville's story. Continuous community engagement via a variety of media, and improved social pride can make Collinsville a more attractive community to prospective residents and businesses; and inform residents and businesses of important information.

Development

The community also recognizes areas of weakness and opportunities to enhance the quality of life in Collinsville. Although Collinsville has lagged behind while peer communities experienced growth spurs, development momentum is now building in Collinsville as the City transitions from a "bedroom community" to the greater St. Louis Metropolitan Region to a major city and regional destination within the St. Louis Metro East. While Collinsville is experiencing increasing development momentum, existing services, shopping, dining, recreation and entertainment options do not meet the needs of the City's diverse population causing residents to travel to neighboring communities for desired goods, services and experiences. The revitalization of Uptown has been successful and exciting to watch. Uptown has become an enjoyable place for both locals and visitors. Collinsville has a good business environment, and residents are committed to support local businesses.



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Housing

Housing affordability is another strength that enhances the quality of life for Collinsville residents and businesses. However, there are gaps in the housing market in terms of housing style, type, and pricing to attract a diverse population of residents and allow current residents to age in place. Increased Code Enforcement is to cleanup derelict properties and encourage better property maintenance. This would also help increase home values.

2. Business, Development & Industry

Employment Industry

Collinsville lacks a workforce and employment industry diversity. Retail and Hospitality employment opportunities are prevalent in Collinsville. More high paying, full-time, "bread winner" jobs are needed. There is an expressed need to diversify the types of employment opportunities in Collinsville as several industry gaps have been identified as areas of growth to meet the skills and education of the City's workforce:

- Skills-based jobs to employ graduating CAVC students
- Medical Industry (Medical Professional Office Campus, Hospital, etc.)
- Mid Large Professional Offices and Headquarters Employers
- Manufacturing, Warehousing, and Logistics
- Tech Industry
- Tourism/Hospitality Industry

Many identify Collinsville as being well positioned to become a "Headquarters community." Headquarters employers tend to be labor-driven entities. Access to an educated, highly skilled, and affordably priced labor force relative to the industry needs are transportation and geography; key labor closeness to customers; proximity to colleges/universities producing potential employees with relevant degrees; the potential to attract and retain talent (cost of living, quality of life, etc.); the overall business environment; and having the support of the respective city are all factors that can effective the attractiveness of a community to headquarters employers.

Collinsville's location, convenient interstate access, and abundance of vacant land for develop are some of the City's greatest assets. Such community characteristics can be attractive to employers in the manufacturing, warehousing and logistics industry. Vacant land and flex space along Horseshoe Lake Road and in East Port Plaza have become hot spot areas for employers in this industry. There is desire within the community to attract more jobs in this industry.

Business & Development Opportunities

While Collinsville has seen a significant increase in development momentum in recent years, residents still find many service, retail, dining, recreation, and entertainment needs missing within the city. Many residents travel to peer communities, Fairview Heights, O'Fallon, and Edwardsville to meet these needs. While the addition of major retailers like Home Depot and Wal-Mart may have decreased the number of shopping trips outside of Collinsville by residents, there are still many desirable general and specific business opportunities which the community would like to see come to Collinsville.

Dining. Collinsville's central location, access and traffic counts along major interstates and highways; tourism and visitor attractions position Collinsville to be a region dining destination.

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Dining is viewed at the #1 complimentary activity of tourists and visitors. There is also a desire within the community to have more diverse dining options throughout the city. More dine-in, fast casual, and fine dining restaurants are desired along major corridors. Uptown dining is largely a bar scene. More family-friendly, fine dining, diverse cuisines, and unique "destination eats" are desired in Uptown to bolster and complement the overall Uptown destination experience.

Commercial Office. Collinsville is at the center of the St. Louis Metro Area which is home to a largely commuter population. Major employers and development of headquarters facilities, professional office parks, and office space in general would attract workers, and potential resident, from throughout the region.

Bulk Shopping. Sam's and Costco were often mentioned as desirable bulk retailers. Currently, the nearest bulk retailers for Collinsville residents are located in Edwardsville and O'Fallon.

Department Stores. There is a desire within the community for more department store retailers offering clothing, shoes, home furnishing, and other soft goods. This reflects a major gap in the existing retail market as residents more often travel outside of Collinsville for department store shopping. Target, Old Navy, and Ashley Furniture were named as desirable retailers in this area.

Tourism, Entertainment and Recreation. While Collinsville is known to visitors for Cahokia Mounds and Gateway Center convention/event activities, there is an identified need to offer more, diverse, and complementary "things to do" for tourists, visitors, and residents alike. The community recognizes the opportunity to leverage Collinsville's tourism, entertainment and recreation assets by giving people more reasons to visit and stay in Collinsville. Restoring the quality of and level of activity within local parks and sports fields will rejuvenate the recreation market and create more activities Collinsville youth. Collinsville has a rich and storied history in which residents take great pride and visitors find much intrigue. This fact was recently confirmed as Collinsville was name "Best place to travel for history lover" by Expedia.com. Marketing local tourism destinations and activities were mentioned as prudent means necessary to create awareness and tell Collinsville tourism story. Other areas of tourism, entertainment, and recreation opportunities desired, but which were found to be lacking in the community include:

- Convention quality hotels
- Sports complex
- Collinsville YMCA
- Family entertainment (Movie Theater, Edison's, etc.)
- Activities for kids and teens
- Things to do within walking distance of home, work and hotels
- Diverse Uptown night life entertainment
- More Uptown tourism and entertainment destinations and activities

Retail. Collinsville's central location within the St. Louis Metro East, convenient interstate access, and traffic counts along major state highways makes the city well positioned and poised to become a regional retail destination. The community recognizes the distinct characteristics of Collinsville's current and future retail corridors and desires new develop and businesses fitting each corridor. Route 159, Beltline Road, and St. Louis Road are viewed as more neighborhood

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commercial oriented corridors. Whereas, Route 159/Bluff Road and Collinsville Road are seen as being better suited for regional retail development.

The community takes great pride in the recent revitalization efforts in Uptown and would like to see these efforts continue to grow. Collinsville has many storied local businesses with deep roots within the community. There is a desire for more small businesses, unique boutique shops, destination shops, restaurants and entertainment venues, as well as a healthy competitive environment to nurture the growth and development of small businesses. Uptown is characterized as having a strong bar scene but needs to attract more unique and family-oriented destinations.

The community generally desires a retail market more reflective of the city's current demographics. There is concern that current retail may not meet the needs of middle class shoppers who travel to neighboring communities like Edwardsville, Fairview Heights, O'Fallon and Shiloh for their shopping needs. Grocers are one specific type of retailers that was mentioned in reference to their being too many discount grocers in the community. Attracting a Dierberg's, Fresh Thyme, or similar higher end grocer would be desirable. Major retailers such as Target, Costco, Sam's, Old Navy, home goods, clothing, electronics, and sporting goods were mentioned as desirable developments. While many specific and general types of development were, there was also recognition that current demographics and other characteristics such as traffic are do not currently fall in line with the demographics and community characteristics to which the desired major retailers are attracted.

3. Housing

The needs and concerns of Collinsville's current housing market are classified into three categories: housing price, housing type/style, and general local market conditions needing to be addressed or opportunities for improvement.

Housing Price. Collinsville has an abundance of homes priced for lower income buyers, older \$100,000 – \$150,000 homes and single family-to-rental conversions. Middle- and higher income single family homes in the \$250,000 - \$350,000 and \$350,000-\$500,000 ranges are in need. The existing housing stock within these price ranges are generally of good quality with some work needed. There is also a gap in \$100,000 - \$150,000 new construction, starter homes for new families. The existing housing stock in this price range are generally older homes with higher expenses related to repairs and renovations.

Housing Type/Style. A variety housing of type/style characteristics were mentioned that are thought to attract and retain residents and strengthen the local housing market.

- New construction: single-family subdivisions and infill development
- Ranch and colonial style homes
- Subdivisions with sidewalks and connections to Bike/PED networks
- Uniquely designed homes, non-cookie cutter subdivisions
- Mixed-use developments: apartments and condos in an urban, walkable setting
- High-end 2nd story apartments or condos in Uptown

Housing Market. A number of concerns with the current condition of the local housing market as well as some prescriptive opportunities to improve these conditions were identified:

Concerns

Increasing ratio of renter to owner occupied homes

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- Current housing market is challenged in attracting a diverse population (young families, young professionals, university students, etc.)
- Older neighborhoods with conditions of blight
- An aging housing stock unattractive to new residents due to higher expense associate with maintenance and needed renovations
- Subdivisions without sidewalks
- Local rental market offers affordably priced units which is attract to the region's commuter population
- Negative perception of local schools dissuades families with school-aged children
- Buyers seeking high income homes often look to Edwardsville or O'Fallon
- Quality of life, business environment and other factors may impede the city's ability to attract and retain higher income residents
- The current housing market overall is not very attractive to new residents

Opportunities

- Develop demand for new housing
- Newly constructed subdivisions similar to Grandview, Sugar Loaf, and Collinwood
- Encourage and incentivize reinvestment into existing housing stock, single-family rentalto-ownership conversion, and first-time home ownership
- Develop housing opportunities for a diversity of incomes and economic demographics
- Attract new SAFB families
- Recognize that home ownership is not the "American dream" for the current Millennial generation, and determine how attract this market segment

4. Parks & Recreation

The City underwent an exciting transition during the public process in reassuming management of all City-owned parks from CARD. In October 2017, the City of Collinsville and the Collinsville Area Recreation District (CARD) entered in an agreement related to the transfer of operations of City parks. Under previous management the community was generally unhappy with the condition of Collinsville's parks and facilities. This opinion was marked by reoccurring comments referring to poor maintenance, neglected and derelict facilities and equipment, deferred maintenance turned capital expenses, lack of park activities, and poor aesthetics.

Under management of the City of Collinsville, restoring the parks and facilities to adequately serve the needs of the community is the number one goal. This goal will be pursued via many objectives, including:

- Addressing deferred maintenance issues, needed capital investment, and infrastructure improvements
- Increasing the level community activities and programs
- Ensuring parks, facilities, and equipment create a safe environment for park patrons
- Marketing and creating awareness about park improvements and activities
- Improving sports fields to leverage park assets and enhance the hospitality and sports markets

5. Commercial Corridors

Collinsville's commercial corridors each their own distinct identity, needs, and opportunities for improvement.

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Route 159/Vandalia Street/Morrison Avenue:

- Idlewood apartments and Street Department garage are an eyesore
- South Morrison Avenue entrance to town is not welcoming
- North Vandalia Street corridor has "low rent" commercial image
- IDOT does not do a good job of keeping their ROW clean
- The corridor largely serves the local community with neighborhood commercial businesses
- Infill development is needed
- Sidewalks and other Bike/PED infrastructure and improvements are needed
- Street Department garage should be relocated
- Idlewood apartments can be improved with façade, landscape, and maintenance improvements
- Perception is reality: the business environment along S. Morrison Avenue is reflective of the area's negative perception of blight, crime and poverty
- More of a local services and professionals corridor rather than a retail corridor
- Apartments are no longer a fitting land use along Vandalia Street
- Single-family -to-commercial conversions gives the area a confusing identity
- The old high school has the potential to be a catalyst project
- Area is not suited for big box retail
- Street layout, infrastructure improvements, and traffic issues need to be addressed on Vandalia Street
- The area needs more places for traveler to stop (i.e., coffee shop)
- Attract more local businesses

Route 157/Bluff Road

- Needs sidewalks to provide convenient and safe connection from Eastport Plaza to the Drury Inn side of Bluff Road
- The intersection of Bluff Road and Beltline Road needs wider lanes and turn lanes
- The area is suited for Big Box development
- More planned developments similar to Edwardsville Crossing or the Shoppes at St. Clair
- Commercial areas' interior roads are not easy to maneuver
- Widen Bluff Road lanes north of I-55
- Mixed-use development and condos are desirable
- Mix of single-family residential land uses make it hard to attract new businesses
- An open air outlet mall is desirable

Beltline Road:

- Resurfacing
- Widened roads
- Increase walkability along the corridor
- Sidewalks, bike lanes and other Bike/PED infrastructure and improvements
- More commercial retail businesses are needed
- Beltline should have a "parkway" landscape design and street scape improvements

Collinsville Road/St. Louis Road

I-255 interchange has poor entryway aesthetics

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- There is a perception of safety along Collinsville Road corridor
- Improve the Race Track
- · Address conditions of blight within the area
- Poor corridor aesthetics
- Neighborhood improvement incentives needed for St. Louis Road section of the corridor

Main Street

- Attract more small businesses
- Develop more "destinations" that attract visitors to Uptown
- Stronger police presence is needed via Uptown beat cops. Owners and visitors enjoy seeing officers stopping into businesses. It creates a more personable and safe atmosphere. This would improve the vibrancy, small town feel and safety in Uptown
- Enhance streetscape and wayfinding on East Main Street which currently does not feel like it is part of Uptown.
- The area is suited for mixed-used development
- Develop more Uptown [urban] style housing
- D.D. Collins House should be utilized more as a public space

City-wide:

- Overall aesthetics and visual impression is poor
- Aesthetics attract people to commercial districts
- IDOT should do a better job of keeping their ROW clean
- City welcome sign entrances need some enhancement
- Collinsville is not pedestrian-friendly
- Bike/PED infrastructure, improvements and facilities connecting people to commercial corridors
- A traffic circle is needed at the intersection of Caseyville Road and South Morrison Avenue
- LED message boards should be placed throughout the city to keep public informed
- Consistent and unified streetscape, wayfinding and signage

6. Transportation Improvements

Several projects are suggested to improve safety, access, connectivity for both motorists and pedestrians.

- Cahokia Mounds does not feel like part of Collinsville due to lack of wayfinding and signage. The site is also poorly accessible via public transportation. The nearest MCT stop is a 15-20 minute walk to Black Lane.
- Better connections to MCT Trails are needed to improve Bike/PED accessibility
- Pedestrian improvements are needed to connect Eastport Plaza to the east side of Bluff Road
- The traffic signal at the Bluff Road entrance to Eastport Plaza is a bottleneck.
- Eastport Plaza need improved wayfinding and signage, especially identifying signage at entrances



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- Extend sidewalks and other Bike/PED infrastructure down Main Street to Bluff Road
- Connect hotels to bike routes
- Enhanced Bike/PED mobility and connectivity along Beltline Road and Route 159
- The City's current Bike/PED network is inadequate for connecting residents to commercial and recreation areas. An enhanced Bike/PED network is needed city-wide.
- Increase the speed on Route 159 to 40 mph.
- The Beltline Road / Route 159 intersection needs improvement
- Improved public transit connections are needed throughout the city.
- The intersection of Bluff Road and Beltline Road is prone to traffic accidents. The Burger King entrance is a trouble spot.
- Enhanced wayfinding and signage city-wide
- Infrastructure and utility improvements along McDonough Lake Road to attract new development
- Improve lane capacity on Bluff Road between Beltline Road and I-55 interchange
- A complete intersection improvement is needed at the intersection of Bluff Road and Beltline Road.

7. Southwest Corridor: Future Development & Land-Use

The Southwest Corridor planning area and the establishment of two new incentive districts emphasizes the City's effort to revitalize one of its oldest thoroughfares and business corridors. Collinsville Road and St. Louis Road, intersected by Bluff Road/State Route 157, are at the heart of the Southwest Corridor. The existing condition of property's within this corridor display conditions of blight and dereliction. The visual appeal of the area is identified as the most pressing concern needing to be addressed in order to attract the types of developments envisioned for the corridor. The I-255 / Collinsville Road interstate exit is a main entrance into the City, but the aesthetics and visual appeal of the immediate area do not reflect the culture and vibrancy of the community. A comprehensive corridor beautification plan is needed to create a more inviting visual impression.

The St. Louis/Collinsville Road Corridor, one of the city's oldest thoroughfares, was first established as Collinsville's primary transportation corridor, and later became a critical corridor for interstate commerce along the Illinois section of Historic U.S. Highway 40 ("The National Road"). The community grew around the St. Louis/Collinsville Road Corridor through the 1970s due to a combination of industry, mining, prime farmland, as well the City's close proximity and direct connection to St. Louis, MO. Today, Collinsville continues to own and celebrate its historic roots and rich culture. Collinsville's outstanding advantages as a growing, affordable, culturally rich residential area for the St. Louis metropolitan population, as well as its position as a regional retail, service, and hospitality destination, are major growth factors.

As the St. Louis/Collinsville Road Corridor aged, most of the regional shopping shifted to the Collinsville Crossings Business District at the intersection of I-55/I-70 and Route 157 (directly adjacent to the Collinsville Road section of the corridor) serves a city of over 25,000 as well as a market area extending over 5 miles beyond City limits. However, the Corridor remains important



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to the economic well-being of the City, encompassing historic residential neighborhoods and many locally-owned neighborhood shops, offices, restaurants, a farmer's market, and other businesses. Today, the St. Louis/Collinsville Road Corridor is poised to reclaim its historical significance and fulfill its economic potential. There is a clear need for more comprehensive planning efforts to revitalize community and economic activity within the corridor, which will no doubt bring positive synergic impacts for the entire city.

The Corridor has many strengths which together with effective planning will revive the sense of place, economic vitality, and quality of life, as well as introduce modern and sustainable infrastructure, land uses, transportation, and mobility opportunities that create a safe, healthy and vibrant place.

In November 2017, the City of Collinsville was awarded the Great Streets Initiative grant from the East-West Gateway Council of Governments to fund Planning assistance to develop comprehensive improvement plan for St. Louis Road and Collinsville Road. Each road section of this corridor has an individual identity, issues, and prescriptive opportunities for improvement. When asked to describe the types of development that 'should' and 'should not' be pursued within the Southwest Corridor, Stakeholder feedback reflected the unique characteristics of each road.

St. Louis Road

St. Louis Road has the potential to become an extension of the Uptown neighborhood. This corridor is home to many locally-owned small businesses and historic residential neighborhoods. Streetscape improvements, including sidewalks, pedestrian-scale lighting and other amenities will create a vibrant, walkable, and more aesthetically pleasing corridor. These improvements will be important to revitalizing economic activity and restoring historic neighborhoods. Neighborhood commercial retail development serving the surrounding neighborhoods is a suitable land use for St. Louis Road section of the corridor. This land use type also creates a smooth transition from higher density of residential and commercial uses in Uptown to the regional developments along Collinsville Road and Bluff Road. The existing mix of residential and commercial land uses fronting St. Louis Road may be problematic in transitioning to more a modern commercial corridor. Developing an initiative or program to encourage the restoration of homes within historic neighborhoods may be an opportunity to help the commercial corridor transition more effectively.

Collinsville Road and Bluff Road/State Route 157

The Collinsville Road section of this corridor, having an abundance of vacant farmland and other sites ripe for development and redevelopment is nearly a blank slate for development. The community has many ideas, yet a very common vision for how this area should and should not be developed. Commercial retail, Mixed-use, Office, Hospitality, Tourism attractions, Sports, and Recreation developments were the most common responses when asked to describe the types of developments that should targeted for the Collinsville Road/Bluff Road section the Southwest Corridor.

The attractive features, location and accessibility of the area make this section of the corridor poised to become a regional retail destination. Dine-in restaurants, fast casual restaurants, and Big Box, national retailers like Target and Costco were specific types of commercial retail developments mentioned.



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While residential development alone is widely opposed, mixed-used development including high density residential developments is a desirable land use for this section of the corridor. This type of development would support attracting young professionals and other segments of the population who desire a planned neighborhoods in a vibrant and walkable urban setting.

The combination of the corridor's prime interstate access and the region's commuter-oriented population make this section of the corridor suitable for development as an employment center attracting major employers serving the St. Louis region. Medium to large professional offices, office parks, and headquarters generally describe the types of commercial developments that should be targeted.

The St. Louis region is experiencing a surge of renewed development interest in the Tourism and Hospitality industry. Tourism and Hospitality includes a broad range development types, including: hotel, attractions, entertainment, recreation, sports, dining and shopping establishments. These types of developments attract visitors from outside the region to St. Louis and the surrounding metropolitan communities. St. Louis leads the way in attracting visitors to the region. Projects like Ball Park Village Phase 2; St. Louis Union Station renovation; Gateway Arch grounds renovations; and St. Louis University's Midtown Redevelopment project are building momentum and leveraging development interest throughout the entire St. Louis region. Collinsville's location and convenient interstate access puts visitors within a 20 minute drive to Downtown St. Louis.

It is vitally important that Collinsville identifies and develops its niche in the Tourism and Hospitality industries in order to attract visitors from outside of and those who live within the St. Louis region.

The Collinsville Road/Bluff Road section of the Southwest Corridor is a prime opportunity for "Destination" developments. "Destination" developments include places and activities unique to Collinsville that attract and host visitors to the City. Hotels, restaurants, shopping centers, camp grounds, indoor and outdoor sports facilities, family-oriented entertainment and attractions were the common "destination" development types generally mentioned by Stakeholders. The adaptive reuse of the Fairmont Park Race Track, redevelopment of Jaycee's Sports Complex, connecting Collinsville Road to East Port Plaza, a third Fire Station, and the addition of a full-service travel center providing services and amenities to interstate travelers are specific projects mentioned by Stakeholders which further enhance economic activity within the corridor. The City has taken a huge step in this direction with the recent additions to the Parks and Recreation Department, as well as future improvements planned for local parks and the Gateway Convention Center. Improvements planned for the City's Great Streets project will also make physical and social connections between Cahokia Mounds World Heritage Site and other complimentary tourism and hospitality destinations and activities in Collinsville.

The variety of land uses and development types envisioned for the Southwest Corridor will require unified planning, design and development to promote socially and economically beneficial developments.

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8. Public Services & Infrastructure

Public services provided by the City received very positive and productive Stakeholder feedback.

Stakeholders identified opportunities for the City of build the capacity of physical and human capital in order to expand public services and meet the needs of the growing community. The Police, Fire, and Street Departments are the most visible service men and women and each received great recognition and appreciation for the services which they provide to the community. While the community recognizes the City's dedication to providing quality services to the community, there is yet an opportunity to enhance the City's public image in order to attract new residents, businesses, and visitors.

Police Department

The leadership of the Police Department is reflected among the men and women who serve to protect and keep the community safe. There is a need to increase the visibility of patrol officers throughout the city. Community policing in Uptown, also mentioned as opportunity to improve the Uptown commercial area, is a desired improvement to public services. Community policing is the system of allocating police officers to particular areas so that they become familiar with the local inhabitants, and promotes the use of partnerships, development of community ties, and proactive problem solving to develop solutions to immediate public safety concerns. These

"The caliber of service our men and women provide is top notch!"

"Dedicated Employees..." "Robust public service..." "Police are great!"

"Excellent public service..." "Dedicated service men and women..."

"Police and Fire are outstanding!" "Police has great leadership."

"The Senior shuttle is a highlight of our community." "Collinsville knows customer service."

improvements may require increased staffing in the Police Department.

Fire Department

Increased staffing, the addition of a third fire station and city-owned ambulances were improvements suggested to enhance the services provided by the Fire Department. These improvements would result in decreased emergency response times, increased ability to handle multiple emergency calls, and overall better public safety.

Public Works

Public Works includes the Street, Water, and Waste Water Departments which work to achieve a high quality of life for the community through planning, building, operating and maintaining the City's infrastructure networks. The Street Department is recognized for the stellar job they do in constructing and maintaining the City's streets, sidewalks, and streetscape amenities. However, the community is also aware of the staffing needs within the department. Increased staffing in the Street Department would increase the number of projects crews are able to complete and reduce time to completion for each project. The improvement of roads, sidewalks, and "parkway" streetscape enhancements on St. Louis Road is a desired infrastructure project.



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Infrastructure improvements are also viewed as a means to support residential and commercial growth.

- The construction and repair of sidewalks within residential neighborhoods, as well as connecting residential neighborhoods to parks and commercial areas throughout the City
- The expansion of City water and sewer infrastructure will enhance opportunities for future annexations.
- The addition of trail heads and improved neighborhood connections to the Madison County Trail network will enhance the quality of life for residents, attract future residents, and enhance the experience of visitors to Collinsville.
- A regular, free yard waste pick-up service would keep residents from burning yard waste and enhance the overall quality of life for residents.

Community Development

The Community Development Department is dedicated to ensuring the health, safety and well-being of the community through the establishment and enforcement of the City's code of ordinances related to building construction, land use, zoning, and development in general. Code Enforcement has been linked to quality of life and property values within the community. Stakeholders identify a general need for improved code enforcement. Increased staffing as well as public awareness of the City's code of ordinances and the appropriate channels through which to report code violations can enhance code enforcement services. Residential code enforcement was directly linked to the local housing market through its ability to encourage property maintenance. Proper code enforcement will improve the quality of life for residents; attract new and retain existing residents; and encourage private investment and reinvestment in the community. Poor property maintenance affects property values and gives the community a poor image which decreases the city's ability to attract and retain residents.

The Community Development Department also operates the City's Senior Shuttle Service which offers elderly residents free transportation to medical, shopping, entertainment, and personal destinations. While this service is touted as a highlight of Collinsville's public services, additional services for elderly residents are desired.

Parks and Recreation

There was a strong desire among Stakeholders to see improvements in Collinsville's park services, facilities and equipment. The City's establishment of a Parks and Recreation Department was suggested to facility parks management, maintenance, capital improvements, expanded services, activities and amenities. A long-range Master Parks Plan would help the City to develop the framework identifying resources, assets, and needed improvements to make Collinsville Parks an attraction for both residents and visitors. Such a plan would also service to develop community support for the revitalization of Collinsville's parks.

Administration

A new City website, expand internet/Wi-Fi access, and more technology friendly communications were the most common service and infrastructure related improvements recommended for City Administration. The City's website is described as being outdated and hard to navigate when searching for relevant and specific information. A complete website update taking examples from communities with more modern and navigable websites is a



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desired public service improvement. Extending internet/Wi-Fi access to St. Louis Road was specifically mentioned as an improvement that would benefit existing and future businesses and enhance this corridors opportunity to become an extension of Uptown. Collinsville residents and businesses enjoy being informed about the latest happenings. Exploring technology friendly methods to share important announcements, community alerts, events and activities is desired.

9. Development Best Practices and Examples from Other Communities

Stakeholders were asked to share best practices and development practices experienced in their travels to other cities which might be adapted for future development in Collinsville. Discussions on this topic generally expounded upon the need to create "destination" places and attractions that provide a unique visitor experience; vibrant and active spaces for pedestrian activity; activate low traffic commercial areas by catering to the pedestrian experience; and family-oriented entertainment and recreation; planned, mixed-use developments.

Enhancing Existing Destinations

- Cahokia Mounds attracts 350,000 annual visitors from around the world to this destination. Collinsville is not realizing the full potential of this tourism and economic development opportunity, resulting in lost visitor activity and few dollars spent at complementary tourism and hospitality related destinations throughout the city. There must be an improved partnership and communication between the City and Cahokia Mounds in order to connect Cahokia Mounds to the rest of the City. Improved wayfinding, signage, marketing and branding is needed to make both a physical and social connection between the City and Cahokia Mounds. The St. Louis Road/Collinsville Road Great Streets Project proposes to do just that.
- Eastport Plaza is the center of the City's hospitality industry, professional office and flex space market. The Gateway Convention Center attraction visitors for national and regional conventions, trade shows, conferences, weddings, and other professional, entertainment, and private events. Visitors Gateway Convention Center as well as Eastport Plaza employees are conveniently located within a short walk of several hotels and restaurants. There is disconnection between Eastport Plaza and the rest of the community. Visitors and employees in Eastport Plaza are not always aware of destinations, attractions, events and activities available to explore throughout the city. An improved partnership and communication between the City, local destinations and attractions, Eastport Plaza hotel and employers would create a more unified local tourism industry. Physical improvements such as bike/PED infrastructure, enhanced walkability, streetscape amenities, wayfinding, bike paths, and a bike share program would create a more vibrant and active sense of place where visitors an employees are encourage to explore the community.
- Uptown Collinsville is the center of Collinsville's history, culture and diversity. There has been a resurgence of downtowns and main streets being the life center of cities across the country. Around the St. Louis Metro East peer communities are developing and promote their downtown niche. Collinsville is experiencing a renewed interest in Uptown development. Stakeholders recognize Uptown's opportunity to develop a niche in dining, specialty shops, and entertainment "experiences." The City's establishment of two new Uptown zoning ordinances for boutique manufacturing and food halls opened the door to attract new, diverse and creative businesses. The culture and diversity exists within Collinsville for Uptown to become a destination for diverse cultural dining experiences.

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The city's economic diversity, accessibility and proximity to peer communities would support upscale night life and fine dining destinations. Collinsville's local heritage and culture are showcased in the annual main street events and festivals that attract thousands of local residents and visitors each year. The community would benefit from having a public square or public space for informal public gatherings and activities for residents. Collins Park can become a public gathering space. Other casual hangouts and entertainment venues that aren't bars are also needed. Office and urban residential developments are viewed as opportunities to further increase visitors and overall economic activity in Uptown. Downtown Edwardsville, E. Main Street in Belleville, Grand Boulevard in St. Louis, and historic Downtown St. Charles were mentioned as communities from Collinsville could take development examples.

- The City must find a way to build community support for restoring the Miner's Theatre. Edwardsville's restoration of the Wildey Theatre is a primary example.
- A creative plan to revitalize or redevelop Fairmont Race Track is a great opportunity to spur more investment and improve the I-255/Collinsville Road entrance to the city.

Community Aesthetics and the Pedestrian Experience

Throughout Stakeholder discussion across several topics there was repeated emphasis on the need to improve the visual impression of Collinsville in all areas of the city. Developing unified community aesthetics, wayfinding, signage, streetscape amenities, and corridor branding that promotes the character and culture of the community. At every entrance to the city and along every major corridors drivers and pedestrians to should see the culture reflected in the physical environment.

Stakeholders also emphasized the desire of residents, businesses, and visitors to have a more walkable community. Expanding pedestrian networks, investing bike/PED infrastructure and amenities enhances the overall quality of life in the community. People desire increased access and safer connections to places. Bike lanes and walking paths should connect residential neighborhoods to commercial areas. Connections to new and existing biking, walking, and hiking trails would complement existing outdoor activities and amenities. "City walks" were mentioned as a desirable outdoor recreation activity to encourage residents and tourists to explore Uptown, historic neighborhoods, and other local destinations.

Other Example Communities

- Town and Country Crossing, Town and Country, MO
- Fishers, Indiana
- Carmel, Indiana
- Legacy Village, Ohio
- Destin, Florida
- Grand Haven, Michigan
- New Berg, Indiana
- Columbia, Illinois
- Kimmswick, Missouri



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- Branson Landing, Branson, MO
- Corpus Christi, Texas
- Brentwood Boulevard, St. Louis, MO
- Downtown St. Charles, MO
- Streets of St. Charles

10. Envisioning Collinsville's Future

- More pedestrian friendly and less auto-oriented community
- Improved community aesthetics
- Regional destination
- Eastport Plaza will be home to Tech industry employers, Headquarters, and other professional employers provide higher income jobs
- A diverse Uptown business mix
- Attract start-ups and embrace entrepreneurship
- Annexing more of Collinsville Township and neighborhoods along Collinsville Road
- A more diverse and eclectic population and culture
- Maintain "small town" feel while embracing growth
- Resolve the misperception of the School District
- Improved housing market: increased home ownership, new home construction, and reinvestment in existing housing stock
- The Southwest Corridor will be booming with development and become a destination
- Growth potential will be dependent on successfully promoting an authentic brand and image

11. Other Thought-Provoking Ideas

- Collinsville welcome center
- Improved public transportation
- Community leadership / civic pride training
- "Shop Local" campaign
- Community branding and marketing to "tell our story."
- More emphasis and resources for workforce development programs around Collinsville Area Vocational Center
- An Uptown market or grocery store
- Public education and awareness on community development, economic development and planning policies and programs.

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- Collaborate with the Library to initiate a local Little Free Library project
- Trolley to Uptown, Eastport Plaza, Cahokia Mounds, and other destination
- Develop incentives and programs to be established when TIF 1 expires
- Joint marketing effort between hotels, attractions, and businesses to enhance local tourism

SECTION 2.4 COMMUNITY SURVEY

Community Survey

- 791 Responses
 - 29 Questions
 - 13 Average time to complete
 - 6 Months
 - 2 Convenient ways to respond

A community survey was developed to be responded to online and/or by written response. Notice of the survey was mailed directly to every household and business in Collinsville with a water utility account. Additional notification occurred through print and social media. The survey was also available at several pick-up points throughout the City: City Hall, Collinsville Township Office, Collinsville Township Senior Center, CARD Administrative Office, Collinsville Chamber of Commerce, and Collinsville Memorial Library.

The intent of the planning process was to be Community-Driven". The community survey provided the vehicle necessary to make that

possible. The community survey empowered Collinsville's residents and businesses to rank various planning elements and articulate their personal recommendations, wishes and worries for the future of Collinsville. The city has received 719 completed surveys, many of which were representative of the points of view of individual members of households. As a result, the estimated number of individuals participating in the public engagement portion of the Comprehensive Plan update is just under 3% of the total population. Utilizing SurveyMokey.com's online Sample Size Calculator, this participation rate would have a 95% level of confidence with 4% margin of error based on a population of 25,838.

Survey questions were developed with the intent of identifying community-defined values and critical issues as they relate to the overall quality of life in Collinsville. Responses from the community survey were analyzed and used to complete the following S.W.O.T. analysis identifying Collinsville's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, (Sections 2.6 - 2.9 of this Chapter). A full report of question response summaries from the community survey can be found in Appendix A.

SECTION 2.6 STRENGTHS

- 1. Schools. Collinsville's schools received the highest ranking (4.23 out of 5) based on their value in making Collinsville a great place to live, work, do business and create a desirable quality of life. Residents of Collinsville recognize the excellent job in providing quality learning opportunities despite the many hardships faced by District. Kahok Strong!
- 2. Sense of Community. The "sense of community", "small town atmosphere" and the resident population that Collinsville offers is a top-rated strength. Here are some comments related to why people say they choose to live in Collinsville:

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- Away from the city, yet close enough to enjoy the city, while keeping its small community feel.
- Life-long resident, friends and family live in Collinsville. Great place to take my dogs for a walk.
- Small town feel and hospitable people.
- I have worked in the City for more than 20 years. I try my best every day to make it a better place to work, live, and play for others.
- Collinsville is my home town. I grew up here and have family here. I love my house and have been in it for 22 years. I love the parks & bike trails. These are some of the best things we have to offer.
- It's my home.
- **3. Affordability.** Collinsville's housing diversity, affordability, & neighborhoods makes it attractive to a significant portion of the population.
- **4. Location.** "Proximity to St. Louis, Edwardsville, and Belleville", "interstate highway access & visibility" were among the top rated strengths of Collinsville. Citizens value "Main Street/Uptown", "Gateway Center", "heritage/historical sites", "sports &, entertainment, horse racing track, etc.", and "commercial & retail establishments", that are available to residents and visitors alike.
- **5. Services.** Collinsville municipal services, such as police, fire, streets, etc., receive high marks, as does the Public Library, its "parks and recreation programs".

SECTION 2.7 WEAKNESSES

The top threats or weaknesses facing the City according to the survey results are; "violence, drugs, and safety issues", "reputation of the school district", the "attraction and retention of quality shopping, entertainment & dining establishments", and the "condition and value of existing housing stock/property maintenance".

These are all factors that affect neighborhood stability and quality of life. The critical issues relating to the weaknesses or threats facing the city included:

- 1. Prevention and Deterrence of Crime: Much of the concern about crime related directly to perceptions of their being "too much" rental housing in the area. "Crime....too few cops on the street with too many sitting at desks. Housing with a reputation of crime and lack of cops", "Crime, schools, too many rentals", "the crime rate, there is nothing for the teenage group to do but get in trouble", "decent amount of crime in some neighborhoods which makes people leery of raising a family in town".
- 2. Reputation of the School District: Much of the concern about the reputation and quality of the school district related to perception of their being "too much" rental housing and a transient population. "The reputation of the educational system in town is very poor", "we have way too much rental property and our school district has a bad reputation, because of untrue rumors".
- 3. Attraction and Retention of Quality Shopping, Entertainment & Dining. "I think the area needs more small shopping and dining businesses. We definitely need to build up Main Street-there is plenty of life at night with the bars, but no daytime activities", "having more options in shopping so you stay in Collinsville rather than go to Glen Carbon, Edwardsville or Fairview



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- Heights", "If I'm going to go out for dinner, shopping and a movie, I'm probably going to a community that offers all three, which means my shopping and dining money are being spent elsewhere right now", "more retail, Costco & Target, restaurants".
- **4.** Quality of Parks & Recreation Facilities. "Parks need to be improved. Need more activities for the youth in town", "put parks in more accessible locations for local residents", "create a sense of community by having a community garden", "the parks are in terrible shape", "Woodland Park needs improving".
- 5. Economic Development. Although related to the questions relating to shopping, entertainment, and dining, economic development goes beyond to include the local job market, industry, and workforce. "Attracting companies with good paying jobs that will bring residents into town", "Lots of minimum wage jobs coming to Collinsville"," Lack of manufacturing jobs. Competition from more progressive communities in regards to securing larger development. Being land locked and not aggressively annexing", "Collinsville needs to take advantage of any opportunities to increase tax income from non-brick and mortar stores, such as a commercial sporting complex or the encouragement of restaurants or tourist locations. This will bring both incomes to the city, as well as jobs and entertainment for residents".
- 6. **Neighborhood stability:** Although neighborhood stability was not included as a category in the survey, a significant number of comments from respondents touched on issues relating to neighborhood stability, property maintenance and the condition and value of existing housing stock. "We must do something about the entrance to the city by the ketchup [sic] bottle. That area is blighted and dangerous". There are houses in my neighborhood and a family member's subdivision with houses that look dilapidated and they are not old houses...Property values would benefit from better code enforcement on houses".

SECTION 2.8 OPPORTUNITIES

- 1. Brand Marketing: Approximately sixty percent of respondents believe the City should invest more resources in brand marketing to showcase Collinsville's community assets, quality of life and opportunities, to live, work, play and do business, including its historical places, heritage sites, and other attractions. "We should celebrate Cahokia Mounds like we do beer and toasted ravioli", "Cahokia Mounds Historic Site is a World Heritage Site", "put marketing plan together to promote restaurant and bar business", "developing an identity as to who we are and what we want to be", "Italian [and] Horseradish festivals are great for confirming city identity and resident to resident contact", "Seems to me that Collinsville has some very wonderful historic properties. Definitely playing up to them a lot more if possible would be great and would also pique the interest of some of the people that do live or work in St. Louis they might consider coming here. Giving more House tours of these beautiful historic residences and buildings would be great. People want to see them inside. Kimmswick Missouri used to do the most wonderful historic Christmas historic house tour every year and it drew so many people to the town. There is enough charm in this city that it could really be valuable", "Think Big! Go after big companies and promote, promote, promote Collinsville to the region. Why not us? Why isn't Collinsville the center of the East side?"
- 2. Business Attraction: Approximately seventy-nine percent of respondents believe the City should use incentives to attract new businesses to Collinsville. This is consistent with results relating to branding, economic development, and attracting quality shopping, entertainment and dining to Collinsville. Incentives include the utilization of the Enterprise Zone, TIF districts, business districts, and available grants and tax abatement programs.



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- 3. Healthy Eating. While survey takers were clear that Collinsville has adequate healthcare services and fitness facilities, healthy food options and other activities were noted as being lacking. "It would be great to have more yoga or holistic types of healthy amenities here. Not to mention more organic small bakeries or food stores, restaurants that are more organic", "we want Trader Joe's or Fresh Thyme!", "We have many restaurants, but it would be nice to acquire and maintain a few, truly healthy options, like a juice bar or soup/salad restaurant", "farm to table culinary offerings", "t There is healthy food/dining at places in Collinsville but we do not have a store that is fully know as a health food store", "There are almost no healthy/hip restaurants".
- 4. Recreation, parks, hiking, biking. In keeping with the desire for more healthy dining options, approximately sixty percent of respondents believe the City should have more parks, hiking trails, bike trails, and walking paths. "It would be great to have a focused study on creating the bike network. Outline where the access to existing trails are located, identify streets that can support on street facilities such as St. Louis Road, Main St. Keebler that connect neighborhoods to places of interest", "the trail system should be a huge attraction for the region!!! Promote it! Investigate communities that have created mixed use roads and access thru their towns. Link our parks and downtown to the nearby trails and promote their use! Lafayette IN just rebuilt their main drag from downtown thru West Lafayette and across Purdue's Campus. Bikes, pedestrians and cars living together!", "should be a park within walking distance of Main Street", "connect to Old School House Trail", "connection to the Mounds", "a sportsplex - Look at O'Fallon. Also, a better youth sports program needs to be created. Look at O'Fallon", "we need safe bike/walking paths along Hwy 159", "sidewalks on Beltline and 157", "bike lanes would be nice down main arteries throughout the city", "build a park by the Gateway Center with walking paths", and "I've lived here 4 years and I just found out there is Frisbee golf at Woodland Park. Advertise these things someplace!".
- 5. Housing Options: While 70% of respondents thought there was a sufficient supply of housing options with regard to housing type, affordability and price range to retain and attract a diverse range of residents, individual comments told a more nuanced story. "This town could benefit from the fact that it has relatively inexpensive housing prices and could totally attract the Silicon Prairie crowd from St. Louis. If we had more for that age bracket we could really draw people into this area", "would be nice to see newer developments where space is available", "too much low income housing in Collinsville", "need newer subdivisions", "too many multifamily, not enough middle of the road homes", "I feel there is a definitely a lack of housing for middle class to upper middle class. We would love to stay here in the long run, but there are not many housing options that fit our needs", Should be more housing (\$200k to \$350k) to compete with Maryville, Glen Carbon, and Edwardsville. But the City has to improve our reputation to get buyers to spend that kind of money in Collinsville."
- 6. Reinvestment in Existing Housing Stock: While respondents were mixed as to whether or not the City should use incentives to attract more residents (46% for, 54% against), they were clear in their desire that reinvestment in existing housing stock is a priority (75% agree) and more should be done to remedy property maintenance issues and derelict properties (85% agree). "Older areas of town, abandoned houses throughout the city and businesses that have closed", "carrot, not stick", "Offer tax incentives to fix up properties like they do in St. Louis", "This is my biggest gripe. We purchased a gorgeous well cared for 100+ year old home, but within a stone's throw we have rowdy goof balls, high on god-only-knows-what, tearing up our beautiful city", "offer incentives to families willing to buy and fix", "begin with local landlords who don't maintain their properties (This is coming from a landlord, btw)", "hire more code enforcement; reduce the time it takes to get things done", "some sort of program to assist homeowners with significant

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structural work to be done", "tax abatement for improving vacant properties", and "create a volunteer group to help".

SECTION 2.9 THREATS

- 1. Schools: "Schools with below average ratings, leading to increases in renter population and decreasing property values/tax revenue", "School district is the number one reason people in their 30s-40s are moving to Troy and Edwardsville from Collinsville.
- **2. Crime:** "Crime....too few cops on the street with too many sitting at desks. Housing with a reputation of crime and lack of cops, regardless of the factual numbers, no one is going to choose Collinsville over much "quieter" neighboring communities", "Collinsville needs to improve the perception of safety".
- 3. Blighted/Dilapidated Housing: "Hire more code enforcement; reduce the time it takes to get things done", "Let's start code enforcing", "Code enforcement needs to patrol the entire area of Collinsville and fine apartment, multi-family and rental properties the slum lords or our town and rebuilding it."
- **4. Economy:** "The poverty and economic decay of Caseyville, East St. Louis, and Granite City is moving east and pushing the middle and upper class folks out to Troy and Glen Carbon", "Local businesses should be encouraged in lieu of chains".
- **5. Growth Areas:** Approximately sixty-nine percent of respondents oppose annexation, however, among the reasons given were "the fact that we are land locked. There is no place to expand", "Is there any place left to annex?", which suggests that rather than disapproval, the reason may resignation to perceived circumstances.

SECTION 2.10 CRITICAL ISSUES SUMMARY

The public engagement process helped define how the community envisions Collinsville growing and changing by 2025. The critical issues identified through the public engagement process as described and summarized in the previous sections help to define a clear vision, goals and objectives to plan and achieve the envisioned future.

- 1. Housing and Neighborhoods
- 2. Quality of Life
- 3. Growth and Development
- 4. Uptown
- 5. Tourism and Hospitality
- 6. Parks, Recreation, and Open Space
- 7. Transportation, Public Infrastructure, and Services
- 8. Education

Goals have been developed for each of the above "critical issues" and included in Chapter 3. The goals respond directly to the critical issues and priorities summarized in the previous sections. The objectives or implementation strategies that correspond to each goal have been carefully developed based on the information gathered during the public engagement portion of this plan. The goals and objectives were developed to help guide the City's elected and appointed officials in making decisions regarding public services, land use, future development and neighborhood preservation.



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Making the goals of this plan a reality will require the coordination and leadership of all levels and forms of government, both internal and external to the City, plus strong support from Collinsville's organizations and local businesses.

