

Urban Character Districts

This section of the report outlines the urban design character of each of the four areas of the corridor. A narrative overview of these areas is discussed below, and is followed by maps of each corridor area that graphically depict the built and natural features that contribute to the character of each area.

Area A

The combination of religious institutional uses and stable commercial uses at the southern end of this section of the study corridor creates a stable, well-maintained gateway to Rockford's Central Business District. The transition of Kishwaukee Street from two-way to one-way traffic at Walnut Street further reinforces this gateway perception. While certain blocks may lack quality landscaping or pedestrian amenities, investments in human-scale decorative lighting in the Oak and Walnut Streets area, sidewalk improvements, and attractive infill commercial development in older structures creates the appearance of institutional and commercial investment. Both Amcore Bank and Swedish American Hospital have been active corporate citizens through their purchase and rehabilitation of adjacent existing housing stock for use by their employees and the provision of employer-assisted housing programs.

Relevant Community Input

- The Swedish American Hospital's foundation plans to rehab 25 to 30 houses over the next five years in the area from Prospect Avenue to 7th Street; they have demolished 40 problem properties already. While the City has invested in infrastructure improvements, the foundation has not received any subsidies for this rehabilitation activity.

Area B

The northern end of this section includes the Haight Village residential district, whose location is visually identified by a painted wooden sign on Kishwaukee Street. The district is distinctive because of its concentration of high-quality, established housing stock. The remainder of this study corridor section is less easily classified, as residential uses give way to an assortment of industrial, commercial and residential uses. The combination of uses, and the diversity of quality within each use category, has effectively prevented the creation of one identity for the section. In addition to the Haight Village at the north end, the 10th Avenue Park expansion and the cluster of commercial uses at the intersection of Kishwaukee Street and Broadway are the most identifiable nodes. Compared to the strong identity of the Haight Village district, the section's remaining residential uses blend into the more dominant commercial and industrial uses.

Relevant Community Input

- The City created a TIF in the Broadway retail area, which is home to an increasing number of immigrant merchants, and some streetscape improvements have been completed. Previous attempts to organize these merchants into a larger organization have been largely unsuccessful.

Area C

The character of this section of the corridor may undergo a change once IDOT completes the Kishwaukee Street expansion and reconstruction project. Currently, the northern end of this section is a mixture of residential and industrial uses, but the expanded right-of-way and subsequent effect on the frontages and setbacks of existing homes may encourage the transition of this section from a mixture of uses to a more consistent industrial character. Two residential developments, the Rockford Supportive Living Senior Housing and Orton Keyes Rockford Housing

Authority development, will ensure that some residential character will remain in this section of Kishwaukee Street. The John Kinley Park at this section's northern edge and the open space surrounding the Orton Keyes development provide some spatial balance to the industrial structures, but unsightly, overgrown vacant lots between the industrial uses decrease the area's aesthetic appeal. A lower-density mixture of lower-quality residential and commercial uses at the southern end of the section present an additional challenge to creating a unified character for this section of the study corridor.

Relevant Community Input

The industrial and residential uses in the area are not compatible with one another.

Area D

This section of the corridor is strongly defined by the Chicago Rockford International Airport and the adjacent industrial uses. The repeated office park-style of construction between the airport and Sandy Hollow Road provides visual cohesion and consistency. North of Sandy Hollow Road, however, this well-maintained industrial fabric gives way to an assortment of industrial, commercial and residential uses that fails to convey a unified character. As happens through the rest of the study corridor, the area between Barnum and Sandy Hollow Roads includes both higher- and lower-quality structures, the inconsistency of which creates the appearance of disjointed development.

Relevant Community Input

- Because of one company's client base that includes Fortune 500 companies, the negative aesthetic condition of the corridor prevents the use of Kishwaukee Street to take business visitors to the Rockford Country Club.
- Industry near the airport is successful and more consistent in appearance and scale.

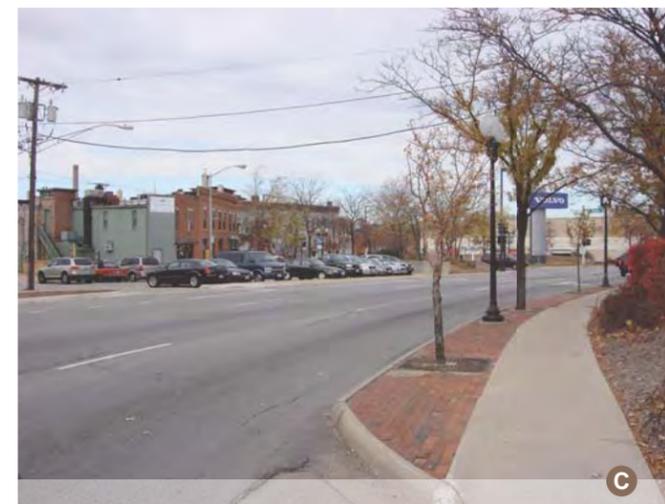
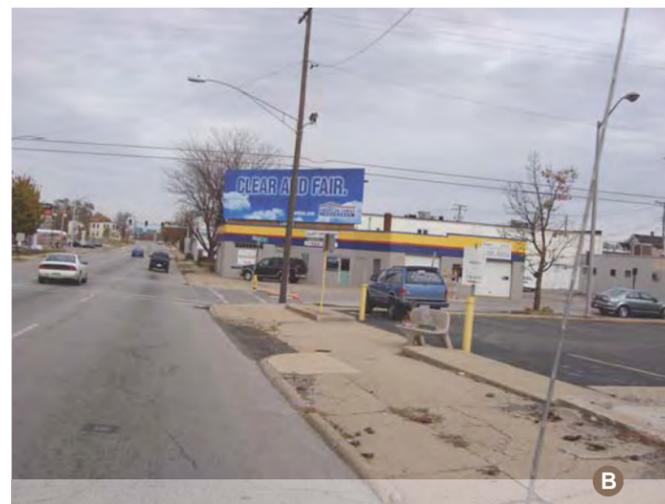
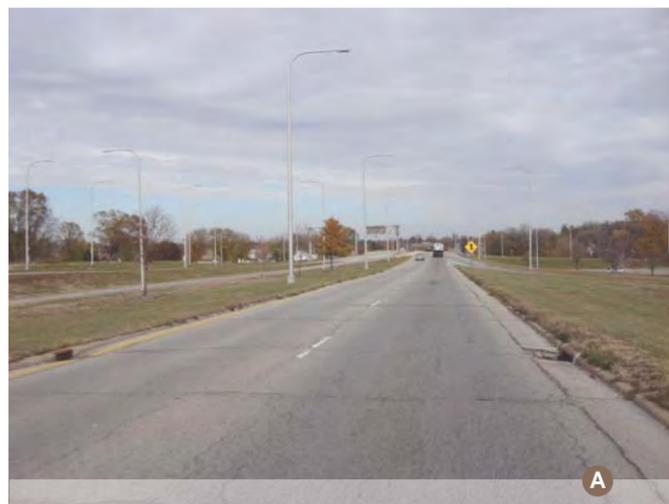
Stakeholder Feedback

- The corridor is inconsistent in appearance with a general lack of site improvements at commercial and industrial parcels
- The corridor has a number of underutilized and abandoned industrial buildings
- As traffic has increased, the environment for residential uses along the corridor has deteriorated



Picture Key:

- A** Northbound on 3rd Avenue: The Whitman Street Interchange has the open space, landscaping, and lighting typical of highways.
- B** East side of Kishwaukee Street at Market Street: Poorly-maintained pavement, a lack of parkway landscaping and inconsistent sidewalks are common.
- C** East side of Kishwaukee Street south of East State Street: Paving, lighting, and landscaping contribute to a pleasant pedestrian environment.
- D** Corner of Kishwaukee Street and Oak Streets looking north: This corner surface parking lot is surrounded by neighborhood-scale lighting, quality sidewalks, and well-maintained landscaping.



Urban Character Districts

Area A

Scale: 1" = 700'

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Kishwaukee Street Corridor Revitalization Plan



Picture Key:

- A** North corner of Kishwaukee and Grove Streets: This sign marks the beginning of the Haight Village Historic District.
- B** Kishwaukee Street between the railroad tracks and College Avenue: High-quality residential with generous set-backs and well-maintained landscaping.
- C** East side of Kishwaukee Street between 10th and Sand Avenues: 10th Avenue Park is in the process of being expanded and improved by the City.
- D** West side of Kishwaukee Street at Broadway: Auto-oriented commercial establishments are dominant in the corridor between Sand and 16th Avenues.



Urban Character Districts

Area B

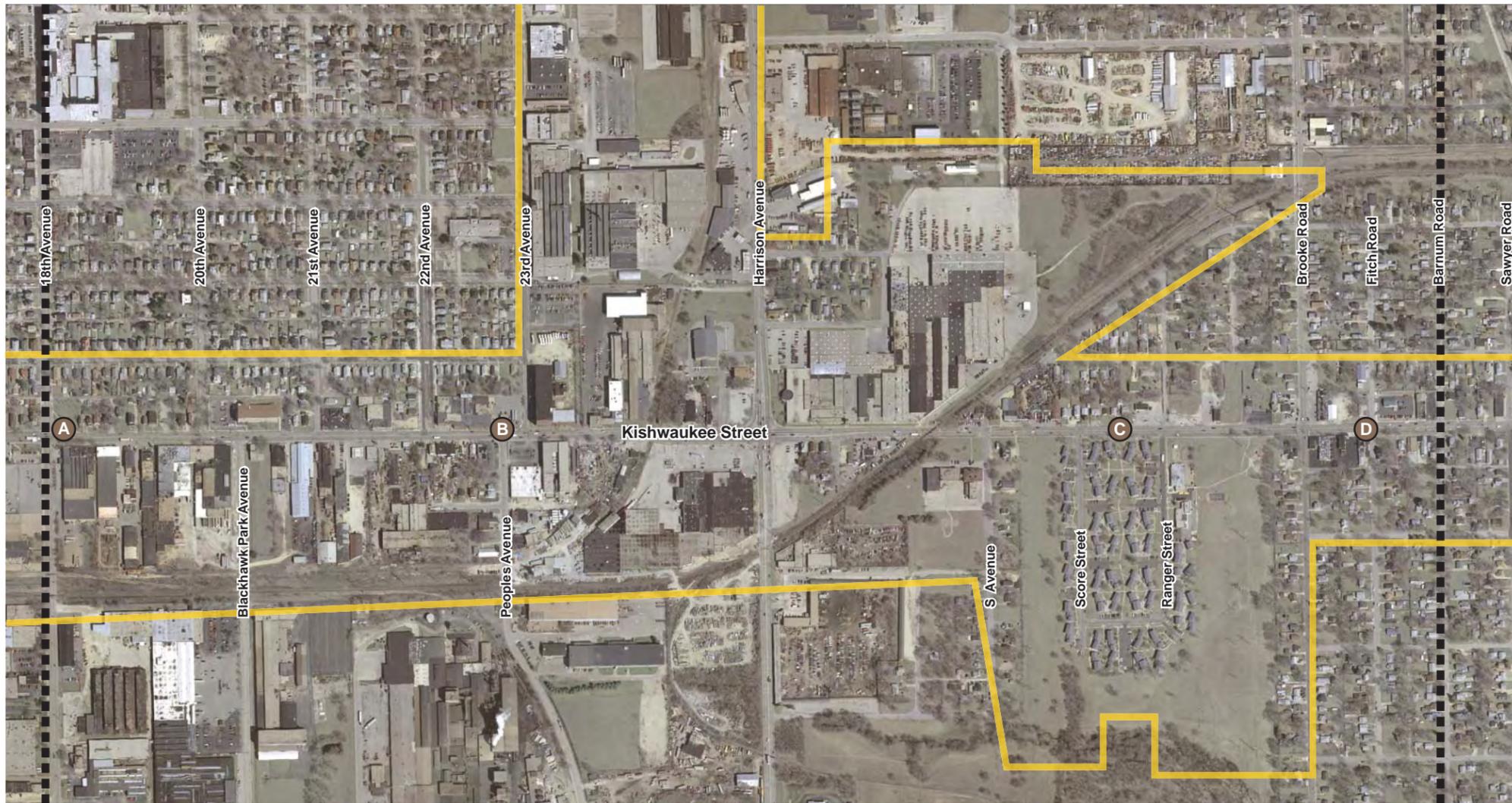
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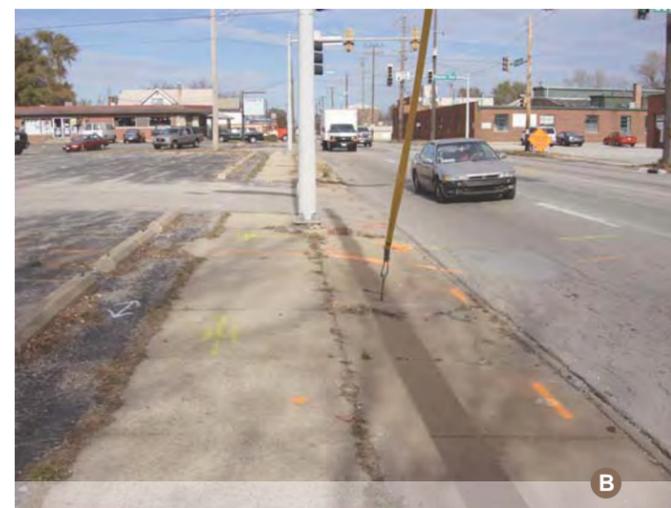
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Picture Key:

- A** Southeast corner of Kishwaukee Street and 18th Avenue: John Kinley Park.
- B** West side of Kishwaukee Street at Peoples Avenue: Auto-oriented commercial uses with sidewalks in poor condition and no streetscaping.
- C** West side of Kishwaukee Street between Score and Ranger Streets: Incompatible mix of residential and commercial uses.
- D** Northeast corner of Kishwaukee Street and Fitch Road: Commercial uses with high-quality sidewalk, well-maintained fencing and landscaping.



Urban Character Districts

Area C

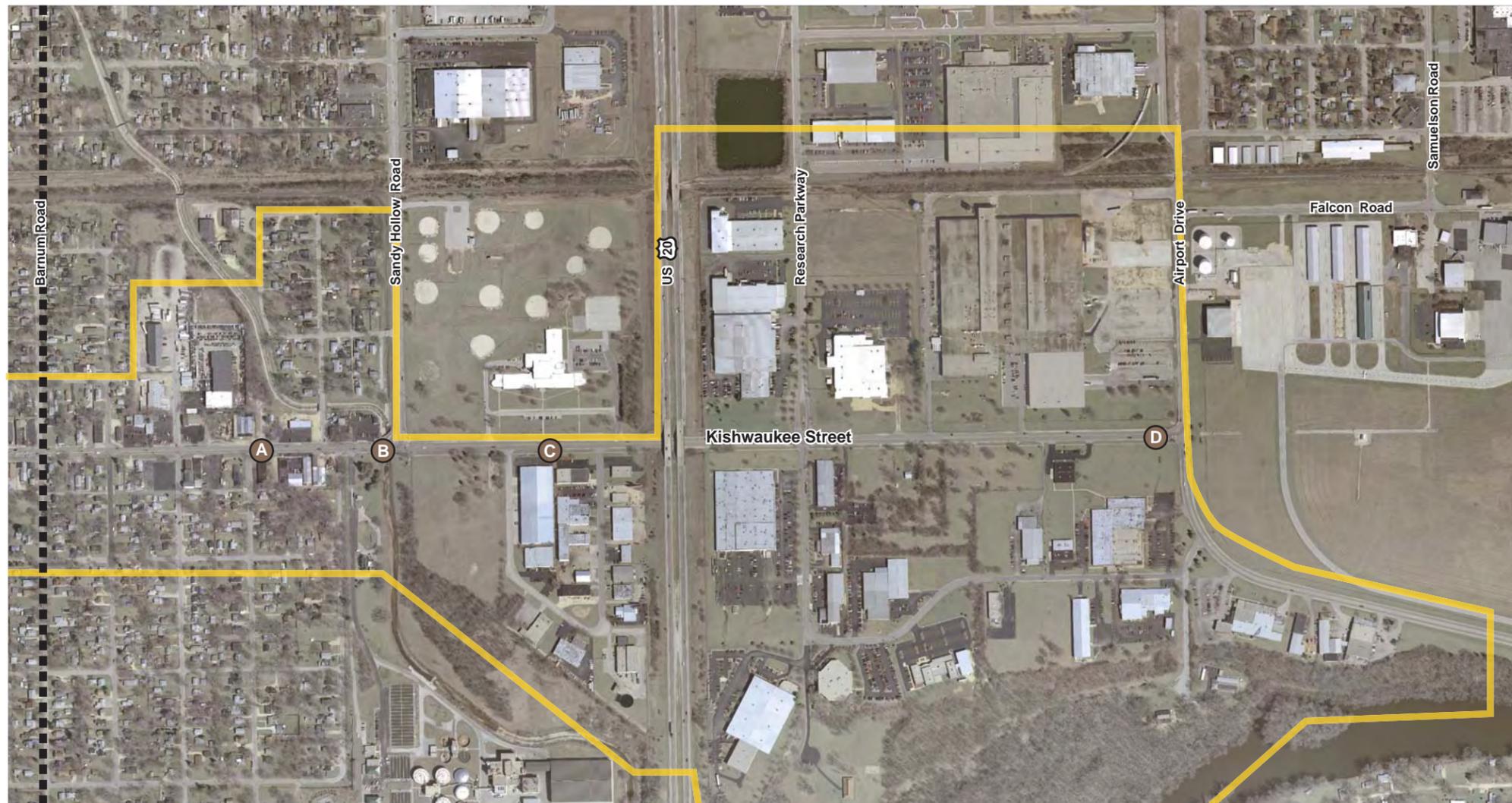
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Picture Key:

- North corner of Kishwaukee Street and Roosevelt Road:
- A** Abandoned commercial/industrial building with overgrown landscaping.
- East side of Kishwaukee Street at Martin Road:
- B** Commercial establishment with quality sidewalks and well-maintained landscaping.
- East side of Kishwaukee Street between Sandy Hollow Road and U.S. Highway 20: Riverdahl School campus.
- C**
- West side of Kishwaukee Street north of Airport Drive: Signage for Rockford Airport.
- D**



Urban Character Districts

Area D

Scale: 1" = 700'

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Assets, Opportunities, & Constraints

This section of the report discusses the assets, opportunities and constraints that exist within each of the four areas of the corridor. Because there are some strengths and weaknesses that are relevant corridor-wide, the discussion first focuses on these before addressing each section of the corridor individually. This is followed by maps of each corridor area that graphically depict the locations of relevant assets, opportunities and constraints.

The majority of the comments made during stakeholder interview sessions were concerns that the existing physical and economic conditions of the corridor are negatively impacting its capacity for redevelopment. Five weaknesses were repeatedly cited during interviews:

- Decreasing truck accessibility and poor traffic flow at key intersections,
- Aging industrial infrastructure,
- Negative perception created by crime, drug dealing, and prostitution along the corridor,
- Unattractive physical appearance overall, and
- With the exception of demand for industrial space, a generally weak real estate market.

Some interviewees noted that the corridor was in better physical condition than it has been in the past, particularly near the airport, but that improvements are mitigated by a general sense of disinvestment and stagnation, if not actual decline.

Despite the challenges facing the corridor, some interviewees found that the existing conditions presented several strengths that could be leveraged for redevelopment and revitalization. Specific strengths include:

- A number of vacant or underutilized lots available for redevelopment,
- Organizations, including the Swedish American Hospital and Zion Development, supporting residential redevelopment,
- The conversion of the Jane Addams housing complex to green space,
- An industry cluster of metal-based firms within the corridor,
- Physical capacity for expansion at the airport,
- The airport's role as a major employment center, and
- The Foreign Trade Zone, which could function as an economic draw for companies from around the region.

Area A

This section of the corridor has a number of stable existing assets, including vibrant commercial and residential neighborhoods, attractive streetscaping, and well-maintained pockets of open space. The neighborhood faces one key constraint, however, with one-way access patterns that limit circulation within the area and impede access to commercial businesses.

Relevant Community Input

- 75 residential units have been added to the River District in the past eight years, and another renovation is underway that will add more apartments.

Area B

This section is already undergoing a significant infrastructure improvement with the IDOT reconstruction of Kishwaukee Street between 15th and Harrison Avenues, and the Keith Creek Greenway Plan will further reshape and improve the area's physical appearance. The demolition of the Jane Addams housing complex will provide another

large-scale opportunity to positively influence the area's built environment. The successful Midtown District is an existing asset that could be extended through infill development along Broadway to join a revitalized commercial node at Kishwaukee Street.

Relevant Community Input

This section of the corridor, which previously had problems with drug dealing and litter, has been cleaned up, but improvements could be made to warn motorists and pedestrians of the at-grade freight railroad crossing.

Area C

This area contains a large number of parcels that are under consideration for designation as brownfield sites. While the assessment and remediation necessary to realize the redevelopment potential of these parcels is a challenge, a number of older industrial structures, including the Rockford National Furniture Company site, have redevelopment or adaptive reuse potential. The area surrounding the intersection of Kishwaukee Street and Harrison Avenue is a stable industrial center that should be supported and expanded. Some vacant parcels within that area of Kishwaukee immediately north and south of the railroad tracks, including the old Rock River School facility, could be redeveloped to support the existing adjacent industrial uses.

Relevant Community Input

The Abilities Center may expand into the adjacent old Counselor Scale building, which is currently owned by the Hendricks Group, and begin a retail operation. There is already a small commercial node in the area that includes a Walgreen's and a second-hand store.

Area D

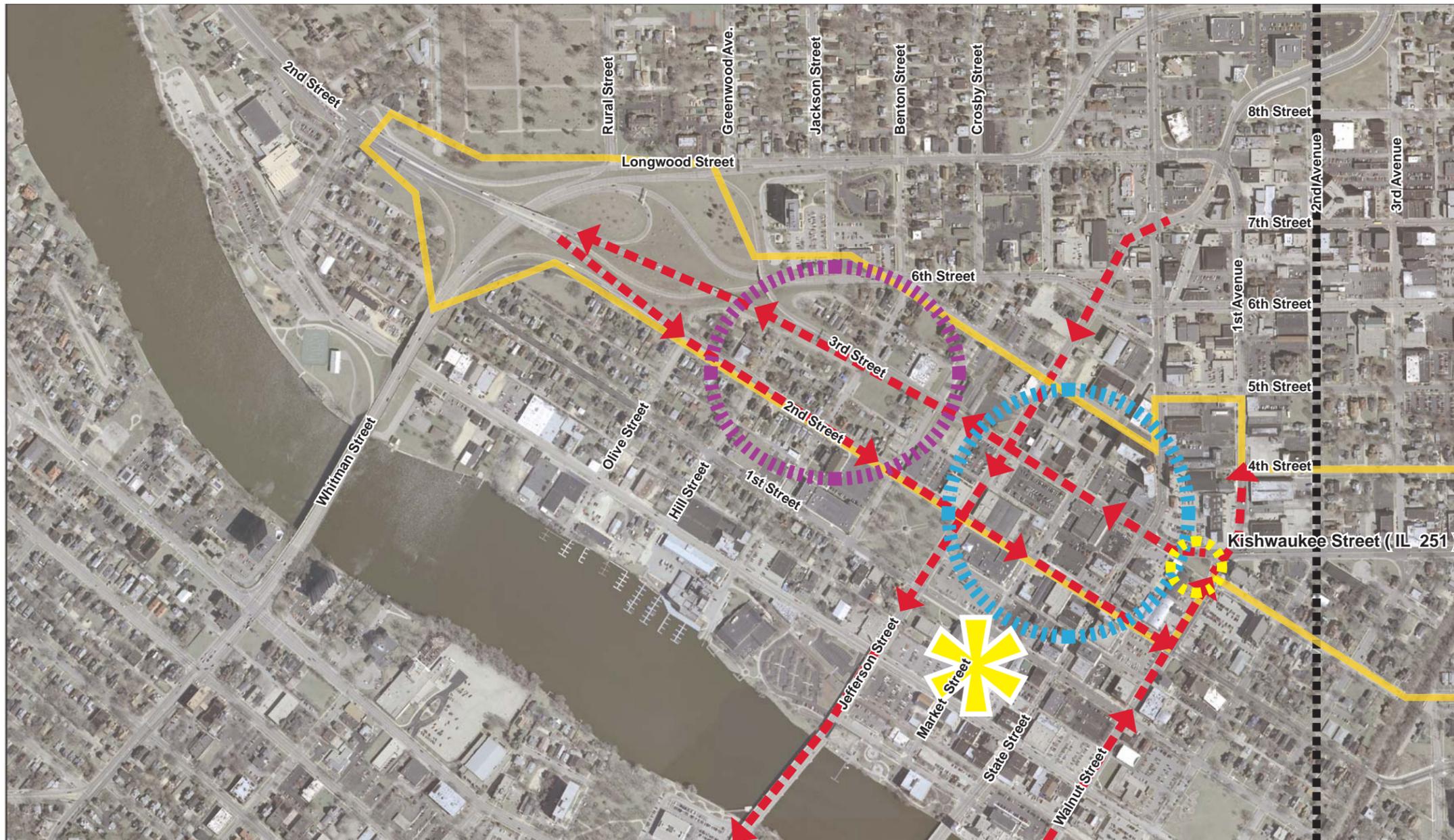
Anchored by the Chicago Rockford International Airport, the existing industrial uses in this area are well-maintained and visually cohesive. Sandy Hollow Road functions as a main access point to Kishwaukee Street, and the existing commercial and residential uses at this intersection could be redeveloped and enhanced to capitalize on this traffic pattern.

Relevant Community Input

- The airport is a designated Foreign Trade Zone (FTZ), an economic development tool which allows participating companies to defer, reduce or eliminate tariffs on foreign goods. The FTZ is not limited to the airport proper, but can be extended to include businesses up to 2.5 hours away. Three years ago, the FTZ recorded \$45 million in activity, and this increased to \$67 million and then \$140 million in subsequent years. The FTZ will continue to expand.

Stakeholder Feedback

- Safety, crime and drug use create a negative perception of the corridor
- The City has effectively promoted the airport area, but has not focused on the rest of the corridor
- The corridor is not a City priority for retail development
- Access to qualified labor is key for some higher-tech companies
- The industrial infrastructure is aging: new telecom and electrical supply infrastructure and modern technical park facilities are needed to compete with other areas



- Legend
-  Study Area Boundary
 -  Match Line



Downtown

As the Northern anchor of the study area, the downtown exists as the City's civic center and is a significant catalyst for corridor revitalization efforts.



Limited Access Patterns

The one-way north-south and east-west access pattern of this area of the corridor functions to limit vehicular circulation. Area business owners are concerned that this pattern may be negatively impacting their businesses.



Stable Residential Area

This cohesive, established residential neighborhood is an asset to this area of the corridor.



Vibrant Commercial Area

Well-maintained new and infill commercial development make this a high-quality mixed-use node.



Attractive Open Space

Small, well-maintained areas of open space, such as this pocket park, improve the visual appearance of the area.

Assets, Opportunities, & Constraints Area A

Scale: 1" = 600'



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Legend

-  Study Area Boundary
-  Match Line

Brownfield Sites
 These parcels have been identified as potentially requiring environmental remediation, which could require substantial financial investment. Redevelopment potential is uncertain until this initial assessment and remediation are undertaken.

-  Potential RPLA #1 Parcels
-  Potential RPLA #2 Parcels
-  Potential RPLA #4 Parcels
-  Potential RPLA #5 Parcels



Keith Creek Greenway Plan
 The investments and improvements to existing open space that will be in this area will increase recreational opportunities and enhance the appearance of the area.



Jane Addams Redevelopment Opportunity Area
 This Rockford Housing Authority-owned property will be demolished and the site will become a green space. The adjacent strip mall is for sale, which presents an opportunity for redevelopment.



Improved River Views
 The completion of the Keith Creek Greenway Plan will enhance views of the Rock River from this high point along the corridor.



Commercial Infill Opportunity
 A number of key vacant commercial parcels could be redeveloped and infill commercial uses extended east down Broadway to link the successful Midtown District with Kishwaukee Street.



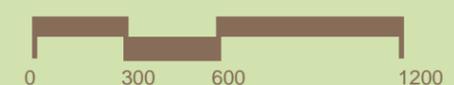
Successful Commercial District
 The Midtown District is a vibrant retail district on Broadway that could, with appropriate infill development, extend west to Kishwaukee Street.



IDOT Project: Infrastructure Investment
 The expansion, reconstruction and improvement of Kishwaukee Street from 15th to Harrison Avenues will improve traffic flow and safety in the area.

Assets, Opportunities, & Constraints Area B

Scale: 1" = 600'

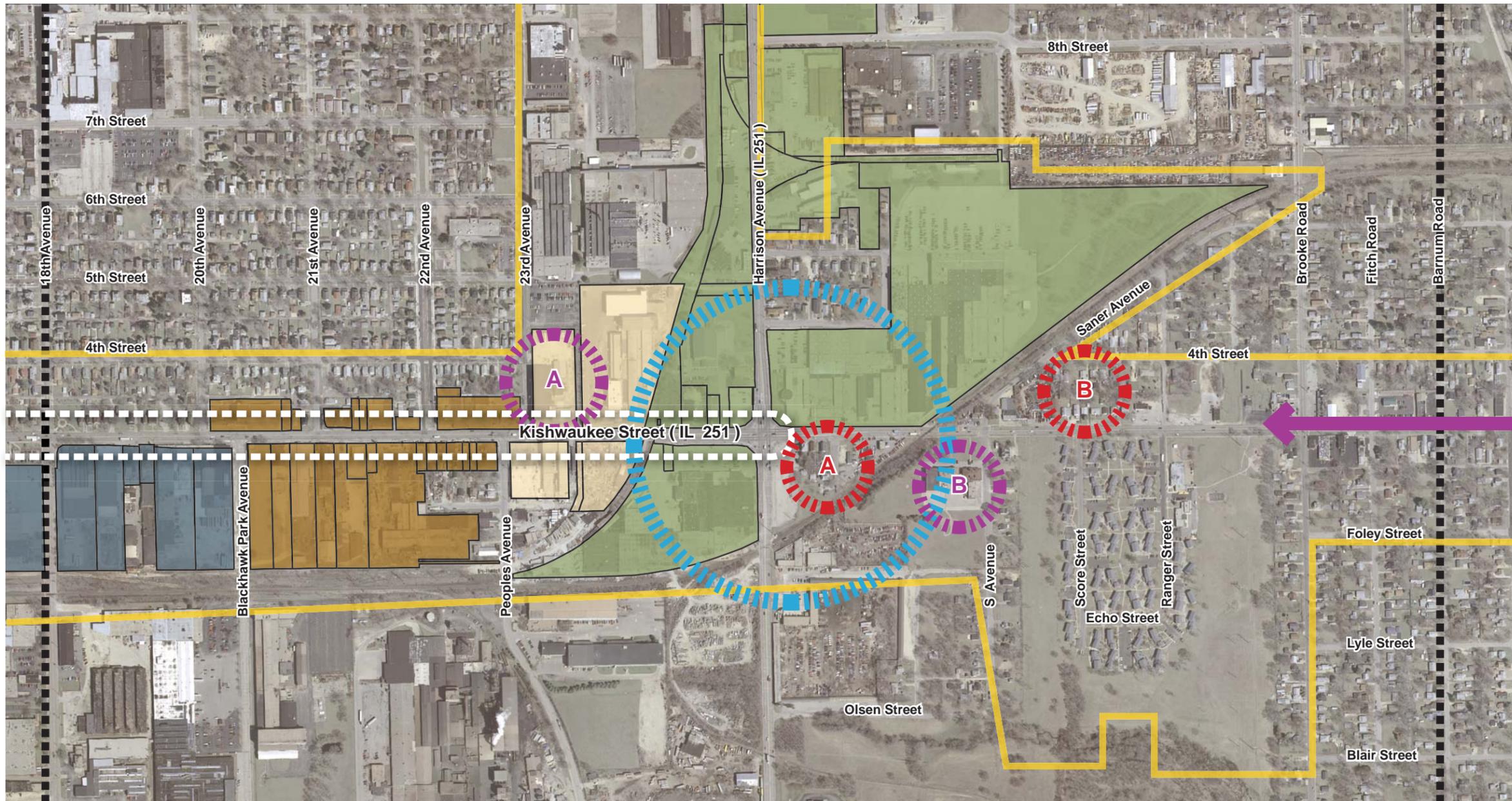


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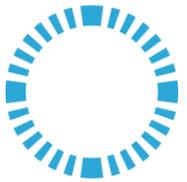
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IDOT Project: Infrastructure Investment
 The expansion, reconstruction and improvement of Kishwaukee Street from 15th to Harrison Avenues will improve traffic flow and safety in the area.



Former Furniture Manufacturer: Opportunity Site
 This former Rockford National Furniture Company building presents a unique opportunity for adaptive reuse that could reflect the city's legacy as a center of furniture manufacturing.



Industrial Stabilization
 This intersection is a concentration of industrial uses that should be preserved and maintained to anchor revitalization efforts.



Commercial Infill Opportunity Areas
 These areas could be redeveloped as a commercial node to serve the needs of the employees of the adjacent industrial businesses and the residents of the Orton Keyes housing complex.



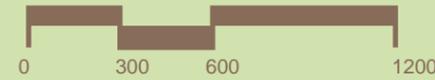
Redevelopment Opportunity Area
 These two structures, formerly the Rock River School, could provide a redevelopment opportunity that maintains the structures historic integrity.



Infill Opportunity Area
 The density of residential development on the surrounding blocks makes this an ideal area for commercial or mixed infill development.

Assets, Opportunities, & Constraints Area C

Scale: 1" = 600'

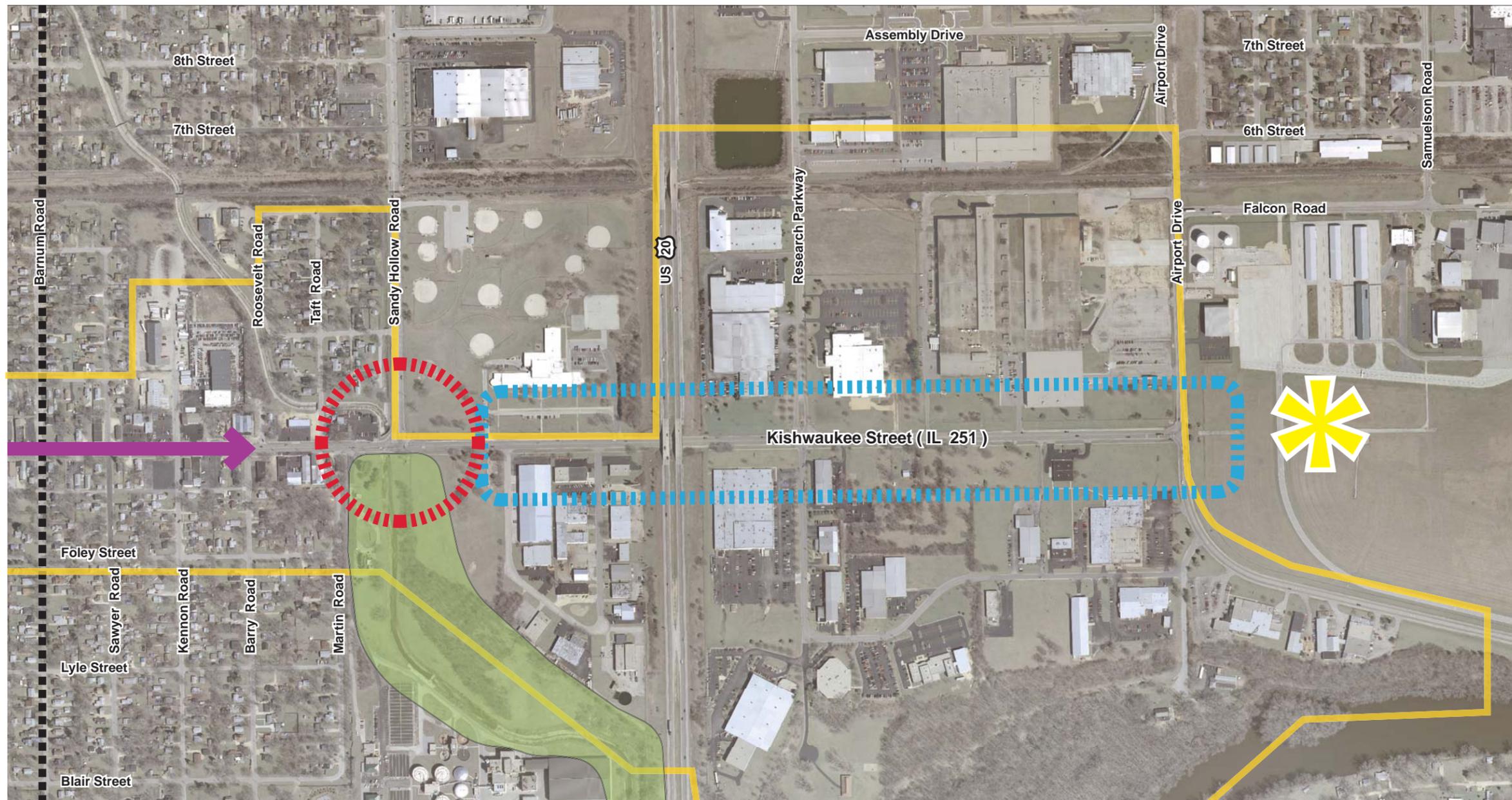



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Legend

-  Study Area Boundary
-  Match Line



Infill Opportunity Area

The density of residential development on the surrounding blocks makes this an ideal area for commercial or mixed infill development.



Opportunity Area

The traffic flow between Sandy Hollow Road and Kishwaukee Street and the adjacent residential neighborhood makes this an ideal area for a commercial node. The planned construction of an administrative building on the western side of Kishwaukee Street could further support commercial development



Rock River Water Reclamation District

An administrative building is planned along Kishwaukee Street south of Sandy Hollow Road. A pocket park behind this building could be a community amenity.



Industrial Stabilization

Kishwaukee Street from the airport to Sandy Hollow Road is lined with attractive, similarly-scaled, well-maintained industrial uses.



Chicago Rockford International Airport

The airport is the Southern anchor of the study corridor and a key asset from a transportation, infrastructure, and economic development perspective.

Assets, Opportunities, & Constraints

Area D

Scale: 1" = 600'




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